

# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE



Volume LXXXIV, Number 4

Chicago, Illinois

December 2024

832nd REGULAR MEETING, Friday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024

## **Jonathan Sebastian on *Loyal to a Man: The Civil War in our Backyards***

**Live/Zoom Meeting. Time: Dec. 13th, 2024, 07:30 PM CST.  
Zoom Option ID 845 3227 1496; No Passcode needed**



In the minds of many, including those who study history, there exists a divide. That is, while history happens everywhere, the real history happens somewhere else. The Civil War is thought of as having been fought in the South and, to an extent this is true. Most of the battles were fought in that region, however all parts of the country were directly impacted by this war. Illinois and even more specifically, the Chicago metropolitan area was no different.

Just two hundred years ago, this area would have been unrecognizable to those familiar with all the Chicagoland area has to offer today. What was once an area of prairie with a handful of small towns was transformed dramatically during the 1860s. The people of the Prairie State played a significant role in the war and were themselves directly impacted by that war. So, how did Illinoisans, and more specifically those of Chicago and the DuPage County area, respond to such momentous issues as emancipation and the draft (among other issues) in the context of a national civil war? This presentation will explore this rich local history (some of it is still here in a tangible way!) and its connection to a most significant moment in the development of the United States.

A former president of the Chicago CWRT, Jonathan Sebastian earned his B.A. in history from Judson College (now University) and his M.A. in Public History from Loyola University Chicago. He has been an adjunct professor of history at Judson University teaching World History 1500 to the Present and U.S. history. More recently, he was a social studies teacher at Woodlands Academy of the Sacred Heart. He was a tour guide at Jubilee College State Historic site outside of Peoria, Illinois, a project-based researcher at the Pritzker Military Library, and was the curator of the Fischer Farm historic site in Bensenville, Illinois. Currently, he is an experience facilitator at the Arlington Heights Historical Museum and the education and programs assistant at the Elmhurst History Museum. He is also the author of Bensenville, a volume of the Arcadia Press Series, Images of America.

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## **Battlefield Preservation**

Dear:

**Today is Giving Tuesday — a day where we can make history at Gettysburg together, no matter where you are in the world!**

Let's come together as passionate history lovers and make a lasting impact on Gettysburg Battlefield, a site that holds monumental moments from our past.

Every contribution you make online today will be [matched dollar for dollar](#) up to \$50,000 by a generous board member. This means your gift will have double the impact in our mission to save threatened land at Gettysburg.

**This 11-acre plot stayed nearly the same for more than a century and a half. *It's in nearly pristine condition!***

It's a two-minute walk from the Lutheran Seminary. It's a three-minute walk to the famed spot where the Three Confederate Prisoners were photographed in one of the most iconic images of the Civil War.

It's about 1,200 feet from the monument that marks the place where Gen. John F. Reynolds lost his life, and barely 1,600 feet from Lee's Headquarters. *That's how central this tract is to the battlefield and the first day of fighting!*

We can save this critical 11 acres, so central to the action on the first day of fighting at Gettysburg, and preserve it forever! *But only if we have your help.*

*The American Battlefield Trust*

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## November Presentation

By Mark Matranga

The November 8, 2024, 831<sup>st</sup> Regular Meeting of The Civil War Round Table featured **Allen J. Ottens** on “*The Grant-Rawlins Relationship*.” In introducing the topic, Ottens pointed out that despite Rawlin’s influence in Grant’s success, little is known of the man. Indeed, Grant himself made little mention of his former Chief of Staff and longtime confidant when penning his *Memoirs*. To correct this, Ottens has authored the 2021 biography, *John A. Rawlins: No Ordinary Man*, which delves into the background and character of this behind-the-scenes highly instrumental man. His talk centered on the qualities of both men, what attracted them, and what made them a successful team.

Grant left the military in 1854 and relocated to Galena in 1860 to work in his father’s leather shop, retiring to a relatively quiet and obscure life. There he met John A. Rawlins, a prominent attorney, member of the Masonic Lodge, and former alderman in town who also represented the Grant shop. Rawlins was a self-made man of the western border. Born in 1831 in relative poverty, he studied law, becoming a leading Democrat politician and Galena’s city attorney at age 26. But he was nonetheless attracted to the stolid Grant due to an interest in the Mexican War. The otherwise quiet West Pointer opened up to Rawlins, relating his war experiences in Mexico during the attorney’s visits to the shop.

The two crossed paths again in April 1861 after the surrender of Ft. Sumter when Lincoln called for volunteers. The following day, Rawlins spoke passionately at a town meeting, asserting that the question was no longer one of politics or party but “simply country or no country.” The day for compromise had passed, he declared; appeal to the “God of Battles” was the only course. Despite his inclination to shy away from politics, Rawlins’ oration aroused Grant’s patriotism and led to his decision to reenter the military. With assistance from Republican Congressman Elihu Washburne Grant was commissioned a colonel, eventually in command of the 21<sup>st</sup> Illinois Infantry.

By August 1861 Grant had been promoted to Brigadier General, the responsibilities of which required a staff; Grant quickly sought out Rawlins who became his aide-de-camp and assistant adjutant general. Grant was impressed with his aide’s patriotism, character and administrative talent. Ottens suggested that Rawlins believed Grant had a low tolerance for alcohol and determined to keep him away from spirits. For Rawlins, “All that concerns his reputation concerns me.” Despite political and social differences,

Grant achieved a comfort level with Rawlins who admitted “I became very much attached to him.”

Rival commanders and corrupt contractors fueled rumors regarding Grant’s drinking during battle, but Rawlins squelched these reports. His then Chief of Staff, Colonel Webster, said Grant was “perfectly sober” during the battle of Shiloh. In answering a pointed inquiry from Congressman Washburne regarding Grant’s alleged lack of sobriety, Rawlins replied that Grant did drink but showed no signs of intemperance. Rawlins was an advocate of abstinence, influenced by his education at the strict Methodist Rock River Seminary, and the tenets of Rev. Lyman Beecher, a leader of the temperance movement. Rawlins also feared falling into dissipation as did his father, a sentiment Ottens considers overwrought.

Rawlins rose to become Chief of Staff of the Army of the Tennessee and brevet Major General. Post war he defended Grant when President Johnson accused him of reneging on a promise to remain Secretary of War until Johnson named Stanton’s replacement. Thinking Grant’s honor had been impugned, Rawlins drafted a reply wherein Grant accused Johnson of “attempting to destroy my character before the country.” Adam Badeau, Grant’s military secretary, considered this a stroke of political genius as it guaranteed Grant the Republication nomination in 1868. It was not surprising that Rawlins followed Grant to the White House, serving as Secretary of War in the new administration. It was a short-lived tenure; Rawlins succumbed to tuberculosis at age 38 in September 1869, six short months after his nomination.

All this begs the question: Why was Rawlins not given the recognition he deserved, neither by his good friend nor by history? Ottens maintains that in his memoirs Grant “placed himself on a pedestal” to show he was in control, his success a measure of his efforts alone. But he did acknowledge his closeness to Rawlins when his friend died, writing “I could not feel the loss of a near and dear relative more keenly than the loss of General Rawlins.” Ottens opines Rawlins accurately captured Grant’s feelings and gave them concrete expression, an important factor in the General’s success. Grant’s strategic vision unquestionably led to ultimate victory, but Rawlins is deserving of respect for his part in protecting ‘the saviour of the nation.’



## BULLETIN BOARD

*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.

December 13<sup>th</sup>, noon at the **Kenosha Civil War Museum**, James Pula will speak on "General Dan Butterfield."

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

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## More Upcoming Local Civil War Events

Dec. 4th, Kankakee Valley CWRT: Zack Nunamaker (and others) on "the 42nd Regiment, Illinois Infantry"

Dec. 6th, Northern Illinois CWRT: Dave Oberg on "The 1st Illinois Light Artillery"

Dec. 10th, McHenry County CWRT: Derrick Lindow on "Partisan Warfare in Western Kentucky in 1862" (zoom only)

Dec. 12th, Milwaukee CWRT: **Jon Sebastian** on "We Are All in This War--the Northern Home Front"

Dec. 17th, Lincoln-Davis CWRT: Chuck Rebesco on "Last Man Standing--20th Indiana at Gettysburg"

Dec. 19th, South Suburban CWRT: Holiday Party

Dec. 21st, Salt Creek CWRT: "Memorabilia Show and Tell"

Jan. 3rd, 2025: Northern Illinois CWRT: Gordon Ramsey on "Civil War Music"

Check the **Announcements** section of the CWRT's website for additional coming events.

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## Future Chicago CWRT Meetings

**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.

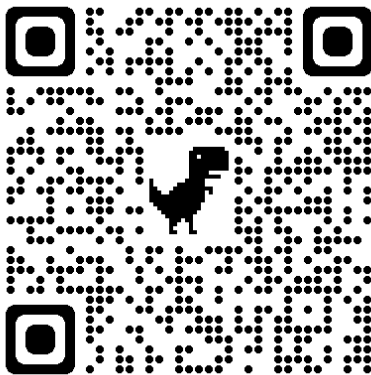
For more, visit <https://alincolnbookshop.com/>

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**Reminder**—The registration form for the 2025 Annual Battlefield Tour (Shiloh and Corinth) is attached. It's April 23-27, 2025. The form is also on our website.



**Merry Xmas and Happy Holidays to all!**



**CWRT Website QR Code**



# THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE of Chicago

## **REGISTRATION for “Shiloh - Corinth” - 74th TOUR, APRIL 23-27, 2025**

★ **Note...This Tour is limited to one bus.** ★

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**COST OF THE TOUR** ..... **\$1,095.00** per person, double occupancy; **\$1,435.00** per person, single occupancy.

**Tour cost includes** ..... Hotel room for Wednesday evening thru Sunday noon; all lunches & dinners; all motor coach services; Tour Guide; all admission fees; and Tour Kit. **Dinner Wednesday evening & all breakfasts are on-your-own.**

Bjorn Skaptason will be our Guide.

**TOUR BASE HOTEL** ..... **Tour Base Hotel: The Lodge at Pickwick Landing State Park.**

**Lodge contact information: 120 Playground Loop, Counce, Tennessee 38326; Phone: (731) 639-3135; Website: [tnstateparks.com/lodges/pickwick landing](http://tnstateparks.com/lodges/pickwick-landing).**

**Transportation** ..... **There are Direct Flights** from Chicago to the Memphis Airport...**From Midway:** Southwest, American, United & Delta. **From O’Hare:** American, United & Delta (Southwest flies to Memphis but there are no direct flights from O’Hare). No CWRT shuttle bus will be scheduled.

❶ **Non-Members**..... **\$50.00** per person additional for non-members of the *Civil War Round Table of Chicago*, or save money and join now; go to [www.cwrt.org](http://www.cwrt.org) and print out the membership form. You can submit your membership application along with your tour payment. This will help insure your place on the tour if we run out of seats. There will be a “waiting list” if the tour is sold-out.

❷ **Roommates**..... Indicate the name of the person with whom you wish to share a room. If you would like help in finding a roommate, please check “Need a roommate.”

❸ **Bus Boarding**..... Bus will load every morning at **7:30AM** and depart promptly at **8:00AM**. Boarding and seating on the bus is on a first-come, day-to-day basis. Once seated for the day on the bus, please do not change your seat for the remainder of the day...necessary for an accurate “head count.” Each day following, choice of seat will continue on a first-come basis.

❹ **Physical Limitations**...Please make certain that you are physically able to meet the challenges of our Tour stops and activities. The CWRT of Chicago is not responsible for illnesses or injuries that may occur.

Ⓢ **Unforeseen Circumstances**...Should unforeseen circumstances occur, the CWRT of Chicago reserves the right to cancel or alter any or all of the planned activities.

★ Send this registration form with your *payment in full*, or a \$250.00 deposit. *Payment in full is due on or before March 10, 2025*.

CWRT of Chicago members have priority until January 25, 2025. This Tour is limited to one bus!

Name(s) PLEASE PRINT \_\_\_\_\_

Badge names \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phones: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Plan to share a room? NO \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_

Roommate's name \_\_\_\_\_

I need a roommate, please help \_\_\_\_\_ *The CWRT does not ensure the suitability of any roommate matches.*

★ Send this registration form with your check payable to “The Civil War Round Table” or simply “CWRT of Chicago.”

**MAIL TO:** ► Rae Radovich, Tour Registrar; P.O. Box 434, Palos Park, IL 60464;

Call 708-361-3823; Email: [raeradovich@earthlink.net](mailto:raeradovich@earthlink.net)