

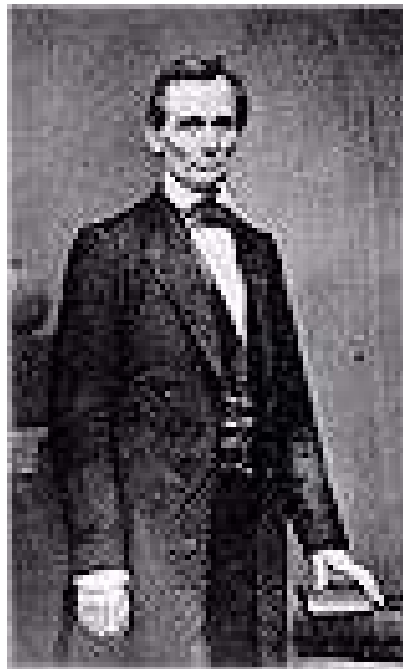
April, 2005

423rd Meeting

Vol. 26 #8

*Tonight's
Program:*

**Abraham
Lincoln
As portrayed by
Jim Getty**



Abraham Lincoln will address the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable tonight. This month, the 140th anniversary of his assassination, Lincoln will be reincarnated in the person of Jim Getty. Jim is one of the foremost impersonators of Lincoln. He has spoken at the National Theater in Washington and the Library of Congress. He provides a moving one man show reflecting Lincoln's heritage, humor, and hope. Come listen to Abe's homespun stories of his youth and recollections of his personal and political life.

Tonight's Speaker:

Jim Getty

Portraying Abraham Lincoln since 1978, Jim Getty is a native of Illinois, who now resides and portrays the 16th President in historic Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He has been featured on television and in special appearances throughout the United States and Canada where he provides 'first person' presentations as the President.

Date: **Wednesday,
April 13, 2005**

Place: **The Cleveland
Playhouse Club
8501 Carnegie Ave.**

Time: **Drinks 6 PM
Dinner 7 PM**

Reservations: **Please Call
JAC Communications
(216) 861-5588**

Meal choice: **Braised Short Rib
or Vegetarian Pasta**

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

FOUNDED 1957

President: **Mel Maurer** (440) 808-1249
Vice President: **Dave Carrino** (440) 843-9088
Secretary: **Marilyn DeBaltzo** (440) 461-6804
Treasurer: **Lynn Loritts** (216) 491-9853
Historian: **Dale Thomas** (440) 779-6454

Directors:

Warren McClelland Hans Kuenzi
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David Novak George George

website: clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com

email: a-bell@adelphia.net

Editor - THE CHARGER - Dan Zeiser

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Past Presidents

2004 Warren McClelland	1980 Charles Spiegle
2003 Maynard Bauer	1979 William Bates
2002 Bill McGrath	1978 Richard McCrae
2001 William Vodrey	1977 James Chapman
2000 Bob Boyda	1976 Milton Holmes
1999 Dick Crews	1975 Thomas Gretter
1998 John Moore	1974 Nolan Heidelbaugh
1997 Dan Zeiser	1973 Arthur Jordan
1996 John Sutula	1972 Bernard Drews
1995 Norton London	1971 Kenneth Callahan
1994 Robert Battisti	1970 Frank Schuhle
1993 Kevin Callahan	1969 Donald Heckaman
1992 Bob Baucher	1968 Frank Moran
1991 Joe Tirpak	1967 William Schlesinger
1990 Ken Callahan Jr.	1966 Donald Hamill
1989 Neil Glaser	1965 Lester Swift
1988 Martin Graham	1964 Guy DiCarlo, Jr.
1987 George Vourlojianis	1963 Paul Guenther
1986 Tim Beatty	1962 Edward Downer
1985 Brian Kowell	1961 Charles Clarke
1984 Neil Evans	1960 Howard Preston
1983 William Victory	1959 John Cullen, Jr.
1982 John Harkness	1958 George Farr, Jr.
1981 Thomas Geschke	1957 Kenneth Grant

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

APRIL, 2005

Our speaker last month, **Tim Smith**, popped myths big and small about **Shiloh**, making us wonder how many other myths we have taken as fact about other aspects of the **Civil War**. There is no substitute for good research when it comes to history. Tim had never seen snow before we provided some for him during his visit. He was awed by our frozen lake, saying he had no idea that it ever froze over, but after a day he had seen enough ice and snow and was ready to return home. (I wanted to go with him.)

Jim Getty, our speaker this month, has been portraying **Abraham Lincoln** over thirty years for audiences of all ages. He performs all around the country for children, Civil War groups, and business groups looking for information and inspiration on **Lincoln's Leadership**. He was last in Cleveland two years ago for an appearance with the Cleveland Pops Orchestra performing Aaron Copeland's "Lincoln Suite." It promises to be a great evening – we encourage you to bring guests to make the president feel the love in Cleveland.

Our thanks to our member who generously donated \$1000 to be used for our speaker program and preservation. Thanks to your support of our raffles this year we will be able to add to this donation and contribute to two good causes that we will announce when we determine the amounts. A special thanks, too, to **Dick Crews** for his generous contribution of many great books for our quiz and raffle.

Our raffle this month will feature Lincoln books and other items, including Ole **Abe's Gettysburg Pinot Grigio**. The Lincoln bicentennial poster will be available one last time before Mr. Lincoln pulls the winning ticket. (Remember our slogan: "We need your Lincolns for our Lincoln poster.")

Be sure to check out the new features **Dale Thomas** has added to our web site – our history and our new **Speakers Bureau** have been added in recent weeks. The Bureau is open to all members so let me know if you would like to join. See you on the 13th...

Mel Maurer

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE
2004/2005 SCHEDULE**

September 8, 2004



Lincoln and Douglas

**Voices of the
Civil War:
D o u g -
las, Lincoln,
and Echoes on
the Prairie**

George Buss

October 13, 2004

**Henry
W.
Halleck**



John Marszalek

November 10, 2004

**Winfield Scott
Hancock**



**Dan
Zeiser**

December 8, 2004



**Ghosts of
Gettysburg**

**Neil
Glazer**

January 12, 2005

The Great Debate

Which is the best book, fiction or non-fiction, on the Civil War?

Moderator: William Vodrey

February 9, 2005

**Stonewall
Jackson in the
Valley
Bob Boyda**



March 9, 2005

**Myths of
Shiloh**

**Tim Smith
Shiloh National Park Historian**



April 13, 2005

**Abraham
Lincoln
Portrayed by
Jim Getty**



May 11, 2005

**Patrick
Schroeder
As George Peers**



Recollections of Appomattox

BALTHASAR BEST and the AMERICAN DREAM

By Mel Maurer

I was first introduced to private Balthasar Best of the 1st Minnesota Infantry Regiment by his great grandson, Bill Lasswell, almost two years ago on the battlefield at Gettysburg. My grandson, Eric, and I had just parked near the Pennsylvania Monument on our auto tour and walked across the road to the tablet describing the action of the 1st Minnesota when an older couple approached us. The man said he had noticed that my license plates were from Cuyahoga County. He told us how his great grandfather, Balthasar Best, survived a shipwreck in 1850 somewhere off the shore of Cuyahoga County when he was just a boy. Mr. Lasswell then asked if I might know anyone named Kleinschmidt – the name of the family that took in the young Balthasar after the shipwreck. I told him that I did not, but would do some research on the shipwreck and the Kleinschmidts when I got home.

Several weeks later, I visited the library at the Western Reserve Historical Society to see what I could learn about Lake Erie shipwrecks in 1850, the Best family, and maybe even the Kleinschmidts. Using some of the same sources I once used in finding my German ancestors' arrivals in this country, I found a record of the Best family - mother, father, and eight children - leaving Darmstadt in Germany and arriving in New York in early June, 1850. I then found a record of the wreck of the steamer, *G.P. Griffith*, some 220 yards off the coast of what is now Willowick on June 17, 1850. A fire on board burned the *Griffith* to the water line. It would prove to be the ship the ill-fated Best family had taken from Buffalo to reach Toledo. I was unable to find anything on any Kleinschmidts.

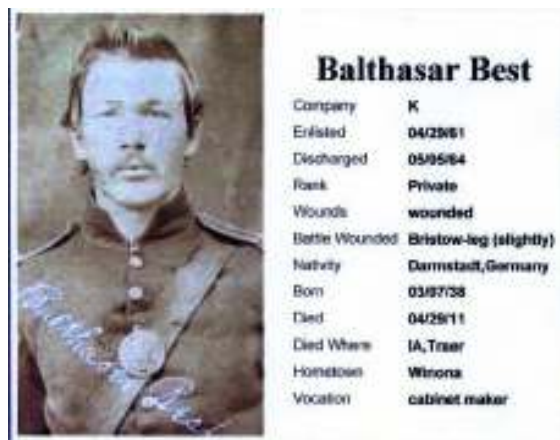
The burning of the *Griffith* was one of the worst maritime disasters on the Great Lakes, killing almost everyone on board (286 dead of about 300 passengers, mostly immigrants.) The victims were buried in a mass grave on the beach that is now part of the lake. There is an Ohio Historical Marker in a Willowick park at E. 305th Street and Lakeshore Blvd. commemorating the *Griffith* and its passengers. (Although no one knows for sure why the *Griffith* ignited, a new oil used on this trip was considered to be a possible cause.) I sent the Lasswells copies of what I had learned of the *Griffith* and the Best family. I received a note back thanking me for my help and telling me my information was almost entirely new to them.



I continued my research on the Internet and at the Cleveland Public Library: Balthasar's father, Jacob, was a doctor who brought his family here in pursuit of the American dream, a dream that would die for all but one of the Bests in Lake Erie's waters. Twelve year old Balthasar survived, somehow making it to shore where he was taken in by a German family. This family, however, treated him cruelly and a new friend of his, Jacob Kleinschmidt, had his family offer him a home where he was raised as a son.

Balthasar moved to Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin in 1856 where he learned the trade of cabinet making before moving to Winona, Minnesota in 1859. There he learned the trade of sash and door making. At age twenty-three, he enlisted into Company K of the 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment on April 29, 1861. (A clerk at that time dropped the "h" in his name and recorded it as "Baltasar.") He was 5'6" tall with gray eyes and brown hair. His childhood friend, Jacob, also enlisted – in what is believed to be Company A of the 37th Ohio Infantry - in September, 1861. (Jacob would die in battle the following year. Balthasar always thought it should have been him who died since he was the orphan in the family.)

Balthasar kept a diary of his war years. He would fight in twenty battles during his three years of service, including Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Bristol Station. He had his gun shot out of his hands at Gettysburg during the regiment's famous charge on July 2 against Wilcox's Alabama Brigade when the rebels wounded or killed 170 of 300 Minnesotans. Some records say he was wounded at Bristol Station. (He never mentions a wound so it may have been slight.) He mustered out on May 5, 1864. (His diary is in German and is now being translated into English by Ewald J. Hausdorf, a former military attaché for Austria. The Cleveland Civil War Roundtable's contribution to his work is a picture of the Griffith Historical Marker which he asked to send.)



Having barely survived a shipwreck, the cruelty of his first foster family, and three years of action in the Civil War, he returned to Winona still looking for that great American dream. He would soon find it. He married Francisca (Fanny) Salentine, another German immigrant, in Winona soon after his return. They left Minnesota for Iowa in 1872, first to Tama City where they ran a restaurant, and then to Traer in 1873 where they had their only child, Minnie, in 1876. He built one building where he ran a restaurant and then another where he and his wife ran a restaurant and hotel – the “Best House.” He would later add a grocery store and a dry goods store to his enterprises.

Balthasar, or simply “B” as he was affectionately known, was a member of the Salley GAR Post in Traer. He attended several reunions of veterans of the 1st Minnesota Infantry. He

said he developed rheumatism after the Battle of Gettysburg due to the rigors of the war – especially troublesome, he said, when standing picket duty in wet weather. He eventually lost the use of both legs as a result. Fanny and Balthasar died in 1909 and are buried in Traer.

His obituary read that he was “one of Traer’s most notable residents, one of her most widely known citizens, one of her most successful businessmen and one of the bravest yet most tender hearted men.” He had realized the American Dream.

Notes:

A. After sending the Lasswells more of my research along with copies of several papers that reported the *Griffith* disaster in Cleveland, I received this note: “My mother and all of our family were amazed and thrilled to read a contemporaneous account of the *Griffith* demise. My mother is ninety-seven. She was five when Balthasar died. Especially during his last year, my mother spent much time watching and visiting with him. All of his life he wanted to know the cause of the fire. My mother told me that Balthasar related to her that his father had gathered the whole family on the deck, said a brief prayer and told them to jump. Thank you.” Signed Bill Lasswell.

B. “Balthasar” is also spelled “Balthazar,” “Baltasar,” and “Balthassar” in various records. (The name comes from Balthazar, one of the three wise men in the bible)

Mel Maurer is the current President of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable and a frequent contributor to the Charger. He is a Lincoln fanatic and a member of the Lincoln Forum, which he attends each year.

CORRECTION AND ADDENDUM

by Dale Thomas

In my article on Rockport Pioneer Cemetery (March, 2005), John Andrews of the 103rd OVI was buried there in 1862 not John Anderson. Jacob Gessner’s name is spelled Gasner or Gastner in military records. (National Park Service Website. Soldiers and Sailors Monument) Nine veterans buried in this cemetery could not be identified with a specific military unit because of contradictory and/or inadequate records: George W. Cooper (Headstone: Cpl., F. Co., 25th OVI. NPSW: Pvt., F. Co., 24th OVI), Hiram B. Landphair (S and S Monument lists a Hoxie E. Lamdphear in the 54th OVI who was really in the 15th Ohio Battery. Was Hiram in the 54th? No record in NPSW.), J.B. Darby (NPSW: Joseph B. Darby, 185th OVI / 191st OVI. S and S Monument: John E. Darby, 125th OVI), Samuel H. Brown, Frank Bentley, Stewart Herbeson, and Gideon Pease. Quoted letters of Nathan Hawkins are from the archives of the Olmsted Historical Society, North Olmsted, Ohio.

Below is the schedule that Dave Carrino, Vice President, has put together for next year. As you can see, it promises to be an exciting and interesting year.

**Cleveland Civil War Roundtable
2005-2006 session**

September 14, 2005: Bruce Smith, Executive Director, National Civil War Naval Museum at Port Columbus, Georgia
“They Had Navies, Too???”

October 12, 2005: James I. Robertson, Jr., Alumni Distinguished Professor, Department of History, Virginia Tech
“How the Civil War Still Lives”

November 9, 2005: Carol Lasser and Gary J. Kornblith, Department of History, Oberlin College
“The Transformation of Abolitionism in War and Peace: Oberlin, Ohio as a Case Study”

December 14, 2005: Lenette Taylor, Summit County Historical Society
“The Supply for Tomorrow Must Not Fail: The Civil War of Captain Simon Perkins, Jr., a Union Quartermaster”

January 11, 2006: Annual Roundtable Debate
“The Most Overrated Leader (Military or Political) of the Civil War”

February 8, 2006: William F.B. Vodrey, Cleveland Civil War Roundtable
“Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain: Scholar, Citizen, Soldier”

March 8, 2006: “The Trial of Henry Wirz”
A play by Dale Thomas, Cleveland Civil War Roundtable

April 12, 2006: Richard McMurry, freelance writer and historian
“New Framework for Civil War Military History”

May 10, 2006: Michael Bennett
“Union Jacks: Yankee Sailors in the Civil War”

**FOR A GOOD TIME – JOIN US
FIELD TRIP SEPTEMBER 23-25, 2005
FREDERICKSBURG - SPOTSYLVANIA COURTHOUSE
NATIONAL MILITARY PARK**

This year's trip will be to Fredericksburg and environs. This gives us access to four battlefields, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, the Wilderness, and Spotsylvania. For those less inclined to traipse over battlefields, the town of Fredericksburg provides other opportunities. Reserve the date. If you are interested, please send your deposit of \$75.00 to Dave Carrino, 4470 Coral Gables Drive, Parma, Ohio, 44134.

NEXT MONTH

PATRICK SCHROEDER AS GEORGE PEERS

RECOLLECTIONS OF APPOMATTOX