

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Company C

"The Sentinel" November 2024

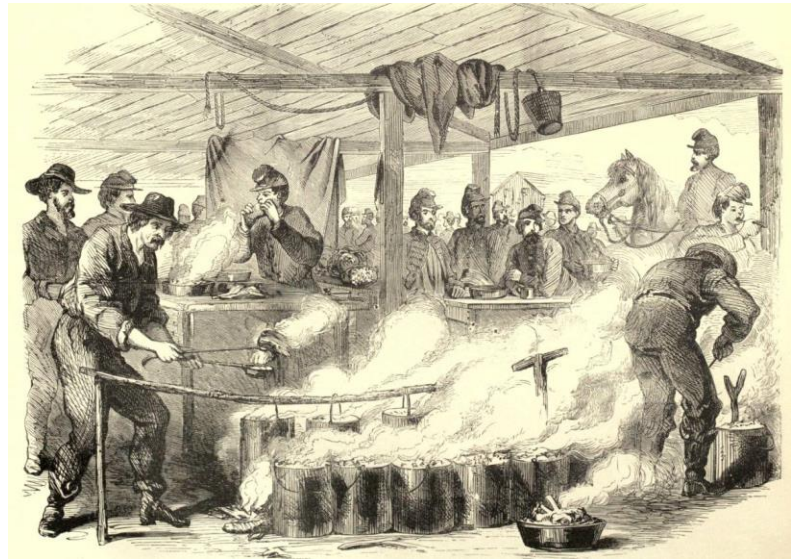
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

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I am always looking for newsletter content, so please forward your articles, book reviews, event summaries & photos, stories, etc.) to me for inclusion in a future edition of "The Sentinel". – Matthew Steger, editor

WHEN MCCLELLAN RETURNED TO ANTIETAM ON MEMORIAL DAY

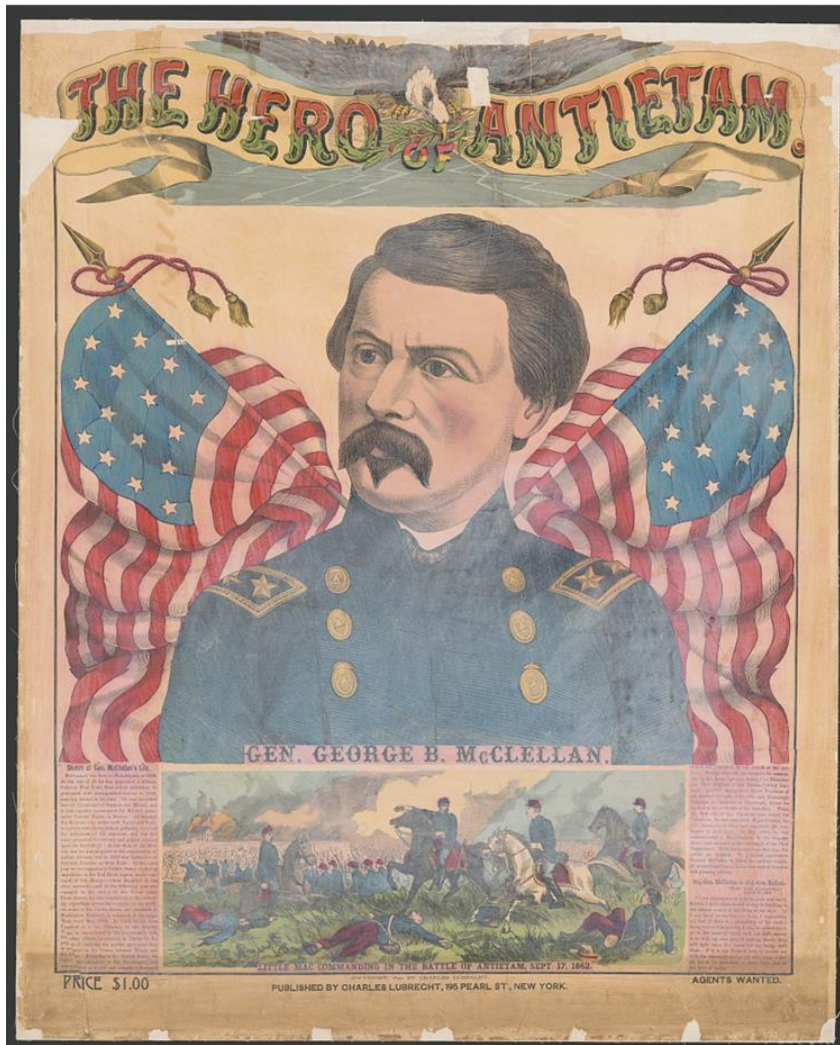
Kevin Pawlak, September 16, 2024, blueandgrayeducation.org

Sharpsburg, Maryland's citizens have always greeted Memorial Day with reverence. Every day, the graves of 4,776 Union soldiers look down on their quiet town, their stories from that fateful Wednesday, September 17, 1862, forever etched in history. Among the many annual remembrances, one stands out: 1885. The keynote speaker at that year's ceremony attracted great attention and drew throngs of people to the burying ground in Sharpsburg. Following his exit from the Civil War, George B. McClellan led a private life. After a failed 1864 run for president, McClellan spent the remainder of the war in Europe. He later returned to the public eye as New Jersey's governor from 1878 to 1881, before retreating again into seclusion.

At the behest of former "Stonewall" Jackson staffer Henry Kyd Douglas, McClellan accepted an invitation to be the keynote speaker for the 1885 Memorial Day ceremony.

The general and his entourage arrived in Hagerstown to a glowing reception on Friday morning, May 29. The next day, McClellan made his way to the battlefield, stepping onto ground he had not visited since 1862. One eyewitness remarked George B. McClellan wore "the same faded blue uniform which he had worn when he commanded at the Battle of Antietam." The general's party explored the northern section of the battlefield, pausing to look at Dunker Church before stepping into the Bloody Lane. Century Magazine's Robert Underwood Johnson tagged along with the general, armed with a sketchpad to create scenes meant to accompany McClellan's upcoming article on the Battle of Antietam. Several hours of battlefield tromping ended and McClellan reached the National Cemetery by noon. He ascended the observation tower, pointing out the particulars of the battlefield to those there with him. A hurried tour of the cemetery followed. One wonders if, while walking on that hallowed ground, McClellan paused to visit one of his

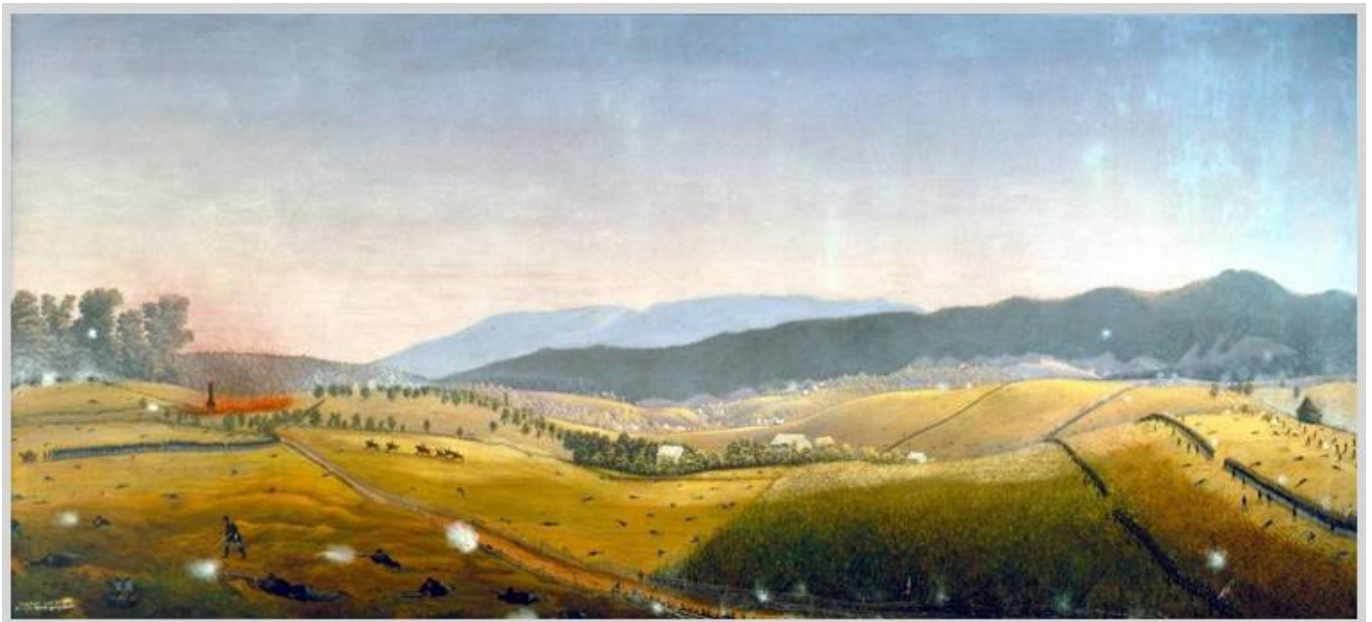
own kin buried there—Harrison White of the 28th Pennsylvania, the general’s cousin, mortally wounded at Antietam.



The Hero Of Antietam – Library of Congress

The Memorial Day ceremony commenced at 1 p.m. in front of the cemetery’s impressive Private Soldier Monument, a 250-ton behemoth towering 44 feet above the cemetery floor. McClellan and his party climbed onto the platform, the old general pulled his speech from his pocket, and began fitting the solemn occasion into words.

“[P]utting behind us all the strife and the rancor and bitterness of that conflict,” he began, with an eye toward the Confederate veterans in the crowd, “and burying in oblivion the animosities of that trying period of our country’s history, we have met here today to do honor to the men, who sleep in this beautiful spot, after having given their lives as a sacrifice for the preservation of their Country. They died not in vain, [but] for the Republic,” he proclaimed



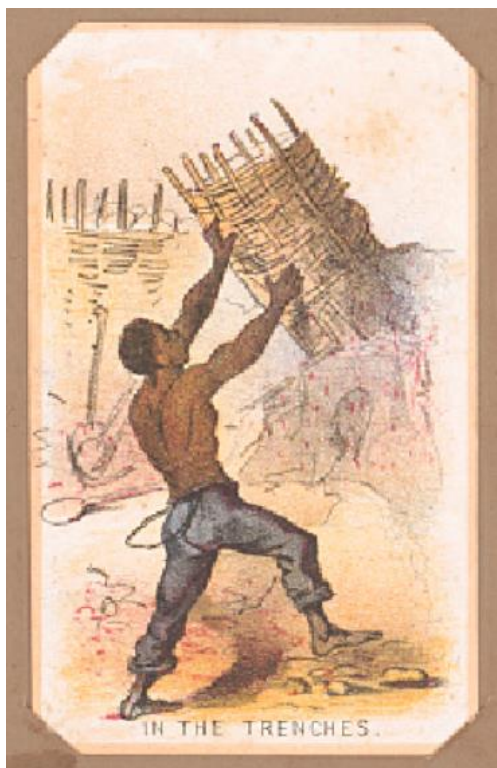
“A Fateful Turn,” by Capt. James Home, depicts Union troops turning toward a sunken farm lane, triggering a fierce three-hour battle with hidden Confederates at Bloody Lane. as the Mumma Farm burned and General McClellan briefly visited the battlefield. | NPS

McClellan's speech touched on many topics: the motivations for the war, the nature of the two armies that fought at Antietam, and his final prayer "that our great Union may never again be endangered..."

The general's Memorial Day address was no Gettysburg Address. It received mixed reviews in the papers. One praising newspaper called the speech "a scholarly production." Still another termed it "more of an apology for the part he had taken in the war ... than anything else." Either way, the audience greeted the general's speech with "several rousing cheers." McClellan did not linger long in Sharpsburg, though "an elegant champagne lunch" briefly occupied him. His party then made its way back to the train station, boarded the cars, and left Sharpsburg for the last time.

The battlefield, 23 years after the battle, stood in stark contrast to the way McClellan left it in 1862. The headstones over which McClellan spoke, marking the graves of the Union dead, are enough of a permanent mark on the landscape to never let one forget the terrible storms this nation endured during the war.

WINSLOW HOMER SOUVENIR CARD



Noted American artist Winslow Homer (1836 ~ 1910) created a series of drawings entitled "Life In Camp" originally published circa 1864 by L. Prang & Co. The series was exhibited in "The Civil War in America" at the Library of Congress in 2013. This month's image is entitled "In The Trenches".

QUARTERMASTER UPDATE

The unit recently acquired quite a few items to add to our quartermaster inventory including leathers, uniform clothing (including a 95th PVI jacket), etc. The updated list can be found at 53rd PVI's website under the "Equipment" tab (link is about halfway down the page): <http://www.53rdpvi.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/53rd-Quartermaster-List-updated-Sept-18-2024.pdf>. I will plan on bringing most of the items to our annual meeting in December.

ELECTIONS

Per our bylaws, civil officer nominations for Vice President and Treasurer/Secretary are due to Eric by today (31 Oct.); this info was also printed in the October newsletter. Please ensure that the person you want to nominate has accepted the nomination and understands the duties involved in order to be put on the ballot. If you have any questions as to the duties of either position, please also consult Eric. Ballots will be handed out at the annual meeting. The winner for each position will be announced by the Elections Committee at the annual party in January.

BOOK REVIEW -

WHERE THE SOUTH LOST THE WAR: AN ANALYSIS OF THE FORT HENRY-FORT DONELSON CAMPAIGN, FEBRUARY

1862

Author – Kendall D. Gott

Reviewed by Mike Espenshade

Paperback; 2003, Stackpole Books; 280 pp text; 29 pictures, 17 maps; Order of Battle/Casualties; 66 pp notes, bibliography, index. \$19.99 bought at Ft. Donelson Visitor Center.

Some historians argue that the pivotal action of the Civil War was not Antietam or Gettysburg, but the twin Confederate losses at Forts Henry and Donelson. These battles shattered the initial Confederate defensive line from Columbus Ky, thru Bowling Green, into East Tennessee and opened the way for Union amphibious forces to occupy Nashville, the capital of TN and thrust deeply into the South's heartland. Signaling the beginning of the dismemberment and ultimate defeat of the Confederacy, it was here, so early in the war, that the inexorable decline of the Confederacy began.

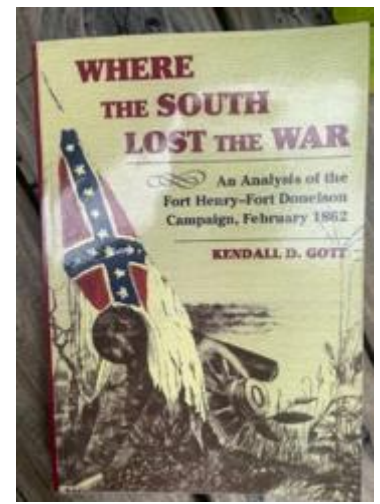
Author Gott blends his experiences as a combat veteran with those of a military historian to provide a gripping narration of day-to-day operations. Particularly relevant are his penetrating analyses of the leaders, their command decisions, and their strengths and weaknesses. These elements combine to give the readers a masterful account of the campaign that introduced the ironclad river navy and U. S. Grant to the war. I especially appreciated the coverage of the organization, construction, and fighting capabilities of the ships which were key to this campaign. And yes, the four ironclads attacking Ft. Donelson were pummeled (hit a total of 169 times by the Confederate gunners = a 33% hit rate) and forced to retreat, leaving the taking of the fort to the Army.

Gott's analysis adequately discusses the failure of the four Confederate Brigadier Generals at Ft. Donelson to win the fight. None of these men (one was a political, not military appointee) would work as a team nor were really in control of the arguably adequate defenses and manpower. They were poorly directed from afar by the Western Department's leader Maj Gen Albert Sydney Johnston who did not name a general to be in command. The Confederate fighting man fought heroically in the woods and ravines almost defeating the Union infantry but were inexplicably recalled into the fort when victory was in their hands.

I recommend this book highly, for its fresh and enjoyable depiction of complex scenarios and informative aspects of naval-army command and logistics.

2025 DUES

Per our bylaws, 2025 unit dues are due to me by December 31st. Cost is \$40/man, of which, \$10 covers your liability insurance through the NR insurance policy. Dinner/party cost is \$30/person. Checks get made payable to "53rd PVI". I will be collecting 2025 dues and the holiday party/dinner checks at the annual meeting on Sat. 7 December. Paying your dues and party/dinner with a single check is encouraged.



CEDAR CREEK 2024 SUMMARY & PHOTOS

By Corporal Mike Espenshade

Four members of Co C, 53rd PVI joined our ELF friends in participation of the 160th Anniversary of the Oct 19, 1864 Battle of Cedar Creek Plantation. Corporals Mike Brumbaugh and Mike Espenshade and Privates Eric Ford and Brayden Thomas helped ELF to have the largest company (38 rifles) in the 10-company (over 215 rifles) Federal Alliance battalion. What a great experience to be part of a full regiment!!

Having brilliant sunny skies during the 70 degree days and cool 30's at night with no wind, the troops enjoyed the best "Cedar Creek weather" ever. We were kept busy with dress parade each morning followed by substantial company and battalion drill sessions.

The armies (estimated around 600 each side) portrayed two battles on Saturday (Hupps Hill and Cedar Creek morning phase) and one on Sunday (evening phase of Cedar Creek). To add battle realism for the spectators, the 53rd sacrificed themselves with 100% (and early) casualties in each battle.

We really appreciated the company mess meals cooked up by Jeff/Dan of ELF and the excellent leadership of Capt. Jimmy Thomas.

A robust set of photos of our company/battalion can be found on Facebook, check them out!!

Photos courtesy of Michael Koehler, Jason McConnell, Mike Espenshade, and Eric Ford.









FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Our next event on the schedule is the annual Remembrance Day Parade. Let me know if you're planning to attend by Nov. 8. Following the parade, Matt will coordinate a trip over to the 53rd's monument site for a group photo.

The unit meeting is set for December 7th at Mark Fasnacht's home in Kleinfeltersville. I'm respectfully asking that everyone make an effort to attend this meeting. I'll move the meeting along quickly and hopefully be able to wrap it up in an hour or so then do the election. The meeting will start promptly at 9:00am. This year's election will be for the positions of Vice President and Treasurer. The 2025 schedule, bylaws and details for the annual Holiday Party will also be discussed. Lunch will follow the meeting for those wishing to participate so please bring a dish to share with the group. Let me know if you need directions.

The upcoming Holiday Party will kick off the 53rd's 45th anniversary year. Please help us in spreading the word to all of our retired members so we can fill the room and the younger guys can hear all of the classic stories from events back in the day.

More details coming soon.

Save the Date: January 18, 2025, The Dobbin House in Gettysburg. Cost is \$30/person.

Respectfully,
Eric

UPCOMING EVENTS

16 November – National Regiment Annual Meeting and Remembrance Day Parade – Private meeting of the NR Board of Directors and member units’ representatives followed by dress parade and the annual Remembrance Day Parade through Gettysburg ending near The Angle and the Bryan Farm. Afterwards, we will visit the 53rd PVI monument for a short ceremony and photos. Dress Parade on the hill behind Lincoln Elementary commences at 12pm. Remembrance Day Parade starts at 1pm. Please let Eric know ASAP if you plan on marching in the parade with your parads as we will need to provide numbers to the NR for company assemblage at the meeting prior to the parade.

7 December – 53rd PVI Annual Meeting – Starting at 9AM sharp at Mark Fasnacht’s home in Kleinfeltersville, we will discuss the 2024 season, unit business, elections, the treasurer’s report, the 2025 schedule, some bylaws updates, and other unit business as well as collecting 2025 dues. Please arrive by 8:45AM and bring something to share with your parads for lunch afterwards. Please let Mark know (1.) if you are attending and (2.) what you plan to bring for lunch. All members should plan on attending.

THE CIVIL WAR MERCHANT

(if you have something for sale or are looking for something, email me to include it in a future edition of “The Sentinel”)

For Sale –

(1.) I have a C&D Jarnagin size 46 federal enlisted frock coat for sale. Still in great condition. Email me with any questions/inquiries: n3ntj@outlook.com

(2.) Kerry Williard is handling the sale of Dave Swigert items for Dave’s wife. Marc and I assembled an inventory list with approximate values. Some items remain. The list is current as of 21 July 2023. Contact Kerry directly with any and all inquiries: shamokin71@aol.com (see the updated list below)

Uniform Clothing	Item Description	Detailed Description	Price
1	Trouser - Steel Blue each with suspendors	34 min waist/27" inseam-avg. condx and a little dirt w/ braces no watch pck	\$25.00
1	Dk Blue Vest Size 42	3 pockets - light wear	\$20.00
1	Colored Pattern Shirt	blue plaid with white china buttons - sun faded - good condx	\$10.00
1	White muslin Shirt	19" at shoulder 14" neck - very short in body length	\$5.00
1	White muslin Shirt	20" at shoulder 16" neck - very short in body length - cuffs are stained	\$5.00
1 pair	Woolen Grey Gloves	modern - right hand is fingerless	\$2.00
1	Underpants - Night Pants - White	36" waist - knee stains - 25" inseam white muslin - rear repair	\$3.00
1	Lt Brown Scarf - Acrylic - Modern		\$1.00
1	Havelock - White - VG condx		\$2.00
3 pairs	Grey Wool Socks - Modern		\$2.00/pr
2	Hats - Union & Confederate for children		\$1.00
Accoutrements			
1	Scabbord - Late war 7 Rivet		\$15.00
1	Gum Blanket	some cracking with oversized grommets	\$20.00
1	Shelter Tent - Both Halves - Heavy Canvas w/Loops w/Mildew		\$35.00
1	Bag of 7 wooden Tent Stakes w/Rope		\$3.00
1	Grey Smooth Face Canteen - Leather Sling Satinette Cover w/ Corded Stopper		\$20.00
1	Haversack - Tarred Black - Brittle Strap w/opwn seam		\$5.00
1	Haversack - Tarred Black w/Liner- Paint peeling Holes @ Strap Connection		\$10.00
1	Grey Smooth Face Canteen - Leather Sling Satinette Cover w/ Corded Stopper		\$20.00
Misc Items			
1 can	sno-seal (half full)		\$1.00
1	Wood Mirror - Haversack filler	sliding cover	\$3.00
1	Wood Comb - Haversack filler		\$1.00
1	Wooden button board		\$1.00
2	Coin Purses - Made from Tic Material		\$1.00/ea
1	Bag with Coffee	brown coffee	\$1.00/ea
1	shoe lace - undied		\$0.25/ea
2	Soap Bar		\$1.00/ea
6 1/2	Wax Candles		\$0.25/ea
1	pocket sharpenig stone	new	\$2.00
1	box rifle cleaning kit	pads, steel wool, rags, etc	\$5.00
3	match boxes w/ matches		\$0.25/ea
1 Pair	shoe tree		\$3.00
1	Green Army Duffle Bag		\$3.00
1	drawers for use as patches		\$1.00
Armaments			
1	1861 Springfield Rifle - Armi Sport		\$900.00

2024 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

13 January - Holiday Party - Dobbin House
10 February - Winter Drill - Landis Valley (note the new date!!)
2~3 March – NR School Of Instruction - Gettysburg
6~7 April - NR Camp of Instruction - Gruber Wagon Works (Federal Alliance)*
4~5 May - 160th Wilderness: Spotsylvania Court House, VA*
4 May - POSA Living History - Robesonia, PA
18 May - Lancaster Cemetery Flag-in event
27 May - Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade **53rd MAX EFFORT**
20~21 July - Landis Valley Civil War Days **53rd MAX EFFORT**
14~15 Sept. - Gettysburg Living History - PA Monument **53rd MAX EFFORT**
19~20 Oct. - 160th Cedar Creek - Middletown, VA*
16 Nov. - Remembrance Day – Gettysburg, PA
7 Dec. – 53rd PVI Annual Meeting **53rd MAX EFFORT**

**NR max effort events*



For updated event info and other news, please check out the Facebook pages of the 53rd PVI and/or the National Regiment (links below) and check your email on a regular basis

53rd PVI Contacts President: Eric Ford (reenactor53@gmail.com)

Vice President: Pete Zinkus (zinkusp@gmail.com)

Treasurer/Secretary: Matthew Steger (n3ntj@outlook.com)

Newsletter Editor: Matthew Steger (n3ntj@outlook.com)

Webmasters: Steve Dillon (steve@gofoxpro.com) and Matthew Steger (n3ntj@outlook.com)

53rd PVI Website: <http://www.53rdpvi.org>

2024 Field Officers - Sergeants: Matthew Steger (1st) & Marc Benedict

Corporals: Mike Espenshade (1st) & Michael Brumbaugh

53rd PVI Facebook Page: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/53rdPVI>

National Regiment Phone line: 800-777-1861 (code 61)

National Regiment Website: <https://www.thenationalregiment.com>

National Regiment Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/842904089142263>

