

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

07/04/62: 028

### *Historical Notes*

Since his last letter home dated June 22, 1862, Cyrus Hardaway had participated in one of the Civil War's major campaigns: the *Seven Days Battles*. Commencing with the Confederate attack on the southern flank of the Union forces outside Richmond, the battle raged over an extended territory and consisted of several battles including *Oak Grove*, *Mechanicsville*, *Gaines' Mill*, *Savage Station*, and *Malvern Hill*.

As one might expect of a participant in such a chaotic event, Hardaway's descriptions do not utilize a modern historical analysis. We can discern from his descriptions of the battle's events, Hardaway's participation in the various battles. It should also be added that this analysis is aided by Hardaway's personal assistance. Years later, and upon his death in the early part of this century, Hardaway had enscribed on his tombstone the major battles of the Civil War in which he participated. Prominent among those listed are those of *The Seven Days Campaign*.

The initial Rebel attack, the *Battle of Oak Grove*, began as a diversionary attack on June 25. On the following day, June 26, General Robert E. Lee attacked the right flank of the Union forces, including Berdan's Sharpshooters, commanded by General Porter. The Confederate attack was supposed to include the "surprise" attack by General "Stonewall" Jackson's troops fresh from their highly successful *Shenandoah Valley Campaign*. Combined with a frontal attack by Confederate forces under D.H. Hill, A.P. Hill, and James Longstreet, Jackson's forces should have prevailed at the *Battle of Mechanicsville*. Instead Jackson did not appear and Federal forces repulsed the Confederates with heavy losses.

Apparently fearful of Jackson's Rebel forces approaching from the north and flanking the Union right, McClellan declared *Mechanicsville* a "complete victory" but promptly instructed Porter's Union forces to retreat four miles where they participated in the subsequent *Battle of Gaines' Mill*. Thus, the *Battle of Mechanicsville*, considered a Union victory, was actually a strategic defeat for the Union. Over the next several days, Confederate forces kept the pressure upon McClellan. The *Seven Days Campaign*, including the battles of *Savage Station*, *White Oak Swamp*, and *Malvern Hill*, resulted in the Union army retreating south of the Chickahominy to Harrison's Landing on the James river.

The entire battle can be discerned from Hardaway's compressed and chronological rendition: *Mechanicsville*, the retreat across the Chickahominy, the *Battle of Malvern Hill*, and the final encampment at Harrison's Landing. Despite the band playing in the background as he writes this July 4th, 1862 letter, it is obvious that Hardaway's hopes for an early end to the war have been dashed.