

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

07/18/62: 031

### *Historical Notes*

Cyrus Hardaway's letter home of July 18, 1862 provided proof that at least one Union soldier still felt great loyalty to General George B McClellan. The *Seven Days Battle* of June 25-July 1, 1862 resulted in the retreat of Union forces from within a few miles of the Confederate capitol to Harrison's Landing approximately 25 miles away. It was also evident that Hardaway placed the responsibility for that retreat squarely on shoulders of Lincoln's Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton.

McClellan was an extremely popular general among his troops. A cautious, careful, and ever organized tactician, he rarely moved unless most of the military variables favored his position. As a consequence, his soldiers were consistently well fed, uniformed, and organized. Without exaggeration, they also appreciated him for the fact that he did not ask them to fight. Once in battle, McClellan remained cautious. Casualty rates under his command were significantly lower than those his opponent Confederate General Robert E. Lee.

It is obvious that this soldier, Cyrus Hardaway, knew about and supported McClellan in the dispute over whom should be responsible for the Union defeat at the *Seven Days Battle*. Modern historians have the benefit of access to Stanton's, Lincoln's, and McClellan's military and personal papers. On the other hand, Hardaway's opinions must have been based upon camp news, officer's information, and rumors. Despite those sources, Hardaway's opinion does have basis in the historical records.

McClellan repeatedly requested reinforcements prior to the *Seven Days Battle* from Secretary Stanton throughout June of 1862. On June 24, McClellan wrote Stanton, "The rebel force is stated at 200,000, including Jackson . . . I shall have to contend against vastly superior odds . . . If the army is destroyed by overwhelming numbers . . . the responsibility cannot be thrown on my shoulders; it must rest where it belongs." On June 27th, two days after the battle commenced, McClellan prepared the following telegram for transmittal to Stanton, "The Government has not sustained this army . . . If I save this army now, I tell you plainly that I owe no thanks to you or to any other persons in Washington. You have done your best to sacrifice this army."

Considering Hardaway's bluntly stated opinion, it is reasonable to presume that many in the Union army felt that they had not been supported by the Secretary of War Stanton. It is undeniable that Lincoln and Stanton diverted the troops that they had earlier promised to McClellan. They also clearly interfered in the strategic placement of troops (McDowell's) who could have made a significant contribution to the Union's defeat at the *Seven Days Battle*.