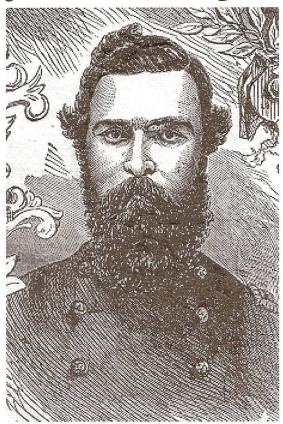
"FAITHFUL TO US HERE ..."

A Remembrance of Colonel Patrick Kelly of the Irish Brigade



Colonel Commanding the Irish Brigade Colonel and Lieutenant Colonel, 88th New York State Volunteer Infantry Captain, 69th New York State Militia

Son of Galway

by T. L. Murphy

The Galway Association of New York, Inc.



The Galway Association of New York knew immediately what they had to do when approached by the Irish Brigade Association last year about Colonel Patrick Kelly's unmarked grave in Calvary Cemetery. We have the honor of unveiling this memorial stone for our fellow Galway man, who made the ultimate sacrifice for his adopted country.

A special word of thanks to the Irish Brigade for their diligent work, to Jack Conway for his efforts and advice, and to historian T. L. Murphy for her remarkable research work on Colonel Kelly.

To the Galway Association committee—Paddy Lally, Gerry McHugh, John Fallon, John Concannon and Bernie Rohan—thank you for this wonderful day.

CECILY ROHAN

President

Faithful to us here, we loved him to the last.

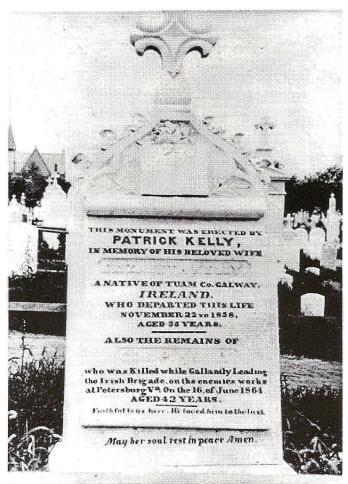
This loving remembrance was inscribed on the original headstone of Colonel Patrick Kelly's grave. The headstone, pictured below, was lost many years ago. Now, through the generosity and hard work of The Galway Association of New York, a beautiful new stone marks Colonel Kelly's final resting place.

We note with special thanks Cecilia Rohan, President, and Patrick Lally, John Fallon, John Concannon, Bernard Rohan, Gerry McHugh, and John Ridge, members of The Galway Association. We depend on the support of Irish friends such as these to continue our great task of memorializing our heroes.

We also note with warm appreciation the efforts of Jack Conway. Jack has led the Irish Brigade Association's Graves Committee for several years. He has helped to identify the graves and to coordinate the ceremonies honoring more than a dozen Irish heroes of the American Civil War.

T. L. Murphy, a Gettysburg Licensed Battlefield Guide and author of *Kelly's Heroes — the Irish Brigade at Gettysburg*, prepared the monograph on Colonel Kelly. Ms. Murphy has spent hundreds of hours in researching the Irish Brigade and Colonel Kelly and we are deeply grateful for her work.

Think of all the people who will come and stand next to Colonel Kelly's final resting place, admire the beautiful stone, and wonder who he was. Will they know of his story, of his joy in life, and the terrible sacrifice that he so willingly made? Is it possible that, in always looking to the future, we may forget the past sacrifices that made us what we are? Rest assured; the dedication and hard work of the people named here, and the dozens of others who support these activities, shows that the chain of Irish history remains unbroken.



COLONEL PATRICK KELLY

by T. L. Murphy

Colonel Patrick Kelly sat for a few moments in silence with a fellow officer and watched as the flames of the campfires flickered and cast shadows over the ground near Petersburg. An ominous feeling came over him as he pensively stared off into the darkness on that warm summer night. On the eve of battle, his thoughts wandered to a beloved horse and dog that he had recently lost as well as the many men that may be lost before the next sunset. His raven hair and beard were matched by his brilliant dark eyes as he turned to Captain Denis Burke and quietly remarked, "I've lost my black horse, and my black dog, and now they'll have 'the little black man' [Kelly, himself]. It was June 15, the night before the battle of Petersburg, VA, in 1864.\(^1\)

Patrick Kelly was born in Castlehacket, County Galway, Ireland in the early 1820s. His father died when Patrick was about nine years old, leaving young Patrick and his sister to be raised by their mother. The family endured difficult times in Ireland and, after the Great Famine of 1846 - 1848 Patrick set sail for America. He arrived in New York City and eventually opened a mercantile business and married a woman from Tuam, Galway. His wife, Elizabeth, had no children and died of "convulsions" at 10 Rapelye St., Brooklyn, on November 18, 1858.²

When war broke out between the states in 1861, Patrick Kelly enlisted as a private in the 69th New York Militia where he quickly rose to the rank of lieutenant of Company E. The 69th was mustered into the Federal service for 90 days after the attack on Fort Sumter. Kelly participated with the regiment in the Battle of First Bull Run. When the 90 day commitment was ended Kelly returned to New York with the regiment to be mustered out.

Patrick Kelly was appointed, but never commissioned, as a captain in the 16th US Infantry. Some accounts erroneously have Kelly as having been breveted for bravery at the Battle of Shiloh. However, as he was not with the 16th US Infantry at Shiloh in April of 1862, it would have been difficult for him to have been breveted for bravery there. The quarterly regimental returns for the 16th US Infantry consistently show Patrick Kelly as not joined.³

In fact, on December 31, 1861, Kelly was commissioned as lieutenant colonel of the 88th New York State Volunteer Infantry, with rank to date from September 14, 1861. The 88th New York, also known as "Mrs. Meagher's Own," along with the 63rd and 69th New York Infantry comprised the three New York regiments of the Irish Brigade. Later they would be joined by the 28th Massachusetts and the 116th Pennsylvania regiments. Thomas Francis Meagher from Waterford, who had



Col. Patrick Kelly

earlier been involved in revolutionary activities in Ireland, took command of the Brigade in February of 1862.⁴

At the Battle of Fair Oaks Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Kelly was advancing through some woods with the 88th New York Infantry towards the enemy. A Second Corps staff officer placed him in great danger when he halted eight out of the ten companies of Kelly's regiment in the woods. When Kelly emerged out of the woods with just two companies he became hotly engaged with the enemy and was out-numbered. If not for the quick action of Captain McMahon in advancing the other eight regiments to the front, the two companies of the 88th New York may have been massacred. Kelly made a point of mentioning in his official report not only the bravery of the men but the surgeons who attended the wounded of both sides. He also told of a young drummer boy of the 88th who closely pursued the enemy and captured a Confederate soldier whom he presented to General Edwin Sumner, commanding officer of the Second Corps.⁵

Patrick Kelly was with his regiment in most of the battles that the Irish Brigade was engaged in. One of his men described him at the Battle of Antietam, in September 1862,

At Antietam, where the Irish Brigade, with 88th N.Y. in front, led the pursuing column from South Mountain, on Sept. 15, 1862, till passed by the 8th Illinois Cavalry and 5th N.H. to skirmish (they had rifles, we had buck and ball muskets), as soon as picket firing commenced and we were deployed, he gave the word 'Lie down, byes [boys], thim little fellows might hurt yez.' We had men of all sorts and conditions of life and the Colonel was apt to 'put on the brogue' just a little on such occasions with very happy effect, though he naturally had enough to give a delightful mellowness to his utterance of the English language. The men laughed, and, feeling tired, most of them fell asleep, waking up hours later to the tune of a cannonade and to find half the army up to the front. This care to guard his boys from the possible contusion of a half-spent minie ball did not interfere in the least with requiring them to charge home on the 17th [Antietam], or at Fredericksburg, or anywhere else.⁶

After the Battle of Antietam, Patrick Kelly was promoted to full colonel on October 16, 1862. One of the officers of the Irish Brigade later described Kelly,

He was not a large man to look at, but his looks were deceiving. He had the physique of a Hercules, broad and deep-chested. He was handsome, with a noble forehead, brilliant black eyes, fine nose, the blackest hair and beard and a dark complexion - which is not uncommon among the people of Galway and Limerick, who in old days were socially and politically in close alliance with Spain.⁷

Colonel Patrick Kelly was a soft spoken man who was well loved by his men. In December 1862, he gallantly led his men into the Battle of Fredericksburg, Virginia where the Irish Brigade charged against the steep embankments of Marye's Heights. They were ordered to charge a strongly defended Confederate position where several previous charges had failed. One Confederate officer later wrote home to his sweetheart about the charge of the Irish Brigade,

Your soldier's heart almost stood still as he watched those sons of Erin fearlessly rush to their death. The brilliant assault on Marye's Heights of their Irish Brigade was beyond description. Why my darling, we forgot they were fighting us and cheer after cheer at their fearlessness went up all along our lines.⁸

General George Pickett

Some of the Confederates on Marye's Heights from Cobb's Legion and Kershaw's Brigade were also born in Ireland. So it was a strange twist of fate that Irishmen would kill Irishmen by the score during the American Civil War.

Kelly, like many Galway men, was fond of horses as one Irish Brigade Officer remembered,

His favorite charger, 'Faugh-a-Ballagh,' was probably the finest war-horse in the United States and would 'negotiate' the most formidable stone-wall, fence, or brook with his 'wetterweight' master on his back like a colt - a frequent performance which never failed to start the Brigade cheering. It was the one thing where the light-heartedness of the boy showed in Col. Kelly, for he was habitually a grave man, a man of few words, gentle, kind, unassuming, feeling his responsibilities in fullest measure, and with a disciplined bravery that would send his men, himself at the head, to storm the very gates of hell, if ordered, and stay there till ordered back. 10

Shortly after the Battle of Chancellorsville in May 1863, Thomas Francis Meagher resigned in protest of not being allowed to recruit new men for his depleted ranks. The chain of command then devolved to Colonel Patrick Kelly who had formerly led the 88th New York Infantry. The brigade had been almost wiped out between the Battles of Antietam and Fredericksburg so that by the time they arrived in Gettysburg Pennsylvania in July 1863 they arrived with just a little over 530 men.

Colonel Kelly assembled his brigade on Cemetery Ridge at Gettysburg on the morning of July 2. They were attached to Caldwell's Division of Winfield Scott Hancock's Second Corps. Before the Irish Brigade went off to fight in the bloody Wheatfield, their chaplain, Father William Corby, had all the Irishmen uncover their heads and bow down to receive General Absolution absolving all the men of their sins. One union officer described the scene as, "it was more than impressive, it was awe inspiring."¹¹

Colonel Kelly led the Irishmen down along Cemetery Ridge and splashed across Plum Run entering the chest high wheat in the Wheatfield. With their regimental flags flying overhead they charged across the field and on to Stony Hill shouting their battle cry, "Faugh a Ballaugh!" (loosely translated means "Clear the Way!") The Irish drove the enemy before them but their victory was short lived as Confederate reinforcements forced them from their position. The Irish Brigade retreated through a gauntlet of death through the Wheatfield to the base of Cemetery Ridge. By the end of the battle the Irish Brigade had lost 200 of their 530 men as casualties.

After the battle of Gettysburg, Colonel Patrick Kelly was recommended for promotion to the rank of Brigadier General on September 10, 1863, by Thomas Francis Meagher. The former Irish Brigade commander wrote to President Abraham Lincoln,

To his Excellency, the President of the United States,

There is not a truer man among them than Colonel Patrick Kelly, nor one better informed, (for all practical purposes) in his profession as a soldier, nor one more eager to do his duty, under every circumstance, whether in the field or in the camp.

He was of essential service to me in organizing the brigade - with action of Savages Station, Gaines' Mill, White Oak Swamp, and Malvern Hill - during which engagements he was lying utterly prostrate at death's door with typhoid fever - Colonel Kelly was with the brigade in every action in which the brigade took part; - and, with the action of Williamsburg and Mechanicsville, the Army of the Potomac fought no battle in which the Irish Brigade was not to the front, supporting it colors in the thickest of the fight.

At Fair Oaks, At Antietam, in the assault in the enemy's works at Fredericksburg, at Chancellorsville, and last of all, at Gettysburg, Colonel Kelly strikingly distinguished himself with his intelligent self-possession, his calm firm bravery, and the admirable manner in which he held and handled his regiment.

A thorough devotion to his men - a perfectly even temperament - promptitude and cheerfulness in obeying orders - a sterling honesty of purpose sustaining him solidly and nobly in all his relations with the service - a pure and beautiful record throughout - these are the ground in addition to his brave and faithful services, on which I rest my application for his promotion, at the earliest day, to the rank of Brigadier General. And in consideration of which I earnestly entreat that it may be granted.¹²

Thomas Francis Meagher



Brigadier General Thomas Francis Meagher First Commanding Officer of the Irish Brigade

Although Abraham Lincoln asked that Patrick Kelly's promotion to brigadier general be considered, Kelly never received his general's star and still held the rank of colonel almost one year later. Some accounts maintain that there was discrimination against the Irish officers, both prior to and during the Civil War, and that General Henry Halleck and his staff were slow to promote Irish born officers. Meagher's recommendation went unheeded and his request that Kelly be promoted to brigadier general never came to fruition.

It was evident that the brigade thought very highly of Colonel Kelly as one officer observed,

He found little fault with men or officers, indeed, he had little occasion, and he was not lavish with praise. When he did bestow it the few words went a long way. Five, viz.: 'Well done, my brave byes,' to the little remnant of the Brigade at Bristoe, when they went through the manual under fire at Coffee Hill, out of devilment, was worth as much as five hundred.¹³

In the Spring of 1864 the Union Army of the Potomac was reorganized and the Irish Brigade filled it's ranks with many of the original men re-enlisting for a second term of three years or the duration of the war.

Colonel Patrick Kelly gallantly led his brigade at the Battle of Petersburg on June 16, 1864. Raising his unsheathed sword in front of the brigade he urged the men forward. A Confederate bullet struck him in the forehead killing him instantly. The Irishmen were devastated. One of the officers wrote the following letter to the editor of the Irish American shortly after the battle,

For our dead comrades, especially Col. Patrick Kelly, the profoundest regrets are uttered. Over his lifeless boy, on its being brought from under fire, by order of Capt. Maurice W. Wall, commanding the 69th Regt. strong old veteran soldiers wept like children, and wrung their hands in frenzy. At this or any other exhibition of deep grief, you, who knew for years and years the sterling virtue of him whose beaming dark brown eye never flashed brighter than in that last fatal charge which he led with almost unrivaled gallantry - his trusty, unsheathed sword being held above his head till the instant when the rebel bullet pierced his brain - at our grief and prevailing sadness, I say, you will not wonder. In truth, from the organization of the Brigade to the hour of his death, there never was a more unblemished soul in it than honest Colonel Patrick Kelly. This is the common feeling with us all here - especially the few remaining of his old comrades in the New York regiments of the Brigade.

But I grieve to tell you, that it is a Brigade no longer, and, as was said to me, yesterday, by one of our trustiest 'Faugh-a-Ballaugh's'- a gallant little officer who first served under and fought by the side of the heroic Captain Clooney - 'without the protection of Providence, the remnant of our heroic little Brigade will lose what it has won; for all that now remains of it is the recollection of its services and suffering.'

I cannot prolong painful reflections; neither, just now, am I able to attempt any eulogy of our gallant dead. This, however, you in New York will faithfully attend to. Give but the records, and they alone will be the tribute most honorable to the memory of the virtues and gallantry which, with Pat Kelly's death, became eclipsed.¹⁴

Another Irishman later remembered,

Till he fell, shot through the brow, so suddenly that he could not have felt the blow, he had the singular fortune of never having received the slightest scratch, while his pockets were made to suffer by the extraordinary fatality which pursued his revolvers. The butts of three in succession were shattered into irreparable ruin at Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg.

That he never received his star was and is disgusting to his men. He did so well with the troops he had that he could not have failed in high command, which he had earned over and over again. A faithful citizen, a splendid soldier, a true friend Col. Patrick Kelly was a perfect type of the very best kind of naturalized American.¹⁵

The day before Col Patrick Kelly, 88th N.Y., commander of the Irish Brigade, was killed before Petersburg, he was grieved over the recent loss of some old domestic pets, and sadly remarked to Capt., now Gen. Denis F. Burke: 'I've lost my black horse, and my black dog, and now they'll have the little black man. [Kelly, himself].' He was shot next day for the first time, but effectually. 16

After the death of the beloved Colonel Patrick Kelly, his body was carried from the field for burial at Calvary Cemetery in New York City. The following letter was sent to the editor of the New York Herald when the colonel's body arrived in New York,

I see by the morning papers, just arrived, that the remains of Colonel Patrick Kelly are expected in New York this morning. Should the funeral take place before Sunday it will not be in my power to attend it, as I am confined to my room by a very sore foot. If it takes place on Sunday, or any other day afterwards, I am desirous, in compliance with his express wishes, that the funeral should be a private and not a public one. Public military funeral are now-a-days a public nuisance, and the most delicate and reverential tribute we can pay to the gallant dead are to be paid unostentatiously and quietly.

Colonel Patrick Kelly, commanding the Eighty-eighth New York Volunteers, the Second regiment of the Irish Brigade, was one of my truest and most reliable officers. Perfectly and absolutely sincere, he displayed neither the vanity nor the brilliancy of a soldier, but under a most modest and almost obscure demeanor, he exercised the best qualities that effect and consummate the grand results of military life. His devotion to duty cannot be excelled. Utterly abandoning all political associations he pledged his life to the honor of the flag under which his emigrant race, the dispersed Irish race the world over have found their most solid respectability and recognition.

The Irish Brigade was organized to assure not only the government of the United States, but every foreign government, that the Irish emigrant and the Irish adopted citizen was true to the nation under which he took shelter, with all the vigor of his arm to the last throb of his impetuous heart. This profession or promise - call it what you will - the Irish Brigade in the Second corps of the Army of the Potomac has by every testimony, up to this day fulfilled. The death of Col. Patrick Kelly establishes this assurance as a fact. Thus the Irish soldier vindicates against the Irish politician, here and abroad, the truthfulness, gratitude, bravery and nobility of the Irish race.¹⁷

Thomas Francis Meagher

A New York paper reported Colonel Patrick Kelly's funeral was to begin at 2:00 PM, but it was nearly 4:00 PM before the large funeral procession was ready and proceeded to Calvary Cemetery,

The men of the Second Corps who could not attend the funeral for Colonel Patrick Kelly were still engaged in fighting for the Union, wanted to honor their friend and beloved commander. On September 23, 1864, General George Gordon Meade, the commander of the Army of the Potomac, issued a circular stating that, "Fort S in the line of intrenchments, designated as Fort Kelly, will be known as Fort Patrick Kelly." to commemorate the late colonel.

When news of Colonel Kelly's death reached his native County Galway his fate was lamented by those who knew him. Like so many Irish heroes that had died in battle on foreign shores he was not forgotten at home where the local paper reported,

We copy into out columns to-day the obituary of Colonel Patrick Kelly, of Castlehacket, near this town. Like so many thousands of our countrymen during the fratricidal war which devastates the once United States of America, our former neighbour, Colonel Kelly, has been mowed down by the pitiless scythe of death far from the green fields and loved home of his nativity; and like another Irish hero expiring on the distant battle-field, he not doubt, regretted that his gushing life blood was not shed for Ireland. . . ¹⁹



Colonel Patrick Kelly

- ¹ Grand Army Publishing, NY, Grand Army Review, Vol. 3, #12, 816..
- ² National Archives RG 15 File #227761.
- ³ Ibid., and the quarterly returns of the 16th US Infantry.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ War of the Rebellion Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (hereafter cited as OR) Series 1 Volume XI/ Part 1 - report of Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Kelly, 88th New York Infantry.
- ⁶ W>L>D> O'Grady, Grand Army Review, (New York W>L>D> O'Grady, Grand Army Publishing Co.) Vol. 1 No. 7 105, hereafter cited as O'Grady.
- ⁷ O'Grady Vol. 3 No. 8, 671.
- ⁸ Glen Tucker, Hancock the Superb, (Dayton, OH; Morningside Bookshop, 1980) 108, hereafter cited as Tucker.
- ¹⁰O'Grady Vol. 3, No. 8, 671.
- ¹¹ Chaplain William Corby, Memoirs of Chaplain Life, (New York; Fordham University Press, 1992. Edited by Lawrence Kohl) 182 184 hereafter cited as Corby.
- ¹² National Archives RG 94 M1064.
- ¹³ O'Grady Vol. 3, No. 8, 671.
- ¹⁴ Irish American, Letter to the Editor dated June 22, 1864.
- ¹⁵ O'Grady, Vol. 3, No. 8, 671.
- ¹⁶ O'Grady, Vol. 3, No. 12, 816.
- ¹⁷ New York Herald, Letter to the Editor, June ?, 1864.
- ¹⁸ National Archives RG 15 Patrick Kelly Pension File, newspaper clipping from an un-named New York newspaper.
- ¹⁹ National Archives RG 15, Pension File, newspaper clipping from an un-named Irish newspaper in Galway, Ireland.

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T.L. Murphy was born in Arlington, Massachusetts next to historic Lexington. The author grew up with an interest in history. Developing a fondness for Irish history and music over a pint of Guinness in Boston's numerous Irish pubs, Murphy studied Irish history and literature at Middlesex Community College and Harvard University Extension. The author lived in Ireland and worked doing historical research for a company in County Kerry on the west coast of Ireland. T. L. Murphy returned to the United States, studied the American Civil War, and currently resides in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, employed as a Licensed Battlefield Guide at the Gettysburg National Military Park.

THE IRISH BRIGADE AT GETTYSBURG. By WILLIAM GEOGHEGAN.

Τ.

O comrades, step with reverent tread
Tow'rd this historic mound;
The soil once wet with brave men's blood
Is always holy ground.
Here five-and-twenty years ago
An Irish phalanx stood,
And here they swelled the battle-tide
With generous Celtic blood.

II.

Thro' many a fierce, ensanguined fight,

Two banners o'er them flew -
The emblems of the land they left,

And the land they came unto;

No stain e'er fell on either's folds -
No foeman e'er could say

He'd plucked a tassel from those staffs,

Or snatched a thread away!

III.

Though rent and splintered, flags and staffs,
With foeman face to face,
Above the vanguard's fire-swept line,
Those flags maintained their place,
And out of Stonewall Jackson's lips
The wrathful sentence drew:
"There goes that damned green flag again
Beside the Yankee blue!"

IV.

On Fair Oaks field, on Marye's Heights,
Through Fredericksburg's dread days,
Well, well the Southland's veterans knew,
Those blended banners' blaze;
Where'er the fight was desperate
And spears struck fire from spears,
Those flags flashed out above the lines
Of Irish Brigadiers.

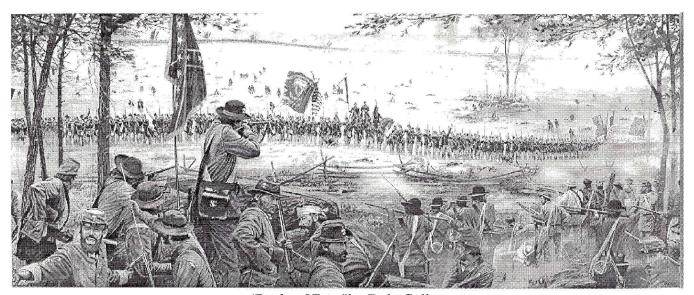
V.

Columbia hath a memory,
Generous, proud and keen,
That fondly holds remembrance of
The boys who bore the green;
So sleep, ye brave, unselfish dead,
Who fell within its shade;
This shaft will tell to other times
The sacrifice ye made.

VI.

The war-drum's throb and bugle sound
Ye loved to hear is o'er -The damp, cold earth is heaped above
Your hearts forever more;
But mem'ry of your gallant deeds
Enlivens, stirs and thrills,
Like echoes of a clarion call
Around old Galway's hills.

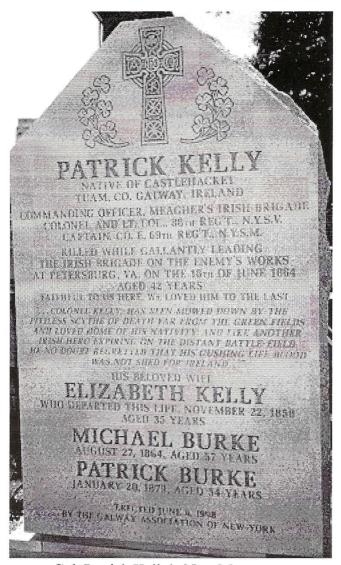
Poem read at the dedication of the Irish Brigade monument on the field of Gettysburg, 1888.



"Pride of Erin" by Dale Gallon Courtesy Dale Gallon, Gettysburg, Pa.

And Col. Patrick Kelly, who so valiantly led us, here deserves to be remembered with veneration and love by every soldier of the Irish Brigade. He was with us from the commencement, and shared the fortunes of the brigade in all its weary marches and fighting till he came to Petersburg, where he fought his last battle. On that June afternoon in 1864, when we advanced to storm the intrenchments of that city, while at the head of his command leading the charge with the colors of his old regiment in his hands, a shell struck him and he fell without an utterance. So died one of the bravest soldiers of the Army of the Potomac. He went to his grave having filled a measure of usefulness, beloved by his comrades and mourned by the soldiers of the Second Corps without regard to rank.

A portion of the speech of Colonel Denis Burke, 88th NYS Volunteers, at the Gettysburg dedication.



Col. Patrick Kelly's New Monument

The Galway Association of New York gratefully acknowledges the support of the following individuals and organizations in the worthy cause of honoring Colonel Patrick Kelly.

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The Irish Brigade Association