

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

05/05/62: 020

### *Historical Notes*

This "letter home" sent by Cyrus Hardaway to his mother living in Pittsfield is among the briefest of his entire Civil War collection. Hardaway's letter of May 5, 1862 is notification to his mother that he and his other New Berlin/Pittsfield companion soldiers have jointly forwarded their soldier's pay to Henry Harrington's father, Daniel Harrington. In all probability the "Express" letter was forwarded to Utica, New York for delivery. Readers may recall in earlier letters that as warm weather approached, Hardaway, Harrington, and others sent their old winter clothes home to Harrington's father by way of Utica.

This letter continues the process of Hardaway's identification of his New Berlin/Pittsfield "boys" with whom he shares his soldier's life. Many like Harrington and Ed Nelson are fellow Berdan Sharpshooters; others appear to be from other units, including the 14th. We have heard about other home town "boys." Within that group, the names of Cleveland and Adrian Foote have been mentioned. In coming letters other Unadilla "boys" will be mentioned. If any reader can assist in the further identification or provide information regarding of any of these Civil War heroes, we would greatly appreciate that effort.

In addition to love and affection, there are other less pleasant reasons for the rapid "express" transfer of a soldier's pay back home to loved ones. As will be seen in forthcoming letters, soldiers who were injured or killed on Civil War battlefields often suffered the final indignity of losing their personal possessions to individuals who would rob the dead and dying as they lay on the battlefield. This reason is not mentioned in any letter to date, but will become more apparent after the coming battles of the *Peninsula Campaign*.

After their withdrawal from Yorktown on May 4, 1862, the Confederate forces benefited greatly from the change in weather. Hardaway's letters recount the steady rains which made it impossible for the Federal forces to pursue the slowly retreating Rebels. The Virginia Peninsula, so enjoyed by Hardaway for its peach blossoms and pleasant spring weather, would now be seen as a frustrating obstacle course in the Federal chase of the elusive Rebel army through muddy roads, sodden fields, and gloomy wet forests