

Historical Notes to accompany letter dated:

4/19/63: 075

Historical Notes

As the Army of the Potomac prepared itself for the spring campaigns of 1863, Cyrus Hardaway continued his efforts to transfer from Berdan's United States Sharpshooter 1st Regiment to Company F, 114th NYS Volunteer Infantry. The NYS 114th had been organized predominately of volunteers from New Berlin, Sherburne, and other communities in Chenango, Madison, and Otsego counties. Hardaway's efforts to expedite the transfer included writing to his friend and family member, Pittsfield's Adrian Foote, a 1st Lieutenant in the 114th, in hopes that Foote might assist in obtaining a Certificate of Vacancy from the 114th's regimental Colonel, Elisha B. Smith of Norwich, New York.

Hardaway's transfer frustrations are somewhat comforting and understandable to late 20th century readers in that their modern experience is not the first generation to deal with "red tape." The lessons of dealing with a bureaucracy have apparently not dramatically changed from 1863 to 1999. Originals and copies in triplicates are still the rule for dealing with any governmental agency.

The Army of the Potomac and its newest commander, General Joseph Hooker, was comprised of nearly 130,000 men in late April of 1863. Opposing it across the Rappahannock River was the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia with less than 60,000, but magnificently commanded by a group of Confederate generals including General Robert E. Lee. In his letter to Lincoln dated April 12, 1863, General Joseph Hooker had advised the President that he intended to cross the Rappahannock and outflank Lee's army encamped at Fredericksburg. In discussions with his Commander in Chief, General Halleck, Lincoln decided that further information about the status of the army was needed. Accompanied by General Halleck and the Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, the President returned to Acquia Creek for a one day fact finding mission on April 19, 1863.

Hooker's reputation as a brash and aggressive commander originated from his boastful personality. Soon after his appointment he confidently predicted that he would move Lee out of his fortifications at Fredericksburg and destroy the Confederate army in an open country fight. Hooker's attitudes regarding his opponent General Robert E. Lee were noteworthy, "May God have mercy on General Lee, for I will have none."