

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

06/07/62: 025

### *Historical Notes*

Cyrus Hardaway's June 7, 1862 letter home to his mother in New Berlin/Pittsfield represents his six month anniversary as a soldier in Berdan's Sharpshooters. It is readily apparent that the 23 year old recruit has matured in many ways. Not the least of that growth is his new found appreciation of family and friends back home in Pittsfield and New Berlin. Earlier letters suggested that Hardaway was not entirely enraptured with the Village of New Berlin and its small town characteristics. This letter seems to recognize that many characters and characteristics of Pittsfield/New Berlin seem much more palatable after six months in the army.

Written "Seven Miles from Richmond," this letter is dated prior to the initiation of the major battle outside of Richmond in late June of 1862. Commonly referred to as the *Seven Days Battle*, it would result in a complete reversal of momentum and the wholesale change of Union military strategy.

After the *Battle of Fair Oaks* in late May of 1862, the Union forces gradually, and under McClellan's command it was exceedingly gradual, approached Richmond in preparation for a prolonged siege. Newly appointed Commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, Robert E. Lee, determined that the best defense of Richmond was a good offense somewhere else, and ordered General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson to create havoc and block any further reinforcements of Union forces outside Richmond. Jackson's May 1862 *Shenandoah Campaign*, was seen by Lincoln and other Union military officers as a possible invasion of the North and accomplished the relief of pressure against Richmond. Union forces, including the planned transfer of McDowell's army to Richmond were cancelled and ordered to block Jackson's invasion of Washington, D.C. and the North.

McDowell and McClellan both strenuously objected to Lincoln's interference as the cancellation of McDowell's transfer was exactly what the Confederates intended Lincoln to do, but ultimately complied with the President's orders. As a result Union forces outside Richmond were not the planned 135,000 but less than 95,000; Lee's strategy had worked.