

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



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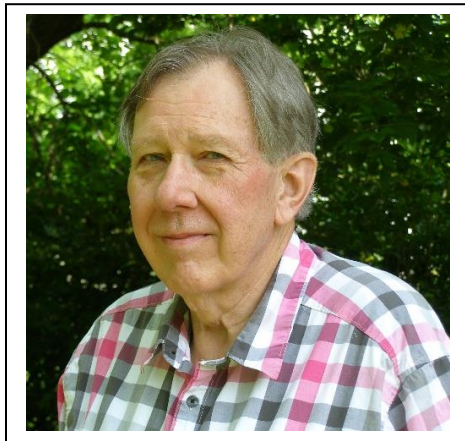
Chicago, Illinois

November 2024

831st REGULAR MEETING, Friday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024

## Allen Ottens on "The Grant-Rawlins Relationship"

**Live/Zoom Meeting. Time: Nov. 8th, 2024, 07:30 PM CST.  
Zoom Option ID 845 3227 1496; No Passcode needed**



Galena lawyer and Ulysses S. Grant neighbor John A. Rawlins rose to assistant adjutant general on Grant's staff and ultimately Grant's secretary of war. From the earliest days of the Civil War to Grant's years in the White House, John A. Rawlins was ever at Grant's side. Yet Rawlins's role in Grant's career is often overlooked, and he barely received mention in Grant's own two-volume *Memoirs*.

Rawlins teamed with Grant, the two complementing each other in their abilities and ambitions. Rawlins submerged his own needs and ambition in the service of Grant. He played a pivotal role in Grant's relatively small staff, acting as administrator, counselor, and defender of Grant's burgeoning popularity.

Allen J. Ottens is Professor Emeritus of Counselor Education and Supervision, Northern Illinois University. He worked as a psychologist at several university counseling centers. He is also a past president of the Manuscript Society. With a lifelong interest in the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln, he is the author of the award-winning biography, *General John A. Rawlins: No Ordinary Man* (2021).

## Battlefield Preservation

The American Battlefield Trust is working with a private landowner to secure the “doughnut hole” of unprotected land right in the middle of the Antietam Battlefield.

This tract at Antietam we have the chance to save is just a few steps behind the Dunker Church building and part of the West Woods.

**These 11 acres are, by far, some of the most important acres left to secure at Antietam.** They not only witnessed, but were at the center of, the surging attacks and counterattacks that defined the deadliest day in American history.

We must quickly raise the \$150,000 needed so we can fill in this 11-acre hole in the battle map and ensure the Antietam Battlefield is intact and preserved.

The American Battlefield Trust does much more than preserve battlefield sites. They also sponsor traveling exhibits, driving tours, virtual tours, and highlight places to visit.

For example, see their piece on Mobile, Alabama related sites, including Fort Morgan, Fort Gaines, the Mobile Bay Battlefield, and Spanish Fort, as well as Fort Pickens in Pensacola. For more, see <https://www.battlefields.org/visit/heritage-sites/fort-morgan-historic-site?ms=googlepaid>

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## October Presentation

By Mark Matranga

**Lawrence Lee ‘Larry’ Hewitt** offered a unique view of Civil War photography at the October 11, 2024, 830<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting of The Civil War Round Table, with his lecture *The Birth of Combat Photography*. An acknowledged authority on the siege and battles of Port Hudson, Hewitt has authored *Port Hudson, Confederate Bastion on the Mississippi*, and most recently has produced *Port Hudson, The Most Significant Battlefield Photographs of the Civil War*. This intriguing photographic essay illustrates with detailed comment photographs taken during that important but often overlooked struggle to capture the last Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi.

After introducing the concept of what constitutes a photograph, Hewitt discussed what qualifies as combat photography. The first war photographs came from the Crimean War; these depicted the battlefield at Sevastopol (1854-55) but did not show men in action. There are earlier photographs showing American soldiers during war, for

example, General Wool and his staff in Saltillo during the Mexican War (1847). Hewitt distinguishes this and most photographs of the war from those depicting actual combat, rare in Civil War photography: the photo of Wool and staff, while not posed, is not a *combat* photograph.

Moreover, most popular Civil War photographs show dead soldiers or pictures such as the iconic 'Three rebels captured at Gettysburg.' Even photographs from WWII, such as General Eisenhower with paratroopers before D-Day, undoubtedly a dramatic photo of men at war, is not, by Hewitt's standards, a combat photograph. This is not to say that 'Good War' photography did not show soldiers fighting, only Hewitt's emphasis that many wartime photos do not qualify as combat images. One recalls that some of the first photographs released to the public in WWII were of dead soldiers on the beach at Tarawa in 1943; this illustrates Hewitt's point that pictures of dead soldiers are not limited to Civil War photography.

Hewitt maintains that the first actual combat photograph from the Civil War is one showing the September 8, 1863, Monitor attack in Charleston Harbor, where ships in the distance are engaged in battle. The factors that limited pictures of Civil War combat from being shown accurately are missing here, as the vessels are far distant, making their movements undetectable. Also, the photographer and his heavy equipment are removed from the actual combatants whose movements precluded producing sharp images. Hewitt also noted the September 18, 1862, photograph taken from south of Antietam Creek showing the immediate aftermath of that battle. But again, photos from Antietam feature posed pictures of dead soldiers, not combat

This all changed, Hewitt argues, when William D. McPherson, formerly a Captain in the 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Sharpshooters, resigned his commission in October 1862 and relocated to New Orleans where he established a photography studio. He and A.J. Oliver, who went to work for him in January 1863, would eventually produce a catalog of combat photography at Port Hudson. More prominent photographers passed on travelling north of Baton Rouge, leaving McPherson the opportunity to seek work; in July, he and Oliver were hired to photograph the battlefields. The two photographed soldiers, including many artillerists, during combat and in camp, and documented prominent terrain features and landmarks. They also produced the first photograph of a surrender of a Civil War army on July 9, 1863.

Hewitt presented numerous *cartes de visite* and other types of photographs, including stereo images. He also described composite prints made from two negatives; the photographers could also enlarge and manipulate images, mixing daylight and nighttime views to produce a third, more artistic, image. One such photograph from two separate negatives, that of Duryea's Battery, Hewitt considers McPherson's masterpiece. Another shows engineering ingenuity: a tri-level set hogsheads used for protection by

sharpshooters. And a photo of a naval cannon while the battle was underway and removed before the surrender is proof positive that this was taken during combat.

Hewitt makes the case that the photographs taken by McPherson and Oliver in July 1863 are the first to show an army in action. Based on the quantity and diversity of images as well as their unique nature, he considers them the most significant of the war. Perhaps adding to his endorsement is that the changed course of the Mississippi and commercial development have irrevocably altered Port Hudson. Images of landscapes that no longer exist differ from those showing a battlefield virtually as it was during the war. As Hewitt asks, "What is more important, what you can't see today versus what you can?" Seeing his presentation and perusing his highly recommended book with its remarkable images will verify this observation.



## BULLETIN BOARD

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*Our in-person meetings are currently held at:*

**Holiday Inn Oakbrook**

350 W 22nd St., Oakbrook Terrace

*Parking at the Holiday Inn is FREE*

Dinner \$40.00 Members and Non- Members

Cocktails at 5:30, Dinner at 6:30

Presentation only is \$10 per person.

November 8<sup>th</sup>, noon at the **Kenosha Civil War Museum**, Larry Desotell will speak on "From Prison Guards to Prisoners: The Story of the Nineteenth Wisconsin."

For more on programs at the museum, visit <https://museums.kenosha.org/civilwar/events/>

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There will be a **Veteran's Day** ceremony honoring America's Civil War, and other war, veterans at **Rosehill Cemetery** in Chicago, Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>, at 11 a.m.

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**Bruce Allardice** is speaking Nov. 4<sup>th</sup> at 1 p.m. at the North Shore Senior Center on "Loose Lips; Military Secrecy in the Civil War."

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## More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

Nov. 1st, Northern Illinois CWRT: Doug Stiles on "Lincoln's Watch"  
Nov. 4th, Rock Valley CWRT: Douglas Egerton on "Thunder at the Gates"  
Nov. 7th, Milwaukee CWRT: Allen Ottens on "The Grant-Rawlins Relationship"  
Nov. 12th, McHenry County CWRT: Bruce Allardice on "'Loose Lips;' Military Secrecy in the Civil War"  
Nov. 12th, Southwest Michigan CWRT: Ron Kirkwood on "Soldier Stories from Spangler's Farm"  
Nov. 16th, Salt Creek CWRT: John Horn on "The Wilson-Kautz Raid and Grant's Second Offensive at Petersburg"  
Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>: Lincoln Davis CWRT: Bill Taylor on "Comparing the Vietnam War and the American Civil War"  
Nov. 21st, South Suburban CWRT: No meeting due to holiday  
Nov. 24th, Northern Indiana CWRT: Brian Conroy on "Forming the 4th Illinois Cavalry"  
Check the **Announcements** section of the CWRT's website for additional coming events.

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## Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

**Dec. 13th:** Jon Sebastian on "We Are All in This War--the Northern Home Front"  
**Jan. 10th, 2025:** Bjorn Skaptason on "Shiloh"  
**Feb. 14th:** Hampton Newsome on "Gettysburg's Southern Front"  
**Mar. 14th:** Gerry Prokopowicz on TBA  
**Apr. 9th (Wednesday):** Phil Spaugy on "The 19th Indiana and the Iron Brigade"  
**May 9th:** Steve Phan on "Asian and Pacific Islanders During the Civil War"  
**June 13th:** Dave Powell (Nevins-Freeman Award) on "Lost Opportunities in the Atlanta Campaign"

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The **Abraham Lincoln Book Shop's** facebook page airs "Take a Break with History", every first and third Friday of the month at 1 pm CST.

For more, visit <https://alincolnbookshop.com/>

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**Reminder**—At the November meeting we will be voting on changes to the CWRT By-Laws, as set forth in the September Newsletter.

Former CWRT President **Roger Bohn** passed away on October 13th.

He was Chicago's President 2001-2002, and President of the Salt Creek CWRT 1994-95. In addition, he filled countless roles and helped out the CWRTs in countless ways. He will be missed.



Ruth and Roger in 2007.



CWRT Website QR Code