



Company C 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

"The Sentinel" August 2025

Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trumps!"

This Month:

1. Book Review – The Little Bugler
2. So How Hot Was It?
3. 1864 General Order Concerning The Wearing of Rank By NCOs, Corps Badges, and Hat Brass
4. Fixing/Unfixing Bayonet Drill
5. Landis Valley Event Summary
6. Upcoming Events
7. The Civil War Merchant
8. 2025 Calendar of Events
9. 53rd PVI Contact Info



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 futured edition of "The Sentinel". – Matthew Steger, editor

BOOK REVIEW – THE LITTLE BUGLER

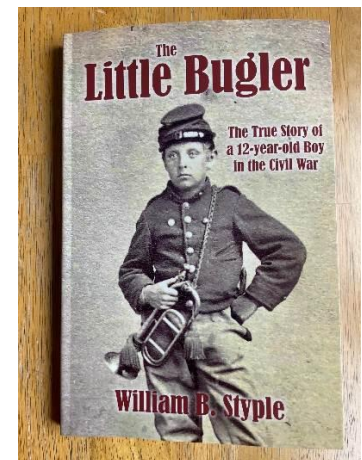
Author – William B. Stypke

Reviewed by Mike Espenshade

Paperback; 1998 Bellegrave Publishing Company; 171 story pp.; 42 pictures, 8 pp excerpts from newspapers, etc. 8 pp Sources, 14 pp Index. \$10 signed copy from the author, who is an old reenacting friend of mine from the 15th N.J. Infantry Vols.

This book is the true story of twelve-year-old Gustav A. Schurmann, who served as a musician in Company I, 40th New York Infantry from 1861-1864. **The Little Bugler** vividly depicts all of his remarkable wartime experiences, including his stay at the White House as the boyhood companion of Tad Lincoln. At the end of Schurmann's distinguished military career at age fifteen, he was a decorated veteran of ten battles – from Bull Run to Gettysburg.

Enlisting as a drummer boy at the age of 12 with his father into the "Mozart Regiment", Schurmann's already significant musical skills were improved by hard work learning the beats and army calls. This dedication to duty led him into fortunate situations where he was recognized by leadership for more responsibilities such as orderly and bugler roles. During the regiment's bayonet charge counterattack at the Battle of Seven Pines, Schurmann's bugle call sounded the charge and he ran with the color guard. A bullet caught his bugle and knocked him down as he reached for the fallen flag. The charge drove the Rebels away. He found himself by summer of 1862 in the honoring position of being General Phil Kearny's mounted orderly/bugler and learning much from Kearny's "from the front" and fearless leadership style.



Although very saddened by Kearny's September 1, 1862 death, Gus continued to serve as division commander Gen. David Birney's orderly/bugler. He then worked as Third Corps commander General Daniel Sickles's orderly/bugler at Gettysburg and was asked to attend to the General's recuperation (from leg amputation) until September, when Schurmann resumed his studies preparatory to a promised West Point appointment.

Author Style does a very nice job bringing the reader into Gus's living and thinking experiences via both documented and interposed fictional dialogue. Style's reenacting experiences are leveraged onto the pages with detailed descriptions of the touch and feel of those army conditions Schurmann endured.

"The Little Bugler" won the Young Readers' Award from the Civil War Round Table of New York.

SO HOW HOT WAS IT?

One of the Sacred Trust Talks this year at annual the Gettysburg Foundation/Gettysburg NMP program included a very interesting presentation by Dr. Jon M. Nese and Jeffrey J. Harding related to their new book entitled, ["The Weather Gods Curse the Gettysburg Campaign"](#). It discussed what the weather was actually like for the men fighting the Battle of Gettysburg and in the weeks prior to the battle. Using data from weather observers (some of which were part of a Smithsonian weather program that was active at the time) and some others were amateur observers who also documented weather data, Nese and Harding were able to help put some quantitative numbers to the question of 'how hot was it really in Gettysburg during the battle'. Nese has worked in the meteorological department at Penn State University as well as on the Weather Channel. Harding has written several books including one about Gen. John Reynolds and his secret fiancé and also worked in the US Navy's intelligence dept. and is a Gettysburg Licensed Battlefield Guide.

After a lot of legwork to obtain data collected in June and July of 1863 from various sources plus using a NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association) program to go back in time, they were able to calculate reasonable temperature and heat index measurements. Some of their research also uncovered data that wasn't known about until this time. They found that the middle to late June 1863 weather conditions were abnormally hot and dry in northern Virginia. They also used first-hand accounts of men in the armies that were there who documented the weather conditions during that approximate 3 week time-frame (mid-June to shortly after the battle).

The most well-known weather reporting in Gettysburg was by Professor Jacobs who was employed at Pennsylvania College in Gettysburg and took measurements 3 times daily, yet one of the important pieces of data that he didn't collect and record was the wet-bulb temperature. The lack of this information made it virtually impossible to determine the humidity, and thus, the heat index during the battle prior to the research of Nese and Harding. Luckily, there were other weather observers nearby (including in Harrisburg) who did collect and record the wet-bulb temperature readings. Wet-bulb temperatures are different than dry-bulb temperatures (of which we are much more accustomed to) and take into account evaporative cooling. Knowing wet-bulb and dry-bulb temperatures allows one to calculate relative humidity, and thus, dew point and then heat index. Other observers in Washington and nearby areas also helped put numbers to what the men of the armies actually likely felt as they travelled north towards Pennsylvania in June.

Using the calculated measurements from the multiple regional observers, it was calculated that the air temperature during Longstreet's Assault (aka Pickett's Charge) was about 91° F. Taking into account the calculated humidity readings at nearby reporting stations in Harrisburg (using the wet-bulb measurements), this puts the heat index around 110°F during the late afternoon hours that day. An important fact to remember is that dry-bulb temperature readings are taken in the shade. Being in direct sunlight adds about 10~15° F. When all is said and done using the measurements that are documented plus using the NOAA model to go backwards in time, it is estimated that the heat felt by the men was likely around 120°~125° F. Heat stroke, fainting, and sometimes even death, was well documented by many first-hand accounts and these accounts jive well with what health symptoms that the modern National Weather Service (part of NOAA) use in modern times when discussing weather conditions and health risks with temperatures this hot.

In mid to late June, it was even hotter in northern Virginia and the heat indices when also taking account the direct sunlight likely had the feels-like temperatures approaching 140 degrees F. There are also many instances where the men documented having no source of water available to them during their long marches around this time.

Nese and Harding also researched how much rain would have been needed in the Williamsport, MD area (and upstream) to cause the Potomac River to rise 10~15' soon after the battle to prevent the defeated Confederates from easily crossing into Virginia for a few weeks. River levels that high are very rare that time of year in that area and it was difficult to find other instances over the same approximately time frame that the river was that high. Regardless, using data from some modern storms (other times of the year since its very rare for this to happen in the late June to mid-July time-frame) that caused the Potomac River to get that high in 1863, it was calculated that the area likely saw around 3.5"~4" of rain causing this phenomenon.

Also, our very own John Heiser was also credited during their presentation for providing some of the maps used in their book.

I have not read the book yet as it just came out, so this article is not a book review but simply a review of their Sacred Trust presentation.

1864 GENERAL ORDER CONCERNING THE WEARING OF RANK BY NCOS, CORPS BADGES, AND HAT BRASS

(submitted by Marc Benedict)

Order Book Company A, 53rd Pennsylvania Regiment
General Orders no. 4 H.Q. 53rd Regt. P.V.V. (part)
near Petersburg, Sept. 4, 1864

It has been observed that non-commissioned officers do not at all time wear their insignia of rank. This will not be permitted in the future. All Sgts. and Corporals must procure the proper chevrons for the blouse sleeves and have them properly put on. These can be procured by requisition to the acting Q. M. of the Regiment or from the sutler of the Regiment.

The trefoils must be worn upon the cap by all officers and men. This must be properly sewed upon the top of the cap, and not pinned on, as has been the custom by a great many. The cap letter and numbers must also be worn upon the top of the cap [,] the numbers on the lower edge of the trefoils and the letter on the upper edge. Any deficiencies existing in these things will immediately be required for to the acting Q.M.

Every enlisted man in the Regiment must be provided with a cap. Orders relative to the paragraph have been published from time to time but has not been observed. In the future any appearing on duty with hats on will be sent to their Companies and other detailed instead and both officers in command of the companies and the men themselves held accountable -- the officers placed in arrest and the men punished accordingly.

Capt. P. H. Schrezer Cmd. Regt.

---from *Don Troiani's Civil War Soldiers* by Don Troiani and Earl J. Coates with Michael J. McAfee; Stackpole Books; co. 2017; pg. 150.

(editor – As discussed at our winter drill this past February when I covered caps and headwear, notice the difference between hats and caps as mentioned in the above order. During this time (1800s), each were considered a type of headwear as caps and hats were 2 different types of headwear not to be confused with each other. As far as the 53rd PVI was concerned, based upon this order, the men in the regiment were to only wear forage caps, no hats allowed. I've seen similar orders from other regiments as well commanding that only forage caps may be worn. This was not always the case in all units.. some unit commanders were much more lax on the topic of headwear, how/where corps badges were to be worn, etc.)

FIXING/UNFIXING BAYONET DRILL

(bolds and underlines added by me to stress specific ideas)

From the 1st Sgt –

As we know, 'fixing bayonets' is a slightly different process depending upon what position the arm is in at the beginning.

From **Order Arms**: In Caseys Tactics, the process to fix bayonets is 'effectively' built-into the process for 'inspection arms'.

INSPECTION OF ARMS.

235. The recruits being at **ordered arms**, and having the bayonet in the scabbard, if the instructor wishes to cause an inspection of arms, he will command:

Inspection-ARMS.

One time and two motions.

236. (First motion.) Seize the piece with the left hand below and near the upper band, carry it with both bands opposite the middle of the body, the butt between the feet, the rammer to the rear, the barrel vertical, the muzzle about three inches from the body; (should the rifle musket be used, the muzzle will be about eight inches from the body); carry the left hand reversed to the bayonet, draw it from the scabbard and fix it on the barrel; grasp the piece with the left hand below and near the upper band, seize the rammer with the thumb and fore-finger of the right hand bent, the other fingers closed.

{For this discussion, I will skip paragraphs 237~239 as they only pertain to inspection arms and the process of drawing the rammer, inserting the rammer, etc. which is, of course, not part of the fixing bayonet-only process that we are discussing here. }

240. If, instead of inspection of arms, the instructor should merely wish to cause bayonets to be fixed, he will command:

Fix-BAYONET.

241. Take the position indicated No. 236, fix bayonets as has been explained, and immediately resume the position of ordered arms.

Important – Notice how the above steps specifically state that the men are at ordered arms from the start (see paragraph 235). Then, notice how last step in paragraph 241 specifically includes returning to shouldered arms.

From Shoulder Arms:

Caseys Paragraph

196. The recruits being at shoulder arms, when the instructor shall wish to fix bayonets, he will command:

Fix-BAYONET.

One time and three motions.

197. (First motion.) Grasp the piece with the left hand at the height of the shoulder, and detach it slightly from the shoulder with the right hand.

198. (Second motion.) Quit the piece with the right hand, lower it with the left hand, opposite the middle of the body, and place the butt between the feet without shock; the rammer to the rear, the barrel vertical, the muzzle three inches from the body; seize it with the right hand at the upper band, and carry the left hand reversed to the handle of the bayonet. If the rifle musket be used the barrel will be inclined forward, the muzzle eight inches from the body, and the left hand reversed to the handle of the bayonet.

199. (Third motion.) Draw the bayonet from the scabbard and fix it on the extremity of the barrel; seize the piece with the left hand, the arm extended, the right hand at the upper band. If the rifle musket be used the clasp will be turned as soon as the bayonet is fixed upon the barrel.

Shoulder-ARMS.

One time and two motions.

Important – The purpose of this article is to stress how when you begin fixing the bayonet from ‘order arms’, the last step in this process is for the rifle to return to order arms. If starting from “shoulder arms” (noted in the 2nd section above the above article), the process of fixing the bayonet ends, effectively, when the bayonet’s clasp is turned to lock it on the barrel. Notice that that step does **not** include moving the rifle to another position to end the process. The section under paragraph 199 “Shoulder – Arms” belongs to the next section/paragraph in Caseys after fixing the bayonet yet I left its text in to show that a wholly different/specific command is needed to move the rifle from the fixing bayonet position (when starting at “Shoulder Arms”) to ending at the shoulder arms position and that step is NOT part of fixing the bayonet when starting at shoulder arms.

Moral of the story... – when fixing or unfixing the bayonet, if you begin the process at the ‘order’, you finish the process at the ‘order’. If you begin at ‘shoulder arms’, you leave the bayoneted rifle out in front of you with the butt between your feet and the muzzle pointed slightly away from your face, and await the next command, whatever it may be.

LANDIS VALLEY EVENT SUMMARY

On 19~20 July, the 53rd PVI again participated in Landis Valley Museum’s annual “Civil War Days” event. We were joined by our pards from the 1st MD, 3rd MD, 7th PA Reserves, 1st MN, 14th CT, as well as 1st PA Reserves. It was a hot humid weekend, but we persevered. On Friday night, we served as the Color Guard prior to the Lancaster Barnstormers game. We did 2 firing demos each day and did skirmish drill twice on Saturday. A rations issue was done just prior to Saturday lunch. Sunday afternoon, we were on the receiving end of a short deluge (downpour) to wetten everyone’s canvas (...and nearly everything else). Thanks to Tony for the great meals and Jonathan for the Sat. afternoon refreshments, which included toasts to Croce and Stu.







Civil War Days 2025 Attendance:

Saturday: 390

Sunday: 184

Total: 574

Total attendance for 2024: 398

Total attendance for 2023: 246



Some black and white photos that Jared Polin took of us.





Photo by Chip Smith.

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. *Hard Tack and Coffee or The Unwritten Story of Army Life*; by John D. Billings; originally published 1887, facsimile reprint of 1993; hard cover; excellent condition; 408 pgs.; 211 illustrations. A must-read for any new member. Will bring to Landis Valley event. Email to claim: oldsolger@juno.com -- \$5.00

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 April 2025. Contact Kerry directly with all inquiries: shamokin71@aol.com (see the updated list below)

Quantity	Item Description	Detailed Description	Price
Uniform Clothing			
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
Accoutrements			
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
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
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 **[53rd MAX EFFORT]**
15 Feb. - Cartridge Rolling Party **[53rd MAX EFFORT]**
22-23 Feb. - NR School of Instruction - Gettysburg
14-16 March - 160th Bentonville (NC)
4-6 April - 160th Sailor's Creek (VA) *
26-27 April - Ft. McHenry Drill
3 May - POSA Living History - Robeson, PA
17 May - Lancaster Cemetery Flag-in Event
26 May - Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade **[53rd MAX EFFORT]**
7-8 June - Manassas (ELF Event) **[NEW DATE!]**
19-20 July - Landis Valley **[53rd MAX EFFORT]**
9-10 August - Cedar Mountain *
13 Sept. - Antietam Living History **[53rd 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 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: Jacob Dicks (jdwarrior@yahoo.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 Sgt.) & Marc Benedict

Corporals: Mike Espenshade & 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>

