

Historical Notes to accompany letter dated:

06/04/62: 024

Historical Notes

Cyrus Hardaway's June 4, 1862 letter home to his mother indicates that it is not only Abraham Lincoln who was impatient with the success of the Army of the Potomac's movement towards Richmond. Lincoln's personal appearance at McClellan's headquarters during the *Peninsula Campaign* cannot be interpreted in any way except encouragement and impatience. The communication between Lincoln and the Union Commander also suggests that many, including Abraham Lincoln and Cyrus Hardaway, thought that McClellan was impossibly slow. McClellan thinking that as many as 200,000 Confederate troops awaited him in Richmond, repeatedly asked for more supplies, materiel, guns, and most of all, soldiers. Observers then and historians now, concede that McClellan was impossibly slow to take advantage of the situation and preferred to lay siege to Richmond rather than attack and overrun the Confederate capitol. This delay provided time for the Rebels to change their strategy towards, "the best defense is a good offense."

Lincoln's impatience with McClellan's lack of aggressiveness is well documented. On May 26, 1862 he asked of McClellan, "Can you get near enough to throw shells into the city?" On June 1, 1862, as the Battle of Fair Oaks progressed, Lincoln wrote McClellan, "Hold all your ground, or yield any only inch by inch and in good order." McClellan did hold his territory but his offensive gains were also measured in inches. Military historians concede that it was likely that McClellan would have attempted to lay siege to Richmond as he had done at Yorktown. His belief that he was greatly outnumbered by the Confederate defenders of Richmond was grossly in error.

Hardaway relates to his mother that "Our regiment went out and got into a _____ up at Hanover," This notation probably refers to an action involving the 1st Regiment of Sharpshooters which was fought near the Hanover Court House on May 27, 1862. The regiment suffered one death and nine injured. The Sharpshooters fought this battle not as a complete regiment, but as separate companies on detached service. This fragmentation of the regiment angered all regimental officers and caused Major Caspar Trepp of the 1st Regiment to tender his letter of resignation; on June 11, 1862 the Secretary of War received a letter by three officers and 76 enlisted men complaining that many of the promises made to them at recruitment had not been kept. In addition to complaints about bounty money and rifles, there seemed to be anger that the Sharpshooters were being used as "common infantrymen."