Shooting Soldiers: Civil War Medical Photography by R.B. Bontecou

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Recommended Citation

D'Onofrio, Peter J. (2011) "Shooting Soldiers: Civil War Medical Photography by R.B. Bontecou," *Civil War Book Review*: Vol. 13 : Iss. 4 .

DOI: 10.31390/cwbr.13.4.10

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cwbr/vol13/iss4/32>

Review

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Fall 2011

Burns, Stanley B. *Shooting Soldiers: Civil War Medical Photography by R.B. Bontecou.* Burns Archive Press, \$50.00 ISBN 978-1-936002-05-4

Looking Wounded Soldiers in the Eye

Shooting Soldiers: Civil War Medical Photography by R. B. Bontecou showcases the Civil War photography of Dr. Reed Brockway Bontecou, Surgeon-in-Charge of Harewood General Hospital in Washington, D.C. This book is the first in a series of Bontecou's photographs of identified soldiers from 101 regiments from the Harewood Hospital Album.

While the photographs may be graphic to some readers, it documents the high cost that soldiers paid for what they believed in a country of united states. Bontecou's photographs, or *carte de visites* (CDV) were a result of the order by Surgeon General William A. Hammond to document the cases that the surgeons worked on, their treatment, and their outcomes. Many of Bontecou's photographs helped illustrated the post-war publication of *The Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion*.

The artistry of Bontecou's pictures has been recognized as among the highest levels of photographic art and helped make him a legend among medical photographers. "Due to their historical precedence there can be no doubt that Bontecou's *carte de visite* album is the premier medical photograph album of the Civil War" (8). Included among the images are close-ups of patients in the OR and of surgeries in progress the earliest known of such views.

This volume also contains a sketch of Bontecou's career, a history of the various images, and a brief summary of the last campaigns of the war. Each of the images identifies the soldier, what unit he belonged to, his wound, where received and date, treatment, and outcome. Some of the images have more information than others. The last few pages of the book list the battles, from the

Wilderness to Appomattox, the soldiers in this book, their unit and plate number. Also included in this section are those with no battle listed and those who died of disease (not in battle). This book represents the earliest efforts of one physician to document war-related wounds and, by the use of photography, present to fellow physicians a way of caring for those wounds.

Shooting Soldiers is a well-written, fast and easy-to-read book. Each image gives the reader a look into the tragic costs of the most turbulent time in America's history.

The author of this book, Dr. Stanley B. Burns, M.D., an internationally known historian, publisher, and archivist, is an ophthalmologist in New York City and Clinical Professor of Medicine and Psychiatry at NYU Langone Medical Center.

Peter J. D'Onofrio, Ph.D. is the president of the Society of Civil War Soldiers, Inc., the largest non-profit, tax-exempt, international educational group dedicated to the study and preservation of Civil War era medical and surgical techniques and the professionals who performed those techniques. He is also the editor/publisher of the Society's quarterly Journal of Civil War Medicine. He can be reached at socwsurgeons@aol.com or through the web site at www.civilwarsurgeons.org.