

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

4/21/63: 076

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The smoke and heat from Cyrus Hardaway's anger can nearly be felt despite the fact that 135 years have passed since his April 21, 1863 letter home. Denied a transfer from the 1st Regiment, Berdan's Sharpshooters to the 114th NYS Volunteers, Hardaway is palpably upset. Written with an anger that can only be generated in dealings with military bureaucracies or other governmental agencies, he is, "so mad when I think of it that I hardly know what to do." Only a few days prior he had written his mother (April 5th) that he would soon be discharged/transferred, on furlough, and receiving a paycheck in Washington; he now realized that it would be weeks, or months before anything was finished.

It would actually be a lengthy time, several months, before Hardaway transferred from Berdan's Sharpshooters. While he waited for his transfer, he would be obliged to participate in the horrific battles of the summer of 1863. The first campaign, *Battle of Chancellorsville*, had been envisioned by Army of the Potomac commander, General Joseph Hooker, as the outflanking of the Confederate army encamped at Fredericksburg, Virginia. Once outflanked, Hooker believed Lee would attempt to "fly" at which time the Union army would block and destroy the remaining Confederate army.

Hooker's plan called for the division of his army into three parts and gave each division a specific set of tasks to be accomplished. First, ten thousand cavalry would cross the Rappahannock several miles north of Fredericksburg and create havoc in Lee's supply lines. Second, 40,000 Federal infantry would cross the river at Fredericksburg and occupy Lee's forces at their fortified sites. Finally, Hooker ordered 70,000 Union infantry to cross the river and station themselves at a small village called Chancellorsville approximately nine miles west of Fredericksburg and in a forest called the Wilderness.

Berdan's Sharpshooters, now a part of the General Dan Sickles 3rd Corps, broke camp on April 28, 1863 and marched down the Rappahannock to the left of the Union army near Fredericksburg. The men were well equipped with 60 rounds of ammunition, 8 days of rations, as well as overcoats, rubber blankets, and a tree climbing device called "climbers." On the morning of April 29, they watched as Federal forces, including the famous "Iron Brigade" successfully stormed the Confederate rifle pits at

Fitz-Hugh crossing near Fredericksburg. On April 30th the Sharpshooters remained in this defensive position through the afternoon. Hooker's plan had worked; Lee's forces were still concentrated at Fredericksburg and the Army of the Potomac had moved 70,000 infantry on Lee's flanks without being discovered.