

Historical Notes to accompany letter dated:

2/8/63: 065

### Historical Notes

Hardaway's letter home of February 1, 1862 indicates that two members of his family have paid him a much needed visit shortly after Burnside's failed January campaign. After marching seven miles, the Army of the Potomac was ordered to abandon its maneuvers intended to outflank Lee's Confederate Army across the Rappahannock River. As soon as the Federal forces left camp, torrential rains turned the local roads into impassible swamps. The campaign was eventually abandoned and Federal troops mud-wrestled their cannons, horses, artillery, wagons, and supplies back to camp. Shortly after Hardaway's return, a short visit from his step-brother, Augustus, and his step-father, Jesse Beardslee did much to lift his flagging spirits after the debacle of the "Mud March." The visit seemed much too short to Hardaway; it seems probable that his visitors felt very uncomfortable in the midst of 125,000 armed angry men and left within a day of their arrival.

Readers of these historical notes might consider it strange that civilians would and could visit friends and family in the midst of the Army of the Potomac's winter campaign of 1863. Contrary to our 20th century experience, in which American wars were fought thousands of miles from home, the Civil War was figuratively a local matter. Although a significant part of the action focused in that general geographical area between Washington, D.C. and Richmond, Virginia, individual battles occurred over most of the United States and Confederacy. When Confederate forces invaded the North in 1862 and 1863, Northerners were only a short distance away from the Battle of Antietam or Gettysburg.

Presuming that Hardaway's family visitors traveled by train, and considering the contents of his February 1st letter, and the insufficient time to otherwise travel, we can imagine that his step-brother and father would have traveled to Utica to connect with the New York City train. In New York, they would then have taken trains to Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. From "Washington City," as it was called in the Civil War, they would have arranged for some combination of rail and stagecoach to Falmouth, Virginia, and Berdan's Regiments' camp.

Such a trip was undoubtedly a major adventure. The fact that it could, and did occur only underscores the railroad's impact on the industrialization of the United States and its consequences during the Civil War. Astute observers of Hardaway's letters and these historical notes are undoubtedly aware of the utilization of railroads by both

Union and Confederate forces. In many cases it appears each of the armies was almost tethered to its railroad supply lines.

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