

My Irish Great Grandfather JAMES GWYN
Brevet Major General, United States Volunteers

He was born and raised in Londonderry, Ireland. He was well trained there at Foyle's College and later studied surgery. He and his many siblings all migrated to various parts of the U.S. during the Irish famine crisis. James settled in Philadelphia and in 1850 married Margaretta Young, granddaughter of an American Revolutionary War hero, and became associated with the Stuart Brothers, well known dry goods merchants. Over time he developed an interest in the Military and did an apprenticeship with the Artillery Corps, the Washington Greys.



James Gwyn was fortunate as well honored to be offered the second in command spot in a new regiment financed by a Philadelphia bank, but he had prepared himself well, and demonstrated strong leadership qualifications which his men highly respected. After Appomattox they chipped in and presented him with a magnificent engraved and gilded sword which is still in my family. The following was their

FINAL MUSTER

118th Pa, United States Volunteers
(Corn Exchange Regiment)

September 30, 1890

Mustered into Service:	Aug 31, 1862
Battles participated in:	34
Killed in battle:	205
Died of wounds & disease:	500
Missing in action:	273
ORIGINAL MUSTER:	960
Additional RECRUITS:	456
FINAL MUSTER of orig. members:	139

Within a week after the fall of Sumter, he had been commissioned Captain of Co. "G", 23d Regiment, Pennsylvania Infantry, with which regiment he served under General Patterson in the Valley, taking part with credit in the affair at Falling Waters, July 2, 1861. Upon the completion of his three months' service he was, on August 14, 1861, commissioned Captain of Co. "F" in the reorganized regiment 23d Pennsylvania Infantry, which took the field under the command of Colonel David B. Birney, and was assigned to First Brigade, First Division, Fourth Corps. He participated with his regiment in the Siege of Yorktown, the battle of Williamsburg and the battle of Fair Oaks, where it was heavily engaged.

THE patriotic resolution of the Corn Exchange, of Philadelphia, adopted at a meeting held upon July 24th, 1862, under which immediate action was taken for the formation of a regiment of infantry and its equipment resulted in the rendezvous, one month later, at Camp Union, near the Falls of Schuylkill, of the historic command which, nearly one thousand strong, went forth as the 118th Regiment.

Sometime later he was prostrated with Chickahominy fever and resigned the service, but upon recovery was commissioned Lieut.-Colonel 118th Pennsylvania Infantry. This fine regiment, which had been raised by the Philadelphia Corn Exchange, was commanded by Colonel Charles M. Prevost. Hurried to the front upon the news of Lee's invasion of Maryland, it was attached en route to the First Brigade (Barnes) First Division (Morrell) of the Fifth Corps. It was held in reserve during the battle of Antietam but three days later composed part of a small force thrown across the Potomac to observe the enemy. The regiment was left unsupported to make a gallant but ineffectual resistance to the overwhelming attack of a number of Confederate brigades. So staunch, in fact, had been the resistance that the Confederates, as evidenced by the reports, believed themselves to have been opposed by a much heavier force.

Gwyn also participated in the Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg campaigns, commanding the regiment in the first and last named in the absence of Col. Prevost, occasioned by a severe wound received at Shepherdstown. October 31, 1863, he received his commission as Colonel.

Upon the opening day of the battle of the Wilderness, Colonel Gwyn led his regiment in the charge of the First Division, Fifth Corps, and was severely wounded in the right thigh. Rejoining the command in August, 1864, he commanded the First Brigade as senior Colonel in Gen. Warren's operations on the Weldon Railroad, participating in the severe engagements of August 18, 19 and 21. He commanded the Brigade in the brilliant action at Peeble's Farm, capturing two earthworks and a fortified line of the enemy, and having his horse killed under him. For his part in this engagement he was thanked by General Meade and was brevetted Brigadier-General.

Subsequently he was assigned to the command of the Third Brigade, Second Division (Ayres) of the Fifth Corps, and participated in the engagements at Dabney's Mills, Fort Steadman, Lewis's Farm and Five Forks. "For gallant and meritorious services at the battle of Five Forks," where his brigade captured a large number of the enemy and many battle flags he was brevetted Major-General. He was mustered out in June, 1865.

General Gwyn was particularly soldierly and impressive in appearance. For a number of years before his death, he was debilitated by age and suffering. He was naturally adapted to a military life. How successful he was as a soldier is best shown by his having received in quick succession the brevets of Brigadier-General and Major-General for distinguished conduct in the field.