

Patrick Buckley and the Irish Brigade

dedicated to my grandsons Jake and Ryan

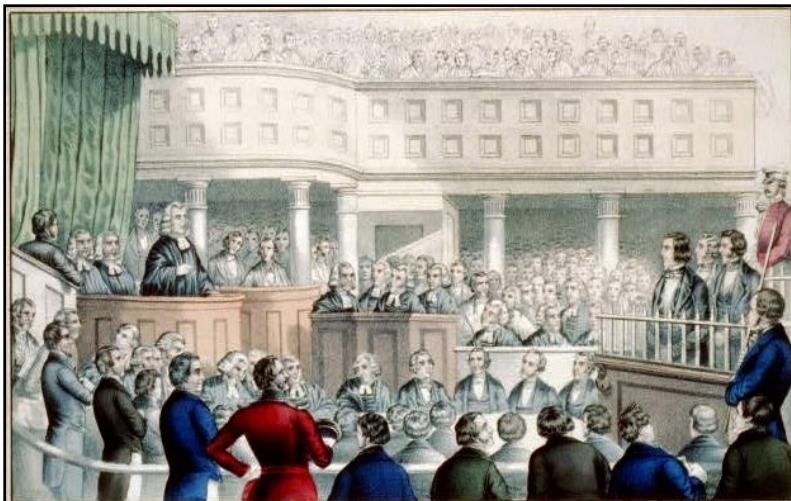
by Vic Berecz

Your great-grandfather, Dr. Leo Stephen Loomie, Jr., was an Irishman through-and-through ... and proud of it. Here's a photo of him with Jake in April 2002. His 2nd-great-grandparents were James Buckley and Julia Riordan. James died in Ireland, but Julia (1795-1880) and all her children (some of whom were married by that time) came to America in the 1850s at least in part due to the Irish potato famine. Julia's daughter Ellen Buckley is your direct ancestor. Ellen's older brother Patrick was killed on December 13, 1862 at the Battle of Fredericksburg in the American Civil War. This essay is primarily his story, and a notable part of your family history. But, first, let's examine the big picture.



1848 was a year of revolutions all over Europe, largely instigated by a desire for democratic reforms in the face of absolute rulers and the remnants of the medieval feudal system. By the time the year was over, most of the revolutionary zeal had succumbed to reactionary forces. Italy, France, Germany, Denmark, Austria, Poland, Hungary and even Switzerland experienced revolutions that year. Your ancestor József Osztróvszky was a leader of the 1848 revolution in Hungary ... but that's another story.

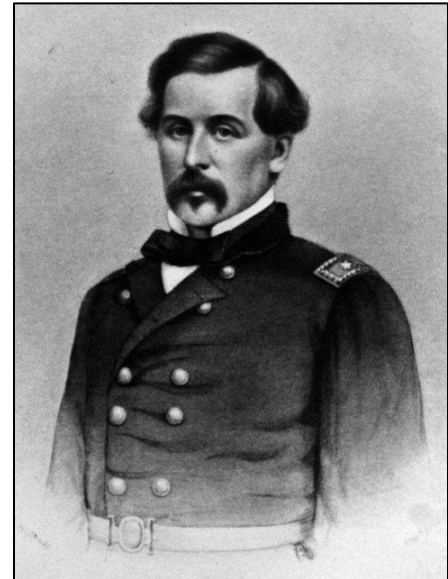
One of the lesser known revolutions of 1848 took place in Ireland, instigated by the famine conditions and the British rulers' "too little, too late" reaction to it. It is called "The Young Irelander Revolution." Thomas Francis Meagher (1796-1867) was one of the more radical members of the *Young Irelander* movement which advocated Irish self-rule. He was the son of a wealthy merchant in Waterford ... most of the movement's leaders were "gentlemen." Thomas was educated at a Jesuit college, and was considered an excellent orator. He and a cohort visited France in early 1848 to learn more about the revolution going on there. Back in Ireland they and a group of *Young Irelanders* made a stand in a shoot-out known as the Battle of Ballingarry. They were overwhelmed and Meagher and two others were tried for sedition. From the prisoner's dock, Meagher's comment to the judge was "My Lord, this is our first offense, but not our last. If you will be easy with us this once, we promise on our word as gentleman to try better next time." This is a drawing of their trial. They were sentenced to be "hanged, drawn and quartered" but due to public uproar, the sentence was commuted to "transportation" to Tasmania for life. In 1852 he escaped exile in Australia and came to America.



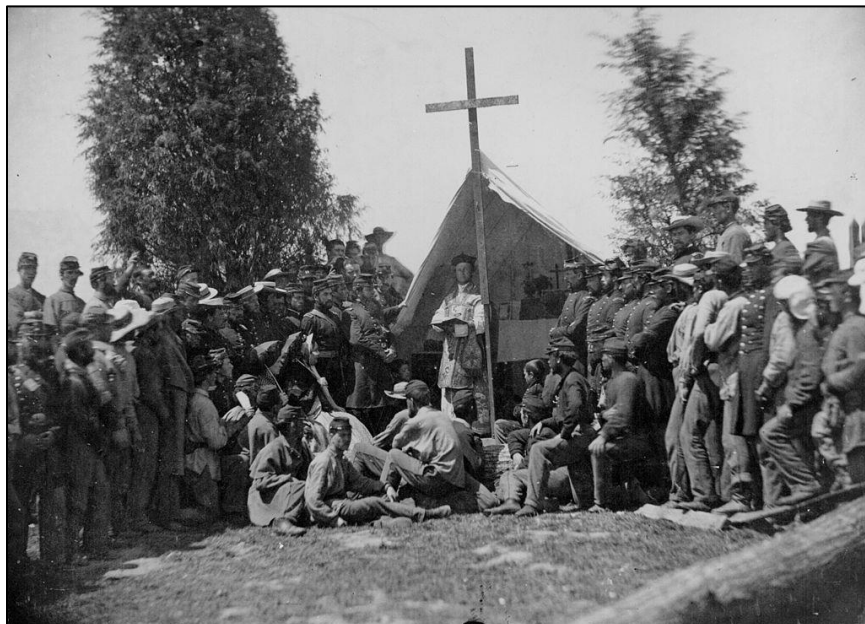
When the Civil War began Meagher recruited among New York's Irish immigrants to form Company K of the 69th New York State Militia commanded by Col. Michael Corcoran. They served well at the *First Battle of Bull Run*, providing rear-guard cover after the Union Army was forced to retreat. Soon their 3-month enlistments expired, but the war was obviously far from over. Capt. Meagher returned to New York, hoping to recruit an "Irish Brigade" to fight the Confederacy and later (he fantasized) to use them to return to Ireland to free his homeland. Lincoln was opposed to ethnic units in the military, but was convinced to allow an exception for an Irish Brigade as a means of keeping the British from allying themselves with the Confederacy. [Others of our relatives fought in the German Regiment of the Missouri Home Guard, but they were basically defending their homes and farms from Confederate raids, and were not a part of the regular Union army.]

Meagher succeeded in recruiting three regiments of Irishmen in New York, and with the later addition of Irish regiments from Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, they formed the *Irish Brigade*. He was given command with the rank of Brigadier General in February 1862 and is seen below in uniform.

According to the 1860 US census, Patrick Buckley (1829-1862) was a married liquor store employee living in Brooklyn, with a personal estate valued at \$300. He joined Company C of the 69th Regiment of New York Volunteers for a 3-year enlistment on the 5th of October 1861. The regiment's commander was Col. Robert Nugent. Within a few days, Nugent promoted Patrick to his staff as regimental Quartermaster Sergeant, making him responsible for procuring and distributing supplies and provisions for the entire regiment. The 69th was mustered in and received its initial training at Fort Schuyler, on Throggs Neck in the Bronx (now the SUNY Maritime College).



On November 18, 1861, the Buckley women, including Patrick's wife Margaret, mother Julia, and his sister Ellen, joined the soldiers of the 69th as they marched from the Bronx to the ferry at 23rd Street that would take them across the Hudson on their way to participate in the defense of Washington. They were assigned to Gen. Edwin V. "Bull" Sumner's 2nd Corps of the Army of the Potomac based at Fort Corcoran on the Potomac River. Below we see a photo of the regimental chaplain, Fr. Mooney saying Mass for the 69th at Fort Corcoran. The regiment remained in that area for several months, primarily on guard duty, until being assigned to take part in the *Peninsular Campaign*, intended to capture Richmond, the Confederate capital.

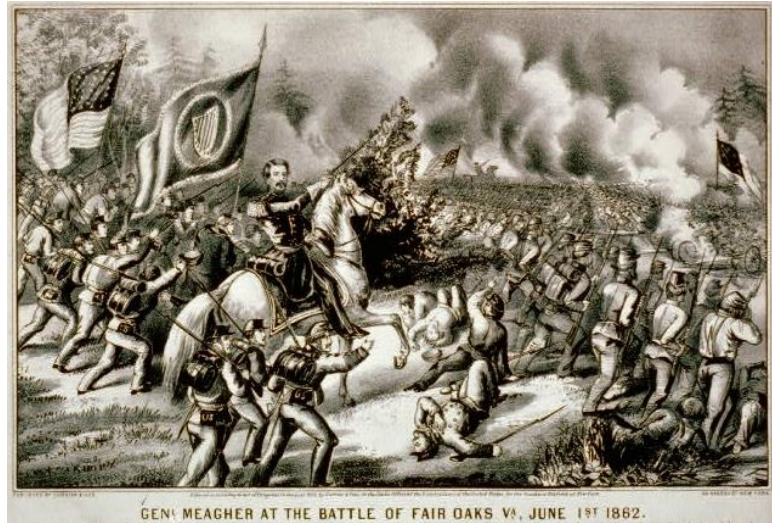


On the 3rd of March 1862 the 69th was shipped to Yorktown where they supported an engineering brigade in the construction of a mortar battery as well as the usual guard duty. When the rebel troops at Yorktown escaped the Federal siege, their division moved up the peninsula past Williamsburg.

On May 31, with high morale and battle impending, the "Chickahominy Steeplechase" was held as a diversion. The brigade's

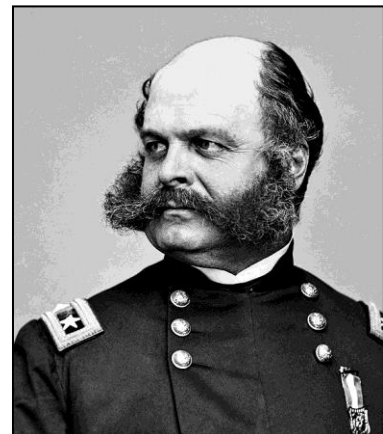
officers raced horses over hurdles, and to cap off the day, drummer boys raced donkeys. When the races ended on the afternoon, the 69th crossed the Grapevine Bridge over the Chickahominy River, where on the June 1st they fought their first significant engagement at the *Battle of Fair Oaks*. The Irish Brigade's losses were heavy in this inconclusive battle. Then Gen. Robert E. Lee took over command of the Confederate forces defending Richmond and went on the offensive. Patrick Buckley's regiment also acquitted themselves well in the so-called "Seven Days before Richmond" ending with the *Battle of Malvern Hill* on July 1. Lee had saved Richmond and both sides pulled back their forces. Their bravery and the heavy losses suffered by the Irish Brigade during this period, coupled with a *Currier and Ives* lithograph (shown below) picturing Gen. Meagher leading a bayonet charge at Fair Oaks, solidified their reputation as fierce fighters, and hence the name *The Fighting 69th*. Much of July and August was spent recovering at Harrison's Landing, Virginia from a hard month of fighting. In the latter part of August the Irish Brigade acted as a rear guard covering Gen. Pope's retreat to Washington.

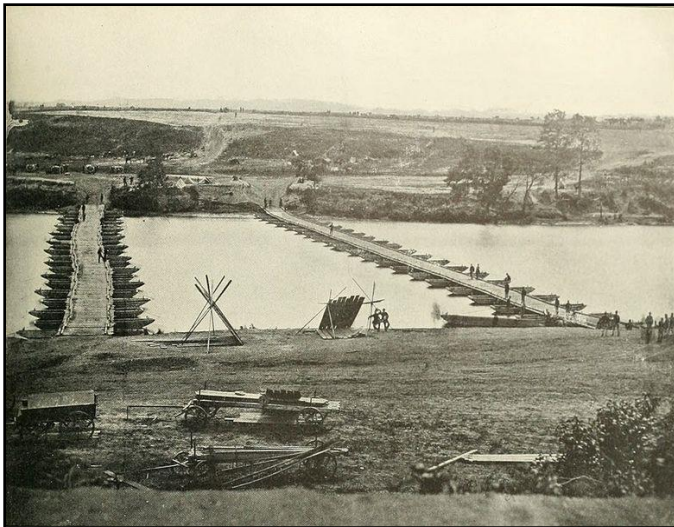
Their next major action was at Antietam, where. Lee's attempted invasion of Maryland was finally repelled in the bloodiest battle of the war. The Irish Brigade was then part of MG Israel Richardson's 1st Division. On the 17th of September 1862, the Brigade crossed Antietam Creek at 9:30 AM at Pry's Ford. They formed up at the edge of a cornfield with emerald green flags snapping in the breeze. Their chaplain, Father William Corby, gave absolution to all the soldiers ... so, should they die, it would be "in a state of grace." After the war, Fr. Corby became President of Notre Dame University.



The 69th New York occupied the right flank on that field, with the 29th Massachusetts, the 63rd and 88th New York to their left. Crossing the cornfield, they encountered a rail fence which was torn down under severe fire. An opposing Confederate column advanced within 300 paces of the Brigade. After several volleys, the Irish Brigade charged with fixed bayonets. At 30 paces it poured buck and ball into Gen. Anderson's North Carolina Brigade which fell back to *Bloody Lane*. After fierce combat, with its ammunition exhausted, the Irish Brigade was relieved. Out of 317 men making up the 69th, 10 officers and 186 enlisted men were casualties at *Bloody Lane*. Gen. Meagher himself was injured when he fell from his horse (some say due to too much drink). Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock temporarily assumed command of the brigade. Although unsuccessful, in meeting their objective, the brigade's attack gave supporting troops enough time to flank and break the Confederate position. After Antietam, because of his heroism Patrick Buckley was commissioned, promoted to 1st Lieutenant, and given command of Company F of the 69th.

During the next month, the Irish Brigade recovered from battle at Harper's Ferry, VA during which time the 116th Pennsylvania Regiment was added to bring it back to nearly full strength. The new Union commander, Gen. Ambrose Burnside (his photo here tells us where the term "sideburns" originated) assembled an army of 125,000 men near the Rappahannock River in mid-November for an assault on Fredericksburg which was intended again to lead directly to the capture of Richmond. Unfortunately, all hope of surprise was lost when the pontoon bridges needed to cross the river were delayed for several weeks.





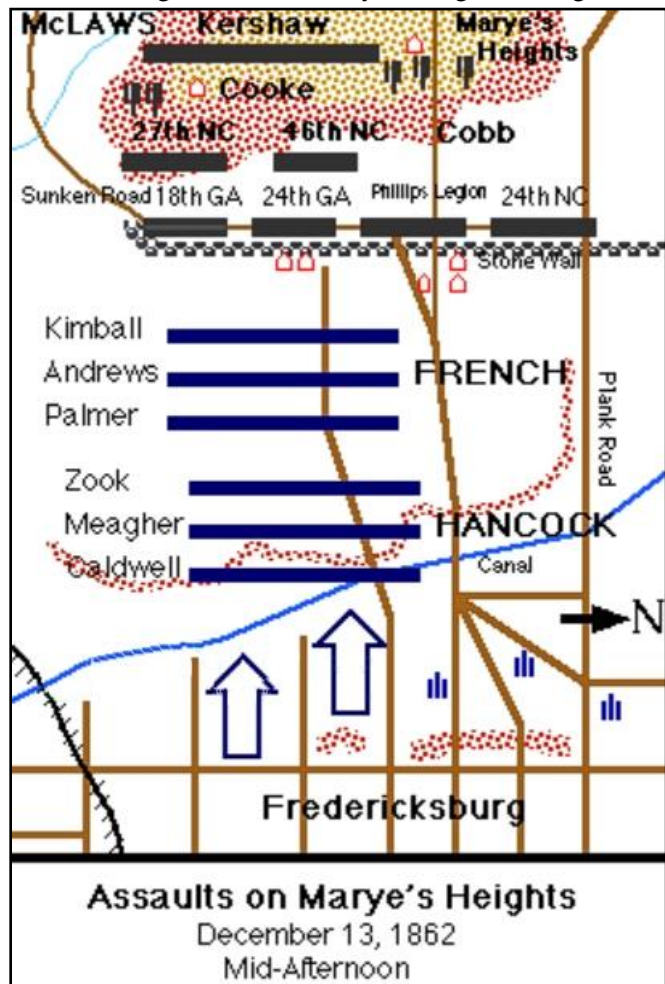
On December 11th the crossing began, and house-to-house fighting on the 11th and 12th cleared the city proper of Confederate troops.

On the 13th, Generals Hooker and Franklin were to attack the rebel defenders on the southern flank, while Gen. Sumner was to take the high ground to the west of the city known as Marye's Heights. At this time, the *Irish Brigade* was part of Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock's division. The brigade consisted of 1317 men, of which 238 were members of the Fighting 69th. This photo shows two of the pontoon bridges actually in place just south of Fredericksburg on the Rappahannock.

Gen. Burnside's orders to Sumner were to send "a division or more" to seize the high ground to the west of the city. He was assuming that his assault on the southern end of the Confederate line by Franklin and Hooker would be the decisive action. So on the morning of the 13th, Gen. William H. French's division prepared to move forward and were subjected to Confederate artillery fire that was descending on the fog-covered city of Fredericksburg. The approach was difficult, mostly open fields interrupted by scattered houses, fences, and gardens that would restrict their movement. A canal stood about 200 yards west of the town, crossed by three narrow bridges, which would require the Union troops to funnel themselves into columns before proceeding. About 600 yards to the west of Fredericksburg was the low ridge known as Marye's Heights, rising 40–50 feet above the plain. Although popularly known as Marye's Heights, the ridge was composed of several hills separated by ravines. The map here shows the positions of the troops just before Sumner's futile attack up the slopes to Marye's Heights.

Near the crest of the portion of the ridge comprising Marye's Hill and Willis Hill, was a narrow lane in a slight cut ... the *Telegraph Road* known after the battle as the *Sunken Road* ... was protected by a 4-foot stone wall, making it a perfect infantry defensive position. About 3,000 Confederate infantrymen were lined up in multiple ranks behind the stone wall for about 600 yards, and another 3,000 were atop the slope behind it. Massed artillery provided almost uninterrupted coverage of the plain below. Gen. Longstreet had been assured by his artillery commander that "we cover that ground now so well that ... a chicken could not live on that field when we open up on it."

The fog lifted from the town around 10 AM and Sumner gave his order to advance an hour later. French's brigades began to move around noon. They advanced slowly through heavy artillery fire, crossed the canal in columns over the narrow bridges, and formed in line, with fixed bayonets, behind the protection of a



shallow bluff. In perfect line of battle, they advanced up the muddy slope until they were cut down at about 125 yards from the stone wall by repeated rifle volleys. Some soldiers were able to get as close as 40 yards. All three of French's brigades succumbed to the same fate, suffering 50% casualties.

Sumner's original order called for the Hancock's division to support French, so Hancock sent forward his brigade under Col. Zook. They met a similar fate. Next was his *Irish Brigade* under Brig. Gen. Thomas F. Meagher. By coincidence, they attacked the area defended by the fellow Irishmen of Col. Robert McMillan's 24th Georgia Infantry. One Confederate who spotted the green regimental flags approaching cried out, "Oh God, what a pity! Here come Meagher's fellows." It was during the charge of the *Irish Brigade* up that hillside that Patrick Buckley was killed. During the course of the day Sumner sent a total of fifteen waves, and not a single one ever came closer than twenty yards from the road.

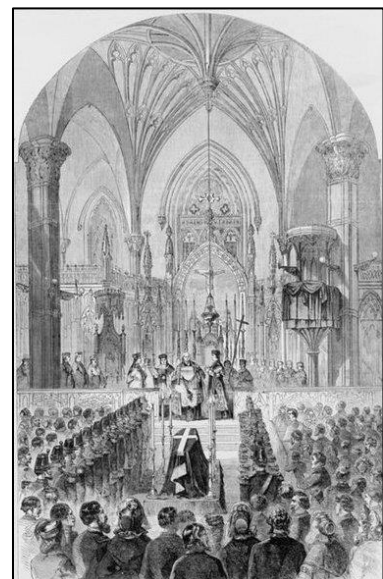
Below is the earliest known photo of that stone wall, taken in May 1863 after the 2nd Battle of Fredericksburg with Confederate dead still lying in the road, and a recent photo of the wall and the *Sunken Road*.



The commander of the II Corps was dismayed at the carnage wrought upon his two divisions in the one hour of fighting and realized that the tactics were not working. By midafternoon, Burnside's forces had failed on both flanks to make progress against the Confederates. Rather than reconsidering his approach in the face of heavy casualties, he stubbornly decided to continue. He sent an order to Franklin to renew the assault on the south flank (which was ignored), and commanded Gen. Joseph Hooker to continue the attack on Marye's Heights. Hooker performed a personal reconnaissance (something that neither Burnside nor Sumner had done, both remaining east of the river during the failed assaults) and returned to Burnside's headquarters to advise against further attack. This time the Confederacy prevailed. All during the night the moans of the wounded lying in the fields could be heard.

In early 1863, Patrick's younger brother James went to Fredericksburg to recover his body and bring it back to New York for burial. Most of the members of the 69th Regiment who were killed in the war were buried at Calvary Cemetery in Queens, where there is a monument memorializing the 69th. We are uncertain whether Patrick was eventually buried there, or whether he lies elsewhere. In early 1863 a "grand requiem Mass" was held in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York for the men of the 69th who fell at Fredericksburg. An engraving showing that Mass was published in the February 7 edition of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* and is seen here.

So that's the story of the fateful charge up Marye's Heights that took the life of your relative Patrick Buckley. I thought you might like to see the list of casualties from the official website of the 69th New



December 12-15	Battle of Fredericksburg The Irish Brigade advanced the closest to the stone wall in the desperate attack on Marye's Heights. Lieutenant Patrick Buckley and 23 enlisted men were killed, Lieutenant Andrew Bermingham and 10 enlisted men mortally wounded, Colonel Nugent, Major Cavanagh, Captains John Donovan, Thomas Leddy and John Toal, Lieutenants Michael Brennan, David Burke, James Collins, Patrick Callahan, Murtha Murphy, Bernard O'Neill, Martin Souilly and 70 men were wounded, and 9 men missing.
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York Infantry Regiment (yes, it still exists). Note that every one of the 14 officers of the 69th was killed or wounded at Fredericksburg.

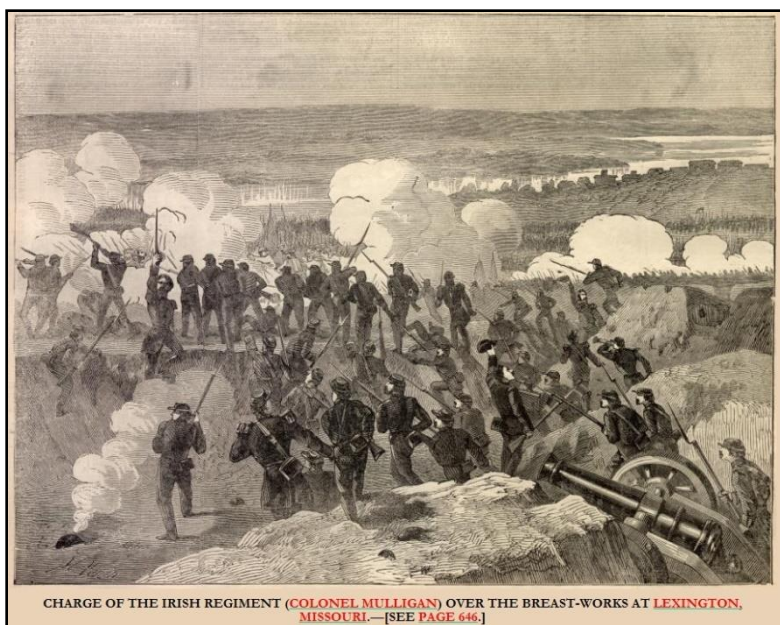
I won't tell you more about the Irish Brigade's actions after Patrick's death, except that it included honorable service at the Battle of Gettysburg. But, it may be of interest to learn Gen. Meagher's fate. He resigned his commission in 1863 when he wasn't permitted to return to New York to recruit replacements for the casualties of Antietam and Fredericksburg. Col. Nugent of the 69th Regiment replaced him as brigade commander. Meagher never made it back to Ireland as he had hoped. After the war he served as acting Governor of Montana Territory until he drowned at Fort Benton in 1867 ... he fell from a boat into the Missouri River, again some say due to too much of that fine Irish "water of life."

Now I will tell you a little more about the other members of the family of James Buckley and Julia Riordan. They are listed in the *Family Group Sheet* shown here. As you know, James died in Ireland, but Julia immigrated to America as did all six of their children. The census records tell us Julia lived with daughter Ellen in Manhattan in 1860 and with son James in Brooklyn in 1870. She died in Brooklyn in 1880. James and Julia's two oldest daughters Mary and Margaret married men named Murphy and Shea and raised families in San Francisco and Oregon respectively.

Son Timothy Buckley married and had a family in Chicago. During the Civil War he served as a Corporal in Company B of Col. James Mulligan's 23rd Illinois Infantry ... known as the *Irish Regiment* though less than half its members were born in Ireland. At the Battle of Lexington (Missouri) in September 1861, after several days of siege, the 23rd Illinois surrendered to MG Sterling Price who was commanding a 7,000 man force of the pro-Confederacy Missouri State Guard. Following their capture, the men of the 23rd were paroled.

We believe Timothy was wounded at Lexington, his unit's only early action, because he was discharged in May of 1862 and applied for an Army "invalid" pension in November of that year. The 1870 census lists

Buckley-Riordan Family		
Father James BUCKLEY		
Birth	abt 1775	Ireland
Marriage	abt 1815	Ireland
Father		
Mother		
Mother Julia RIORDAN		
Birth	1795	Ireland
Death	Jul 1880	New York, NY
Father		
Mother		
Children		
F	Mary BUCKLEY	
Birth	abt 1818	Ireland
Death		California
Spouse	[Unknown Husband of Mary Buckley] MURPHY (-)	
F	Margaret BUCKLEY	
Birth	abt 1821	Ireland
Alt. Name	Peggie	
Death		Oregon
Spouse	[Unknown Husband of Margaret Buckley] SHEA (-)	
M	Timothy BUCKLEY	
Birth	1828	Ireland
Death	Oct 1871	Chicago, IL
Spouse	Johanna [BUCKLEY] (1830-)	
Marriage	abt 1855	
M	Patrick BUCKLEY	
Birth	1829	Ireland
Death	13 Dec 1862	Fredricksburg, VA
Spouse	Margaret [BUCKLEY] (1832-)	
Marriage	bef 1860	
F	Ellen BUCKLEY	
Birth	1830	Ireland
Death	bef 1900	New York, NY
Spouse	John MURPHY (-1854)	
Marriage	abt 1846	Ireland
Spouse	John SHEA (1822-1870)	
Marriage	abt 1856	New York, NY
M	James BUCKLEY	
Birth	1 May 1839	Cork County, IRE
Death	9 Oct 1872	Brooklyn, NY
Spouse	Mary E. MCCALLAUGH (1843-1907)	
Marriage	30 Nov 1859	



him as living with his wife and five children in Chicago. They owned a home worth \$2000 and his personal estate was \$1500 ... rather prosperous for the era. His occupation is listed as a “lumber Inspector.” He died in early October 1871 at the time of the *Great Chicago Fire*. We are uncertain whether or not he was one of the 300 or so Chicagoans who lost their lives in that fire. But, considering that he was employed in the lumberyards along the Chicago River ... the burning of which contributed so much to the spread of the fire ... that is a distinct possibility. After his death, his wife Johanna applied for a Civil War widow’s pension. A

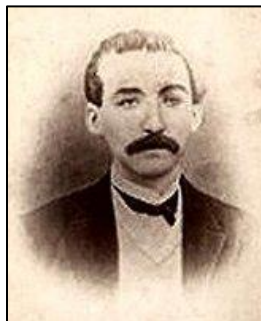
drawing of the 23rd Illinois fighting at Lexington from the *Harper’s Weekly* magazine is shown here.

As you already know, Patrick Buckley married a woman named Margaret, who was born in Ireland in 1832. Other than the 1860 census, the only information we have about her are index cards concerning her March 6, 1863 application for a war widow’s pension.

One of those index cards (shown here) seems to indicate that she and Patrick had a child. Clearly, she filed for a widow’s pension in 1863. The only way the rest of the card makes any sense is, having lost her pension when she remarried in 1868, she filed for a pension for Patrick’s minor survivor. If that is the case, the second husband’s name was likely Fitzpatrick, and he adopted the child. But, no further mention of Margaret or the child could be found in either the subsequent NY State or US Census records.

NAME OF SOLDIER: <i>Buckley, Patrick</i>				
NAME OF DEPENDENT:		Widow, <i>Buckley Margaret</i> <i>Fitzpatrick, M., Jr.</i>		
SERVICE:		<i>469 N.Y. Inf. -</i>		
DATE OF FILING.	CLASS.	APPLICATION NO.	CERTIFICATE NO.	STATE FROM WHICH FILED.
<i>1863 Mar 6</i>	<i>Invalid,</i>			
<i>1868 June 15</i>	<i>Widow,</i>	<i>14088</i>	<i>73705</i>	
	<i>Minor,</i>	<i>162030</i>	<i>185983</i>	
ATTORNEY:				
REMARKS:				
<i>7-10-05</i>				

The youngest of James and Julia’s children, was James (1839-1872) who is seen here. He married and had a family in Brooklyn. He is the one who went to Virginia to recover his brother’s body in early 1863.



James is remembered by the family as “the youngest judge in New York.” That he actually was a judge is confirmed by the 1865 NY State Census where he is listed as a *Justice of the Peace*, and the 1870 US Census which lists him as a *Police Justice*.

He married Mary McCallagh in 1859 and they had five children, only two of whom ... Julia and Mary ... lived to adulthood. In 1870 he owned no real estate and his personal estate was worth \$1000. He died in Brooklyn on 9 October 1872.

After his early death, his wife Mary was appointed the “matron” of the Kings County Jail in Brooklyn, living there with her two young daughters, three servants, and over 100 prisoners according to the 1880 Census. The 1892 NY State Census still lists her as a “matron.” Julia married William Meade and they had three children. Mary (called *Mamie*) married John McDevitt and they had four children. It is thanks to their descendants that we have photos of James Buckley and some of his family.

Your 4th -great-grandmother Ellen Buckley came to America with her two young children shortly after her first husband, John Murphy, died in Ireland. She married John Shea (sometimes spelled Shay) in New York, and they had four more children. Ellen’s daughter by her first marriage, Julia Murphy (1852-1936), married another Murphy and their daughter Loretta (1887-1960) married the first Leo Stephen Loomie (1885-1943) ... and that’s where *his-story* begins to morph into *your-story*.

Below is a 2014 photo of Jake and Ryan at the monument honoring the 69th New York State Volunteers on the Fredericksburg Battlefield where Patrick Buckley, their fourth-great-granduncle gave his life for the Union.

