

MATHEW B. BRADY: PIONEER WAR PHOTOGRAPHER

by 4589

LESTER D. COLLIER

A.B., University of Nebraska, 1951

---

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Technical Journalism

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1970

Approved by:

  
Major Professor

LD  
2648  
R4  
1970  
C648  
C.2

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Chapter	
I. MATHEW B. BRADY . . . . .	4
Chapter	
II. BRADY AND THE CIVIL WAR . . . . .	15
Chapter	
III. THE POST WAR YEARS . . . . .	32
Chapter	
IV. SUMMARY . . . . .	35
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	38

## INTRODUCTION

Probably the first person to use photography as a journalistic approach to "cover" a war was Roger Fenton. In 1855, he became perhaps the first combat photographer, when he equipped a wagon with cameras, lenses, glass plates, chemicals, a stove, and a portable darkroom and photographed the Crimean War. He returned with more than three hundred negatives of French and British soldiers at campsites at Balaklava Bay.<sup>1</sup>

But Fenton's achievement was overshadowed a few years later by an American photographer, Mathew B. Brady, whose coverage of the Civil War has been called "one of the greatest achievements in the annals of photography."<sup>2</sup>

James D. Horan, in Mathew Brady, Historian with a Camera, points out that no great photographer has ever impressed his personality on a nation more strongly than Mathew B. Brady. "Perhaps this is partly because no other photographer has more completely absorbed the spirit of his times, so that mid-nineteenth century America and the American Civil War are linked with his name. Mathew B. Brady, who used his camera to record his country's

---

<sup>1</sup>John B. Whiting, Photography is a Language (Chicago: Ziff Davis Publishing Co., 1946), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Robert B. Rhode and Floyd H. McCall, Press Photography Reporting with a Camera (New York: MacMillian Co., 1961), p. 15.

history, produced the greatest pictorial essay of our times.<sup>3</sup>

In The Press and America, Edwin Emery noted:

The most notable contribution to pictorial journalism in the 1860's was the photograph. Pioneer war photographer was a lovable Irishman, Mathew Brady.

True, his photographs could not be used in the newspapers of the time, since a practical method for transferring light and shade in the printing process was not perfected for another decade. But Brady was famous for his war pictures, and his photographic record of the conflict comes down to us as one of the finest examples of reporting . . .

These pictures give us an entirely different impression than the usual report of people and events. Although Brady's equipment was inferior to the simplest box cameras of three generations later, he produced amazing pictures.

Some of them were the equal of any produced in World War II, although he could not stop fast action. Despite the limitations of his equipment, somehow he was able to capture through his lens the hysteria, horror, and occasional glory of war.<sup>4</sup>

Beaumont Newhall, in American Photography, 1839-1900, wrote that the War Between the States gave Brady his greatest opportunity to record history with the camera. Brady went to the front, organized teams of combat photographers, and produced the remarkable collection of several thousand "Photographic Views of the War." Newhall said that "taken as a whole, the photographic documentation is a landmark . . . the impact of these stark images which as Brady stated, 'present grim-visaged war exactly as it appears' has seldom been excelled even today."<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>James D. Horan, Mathew Brady, Historian with a Camera, (New York: Crown Publisher, Inc., 1955), p. xiii.

<sup>4</sup>Edwin Emery, The Press and America, an Interpretative History of Journalism, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), pp. 304-305.

<sup>5</sup>Beaumont Newhall, ed. American Photography, 1839-1900, (Washington: Library of Congress, 1957), p. 1.



There seems to be little doubt that the pioneer accomplishments of Mathew Brady had a tremendous influence in pictorial journalism. Perhaps Brady's contributions can best be summed up by Arthur Rothstein as he comments in his book, Photojournalism:

These photographs, now in the National Archives and the Library of Congress, have influenced war photographers ever since.

Here, for the first time, the special quality of photography which is so important to the photojournalist became evident: the strong sense of realism and truth, the participation with the photographer in presence at the scene and as a witness to the event.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup>Arthur Rothstein, Photojournalism, Pictures for Magazines and Newspapers. (New York: American Photographic Book Publishing Co., Inc., 1965), p. 7.

## CHAPTER I

## MATHEW B. BRADY

Historian Francis T. Miller put Brady's birthplace as Cork, Ireland, but Brady in an interview with New York World correspondent, "Gath" Townsend, claimed Warren County, New York, as the place of his birth and put the year as "about 1823-24."<sup>7</sup>

Although Brady told Townsend that he was born of poor Irish parents in the woods about Lake George, a search of the county records failed to produce a birth certificate.<sup>8</sup>

According to Brady's death certificate, he was born of native American parents in the United States in 1823. Brady was conscious when he entered the Presbyterian Hospital in New York before his death in 1895. It is assumed that he supplied the hospital with his own vital statistics, which were later written on the certificate.<sup>9</sup>

Little is known of Mathew Brady's boyhood years but at about sixteen he left home and traveled to Sarasota, New York, which was the mecca of the farm boys who sought jobs and a look at the outside world.

---

<sup>7</sup>Horan, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

While Brady was a boy he met William Page, a struggling young portrait artist. Brady apparently acquired an ambition to become a painter as a result of his friendship with Page, who gave him some instructions.

A letter published in the New York Observer in 1839 by Samuel F. B. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph, telling about the Daguerre process of photography brought about changes in the life of Brady.

Morse's letter described his meeting with Daguerre, in France, who had a public exhibition of his daguerreotypes--pictures taken on copper. At a joint meeting of the Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris the daguerreotype process was revealed. For his invention, Daguerre was granted an annuity by the French government and his invention was given to the world without restriction.

Daguerre's process was not too complicated. A sheet of clean, polished copper was coated with silver. This surface, when placed in a small box filled with iodine vapors, turned a yellow color. At ordinary temperature the metal was sensitized after thirty seconds. The copper plate was then placed in a camera and exposed to the light from five to ten minutes. The plate was then washed in "hypo."

The daguerreotype had two major disadvantages. It was a positive, in photographic terminology of today, not a negative. (Each picture was unique; it could not be duplicated.) Exposures were long, usually several minutes. About a year later, improvements

reduced exposure times under good light conditions to less than a minute and made portraits possible. Thus portraiture was the greatest activity of the daguerreotype era.

In September of 1839, Morse returned to New York from France with his daguerreotype camera and announced the birth of photography to the United States. Within a few days news stories describing the process were published in New York, Washington, Boston and Philadelphia.<sup>10</sup>

The daguerreotype was a new art. It would seem that all one had to do was to build a camera, coat and polish a copper plate and take a picture. The financial gains from this apparently simple method of photography were obvious from New York to the farthest frontier.

Americans began to experiment with Daguerre's wooden camera and the process of daguerreotypy. One of them was Mathew B. Brady, whose camera would link the founders of the Republic with virtually the opening of the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup>

About 1839 or 1840, Page and Brady arrived in New York City; Page continued to paint portraits while Brady secured a job as a clerk in A. T. Stewart's large department store.

When Page went to visit his friend Samuel F. B. Morse, then president of the National Academy of Design, Brady went along and was introduced to Morse--and photography. At the time Morse was experimenting with the daguerreotype and undoubtedly

---

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

showed the copper plate with the image to Brady and Page. Brady was immediately attracted by these metallic pictures and received instructions from Morse in the art of taking them. In fact, Mathew Brady, the farmboy, was a student of Morse when Morse opened what was perhaps the first school of photography in America in 1840.<sup>12</sup> Later Professors Draper and Doremus of New York City University advised Brady in his attempt to learn the practice of daguerreotypy.

With the small cash capital he had saved from his long hours at Stewart's, Brady decided to open his own gallery in 1844. He chose the "Times Square" of his time at the corner of Broadway and Fulton. Taking advantage of the idea utilized by Draper and Morse in employing a glass house on a roof, Brady rented the top floor of the building at this location and constructed several skylights to secure greater illumination. He was probably the first photographer to construct skylights, which became standard equipment in most studios in later years.

Brady was a tireless worker and experimenter in his efforts to produce the best results which the art of daguerreotypy was capable of giving. He worked from dawn until the light failed; then he spent most of the night developing his daguerreotypes. In later years he estimated he had taken "thousands" of pictures in those first years.<sup>13</sup>

The annual fair of the American Institute offered prizes

---

<sup>12</sup>Robert Taft, Photography and the American Scene (New York: The MacMillian Co., 1938), p. 38.

<sup>13</sup>Horan, p. 10.

for plain and colored daguerreotypes and these prizes were eagerly sought by the increasing number of professionals in the new art. Brady was quick to realize the value to be gained by such publicity and competed for the first time at the fair in 1844.

He received the silver medal for first honors. For five years he won the American Institute award for his contributions to photography. In fact, in 1849, it had become so monotonous that Humphrey's Journal, one of the early daguerrean trade periodicals, announced with a casual air, "Mr. B. has won again."<sup>14</sup>

Prizes and awards soon seemed minor matters to Brady because his daguerre portraits created an immediate sensation and were influential. His portraits were widely seen and his financial success was evident and thus worth trying to imitate. He was quickly becoming the well-known "Brady of Broadway" and his fame as a photographer was beginning to spread beyond the boundaries of the city of New York.

With typical energy and tenacity, Brady began to seek out the great men of his time, pleading, begging, promising and cajoling them to pose for him. Brady's persuasiveness worked wonders because the "men and mothers of America" as Brady called them, followed the sign which directed them up the stairs to his second floor studio.<sup>15</sup>

In 1845 Brady began work on the tremendous project of preserving for posterity the pictures of all distinguished Americans,

---

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

which he planned to publish in a massive volume to be entitled The Gallery of Illustrious Americans.

Brady's daguerreotype of Andrew Jackson, seventh President of the United States, was his first major contribution to his historic gallery. "Old Hickory" was dying in his bedroom of his beautiful Nashville Hermitage in 1845, when Brady obtained the precious pictures. Brady said in later years that he "had Andrew Jackson taken barely in time to save his sacred lineaments to posterity."<sup>16</sup>

Later Brady was to record by his camera every president of the United States from John Quincy Adams, the sixth president, to and including William McKinley, with one exception. Not all were photographed during their term of office, as Adam's term had expired in 1829, ten years before the introduction of daguerreotype.

The single exception was William H. Harrison, who died in office in 1841; Harrison's death occurred before Brady had started in the portrait business.

While attending a dinner in Washington, Mathew Brady met Julia Handy. She was the daughter of Colonel Handy and as a young girl attended the best schools of Maryland and Georgia. Apparently she was impressed by Brady because their courtship was brief and they were married at the old E Street Baptist Church in Washington.

---

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

A search of the church records of that time failed to disclose the exact date; however, newspaper accounts of Julia's life indicate the marriage took place in the eighteen-forties or early eighteen-fifties.

The National Hotel in Washington was to be their permanent residence until Julia's death. Apparently Julia devoted her life to her husband and his work; they had no children but lavished their affection on their nephew, Levin Handy.<sup>17</sup>

By 1850, Mathew Brady was one of the best-known photographers in the world and owned one of the finest galleries in America.

He was sought out by the leaders of the nation who wanted their likeness preserved among Brady's famous daguerreotypes of the great men of the ages. The legend "By Brady" at the bottom of a portrait was de rigueur for fashionable society in the United States and Europe and it was a rare issue of Harper's Weekly that did not have a large engraving with a Brady credit line.

Brady knew the value of publicity and he called at Harper & Brothers when he had a rare print. In the fifties he was running what could be compared to the present picture syndicates.

Brady once called his gallery "the magazine to illustrate all the publications in the land." "The illustrated papers," he said, "got nearly all their portraits and war scenes from my camera." A check of the issues of Harper's or Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspapers in those years will show that ninety out of hundred illustrations used are Brady's.<sup>18</sup>

It was the Americans who carried the daguerreotype to its highest technical peak and widest popularity. Daguerreotype parlors could now be found all along Broadway. In 1840, the census report listed no photographers officially but a decade later there

---

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 14.



were 936. Ten years later there were 3,154 and by 1870 there were 7,558.<sup>19</sup>

At the World's Fair in 1851, three American daguerreotypists won the top honors. They were John Whipple of Boston and M. Brady and M. Lawrence of New York. Whipple received special recognition for his daguerreotype of the moon which was taken with the of an observatory telescope.

The news that America had captured all honors stirred the United States. In New York, Horace Greeley editorially rubbed his hands in glee: "In picture taking we beat the world," he wrote of his friend Mathew B. Brady.<sup>20</sup>

Very probably, the most important photograph that Brady made during his heyday as a portrait photographer was that of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln came to New York in February, 1860, a relatively unknown man, to deliver an address at the Cooper Union. While in New York he was taken by his host, R. C. McCormick, to Brady's gallery. On February 21, 1860, Brady took several portraits of the country lawyer.

At the time that these photographs were made, what reputation Lincoln possessed was that of a rough, uncouth, backwoods lawyer. After meeting Lincoln, McCormick said "that the Illinois lawyer, 'half-alligator, half-horse,' was wearing a cheap black suit, much wrinkled from the careless packing in the valise. His form and manner were indeed very odd, and we though him the most

---

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

unprepossing public man we had ever met."<sup>21</sup>

Lincoln's speech at the Cooper Union, the evening after he posed for his portrait, convinced the country that he was a man of marked ability and dignity; however, the popular impression of Lincoln's appearance of the wrinkled black suit and ungainly manners worked to his disadvantage.

After this speech, there was a demand for pictures of Lincoln. The Brady photographs were available and were reproduced in various ways. Currier and Ives made excellent lithographs while many journals prepared woodcuts from the Brady portraits.

The Brady portraits revealed Lincoln as a man of dignified bearing and human aspect. When Brady and Lincoln met at the White House several years later, Lincoln, on being introduced to Brady, remarked to those present, "Brady and the Cooper Union speech made me President of the United States."<sup>22</sup>

Brady made many other portraits of Lincoln, some of them being probably the best views of Lincoln ever made. Of all the photographs of Lincoln, the portrait made by Brady on February 9, 1864, in his Washington gallery, is the best known.<sup>23</sup>

It is the picture of Lincoln which appears on the five-dollar bill and which appeared on the 1923 issue of the three-cent stamp. This photograph has been copied many times in woodcuts,

---

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>22</sup>Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln, The War Years (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1939, Vol. III), p. 428.

<sup>23</sup>Taft, p. 243.

lithographs and engravings.

In the same year that the American daguerreotypists were winning acclaim in London, a new photographic process was revealed that was to make the daguerreotype obsolete.

This was the wet-collodion process, or more simply the wet-plate process, discovered by Frederick Scott Archer, an English sculptor.<sup>24</sup> Collodion was first discovered about 1847 and was used to supply a protective covering for wounds. It is a mixture of soluble guncotton (pyroxylin), alcohol, and ether that will quickly dry to form a thin, colorless, elastic film on any surface on which it is spread.

To make a wet-plate negative the photographer flowed an even coating of collodion, to which iodide and bromide had been added, onto a glass plate. The coated plate was then soaked in a bath of silver nitrate and the silver iodide or bromide then made the plate light sensitive. The sensitivity was lost, however, when the plate dried. It was put, still wet, into a light-tight plate holder, the holder positioned in the camera, the lens cap removed for an exposure of several seconds, and the cap replaced. The plates had to be immediately developed with acid and fixed.<sup>25</sup> The wet-plates were capable of unlimited reproductions and were superior to the daguerreotype.

The wet-plate negatives were frequently converted into

---

<sup>24</sup>Horan, p. 20.

<sup>25</sup>Rhode and McCall, p. 13.

positives by simply placing the glass against black material or painting the back of the glass black. By using thin metal plates japanned black or chocolate color, instead of glass, photographers were soon producing tintypes.

The wet-plate process had its disadvantages. It was a clumsy, messy and exacting technique; accidents could and often did happen at any stage of the process. The glass had to be coated, sensitized, and developed at the time and place the photograph was taken. Under average conditions the useful life of a wet-plate was approximately ten minutes; it had to be exposed and developed while still wet. A delay of only a few minutes on either side of the exposure could mean a serious, even disastrous, loss of brilliancy and depth in the final product.<sup>26</sup> If the photographer took his camera into the field, the darkroom went too.

Brady was not satisfied with his success. The daguerreotype was too slow to be adaptable to anything but portrait work and he sought a faster process. In 1855, he went to Scotland to learn about a new and faster wet-plate developed by Scott Archer.

---

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

## CHAPTER II

## BRADY AND THE CIVIL WAR

The Civil War was the beginning of pictorial journalism. Vivid eyewitness sketches by Alfred and William Waud, Winslow Homer, and Edwin Forbes turned up as engravings in Harper's and Leslie's, bringing the experiences of war vicariously to thousands who would never see a battlefield.<sup>27</sup> At the same time Mathew Brady and other photographers were recording the tragic scenes of the great conflict.

Earlier in the war, Brady developed an ambition to photograph the Civil War. He consulted his wife and told her of his plans. She was attentive but did not agree with him because she thought the risk was too great. "My wife and my most intimate friends," Brady said, "had looked unfavorably upon this departure from commercial business to pictorial war correspondence."<sup>28</sup> This idea would destroy him but at the same time give his work a permanent place in history.

As the rumors of war grew, Brady knew, from rough calculations, that it would be enormously expensive to photograph

---

<sup>27</sup>Richard Ketchum, ed., The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War (New York: Doubleday, 1960), p. 492.

<sup>28</sup>Roy Meredith, Mr. Lincoln's Cameraman, Mathew B. Brady (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), p. 88.

a war, even the "six months war," as most Northerners thought of the war in those early days. It would also be dangerous because in order to get good pictures a cameraman would have to be in the thick of the fighting.

The intense desire to risk his life and fortune to capture on wet-plates his country at war and to depart from the commercial business to pictorial war correspondence is explained by Brady when he simply said: "I can only describe the destiny that overruled me by saying that like Euphorion, I felt I had to go. A spirit in my feet said, 'Go' and I went."<sup>29</sup>

Other men besides Brady recognized the importance of covering the Civil War. The American Photographic Society appointed a committee to discuss the matter with the Secretary of War. They filed their suggestions but made little progress.

Brady was not a member of the committee but he tried a different approach--that of personal friendship. He encountered considerable difficulty in obtaining permission to get to go to the front because he and most of the other photographers had no official connections with the army.

Brady went to see his friend, old General Winfield Scott, Chief of the Army. As Brady explained:

I had long known General Scott, he said, and in the days before the war, it was the considerate thing to buy wild ducks at the steamboat crossing of the Susquehanna, and take them to your friends, and I often took Scott his favorite ducks.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup>Meredith, p. 229.

<sup>30</sup>Taft, p. 226.

Scott heard Brady's suggestion; then Scott told Brady the news that he was not to remain in command because he was to be replaced by General McDowell.

Brady did not go see General McDowell; instead he went with his proposal to President Lincoln. Lincoln was not impressed; however, he referred Brady to the Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton.<sup>31</sup>

Stanton was a problem to Brady because Stanton was contradictory, erratic, and arrogant. Brady had met Stanton because he had made portraits of him several times. Brady made his proposal but Stanton was not easily convinced and Brady exhausted his arguments. "By persistence and all the political influence I could control," Brady wrote, "I finally secured permission from Stanton, the Secretary of War, to go into the battlefields with my camera."<sup>32</sup>

The provision placed on Brady by Stanton was that Brady would have to finance the venture himself; the government could not see enough merit in the proposal to warrant War Department financial support.

It was agreed that Brady would have the protection of the newly organized Secret Service headed by Allan Pinkerton. Pinkerton saw great possibilities in the venture and agreed to cooperate saying that he had no objections if Brady did not get in the way. It was probably at this meeting that Lincoln "wrote

---

<sup>31</sup>Meredith, p. 90.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

and signed a heavy card with the large scrawl 'Pass Brady' which took Brady nearly anywhere he cared to go."<sup>33</sup>

Lincoln's signature was enough for Brady. He knew many of the generals and probably would not need the pass but he did want the President's permission.

The pass was not the only resource Brady had for his monumental undertaking. As the picture editor of the most enormous photo-assignment of that time, Brady already knew senators, cabinet members, generals, and notables whose cooperation was to prove essential. He was the most famous photographer of the day and he had financial resources to back up his idea. These resources were to be strained; later Brady estimated the war cost him a hundred thousand dollars.

The odds against Brady were great because it was left to him to formulate methods of financing the operation. Brady realized that the cost of the investment would make the investments of his other enterprises seem trivial.<sup>34</sup>

Brady set about organizing his field units. He trained his crews and made plans for the campaigns. His first problem was to get cameramen. This was apparently the most difficult of many problems, judging from Brady's conversation with John C. Taylor, whom he told of "his difficulty in finding men to operate (his) cameras. Men now realized the dangers of the field and the boredom of life in bivouacs in all kinds of weather."<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 92.



It can be assumed that, although little is known of the men, they were recruited from his own galleries. He knew them and their capabilities and the men were familiar with his methods.

Included among those who were at some time or other on Brady's staff were Louis Landy, Alexander and James Gardner, David Knox, Wm. Powell, T. O'Sullivan, D. Woodbury, J. Reekie, J. Coonley, T. Roche, S. Chester, a Mr. Wood, a Mr. Gibson, and a Mr. Fox.<sup>36</sup>

O'Sullivan and Gardner took extensive battlefield pictures and Gardner is credited with having made three fourths of the scenes with the Army of the Potomac. It was O'Sullivan who made the memorable "Harvest of Death" picture at Gettysburg.<sup>37</sup>

Brady and his assistants took thousands of pictures with cumbersome equipment but getting to the scene of action was only the beginning of work for the photographers. The processing details necessary to take the pictures were described as follows by George G. Rockwood, a Civil War photographer:

First, all the plain glass plates in various sizes had to be carefully cleaned and carried in dust-proof boxes. When ready for action, the plate was carefully coated with collodion . . .

The coating of plates was a delicate operation even in the ordinary well-organized studio. After coating the plate and letting the ether evaporate to just the right degree of stickiness, it was lowered carefully into a deep bath holder.

When properly coated the plate was put into a holder and exposed to the action of the light in the camera. When exposed, it was returned to the darkroom and developed.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup>Taft, p. 230.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>38</sup>Horan, p. 41.

It was J. Pitcher Spencer who remembered:

When I made some views there came a large realization of some of the immense difficulties surmounted by those who made war-pictures.

When you realize that the most sensitive of all the list of chemicals are requisite to make collodion, which must coat every plate . . . you may perhaps have a faint idea of the care requisite to produce a picture . . .

Moreover, it took unceasing care to keep every bit of apparatus, as well as each chemical free from contamination which might affect the picture. Often a breath of wind, no matter how gentle, spoiled the whole affair . . .<sup>39</sup>

Later Brady realized, as the scale of wartime operations developed, he would be able to record only a small fraction of the war scenes. In order to meet this difficulty he began to recruit his photographic teams. By August 1862, Brady had thirty-five bases of operations in the war theaters.<sup>40</sup> In the East, West, and in the South his personally trained operators were at work photographing the military operations. "I had men in all parts of the army," he said, "like a great newspaper."<sup>41</sup>

This was no exaggeration and it presented a staggering problem of management. These bases, usually built of logs, with a log roof covered with canvas, had to be supplied with plates, chemicals, camera equipment, feed for the horses that drew the traveling darkrooms about, and many other supplies for work in the field.<sup>42</sup>

Financing these photographic supply depots was also a

---

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>40</sup>Taft, p. 229.

<sup>41</sup>Meredith, p. 117.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 230.

staggering problem and the cost had to be carried by Brady's studios in New York and Washington. Brady had expected the sale of his "War Views" to pay for these investments: although tremendously popular and a novelty of the moment, the sale of these pictures up to this time was a speculation. Later at the end of the war, Brady found that the public soon lost interest in war pictures and he was heavily in debt.

For equipment, Brady had to rely on Anthony and Company who had furnished his chemicals and supplies for his studios for many years. Some of the supplies included:

Horses, and wagons specially designed for field work were purchased for the traveling darkrooms, which had built-in receptacles and shelves for the chemicals and plates to guard against breakage, with additional compartments for the several types of cameras carried.

These cameras were of different sizes ranging from the large 16" x 20" types, to the small 4" x 5" stereoscope cameras used to make pictures for the popular parlor stereoscope viewer.

Chemical tanks for each camera were also a part of the unit, and each darkroom had a full supply of glass plates, plate holders, heavy negative boxes, and several tripods.<sup>43</sup>

At the beginning of the war, Brady's ridiculous appearing black mobile photographic laboratory was such an oddity to the blue uniformed men at the front that he called it his "Whatisit" wagon as a result of their questions.

Soon his little black wagon was a familiar sight on the active fronts because Brady had an uncanny knack of knowing where the fighting would start. The troops at first derided Brady's "Whatisit" wagons but later came to respect this strange breed

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

of men who carried no sidearms or rifles, but cameras to the top of protective barriers even when the firing was the heaviest.<sup>44</sup> Later the soldiers came to dread the sight of Brady arriving on the scene because they knew that the shooting would begin and the cameramen would be there or not far behind.

The photographer's cameras, suitable for studio work and not much else, were so slow that exposure had to be a long one, which explains the fact that there are no real action shots taken in the war.<sup>45</sup>

In the field, the photographers would be set up near the black wagons, in a position for the picture, and a photographer's assistant would rush out with an 8" x 10" glass plate which had been stored in a dust-proof box and then specially sensitized just before use.

The plate would be exposed, rushed back to the wagon for development and if the weather was not just right, or the timing a little off, or the assistant a bit careless, the plate was spoiled and the cameraman and his crew might have risked their lives for nothing.

At the Battle of Bull Run, one of the most talked-about vehicles was a lumbering wagon, hooded with black, which gave it the appearance of a hearse. "In it were Mathew B. Brady, dressed in his broadcloth suit, a linen duster and a broad-brimmed hat 'like that of a Paris art student', Dick McCormick, a newspaper reporter, and Ned House and Al Waud, combat artists

---

<sup>44</sup>Horan, p. 41.

<sup>45</sup>Richard Ketchum, ed. The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War (New York: Doubleday, 1960), p. 7.

for Harper's Weekly.<sup>46</sup>

In the early hours of the morning, Brady had prepared his equipment and marched into battle. When Beauregard, the Confederate general, advanced, the volunteers who had been supporting the army fled in wild retreat. Panic spread through the Union Army and although the Union general and his staff tried to halt them, the retreat became a disorderly rout.

As Brady was returning up Bull Run Road he was engulfed by the retreating army. His wagon was overturned but he managed to rescue some of his wet-plates in their heavy wooden plate boxes. For three days Brady wandered about the forest with other stragglers. Finally on the third day he limped into the capitol where he sadly admitted, "Our apparatus was a good deal damaged on the way back to Washington, yet we reached the city."<sup>47</sup>

Although the Battle of Bull Run was a disaster for the Union Army, it was a success for Brady. Brady's venture had been highly praised and his pictures had a large sale. As Humphrey's Journal stated:

The public is indebted to Brady of Broadway for numerous excellent views of "grim-visaged war." He has been in Virginia with his camera, and many and spirited are the pictures he has taken.

His are the only reliable records at Bull's Run. The correspondents of the Rebel newspapers are sheer falsifiers; the correspondents of the Northern journals are not to be depended upon . . . Brady never misrepresents.

Brady has shown more pluck than many of the officers and soldiers who were in the fight. He went--not exactly like the "Sixty-Ninth," stripped to the pants--but with his

---

<sup>46</sup>Horan, p. '38.

<sup>47</sup>Taft, p. 227.

sleeves tucked up and his big camera directed upon every point of interest on the field. . .<sup>48</sup>

Brady's photographs also brought out the point of view of the military authorities as to the use of photography in the army. Brady clearly demonstrated its value at Bull Run; now, they saw the importance of photographic records of the achievements of the army engineers.

Some of the greatest feats of military bridge building were accomplished during the Civil War.<sup>49</sup> The Army Engineers performed miracles of building and repairing of bridges which had been partially or wholly destroyed by both armies in advance and retreat. Photography was becoming an important factor in military operations.

After Brady had demonstrated the value of photography, other men received army appointments--men with far less ability and experience. He could have turned his whole staff over to the government and completed a systematic job of covering the war for the official record.<sup>50</sup>

One of the most picturesque and also one of the bloodiest battles of the entire war, the battle at Antietam, was photographed by Brady in the fall of 1862. The pictures Brady, Alexander Gardner and their assistants made that September day, did much to bring the grim reality of war into the American home.

---

<sup>48</sup>Meredith, p. 117.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

The campaign began with Lee's army crossing the Potomac at a point less than forty miles from Washington. Two days later "Fighting Joe" Hooker discovered a large part of Jackson's corps in a cornfield. Hooker set up his guns and raked the Confederates with close-range shot, inflicting terrible losses. Brady and Gardner, advancing with Hooker's forces, photographed the soldiers in a series of wild charges.

One of the best pictures of the battle was taken by Brady at the scene of Dunker Church. General Burnside's men had pushed up main street, leaving behind several Confederate artillery sprawled about their weapons.

The effect of Brady's photograph is mentioned by one historian in his description of the photograph:

The battered white church, the dead men stiffening in the chill air--everything that is war, is plain to see. One can almost sense the strange quiet which some veterans remembered, that followed in the wake of the fierce battle.<sup>51</sup>

These pictures by Brady stunned Americans. Oliver Wendell Holmes, writing in the Atlantic Monthly for January 1863, commented on some of the views made by Brady after the battle of Antietam:

These terrible mementoes of the most sanguinary conflicts of the war, we owe to the enterprise of Mr. Brady of New York.

We, ourselves, were upon the battlefield upon the Saturday following the Wednesday when the battle took place. The photographs bear witness to the accuracy of some of our sketches . . . the "ditch" encumbered with the dead as we saw it . . . Colonel Gray's horse . . . just as we saw him lying . . . let him who wished to know what war is, look at the series of illustrations.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup>Horan, p. 42.

<sup>52</sup>Horan, p. 42.



After Antietam, Brady returned to Washington while his assistants roamed the battlefields. He prepared a group of prints to be submitted to an International Photographic Competition to be held that year in London. His selections were inferior to the group of daguerreotypes he took to London in 1851 and the trade journals and art critics critized him unmercifully.<sup>53</sup>

Brady had little time to consider the complaints because his friend, Major Burnside, had been given command of the Army and another battle was being planned on the war maps. Brady decided to join his friend and be ready to bring his camera to war again.

At the time, Burnside did not believe the Confederates would put up much of a fight for the town of Fredericksburg and delayed the crossing of the river for nearly a month while the Rebels dug in.<sup>54</sup>

The Confederate lines stretched for five miles around the lowland where the city lay. At the foot of a hill was a four foot stone wall where Tim O'Sullivan and Brady would make some of their most memorable pictures.

As the hours of the seige passed, Fredericksburg was reduced to rubble. As Brady's pictures later showed, every house was a target and every street was marked with shell holes. Brady and his assistants took many pictures of the battle but were ordered to return to their wagons to pack their equipment. At Fredericksburg Brady captured the grim reality of the battle's aftermath:

---

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 43.



. . . the Confederate dead as they had fallen, one young trooper, his head thrown back, staring with open eyes at the clear sky; his young comrades, hunched against the wall; the dead horses and smashed guns of the famous Washington Artillery, which had raked the assaulting Federals . . .<sup>55</sup>

The working and living conditions in the battlefields of the Civil War photographers are vividly described in Roy Meredith's Mr. Lincoln's Camera Man, Mathew B. Brady. Portions of the descriptions are:

As soon as word reached Brady of the breakthrough, he and his assistant hitched up the horses and struck out for the trenches that had just been evacuated. Their progress was slow, for the wagon<sup>56</sup> often sank almost to the hubs in the thick mud . . .<sup>56</sup>

Upon reaching the fortifications just evacuated, the photographer carried the darkroom tents and cameras to the scene that was accessible. Most of the trenches were filled with mud and water . . .<sup>57</sup>

Brady was lining up the picture on the ground glass, when shells began bursting all around. The air became filled with flying metal. When the first shell struck and burst, Brady's horses took fright and ran away with the wagon scattering plates and chemicals all over the parched ground.<sup>58</sup>

Thousands of bodies in blue were lying in all contorted postures. The photographers had to take care lest they stumble over some poor soldier while carrying their equipment about . . . Brady kept at work. It was a gruesome job, this battlefield photography.<sup>59</sup>

Suddenly rifle bullets spattered about Brady. A shell from the cannon exploded nearby, throwing up mud and rocks, upsetting the camera, and causing the horses to run away

---

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>56</sup>Meredith, p. 98.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

with the darkroom. Brady, unhurt, coolly retired<sup>60</sup> to a safer place, leaving the camera to its fate . . .

That winter of '62 and '63 was severe, and there was much suffering among the soldiers of both armies. Snow covered the ground, and it was cold indoors . . . It was during these next few months that Brady and his men undertook photographic operations under almost impossible conditions . . . the camera and wet-plate had to undergo winter trial.<sup>61</sup>

It was too dark for photography, but they went about their preparations. Dust-proof boxes were placed within reach, chemical tanks examined . . . It was bitter cold working in the darkroom wagons and the mixing of chemicals had to be done with bare hands . . .<sup>62</sup>

No fires were permitted and the photographers shared the same cold rations as the soldiers and got what sleep they could until morning . . .<sup>63</sup>

In the stuffy "well" of the darkroom wagon Brady and his assistant took turns at developing the plates. The stench of the battlefield was at times unbearable. Even the smell from the chemicals could not overpower the sticky, sweetish smell of death that brought out swarms of little green flies in the early summer heat . . .<sup>64</sup>

After the campaign at Fredericksburg, Brady returned to Washington, leaving Gardner back in the field to take a picture of Lincoln when he visited the camps at Antietam. Later, Lincoln posed with one of the generals and Allan Pinkerton. Pinkerton of the Secret Service, who was the "Major Allen" in the war, had arrested the famous female Confederate spy, Rose O'Neal Greenhow. Brady, learning of this happening, hurried over to the Old Capitol Prison to pose Rose with her daughter in the courtyard.

---

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

In the spring Brady and his assistants again joined the Union Army, now under the command of General Hooker. Hooker had been appointed Commander-in-Chief by Lincoln and it was his strategy to deploy a portion of the army as decoys for General Lee.

When the campaign was put in motion, the strategy was partially successful. Apparently Brady accompanied the corps, as most of the pictures of the battle were made on the ground captured by the Confederates only a few hours after the pictures had been taken.<sup>64</sup>

By this time Brady had more competitors in photographing the war. Gardner, who had previously worked for Brady, was in the battlefields, the Anthonys (suppliers of photographic goods) had T. C. Roche and other cameramen in their employ; however, it was "Brady's Pictures" which held the country spellbound. As Harper's Weekly pointed out, "Again we are indebted to the enterprising Mr. Brady . . ."<sup>65</sup>

Harper's devoted its entire August 27 issue to Brady's documentation of the great battle of Gettysburg. An article with engravings of Brady's photographs read:

Mr. Brady, the photographer, to whose industry and energy we are indebted for many of the most reliable war pictures, has been to Gettysburg battlefield and executed a number of photographs of what he saw there . . .<sup>66</sup>

From Brady's collection the editor of Harper's had selected pictures of the headquarters of Meade and Lee, Gettysburg

---

<sup>64</sup>Horan, p. 48.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

from the west after the battle, the battered gate of the cemetery, some of the dead in McPherson's Woods, and other scenes.<sup>67</sup>

In March, General Grant had been ordered to Washington to receive a lieutenant-general's stars.<sup>68</sup> When the news broke that Grant was on his way to the capitol, Harper's and Leslie's sent urgent wires to Brady asking for pictures of the first man to wear three stars since Washington and Winfield Scott. As usual, no pictures of Grant were available. When Grant came to Washington, Brady photographed him at his studio.

According to one critic, these pictures are the best pictures ever taken of Grant because "the terrible days before Vicksburg, the hours of lonely drinking in his tent to banish unknown fears; the brooding;--all had etched their marks in Grant's face, the mask of war worn by a lonely man."<sup>69</sup>

In March, 1864, Sherman and Grant met to arrange for the move against the two main Southern Armies. Brady's photographer's, Coonley and Barnard, who had photographed Lincoln's first inaugural and early battles, were selected to accompany Sherman's troops on the famous March to the Sea.<sup>70</sup> Under the jurisdiction of the Quartermaster Department both men were ordered to photograph all bridges, trestles, buildings that were under the control of the department and also all enemy installations, railroads, bridges, etc.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

Coonley's work was of such a large scope that the Quarter-master Department had fitted out for his exclusive use history's first photographic train.<sup>72</sup> Coonley's work was highly dangerous because the little train was usually more in enemy territory than in its own.

Brady and his assistants covered the entire nine months of Sherman's campaign, one of the most difficult of the war, which led ultimately to Richmond. Brady missed Lee's surrender to Grant at the home of Wilmer McLean in Appomattox. Brady's failure to get photographs of this historical moment is explained as follows:

The failure of Brady and the army photographer to make pictures of the surrender was due to faulty communications plus the fact that the surrender meeting between Grant and Lee was of such short duration that they had no time in which to prepare.<sup>73</sup>

Brady took a number of pictures of the McLean house after the surrender but set off at once for Richmond to photograph the gallant Southern leader.

At the Lee home he received a courteous refusal; later General Lee agreed to be photographed. Brady later told of this historic picture, which he took the day after he arrived in Richmond. He said:

It was supposed that after his defeat it would be preposterous to ask him to sit, but I thought that to be the time for the historical picture. He allowed me to come to his house and photograph him on his back porch, several sittings. Of course I had known him since the Mexican War, when he was on General Scott's staff and my request was not as from an intruder.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>73</sup>Meredith, p. 368.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

## CHAPTER III

## THE POSTWAR YEARS

After Appomattox Brady's entire fortune of one hundred thousand dollars--an enormous sum in those days--was exhausted; his regular business had to be rebuilt; Julia, his wife was ill; Tim O'Sullivan was no longer with him; younger photographers were now his competitors; the sale of his "War Views" had been far too small to enable him to recoup his lost fortune; and he was deeply in debt to the Anthonys for supplies that had been consumed.<sup>75</sup>

Brady disbanded his photographic teams and stored his collection of plates in Washington and New York warehouses.

Brady tried several times, by exhibitions, to interest the government in buying his collection but was unsuccessful. The money Brady made never seemed to be enough to pay for rent and supplies. In the winter of 1871, there was one last legal recourse--bankruptcy.

Later Brady was notified by the owners of the warehouses where he kept a great number of the wartime plates that he owed \$2,840 and unless the fees were paid his property would be put up for auction. Brady was unable to pay and the auction took place.

---

<sup>75</sup>Horan, p. 64.

Ironically, the buyer was the U.S. Government. The plates were transferred to a government warehouse where the indifference and carelessness by employees destroyed many of the plates.

A year passed and Brady's financial reverses grew more critical. In 1875 General Garfield demanded that Congress pay Brady for his devotion to his country's history.<sup>76</sup>

During the session of Congress, Garfield tried to force an amendment which would pay Brady \$25,000 for the full title to the Brady collection of Civil War plates, although the commercial value of the negatives was placed at \$150,000.<sup>77</sup>

In a speech, Garfield denounced the government for abandoning a man who had risked his life and fortune to preserve America's history. Garfield said:

Here is a man, who for twenty-five years has fought to preserve our National Monuments. Some of his men were starved, some wounded in the struggle. Then his government got three-quarters of his collection of these wonderful pictures in lieu of a storage bill. The government should not take advantage of a man's distress.<sup>78</sup>

The amendment was finally passed; the money was to be turned over to Brady. It was too late because the negatives stored in the New York warehouse had been turned over to the Anthonys for payment of Brady's debts and they had obtained a clear title in the courts.

Later the collection was bought from Anthonys by General

---

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 83.



Ordway and Colonel Rand. In turn, John C. Taylor bought the collection and tried to assemble the Brady collection.<sup>79</sup> When Taylor told Brady that he had acquired seven thousand of his best pictures, Brady seemed pleased. Recalling the hardships during the war, Brady said:

No one will ever know what I went through in securing the negatives. The whole world can never appreciate it. It changed the whole course of my life . . . Some of these negatives nearly cost me my life.<sup>80</sup>

There was poverty, failure, sadness and death in Brady's last years. After his beloved Julia died in 1887, Brady gave up his apartment at the National Hotel and went to live with his nephew. In April of 1895, Brady was struck by a horse car as he was crossing the street and his leg was broken.<sup>81</sup> It took him a long time for him to recover. Despite the protest of his nephew, Brady moved to a rooming house not far from the home of an old friend, William Riley.

In the winter of 1895 Brady was seized with a kidney ailment and a doctor ordered him to bed. Before Christmas his condition weakened and Riley took him to the Presbyterian Hospital. Riley saw him every day but it was evident that Brady was dying. Riley last saw him on the night of January 14. In the morning Brady was in a semi-coma. "At about five o'clock on January 15, 1896, Mathew B. Brady, historian with a camera, died--alone and forgotten."<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 87.



## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY

One of the great photographers of all time, Mathew Brady had a sense of history unequalled by any other camera man. Very early in the era of photography he recognized the importance of the picture as a document; therefore, his career was that of historian as well as a photographer.

As early as 1851, he received a medal for the technical excellence of his work. He sought to photograph the important people of his day as though he were an editor assigning himself to work.

Since the Civil War was the beginning of pictorial journalism, the War Between the States gave Mathew Brady his greatest opportunity to record history with the camera. He went to the front, organized teams of combat photographers and produced the remarkable collection of seven thousand "Photographic Views of the War."

It is true that during his early years, Brady worked long and diligently to master his art but once this mastery had been achieved and competence assured, Brady left much of the actual photographic work to others.

He kept abreast of his times, employed only the most competent operators and did not hesitate to spend money upon the

introduction of new devices or new methods. Even during the Civil War, when actually engaged in photographic work, he employed a large number of operators and many of the photographs credited to Brady were made by his employees.

The credit which is due Brady is for his original idea as a photographic historian, his persistence in this idea, and for sufficient business acumen and management to carry it out.

Brady was not a press photographer; he and a number of his assistants, notably Timothy O'Sullivan and Alexander Gardner were camera reporters.

The photographic documentation of the Civil War is a landmark because no other such complete pictorial record of warfare has ever been put together. The impact of these stark images has seldom been excelled today.

Unable to photograph action, Brady and his men concentrated upon the ravage of war--ruined buildings, hasty emplacements--and the men who did the fighting, posed informally outside their quarters or within fortifications. Some of the photographs of corpses lying where they fell are among the strongest indictments of war ever recorded.

His photographic interpretations of famous battles and war leaders could not be matched in mood and accuracy by the printed word. Because Brady was so successful in using this new medium of reporting, he is worthy of recognition.

The achievements of Brady and his assistants in producing thousands of technically superb negatives that still yield brilliant,

story-telling prints is made even more remarkable by the fact that they had to work with the clumsy, frustrating wet-plate process in traveling darkrooms, called "whatisit wagons" by the soldiers. Modern critics have speculated that the very hardships of early photography make it great--compromises were impossible.

Mathew Brady was famous for his Civil War pictures but beginning almost with the invention of photography in 1839, Brady, the farm boy from the frontier, became America's photographer.

Internationally famous as "Brady of Broadway" he photographed just about every celebrated American in the political, military, theatrical, literary, scientific and journalistic fields. Almost every notable foreign visitor came to his studio.

He made many photographs of the American scene--New York views, Washington panoramas, parades, groups and gatherings. He preserved, so far as possible, all the plates for their usefulness in history.

Although Brady died, alone and forgotten, in 1896, a tribute to him was made by the combat photographers in World War II. On April 17, 1953, at the Carswell Air Force near Fort Worth, the members of the Air Force Photographic Division christened a plane in his honor. At the ceremony "The RB-36, the largest photo-reconnaissance plane in the world, roared across the field and rose, like a great silver eagle, into the sky. The name in big black letters stood out: MATHEW B. BRADY."<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bleyer, Willard G. Main Currents in the History of American Journalism. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1927

Elson, Henry W. The Civil War through the Camera. New York: McKinlay, Stone & Mackenzie. 1912

Emery, Edwin. The Press and America, an Interpretative History of Journalism. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentiss-Hall. 1962

Horan, James D. Mathew Brady, Historian with a Camera. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc. 1955.

Image of America, Early Photography, 1839-1900. A catalogue. Washington: Library of Congress. 1957.

Ketchum, Richard M. ed. The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War. New York: Doubleday. 1960

Kobre, Sidney. Development of American Journalism. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Crown Co, Publishers. 1969

Meredith, Roy. Mr. Lincoln's Cameraman, Mathew B. Brady. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1946.

Mott, Frank L. American Journalism. New York: The MacMillian Co. 1962.

Rhode, Robert B. and McCall, Floyd H. Press Photography, Reporting with a Camera. New York: The MacMillian Co. 1961.

Rothstein, Arthur. Photojournalism, Pictures for Magazines and Newspapers. American Photographic Book Publishing Co., Inc. 1965

Sandburg, Carl. Abraham Lincoln, the War Years. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co. 1939.

Taft, Robert. Photography and the American Scene. New York: The MacMillian Co. 1938.

Whiting, John R. Photography is a Language. Chicago: Ziff Davis Publishing Co. 1946.

MATHEW B. BRADY: PIONEER WAR PHOTOGRAPHER

by

LESTER D. COLLIER

A.B., University of Nebraska, 1951

---

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Technical Journalism

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1970

The most notable contribution to pictorial journalism in the 1860's was the photograph; the most important pioneer war photographer at that time was Mathew B. Brady. His photographs could not be used in newspapers of his day, since a practical method of transferring them to the printed process was not perfected.

Brady was famous for his war pictures and his photographic record is one of the finest examples of reporting. Apparently Brady was everywhere during the war. He recorded on his clumsy plates the famous battles and war leaders. He was successful in using this new medium because his photographic interpretations could not be matched in mood and accuracy by the printed word.

Brady was born about 1823 and as a youth worked as a clerk in a department store in New York City. When Brady took up the study of photography, Samuel Morse made him his understudy. In 1839, Morse went to Europe where he met Daguerre, inventor of the daguerreotype--a photograph on metal.

Brady set up a daguerreotype shop in New York and soon became famous as a photographer of important persons. For five years he won the American Institute award for his contributions to photography. He became the most fashionable American photographer of his day, operating palatial studios in New York and Washington.

Because the daguerreotype was too slow to be adaptable to any photographic work other than portrait work, Brady went to Scotland to learn about a new and faster wet-plate process.

When the Civil War loomed he virtually abandoned his lucrative portrait business "to cover" the war. Friends predicted his war venture would bring financial ruin and that prediction proved correct. There was no extensive market for his war pictures, no way for magazines or newspapers to reproduce them except by costly engravings made by artists copying his photographs.

He persuaded President Lincoln to let him make a photographic record of the war; he was permitted to go anywhere protected by the Secret Service.

He was often under sniper fire as he set up his camera but by the end of the war he had collected about seven thousand glass plate negatives, including thirty of Abraham Lincoln.

Brady's pictures gave an entirely different impression than the usual reports of people and events. Although his equipment was inferior to cameras produced at a later date, he produced amazing pictures.

After Brady's death, part of this collection was eventually purchased by the government but many other negatives fell into private hands--a large number going to a photo supply house to pay Brady's account. Despite the careless neglect with which many of these negatives were treated after Brady's financial failure, an extensive collection has survived and is now being carefully preserved.