

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

11/09/62: 047

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Cyrus Hardaway's briefly worded letter home dated November 9, 1862, provides the modern reader with evidence of the physical hardships encountered by Berdan's Sharpshooters as the Army of the Potomac finally moved south towards Richmond, Virginia. Leaving their camp at Harper's Ferry on October 30th, Berdan's Sharpshooters marched to Snickersville and then southeasterly passing through Middleburg, White Plains, and Warrenton, Virginia. While at White Plains, Hardaway and his colleagues were treated to an early November snowstorm and cold temperatures.

While the Army of the Potomac including Berdan's Sharpshooters, slowly marched south towards Richmond, Abraham Lincoln concluded that a change in leadership in that Federal army was necessary. In one of the more significant command decisions of the entire Civil War, Lincoln replaced the popular George B. McClellan as Commander of the Army of the Potomac with General Ambrose Burnside. Lincoln's decision was not popular with many people including Cyrus Hardaway. In 1864 the Democratic party nominated McClellan as its presidential candidate against Abraham Lincoln. In a letter which forwarded his absentee presidential vote to his step-brother, Augustus Beardslee, Hardaway proudly advised that he had voted "straight Democratic." It was probably the first and last such vote emanating from the homestead located in Pittsfield.

Berdan's Sharpshooters remained in Warrenton, Virginia until the middle of November 1862. On November 10, 1862 General George McClellan departed from the his beloved Army of the Potomac while it was encamped at Warrenton. His farewell speech did nothing to diminish his soldiers' respect and adoration for him; McClellan's poised "farewell" speech only further enhanced the near idolization of "Little Mac" by his soldiers. Some Union officers, characterized by their loyalty to McClellan, suggested that the wrong man was being replaced, and implied that the army should march towards Washington instead of Richmond. McClellan's final orders to his soldiers did much to smooth Burnside's acceptance by the Army of the Potomac, "Stand by General Burnside as you have stood by me, and all will be well."