



**TIPPERARY HISTORICAL JOURNAL
2000**

© County Tipperary Historical Society

**www.tipperaryllibraries.ie/th
society@tipperaryllibraries.ie**

ISSN 0791-0655

Cahir marine in American Civil War

By Edward J. Shaughnessy

William Walsh was born in Cahir in 1828, the son of Michael Walsh and Mary O'Brien. There is no record of his schooling, but American military records in Washington, D.C. show that he could read and write.¹ There also is no indication of why he emigrated to the United States, though the hardships of the famine years when he grew to manhood would have been sufficient reason. Perhaps he simply waited for elderly parents to die before heading for Cobh, then Queenstown, to board an emigrant ship.²

William Walsh arrived in the United States on 13 August, 1850, on the *Washington Irving*, which had sailed from Liverpool and called in at Queenstown on her way to Boston. There were 230 passengers in steerage, many of them with Irish names and all listed as labourers, whether male or female. On board were three Walshes. William was listed as aged 22 on a separate page; listed together were Michael and Patrick, 19 and 14 respectively.³

What happened to William between his arrival and his enlistment in the U.S. Marine Corps on 25 July, 1854 is unknown. However, he listed his occupation as "sawyer." This would suggest he worked in a sawmill, lumber yard or the like; perhaps he was a ship's carpenter at the Boston Navy Yard. He was then 26 years old, stood 5 feet 11 inches, with blue eyes and dark brown hair when he joined the Marines — probably an imposing figure.⁴

On 1 June, 1858 he was promoted to Sergeant on the *U.S.S. Plymouth* and on 26 January, 1859 became an Orderly Sergeant, the highest ranking non-commissioned officer on the newly built

SIZE ROLL.

William Walsh a private, born ~~in~~ *the* *Ireland*
State of _____ County of *Tipperary* Town of
Cahir enlisted *25th July 1854* at
Boston Mass for four years, by *St. Col. W. Ireland*
aged *26* years, *5* feet - *11*/₄ inches high, *Blue* eyes,
Dark Brown hair, *Fair* complexion, by trade or occupation a *Sawyer*

REMARK *Naturalized Citizen*

I CERTIFY, That the above recruit is free from bodily defects, and is qualified to perform the duty of a soldier.

Explicitly satisfactory evidence of vaccination.

Wm. Johnson
Surgeon

The official Size Roll relating to Walsh's enlistment in the U.S. Marines in 1854.



Steam Sloop Brooklyn, built at the Brooklyn, New York Navy Yard. This was the first of a new class of ships, called Screw Sloops.⁵ She was commissioned on 29 January, 1859 with Walsh as her senior NCO.⁶

The *Brooklyn* was commanded by Captain David Glasgow Farragut, who took command on 1 January, 1859. The ship set out on its "shake down" cruise that same month for Beaufort, South Carolina, then on to Haiti and Vera Cruz, Mexico, returning to New York in September.⁷

On 14 October, 1859, William Walsh married Jane Wall at St. James Cathedral in Brooklyn, with Sergeant Edward Ray and Ann Dowling as witnesses.⁸ Walsh was 31 and his wife only 19. Her parents were Richard Wall, who emigrated from Mayo in 1833, and Mary Wall. They were wed in New York City in 1840. They lived at City Hall Place. Jane, who was an accomplished seamstress, had a brother, Francis H., born in 1851, who later became a distinguished Monsignor in the New York Archdiocese.⁹

The *Brooklyn* sailed out again on 8 November, 1859 for Vera Cruz, but a dispute among the crew led to the death of Seaman George Ritter. Just then the New York papers were full of state and city elections and the raid at Harper's Ferry by John Brown.¹⁰ Sergeant Walsh gave evidence at court-martial proceedings held aboard ship in Vera Cruz harbour.¹¹ Captain Farragut seems to have been a martinet in the matter of ship's discipline and had difficult relationships with his own officers as well. He was close to having his career wrecked by losing command of the *Brooklyn*, and for a period was without command.¹²

On December 5, 1860, South Carolina seceded from the Union, to be followed in 1861 by other States which formed the Confederacy. Florida's secession in January, 1861 created a military emergency. The Marine barracks at Pensacola would fall to the Confederates, but Fort Pickens on Santa Rosa Island withstood a long siege until May, 1861.¹³

On January 18 and 20 U.S. Marines volunteered to assist in retaking Fort Pickens. Reinforcements from the *Brooklyn* got ready to land and support the meagre garrison. Among these was Orderly Sergeant William Walsh. In April, a party of 40 marines, including Walsh, were again landed to augment both the Fort Pickens garrison and Santa Rosa Island. The Fort remained in Union hands for the entire Civil War.¹⁴

In October 1861 William Walsh was re-assigned to the Marine Barracks in Philadelphia, moving to Brooklyn N.Y.'s Barracks a month later. There he served as a military recruiter until 13 December, 1862, when he was honourably discharged as his enlistment period was over. He re-enlisted, however, in January, 1863 and served in Philadelphia until 1 May, 1863.

One of Walsh's close friends was Private John Lane, who had been with him on the *Brooklyn*. Lane served with the Marines at the Battle of Bull Run, July 1861, where he was taken prisoner and moved to Salisbury in North Carolina. He was paroled in mid-1862.¹⁵ Lane would later marry Walsh's widow.

William Walsh was in the city of Brooklyn in September, 1862 for his naturalization ceremony, which was sponsored by Richard Wall, the Mayo immigrant.¹⁶ Walsh was transferred to the Boston Navy Yard's Marine Barracks in May, 1863, and was ordered back to Brooklyn after the draft riots in New York City in July of 1863. He went to sea again on the *U.S.S. Wabash* and took part in the assault on Fort Sumter in September, 1863 and also in the siege of Morris Island.¹⁷ In December, 1864 he was assigned to the *U.S.S. Ohio*, where he served until his discharge on 17 January, 1867.

Walsh must have been home in February, 1866, as another son was born that month who only survived some days. The child was buried in Holy Cross Cemetery, Brooklyn, New York in a grave that would be the last resting place of its two parents. William Walsh himself died of tuberculosis on 30 July, 1868.¹⁸ His son William F. lived until 1910 and had three sons, one being



a well-known attorney, Frank H. Walsh. The eldest son, my grandfather, John J. Walsh, lived until 1952, dying at the age of 92. One of his daughters, my mother Jane, also lived to 92. She married Edward J. Shaughnessy, Sr. in 1923. I am one of the two children of that marriage.

FOOTNOTES

1. Enlistment papers of William Walsh, National Archives and Records Administration, Division of Military Records, Washington, D.C., state his place of birth as Cahir.
2. Denis G. Marnane, "The Famine in South Tipperary – Part One", *Tipperary Historical Journal* 1996, p. 21.
3. *Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at Boston, MA. 1820-1891* M-277 [115 rolls], National Archives and Records Administration [NARA] Pittsfield, Mass.
4. Supra, note 1. These enlistment papers provided the detailed physical description.
5. Paul H. Silverstone, *Warships of the Civil War Navies Annapolis, Md.*: Naval Institute Press, 1989, pp. 35-36. The log books of the U.S.S. Brooklyn are available for inspection in the National Archives.
6. Muster Rolls of the United States Marine Corps, Microfilm Record T-1118, [NARA] Rolls 26 and 27. Drawer 57A-05. Muster rolls exist for each year and indicate assignment, transfers and promotions.
7. Charles Lee Lewis: *David Glasgow Farragut, Admiral in the Making* Vol. 1, Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1941, p. 270.
8. Joseph M. Silinonte: *Bishop Loughlin's Dispensations: Diocese of Brooklyn 1859-1866*, Vol. 1, Toronto: Becker Associates, 1996. P. 159. A certified copy of the actual marriage certificate was obtained from St. James Cathedral, Cathedral Place, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201.
9. Correspondence, North American College, Rome, Italy and Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York; United States Census: 1870, New York City M593 Roll 976, 4th Ward, 2nd E.D. p. 346.
10. *New York Evening Post*, Wednesday, Nov. 9, 1859.
11. *Index of Letters of Captains et. al. to the Secretary of the Navy, Isaac Toucey* [NARA], MO 273 57A-05, Letter 164.
12. *Letters of the Secretary of the Navy to David Glasgow Farragut*, Letters 191 and 446.
13. David M. Sullivan: *The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War: The First Year*, Shippensburg, Pa., The White Mane Pub. Co., 1997, pp. 37-40.
14. Sullivan, pp. 73-78.
15. Letter from Major Addison Garland to Marine Corps Commandant, Col. John Harris June, 4, 1862, [NARA] "Commandant's Letters Received 1819-1903, Record Group 127, USMC, "G" Box 124, January 1851-December 1863.
16. City Court, Brooklyn, New York, 1862, Vol. 33, page 3.
17. Sullivan: *The United States Marine Corps in the Civil War: The Third Year III*, 1998, Chapter 2 "Hard Times off Charleston, South Carolina" p. 28 ff. Letter of Lt. George R. Graham U.S.M.C. on board the U.S.S. Brooklyn June 24, 1861, In "Commandant's Letters..."
18. Death Certificate of William Walsh No. 4974. July 30, 1868, City of Brooklyn, Municipal Archives of the City of New York.

