

Historical Notes to accompany letter dated:

08/22/62: 038

Historical Notes

In his August 22, 1862 letter home, Cyrus Hardaway noted the final act of McClellan's unsuccessful *Peninsular Campaign* in which the Union's Army of the Potomac had been engaged since March of 1862. Returning by the same route they originally traveled to the Virginia Peninsula, Hardaway and his fellow Berdan's Sharpshooters marched overland from Harrison's Landing, across the Chichahominy, past their former encampment at Yorktown, and to the awaiting ships for the trip up the Chesapeake. They landed at the railhead at Aquia Creek and traveled the next twelve miles by rail to Falmouth, Virginia. They then marched westward to a location near Bristoe, Virginia.

Noting the Federal's departure from Harrison's Landing, General Lee quickly moved the rest of his Army of Northern Virginia north to assist Lee in his operations against Pope on the Rappahannock river. By the time Hardaway wrote his August 22nd letter, Berdan's Regiments had joined Pope's Army of Virginia. After the Federal defeat at the *Battle of Cedar Mountain* on August 9th, the armies were situated for a sequel to the *First Battle of Bull Run*.

Also occurring on August 22, 1862 was Abraham Lincoln's famous answer to *New York Tribune* publisher Horace Greeley's "Prayer of Twenty Millions." Responding to its call for emancipation of slaves, Lincoln wrote an open letter to the editor of the *New York Tribune*. Lincoln's succinct message stated, "My paramount object in the struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that."

Lincoln's personal evolution on the issue of slave emancipation is clearly evident in his letter. Eventually on January 1, 1863 Lincoln would formally issue his controversial *Emancipation Proclamation*. It is apparent from this earlier letter that Lincoln had not yet reached the philosophical position of others in the Republican party (Radicals) which justified and advocated the total destruction of slavery in order to completely destroy a culture dependent upon an enslaved class.