

Historical Notes to accompany letter dated:

09/27/62: 042

Historical Notes

Cyrus Hardaway's letter home dated September 27, 1862 is his third while convalescing in Washington, D.C. During his detached duty Hardaway's regiment has participated in the *Battle of Antietam* near Sharpsburg, Maryland and although a military draw, the battle was considered a strategic victory for McClellan and the Army of the Potomac. Lee's first invasion of the north had been terminally crippled.

As Hardaway grew increasingly bored by his recovery, a fellow Washingtonian, Abraham Lincoln implored the Army of the Potomac to pursue and "crush" the wounded Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. Expecting McClellan to pursue and engage the Rebel army in a climactic war ending battle, the Federal army chief instead waited for his supply wagons and troops to be in perfect order. McClellan's critics, of whom there were many, grew frantic at this lost opportunity to quickly end the war. Many even suggested that McClellan was at least a Rebel sympathizer, a *copperhead*, or an outright traitor. Lincoln cajoled and encouraged McClellan to avoid his characteristic over-cautiousness but to no avail. McClellan would not fight until his army was completely prepared to meet what he believed were 110,000 (actually less than 50,000) Confederates.

Finally on October 26, 1862, after Cyrus Hardaway had completed his convalescence and rejoined Berdan's, McClellan began to cross the Potomac River but moved so slowly that Lee was able to block the Army of the Potomac's route towards Richmond. Exasperated beyond words, Lincoln, with the overwhelming support of his cabinet and military advisors, removed McClellan as commander of the Army of the Potomac.

Throughout September and October of 1862, McClellan wrote letters, just as did Hardaway, to his family. Those letters reflect an attitude, which had it been known by his detractors, would have resulted in more than McClellan's removal as commander of the Army of the Potomac. Considering himself as Napoleonesque in his importance to the Union, he wrote to his wife, Ellen McClellan, "The good of the country requires me to submit to all this from men whom I know to be my inferior. . . . There never was a truer epithet applied to a certain individual than that of Gorilla . . . I have insisted that Stanton shall be removed & that of Halleck shall give way to me as Comdr. in Chief."