

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

01/20/62: 006

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During the winter months of 1861-1862, Berdan's Sharpshooters "Instruction Camp" was frequented by the familiar sicknesses and diseases that affected the hundreds of "Washington City" Union soldier training camps. Winter created days of inactivity and boredom as inclement weather modified the normal daily schedule. Berdan's camp, intended only to be a temporary location, was characterized by the poor selection of latrine sites typically upstream from the regiment's water supplies. Sickness and diseases including small pox, typhus, measles, malaria, and pneumonia resulted in large numbers of sharpshooters to be absent from roll call. A New York Times article dated January 15, 1862 indicated that the muster rolls of the two regiments contained over 1,500 men but that in the prior three weeks, 64 soldiers had died, and over 700 were in regimental hospitals.

On January 28, 1862, Surgeon and Medical Director of the Army of the Potomac, Charles S. Tripler, personally visited Berdan's Regiments and found, ". . .foul air, bad clothing, imperfect shelters, exposure to cold and moisture, and imperfectly drained and badly policed camps."

In his to be published letter, dated January 26, 1862, Hardaway will mention the death of one of ". . .our boys. . .one of the best that we had in the Company." He also mentions that Alfred Aldrich is "verry sick and has made up his mind to die. . ." By the end of the war in 1865, the American Civil War will count over 600,000 casualties; more deaths than in any other war in American history, and until the late twentieth century, more dead than in all other American wars combined.

By the winter of 1862, Washington, D.C., sometimes called "Washington City," was a city physically transformed by the outbreak of the Civil War in April 1861. Most public buildings were changed from their pre-war function to a use directly related to the war time emergency. The Patent Office was turned into a hospital and received hundreds of soldiers as patients. Ed Nelson, previously mentioned as on his way to the City Hospital and the morgue, is now located at the Patent Office Hospital, where Hardaway hopefully states, "he may get well again."