

THE BERMINGHAMS OF THE IRISH BRIGADE

The Story of Four Family Members who Served in
Company A, 69th New York State Volunteers

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69th New York Historical Association

THE FENIAN RALLYING SONG.

*Where glory's beams are seen, boys,
To cheer the way, to cheer the way,
We bear the Emerald Green, boys,
And clear the way, and clear the way;
Our flag shall foremost be, boys,
In battle fray, in battle fray,
When the Fenians cross the sea, boys,
And clear the way, and clear the way.*

*That home where valor first, boys,
In all her charms, in all her charms,
Roused up the souls she nurs'd, boys,
And called to arms, and called to arms;
One trial more 'tis worth, boys,
'Tis worth our while, 'tis worth our while,
To drive the tyrant forth, boys,
And free our isle, and free our isle!*

*We love the generous land, boys,
In which we live, in which we live;
And which a welcome grand, boys,
To all doth give, to all doth give.
May God upon it smile, boys,
And swell its fame, and swell its fame!
But we don't forget the isle, boys,
From whence we came, from whence we came.*

*Things soon may take a turn, boys,
There's no one knows, there's no one knows,
When the Stars and Stripes may burn, boys,
Against our foes, against our foes;
When Yankee guns shall thunder
On Britain's coast, on Britain's coast,
And land, our green flag under,
The Fenian host, the Fenian host!*

*Oh, let us pray to God, boys
To grant the day, to grant the day,
We may press our native sod, boys,
In linked array, in linked array!
Let them give us arms and ships, boys,
We ask no more, we ask no more;
And Ireland's long eclipse, boys,
Will soon be o'er, will soon be o'er!*

Charles G. Halpine

THE BERMINGHAMS OF THE IRISH BRIGADE

Prologue: 1848 to 1861 - Ireland and the United States

Famine raged in Ireland during the 1840's. A million souls perished in *an Gorta Mor*, the Great Hunger. Hundreds of thousands more languished in work houses that offered scarce comfort and no hope. There were no farms, no jobs and no future for the Catholic poor.

A million Irish, with God's mercy, found passage to North America - *Tir na nOg*, the legendary Land of the Young. Most settled in the United States where life was extremely hard for the unskilled, destitute Irish. But *Amerikay* offered what Ireland could not - a chance for those willing to work hard, an education for the children, a Church triumphing over prejudice, a political process open to all. It offered freedom.

Among the million emigrants were the families of William and Richard Bermingham. At the end of 1848 they left the town of Mt. Armstrong, Rahan Parish in King's County (now Offaly). William and Richard had married sisters, Ellen and Bridget Magee. William and Ellen emigrated with their nine children and Richard and Bridget brought their seven children. All sailed together on the ship *Naomi* and landed in New York City on January 25, 1849.

William and Ellen Bermingham settled in northwest New Jersey. Morris and Sussex counties had large Irish communities working in the iron mines and mills, as well as in canal and railroad building. Settling in Mine Hill, near Dover Township, William worked in the backbreaking conditions of the mines. His sons Edward, John, Richard, William and Andrew joined their father in the mines as soon as they could wield a pickaxe and shovel. Edward died in 1859 and was buried in St. Mary's old cemetery in Port Oram (now Wharton). William died in 1862 and was buried with his son.

Richard and Bridget Bermingham remained in New York City and became a part of the country's largest Irish population. They maintained close touch with their relatives in New Jersey. Richard made sure that his children were well educated. Two of Richard's sons - Andrew and Richard, Jr. - found office work. His son William became a priest and his daughter Anna became a nun, both serving in St. Mary's after the Civil War.

America in the 1850's was an exciting, growing nation; a stark contrast to the sad state of Ireland. Yet America had been a British colony only a lifetime before. During their revolution the American colonists, who numbered far fewer than the Catholic Irish, fought against the same tyranny that beggared Ireland and threw it off. American citizen soldiers had faced the military might of the British empire and defeated it. Could Ireland do the same?

Many Irish revolutionary leaders thought so - with America's help. In 1858 John O'Mahony and Michael Doheny organized the Irish Republican Brotherhood or Fenians (the IRB, allied with *Sinn Fein*, and the Irish Republican Army, would eventually lead Ireland to freedom in 1921). The Brotherhood favored freeing Ireland by force of arms. It became the secret sponsor of the 69th New York State Militia, a military regiment most of whose members were Fenians.

The 69th was the best known Irish militia regiment. The regiment was formed in 1851 by grouping together a number of private Irish militia companies. By 1860 it was the only remaining Irish regiment in New York. Commanded by Colonel Michael Corcoran, a Fenian leader and co-founder of the IRB, the regiment became famous in November 1860 when Corcoran refused to parade it in honor of the Prince of Wales who was on an unofficial visit to New York. Corcoran was arrested for disobedience of orders. His court martial had been underway for some months when the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter.

The officers of the 69th telegraphed the State Adjutant General and offered the 69th for

immediate federal service if Colonel Corcoran's court martial was stopped. The court martial was canceled and the regiment prepared to march for Washington.

Andrew Bermingham, Richard's son, had joined Company A of the 69th and served as first sergeant. The first sergeant was the highest-ranking enlisted man in the company and was responsible for organizing, training and managing the company for the officers. Company A was commanded by Captain James Haggerty and was known as 'Haggerty's Bullies.'

The 69th first guarded the rail line between Annapolis and Washington and then moved to the Capital. The regiment constructed and garrisoned Fort Corcoran on the south bank of the Potomac. Then, as part of Colonel William T. Sherman's brigade of General Daniel Tyler's division, it fought in the Battle of Bull Run.

As senior captain Haggerty was acting as lieutenant colonel during the fight, replacing Lieutenant Colonel Robert Nugent who had remained in camp after breaking his arm in a fall from his horse. The famous Irish revolutionist and orator Captain Thomas Francis Meagher of Company K was acting as Major, replacing Major James Bagley who had not joined the regiment in the field. Haggerty was the first man in the regiment to be killed. He rode after a retreating Confederate soldier who turned and shot the Captain in the chest.

The 69th fought well. The Irish stormed the Rebel lines several times and were among the last to leave the field. The Irish men maintained their formation until they reached the Stone Bridge over Bull Run. There Colonel Sherman called out that it was every man for himself before galloping away. Despite Colonel Corcoran's appeals, the regiment dissolved into a mass of men struggling to cross the creek. Corcoran and several others barricaded themselves in the tollhouse next to the bridge where they were captured by pursuing Confederates.

The 69th Militia returned to New York shortly after the battle and was mustered out of the army at the end of its three-month's service. But these were Irishmen who had left a fight unfinished. Captain Meagher, a member of the Young Ireland leadership, petitioned the War Department for permission to recruit a Volunteer regiment of Irishmen to serve for three years. With the Administration's approval, Meagher began a speaking campaign to encourage enlistment in the new 69th New York Volunteers.

The response was overwhelming. Meagher worked with many influential Irishmen and eventually recruited an entire brigade made up of three regiments of infantry and two artillery batteries (the Fifth regiment, Irish Brigade). In less than two months the ranks of the 69th, 88th and 63rd New York Volunteer regiments were nearly full. The first two regiments were sent to Fort Schuyler on Throgs Neck for basic training, while the 63rd did its training on David's Island. Meagher had also planned on recruiting a cavalry squadron, but later abandoned the plan.

Meagher had a fine sense of Irish history and named his organization the **Irish Brigade**, after the famous brigade in the French army. In the 1600's and 1700's, the men of France's Irish Brigade, most exiles from their native land, were considered the best soldiers in the European armies. Irish battalions also served in the Austrian, Spanish and Mexican armies. A Battalion of St. Patrick had served in the Papal army during the just completed war in Italy.

The start of the Civil War created a sensation in the Irish community. Most felt a deep loyalty to the United States, which they regarded as a safe haven from the strife in Ireland. As hard as their lives were now, America provided opportunities that simply did not exist in the Old Country. The Rebellion might destroy those opportunities for themselves and their families.

The Irish saw the hand of Britain in this war. Already the Confederacy was actively seeking British intervention in the struggle. Fighting the Confederacy would be a surrogate for striking at Britain. Many in the Irish secret societies supported this idea, thinking that once the war was over the veteran Irish soldiers from both sides could be used in the fight to free Ireland. The Catholic Church also approved Irish enlistment in the army.

Those Irishmen who could not find places in the Irish Brigade eagerly joined other New York Irish regiments, such as the Thirty-seventh 'Irish Rifles,' the Fortieth 'Mozart,' the Forty-second 'Tammany,' and the Eighty-second 'Second Irish' New York Volunteers. Meagher traveled to Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and the Midwest where he helped to recruit the Ninth and Twenty-eighth Massachusetts Volunteers and the 69th Pennsylvania Volunteers, hoping that they would be used to form an Irish division in the Army of the Potomac. All over the north and south Irishmen flocked to the colors, many joining Irish regiments such as the Twenty-third Illinois, and the Tenth Ohio. On the Confederate side, the First Virginia Battalion, the Tenth Tennessee, the First "Tigers", Sixth, Seventh and Tenth Louisiana, the First 'Irish Jasper Greens' and Twenty-fourth Georgia had many Irish members. Tens of thousands of other Irishmen joined local regiments.

More than 180,000 Irish served in the Union and Confederate armies.

November 18, 1861 - New York City

Reveille sounded with the bright of morn. The bugle's piercing notes echoed from the walls of Fort Schuyler and carried into the tents of the 69th New York State Volunteers. First Sergeant Richard Kelly of Company A strode down his company 'street,' kicking open tent flaps and welcoming the enlisted men to the new day.

At six feet three inches Kelly towered over the other men in the company. The fair-haired Irishman had left his carpenter's trade to enlist for three years in the 69th. The other non-commissioned officers were up quickly, chasing the privates out of their tents and into formation for roll call. At the end of each company 'street' or row of tents, the soldiers detailed as cooks started boiling coffee and frying bacon for breakfast.

At the top of the company street Captain James Saunders, commanding Company A, stepped from his tent over to the fires to get a cup of coffee. Saunders, a rough hewn forty-two year old, had no military background. He had joined the 69th on October 18 after spending the better part of September in raising Company A. He adopted a Company letter made famous by Captain James Haggerty who, as acting Lieutenant Colonel of the 69th Militia, was the first man in the regiment to die at the Bull Run battle.

Several of the former Company A militia men, who were known as Haggerty's Bullies, had joined Saunders. These included Andrew Bermingham, who had been first sergeant under Haggerty and now wore the shoulder straps of a second lieutenant, and Richard Kelly, the current first sergeant.

While certainly not a 'gentleman,' or schooled in the military arts, Saunders was a driver who believed in leading from the front. He was typical of the officers in this volunteer army, and typical of the men who would lead the Irish Brigade through the next terrible four years.

Company A had three Berminghams in its ranks. Twenty-eight year old Andrew Bermingham enlisted as a private in the Volunteers on October 18, 1861, but soon received his commission as Second Lieutenant. Andrew's brother, Corporal Richard Bermingham, joined Company A on September 23, 1861. A mere nineteen years old, Richard gave his employment as a lawyer. Despite his age, perhaps with his brother's influence, the gangly five foot ten inch youngster was enlisted directly as a corporal.

Their cousin, twenty-three year old Private William Bermingham of Mine Hill, New Jersey, stood quietly in formation. William had passed on the chance to enlist in a New Jersey regiment and traveled to New York to join his relatives in the Irish 69th. On October 29, 1861 he was mustered into Company A, the sixtieth private to join the company. He was sent to Fort Schuyler the next day to begin his training. At five foot ten inches, William was above average height; his

dark complexion, black hair and blue eyes betrayed some non-Celtic forebears.

The sleepy soldiers shuffled into a single line by height, which they had done each day of the six weeks they had spent at Fort Schuyler. Satisfied with his formation, First Sergeant Kelly ordered the men to count off and to form double ranks. Then he opened his notebook and took roll call. Most of the company was present; there was remarkably little sickness in the regiment. Besides, today was a special day. The 69th would be leaving Fort Schuyler for good, first to receive its new regimental colors, and then to embark for Washington to join the Army of the Potomac under Major General George B. McClellan.

'Little Mac' or the 'Young Napoleon,' as the newspapers called him, was the hero of the hour. A respected officer and a staunch Democrat in the midst of a Republican administration, McClellan was brought to Washington to assume command of the Union army after the disaster at Bull Run. The nation expected him to restore order to the army and to quickly crush the Rebellion.

The roll taken, First Sergeant Kelly dismissed the company to breakfast and strode over to Captain Saunders' tent to make his report. Instead of the usual company drill after breakfast, the regiment fell in on the parade ground for a final inspection and then marched to the wharf where the steam transport *Atlas* was waiting to carry them to Manhattan. They were joined by the senior officers of the Eighty-eighth regiment, who would also receive their colors that day. The 63rd had received its colors on November 7 at its camp on David's Island.

As the *Atlas* sailed away from Fort Schuyler, the men crowded the rails for a last glimpse of that lovely spot. Very few would ever see it again.

The *Atlas* steamed to midtown and docked at the Thirty-fourth Street wharf. The regiment formed in column of fours and marched to the Archbishop's residence on Madison Avenue, behind the new St. Patrick's Cathedral which was under construction. Archbishop John Hughes of New York was in Europe on a mission for President Abraham Lincoln. He had asked his Vicar-general, the Reverend Dr. William Starrs, to officiate in his stead.

The 69th would never look better. New York State provided its uniforms, a dark blue fatigue cap and eight button coat with epaulettes and left belt loop. The trousers were sky blue and the men all wore new brogans. Their equipment included a leather cartridge box and shoulder belt with the brass eagle in front. A waist belt with an SNY (State of New York) buckle supported the percussion cap pouch and bayonet scabbard. The soldiers all wore their packs, haversacks and canteens. Most of the soldiers had never owned finer clothes.

Each enlisted man carried a Model 1842 or a percussion converted Model 1816 .69 caliber smoothbore musket. These weapons were not rifled and most military men thought them obsolete. They fired a 'buck and ball' round made up of a .64 caliber round ball and three .30 caliber buckshot. While not accurate at ranges above 100 yards, at close range their powerful shotgun-like blast was devastating. Meagher chose the weapon because he believed that the Irish Brigade would fight at close quarters and with the bayonet, where the musket would be more effective than a modern rifle.

A large crowd of family members and well-wishers had gathered to witness the presentation of the colors. These flags were particularly beautiful. They were embroidered by Tiffany & Young (now Tiffany & Co.) under a commission of Irish ladies led by Mrs. Elizabeth Meagher, the wife of acting Brigadier General Thomas Francis Meagher. Tiffany & Young charged the ladies over \$600 for three sets of colors. The flags were made of the finest silk, the national color embroidered with each regiment's number in the brigade. The 69th was shown as the '1st Regt. Irish Brigade.' The Irish color was a work of art. Embroidered on a rich, emerald green silk, the main device was a golden harp resting on a bed of shamrocks and under a sunburst, all ancient symbols of Ireland. Above the sunburst was an embroidered scroll with the regiment's number in

the Brigade. Below the shamrocks was another scroll bearing a theme from the ancient Irish poet Ossian, in Gaelic, '*Riabh nar Druid o Sbairn Lann*,' 'They shall never retreat from the clash of spears.'

The 69th marched to the residence where Colonel Nugent halted it and faced it to the front. Captain Saunders and Lieutenants James Reynolds and Andrew Bermingham took their parade positions in front of Company A. First Sergeant Kelly stood in the front rank at the right side of the company. Richard Bermingham stood at in the middle of the company while William stood in the ranks.

After Dr. Starrs' greeting, Judge Charles Daly stepped forward with Colonel Nugent and Mrs. Chalfin to present the 69th's flags. Daly was a strong political power in New York who had worked strenuously to ensure the success of the Irish Brigade. Daly was no friend of Thomas Francis Meagher. He believed that Meagher was not qualified to command the Brigade, favoring his old friend General James Shields instead. But Daly could not criticize Meagher's efforts in creating the Brigade and he put his feelings aside for the sake of the Union.

Daly challenged Nugent and the men of the 69th to never dishonor their flags or the reputation of their race, "You have chosen to be known by the number of a regiment already distinguished in the beginning of this contest, the reputation of which you have assumed to maintain; but more than this, you and the organization to which you belong have designated yourselves by the proudest name in Irish military annals - that of the Irish Brigade. That celebrated corps achieved its historical renown not through the admitted bravery of its members merely, but chiefly by the perfection of its discipline; and it will be precisely in the proportion that you imitate it in this respect, that you will or will not be known hereafter. The selection of such a name only renders the contrast more glaring in the event of inefficiency or incompetency; and it were well, therefore, that the officers and men of the new organization should remember that if any part of the glory that the Irish Brigade achieved upon the fields of Ramillies, the heights of Fontenoy, and at the gate of Cremona, is to descend upon them, it will not be by adopting its name, but by proving hereafter, by their discipline and by their deeds, that they are worthy to bear it."

The Eighty-eighth received its flags next. The Eighty-eighth, 'Mrs. Meagher's Own,' was the favorite regiment of the Meaghers since it was officered by many of the men who served in Meagher's Company K in the 69th Militia. Colonel Henry Baker received the flags from Mrs. Meagher. Mr. Malcolm Campbell, Esq., presented the flags, "With confidence and hope, then, the hands of beauty commit these standards to the protection of Irish valor. Guard them well - bear them firmly through the shock of battle - make the flaunting flag of sedition trail in the dust before these insignia of the majesty of the people, and return them, in tattered shreds if you will, dyed in blood, and begrimed with the dust and smoke of battle, but free from the slightest stain or speck of dishonor. Do this, and there is still hope that the wish that lingers of your dying patriots may yet be gloriously realized, 'That in the days to come the *Green* shall flutter o'er the *Red*.'"

Acting Brigadier General Meagher, as prospective Colonel, then stepped forward to receive the flags of the Fifth regiment, the artillery batteries of the Irish Brigade. They were presented by Miss Devlin after Mr. John Doyle, Esq. made his remarks, "Sir, these colors are the gift of fair women to brave men. I need say nothing to you or your regiment as to the way you are to guard them. You know a soldier's duty, and will discharge it. When the war is over, and peace and Union have been restored, you will bring them back here, stained perhaps with the dust and smoke of battle, reddened with blood, rent into strips by the storm and the wind, and riddled with bullets, so that the stars may be seen through them. But you will bring them back untarnished by defeat or dishonor. So shall they be preserved forever, hung up as a sacred relic, which will commemorate to us and to our posterity for all time the deeds, the sufferings, the victories, and the virtues of the Irish Brigade."

The speeches done, the flags presented, Colonel Robert Nugent turned to face the men in his regiment, "Attention Battalion! Shoulder Arms! Right Face! Forward March!"

The soldiers' muskets snapped into position and the troops marched away from the Archbishop's residence. The crowd's cheers drowned the quiet prayers of loved ones who begged God to protect their men from danger. The regiment disappeared from view as it moved down Madison Avenue and marched back to the *Atlas*, which immediately steamed to Perth Amboy in New Jersey. There the regiment boarded a train to begin the long trip through Philadelphia and Baltimore to Washington, D.C.

Winter, 1862 - Camp California, Alexandria, Virginia

The 88th and the 63rd had followed the 69th to Washington in December. Altogether, the Brigade numbered about twenty-five hundred men. The Brigade spent its first Christmas at Camp California, near Alexandria, Virginia. The camp was named in honor of Major General Edwin Sumner, who had helped to keep the state of California in the Union. The Brigade was assigned to Sumner's division, joining the brigades of Brigadier Generals Oliver Howard and William French. The Irish began an active program of drill, interrupted at times by duty on the picket lines.

Sumner was the oldest general in the Army of the Potomac, but he had the fighting spirit of a young patriot. He seemed almost Irish in his eagerness to meet the foe. The Irish Brigade revered him as if he were an ancient Irish High King or *Ard Righ*. In the thickest of battle, Sumner would cry, "Where are my Green Flags? Bring up the Irish Brigade!"

Originally Major General James Shields was offered the command of the Irish Brigade. Irish born Shields was a Mexican War hero who had served in the United States Senate. He declined command of the Brigade and recommended that Thomas Francis Meagher be given it instead. Pressure was brought to bear in Washington by political opponents of Meagher to block his promotion, some even suggesting that a native born officer be given the Brigade. A delegation of Irish officers visited President Lincoln to urge Meagher's case. The President submitted Meagher's name to the Senate where he was unanimously approved for promotion to Brigadier General and placed in command of the Brigade.

Early in March a number of important changes were made in the organization of the army. The Administration created a structure of Army Corps and appointed officers to command them without consulting General McClellan. This snub was typical of the many slights McClellan suffered from the War Office, which led in a large degree to his alienation from the political powers in Washington. As the war continued, there would be many instances of political interference in the army's plans and organization. Edwin Stanton, the Secretary of War in Lincoln's cabinet, had become a fiercely partisan Republican who went out of his way to diminish the accomplishments of military leaders from the Democratic party. McClellan was a particular target of Stanton's vindictiveness.

The Irish Brigade and General Meagher, who was then an outspoken Democrat, also suffered from Stanton's prejudice. While the Irishmen were always held in the highest regard by their fellow soldiers and the citizenry at large, they felt estranged from the senior officers in the War Office and the Administration. The Republicans had sprung from the anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant Know-Nothings. Also, many of the senior Administration disliked Meagher because of his strong support of the Democratic Party. They found every opportunity to blacken his reputation. Throughout the war the Brigade found that the honors and recognition they earned by their brilliant service were rarely granted by the Administration, while other regiments and brigades found honors heaped on them for lesser service. The Irishmen received greater

recognition from their foes, who often cheered their brave acts and who learned to fear the appearance of the Green flags on their front.

General Sumner was promoted to command the Second Corps which would gain the reputation as the toughest in the Army of the Potomac. His corps contained his old division, now commanded by Brigadier General Israel Richardson, and Sedgwick's and Blenker's divisions. Blenker was immediately detached and sent to join General Nathaniel Banks' command in the Shenandoah Valley.

Richardson was a perfect choice for the command of Sumner's men, now called the First Division, Second Corps. By reputation a fighter, Richardson would bring honor to his division in every battle until his death at the battle of Antietam.

When Richardson came to inspect the Brigade for the first time, all of the men were in the ranks, clean and with shining weapons, and curious to learn more about their new division commander. Just before the general arrived, Lt. Jack Gosson of Meagher's staff rode up to the regiments. "Well what do you think, boys!" Gosson shouted, "the General thinks so much of his Irish Brigade that he has provided a barrel of whiskey for each regiment!" The Brigade cheered itself hoarse when Richardson rode up. Meagher's command instantly became Richardson's favorite brigade. Of course Gosson was lying, but the Brigade forgave him, thinking that it was a joke well played.

July 1, 1862 - The Battle of Malvern Hill

Since June 26 the Army of Potomac had been fighting for its life against Robert E. Lee's surging Confederates. The fighting began north of the Chickahominy where Lee began a grand flanking movement to force McClellan away from his base of supplies. McClellan decided to move his base across the peninsula from the York River to the James. Thousands of army wagons were loaded with supplies and sent on the single road to the south. Any supplies left behind were burned.

General Fitz John Porter's Fifth Corps was alone on the north bank defending the White House depot. Lee struck this isolated corps at Mechanicsville on June 26, and again at its main line at Gaines Mill on June 27. After a full day of heroism and defiance, Porter's lines were broken and the Fifth Corps began a retreat to the Chickahominy. Just as disaster threatened, Meagher's Irish Brigade and French's brigade arrived on the field, stopping the Rebel advance and allowing the Fifth Corps to safely reach the south bank of the Chickahominy.

The Irish Brigade returned to its position around Fair Oaks on June 28. That afternoon McClellan ordered the Second, Third and Fourth corps to follow the Fifth across the White Oak Swamp. First they had to hold a line in front of the supply depot at Savage's Station for a day to allow the wagon train time to cross the swamp.

On June 29 the Rebels struck the Union lines at Savage's Station. After a day of severe fighting Lee's men were thrown back all along the line. As night fell the Second Corps acted as rear guard and was the last to cross White Oak Swamp. The only bridges were burned and the Union men were safe for a day against pursuit from the north.

Not so from the west. On June 30 Generals James Longstreet's and A. P. Hill's Confederate divisions struck three Union divisions under Generals Joseph Hooker, George McCall and Philip Kearny guarding the vital Glendale crossroads. McCall's men were pushed back in the center, while Hooker and Kearny held the flanks. Once again the Irish Brigade was sent to restore the Union lines. Meagher led his men into the gap that Hill had created in the Union line and pushed the Confederates back from the crossroads.

Darkness fell on the Second Corps guarding the road junction while the remainder of the army

marched along its rear, down the Quaker Road to Malvern Hill. The Second Corps was the last to leave Glendale and arrived at Malvern Hill at daybreak on July 1. General Sumner placed his Second Corps at the right side of the Union lines which formed a large semicircle facing north along the crown of the hill.

Company A fell to the ground, completely exhausted. For five days Saunders' men had been continuously marching and fighting. Meagher's Brigade was always the first to contact the enemy or the last to leave the battlefield. The days saw the Irish battling the Rebels and the nights saw them marching back to the next position. They had no chance to rest, only grabbing the odd moments of sleep. As soon as the regiment was placed in its position, they all fell asleep.

While the Irish Brigade rested, Lee's men spent the day testing the center of the Union line. Morell's and Couch's divisions held the center, supported by over thirty artillery pieces, under the command of General Porter. The continuous roar of artillery rumbled in the dreams of the Brigade. No danger threatened its section of the front and the Irishmen were able to rest and eat their meager rations in peace. The sounds of battle waxed and waned as each Rebel advance was stopped by their gallant comrades. Even the Navy joined in the fight as a number of gunboats from the nearby James River added their giant artillery to the tote sheet against the enemy.

After noon Lieutenant Gosson enlivened the scene. He had been complaining to Richardson and Meagher that not a drop of whiskey was to be found in the Brigade and the Brigade's sutlers had all left with the army trains. Richardson gave him permission to search for the sutlers. He found one on the road to Harrison's Landing and forced him to return to the Brigade. With a loud "Halloo," Gosson led the sutler's wagon up the road to the camps. The sutler was terrified of the artillery fire. Every so often a shell would explode nearby, nearly paralyzing him.

Most of the 69th walked back to the road to watch the spectacle. Just as the wagon arrived, a shell exploded a few yards away and the sutler dove under the wagon for protection. Gosson, who knew a good thing when he saw it, waved everyone over to help themselves to the contents of the wagon. Every time the sutler tried to crawl out, Gosson would throw a round shot against the side of his wagon, sending the frightened sutler crawling back under for cover. Finally, when everyone had taken their share, Gosson called the man out and sent him on his way back towards the James River.

Late in the day the Rebels mounted a serious attack on the Union center. Lee's soldiers moved out of the woods at the bottom of the hill, and pushed through Colonel Hiram Berdan's sharpshooters who were posted as a skirmish line. The Rebels pressed up the long, open fields towards the Federal batteries. Lee's men were greeted with shot, shell and canister, but still they came on and reached the front lines. Porter's federals were soon pushed back as the Rebels pressed on to the batteries.

General Sumner and General Heintzelman were watching the fight from behind the center. Seeing the strength of the Rebel assault they knew that reinforcements were required. When Porter sent back an urgent call, they each sent a brigade, General Heintzelman sending Brigadier General Daniel Sickles' Excelsior brigade and General Sumner sending Meagher's Irish Brigade.

The long roll of the drums summoned the Irish Brigade to action. With a dash Company A grabbed its equipment and fell in on the color line. First Sergeant Richard Kelly walked along the line, straightening leathers and checking cartridge boxes and canteens. In seconds the men were at attention, their lines were dressed and they were ready to march. Then it was "Shoulder Arms! Right Face! Countermarch By Files Right! March!" and they set off towards the sound of the guns, the 69th in front, the 88th next, followed by the 29th and the 63rd.

The Brigade had marched a short distance when General Porter galloped up to its column. Just as he reached it, his horse stumbled and threw the General to the ground. He jumped up, much embarrassed, and remounted. The Irish gave him three hearty, laughing cheers. Then, with a

smile that belied the serious nature of his request, he called, "You must come quickly, General Meagher! I shall lead you into position!" General Meagher turned in his saddle, "Irish Brigade! At the Double Quick! Forward March!" Captain Saunders' men lifted their muskets to the right shoulder and trotted along behind the Generals.

General Porter led them straight to the center of his position, behind the last line of guns. The Rebels were in view and had pushed up to the first line of guns. Morell's infantry were still fighting hard but the Irishmen could see that they were at the end of their endurance.

"By Company Into Line!" Nugent shouted and the 69th quickly deployed into line of battle. The other regiments formed in a column behind the 69th. Captain Saunders stood in the front rank at the right of the company with Sergeant Kelly behind in the second rank. Lieutenants Reynolds and Bermingham were behind the company along with the other sergeants. Richard and William Bermingham stood in the ranks.

Porter and Meagher galloped to the front of the Brigade. Meagher called, "Come on, come on, my brave men; Ireland shall have another day! Shoulder Arms! Guide on the Colors! Forward March!"

"*Faugh an Ballaugh!*" the Irish roared, "Clear the Way!" and marched straight for the enemy. The fife and drum corps broke into the '*Garryowen*' as the Irish passed through each line of guns, then through the infantry line and down the long slope.

The 63rd and 29th were kept at the gun line as a reserve while the 69th and 88th moved on. Porter and Meagher and their staffs rode in front while, cheering wildly, the lines straight and the green and national colors flying in the cooling breeze, the two regiments marched on the enemy's front two hundred yards away. All along the Union line, men paused to watch the inspiring sight. A great roar broke out from the lines as the men in blue cheered the Irish attack.

The Rebels fired a volley that had little effect on the 69th. Realizing that they were blocking the regiment's fire, the Generals trotted off to the side. Then Colonel Nugent bellowed out his order, "69th! Halt! Ready! Aim! Fire!"

Captain Saunders echoed the commands to his company. The first volley thundered into the Rebels. "Reload and Come to the Ready!" The Rebel lines began to fall back down the slope. "69th! Forward March!" Nugent ordered and the Irish pressed forward into the musket and artillery fire of the Confederates. The Irish stepped over the blue and grey wounded and dead from the day's fighting. Fifty yards further and Nugent ordered another volley.

Then it was forward march again, the Irishmen now more than three hundred yards in front of the Union lines. The Rebels fell back, firing all the way. The 69th halted to give them a few more volleys and then moved forward again, chasing the enemy into some sheltering woods.

After these volleys the 69th was having trouble loading its fouled muskets. The 88th was ready behind them. "Cease Fire!" Nugent shouted, "Shoulder Arms! Right Face, Forward March!" The 69th moved to the right. As soon as they were clear, the 88th advanced into the 69th's position. Nugent led his men back behind the 88th to clear their muskets and replenish their ammunition. The Irish were now about five hundred yards in front of the main Union line and had no support on their flanks. Meagher and his staff galloped back to bring up the 63rd and the 29th. Meanwhile, the 88th continued a rapid fire into the Confederates.

But like the 69th, the 88th soon had trouble with its muskets. Major James Quinlan, commanding the 88th, sent back for the 69th to come forward while he filed the 88th to the right and then to the rear of the 69th. The 69th moved up immediately. Soon the battle was joined as before, Irish volley after Irish volley crashing into the increasing gloom of dusk and powder smoke.

The 88th were spectators to this contest since they could not fire without hitting their comrades. The 69th was loading and firing with remarkable speed, all the time taunting the enemy

with Gaelic and English jibes. A few of the men began singing, "Ain't you glad you got out of the wilderness," as they emerged from some woods. They advanced to bottom of the hill, almost reaching the front lines of the enemy.

Suddenly, a Rebel volley flashed out of the woods to the left of the 69th and into its flank. A powerful Confederate force was moving through the woods to cut off the two Irish regiments. Colonel Nugent was surprised by this move and quickly moved to counter it. "Refuse the left flank!" he called. The regiment began to move its left side backwards to face the threat, pivoting on the color company.

Another Rebel volley slashed into the 69th, tumbling men up and down the line. Lieutenant Reynolds fell backwards as a bullet tore through his body, killing him instantly. Saunders and Andrew Bermingham moved up and down the line, settling the men while the regiment realigned itself. Meanwhile Colonel Nugent sent back to the 88th for help.

The 88th had halted to wait for more ammunition when Major Quinlan called it to attention and ordered his men to fix bayonets. The 88th had not had time to clear its muskets and only a few rounds remained in their cartridge boxes. The only help they could provide was with the bayonet. Major Quinlan moved in front of his regiment, ordered a quarter wheel to the left and, shouting Gaelic curses, led the regiment forward.

This was fighting! No distance, no musketry, simply face to face with the foe. The enemy was the 10th Louisiana regiment, a predominantly Irish unit, who waited with bowie knives and pistols drawn. One sight of this and the bayonets were forgotten. The 69th and 88th grasped the barrels of their muskets and waded into the gray line, swinging left and right, and braining every one of them in reach. The enemy, who had assumed that the mere sight of their big knives would send the Brigade flying, was completely overcome by the impetuous attack.

The 69th pitched into the Confederates alongside the 88th. Company A charged with its bayonets, slashing and firing at the Rebels as they entered the woods. William Bermingham dashed across the open ground. Suddenly he was struck by a bullet that smashed through his left thigh. He dropped straight to the ground in agony while his comrades pressed on. While he lay there, William was again injured by some shrapnel that struck him in the groin.

First Sergeant Kelly ran with the company into the woods. To his left a private tried to bayonet a Rebel, but was stopped by the Confederate colonel, who blocked the thrust with his sword. Kelly used his massive six foot three inch frame to reach up and haul the colonel from his horse, capturing him and saying, "That will be enough of that!"

The Louisianans fell back in disorder and the fighting came to an end. Night was falling as Nugent and Quinlan reformed their lines. The two regiments pulled back to the line of the guns and rejoined the 63rd and 29th.

The dead and wounded of both sides lay all over the long slope of Malvern Hill. Lanterns in hand, the Brigade's surgeons and chaplains moved from man to man, providing what care they could to the seriously wounded and trying to get the Irish casualties back to the Union lines. William lay in the tall grass, unable to move, desperately hoping to be rescued by the surgeons and stretcher-bearers. At some point during the night, J. Pascal Smith, a surgeon in the 69th, lantern in hand, found William. He probed the wound, found that no bones were broken, and dressed William's leg and groin. He then moved on to the next man and left William where he found him.

William spent the night on the field, in terrible pain and expecting to be captured by the Confederates at dawn. As the first rays of morning lit the battleground, William heard his name called. Privates Francis Carroll and Patrick Dunne had left the regiment to see if they could find their friend. William's heart leapt with joy as his two friends ran to his side, grasped him by the arms and carried him away to safety.

Carroll and Dunne brought William to the field hospital where he joined many of the Brigade's wounded. There is no sadder sight than a battlefield hospital, and the scene around the Malvern Hill hospital was no exception. It was located around a farmhouse at the rear of the hill, looking over the James River. The army had been ordered to fall back to Harrison's Landing. General Meagher was at the hospital making sure that all of his men who could walk or be carried were removed. William was placed in an ambulance, which jolted him for the several miles to the Landing.

July 5, 1862 - Harrison's Landing and Cliffburne Army Hospital, Washington, D.C.

William Bermingham was taken to the division hospital where he lay among dozens of wounded. At last the surgeons had time to examine and treat his wound. He was lucky; no bones were broken and his leg was not amputated. Even so, his wound was very serious. The medical men decided to evacuate him and he was sent by steamship down the James River and up the Potomac River to Washington. He was admitted into the Cliffburne Army General Hospital to recuperate and hopefully return to the ranks.

Andrew Bermingham was promoted to First Lieutenant to replace Thomas Reynolds, who had found his grave on the battlefield. In recognition of his bravery in capturing the commander of the 10th Louisiana, Sergeant Richard Kelly was promoted to Second Lieutenant to replace Andrew. Richard Bermingham was promoted to third sergeant.

July, August and September - Virginia and Maryland

The middle of September found the Army of the Potomac camped around Frederick, Maryland. For once, General McClellan got lucky. Two soldiers had found a set of orders from General Lee describing the locations and plan of action for each of the Confederate army corps. With this extraordinary information McClellan could maneuver his Army of the Potomac between Lee's forces, and defeat each wing of the enemy army in turn. McClellan at once ordered his army forward to sever Lee's line at South Mountain, a few miles west of Frederick.

The Army of the Potomac, indeed the whole Union cause, needed all the help it could get. After the Seven Days battles around Richmond, the Administration had left the Army of the Potomac idle at Harrison's Landing. President Lincoln and Secretary of War Stanton had developed such antipathy to McClellan that the Administration seemed determined to prove that the war could be won without him. President Lincoln formed a new army made up of the three army corps around Washington ? troops that should have been sent to McClellan before the Seven Days battles ? and placed General John Pope in charge. Pope, a Republican who had won battles in the west, was bombastic and incompetent. Lee, sensing that the focus of action had shifted to the area around Washington, left the Army of the Potomac behind in a rush to defeat Pope. The Administration, realizing the grave danger facing Pope, at last ordered the Army of the Potomac back from Harrison's Landing, and placed its corps under Pope's command.

But it was too late. On August 28 Lee inflicted a crushing defeat on Pope at the Second Battle of Bull Run. Once again the Union armies fled into the Washington defenses. An embarrassed Administration quietly packed Pope west to fight Indians, while Lincoln begged McClellan to resume his place at the head of the Army of the Potomac.

Meanwhile, Lee had crossed the Potomac into western Maryland and north of Washington. He divided his army, sending General James Longstreet's corps north to Hagerstown and east to Frederick, while Jackson's corps laid siege to Harpers Ferry. McClellan moved cautiously in pursuit. As he approached Frederick, Lee pulled back behind South Mountain, leaving a division

of troops under General D. H. Hill to defend the passes.

After reading Lee's orders, McClellan ordered General Ambrose Burnside to take his Ninth and the First Corps under General Hooker, across South Mountain and into Pleasant Valley on the far side. This would place the Union men between the two wings of the Confederate army. Then McClellan sent General William Franklin's Sixth Corps to attack Jackson and relieve Harpers Ferry. McClellan would follow Burnside with the rest of the army, made up of the Second, Fifth and Twelfth Corps, and await developments in Pleasant Valley.

On September 14 Burnside's corps ran into Hill's Confederate division at South Mountain. After a day of heavy fighting he pushed the Rebels away from the passes and into Pleasant Valley. McClellan sent the Second and Fifth corps forward in pursuit of Hill, who retreated towards the Potomac River and the town of Sharpsburg, Maryland.

Richardson's division, led by the Irish Brigade, chased the Confederate rear guard all the way to Sharpsburg. The men in grey stopped on the far side of Antietam Creek and occupied the high ground in front of Sharpsburg to await reinforcements. For two days the armies assembled; Lee bringing Longstreet back from Hagerstown, and Jackson from Harpers Ferry; while McClellan brought his army corps together from South Mountain. On the night of September 16 McClellan sent the First and Twelfth Corps across the Antietam to the north of Lee's lines with orders to attack in the morning.

September 17, 1862 - Sharpsburg, Maryland

With a thundering crash, the Union artillery greeted the dawn. The Irish Brigade was already up and active. With a quiet competence, the men prepared for battle. Blankets were rolled up and slung over shoulders. Muskets were checked for damp. Rounds were crammed into cartridge boxes and pockets. Last minute visits to Father Ouellette for confession were made. Soon, all was ready.

Company A was short an officer. On September 12 newly promoted Second Lieutenant Richard Kelly got into a violent argument with Lieutenant Perry of Hazard's Battery. Perry, fearing an attack from Kelly, pulled his pistol and shot Kelly through the thigh, inflicting a serious wound. Kelly was sent to Carver's Hospital in Washington, where he was to spend the next few months. Some weeks later, a court of inquiry found that Kelly provoked the attack and exonerated Perry.

Several of the men climbed the bluffs along Antietam Creek which gave them a view of the battlefield. The early morning mist had cleared and the battlefield was clearly visible. The fight was not going well. Hooker's men had been stopped and pushed back. Mansfield's Twelfth Corps had restored the front, but could press no further. Sedgwick's division had moved to support Mansfield, but was crushed by a Rebel counterattack. French's men followed Sedgwick and moved to attack Lee's center posted in a sunken road.

At 8.30 Richardson ordered his division to form up and move onto the Boonsboro pike. The long roll of the drums called all of the men back to the color line where they recovered their arms and prepared to move. After a short rest on the pike, word came to advance to French's support. Richardson's division, with the Irish Brigade in the lead, marched to the ford across Antietam Creek.

Meagher galloped across the stream while his men waded through the hip high water. The veterans filled their canteens as they crossed; a last chance to get water before the fight. Richardson crossed with the Brigade and cheered the regiments as they went by. Meagher led his men a short distance downstream to wait for General John Caldwell and Colonel John Brooke to cross their brigades.

The Irishmen listened to the sounds of French's desperate battle. Richardson decided to send the Irish Brigade ahead to support French. He ordered the men to remove their knapsacks and blanket rolls and to load their weapons. Meagher led his men forward at the double quick. The Irish Brigade moved out in a column of fours towards the sound of the firing.

Meagher's men dashed up to a lane leading to a group of farm buildings. French's three brigades had attacked the Rebels in the sunken road. Every attack had been crushed. Now the remnants of French's division clung to the top of the crest in front of the road. French's left flank hung in the air, and Meagher spotted at least a regiment of Confederates moving to attack it. Seeing that French was about to be flanked, Meagher ordered the Brigade to deploy into line of battle. He anchored the 69th on the farm lane and extended his other regiments out to cover the left flank of French's men. The Brigade quickly went into line behind a large cornfield that hid the Brigade from the Rebel skirmishers on top of the rise.

Richardson rode up to Meagher and ordered him to advance through the cornfield to the edge closest to the enemy's position. Company A and the rest of the Brigade plunged into the cornfield and disappeared behind the tall stalks. At the far side, they came up against a chest high split rail fence which halted their advance. Captain Saunders ordered his men to tear down the fence and move into the open field on the other side. The field extended over three hundred yards up the rise to the sunken road. Another split rail fence angled across the field about one hundred yards in front.

The Rebel skirmishers were surprised to see the Brigade appear, but they quickly opened fire on the Irishmen. The battle suddenly became very personal as minie balls zipped into the corn around the Irish. Meagher ordered his men forward about fifty yards and then halted them to dress their lines. He rode to the front and called for volunteers to tear down the next fence so it would not hold up the advance. Company A cheered as about eighty men sprang forward to do Meagher's bidding. The Confederates took special exception to this move and their fire lashed into the volunteers. The fence went down, but half of the volunteers were shot by the Rebel skirmishers.

Father Ouellette galloped along the 69th's front and granted conditional absolution to the men, forgiving the sins of all who did their duty. Then he dismounted and moved behind the line of battle to care for the wounded.

Confederate bullets whistled in the air around Meagher and his staff. Ordering the Brigade to attention, Meagher called, "Irish Brigade! Three Cheers for General McClellan and the Army of the Potomac!" The Brigade roared back its savage approval. Drawing his sword and standing in his stirrups, Meagher shouted, "Irish Brigade! Raise the Colors and Follow Me!"

Moving as one, the 1,400 men of the Brigade stepped off, chanting their battle cry "*Faugh an Ballaugh*". Captain Saunders marched at the right side of the company. Waving his sword and cap, he whooped, "For the Union, Boys, and dear old Ireland!"

At the top of the rise, the Confederate skirmishers were firing as fast as they could into the 69th. Every shot seemed to find a target in the massed Irish ranks. The Brigade was now less than a hundred yards from the crest. The 69th marched over one of French's regiments which was lying prone on the ground, cheering the Irish as they swept by.

The Confederate skirmishers sprinted back into the sunken road, alerting their comrades that the Brigade was coming. The Irishmen swept on. The Rebels heard cheering from below the crest. Chanting "*Faugh an Ballagh!*", the Brigade surged up the last few yards. The colors began to emerge over the top. First the finials and streamers, then the flags themselves, emerald green and red, white and blue. Then the men appeared, in battle line as if on parade. The Confederates rose up, leveled muskets and fired.

The 69th saw only the flash and smoke. Death struck the regiment; it seemed that the entire

front line fell under the Rebel volley. The entire Brigade came to an abrupt halt. Captain Saunders roared, "Company A, Ready! Aim! Fire!" A volley of musket fire lashed back into the Confederates' faces. Dozens of them fell while the shocked survivors ducked behind the road bank.

"Reload! Reload! Hurry, boys!" Company A raced to beat the Confederates to the next volley. "Ready! Aim! Fire!" Another volley flashed into the Rebel lines. "Form the line here! Dress and Cover! Reload! Independent Fire! Fire at Will!" Lieutenant Bermingham shouted. Standing, kneeling, lying prone, Company A kept up a tremendous fire into the enemy.

After watching the 69th fire several volleys into the enemy and witnessing the effect of its fire, Meagher decided to order a bayonet charge. As he rode over to James Kelly, the lieutenant colonel commanding the 69th, was struck in the face by a Rebel bullet. Meagher turned instead to the regiment, "Raise the Colors, Boys! Follow Me! Charge Bayonets! Forward March!" Meagher guided his horse through the battle line towards the enemy.

Captain James McGee of the Color Company shouted, "I'll Follow You!" and grabbed the green flag, waving it at the Rebels. The flagstaff was immediately cut in two by a Rebel bullet. McGee reached down to pick up the flag and felt a bullet snatch off his cap. Clutching the flag, McGee draped it over his shoulders and strode towards the Rebel line.

The Confederates fired desperate volleys at the approaching 69th. Captain Saunders led Company A forward, leaning into the Rebel fire as if it was a hailstorm. Sergeant Richard Bermingham, marching behind the ranks, was struck in the legs by a Rebel ball. He collapsed in agony on the front of the crest.

Captain Saunders pressed on into the Rebel fire that blasted the air around him. All around men were falling dead and wounded. It was impossible to go further. Meagher called off the attack and the 69th fell back to its first position. There the men turned and resumed their heavy fire into the Rebels.

Meagher galloped along the line to encourage his men. Suddenly a Confederate bullet struck his horse. The brave animal died instantly, rolling over and crushing Meagher. The General was stunned and partially paralyzed by the fall. Lieutenant Gosson rushed over to help him. Grateful that Meagher was not wounded, only dazed, he ordered two men to carry the General to the Brigade hospital.

The 69th's front was slowly shrinking. As more men were whittled away the survivors moved to the center, dressing on the colors to protect them. Every time a flag went down, another brave soul snatched it up. Eight of the nine men in the color guard were killed in the fight.

The 69th's ammunition was running low. Muskets fouled by black powder residue could not be loaded. The surviving soldiers had each gone through two or three muskets, throwing the old ones away when they were too hot to hold. The veterans poured canteen water into their muskets to flush them out. The red hot barrels dried in seconds. Sergeants scoured the cartridge boxes and pockets of the dead and wounded for their last rounds of ammunition. Officers and sergeants were down. The privates fought on. There was nothing fancy about this fight, it was a simple, bloody brawl.

Major James Cavanaugh, now in command of the 69th, stood in the center of the line by the color bearers, encouraging his few remaining men to keep up their fire. Suddenly, a Confederate shouted from the sunken road, "Bring them colors in here!" The 69th shouted back, "Come and get them, you damned Rebels!" Infuriated, the two men carrying the regiment's flags ran forward several yards and began to wave them in the Confederates' faces.

Then, from the left of the 69th, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Barnes of the 29th launched an attack. The Irishmen watched their Bay State comrades move to the attack. A feeling of savage pride surged through their ranks, and a roar burst from their throats, born of hatred, rage, blood

lust and revenge. Company A sprang to their feet and joined in the attack. Lieutenant Bermingham jumped up, "Forward boys! For Ireland and St. Patrick! Company A, Forward!"

The Confederates rose to their feet, most turning to flee from the road, an undaunted few firing another volley. Then, from behind the Irish Brigade, Caldwell's brigade charged up the slope to relieve the Irish. As they came even with the 69th, Caldwell's men pushed through the Irish line and charged into the sunken road. The Confederates broke and ran.

The men of the 69th remained standing in front of the road, genuinely astonished at this turn of events and not believing that their battle was over. Several Irish companies pressed forward into the cornfield, but most watched Caldwell's brigade pursue the broken Rebels towards the Hagerstown turnpike. Richardson galloped up the rise, leading an artillery battery which went into position on the crest.

On top of the crest, the Irish stood among their wounded and dead comrades. Over four hundred lay in a long line at the top of the rise, stark evidence of the terrible battle. Now that the fighting was over, Andrew Bermingham rushed over to his brother Richard to see how badly he was hurt. He had two men carry Richard to the Brigade's field hospital.

In the field hospital, the surgeons examined Richard Bermingham's wounds. Fortunately, no bones were broken and his legs were not amputated. He was placed on a pile of straw, sheltered by a blanket, to await transportation to an army hospital.

September and October 1862 - Convent Hospital, Frederick, Md., Cliffburne Army Hospital, Washington, D.C.

Some days after the battle Richard Bermingham was moved to Frederick, Maryland. He was admitted to the Convent Hospital on September 24. He would remain there until December 29 when he was transferred to the No. 1, U. S. Army General Hospital, still in Frederick. He remained there until June when, sufficiently healed to return to duty, he rejoined his regiment.

On September 30 Surgeon Henry Bryan signed the papers granting William Bermingham a medical discharge from the army. His diagnosis read, "Gun shot wound of the back of the thigh producing permanent contraction of the muscles and a disability of one half." On October 10 he was discharged a cripple from the hospital and returned to his home in Mine Hill, New Jersey.

December 13, 1862 - Fredericksburg, Va.

Half frozen after a night dozing on the muddy ground, Captain Saunders stepped between the huddled forms of his men and moved towards the ruins of the railroad bridge. The Rappahannock River flowed by only yards away. Nearby, Saunders could hear the clatter of traffic moving across the pontoon bridges that stretched across the river. The far bank was hidden in fog, in fact the whole army was hidden in the milky folds. But the army was there, huddling in Fredericksburg's ruined houses and muddy streets, and stretching downstream along the riverbank.

The Irish Brigade had crossed the Rappahannock the day before. At first the Brigade had been held in the northern part of town. Late in the day they were ordered to move here, to the old river landing. The landing was small and could not hold the whole Brigade. A number of the men drifted away to join in the general pillage of the town. For some strange reason, orders came to build no fires, condemning the men to a comfortless night. As if the Rebels did not know they were there! The cold, the gloom, the thoughts of what waited on the morrow, depressed the spirits of the entire army.

Their hero McClellan was gone, a victim of political intrigue. Major General Ambrose

Burnside now commanded the Army of the Potomac. General Richardson was gone, too, a victim of a Rebel shell at the Bloody Lane. Brigadier General Winfield Scott Hancock now commanded the First Division, Second Corps, of which the Irish Brigade was a part.

The original Irish Brigade was also gone. The New York regiments were shadows of their former selves, each fielding fewer than two hundred and fifty men. Their Bay State comrades, the 29th Massachusetts, had been replaced by the all-Irish 28th Massachusetts. The 28th had originally been raised to join the Irish Brigade, but had been sent to the Ninth Corps instead. Now, after a year of campaigning, it was finally where it belonged, proudly calling itself the fourth regiment of the Brigade, and carrying the green color that had been presented to Meagher in New York more than a year ago.

The 28th's green flag was the only one with the Brigade. The original green colors of the New York regiments had been sent home. Battle torn and bloody, they were being retired and replaced by a new set of green colors. The new flags had been commissioned by a group of American businessmen to honor the service of the Irish Brigade. They had been exchanged for the old flags at a presentation on December 2 in New York. Captain James McGee, who had carried the green flag in the Antietam battle, was sent home to receive the new colors. A ceremony was planned to accept the colors as soon as they arrived. McGee was expected to return with them any day.

A small regiment, the partly Irish 116th Pennsylvania with six companies, had joined soon after the battle of Antietam to make up for the Brigade's losses. This was a new regiment, unproven in battle, and subject to much good-natured ribbing by the New Yorkers. The 116th did not carry a green flag, but its commanders, Colonel Dennis Heenan and Lieutenant Colonel St. Clair Mulholland were staunch Irish nationalists.

So many of the 69th's officers were lost at Antietam that Captain Thomas Leddy of Company B was now the senior captain in the regiment. Leddy had only just returned to the regiment after recovering from a wound he received at Malvern Hill. Lieutenant Andrew Bermingham was temporarily transferred to command Company B, to replace Leddy, who would be acting as major during the battle.

Captain Saunders was the only officer with Company A. Lieutenant Richard Kelly was still away in hospital recovering from the pistol wound he received during his argument with the artilleryman. Company A was a shadow of its former self, numbering fewer than thirty men. General Meagher still commanded the Irish Brigade. Colonel Robert Nugent had returned to the regiment after recovering from the illness that kept him away from the Antietam battle. Lieutenant Colonel James Kelly had not recovered from his Antietam wounds, so Major James Cavanaugh was acting Lieutenant Colonel.

The crash of artillery fire continued all night from the high ground less than a mile from town. Lee's army was posted on Marye's Heights, which commanded the town and the open fields in front. Rumor said that the heights were thick with Rebel artillery and their infantry was posted in three lines of rifle pits and breastworks. It seemed impossible that Burnside would order an attack on such a position. Nonetheless, the attack had been ordered. The Second and Ninth Corps were to seize the heights outside of town and drive the enemy back towards Richmond.

The artillery firing increased as the sun came up. The Union heavy artillery was posted on the far side of the Rappahannock, where it pumped shells into the open ground on the outskirts of town. But the Federal guns did not have the range to reach the main Confederate positions. The Rebel artillery could easily reach the town and sweep the open ground between the town and their lines. Rebel solid shot and shells flew straight down the streets of the town and into the Union camps.

The ground between the town and the Rebel lines was in the shape of a large rectangle, a mile long on the north south axis and a half mile in depth. The ground was open. A ravine containing

a deep, water filled canal ditch ran along the edge nearest to town. The ravine offered some shelter for forming the Union lines, but the ditch was a veritable moat. It began near Hazel Run and ran across the entire battleground, obstructing the main line of approach to the Rebel lines.

The southern edge of the battlefield was bounded by Hazel Run, which emptied into the Rappahannock, and the railroad embankment. Its northern edge was framed by Hanover Street, the main road running out of town, which turned into the Orange Plank Road as it crossed Marye's Heights. In addition to Hanover Street, two other roads led out of town to the battlefield. The roads crossed the ditch on bridges that had been removed by the Rebels. Only the stringers of the bridges remained.

The battlefield was crossed by two chest high split rail fences which would have to be pulled down to permit the attack to proceed. Each fence formed a killing ground where the Federal advance would be held up and exposed to crushing artillery and musket fire. A few houses scattered along the roads offered the only cover on the field.

A wagon road ran along the foot of Marye's Heights connecting the Telegraph and Plank roads. The road was below ground level and was bordered by a chest high stone wall behind which Lee had posted two brigades of infantry. The slopes of the heights behind the road had several batteries of artillery dug in. The spaces between the batteries were filled with additional brigades of infantry. The Confederate artillery commander had promised that a chicken could not live under the fire of his batteries.

At 9 a.m. orders arrived from Major General Darius Couch, who commanded the Second Corps, to commence the attack. French's division would lead, followed by Hancock's. The long roll of the drums summoned the Brigade to fall in. Captain Saunders' Company A formed at the right of the Irish Brigade, near the railroad embankment. Lieutenant Bermingham and Company B formed further down the line.

General Meagher rode up to the regiment. "Officers and soldiers of the 69th! In a few moments you will engage the enemy in a most terrible battle, which will probably determine the fate of this great, good and glorious country. This day you will strike a blow against those wicked traitors who are now but a few hundred yards from you and bring back to this distracted country its former prestige and glory! This may be my last speech to you, but if I fall, I can say I did my duty, and fell in the most glorious of causes!"

While Meagher spoke, his staff officers passed out sprigs of boxwood, an evergreen, to place in the men's hats. Since the regiment's new green flag had not yet arrived, Meagher thought that the green boxwood would remind all of their native land. The regiment gave Meagher three loud cheers as he rode to the 88th, the next regiment in line. At that moment, a shell exploded in the ranks of the 63rd, killing three men and wounding several more.

Meagher spoke to each regiment in turn. As soon as he finished his speech to the 116th, he ordered the Brigade to shoulder arms, and marched by the right flank across the railroad and along the river road into town.

Company A led the march. Dozens of Rebel guns were pouring fire into the town. Solid shot bounced down the cross streets and smashed everything in the way. The Brigade was showered by iron and masonry whenever shells exploded in the roofs and upper storeys of the buildings. Each company timed its crossing to miss any incoming shells. At every halt, the men huddled against the walls of the buildings to protect themselves from the fire. The Brigade marched through a steady stream of casualties from the front, where desperate fighting had begun.

At the intersection of Hanover Street and the river street the Brigade halted for several minutes to allow Zook's brigade to march ahead to the battlefield. The regimental surgeons commandeered several buildings at the intersection for the Brigade's hospitals. One of their first casualties was Colonel Heenan of the 116th who was severely wounded in the hand. The shell

that wounded him killed and injured several other men.

It was already after noon. French had sent his three brigades against the center of the Rebel stronghold. Each of French's brigades was slaughtered by the enemy's artillery and musket fire. His men were still lying on the field, whether wounded or not, unable to advance or retreat through the terrible fire.

While French attacked, Hancock led his division through town and onto the battlefield. Zook's brigade led, followed by Meagher and Caldwell. Hancock's men marched up Hanover Street under the shelter of a small ridge that marked the edge of town. At the top of the ridge, the division angled to the left and descended the ravine to the canal ditch.

The entire division was held up in the ravine to allow the men to skip over the wooden stringers of the bridges. They were all in plain sight of the Confederate batteries and under severe artillery fire. When Meagher's turn came, there was no time to cross the stringers and he ordered his men to wade through the freezing, hip deep water of the ditch.

Meagher was suffering from a severely ulcerated knee which had been lanced a few days before and had not healed. He could barely walk. After dismounting from his horse, he was helped across the stringers by two wounded men. He limped to the right of the Brigade where Nugent was forming his regiment.

The 69th was the first across the canal ditch and stood waiting in line of battle. The other regiments were still forming. Zook had already started his attack, and Caldwell was just crossing the ditch. The Irish watched as an incredible fire of artillery and musketry descended on Zook's men. They fell in their hundreds. Zook's advance got as far as the second fence line, where his men took what cover they could behind a low fold in the ground and a two story brick building, a little over a hundred yards from the Rebel's stone wall.

A staff officer dashed up to Meagher with orders from Hancock. The Federal attacks had concentrated on the center of the Confederate position. Hancock was worried that the troops on the Rebel left would sweep from behind the stone wall and take his attack in the right flank. Meagher turned to Nugent and ordered him to deploy skirmishers to cover the right flank of the advance. Nugent called over to Saunders and ordered him to send Companies A and K out to the threatened flank. Saunders immediately led the two companies out and across Hanover Street.

Meanwhile, the rest of the Irish Brigade had formed its line. Meagher commanded, "Irish Brigade, Advance! Forward! Double Quick! Guide Center!" With a tremendous shout of "*Faugh an Ballaugh!*" the Brigade surged up the side of the ravine and into the blast.

The whole field in front of the Brigade was covered in blue. Four brigades had already attacked: three from French's division and Zook's from Hancock's. Their men were lying on the ground, desperate to find any cover they could. The Irish moved through a sea of arms. French's and Zook's men grabbed at their legs to stop them from going into the slaughter. "Its no good, boys! Don't go!" But the Irish pressed on.

First to hit them was the Rebel artillery fire. Solid shot and shells played in the Irish ranks. Whole squads were knocked down by this fire, but still they advanced. The rear ranks stepped forward to fill the gaps in the front line. A little further on and the canister hit them. Dozens more fell under its withering blast. The lines pressed on, dressing on the green flag of the 28th in the center of the Brigade. "Come on, Boys!" the officers cried, "This is nothing to Antietam!"

The first fence line was reached and crossed. The Irish were cut down in bunches at this obstruction. The survivors dressed their lines and advanced. Fewer than half of the earlier brigades had gone this far. The Irish Brigade dashed up to the second fence line, where Zook's men lay. They quickly knocked down the rails of the fence and pushed through. The regiments took terrible casualties as they worked to clear the fence.

Now less than a hundred yards from the Rebel lines, the Irish survivors charged on.

Amazingly, a cheer went up from the Confederates sheltered behind the stone wall. They cheered the gallantry of the Irish attack, they had never seen anything like it. Then the men in gray leveled their muskets and poured a sheet of fire into the Brigade.

Wounded or not, most of the Irish went down. A few hardy souls, led by Major William Horgan of the 88th, pressed on and dashed over the last fifty yards to the wall. But they were quickly shot down; Horgan died only thirty feet from the wall. When the battle ended, the Rebels would note that the Union men closest to the wall wore sprigs of boxwood in their caps.

Captain Saunders led his skirmishers across Hanover Street and onto a slight knoll that commanded the open space up to the enemy's lines. He posted his men there under cover of the knoll where all remained during the Brigade's attack. The Rebels showed no inclination to come out of their excellent cover, so the right flank of the attack was safe.

Andrew Bermingham took cover on the battlefield among the Company B men. Most of them were wounded or dead. The survivors were firing as best as they could towards the stone wall. However, at this range there was little they could do with their inaccurate smoothbore muskets. Then, from the center of the regiment, Bermingham heard Colonel Nugent order, "Once more, boys! Irish Brigade Advance!"

The Irish Brigade leapt to its feet and swept forward a second time. Once again the cheers thundered from the Rebel lines, quickly followed by another deadly volley of musket fire. The Irish were cut down wholesale. Colonel Nugent fell with a serious wound in his chest. Major Cavanaugh assumed command and sent the Colonel to the rear. "Blaze away and stand to it, boys," cried Cavanaugh. But the attack failed and the Irish fell back to the ground.

The Irish were pinned down, so Hancock sent Caldwell's brigade into the attack. One of his regiments, the 5th New Hampshire, pushed up to the Irishmen's position. None of the others would come near. The New Hampshiremen joined with their old comrades in the 69th and 88th for one more push at the wall. This attack suffered the same fate as all the others.

Andrew Bermingham lay among the survivors of Company B, desperately thinking of a way to escape this hell. As he turned sideways to look for support, a bullet tore through his thighs, shattering the bones in one leg. A few brave soldiers quickly gathered him up and dashed through the artillery and musket fire and back into town. They delivered him to the Brigade's hospital, unconscious and desperately injured.

On the battlefield the Brigade's situation worsened. Major Cavanaugh was wounded and Captain Leddy assumed command of the handful of 69th men still able to fight. Soon he, too, was wounded seriously in the arm. Now Captain John Donovan of Company G was the senior officer left on the firing line. Donovan, who lost an eye at Malvern Hill, was wounded again in two places, and was unconscious for over an hour. When he awoke, he looked up and down the long lines of men lying about him on the field. "Is it possible that we have been relieved by a new brigade?" he called out. "No!" was the answer that greeted his ears, coming from his First Sergeant, Joseph Hoban. "They are the dead and wounded soldiers and officers of the 69th, 88th, and 5th New Hampshire." "Where is Major Cavanaugh?" "Carried away either dead or wounded from the field." Fewer than fifty men were left uninjured in the 69th.

A new danger threatened the men in the front line. Several more Union brigades attacked the Rebel position, but none came as far forward as the Irish Brigade and the 5th New Hampshire. Instead, they stayed back and fired at the Confederate line over the Union men in front. Soon the Brigade was suffering as many casualties from friendly fire as it was from the enemy.

About two hundred of the twelve hundred man Irish Brigade were able to escape from the field, many of whom carried wounded to the hospitals. General Meagher found the remnants of his Brigade huddling on the river street, next to the hospitals. He sent several groups back to the battlefield to recover the Brigade's casualties. The wounded were placed in the hospitals, joining

the hundreds of Irish already there.

When dusk fell and the Union assaults came to an end, Captain Saunders led his skirmishers back into town. He found General Meagher and the remnants of the Brigade next to the hospitals. Saunders was the senior uninjured officer left in the 69th, which now numbered fewer than sixty men. The Irish Brigade had less than 250 men left in the ranks. After assuring himself that the surgeons had the wounded well in hand, Meagher led his pitiful remnant back across the Rappahannock to rest near army headquarters.

The Brigade surgeons, bloodied and exhausted, fought to save the lives of the injured. The wounds were fearsome and amputation the common remedy. The severed limbs piled up outside the buildings. Andrew Bermingham was carried to a makeshift table where the surgeons acted quickly to save his life. The bones of one leg were so badly shattered that it could not be saved. In a matter of minutes the surgeons amputated it and added it to the pile of limbs. The other leg was sewn up and both were dressed. Andrew was carried into a nearby room crowded with wounded.

Dusk was falling on the battlefield. Donovan was perplexed. The Irish were stuck between two firing lines. The friendly fire from the rear was almost as destructive as the enemy's in front. Much as he wanted to retreat, Donovan considered it certain death to get out what remained of the regiment. He ordered all the men to lie flat until the firing from the rear ceased. One of his men turned on his back and placed his side to the enemy. When Donovan questioned the man, he coolly answered, "I do not want to be shot in the back."

At last, the friendly fire slackened in the darkness. Donovan felt it was safe to give the order to retreat. "69th! Fall back to the mill race!" About a dozen men rose from the hundreds of bodies lying on the firing line and followed him to the rear. Donovan got about half way between the two fences where he fell down from exhaustion and the effect of his injuries. After a short rest, he rose again to his feet. A Rebel sharpshooter shot his hat off his head.

Donovan crossed the last fence and descended into the ravine. He lay there until two other wounded officers from the 69th helped him across the stream. Once he was safely across, and for the first time in the war, he broke down in tears. Donovan was overcome by gratitude for his own survival, and by sorrow for the many thousands who fell that day. He felt in his heart that these heroes were not martyrs to a cause, but victims of a terrible blunder. He would never see them again.

December 14 to 17, 1862 - Fredericksburg, Virginia

Andrew Bermingham lay on a pile of blood soaked straw in a back room of the hospital. The surgeons had done all that they could for him. It was now up to Andrew to overcome the shock of his terrible wounds. But his injuries were too much to bear. On December 17 Andrew Bermingham died of his wounds. For the first time in the war, there were no Berminghams on active duty with the 69th.

On the day of the battle, Captain James McGee arrived at the old camps around Falmouth with the new colors for the New York regiments. A large log hut had been constructed near Meagher's old camp for the ceremony accepting the flags. But the Brigade was in Fredericksburg where its few remaining members filled the buildings in town, ready to repulse a Rebel counter assault.

McGee rode over the river to report to Meagher. The Brigade was under orders to remain in town, so arrangements were made to accept the colors in Fredericksburg. McGee took over the town's small theater and set tables with the delicacies that he had brought from New York and Washington. Meagher invited all of the senior officers of the army to the celebration, all except

Burnside who had sent his army to such disaster. General Hancock was amazed at the splendor of the event, in the shadow of so much death. "Only Irishmen could do such a thing!"

Meagher made a touching speech accepting the flags. Then he surprised the other officers by ordering that the flags be returned to New York. After the losses his Brigade had suffered he did not believe that he had enough men to guaranty the safety of the flags in battle. He refused to expose them to the danger of capture by the enemy.

The Confederates on Marye's Heights noticed the gathering of horses and orderlies near the theater. They decided to join the party by sending a few artillery rounds towards the building. One round crashed through the roof and scattered the party goers. They quickly adjourned and returned to their camps.

On Monday, December 15, the Army of the Potomac slipped away across the river, leaving its dead and wounded on the fields in front of the stone wall. As dawn broke on the 16th, the Confederate skirmishers discovered that the Union men were gone. Lee quickly reoccupied Fredericksburg.

On the 17th, Burnside at last arranged a truce to recover the wounded and bury the dead of the Saturday battle. A number of Union soldiers recrossed the river to work on this heart rending task. After four days exposure to the frigid weather, very few of the wounded were left alive. All of the bodies near the wall had been stripped by the Rebels and left naked and exposed. The odd caps and hats remaining among the dead at the wall had sprigs of boxwood stuck in their brims.

Meagher sent his staff officers out with special orders to find Major William Horgan of the 88th, who had led the charge closest to the wall. His body was found and returned to New York for burial. Andrew Bermingham, who had died in the hospital, was also sent home. Both Bermingham and Horgan were buried in Calvary Cemetery in Queens.

January through June 1863 - The Consolidation of the New York Regiments

Immediately after the battle, Meagher returned to New York to begin recruiting replacements for the crushing losses the Brigade suffered in 1862. He had no success. Feelings in New York were strongly anti-war and the terrible defeats that the Army of the Potomac had suffered did nothing to encourage enlistments.

The public believed that something was wrong in Washington. Whether the problem lay with President Lincoln or Secretary of War Stanton or General in Chief Halleck was not known. All that was known was that the South was winning and it seemed pointless to sacrifice any more lives, particularly one's own.

What volunteers were available were mostly recruited into new companies and regiments that offered bounties that the veteran regiments could not. After all, local dignitaries spent their own time and money to raise these new recruits. It was only natural that they would receive commissions to take these green soldiers to war. So, while the veteran regiments shrunk through wounds and sickness, dozens of completely inexperienced new regiments arrived in the army. The failure of the War Department to stop this process of recruitment caused the war to drag on needlessly.

New York was a hot bed for anti-war activities. Anti-war Democrats, known as Copperheads, had control of City Hall. Meagher, who had moved close to the pro-war, Republican position, had lost much of his political support. More importantly, he had lost his popular support. The thousands of Irish women in mourning were a constant reminder of the terrible burden their men had borne for Lincoln's war. The general feeling was that the Irish Brigade had borne the brunt of the fight; that the Republican politicians were happy to sacrifice the lives of the immigrant, Democratic Irishmen and spare the lives of the native born Americans.

Meagher was angered by the attacks on him and his Brigade. His political opponents cheapened the sacrifice of his men by portraying Meagher as a dupe of the Washington war mongers, and his men as sad victims of Meagher's personal ambition.

Meagher concluded that the only way to recruit replacements was to have the New York regiments return home and directly appeal to the Irish community. Only his veterans could counteract the lies that anti-war politicians were spreading about him and the Irish Brigade. Meagher believed that once the Irish community saw his men and heard the true stories of their bravery in battle, they would enlist. He began a campaign to gain approval by the War Department to allow the Irish Brigade's veterans to return home on furlough.

Meagher was not successful. Secretary Stanton at the War Department had developed a great dislike for Meagher and the Irish Brigade. Stanton refused to allow the Brigade to return to New York unless an equal number of men were provided by the New York authorities to replace the Irishmen. Since this was the crux of the problem, it was a condition that could not be met. Meagher appealed the decision to President Lincoln, who sided with Stanton. The Irish Brigade remained with the army.

Many changes had taken place in the army since the Fredericksburg disaster. The army was still camped across the Rappahannock River from Fredericksburg. In January Burnside had been replaced by Major General Joseph Hooker. Hooker was a popular commander who had quickly restored the morale of the army. He developed a sweeping plan to outflank Lee from his positions behind Fredericksburg and to defeat him in the open terrain to the west of the town. The Army of the Potomac heavily outnumbered Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Longstreet's Corps had been detached for action around Suffolk, Va. and now only Jackson's Corps was with Lee's army.

The entire Irish Brigade numbered fewer than 800 men, less than a third the size of a regular brigade. When the Second Corps moved in support of Hooker's plan, the Brigade was assigned to guard the supply trains and river crossings. During the ensuing battle of Chancellorsville, a devastating defeat for the Union army, only two of the Brigade's regiments, the 88th New York and 116th Pennsylvania, got into the fight.

By early June, the Brigade numbered less than six hundred men. Meagher decided to resign his commission in protest against the War Department's refusal to allow the Brigade to return home and recruit replacements. Meagher's resignation was quickly accepted by Washington. Colonel Patrick Kelly of the 88th was assigned to the command of the Irish Brigade.

The army had begun to consolidate its veteran regiments and brigades to create units whose size was appropriate to their designation. The initial plan was to dissolve the Irish Brigade and assign its regiments to other brigades. However, General Winfield Hancock decided to retain the Irish Brigade as a separate unit. The New York regiments, which each numbered fewer than 100 men, were consolidated into a single battalion of about 250.

With the consolidation of the regiments, all excess officers and sergeants were mustered out of the service. As a result, a large number of the army's most experienced leaders were lost to the service. The cost of this loss of talent was incalculable. At a time when the army needed to be at its best, Washington's policy dramatically reduced its effectiveness.

Company A was one of two companies retained for the 69th. Captain Saunders and most of the Company A sergeants were mustered out of the army and their positions assigned to others. Lieutenant Richard Kelly, now recovered from his wound, remained with the company.

The mustering out affected the men convalescing from wounds. Washington directed that all soldiers who, in the army surgeons' opinion, would be unfit for active duty, were to be discharged from the service. Sergeant Richard Bermingham, who was still in hospital in Maryland recovering from the wounds he received at Antietam, was mustered out on a

physician's certificate of disability. The army surgeons did not believe that he would ever be fit for duty.

July 1863 through January 1864 - New York City

The Army of the Potomac fought its climactic battle at Gettysburg over the first three days of July. The consolidated Irish Brigade, numbering about 500 men, fought during the battle of the Wheatfield on July 2. At the end of the Gettysburg campaign, the Brigade numbered about 300 men.

After the terrible losses in 1862 and 1863, President Lincoln introduced a draft to replenish the army's ranks. To mitigate the effects of the draft, Lincoln offered very large bounties to encourage enlistment. A new recruit could receive as much as \$700 for signing with the army ? a small fortune for most Americans.

The Irish community in New York exploded when the draft was first held. While the Union armies fought desperately at Gettysburg, New York experienced the bloodiest riots in its history. Hundreds were killed and injured by the rioters; many of the victims were free blacks whom the rioters held accountable for the war.

The rioters also attacked soldiers who were on duty or on leave in New York City, including Colonel Robert Nugent of the 69th. Nugent had returned home to recuperate from the terrible wound he received at Fredericksburg. Mustered out on the consolidation of the 69th, Nugent reverted to his permanent rank of Captain in the 13th U.S. Regular Infantry. He was appointed Acting Assistant Provost Marshal and chief recruiting officer in New York City. Nugent led a scratch force against the rioters in the City. Despite his heroic reputation as the Colonel of the 69th, the Irish rioters destroyed his home.

Washington corrected a number of inequities in the draft which had sparked the riots and began to induct men during the fall of 1863. This led to a flood of new volunteers, men who expected to be drafted and who took advantage of the large bounties offered for recruits. Another source of men was the emigrant ships which landed at New York's Castle Garden. Many of the young Irish immigrants were enlisted directly into the army, taking the bounty money as a stake in their new American lives.

Nugent did what he could to direct the Irish volunteers to the Irish Brigade. By early in 1864, the Brigade's New York regiments were near full strength and were reconstituted as separate commands. The 28th Massachusetts and the 116th Pennsylvania were also able to restore their numbers.

The new recruits made up about three quarters of the Brigade's ranks. Although the Irish Brigade was considered a crack unit, in truth its strength lay in its veterans. The new men had much to learn before they could be considered soldiers. However, they were more fortunate than the men in the new regiments. At least the Irish Brigade had a core of steel ? its veterans. They would set the tone and show by example the bravery of the Irish race.

Time after time in the bloody days that were to come, Union generals found that their newly recruited regiments were not reliable. Even veteran regiments that had large numbers of new recruits performed poorly. It was not unusual for entire brigades to give way after only a brief contact with the enemy. Many of the regiments, veteran and inexperienced alike, would not stand against Confederate General Robert E. Lee's men. But the Irish Brigade would prove rock steady. General Hancock commented that, despite the large number of new recruits, the Irish Brigade showed the same fighting spirit as had its predecessors under his command.

Colonel Patrick Kelly of the 88th and Colonel Richard Byrnes of the 28th had returned to New York and Boston to help in recruiting. With these two senior officers away on leave, command of

the Irish Brigade was given to Colonel Thomas Smyth of the 1st Delaware, the first non-Irish Brigade officer to lead the Brigade. Smyth was an Irishman and the leader of the Fenian Circle of the Army of the Potomac. General Hancock thought highly of Smyth and he was very well regarded by the men of the Irish Brigade. The 69th New York was under the command of its senior captain, Richard Moroney. All of the field officers were either recovering from wounds or on leave.

The Brigade remained in the First Division of the Second Corps. Brigadier General Francis Barlow was assigned command of the division, replacing General Caldwell. Barlow was a fighter but was not liked by his men. He had a reputation for taking chances that cost the lives of his soldiers. Barlow had been desperately wounded and captured at Gettysburg, but had been exchanged and recovered from his wound. The Irishmen did not like Barlow. The veterans remembered how he had left them unsupported for an hour at Antietam.

At the end of 1863, after a number of maneuvers in northern Virginia, the Irish Brigade, along with the rest of the Second Corps, set up winter camps near the town of Stevensburg, located between the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers.

February 2, 1864 - New York City

In November 1862 William Bermingham had returned home to Mine Hill after his medical discharge. He was not able to work right away because of his injuries. He received a small disability pension which he supplemented with whatever wages he could earn.

William's younger brother Andrew had remained in New Jersey for the first two years of the war. No doubt William explained the rigors of army life, and his own wounds were an eloquent reminder of the risks of combat. Andrew continued his work in the mines where wages were good. The work was risky but far safer than service in the army.

William was proud of his service in the Irish Brigade. Although he paid a terrible price, he no doubt thought it a fair bargain to advance his interests and the interests of his countrymen in their adopted land. When the draft was introduced and his younger brother Andrew faced his call up, William probably urged him to travel to New York and enlist in the Irish Brigade.

When he arrived in New York, Andrew most likely stayed with his uncle Richard Bermingham, whom he designated as next of kin on his enlistment papers. He also must have spent time with his cousin Sergeant Richard Bermingham who had been discharged the summer before due to his wounds and the consolidation of the 69th.

Richard had suffered terrible privations after his discharge. His pay records were first lost on the Peninsula, when the Brigade's wagons were abandoned and burned at Savage's Station. His others were misplaced during Richard's many transfers between hospitals after Antietam. Richard wrote to Colonel Nugent to intercede on his behalf with the Paymaster Department. He had no money and could not work due to his wounds. By the end of the summer, he was destitute. The intervention of Colonel Nugent enabled Richard to get his back pay, bonus and a small pension.

On February 2, 1864, Andrew entered the Irish Brigade's recruiting office and enlisted in Company A, 69th New York. This was his brother's and cousins' company, now commanded by Captain Richard Kelly, who had started as First Sergeant just over two years before. Andrew was enlisted by Colonel Robert Nugent, who in his permanent rank of Captain in the 13th U.S. Infantry, was responsible for recruiting in New York City. Andrew was a perfect candidate for the Irish Brigade and Nugent made sure that he was assigned to the 69th.

Andrew was twenty years old when he enlisted in Company A. At 5 feet 8 inches, Andrew was average height. He shared his brother's dark complexion but with grey eyes and brown hair.

He was paid \$13 for a month in advance and was sent first to Riker's Island in Long Island Sound. None of his bounty money of \$300 was paid to him right away. The recruit depot was only a holding camp. The recruits received no training while they were there. In early March Andrew joined the 69th regiment at Stevensburg.

May 5, 1864 - the Battle of the Wilderness

"69th! Halt! Front!" Captain Moroney rode to the front of his regiment, "Order arms! In place rest! Skirmishers forward! Company commanders, start building some cover!" Andrew Birmingham stood breathing deeply. Not even the hard work in the mines had prepared him for this. The three days' march seemed like a lifetime. Every muscle and joint ached and his feet were on fire. And his load was light! The veterans made sure that the 'fresh fish' only carried what was really needed.

Andrew stole a look north up the Brock Road, the only direction he could see any distance. Dense forest fringed the road and cut visibility to no more than a few yards in front and back. The skirmishers were swallowed up in the forest. This was the gloomiest forest Andrew had ever seen. The veterans knew it well enough. The Wilderness they called it; the last place on earth for a fight. Andrew could not see very far but he certainly could hear. The entire forest roared with the sound of musket and cannon fire. Andrew had never heard anything like it.

Captain Richard Kelly ordered his men to stack arms and begin building earthworks. The First Sergeant split the company in two, with half the men digging a trench along the west side of the road and the other half cutting down the trees and brush in front to clear a field of fire. Spent bullets flying in from the woods encouraged the men to work harder. As each tree fell, the soldiers carried it to the pile alongside of the road. There the diggers scraped out a trench behind the log pile and used the dirt to fill in the gaps between the logs. The heavy brush and branches were piled in front of the logs to obstruct any attacking force. The veterans had learned the value of good earthworks from bitter experience. In a hour they had a respectable cover for themselves that could stop musket balls. Artillery fire was a different story, but in these woods there was no threat of artillery.

"Fall in, 69th, in front of the rifle pits!" the orders came from the center of the regiment. "Company A, fall in!" Captain Kelly shouted, "Take arms! Attention, Company! Over the breastworks!" Barlow's division lined up in front of their breastworks. Andrew watched as the skirmishers returned to the fringe of the forest. He stole a glance down the line but could not see past the colors in the center of the regiment. The sun was well below the tree line and darkness was settling over the forest. Smoke from the gunfire and dozens of small fires added to the gloom.

"Irish Brigade! Advance!" The 69th clambered over the tree stumps and moved into the forest. Once in the woods it was next to impossible to maintain their formation. The officers were shouting and urging the men to keep their alignment, but they were wasting their breath. The Irishmen moved forward in fits and starts, marching towards the setting sun.

The skirmishers were about fifty yards in front of the Union line, dodging from tree to tree, and anxiously peering forward for the Rebels. A few shots rang out but in most cases the Union men were shooting at phantoms. They could see nothing clearly. After a march of about three hundred yards the skirmishers were surprised when the entire forest exploded in their faces. They had found the Confederate's main line.

Andrew ducked as the Rebels' deadly volley tore through the Irish lines. Dozens of men fell wounded or dead among the trees. "Steady men! Ready!" Andrew stood up and cocked his musket. "Aim! Fire!" Andrew felt the sharp recoil of the musket. "Reload, quickly boys!

Independent Fire!” The Irish took advantage of the cover the trees provided and poured fire into the Confederate line. Although they were less than fifty yards from the men in gray, the Irish could not see their targets clearly. In most cases they aimed at the flash of the Rebels’ fire.

After several minutes of this toe to toe fighting, the Rebel line began to give way. The Irish veterans pressed forward, all formation lost, bushwacking from tree to tree. The new recruits followed the lead of the older men. Soon the Brigade swept over the Rebels crude defenses and attacked deeper into the woods.

The Rebels retreated slowly and tried to hold the Union men back whenever a fold in the ground or a dense growth of vegetation provided cover. But Barlow’s division extended beyond the Rebels’ right flank and they could not hold. The Confederates’ were quickly turned out of every position they took and driven further into the dark forest.

In no time the Union lines became as disorganized as the Confederates’. Several times Colonel Smyth halted the Irish Brigade to try to realign his men. The Union advance slowed until darkness brought it to a halt.

General Barlow received orders from General Hancock to withdraw from his advanced position and fall back to the Brock Road. Andrew and his comrades drew back slowly through the dark woods. Whenever they could they recovered their wounded, but in the darkness many were left behind. The only light was the red glow from the dozens of small fires burning in the undergrowth. How many of the wounded perished in these fires will never be known.

Once back at the Brock Road the Irish Brigade was put to work strengthening their earthworks. Confederate General Longstreet’s Corps had not been engaged in the day’s fighting and Hancock believed that Longstreet might attack him from the south. He detailed Barlow’s division to guard the left flank of the army against any such attack.

The Union men spent most of the night getting into position for the attack, and strengthening their defenses along the Brock Road in case the attack failed.

Major John Garrett of the 69th was waiting for the regiment when it returned. He assumed command of the 69th and Captain Moroney returned to his company.

Hancock renewed the attack at dawn on May 6 with seven divisions. Longstreet’s Confederate Corps had not been found on the battlefield as yet, so Barlow’s division was held at the Brock Road to cover the flank of the army. The dawn attack was successful and Hancock drove Confederate General A. P. Hill’s Corps back more than a mile. Longstreet came to Hill’s support and halted Hancock’s attack. Then, by a brilliant move, Longstreet attacked the Union force on its left flank and drove it back to the Brock Road.

The Irish Brigade ate a leisurely breakfast that morning. They listened with great excitement as the sound of the Union attack carried further and further west. However, by noon the battle noise began to move back towards the Brock Road. Then panic stricken stragglers burst from the woods in front of the Irishmen’s breastworks. Colonel Smyth ordered the Brigade to take its positions along the road. Soon after, the remainder of the Second Corps fell back into the road and began to reform its disordered lines.

The woods in front of the Brigade grew quiet for four hours. Lee’s veterans had been as disorganized by their success as Hancock’s had been earlier. They also had to contend with an attack by Burnside’s Union Ninth Corps against their northern flank. However, by mid-afternoon, Lee was ready to strike again. With reckless energy, a large number of Confederates burst from the woods and charged the Irish line.

The Confederates expected a quick victory but the Irishmen were ready. Their rapid volleys decimated the Rebels. Then the breastworks caught fire, forcing the Irish across the road. The men in gray tried to take advantage of this by charging the line again. The Irish maintained their heavy fire through the flames and drove the Rebels back. With that, the fighting came to an end

on the Second Corps' front.

May 12, 1864 - The Bloody Angle

Andrew Bermingham was exhausted and soaked through by the heavy rain. He stood in the Irish Brigade's battle line, in an open field less than a half mile from the Confederate entrenchments near Spottsylvania Courthouse. The dim light of dawn struggled through thick clouds. Darkness, rain and heavy mist hid the Union force from the Confederate lookouts.

The Second Corps, Hancock's bully boys, was facing another tough assignment. They were ordered to assault and carry a large salient in the Confederate lines. After seizing the salient, they were to move forward and split Lee's Confederate army in half. General Burnside's Ninth Corps and General Wright's Sixth Corps would launch supporting attacks to crush the divided wings of the gray army.

The Second Corps had left its lines in the Wilderness on May 8. After fighting a sharp skirmish at Todd's Tavern, and another near Shady Grove across the Po River, the Second Corps arrived at the right of the Army of the Potomac's lines in front of Spottsylvania Courthouse.

Through skillful marching and skirmishing, Lee's men had beaten the Union army to this location. The Rebels quickly established a well entrenched line several miles long to oppose the Union advance. Grant ordered several attacks against the Rebel lines, only one of which had shown any success. This attack, by Emory Upton's brigade, was not properly supported. Now, Grant would repeat Upton's attack with his best fighters, the Second Corps.

The Second Corps' objective was a large salient in the gray lines which would be known as the Bloody Angle or Muleshoe. This section of Lee's line projected towards the Union position and was the weakest spot in the defense. Lee's engineers had already constructed a line behind the salient into which Lee was prepared to withdraw that morning. All of the artillery in the salient had been limbered up in preparation for the move back. Hancock's attack would speed the process, at a cost that Lee's army could ill afford. The salient was manned by two Confederate divisions, under Johnson and Rodes, with Gordon's division in close support at the new line.

Captain Richard Kelly took his place at the right of Company A. "Load but do not prime your muskets," he spoke quietly down the line, "Softly, boys, and remember there will be no firing until we have crossed the gray devils' lines."

Andrew tore a cartridge open and poured the powder down the barrel of his musket, hoping that the barrel was dry enough to preserve the powder charge. Then he slid the buck and ball round, paper and all, into the barrel. He slowly rammed the round home and quietly slipped the ramrod back into its pipes. The hammer remained closed on the uncapped nipple cone to keep out the rain. Without the percussion cap the musket could not be fired. A series of muted clicks surrounded him as his comrades finished their preparations. He listened to the undertones of grumbling from the veterans, who wondered what sort of an army had they joined that did not want its men to fire their muskets.

A voice from the rear ordered the division forward. Colonel Smyth kept his voice low, "Irish Brigade, Trail Arms! Forward March!" Andrew pushed across the sodden ground. "Dress the lines!" Colonel Smyth urged, "The dress is on the colors!"

Nelson Miles' brigade was directly in front. For a change, the Irish Brigade was in the second line. On the right, the dark mass of Birney's division emerged from the woods and joined in the assault. Although the Rebel lines were less than 500 yards away, they could not be seen in the gloom.

Amazingly, the gray lines were silent; the Union attackers had not been detected. The entire Second Corps was advancing on the Rebel positions unseen and with complete surprise. A thrill

ran through the veterans and recruits alike. This attack might work! Their pace quickened as they crossed the dangerous open ground that led to the Rebel trenches.

The Irish heard the sound of axes cutting into the trees the Rebels had dragged in front of their lines to obstruct any attackers. Union skirmishers were rapidly clearing a path for the main force. The noise at last woke the Rebels, "Who goes there?" Then a shot rang out, then several more.

The gunfire energized the Union attackers. A great roar burst from their throats, announcing their presence to the enemy. The leading brigades crashed against the fallen trees and pushed them out of the way. The trailing brigades caught up with the first. Then the irresistible blue wave swept up and over the Confederate lines.

Sergeant Dillon, the color bearer of the 63rd, raced ahead of the Irish Brigade and planted the green color on top of the earthworks. Right behind Dillon, Colonel Denis Burke of the 88th planted the national colors. With a tremendous "*Faugh an Ballaugh*," the rest of the Brigade followed him and leapt into the Confederate lines. The Union soldiers quickly captured the three thousand astonished Rebels who held this section, most of whom had not had time to fire a shot, and sent them back over the trench towards the Union lines. The Second Corps had captured the better part of a division of Lee's men, as well as thirty colors and the eighteen artillery pieces that were limbered up ready to be moved to Lee's new line.

The Second Corps itself was in disarray. Barlow's and Birney's divisions were all jumbled up in the trench. The officers were busy trying to sort out the mess. Several minutes passed while Hancock's men consolidated their positions, sent the prisoners to the rear and reformed their regiments and brigades. From the rear, Hancock's two other divisions, commanded by Gibbon and Mott, were crossing the open ground and pressing against the outside of the captured trench.

General Lee and his army awoke to find a great gap torn in their lines. Confusion and alarm ran through the gray ranks on either side of the breach. They faced disaster. The center of their line had been torn open by Hancock's surprise attack. The men in the front lines had been captured or sent running to the rear. The only force left to stop the victorious Unionists was General John B. Gordon's veteran brigade. The Rebels on either side of the breach were exposed to flank attacks and could barely hold their own.

Gunfire erupted from the Union flanks and front as the alarm spread through the Confederate forces. The heaviest fire broke out on the flanks where the Rebels tried to force the Union men back out of the trenches. The blue regiments at the flanks established lines facing outwards to block the Rebel attacks. The Union brigades in the middle clambered out of the captured trench and stepped forward in the rainy dawn into the rear of the Rebel army.

The advancing brigades immediately came under heavy fire. General Lee had worked a miracle. He rallied the panicked survivors of Johnson's division and got them to face the Union attack. At the same time he called up Gordon's brigade and sent it at the double quick into the breach. Lee anchored his reserves on this new line. They opened a heavy fire on Hancock's men and stopped them cold. Then the men in gray launched a desperate counterattack into the disordered Union ranks.

The 69th was pressing forward into heavy fire when it was struck by the Rebel attack. Captain Richard Kelly fell desperately wounded. The company lost sight of him in the darkness. His men were forced back and were not able to recover their beloved commander. Kelly was overrun by the Confederates. He died on the field and his grave is unknown.

Hancock's men fell back to the captured trench, and jumped over the front. Under cover of the dirt embankment, they turned and opened fire on the attacking Rebels. The Confederates tumbled into the trench but could not push the Union men away from the front.

Andrew Bermingham rushed back into the captured trench along with the rest of Company A. He hopped over the front wall and turned to hold it against the Confederates. The Rebels slid into

the ditch and both sides opened a murderous fire across the piled up dirt.

A desperate battle ensued across the breastwork that lasted for the rest of the day. The rain poured down on the muddy soldiers as they fired point blank into one another. Dozens of bodies lay in the mud of the trench and the wall. Fresh troops trampled the wounded and dead into the blood soaked mud.

Their comrades passed loaded muskets to them until they were shot down. Then others climbed up in their place. The intensity of fire was awesome. Trees were cut down by the impact of dozens of bullets. The battle earned its name of 'The Bloody Angle.'

While his men fought in the old trench, Lee's reserves hastily finished the new line in the rear. With the end of that hellish day, Lee's survivors pulled back to the new line and surrendered the old trench to the men in blue.

Smyth's Irish Brigade was pulled back to the woods. As night fell, Andrew and the rest of Company A huddled in the sodden forest and listened as the fire died down on the battle front. After the exhilaration of capturing the Confederate line, the men could not believe how their fortunes had changed. Captain Kelly, the man they had followed for years, was wounded in Rebel hands and likely dead. Neither Burnside's nor Wright's corps had supported Hancock's men. Lee was able to pull men from other parts of his line to stem Hancock's success. What was wrong with the Union army?

June 3, 1864 - Cold Harbor

Andrew was exhausted after a month of battle. Every day seemed to bring a fight or a long march; sometimes both. The army had never seen anything like it. Before, each battle was followed by a period of quiet which let the men recover their strength and morale. Grant did not work that way. He pushed constantly against Lee's Confederates, always looking for the advantage, always trying to use his superior strength to crush the Rebel army.

So far, the fighting had gone the Confederates' way. Lee was always a step ahead of the Union men. He took advantage of terrain and field fortifications. His men fought tenaciously on defense and launched lightning counterattacks that stemmed every Union success. Whenever an advantage was gained, the Union senior commanders found a way to lose it. More than forty thousand federals had fallen since the start of the campaign. Lee's losses were half of Grant's.

Still, the Union army was once again at the gates of Richmond. The Second Corps had arrived near Turkey Hill on the Chickahominy River, and lined up along Dispatch Station Road, facing the Gaines Mill battlefield of two years before. The few Peninsula campaign veterans still in the ranks recalled those days. They reminisced how their heroes, McClellan and Meagher, had led the Irish Brigade to this spot with no losses. There was no such luck on this campaign ? Grant had presented a butcher's bill to the Irish. They had lost half their number since the start of the campaign just a month before.

A sense of foreboding settled over the Irish Brigade. The army was ordered to attack the Rebel lines posted on Turkey Hill in an overwhelming assault. The infantrymen knew what this meant, more so than their generals. After a month of fighting the men were all veterans now. They understood the strength of the Confederate positions and the likely outcome of this attack.

Barlow's division was formed for the attack with Miles' and Brooke's brigades in the front line and the Irish Brigade and McDougal's brigade behind them. Their orders were similar to those they received at Spottsylvania: a dawn attack and no firing until the Rebel lines were breached. Miles and Brooke would seize the line. Then the Irish and McDougal's brigades would pass through to assault the Confederate rear. Gibbon's division would attack on Barlow's right. Birney's division would support the division with the greatest success.

Colonel Richard Byrnes of the 28th Massachusetts now commanded the Irish Brigade. Byrnes had just returned from recruiting duty in Boston. Colonel Thomas Smyth left the Irish Brigade to command another brigade in Gibbon's division of the Second Corps.

Dawn was breaking as Barlow formed his division for the attack. Andrew stood on the ranks with the handful of survivors in Company A. Miles' brigade was in the front line; Brooke's and McDougal's brigades were to the Irishmen's right. A signal gun was fired and Miles and Brooke moved forward. Colonel Byrnes allowed Miles to advance about a hundred yards before ordering, "Irish Brigade! At the Double Quick! Advance!"

The Confederates were ready for the attack. As soon as the blue lines advanced across Dispatch Station Road, the Rebel pickets opened fire. The flash of muskets and the blast of cannon outlined the enemy's lines, now only a hundred yards away. Miles' men were slowed by the marshy ground that protected the Confederate defenses. Nevertheless, they pressed forward as quickly as possible, without firing. The two leading brigades swept into the main Confederate lines and drove off the riflemen and cannoneers who held them.

Byrnes kept the Irish Brigade in check so that there would not be the mixing up of brigades like Spottsylvania. The Irishmen advanced up to the captured line and halted for developments. The Rebels still in the trenches to the left poured a heavy fire into the Brigade's unprotected left flank. Once again, the Second Corps had broken the enemy's line.

Miles and Brooke consolidated their positions while the Irish Brigade moved up. For some reason, McDougal's brigade had not advanced, depriving the attackers of a quarter of their strength. Birney's supporting division also stayed back behind the Union lines. Nevertheless, Brooke pushed forward into the Rebel rear while Miles and Byrnes remained in the Rebel lines.

The Confederates realized how dangerous their position was and sent several brigades to counterattack and regain their trenches. Brooke's men were quickly pushed back into the trenches. Then the Confederates attacked the flanks of the Union brigades and threw them back.

The Irish Brigade was suffering terribly under the Rebel fire. Colonel Byrnes was mortally wounded as he led his men back. Andrew was shot through the right foot and crippled. He was fortunate to be carried back the Union lines. Most of the wounded caught in no man's land were killed during the fire fights that broke out all day between the opposing lines. The survivors of the Brigade began digging new trenches less than a hundred yards from the Confederates.

Three Union corps attacked the Confederate line that morning. Of the thirty thousand Federals engaged, 8,000 were killed or wounded. The fight had lasted only twenty minutes.

Andrew was treated for his wound at the division hospital. The surgeons chose not to amputate his foot right away, but they directed that he be evacuated back to Washington, D. C. for further treatment. Andrew was sent to Emory Military Hospital where he remained for a week. He was then sent to the Army General Hospital in York, Pa.

Andrew remained in York until August when he was transferred to the hospital at Fort Columbus on Governors Island in New York Harbor. Here Andrew recovered his strength. His foot wound did not completely heal, but there was no need to keep him in the hospital. He was furloughed home on September 20, 1864. He had been on active duty for eight months.

Andrew remained home until the end of the war. He was mustered out of the army on May 27, 1865. Since he was not on duty, his muster out was sent by telegraph. He had not been paid for over a year, and was owed over \$300 in bounty and pay for his service in the army. Andrew also received a pension of \$8 a month for his disability.

Aftermath

The Irish Brigade continued its service until the end of the Civil War. In April 1865, Colonel Robert Nugent, in command of the Brigade, passed the first surrender note between Grant and Lee to one of Lee's staff officers. After Lee's surrender at Appotmattox, the Brigade returned to Washington, D.C. and participated in the grand victory parade. Each of the New York regiments carried their two green flags: the first color that was retired after Antietam, and the second color presented after Fredericksburg. On their return to New York, the three regiments turned their colors over to the 69th New York Militia for safekeeping. They are now stored in the regimental armory.

The Irish Brigade suffered the heaviest losses of any brigade in the Union Army. The Bermingham family's experience reflected these losses. Of the four family members who served in the 69th, one died in action and the others were wounded.

Lieutenant Andrew Bermingham's body was returned to New York after the Battle of Fredericksburg. He was buried in Calvary Cemetery, Queens, New York, in a section that became known as Military Hill. His grave is near the New York State monument. The grave is unmarked.

His brother Richard returned to New York after the consolidation of the New York regiments in June 1863. Richard's pay records had been lost during the retreat from Richmond and his request for pay from Major Pratt, the New York paymaster, was denied. Richard was owed his bounty money of \$100 plus pay since March. Richard appealed to Colonel Nugent for assistance, who wrote on behalf of this "faithful man and excellent soldier".

Richard attempted to rejoin the regiment as a lieutenant but he was never mustered in at that rank. His wounds were too serious for him to serve again. He received a military pension for his wounds and resumed his career as a lawyer. After the war he became active in "Meagher's Irish Brigade", the veterans association of the Brigade. As with today's 69th Veterans Corps, the Association was based at the new 69th Regiment Armory on Lexington Avenue. Richard served as the Association's secretary.

Richard died on May 2, 1919 and is buried in New Calvary Cemetery.

William Bermingham returned to Mine Hill, New Jersey. He faced a far more difficult life, since he was a miner before the war, and his wounds affected his ability to work. He had no other skills and resumed his manual work as before. He eventually became a mining contractor and served several terms as Street Commissioner of Dover, New Jersey.

William was active in the parish affairs of St. Mary's Church in Port Oram, now Wharton, New Jersey. He helped to raise the funds to construct the beautiful church that serves the parish today. On January 7, 1866, William married Bridget Johnson, age twenty-one, at St. Mary's. William and Bridget had three daughters and a son. His daughters lived at home to the end of his life. By then, age and the wounds to his legs greatly affected his ability to work, and his pension was barely adequate to keep his family from starvation. On March 26, 1915 William wrote to the pension commissioners requesting an increase from the \$18 a month he received. William died on May 17, 1915 and is buried in St. Mary's cemetery in Wharton.

William's younger brother Andrew shared his difficulties after the war. His foot wound bothered him severely for the rest of his life. He was not able to work full time. The pay he earned at odd jobs and his pension were barely enough to keep his family clothed and fed.

Andrew married a widow, Mary Ann Connolly, on November 8, 1874. They had two children, John, born November 13, 1875, and Ellen, born on March 31, 1879. John became the funeral director in Wharton. Andrew and his family were active in St. Mary's. Their descendants continue their involvement in the parish to this day. Andrew died on March 5, 1906 and is buried at St. Mary's.

April 26, 1911 - the Sixty-ninth Regiment Armory, Lexington Avenue, New York City

Fifty years after the 69th Militia marched off to the war, a ceremony was held to celebrate the service of the 69th and the Irish Brigade in the Civil War. The tributes extended over three days and included parades, receptions, a banquet and a memorial Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral. All of the surviving members of the Irish Brigade were invited, including Richard and William Bermingham. Richard appears in a photograph of the veterans who attended the ceremonies. William's name appears on the guest list, but he is not mentioned as present in the press reports.

The memorial Mass followed a parade up Fifth Avenue which was led by the 69th NY National Guard. At the head of the regiment were the old colors of the Irish Brigade, which were placed on the altar during the service. A news report described the tattered condition of the flags, and the blood stains and battle scars that marred their surface.

President William Howard Taft, the Governor of New York, the Mayor of the City of New York, and a large number of dignitaries attended the banquet. Among them was Lieutenant General Nelson Miles, whose brigade of the First Division, Second Corps had served alongside the Irish Brigade during the Civil War. Also there were Major General Daniel Sickles, who had lost a leg at Gettysburg while commanding the Third Corps, and Major General Leonard Wood, the Chief of Staff of the Army.

General Miles, at that time America's most decorated soldier, made the most touching address, in part:

"I have seen... General Francis Meagher, I have seen him lead the Irish Brigade into battle, and I recall one time, which your historian referred to, when the Irish Brigade was ordered to move forward to take part in that great important battle at Malvern Hill, moving over the green fields of beautiful country at the head of his brigade, he turned around and looking at the regiment, they were following him, the flag, the Star Spangled Banner and the green flag of Ireland floating over them, his soul evidently went back to his native country, for their efforts towards freedom and their efforts for independence, and their history of glory, he says, "Come on, come on, my brave men; Ireland shall have another day!" And indeed it did not only have another day, but it had many others...

"Then at Antietam, I remember on that beautiful morning seeing the brigade move over the river and ascending the slope, moving up as sunlight flashed upon the flags as they were flying, and went up to the charge on that sunken road, one of the bloodiest fights of the war. I saw the flag of our country, the Star Spangled Banner, and the green flag of Ireland, go down many times, the heroes bearing those flags giving their lives for their country, yet, they remained not on the soil of Maryland. Brave men picked them up again and waved them again in triumph and in defiance of the stream of shot and shell that was thinning their ranks and carried them on to final victory.

"Much has been said about the heroism, the bravery, the glory of the 69th, and yet your historian referred to the terrible sacrifice that was made, and we cannot tonight forget the fact that so many brave men gathered up the prospects of life, gathered up all that they hoped for, all that was in prospect for them, and placed them upon the altar of their country, gave their young lives in order that the Nation might live and that the flag of America might remain in the air. You honor yourselves in honoring the brave men of the 69th New York Regiment in such a great crisis. You honor yourselves in paying tribute to the men who fought so heroically and died so gloriously and still live to maintain and take part in the glorious achievements of today. Such honor, such patriotism, such enthusiasm, I trust will ever remain with you and that you may fully enjoy all the blessings that your comrades fought for and died for."

May they all rest in peace, reunited with their families in God's great Glory.

Author's Note

I first began researching the Berminghams in 1995, when a friend mentioned that he knew of a 69th New York Civil War veteran who was buried in Wharton, New Jersey. I checked a list of war burials in Morris County and found William and Andrew's names mentioned for St. Mary's Cemetery.

That year I began working at Saint Clare's Health Services. One day I drove through Wharton and saw the Bermingham Funeral Home on Main Street. I also found that Jack Bermingham was a board member of St. Clare's. I contacted Jack to see if he had any information on his family in the Civil War. I was quite surprised to find that I was researching Jack's grandfather Andrew and granduncle William.

I traveled to Washington, D. C. to find the Berminghams' records in the National Archives. There I found that there were two other Berminghams on Company A's rolls: Richard and another Andrew. Given the spelling of their last names, I believed that they were all related, but I had no proof.

Then I found a letter in William's pension file that was written by Richard affirming that he and William were the sons of brothers. This established the link between brothers Andrew and William and cousin Richard. However, I had no positive proof of the other Andrew's relationship.

Jack Bermingham came to the rescue. He had gotten copies of the immigrant records for his family and found that the two brothers, William and Richard, had sailed together to New York. The manifest showed their children, including both Andrews, their ages matched and I had my confirmation.

I worked with my friend Jack Conway of Conway's Funeral Home in Jackson Heights, New York, to see if we could find Richard's and Andrew's graves. Jack found both men buried in Calvary Cemetery in New York. Richard has a fine headstone, but Andrew's grave is unmarked. We will correct that soon.

One puzzle remains unsolved. Another Bermingham, James, served in the 88th New York through the entire Civil War. He enlisted as a private in 1861 and was discharged a lieutenant and regimental adjutant in 1865. I cannot establish a link to him, but it seems likely that he was a relative. I leave that research to another time.

I want to thank Jack Bermingham for his help. I always enjoy working with family members, since it shows so well that the sacrifices of the veterans were not in vain. I hope that my research will be used to complete a family history of the Berminghams in America. After all, my research only covers a few short (but exciting) years.

I also wish to thank Jack Conway, Joe Bilby, Ron McGovern, Charlie Laverty, Lt. Colonel Ken Powers, regimental historian of the 69th, and the members of the 69th New York Mechanized Infantry, NYANG, the 69th New York Veterans Corps, the 69th New York Historical Association and the Irish Brigade Association, who contributed ideas and materials to this work. My thanks also to the Reverend Richard H. Oliveri, Pastor, and the parishioners of St. Mary's for helping to make this day possible. Brian Regan developed the program for the Mass and the wonderful music. The chain of Irish American history remains unbroken.

I dedicate this work to Barney Kelly, late commander of the 69th New York Veterans Corps, who left us last March. Barney was an inspiration to us in the 69th New York Historical Association. His encyclopedic knowledge of the regiment and Irish American military history contributed so much to our work over the last ten years. There are more than a dozen monuments to the men of the Irish Brigade that Barney made possible. We miss you, sir.

Stephan D. O'Neill

St. Mary's Church, Dover, New Jersey ? *A Short History*

by: Brian Regan

St. Mary's Church, the first Catholic parish in northwestern Morris County, was established in 1845 to serve primarily Irish immigrants who were drawn to employment in the mines in and around the Dover hills. The members of its congregation were residents of Dover and, in much greater numbers, of the constellation of settlements to the north and west of it, and located in present-day Wharton, Mine Hill, Randolph, and Rockaway Township.

In 1845-46, St. Mary's congregation erected a simple frame church. The site for the church (which stood until 1962 across Blackwell Street near the current Dover Campus of St. Clare's Hospital) was equidistant from the various housing clusters where its members resided. The location was the popular choice of the congregation.

The Dover region was rich in iron deposits, and settlements expanded as mining and refining technology advanced and as transportation routes, such as the Morris Canal and the railroad, were opened. In 1869, the Port Oram Iron Company completed a large anthracite refining plant. It created new employment at the furnace and fired explosive job growth in the surface and subsurface mines that supplied the plant.

In 1870, when this boom was near its peak, St. Mary's was assigned a new pastor, the Reverend Pierce McCarthy (1842-1885). Father McCarthy was a native of the parish. His Irish-born father worked in the mines of Stanhope and Mt. Hope, New Jersey before joining the settlement of Mine Hill. When the young priest assumed his position as pastor, his congregation had already outgrown the church building, and he set out almost immediately to build a larger one.

Father McCarthy was a student, seminarian, and an administrator at Seton Hall College in South Orange, New Jersey and witnessed the raising of its chapel (1863-1870) and main building (1866), both designed by Newark architect Jeremiah O'Rourke (1833-1915). After considering less ambitious plans by other architects, the priest turned to O'Rourke to submit a design for a new church.

The building fabric came, almost literally, from only a stone's throw away. Members of the congregation participated in carting the stones for, digging, and laying the foundation beginning in November, 1871. In early 1872, O'Rourke submitted plans to Father McCarthy for the church that was built. These drawings are in the church archives and are the only complete set of O'Rourke's drawings known to survive. The source of St. Mary's stones cannot be doubted. Today, small portions of its wall surfaces are stained with rust ? rust from magnetite, the iron that was the source of whatever little wealth St. Mary's early parishioners enjoyed.

In May 1872, the Bishop of Newark, James Roosevelt Bayley, blessed the cornerstone of the new church. He candidly noted in his diocesan diary that it would replace "the miserable old barn of a building which has so long been a disgrace to that Mission." Contemporary accounts estimated that the cost of the church was \$50,000. Financing followed the pattern for Catholic building programs of the period. To start construction, Father McCarthy solicited donations from the congregation and organized fund-raising fairs, picnics in St. Mary's Grove, and concerts promoted to the wider community. He then secured long-term mortgage financing from a few individuals in the Dover area, local banks, and insurance companies in Newark. Two lay trustees at the time, one of whom was William Bermingham, authorized the debt agreements. A year and a half later, on November 1, 1873, Bishop Michael A. Corrigan, Bayley's successor and later Archbishop of New York, recorded that he "dedicated the beautiful new church of St. Mary in Dover." At the time of its completion, it was the most architecturally sophisticated church yet

erected for a Catholic congregation in New Jersey and the largest Morris County church of any denomination erected north of Morristown. An alert reporter for the local newspaper observed: "Few ecclesiastical edifices in Morris Country equal and still fewer surpass St. Mary's.... It is in the shape of a cross, and but for its modern trimmings, closely resembles those venerable fanes of medieval times described by historians and tourists.... Nearly all the materials used in the construction of the church remain in a comparatively primeval condition. The stone, which is of a bluish gray color, came from the mines in the neighborhood."

A Church by Jeremiah O'Rourke

Jeremiah O'Rourke, the architect of St. Mary's, was born in Ireland. He trained at the Dublin School of Design and emigrated to the United States and settled in Newark in 1850. He opened an architectural practice there in 1859. Knowledgeable and opinionated, O'Rourke believed that the Catholic Church in the United States had generally failed to build churches worthy of its architectural heritage, and it was his expressed intent to bring the highest standards to the design of Catholic churches.

The style of O'Rourke's works reflected the influence of Ecclesiology, a movement that identified the style of the Medieval parish church as the paradigm for church building. O'Rourke studied the writings and work of A. W. N. Pugin, the presiding intellect of the Gothic Revival, and his prolific Irish disciple, J. J. McCarthy.

The plan that indicated the internal arrangements, the building fabric of undressed, local stone, the open timber roof, and the Decorated tracery, all these were prescribed by Ecclesiological precepts for a church of St. Mary's modest size and remote setting. O'Rourke abandoned the traditional east-west axis convention for churches in favor of the more picturesque effect of having the nave parallel the Port Oram road (now South Main Street, Wharton).

In aspects of its style and in particular details, St. Mary's owes a debt to churches put up in Ireland from 1840 to the end of the 1860's. It is a rare American building that was influenced by the Irish Gothic Revival, a movement that had an especially original and vigorous development. The stone trim and the floriated gable cross of the west facade is adapted from those favored by Pugin and found on his churches in Wexford County, Ireland. In this way, O'Rourke cited the churches of Ireland as a fitting reference for an American church built to serve Irish immigrants.

The handsome spire O'Rourke designed for St. Mary's was never erected. A local newspaper account of the church's dedication in 1873 noted that the church was complete, "...except for the spire, which it was decided to leave it unfinished until the congregation can better sustain the expense. It is intended, however, to complete it at an early day." That day never came. While the church was still under construction, the mining industry and the wider economy collapsed and the market for the parishioners' iron ore dried up. And with little demand for ore, the big Port Oram furnace went cold. Hard times lasted for the rest of the decade. Father McCarthy, who had led the ambitious building project, was transferred to Harrison, New Jersey. In the future, no funds were sought to raise the spire. Unfinished, it has become a kind of monument to the boom and bust cycle of an early industrial economy.

Open Timber Roof The open timber roof with infills of Victorian tracery intensified the rusticity O'Rourke sought to give St. Mary's. It is a magnificent example from the 1870's of this type of construction.

Extraordinary Stained Glass The stained glass windows are remarkable for their extraordinary beauty and also because they were all installed in a one year, 1873. Evidence permits us to

confidently attribute them to the firm of Slack and Booth, a studio active in Orange, New Jersey, in the 1870's. Stephen Slack and Charles Booth were stained glass artists trained in their native England. As an untouched cycle, St. Mary's windows constitute an especially significant collection of American stained glass. (Currently, some of these windows are removed from the church and being restored by a glass conservation expert.)

Images and Symbols in the Windows The rose in the chancel holds symbols of Mary, the parish's patron, as named in the Litany of the Virgin: Star of the Morning; Lily (Virgin Most Pure); Ark of the Covenant; Tower of Ivory; and Mystical Rose. Mary is given pride of place, too, in the superbly rendered window in the transept. Opposite is one of Jeremiah the Prophet donated by Jeremiah O'Rourke. It is, in effect, how the architect signed his design.

The small lancets in the chancel hold the figures of St. Michael and St. Catherine. Father Pierce McCarthy was the son of Michael and Catherine McCarthy and when planning the church, he arranged for windows of his parents' name saints to be placed near the high altar.

Many windows carry the names of the most generous donors to the original building campaign. They were parishioners (including the two Bermingham families), a number of Seton Hall faculty and diocesan clergy, apparently friends of Father McCarthy, and two TABS. (Total Abstinence and Benevolent Society), to which a majority of the men of the parish belonged. Members took a pledge not to drink alcoholic beverages, a discipline for which both employers and the clergy had sympathy. The TABS' benevolence took the form of an insurance collective, funded by dues, in which members were given a kind of disability and life insurance, critical benefits for miners, whose dangerous work put them daily in harm's way.

Murals The murals of Christian scenes in the inclined panels of the ceiling were painted, we believe, in the first decade of this century. We know from oral tradition that they are the work of German-speaking artists who lodged in parish homes.

Restoration & Renewal

In 1997, the parish began a program of restoration and renewal made possible by the wonderful generosity of parishioners and friends of St. Mary's. The structure and infrastructure required restoration and long-deferred maintenance. The interior, which over the years had lost much of its earlier character, called for attention. A parish committee, with John C. Bermingham serving as general chairman, developed the plans. The interior work aimed to restore or renew in a way that respected the church's particular aesthetic and also fit it for use by a vital worshipping community as it entered a new millennium. The committee examined previous interior schemes and studied nineteenth-century design and materials, in general. It chose to use such materials in the new work.

Appointments The altar of oak and marble, and other liturgical appointments, and the organ case, were designed in 1997 by Michael Wetstone of Beyer Blinder Belle, a New York architectural firm. The floor tiles were imported from England from Minton Hollis, renowned for its geometric and encaustic tiles, and installed in 1997. The border patterns throughout are derived from the original borders.

Statue of Our Lady, Patron of St. Mary's The splendid bronze statue of Our Lady, cast in 1997 especially for St. Mary's, is the work of Mother Concordia Scott, a Benedictine sister and the Abbess of Minster Abbey, which, coincidentally, is not far from Dover, England. Other works by

Mother Concordia are in Westminster R. C. Cathedral, London, and the crypt chapel of Canterbury Cathedral. St. Mary's bronze was cast with a small amount of copper in it, giving the statue its warm hue. It is highlighted with pure gold leaf, from sheets of gold that the artist described as "light and fine as a butterfly's wings." A jewel-stone of sapphire-blue, for Mary, is set in Our Lady's crown.

Skinner Pipe Organ The pipe organ in the chancel was installed in St. Mary's in early 1998. It was built by the Skinner Organ Company of Boston for a Paterson church in 1928-29. St. Mary's had it restored and placed here in 1998. Skinners were, and are, prized for their grandeur of ensemble and tonal color. The organ case was designed in the High Victorian idiom especially for St. Mary's in 1997. In a touch of Gothic whimsy, the design for the finials that crown the organ case's four wooden posts was taken from the drawings for the spire that was never built.