

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

03/31/62: 014

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"I do not know where I am except that I am on picket . . ." Lt. Cy Hardaway's March 31, 1862 letter home to his mother contains an interesting mix of personal observations and commentary about soldier's life. Clearly evident is the recognition that military combat is far different than the world of the Instruction Camp and of butter and blackberries, base ball clubs, and visitations by President Lincoln. After relating about companion sharpshooters being shot and the awfulness of the destruction of Hampton, Virginia, "one of the most beautiful towns in the United States," he poignantly tells his mother, ". . . I thought I knew what it was to be a soldier when I left Washington but I find that I did not know anything about it at all."

Also evident in this letter is Hardaway's good humor. It is well known to readers of these letters and the accompanying historical commentaries, that Hardaway had a perpetual interest in food. Despite one of the Massachusetts boys injury, Hardaway is appreciative of a recent "good dinner , out of a secesh pig that the boys killed this morning we lay violent hands on every pig that comes in the way. . . ." Confederate soldiers were rarely referred to as such; the most common term was rebel, with "secesh" a close second. The latter term was typically spoken with a distinct hissing sound.

Just as he was impressed with the pageantry of the passing naval ships on his regiment's sail from Alexandria to Fort Munroe, "it was a grand sight" to see thirty thousand Union soldiers marching by on a reconnasissance near Yorktown. Hardaway also suggested that after Yorktown was conquered, it was likely that Richmond would fall in "one more week." It is typical of not only Hardaway but also most Union soldiers in the belief that the Confederacy could not sustain warfare against the superior Union forces. Richmond would not fall for another three years, and then, only after a combined Union Confederate list of dead over 600,000 names long.