

# 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

## Company C

"The Sentinel" March 2025

Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

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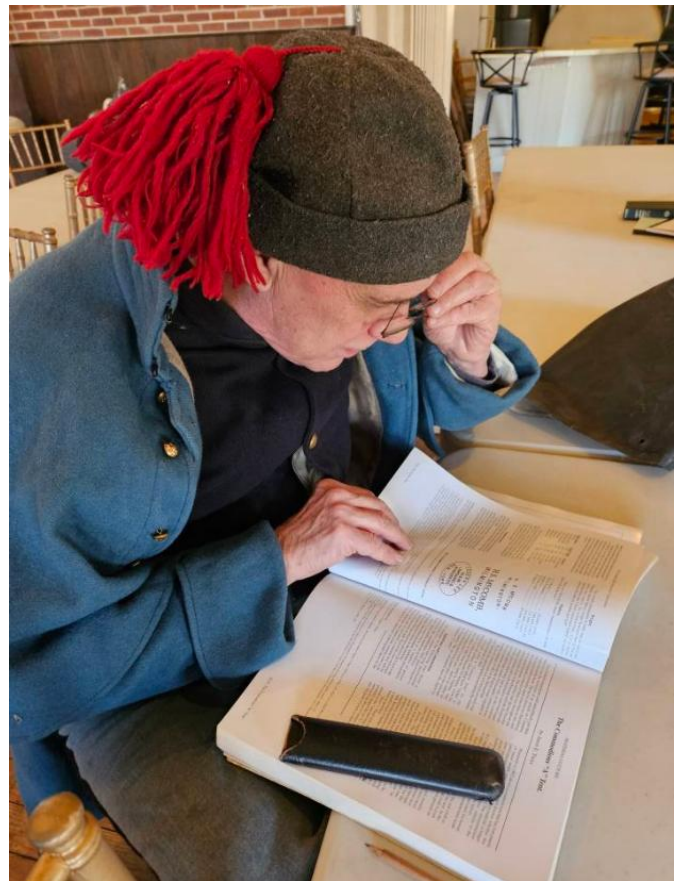


*I am always looking for newsletter content, so please forward your articles, book reviews, event summaries & photos, stories, etc.) to me for inclusion in a future edition of "The Sentinel". – Matthew Steger, editor*

## WINTER DRILL SUMMARY

On Sat. 1 Feb., the unit held its annual winter drill at Landis Valley. We were joined by pards from the 1<sup>st</sup> MD and the 8<sup>th</sup> OH. 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Steger lead the drill, which included some newer guys, in the basics such as forming the company, loading in 9-times, firing, manual of arms, stacking arms, etc. We also had some classroom time in the firehouse which covered information about the uniform and accoutrements, how items were issued to the men, etc. Capt. Carlson led the men in company drill included company movements, wheels, company into line, etc. Sgts. Benedict and Steger and Capt. Carlson also covered bayonet drill. Eric Ford prepared a good dinner Saturday night and the men enjoyed playing cards afterwards. Photos courtesy of Ira Seidel, Eric Ford, and Mike Koehler.







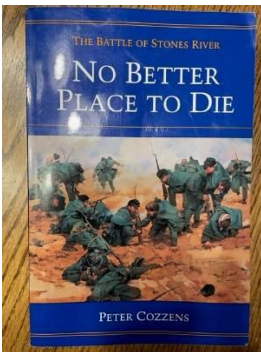


**BOOK REVIEW - NO BETTER PLACE TO DIE - THE BATTLE OF STONE'S RIVER**

Author – Peter Cozzens

Reviewed by Mike Espenshade

Paperback; 1991 Illini Books; 219 story pp.; 10 pictures, 11 pp maps, Order of Battle, 19 pp Notes, 30 pp Index/bibliography. \$2.00 from McConnellsburg Library Book sale.



Please consider reading this well-researched and well-told history of the Battle of Stones River – a critically important, but costly, Union Victory. Cozzens meticulously traces the events as the Army of the Cumberland and the Army of the Tennessee meet in Middle Tennessee on New Year’s Eve 1862 in one of the bloodiest encounters of the Civil War = over 23,000 casualties combined. “This (book) will come to be regarded as the major work of record on the battle ... Decidedly better than any of the much earlier and more one-sided accounts”. – William C. Davis

A well-timed victory: which a grateful Lincoln thanks Gen William Rosecrans and his men for a “hard-earned victory which, had there been a defeat instead, the nation could scarcely have lived over”. The Emancipation Proclamation was to take effect on January 1, 1863, but Lincoln needed military success to enforce it. Grant was stymied in the swamps north of Vicksburg, Buell had barely

survived at Perryville, McClellan had failed to follow up Lee at Antietam, Burnside met disaster at Fredericksburg.

The energetic and closely involved Rosecrans - along with a staunchly defended Union center by Sheridan, Hazen, and others - saved the Union Army as Confederate Gen Braxton Bragg's crushing early morning assault on the Union right flank swamped very poorly led forces under Major General Alexander McCook. The Confederates pressed their bloody attacks, sometimes succeeding, against a desperate patchwork of Union defenses including the Wilkinson Pike, The Cottonfield, Sheridan's Salient, and the Round Forest. The Union forces held onto their lifeline of the Nashville Road. The Confederate assault on the Union left flank along Stones River on January 2, 1863 was bloodily repulsed by massed Union artillery and quickly-shifted Union infantry. After over 10,000 casualties, and erroneously hearing that Rosecrans was being reinforced, Bragg limped away from the battlefield on January 3<sup>rd</sup> southward towards Tullahoma, TN.

Rosecrans, losing nearly 13,000 casualties, moved into Murfreesboro and setup a massive Union supply Depot, This became the stage for the Tullahoma campaign and launching point for campaigns against Chattanooga and Atlanta that slashed through the heart of the South.

Note: During a recent trip across the South, I was privileged to visit the Stones River Battlefield National Park. The Visitor's Center is very excellently staffed and equipped with excellent story displays and bookstore. I was able to walk the better part of the battlefields of late morning 31 Dec 1862 and late-in-day 2 Jan 1863. Unfortunately, most of the other 2/3's of the entire battlefield has long-been lost to industrial/residential expansion of Murfreesboro.

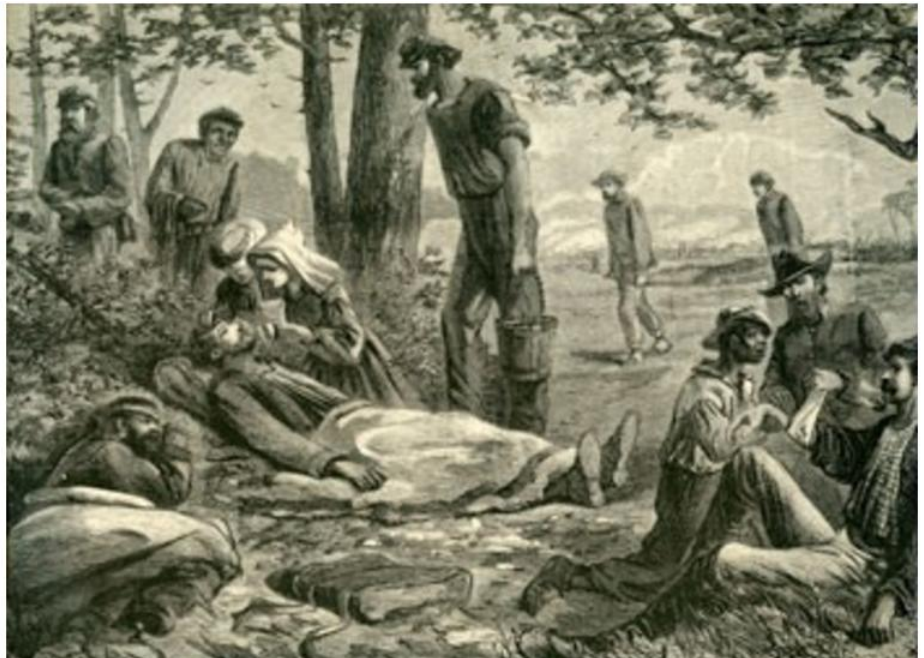
## **WHAT IS THE U.S. CHRISTIAN COMMISSION AND WHAT IS ITS CONNECTION TO THE CIVIL WAR?**

Alan Farley, D.D., October 20, 2023, [blueandgrayeducation.org](http://blueandgrayeducation.org)

The United States Christian Commission was a volunteer organization sponsored by the Young Men's Christian Association. The YMCA, as we know it today, actually began in England in 1844. The first YMCA "chapter" in America was started at the Old South Church in Boston, and the first Black YMCA was founded in Washington City (D.C.) in 1853.

In 1861, as troops gathered in camps in and around New York, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) became concerned with the spiritual needs of the soldiers in these nearby camps.

Vincent Colyer, a member of the New York City YMCA and chairman of the "Army Committee," had begun spending time visiting nearby encampments where soldiers were stationed temporarily on their way to the front.



*"U.S. Christian Commission on the Battlefield," from Harper's Pictorial History of the Great Rebellion, 1868 | Harpers & Brothers*

Colyer mingled with these soldiers, offered words of encouragement, and handed out religious tracts and specially printed pocket hymnals.

On November 15, 1861, as an answer to a letter sent out to all the Northern YMCAs, 50 delegates representing 15 Northern states met in the Bible Room of the New York Young Men's Christian Association. The next day, a "Christian Commission" of 12 members was appointed to devise a plan for the associations to act as a clearinghouse for all religious work in the Union army. Their two-fold mission statement was "to promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of the soldiers in the Army and the sailors in the Navy, in cooperation with the chaplains."



*Headquarters of the U.S. Christian Commission in Richmond, Virginia, in April 1865 | LOC*

George H. Stuart was designated as chairman of the new United States Christian Commission, a post he held throughout the war.

Its method of operation was the use of “delegates,” who served on a volunteer basis for terms averaging six to eight weeks with no monetary enumeration. Once receiving their appointment, these delegates pledged to be ready to leave their homes, for the front, within one hour of receiving a telegram.

The Commission’s early activities included publication of a collection of familiar hymns, bible readings and prayers, devotional meetings in the camps, the organization of a “working Christian force” in every regiment, as well as aiding and supporting chaplains. The Commission’s activities soon expanded into the physical and social realm by helping to secure well-qualified chaplains, encouraging Sabbath observance, promoting temperance, providing portable libraries with wholesome reading

material, and, when possible, reading rooms as well as chapels, making the Commission a valuable agency of wartime relief.

The Commission also came up with the first soldier’s “identifier,” which became the forerunner of the modern military “dog tag.”

A special work performed by delegates was the assembling of records of those buried from prisons and in major battle areas.

Two very important culinary advancements happened within the care of soldiers with the first formation of dietary kitchens in the hospitals and the invention of the coffee wagon.

A decision was made to terminate the Commission’s work on January 1, 1866. During its four years of operation, the Christian Commission sent nearly 5,000 agents into the field; and distributed 95,000 packages, which included nearly 1.5 million portions or full scriptures, 1 million hymnbooks, as well as over 39 million pages of tract, 7 million sheets of stationary and covers, and 5 million “chap” books. The total money spent during those four years was estimated at over \$6.2 million.



*U.S. Christian Commission battlefield representatives at their headquarters location in Germantown, Maryland, about 40 miles from Antietam Battlefield | LOC*

## **THE CARTRIDGE ROLLING PARTY - SUMMARY**

On Saturday 15 February, the unit held a cartridge rolling party at Mark Fasnacht's home. We made 28 packs and had a great meal. Present were Sgts. Steger and Benedict, Corporal Espenshade, Privates Fasnacht, Kramer, Orris, and Thomas. We were also joined by Jeff Marks who assisted us.

## **BULL RUN/MANASSAS LIVING HISTORY - NEW DATE!**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Maryland's Living History at Bull Run (Manassas) has been changed to June 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>. The previous date was Mother's Day weekend. Please update your event calendar. The 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI has this event on our schedule to help support our ELF pards.

## **NEW MEMBER**

The unit has a new member as of 20 February. It's Oskar Hinceman. He and his family stopped by our winter drill at Landis Valley to meet some of us. Oskar lives in Wynnewood, PA. Please welcome Oskar to the unit.

## **NATIONAL REGIMENT SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION - SUMMARY**

The NR held its annual School Of Instruction (SOI) at the Gettysburg firehouse on Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>. In attendance were Sgts. Steger and Benedict as well as new member, Private Oskar Hinceman. Numerous good topics were covered including the Appomattox campaign, firing in the ranks, manual of arms, shelter on the campaign, period shaving, handguns of the Civil war, weapons cleaning in the field and at home, period issue shirts, and more. The NR also held a 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration. I also took a good portion of the unit's quartermaster and was able to sell numerous items. On Sunday morning, we were treated to a private hike of Little Round Top by 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI Alumni and retired NPS employee, John Heiser.



Tim App discusses guns of the Civil War.

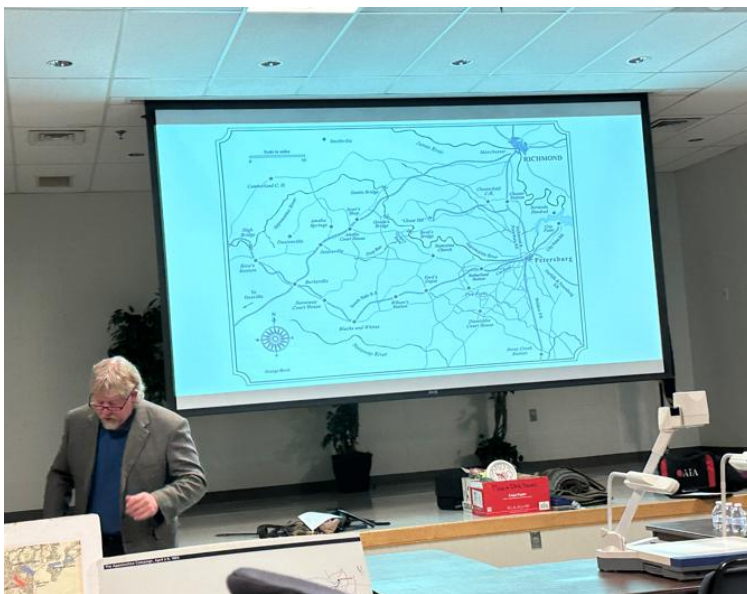
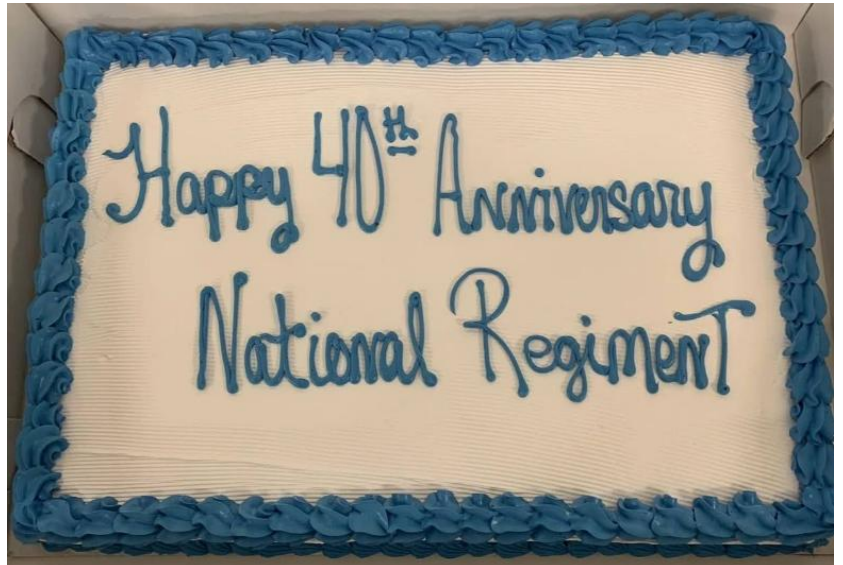
George Craven discusses field and home cleaning of your rifle musket.





Chris Sedlak presented on shaving during the Civil War.

The Colonel led the group in a cake cutting and ceremony celebrating the National Regiment's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



Patrick Schroeder of Appomattox NPS gave a presentation on the April 2-9, 1865 battles, skirmishes, and movements of both armies (the Appomattox campaign) leading up to Lee's surrender.



Mike Kraus discussed the Federal Army of 1865.

John Heiser leading the NR on a private hike of Little Round Top.



### **QUARTERMASTER UPDATE**

As has been reported multiple times in the past, the unit recently acquired several items to add to our quartermaster inventory including leathers, uniform clothing, etc. I've sold numerous items already; the updated list can be found at the 53<sup>rd</sup> PVI's website under the "Equipment" tab (the file link is about halfway down the page): <https://www.53rdpvi.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/53rd-Quartermaster-List.pdf> . If you're interested in any items, please let me know ASAP. Feel free to pass this list to your pards.

## 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](mailto: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 26 February 2025. Contact Kerry directly with any and all inquiries: [shamokin71@aol.com](mailto:shamokin71@aol.com) (see the updated list below)

Quantity	Item Description	Detailed Description	Price
<b>Uniform Clothing</b>			
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	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
1 pairs	Grey Wool Socks - Modern		\$2.00/pr
2	Hats - Union & Confederate for children		\$1.00
<b>Accoutrements</b>			
1	Scabbord - Late war 7 Rivet		\$15.00
1	Gum Blanket	some cracking with oversized grommets	\$20.00
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
<b>Misc Items</b>			
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
2	Soap Bar		\$1.00/ea
1	box rifle cleaning kit	pads, steel wool, rags, etc	\$5.00
1 Pair	shoe tree		\$3.00
1	Green Army Duffle Bag		\$3.00
1	drawers for use as patches		\$1.00

## 2025 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 18 Jan. - Holiday Party - Dobbin House, Gettysburg
- 1 Feb. - Winter Drill - Landis Valley **[53<sup>rd</sup> MAX EFFORT]**
- 15 Feb. - Cartridge Rolling Party **[53<sup>rd</sup> MAX EFFORT]**
- 22~23 Feb. - NR School of Instruction – Gettysburg
- 14~16 March - 160<sup>th</sup> Bentonville (NC)
- 4~6 April - 160<sup>th</sup> Sailor's Creek (VA) \*
- 26~27 April - Ft. McHenry Drill (ELF Event)
- 3 May - POSA Living History - Robesonia, PA
- 17 May - Lancaster Cemetery Flag-in Event
- 26 May - Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade **[53<sup>rd</sup> MAX EFFORT]**
- 7~8 June – Manassas (ELF Event) **[NEW DATE!]**
- 19~20 July - Landis Valley **[53<sup>rd</sup> MAX EFFORT]**
- 9~10 August - Cedar Mountain \*
- 13 Sept. - Antietam Living History **[53<sup>rd</sup> MAX EFFORT]**
- 18~19 Oct. - 161st Cedar Creek - Middletown, VA
- 15 Nov. - Remembrance Day - NR Annual Meeting and Parade \*



\*NR max effort events

For updated event info and other news, please check out the Facebook pages of the 53<sup>rd</sup> 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](mailto:reenactor53@gmail.com))

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

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

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

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

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

2024 Field Officers - Sergeants: Matthew Steger (1<sup>st</sup>) & Marc Benedict

Corporals: Mike Espenshade (1<sup>st</sup>) & Michael Brumbaugh

53<sup>rd</sup> 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>

