

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

11/16/62: 049

### *Historical Notes*

In his November 11, 1862 letter home to his mother in Pittsfield/New Berlin, Cyrus Hardaway indicated that the adjustment to the new commander of the Army of the Potomac, General Ambrose Burnside, was proceeding well. In addition to McClellan's removal, his friend and protege, General Porter, commander of the Corps to which Berdan's was attached, was replaced by General Joseph "Fighting Joe" Hooker. As might be expected, Burnside and Hooker immediately commenced discipline enhancing drills, training, and other changes consistent with their program.

Hardaway's letter also indicated a change in strategy now that Burnside was in command. In fact, a change in the Union strategy had been ordered by Burnside immediately upon assuming command. Instead of continuing with McClellan's plan of once again using the railroad route through Manassas on its way to Richmond, Burnside's plan was to move the huge Federal army of 110,000 men to Falmouth, Virginia. From there the army would cross the Rappahannock River near Fredericksburg, and then proceed to Richmond. The advantage of this plan was that supply routes could be protected by the U.S. Navy operating in the Chesapeake and its rivers; the disadvantage lay in the number of rivers the army would have to cross.

Hardaway and the rest of Berdan's Sharpshooters departed Warrenton after November 16, 1862 and arrived at Falmouth, Virginia on the 23rd where they remained until December 11, 1862. The march from Warrenton, 45 miles, took over seven days and was attended with great hardship, bad weather, and poor planning. Upon their arrival the Sharpshooters began construction of winter huts using nearby forests as their resouce. It seemed reasonable that Berdan's might winter at this pleasant site located three miles from Falmouth, Virginia.

Delayed by the non-arrival of pontoon bridges, Burnside was prevented from crossing the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg. By the time the Federals were finally ready to cross, Lee had positioned the Army of Northern Virginia on the south side of the river. Occupying the high ground with artillery commanding sweeping fields of fire, the Confederates actually hoped that Burnside would attempt to cross the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg.