

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

03/15/62: 012

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During the lengthy time period (August 1861-April 1862) that Hardaway and his fellow sharpshooters were in Berdan's Instruction Camp, the object of their training was the creation of a special tactics unit characterized as "skirmishers." Lt. Colonel Frederick Mears utilized the tactics as contained in Hardee's Tactics to turn Hardaway and his fellow marksmen into skirmishers. As envisioned in 19th century warfare, skirmishers were to be positioned far in advance of regular troops, and were to engage the enemy as it moved. Alternatively skirmishers were "holed up" in stationary defensive positions. Located as much as a third of a mile in front of their own lines, Berdan's Sharpshooters were to suppress enemy fire. Sharpshooting at small groups of enemy horsemen (Confederate officers) or at artillerymen, small groups of Berdan's Sharpshooters could seriously suppress enemy troop activities.

During such skirmishing, the individual sharpshooter's actions, reactions, and decision making were critical. Skirmishers learned to choose sites, take advantage of the geography, and artfully retreat and assume new positions while making the enemy pay for its advance.

Commanding and controlling the "individual" movements of the Sharpshooters was accomplished by bugle commands. All orders, whether that of reveille or those on the battlefield, were communicated by two buglers in each company. In this manner, by the sound of bugles, the entire regiment could be deployed, repositioned, and recovered as efficiently as that of a company in the regular army.

Hardaway also provides another interesting example of camp life in his letter of March 15, 1862. In addition to his usual and sometimes amusing interest in food, it appears that camp life included baseball teams. Hardaway's "base ball club" is evidence of the popularity of baseball during the Civil War. His inclusion of such information suggests that everyone, including his elderly mother, knows about and understands the game. It would have been nice if Hardaway had assisted baseball historians with a statement about baseball such as, ". . . as invented by Abner Doubleday in Cooperstown," but of course he does not.

On a personal basis, Hardaway's letter also alludes to the scandalous letter he had recently received from Miss Hancox. It would appear that his mother honored his wishes, and after reading it, "burn it up as soon as you have read it do not let any boddy see it." It would be of considerable "historical" interest what Miss Hancox's letter, "and a very good one too," had to say.

It is likely that Lt. Cyrus Hardaway did not know that his next letter home, his 13th, would not be written from his "splendid camp," with time for butter and blackberries, base ball clubs, visits to the Smithsonian, and scandalous letters from home town Miss Hancoxes. Less than a week later on March 20, 1862, Berdan's Sharpshooters would be ordered out of their Instruction Camp and deployed to Fortress Munroe near Alexandria, Virginia.