

MAY 2016 BUGLE CALLS TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. MAY MEETING

2. PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

3. AFTER ACTION REPORT

4. CIVIL WAR HUMOR

1. MAY 12th Meeting: Speaker will be Terry Omman, on “The Civil War in Tulare County.” He is a local historian, retired Deputy Sheriff, who has written historical books on Tulare County History. Mike and I attended his program last January, and it was very interesting!

2. PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

None received

3. AFTER ACTION REPORT OF MEETING OF 4/14/16

BY RON VAUGHAN

*Our April meeting had 15 persons present, and they did not include some of our regular attendees: Michael G., Brian C., Henry H., or Old Abe!

*Gayle Schulze is graciously willing to continue as Treasurer, and another letter was issued for the Bank of Sierra to recognize her. She said our current balance is \$2295.

*Patti reported that the Sacramento CWRT will host the Nov. 2017 Conference.

*Patti provided me with the Email address of the webmaster of the Sacramento CWRT. It was agreed that I would investigate this option. Since the secret of the website access died with Walt, I have purchased a new domain: SJVCWRT2.com via GoDaddy.com. The webmaster for the Sac. CWRT, Kim Knighton, has set up the new website, and hopefully, transfer the old material there. Her fee was \$190. For another \$70 she agreed to put all the old material into the new site. I have sent her a personal check for this, in order to save this for posterity. . (Especially since, Dr. Davenport and Walt worked so hard to include the old newsletters.) I have attempt to add info, but despite following directions carefully, I screwed up the entire site, stacking all on top of each other! Thankfully, Kim restored it to order, without extra charge! She will add new additions for only \$5 each.

*Due to cancellation of a previous speaker, I put together a power point program on the Irish Brigade. In brief, after the failed Irish revolt of 1848, many of the leaders escaped to new York City. In the Fall of 1849, they began to organize independent military companies, with the long range goal of eventually achieving Irish independence. Between 1850 and 1858 3 regiments were formed and mustered into the State Militia.

When the Civil War broke out, the Army called up the 69th NY Militia into service, and led by Col. Michael Corcoran, it was rushed to Washington D.C. The 69th fought at 1st Bull Run under Col. W.T. Sherman. The Irish were one of the few regiments to maintain cohesion after the defeat, despite the wounding and capture of Col. Corcoran. It served as the rear guard of the retreating army.

After Bull Run, Captain Thomas F. Meagher, former Irish rebel leader, applied to have the 69th reorganized into Federal service, as the core of a brigade composed of Irish immigrants. In Sept. 1861, Meagher was appointed Brigadier General of the brigade. The brigade originally consisted of the 63rd NY Volunteers, the 69th NYV, and the 88th NYV. The Irish Brigade differed from the rest of the Army of the Potomac by Meagher's insistence on arming the 8 line companies of each regiment with the Model 1842 smooth-bore musket, an obsolete weapon, largely phased out by 1862. Meagher wanted his men to be able to fire buck and ball

loads (a 69. Caliber ball with 3 or 4 small buckshot.), which produced a shotgun like effect at close range, and could not be used with rifles. Only the two light companies of each Irish regiment, were armed with Springfield or Enfield rifles.

In March, 1862, the 2,500 man Irish Brigade was assigned to the Army of Potomac's 2nd Brigade of General Edwin Sumner's Corps. While, the brigade slogged through the Peninsula Campaign, the 29th Massachusetts Volunteers (of mainly Puritan descendants) was assigned to the brigade. The brigade earned plaudits during the battles of Seven Pines, and the Seven Days, losing 700 casualties. Meagher obtained permission of return to New York to recruit replacements.

Unfortunately, he only managed to gather about 70 recruits, who joined the brigade just prior to the Battle of Antietam. The brigade's frontal attack on the Sunken Road, henceforth known as "Bloody Lane," cost the Irish 450 casualties.

On Oct. 10th, 1862, in order to offset the losses, the understrength 116th Pennsylvania Volunteers, (composed of many Irishmen) was assigned to the brigade. Also, the 29th Mass., unhappy at serving alongside the Irish, was transferred out, and replaced by the mostly Irish 28th Mass. Volunteers. Both of these regiments were armed with rifles.

The Irish brigade suffered its greatest challenge in the attack on Marye's Heights, Fredericksburg. Meagher led 1,200 Irish up the hill, and they lost 545 casualties (45%).

On January 16, 1863, a large Mass was held at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Manhattan for the 1,500 fallen Irish soldiers. Thousands of grieving widows and family attended.

The brigade played a small role in the battle of Chancellorsville, but lost 200 more casualties. General Meagher requested permission to recruit more men, but he was denied twice, so he resigned in protest. He was replaced by Col. Patrick Kelly.

Just prior to the battle of Gettysburg, several hundred of its recovered wounded returned to the brigade. However, the brigade was only able to field a total of a mere 530 men, in its five regiments. Two regiments were commanded by Captains, as all the field officers had been casualties. After Chaplin Corby's famous mass, the Irish attacked the Confederates in the Wheatfield, at Stony Knoll. Here their buck and ball loads were more effective than the Confederate's rifles. The fight cost another 200 Irish casualties.

In early 1864, the few Irish survivors were given a 30 day furlough as a reward for re-enlisting. By St. Patrick's Day, 1864, the brigade had a strength of 2,000, but 80% were new recruits. The new commander, Col. Byrne devoted much time to drilling them in hope of reaching the brigade's high standard of discipline and performance of the past.

The brigade fought in the Wilderness and at the Mule Shoe, at Spotsylvania, losing 974 men. At Cold Harbor, once again the Irish were ordered to make a suicidal attack against an entrenched foe. Col. Byrne was killed, and command passed to Col. Smythe. Then he was killed leading the brigade at Petersburg. Capt. Richard Moroney was now the senior officer in command. The remnants of the brigade was assigned to "The Consolidated Brigade," of the 1st Division of the II Corps. The brigade officially ceased to exist,

As I researched this program via a couple of books and "Wikiwiki," thought this was the end of the brigade's story. However, "like the legendary phoenix rising from the ashes, so the Irish Brigade would be resurrected." Energetic officers gathered recruits for the decimated regiments, and the 4th New York Heavy Artillery Regiment (Infantry) was assigned, bringing the new "2nd Irish Bde." to a strength of 1,500, by February, 1865, under Col. Robert Nugent.

The reborn brigade fought bravely at Ft. Stedman, captured two redoubts at Petersburg, and smashed the Confederate rear guard at Amelia Courthouse. On April 9th they were still advancing, when they were ordered to halt, to await the outcome of meeting of two generals at Appomattox Courthouse.

The regiments of the Irish Brigade are among the top ten list of Union regiment's battle deaths: 69th NY=259, 28th Mass.= 250, 63rd NY =156, 88th NY = 151,

116th Penn. =145. Total= 961. Six members were awarded the Medal of Honor, and they Brigade never lost a flag.

*After the program, there was a raffle of Irish Bde. related items, including a book, flag miniature, shot glass, and jug of Irish whisky!

4. CIVIL WAR HUMOR FROM THE “BLUE & GRAY LAUGHING”

“A Captain of Munford’s cavalry (2nd Virginia) on picket after the battle of Fredericksburg, was accosted by the Yankee picket opposite to him with the query: ‘Have you a sorry corporal with you?’

‘No,’ answered the captain, ‘but what do you want with him?’

‘We want to trade Burnside for him.’”