

Historical Notes to accompany letter dated:

09/21/62: 041

Historical Notes

The letter home dated September 21, 1862 was Cyrus Hardaway's second since his detachment from Berdan's Sharpshooters for medical convalescence. Remaining behind in Arlington Heights, while his regiment traveled north with McClellan's Army of the Potomac in pursuit of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, Hardaway has moved to a different convalescent site near the capitol and railroad depot.

In earlier letters to his mother in Pittsfield/New Berlin Hardaway had acknowledged several medical problems including kidneys, rheumatism, and a disabling bad back. In this letter he indicates that he is "not near as lame as I was a week ago, but my back troubles me a good deal nights. It ackes so much that I cannot sleep but a little." We can presume that these ailments are the cause of his staying behind in Washington, D.C. and medical convalescence. In this letter Hardaway indicated that although he had not heard from his regiment, he also stated that he "don't care much if I never hear from them again," This is a substantial change of character and suggests that his ailments were not simply physical.

Although seriously depleted in numbers, Berdan's Regiments did leave Washington on September 12. Without a Colonel or Lt. Colonel, the Regiment was under the command of Captain John Isler. Some new recruits had arrived from Wisconsin and Vermont but the Regiments were at best at half-strength. Still assigned to Porter's Divisions, Berdans participated in several battles as McClellan was forced to leave the fortifications of Washington and follow Lee into the open country of Maryland. After crossing the Potomac, Lee captured Harper's Ferry while McClellan followed.

The Sharpshooters took part in the *Battle of South Mountain* on September 14 as McClellan broke through Lee's rear guards. The Confederate General quickly pulled his forces together at Sharpsburg, Maryland located on Antietam Creek. The engagement which followed, the *Battle of Antietam*, September 17, 1862 was the bloodiest single day (23,000 casualties) of the entire Civil War. Berdan's 1st Regiment was once again assigned to Porter's division and occupied the center of the line battle at Antietam. Strangely, the 1st regiment was not heavily engaged and suffered minimal casualties. The 2nd Regiment was engaged and lost a total of 66 killed and wounded over two days.