

Historical Notes to accompany letter dated:

12/28/62: 057

Historical Notes

Cyrus Hardaway's letter home of December 28, 1862 affirmed the return of Colonel Berdan to regimental active duty in late December 1862. As readers of these notes may recall, Colonel Berdan had been in a "controversial" convalescence for several weeks in Washington, D.C. at the Willard Hotel. Hardaway had also convalesced in Washington during part of the same time but returned to the regiment in October.

Colonel Berdan's return to active duty created just as much controversy as his earlier absence had done. Hardaway did note the positive effects upon Berdan's return, ". . .we have had inspections and drills every day for the last week and another inspection this morning. . .," but he did not comment upon an incident between Berdan and Lt. Col. Caspar Trepp.

On December 26 an unusual and humiliating event occurred in which Lt. Colonel Trepp was called at his quarters, and ordered by Col. Berdan through Major Hastings, to take a rifle, and be drilled in the manual of arms under the instruction of Lieutenant Nash. Lt. Colonel Trepp obeyed the order but was overheard, later while in his tent, complaining of Berdan's insulting and humiliating order. Berdan immediately appeared at Trepp's tent and showed Trepp certain written orders allegedly prescribing such drill of line officers, but not field officers. Berdan disingenuously suggested that Trepp's *order* had been merely a *request* and not an order. Trepp immediately tendered his written resignation but Berdan refused knowing that Trepp was indispensable to command troops in the field.

Colonel Berdan's callousness and bizarre behavior would continue to handicap the regiment. In late January 1863, Colonel Berdan, for reasons that no reasonable observer can fathom, charged Lt. Col. Trepp with stealing regimental stationery, causing court martial proceedings to commence against Trepp. In response, Trepp wrote a three page defense to this alleged *capital offense* relying upon specific army regulations. Later, Berdan charged Trepp with cowardice from military actions in June of 1862; confined to his quarters by Berdan and unable to obtain evidence in his defense, Trepp wrote letters to other officers. Despite these handicaps Trepp was acquitted of all charges at his court martial on February 20, . Trepp would not return to active duty until March 2, 1863.