

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

04/28/62: 018

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By late April of 1862, the Union forces, Lt. Cyrus Hardaway of New Berlin/Pittsfield among them, had accumulated massive forces ready for the destruction of Yorktown and its fortifications. The Union commander, George B. McClellan, always a cautious and over organized general, believed Allan Pinkerton's intelligence reports ascribing Confederate strength at over 100,000. In fact, the South was less than half that strength and counted on the elaborate maneuvering of Yorktown troops under its commander, General John Magruder, to confuse, stall, and baffle the Union command. Moving, marching, and constantly changing the location of his troops convinced McClellan that Yorktown had a much larger defending force than was actually present. Only an extremely cautious commander would wait as long as did McClellan; Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston commented to Robert E. Lee, that "no one but McClellan could have hesitated to attack."

While the siege guns were brought forward to Yorktown, Berdan's Sharpshooters continued to provide the suppression tactics that were establishing them as early legends in the war. Hardaway describes in his April 28 letter of being so close to Confederate lines that he could hear their roll call night and morning. He too, was the target of Confederate sharpshooters; his absolute fright at nearly losing his hand and later being buried in dirt from artillery fire is provocative description.

Everyone, including Hardaway knew that there would soon be a terrible battle ". . .and I think it will decide which will be boss, Uncle Sam or Jeff." Exactly when the massed artillery and mortar bombardment would begin was unknown. McClellan, often referred to as the "Young Napoleon," had accumulated enough artillery and mortars capable of blasting Yorktown with 400 tons of shells a day. It appeared to young Hardaway that , "I do not think it will be many days before the dance will open."