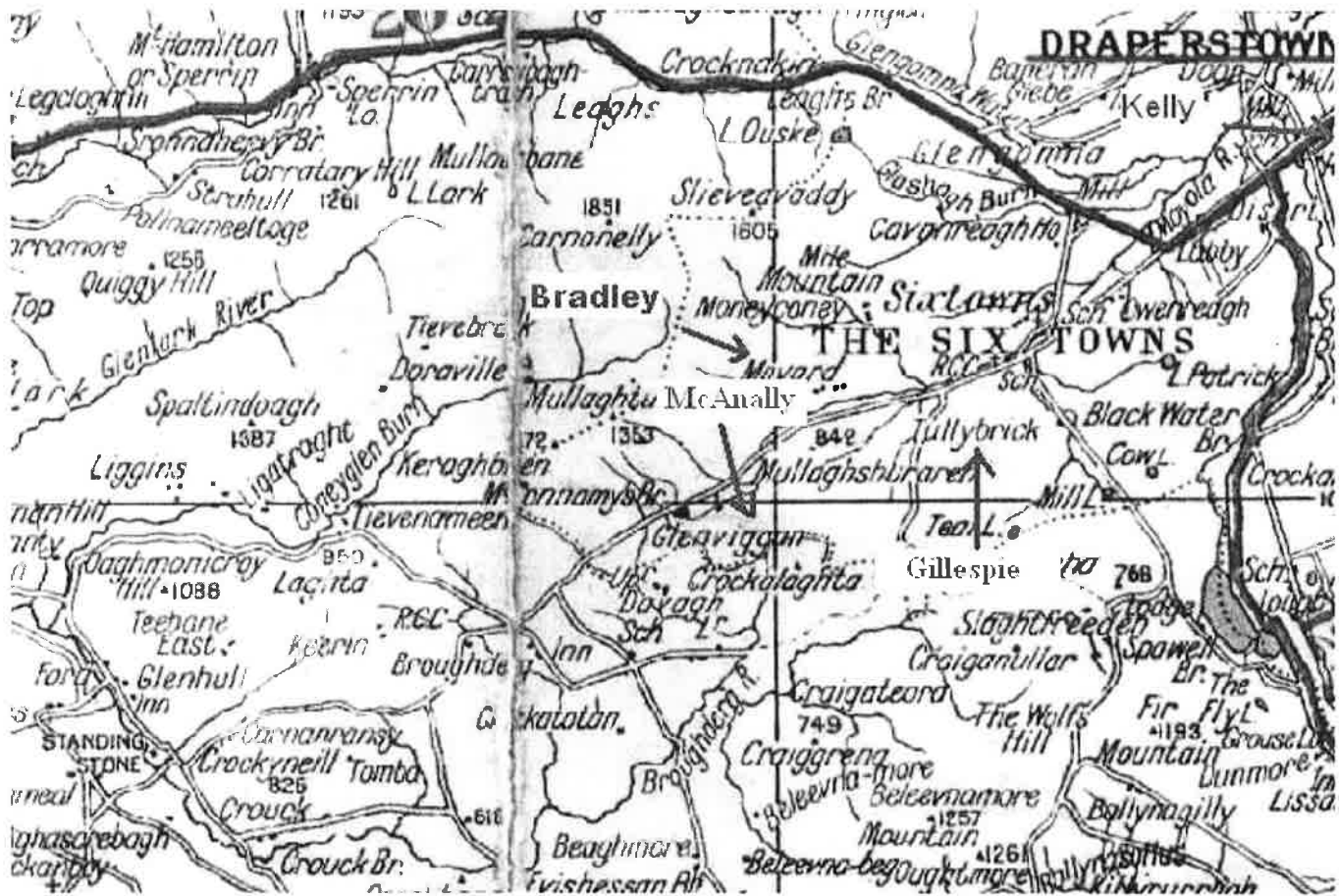


# Lieut. Peter Kelly 69th. New York Vols. Born Straw Draperstown Co. Derry

Born in Straw near Draperstown-Ballinscreen Co. Derry Ireland June 17th. 1832.

If anyone looks the names of the soldiers of either the 69th. Penn. Vols. or the 69th. New York Vols. it will be seen that there are numerous "south Derry" names listed. If one knows Draperstown and the surrounding area names such as Kelly, Conway, Henry, McWilliams, Diamond, McNally or McAnally will be immediately recognisable.

Peter Kelly was born 17th. June 1832 to Eiblin Duffy and Peter Kelly. The Kellys were small mill owners in Straw village. They would generally have had a reasonable income from the mill but such mills were subject to trade variations due to market demands. The mill would be used to grind corn and also double as a skutch or saw mill. In fact the mill was operational into the 1950's and the ruins still stand and the mill race still runs!. Peter was the fifth child of a family of 10 children of which six were girls and four boys. His brothers and sisters were named Margaret, Maria, Alice, Patrick, Matthew, Anne, Matilda, Joseph and Catherine.



Capt. Charles McAnally 69th. Penn. Pvt. James Gillaspie 16th. Iowa, 2nd Lieut. Peter Kelly 69th. New York. Capt. Hugh Bradley 3rd Pa. Vol. Inf.

This is the order of their birth between 1826 and 1843. Some time in the middle of the 19th century Peter and Maria would emigrate to the States probably to other relatives already there. As far as is known the remainder remained in the S. Derry where their descendants still live. Growing up in Straw Peter would have attended the local primary school and have achieved good

fundamental reading and writing skills and have some mathematical skills. However Peter was to take the path to America the same route that Capt. Charles McAnally of the 69th. Penn. Vols. and Private James Gillaspie of the 16th Iowa Vols. and many others from the area would also take.

**Emigrated to America circa 1850's.**

We are not certain at what age he emigrated but he was by 1861 old enough to join the 69th. Regt. New York Infantry. He is noted as enlisting April 19th. 1861. He was possibly living at 27 Manhasset Place Brooklyn New York. He would be living in a period of New York's history when the post famine Irish immigrants would be flooding into the city. They would bring their tales of the grave economic situation and political upheavels in Ireland with them. There would be many organisations forming up in the city such as the Fenian movements hoping do something about the situation in their homeland. Physical violence would not be ruled out. There was one train of thought that if the new immigrants firstly served their new country the military skills learned could be put to use against the English when they returned home.

**Enlisted in the 69th. New York Volunteers. April 19th. 1861.**

It would be against this background that Peter Kelly would join the 69th. In his muster in records of 1861 he is noted as being 27 years of age. He was in fact 29. This would be an initial 90 day committment.

It is of interest to note that in the Special Schedule Surviving Soldiers Sailors Marines and Widows S.D. E.D. 56 it notes:

Peter Kelly Co. I 69th N.Y. Vols. was listed as living at or having an address at 27 Manhasset Place Brooklyn New York enlisted April 19th. 1861. Was wounded at Bull Run, and taken prisoner. On this document it states he was discharged April 1864. Unlike other soldiers in the list his period of engagement is not given.

Coincidentally on the same list living at the same address was James Cavanagh Co. C who was at a time a Capt. and Major . Had enlisted April 1861 and was discharged May 1st. 1863 a period of 2 years and 1 month. He was discharged due to disability. In the Regimental Descriptive Book (List of Commissioned Officers) it notes that Kelly was appointed 2nd. Lieut. Oct. 24th. 1861. It also goes on to state that he was dismissed by General Court Martial August 24th. 1862.

As to why he joined the army we can only guess. Perhaps for the pay or perhaps with a group of other Irishmen fired up with patriotism. The Civil War had started in April 1861. He would initially hold the rank of Private.

At some stage after the war started Peter married a Mary Ann Diamond whose parents were Patrick Diamond and Mary Henry who themselves had married in New York Oct. 3rd. 1844. It would be a very fair assumption that both Mary Ann's parents Diamond and Henry were if not from Straw/Draperstown they were most certainly from the S. Derry area. Peter would have been very comfortable in this relationship as his father and mother in law were probably first generation emigrants and probably knew a lot about Peter's background.

On April 20th. 1861 one James McKay Rorty a young man born in Donegal Town Ireland June 11th. 1837 and later a Fenian activist in New York would also join up. He would enlist in Co. G. "The Mechanics Guard" of the 69th. New York State Militia on a 90 day commission. This Co. being commanded by Colonel Michael Cocoran one of the founder members of The Fenian Brotherhood in New York.

On April 23rd. 1861 the 69th. left New York amidst a fanfare of euphoria and headed south. Just three days after joining James Rorty would find himself marching south as a soldier of the 69th. not too much basic training required!.

**April 23rd. 1861 the 69th. marched south from New York to face the Confederates.**

Peter's unit the 69th. served a brief stint at Annapolis Md. then onward to Washington D.C. Here they spent their time there basically as labourers building fortifications.

They then marched south to confront the enemy on July 16th. 1861. At the battle of 1st. Bull Run (Manassas) on Sunday 21st. July they encountered the enemy and after several skirmishes many of the unit were killed and Rorty and Kelly probably captured on this day. They would soon find themselves in the Confederate Libby prison in Richmond Va. About the same time 1st. Sergt. William O'Donohue also of the 69th. was also captured and also taken to Richmond. O'Donohue was from Co. Cork and obviously had been a promoted regular soldier. He lived in Bridgeport Conn. Rorty, Kelly, O'Donohue and a Capt. James P. McIvor (said to be a Fenian activist back in New York) decided to make an escape attempt. They had been in captivity for about a month. This went to plan though McIvor was spotted by a guard and clamped in irons. The other three made good their escape which took place on Sept. 18th. 1861. They had been imprisoned for about a month. I should think that Capt. McIvor was in fact the leader of the group of escapees, and possible whoever captured him had his eyes on the senior figure of the party. More kudos capturing a captain than a private or a sergeant!

Sept. 18th. 1861 Kelly, Rorty and O'Donohue escape from Richmond's Libby Prison Va.

After quite a few adventures crossing rural Virginia and living off the land they made it to Union warships lying on the Potomac river and eventually made it to Washington Navy Yard. Later they would find themselves as heroes in New York. Colonel Michael Cocoran had also been captured and also held in Richmond.

These guys were heroes. They had escaped from the heartland of the Confederate south. No doubt the major clout of the Fenian Brotherhood establishment in New York would see that they would be awarded.

Peter Kelly was promoted to 2nd. Lieut. Private Rorty was also promoted to 2nd. Lieut. and 1st. Sergt. William O'Donohue also promoted Lieut. These promotions were I think really political rewards and not really on battlefield attainments or military experience. The only man amongst the three who would have a merited promotion would appear to have been 1st. Sergt. William O'Donohue.

Some sources state that both Kelly and Rorty were wounded at this battle known as the first battle of Bull Run. However their injuries would not appear to have been extensive as did not seem to affect their escape. Kelly later claimed in his pension application that he had been wounded in both hips at Bull Run.

Re-Enlisted in the 69th. New York Volunteers. 24th. Oct. 1861.

This would appear to be the date of Peter Kelly's re-enlistment for a three year commitment. It would appear to be the day that he was also promoted to 2nd. Lieut. As a matter of interest Kelly would be a fairly small man about 5'7" tall of medium build.

Kellys War after Promotion and re-enlistment.

In Kelly's Regimental Descriptive Book it states he was Appointed 2nd. Lieut. Co. K. 69th. Oct 24th. 1861. It is noted in *The Irish American* of Dec. 7th. 1861 that Lieut. Peter Kelly was "presented with a sword, sash and other equipments on Thursday evening of last week". The Thursday in question was Thursday Nov. 28th. 1861. On the following Saturday which was Nov. 30th. 1861 he was presented by a "beautifully mounted Colt revolver on behalf of his many friends". The article goes on to talk of Peter's great bravery and his escape from the enemy prison at Richmond, that he had been imprisoned for upwards of eight weeks having been severely wounded in that disastrous engagement. Note it talks of upwards of eight weeks imprisonment

and severely wounded. Kelly gives a fine response assuring his friends that "when his adopted country called for his service he hoped that he would always be found ready and at his post". The term "adopted country" is interesting as it kind of suggests that he came to the States as perhaps a young adult and not as a child. Some articles suggest he was imprisoned for the same period as Rorty and his incarceration was in fact about a month. The article speaks of his being wounded. How badly?. Records note he wounded in both hips. If he had been badly wounded how did he manage to cross rural Virginia to the Potomac?. His wounds would appear to have not been too severe.



On the very next day Sunday 1st. Dec. 1861 Private James McKay Rorty already promoted is presented with a splendid sabre, sash and belt at Fort Schuyler New York by Capt. Phelan of Co. D of The Pheonix Brigade. This event is reported by *The Irish American* Dec.7th. 1861.

1st. Sergt. William O'Donohue is also presented with a similar award and like Kelly and Rorty was already promoted to the higher rank of Lieutenant. O'Donohue would most certainly as regards soldering would be the most experienced man. He had already been promoted to 1st Sergt. probably on merit and not as a political reward. In the Regimental Descriptive Book (List of Commissioned Officers) it notes that Kelly was appointed 2nd. Lieut. Oct. 21st. 1861. It also goes on to state that he was dismissed by General Court Martial August 24th. 1862. His promotion was as they say meteoric going from being a Private at the end of July 1861 to being a 2nd. Lieut. by October 24th. 1861 taking about ten weeks!. In the 69th. records it is seen that the Muster Roll Oct. 25th - Dec. 31st 1861 he is noted as being a Lieut. but "not stated" is recorded on his being there or not. However during this period the Companys Muster record notes that he is mustered in at Camp California Va. Nov. 17th. 1861 and that he joined for duty and enrolled in New York city.



It is known that Kelly and Rorty were both in New York city over the weekend Nov 28th - Dec 1st 1861. O'Donohue was also forming up the 2nd. Batt. New York Light Artillery which Rorty would also join. Thus

all three were in the city at the same time. Sadly O'Donohue would later die in the battle of Chancellorsville in July 1862. Rorty would gain prominence in his heroic performance at Gettysburg but sadly killed there on at fateful day of July 3rd. 1863.

There are two interesting photos held as now in Ireland by a descendant relative of Kelly. The image on the left above is Kelly which is from an old photo but more interestingly the one of the three soldiers is taken off the original glass plate of the 1861 era also held by the aforesaid relative. However just who are the two soldiers along with Kelly in the image of the three soldiers above?. From comparisons with images sources I have been able to access I am not been able to give a positive answer at this stage. All three look very smug and probably had been recently promoted. I feel that the photo was taken in some kind of "posing" booth at Fort Schuyler so photos could be sent home to relatives.

The image below Kelly to the left is an image taken of the old Civil War photographic plate held here in by a descendant relative here in Ireland of the three soldiers. It is some 144 years old and considering its age is still in relatively good condition though some chemical deterioration is seen at the edges.

Tracing Kelly's army career proves difficult so what I will do is put down as accurate a scenario as I can deduce with the material on hand and records known of. Basically from the very initial information on Kelly and his experiences at Bull Run and his wounds, length of imprisonment there seem to be in some cases exaggeration primarily due to the press reports. They had a good story on these guys and at a time when the war was in the balance it did what newspapers do best. On this basis let me try and put a sequence to his life in uniform. No doubt this will change as information is unlocked and found. Let us pick up the story post Bull Run and his promotion in New York at the end of 1861. Before being too critical of him keep in mind that he had negligible military experience and was promoted to Lieut. from Private after about 10 weeks.

In The Regimental Descriptive Book it is recorded that Kelly was a commissioned officer at 2nd. Lieut rank and appointed to this rank Oct. 24th. 1861 but "dismissed from the service by general court martial Aug. 2nd. 1862"

In the Company Muster Roll Oct. 23rd. until Dec. 31st. 1861 Kelly's presence "not stated".

Kelly was mustered in Nov. 17th. 1861. This is recorded in the Company Muster- in Roll dated Nov. 17th. 1861 at Camp California Va. Nov. 17th. 1861.

In the Company Muster Roll for Jan. and Feb. 1862 Lieut. Kelly is noted as being "present".

In the Regimental Return for March 1862 Kelly is noted as being "present".

In the Company Muster Roll for March and April 1862 Kelly is noted as being "present" and "commanding company from the 25th. March".

In the Regimental Return for April 1862 Kelly is noted as being "present".

In the Regimental Return for May 1862 Kelly is noted as being "present".

During this period the 69th would have been taking part in the Peninsula campaign. He had been promoted Oct. 24th. 1861. Letters exist from and to him in this period. In one letter he talked of the captain of the unit either being wounded or missing and he Kelly took over command of the unit. In the Company Muster Roll for May and June 1862 it states that Kelly had been relieved of his command as from May 14th. 1862. Kelly had been in command of his Company from March until mid May a period of about 8 weeks.

As to why Kelly was court martialled the following seems to suggest the circumstances.

Sometime just prior to May 14th. 1862 the information on hand as now suggests that Kelly was caught delivering a duel challenge to another officer a Lt. W. H. Baker from 1st. Lieut. John Conway a fellow officer who commanded Co. K with Peter Kelly as his second in command. As to what unit Baker was from we do not know but looking at the names of the 69th. there are a couple of Bakers named as privates but no officers. Kelly was in essence acting as a second to the challenger. The army would not be too pleased by this and Kelly was put under close (tent) arrest by his commanding officer Col. Nugent. This confinement would be too much for him and he decided to escape and make a break of it back to New York. Kelly as 2nd in Command of Co. K. now being put under tent arrest would have really been devastated. Be aware that many of the ordinary private soldiers in Co. K may well have been from the area that Kelly came from in Ireland. To me Nugent's action against Kelly would be devastating to his morale. Did Nugent realise this?.

Kelly's actions would suit the army as they could now charge him with desertion and not associated with duels. I am intrigued by Conway. Was he perhaps known to Kelly back home in Ireland and I feel he may well have been using a very naive Kelly to do his dirty work or was there a kudos or honour of being selected to deliver such a challenge. I suppose it made the person carrying the challenge liable to get involved as a quasi second. In any case not a good idea to get involved I should imagine. I wonder if Conway was also arrested. It would appear not as he went on to fight at Antietam where he was subsequently killed.

It is thought that after Kelly was relieved of his command on May 14th. 1862 and being placed under close tent arrest Kelly tried to face down the hurt and embarrassment of this by writing home saying that he had resigned his commission and was coming home to New York. Now did he

write this letter of resignation and send it to Washington is another question. It appears that his resignation never did reach Washington, but was it ever sent by either Kelly or Nugent or Adjutant Smith?

The Conway name is very common in the area back in Ireland where Kelly came from. The arrest and close confinement of Kelly took place when the 69th. was encamped at Harrisons Landing Va.

There are six Conways listed in the regimental listings. These are.

Conway James. Co. G. Enlisted 20. 1. 1864 in New York as a private. Mustered out 30. 6. 1865 at Alexandria Va. He was 39 years of age. He was promoted 9. 3. 1864 to Corp. and to 2nd. Lieut. 24. 2. 1865. He transferred 24. 2. 1865 from Co. G to Co. H.

Conway John Co. A. Enlisted New York 20. 10. 1861. Mustered out 10. 10. 1864 aged 25. Listed as wounded 18. 5. 1864 at Spotsylvania Court House Va. Transferred 12. 6. 1863 from Co. A to Co. B.

Conway John Co. K. Enlisted 17. 11. 1861 in New York City. Aged 35 as 1st. Lieut. Commissioned 17. 9. 1862. Killed Antietam.

Conway Michael Co. A. Enlisted New York 18. 10. 1861 as 25 year old private. Later listed as missing 1. 7. 1862 at Malvern Hills Va. No further information.

Conway Michael W Co. D. Enlisted 3. 11. 1861 at Chicago Ill. aged 22 as private. Later deserted.

Conway P. Co. K. Enlisted as private and later listed as AWOL.

Which Conway was Kelly involved with in the duelling incident. Evaluation and deduction suggests that it was indeed Lieut. John Conway also of Co.K. From what we know as now he was not courtmartialled and was later involved in the battle of Antietam where he was killed. It would appear as now carrying a duel challenge was a more serious event than actually taking part in a duel?. I really do not think so.

Kelly was finally located in New York after being on the run for about 48 days. He would face courtmartial in Washington.

Before we become too judgemental about Peter Kelly's courtmartial we should stand back and look at the circumstances as stated. Apart from the stress and strain of being a soldier in war there were many stresses of personal relationships at play. If the reader was asked to put on a blue serge uniform and given a poor quality rifle and told go face the enemy with equally ill equipped soldiers, to face them and shoot and perhaps be subject to grape and cannon shot then be expected to remain unaffected would be expecting a lot. I have looked at two of the major Irish Regiments in the Civil war, the 69th. Penn Vols. in particular and to a lesser extent the 69th. New York Vols. and see similar scenarios. I feel that in some circumstances discipline was not the greatest and the "settling of scores" real or imaginery was in many cases the order of the day. Even Colonel Dennis O'Kane the commander of the 69th. Penn. was also court martialled at a time for what appears to have been a slanging match with a senior officer in a drunken exchange between both parties. In his case basically common sense prevailed and the charges were dropped or forgotten about. Idle soldiers in the Civil War would look for confrontation. Was this mostly in the Irish Regiments?. Perhaps so as Irish soldiers I think only close ranks and fight as a unit when their backs are to the wall.

After his capture Kelly was taken to Washington D.C. He was court martialled on two Specimen charges. One of Desertion and the other of Breach of Arrest. The charge was signed by Colonel

Robert Nugent of the 69th. Regt. The charge sheet was countersigned by Capt. R. Moroney of the 69th. and Adjutant James Smith also of the 69th. The charges relate to the events at Harrisons Landing Va. The charge sheet is dated Aug, 2nd. 1862. Adjutant James Smith was said to be under total control by Nugent and simply rubber stamped Nugents decisions.

**Kelly Dismissed from the Army August 24th 1862.**

After his dismissal on August 24th 1862 it is assumed that Peter simply went home to New York and start to pick up the pieces, it would however not be the end of his Army career.

A letter was sent from Thomas M. Vincent Asst. Adjutant General from the Adjutant Generals Office in Washington on Oct. 31st. 1862 to His Excellency The Governor of New York stating that 2nd. Lieut. Peter Kelly 69th. Regt. was dismissed Oct. 24th. 1862. It repeats the same statement again this time giving the date as Aug 2nd. 1862 which appears to be the date on which the charge sheet was written.

Colonel Robert Nugent who appears to be the officer who was responsible for putting Kelly on the charge would appear to have a position of poor standing amongst many of the officers who had come across him. Refer to the letter below.

*To the Editors of the New York Herald:*

*Dear Sirs,*

*It is with the utmost reluctance that we the officers of the Irish Brigade whose names are given with this communication address you on a subject pertaining to that organization which has been lately been brought before the public in the columns of your journal and variously commented on by the Irish American press We feel it is not the province of an officer or soldier, having done his duty to his country to rush into print and criticize every little scrap of gossip and camp reminiscence which finds its way as" filling " into a newspaper. Old soldiers are proverbially addicted to drawing the "longbow" and 'twere a useless task to seek to refute their tales. An officer cannot be supposed to be cognizant of the various incidents of the field or camp; he has his appointed position, and cannot know, unless through official or common report, of the stirring events around him; and in his version of matters he can only be credited with the recital of what has taken place and his own immediate observation. Therefore it is that when an officer, over his own signature, and with the weight which attached to his and accredited veracity makes a statement contradicting a previously accepted report it is natural to suppose that, not only has he personal knowledge of what he states to but that, in order to fortify himself, in his belief or recollection, he has had reference to official documents to sustain his statements. Ignorance cannot be pleaded. To what, then, must we attribute the motives of a person who not only asserts as true matters, which were physically beyond his personal observation, but actually gives the sanction of his name to what he knows to be a willful misinterpretation. In such a position stands Major Robert Nugent of the 24th U.S. Infantry, ex Colonel of the Sixty-ninth Regiment, N.Y.S. Volunteers. In his letter to the Herald he says that he made a tender of the services of the Sixty-ninth Regiment N.Y.S. Militia of which he was Lieut-Colonel in 1861, through General Standford to Governor Morgan. In refutation of this statement we copy the following extract from a late number of the Irish American knowing it to be the truth--- We hardly know how to characterize this statement as it is conveyed in Colonel Nugent's letter, for it reflects upon the whole Irish race in America and represents us for the time being as dependent for our status upon the endorsement of this nameless adventurer, who but for the accidental association with Meagher and Corcoran, would never have been heard of—but who now has the audacity—over the graves of such men to claim as his own the merit of their acts. Colonel Nugent states that he tendered the services of the representative Irish regiment, in 1861, to General Standford who forsooth required guarantees of the fealty of our people to the land and the flag of our adoption. The assertion and the insinuation are both false—and Colonel Nugent knows it." He is a happy fatality, which has stood him on more*

*occasions than one. Col. Nugent accompanied his regiment on the march to Bull Run, no farther than Arlington Heights, though on its return from the disastrous field he did not hesitate to accept a captaincy--- one of the four positions in the regular army---- with which the President was pleased to reward its services. We pass over Colonel Nugent's preposterous claim of having organized the Sixty-ninth Volunteers with the remark that it was an achievement beyond his means and influence, he being, at the time comparatively unknown. When the Brigade lay at Camp California near Alexandria, Virginia, in 1861-62 Colonel Nugent as the senior officer present did command it for a short period, and took advantage of the position by seeking to secure the Brigadier-Generalship for himself, to the exclusion of Meagher, who alone was entitled to it. We will not now refer to the means he resorted to, as he subsequently became, though reluctantly, one of the signers of General Meagher's application, When Colonel Nugent asserts that he commanded the Irish Brigade at the battle of Fair Oaks, and that General Meagher was in arrest there, he states what he must know to be false. The records in the archives of the War Department at Washington, will prove him a falsifier of facts, not only in this, but in every other statement in his letter. One regiment of the brigade---the Sixty-Third---was ordered to the rear to assist in extricating some of our artillery that was mired in crossing the Chickahominy Swamp; the other regiments fought in the action though not continuously. General Meagher was in command there and received his orders from Generals Sumner and Richardson in person. We shall never forget the remark with which General Sumner accompanied his. Some of our troops who had been engaged with and repulsed by the enemy were rushing out of the woods in disorder, on the outskirts of which the Irish Brigade was in line of battle, when General Sumner galloped up from the left and excitedly asked for General Meagher, who at almost the same instant rode down from the right saluted him and received instructions as to the disposition of his command; in addition to which Gen. Sumner shouted ---so as to be distinctly heard at a considerable distance vigorously slapping his left shoulder with the right hand at the same time: General Meagher, I place those straps in the keeping of your Brigade today, if it runs I will run myself" General Sumner was then in command of the right wing of the Army of the Potomac. At the battle of Savage Station which took place seven days after, but from which the context of his letter, we would be led to suppose Col, Nugent imagined took place the next day, General Meagher was placed in arrest for refusing to obey an order not given him through regular channels, but was restored to command the same night by order of General McClellan, the Duc de Chaitres being its bearer. At this fight the Eighty-eighth was the only regiment of the Irish Brigade engaged; but Col. Nugent who happened to be temporarily in command credited his own regiment with the honor in his report of it. We mention this circumstance simply as a further proof of the man's subtlety and his disposition to glorify himself at the expense of others.*

*At Malvern Hill, Col. Nugent commanded his own regiment, and no other, nor was he aware of its critical position till his attention was directed to it by one of its officers whose signature is appended to this communication. Simultaneously with the discovery that his regiment was outflanked, its Lieut.-Col. James Kelly remarked to him "We had better have up the Eighty-eighth to our assistance," and Nugent replied "yes ! yes!" The Eighty-eighth was not more than forty paces in rear of the Sixty-ninth at the time, having been relieved by it but a few minutes before, and as Col. Kelly approached it from the front, Lieut. Emmet of Gen. Meagher's staff rode up from the rear with orders for it to advance: but before he had time to deliver them the regiment sprang forward spontaneously and repulsed the enemy. The combatants were so close that several prisoners were taken by our side and some few of the enemy were killed or wounded by the bayonet. Gen Meagher was in command of his own four regiments there; but Col. Nugent seems to labor under the delusion that the Brigadier-General's place was with the Sixty-ninth and that if not with it he was "separated from his brigade." Every member of the Brigade must feel astonished and disgusted with Col. Nugent's claim of being in command of the Brigade at the several battles referred to, but more particularly must they be disgusted with his claim of having commanded it at Fredericksburg. The Irish Brigade crossed the Rappahannock on the 12th of December, 1862 and bivouacked in the streets of Fredericksburg on the night of the same day. Next day, the 13th before the attack on Marye's Heights, General Meagher,*



*accompanied by General Hancock and a number of staff officers, including the chaplains of the Brigade, rode to the front and center of each regiment, in turn, and made a short but soul-stirring speech to the troops, in which he charged them not to forget the honor of two nations, and the life perhaps of one was in their custody that day; and expressed the hope that if only one man survived he would report within the enemy works. It is strange that we who participated in the battle never suspected that Col. Nugent was our commander in it. If our memory serves us right early in the day Col. Nugent while bravely leading his regiment was hit by a bullet on the handle of a pistol attached to his belt, the concussion from which caused him to retire. The command of the regiment then devolved upon Major James Cavanaugh who fought gallantly till he received a dangerous wound in the side. General Meagher though suffering from an abscess of his knee went in with his Brigade, being assisted across the mill-race in front of the Heights, by members of his staff and remained on the field till he received orders from General Hancock to withdraw his men. During the action he forgot his lameness while meanwhile the limb had become swollen and stiff, and his having to be assisted off the field gave rise to the report he was mortally wounded. This we know to be the historical fact with regard to the Irish Brigade on the memorable field of Fredericksburg. We intended to confine ourselves to the refutation of the statements of Col. Nugent's letter—our conception of what is due to his present position inducing us to extend to him, the charity of our silence. But as he has been publicly stigmatized in the columns of a local print as an adventurer and willful perverter of truth, we are relieved from any punctilio which otherwise would have deterred from descending to matters personal to the individual. It is to be regretted that a true history of the Irish Brigade in America, has yet to be written: but if the facts regarding it are to be set down in accordance with the spirit which prompted the letter on which we have occasion animadvert such a publication will fail to obtain the endorsement of the great majority of the surviving members of the organization, who would look on it as a perversion of history, only calculated to advance the interest and minister to the vanity of some ambitious members. A sense of justice and our duty to the memory of our dead comrades, thus trespassing on your valuable space. Very respectfully, your obedient servants.*

*P.K.Horgan, late Captain 88th, Bvt Major, Vols.*

*John McCartan, late Captain 88th, Bvt. Major, Vols.*

*James Cavanaugh, late Major 69th Vols. Colonel 69th NYSNG*

*Dennis Burke, late Colonel, 88th Bvt. Brig, Gen. U.S.Vols.*

*James Quinlan, late Lieutenant-Colonel 88th Vols.*

*Maurice W. Wall, late Captain 69th Vols. AAG Irish Brigade*

*John W. Byron, late Lieutenant-Colonel 88th New York, Bvt. Col. USV*

*John Dillon Mulhall, late Captain 69th NY Vols.*

*Charles M. Grainger, late Captain 88th and ADC to Colonel Nugent*

*William F. Meehan, late 1st Lieutenant 63rd NY Vols.*

*William O'Meagher Surgeon 69th Vols and Surgeon-in-chief Irish Brigade*

*P.M.Haverty, late Lieutenant and QM, 88th Vols. and Major USV*

*John F. Toal late Captain 69th Vols.*

*Patrick J. Healy, late 1st Lieutenant 88th Vols.*

*John Smith, late Lieutenant Colonel 88th Vols.*

*George J. Benjamin, late Captain 63rd Vols.*

*Peter Conlin, late Lieutenant 69th Vols.*

It is of interest to note that as late as 1877 some of the ex officers of the 69th. were still exchanging acrimonious letters via the New York newspapers with their views on Nugent and his replying with his views on them in the management of various units and their deployment in the Civil War. Who was right who was wrong?. Did Nugent an Irish Protestant have difficulty managing Catholic Irish soldiers?. Perhaps herein is yet another angle to Kelly's incarceration. Nugent would not appear to have been too popular amongst quite a few of his fellow officers. It is also noted that Robert Nugent was from Newry Co. Down.

**Peter Kellys career Aug. 24th. 1862 until war ended in 1865 or when he left the Army.**

**This period of Kelly's Army career is the most difficult to sort out. Though dismissed from the Army in August 1862 he somehow seems to have been able to rejoin the Army.**

**It is more than likely that Kelly when he arrived back in New York would again contact his many friends in that city. It is possible that through contacts he got a position in Co. D of the 1st. New York Cavalry. Was he in this unit as a private and later looked to getting a commission in the 170th. New York? A discharge document exists indicating the discharge of Peter Kelly from the 1st. New York to take up a commission in the 170th. New York Volunteers. A document is know to exist stating that he held the position of 2nd Lieut.**

**Also it is supposed he spent only a short period in the 1st New York Cavalry.**

**Kelly was apparently under pressure from his family both in the States and also in Ireland.They would appear to have found out that he had rejoined the army as a private soldier. A letter which exists but not fully legible is very interesting. It was written from New York on July 25th 1864 a year before the war ended and is addressed to his Brothers and Sisters.It starts off stating that they had expressed great anxiety as to why he had rejoined the army as a private soldier. No doubt they had all both in the States and Ireland being quite proud of his exploits at Bull Run and his promoton and fame. Basically reading what can be read off the letter he explains just why he had left the army. Basically he gives an mirror image of the actual circumstances of what happened and he had really resigned on principle no mention of court-martial!. He talks of charges being prepered by him against Conway his fellow Lieut in his Company. A mosty confused story and in it he goes on to mention the numerous battles that the 69th had fought in implying as I see it that he had taken part in them all!. A physical impossibility. Whether his family believed this I do not know.**

**Peter Kelly's courtmartial is set aside Feb. 1st. 1866 some 7 months after the war ended.**

**By Feb. 1866 by whatever influence Peter Kelly had his disability due to his courtmartial removed. In a letter from the Adjutant Generals Office in Washington dated Feb. 1st. 1866 to His Excellency the Governor of New York his Court Martial has been set aside and he is free to to be re-commissioned should His Excellency so desire. This letter is signed by Thomas M. Vincent Asst. Adjutant General. The war was of course over so this circumstance would probably clear the way for a pension claim. The terminology of this letter is most interesting. "..he is free to be recommissioned". I should have thought that after he has been dismissed in 1862 nearly 4 years earlier they would not have used such terms. Did they know he was still around operating as a non commissioned officer? and just maybe he might want back to "the fold"?.**

**Between Feb. and Oct. 1866 Kelly applies for a pension.**

**As now the exact date of Kelly's leaving the army is unknown but sometime in 1866 after his courtmartial is set aside he seems to have had some difficulty getting his pension application accepted. In order to obtain this pension Kelly turns to several of his ex soldier colleagues of the 69th. Thomas McCantar an ex Captain of the 69th writes a statement that.**

***...in an act of justice to the soldier that he should receive a pension.***

***Thomas Mc Cantar***

***Late Capt 69th Regt.N.Y.V.G***

**This statement is witnessed by what appears to have been an attorney in New York who states.**

*Sworn and subscribed to before me this 30th day of October 1866 at New York City and I certify the applicant to be respectable and entitled to credits and I have no interest in any allowance made by the soldier Peter Kelly for a pension.*

*J.R.Cuming,*

*Coajutor Public.*

This statment signed with seal and stamp of George Washington.This was a lawful document. Kelly would appear to have received his pension.

On 19th June 1889 he receives an increased pension of 8 dollars. His pension is based on the wounds received at the battle of 1st. Bull Run in 1861.

What happened to Kelly in the post war years 1865-1897 is to me unknown though it is recorded he was as storekeeper at the time of his death in 1897.I feel that he went back to New York and raised his family there. Did he ever visit Ireland I don't really know but think not. Few ex soldiers seem to have done so.

Peter Kelly died in Brooklyn New York City May 21st 1897 aged 65.

Peter's wife Mary Ann had died in Feb. 1877. Their son Peter M. had died Aug. 29th. 1892 aged 38 as result of an accident.Their daughter Mary Kelly married an unrelated John J. Kelly and the rest is as they say is history and thankfully the Kelly line still runs. Peter is buried along with his wife Mary Ann, son Peter M, daughter Mary E. Kelly and her husband John Kelly in the Calvary cemetery in Brooklyn. At the time of his death he was employed as a U.S. Storekeeper/Custom Clerk.

In Peter Kelly's life we have a fascinating insight into the life of a young man from Straw by Ballinascreen Co. Derry. We have so little here on our emigrants from S. Derry who fought in the Civil War. Hundreds did. So far what you see on this website is all I have turned up to date. Perhaps McAnally and Gillaspie from just "up the Six Towns Road" had a more exciting war but with its own turns and twists Peter also had a memorable war.

Did the McAnally, Gillaspie and Kelly families in the area of Straw know each other in the 1830's?. Most certainly. Their descendants still live in the area and know each other very well.

#### Conclusions.

If you read the stories of O'Kane, McAnally, Dooley and others on the website you will see very different men. What would you make of Peter Kelly's "war"?. Perhaps you might initially think not a lot really he did not seem to have contributed a lot. Wrong. He did contributed a lot. Why?. Take your thoughts back to the state of the Union forces at the battle of Manassas (Bull Run). Were things looking good for the Union Forces at that time?. No they were most certainly not especially for the officers and soldiers of the 69th. New York. Morale would be very low after basically a bad defeat at Manassas with many killed and captured. The Confederates were on a high. What happened that helped change the morale of the 69th?. A simple thing really. Three soldiers Rorty, O'Donohue and Kelly escaped from imprisonment in the heartland of the Confederate south, Richmond Va. and made it back to New York. This to me was an event that has been overlooked. This was an event that gave a massive morale boost to both the 69th. and indeed the Union forces. This was a psychological warfare event won by the Union Forces. This was where things would change in the mindset of the 69th. and many other units of the Union Army. This event brought massive kudos to the citizens of New York especially the Irish there. As to why Kelly was dismissed from the army I am of the opinion that he was most probably the victim of dirty tricks by those he probably trusted the most and possibly by men known to him in Ireland or from Ireland. Whatever the circumstances of his dismissal from the army he had the idealism and the bottle to rejoin the army perhaps with the tacit agreement and arrangement of

those of power in the regiments linked to New York. He would fight the Union cause whatever the circumstances. I also think the hurt due to and the circumstances of his army dismissal never left him until the day he died.

This son of South Derry served the Union Army well as he did the United States. This should never be forgotten.

## **Capt Hugh Bradley. 3rd Pa. Vol. Infantry. Born Moyard Draperstown Co. Derry**

**Born Moyard near Draperstown-Ballinscreen Co. Derry Ireland March 4th. 1833.**

This mans family belonged to one of the Bradley families who lived in the Moyard or Moneyconey townlands about 4 miles outside the town of Draperstown in Co. Derry. It is known that prior to the Civil war and certainly in earlier years especially pre, during and after the 1847 Irish famine emmigration from this part of Co. Derry would have been in great numbers. Philadelphia was in most cases the main target city in the United States. Many would have walked to the port of Derry to find a ship but some also made it via Belfast or Belfast to Liverpool and then America. One such emigrannt would be a young Hugh Bradley.

Hugh Bradley was born 4th. March 1833 the same year as the later to become Captain Charles McAnally M.O.H of the 69th Pa Vols.from Glenviggan townland some miles further along the Sixtowns road towards Omagh.

Handed down family history states that a young Hugh aged just 17 years made his way to America via a different route via New Orleans as he wanted to meet up with relatives living in the city of St Paul Mn. in what was Minn. territory at the time. He would attempt this journey via the Mississippi. However it appears that the boat get sailed on up the river either went argound or was severely damaged and he immediatley looked for employmentlocally working for a farmer near Memphis Tenn. After about a year he then took up employment on the docks on the river no doubt loading and unloading the goods associated with the cotton trade of La. Later he befriended a local man called Frank White a locomotive engineer involved with the newly opened railroad between Memphia and a small town called Moscow Tn. However still with the urge to travel he left his firemans role and headed north east to Pittsburg Pa.then Johnstown Pa. home to so many Irish emigrants and perhaps some of his relatives from an earlier era. He moved at a time to Phoenixville Pa where he found work as a puddler in a steel works, then eventually back to Johnstown where he would put down roots. At this stage Bradley would be aged about 20. In Johnstown he took up employment with the Cambrian Iron Co. and worked with them for some 40 years. In August 1892 he was promoted to watchman/janitor of the works and held this position until 1905. There would be breaks however.

In 1861 just prior to the Civil war he heeded Lincolns call for volunteers and on the 18th April 1861 joined Capt John Lintons Co. of the 3rd Pa. Vol. Infantry 90 day vols. with Colonel Minier commanding. He was 28 years of age. He would be assigned to Co. F. which was raised in Cambria County.

Though not heavily involved in the war he initially would have taken part in skirmishes in the vicinity of Falling Water and Winchester Va. He also would gain promotion to 1st. Lieut and later Capt. He would not enlist for the three year stint and went home to his family.

Hugh Bradley married three times. His first wife was Mary Riley of New Florence Pa. whom he married on Nov. 16th 1858 and in the 1860 census his family is listed as.

**Name: Hugh Bradley**

**Age in 1860: 28**

**Birth Year: abt 1832**

**Birthplace: Ireland**