

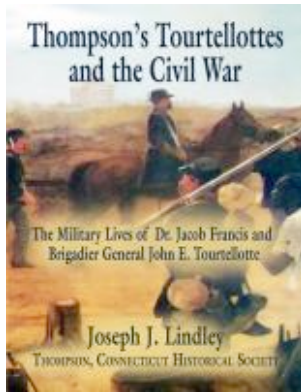
# Thompson's Tourtellottes and the Civil War



The Military Lives of Dr. Jacob Francis and  
Brigadier General John E. Tourtellotte

Joseph J. Lindley

THOMPSON, CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



***Thompson's Tourtellottes and the Civil War** chronicles the military lives of Dr. Jacob Francis Tourtellotte USN and his brother Brigadier General John E. Tourtellotte of the 4th MN Infantry Regiment. After leaving their childhood home in Thompson, Connecticut in search of new lives, both young men, like so many others in America, were caught in the surge of war that swept a nation and devastated an entire generation.*

# Thompson's Tourtellottes and the Civil War

Order the complete book from

**[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6268.html?s=pdf)**

**<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6268.html?s=pdf>**

**or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.**

**Your Free excerpt appears below. Enjoy!**

# **Thompson's Tourtellottes and the Civil War**

Copyright © 2012 Joseph Lindley

ISBN 978-1-62141-714-9

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Bradenton, FL.

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

BookLocker.com, Inc.  
2012

First Edition

*Cover: Francis D. Millet's Fourth Minnesota Entering Vicksburg.  
The mural-sized painting now hangs in the Minnesota State Capital.*

*Maps found in this book were created by Hal Jespersen for the Thompson Historical Society.*

# ONE

---

## THOMPSON CONNECTICUT'S TIES TO THE SOUTH

Historians have debated the causes of the American Civil War for decades. States' rights, the South's economic structure, and the rapidly growing abolitionist movement all contributed to the eventual start of hostilities. Suffice to say that the causes are more complicated than can be properly addressed in a work of this nature. What can be said, however, is slavery had a huge economic impact on the entire country, especially New England and its textile factories.

Southern slaves accounted for the largest cumulative asset owned by Americans in the mid 1800's. Simply abolishing it had far reaching social, economic, and political ramifications. On March 4, 1858, during a speech before the United States Senate, on the admission of Kansas to the Union, Senator James Henry (S. C.) declared that "Cotton is King," and so it was. Factories throughout New England and Connecticut used cotton as one of its primary raw materials to produce the fabric and thread needed to clothe a rapidly growing nation. Without slave-produced cotton, many textile mills in Northeastern United States would simply stop running, putting many Americans out of work, and both northern and southern economies in turmoil. In this respect, the North may have been more responsible for the perpetuation of slavery than the South.

Connecticut also directly contributed to the slave problem in other ways. Many historians suggest that no single man did more for the advancement of slavery than did Connecticut native, Eli Whitney. His invention of the cotton gin in 1793 allowed plantation owners to process cotton on a level never before seen, requiring more slaves, to pick more cotton. The higher cotton output further allowed New England, and Connecticut textile mills to thrive and expand. From 1793, until the middle 19<sup>th</sup> century, large and small factories were popping up all along Connecticut rivers. Waterways like the Connecticut, Farmington, French, Housatonic, Pawcatuck, Shetucket, Thames, Quinebaug, and Willimantic Rivers, all had factories being built.<sup>2</sup>

In the small town of Thompson, Connecticut, several mills, to include the town's largest, the Grosvenor Dale Company, used southern cotton as its primary raw material. Others, including the 11,000 spindled Masonville Mill, and the Quadic Mill, also bought southern cotton to keep its production lines going. Masonville was proud of the fact it

---

<sup>2</sup> Warshauer lecture, Woodstock Academy, Woodstock, CT 2012.



purchased the finest southern cotton. According to the Thompson Historical Society, “It was the policy of the Masonville Company to manufacture cloth of the highest grade and best quality. With Sea Island cotton, new machinery, and skilled workmen, they soon attained their objective, and Masonville sheeting stood at the head of the market.”<sup>3</sup> Hundreds of people from Thompson and the surrounding area worked in these factories, their families dependent upon the wages they earned – the factories dependent upon cotton.



*Above: The Grosvenor Dale Mill built 1862. Many of the workers at that time lived in what is now the village of Grosvenordale. The mill prospered until well after the turn of the century. Much of the building shown above does not exist today. (Thompson Historical Society)*

Connecticut also had its own history with slavery. It wasn't until growing pressure from abolitionists in the late 1700's did Connecticut, through the Gradual Abolition Act of 1784, start the process of abolishing the institution, and it wasn't until 1848, only twelve years before the Civil War, that it was finally gone.<sup>4</sup> A strong abolitionist movement in Connecticut did exist for many years, producing several notables to include Prudence Crandell and

<sup>3</sup> Thompson Historical Society, *Manufacturing History of Thompson*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Warshauer, *Connecticut in the American Civil War*, 2-12.

Harriett Beacher Stowe, but as Warshauer so adequately notes, Connecticut was *not* the hot bed of abolition many think, and keeping the country whole was a much larger issue for Connecticut residents. Warshauer writes:

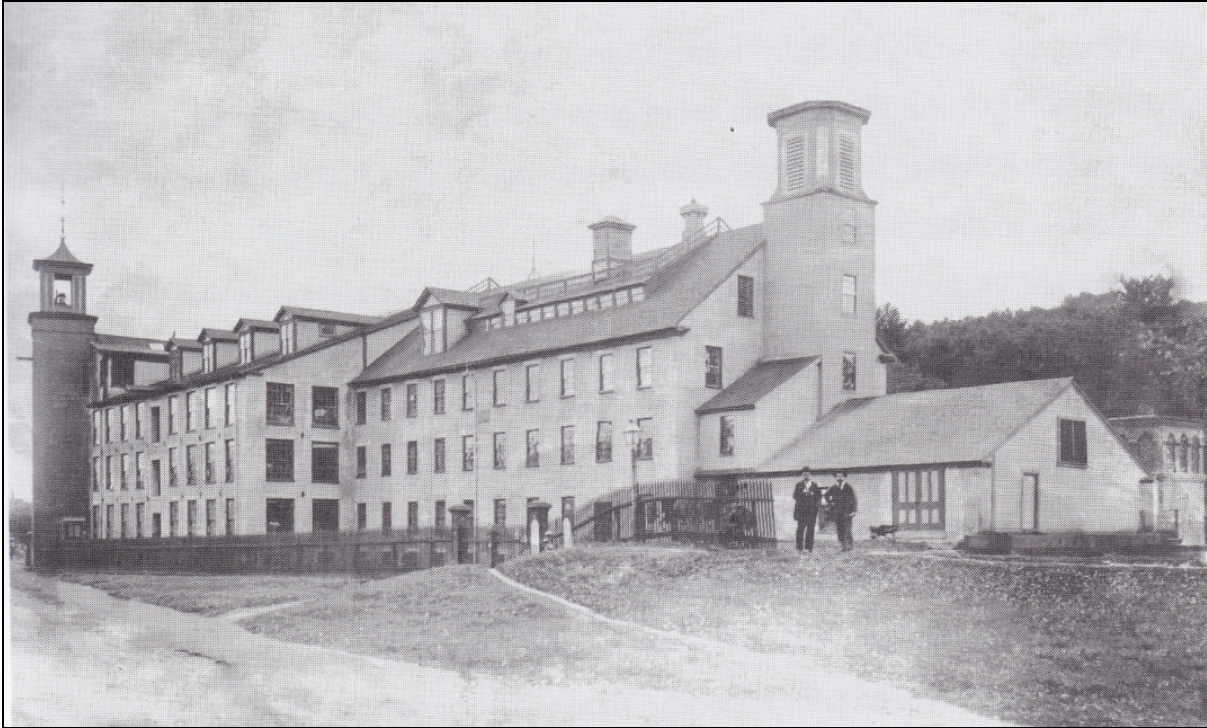
*Yet most Connecticut residents were either ambivalent, or outright hostile, towards the blacks in their midst. When the nation began to slide further toward open rupture in the midst of the debate over the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the anti-Southern Republican Party did well primarily because it actively avoided connection with abolitionism or blacks rights. Understanding this situation makes it difficult to argue Connecticut went to war in 1861 to emancipate and secure the future of its black residents.*<sup>5</sup>

Without specific records, it is difficult to understand the general feelings and opinions of those who lived in Thompson, Connecticut, at that time. What little exists, suggests most Thompson citizens disagreed with the institution of slavery and supported abolition, as long as it did not affect their well-being, and the well-being of their families. The few records also suggest that the mill owners and managers of the day looked at potential hostilities in the south, and the rapidly developing slave and State's rights issue, with great trepidation. All eyes were on the south.

---

<sup>5</sup> Warshauer, *Connecticut in the American Civil War*, 40.

*Joseph Lindley*



*Above: The Masonville Mill located on what is now Route 12, Grosvenordale, CT. Masonville used the best "Sea Island" cotton making it one of the market leaders of the time. This factory is among the oldest in Thompson and parts of it still exist today. (Thompson Historical Society)*



## TWO

---

### THOMPSON SENDS ITS SONS

The Thompson Common, a large triangle of green grass surrounded by a variety of large hardwood trees, has been a fixture of Thompson Hill, since first being cleared by Benjamin Wilkinson in the early 1700's.<sup>6</sup> New England commons like this were, and still are, places where local residents meet. During their early days they were also used by local militias to practice the art of war, and as place to keep horses and carriages while attending local churches that filled its perimeter. Thompson Common is unique in that it has changed little over its 180-year history, and it appears today much as it did during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, when young men used this area to drill and prepare for war.

Located on the eastern side of the Thompson Common, opposite the 1856 Thompson Congregational Church is a large stone monument listing the names of 235 Thompson men who fought during the American Civil War. There is an apology on the monument that states: "This tablet honors equally any soldier whose name has unintentionally been omitted." Cross referencing the Thompson Hill monument against other sources, to include James Cutler's *Connecticut Volunteers from Thompson*, shows several discrepancies and omissions leading to a general feeling that the true number of Civil War veterans from Thompson, Connecticut, was two hundred and fifty-two.<sup>7</sup>

Connecticut, in spite of its political views on the war and the issue of slavery, sent an astonishing 55,000 men, forty-seven percent of its men ages 15-50, and twenty-nine regiments to war, one of the highest percentages in the Union. Those who remained home helped produce nearly one third of all arms used by the Union forces.<sup>8</sup> Thompson, with a population of only 3,259 (1860 census), sent thirty percent of its young men to war and ultimately paid a terrible price.<sup>9</sup> Of the 252 recorded soldiers, there were twenty-nine total dead, nine killed or missing, thirty wounded, and forty-four captured for a total of twenty-five percent casualties.

---

<sup>6</sup> *Echoes of Old Thompson*, 44.

<sup>7</sup> James Cutler of the Aspinock Historical Society, Putnam, CT, completed an extensive unpublished piece on the Civil War participants of Thompson. He lists 252 Thompson men fighting in the war. Cutler's book *Civil War; Connecticut Volunteers from Thompson* is regarded the most complete work of its kind. A copy of his work is available at the Aspinock Historical Society and the Thompson Historical Society.

<sup>8</sup> Warshauer, *Connecticut in the American Civil War*, 3.

<sup>9</sup> The total number of soldiers assumes that twenty-five percent of the total population was males of military age. See Appendix 1 for a complete list of names.

Eight Thompson soldiers were killed on the same day while fighting at Antietam, Maryland on September 17, 1862. Ten Thompson soldiers died in captivity, five at Andersonville Prison, Georgia, three at the Libby Prison, Richmond, Virginia, and two at Staunton, Virginia. The first Thompson soldier killed in battle was Private Michael Keegan, of Company C, Fourteenth Connecticut Volunteers, at the Battle of Antietam on September 17, 1862. The first wounded soldier was Private Clinton Fessington of Company F, Eleventh Connecticut Volunteers on the same day. Fessington later died of his wounds. The Battle of Piedmont was the worst day of the war for Thompson with eighteen total casualties.<sup>10</sup> The numbers of Thompson men who died after returning home as a result of battle wounds they received, and sickness they contracted while serving is unknown, the author suspects there were dozens.

There are many Thompson soldiers and sailors who distinguished themselves while in the service of the federal government during the Civil War. Two of the most notable are Major General George Davis (1839-1918) and First Lieutenant William Sully Beebe. Their stories are well established. Gates, in his 1905 book, *Men of Mark in America: Ideals of American Life told in Biographies of Eminent Living Americans*, captures Davis' story. He writes:

*DAVIS, GEORGE WHITEFIELD, soldier in the United States volunteer army in the Civil War, 1861-65, receiving promotion from sergeant to major, U. S. V.; in the United States regular army, 1865-1905; receiving promotion from captain to major-general, U. S. A.; and in the United States volunteer army in the Spanish-American war, 1898-1900 with the rank of brigadier general and major-general, U. S. V.; was born in Thompson, Windham county, Connecticut, July 26, 1839. His father, Deacon George Davis was a farmer, an antislavery man noted for industry and persistence; and his mother, Elizabeth Grow, was the daughter of the Reverend James and Elizabeth Edmunds Grow and a woman of much intellectual force. His first paternal ancestor in America, Robert Davis, came to Providence Plantations about 1670; and his maternal ancestor, John Grow, to Ipswich, Massachusetts Bay colony, 1664.*

*George W. Davis assisted his father in the farm work, attended the district school winters, and studied at home nights. When eighteen years old he began to teach a district school, following that vocation for*

---

<sup>10</sup> Hines, *Civil War Volunteer Sons of Connecticut*, 572-573. Note: Cutler's casualty statistics differ from those of Hines.

*three winters and continuing to work in the summer for his father. He attended the Nichols academy, Dudley, Massachusetts, two fall terms, and the Connecticut normal school, New Britain, one term; but he was not graduated. In 1860 he was a tutor in a family in southern Georgia. When the Civil war broke out, he left Savannah in September, 1861, and after a long and difficult journey through Georgia, Tennessee and Kentucky, then the scene of active military operations, he reached home. While in Atlanta he was arrested as a Northern spy and he secured his release through the good offices of a fellow traveler, General John E. Ward, United States Minister to China, who was himself making his way to Canada to join his family in Italy. Mr. Ward was a law partner of the mayor of Savannah with a pass from the Mayor and he vouched for his fellow traveler. Young Davis enlisted in the 11th Connecticut volunteer infantry, was made quartermaster's sergeant, and accompanied his regiment to North Carolina in Burnside's expedition. He took part in the Battle of New Berne, March 14, 1862, and was promoted first lieutenant of his company, and was at South Mountain and Antietam. Lieutenant Davis remained with the Army of the Potomac to the close of the war holding important staff positions, witnessing the surrender of Lee at Appomattox Court House. He served as chief quartermaster of a division and accompanied the twenty-fifth army corps, General Weitzel, to Texas, when war was threatened on the Mexican border. He was honorably discharged from the volunteer service, 1866; was commissioned captain, 14th United States infantry, early in 1867 and was ordered to Arizona, subsequently serving in Dakota, Nebraska, Utah and Texas, acting principally as engineer in the erection of military posts and army buildings. In 1876 he was appointed chief assistant to General Casey and helped to plan and execute the completion of the long unfinished Washington monument without taking down the portion built years before on an insecure foundation. He was assigned to the staff of Lieutenant-General Philip H. Sheridan as aide and soon after was made instructor of engineering at the United States military school at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. In 1890 by special act of congress he was granted indefinite leave of absence with permission to accept the general management of the Nicaraguan Canal Company, of which corporation he became vice-president. When financial difficulties caused the*

*company to abandon its work in 1893, Major Davis was ordered to special duty in the war department at Washington. In 1895 he was appointed president of the board of publication of the "Rebellion Records" and in 1896 was the war department official in charge of the reception given by the government to Li Hung Chang on the occasion of his visit to the United States. He was promoted major, United States army, in 1897, and lieutenant-colonel in 1898.*

*At the beginning of the war with Spain he mustered into service the volunteer troops at New York and was appointed brigadier general of volunteers and placed in command of Division A in the Second army corps which he organized at Camp Alger. In November, 1898, he was sent to Cuba as acting military governor of the province of Pinar del Rio, and in January, 1899, he was made department commander. In May, 1899, he was assigned by President McKinley to the command of the Department of Porto Rico, becoming the military governor of the island. He received promotion to colonel of the 23d U. S. infantry, October 19, 1899. He transferred his civil functions to the government May 1, 1900, and upon the discontinuance of the Department of Porto Rico the body politic became operative as The People of Porto Rico. He was transferred to the war department and thence to the Philippine Islands as inspector-general of the army, January, 1901. He was appointed brigadier-general U. S. A., in February, 1901, and commanded the city of Manila and the troops serving therein. He drafted a law for the civil government of the city at the request of the Philippine Commission, and the measure with some changes was adopted and went into effect August, 1901. He was then sent to the Moro country to suppress the insurgents, and by April, 1902, had broken the rebellion and established a military government. In July, 1902, he was appointed major-general, U. S. A.; and in August he assumed command of the military district of Luzon. On October 1, 1902, he was placed in command of the Division of the Philippines. He established order on the islands and assisted the civil government. Early in 1903 he suppressed an outbreak near Lake Lanao by capturing all the Moro forts; and he constructed good roads between remote posts and Manila.*

*General Davis was retired July 26, 1903, by operation of law. On March 3, 1904, he was appointed a member of the Isthmian Canal*



*Commission. He was a member of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion and of the Metropolitan club of Washington, District of Columbia. He was married April 30, 1870, to Carmen Atocha. His army life has kept him entirely out of politics and he has never voted at any political elections. His most profitable reading has been history, engineering and political economy, and he took up building and engineering "from a desire to do things. "The influences that shaped his course in life began in his home by the precepts and example of his parents and received strength by his association with men of affairs and by his own determination not to be an idler. His advice to young men is, "Do as you would be done by and never cease doing"; "persistent plodding industry has done more for me than all else." His published works consist of "Reports" on the economical and industrial conditions of the islands over which he was governor from 1898 to 1903, nine in number, published by the war department.<sup>11</sup>*

Bayles, in his 1889 book, *History of Windham County, Connecticut*, captures the story of Thompson's only Congressional Medal of Honor winner, First Lieutenant William Sully Beebe. Lieutenant Beebe received the country's highest award by voluntarily leading a successful assault of a fortified position at Cane Crossing, Louisiana. He later became quite the colorful character mostly due to his passionate beliefs in American Mythology and that a great civilization originating in Peru once occupied America. Bayles writes:

*William Sully Beebe was born at Ithaca, N.Y., in 1831, and educated with a view to his appointment to the Military Academy at West Point. He was one of the president's appointments there in 1858, on account of the services of his uncle and adopted father, Captain John C. Casey, himself a graduate of 1829, a member of the board of visitors of 1843, chief commissary on General Taylor's staff in Mexico, "whose zeal, intelligence and devotion to duty to the hour of his death, gave a peculiar claim and promise of faithful service to his young relative."*

---

<sup>11</sup> Gates, *Men of Mark in America*, 275-279.



*Above: A circa 1862 picture of a Civil War era soldier on the Thompson Common. This picture may have been taken during the return celebration of Dr. John McGregor, 3<sup>rd</sup> Connecticut Infantry. He was captured on July 21, 1861, at Bull Run when he refused to leave his injured and dying men.<sup>12</sup> As a P.O.W. he was badly treated and was eventually paroled and returned to Connecticut. Because of his sense of duty and the fact he was one of the first P.O.W.s taken in the war, he was made a national figure. (Thompson Historical Society)*

*He graduated in 1863, fifteenth in a class of twenty-five, was appointed a second lieutenant of ordnance and assigned to St. Louis Arsenal except during the time of Morgan's raid, when he served as volunteer aid with the forces opposing Morgan in Kentucky and Indiana. At his urgent request he was ordered to the field in the Department of the Gulf as assistant to its chief of ordnance. He applied for detail with the Red River Expedition then starting, and was appointed its chief ordnance officer, taking part in all the battles and actions of that campaign, acting*

---

<sup>12</sup> Cutler, *Connecticut Volunteers from Thompson*, 1.

*as aid to the general commanding at the battle of Sabine Cross Roads, leading the supports of Nims' Battery in an attempt to recover it from the enemy, when his horse was killed under him inside the battery and he himself was wounded, for which service he was reported to headquarters by the chief of staff, an eye-witness of the occurrence.*

*In the action of the same day, when the 19th Army Corps repulsed the confederate advance, he was sent to restore the extreme right of the federal line; in which effort he was successful, taking advantage of the confederate check to drive them in turn and capturing many prisoners, thus securing the first authentic intelligence of Taylor's reinforcement by Churchill's Missouri Column, for which he received the thanks of the 19th Corps commander, and was again commended to army headquarters. At the battle of Pleasant Hill he was commended by the general commanding the army and 19th Corps for his promptness and energy in leading the supports into action. At the evacuation of Alexandria, and the conflagration that took place during a gale, he, at the head of a detail of picked men, attempted to stay the fire by blowing up the buildings in its path. During this time the party again and again escaped destruction by premature explosion, in some cases the flakes from burning buildings falling into the receptacles for powder when they were about to be filled. For this he was thanked by the citizens of the town, headed by a brother-in-law of General Albert Sidney Johnston, who pledged the good name of the town for the safety and release of the party in case of its capture by the confederate advance.*

*When the fleet under command of Admiral David D. Porter had been forced to lighten draught by landing their guns, the first intention had been to burst them, but on Lieutenant Beebe's stating that he was confident he could move them below the falls and reload them on the vessels to which they belonged, he was given the men to make the attempt and succeeded in saving all but five old model 32s, which he had to leave through lack of time. For this service Admiral Porter wrote as follows: "It was under Captain Beebe's orders that that most efficient ordnance party worked so laboriously and efficiently to save the guns of the fleet from falling into the hands of the enemy, and but for Captain Beebe's energy and perseverance the guns would have been so abandoned."*

*At the battle of Cane River Crossing, while the rear guard were being pressed by the enemy, and while the head of the column was held in check by some 8,000 confederates strongly entrenched, with artillery in position, in fact, when success was vital, he was directed by the new chief of staff, General Dwight, to join the column detached to dislodge this force and "on his arrival to signal what he thought the strength of the opposing force and to unremittingly urge the necessity for speed, in which action he would be sustained by his superiors. "On his arrival, finding the confederate skirmish line on the advance instead of being pushed, he volunteered to lead the regiment in front of him in assault if suitably supported, which offer was at first declined with some asperity, but on its being renewed when the confederates showed signs of attacking in force, was promptly accepted. He led the assault, being the first man inside the confederate lines, from which they were driven in full retreat and for which their commander was relieved from his command and was tried by court martial. In this assault the attacking column lost some 200 men. On his return he was complimented by the column commander on the spot, and on arriving at headquarters was informed by the chief of staff, who sent him, that while waiting for his report by signal, he received the news that the enemy had been driven out of their works by an assault led by the staff officer he had sent. Lieutenant Beebe was brevetted captain in the U. S. Army to date from this battle as follows "For gallant and meritorious services and for intrepidity and daring and skill in handling men in the face of the enemy."*

*On the run down the Mississippi, when the headquarter boat was under fire at Tunica Bend, the battery was engaged at close quarters by a rifle placed on the boat's upper deck with such satisfactory results that although the boat itself was riddled, no lives were lost, and the transports following passed without receiving a shot. This gun was manned by members of the general staff, Lieutenant Sargent, Doctor Homans and others, under Lieutenant Beebe's direction.*

*When the expedition terminated Lieutenant Beebe received leave of absence -with a view to his acceptance of a volunteer command, for which he was recommended by the general commanding and every corps commander in the department, as follows: "He has shown upon various occasions intrepidity and daring and skill in handling men in the face of*



*the enemy that merit the highest applause, and should secure for him any position he may choose to seek. At Cane River Crossing he particularly distinguished himself by leading a regiment on a charge, most gallantly carrying a strong position held by the enemy. You will find him fully competent to command a regiment or even a larger body of men."*

*General W. B. Franklin, commander of the 19th Army Corps, said: "I am sure that a regiment under his command cannot fail to distinguish itself, and I cordially endorse his application." Owing to the appearance of smallpox on the transport on which he sailed and the consequent quarantine, Lieutenant Beebe lost the opportunity he had in view, and as he found that political influence would be required in any new direction, something he had neither time nor inclination to seek, he returned to his station at New Orleans, where he found that without his knowledge an order had been issued assigning him to duty on the staff of General Gordon Granger, then about to undertake the expedition for the capture of Forts Gaines and Morgan, the outer defenses of Mobile bay. - Against General Granger's friendly contention he had this order recalled, preferring the position of chief of ordnance of the expedition to even such a complimentary position as that offered him. During the siege of Fort Morgan the method of supply for the batteries by wagon along the beach being tedious, he was asked by his chief if he thought he could run a light draught steamer captured from the enemy, under cover of darkness and relying on the fire of our sharpshooters to prevent its being sunk, up to the mortar batteries, which were within a few hundred yards of the fort, with a deck load of powder and shell. This he undertook to do the next morning at daylight, and when about to land his cargo, saw in the dusk the flag of truce just sent out with a view to the surrender of the fort. He accordingly ran by the batteries and over the torpedo ground, trusting to his light draught, and tied up at the fort wharf. Owing to this circumstance and the politeness of the confederate ordnance officer, who came down to the end of the wharf and invited him to make the tour of the fort, he was the first person inside the works from the federal side, which was then on fire and was surrendered that day at noon. He was, on General Granger's nomination, brevetted major, to date from the capture of the fort, "for gallant and meritorious services at the siege of Fort Morgan."*

*A few months later the expedition under command of General E. R. S. Canby, for the reduction of Mobile and its outlying defenses, Forts Blakely, Huger and Tracy, and Spanish Fort, was undertaken, when Major Beebe was, at his own request, ordered to duty as its chief ordnance officer, his especial charge being an ordnance and siege train that was drilled for the purpose, reviewed by the commanding general and received his written commendation. While the troops were being transferred across the bay after the outlying defenses and the city itself surrendered, Major Beebe took the yawl of one of his transports, and with her captain and mate as crew, a confederate pilot pressed into the service, and Colonel Palfrey, chief engineer, as fellow-passenger, ran across the obstructions and torpedo ground and put up the first flag in the city of ' Mobile, on the spire of the Episcopal church, the confederate cavalry raiding the streets while they were thus engaged, and the party only escaping capture by the confederates being so sharply pressed by our infantry as not to have time to dismount.*

*Major Beebe was one of a half dozen officers sent to Meridian, Miss., to receive the surrender of General Dick Taylor's army and supplies, after which, the war being over, he was sent to command Mount Vernon Arsenal, Ala., from thereto Frankford Arsenal, Pa., where in securing the arrest of a night expedition of river thieves he, with two enlisted men, captured their whole outfit, a sloop and yawl, one of the party, and were forced to kill another who fired the first shot and died pistol in hand. The men with him were commended in post orders.*

*From Frankford he was ordered to Fort Monroe, and during an explosion that took place in an ammunition house in one of the redoubts, a building some twenty feet square, in which, "when the explosion took place there were some twenty barrels of powder" and five men, two of whom were mortally wounded and three killed, "the powder and wounded were safely gotten out of the way by Major W. S. Beebe and Richard Oldfield, William Hayward, James Cooney and Private Carter, Company A, Third Artillery. The conduct of Major Beebe was highly commendable in his efforts to save life and property, as he exposed himself to more than ordinary danger in doing so."*

*From Fort Monroe he was ordered to Watervliet Arsenal, Troy, N. Y., and from there to Alleghany Arsenal, Pittsburgh, Pa., and finally*

*to Rock Island, Ill., from which place he resigned, to take" effect at the end of the year as an unusual mark of favor." Previous to his resignation Major Beebe had gone abroad with a circular from the State Department, worded as follows:" That the Department took peculiar pleasure in commending him as one who had conducted himself with distinguished ability and gallantry in the field, during the late Civil War," and "that he came highly commended by General Grant, General Meade and General Dyer, Chief of his Corps."<sup>13</sup>*

Many other Thompson soldiers distinguished themselves heroically in the battles of Gettysburg, Fredericksburg, Antietam, Bull Run, and Brandy Station, just to name a few. A personal account of the war was captured by East Thompson's Henry Brown, a naïve young lad of eighteen years of age, who joined the Twenty-First Massachusetts Infantry. Henry, like many who enlisted, envisioned being rushed to the battlefield and after a short period of hard fighting, returning home in glorious triumph.<sup>14</sup> Little did he know in 1861, how very wrong he would be. His nearly fifty letters home to his mother, father, and siblings, found in the 1990's by his family, and later shared with the author (and the world) by his direct decedents, including great-great nephew John Proctor, details the many hardships of daily life as an infantry private in the Union Army from August 19, 1861, to May of 1864. Young Henry, after surviving many battles to include, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bull Run, Fredericksburg, Ox Hill, and Gettysburg, fell ill, and like so many other soldiers during the war, miserably succumbed to his illness.

Brown's biographer, John Proctor, tells us of the heart-wrenching anguish Brown's parents felt upon hearing the devastating news of their son's illness. His father Benjamin Brown, a poor farmer, travelled from East Thompson to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where Henry was hospitalized, to see to the care of his oldest son. His mother, much to her distress, was unable to join her husband as she had just given birth to the Brown's ninth child. Benjamin, after a short time with his son, returned to his East Thompson, Connecticut farm to plant the year's crop, leaving his gravely ill son behind, knowing he had little time to live. Leaving his dying son to return home to care to the balance of his family must have been the most difficult decision of Benjamin's life. A week after he arrived in Philadelphia he wrote his wife the following:

---

<sup>13</sup> Bayles, *History of Windham County*, 722-726.

<sup>14</sup> John Proctor, interview with author.

Joseph Lindley

*Dear Wife,*

*I now take this time to write a few lines to you to inform you that I don't think Henry will live long. He is fading very fast. His cough is very hard and he grows weaker all the time. His bowels are swelled. A good deal of his feet are also swelled. He is nothing but skin and bones. I can't write anymore now...*<sup>15</sup>

To one of his oldest daughters he simply writes, "Adaline, you see what father has wrote. There is no hope now..."<sup>16</sup> Henry Brown died a short time later on May 19, 1864, at Satterlee Hospital, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.<sup>17</sup>

Brown's story was not unique as many Thompson families had to contend with the loss of a love one, most of whom were just boys. Many, who did return home, bore the typical scars of war, spending the rest of their lives dealing with terrible physical and mental maladies that few outside the brotherhood of war could understand. With twenty-five percent total casualties, few could argue that the men from the small town of Thompson, Connecticut did their share.

---

<sup>15</sup> Henry Brown Letters, (Proctor and Brown families), Found at: <http://www.thompsonhistorical.org>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

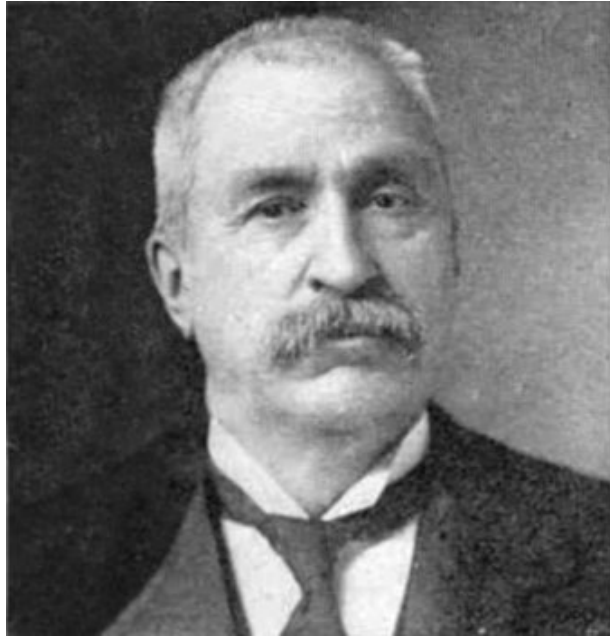
<sup>17</sup> Author's note: The story of Henry Washington Brown is based on an interview with John Proctor, Henry's great-great nephew and Henry's actual letters. Transcribed copies of the Brown letters are displayed with the Proctor and Brown family permission at the Thompson Historical Society Website at: [www.thompsonhistorical.com/collections](http://www.thompsonhistorical.com/collections). For me, the letters remain one of the most poignant accounts of the war from a soldier's perspective. They also provide support to Warshauer's findings regarding the average Connecticut resident's perspective of the slave issue. The Proctor and Brown family reserves all rights.





*Above: The Thompson, Connecticut Civil War Monument located on Thompson Common opposite the Congressional Church. The actual date of its dedication is not known, but the author suspects it was around the turn of the century. (Thompson Historical Society)*

*Joseph Lindley*



*Above: Lieutenant Thompson's Sully Beebe (top-left), Major General George Davis (top-right), and Sergeant Orton Green (bottom). Many of Green's descendants still live in the Thompson area. (Thompson Historical Society)*

## THREE

---

### JACOB FRANCIS AND JOHN EATON TOURTELLOTTE

**D**r. Jacob Francis Tourtellotte and Brigadier General John Eaton Tourtellotte were raised in Wilsonville, a small farming village of Thompson, Connecticut. Marking the general location of the family's farm is a field-stone-enclosed graveyard, now located at the corner of Lowell Davis Road and Wilsonville Road. The family plot dates back to the 1700's and contains many of Jacob's and John's relatives to include their mother and father, Jacob and Poly. Jacob Tourtellotte (1793-1878) and Poly (Ballard) Tourtellotte (1799-1875) had four



*Above: Tourtellotte farm "Maplehurst" located in the Wilsonville section of Thompson circa 1880. (Thompson Historical Society)*

boys - Augustus Valentine Tourtellotte (1820-1872), Monroe Lynde Tourtellotte (1823-1894), John Eaton Tourtellotte (1833-1891), and Jacob Francis Tourtellotte (1835-1912).<sup>18</sup>

The three older boys, Augustus, Monroe, and John, pursued higher educations and left Thompson for better opportunities in the rapidly growing Midwest, more specifically, Minnesota and Wisconsin. The youngest of the four, Jacob Francis, after earning a teaching degree, moved to New York, where he pursued a medical degree. The two older brothers, Augustus and Monroe did not participate in the Civil War, most likely due to their age at the start of the war, forty-one and thirty-eight respectively.<sup>19</sup>

There were a number of other Tourtellottes listed on local Civil War rosters to include relatives Oscar Tourtellotte and Newton Tourtellotte, of Thompson. Oscar served with Company D, Twenty-Fifth Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers from 1861 until being discharged in 1864, Newton served with Company D, Second Rhode Island Volunteer Infantry. The Twenty-Fifth Massachusetts fought in many of the very same battles as did Henry Brown's Twenty-First Massachusetts, and it is very likely both crossed paths, although they may not have known each other. Other Tourtellotte relatives from Dudley, Massachusetts, and Putnam, Connecticut, also fought during the war.<sup>20</sup>

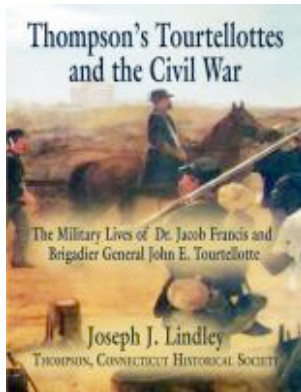


*Left: Judge Oscar Tourtellotte, of Thompson, CT. Oscar was a selectman and judge in the Town of Thompson. This picture, circa 1861, might have been taken shortly before or after he joined the 25<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry. The 25th was organized in September of 1861 at Camp Lincoln, Worcester, MA. Oscar is credited with the single-handed capture of twenty-six Confederate soldiers.<sup>1</sup> As a judge, he later helped his cousin Dr. J. F. Tourtellotte secure his military pension. Photo compliments of Mary Tourtellotte Wood.*

<sup>18</sup> Anderson, et al, *Encyclopedia of Biography*, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Cutler, Aspinock Historical Society.



***Thompson's Tourtellottes and the Civil War** chronicles the military lives of Dr. Jacob Francis Tourtellotte USN and his brother Brigadier General John E. Tourtellotte of the 4th MN Infantry Regiment. After leaving their childhood home in Thompson, Connecticut in search of new lives, both young men, like so many others in America, were caught in the surge of war that swept a nation and devastated an entire generation.*

# Thompson's Tourtellottes and the Civil War

Order the complete book from

**[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6268.html?s=pdf)**

**<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6268.html?s=pdf>**

**or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.**