

JAMES O'NEILL: "The Kindle of his Bright Eye"

By Don Jensen

© 2008, Don Jensen

The teamster lashed his mules into an unaccustomed run, leaving behind the dimming sounds of gunfire a half mile to their rear. The band wagon bounced and swayed wildly as it rumbled across the prairie. In pursuit, a dozen or more mounted men, Confederate irregulars, Quantrill's feared raiders closed in on the speeding wagon. One of them, a heavysset bearded man, caught up to the heavy vehicle, shouting to the driver to rein in and surrender.

Someone on the band's wagon – it was probably the teamster himself, Pvt. Thomas Leach, since he was the only one aboard believed to be carrying anything more lethal than an Eb rotary valve cornet – pointed a pistol at the mounted man and fired. The guerrilla toppled from his horse, dead.¹

And then it happened! An axle couldn't handle the strain of the chase. A wheel fell off. The wagon tipped, its bed digging into the earth like an anchor, dragging the mules to a halt and spilling most of the band members to the ground. Whooping and yelling, the pursuers, clad in Union blue, an assortment of captured and

scavenged items of enemy uniform, surrounded the wagon. Its passengers, dazed, half blinded by the dust, stumbled to their feet, their arms raised over their heads. Those who hadn't been tossed out climbed down from the crippled wagon, waiving white handkerchiefs in surrender.

But Quantrill's men, typically ill-disciplined and merciless, were not inclined to take prisoners under any circumstances. Further, the line separating combatant from non-combatant, military from civilian, front line and home front, blurred in any civil conflict, often disappeared entirely on the Trans-Mississippi frontier. Only weeks earlier, these same men had raided Lawrence, Kansas, murdering nearly 200 civilians in cold blood. Why should they show quarter to this band of popinjays in fancy uniforms who had just killed one of their own, jovial Billy Bledsoe?

The wagon driver was gunned down. Henry Peltage, the band master, identified by the gold stripe down the seam of his pants, received a bullet in the head. Then they shot the rest of the hapless and helpless unarmed musicians.

But there was one more. Jim O'Neil was a man of many talents, an accomplished painter, a Shakespearean actor, a music

hall comedian, a persuasive orator. He was glib and quick-tongued, with an Irishman's gift of gab. His civilian garb may have given him a few extra moments to argue for his life.

He wasn't a soldier. He was a non-combatant, a special artist for Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, the Time magazine of the Civil War era. He was a news correspondent embedded – in today's parlance -- with the Union troops. His job was to follow Maj. Gen. James G. Blunt's Army of the Frontier into combat, draw sketches of the scenes he witnessed, and mail those drawings back to New York, where they were turned into engravings to illustrate the weekly's war coverage.

But the bearded men confronting him could not have cared who or what O'Neill was. Realizing his plea had failed, the artist turned and bolted. He'd fled but a few yards when one of the guerrillas raised his Sharps carbine and shot him dead. Quantrill's men then set the wrecked wagon ablaze and tossed most of the lifeless bodies onto the flames.

O'Neill's body escaped burning, but his drawings did not. Pages from his sketch book were consigned to the fire and began to

burn. Flaming scraps of paper drifted skyward on the superheated air currents.²

Several hours later, with the guerrillas long gone, Major Benjamin Henning of the 3rd Wisconsin Cavalry arrived with a burial detail. Later he would tell a Wisconsin newspaper editor that "O'Neill was laying on his back, shot through the breast, and partly stripped, but his face looked natural, enlivened even in death with the hearty frankness that it ever bore in life."³

That sort of glamorization of death in war was on its way out, thanks, in part to artists like James O'Neill. The press was beginning to show a more graphic side of combat. Photography, still in its infancy, had begun to document warfare pictorially. But still slow and cumbersome it was limited to battlefield scenes after the fury ended. And no photos had yet appeared in the press for half-tone photoengraving was still 15 years in the future. So weekly news publications like Leslie's, Harper's and the New York Illustrated News relied upon hand engraved printing plates of sketches made under fire by some 330 combat artists.

During the war, Leslie's alone published 2,277 engravings depicting some aspect of the conflict. These were based on drawings by its 16 full-time special (combat) artists, and by approximately 85 other part-timers, including James O'Neill, who were paid \$5 to \$25 for each illustration used. Only a handful of them, like O'Neill, covered the largely ignored but often brutal war west of the Mississippi. And he was the only Civil War combat artist to die in action.⁴

* * * *

The so-called Baxter Springs Massacre captures the essence of the Trans-Mississippi conflict, a war with few set-piece battles, a continuation of the internecine struggle between neighbors, Pro-Slavery or Free Staters, that gave Bloody Kansas its name and reputation. Though merely a little remembered historical footnote, it happened Oct. 6, 1863, at Baxter Springs in the Cherokee Neutral Lands, a buffer strip at the edge of the Indian Territory, in today's southeastern corner of Kansas.

There were two actions that day. The first occurred about noon when an estimated 600 or more Confederate irregulars, commanded by the notorious William C. "Bloody Bill" Quantrill, stumbled across a

smaller Union force, about 225 Wisconsin and Kansas troops manning Ft. Blair, a small, partially finished fortification guarding the north-south military road. Though the Union troops were surprised by Quantrill's force, they fought back, repulsing the attack, strongly supported by their commanding officer, Lt. James Burton Pond of the 3rd Wisconsin Cavalry, who single-handedly manned a howitzer, the fort's lone artillery piece. For his actions, Pond would receive the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Just then, Quantrill spotted a second and smaller Union force – about 100 in all -- approaching down the nearby military road. It was Gen. Blunt with his staff, in the process of moving his headquarters from Fort Scott, Kansas, to Fort Smith, Arkansas. Escorting the 15 wagons was another company of the 3rd Wisconsin Cavalry and a squadron of Kansas troopers. Also traveling with the headquarters group was Blunt's splendid Brigade brass band, most of them from Wisconsin, and special combat artist James R. O'Neill.

Quickly, Quantrill redirected his attack to the new and easier target. Blunt and his men also were caught by surprise, initially confused by the stolen blue uniforms the enemy wore. At the charge of this vastly superior force, the dismounted Union cavalymen mostly

broke and ran. Blunt and a handful escaped, but most of the troopers were hunted down and when they surrendered, were shot in cold blood. About 80 of Blunt's force were killed or mortally wounded, most of them after they had been captured and disarmed.

At the height of the melee, the band wagon's driver made a break for it, with the bandsmen and O'Neill hanging on for dear life. They headed west across the prairie for more than a quarter mile before a group of mounted raiders spotted the escaping wagon and took chase. They might have made it, too, but then the wheel came off

And, after it ended, after Quantrill's force had moved off, headed to their winter quarters in Texas, Major Henning, a survivor of the massacre, along with Lt Pond and some of his men, searched the battlefield for the few survivors and buried the dead. Pond came across the body of O'Neill, a long time acquaintance, and closed his eyes in death. He buried him in a solitary grave beside the military trail, separate from the rest of the fallen.⁵

Soon, word reached Leavenworth, 170 miles to the north, then the largest town in early Kansas, where Jim O'Neill had lived the last

three of his 30 years. The editor of a local newspaper, the Leavenworth Daily Times, eulogized his friend:

"Who can forget the genial face, the manly and robust form, the sparkling wit, the unvarying amiability, or the bold purity of heart and life of our lost and lamented brother. . .an abolitionist, a humanitarian – James R. O'Neill won the admiring respect of every loyal man he met.

"Artist, actor, musician – the versatility of his acquirements enabled him to shine in every occupation of his life. . . We shall not forget dear James O'Neill!"⁶

* * * * *

James Richard O'Neill was born in Ireland, Feb. 13, 1833, perhaps in Drumbirn, Errigal Trough Parish, Clogher Diocese, County Monaghan, for that's where his father's family originated. James was the first of three children born to Charles and Elizabeth Mary (Douglass) O'Neill. When James was only four months old, he and his parents sailed for the United States, arriving in New York on July 8.

There is little available information about James' early years, but the family apparently moved several times between New York

State and Canada. His sister, also named Elizabeth Mary, was born in Quebec in 1836; his brother, 28, John Charles was born in New York State in 1838.

In 1843, when he was 10, his family moved from Canada to the village of Southport (today's Kenosha) on the western shore of Lake Michigan in Wisconsin Territory. Several years later, his father, Charles O'Neill would be appointed keeper of the federal lighthouse at Southport.⁷

There are no records of the O'Neill children attending school but likely they went to the free public school on Southport's mostly Germanic north side. James' education seems to have been better than most. Later in life he displayed an easy familiarity with classical literature. Music also seems to have played a major role in the O'Neill family life. The 1850 US Census shows 17-year-old James working as a carpenter and living with his family in the lighthouse keeper's cottage.

When and how he was introduced to art is uncertain. Later, in Madison, he would claim never to have had an art lesson. This may be true. Or he may have received his first exposure to drawing from an itinerant Scottish landscape and portrait painter, George J.

Robertson, who had trained at London's Royal Academy. In the late 1840s and early 1850s, Robertson made regular month-long visits to Southport/Kenosha, seeking portrait commissions.⁸

Clearly, James already was painting when a major turning point occurred in his life. On May 29, 1854, an itinerant theatrical company came to Kenosha for a several day run and when the show moved on the 21-year-old carpenter and budding artist went along as the troupe's new scenery and set designer, builder and painter.⁹

In January 1855, when the Wisconsin legislature went into session in the state Capitol, and Madison's social and entertainment season began, the touring theater began its short second season in residence. During the winter months, Jim O'Neill was busy painting scenery for new stage productions. But he also had the opportunity to view the performances and performers up close. And he was bitten by the "bug." He wanted to tread the boards, himself, to perform on stage, not just remain behind the curtain.

He began to act, first in small walk-ons, but before long in larger roles and, eventually, even dramatic leads. He gave declamatory readings, a staple "short subject" for many dramatic companies. He became a singer – sometimes -- and a comic dancer – often. He

became a music hall comedian, specializing in the broad Irish ethnic sketches popular at the time. In short, James O'Neill found himself an actor as well as a set designer.

But art always came first for O'Neill, and always would. After that first season on the road, he seems to have spent most of the year in Madison as a struggling painter. He frequently acted during the winter theatrical season, but only rarely did he join the troupe on their spring-to-fall Midwestern tours. From 1855 until well into 1860, he rented a studio on an upper floor of City Hall on the Madison square.¹⁰

The community, in the mid-1850s, was becoming a focal point for a modest group of artists, some of them like Samuel Marsden Brookes, Thomas H. Stevenson, L. Rowley Jacobs and a certain "celebrated" Bronson, with national reputations. James O'Neill became part of the art colony, and at least one of his oil paintings, "The Fortunes of the Cup" was exhibited at Seaver & Jacobs' Gallery and Museum, where it was sold "by lottery."

In October 1860, shortly before he would leave Madison for good, he was interviewed by the daily Wisconsin Patriot which noted that O'Neill had not had any formal art training, "no tutor, save the art

and instincts that nature has endowed him with and, yet we doubt whether there is a scenic artist in all of these United States that can surpass him in spreading nature onto canvas.... In making Nature stick out, he stands unrivaled."¹¹

He was especially known for his painted theatrical flats, particularly the classical architectural columns and pillars of European antiquity that set the stage for the Shakespearean productions in Fairchild's Hall. And he continued to perform on stage each winter. In a letter to his hometown newspaper in February 1857, a reviewer – unsigned, but likely Wisconsin legislator, the future inventor of the typewriter, Christopher Latham Sholes -- offered praise for both O'Neill's canvas sets and his acting:

"(T)he world of Madison is indebted for the varied scenery of mountain, lake, tree and river, with castles, dungeons, cities, etc., etc., nightly unrolled and rolled up before their wondering eyes...to say nothing of the remarkable success (O'Neill) has in personating (a) character (in a) singularly lifelike manner...."¹²

In the Spring of 1859, when the theatrical company pulled up stakes and moved west, O'Neill remained in Madison, except for an excursion or two to Minneapolis and St. Paul to paint scenery for

theaters. He was welcomed when he returned home, where his impressive artistic efforts, plus his acting, comic sketches and humorous dances, had won him a local reputation.¹³

He also had a reputation as prankster. He hung out with, and often led an irreverent band of cronies in their 20s and early 30s who loved to mock the older, more staid establishment. He had friends who loved him like a brother, but also there were at least a handful of conservative old timers who deplored his wild behavior.

In 1859 and early 1860, he was, variously, "president," "conductor," and "W.F." (presumably Worshipful Fellow) of a just-for-fun organization that went by different names at different times, including K.O.T.F.N. (Knights of the ???, a spoof of the local Commandery of the Knights Templar) ; the Peripatetics (with a vaguely Aristotelian bent), or, more simply, The Club. O'Neill, sometime signing his name as E. Pluribus Barnum, often announced the group's meetings in the newspaper, always at an undisclosed location. At these, often weekly, gatherings, libation seems to have been the most important item on the agenda.

The highlight of these activities occurred on July 4, 1859, when the 26-year-old O'Neill and his friends, then identifying themselves as

Ye Anciente and Horrible Artillerie, staged a noisy counterculture Independence Day Parade through Madison's downtown. The group, bewhiskered or masked and wearing outlandish military uniforms, banged on old pots, fired salutes from a phony cannon and carried banners reading, "We Stupe to Konker!" While most Madisonians accepted and enjoyed it as harmless entertainment, one angry old timer wrote a nasty letter to a local newspaper, castigating the group as unpatriotic louts for mocking and ridiculing the local militia units that had marched in the "official" parade that same day.

O'Neill, writing under a pseudonym, responded, branding the complainer an "old foggy" and a "sorehead," saying no harm was done by a younger generation letting off a little steam. But he did offer an apology if any of the militiamen had been offended, noting that Ye Ancient and Horrible Artillerie had since passed a resolution offering the local hometown troops "the right hand of fellowship."¹⁴

In 1859, O'Neill discovered a new way to couple his landscape painting with popular entertainment. He became a painter of moving panoramas. In the 1850s and '60s, particularly, moving panoramas were all the rage, the travelogues of their day. Artists painted huge canvases – muslin, actually, in most cases, because it weighed less –

many hundreds, even several thousands of feet in length and 8 to 10 feet in height. A painted panorama on large wooden spools was unrolled, scene by scene across a theater or assembly hall stage, while a professional lecturer offered a running narration. Panoramas were viewed by fascinated audiences who paid a quarter or so to view the show.

The paintings, typically, were scenes of exotic, far off lands, or illustrations from classical literature. During his short career, James O'Neill painted panoramas of ancient Greek and Roman sculpture, scenes of the Great Eastern, the just-launched largest iron sailing ship of its time, and Donald McKay's new clipper, the *Minnehaha*; views of Italy; the Biblical Holy Land; American rail journeys; Great Britain; Ireland and Civil War battlefields. Since he had visited none of those locations, he apparently based his panoramas on the work of other artists and early photographers.¹⁵

Not long after he began painting panoramas, O'Neill met Professor Charles MacEvoy, a Chicago music teacher and composer. MacEvoy offered more than the usual accompanying lecture. With his small troupe of performers, including several of his teen aged children, MacEvoy brought O'Neill's "Tour through Ireland" to life, with

appropriate descriptive explanations, Celtic anecdotes and history, instrumental solos, songs and dances, even comic sketches.

Between Sept. 25, 1859, when it was unveiled at Madison's Van Bergen hall, and the end of 1861, MacEvoy presented the musical Irish panorama in a number of Midwestern cities, from Kenosha to Chicago and Detroit. For a time in mid-1860, James lived with the MacEvoy's in Chicago.¹⁶

It was during the Thanksgiving weekend run at Detroit's Fireman's Hall in the fall of 1860 that Jim met another young artist, George Balthazar Gardner, who was home for the holidays from Leavenworth, Kansas. There, Gardner and a local painter, William M. Hook, had been putting the finishing touches on a massive panorama featuring the Missouri River and Great Plains, the Colorado gold fields and the Mormon capital, Salt Lake City. Wanting to add scenes of a rail journey from New England to Missouri to his already long canvas, Gardner hired the Wisconsin panorama artist to ride the cars from Boston to St. Joseph, Missouri, the end of the line not far from Leavenworth, making sketches along the way. Then, in Kansas, O'Neill began to paint the new scenes on hundreds of feet of additional fabric.

But, within two months, Gardner and his succession of financial partners ran out of money. The panorama was abandoned and never completed. In early 1861, Gardner returned to Michigan, and a college teaching career. Though out of work, O'Neill decided to make Leavenworth his new home.¹⁷

He boarded at John Curran's Exchange Saloon, above the barroom on the north side of Cherokee, between 7th Street and Broadway. He rented an art studio about six blocks away, over Charles McGreevy's aptly named Charley Saloon on the west side of Main (as Leavenworth's 4th Street was popularly known), between Shawnee and Seneca, near the post office.¹⁸

Once again, he involved himself in the local theater, first painting scenery for actor-stage manager George Burt's Union Theater, a newly renovated auditorium on the second floor of what had previously been called Stockton Hall. Soon, though, he was back on stage himself, playing roles as diverse as Othello's Brabantio and the farcical Lady Creamly in drag.¹⁹

He also was hard at work painting his own new panorama of the then-raging Civil War, but he also picked up painting commissions where he could find them, including, in the summer of 1861, a portrait

of the Virgin Mary for Bishop John Baptiste Miege's then-planned Roman Catholic cathedral in Leavenworth.²⁰

For several years, Kansas had been involved in an undeclared war. Bands of partisans, bushwhackers and outright brigands made it a dangerous place to be. With the outbreak of a real national Civil War, a sleepy Fort Leavenworth came alive with newly formed militia and volunteer companies. Kansas Senator and Brigadier General James H. Lane took up residence, as did Colonel Charles "Doc" Jennison, head of an undisciplined band of raw troops widely known as Jayhawkers. James O'Neill set up a temporary studio at the nearby fort, sketching the military, new captains and colonels who had money to pay him for his work, or whose pictures he believed he could sell to Frank Leslie's national newspaper. His sketch of General Lane did appear in the August 17, 1861 issue.

With this sort of artistic flattery, he insinuated himself into the top military echelons, and in that free and easy time of quickie political Army commissions, he became a "sort-of" officer himself. Though records show he was never a real soldier, he presented himself, in full uniform, as a lieutenant in Jennison's Jayhawkers,

during a newspaper interview by a hometown editor back in Kenosha that Christmas.²¹

The irrepressible O'Neill had record of impersonating soldiers, just for fun, beginning with the phony Artillerie in Madison. In Leavenworth, he took up with Ben Wheeler, a comic actor, the impresario of a disreputable 10 Cent varieties dive called the American Concert Theater and a self-styled colonel. Shortly after the war began in 1861, Wheeler had gall enough to travel to St. Louis to volunteer his then still imaginary Ancient and Honorable Fusileers for federal military duty. His offer was summarily declined.

Back in Leavenworth, though, the Fusileers, with "Colonel" Wheeler; his bartender, "Major John" Freeland; Captain, and sometime-chaplain Jim O'Neill, and a gaggle of fun-loving hangers-on, occasionally mustered in a mock drill upon the American's stage. On the 4th of July in 1861 and again in 1862, they staged raucous faux military parades through the town. Unlike O'Neill's earlier effort in Madison, crude and rowdy Leavenworth universally loved it.²²

All the while, he was busily painting his panorama of the war. Since he'd never been to Fort Sumter or Bull Run, in fact had never seen any real combat, presumably he based his oversized battle

scenes on others' sketches that appeared regularly in Leslie's weekly. His Civil War "Panopticon," as it sometimes was called, first was shown on Wheeler's stage on Oct. 7, 1861, and periodically it again was shown as O'Neill, over the coming months, added hundreds more feet of fabric and more exciting war scenes. In January and February 1862, he brought the panorama back to Wisconsin and Kenosha's Simmons Hall.²³

After a brief stint in the summer of '62 as manager of Wheeler's American Concert hall, Jim returned to the more legitimate Union Theater. Veteran stage manager Burt had moved on and the theater was then owned by photo studio operator Alfred Addis. In addition to painting brand new sets, which a newspaper writer said "puts one in mind of the pictures of Versailles and the Louvre," O'Neill played a variety of roles, served briefly as stage manager and, in early November 1863, even ran a "green room," traditionally an actors' lounge but here open to the public, serving beer, wine and tasty snacks such as oysters, on the ground floor of the theater building.²⁴

Meanwhile, the Trans-Mississippi war was heating up. Leslie's newspaper again was showing interest in what was happening in Missouri and Arkansas. Never one to stick with any one thing for

very long, Jim O'Neill left Leavenworth to join General James Blunt's Army of the Frontier which since early fall had been on expedition through Missouri. Having earlier ingratiated himself with Army commanders with his flattering portraits of political generals like Lane and Blunt, he was accepted as an unofficial part of the latter's headquarters staff.

He accompanied Blunt's Army through southern Missouri and northern Arkansas, crossing the Boston Mountains to Van Buren, through a series of skirmishes and minor battles. His written reports, but no battle drawings, appeared in Leslie's during these weeks. However, his major contributions to Leslie's weekly were humorous political cartoons. After his death, his friend, Lt. Pond spoke fondly of O'Neill's published comic drawings.²⁵

O'Neill returned to Leavenworth in late winter and the spring of 1863, when he seems to have been less involved with the theater and more focused on matters military and political. At a Great Unconditional Union meeting held at the Turners' Hall in Leavenworth, Feb 13, 1863, there were a handful of bombastic speeches by such outspoken public figures as General Blunt and the notorious Jayhawker, Jennison, but also by Jim O'Neill, who

proposed a resolution – adopted by acclaim – that anyone found possessing or dealing in Confederate currency be treated as a traitor, and that claims by southern sympathizers for alleged losses at the hands of Union forces be considered treasonous acts.²⁶

In the subsequent months, he split his time, as General Blunt himself did, between the Army's headquarters at Fort Scott and Leavenworth. He did not return to the stage again, but in early summer 1863, returned to the field with Blunt's army. His only signed battle sketch to appear in Leslie's Illustrated newspaper, a Union cavalry charge at Honey Springs, Indian Territory (Oklahoma), July 17, 1863, was published some five weeks later.

Autumn came. When the small headquarters column left Fort Scott, headed south, on the afternoon of October 4, 1863, 30-year-old Jim O'Neill rode along with the Brigade Band and Henry Peltage. And together, they met death at Baxter Springs.

Several weeks later, Leslie's included a small item at the foot of a column on an inside page:

"We regret to find in the report of Major General Blunt on the Baxter Springs Skirmish that James R. O'Neill, whose graphic sketches of actions and operations on Gen. Blunt's movements have

so often enriched our pages, was one of the prisoners butchered by the enemy."²⁷

The editor of the Leavenworth Bulletin offered a more personal comment on O'Neill's death:

"No more will we see the kindle of his bright eye. No more will we hear the sweet sounds of his eloquent voice – and no more will we see his familiar form and footstep on our streets or behind the footlights of the mimic stage. He has played his last characters in the drama of life and enacted the last act in the melancholy tragedy."²⁸

His body was buried beside the dusty military road he had traveled to Baxter Springs. Later, in 1869, the army reburied him, with the other victims, in a special federal plot within the local cemetery. In the late 1870s, his mother and sister erected a family monument in Kenosha's Green Ridge Cemetery. On it is inscribed James O'Neill's name, although he lies in another grave, 530 miles to the southwest.²⁹

But there was a final postscript to his life, a posthumous showing of O'Neill's Great Diorama of the War at Leavenworth's Turner Hall. On Jan. 27, 1864, the Daily Times announced that the

evening's showing would be "positively the last opportunity that will be afforded our citizens of witnessing O'Neill's great work."

Then the huge painting was gone, who knows where, disappeared into history, just as did its creator, the many-talented James R. O'Neill.

--00--

ENDNOTES

¹ The band wagon's teamster is not specifically identified in any contemporary report. However, Pvt. Thomas P. Leach, a 22-year-old cavalryman from Fairwater, WI, was on detached service as a teamster and General Blunt's personal driver. He was among a number of teamsters killed at Baxter Springs, but according to a near-contemporary account, the details of his death seem to match those of the man driving the band wagon. G.M. West, *Metomen, Springvale, Alto and Waupun During the War*, (Brandon, WI, Brandon Times Office, 1867);

² Benjamin S. Henning, Major, 3rd Wisconsin Cavalry. *Official Report No. 3, Oct. 6, 1863, Action at Baxter Springs*, Baxter Springs, Cherokee Nation, 7 Oct. 1863; James B. Pond, Lieutenant, 3rd Wisconsin Cavalry. *Official Report No. 4, Oct. 6, 1863, Action at Baxter Springs*, Baxter Springs, Cherokee Nation, 7 Oct. 1863. John N. Edwards, *Shelby and his Men, or The War in the West*. (Cincinnati, Miami Printing and Publishing Co., 1867).

Ramp and others identify the dead guerrilla as Bledsoe. Lary C. Rampp, "*Incident at Baxter Springs*," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Summer 1970.

Letter to Daily Times from a correspondent identified only as "C" says O'Neill's body "escaped burning." *Leavenworth Daily Times*, 21 October 1863.

³ *Wisconsin Patriot*, 31 October 1863.

⁴ John Walker, *The Civil War: A Centennial Exhibition of Eyewitness Drawings* (Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1961); Joshua Brown, Executive Director, American Social History Project, Center for Media and Learning, The Graduate Center, City University of New York, personal correspondence, 24 December 2006, 3 January 2007.

⁵ Lt. J.B. Pond, published letter. *Janesville (WI) Gazette*, 28 October 1863.

⁶ *Daily Times*, 11 October 1863

⁷ Charles O'Neill involved himself in local Whig politics, supporting Zachary Taylor for US president in 1848. For his support, he was appointed Southport lighthouse keeper, 1849-1853. After that, the family lived on a farm in rural Somers, a town adjoining Kenosha, until 1861, when President Abraham Lincoln reappointed him lighthouse keeper. He again was replaced in 1865. Later the family lived on a farm in Pleasant Prairie, another adjoining town. In old age, Charles and his wife, Elizabeth lived in Kenosha with daughter Elizabeth Mary and her husband, Orla Calkins. Charles accidentally drowned in Lake Michigan, near his daughter's home, in 1875. Elizabeth died in 1896. James' sister, Elizabeth Mary survived until 1919. His younger brother, John Charles, who spent several years abroad, died at 39 in 1877. Robert Williams, Ulster Ancestry, Londonderry, Northern Ireland, *James R. O'Neill*, unpublished genealogy report, 22 June 2007; Kenosha Telegraph, 1 June 1874, 16 Sept. 1875, 12 Dec, 1877, 18 Feb. 1896, 29 May 1919; Kenosha News, 9 May 1970; U.S. Census 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880; Wisconsin Territorial Census 1846, 1847; Wisconsin State Census 1855.

⁸ Don Jensen, "*George Robertson: Itinerant Painter*," unpublished manuscript.

⁹ Margaret Lauterbach, Boise, ID, "*Itinerary for the Langrishe Company, 1854-1860*," unpublished manuscript.

¹⁰ Madison Argus and Democrat, 17 Oct. 1856; Wisconsin State Journal, 15 Jan. 1859; W.L.E. Ferslew, Madison City Directory and Business Advertiser (Madison, Bliss, Eberhard and Festner, 1858); Henry C. Youngerman, "*Theater Buildings in Madison Wisconsin, 1836-1900*," Wisconsin Magazine of History, March 1947: 273-277.

¹¹ Telegraph, 3 April 1856; Wisconsin Daily Patriot, 1 Oct. 1860.

¹² Telegraph, 5 Feb. 1857.

¹³ Wisconsin State Journal, 15 Jan., 18 March 1859.

¹⁴ State Journal, 11 and 18 Feb., 7 March, 31 May, 14 and 18 June, 7 July, 2 Sept. and 1 Oct. 1859.

¹⁵ State Journal, 8 and 12 Dec. 1859, 29 Sept. and 1 Oct. 1860; John L. Marsh, *"Drama and Spectacle by the Yard: The Panorama in America,"* The Journal of Popular Culture, Winter, 1976: 581-592; Kevin J. Avery, *"Movies for Manifest Destiny: The Moving Panorama Phenomenon in America,"* available from <http://www.montclairartmuseum.org> Accessed 16 Feb. 2007.

¹⁶ (John) Charles MacEvoy would go on to write many popular songs, and developed his family act that accompanied O'Neill's panorama paintings into an Irish vaudeville-like stage performance called MacEvoy's Original Hibernicon, which played widely throughout the U.S. Chicago Times, 1 and 10 Sept. 1860; Detroit Free Press, 22 Nov. 1860, 28 Dec. 1861; US Census 1860, 1870.

¹⁷ Daily Times, 27 June, 3, 6, 10 and 14 Aug., 8 Oct., 27 Nov., `10, 20 and 31 Dec. 1860, 1 Jan. 1861; Manhattan (KS) Express, 21 July 1860; Elon G. Reynolds, *"George B. Gardner,"* Compendium of History and Biography of Hillsdale County, Michigan (Chicago, A.W. Brown and Co., 1903); "Professor George B. Gardner," Hillsdale

Collegian, 13 April, 1904; Sadayoshi Omoto, *Early Michigan Paintings* (East Lansing, Michigan State University, 1976): 55-57; William H. Gerdtz, *Art Across America, Vol. 2, Two Centuries of Regional Painting* (New York, Abbeville Press 1990).

¹⁸ *James Sutherland, Leavenworth City Directory and Business Mirror*, 1859-60, 1860-61 and 1862-63 editions (St. Louis, Sutherland and McEvoy, 1859; Indianapolis, Journal Co. and Douglass and Palmer Book Binders, 1860; Leavenworth, Buckingham and Hamilton, 1862).

¹⁹ *Daily Times*, 17, 24 and 31 July 1862, 17 and 30 Aug. 1862.

²⁰ *Daily Times*, 21 June 1861, 7 Oct. 1861.

²¹ *Telegraph*, 26 Dec. 1861.

²² *Leavenworth Daily Conservative*, 4 July 1862; *Daily Times*, 1 and 4 July 1862; James C. Malin, "*The Theater in Kansas, 1858-1868*," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Spring 1957: 10-53.

²³ Daily Times, 7 Oct. 1861, 14 Nov. 1861, 24 July 1862; Telegraph, 14 Nov. 1861, 27 Feb. 1862, 6 March 1862.

²⁴ Daily Times, 9, 17 July 1862. 13 and 15 Sept. 1862, 6 Nov. 1862.

²⁵ "*Victory of Blunt at Cane Hill*," Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 28 Nov. 1862; "Victories at Cane Ridge, Prairie Grove and Van Buren," Leslie's, 27 Dec. 1862, "Rout of Rebels in Arkansas," Leslie's, 17 Jan. 1863; "Battle of Honey Springs, Leslie's, 29 Aug. 1863.

"His sketches of the Frontier Army in Frank Leslie's have afforded us amusement many times during the past six months." Lt. J.B. Pond in a published letter. Gazette, 28 Oct. 1863.

Leslie's usually, though not invariably, published a cartoon on the back page of the weekly newspaper. Sometimes these were simply jokes, such as one referring to the Scotch sport of curling, with the drawing showing kilted men curling the hair of a third. Usually, they were political in nature, focusing on some aspect of the war or international affairs. Many appeared to be uncredited. Occasionally

drawings were signed, e.g. the initials FB in a triangle; the block letters WP or N; and a name that seems to be Howard Del. Seven cartoons between October 1862 and December 1863 (the latter published posthumously) appear to be signed with the scrawled script letters jro, and are believed to be O'Neill's work. Leslie's, 25 Oct. and 13 Dec. 1862; 2 and 23 May, 13 June, 17 Oct. and 19 Dec. 1863.

²⁶ Daily Times, 14 Feb. 1863.

²⁷ Leslie's, 24 Oct. 1863.

²⁸ Leavenworth Bulletin, 10 Oct. 1863.

²⁹ Larry O'Neill, historian, Baxter Springs Museum and Heritage Center, personal correspondence, 22 and 24 April 2007.

Illustrations

There are no known photos or drawings of James R. O'Neill or his family.

The engraving of the cavalry charge at the Battle of Honey Springs is signed by O'Neill, the only one of his published illustrations to bear his signature. From Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 29 Aug. 1863. (It is in the public domain)

The engraved portrait of Brig. Gen. James Lane is unsigned but is believed to have been from a drawing done by O'Neill. He was known to have been drawing portraits of a number of Kansas officers at Fort Leavenworth during this period of time. From Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 17 Aug. 1861. (Public domain)

The four political cartoons are believed to be O'Neill's work. From Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 2 May 1863 (The Great Vermin Killer); 23 May 1863 (Winning and Wearing); 17 Oct. 1863 (posthumously, Uncle Sam...), and 19 Dec. 1863 (posthumously, Indecent Haste of the Emperor Maximilian...) (Public domain)

Two photos of the Baxter Springs Cemetery's federal section, dedicated in 1869, when the bodies of James O'Neill, the Brigade Band members and others killed in the Oct. 6, 1863 action, were reinterred here. The granite monument was erected by the United States government. Photos courtesy of Larry O'Neal, Baxter Springs Museum and Heritage Center. (Photos were given by O'Neal to the author and are the author's personal property)

Sheet music cover includes a later photo (bottom, center) of Professor Charles MacEvoy of Chicago, who, in 1859-1861 toured Midwestern cities providing music and narration for O'Neill's moving panorama, Tour of Ireland. (Public domain)

Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, KS, has photos of Maj. General James G. Blunt (there are several in your collection) KSHS also has period photos of various relevant places, e.g., city and Fort Leavenworth. (e.g. KSHS 100047, 102799, etc.)