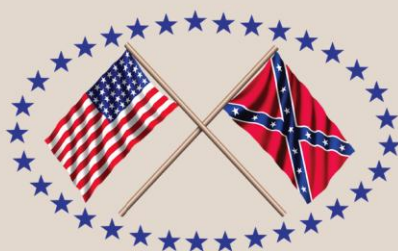


Sumter to Appomattox



American Civil War Round Table of Australia (New South Wales Chapter)
www.americancivilwar.asn.au Patron: Prof the Hon Bob Carr

Number 137
Aug. – Sept. 2026

President's Message

Past President Bruce has been whispering in my ear with increasing frequency that his international duties with the McLennan Scottish Clan are ever increasing and he is not sure he can keep up his ACWRT efforts, but that he still enjoys the Committee dinners and does not want to give them up. And, similarly, Secretary Dan has been whispering in my ear (more of a shout than a whisper) that it is time for someone else to take over the Secretary role. He claims that he has been doing it for ten years, but he is a lawyer so I am not sure he can count. He said that he still enjoys the Committee dinners and does not want to give them up. He has been a fantastic Secretary.

Then I saw that these fellows were in danger of getting in ahead of me, so I also spoke up. I said that I was contemplating stepping down as President and taking up the Immediate Past President role. I am not sure that I will be as useful as Bruce in that role as he has been a wise voice frequently contributing sound ideas, but am happy to try. I also enjoy the Committee dinners and do not want to give them up.

So, we deemed that we would adopt an Emeritus Committee Member or Dinner Member category and invite ourselves along to the dinners. They really are quite fun. Jannette confessed to enjoying hanging out with a bunch of (mostly) old men because we talk about all sorts of things, generally not Civil War topics. And we all feel the same.

So, we have resolved to step down at the AGM this year and there will be some vacancies. Please contemplate joining the Committee this AGM. You will not regret it. It is a great group!
/contd>>

Our Next Meeting

Monday, 24th August from 6pm
at

The Chatswood Club

11 Help Street, Chatswood

Cost: **\$35** for an excellent buffet

dinner including wine on the table

Please book by Thursday Aug 20th.

<https://www.trybooking.com/DOVMR>

Program

A presentation will be given on

Battles of Chattanooga

By John Morrison

General Grant's major tactical and strategic victory in the three-day Battles of Chattanooga, resulting in one of the most dramatic turnabouts in American History.

Reminder:

Membership Renewal for 2026-27 is due!

Please fill out the renewal form sent out by Secretary, Dan Howard, on 12th July.

President's Message cont'd

Do not forget a \$5 and a \$10 note for the door raffles. Bruce's garage is still overflowing with books. See you on 24 August!

.....

Ian McIntyre



U.S. Grant on Lookout Mountain

"And so, we come to the final chapter of the Western Campaign of 1863. What began as a significant Union defeat at Chickamauga ended only a few weeks later with the major Union tactical and strategic victory of the three-day Battles of Chattanooga, resulting in one of the most dramatic turnabouts in American History.

Here, the Union forces were united under a single command - the Military Division of the Mississippi under Ulysses Grant. His performance helped to confirm him as Lincoln's choice for General in Chief.

The significant defeat of Bragg's Confederate Army eliminated the last significant Confederate control of Tennessee, opening the door to the invasion of the [Deep South](#), leading to Sherman's [Atlanta campaign](#) of 1864."

Future Meetings

Should anyone be interested in presenting any of the other topics, or parts thereof, please contact John Morrison on 0411197935 or email at johnjmorrison@bigpond.com

Looking forward to some great nights, best wishes,

John Morrison

Program Coordinator, Civil War Roundtable.

Club Parking

The club offers free parking, with ample space for up to 50 vehicles. The parking lot provides direct access to the club.

How to Access the Parking:

The entrance to the parking lot is located at the back of the club, accessible via McIntosh Street.

For GPS directions, enter '12 McIntosh Street, Chatswood'. This will guide you to the general area. Upon arrival, look for the parking complex with signage that reads 'Club Parking' in black lettering. The following image should assist you:



12 McIntosh St

IMPORTANT: You may need to phone the number on the post outside to get the gate opened. There are internal stairs up to the Club (there's a door on the landing on the right on the top level, just down from the gate) or you can catch the lift to G, then exit the glass doors and enter through the adjoining glass doors.

Our Last Meeting

Member Rod Cooke gave a stimulating and well-received presentation on the Lightning Brigade.

The Lightning Brigade

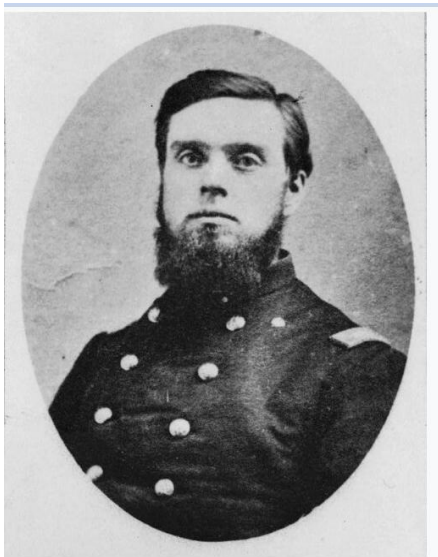
Rod Cooke



Founding

The Lightning Brigade was named because of the speed of their deployment. Wilder's Brigade was named after the commander of the brigade, John Thomas Wilder. Having established a foundry and being an expert in hydraulics, Wilder organised a light artillery company and forged two six-pounders. In May 1861, following his election, he was commissioned as a Captain of Company A in the 17th Indiana and gained a reputation as a competent, even gifted, commander.

Col. John Wilder



John Thomas Wilder, c. 1861-65

Early in his career, in June 1861, Wilder was promoted to Lt. Colonel and saw action in Western Virginia at Cheat Mountain and Greenbriar Valley. In November 1861, his regiment was attached to the Army of the Ohio and moved west. In April 1862, he was promoted to colonel. He arrived too late for the Battle of Shiloh but participated in the siege of Corinth and was praised after by the Divisional Commander.

In the summer of 1862, Confederate General Braxton Braggs' army invaded Kentucky, leading to the Battle of Munfordville in September 1862. Munfordville was on the north end of an 1800-foot-long railway bridge over the Green River and was a federal supply depot and key station on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. This line was used as the line of advance of the Union Army of The Ohio as they pursued Bragg.

Munfordville had a garrison of 4,000 troops and Braggs's Army had 16,000. After a three-day siege, the garrison surrendered. Wilder had refused to surrender but after three days was shown the enemy positions and then surrendered the garrison. He spent two months as a POW before being exchanged. This siege set the scene for the Battle of Perryville on October 8, 1862.

After his release, Wilder was assigned to command a Brigade in Maj. Gen. Reynolds' 5th Division, 14th Corps, and was then assigned his old regiment, the veteran 17th Indiana. The assigned artillery battery was the 18th Indiana Battery with six 3-inch rifles under Capt. Eli Lilly (a pharmacist and founder of global giant Eli Lilly Pharmaceuticals).

Morgan's raids

In December 1862, Confederate John Hunt Morgan, with 3,100 cavalry and 7 field pieces, left Tennessee for Kentucky, aiming to destroy the line of supply of Maj. Gen. William Rosencrans's Army of the Cumberland along the Louisville and Nashville railway.

Reynolds' Division was assigned to pursue Morgan and left to pursue him on foot. This division had 2 brigades – Wilder's and Hall's. Wilder had 75 officers and 1,738 soldiers. He followed Morgan, in his 1862-63 raid, as he headed back south. Morgan had destroyed \$2m worth of Federal property including ripping up railway tracks and capturing prisoners. Wilder had missed the Battle of Stones River.

Mounting the Brigade

It seemed that use of rail, wagons and mules did not work. Wilder's solution was to use Dragoons.

Wilder realised that his infantry could not catch mounted raids. Additionally, inadequate firepower was an issue as only single shot muskets were available. The Army of Cumberland also suffered from a dearth of horses, weapons and equipment. To overcome this, Wilder proposed mounting his Brigade by raiding Confederate areas to access horses, equipment and fodder, a new policy for the Union. He stressed that his force was to be mounted infantry, not cavalry. Troops would dismount to fight.



Rosencrans approved the proposal and each Regiment would get a vote. The equine impressment program got into gear with horses and mules brought in. Wilder's Brigade was made up of the 92nd Illinois; the 98th Illinois; the 123rd Illinois; 17th Indiana; the 72nd Indiana; the 18th Independent Battery, Indiana Light Artillery (Capt. Eli Lilly). Eli Lilly's Battery initially had six 3-inch rifled guns; 8 horses per gun instead of 6 and 4 mountain howitzers that could be carried by mules. It was nicknamed 'the Jackass battery'.

Wilder's Brigade undertook many raids and, in March 1863, one raid took 88 prisoners, 460

horses and 6 wagons as well as a great deal of corn, hay and tobacco and 194 negroes. They also destroyed 10,000 bushels of wheat.

Repeating rifles

In arming his Brigade, Wilder preferred repeating rifles because rifled muskets were too difficult to use on horseback. The US Cavalry was using Spencer single shot rifles, but their rifles lacked the long-range accuracy the Brigade needed.

Springfield rifled muskets used a 0.58-inch paper cartridge. Spencer breech loader and repeating rifles used a 0.52-inch metallic cartridge and Henry repeating rifles used a 0.44- inch metallic cartridge.

Wilder looked at the Henry repeating rifle and then a demonstration of the Spencer repeating rifle by Christopher Spencer. This weapon delivered about seven times the firepower of muzzle-loading weapons. Spencer arranged a shipment of his rifles, which armed all men of the Brigade. Training took place in May and June 1863. The Brigade needed deliveries of Spencer cartridges and fodder and equipment for their horses.



Private William N. Rogers, Company C, 98th Illinois, posed proudly with his newly-issued Spencer rifle.

Advance South

The Battle of Hoovers Gap, part of the Tullahoma Campaign, involved Rosencrans manoeuvring against General Bragg in heavy rain and mud. The Lightning Brigade spearheaded the advance to Hoovers Gap, showing speed in arriving there, and then, against orders, decided to take and hold the position.



Wilder was attacked by Brig. Gen. Bate's Brigade, but he maintained his position with the use of the Spencer rifles. This was supposedly the first battle fought with repeating rifles. Bate lost 146 killed and wounded and Wilder 61. After the battle, Wilder was congratulated by Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas and Gen. Rosencrans, who congratulated him for "seizing the Gap because it would have cost thousands of lives to take the position".

In the aftermath, the Confederate cavalry was not provided intelligence on Union movements. Union troops under Thomas broke out of Hoovers Gap and Bragg, finding his right flank gone, withdrew to Tullahoma on June 27th.

Wilder's Brigade left on a raid on June 28th, tearing up railway track and destroying a branch line. They were back in Manchester without a single casualty by June 30th. In August-September 1863, the Brigade's success saw them detached as the Army's mobile brigade. This success caused Gen. Bragg to withdraw from Tullahoma and then to Chattanooga with Gen. Sheridan pursuing them.

2nd Battle of Chattanooga

In the Second Battle of Chattanooga, the Lightning Brigade shelled the town from the northern side of the Tennessee river and then skirmished with the main Confederate force in order to divert attention from the flanking column sent to the southwest of the city. They marched to north-east of Chattanooga so that the Confederates could see them.

By August 21st, the Brigade was in position and the 18th Indiana Light Artillery began shelling the city. This continued for two weeks, keeping Bragg's attention to the northeast, while the bulk of Rosencrans' army crossed to river to the south and west. Bragg was forced to withdraw into Georgia.

At Ringgold, the Lightning Brigade was surrounded by Confederates but did not press home an attack. They withdrew without any

casualties but heard the Confederates attacking their position.

Rosencrans had escaped a trap so abandoned his pursuit plans and concentrated his army. In the meantime, on 17th September, Bragg was reinforced by Lt. Gen. Longstreet's Corps and by a Mississippi division under Brig. Gen. Bushrod Johnson. On the 18th, Bragg decided to move north towards Chattanooga, forcing Rosencrans to fight or withdraw.

Battle of Chickamauga

On the 17th September, the Lightning Brigade was sent to defend Alexander's Bridge over the Chickamauga Creek. Wilder sent the 123rd Illinois, most of the 72nd Indiana and a portion of Lily's Battery but had only 1,000 men to block an incoming force eight times higher. Rifles and cannon held off an attack by Liddell's Brigade, causing 105 casualties. Walker's Brigade moved to Lambert's Ford and crossed at 16.30, well behind schedule. Lily's Battery duelled with an Alabama Battery.

Concerned about his left flank, Wilder withdrew his Brigade to a blocking position west near Viniard Farm. By dark, Bushrod Johnson's Division was halted in front of Wilder's position. Walker had crossed the river, but his troops were scattered along the road behind Johnson.

Chickamauga Day 1: Bragg failed to exploit the surprise he had created. Rosencrans, anticipating Bragg's plan, ordered Thomas and McCook to move up to support Crittenden. Rosencrans sent forces to deploy across the farm but stumbled into Johnson's men, causing the Battle of Chickamauga to begin. At 14.00 hrs, Johnson's Division advanced across the Lafayette Road and forced Davis's Union Division back.

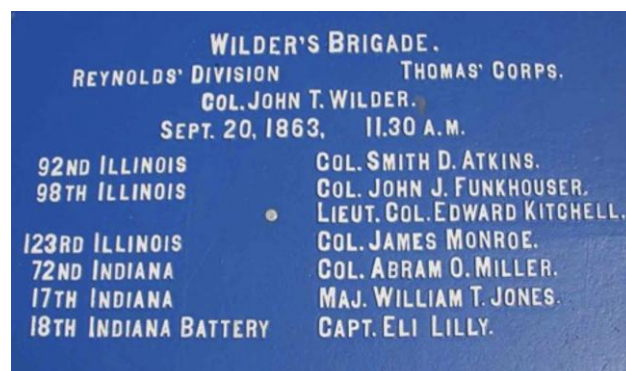
The Lightning Brigade had been held as a reserve near Viniard Farm till midday. He now received orders to support the threatened Union line. They arrived to find the 3rd Arkansas and 1st Texas Regiments of the Texas Brigade closing in on the 2nd Minnesota Battery. In response, the 72nd Indiana and 123rd Illinois rode in to shatter these Regiments. The Spencer rifles forced the Confederate attack to withdraw.

At 15.30 hrs, the Texas Brigade came on again. Outnumbered two to one, the Lightning Brigade fended off the Confederate attack. One rebel prisoner asked, "What kind of gun have you got over there? You jus' kept on shootin' and shootin'". For a second day, the Lightning Brigade had saved the Army of the Cumberland from disaster.

Chickamauga Day 2: Rosencrans failed to see Brannan's Division in the centre of the line. He ordered Wood's nearby Division to move and fill the supposed gap. This created a gap in the Union line just where Longstreet had planned his attack. The Confederates achieved a major breakthrough and the Union units began fleeing. McCook's Corps and Sheridan's Division were now cut off. Sheridan was sent to link up but was pushed back by the triumphant Confederates. Rosencrans gave up trying to rally his troops and fled. The last hope on the right was now Wilder's Brigade, who surprised and halted the advancing Confederates. It turned into a counterattack, with the 34th Alabama routed and 28th Alabama forced back. During a lull, sounds of Thomas's defence to the north suggested they were the only Union force left, so Wilder planned to take his Brigade north to join up with Thomas. Wilder then sent dispatches to McCook and Sheridan.

On Day 2, a hatless, shaken individual galloped towards Wilder. It was the Assistant Secretary of War, Charles Dana, who demanded to be escorted to Chattanooga to inform Washington of events. Wilder offered an escort, but Dana emphasised that Wilder should fall back and guard the withdrawal. The Lightning Bde withdrew from the field and took up a position on Missionary Ridge, east of Chattanooga. Up north, Maj. Gen. Thomas held out and saved the Army from destruction.

Over the days of the battle, the Lightning Brigade had: on 18th September, held off a Division from crossing Chickamauga Creek; on 19th September, pushed back the elite Texas Brigade; on 20th September, deflected part of Longstreet's attack, plugged several holes and supported other Union formations. It had been a catalyst for several counterattacks, had suffered only 125 casualties. Maj. Gen. Thomas formally commended Wilder for his performance at Chickamauga.



Wilder's Brigade Historical Marker

After Chickamauga, Rosencrans's Army withdrew back to Chattanooga and erected strong fortifications. The Confederates followed

and besieged the Union Army, which had to be reorganised with Maj. Gen. U.S. Grant appointed Commander of the new Military Division of Mississippi.

The Lightning Brigade was assigned to defend the Tennessee River at Friars Island and began digging fortifications. During this time, Wilder fell ill with complications from typhoid and dysentery and took leave. On 19th October, Rosencrans was relieved and Thomas was appointed to command the Army of the Cumberland.

In October 1863, the Army of the Cumberland was reorganised and the Lightning Bde broken up and promoted into the Cavalry to a number of Illinois and Indiana Brigades and Corps.

Wilder was promoted to brevet Brig. Gen. on 7th August 1864 and took command of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division in the Western Cavalry Corps. He took part in the Atlanta campaign in spring and summer 1864 as part of Sherman's Army but recurring bouts of illness meant that he was forced to retire on October 5th 1864.

Post-Civil War, Wilder settled in Chattanooga and established ironworks and blast furnaces as well as a company that built rail tracks and helped build railways. He was elected Mayor of Chattanooga in 1871 and unsuccessfully ran for US Congress in 1876. He was City Postmaster until 1882 and appointed Federal Pension Agent by President McKinley.



Wilder Brigade Monument at Chickamauga

Song: *The Lightning Brigade* by James Barnes, spring 1917

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oh0B_GLF31c&list=RDoh0B_GLF31c&start_radio=1

Secretary and Member Dan Howard followed on with an equally well-received and informative topic.

The Draft Riots

Dan Howard

New York was something of a Jekyll and Hyde at the time of the American Civil War.

It was the location of Lincoln's famous 'Cooper Union Speech' that catapulted him to national prominence; Manhattan promptly provided a regiment to protect Washington in response to Lincoln's call for troops after Fort Sumter, and Brooklyn was "a sanctuary city before its time", with one of the largest and most politically aware Black communities in the United States. Henry Ward Beecher, brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, pastor at the Plymouth Church in Brooklyn Heights, was one of the country's most active abolitionists.

However, as the business capital of the nation, New York City merchant classes had not welcomed the onset of the War as it meant losing the South as an important trading partner.

Before the Civil War, cotton represented 40 percent of all the goods shipped out of the city's port. Although the slave trade was made illegal in 1808, the city's underground market in enslaved people continued to thrive.

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, there was even talk of the city of New York seceding from the Union itself, so entwined were the city's business interests with the Confederate States.

Irish Resentments

Irish had fled the 'Great Hunger' in Ireland from 1845; during the famine period, 650,000 Irish arrived in New York Harbour. They were frequently taken advantage of and were on a very low rung of the social ladder. The total population of New York City in 1863 was about 850,000, a quarter of whom were Irish immigrants.

James M McPherson in *Battle Cry of Freedom* has this to say about the situation of the Irish in New York at the time:

"Crowded into noisome tenements in a city with the worst disease mortality and highest crime rate in the Western world, working in low-skill jobs for marginal wages, fearful of competition from black workers, hostile toward the Protestant middle and upper classes who often disdained or exploited them, the Irish were ripe for revolt against this war waged by Yankee Protestants for black freedom. Wage increases

had lagged 20% or more behind price increases since 1861. Numerous strikes had left a bitter legacy, none more than a longshoremen's walkout in June 1863 when black stevedores under police protection took the place of striking Irishmen."

The extract below from the 'Help Wanted' ads in an 1857 New York Times paper provides a good example of the 'No Irish need apply' attitude that kept them on the low rungs of society.

NURSE WANTED—To take charge of three children. A Protestant woman (Scotch preferred), who is fully competent in all respects. Must have unexceptionable references, and willing to spend the Summer in the country. Apply at No. 94 East 27th-st., or 21 Platt-st.

CLEAN, ACTIVE GIRL WANTED—To do the housework of a private family; must be a first-rate washer and ironer, a good plain cook, and kind and obliging to children. Apply at No. 27 Lamartine-place, 29th-st., between 8th and 9th-avs. No Irish need apply.

CHAMBERMAID AND WAITER WANTED.—A girl to wait on the table and do chamberwork is wanted at No. 63 East 17th-st. She must be a Protestant and with good recommendations.

COOK WANTED.—A Protestant cook, well recommended by her last employer, may obtain a situation in a private family, at No. 63 East 17th-st. Wages \$8 a month.

COOK.—Wanted, a good cook for the country during the Summer months. A German Protestant preferred. Apply from 9 to 12, at No. 33 Lafayette-place.

AN INTELLIGENT AND EXPERIENCED PROTESTANT WOMAN WANTED—To take charge of one child and do light chamber work. None need apply except those having the highest testimonials from their last employers. Inquire at No. 59 Pierpont-st., Brooklyn.

New York State overall voted Republican in the 1860 election – an explosive mix in the Civil War era. Many local politicians were openly hostile to the war which, by 1863, had resulted in tremendous carnage.

One significant New York politician of the era was Fernando Wood, a strongly pro-slavery New York politician with 'Copperhead' sympathies toward the seceding Southern states, who had been Mayor of New York City for several years, including throughout 1860 and 1861.



The Emancipation Proclamation



Promulgated in early 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation seemed to have changed the purpose of the war from preserving the Union to freeing the slaves. Many did not support this.

New York's anti-war politicians and newspapers kept warning the working-class white citizens – many of them Irish and German immigrants – that emancipation would mean their replacement in the labour force by thousands of freed blacks from the South.

Tammany Hall politicians courted the Irish vote, which resulted in a Democratic Mayor, whilst

Fernando Wood

Just before the war, Wood had proposed to the City Council that the city secede from the Union to form the 'Free City of Tri-Insula', incorporating the islands of Manhattan, Staten Island and Long Island except for pro-Union Brooklyn. Its economy would thrive on tariffs from cotton.

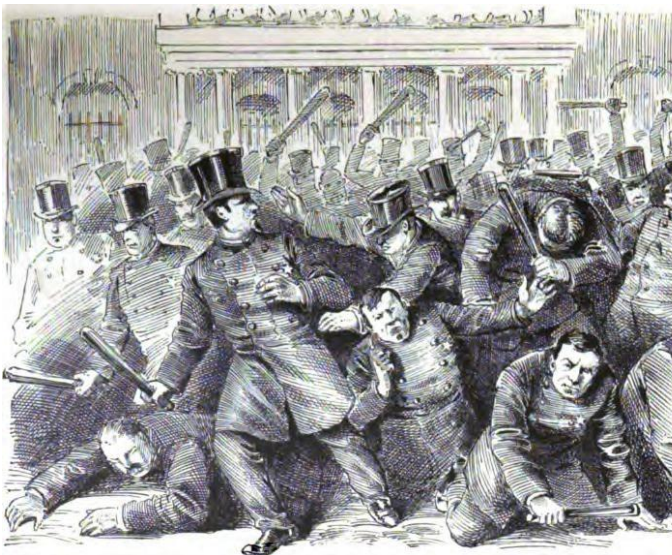
During the 1850s he built an independent populist base by championing the massive wave of poor Irish immigrants escaping the Great Famine and had used the Irish gangs of New York to help him gain control of Tammany Hall (the New York Democratic headquarters with immense political influence and a reputation for corruption). Wood controlled the Municipal Police Force and favoured appointments of Irishmen.

In 1857, the Republican dominated State legislature created the 'Metropolitan Police' to break Wood's Tammany Irish political machine and the city's corrupt police force, the 'Municipals'. Wood refused to disband his own city force of 'Municipals' and chaos resulted as the two forces battled openly in the streets.

Two Competing Police Forces

This situation led to New York City's **Great Police Riot** of 1857.

Wood refused to accept the appointment of a new Street Commissioner by the State government and had him forcibly removed from City Hall and appointed Charles Devlin instead. When Metropolitan Police tried to arrest Wood, the Municipals battled with them for half an hour on the steps and in the corridors of City Hall. The Metropolitan Police eventually retreated. 53 were injured in the riot and for months afterwards, the two police forces interfered with one another, often preventing one another from arresting criminals.



Metropolitan Police and Wood's 'Municipals' battle outside Town Hall during the police riot of 1857

This extraordinary break down of law enforcement gave considerable free rein to NY criminal gangs and did little to discourage lawlessness.

The Municipals were ultimately disbanded. The situation was, however, exacerbated by the fact that newly-appointed police Superintendent Kennedy was greatly disliked for targeting immigrants, including Irish, disproportionately.

On July 4, 1857, following a court ruling that dissolved Wood's 'Municipals', the Irish gang known as 'The Dead Rabbits' (or Roach Guards) launched a major assault against their nativist rivals, the Manhattan 'Bowery Boys', at the Five Points district. 12 people died and the State Militia was required to quell the riot.



A contemporary sketch of the 1857 riot between the 'Dead Rabbits' gang and the 'Bowery Boys'

These various elements of prejudice, fearmongering, breakdown of law and order and general discord created a virtual powder keg environment for the draft to be introduced into.

The Draft Proposed

In July 1862 Lincoln called for states to provide 300,000 volunteers, but the enrolments had fallen off significantly. Thousands of soldiers would soon be able to get out of their service when their term of enlistment expired in the summer of 1863.

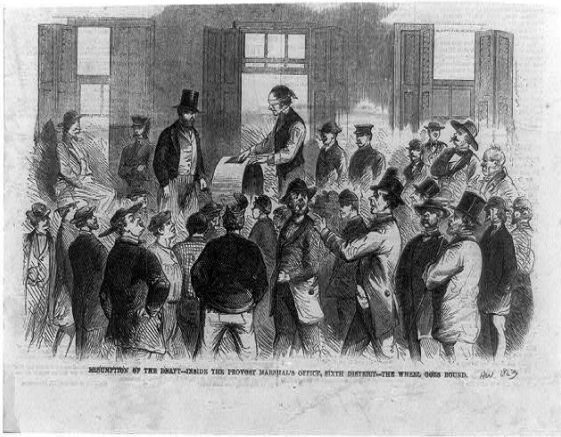
As a result, the **Enrollment Act** was passed by Congress. Its primary goal was to encourage men to volunteer under threat of being drafted.

Under the operation of the Act, districts were given quotas, based pro rata on their population (after adjusting for the number who had already enlisted voluntarily from that district), to meet *before* the draft would be put into effect. States worked hard to meet their quotas, mainly using the offer of cash bounties (state, federal & local). "Bounty Brokers" could even take men from other districts and states. Bounties reached as high as \$1,000.

Congress authorized a Provost Marshall's Bureau in the War Department to enforce conscription in each congressional district by enrolling eligible persons. They had wide powers to seize spies, deserters and war critics.

In the first draft in July 1863, the Provost Marshalls called up 20 percent of enrollees, chosen by lot in each district.

Each district had 50 days to fill its quota with volunteers. The balance of the quota would be made up by the draft lottery.



A

contemporary sketch of the Draft lottery being drawn (Library of Congress)

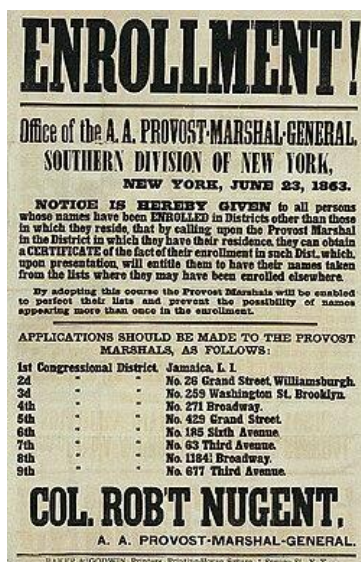
Some Key Provisions of the Enrollment Act 1863

The Act required all Able-Bodied male citizens and immigrants intending to become citizens, between ages 20 and 45, to enroll. They were divided into classes of eligibility. Class 1 were all men aged 20 – 35 plus unmarried men up to age 45; Class 2 were married men between ages 35 and 45 (to be drafted only if class 1 was used up in filling the district's quota).

Blacks were not citizens and so were exempt from the draft, which gave rise to added resentments.

The Act allowed for *commutation* of the draft obligations at cost of \$300 (a cruel joke as this was about a year's salary for a labourer who earned about 85 cents a day). It also allowed for a person drafted to pay instead for the provision of a *substitute*.

It was not surprising that Irish American labourers vociferously opposed the Lincoln Administration, emancipation, and the military service the Union now required.



An enrolment poster under the Act

Significant elements of New York politicians and the press recklessly fomented trouble over the new draft. *The Freeman's Journal*, the leading Catholic Newspaper in New York, fanned the flames by advising New Yorkers to resist the draft in order to prove that they were not an 'enervated, emasculated and slavish people'. The editor told a mass meeting that "when the President called upon them to go and carry on war for the nigger, he would be d----d if he believed they would go."

Other Democratic organs denounced conscription as a plot by Republicans in Washington to override states' rights, impose black equality and force Irish-born Democrats into what some of them called a "nigger war" – requiring them to risk their lives to free black men who would soon compete for their low-paying jobs.

In a 4th July speech to Democrats in the city, Governor Seymour warned Republicans who pleaded military necessity for emancipation and conscription: "Remember this – that the bloody and treasonable doctrine of public necessity can be proclaimed by a mob as well as by a government."

However, the reality of the draft's operation was that very few people would ultimately be drafted. Again, citing historian, James M McPherson: "If a man's name was drawn in this lottery, one of several things would happen to him next – the least likely of which was induction into the army".

According to McPherson, of the four drafts held under the Act, more than 20% failed to report (161,000 of 776,000) fleeing instead to the West, Canada or 'the woods'. Of those who did report, one-eighth were sent home because of already-filled quotas. Three-fifths of the remaining 522,000 were exempted for physical or mental disability or under one of the other exemptions.

Those remaining had the choice to pay the \$300 commutation fee (which was good only for the current draft) or to furnish a substitute (which exempted him from any further draft). Of the 207,000 men who were drafted, 87,000 paid a commutation fee and 74,000 furnished substitutes, leaving only 46,000 who went personally into the army as draftees. The pool of substitutes was furnished by 18 and 19 year-olds or immigrants who hadn't applied for citizenship.

A System Ripe for Abuse

Unfortunately, this system was ripe for abuse. Surgeons could be bribed; false affidavits claiming exemption were made; some feigned

insanity and some even self-mutilated including by removal of teeth (so they could not bite cartridges as required to load a muzzle loading rifle!) and some citizens claimed to be aliens. The contemporary cartoons below show a man who has had his wife cut off his finger, and a man disguising himself as a woman in order to avoid the draft.



The New York Irish had recently suffered many bereavements and were grieving after the battle of Gettysburg (1-3 July 1863). That tragic engagement gave rise to hundreds of casualties across various regiments, North and South. The legendary Irish Brigade, consisting of the 63rd & 69th New York, 116th Pennsylvania and 28th Massachusetts, fought in the notorious Wheatfield and suffered 202 casualties out of their total strength of 530 men. There were many Irishmen in the 69th Pennsylvania which suffered heavy losses defending against Pickett's Charge. It was therefore not surprising that there was a great deal of very real grief amongst the Irish in New York and anger at the personal cost of the war.

The Riots Erupt

The first day of the draft in New York, on Saturday 11 July 1863, went quietly. However, on Sunday, anger fomented and loose plans for violent protest were made in public houses and elsewhere. When the draft resumed on the following Monday, 13 July, all hell broke loose.

An angry mob stormed the uptown draft headquarters on Third Avenue, beating policemen who stood in their way. They threw bricks at and smashed the glass window, smashed the draft wheel, scattered the draft cards, trashed the interior and set fire to the place.

John Alexander Kennedy, the Superintendent of Police, was viciously attacked and left for dead. The rioters stormed downtown, the crowd swelling – eventually up to 50,000 – towards the city's armories intending to seize guns and, on the way, set fire to the entire Forty-seventh Street block. Residents in poor Irish neighbourhoods swarmed into black enclaves, torched businesses and homes, beating hundreds of African Americans, maiming and mutilating dozens, and lynching at least half a dozen innocent victims. Other mobs targeted the residences and businesses of well-known Republicans, including Horace Greely's *New York Tribune* office – one of many occasions when the police charged at the rioters. The owner of the *New York Times*, Henry Raymond, posted three Gatling guns on the roof to keep the mob at bay.



Police charge the rioters outside the office of the *New York Tribune*

The mob turned on the Colored Orphan Asylum. A quick-thinking matron with other staff got all 233 children out the back door and to safety before the mob breached the building and burnt it to the ground.

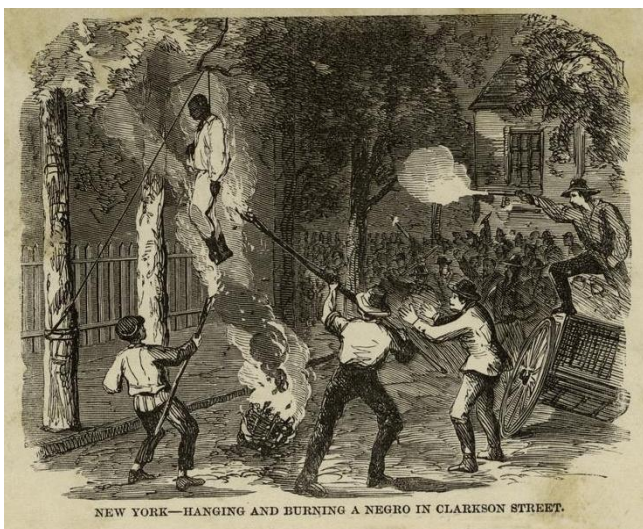


The burning of the Colored Orphan Asylum

Brooks Brothers store was looted. Well-dressed men were attacked, members of the mob shouted taunts such as "Down with the Rich!" and "There goes a \$300 Man!" Abolitionists were targeted. 'Amalgamationists' were targeted including a prostitute, Mary Burke, who took black clients, and Ann Martin and Ann Derrickson, who were married to black men.

Rioters imposed a reign of terror on Manhattan, attacking police officers. They tore up railroad tracks, destroyed street-sweeping machines and a grain elevator and burned down the armory on Second Avenue and Twenty-first Street; the mob invaded the Union Steam Works in an attempt to get the thousands of rifles stored there; outnumbered occupiers leapt to their deaths from windows or were clubbed or shot.

Catholic Archbishop John Hughes pleaded for calm, but the mob responded by setting fire to Protestant churches and attacking firemen who tried to put them out.



At least half a dozen innocent African-Americans were lynched by the mob

The Riots were finally put down on 17 July 1863. New York's police were untrained in riot control and fought the mob courageously but with only partial success.

The War Department rushed several regiments of Union troops from Gettysburg who, on 15 and 16 July, poured volleys into the ranks of rioters. By 17 July a degree of peace was restored. The troop strength in Manhattan was built up to 20,000 to deter any similar disturbances elsewhere and the draft resumed on 19 August, by which time the City Council had appropriated funds to pay the commutation fees of drafted men (including some of the rioters no doubt!).

The final cost of these terrible riots was 119 dead (some historians give a much higher figure). More than 110 soldiers and policemen were wounded, hundreds of civilians, black and white, were injured and there was massive damage to property and infrastructure.

It is a question to ponder whether much progress has been made in contemporary America to address the root causes and underlying discontents that combined so tragically to give rise to the New York Draft Riots of 1863.

FOR SALE

The Secretary has received a letter from one Peter Nixon saying that he has two Civil War swords for sale. One is an 1860 Pattern Ames light cavalry sabre and scabbard; the other is an 1863 Roby musician's sword and scabbard (see below). He has no figure for a sale but would be interested in a reasonable offer. If interested, contact Peter at peteranixon@ozemail.com.au



Any members wishing to contribute should contact John Morrison on

johnhnmorrison@bigpond.com or 0411 197 935