



# GENERAL THOMAS FRANCIS MEAGHER



*As Portrayed by Joseph Forrester*

Thomas Francis Meagher was born in Waterford City, Ireland on August 3, 1823. Meagher was educated at Catholic boarding schools. When Meagher was eleven, his family placed him in the care of the Jesuits at Clongowes Wood College in County Kildare. It was at Clongowes that he developed his skill of oratory, becoming at age 15 the youngest medalist of the Debating Society. These oratory skills would later distinguish Meagher during his years as a leading figure in Irish Nationalism.

Meagher was an Irish nationalist and leader of the Young Irelanders in the Rebellion of 1848. After being convicted of sedition, he was first sentenced to death, but received transportation for life to Van Diemen's Land in Australia. In 1852, he escaped and made his way to the United States, where he settled in New York City. There Meagher studied law, worked as a journalist, and traveled to present lectures on the Irish cause.

At the beginning of the American Civil War, Meagher volunteered to fight for the Union. He recruited a full company of infantrymen to be attached to the U.S. 69th Infantry Regiment New York State Volunteers.

On April 29, 1861, the regiment was added to Brigadier General Irvin McDowell's Army of Northeastern Virginia. Colonel Corcoran initially commanded them, but was captured during the battle. Despite the Confederate victory, the Irish of New York's 69th fought bravely, winning praise from the media and support from the Irish of New York.

Following the First Battle of Bull Run, Meagher returned to New York to form the Irish Brigade. He was commissioned brigadier general to lead them in the Peninsula Campaign of 1862. In late May during the Battle of Fair Oaks, part of the Peninsula Campaign, Meagher saw his first battle

as a brigadier general. The Union was defeated at Fair Oaks, but the Irish Brigade developed a reputation as fierce fighters.

The Irish Brigade suffered huge losses at the Battle of Antietam that fall and suffered its largest losses at the Battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862. Meagher spent the next four months recovering from injuries and took charge of his command three days prior to the Battle of Chancellorsville.

After limited engagement at Chancellorsville, Meagher resigned his commission on May 14, 1863. The Army had refused his request to return to New York to raise reinforcements for his battered brigade. The brigade was 4,000 strong in mid-May 1862, but by late May 1863 it had only a few hundred combat-ready men left. Following the death of Brigadier

General Michael Corcoran, another leading Irish political figure, the Army rescinded Meagher's resignation on December 23, 1863. He was assigned to duty in the Western Theater beginning in September 1864. He commanded the District of Etowah in the Department of the Cumberland from November 29, 1864 to January 5, 1865. Meagher briefly commanded a provisional division within the Army of the Ohio from February 9-25, 1865, and resigned from the U.S. Army on May 15th. Following the Civil War, Meagher was appointed acting governor of the Montana Territory. In 1867, Meagher drowned in the swift-running Missouri River after falling accidentally from a steamboat at Fort Benton.



General Thomas Francis Meagher is portrayed by Joseph Forrester.