



"True Jersey Blues" : The Civil War Letters of Lucien A. Voorhees and William Mackenzie Thompson, 15th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteers

Dominick Mazzagetti

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Lucien A. Voorhees and William Mackenzie Thompson left Flemington, New Jersey, in high spirits in September 1862 as enlisted men in the 15th New Jersey Regiment to join the fight for the Union. They expected to do their duty and return home victorious in short order. On the march South Voorhees and Thompson each began a correspondence with the local newspapers back home to describe their activities as soldiers in the Army of the Potomac. Within just weeks of their departure from home they came face to face with the realities of war at the Battle of Fredericksburg. These young men proved to be great writers as well as patriots. Their letters, short or long, convey their feelings and the events they witnessed in vivid and colorful language. They soon discovered that their service would demand great sacrifice.

'True Jersey Blues' presents Voorhees' and Thompson's vivid accounts of life on the march, fierce firefights, and everyday occupations convey a true sense of the Civil War as experienced by the men enlisted to fight. The letters from Voorhees and Thompson cover the period from the muster of the 15th Regiment at Flemington (August 1862) through the combat deaths of both writers at Spotsylvania (May 1864). The soldiers tell the story of two failed Federal assaults on Fredericksburg, a race to Gettysburg, the subsequent chase after the Army of Northern Virginia, court-martials, executions, a dress parade for President Lincoln, picket duty, "contrabands" (escaped slaves) coming into the Union lines, and the activities contrived to keep themselves busy in winter camp. These men never lost their faith in the cause they were fighting for or their love of home.

Their pens went silent at Spotsylvania in the spring of 1864 where they sacrificed their lives for the cause they believed in. Here, Voorhees and Thompson tell their story of the Civil War and their fight for victory.

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