

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

3/3/63: 067

*Historical Notes*

Cyrus Hardaway's letter home of March 3, 1863 continued the discussion regarding his prospects of obtaining a commission in the 114th Regiment, NYS Volunteers. Anxious to return home and visit Pittsfield/New Berlin, he also mentioned that furloughs in excess of 10 days were not available. His letter also stated that even if he were granted such a furlough, it would only allow him four days at home, and "that would be worse than no stay at all." With Hardaway's painful assistance, we know that Pittsfield/New Berlin was only three days travel from the Northern Virginia battlefields. Considering that this letter is written in March while the Army of the Potomac is in winter quarters, it underscores the military and social revolution caused by the railroad.

Since December's *Battle of Fredericksburg*, and Burnside's infamous "Mud March" of late January, Berdan's Sharpshooters had remained in winter quarters at Stoneman's Switch near Falmouth, Virginia. Picket duty was common and when weather permitted the regiments were drilled. Picket duty often provided exciting times. On one night in March 1863, an event occurred which provided Berdan's Sharpshooters with much comedic material for weeks thereafter. An overzealous Wisconsin lieutenant had been instructed to fire upon any Confederates who made noises in the darkness in front of the picket lines. Hearing random shots somewhere in the distance and what he thought was Rebel cavalry approaching, his company commenced firing. Within minutes, the entire command from Colonel to Generals appeared at the front lines, and realized that nothing was in fact happening in the darkness. From then on the "wide awake" lieutenant was a legend within Berdan's Regiments.

As a result of the carnage at *Fredericksburg*, and his infamous "Mud March," General Burnside met with President Lincoln in late January 1863, and demanded the dismissal of several of the generals whom he blamed for the humiliating "Mud March." Lincoln conferred with his cabinet and within a few days removed Burnside from command of the Army of the Potomac. General Joseph "Fighting Joe" Hooker is appointed and immediately reorganized the command structure of the Army of the Potomac.

---