

Historical Notes to accompany letter dated:

03/24/62: 013

Historical Notes

On March 20, 1862 after some Sharpshooters had received as much as six months of training, Berdan's Sharpshooters finally received orders to participate in Union military action. Ordered to report to General Fitz John Porter's division encamped at Alexandria, Virginia, Berdan's would participate in the Union's offensive known as the "Peninsula Campaign." Hardaway and his fellow sharpshooters first marched to Alexandria, where after two days where they were transported by ship to Hampton, Virginia and finally to Fort Munroe. Eventually Berdan's Regiments would proceed to Yorktown, Virginia and participate in the Union siege of that Confederate position defending Richmond, Virginia.

Curiously, most of the Sharpshooters left the Instruction Camp without weapons or ammunition. Despite the promises of their recruitment in the distant summer of 1861, many of the Sharpshooter's did not receive any weapons until just before embarkation, or others upon their arrival at Fort Munroe. And instead of their as advertised "Sharp-shooter" rifles, they were provided with the much despised Colt 5 shot revolving rifles. Two companies retained their muzzle loading target rifles; and even at this late date, two companies remained unarmed. The regiments were belatedly provided with ammunition which had not been contemporaneously ordered with the Colt rifles.

Hardaway's mention of the historically famous Union iron gun boat *Monitor* "that the papers have said so much about is lying but a short distance from our boat, it looks like a long platform with a large cash setting on top of it. . ." is an indicator of the overwhelming force Union forces mustered for this campaign. The *Monitor's* engagement with the Confederate gun boat *Merrimack* would forever change naval warfare

Opposing the Union forces commanded by General George B. McClellan was Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston. McClellan *Peninsular Campaign* is generally considered as an ineffective effort. Moving thousands of troops by ship to the Virginia peninsula for an offensive gained little in the war against the Confederacy. McClellan is considered by historian to have been an enormously successful at the establishment, organization, and administration of the Union Army. He was overwhelmingly appreciated by his troops including Cyrus Hardaway. He was however, not an effective, aggressive, or successful military tactician. On more than one occasion, President Abraham Lincoln voiced his frustration with McClellan's unwillingness to fight inferior Confederate forces.