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“So here’s to the stars and stripes, me boys, And to
Ireland’s lovely shore”

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Abstract

The Dropkick Murphys is a popular American Celtic Punk band known for their combinations of punk rock and bagpipes. Their songs are filled with Irish pride and often have something to do with hard partying and whiskey. However, in their 1999 album *The Gang’s All Here*, the Murphys took on the topic of Irish soldiers in the American Civil War. The song “The Fighting 69th” was first sung by the Irish band The Wolfe Tones on their 1993 album *Across the Broad Atlantic*. The album features several songs dedicated to Irish immigrants to America and holds a certain fascination for the Irish American. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

The Gettysburg Compiler, Civil War, 150th Anniversary, Gettysburg, Civil War Memory, Sesquicentennial, Irish Brigade

Disciplines

History | Military History | United States History

Comments

This blog post originally appeared in [The Gettysburg Compiler](#) and was created by students at Gettysburg College.

THE GETTYSBURG COMPILER

ON THE FRONT LINES OF HISTORY

**“”So here’s to the stars and stripes,
me boys, And to Ireland’s
lovely shore”**



“Irish Brigade Monument at Gettysburg.”
Wikimedia Commons.

December 24, 2014

by Sarah Johnson '15

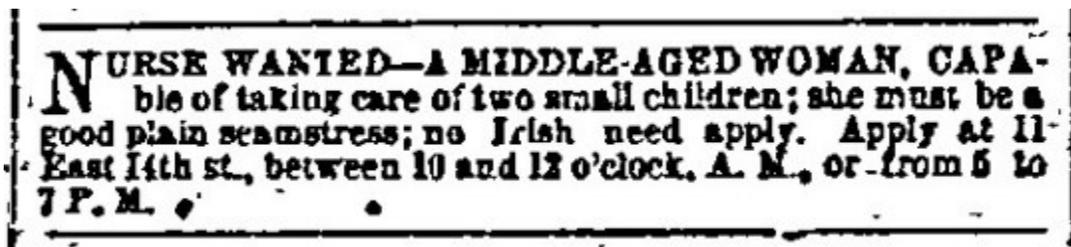
The Dropkick Murphys is a popular American Celtic Punk band known for their combinations of punk rock and bagpipes. Their songs are filled with Irish pride and often have something to do with hard partying and whiskey. However, in their 1999 album *The Gang's All Here*, the Murphys took on the topic of Irish soldiers in the American Civil War. The song “The Fighting 69th” was first sung by the Irish band The Wolfe Tones on their 1993 album *Across the Broad Atlantic*. The album features several songs dedicated to Irish immigrants to America and holds a certain fascination for the Irish American. The [Wolfe Tones version of the song](#) is a more traditional-sounding Celtic song detailing the journey of Irish immigrants as “they sailed away/and they made a sight so glorious/as they marched along Broadway...and from there they went to Washington/and straight into the war.” When

the Murphys released [their version of the song](#) in 1999, they added their signature punk anthem sound to make their version a hard rocking ballad dedicated to the men of the Irish Brigade.



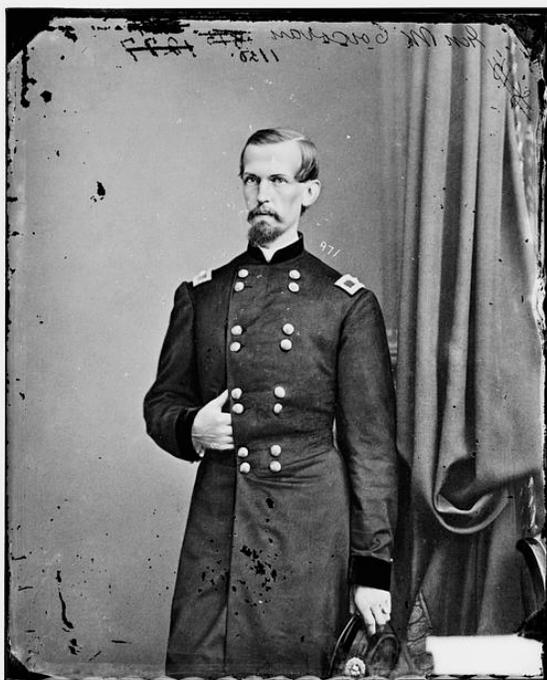
“Dropkick Murphys live in the Reading Festival 2008,” Wikimedia Commons.

The image of immigrants taken straight off the boat at Ellis Island and sent into the war is a popular trope of the Civil War, an example of which can be briefly seen in the 2002 film *Gangs of New York*. The Irish Brigade in particular has become famous in Civil War mythology. The town of Gettysburg alone has two separate Irish stores where one can find all kinds of souvenirs and mementos of the Irish Brigade. They are perhaps best known for their activity on Marye’s Heights at the battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862, where they attacked uphill against entrenched Confederate lines. The attack has been mythologized in the 2003 film *Gods and Generals*, where the audience is moved by the bravery of the new immigrants pinned down in a swale in front of deadly rifle fire. In the film, one feels deeply for the men earning their Americanism in a baptism of fire.



Wanted advertisement displaying the qualification “No Irish need apply.” The New York Herald, Vol. XXVIII Issue 186, Page 11. 7 July 1863.

This view, however, is far different than the view of Irish immigrants at the time of the Civil War. During the 1840s-1860s, many Irish fled their homes due to starvation and harsh conditions. Upon arrival to America, Irish were viewed as subhuman, as poor dogs groveling on the streets of cities like New York. Employment signs sometimes featured the qualification “No Irish Need Apply.” Often, the army served as one of the few places for Irish men to get steady pay and many enlisted to meet base survival needs rather than high ideological ideas of patriotic dedication to one’s new home. And yet today Americans are obsessed with and fascinated by the Irish. St. Patrick’s Day and shirts like “Kiss Me, I’m Irish” have become a huge deal for many Americans able to trace even the smallest amount of Irish heritage. Perhaps the fascination is because Americans love an underdog or a rebel. And so within the pantheonization of all other things Irish, the 69th New York Infantry Regiment is no exception.



The fourth verse of the song speaks to the continuing legacy of the 69th. After the war, it continued to be a regiment and has continued to serve throughout subsequent American wars even to today. During the 150th anniversary of Fredericksburg, the current men of the 69th recreated the assault on Marye's Heights undertaken by their Civil War predecessors. In the YouTube link to the song embedded above, the song is accompanied by a slide show juxtaposing photographs of the modern 69th with Colonel Corcoran and the Civil War 69th. Through the song "The Fighting 69th," the Dropkick Murphys link Irish pride to American pride through their first true intersection, the American Civil War.

Colonel Michael Corcoran, LC-DIG-cwpbh-03187.

Original Wolfe Tones Version: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWvdf_51Iq0

Dropkick Murphy's Version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UmtJ30Rl5o>

www.dropkickmurhpys.com

<http://gettysburgcompiler.com/2014/12/22/so-heres-to-the-stars-and-stripes-me-boys-and-to-irelands-lovely-shore/>