

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

08/05/62: 035

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Cyrus Hardaway's letter home of August 5, 1862 confirmed his growing sophistication as an observer regarding the soldier's life. His letter indicated that, "We have just ordered to ready to march at a moments notice . . . so I guess we have got something to do." Encamped since early July at Harrison's Landing on the York river, Berdan's Sharpshooters were not engaged in battle for the better part of July and August. Camped next to Porter's Division to whom Berdan's Regiment was attached, and together with whom they had fought the *Seven Days Battle*, the battle tested veterans and a Pittsfield farmboy could now anticipate the earliest preparations for a new campaign.

During this prolonged lull in military operations, the Regiment had the time and necessity to engage in recruiting efforts. Because of its status as non-state supported private military unit, recruitment was necessarily done by Regimental officers. As Hardaway indicated in his last letter home dated July 30th, most of the regiment's companies were at seriously depleted levels, ". . . some of them are half gone, some two-thirds and some nearly all gone. . ." Colonel Berdan in a decision certain to be seen as controversial, volunteered to leave the Regiments, and personally recruit new sharpshooters in the North. This task was usually assigned to wounded and recuperating personnel and not the commanding Regimental Colonel; Berdan's request to personally recruit did nothing to contradict his growing reputation as an incoherent and ineffective battlefield commander. Many Regimental officers and enlisted men perceived that "Colonel Berdan loses what little coherency there is about him when he is placing the men in position, and takes excellent care to be far in the rear before there is a possibility of being shot." Cy Hardaway's observations in his July 12 letter were shorter and more succinct, "Col. Berdan does not amount to shucks and the men all call him a coward. . ."

Berdan's request to personally recruit was forwarded by General Morell to General Fitz John Porter. The request was denied and instead of Col. Berdan, four wounded officers, Wilson, Willett, Bronson, and Elmendorf, were sent north to recruit new sharpshooters. In his letter to General Morell requesting permission to personally recruit, Berdan indicated that his once 1000 man regiment now numbered only 300 fit for duty.