



## A. Lesson Plan Title: Justus Altmiller- ‘Days of Auld Lang Syne’

Developers:

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Grade Level: 6<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>

Length of Lesson: 3– 4 class sessions (45 minutes each)

## B. Overview of this Collection-Based Lesson Plan:

Park Name: Appomattox Court House National Historical Park - P.O. Box 218 Appomattox, VA 24522  
[www.nps.gov/apco](http://www.nps.gov/apco)

Description: Justus Altmiller was born at Lautenhausen, Germany in 1840. He immigrated to America when he was 15 years old and spent the remainder of his youth in America working on railroads, in mines and as an engineer at a flour mill. By age nineteen, Justus had joined a musical band made up mostly of other German immigrants. Two years later the Civil War began and Altmiller and his band joined the Union army. He served for three years and was present on April 9, 1865 in the small Virginia county seat of Appomattox Court House when Confederate General Robert E. Lee departed the McLean home after surrendering the Army of Northern Virginia to Union General Grant. As General Lee, accompanied by Lieutenant Colonel Charles Marshall and Private Joshua O. Johns, turned their mounts on to the Richmond-Lynchburg Stage Road to return to their, now defeated army, they heard the strains of “Auld Lang Syne” as the notes wafted from a Pennsylvania regimental band directly across the road from the soon to be famous home. Among the band members was the young German immigrant, Justus Altmiller, a cornet player. Justus had been in America for just ten years before fate landed him on the doorstep of history positioning him to contribute the soundtrack that accompanied one of the most significant events in the history of America *and* in the life of a young immigrant, now an American in every sense. As a military veteran, Altmiller returned home to Pennsylvania and proved a model citizen, businessman and civic leader. Throughout all his days he continued to play music and to cherish, through keepsakes and memories, the part he had played in the surrender at Appomattox Court House.

### Essential Questions:

What can the belongings of Justus Altmiller tell us about his life both during and after the Civil War?

How can we tell what impact the Civil War and the surrender at Appomattox Court House had on a recently immigrated Union soldier?

## C. Museum Collection Objects Used in Lesson Plan:

Objects, specimens, documents, photographs from the Park museum collection:

### 1. Justus Altmiller's Cornet



Brass, W: 13.8 cm H: 20.1 cm APCO 4986

This cornet belonging to Justus Altmiller was manufactured in Boston and has been lovingly preserved by his descendants for over 140 years. Family history says that this is *the* instrument played by Altmiller at the Surrender.

### 2. Altmiller Photographs



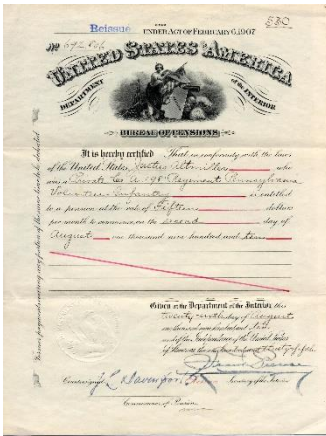
Photograph, W: 12.5 cm H: 20.1 cm APCO 4982

Photograph, W: 21.8 cm H: 25.1 cm APCO 4984

These photos show a dashing young Justus in uniform with his instrument as well as a more mature image befitting the respected businessman, councilman and mayor of Hazleton, Pennsylvania Altmiller became in his post war years.

### 3. Pension Certificate

This document was produced by the United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Pensions in 1910 verifying Justus Altmiller's service in the military and entitlement to \$15 per month for his services to his adopted country.



Paper, W: 27 cm H: 40 cm APCO 4985



4. Justus Altmiller's Buttons  
Brass, 15.3 mm APCO 4987 & 4988

These decorative buttons of Jusuts Altmiller's are typical of the type worn by members of military bands during the Civil War.



5. Confederate Bills  
Paper, W: 15.2 cm H: 7.9 cm APCO 4989

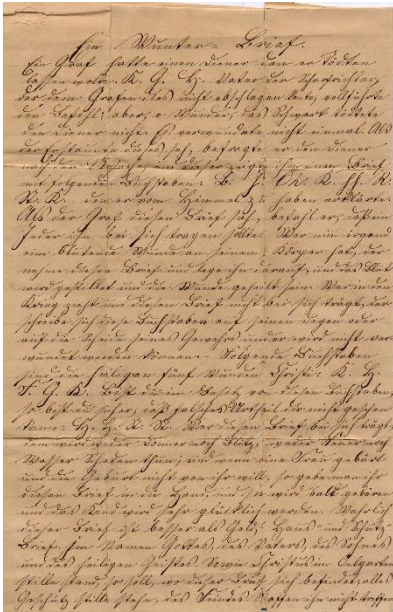
According to his descendents, Justus Altmiller collected these bills at the time of the Surrender as mementos of the historic occasion.



Paper, W: 5.3 cm H: 8.9 cm Paper, W: 5.2 cm H: 8.2 cm  
APCO 4991 APCO 4992

6. Letter in German

This letter written in German is a letter or prayer of sorts; an "amulet" popular among German soldiers. The "amulet" was believed to protect the bearer from such dangers as being hit by bullets or struck by lightning and could be placed over a wound to stop it from bleeding.



Paper, W: 18.9 cm H: 29.2 cm APCO 4993

#### D. National Education Standards:

Meets National Education Standards for Social Studies as established by the National Council for the Social Studies, 1994. Middle grades & high school level.

##### Number I: Culture

###### Middle grades

- b) Explain how information and experiences may be interpreted differently by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference;

##### Number II: Time, Continuity, and Change.

###### Middle grades

- b) Identify and use key concepts such as chronology, causality, change, conflict, and complexity to explain, analyze, and show connections among patterns of historical change and continuity.

##### Number IV: Individual Development & Identity

###### Middle grades

- a) Relate personal changes to social, cultural, and historical contexts; describe personal connections to place — as associated with community, nation, and world;
- b) Describe the ways family, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and institutional affiliations contribute to personal identity;
- c) Relate such factors as physical endowment and capabilities, learning, motivation, personality, perception, and behavior to individual development;
- d) Identify and describe ways regional, ethnic, and national cultures influence individuals' daily lives;
- e) Identify and describe the influence of perception, attitudes, values, and beliefs on personal identity;

##### Number V: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions.

Middle grades

- a) Identify and describe examples of tensions between belief systems and government policies and laws.
- b) Describe the role of institutions in furthering both continuity and change.
- c) Apply knowledge of how groups and institutions work to meet individual needs and promote the common good.

Number VI. Civic Ideals and Practices.

Middle grades

- a) Examine the origins and continuing influence of key ideals of the democratic republican form of government, such as individual human dignity, liberty, justice, equality, and the rule of law.
- b) Identify and explain the roles of formal and informal political actors in influencing and shaping public policy and decision-making.

**E. Student Learning Objectives:** Upon successful completion of this lesson, students shall:

*Explain why Justus Altmiller's experience at Appomattox Court House was unique.*

*Describe what Justus Altmiller shared in common with his fellow Civil War Soldiers and what made him different.*

**F. Background and Historical Context:**

Justus Altmiller was born in Lautenhausen, Hessen, Germany in 1840. He immigrated to America when he was only 15 years old. Justus spent the remainder of his youth in America working on railroads, in mines and as an engineer at a flour mill. At the age of nineteen in 1859, Justus along with six other German Americans joined "Gleim's Band" a musical band named after the band's initial leader. Justus joined the 11<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Pennsylvania Infantry volunteers at the onset of the war. Altmiller returned home in 1862, as many of the regimental bands were disbanded and the initial one year enlistments began to expire, but in 1864 he reenlisted and joined the band of the 198<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers.

On the April afternoon in 1865 in the village of Appomattox Court House General Robert E. Lee met with General Grant. As events unfolded that would result in Lee's surrender of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, a regimental band struck up an old familiar tune appropriate for the occasion. The 198<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania regimental band - a band that included Justus Altmiller - began to play "Auld Lang Syne" as the primaries took up their places and prepared to play *their* parts. Justus, a German immigrant only in the country for ten years, realized the significance of this event and his proximity to it. His descendents tell of how he collected currency notes both Confederate and Union to memorialize this day.

Justus Altmiller was discharged from military service and returned to life in Hazleton, Pennsylvania in June, 1865. There he went on to become a successful businessman, owning a profitable grocery and dry goods store, and was elected to the town's council where he served from 1883 to 1892. Later Altmiller was elected to serve as Mayor of Hazleton for a term from 1895 to 1898. Justus Altmiller was the mayor when Hazleton became briefly notorious for a mine strike turned deadly there in 1897. Altmiller's public service was said to be noted for "efficiency and capability."



Throughout all this time, Altmiller continued to play music and was active in veteran's affairs. According to at least one source, Altmiller along with the rest of the 198<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania band reportedly led the 5<sup>th</sup> Army Corps in the Grand review parade in Washington in May 1865. Other accomplishments of Altmiller and his musical friends included being chosen best among the 265 bands that played in the National Firemen's parade in Philadelphia in 1866, performing at the centennial celebration in Philadelphia in 1876 and at a reception for General Grant in 1882. Altmiller eventually became leader of the band, and served in that role until 1892 when he passed it over to his nephew- Justus E. Altmiller.

Justus Altmiller led an incredibly rich and full life. His experience at Appomattox Court House was just one of many colorful episodes he took part in. Altmiller held on dearly to his keepsakes from Appomattox: his instrument, his uniform buttons, and the Confederate and Union bills he collected. In the life of a man who had many adventures, who performed many a song, Justus Altmiller's accompaniment to the surrender at Appomattox was perhaps his greatest adventure; his most important performance, and most treasured memory.

## G. Materials Used in Lesson Plan:

Altmiller Cornet

Altmiller Photographs

Altmiller Pension Certificate

Altmiller Buttons

Altmiller Letter

Confederate and US Currency

### Item Support Materials

**Altmiller Article- APCO 4983** This *Hazleton Standard Speaker* article written in 1983 recounts some the story of Justis Altmiller's life.

**Altmiller Excerpt-** This excerpt from the book History of the One Hundred and Ninety Eighth Pennsylvania Volunteers written by E.M. Woodward and published in 1884 tells the story of Altmiller and the rest of the 198<sup>th</sup> Regimental Band at the Surrender meeting. It is accompanied by the Keith Rocco drawing **APCO 11603** "Auld Land Syne" depicting the same event.

**Altmiller Cornet-** This rather ornate instrument belonged to Justus Altmiller was preserved by his family and believed by them to be the instrument he played at the Surrender. There are numerous pictures to accompany this instrument.

**Altmiller Letter-** This letter, meant to serve as a protection of sorts, is accompanied by an English translation courtesy of Dr. Geoffrey Orth of Longwood University.

### Other Materials:

*How to Read an Object* graphic organizers -- available at

[http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/tmc/docs/How\\_to\\_Read\\_an\\_Object.pdf](http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/tmc/docs/How_to_Read_an_Object.pdf)

Assessment Rubrics- available at the end of this document

## H. Vocabulary:

**Amulet-** *something worn on the body because of its supposed magic power to protect against injury or evil: a charm*

**Cornet-** *a brass-wind musical instrument of the trumpet class having three valves worked by pistons*

**Regimental Band-** *a musical band consisting of members drawn from within a regiment, commonplace at the beginning of the Civil War but rarer as the war lengthened.*

## I. Teacher Tips:

This lesson plan is merely a suggestion for the use of these items. Although adequate time should be allowed for a thorough investigation of the artifacts and their history, these plans may certainly be tailored to the unique needs of your particular class. The particular subject matter of this lesson plan- Justus Altmiller's role in a key event in American history and his place as an immigrant in American society make this a tremendously powerful teaching tool for the subjects of cultural identity and assimilation among others.

**J. Lesson Implementation Procedures:** This lesson plan may be tailored to suit the needs and abilities of specific classes and students. All hand outs are contained herein or are available at website addresses found within this document. Be sure to print out an adequate number of copies of all documents for the assignment. Allow adequate time for group discussion of all items associated with each artifact and preparation for group project.

## INTRODUCTION:

*Explain why Justus Altmiller's experience at Appomattox Court House was unique.*

*Describe what Justus Altmiller shared in common with his fellow Civil War Soldiers and what made him different.*

### 1<sup>st</sup> Class Session

1. Consider beginning this lesson with an introduction such as the following: "What does it mean to be American? Didn't both Northerners and Southerners alike consider themselves Americans? What does an American look like? If you immigrate to this country, how long does it take to "become American?" Have students share their answers to these questions.

Then: imagine you are a nineteen year old kid. You've only been in America for 6 years or so when war breaks out. You want to do the patriotic thing and join the army but you *love* to play music and you are in a band with some of your best friends. What are you to do? Simple, you and your band mates join up as a regimental band - an army band! That's exactly what Justus C. Altmiller did. After living in Germany until he was 15, Justus' family moved to central Pennsylvania in 1855. Six years later Justus was headed off to fight for his adopted country. How might he have seen things differently as a German? As a musician? Have students brainstorm responses to these questions. Have students share their ideas. Write down responses on board/overhead device.

Explain to students that although we have no written record of Justus Altmiller's Civil War Experience we do have artifacts and documents that can help tell his story.

(5 minutes)

2. Divide students into groups. Before handing out items and their supplementary materials, provide each group a copy of the *Hazleton Standard Speaker* article detailing Justus Altmiller's life. Have students read the article before they begin working with their items. Provide student groups with images of the items. Have each group complete a "How to Read an Object" graphic organizer for their Altmiller related objects. (15 -20 minutes)

3. Allow student groups the remaining class time for their investigation of the items and to determine what they believe these items tell us about Justus Altmiller's experiences in the Civil War. Students can use their imaginations to create a more complete picture of what life was like for Justus Altmiller before and after the Civil War. The students may choose from any of the products to demonstrate their ideas about the life of Justus Altmiller and then use their products in a brief presentation to the class.

Homework Suggestion: have students take their ideas about the products they are going to create home and work on them independently.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Session:

1. Begin class with a think/pair/share exercise in which pairs are created out of students from different groups. Students have 2 minutes EACH to tell each other about their objects & their project.

2. Allow student groups a whole class period to work on presentations if necessary (35-40 mins)

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Session

1. Allow student groups the whole class to work on presentations if necessary or begin group presentations. (45-50 mins)

2. After group presentations, have the members complete a brag sheet for their group and assignment rubrics for self evaluations. These items are to be turned in the next day as a homework grade.

### 4<sup>th</sup> Class Session

1. Allow student groups the whole class to present to the class. (45-50 minutes)

2. Have students complete a brag sheet for their team and assignment rubrics for self evaluations. These items are to be turned in the next day as a homework grade.

## **K. Evaluation/Assessment for Measurable Results:**

Use the included Assessment Rubrics to evaluate individual & group efforts.

## **L. Extension and Enrichment Activities:**

<http://www.standardsspeaker.com/History/lattimer.htm>

This article from the Hazelton, Pennsylvania newspaper about mine unrest in 1897 features a quote from the then Hazelton Mayor Justus Altmiller.

## **M. Resources:**

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum>



Woodward, E. M. History of the One Hundred and Ninety Eighth Pennsylvania Volunteers: MacCrellish & Quigley Book and Job Printers, 1884.

## **N. Site Visit:**

**Pre-visit:** Use the lesson plans contained herein as an introduction to Appomattox Court House NHP. Also, visit the website to become familiar with the other significant stories you may want to incorporate into an actual visit. Contact the park (434-352-8987) to request material and schedule your visit.

**On Site visit:** Be sure to see the Justus Altmiller exhibit at the Visitor's Center.

**Post-visit:** Have students write a summary of what they learned while at the park about the significance of the life of Justus Altmiller and his role in the Surrender at Appomattox Court House. Perhaps have students stop within the historic village and write letters home *as* Justus Altmiller describing the surrender events as he saw them.