

Historical Notes to accompany letter dated:

10/25/63: 095

Cyrus Hardaway's letter home to his mother in Pittsfield/New Berlin dated October 25, 1863 was one of the more casual, breezy, and least stressed of the entire Hardaway Civil War letters collection. Now an officer of the NYS 114th Volunteer Infantry Regiment, he has clearly adapted to his new regiment, job duties, and Louisiana's environment. His initial confusion and sadness has been replaced with a happiness and joviality. He clearly enjoys working with his step brother in law, Pittsfield's Adrian Foote, his 2nd Lieutenant status, and most of all, the good food prepared by "Aunt Lucy."

Reference is made in this letter to Lt. Hetherington of Hardaway's old Company D of Berdan's Sharpshooters. Hetherington

One of the more interesting developments in this Hardaway letter is evidenced by his assurances to his mother that "we do not have to pay for horses in this country. We only give notes for them to the division QuarterMaster & when we get through with them turn them over to him again." To modern observers, this type of confiscation of local supplies and commodities for military use, is the same behavior and type of warfare that Hardaway condemned earlier in the war at Fredericksburg. It is obvious that something has happened to the innocent Pittsfield farmboy which now allows him to acknowledge, if not boast, about such behavior to his mother. Perhaps the change can be ascribed to the inevitable relative cynicism one would acquire witnessing the carnage at Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Antietam, Manassas, and Gettysburg. Maybe it is the presence and reaction to former slaves (contrabands) and Louisiana's semi-tropical environment. Conceivably it could be the presence of familiar friends and colleagues in the his hometown "Unadilla Valley Company" and Chenango County Regiment that have allowed him to "relax."

As has been mentioned in earlier columns, Cyrus Hardaway is related by marriage to fellow officer, Lt. Adrian Foote. "Foote" was married to Hardaway's step sister, Mary Cornelia Beardslee and the two had known each other from the time his widowed mother, Mary Ann Hardaway, married Pittsfield's Jesse Beardslee. Adrian Foote had been one of the earliest organizers of the 114th NYS Volunteer Regiment, and in consequence had been elected 1st Lieutenant of the "Unadilla Valley" Company D of the "Chenango County" 114th Regiment.

It is probable that Foote's success as a recruiter of young men was at least partially the result of his position as Manager of the Arkwright Cotton Factory located in Hoboken. Between 1840 and the late 1850's, Foote was the Manager of this locally important business. Combined with about 50 young men from Sherburne, Foote raised approximately the same number in Pittsfield and New Berlin, and established Company D. The Arkwright Cotton Factory was located south of Hoboken, the small hamlet easterly across the river from New Berlin, on the site that would later be recycled and used by the Borden's milk condensery.

By the time the Civil War erupted in 1861, Foote was a mature and experienced businessman, knowledgeable about organizational techniques, and would have been a natural for the position of Quartermaster. Adrian Foote, and his wife, Mary Cornelia Beardslee, lived in the Arkwright Cotton Factory Manager's Residence. This lovely old home, the Arkwright Manager's Residence, is located at the south east corner of NYS Route 80 and Otsego County Road #18, and has been handsomely restored and renovated by another long time Unadilla Valley family, Robin and Bill Beckwith. Foote lived in this home between approximately 1841 and 1857.

Hardaway's comments regarding the commander of his former regiment, Berdan's Sharpshooters, were typically correct. The founder of Berdan's Sharpshooters was not well regarded by his regimental officers and enlisted soldiers. Berdan was rarely found at the front during battle and on at least one occasion, was considered cowardly by Cyrus Hardaway. At about the same time that Hardaway had been recuperating from injuries at a Union hospital, Berdan recuperated at a swank Washington hotel in the company of his wife. Upon his return to the regiment, he re-initiated a personal attack upon well regarded fellow officers. Eventually, Hiram Berdan's less than heroic behavior resulted in a denial of his requested promotion to higher rank.