

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

10/17/63: 094

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Cyrus Hardaway's letter home of October 17, 1863 was written while his regiment was engaged in the campaign directed towards Texas. After the fight at Vermillion Bayou earlier in October, the regiment had changed locations, and by the date of this letter, was probably at Pratt's Plantation a short distance from Opelousas. From this location the regiment was scheduled to receive supplies for the planned expedition into Texas.

Hardaway's October 17th letter refers to "a little skirmishing for a few days back, but it has not amounted to much." Comparison of his letters with regimental histories indicate that on October 11th the regiment was encamped at a "dirty little brook" named *Carrioncrow Bayou* and over the course of several days was attacked by Confederate cavalry. The engagement proved to be a feint as the major attack occurred five miles behind Hardaway's and the 114th's position. On the morning of the 15th the Confederates renewed their attack but Union artillery soon drove the Rebels off. In between the Confederate attacks, the Union paymaster, up from New Orleans, was forced to await the conclusion of the battle before he could pay the Federal troops. It was suggested that the 114th was particularly inspired by this Confederate attack due to its interruption of their long awaited payday.

Low water levels in the Atchafalaya River prevented the planned resupply, and on the 1st of November, 1863, the regiment moved to Vermillionville. At that location on November 4th, the Army of the Gulf was attacked by a mounted force of over 4000 Confederates. A sharp fight ensued with several hundred casualties and over five hundred Federal soldiers captured as prisoners. Regimental histories of the 114th consider this "surprise" attack as a major military embarrassment. Pellet, mentioned by Hardaway in several letters, wrote in his History of the 114th , "Subsequent investigation showed that the attack was a shameful surprise, and was declared . . . disgraceful to our arms."

The camps of the 114th and the Army of the Gulf were noticeably crowded with runaway slaves during this time period. Wherever the army marched, "contraband" would appear and officers were compelled to periodically clear the slaves from camp. One account states regarding their omnipresence, "By day they were stalking through the company streets, with pans of molasses candy for sale. The nights were made hideous by their dances and prayer meetings, disturbing the sleep of the men."