

Lewis (aka, Louis) T. Dutton was a very unique individual. His advanced literacy skills put him into a special role in his life time.

Lewis was born on December 26, 1838 in Brandon, Vermont. ^[1] The initial "T" stood for Tippecanoe, which came from the popular song turned campaign slogan of William Henry Harrison and John Tyler (Tip and Ty) in the 1840 Presidential election. ^[2] Lewis' parents were William Turner Dutton and Lydia (Johnson) Dutton. ^[3] He had two sisters and three brothers: Mary Jane and Laura Adelia; Turner William, John and Nathan Thomas, who was actually a step-brother. ^[4] All of the Dutton's lived in Goshen, Vermont right through the time that Lewis went off to war (1850-1860) ^[5] William, Lewis' father, operated a farm in Goshen all those years. So it made sense that Lewis grew up with an interest in agriculture and nature. When he was twenty-two, he still lived with his parents and his siblings Lewis was "...a painter, a part-time botanist and a cultivator of gladiolus..." ^[6]

He apparently was also known for his literary skills. When the Rutland Herald needed a field correspondent to report on the Regiments being raised to answer President Lincoln's call for troops, he was chosen. He began reporting on the activities of the Third Vermont from June, 1861 until mid-July. Initially Dutton's letters dealt with how the raw recruits of the Third were getting by while they awaited clothing and equipment to outfit themselves. He devoted considerable space to describing how manly they looked and how proficient they were becoming at the drill. He lavished praise on them for being the finest specimens of soldiers to be found anywhere and how they would make every Vermonter proud: "...that their self respect and their respect and love for Vermont, will inspire them to the performance of deeds of valor, such as every Vermonter will be proud to name; that they will follow the flag of our country wherever it leads, in the darkest hour and in the thickest of the fight..." ^[7]

After the Union disaster at First Bull Run on July 21, 1861, additional Regiments were called for by the President. Vermont immediately raised the Fourth and Fifth Regiments during late July and early August, 1861. That is when Lewis decided to go from just being a field correspondent for the Rutland Herald to becoming a soldier in the Army. The twenty-three year old painter signed up on August 24, 1861 at Brandon, Vermont for three years. He stood five feet six and three-quarter inches tall with a light complexion, blue eyes and auburn hair. The painter was assigned to Company H of the Fifth Vermont Infantry. ^[8] It wasn't until September 16, 1861 that Lewis was officially accepted into the service. He had to go to St. Albans to get mustered-in. He then became a member of Captain Seagar's H Company of the Fifth. ^[9]

Lewis continued to write for the Rutland Herald as its semi-official correspondent. His first "news from the front" reports essentially focused on the routines and monotony of camp life. He also included in his letters to the editor from Camp Griffin in Virginia many lamentations over the great numbers of Vermonters who were dying of the various camp illnesses like pneumonia, diarrhea and typhoid. He reported in one letter that as much as twenty-five percent of the Vermont Brigade was down with one ailment or another at the same muster roll in 1862. Several times in these winter of 1862 letters Lewis revealed his intense hatred of the Rebels. In one, written on December 20, 1861, he expressed his belief that "...We must learn the South a lesson: - a lesson they will never forget; and that is 'to let well enough alone'...but will close, hoping that traitors (both in and out of uniform) may see their folly and turn from it..." ^[10]

With the coming of Spring, Dutton's letters home began to take on a new focus - confrontations with hostile forces increased as activity of both armies escalated. Skirmishes between enemy forces became more frequent. During February of 1862, Lewis reported that several times Union cavalry had taken Rebel prisoners while suffering only slight casualties themselves.

In a late February, 1862 letter to the editor, Lewis went into great detail about how the Vermont Regiment celebrated Washington's birthday: "...On returning to our new Camp ground (from having listened to patriotic speeches and having a dress parade) a little excitement was gotten up in the shape of fun,...A pole was greased, and ten dollars placed upon the top of it....The next operation was a foot race by the different officers of the regiments....The next thing on the programme was a foot race by the corporals and privates - these being chosen from each company....The next operation was a foot race by the privates, having a sack drawn over their persons....The next thing was a five dollar greased pig....The ones that caught him were to take him for their booty....To close the exercises of the day, a football strife took place in the regiment, between the right wing and left wings....and never will the 5th Regiment forget the day." [11]

Warmer weather in 1862 not only brought renewed vigor among those in camp, but also those in command. McClellan, after agonizingly delaying any action against the Confederate capital of Richmond, finally began moving his army. The Vermont Brigade was ordered out of camp on March 15, 1862. The next day, it found itself in Alexandria, Virginia. The Union strategy did not call for a direct assault on the Confederate capital, but, rather, deployed Federal troops by riverboats to the tip of the Virginia Peninsula. They were landed near Fort Monroe and then marched up the Peninsula towards Richmond. However, the Confederates had been made aware of their plan of assault and had moved their troops from Richmond to near Yorktown. There they set up a defensive line clear across the Peninsula to meet the Federal threat.

One of the resulting engagements of this campaign involved the Vermont Brigade, particularly the Fifth Vermont Regiment, at a place called Lee's Mills. Lewis described the encounter in one of his letters to Vermont:

"Camp Near Yorktown, Va.

April 27, 1862 (the engagement actually occurred April 16)

On the 3d day of April we were marched the distance of about a mile, by flank, through mud and ditches, near by a fort on the James River, where we halted and commenced pitching our tents; but ere this was accomplished, we received orders to be in readiness for a march next day, at 6P.M., and with two days' rations in our haversacks. As we drew near said Mills, a spyglass view was taken of the place and the strength of the enemy ascertained. At this we were drawn up in line of battle, and marched some distance in the woods, over fallen trees, underbrush, and the like. On we rushed, through a small clearing, and thence to the enemy's works. A few rods from the earthworks, is a steep bank and trees felled in every possible way; and such a tumbling down hill I never witnessed before. I recollect stepping on a log at the top of the hill, and also picking myself out of the mud at the bottom. Not heeding this, I rushed on with others, and in a moment's time we were all over their comfortable quarters, ransacking every nook and corner. In many instances meat was found frying, biscuits cooking, &c. We only had one man wounded in the affair, a private in Co. G. Here we encamped for the night, but early in the morning we resumed our march; and a rainy day it was, too....A few days since (actually August 16) the Vermont Third charged upon one of their rifle-pits, drove them out, killing many of them, and losing between thirty and forty on our side in killed. Two companies (part of the 4th and 6th) were sent across (the dam and pond at Lee's Mills) and two left behind (part of the 4th and the 5th) for support. After this the Sixth became engaged in the contest; but as the enemy had received reinforcements by the thousands, it was not thought best to contend with the 'ghosts of Dixie' at such fearful odds. This latter disaster may be well enough, but I 'can't see it' It may not by some be considered a disaster, but to me it seems quite a serious one..."^[12]

Serious it was for the Third and Sixth Vermont who had made two charges on the Rebel works by wading across the bogs and pond at Lee's Mills. All told, Vermont lost sixty-five killed and one hundred forty-eight wounded in the action on April 16, 1862.^[13] This was the first major baptism by fire for the Fifth. It would not be the last.

McClellan's forces kept relentlessly pushing the Confederates back towards their capital. As they pursued the Rebels, they encountered a first-of-its-kind weapon being used by the Southerners. In a letter to the Vermont newspaper dated May 8, 1862 from "Camp near Williamsburg, Va.", he tells of Federal troops coming across a new and unheard of tool of warfare - land mines: "..The rebels in evacuating their strongholds placed percussion shells in the ground for the purpose of blowing up our men....I learn that two men were killed and seven or eight wounded by one of them; after this they were dug up

and a guard placed around them...." ^[14] It was Confederate Brigadier-General Gabriel J. Rains who ordered his retreating troops to bury artillery shells in the paths of the advancing Federals so that, by pulling a trip wire or stepping directly on a hidden shell, it would cause it to explode. ^[15] This is the same man who, as a Union officer, mustered-in the early regiments from Vermont.

By May 24, 1862. Private Dutton was in the hospital sick. He took himself to White House Hospital where he joined a thousand other sick soldiers. The Fifth marched on towards Richmond without him. While at the hospital, Lewis wrote home once more: "There are probably one thousand men stationed in tents...besides there are several boats or floating hospitals upon the Pamunkey (River)....Some have fevers, others have a severe cold and a bad cough; most, however, are worn out...." ^[16] The Vermonters were now close enough to Richmond to hear the church bells ringing on Sunday morning. Along with the celestial music of the bells, those at the hospital could hear the continual booming of their own siege cannons.

June 25, 1862, the newly appointed commander-in-chief of the Army of Virginia, Robert E. Lee, decided the Blue Bellies had gotten close enough to Richmond. He began an offensive action that came to be called the Seven Days Battle. One of seven severe clashes between Lee's forces and McClellan's occurred on the fourth day. It was called the battle of Savage's Station and the Fifth, along with the rest of the Vermont Brigade, was in the middle of it. The fighting had been going on most of the day before the Vermonters were ordered to make a frontal attack on a well entrenched and well supported Confederate position. Other Federal troops had refused to charge it. But the Vermonters went into the fray without hesitation. The Fifth, in particular, was mowed down like stalks of wheat before the scythe. Musket balls, grape and canister and a thirty-two pounder mounted on a railroad car decimated the Regiment. It suffered over 200 casualties. Private Dutton's company alone lost thirty-five rank and file in twenty minutes of fighting. Among those wounded was Lewis T. Dutton. ^[17] At first, newspapers reporting on the battle listed Lewis as being wounded in the chest and

shoulder and captured by the enemy. The wounds they probably got right based on official records of Lewis' death. The captured part they got wrong. When nightfall fell on the battle field at Savage's Station, a violent thunderstorm erupted over the scene. The darkness and noise allowed Vermonters to search for wounded comrades they had not been able to carry off the field. They retrieved some, but many still had to be left for the Confederates to find and care for. ^[18] In a sense, Lewis was one of the lucky wounded, for his comrades did remove him from the field.

He was sent to Camden Street USA General Hospital for treatment of his wounds. He lingered through July and into the first half of August, finally dying of his wounds on August 19, 1862. ^[19] Private Lewis T. Dutton, age twenty-five of Brandon, Vermont, single, of Co. H, 5th Vermont died of multiple gun shot wounds. His body was taken care of by friends. His remains were embalmed and returned to Vermont for burial. ^[20]

NOTES

1. Ancestry.com, U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600's-Current.
2. en.wikipedia.org and Ancestry.com, U.S., Registers of Deaths of Volunteers, 1861-1865; Fold3.com, Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Vermont, p. 2, image 311420710. Herein referred to as Compiled Service Records....
3. Ancestry.com, U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600's-Current under Lewis Tippecanoe Dutton.
4. www.findagrave.com under Louis Tippecanoe Dutton.
5. Ancestry.com, 1850 and 1860 U.S. Federal Census under Lewis Dutton.
6. Letters To Vermont From Her Civil War Soldier Correspondents To The Home Press, Volume I, edited and compiled by Donald H. Wickman, Images from the Past, Inc., Bennington, VT, 1998, p. 59. Herein referred to as Letters To Vermont; Ancestry.com, 1850 and 1860 U.S. Federal Censuses under William Dutton and Lewis T. Dutton; Fold3.com, Compiled Service Records..., p. 2, image 311420710.

7. Letters To Vermont, Wickman, p. 69.
8. Fold3.com, Compiled Service Records..., p. 2, image 311420710.
9. Ibid., Compiled Service Records..., p. 4, image 311420712.
10. Letters To Vermont, Wickman, p. 75.
11. Ibid., Wickman, pp. 83-84.
12. Op cit., Wickman, pp. 87-88.
13. Full Duty: Vermonters In The Civil War, Howard Coffin, The Countryman Press, Woodstock, 1993, p. 95. For a more detailed account of the fight at Lee's Mills, see Full Duty, pp. 92-96.
14. Letters To Vermont, Wickman, p. 89. Operational land mines are considered an American invention. Credit for their development has been given to Confederate Brigadier-General Gabriel J. Rains, a former U.S. Army officer.
15. [https://: ill members.iinet.net.au](https://illmembers.iinet.net.au), The History of Landmines, p. 3.
16. Letters To Vermont, Wickman, p. 91.
17. Fold3. com, Compiled Service Records..., p. 9, image 311420717 and Letters To Vermont, Wickman, p. 95. For a more detailed account of the battle of June 29, see Full Duty, pp. 105-110.
18. Letters To Vermont, Wickman, p. 95.
19. Fold3.com, Compiled Service Records..., p. 10, image 311420718.
20. Ibid., Compiled Service Records..., p. 18, image 311420726.