

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

05/18/62: 022

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Since his last letter home to his mother in New Berlin/Pittsfield, Cyrus Hardaway and his fellow Berdan's Sharpshooters have moved from West Point, Virginia, located on the York river, to an encampment near White House, Virginia. As befits a Pittsfield farmboy, Hardaway expresses great appreciation for the "handsome" land found on Col. Lee's farm some 23 miles from Richmond. Hardaway grew up on the Beardslee/Benson farm in Pittsfield upon which the largest level fields were no more than 100 acres.

The march from West Point to White House was difficult for Hardaway and many others. The unusually rainy weather, combined with the semi-tropical heat took its toll upon Union soldiers most of whom had never been exposed to such levels of heat and humidity. The rainy weather continued throughout the operation and would prove to be a matter of great significance as the Union army approached the Confederate capitol. Richmond, located on the James river and south of the Chickahominy river, meant that the Union army would necessarily have to cross the rain swollen Chickahominy at some point in its march up the Virginia Peninsula.

The movement of Hardaway and his fellow Berdan's Sharpshooters was part of the Federal *Peninsula Campaign*. After the successful siege at Yorktown, McClellan's Union forces were slowly pursuing the Confederate army and moving up the Virginia Peninsula toward the Rebel capitol of Richmond. Throughout this phase of the Civil War, the capture of the enemy's capitol was a primary goal of both Confederate and Union forces.

Unlike earlier campaigns, and undoubtedly desiring to prevent another disaster as had happened at the First Battle of (Manassas) Bull Run, President Lincoln personally intervened and supervised the *Peninsula Campaign*. The day after the capture of Yorktown, Lincoln, and his Secretaries of War and Treasury traveled to Fort Munroe, Virginia. On subsequent days, Lincoln visited the *Monitor*, met with General McClellan, and as Hardaway states, "The whole army was reviewed just at night by Genl Mc Secty Seward and a good many others. The rain was pouring down in streams as they passed along."