



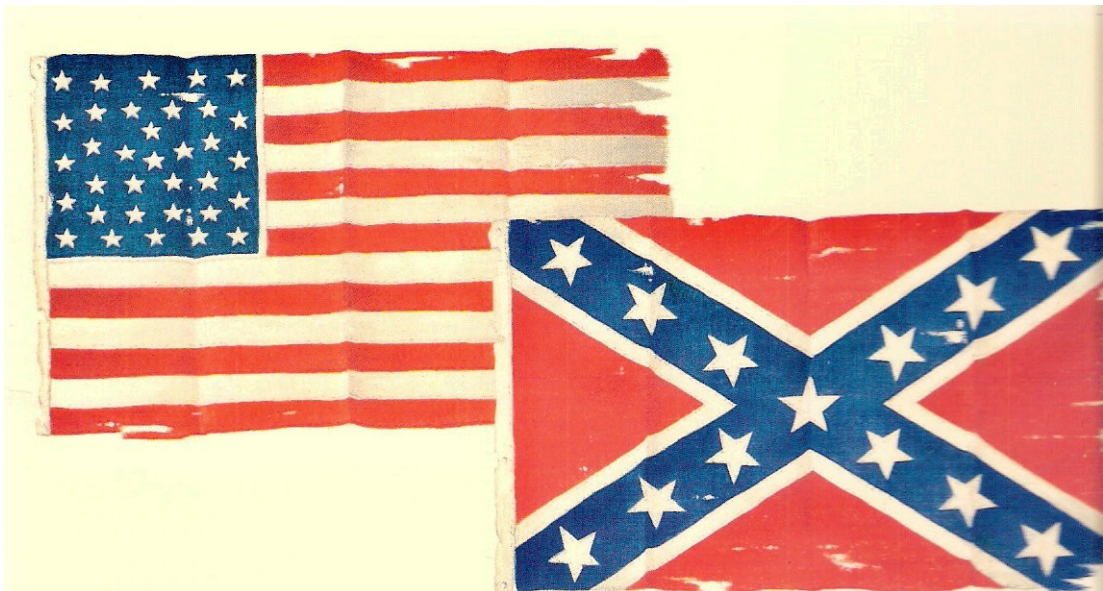
TASMANIA'S CONNECTIONS TO THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR.

by

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2015



TASMANIA'S CONNECTIONS TO THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

Tasmania's connections to the American Civil War are historically significant.



At least three Civil War veterans lie buried throughout the State, perhaps one or two more and two Irish exiles to Van Diemen's Land, Thomas Meagher and John Mitchel, went on to play major roles in the War between the States. (see more under **Irish Exiles**)

TASMANIANS WHO SERVED.

It is also believed that a Tasmanian served during the war by the name of Manfred Rose. Manfred's real name was William Goody, but it is unsure why it was changed. Manfred/William was born in Hobart Jan 11, 1853, and joined up as a 12 year drummer boy. He returned to Australia and is buried in Neutral Bay, New South Wales.

Edward John Dumaresq, son of pioneer Edward Dumaresq Senior of Longford, served with the Confederate Army as a Captain. He was born in Tasmania (Van Diemen's Land) 18th July 1836. He enlisted as a private in the South Carolina Zouave volunteers, Hampton Legion Mounted Infantry 7th September 1861, although he had served as a British Officer previously. He survived the war and it is believed could have served as a Police trooper in Queensland, but it is not known where he died.

TELEGRAPH LINE IN TASMANIA

Another connection is with John P Mikesell who superintended the construction of Tasmania's original telegraph line in the 1870s. Mikesell was born in Virginia in the 1830s and participated in the Californian gold rush in the late 1840s and 50s. He enlisted in the Union Army in November 1861 and resigned as Captain in 1863. When gold was found in Australia shortly afterwards, he sailed for our shores. After completing his services as a superintendent to our telegraph construction, he left Australia and returned permanently to the U.S.A.

CIVIL WAR RAIDERS.

The *C.S.S. Alabama* was sunk off the coast of France in 1864 by the U.S.S. Kearsage. The pennant, however, was saved by a French yachtsman who managed to salvage the pennant from the water. Years later the pennant was delivered to the son of Lt. John Low in Liverpool England, who served on the Confederate raider. Eventually the pennant and Lowe's sword and scabbard came into the hands of Philip Sweetingham of Hobart, Tasmania, great great grandson of John Low. The family migrated to Tasmania in 1913. In 2001 on a trip to Mobile, Alabama Mr Lowe in the presence of Oliver Semmes, the great great grandson of Admiral Raphael Semmes, who captained the *Alabama*, presented the 75 foot pennant and sword and scabbard to the Museum of Mobile, at a civic reception. Another Confederate vessel, the *C.S.S. Shenandoah* was certainly in Australian waters and it is possible that in an effort to hide from Yankee vessels it sought shelter in Port Davey on our west coast. *Shenandoah* researcher Civil War historian, Barry Crompton from Victoria, has written extensively on the *Shenandoah's* visit to Australia, particularly to Port Melbourne, but he cannot vouch for the Tasmanian visit. He, however, adds, "Stranger things have turned up in the past."**

IRISH EXILES

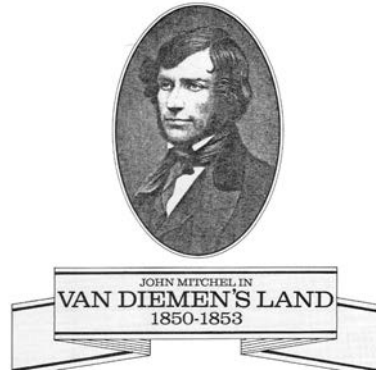
Two Irish political exiles, Thomas Francis Meagher* and John Mitchel, both escaped from the penal home of Van Diemen's Land to seek refuge in the U.S.A. There, they got involved in War between the States, though on opposite sides.

Meagher, escaped from Van Diemen's Land in early 1852 and made his way to the U.S. When the Civil war exploded he organized a company C of Irish Zouaves for the Union cause and was given the rank of Captain. He was wounded on two occasions. He retired as General Meagher and died mysteriously in Montana in 1867, possibly at the hands of vigilantes, officially drowning in the Missouri River after falling over-board from a river boat.



General Thomas Francis Meagher

His comrade, John Mitchel, supported the South. Mitchel, too, escaped from Van Diemen's Land after giving notice to do so to the startled local magistrate at Bothwell, a quaint historical village in the State's Midland. It is a documented fact, that Mitchel's son, John Jnr. who also lived in Tasmania, fired the first Confederate cannon volley on the Union held fort, Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbour on April 12, 1861. Thus the war began.



John Jnr actually became Commandant of Fort Sumter and was killed later with the rank of Captain, July 20 1864. John Mitchel's other son, Willy, also was killed, at Gettysburg in June 1863. A third son, James, survived, though losing an arm. John Mitchel Senior edited a southern newspaper in Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy. Oddly enough the name of the newspaper is the same as a Tasmanian daily called, *The Examiner*.

AMERICAN MEXICAN WAR CONNECTION

As stated, there are three American Civil War veterans (possibly more) buried in Tasmania. Two known American veterans, who served in the American-Mexican War of 1846-7. One was Robert Edgar Lockheart who is buried in the old Queenborough cemetery at Sandy Bay. It is understood that he was a part-American Indian.

Another was James Hoare who was brother to Catherine Briscoe (see story below). He served in the Mexican War and was born it is believed in 1830 and like his parents, the Hoare couple, he migrated to Tasmania.

CIVIL WAR VETERANS

1) In the Cornelian Bay cemetery, southern Tasmania, lies **James Francis Waters**. * James was born in Louth County, Ireland and enlisted in the U.S. Navy April 24, 1863. He served on various vessels. After the war he joined the American Navy. In 1879 he departed the U.S., having learned that his father was still alive and living in Hobart. He arrived in Tasmania July 4 1879. James married Rachael Elizabeth Dunton in that same year at St. John's Church, Richmond. There were ten children from the marriage. Every year to commemorate his American heritage James flew the

American flag from his home in Hobart. His last home was at 36 Federal Street. He died in Hobart February 22 1923. His descendants still live in Tasmania.



James Waters



Tombstone of Waters, Cornelian Bay, Tas
(photo: Reg Watson)

2) **Henry Wells**, ex Company B & A, 69th Indiana Infantry Regiment lies at Somerset on the north west coast. Once his grave-site was unmarked, but by the efforts of the late Roy Parker in 1996 and the local RSL, his lasting resting place is now marked, being dedicated Australia Day, January 26th 1996. He arrived in Tasmania in 1879 to Burnie and settled at Somerset in 1889. At the age of 67 years he married 46 year old Jessie Emily Wragg 9th November 1895. He died at Latrobe hospital in January 1912. Like Waters he was born in Ireland 11 May 1828, County Dare, later migrating to the United States. When the war commenced he was working on a farm in Indiana and enrolled at Richmond Indiana 5th August 1862 as a Private. Wells saw action in the Western Theatre during his three-year term, including the battle of Richmond Kentucky, when most of the Regiment was captured and the siege of Vicksburg in July 1863. He was honourably discharged at Mobile, Alabama on 5th July 1865 as Corporal. He returned to farming and then to Kansas, before moving to Tasmania. His descendants still live in Tasmania.



Unveiling of Well's tombstone 1996. Left: Maj. Roy Parker, Len Traynor, Cyril Dixon (Mayor) and Tom Wragg.

(Table Cape News 31st January `1996)
Photo right: tombstone 2009. (photo: Reg Watson)

3) Another Civil War veteran, named **Charles Baker**.



Charles Baker.

Baker lies at Beaconsfield, but his grave is not marked. The author is working to have a tombstone placed on this man's grave, but full documentation is required before doing so. Charles joined the Union Army at Boston and later transferred to the Navy. He was born in Lancashire English about 1844. His family moved to the east coast of USA and it is believed he went to sea as a cabin boy for some years until he was 16-17 years of age. He arrived in Melbourne in 1867-1869, but left the ship and went to the Victorian goldfields. He married in 1871 Sarah Ann and in about 1880 arrived in Tasmania to work in the mine at Beaconsfield. He died there in September 1906.



Baker's unmarked grave, Beaconsfield. (photo: Reg Watson)

4) Another possibility is **John Francis Johnston**. It has been thought that he was ex Company A, 48th Illinois Infantry Regiment. Johnston lies resting in a disused burial ground in Launceston. It is now used as a private school's sporting field. Latter research, however, shows that definite dates for Johnson serving in the Civil War just do not equate. While not discounting him one hundred per cent, it does look like that he may not qualify as a veteran.



John Francis Johnston

5) Research is currently being done on a **John Henry Stephens**, who is claimed to be a possible veteran by one of his descendants. He was born in Cornwall in 1838 and it would appear after the war lived in California, arrived in Tasmania in 1877. He too, lived at Beaconsfield and died in Launceston 24th July 1897 and is buried in the Charles Street, Cemetery.

FURTHER CONNECTIONS

Actor Edwin Booth, brother of John Booth who assassinated President Lincoln, played at one time at the Theatre Royal in Hobart, while Hobart also enjoyed a visit from author Mark Twain who spent a very brief spell (of only several weeks) in the Confederate Army. Twain, arriving in Tasmania 2nd November 1895, described Hobart as one of the tidiest cities in the world.

Samuel Crombie Brown (Croumbie Brown) of Company B, 61st Massachusetts Infantry, arrived in Australia in the late 1860s and married at Launceston in 1872 to Maria Annie Dean, having five children by her. He was a journalist in Tasmania and during The Anglo-Boer War he was a war correspondent. He is buried at Rookwood Cemetery, Sydney NSW, with his cousin from Launceston, Rachel Brown (d 1890) and his wife, who lived until 1951.

The Tasmanian Briscoe family began with the arrival of Mrs Catherine Briscoe nee Hoare, with her four children. They settled near her parents, Michael and Catherine Hoare who had been transported from Ireland and had settled at Chudleigh. Her husband Private Michael Briscoe was now dead. Michael at the rather advanced age of 46 years enlisted in the New York infantry in 1862, but tragically died as a civil war soldier in May 1864, while serving with the NY 132nd Regiment Voluntary Infantry.

The 132nd were on outpost duty at Batchellors Creek near New Bern from May 1863. On 26th May 1864 while men were waiting for the mail to be unloaded from the train at about 4pm, a torpedo accidentally exploded and numerous men including Michael Briscoe were killed. Commander, Colonel Peter J. Classen wrote to a fellow officer *“A fear explosion occurred here half an hour ago, whereby several men and officers were killed and wounded. Thus far I cannot trace to any negligence causing this explosion except from idle curiosity, tampering with the torpedoes sent in of Lieutenant King up here. Medical aid is wanted. Dr Page, with his generous stores, is desirable. I am too sick at heart to ell you more just now.”*

The following day (May 27th 1864) Captain Fenton wrote to Mrs Catherine Briscoe stating that (her husband's) *“remains have been interred in the Regimental Grave Yard his paper will be made out so that you can obtain back bounty due him and also his back pay.”* Catherine received a pension of \$8 per month, but after arriving in Tasmania in 1871 she requested an increase in the pension. After about six years and much writing she was finally awarded an increase.

Another interesting and another connection is an interesting letter from a Tasmanian Richard Cripps to his brother William Cripps dated 3rd Nov 1863 from New York in which he writes (among other things) *“Dear brother I will tell you a little about the dreadful war in America between the North and South it has been going on for three years and there is no sign of it stopping but*

getting worse. The Government has commenced drafting men for soldiers I expect that every able body man will have to go from 20 to 45. I am libel to a draft myself, Edward is not. They had one battle last Spring where the loss on both sides was about fifty thousands killed. It makes my heart ache when I think of the terrible trouble that prevails over the once most happy land of America. You cannot think the change it has made in so short of a time. Four years ago America was one of the most flourishing country in the world. We was once a free people, but not so now.”

A rather intriguing connection is with Abraham Lincoln. In 1879 Hobart was guest to Pastor Charles Chiniquy from Canada. Chiniquy was a converted Catholic Priest, who made it his world mission to preach against the “errors” of his original faith. He was asked to come to Tasmania when lecturing in Australia, by a number of Protestant ministers, excluding those of the Church of England faith. Chiniquy lectured in the Hobart Town Hall, where every night was disrupted by those who opposed him. The city tinkered on open chaos, so much so, that the Governor called out the local artillery and militia volunteers, believing (quite rightly) the police could not handle the situation. The author believes this is the only time in Australia’s history that that has happened. In 1850 when Chiniquy was in the United States, a Catholic Bishop charged Pastor Chiniquy with malpractice. Chiniquy was exonerated from the charges after being successfully defended by his advocate, Abraham Lincoln, who was to become the United States President during that country’s Civil War.

Another interesting Civil War veteran, although not connected to Tasmania, but with Australian bushranging was Captain Moonlite. Moonlite was captured after a furious gunfight with the police from Wagga Wagga and was hanged for his deeds at Darlinghurst in 1880. His real name was Andrew George Scott and was an earnest Anglican part time preacher, although not ordained. He was an Englishman who it is believed served with the Garibaldi, the Italian patriot of the 1840s and 50s who incidentally sailed in Bass Strait.

Moonlite also served with the British in New Zealand during the Maori Wars and then went to the U.S. where he joined the Union Army. It is said he made a great deal of money through black marketing. After the war, he came to Australia where he took up bushranging on two separate occasions, under the pseudonym, Captain Moonlite.



* Section H – Roman Catholic Section. “F”

** for a history of these raiders, see the book, “Four Years in the Confederate Navy” (The career of Captain John Low on the CSS Fingal, Florida, Alabama, Tuscoloosa and Ajax) by William Stanley Hoole.

Acknowledgment:

On the Briscoe family to Jeff Briscoe at the time of writing (2015) an Alderman on the Hobart City Council. From his family papers.



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Mr Watson is author of the book, *THOMAS FRANCIS MEAGHER – Irish Exile to Van Diemen’s Land*. \$18 posted. Further copies of the CD are available for \$15 posted.

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Thanks to: *American Civil War Round Table of Australia*, in particular, Barry J. Crompton and to the extensive research papers of the late Roy Parker. Check Roy Parker’s book, “*Civil War Veterans in Australia*” (2000). However, it only mentions Wells and Walters in reference to Tasmania.