

# "Letters Home"

The Civil War Letters of Lt. Cyrus J. Hardaway  
*Historical Notes*

01/05/62: 003

It is in his January 5, 1862 letter, the first from Washington, D.C. that Lt. Cyrus Hardaway first identifies himself as belonging to "Company D, First Regiment, Berdan's Sharp Shooter." Since his last "letter home," Hardaway has travelled from Albany, to New York, through Baltimore and onto Washington, D.C. And much like New Berlin and Pittsfield veterans of World War II can undoubtedly remember, soldiers in transit were greeted at train stops with food and drink prepared by local women's groups.

This letter is also evident that for the first time in modern warfare, the power of railroads to move large numbers of men and huge amounts materiel in short periods of time. Unlike all earlier wars, in all the world's history, the Civil War can be uniquely characterized by its revolutionary use of mass transportation. A journey from New Berlin to New York, and onto Washington, D.C. took several days before the advent of trains. It appears from this letter that Hardaway left New York at 10:30 am and arrived in Baltimore at 3:00 am, and Washington at 6:30 am, the next morning.

Hardaway's observations of the presence of large numbers of police and security in Baltimore and that "a person would be apt to think . . . that the authorities did not have much confidence in the people of that city," was absolutely correct. Baltimore was a city divided in loyalties in 1862. After his election in 1861, Abraham Lincoln necessarily used deception and secrecy to pass through similar circumstances on his way to Washington, D.C.

As will become evident with the publication of the remainder of his letters, Hardaway is particularly sensitive to issues involving food. Upon his arrival in Washington, the assignment of his company to a "splendid spot" for a camp, and the providing of uniforms, we learn that this soldier's life is measured by whether or not he has "plenty to eat here and thus, that is nice, such as pork beef salt and fresh, rice hominy beans coffee sugar and Syrup, and good new bread all the time. . ."