

photographs of a handful of artifacts discovered near the wreck—pewter spoons, bone-plated buttons, and parts of jars and pans.

With limited research material from which to draw, Wagner does an interesting job addressing our inland river history, as it pertains to the construction, travel, and demise of so many flatboats. He presents in great detail this newfound wreck and describes the challenges that he

and his team faced in their efforts to record and preserve this unique piece of Ohio River history. The book offers an interesting and informative read for any “river rat” and even an armchair sailor.

CAPTAIN RICK RHODES of St. Petersburg, Florida, is the author of nine books, including *The Ohio River in American History and Voyaging on Today's River* (rev. ed., 2010).



The Photographer and the President: Abraham Lincoln, Alexander Gardner, and the Images that Made a Presidency

By Richard Lowry

(New York: Rizzoli Books, 2015. Pp. xiv, 241. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

After a big boom in “Lincoln and” books—full disclosure: my own *Lincoln and the Power of the Press* is among them—it comes as a breath of fresh air to see preeminence in yet another such title granted to a “secondary” character: in this case, Civil War photographer Alexander Gardner. Few artists associated with the development of the Lincoln image deserve such acknowledgment more, and Richard Lowry has risen to the challenge admirably.

The Scottish-born Gardner, a Mathew Brady protégé when the war began, ultimately tired of seeing his boss hog the limelight. After Brady won the praise for an 1862 New York exhibition of Gardner’s harrowing battlefield photos, Gardner decided to launch his own business, competing directly with his mentor. Billing himself as “Photog-

rapher to the Army of the Potomac,” he ultimately amassed a *Photographic Sketch Book of the War* (1866), the masterpiece of the era. Gardner also opened a rival portrait gallery in Washington. Lincoln was his first sitter.

Until now, the standard Gardner biography was D. Mark Katz’s handsome 1991 *Witness to an Era: The Life and Photographs of Alexander Gardner*. Lowry’s effort may be less satisfying pictorially, but it is the far superior literary achievement. Typical is Lowry’s captivating description of his two subjects’ initial meeting. President-elect Lincoln arrives in Washington weary from his journey and mortified at the way it ended: a secret passage through hostile Baltimore, allegedly in disguise. He hastens to Brady’s for some remedial image-making. There,

Gardner poses his famous subject prosaically, or perhaps cowed, allows him merely to stare vacantly into the distance. Refreshingly, Lowry is not unwilling to criticize Gardner whenever he wastes Lincoln's time—or that of customers and posterity—by presiding over disappointing sittings (as he did again in August 1863).

But when Gardner and Lincoln synchronized, the results astound: like the series made November 8, 1863, right before the Gettysburg Address, or the heartbreaking portraits showing a shockingly thin and prematurely aged Lincoln two months before his assassination. Lowry's take on Gardner's photo of Lincoln and his son Tad that day—less famous than the one taken at Brady's the year before—is both masterful and provocative (as is the author's bonus commentary on Gardner's wartime portraits of Walt Whitman). And as many times as we have seen the picture of Lincoln facing down General George B. McClellan at Antietam (notably the first photos ever made of a commander-in-chief on a battlefield of war), no one has ever offered Lowry's intriguing speculation that Gardner “sought to provide a physical discomfort between his illustrious subjects by posing them so close to each other.” The book is full of such insights. Gardner had quite an eye, if the light and circumstances inspired him, and so does Lowry.

The case that Lowry never persuasively makes is that Gardner's images “made” Lincoln's presidency—any more than those of Brady himself (his 1860 Cooper Union pose helped elect

Lincoln in the first place) or his other gifted employee, Anthony Berger, who at a single 1864 sitting took the pictures later engraved for the copper penny and five-dollar bill.

Certainly Gardner deserves credit and reappraisal. He took more photographs of Lincoln than anyone else. He was not only on the spot when Lincoln visited Antietam, but at the second inaugural on March 4, 1865, creating a series of blurry yet thrilling records of the great orator delivering a masterpiece. Yet Gardner was also at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863, and came away empty-handed—bun-gling the opportunity to take another historic picture.

Lowry writes beautifully about the images themselves, and weaves a fine little biography of Lincoln around them. The only disappointment is that Rizzoli, the typically lavish New York art publisher, did not make this a larger or more profusely illustrated book. Surprising too, is that Lowry, a film historian at William & Mary, could not resist an unnecessary reference to a Hitchcock film and then got its title wrong! The movie that ended with a chase on Mount Rushmore is of course *North by Northwest*, not *Notorious* (p. 73)—a gaffe fixable in subsequent printings, of which there deserve to be many.

HAROLD HOLZER, winner of the 2015 Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize, is the author, co-author, or editor of fifty books on Lincoln and the Civil War. He served for twenty-three years as chief spokesman for The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

