CELTIC MYTH AND REALITY: THE 28TH MASSACHUSETTS VOLUNTEER INFANTRY REGIMENT

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DEDICATION

To the memory of the men of the 28th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment; and to Christine, my wife, and Timothy, my son, who have lived with the stories of these men since 1988.

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I

INTRODUCTION

By 1865, the Irish soldier in the American Civil War enjoyed a reputation of valor and self-sacrifice unequalled by other immigrant groups in the United States. Although many doubted if the Irish would be willing to fight at all for their adopted country in 1861, thousands rallied to the flag and pledged their lives for its defense. By 1863, the exploits of Union Irish organizations, such as the Irish Brigade, were so notable that even foreign press gave them praise. Union commanders, when faced with tough resistance, often called upon Irish units to clear the way. The resulting death toll to these units could not be denied by anyone, and the amount of Irish blood spilled in support of the Union received acclamation throughout the northern states.

The end of the war allowed the Irish community in the northern states to capitalize on the legendary exploits of their countrymen. Extolling the virtues of the wartime fidelity of the Irish community, Irish politicians took every opportunity to recount the heroic and daring acts of the Irish soldier. Indeed, many Irishmen had joined the Union Army in an effort to attain equal rights as American citizens. Irish leaders repeatedly declared that the United States could only pay back the debt by granting the Irish community full rights of citizenship and political participation.

This thesis examines the myths about the Irish Union soldier of the Civil War by examining the largest unit in the Irish Brigade, the 28th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment. The 28th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment supplied the largest

number of men, and consequently, provided most of the officers who lead the Brigade for nearly three years. This thesis has four parts. The first (Chapter II) relates a short history of the 28th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment from its inception in Boston, Massachusetts in 1861, through its disestablishment in 1865.

Section two (Chapter III) examines how the legends and myths about the unit helped and hindered the unit's combat effectiveness. It provides insight on how Irish and Massachusetts politics helped and hindered the usefulness of the unit, the success of the regiment for its first year, the steps taken to improve the organization's leadership and performance, and the accomplishments of the unit throughout the rest of the war, both in the negative and positive sense.

Section three (Chapter IV) examines the utility and accuracy of the unit's reputation and how the unit lived up to, or fell short of, its reputation. The political rhetoric used to justify full equality with the "native-born" by recalling the amount of Irish blood shed in the country's defense will be compared against the documented reality, showing how Celtic myth clashed with reality.

Section Four (Chapter V) examines how the long held perceptions of the 28th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, one of the most famous Irish units in the Union Army, turned out not to be as Irish as Civil War historians contend. Combined, these topics reveal the inconsistencies of the generally accepted facts with documented evidence concerning both the 28th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment and the Irish Brigade.

II

HISTORY OF THE 28TH MASSACHUSETTS VOLUNTEER INFANTRY REGIMENT

By September 1861 recruiting for the Union Army had gotten out of control as an unregulated cottage industry of inducing men to join the Army sprang up in the streets of Boston, Massachusetts. The governor's office became entangled in the bickering between self-appointed recruiters, politically-appointed generals, and the War Department. Governor John A. Andrew tried to bring order to the chaos, but in the process, lost a round to his political rival, General Benjamin F. Butler. Butler roamed across New England recruiting men for his own units by offering money to those who signed up. With a limited manpower pool from which to draw, Massachusetts (which did not offer money for joining) soon found itself hard-pressed to fill its own units. Appeals by Governor Andrew to President Lincoln brought assurances that in the future only states could recruit, but in the short term, politically connected individuals such as Butler could continue their own recruiting. The War Department promised Andrew that no more individuals would interfere in his state's recruiting efforts. Then came Thomas Francis Meagher, an Irish ex-patriot banished from Ireland by the British government, with President Lincoln's permission and blessings to recruit in Massachusetts. In fact, Meagher had already appointed a recruiting representative in Boston, Bernard S. Treanor, the editor of the *Irish American* newspaper. Treanor sent Andrew a letter with numerous newspaper clippings detailing Meagher's recruiting activities in the northeastern states for an "Irish Brigade." Since Meagher received permission to raise volunteers in

Massachusetts six days before the assurances of Secretary of War Simon Cameron and President Lincoln, Governor Andrew had no choice but to support Meagher's efforts.

Mr. Treanor explained that Irishmen probably would not enlist in an "American" unit, but would join an "Irish" unit. Many Irish were forced out of Ireland to America in the 1840s due to famine and oppressive British rule. Treanor extolled the virtues of Irishmen who believed in the future independence of Ireland. He explained that many Irish believed fighting for the Union would prepare them for the inevitable conflict with England. In fact, Treanor had the names of twenty-five New York men who would be fine officers for the regiment of Irish from Boston, if the governor would commission them. Meagher had asked Treanor to raise the Massachusetts regiment, and Treanor now asked the governor to permit him to do so.[1]

Never popular with the Irish community, Governor Andrew had nevertheless raised an "Irish" unit, the 9th Massachusetts Infantry (Irish), the previous April. He was soon thoroughly embarrassed by its officer's political in-fighting and the unit's general conduct upon its arrival in Washington D.C. in June. So raising another ethnic regiment in the fall of 1861 was not Andrew's highest priority.[2]

Patrick Donahoe, the editor of Boston's Irish newspaper *The Pilot*, had in fact originally counseled his readers against any Irish getting involved in any internal regional dispute and used his newspaper to that end. However, when war broke out Donahoe perceived the opportunity for the Irish community to use the situation to their advantage. He became an ardent supporter of the Union and urged the creation of an Irish regiment. His efforts convinced Andrew to create the 9th Massachusetts Infantry (Irish). Donahoe, like Treanor, hoped the war exploits of their people would gain glory, recognition of full

citizen rights and ultimately, political clout for the Irish in America. Meagher, who earlier been banished by the British to Tasmania for treasonous activities in Ireland, enjoyed the widespread acclaim of the Irish community in America ever since he arrived to the United States in 1852. Known for his stirring speeches, the fame of "Meagher of the Sword" would undoubtedly bring in recruits, a point on which both Andrew and Treanor agreed.[3] In the meantime, various Irishmen attempted to have influence in the raising of an Irish unit.

Doctor William M. Walsh, for example, had also been recruiting Irishmen in anticipation of a Massachusetts Irish regiment for Meagher's Irish Brigade. Walsh, foreseeing a split between Treanor and Donahoe, recruited but did not report his efforts until he found out which of the two men Governor Andrew backed. Whoever received the governor's backing would get his recruits.[4] Meanwhile, non-Irishmen (native-born Americans) seeking to gain prestige, plied Andrew with letters recommending themselves as the proposed regiment's commander. For instance, Francis J. Parker, a native born Bostonian, attempted to meet with Governor Andrew to procure the position. However, he met with little success, so he resorted to writing the governor. In his letter, Parker stated that he did not go out of his way to seek the position; rather, it was Donahoe who had asked him to volunteer for the post, arguing that the unit had to be officered by a native-born American. Parker arrogantly intoned that he was a busy man and if he is to become the regiment's colonel, Andrew should quickly tell him so. At no time did Parker say he wanted the position, but if offered, he would accept it.[5]

Against this background of political intrigue, Thomas Francis Meagher arrived in Boston to generate enthusiasm for his Irish Brigade. A capacity crowd packed Boston's

Music Hall to see the famous orator, Governor Andrew, and the state's Adjutant General, William Schouler. As expected, Meagher spoke against the Confederate cause, telling his audience that the North deserved their support. Meagher also countered the idea held by many Irishmen that the South's secession spirit seemed to be in tune with those who worked for Irish independence. Meagher next worked his audience up to cheer after cheer by referring to the many brave military exploits of Irish soldiers in Europe and the Far East. His verbal crescendo rocked the rafters of the hall:

> Then up, Irishmen! Up! Take the sword in hand! Down to the banks of the Potomac! Let those who can, do so; and I believe I speak consistently with the views of your esteemed Chief Magistrate, when I say that every facility will be accorded those Irishmen who wish to enlist under the banner of the State; and I have no doubt that, somehow or other—indeed with every facility—the Irishmen regimented together, carrying the green flag with the Stars and Stripes and the State arms, will one day find themselves in the Irish Brigade.... Here at this hour I proclaim it in the center of that city where this insult was offered to the Irish soldier [referencing the disbandment of Irish militia units in the 1850s during an anti-immigrant movement] – 'Know Nothingsim'* is dead. [The hall shook with the reverberation of cheers at this point.] This war, if brought no other excellent and salutary fruits, brought with it this result, that the Irish soldier will henceforth take his stand proudly by the side of the native-born, and will not fear to look him straight and sternly in the face, and tell him that he has been equal to him in his allegiance to the Constitution. This, too, I know—that every Irishman this side of Mason and Dixon's line is with me. If there is one who is not, let him take the next Galway steamer and go home![6]

The audience's astounding response to Meagher and the competing interests seeking to raise an Irish Regiment (Treanor, Donahoe, and Walsh) deeply impressed Governor Andrew, who called for the recruitment of not one, but two Irish regiments. They would

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* The Know-Nothing Movement, a nativist political movement in the United States in the 1850's, was organized to oppose the large number of immigrants (mostly Irish and Roman Catholic) who entered the United States after 1846. Know-Nothings claimed these immigrants were subservient to the Pope, and therefore the Pontiff would exert political control over the United States.

be designated the 28th and 29th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiments.[+] This would require 2,000 Irishmen: 100 men per company, and ten companies per regiment.[7] Companies started forming immediately after Meagher's speech at the Music Hall.

To meet the call for troops from both Brigadier Generals Butler and Meagher, not to mention Brigadier General Thomas W. Sherman's efforts at the same time, Governor Andrew had to decide which unit would go to which General. As originally envisioned, the 22nd, 23rd, and 25th Regiments would go to General Sherman (whom the War Department in Washington, D.C., insisted had priority over everyone). General Butler would receive the 26th and 28th Regiments, and Meagher could have the Irish 29th Regiment for his Irish Brigade.[8] This decision had serious repercussions and would later provide ample fodder for Irish activists to besmirch Governor Andrew's name.

Meanwhile, General Butler started recruiting over the protests of Governor Andrew, who preferred raising one unit at a time. The two bickered, each sending scathing telegrams about the other to the War Department, which only gave vague assurances to both parties (the matter was not settled until early 1862, in Andrew's favor; however, Butler by that time had departed for the battlefield with his troops). Butler, by providing monetary inducements as a recruiting tool, managed to more effectively fill his units then Sherman and Meagher, who did not offer similar financial rewards to enlistees. Sherman's and Meagher's recruiting fell behind. By October 15, 1861, a mere three weeks after Meagher's speech, the problems of raising two Irish regiments in the face of the bickering between Butler and Andrew became obvious to the designated officers of the Irish 28th and 29th Regiments. In response, officers of both units signed a petition to

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[+] To avoid the use of long titles, only the infantry unit's number, i.e., 28th Regiment, instead of 28th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, will be used. If other than an infantry unit is referred to, the longer title will be used.

Governor Andrew asking him to combine the two fledgling organizations. By doing so, they hoped that at least one Irish regiment would be formed.[9] Massachusetts Adjutant General William Schouler agreed with this approach, observing that Irish-born soldiers and native-born recruits preferred serving in separate units. When a colonel in a Massachusetts regiment filled with native-born men from the Massachusetts countryside expressed his concern about obtaining replacements for his losses, Schouler responded by explaining that the Irish community would not be interested in joining "Native Born" units like his. "Recruiting for the two Irish Regiments, the 28th & 29th," he wrote, "will not interfere with recruiting for such as yours."[10]

The social gulf between the Irish immigrant and the native born was very wide. Native born perceptions of common ideas, such as knowing your birthday and how to spell your name correctly, could not bridge the gap. Francis Collopy, a recruit for the 28th Massachusetts, illustrates the gulf between the Irish immigrant and the native born, and why one class did not to mix with the other.

> My father having died when I was very young left no record of birth or anything pertaining thereto, and as there were only my mother to care for us, naturally lost sight of the dates of birth. I heard my mother say on one occasion when I was very young that I was a warm weather child as I was born in August...I left home about 1859 or 60 and went to Sea having shipped in a whaler for 54 months, but was driven home by the danger of being captured by privateers, so plenty at that time, and arrived at New Bedford, Mass., ...and enlisted...[and] assigned to the 28th Massachusetts Volunteers, Company B...until the war ended....[11]

Not knowing the date of birth was not the only problems the Irishmen had when enlisting. The attorney William Hobbs of Boston tried to explain to officials in Washington the problems of people who do not know how to read verifying the spelling of their names to muster officers:

> In regard to spelling of the names viz = Connalor versus Connellon, the difference as understood in pronunciation through Irish lips is remarkable for its similarity rather than discrepancy. For 99 out of every 100 cases when you spell a name and ask an Irish man or women if spelled correctly, they will assent to any way it may be spelled. In application for marriage in this state, the man applies for it. In Connellon's case he could not write and would be quite as likely to assent to Connalor as Connellon.[12]

Disdain by American born men for the Irish was so great that when William Schouler offered the Lieutenant Colonelcy of the then-forming Irish 29th Regiment to a native-born man in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, he received no reply to his telegram.[13] However, once the Irish got together with their brethren, it apparently became hard to separate them. George W. Snow, Surgeon of the 28th Regiment, complained to Adjutant General Schouler about a growing problem at the unit's campground. "...Men who have failed to pass a medical examination and therefore have been rejected [for service] still remain in the camp and attach themselves to Companies."[14] Schouler responded by ordering the commanding officer of the campground to run the Irish civilians off at once.[15] As the month of October dragged on, however, Schouler may have privately wished the physical standards for military service were not so strict. Recruiting the required number of men to fill both units had slowed down and no company had its full compliment of men.

To see the problem first hand, Schouler visited the 29th Regiment's camp at Framingham and inspected the 378 men who made up the unit. Since 1,000 men were needed to make up a regiment, the small numbers were discouraging. While the camp seemed clean and the men well cared for, the acting commander of the unit, a New York Irishman named Matthew Murphy, absented himself a great deal and had little to do with the camp. On the other hand, the acting captain for the unit, a native-born American

from Milford, Massachusetts named Isaac Britton, ably saw to the men's needs in the commander's absence. The camp quartermaster, E.A. Brackett, remarked to Schouler:

> I have been a close observer of men all my life, and I regard Murphy as a fair example of a New York blower. He is seldom at the camp; he generally comes up in the evening, and leaves for Boston by the first train in the morning. The men are sorry when he comes, and glad when he goes. But Captain Britton, he is a good man.[16]

The Adjutant General wanted to remove Murphy from command and Murphy made the task simple for Schouler. Murphy, who had heard of Schouler's visit a few days previously, arrived in Boston on November 2nd, 1861 to make his case for command. As he sat in the waiting room of Governor Andrew, he wrote a letter to the state's chief executive complaining that Britton acted as if in charge of the camp. Without his commission as colonel, Murphy declared that his own presence at camp was useless.[17] Later in the day, Murphy visited William Schouler at his office. He asked Schouler to tell Governor Andrew that if he was not commissioned or put in charge of the camp, he would return to New York and have nothing more to do with the unit. Andrew replied, through Schouler, that he was not ready to give any commissions for the 29th yet. If Murphy went back to New York, Andrew did not object. An enraged Murphy told Schouler goodbye, and that he would leave for New York that evening and have nothing more to do with any Massachusetts unit.[18] Unfortunately, Murphy's wounded pride did not let him go peacefully. That same afternoon, a Saturday, Murphy reappeared at the 29th Regiment's camp at Framingham where he made a self-serving speech to the men about the injustice of the Governor towards him. His intention was to cause insubordination in the unit, and he succeeded. Scores of men deserted the camp for the day, but after enjoying the town's offering of alcohol to their fill, many returned by that

night, although very late.[19]

This act of defiance constituted the last straw for Schouler. Two days later he met with the officers of the 28th and 29th Regiments and asked them if they really wished to combine the two organizations into one Irish Regiment, which would go to General Butler and not Meagher's Irish Brigade. Officers from both regiments agreed and signed a petition (for the second time) requesting Schouler to take immediate steps to solve the slow recruiting of both units by combining the two.[20] Thereupon Schouler picked who he believed were the best officers from both regiments to lead the Irishmen. A review of the names Schouler chose on the combined officer rosters indicates a fairly even split between native-born and Irish officers, with 16 native-born and 14 Irishmen receiving commissions.[21]

Although he had easily settled the question of individual company command positions, finding an overall commander for the now combined unit, officially known as the 28th Regiment, proved more elusive for Schouler. His first suggestion to Governor Andrew was Brigadier General William W. Bullock, a native-born American and commander of Camp Cameron, the camp where the 28th Regiment housed its recruits. Schouler explained to Andrew that Bullock had the talent for managing "...such material as this Regiment is composed of."[22] Governor Andrew agreed in principle with the consolidation of the two regiments, "...for the public good,"[23] but believed Bullock was more valuable as a training camp commander and therefore instructed that he remain in that position.

While the new unit now had over 700 men, it still needed another 300 to fill out the ranks. The desire to get this unit into federal service and to the "seat of war" for "the

public good" sometimes trampled over the good of the individual, as Dr. B.T. Allen found out. After getting drunk, Allen, a medical doctor, joined the 28th Regiment with the expectation of a commission in a unit that was at least half "American." He entered camp on 29 October 1861, and woke up early the next morning to discover to his horror that most of the men were Irish. In addition, he learned that he could not be the doctor, but a private infantryman instead. His fellow soldiers eyed him hopefully since Allen obviously appreciated spirits, and asked him to chip in some money so they could buy some whiskey. He refused and the Irishmen threatened him and tried, from time to time throughout the day, to steal his clothes. Allen, worked up to an emotional pitch, convinced the officers to allow him a furlough for the weekend. He immediately went home and told his story to his wife, who wrote Governor Andrew a letter requesting that her husband be released from service with the 28th Regiment. As proof of his inability to meet the basic requirements of a soldier, she attached a number of affidavits from fellow townspeople citing the doctor's many shortcomings. Besides, the charitable Mrs. Allen wrote, he "drinks to[o] much."[24] The good Doctor went home.[25]

The unit's native-born quartermaster, Benjamin F. Weeks, believing that working with Irishmen were beneath his station in life, illustrates another example of the native-born's distaste for the Irish. Shortly after the unit officially became part of the Union Army, he began a campaign to leave the Irish 28th Regiment to join an "American" unit. Weeks' brother asked Governor Andrew to transfer Benjamin to the 1st Massachusetts Cavalry Regiment. Andrew declined, because the 28th Regiment was now a Federal unit and, as such, he no longer could transfer men in and out of the unit.[26]

However, not all native-born soldiers found the Irish as distasteful as did Weeks

when they joined the 28th Regiment. Seventeen-year-old Hiram Nason lied about his age (he claimed to be 21) and joined in November 1861. A prodigious letter writer, Nason commented on what he considered the temptations of a soldier's life that he struggled with, instead of blaming others for his circumstances. He wrote to his sister about the gambling, drinking, thefts, and the occasional desertions occurring around him in camp. From his young perspective, these were all things that Christians did not do. "I feel that I have got to have devine assistance from God or I shall be led away in sin and loose what enjoyment I have enjoyed in times past. For, there is no Christians here...but with the assistance of God I can resist every temptation and be happy in God."[27] Although he is in a unit predominately Irish and Catholic, he never mentions this fact in his letters home throughout the almost three years of his time in the unit. Unfortunately, Nason did have his clothes stolen, but, unlike Doctor Allen, he took this setback in stride. On the contrary, he saw good in his new comrades. "It is a rather rough set, bully fighters though."[28]

Even with the consolidation of the two units, the 28th Regiment still fell short of the required 1,000 men to bring it up to full strength. William Schouler asked General Butler if he would take the men whom Butler had already recruited to fill the vacancies in the 28th Regiment and then take the Irish unit into his New England Brigade as planned. Butler needed as many regiments as possible because his orders required him to invade the Ship Islands off the Mississippi coast in an upcoming campaign. Although the War Department had originally authorized Butler to raise one Massachusetts regiment for his New England Brigade, and despite the agreed plan with Governor Andrew to give the 28th Regiment to Butler, the politically astute general would only accept the Irish unit if it

would not be counted as one of his six authorized New England regiments. This would allow him to return to Massachusetts to raise another regiment for his New England Brigade.[29] Predictably, Schouler was furious with Butler's response. He wrote Butler a curt note, stating: "The proposition is respectfully declined."[30] From that point on, the Massachusetts government acted on the assumption that Butler was not entitled to the 28th Regiment. Although the 28th Regiment was now free to be sent wherever Governor Andrew believed best, it would later cause friction in the Irish community. Now, without Butler's input, and without an alternative available to them, Schouler and Andrew decided to officially appoint an Irish builder from New York with political connections with the then-forming Irish Brigade, William Monteith, as colonel of the 28th Regiment.[31] This unfortunate selection would come back to haunt Andrew, but at the time he did not believe he had any other choices available to him.

The combining of the 28th and 29th Regiments meant that the next regiment, not yet recruited, would be designated the 29th Regiment. In an odd twist, the Irish 28th had no particular assigned place, while the non-existent 29th Regiment was destined to join Meagher's Irish Brigade. As the 28th Regiment slowly filled up, the unit finally became large enough to be admitted into federal service. On 13 December 1861 the second Irish regiment raised by Massachusetts joined the United States Army, but with no orders, it stayed in camp. Two weeks later, at Andrew's urging, Adjutant General Schouler wrote to General George B. McClellan, the commander of the Army of the Potomac, requesting orders for the 28th Regiment. Schouler noted to McClellan of the Irishmen's desire to join Meagher's Brigade. He also wrote to Meagher urging him to ask General McClellan for the 28th Regiment.[32] There is no record that either general answered Schouler's

request. By the end of January 1862, the 28th Regiment had moved to an Island in New York Harbor and had received its orders from the War Department to join Brigadier General Thomas W. Sherman at Port Royal, South Carolina.[33]

Because of the bickering between General Butler and Governor Andrew over recruitment, the intended Irish regiment did not go to General Meagher's Irish Brigade. As events unfolded, the promised 29th Regiment did indeed go to Meagher, but instead of the expected Catholic Irishmen, it was filled with native-born Protestant men. The Irish 28th Regiment went to an expedition to South Carolina. This opened up the charge that the Governor of Massachusetts "...refused to allow the Irish commands recruited in [that] state to join [the Irish Brigade]."[34] Although incorrect, the post-war Irish apologists would make many such accusations in an effort to gain political ground for Irish-Americans.

From the creation of the 28th Regiment, the native-born and the Irish communities had conflicting expectations about the unit. Native-born Protestants perceived the Irish as low class, uneducated and unskilled laborers who were unduly influenced by the Catholic Church, an institution viewed by most Protestants as corrupt, tyrannical, and bent on world domination. As the story of the 28th Regiment's creation illustrates, the native-born's views of the Irish as ignorant people seemed to be borne out by the inability of many Irish recruits to even spell their names or know their birthdays. However, the exigencies of war can often overcome ethnic stereotypes. At first it appeared to political leaders, because of Irish newspaper editorials favoring Irish neutrality, that the Irish community would not support the Union's efforts to put down the rebellion. However, when the shooting started, the Irish community supported the war effort. With pressure

from the federal government on the states to provide as many regiments as possible to defend the Union, Massachusetts' leadership quickly snapped up a unit made up of Irishmen to meet its mandatory quotas for the Army.

Because of the social distinctions between the upper crust Massachusetts Puritan elite and the lower class Irish immigrants, the native-born, convinced of their superiority, naturally believed the new Irish unit had to be led by an "American" officer. Only a native-born man, they argued, had the strength to lead the rough Irishmen into battle. At the same time, though, some native-born saw an opportunity to gain prestige and power for themselves by commanding an Irish unit. The Irish, known for their fierce fighting, would do the dirty work of killing and dying, while the native-born American officers gained the accolades. Therefore, some less than desirable individuals applied regularly to Governor Andrew for appointment as colonel of the new Irish regiment. On the other side of the coin were those men who viewed themselves as so superior to the Irish that when the state's chief executive asked them to take command of the Irish unit, they refused to honor the request with an answer. Even those native-born officers who achieved a modicum of success in the Irish unit constantly asked for a transfer to an all "American" unit.

Although native-born Americans believed the Irish were good fighters, the sons of Erin were not to be trusted with overall command since the lower class were not used to that role in society. The incident at the camp of the 29th Regiment's camp with Mr. Murphy, seemed to prove this point. However, the scarcity of qualified native-born men to lead the 28th Regiment and the pressure by the War Department to quickly send the new unit to the front lines prompted Andrew to appoint Montieth, from New York, to

command the regiment. As it turned out, it was a poor choice and Montieth's actions reinforced the native-born's stereotype of the Irish as poor leaders.

The Irish, on the other hand, viewed the whole affair from a different angle. They understood that Americans looked upon them as fit only for the menial jobs the native-born did not want. As outcasts, the Irish preferred each other's company. Surrounded by anti-immigrant sentiment, the Irish community became convinced that the native-born who ran the government were always prejudiced against the Irish. Therefore, when the first rumblings of disunion were heard, many Irish leaders urged their community to stay out of the political native-born squabble. When war erupted, the Irish community's leaders widely supported the Union. They reasoned that the United States had been the only country to accept the Irish during the recent famine in Ireland, thus allowing many to avoid certain death by coming to this country. While the native-born may not have welcomed the poor Irish with open arms, at least they had given them a chance to make their way relatively unmolested. Irish community leaders also saw in the war an opportunity to press back the anti-immigrant political forces that were bent on suppressing Irish immigrant's civil rights. If Irish soldiers helped to defeat the rebellious southerners, they reasoned, the local, state, and federal governments would have to grant to the Irish full citizenship rights.

To stir support of the Irish community for the war and thereby gain this long-range goal, Irish leaders turned to Ireland's nemesis, England. Reasoning that participation in the war would provide the needed training to fight England and liberate Ireland, many Irish patriots answered the call to join the Union Army. The memory of Irish units distinguishing themselves in past wars made the call irresistible to many

Irishmen. But the glory sought by the Irish community by participating in the war would quickly erode when Confederate bullet and bayonet met Irish flesh and blood.

When the 28th Regiment arrived at South Carolina, native-born Brigadier General Egbert L. Viele liked what he saw—a fighting Irish regiment. As he watched the unit go through its parade formation and march in review, he turned to the 28th Regiment's commander, Colonel William Monteith, and remarked, "Colonel, you take 40 men off of the right of each of your companies. They ought to be able to handle double their number of Confederates."[35] However, the colonel would never be in a position to take such advice. By the time the 28th Regiment fired its first shot in a small skirmish on 3 June 1862, Colonel Monteith would be in his second week in arrest, for neglect of duty and conduct unbecoming an officer. The hard drinking colonel resigned his commission under the penalty of a court martial, never leading his men into battle.[36] The 28th Regiment's actions in that small fight on 3 June did not endear its soldiers to their comrades; they did not live up to the Irish fighting reputation. Transported to Sol Legare Island, South Carolina, portions of the Massachusetts regiment, along with elements of the 79th New York and 100th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiments, were ordered to capture some abandoned Confederate cannons located on the connecting road to James Island. Unfortunately for the Union soldiers, the Confederate 24th South Carolina Infantry resisted the attempt. In the early morning darkness, Union forces deployed into a patch of pine woods just above the abandoned Legare plantation house. The 28th Regiment's Company A took the extreme left, while Company E set up as reserve forces in the old slave quarters behind the Legare house. The Confederate and Union forces clashed within moments. Like the rest of the unit, this was Sergeant John Cooley's first time

under fire, and he believed it to be a major battle. "...[O]nly a miracle to God after the hot fire we stood...They fired two shots at our little party, but I had the pleasure of firing the third shot. Then the fire kept up for about two hours and bullets flew like hail around us, and no mistake."[37] What Sergeant Cooley failed to mention was that the two-hour skirmish did not take place in the woods. After a few shots in retaliation, the Union forces quickly fell back towards the Legare house. However, the men of the 28th Regiment did not stop at the plantation house like the other Union soldiers of the 100th Regiment, but continued another half-mile to the slave quarters to join up with Company E, held in reserve. The hapless remnants of Pennsylvania soldiers, lead by Captain James Cline, took a stand at the Legare house, where they were overwhelmed and captured by the advancing Confederates. Now re-grouped, the Irish (along with the other Union reserves), blazed away at the enemy congregating around the Legare house. The Confederates pulled back only when Union gunboats added their firepower.[38]

The 28th Regiment's quick retreat from the woods, and their failure to rally at the Legare house to support their fellow soldiers, cost the unit its reputation as a fighting organization, at least with their comrades. Captain Cline, a native-born officer with the captured 100th Pennsylvania contingent, reported that the Irishmen "...broke and ran the first fire they received...[and left us] to our fate."[39] The Reverend Robert Browne of Pennsylvania wrote his wife that Cline and his men were captured due to actions of the "28th Massachusetts, a foreign regiment...."[40]

The next battle in which the 28th Regiment participated, a full-fledged assault on a Confederate fort known as Tower Battery, did nothing to enhance its fighting reputation. An unexpected marsh forced the unit to march towards its right and into the left side of

another attacking regiment. The resulting mixing of the troops from both units, plus the fierce blasts of enemy cannons, threw the men into a panic. Private Hiram Nason of Company F wrote his father that the seventh Connecticut "[T]urned and ran and back into the ranks of the 28 Mass who was getting in to line to charge and scatered our men while the shot and shell from the enemy mowing our men down in swaths."[41] Corporal John Goodwin of Company I could only wonder: "we wher cut down by the dozen and I don't see how I ever got out safe."[42] Most got out by lying down and hiding behind fallen trees in a ditch. Enemy fire dissuaded the men from going forward. Lieutenant Colonel McClelland Moore, the second in command who was now in charge of the regiment with Colonel Monteith in arrest, saw no use in continuing the fight. "Seeing that we could be of no possible use in this place with less than a platoon front to retaliate by fire on the enemy," he explained, "I ordered the regiment to retire."[43] As the men of the 28th Regiment clutched the ground or fell back, the 79th New York Regiment stormed passed them in their futile charge against the works. Made up of mostly Scotsmen, the New Yorkers loudly proclaimed their scorn for the Irishmen who failed to join along with them in the rush towards the enemy defenses. The futile battle ended unsuccessfully without any further participation by the 28th Regiment. After the battle, many of the 79th New York blamed the 28th Regiment as cowards who cost many a man his life, due to their inaction.[44] Lieutenant Colonel Moore tried to form the regiment into some semblance of fighting order behind the lines, but inadvertently formed the men with their backs to the enemy.[45] A shocked Brigadier General Horatio Wright, observing nearby, intervened and removed Moore from command and placed native-born Major George W. Cartwright in command of the 28th Regiment.[46] The fighting reputation of the Irish 28th

Regiment had reached a low point. Twice in two weeks the unit underwent the test of combat; both times the unit failed to prove its mettle. The 28th Regiment now had a reputation as poor fighters led by inept officers.

The leadership cadre of the 28th Regiment had posed a problem for the unit from almost the beginning due to tensions between the native-born and Irish officers of the unit and conflicts between the Irish officers themselves. The drinking habits of the Irish caused great consternation to the native-born officers of the unit, who raised the issue with superiors partly for purposes of personal advancement. Native-born First Sergeant David T. Powers of Company K, for example, submitted charges of his Irish captain's drunkenness at battalion drill.[47] The regiment's adjutant, native-born Charles Sanborn, railed against his Irish commander Colonel Monteith to the Massachusetts Adjutant General, William Schouler. "I greatly fear through his [Monteith's] ignorance, that our Regt. May not give as good an account of themselves as they ought," Sanborn opined. "If we had been in the state of discipline that we should have been, we should have been sent there [to defend against a Confederate intrusion]."[48] As it turned out, Schouler was not a Monteith supporter, as revealed in a letter to Lieutenant Colonel Moore upon hearing of Monteith's court martial for other reasons. "...I never favored Col. Monteith's appointment. He never appeared to me to have the faculty to command men, and I opposed taking a New York man to command a Massachusetts Regiment on general principles."[49] Therefore, any negative news about Monteith would most likely find a sympathetic ear with the state's chief military bureaucrat.

Officers turned on one another in the resulting power struggle to control the unit. Native-born First Lieutenant Moses J. Emory, Company I, conducted a letter writing

campaign against his company commander, Irishman Captain James Magner. He accused Magner of incompetence first to Adjutant General Schouler's Aide-De-Camp, then to Schouler himself. "i clame the captainecy myself and he is encompitent to command a comp the orderly gave up the company to him to day at present arms and he raised the comp marched it off without cumming to a shoulder the captaincy of that comp belongs to me."[50] Despite Emory's "eloquence," he did not replace Magner as the company commander. In fact, he resigned a few months later due to wounds received at the battle of Second Bull Run, while Magner remained with the unit until killed two years later at Spotsylvania, Virginia.[51] Such damning charges by native-born officers against Irish officers often worked to the former's advantage. For instance, Irishmen Captain George F. McDonald of Company I, and Second Lieutenant James Devine of Company G, both resigned and were replaced by native-born Lieutenant Charles Sanborn and Regimental Sergeant Major Levi C. Brackett respectively.[52]

Following the 28th Regiment's debacle in the first two battles, a scramble took place to replace its commanders. Coupled with the imminent removal of the Irish Colonel Monteith, and the forced resignation of the Irish Lieutenant Colonel McClelland Moore (after the Division Commander, Brigadier General Isaac Stevens, removed him from command a second time), native-born Major George W. Cartwright pleaded to Governor Andrew to be appointed as the new commander. He was very aware of the politics that swirled around such appointments.

> I have the honor to address your excellency for the purpose of calling your attention to the vacancy now existing in this command ... and by leave to present to your notice my claims for the position. I labored under difficulties which the resignation of LtCol Moore has partly removed....I should not have intruded on your excellencys time to this extent were it not that I am advised that officers, some of whom under the

> plea of sickness, have left the service [and are] endeavoring to predjudice your mind against me for the purpose of preventing my further promotion and I respectfully ask your excellency to make such enquiries as will satisfy you of the truth and I ask it as an act of justice to an officer who has done his duty in a Regt which I believe will yet reflect credit on the state they represent.[53]

But the quest for a commander for the 28th Regiment did not confine itself to just the native-born and Irish within the unit. Brigadier General Isaac Stevens, the Division commander, offered his own son as a possible replacement in a letter to Governor Andrew. "The Regiment is in my division. It has the material for a first class regiment. But it needs a decisive, energetic and experienced commander, and I write you to suggest one. I will recommend my Adjutant General for this position Capt Hazard Stevens....by appointing him Lieut. Colonel."[54]

In the end, even fellow Irishmen provided negative reports to Governor Andrew concerning Irish officers in the regiment. Irish Captain John Riley, for example, reported to Governor Andrew that "Col Monteith and the Major drink so mutch liquor that they have washed their principles down."[55] Captain Riley pleaded with the Governor to appoint a good commanding officer to the unit. "I beg of your excellency for the love you have for the bay state to send us a good man to lead us."[56] Leadership in the 28th Regiment was obviously lacking and Governor Andrew actively sought to find the right man to lead the unit. Unfortunately for the unit, it would participate in three more major battles before Governor Andrew found a "good man."

In August 1862, the Army transferred the 28th Regiment from the Department of the South in South Carolina to the Army of the Potomac, in Virginia. Major Cartwright led the unit through the Second Battle of Bull Run, and received two wounds. Captain Andrew P. Caraher, Company A, took command while Cartwright recovered in the

hospital. Next, the unit participated in the Battle of Chantilly, followed by Antietam, Maryland, the bloodiest one-day battle in American history.[57] By this time the men, with veteran regiments on either side of them, had learned how to handle themselves in battle. For instance, at the Battle of Chantilly the Irishmen battled side-by-side in a pouring rain next to the Scotsmen of the 79th New York Regiment. This time the New York soldiers advanced with the 28th Regiment by their side, and when ordered to retreat in a fierce thunderstorm, both fell back together. The 79th New York never questioned the fighting ability of the 28th Regiment again.[58]

However, the senior officer corps of the unit was completely depleted. The command of the regiment devolved down to a Captain (Caraher). Therefore, Governor Andrew sent his representative, Colonel Harrison Ritchie, to the Army to find a new and suitable unit commander for the 28th Regiment. Ritchie, fresh from Boston, was well acquainted with the politics associated with this Irish unit. Supporters of the regiment, back in the Bay State, most notably Patrick Donahoe, the owner-editor of the Boston newspaper *The Pilot*, submitted a petition to Governor Andrew. In it, Donahoe lionized the exploits of Cartwright at Second Bull Run and recommended to the governor that Cartwright be promoted to colonel and commander of the 28th Regiment.[59]

In truth, Mr. Donahoe did not really support Cartwright's appointment to colonel of the regiment. In a confidential note to the governor, he made it clear that Irish politics forced him to play a role he did not really believe in. He wrote, "I signed a paper to have Major Cartwright appointed Col., but you must exercise your own judgment in this matter…I desire to withdraw my signature if you know of more competent persons."[60] Donahoe believed the rank and file troops of the 28th were as good as any Massachusetts

unit, "...but the field officers—God forgive me for favoring any of them. But I depended too much on others—not being a military man myself. But do appoint some competent man no matter of what creed or nationality, provided he is an educated military man."[61]

Donahoe was not the only person to express a view on who should command the 28th Regiment. The unit's native-born Brigade commander, Colonel Benjamin C. Christ, offered Governor Andrew his nominees (all native-born); if the governor refused his nominees, Christ still believed the unit's leadership should be promoted from within its own ranks.[62]

With these politics in mind, Colonel Ritchie set out to find a commander for the 28th Regiment. Upon arriving at the Antietam battlefield shortly after the fight, he visited Brigadier General William W. Averell, the commander of the 1st Brigade, Cavalry Division, for advice. Averell told Ritchie of a particular Irishman named Richard Byrnes who had joined the cavalry in 1850 as a private, participated valiantly in battles as a first rate Indian fighter out west, and rose up through the ranks to First Lieutenant. Coincidently, at that moment, Lieutenant Byrnes passed by. Averell grabbed Ritchie by the arm and pointed to Byrnes and cried: "That's your man—take him and you will not regret the choice!"[63]

Ritchie suggested Byrnes to the governor, who approved the nomination. It did not take long for the rumor of Byrnes' appointment to sweep through the 28th Regiment's camp. Irish Lieutenant Jeremiah W. Coveney of Company A greeted the news with enthusiasm. "...the immediate appointment of Lieut. Byrne would have the effect of restoring order and discipline to the Regt. Which it now lacks."[64] However, Lieutenant Coveney's enthusiasm did not make him naïve to the politics within the regiment.

"Vigorous efforts will no doubt be made to offset Lieut Byrnes to the aggrandizement of other parties," he wrote to General William Schouler, "but Sir I hope they will all fail."[65] The political infighting of the unit's officers absorbed all of their interests, leaving the dull routine matters to fall into a state of chaos. Coveney wrote General Schouler:

> Many things are now neglected that go to serve the organization or that would tend to benefit the Regiment, and all this seems to grow worse. I hope Sir that soon either Major Cartwright or Lieut Byrne will come here and straten out matters as they ought to be, keeping every body at their duties and thus end at once all anxiety in relation to a Colonel.[66]

Coveney's understanding of the situation was accurate. The officers of the unit were appalled that none of them had been appointed as the new colonel. On 29 September, 1862, Byrnes mustered in as a colonel of the 28th Regiment. However, he did not report to his new assignment until he had his commissioning paperwork in hand from Governor Andrew, which did not arrive until 17 October.[67]

With the arrival of Byrnes, the other Irish officers in the unit now worried more about their political standing with the new colonel and their opportunities for promotion than about what native-born officers in the unit thought or did. Up to this time, the incessant attempts by native born-born officers to place themselves, their kin, or their friends in command of the Irish unit dominated the politics of the officer corps and men of the 28th Regiment. With the appointment of Richard Byrnes, however, the barrier to promotion and prestige suddenly changed from the native-born outside the unit to fellow Irishmen within the regiment. Byrnes had arrived in the United States in 1833 and had spent his entire adult life out west. He had no social or political connections with the Boston Irish who made up the majority of the unit, thereby owing no allegiances to anyone within the organization or back in Massachusetts. As an independent entity, no

one, save the Army, had control over him. The politics of the leadership therefore turned inward and could be viewed as Irish versus Irish for control of the unit.

During the intervening weeks between his muster and taking command, the officers of the 28th Regiment began their campaign to rid themselves of Byrnes. A petition sent to Governor Andrew of Massachusetts, signed by seven of the nine remaining officers left on duty with the unit, expressed outrage that one of their own was not appointed as the new colonel. They pleaded with the governor to revoke the appointment of Byrnes, arguing that "he has not the advantage of a military education; that the experience of an enlisted man in the ranks of any army does not qualify him for the important and responsible position of Col. of a Regiment."[68] Unknowingly, the signers of the petition expressed the governor's very reason for appointing Byrnes: "the appointment of an officer of his rank over us, seems to us to be an avowal of the lack of the necessary Military and Administrative talent in our Regt. to command a Regiment."[69] That was exactly the reason, and they backed up this assessment when they vowed that Byrnes' appointment "...would cause the resignation of many, if not all of the Commissioned Officers of the Regiment."[70] It is noteworthy that the two officers who did not sign the petition were Jeremiah W. Coveney, who would later be accused of leading a campaign against Byrnes, and the Captain Andrew P. Caraher of Company A, who at that time commanded the 28th Regiment.[71]

As it turned out, the petitioner's threat to resign was a rather hollow one; only one officer actually resigned.[72] However, Augustus Annand, a second lieutenant and acting adjutant for the unit, noted that Colonel Byrnes "...frequently held officer's resignations some time before forwarding, and placed them in my custody."[73] Evidently, Byrnes

hoped that the petitioners would change their minds after seeing how the regiment improved under his leadership, and therefore delayed forwarding their resignations to higher headquarters. Most of the time his judgment proved sound. Most of the petitioners did not resign until wounds suffered in battle forced them to do so.[74] Those that did resign during the first few months of Byrnes' command were usually absent on sick leave. It is therefore doubtful that they acted on any moral outrage over the new colonel's appointment.[75]

As a new colonel and a professional Army officer, Richard Byrnes had a mandate to fix a broken outfit. Upon his arrival, he found few officers present. Most were either attached to other units, on furlough, absent, sick, prisoner of war, or absent without leave. The remaining officers present were cool and aloof, and sometimes surly towards him. He found that the officer corps ignored the routine regimental paperwork. The unit's men were scattered throughout the Army, assigned to menial tasks and thereby reducing the unit's available strength to just over 400 men—less than half of a fully manned regiment of 1,000. Byrnes had to act decisively and without tolerance toward any soldier who would not do his duty or who stood in the way of rebuilding the unit. A flurry of messages and orders poured out of Colonel Brynes' tent. He ordered those men conducting additional duties throughout the Army of the Potomac to return to the 28th Regiment. Byrnes also relieved the sergeant major of his duties for incompetence and appointed a replacement. He also fired the regimental quartermaster for inefficiency and personally ordered drums for the Regimental Drum Corps, which, unbelievably, had none. Finally, Byrnes detailed men to clean up the campsite and appointed new non-commissioned officers.[76] Brynes' firm control over the unit did not go unnoticed by the

rank and file of the regiment. Hiram T. Nason of Company F noted to his family, "On the 18 we had a new Colonel take command his name is Burns...he seems to be very strict."[77]

On 23 November 1862, a welcomed organizational change took place. General Meagher evidently worked out a swapping of units, and the 28th Regiment transferred from the IX Corps to Meagher's Irish Brigade in the II Corps, while Meagher's 29th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, filled with native-born Protestants, went to the IX Corps.[78] Although the documentary evidence is silent, Byrnes undoubtedly found the new arrangement satisfactory. The gallantry of the Irish Brigade in battles in Virginia and Maryland was well known. Success breeds success, and now the 28th Regiment had a role model to pattern itself after.

The unit fought its first battle with the Irish Brigade at Fredericksburg, Virginia; despite losing 158 of the 416 men he led into combat, General Meagher expressed his pleasure with the 28th Regiment and Byrnes in particular:

> [Byrnes] eminently distinguished himself by the perfect fearlessness of his conduct, his gallant bearing, and his devotion to the orders he had received—leading his men up within pistol-range of the enemy's first line of advance, and there holding his ground until the rest of the Brigade being hopelessly reduced, and his own command left without support whilst it was considerably weakened, he brought the 28th with honor from the field.[79]

Throughout to the end of the war, the 28th Regiment would never be accused of cowardice or considered anything but a crack fighting unit. Major General Winfield Scott Hancock, the commander of the 1st Division (to which the Irish Brigade belonged), wrote of Byrnes and the 28th Regiment, "The conduct of Col. Byrnes at Fredericksburg was excellent: the loss of officers and men in his Regt. was quite great. ... Col. Byrnes

has a fine, disciplined regiment."[80]

For the rest his time as the commander, Byrnes rooted out incompetence by reducing many men in rank for inefficiency or neglecting their duty. He made quick promotions to replace the incompetent and those killed in battle. Byrnes emphasized to his troops that he expected them to produce quality results. To make his point, the colonel forced one officer who absented himself from the unit just before the Battle of Fredericksburg to resign. He also asked officers who had not returned from sick leave to resign.[81]

The many battles that followed, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Auburn, Bristoe Station, Mine Run, Spotsylvania, North Anna River, Totopotomoy Creek, and Cold Harbor, Byrnes always demanded the best from the 28th Regiment, who always delivered their best. However, these battles produced losses, and they had to be made up. In an effort to get the best officers for the 28th Regiment, Byrnes ran into internal dissension from his own officers and men. The colonel, a man of high standards, often found that he had more openings than talented men from within the 28th Regiment to fill them. Therefore, he asked Governor Andrew (through the Massachusetts Adjutant General, William Schouler) to fill the other vacancies with "...young men from Boston, preferably men who have been tried."[82] Men from other Massachusetts units were sent to the 28th Regiment, oftentimes receiving promotions in the process to officer rank.[83]

One such officer candidate, John B. Noyes, a Private from the 13th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment, and a Harvard graduate (class of 1858), realized that he would not be welcomed due to his outsider status, both as a non-Irishman and one who did not rise up through the ranks within the 28th Regiment. "Such a position I have no doubt will be

to a certain extent embarrassing... I am to be placed in a very bad position...The Regiment is distinctly an Irish one. Of course I should have much preferred to go into an American Regiment, or at least one with American officers. However it is not best to look a gift horse in the mouth...."[84]

While Byrnes may have been a pragmatic man, believing he was doing the best for the unit, the other officers and men of the 28th Regiment were incensed that once again they had been overlooked in the promotion process. Corporal Peter Welsh of Company K wrote his wife:

> [This] is the meanest act i have heard of any comanding officer doing in this army and especialy as his motives are purely selfish...the Colonel would lose comand of [the 28th, due to its small size] as the law provides that such ... shall be comanded by no higher officer then a major so in order to keep his own fat birth he has done a great injustice to the men a great many of whom are much more competent to hold comisions then the strangers he brought in all the officers of the regiment protested against it when they heard of it and he put two captains under arrest...those two were the leaders of the opisition to his scheme so he tried to wreak his wrath on them he had them courtmarshaled but made nothing of it.[85]

Indeed, Byrnes ordered the arrest of the three captains involved in this conspiracy and charged them with "mutinous and seditious conduct." However, they were found guilty of lesser charges and were publicly reprimanded in front of the troops.[86] Ever the professional soldier, Byrnes did not give latitude to anyone not obeying his orders to the letter. Lieutenant Noyes, the native-born officer who wished he were in an American unit, observed that Colonel Byrnes "...is somewhat stringent in punishing men for comparatively light offences...."[87] In a letter to his oldest brother, Noyes notes: "Colonel Byrnes is a hard man to get along with, although my relations with him have been good; still his conduct has been high handed, and unbearable to some officers."[88]

For example, soon after the Battle of Gettysburg, while in pursuit of Lee's army, Byrnes ordered all of his officers to position themselves at the head and tail of each company to prevent the men from straggling off during the march. However, one officer failed to position himself where he belonged, and Byrnes ordered a court martial against him. A month later, the officer pleaded "not guilty," and the court agreed with him.[89]

This was the second time Byrnes had tried to discipline his officers with a court-martial and forced to see a "not guilty" verdict. The court-martial board, headed up by a colonel of a New York volunteer regiment, was not sympathetic to a regular army officer who was not willing to overlook what he felt were minor offenses. Byrnes finally must have realized that this volunteer army could not be run like a peacetime army since he never tried to have any of his officers court-martialed again.[90] That did not mean that this Irish professional soldier would let the Irish volunteers take advantage of him. In September 1863, for instance, Byrnes discovered one of his captains drunk on duty. The colonel knew a court-martial might not give the results he wanted; however, the captain had just been picked to become the 28th Regiment's new major. Therefore, Byrnes only threatened him with a trial. The colonel told the major-to-be that he would not press charges if the culprit would sign a written oath not to indulge in alcohol again. Byrnes threatened to press the charges of drunkenness if the would-be major broke his promise. Knowing that he could lose his promotion with a court-martial, the officer quickly agreed and pledged not to be "...under the influence of liquor from this time forward as long as I am in anyway connected with this Regt."[91] Byrnes thus found a way to maintain order and still keep a good man. Within a few days the officer mustered in as the unit's major. He remained with the unit and kept his pledge until he was killed during the Battle of

Spotsylvania.[92]

Byrnes also realized the main irritant to his officers and men was his propensity to bring in men from outside of the regiment to fill vacant officer positions instead of promoting from within. He corrected this when he confided to William Schouler, the Massachusetts Adjutant General, that he had two lieutenant positions to fill, but, "I will reserve them as rewards for meritorious conduct."[93]

Byrnes brought a sense of professionalism and pride back into the unit, and replaced inadequate leadership with quality and competent officers and non-commissioned officers. Despite Byrnes' aloofness to his men, the tone of the unit was set. Native-born Lieutenant John B. Noyes, a company commander of the 28th Regiment by this time, said of Byrnes, "No man loved Col. Byrnes, yet every one respected his fearlessness. The men believed in him and had confidence in him. With him they were willing to endure all dangers, yet they feared him and had a wholesome dislike towards him."[94] Even after he was killed at the Battle of Cold Harbor in June 1864, the unit continued to function under the strict discipline of Colonel Richard Byrnes.* Consequently, the fighting ability of the unit improved, and as a member of the Irish Brigade, it often found itself in the thick of the fight. Certainly, the men of the 28th Regiment were pleased to be part of the famous Irish Brigade they had hoped to join when they first enlisted, and their performance (as already noted) pleased the brigade leadership.

With the death of Byrnes, Lieutenant Colonel George W. Cartwright finally took command of the unit. However, he had also been wounded during the Battle of the

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* Lieutenant Noyes confessed to his father that when he saw Byrnes carried off the field, wounded, "I could not refrain from tears when I saw his body borne past me..." (John B. Noyes to his Father, George R. Noyes, 5 June 1864, MS AM 823F, Letters of John B. Noyes, Houghton Library, Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Mass.).

Wilderness (5 May 1864), and lay recuperating in a hospital in Washington D.C. The actual command of the regiment through the rest of the Wilderness battles and the initial stages of the siege of Petersburg fell to various senior company captains until one (James Fleming) was promoted to the rank of major. During this time Cartwright, on special duty assignments while in Washington D.C., finally returned to the regiment and took command in November 1864 at Petersburg, a month before he and 140 other men were discharged due to completing their terms of enlistment. During the one-month of his command, Cartwright and the 28th Regiment did not participate in any combat operations.[95]

The 28th Regiment remained in the Irish Brigade as it fought its way through the fields of Virginia until the siege of Petersburg. At that time, the Army of the Potomac reorganized and transferred the unit to another brigade, for a short time, and then back into the Irish Brigade. The 28th Regiment fought at the Jerusalem Plank road, Darbytrown Road, Charles City Cross Roads, and Reams' Station. By December 1864, those who did not reenlist were released from duty after completing their enlistment of three years of service. The remaining men were consolidated in to five companies (A through E), and the Army designated the new organization as the 28th Massachusetts Veteran Volunteers Battalion (28th Battalion for short).[96] The 28th Battalion participated in the final battles in Virginia, ending on 2 April 1865 at Sutherland Station while in pursuit of Lee's army on its way to Appomattox. After marching in victory parades in both Richmond and Washington D.C., the unit returned to Boston where the men were paid off and discharged.[97]

The history of the 28th Regiment is full of expectations, disappointments, heroic

accomplishments, and pettiness. At every turn, experience jolted closely held views. The native-born expectations that the Irish would not support the war effort in 1861 proved to be in error; the Irish community provided thousands of men who joined the Union Army. The Irish saw the war as an opportunity to gain equality with native-born Americans. The glory of battle quickly faded when the 28th Regiment acted badly in their first two fights. Poor leadership seemed to justify the native-born skepticism of the "foreign" unit, and it was not until a professional soldier, Colonel Richard Byrnes, took control did it match its pre-battle reputation. Joining the Irish Brigade, the 28th Regiment won admiration from its sister units within the Brigade, as well as the accolades of various Army leaders throughout the Army. The participation in various battles drained the unit of its manpower, and consequently, Colonel Byrnes resorted to filling the vacancies with any warm body that would do the job. This caused internal dissension, especially among the Irish officer corps, that only dissipated when most of the offended officers were either lost through sickness, wounds, or killed in battle (including Colonel Byrnes). However, Byrnes' pattern of demanding the best of his men and adhering to the rules and regulations set the tone of the unit even after he died. Up until the disestablishment of the unit in June 1865, the fighting reputation of the Irish 28th Regiment was never questioned, and the 138 years since, the legends of this "predominately" Irish combat organization has not been closely scrutinized. The next chapter will review the myths and legends of the Irish soldier as exemplified in the 28th Regiment.

Chapter Two Endnotes

[1] B.S. Treanor to Gov. Andrew, 11 September 1861, Massachusetts Military History Research Center and Museum (hereafter cited as *MMHRC&M*).
[2] William L. Burton, "Irish Regiments in the Union Army: The Massachusetts Experience," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 2 (1983).
[3] Ibid.
[4] Patrick Donahoe to Governor Andrew, 18 September 1861, Library of Congress Microfilm Collection, The Papers of Governor Andrew (originals are part of the Massachusetts Historical Society Collection) (hereafter cited as *Governor Andrew Papers*).
[5] Francis J. Parker to Governor Andrew, 21 September 1861, Library of Congress, Governor Andrew Papers.
[6] Captain W.F. Lyons, *Brigadier-General Thomas Francis Meagher; His Political and Military Career*, D. & J. Sadlier Co., 1870, (Reprint edition, Archer Editions Press, 1975), 117-121.
[7] Massachusetts Adjutant General Orders Number 23, 23 September 1861, MMHRC&M.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Petition, Officers of the 28th & 29th Regiments to Governor Andrew, 15 October, 1861, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office Incoming Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[10] William Schouler, Massachusetts Adjutant General, to Colonel Edward W. Hinks, 17th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, 18 October, 1861, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office Outgoing Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[11] Francis Collopy to U.S. Pension Commissioner, 25 December 1916, on file in his pension record, National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter cited as *NARA*), Record Group 15.2.1.
[12] William Hobbs Jr., to Honorable Joseph St. Barrett, Washington D.C., 8 December 1864, on file in William Connellon's pension file, NARA, Record Group 15.2.1.
[13] William Schouler, Massachusetts Adjutant General, to Captain Whelden, 24 October 1861, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office Outgoing Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[14] William Schouler, Massachusetts Adjutant General, to Brigadier General Joseph Andrews, Camp Cameron commander, 24 October 1861, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office Outgoing Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[15] Ibid.
[16] William Schouler, Massachusetts Adjutant General, to Governor John A. Andrew, 30 October 1861, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office Outgoing Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[17] Matthew Murphy, acting colonel of the 29th Regiment, to Governor John A. Andrew, 2 November 1861, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office Executive Incoming Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[18] William Schouler, Massachusetts Adjutant General, to Governor John A. Andrew, 4 November 1861, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office Outgoing Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[19] Ibid.

[20] William Schouler, Massachusetts Adjutant General, to Governor John A. Andrew, 8 November 1861, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office Outgoing Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Governor John A. Andrew to unknown, 5 November 1861, Massachusetts State Archives, Executive Outgoing Letters.
[24] Mrs. Allen to Governor John A. Andrew, 9 November 1861, Executive incoming Letters, MMHRC&M.
[25] No record of B.T. Allen has been found in the official listings of men mustered into the unit.
[26] Allen S. Weeks to Governor Andrew, with Andrew's reply, 31 December 1861, Library of Congress, Governor Andrew Papers.
[27] Hiram T. Nason to Lydia Nason (his sister), 10 November 1861; to his parents, 20 January 1862, on file in Nason's pension record, NARA, Record Group 15.2.1.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Major George C. Strong, Gen. Butler's Assistant Adjutant General for the Department of New England, to William Schouler, Massachusetts Adjutant General, 11 November 1861, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office Incoming Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[30] William Schouler, Massachusetts Adjutant General, to General Butler, Commander, Department of New England, 11 November 1861, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office Outgoing Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[31] Adjutant General's Office, *Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines in the Civil War* (Norwood, Mass: Norwood Press, 1932), Volume III, 190 (hereafter cited as *MSS&M*).
[32] William Schouler, Massachusetts Adjutant General, to General George B. McClellan, Commanding General, Army of the Potomac, 28 December 1861; Schouler to Thomas F. Meagher, 28 December 1861, both in the Massachusetts Adjutant General Office Outgoing Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[33] William Schouler to Governor Andrew, 17 February 1862, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office Outgoing Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[34] Michael Cavanagh, *Memoirs of Gen. Thomas Francis Meager* (Worcester, Mass: The Messenger Press, 1892), 425.
[35] Sandy Barnard, ed., *Campaigning with the Irish Brigade: Pvt. John Ryan, 28th Massachusetts* (Fort Collins, Colorado: Citizen Printing Inc., 2001), 29.
[36] General Order Number 3, Headquarters, 9th Army Corps, Old Point Comfort, 3 August 1862, Court Martial Proceedings against Colonel William Monteith, 28th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, 28th Massachusetts Regiment Papers, RG 94, Stack Area SW3, Row 9 Compartment 1, Shelf B, Boxes 1805, 1806, 1807, NARA (hereafter cited as *28th's Papers, NARA*).
[37] Sgt. John Cooley, Company A, 28th Regiment, to his wife, 28 June 1862, copy in the Author's collection (original held by Mary Lawrence Aitken, a descendent).
[38] US War Department, *The War of the Rebellion. A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. 128 Vols., Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, Series 1, Volume 14, 1880-1901 (hereafter cited as *OR*).

[39] William G. Gavin , Campaigning With the Roundheads: History of the Hundredth Pennsylvania Veteran Volunteer Infantry Regiment in the American Civil War, 1861-1865, (Dayton, Oh: Morningside Bookshop, 1995); quoted by Patrick Brennan, *Secessionville*, (Campbell, Ca: Savas Publishing Company, 1996), 78-79.
[40] Patrick Brennan, *Secessionville*, (Campbell, Ca: Savas Publishing Company, 1996), 234.
[41] Hiram T. Nason to Moses Nason (his father), 22 June 1862, on file in Nason's pension record, NARA, Record Group 15.2.1.
[42] John F. Goodwin to his sister, 21 June 1862, on file in Goodwin's pension record, NARA, Record Group 15.2.1.
[43] Report of Lieutenant Colonel MacLelland Moore, Twenty-eight Massachusetts Infantry, to Colonel William M. Fenton, Commanding First Brigade, 17 June 1862, OR, Series 1, Volume 14, 69.
[44] Patrick Brennan, *Secessionville*, (Campbell, Ca: Savas Publishing Company, 1996), 199.
[45] Capt John Riley, Company F, to Governor Andrew, 29 July 1862, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office, Governor Andrew Executive Incoming Correspondence, MMHRC&M (The writer either confuses Lieutenant Colonel McClellan Moore's actions with Major George W. Cartwright, who replaced Moore, or he intentionally tries to smear Cartwright's reputation with the Governor. The latter seems more likely).
[46] Major George W. Cartwright to Governor John A. Andrew, 29 July 1862, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office, Governor Andrew Executive Incoming Correspondence, MMHRC&M
[47] Charges and Specifications preferred by David F. Powers, 1st Sergeant, Company K, 28th Regiment, against Capt John H. Cooley, 22 March 1862, citing incident of 26 February 1862, on file in Cooley's pension record, NARA, Record Group 15.2.1.
[48] 1Lt Charles H. Sanborn, 28th Massachusetts Adjutant, to William Schouler, Massachusetts Adjutant General, 3 April 1862, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office, Adjutant General Incoming Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[49] William Schouler, Massachusetts Adjutant General, to Colonel Moore, 28th Regt. Mass. Vols., 3 July 1862, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office, Adjutant General Outgoing Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[50] 1Lt Moses J. Emory, Company I, 28th Massachusetts, to William Schouler, Massachusetts Adjutant General, 12 April 1862, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office, Adjutant General Incoming Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[51] MSS&M, Biographical entries, Vol. III, 188-274.
[52] 28th Regimental Books of Special and General Orders, Record Group 94, Stack Area 9W3, Row 7, Compartment 33, Shelf D, NARA (hereafter cited as *28th Rgt. Books, NARA*).
[53] Major George W. Cartwright, 28th Massachusetts, to William Schouler, Massachusetts Adjutant General, 3 August 1862, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office, Adjutant General Incoming Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[54] Brigadier General Isaac Stevens to Governor John A. Andrew, 26 July 1862, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office, Governor Andrew Executive Incoming Correspondence, MMHRC&M.

[55] Captain John Riley, Company F, 28th Massachusetts, to Governor John A. Andrew, 29 July 1862, Massachusetts Adjutant General Office, Governor Andrew Executive Incoming Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[56] Ibid.
[57] MSS&M, Vol. III, 188-274.
[58] Lieutenant Colonel Robert Ross Smith, USAR, *Ox Hill, The Most Neglected Battle of the Civil War, 1 September 1862*, reprinted in *Fairfax County and the War Between The States*, by the Fairfax County Civil war Centennial Commission, 1961, 19-64.
[59] Petition, Patrick Donahoe, et al, to Governor John A. Andrew of Massachusetts, circa September 1862, Executive Incoming Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[60] Patrick Donahoe to Governor John A. Andrew, 13 September 1862, Governor's Office Executive Letters, Incoming, Massachusetts State Archives (hereafter cited as *MSA*).
[61] Ibid.
[62] Colonel Benjamin C. Christ to Governor John A. Andrew, 18 September 1862, Governor's Office, Executive Letters, Incoming, MSA.
[63] *The Pilot* (Boston, Mass), "Flag Presentation to the 28th Regiment, Col. Byrnes", 7 May 1864; and *Irish American* (New York), "Irish American Soldiers' Obituary, Col. Byrnes, 28th Mass. Vols.—Acting Brigadier General of the Irish Brigade," 25 June 1864.
[64] Lieutenant Jeremiah W. Coveney to Adjutant General William Schoulder, Massachusetts Adjutant General, 20 September 1862, Governor's Office, Executive Letters, Incoming, MSA.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Individual Military records of Colonel Richard Byrnes, 28th Massachusetts Regiment, NARA, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as *Byrnes IMR*). Byrnes received his commission from Governor Andrew while in camp near Knoxville, Maryland, on 17 October. He penned a short letter to the Governor stating: "Whilst I thank you Governor most heartily for the honor done me, I trust the occasion may never occur to give you cause to regret the appointment." Byrnes to Governor Andrew, 17 October 1862, Executive Correspondence, Incoming, MMHRC&M.
[68] Petition, Officers of the 28th Massachusetts Regiment to Governor John A. Andrew, 1 October 1862, Executive Correspondence, Incoming, MMHRC&M.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid; and Muster Rolls, 28th Massachusetts, Record Group 94, Stack Area 8W3, Boxes 1808 and 1809, NARA (hereafter cited as *28th Muster Rolls, NARA*).
[72] The seven officers were: Captains John H. Brennan (resigning on 10 March 1863, which he attributed to wounds received during the Antietam battle); Charles H. Sanborn (resigning 3 June 1863, which he attributed to wounds received during the Fredericksburg battle); James Magner (who was latter killed 18 May 1864 at the battle of Spotssylvania); James O'Keefe (who did resign on 11 May 1863); Lieutenant William Mitchell (who followed through on his threat and resigned on 14 November 1862, a mere month after Colonel Byrnes reported to the unit); Josiah F. Kennison (who resigned on 12 October 1863); and Edmund H. Fitzpatrick (who resigned on 1 March 1864). Only

William Mitchell resigned in protest, the others, if they did offer resignations, withdrew them, for a time, after Byrnes showed his flair for organization and discipline.
[73] Augustus Annand, Affidavit, 14 September 1885, in Captain James O'Keefe Pension File, NARA, Record Group 15.2.1.
[74] MSS&M, Vol. III, 188-274.
[75] 28th Muster Rolls, NARA.
[76] 28th Massachusetts Regiment Special Orders, 28th's Papers, NARA.
[77] Hiram T. Nason to his Father, Mother, and Sister, 20 October 1862, Nason Pension File, NARA, Record Group 15.2.1.
[78] HQ, Right Grand Division, Special Order #25, 23 November 1862, 28th's Papers, NARA.
[79] Brigadier General Thomas F. Meagher, Irish Brigade Commander, to Assistant Adjutant General W.G. Mitchell, Hancock's Division, 28 February 1863, Adjutant General's Office, Letters Received, Microfilm Roll #M619, Roll 6, NARA.
[80] General Winfield S. Hancock's endorsement on Colonel Richard Byrnes letter to Colonel Delos B. Sackett, Inspector General, Commission Branch, Letters Received, Microfilm Roll #1964, Roll 4, NARA.
[81] Speical Orders, General Orders, and Outgoing Messages, December 1862, 28th Rgt. Books, NARA; and December 1862, 28th Muster Rolls, NARA.
[82] Colonel Richard Byrnes to Adjutant General William Schouler, 21 March 1863, Outgoing Message #129, 28th Rgt. Books, NARA
[83] Lieutenant Colonel Harrison Ritchie to Colonel Richard Byrnes, 1 April 1863, Executive outgoing Correspondence, MMHRC&M. The men in this instance were Private John B. Noyes, Company B, 13th Massachusetts Regiment; Sergeant William F. Cochrane, Company A, 1st Massachusetts Regiment, and Sergeant Walter Scott Bailey, Company A, 2nd Massachusetts Regiment. Noyes and Bailey served their allotted time until mustered out on 8 December 1864. Cochrane died of wounds he received at the battle of Spotsylvania, 20 May 1864.
[84] John B. Noyes to his Father, George R. Noyes, 9 April 1863, MS AM 823F, Letters of John B. Noyes Houghton Library, Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Mass.
[85] Lawrence F. Kohl, editor, *Irish Green & Union Blue: The Civil War Letters of Peter Welsh* (Fordham University Press, 1986), 95-96.
[86] Court Martial Records, NARA; Colonel Richard Byrnes to Lieutenant Mitchell, Assistant Adjutant General, Irish Brigade, 18 April 1863, 28th's Papers, NARA.
[87] John B. Noyes to his Brother, Stephen B. Noyes, 30 May 1863, MS AM 823F, Letters of John B. Noyes Houghton Library, Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Mass.
[88] John B. Noyes to his Brother, George D. Noyes, 1 August 1863, MS AM 823F, Letters of John B. Noyes Houghton Library, Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Mass.
[89] Charges and Specifications preferred by Col. R. Byrnes 28th Mass Vols. Against 2nd Lieut Chas. V. Smith, "Co. C" 28th Regt. Mass. Vols.," 28th's Papers, NARA; and 1st Division, II Corps, General Order 188, 4 August 1863, 28th's Papers, NARA.
[90] 28th's Papers, NARA; 28th Muster rolls, NARA.
[91] Captain Andrew J. Lawler, Company D, 28th Mass, to Colonel Richard Byrnes, 3 October 1863, 28th's Papers, NARA.
[92] MSS&M, Vol. III, 188-274.

[93] Colonel Richard Byrnes to William Schouler, 3 November 1863, Outgoing Message #140, 28th Rgt. Books, NARA.
[94] John B. Noyes to his Father, George R. Noyes, 5 June 1864, MS AM 823F, Letters of John B. Noyes, Houghton Library, Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Mass.
[95] 28th Muster Rolls (monthly returns for 1864), NARA.
[96] Ibid.
[97] MSS&M, Vol. III, 188-274.

III

MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF THE IRISH SOLDIER

Opinions of the Irish depended on the individual and the circumstance. The native-born vacillated between ideas of an Irishman as an ignorant clown or a heroic warrior. At the best of times, the native-born considered the Irishman deserving full recognition as an American, just like anyone else who fought for the Union. The Irish viewed themselves as a suppressed minority deserving full citizenship rights because they shed their blood in defense of the nation. The Irish sense of humor made light of their dreadful circumstances and reflected their mental toughness. They also believed in the fighting superiority of their race, and relied on it to improve their circumstances in America.

Shortly after the war ended, and right up to about 1900, numerous books of soldier's reminiscence about the conflict filled bookseller's shelves. Fanciful titles such as *Camp Fire Stories*, *The Blue Coats*, *Bullet and Shell*, and *Sparks from the Camp Fire*, all sought to tell readers of the world of the soldiers who had fought for the Union. One work subtitled itself, in part, as a book that captured "the funny and pathetic side of the war, embracing the most brilliant and remarkable anecdotical events."[1] Interestingly enough, many of these works related stories about the Irish soldier. If the work was printed close to the war's end, the authors fell back on stereotypes about the Irish. If the work was published twenty plus years after the close of hostilities, they tended to treat the Irish soldier as just another American citizen. However, these soldier stories have to be

taken with skepticism. With rare exception, all of the Irish soldiers mentioned bear the legendary names of Pat, Paddy, or Mike. The Irish stories written by the native-born fall into four broad categories: general observations, fighting ability, leadership, and American patriotism.

Early during the succession movement, a newspaper reported a supposed conversation between the Irish Private Pat Fletcher of the 2nd U.S. Cavalry Regiment in Texas and a lieutenant who had resigned his commission to join other former officers to accept commissions in the new Southern Army. The Lieutenant wanted Pat to join him, but the Irishman did not seem inclined to leave the United States Army. The officer tried to reason with him, pointing out that other Irishmen were joining the southern army and that if he stayed with the Union army, he would have to fight against fellow Irishmen. "Do you know that you will have to fire on green Irish colors, in the Southern ranks?" he asked. Pat answered, "And won't you have to fire on them colors, (pointing to the flag at Fort Bliss,) that yerself and five of us licked nineteen rangers under? Sure, it isn't a greater shame for an Irishman to fire on Irish colors, than for an American to fire on American colors. An' the oath 'll be on my side, you know, Lieutenant." "Confound the man that relies on Paddies, I say," retorted the lieutenant. "The same compliments to deserters, your honor," responded the Irishman.[2] Whether the story is true or not cannot be determined; however, the agenda of the writer is clear. At the beginning of the war, the native-born doubted that many Irishmen would answer the call to defend their adopted country. Many Irish-American newspapers had counseled their readers to stay out of the 'political dispute' between the two regions. In this story, the hope of Irishmen staying with the Union is apparent, especially when so many officers were leaving the

service to join the Confederacy. As it turned out, far more Irish joined the Union Army than the Confederate, probably because the majority of the Irish in America lived in the urban centers of the north. Once Fort Sumter came under attack, Irish political leaders, such as Thomas F. Meagher, saw the war as an opportunity for the Irish community, and urged their men to join the Federal Army.

Once it became apparent that the Irish community (for the time being, at least) would support the war, native-born writers used Irish soldiers as characters for their jokes. For instance:

> An Irishman at the Bull Run battle was somewhat startled when the head of his companion on the left hand was knocked off by a cannon-ball. A few moments after, however, a spent ball broke the fingers of his comrade on the other side. The latter threw down his gun and yelled with pain, when the Irishman rushed to him, exclaiming, "Blasht your soul, you ould woman, shtop cryin'; you make more noise about it than the man that losht his head![3]

Then the story concerning an Irishman conducting guard duty in Nashville as a citizen approached:

> "Halt! Who comes there?"
> "A citizen," was the response.
> "Advance, citizen, and give the countersign."
> "I haven't the countersign; and, if I had, the demand for it at this time and place is something very strange and unusual," rejoined the citizen.
> "An' by the howly Moses, ye don't pass this way at all till ye say Bunker Hill," was Pat's reply.
> The citizen, appreciating the "situation," advanced and cautiously whispered in his ear the necessary words.
> "Right! Pass on." And the wide-awake sentinel resumed his beat.[4]

Sometimes the joke would have the Irish character say the double-entendre, since he was supposedly cruder than a Puritan native-born:

> The following took place at a flag presentation in the Army of the Cumberland, May 1, 1863. The flag was presented to the Fifteenth

> Indiana Volunteers (on behalf of the young ladies of Hascall, Indiana,) by the chaplain, and received for the regiment by General Wagner. The regiment was in line, and the rest of the brigade assembled to witness the ceremony. The General, in the course of his speech, said:
>
> "Tell the young ladies of Hascall that when the war is over their then sanctified gift shall be returned to them, unless torn to shreds by the enemy's bullets."
>
> "An' thin we'll take 'em back the pole!" cried an Irishman in the regiment.
>
> The Brigade, officers and men, created a breach of discipline by laughing immoderately, and Pat received a pass to go to town next day.[5]

However, the good nature of the Irish soldier's character invariably is the crux of the joke, as a supposedly true story by Colonel Edward Anderson relates of one of his Irish privates, Tim Hickey, who caught a donkey and offered his services to the commanding General:

> The General told him to cross a river to find a good place for the men to cross... All at once the burro stepped on a rolling stone and Tim went off into the water. He swam around, caught the donkey by the tail and landed safely on the other side. Then he began to twist the ears of his jackass, and the general called to him:
> "What are you doing, Tim?"
> "Shure, I'm wringin' out me hourse," came back the answer.
> Afterward Tim said, as he stood looking at his miniature beast:
> "Troth, he's the father of all jack-rabbits!"[6]

Colonel Anderson had a number of Tim Hickey stories, one of which involved a statue of General Green Clay, a hero in the War of 1812, in New Orleans. Looking at a statue of General Clay, Tim does not know who he is. The colonel tells him "That's Clay," and Tim goes over to inspect the statue. He soon returns and says, "It's a lie, sor; it's iron!"[7]

While such banter is harmless enough, sometimes the jokes depended upon the idea that the majority of the Irish were ignorant, and too fond of alcohol.

> Two gallant sons of Erin, being just discharged from the service, were rejoicing over the event with a "wee taste of the cratur'," when one, who felt all the glory of his own noble race, suddenly raised his glass above,

> and said, "Arrah, Mike, here's to the gallant ould Sixty-ninth: *The last in the field and the first to leave!"* "Tut, tut, man," said Mike, "you don't mane that." "Don't mane it, is it? Then what do I mane?" "You mane," said Mike, and he raised his glass high, and looked lovingly at it, "Here's to the gallant ould Sixty-ninth – *equal to none!"* And so they drank.[8]

Despite the good fighting reputation the Irish earned once in battle, native-born wags could not resist the temptation to use the stereotypical traits of the Irish for a joke to belittle their accomplishments. In this way native-born courage, because it was pure, could not be placed on the same level as Irish courage. Irish courage had to have a flaw:

> One of the Indiana regiments was fiercely attacked by a whole brigade, in one of the battles in Mississippi. The Indianians, unable to withstand such great odds, were compelled to fall back about thirty or forty yards, losing, to the utter mortification of the officers and men, their flag, which remained in the hands of the enemy. Suddenly, a tall Irishman, a private in the color company, rushed from the ranks across the vacant ground, attacked the squad of rebels who had possession of the conquered flag, with his musket felled several to the ground, snatched the flag from them, and returned safely back to his regiment. The bold fellow was, of course, immediately surrounded by his jubilant comrades, and greatly praised for his gallantry. His Captain appointed him to a sergeantcy on the spot; but the hero cut everything short by the reply, "O, never mind, Captain, -- say no more about it. I dropped my whiskey flask among the rebels, and fetched that back, and I thought I might just as well bring the flag along!"[9]

The general assumptions of the Irish, as revealed by these supposedly true stores, involves the belief that the Irish soldier was uneducated, heavy drinkers, funny, and a good fighters, albeit with less than noble motives.

However, as coverage of the war from on-scene newspaper reporters started to filter back, anecdotes of the fighting ability of the Irish increased. Right from the beginning, Native-born writers began to ply the newspapers with stories of Irish gallantry in combat using hyperbole, such as this example of an incident at the Battle of First Bull Run. This newspaper story concerns then Captain Thomas F. Meagher, of the 69th New

York Volunteer Regiment (and the core organization for the future Irish Brigade), who led his men in the first major battle of the war.

> The famous Sixty-ninth Irish regiment, sixteen hundred strong, who had so much of the hard digging to perform, claimed the honor of a share in the hard fighting.... It was a brave sight—that rush of the Sixty-ninth into the death-struggle! With such cheers as those which won the battles in the Peninsula, with a quick step at first, and then a double quick and at last a run they dashed forward, and along the edge of the extended forest. Coats and knapsacks were thrown to either side, that nothing might impede their work; but we knew that no guns would slip from the hands of those determined fellows, even if dying agonies were needed to close them with a firmer grasp. As the line swept along, Meagher galloped towards the head, crying, "Come on, boys! you've got your chance at last!"[10]

After the Irish Brigade came into being, more reports came back from the on-scene reporters concerning the Irish soldiers. Reporting on the Battle of Fair Oaks, one reporter noted to his readers up north: "On the dark nights that followed the first and disastrous day at Fair Oaks, hundreds of soldiers remember with what fierce enthusiasm Meagher and his Irish brigade pressed forward over the dead and dying. Then early the following morning there came the wild shout, the rush, the clash, the dead stillness, and then the yell of victorious Erin."[11] And again at Savage Station:

> "Forward, ye divils!" shouted a Celtic voice in the hollow below us. Looking down, we saw the Irish brigade, General Meagher at its head, coming along at a jog-trot. Despite the gathering darkness, I could see that the men's faces were set as though they knew that something desperate was in store for them. As the brigade reached the higher ground, I saw the general turn in his saddle, and wave his sword over his head. The appeal was answered by a wild cheer; and the brave fellows went forward at a tremendous pace, dashing into the woods where the battle was fiercely raging.[12]

The Battle of Fredericksburg is probably the greatest source of stories about the fighting spirit of the Irish. Reporters were quick to tell the public that the Irishmen never wavered on their charge against the well-entrenched Confederates atop of Marye's

Heights. It is here, where the slaughter was greatest, and the attack an utter failure, that the legend of the fighting Irish Brigade was cemented forever into America's memory of the Civil War. "Useless! the triumphant confederates, safe in their rocky shelter, shout and yell in defiance and derision. Meagher, with true Irish determination, throws his gallant battle-scarred Irish brigade against this unyielding rock again and again, but all in vain...."[13] The oft-quoted correspondent of the London *Times*, watching from the Confederate line, penned his report in part:

> Never at Fontenoy, Albuera, or at Waterloo, was more undaunted courage displayed by the sons of Erin than during those six frantic dashes which they directed against the almost impregnable position of their foe. ...But the bodies which lie in dense masses within forty yards of the muzzles of Colonel Walton's guns are the best evidence what manner of men they were who pressed on to death with the dauntlessness of a race which has gained glory on a thousand battle-fields, and never more richly deserved it than at the foot of Marye's Heights on the 13th day of December, 1862.[14]

At the same battle, an American reporter for a northern newspaper reported an incident where an Irishman requested the use of a cannon. Although the artillery crew pointed out to him that Confederate targets were at too great a distance for the cannon to be effective, the Irishman insisted, and offered to pay for the ammunition he used if he failed to hit any of the enemy. The gun-crew consented and the Irishman "loaded his gun, cutting his fuse from his own sense of distance, drawn from his unerring sight. Soon an [enemy] officer was seen, with another on each side, when Pat sighted his gun, and let go. Down went the officer...wounding or killing the other two; and thus, with equal precision, he continued to cut his fuse and fire as long as they remained on the ground."[15]

With such tales of martial daring, the tone of the Irish jokes changed slightly. Now

the courage of an Irish soldier was not questioned, but he did shed the glory of war and turned his attention to the grim business of fighting. As the story goes, the color-bearer of the Tenth Tennessee (Irish) is shot down in the battle of Chickamauga. The unit's colonel orders a private to pick up the flag. The Irishman, who was loading at the time, replies: "By the holy St. Patrick, colonel, there's so much good shooting here, I haven't a minute's time to waste fooling with that thing."[16] This response probably tells more about the state of mind of a country numbed by heavy losses, than of Irishmen in particular. However, an Irish 'foreigner' in a joke can illustrate the general feeling of the populace wanting to end the war quickly by inflicting the most damage as possible, without being deterred by functions not to that end.

These reports would lead to an assumption that the Irish soldier could not wait to get into a fight, no matter how desperate the situation. In fact, the more the odds ran against the Irish, the more he tried to prevail. The Fredericksburg debacle endeared the Irish soldier to the public imagination. All of the foregoing accounts, however, are based on popular books and newspapers stories of the period. Native-born Brigadier General Francis A. Walker wrote what is the closest attempt at an official history of the Army of the Potomac's Second Army Corps, which included the Irish Brigade. Walker mentions the Brigade a number of times in his work, and although published in 1887, he was an eyewitness to the events he wrote about. After the war, Walker became a noted figure in the new inductive and historical school of economics, and he approached his Second Corps history in the same manner.

Walker introduces the reader to the Irish for the first time when he describes the Irish Brigade as "...one of the most picturesque features of the Second Corps, whether in

fight, on the march, or in camp."[17] Walker admired the Irish Brigade soldiers. His usual matter-of-fact narrative blooms with purple prose when he describes their fighting ability. Describing the Seven Days Battle, he brings the Irish into the story: "And now an unaccustomed cheer rises along the slender Union line. It is the cheer of men overweighted and worn, when they learn that help is at hand. ... Good brigades, good men! There wave the green flags of the Irish regiments of the reckless, rollicking, irrepressible, irresponsible Meagher...."[18] At Antietam:

> Arriving on the field, Meagher's Irish brigade formed line of battle ... and at once moved forward against that part of the enemy's line.... The Irishmen advanced steadily and rapidly, under a heavy fire...word soon [arrives] that Meagher's ammunition [is] exhausted, Caldwell's troops ... moved forward, breaking by companies to the front, the Irish regiments breaking by companies to the rear. This movement ... effected with perfect composure, [showed] the gallantry of the troops and the exceptional intelligence, skill and audacity of the regimental commanders....[19]

It is at the Battle of Fredericksburg that Walker's effusive pen adds to the mythic quality of the Irish fierceness, despite the hopelessness of their attempt to dislodge the Confederates protected in their trench behind a stonewall at the top of the hill:

> But hark, what cheer is that which bursts from the rear as they struggle on? It is the Irish Brigade.... Here are the three sterling New York regiments...with them comes the Twenty-eight Massachusetts, under Byrnes.... Right gallantly the Irishmen charge over the sheltering ridge, and dash across the bloody spaces strewn with the dead and dying of the brigades that have gone on before. But how can men live where, a pistol-shot away, four ranks of veteran marksmen, themselves completely sheltered, are pouring forth an unremitting blast of deadly fire? The killed and wounded fall like leaves in autumn, while hundreds of men, brave among the bravest, lie down beneath the storm of lead. The fourth commander [Byrnes] is now in charge of the battalion. Flesh and blood will not stand it longer. In the face of the manifest impossibility of accomplishing anything, a part of the brigade take to the ground; a part break to the rear, ...a few of them, joined by some choice spirits...actually push their way through ...up to within twenty and even

> fifteen yards of the stone wall, lay soldiers of those four brigades. Oh, that such valor had been well employed! Oh, that such precious blood had been wisely spent! Oh, that those heroic regiments had, in the course of some prudently conceived movement, been let loose upon the Confederate flank![20]

While Walker does note that numerous other units made the same attempt to dislodge the Confederates, with the same results, he spent most of the narrative on the Irish Brigade's sacrifice. It is possible that since the Irish unit were so distinctive and did stand out from the rest of the Second Corps, that the demise its members may have made more of an impression than the falling of so many indistinguishable bodies of troops from other units.

John B. Noyes, a native-born officer assigned to the 28th Regiment after the Battle of Fredericksburg, noted the reputation enjoyed by the Irish Brigade. He recounted to his mother the steadfastness of the Brigade at the Battle of Chancellorsville, the day he reported to the regiment. "Bad news from the front. On the previous evening the 11th Corps had behaved badly, skedadling by brigades. Meagher's Brigade held its position and the enemy did not pursue far."[21]

However, even with a good fighting reputation, some still looked at the Irish soldiers as foreigners. Noyes wrote to his sister, Martha, when General Meagher resigned from the Army in May 1863 in protest after he was denied the opportunity to take part of the Brigade back up north to recruit and replace its losses:

> I doubt the expediency of casting off Generals in such a manner, especially a General whose brigade has never flinched, and which at times has accomplished what would hardly be expected of a whole division. Genl Meagher is an Irishman of distinction, whose name is a power among the Irish population of the country. At this time no seeds of discontent should be sown among the foreign part of our population.[22]

These views of the Irish both helped and hindered the combat effectiveness of both the Irish Brigade and the 28th Regiment in particular. Reporters, the public, and the officers and men of the Army took great stock in the idea of the Irish soldiers as fearless warriors. To be sure, the early battles of the Irish Brigade seemed to warrant the reputation. Unfortunately, the shifting from the stereotype of a drunken fool of a foreigner who could not be counted upon to fight for the Union, to a care-free warrior who could be depended upon to accomplish the feats of three men, proved just as damaging to the unit's effectiveness.

The combat effectiveness of the 28th Regiment in particular had the same pressures applied to it. As noted in the previous chapter, when the 28th Regiment first arrived in South Carolina in May 1862, the native-born General Egbert L. Viele, a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, believed the unit could outfight the Confederates with a ratio of two to one. Unfortunately, the unit failed to live up to such expectations. The officers failed to train its men, and the officers operated without clear authority above or below them. These symptoms all led back to the unit's poor leadership. Bad leadership appears to be the primary cause for the less than glorious actions on the regiment's part and led to infighting among its officers and a failure of discipline within the ranks, especially under fire. With the apparent failure of the unit on the field of battle at Secessionville, the native-born officers in camp sought to fill the power vacuum.

However, the solution came from both the state of Massachusetts and the U.S. Army. First, the Governor and the state's Adjutant General did not bow to the pressure to appoint someone immediately to take charge of the 28th Regiment. Instead, for the

time being, the second in command took charge. Until the long drawn out process of removing the previous commander was completed, the state's officials were willing to bide their time so that the correct man could be found to take charge of the regiment. In fact, it took almost two and a half months from the arrest of the unit's commander, Colonel William Monteith, until he was dismissed from the service in disgrace.*

Second, during the intervening time, the 28th Regiment transferred from the sparsely-manned Department of the South, where they primarily provided manual labor along the coastal areas of South Carolina and Georgia, to the large combat-experienced Army of the Potomac in Virginia. In the next few months (July through November), the 28th Regiment fought in four battles, Second Bull Run, Chantilly, South Mountain and Antietam, as members of Major General Ambrose Burnside's IX Army Corps. Working side-by-side with these combat veterans, the regiment underwent training and then put their training to use in combat. However, so much fighting took a toll on men and reduced the unit's numbers down to 368 officers and men present for duty by the end of September 1862. In fact the senior ranking officer, a captain, commanded the regiment.[23] The fighting capability of the unit proved to be as good as any other unit in the army during these battles, but the leadership shortcomings continued. In October 1862, when Colonel Richard Byrnes took command of the 28th Regiment, the internal discipline of the unit required constant attention. Byrnes proved to be the perfect tonic to this particular problem. As each day progressed, the combat capability of the regiment increased, but expectations also increased when the unit transferred from the IX Army Corps to the Irish Brigade in the II Army Corps.

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* Colonel Monteith was arrested and relieved of command on 20 May, 1862. He remained in arrest until his court martial on 3 August, 1862, the same day he was released from the service.

If any unit in the Army of the Potomac had a reputation of super-warriors, it was the Irish Brigade. Not only were they known for their fierce fighting abilities, but its leader, Brigadier General Thomas F. Meagher, strove to prove that Irishmen were just as worthy as the native-born to enjoy the full expression of United States citizenship. This ideological drive motivated the men in the Irish Brigade, and they proved themselves in battle time and again. In the long run, however, it proved disastrous to the combat effectiveness of the Irish Brigade. Time and again the commanding generals sent the Irish Brigade into the most dangerous spot on the battlefield to shore up sagging battle lines, to stop a Confederate charge, or to buy time for the Union force to safely withdraw. In his book *Regimental Losses in The American Civil War*, native-born Lieutenant Colonel William F. Fox, states:

> The Irish Brigade was, probably, the best known of any brigade organization, its having made an unusual reputation for dash and gallantry. The remarkable precision of its evolutions under fire; its desperate attack on the impregnable wall at Marye's Heights; its never failing promptness on every field; and its long continuous service, made for it a name inseparable from the history of the war. The Irish Brigade lost over 4,000 men in killed and wounded; it being more men than ever belonged to the brigade at any one time. With the exception of the Twenty-eighth Massachusetts, the regiments were small. The three New York regiments became so reduced in numbers that, at Gettysburg, they were consolidated into two companies each.... [24]

After Antietam, when the 28th Regiment joined its ranks, it is no wonder that the unit received a warm welcome from General Meagher. Although only 400 men strong, the regiment immediately became the largest unit in the brigade. The men of the 28th Regiment were also pleased to join the brigade. As Company K's Peter Welsh pointed out to his wife, "There is another advantage we have since we joined this brigade there is three priests with the brigade so the [that] we have frequent oppertunitys of going to

mass and evening prayer".[25] In an army full of Protestants, the majority of the men in the unit could now practice their Catholic beliefs.

These two changes, the arrival of Colonel Byrnes and the transfer to the Irish Brigade, improved the combat effectiveness of the regiment. However, joining the Irish Brigade brought with it great expectations from both native-born and from the Irish, which proved well placed at the Battle of Fredericksburg. After the battle, positions within the Brigade's leadership opened, and the officers of the regiment filled them. This allowed them to make the most of their new authority and better the lot of the 28th Regiment's men. Additional clothing and rations, for instance, now flowed to the members of the regiment. Under the leadership of Byrnes, the unit went without reproach by the native-born. In Walker's history of the Second Army Corps, Byrnes is remembered as "...a good disciplinarian in camp; cool and resolute in action; mingling in just proportion, impetuosity with sound judgment."[26]

Commanding generals, relying on the brigade's reputation (and consequently the 28th Regiment), called it into battle again and again until the units were bled dry. Failure at one point was inevitable. That point came in August 1864 at Deep Bottom Run, Virginia. General Ulysses S. Grant, in an effort to break the two-month siege of Petersburg, planned to turn the Confederate line and force the defenders of Chafin's Bluff, south of Richmond, out of their works. If successful, Petersburg would then be cut off from the Confederate capitol. The 28th Regiment participated in this attack, and Brigadier General Francis C. Barlow in his official report described an uncharacteristic response by his Irish soldiers: "...the troops bore themselves without any spirit, and were thrown off by a feeble resistance...."[27] Historian Walker responded:

> Concerning the reported ill-behavior of the troops on this occasion, it is enough to say that the two brigades referred to had been among the chief glories of the Second Corps. General Morgan justly remarks: "Nothing could so clearly show the disorganization brought about by the terrible losses of this campaign as that such language could be truthfully used about these troops. The Irish brigade had left its dead, with their sprigs of green in their caps, close under the stone wall at Fredericksburg; and had shown on every field the most determined bravely. It is evident," concludes Morgan, "that assaults 'all along the line' had left very little of the old material there."[28]

John Noyes of the 28th Regiment noted that the day was very warm and with a number of streams nearby in the woods, "...stragglers who filing their canteens, in many cases failed to report again....The rebs shelled us with considerable spirit, making excellent shots....During the day nearly 100 men were wounded in the Brigade. The charge was unsuccessful + the loss considerable...."[29] This came as no surprise to Noyes, however. As far back as September 1863, Noyes sensed the seeds of discontent and diminishing combat effectiveness. He wrote to his father of the increasing reluctance of his regiment to enter into combat. "Officers and men would go anywhere to get out of the Irish Brigade, especially just at this time. They would make good time marching *away* from the Rapidan."[30] After the failure at Deep Bottom, the unit went back to the trenches of Petersburg, and never received another negative report for the rest of the war.

To conclude how the legend of the Celtic warrior both helped and hindered the 28th Regiment, it is evident that bad leadership before Colonel Byrnes' arrival hurt the unit. However, steps taken by Massachusetts governor corrected the problem. Massachusetts had a stake in the success of the 28th Regiment since it created it as an Irish unit based in response to the demands of the politically influential Irish of Boston. Governor Andrew tried to get the unit into the Irish Brigade, but having failed that, sent the unit out alone to South Carolina, where it joined the South Carolina Expedition. By not joining the

seasoned Irish Brigade, the 28th Regiment did not have a support system. Bad leadership could have been corrected or dealt with internally by General Meagher, and the unit's future could have turned out differently. Unfortunately, without Meagher's aggressive intercession to incorporate the regiment into his Irish Brigade, the unit went out on its own to South Carolina. With no assistance to train the men, it did not take long before the spotlight fell onto the 28th Regiment's poor leadership.

The irony is that, because the 28th Regiment missed a number of large battles where the Irish Brigade was used in the most savage areas of the battlefield, it did not sustain the high losses of the three New York regiments in the brigade. When the 28th Regiment finally arrived, it was the largest of all the units in the brigade. This allowed many of the officers to take on the required brigade positions and, essentially, take over the running of the brigade after Fredericksburg. Thus, native-born expectations and increased combat effectiveness of the 28th Regiment rose dramatically. Not until the Massachusetts unit lost so many of its men, like the other brigade units, did it finally succumb and lose combat effectiveness at Deep Bottom. The expectations of the native-born were dashed and never again was the 28th Regiment, nor the Irish Brigade, used to lead headlong charges in hopeless situations. For the rest of the war, like the majority of the Army of the Potomac, the 28th Regiment operated out of trenches, fought from behind breastworks, and only in the final days of the war did it form up into a line of battle in an open field to repel attackers, which never came. Instead, the Confederates surrendered.

The native-born were not the only ones who had pre-conceived ideas about Irish fighting ability. The Irish themselves held stereotypical views about themselves and

operated under a set of beliefs that both helped and hindered the combat effectiveness of their units. In the early days of recruiting, Thomas F. Meagher constantly reminded his Irish audiences of the proud history of Irish soldiers in the past that left their "...footprints in almost every camp, and on almost every battlefield in modern times," in Europe and the Far East.[31] Captain David P. Conyngham, the first person to publish a history of the Irish Brigade in 1867, took a similar track in his foreword.

> The flower of the Jacobite army, after the surrender of Limerick, took service under the *Fleur de Lis* of France...When Luxemburg drew his lines around Namur...it fell before the ringing cheer and dashing charge of Irish valor. Brilliant were their services under the princely Mountcashel...The regiments of Burke and Dillon saved Cremona. At Blenheim...Lord Clare's dragoons bore off two of the enemy's standards. The service of the brigade at Ramillies and Fontenoy are proudly chronicled in French history. King Louis publicly thanked the brigade...the young blood of Ireland deluged the olive-groves of Spain...Even in the republics of Chili, Bolivia, and Venezuela, the praises of O'Brien, Dillon, Devereux, and other Irish patriots are yet sung in the soft Castilian tongue....[32]

While it may have helped recruit Irishmen, the main purpose of such speeches seemed to be more directed to the future, while alluding to the past. Many Irish leaders, like Meagher, had fled from their native Ireland and looked to the war as an opportunity to help establish the Irish in America. Phillip T. Tucker, the editor of a collection of essays on the Irish Brigade published in 1995, listed six objectives the Irish-American community could secure by actively supporting the war: Irish soldiers would indirectly undermine a potential ally of the Confederacy, Great Britain; insure Irish-American civil rights; prove Catholics would support the Union, thereby persuading the native-born to be more religiously tolerant; by their example, discourage the United States from imposing anti-immigration laws, thus allowing more Irish to come to America; preserve a cultural identity in their new homeland; and finally, continue the tradition of Irish

soldiers serving in foreign armies with distinction.[33]

This was quite a burden on the lowly soldier in the ranks. However, these appeals to Irish tradition and culture did raise regiments. Peter Welsh, a sergeant in the 28th Regiment, wrote his father-in-law in Ireland on why he joined the army. First, he pointed out that Irishmen in America have opportunities. "Here they have an open field for industry And those who posses the abilitiys can raise themselves to positions of honor...Here Irishmen and their decendents have a claim a stake in the nation and an interest in its prosperity."[34] Second, Peter saw the United States as a "...refuge [and] Irlands last hope" for those fleeing Ireland.[35] Thirdly, Peter abhorred England, and the rise of America would doom the British Empire. "England hates this country because of its growing power and greatness[.] She hates it for it republican liberty and she hates it because Irishmen have a home and a government here and a voice in the counsels of the nation that is growing stronger every day which no good for her."[36] Peter also believed the war was in actuality a training ground for the eventual Irish army that would free Ireland from England. "For such an oppertunity this war is a school of instruction for Irishmen and if the day should arive within ten years after this war is ended an army can be raised in this country that will strike terror to the Saxons heart." [37]

While the Irish soldiers may have viewed themselves as bearers of Irish culture in America and the means to secure Ireland's independence in the future, achieving these objectives demanded successful fighting on the battlefield. As already illustrated, the Irish soldiers by and large lived up to their reputation as

fierce fighters. Despite the 28th Regiment's poor start in South Carolina, the unit acquitted itself well for the rest of the war. One morbid measure used to determine if a unit fought well or not was the number of its members killed in action. The logic dictates that those units were called upon to fight the most would sustain the heaviest losses in battle. Lieutenant Colonel William F. Fox painstakingly compared casualty figures for every regiment in the Union army, and concluded that there were 300 regiments that "...evidently did considerable fighting. ...in the long run active service brings its many scars; where the musketry was the hottest, the dead lay thickest; and there is no better way to find the fighting regiments than to follow up the bloody trail which marked their brave advance."[38] Each of the five units in the Irish Brigade, the 63rd, 69th, and 88th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiments, 116th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment, and the 28th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, were all included in the top 300 fighting regiments. The 116th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment led the brigade with a whopping 32 percent of its members killed (528 out of 1,661 assigned). The 28th came in second, with 14 percent (250 killed out of 1,778 assigned). Other brigade units fared just as badly. The 63rd New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment lost 11 percent (156 killed out of 1,411 assigned), while the 69th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment lost 259 men, and the 88th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment lost 151. The 9th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, another Irish unit from Boston (but not part of the Irish Brigade), lost 12.6 percent of its numbers (209 out of 1,650 assigned).[39]

Losses such as these damaged combat effectiveness, and the Irish soldiers knew it. After the Battle of Fredericksburg, the soldiers' view of themselves as 'super-warriors' began to fade. As Peter Welsh wrote to his wife, "our brigade got terribly cut up[,] it is so small now that it is not fit to go into any further action unless it is recruited up so you need not be uneasy now about me for the rest of the fighting will have to be done without our aid."[40] Out of the 1,200 men in the Irish Brigade engaged at Fredericksburg, 545 were killed, wounded or missing.[41] Captain William J. Nagle of the 88th New York Volunteer Regiment wrote to his father the following day after the battle "We are slaughtered like sheep, and no result but defeat."[42]

News of the disaster at Fredericksburg reached the Irish communities up north and created a backlash against the war. Irish recruits were hard to obtain, and the Irish Brigade units were denied a trip back home to recruit their fellow countrymen. Professor Joseph M. Hernon, in his study, *Celts, Catholics, and Copperheads*, noted that the Irish community believed the high casualties of the Irish soldiers may have won respect on the battlefield, but it did not garner admiration for the Irish community in return by the native born. The Irish community's resentment at a new round of draft requirements, and the addition of emancipation of the slaves as a war aim, nurtured a growing opposition to the war. This resulted in the New York City draft riots of July 1863.[43] The loss of support back at the home front must have affected the individual Irish soldier. But while many Irish soldier undoubtedly questioned how the sacrifices of his fellow soldiers would win the war, the living had no choice but to carry on.

At the Battle of Gettysburg, some of the old flair of the Irish Brigade manifested itself. It fought its way across "The Wheatfield" and captured a rocky hill, pushing the Confederate line back. Only when the Confederates overwhelmed the Union units on both flanks of the Irish Brigade did the Irishmen retreat to escape capture. It was during this movement that John Noyes of the 28th Regiment noted the heroics of one the men in his command, Corporal John Leary of Company F. "Surrounded by the enemy he refused to surrender & was shot dead. He was a brave soldier & his loss has been deeply felt in the company. Patient & uncomplaining during the long & fatiguing marches preceding the battle of July he offered up his life that the country might be saved."[44]

Fresh from the victory at Gettysburg, news of the riots in New York, conducted largely by Irish mobs, elicited angry responses by the rank and file Irish soldiers. "[T]he originaters of those riots should be hung like dogs," wrote Peter Welsh, now the Irish flag bearer in the 28th Regiment.[45] An answer for Peter's wish for retribution came quickly. Back at the 28th Regiment's home city of Boston, when the drawing of names began for the draft, a mob of protestors threw stones at the troops called in to protect the process (in reaction to the New York experience). The soldiers did not hesitate, and after shooting into the crowd and killing a number of the unruly, the crowd dispersed.[46] John Noyes, the native-born officer in the 28th Regiment, shared Sergeant Welsh's sentiment. "I only wish a little more grape had been used," he wrote, referring to the type of cannon ammunition that was used to quell the riot.[47]

A sure sign of dwindling support for the war in the Irish community is reflected in the lack of volunteers to fill the 28th Regiment's ranks. Heavy losses blunted the unit's combat effectiveness, and only fresh men could help restore its battlefield prowess. However, recruiting for the 28th Regiment did not progress satisfactorily until 1864, when Colonel Byrnes went to Boston to personally oversee recruiting for his unit. In all of 1863, even with a few officers of the 28th Regiment detailed for recruiting duty, the unit received a total of 189 men. Of these 189, 182 were draftees, leaving only a grand total of seven volunteer recruits. By the time Byrnes left to go back to the regiment, he had sent 288 new men ahead of him, bringing the total number present for duty to 446.[48]

Byrnes, the new men, and the veterans were called upon once again to show their Irish flair for battle, and paid the price during the Overland Campaign, which included the battles of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, North Anna, and Cold Harbor (where Byrnes received his mortal wound). Like most units in the Army of the Potomac, losses in the constant combat from 5 May through 19 June bled the 28th Regiment. The Army of the Potomac lost over 58,000 men in 46 days in killed, wounded, and missing.[49] During the same period, the 28th Regiment lost 356. By the end of June, only 179 men were present for duty.[50] The 28th Regiment was not alone in the Irish Brigade with heavy losses. The other regiments were reduced to small numbers also. This sad state of affairs merited a re-organization of the entire II Army Corps, and consequently, the Irish Brigade was dissolved. Daniel Chisholm, of the 116th Pennsylvania Volunteer Regiment, noted the sad news in his diary:

> They have broken up the "old Irish" Brigade, and distributed us into the other Brigades...It was awful to hear the men swear when they found the Regiments forming the Irish Brigade had to separate, some of the men swore they would never charge again. I went along the line of our old Irish Brigade. It made me sad to see how she had been cut to pieces, her thinned ranks tell the tale of her battles and hardships, that she has passed through on this campaign. The Glorious old 88th N.Y. and the gallant old 69th N.Y. the always ready 28th Massachusetts and the spoiling for a fight 63rd N.Y. and our own gallant 116th Pennsylvania comprise the Brigade. They all now present the appearance of Companies instead of Regiments. Our Regiments Ranks does not number One Hundred men. She numbered Eight Hundred and Sixty Seven when on the banks of the Rapidan May 5th. The old Irish Brigade is a thing of the past. There never was a better one pulled their triggers on the Johnnies.[51]

The disbandment did not last long. The draftees that the north sent down to the army filled up the regiments again, and in November 1864, the 28th Regiment and the three New York Irish units were once again reunited in the Irish Brigade. Only the 116th Pennsylvania remained out of the reconstituted brigade.[52]

The reconstituted brigade entered into the war's final stage, the siege of Petersburg, which lasted until the end of March 1865. Since fighting from trenches is a different type of warfare, the Irish Brigade did not have an opportunity to be used in the same manner as in the past. Commanders no longer ordered 'glorious' headlong charges into enemy lines, thereby making it harder to prove that the Irish soldier was any better a warrior than the Germans, Italians, or full stock Puritans in the trenches to the left or right of the 28th Regiment. However, the fighting reputation of the Irish soldier, and the 28th Regiment in particular, had now firmly implanted itself into the public mind, which, in an ironic way, also limited the combat effectiveness of the unit, as John Noyes complained in a letter to his father. "One hundred and seventy muskets is the strength of our Regiment. A recruit just from Gallop's Island tells us that there are no recruits from

the 28th there; that the Regiment is thought to be much 'on its fight' so to speak, and no one joins it."[53]

Even other Union organizations recognized the unit's standing as fighters. Private John Ryan told the story of the unit reaching back to its days while still in the IX Army Corps, before joining the Irish Brigade, when the men of the 28th Regiment fought some men in the 20th Michigan Volunteer Infantry over some rations that had inadvertently been delivered to the wrong unit. "The commissary officer in charge of the rations belonging to the Michigan regiment made a complaint to our brigade commander about the 28th. The commander made a reply "You must keep you men away from that 28th Regiment; you know that they are all Irishmen and would just as soon fight as eat."[54] Evidently, even two years later, the 28th Regiment's reputation within the army had not dimmed.

By the end of the war, the combat effectiveness of the 28th Regiment had been hindered by the very reputation it had for fierce fighters, even though after the Overland Campaign its losses dropped dramatically. During the last nine months of the war, usually only one or two men a month were actually killed in combat. The only exception occurred in March 1865 at the battle of Fort Stedman, when the Confederates launched an attack. The unit formed a line of battle and repulsed the attackers three times, and in the process, lost 10 men killed.[55] Even this was a far cry from the losses earlier in the war when losing dozens of men was commonplace. In short, by the end of the war the 28th Regiment still had a fighting reputation, but did not have to prove it again due to the change in tactics.

The Irish soldier considered himself in a completely different light than the

native-born. While both believed the Irish soldier was a formidable fighter, the Irishmen believed that he was fighting for two counties: the United States and Ireland. First, he had to help restore the stability of the United States government as a safe haven for the Irish people. Second, in the process of fighting to victory, he was forging a better post-war environment for the Irish community. By proving to the native-born that Catholics owed their allegiance to the United States Constitution, and not to the Pope, they would foster religious toleration and prevent anti-immigration policies. However, the Irish soldier first had to overcome native-born skepticism of their combat effectiveness. This they accomplished almost too well. Once the dependability of the Irish soldiers' fighting abilities were realized by the native-born, Union Army commanders time and again relied upon Irish units to 'come to the rescue' or to be the key to overwhelm the enemy. As the Battle of Fredericksburg illustrated, only so much could be asked of any soldier, Irish or not. Not until the Battle of Deep Bottom in August 1864 did the II Army Corps commanders realize that the Irish Brigade had been 'used up' and could no longer be the deciding factor in its part of the battlefield. While the legends and myths of the Irish super-soldier may have waned within the army, Irish apologists would reawakened them within a year of the close of the war by (which will be discussed in the next section).

But another view of the Irish soldier began to emerge by the end of the conflict. Soldiers tended to now view each other as fellow soldiers, and not by their origin. A change had occurred, an "Americanization" of sorts. Colonel Edward Anderson reflected on this change when he wrote:

> Our Army was made up of all sorts and pretty much all nationalities of men; but where we had been with what we call foreigners—though most of us have but to look back a few generations to find we are such too—we lost the idea that they were aliens, and our commingled blood helped

> to cement the bond that was formed by our suffering together in march and bivouac and camp, in hunger, thirst and fatigue, and sometimes in sickness and comrade-care. So we forgot that Tim was an Irishman, and even his speech with its rollicking brogue wasn't more different from ours than was the "daown-east" Yankee's from that of the New Yorker, or either of them from the mountain-Tennesseean.[56]

The perceptions of the native-born concerning the Irish changed dramatically during the war. No longer viewed as the drunken rowdy, a vast number of native-born men had seen the Irish soldier up close and decided that these, too, were Americans. The Irish, on the other hand, did not view the war experience as particularly beneficial. The majority of the Irish community believed their men's death accomplished little in advancing the Irish minority, but rather, unleashed a competitor for unskilled work—the recently freed slaves. It is in this climate that the heroic myth and legend of the Irish soldier became cemented in Civil War lore.

Chapter Three Endnotes

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[8] Frank Moore, *The Civil War in Song and Story, 1860-1865* (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier, 1865), 391.
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[11] Ibid., 412.
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[16] Captain John Truesdale, *The Blue Coats, and How They lived, Fought and Died for the Union. With Scenes and Incidents in the Great Rebellion* (Philadelphia: Jones Brothers & Co., 1867), 465.
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[18] Ibid., 62.
[19] Ibid., 112-113.
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[23] 28th Muster Rolls, NARA.
[24] Lieutenant Colonel William F. Fox, *Regimental Losses in The American Civil War 1861-1865* (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside House, Inc, 1985, reprint of the 1898 edition), 118.

[25] Lawrence F. Kohl, editor, *Irish Green & Union Blue: The Civil War Letters of Peter Welsh* (Fordham University Press, 1986), 35 (hereafter cited as *Kohl*).
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[27] Ibid., 573.
[28] Ibid., 573-574.
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[31] Captain W.F. Lyons, *Brigadier-General Thomas Francis Meagher; His Political and Military Career* (privately published: 1870).
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[41] Kevin E. O'Brien, editor, *My Life in the Irish Brigade, The Civil war Memoirs of Private William McCarter, 116th Pennsylvania Infantry* (Campbell, Ca: Savas Publishing Company, 1996), viii.
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[51] W. Springer Menge and J. August Shimrak, editors, *The Civil War Noteboook of Daniel Chisholm* (New York: Orion Books, 1989), 26.
[52] 28th Muster Rolls, NARA.
[53] John B. Noyes, to his Father, 18 November 1864, MS AM 823F, Letters of John B. Noyes, Houghton Library, Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Mass.
[54] Sandy Barnard, ed., *Campaigning with the Irish Brigade: Pvt. John Ryan, 28th Massachusetts* (Fort Collins, Colorado: Citizen Printing Inc., 2001), 73-74.
[55] 28th Muster Rolls, NARA.
[56] Colonel Edward Anderson, *Camp Fire Stories, A Series of Sketches of the Union Army in the Southwest* (Chicago: Star Publishing Company, 1896), 24.

IV

ETHNICITY OF THE 28TH MASSACHUSETTS VOLUNTEER INFANTRY REGIMENT

The end of the war's blurring of ethnic backgrounds within the army brings up an interesting question on exactly how "Irish" the 28th Regiment actually was. Without a doubt, the regiment was chiefly Irish, but it was never completely Irish, even at the beginning of the war. As the conflict progressed, the Irish majority shrank in the 28th Regiment as more native-born Americans, and even other country's citizens, swelled the unit's ranks. By the end of the war in 1865, the 28th Regiment, the largest regiment in the Irish Brigade, was truly an American unit, and not ethnically pure, despite the reports by Civil War historians ever since.

Various former members of the Irish Brigade, notably of the smaller units that made up the Brigade, and Civil War historians, often cite the members of the unit as being exclusively Irish-born or sons of recent immigrants from Ireland. Captain David P. Conyngham, a former Irish member of the 69th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment of the Irish Brigade, states:

> A new field now opened to Irish valor and Irish gratitude, and the tried heroism of Meagher's Brigade, and several other Irish brigades and regiments, has added a new chaplet to our heroic record, and has given us a stronger claim to the protection and gratitude of the American nation. ... We have given too many Irish regiments and brigades to the American service to let their history sink into obscurity; besides, their bravery and services are of such a nature as to cause a glow of pride to tingle through every Irishman's heart.[1]

It is clear by his comments that the glory of this Brigade belonged exclusively to the Irish soldiers in it. Bell Irvin Wiley, a notable Civil War historian, perhaps comes a little closer to the truth by stating that "More than a score of regiments were pure Irish or nearly so when they donned the blue, and numerous others contained a heavy admixture of men born on the Emerald Isle. Massachusetts...contributed two Irish regiments, and several others states each provided one."[2] However, neither author makes any allowance for changes in the unit's nationality during the war, leaving the reader under the impression that these units remained overwhelmingly Irish throughout the whole conflict.

As the largest unit in the Irish Brigade, the 28th Regiment supplied the largest number of men (51 percent), and consequently, provided the most officers to lead the Brigade for nearly three years. The officers and men of the 28th Regiment never published a history on the unit, and no one has researched the makeup of the men in this, the Brigade's largest unit. Did the 28th Regiment remain thoroughly Irish to the end of the Civil War in 1865?

As already noted, by the late 1840s, the Protestant native-born Americans looked upon the Irish immigrants arriving to the United States with suspicion. Forced from their homes due to the agricultural disaster with the potato crops, these "famine" Irish farmers were not the skilled craftsmen of past immigration, but the lowest illiterate laborers imaginable. Moreover, over a million-and-a-half of them came between 1841 and 1860. They arrived at various ports, but the most common entrance into the United States was the ports of New York and Boston.[3] Lacking the financial resources to move to the nation's west (where an increase in population would be welcomed, as would their farming skills), they stayed in the cities. Overcrowding and squalor soon prevailed and

the large available labor pool forced wages downward. The native-born American public became alarmed at the poverty brought over by the Irish, and by the Irish culture. While the Temperance Movement enjoyed support in the United States, the Irish saw no sense in tea totaling, and they aggressively defended their religious faith, Catholicism, in the face of hostile Protestants. Many Americans believed in the possibility of the Pope using the Catholic immigrants to ultimately control the country. Such ideas spurred anti-immigration political parties, such as the "Know Nothing" Party, and Irish-Americans were kept from voting as new residency laws increased the in-country time requirements.[4]

The ethnic purity of the Irish Brigade's units is the constant theme underlying the image of the valiant Irish soldier who gave his all for equal citizenship rights in America. Irishmen banding together into all-Irish units fighting and dying in the defense of an inseparable United States posed a strong argument for acceptance by the larger American society. Conyngham makes it a point that the men in the Irish Brigade were of one ethnic background. In his dedication of his book, *The Irish Brigade and its Campaigns*, this former captain of the brigade writes, "To the memory of the soldiers of the Irish Brigade who fell sustaining the cause of their adopted country and the courage and fidelity of the Irish race, this work is reverentially dedicated by the author."[5] He goes on throughout the book to emphasize the unit's unique Irish complexion. For example, he writes that as the soldiers paraded by the United States and green Irish flags, the men took off their "...'hats and caps waving on the bayonet points, and an Irish cheer, such as never before shook the woods of old Virginia, swelling and rolling far and wide into the gleaming air.'"[6]

This powerful image of Celtic warriors has not tarnished with age as historians since the Civil War have built upon the theme. Numerous historians have noted the presence of the 28th Regiment and have deemed them to be overwhelmingly of Irish descent. The Catholic Encyclopedia's entry concerning the 28th Regiment notes: "Not a few regiments were composed almost exclusively of men of Irish birth or Irish descent, such as the ...28th Massachusetts volunteers...."[7] Irish historian Kevin E. O'Brien wrote, "The 28th Massachusetts was a predominantly Irish regiment from Boston...."[8] These statements and many others like them by historians leave no doubt as to the ethnic makeup of the 28th Regiment.[9]

Despite the blanket statements emanating from both the casual and professional historians about the overall "Irish-ness" of the 28th Regiment, some Civil War writers do sound a precautionary note in their description of the unit. Donald C. Williams penned in a magazine article concerning the history of the 28th Regiment that "...although the regiment was touted as an ethnic Irish unit, it never was 100 percent Irish."[10] However, Williams did not go into details to support his claim.

Prolific Irish Civil War historian Kevin E. O'Brien, however, does provide an observation of the reversing of Irish ethnic makeup of the 28th Regiment late in the war: "The 28th Massachusetts...recruited large additions to their depleted companies. The new recruits were different from the men who had volunteered in 1861. There were far fewer Irish immigrants and native-born Irish-Americans.... The Irish Brigade became less and less Irish as the war dragged on."[11] While that may be a plausible explanation as to an end result, O'Brien offers no reason as to why the replacements were not Irish.

After almost four months of recruiting, members of the 28th Regiment enlisted en-

masse on December 13, 1861. Although at the time predominately Irish, quite a few native-born men joined the unit at the same time. Native-born men found their way on the unit's staff. The Commissary Sergeant, Benjamin F. Weeks of good Puritan stock, became the 28th Regiment's Quartermaster, rising up to the rank of First Lieutenant in the unit before his transfer to a higher headquarters where he attained the rank of Major.[12] In addition, the unit's adjutant, First Lieutenant Charles H. Sanborn, was not of Irish parentage. The Massachusetts Adjutant General, William Schouler, described Sanborn as a man "...who has the brains and who has the true Yankee tact and pluck...."[13] to do well in the 28th Regiment. Some other examples of a non-Irishman having increased responsibility is Sergeant John Stitt of Company F, the regiment's mail clerk, and Private Frederick K. Porter of Company B, detailed to the Post Adjutant's office as a clerk.[14] Non-Irish also made up part of the regimental band. Names such as Thayer and Merriam sprinkle the roster.[15] Finally, First Lieutenant Moses J. Emery, took charge of Company F.[16]

After the August 1863 involuntary induction of men into the army (the "draft"), more non-Irish joined the unit. One such example, Louis LaPorte, a French speaking Canadian, recalled years later, "At the time of and during my service I was unable to speak English and only a few in the Co.[mpany] who could speak french, so I did not get to know the English speaking commands very well."[17] Soon over 100 foreign-born men swelled the ranks of the 28th Regiment. The majority, 76, came from Canada, but England, Germany, Sweden, France, and even Hungry contributed.[18]

To understand the context of the 28th Regiment's ethnic population, a review of the Irish population in the United States is in order. By the end of June 1860, the total

U.S. population was 31,183,582. Of this, the total Irish-American population in 1860 was 1,611,304, or five percent of the population. The same 1860 census reveals that Massachusetts had a total population of 1,231,057. Of this, 185,434, or fifteen percent (much larger than the national average), of the state's population was Irish. Census counters totaled 592,244 white males in Massachusetts; however, those of military age were considerably less, due to age and health restrictions.[19]

In all, Massachusetts furnished over 144,000 white men to the military service (both army and navy).[20] The 28th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment accounted for 1,769 of them (a little over one percent).[21] Despite its small numbers, the Irish composition of this unit became famous throughout the United States Army. So, how Irish was the 28th Regiment? Comparisons of Irish surnames against the muster rolls used throughout the war reveals the ethnicity of the 28th Massachusetts. Although the muster rolls may mention the birthplace of the soldier, often it was omitted. A fairly accurate picture of nationality emerges when comparisons are made between the muster rolls, pension records, and names in the Irish surname directories.[22]

Monthly returns, beginning in January 1862 (the first month of these reports for the 28th Regiment), reflect a unit with an overwhelming majority of Irish-Americans. However, there were non-Irish members in the organization. Of the 910 men present, fully 150 were non-Irish, a sizable minority of 15 percent for the unit, just the opposite of the Irish to non-Irish population ratio in Massachusetts. A year and a half later, August 1863, the loss of men, both Irish and non-Irish, in the unit reduced the overall total manpower to only 314 men. However, this number includes the acquisition of men from the summer draft of 1863. The majority of those men were non-Irish, which brought the

number of non-Irish in the unit to 120, a 38% non-Irish population rate for the unit.[23]

The following year, 1864, the unit commander, Colonel Richard Byrnes, traveled to Boston, Massachusetts, to personally handle recruiting for his unit.[24] Within three months, Byrnes and his men recruited 288 new men, a number of them non-Irish. Byrnes, a "Regular Army" officer, did not care whether a man was Irish or not. As long as he could carry a musket, he would do fine in filling up the ranks. In fact, by the end of May 1864 when the unit's membership had risen to 429 men, the non-Irish personnel accounted for a whopping 50 percent of the regiment. By the end of the war, however, the heavy casualties had taken its toll. Only 169 men answered roll call on the morning of 30 June 1865, when the federal government released the 28th Regiment from federal service. Of these, 65 (thirty-eight percent) were not of Irish descent.[25]

Taking the "long-view" of the regiment's history, 1,769 men served in the unit throughout the whole American Civil War. Of these, 459 of them were not of Irish ancestry. This accounts to an overall 33 percent (one-third) of the regiment's personnel who served but were not Irish. These statistics do not reflect a radical shift of the ethnic population of the 28th Massachusetts to the point where the unit mirrored the national demographics. After all, by the end of the war, the majority of the men in the unit were Irish. By reviewing the documentary evidence, it is obvious that the 28th Regiment may have started out as a predominately Irish unit, but by the end of the Civil War, it had become decidedly an American unit.

Despite the public statements and post-war reminiscence by those seeking a better life in the United States for the Irish population, the 28th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment was not thoroughly Irish to the end of the Civil War in 1865.

Although the documentation has always been available, stereotypes persist to this day. This may be because no in-depth history of the largest unit in the Irish Brigade has been written. Therefore, both professional and amateur historians have been content, for the most part, to merely repeat the mantra of this unit's men being of Irish or predominately Irish descent for the entire Civil War.

Chapter Four Endnotes

[1] Captain David P. Conyngham, *The Irish Brigade and Its Campaigns* (New York: William McSorley & Co, 1867), 8, 10 (hereafter cited as *Conyngham*).
[2] Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank, The Common Soldier of the Union* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1952; reprint, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 308.
[3] Thomas A. Bailey and David M. Kennedy, *The American Pageant, A History of the Republic, Volume I*, 10th ed. (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1994), 302.
[4] Ibid., 304-309.
[5] Conyngham, 3.
[6] Ibid., 29.
[7] Remy Lafort, editor, *The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume VIII* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), entry under "The Irish," 16, taken from the Online Edition, Kevin Knight, ed., 1999; available from http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/00001a.htm; Internet; accessed 21 November 2001.
[8] Kevin E. O'Brien, "Sprig of Green The Irish Brigade," in *The History of the Irish Brigade A Collection of Historical Essay*, ed. Phillip Thomas Tucker (Fredericksburg, Va.: Sergeant Kirkland's Museum and Historical Society, Inc., 1995), 31.
[9] Frank A. Boyle, in his history of the Irish Brigade, states the 28th Regiment was "...from the Bay State, but one that was indisputably as Irish as any in the world." Frank A. Boyle, *A Party of Mad Fellows, The Story of the Irish Regiments in the Army of the Potomac* (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside House, Inc., 1996), 208. Civil War author Bruce Catton's assertion that "...the 28th Massachusetts, [was] a regiment of Bay State Irish specially recruited for this [Irish] brigade," see Bruce Catton, *Bruce Catton's Civil War, Glory Road* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1952; reprint, New York: The Fairfax Press, 1984), 253. Others have followed suite. Steven J. Wright in his book *The Irish Brigade*, sums up the ethnic makeup of the 28th Regiment as "...another Irish regiment." See Steven J. Wright, *The Irish Brigade* (Springfield, Pa.: Steven Wright Publishing, 1992), iv. Finally, Mark M. Boatner III, who authored the exhaustive and authoritative reference work for every Civil War historian, *The Civil War Dictionary*, listed the 28th Regiment as an organization composed "...mostly from men of Irish birth...." See Mark Mayo Boatner III, *The Civil War Dictionary, Revised Edition* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1988), 518.
[10] Donald C. Williams, "The 'Clear the Way' regiment," *America's Civil War*, March 2000, 27.
[11] Kevin E. O'Brien, "Sprig of Green The Irish Brigade," 36.
[12] Special Order 575, Massachusetts Adjutant General's Office, November 14, 1861, Adjutant General's Outgoing Correspondence, Massachusetts Military History Research Center and Museum, Natick: Mass.; and MSS&M, Vol. III, 191.
[13] William Schouler (Mass. Adj. Gen.) to John A. Andrew (Mass. Governor), 22 January 1862, Governor Andrew Papers, Miscellaneous Manuscript Collection 1060, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[14] Special Order 13 and 17, 28th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, February 27 and March 13, 1862, 28th Massachusetts Regimental Books, Record Group 94, Stack Area 9W3, Row 7, Compartment 33, Shelf D, NARA.
[15] Ibid., Special Order 31, Dawfuskie Island, S.C., April 18, 1862.
[16] Ibid., Special Order 49, Dawfuskie Island, S.C., May 11, 1862.
[17] Louis LaPorte Deposition, in the Widow's Pension Case of Mary Cronin, given on August 28, 1906, NARA, Record Group 15.2.1.
[18] 28th Muster Rolls, NARA.
[19] Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Eighth Census of the United States of America, Table A, 1860* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864; reprint, New York: Norman Ross Publishing, 1990—information provided by Massachusetts State Library); University of Virginia , Geospatial & Statistical Data Center, Fisher University of Virginia Library, 1860 State Level Census Data; available from http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/census; Internet; accessed 27 November 2001.
[20] Frederick Phisterer, *Statistical Record of the Armies of the United States* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883, reprint, Wilmington, N.C.: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1989), 10.
[21] MSS&M, Vol. III, 188-274.
[22] Irish surnames were taken from "Irish Pedigrees," referring to manuscripts kept at the Trinity College Library, in Dublin, Ireland. The principal families in Ireland are listed as of the close of the 17th Century, and Irish Surname Directories on World Wide Web: http://irelandgenealogyprojects.rootsweb.com/Old/names.html
[23] 28th Muster Rolls, NARA.
[24] Ibid.; and Colonel Richard Byrnes to Major T.P. Clarke, Superintendent of Recruiting, 4 March 1864, *28th Massachusetts Regiment Papers*, Record Group 94, Stack Area 8W3, Row 9, Compartment 1, Shelf B, Boxes 1805 through 1807, NARA.
[25] 28th Muster Rolls, NARA; Consolidated Morning Reports of the 28th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, Adjutant General's Record Group, 308FF 38 3 457X, Boston, Mass., Massachusetts State Archives.

V

UTILIZATION OF THE MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF THE 28TH MASSACHUSETTS VOLUNTEER INFANTRY REGIMENT

With the war over in 1865, it appeared to the Irish community that they had achieved few of the goals promised to them in 1861. While the Confederacy had been beaten, the damage to Great Britain in consequence of its close relations to the doomed secessionist movement did not seem to justify the thousands of dead Irishmen the victory demanded. In fact, the continued normal relations between the United States and England during and after the war proved that the 'alliance' between the Confederacy and Great Britain amounted to no great importance. While England had profited from its dealings with the defeated Confederacy, it became obvious to the Irish that the United States had no intention of picking a fight with its old nemeses over these indiscretions.

A dedicated band of Irishmen decided that they would have to take on Great Britain on their own. Calling themselves the "Fenian Brotherhood," former members of the Irish Brigade, as well as more numerous Irishmen with and without military training, swore an oath "...by all the wrongs inflicted on Ireland, and on my Irish ancestors by England, that I will labor while life is left, to rid Ireland of English Government, that I will to the best of my ability, aid the men at home to put themselves in a state of preparation to fight England ant that my contributions to this organization will be for that purpose alone...."[1] A review of the available membership records of the Brotherhood only reveal seven former members of the 28th Regiment joining this movement, and of

these, only two were common soldiers from the ranks, one of whom was so badly wounded in the leg during the war that he was noted by the Fenian leadership as not fit for active service in the field.[2]

Barely a year after the end of the war, the Fenians made their move when a few hundred former Irish Union soldiers invaded Canada in a vain hope to create a base from which to launch an attack to liberate Ireland. Within 48-hours the "Fenian Raid" of 1866 ended in utter failure, and many of the participants who returned to the United States were arrested by American authorities. This sad episode revealed how hollow the goal of creating a fully trained Irish army had become. The dream of creating an Irish army freeing Ireland from the British ended. The Irish-American community, no longer willing to sacrifice any more of its young men, had no desire to enter into another conflict.

However, some intangible goals had been reached, such as putting to rest the idea that the Irish community would not support the Federal government. Tolerance for their Catholic religion also took root among the native-born, and for the next twenty or so years the movement for anti-immigration laws lost popular support, allowing unhindered Irish immigration to America. Nevertheless, the Irish community viewed the war as a disaster, with no beneficial immediate results. Indeed, the tradition of Irish soldiers serving with distinction in another country's army even lost its luster. The now free blacks threatened to displace the Irish laborer from the market place, and there did not appear to be any particular thanks extended by the native-born for the Irish participation in the recent war. The Irish still residing in Ireland were equally unimpressed. As a poem in the newspaper *Nation* implored, while helping the United States was laudable,

the sacrifices should have been spent on Ireland's liberation:

Enough! enough! Your blood was given,
As might beseem, a grateful band—
But mightier is the claim of heaven,
And urgent that of motherland.[3]

Deprived of so many lives, the Irish community needed to make some sort of sense out of the recent war and their sacrifice in it. Enter David P. Conyngham, an Irish journalist who had lived with the Irish Brigade for a few months after the Battle of Fredericksburg. He can be credited with almost single-handedly creating the legend of the Irish Brigade's self-sacrifice, which culminated in the charge on Mayre's Heights outside of Fredericksburg. While Conyngham admitted the loss of men as frightful, he interpreted the fight not as a complete and utter failure with Irish blood uselessly spilt, but as a glorious devotion to duty.

> Though the Brigade had suffered fearfully, never had they displayed more desperate bravery than in this fight. Not more dashing courage, not more desperate daring were displayed by our countrymen of the last centuries at Cremona, at Fontenoy, than by their compatriots of this generation at the Malvern Hills and at Fredericksburg. Is there any thing in the records of the greatest efforts of human fortitude and endurance finer than the placing...those springs of evergreen in their hats...[and the dead] nearest to the foe and to his strongholds, were found the men of the Irish Brigade... with the green emblem in their hats.[4]

Single-handedly, Conyngham created the notion of using the exploits of the Irish regiments for political purposes, and he was not quite honest about it. For instance, despite the fact that hundreds of other men from other regiments also charged the Confederates and met the same fate, they nevertheless fade into the background in accounts of the battle. Many writers latched onto the scene painted by Conyngham of the Irishmen putting sprigs of boxwood under the leather strap of their hats and charging towards the stone wall on top of the heights at Fredericksburg. Other Irish apologists,

such as Chaplain William Corby and Colonel St. Clair A. Mulholland, both members of the Irish Brigade throughout most of the war, based their description of the Battle of Fredericksburg on Conyngham's account, noting the same devotion to duty as the one saving grace of the event.[5]

With the war won, the fact that most of the Irish community had stopped supporting the war at home, and had even rioted during the draft of 1863, was not something Irish politicians wanted to have brought up as they strove to achieve political rights for the Irish community. Instead, the sacrifice of the Irish in supporting the Union in its darkest hour and the mistreatment of the Irish in the past were recounted. The Irish defined themselves and their place in the written chronicles of the Civil War, and in so doing, assured that their participation would not be lost to historians for many years afterward. The Irish Brigade historians, participants in the events they recorded, supplied a wealth of source material to other Civil War historians about the conditions of the Irish before and during the war. As noted previously, their view has flavored Civil War history ever since. For instance, both the Irish and native-born historians are quick to point out the many casualties the 28th Regiment suffered during the war (such as recounted in Fox's Regimental Losses) and that native-born Americans should be grateful for these Irishmen's sacrifice. What is not pointed out is that the numbers bantered about in such discussions contain a good many native-born deaths as well.

Another common refrain was that the Irish 28th Regiment suffered mean-spirited native-born politician's plans to thwart their military effectiveness. As related in Chapter II, the call for troops put Governor John A. Andrew of Massachusetts under tremendous pressure to satisfy all requests. Originally, the 28th Regiment was supposed to go to

General Butler for his New England Brigade, and the 29th Regiment to General Meagher's Irish Brigade. The failure of the recruiting drive to procure enough able-bodied Irishmen to fill both the 28th and 29th Regiments led to combining the two units into one—the 28th Regiment. Butler refused the 28th Regiment, and despite appeals by the Governor to both Generals Meagher and McClellan to accept the 28th Regiment to the Irish Brigade, no such organizational action took place. This sent the Irish 28th Regiment to another organization, and the next numbered unit, the 29th Regiment, went to the Irish Brigade as promised.[6] In retrospect, Michael Cavanagh, who edited General Meagher's memoirs, charged that the Governor of Massachusetts "...refused to allow the Irish commands recruited in [that] state to join [the Irish Brigade]."[7] Although incorrect, the post-war Irish apologists would make many such accusations in an effort to gain political ground for Irish-Americans.

Fear of anti-Catholic forces rising up to prevent the Irish from attaining political power was still a real worry to the Irishmen. In his memoirs of his time as a chaplain in the Irish Brigade, the Very Reverend William Corby took time out of his narrative to rail against those who feared the Irish because of their religious obedience to the Pope. After a long list of heroic deeds by Irish soldiers and statesmen, Corby acknowledges America's indifference to these examples. "... and still we have the mortification of hearing, through the press, from the pulpit, and even in legislative halls, the hue and cry: 'Catholics will destroy our free institutions!' ...Shame on bigots for their ingratitude! Shame on bigots for this lack of a sense of justice!"[8]

St. Clair Mulholland, the former commander of the 116th Pennsylvania Volunteer Regiment, recounted the feelings of his men when the brigade was reorganized and their

unit transferred. "The members of the Regiment left the Irish Brigade with regret. They had participated in all the glories and triumphs of that famous brigade for two years, and although the One Hundred and Sixteenth was composed almost entirely of American-born citizens, the men had learned to love and esteem the men of the Emerald Isle."[9] Nowhere in his nearly 500 pages of text did the native-born Mulholland ever have anything but praise for the Irish. Mulholland noted in his numerous works the bravery of the Irish.

> The Irish...fought nobly side by side for the land of their adoption, and...were distinguished...The Sixty-ninth (Irish) Pennsylvania stood, when the battle raged fiercest, out in advance of the line where the great attack of Pickett's 18,000 concentrated in largest numbers, surrounded, overwhelmed and literally swallowed up in the surging masses of the Confederates. The Irishmen stood immovable, unconquerable, fearless and splendid in their valor, the green flag waving side by side with the colors of their adopted country, both held aloft by the stone wall until the victory was assured and the hosts of the enemy crushed...another regiment had taken its place in the list of those that had, in single engagements, lost 50 per cent. killed and wounded.[10]

Such arguments, legends of the selfless Irish soldiers, and the myth that all Irish Brigade casualties were Irishmen (especially in the 28th Regiment), evidently held the Irish community together, and they did eventually achieve political power, although slowly. The sluggish advancement of the Irish community can be partially explained by a world-view of "us versus them" that encouraged Irish-Americans to stay with the known community and not to leave it. Irishmen worked together, and in this way, they seemed to excel in careers that emphasized teamwork, such as police and fire departments, dockworkers, railroad workers, canal diggers, and construction crews. The Irish-American community did not foster individualistic entrepreneurship by its members, as revealed by a telling story by David Conyngham in his history of the Irish

Brigade. Conyngham wrote with pride how the Irish soldier did not try to make any extra money by selling items in the soldiers' camps. However, if he did, "he was sure to be treated with scorn, as if a disgrace to the name of soldier and the country he came from."[11] Conyngham recorded an incident when an Irish soldier tried to sell newspapers was met with an angry Irish sentry of the 69th New York Volunteer Regiment. First, the sentry demanded to know if his fellow Irishman was a soldier, and after being assured that he was, the sentry lost his temper. "Then why the hell do ye be seen peddlin? Sure, an' you ought to take off them soldier's clothes, any way, and not be disgracing the uniform." "Well," replied the seller, "I had a little time to spare, an' a little money, an' I thought I might turn an honest penny like the rest, you see..." The sentry cut him short with "Git out of this quick, or, by jabbers, I'll make a target of you. Hell blow you! Can't you leave the peddling to the Yankees—an Irish soldier disgracing himself peddling like any Yank!"[12]

Although not known for developing businessmen, the Irish community did participated enthusiastically in politics. Their votes were rewarded with local government job positions, which resulted in more votes in the next election.[13] In 1885, exactly 20 years after the end of the war, Boston elected its first Irish mayor, Hugh O' Brien. Political power not only brought benefits to the Irish community, but also drew the ire of other political parties and therefore invited savage treatment in the newspapers.

One can almost follow the Irish rise to political power by reviewing the political cartoons of Thomas Nast of Harper's Weekly. Nast constantly depicted Irishmen as almost ape-like in his cartoons. Nast, and other cartoonists such as Friedrich Graetz, made sure they used characters that their readers would immediately identify as being

from one ethnic group or another. Hence, Chinese depictions had overly slanted eyes, shaved heads, with waist length ponytails. Irishmen all had low browed, simian faces, and dressed in traditional Irish clothing from the 1840s and 50s.[14] As early as 1870, Nast feared the power of the Pope over his Irish flock in the United States and saw a Catholic threat to the separation of church and state as dangerous to freedom.[15] Nast noted Irish violence against Chinese immigrants, and depicted Irishmen as demanding political power in order to kill Protestant Irishmen in 1871. In 1887, Nast harked back twenty years before to a riot on Saint Patrick's Day in 1867, which showed a caricature of the ape-like Irishman attacking the police. However, by 1889, the power of the Irish vote in politics could no longer be denied. A cartoon at that time depicted native-born politicians, from the President to the mayor, and other public figures, bowing low before the giant personification of the Irish-American vote.[16] The Irish had arrived.

Chapter Five Endnotes

[1] Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Fenian Brotherhood Records, Catholic University of America Libraries.
[2] Ibid. These men were: LtCol. John Connor I, initiated in 1865 at Petersburg, VA; Capt Jeremiah W. Coveney, initiated at East Cambridge, MA; Capt John Treanor, initiated at Worcester, MA; Capt Florence F. Buckley, initiated in 1865 at Philadelphia, PA; 1Lt John Killian, Jr.; Pvt. William Connealy, initiated in 1864 at Marlborn, MA; and Pvt. Michael F. Casey, initiated at Springfield, MA.
[3] "The Kilkenny Man," "A Voice from Ireland to the Irish," *Nation*, September 7, 1861.
[4] Conyngham, 352-353.
[5] The Very Reverend William Corby, *Memoirs of Chaplain Life*, (Notre Dame: Scholastic Press, 1894), 132; (hereafter cited as *Corby*); and Colonel St. Clair A. Mulholland, *The Story of the 116th Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers in the War of the Rebellion* (Philadelphia: F. McManus, Jr., & Co., 1903), 58 (hereafter cited as *Mulholland*).
[6] William Schouler, Massachusetts Adjutant General, to General George B. McClellan, Commanding General, Army of the Potomac, 28 December 1861; Schouler to Thomas F. Meagher, 28 December 1861, both in the Massachusetts Adjutant General Office Outgoing Correspondence, MMHRC&M.
[7] Michael Cavanagh, *Memoirs of Gen. Thomas Francis Meager* (Worcester, Mass: The Messenger Press, 1892), 425.
[8] Corby, 69.
[9] Mulholland, 279.
[10] St. Clair A. Mulholland, *Heroism of the American Volunteer* (Privately printed by Mulholland of reprints of his articles appearing in the Philadelphia Public Ledger newspaper, Philadelphia, 30 May 1904), 16 and 39.
[11] Conyngham, 225.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Richard Jensen, *"No Irish Need Apply": A Myth of Victimization*, Journal of Social History, 36.2 (2002), 412.
[14] For an opposing view, see Richard Jensen's "No Irish Need Apply": A Myth of Victimization, *Journal of Social History*, 36.2 (2002), 405-429, University of Illinois, Chicago. Unfortunately, Jensen ignores the very sources, pertaining to political cartoons, that he points to in his contention that Irishmen were not depicted as ape-like.
[15] University of California Davis web site on political and editorial cartoons: http://historyproject.ucdavis.edu/imageapp.php?Major=RE&Minor=D&SlideNum=23.00, various dates.
[16] Ibid.

VI

CONCLUSION

In this atmosphere of distrust and outright discrimination, it is no wonder the Irish community desired to achieve full citizenship rights in their adopted country. When war broke out between the northern and southern states, leaders in the Irish-American community immediately saw the opportunity to gain the respect from the majority of other Americans—to fight and die for the same government and constitution as their Protestant neighbors. Judge Charles P. Daley of New York noted to the assembled Irishmen entering into service with the army in November 1861:

> Whatever may be the result of our experiment of self-government, the Irish race in America is as responsible for the result as any other. That it has its defects none of us are vain enough to deny; but if, in view of what it has accomplished, any Irish adapted citizen is willing to give it up, let him go and live under the monarchy of Great Britain....[1]

The Irish chroniclers of the Civil War made sure they recorded any positive comments by native-born dignitaries or military leaders, displaying them for all to see in their histories. For instance, Captain David P. Conyngham, in his now classic history of the Irish Brigade, sprinkles quotes by native-born army personalities such as General Charles V. Sumner, "...seeing the importance of the position called out—'Boys, I am your general. I know the Irish Brigade will not retreat. I stake my position on you.' A Sergeant McCabe of Company K replied: 'General, we have never run yet, and we are not going to do it now.' 'I know it, I know it,' replied Sumner, as he rode off."[2]

Such a reputation, carefully cultivated and preserved by Irish apologists and political leaders of the Irish community, helped attain equal opportunities in the United States. Endless repetition of such tales defined for the Irish community the reason for the horrendous sacrifice of their men who served in the Union cause.

Both the native-born and the Irish both held onto myths about the Irish soldier in the Civil War, modifying them to suit current circumstances. While the native-born's views of the Irish soldier underwent positive changes over the years, the Irish community created new myths concerning their participation in the war to justify equal status with the native-born.

The native-born views of the Irish changed dramatically during the war years. In the beginning, many believed the Irish would not fight in the war, since the Irish seemed to consider Ireland as their real country. However, much to the relief of many Union leaders, when war did break out, the Irish joined the army, fought, died, and the remainder continued to fight, even when support in the Irish community for the war waned. Now that the Irish were helping the Union, the native-born wanted to believe that all Irish soldiers were always spoiling for a fight, natural warriors desiring to get into battle, no matter how desperate the situation. The truth of the matter, as it turned out, was that Irish soldiers were not any better or worse than other soldiers. A case in point, the 28th Regiment ran in disgrace in its first two battles. They needed good leadership, discipline, and training to be effective. In fact, having a fighting reputation did not always attract new Irish recruits. By 1864 Irishmen explicitly stated that they did not want to join the 28th Regiment because it increased their chances of being killed.

After the disastrous beginnings of the 28th Regiment, many native-born army

officers asserted that Irishmen could not be effective leaders, and that only native-born officers could control Irish soldiers. However, once trained professionals, such as Colonel Richard Byrnes, replaced the amateur officers who commanded the 28th Regiment, such views quietly evaporated.

Other myths held by the native-born about the Irish have proven harder to dispel. The idea that the majority of Irish were ignorant and inclined to be drunkards persisted throughout the war. If classifying the Irish as ignorant was based upon their ability to read and write, then the view does have solid evidence. Using this standard, the majority of Irish were ignorant. After reviewing the mustering rolls, discharge papers, and affidavits for over 1,700 pension files for the 28th Regiment, it is apparent that most of the men could not read or write. However, there is a difference between ignorance and stupidity. The Irish soldier was just as resourceful as the native-born soldier in surviving the rigors of army life. As far as the idea that the Irish were fonder of drink than the average native-born soldier, there is no evidence this is true. In fact, Colonel Byrnes strictly enforced the no drinking policy with his officers, as already shown by the temperance pledge he had his fellow officer, Captain (Major-select) Andrew J. Lawler take (and with which he complied to the day he died). Many of the Civil War histories of the time mention that men pursued alcohol in every unit of the Army, not just the Irish. Evidence such as courts martial documents and correspondence suggests that the Irish fondness for alcohol was no different than that of the native-born. Each drank when they could, and went many weeks, even months, without spirits.

Just as the native-born published myths about the Irish, the Irish themselves propagated myths about themselves and their condition, depending upon which point they

wanted to make. After the war, Irish writers noted that Governor John A. Andrew disliked the Irish 28th Regiment so much that he tried to keep them from joining the Irish Brigade. This was patently untrue. The point of this story was to create a 'we versus them' atmosphere to unite the Irish community together, and to gain sympathy from the native-born for these 'past wrongs.' Irish leaders attempted to gain civil rights for the Irish community after the war by pointing to the sacrifice of the Irish soldiers for the Union cause, while native-born politicians at the home front worked against the very community supplying the fighting men. Unfortunately, no one really tried to refute this charge, as it was only one of many such stories proliferated by the Irish spokesmen. As already noted, Governor Andrew tried very hard to send the 28th Regiment to the Irish Brigade, but met with little or no assistance from the Army. The 28th Regiment, now under War Department control, departed to where the Federal Government deemed best, despite Governor Andrew's suggestions.

Perhaps the greatest myth and legend is the Irish participation in the Battle of Fredericksburg. Since 1867, both the Irish community and Civil War historians constantly refer to the battle. While no one claims that at the Battle of Fredericksburg only the Irish Brigade charged towards the stone wall on top of Marye's Heights, undue emphasis on the Irish Brigade's efforts fill almost every summary of the battle. To be fair to the others who took part in that battle, the Irish Brigade was only one of several units sacrificed that day against Marye's Heights. In the entire battle, 12,353 Union soldiers were casualties. In the attack against the Confederate line at Marye's Heights, the II Corps (to which the Irish Brigade was assigned) lost 4,000 men. Three Divisions of the II Corps tried to overrun the rebel position. Generals Oliver O. Howard, William

H. French, and Winfred S. Hancock, each sent their roughly 5,000 men towards the stonewall and failed. When Hancock's Division went forward, it consisted of the Irish Brigade and two others. General John C. Caldwell's Brigade took 1,987 men into battle, and suffered 949 casualties. General Samuel K. Zook's Brigade took an additional 1,532 men onto the killing field and lost 527 men as casualties. Finally, Meagher's Irish Brigade took 1,315 men into the maelstrom, resulting in 545 casualties. Hancock's Division alone lost over 2,000 men, and the majority of the casualties did not come from Meagher's Irish Brigade, but from Caldwell's Brigade.[3] However, the units did not have historians and politicians glorifying them to support of any particular cause, but the Irishmen did. This is perhaps the major reason why the Irish soldiers' very real sacrifice at Fredericksburg is remembered to this day in Civil War histories.

Linked to the picture of heroic warriors marching off to Fredericksburg's slaughter is the idea that the Irish soldiers never wavered or failed to do their solemn duty. However, the combat effectiveness of the 28th Regiment, and the rest of the Irish Brigade, did ultimately fail. The constant losses of so many battles through the years finally "used up" the 28th Regiment. The failure of the Irish Brigade at the Battle of Deep Bottom in August 1864 finally revealed to the Union commanders that the unit no longer was made up of the men on whom they could rely.

Such incidents were brushed under the carpet of collective forgetfulness after the war, and Irish politicians insisted that the Irish community had always supported the war effort. Therefore, the native-born community owed the Irish community equal opportunities. The truth was that after the Battle of Fredericksburg and the Emancipation Proclamation, the Irish community's support of the war practically ceased. When the

draft was instituted, the Irish community violently revolted against it. Irish volunteers for the Irish Brigade dropped so considerably that by 1864 recruits for the 28th Regiment were almost entirely native-born or non-Irish foreigners. Despite the collective failure of memory on this point, the fact that many thousands of Irishmen did die for the Union cause justified the Irish community's case for equal treatment.

Irish defenders chanted about the sacrifice of the Irish soldier in support of the government and noted the amount of Irish blood spilled in defense of the United States. When it came to the 28th Regiment, the point was that all of its casualties were Irish and that their blood cried out for equal treatment by the native-born. In actuality, the 28th was never all Irish, and at one point (May 1864), native-born and non-Irish foreigners made up 50 percent of the unit. Therefore, many a native-born or non-Irish foreigner's blood is counted as being Irish to support the 'sacrifice argument' the politicians made.

Finally, one early myth used to recruit Irishmen proved false soon after the war ended. The idea of supporting the Union cause by sending their men into the Army would result in a trained force ready to liberate Ireland. The Fenian Invasion of Canada ended in failure. Never again did the Irish community try to raise an army in the United States and send it to fight the British.

Despite these myths, and sometimes because of them, everyone's sacrifice, both native-born and Irish-born, helped with the social integration of the Irish population into American society in the nineteenth century. Although this may not have been the intention of the native-born members of the 28th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, it certainly is a fitting tribute for an American unit. The myths and legends of the 28th Regiment served to keep the Irish community bound to the idea that they had

invested much in the security of the United States, and therefore were equal participants and benefactors of the potential greatness of the country. The native-born, especially in the era of reconciliation after the war, chose to accept the myths and legends in their remembrances of the Civil War. However, it is only fair to each party, the native-born and the Irish, to reveal the truth of both their sacrifices and tribulations during the conflict, and not let the reality be buried by gross generalizations and clichés. Accurate reporting of what really happened at that time reveals more eloquently the true heroics required to continue despite the terrible circumstances, and thereby better supports the ideals the men of the 28th Regiment ended up fighting for than hackneyed repetitious phrases found in so many Civil War writings concerning the Celtic myth.

Chapter Six Endnotes

[1] Conyngham, 61.
[2] Conyngham, 154.
[3] Lieutenant Colonel William F. Fox, *Regimental Losses in The American Civil War 1861-1865* (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside House, Inc, 1985 reprint of 1898 edition), 169-292; Bvt. Brig. Gen., U.S. Vols. Francis A. Walker, *History of the Second Army Corps In the Army of the Potomac* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 192. The Irish Brigade's total losses were 545 in killed, wounded (both mortal and recoverable), and missing, out of the 1,315 men who went into battle. The 88th New York Regiment had the highest number of killed on that day, 17. The 28th Regiment had the largest number of men wounded, 124, and the 69th New York Regiment had the most men missing after the battle, 23. However, the unit with the largest numbers of combined casualties (killed, wounded, and missing) was the 28th Regiment for 158 men. The 69th New York Regiment had the next highest amount of casualties, 128, while its sister unit, the 88th New York Regiment, had 127 casualties. The 116th Pennsylvania Regiment suffered 88 casualties, and the 63rd New York Regiment escaped with the lightest casualty count in the Brigade on that day with 44.

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