

Historical Notes to accompany letter dated:

06/22/62: 027

Historical Notes

As befitting of the proverbial calm before the storm, Hardaway's June 22, 1862 letter home to his mother in Pittsfield/New Berlin contains virtually no indications of the huge military operation about to occur outside Richmond in late June of 1862. Instead of any discussion of military operations, Hardaway's only military news is that portions of his Berdan's Sharpshooters have been detached and assigned to other units. "But we did not stay there long as they most of the officer in the regiment did not like it and would have resigned if we had been kept there."

The remainder of the letter contained observations about his soldier's life that might be of common interest with his family back in Pittsfield. After his usual request for more and longer letters from home, he discussed the bountiful Virginia peach crop, mulberries for supper, White Oak cheese, soldier life compared to the "wickedness" in the little town of New Berlin, and his ability to read the *New York Herald* newspaper. Henry Harrington had returned once more from his sickness, but "he is not fit to be here." It is obvious that Hardaway admires Harrington's spunk, but questioned his judgment.

Within days of this letter, the inevitable battle that both Northern and Confederate armies had been awaiting commenced. The situation of the Union army encamped miles outside Richmond required the Confederacy to, as Confederate President Jefferson Davis stated, ". . . relieve the Confederacy of its embarrassments in the East." Between June 25 and July 1, 1862 a series of major battles, *The Seven Days Campaign*, were fought between Union and Confederate forces east of Richmond in Northern Virginia. Union forces were spread over an eight mile north-south front and were bisected by the Chickahominy creek. North of the Chickahominy were Union forces commanded by Generals Porter, Franklin, Sumner, and Heintzelmann. As noted in Hardaway's June 22 letter, Berdan's Sharpshooters were attached to General Porter's division and were located at the northern edge (right flank) of the Union forces. Although the *Seven Days Campaign* officially began with the Confederate attack on the Union army south of the Chickahominy, it was actually only a diversionary feint. The real Confederate attack was directed at Porter's forces on June 26-27, 1862. Complicating the Union response north of the Chickahominy, was the imminent arrival of General "Stonewall" Jackson's army fresh from his highly successful *Shenandoah Valley Campaign*. Jackson's arrival at the northern flank of the Union forces complicated everything.