

MATHEW BRADY

"The First Photojournalist"

Mathew Brady was born in 1822 in upstate New York. At this same time, in various countries around the world, the first cameras were being developed. By the time Mathew Brady was an adult, the technology had developed enough that cameras had become portable and practical. In his early adult life, Brady became fascinated with the new technology and saw its importance. Later on, he brought the camera to the battlefields of the Civil War and became known as the first photojournalist: the first person to make a profession documenting current events with photography.

Mathew Brady began his career in New York City by studying painting. While there he became friends with other artists who had begun using photography for their artwork, and soon joined them. After studying photography, he opened a studio and made a living taking portraits of wealthy and famous Americans. After the Civil War started, many of Brady's clients were soldiers passing through who wanted portraits taken of themselves. This inspired Brady to document the war itself with photography.

Brady asked Abraham Lincoln for permission to travel with military regiments and photograph the war as it was happening. Lincoln agreed, but on the condition that Brady pay for it himself. Brady was able to raise enough money to purchase several cameras and portable darkrooms and hired more than twenty men to travel with the Northern military and document it. The photographers often got extremely close to the combat, but the photographs could only be on the battlefields after the fighting was over. Cameras, at the time, needed the subject to be very still, or the picture would be fuzzy.

Brady and his employees took thousands of photographs of the Civil War, and the photographs have since been recognized as very important documents of our national history.

Unfortunately, after the war was over, people did not want to be reminded of the difficulties it had caused. Brady had very little success in selling his work. He had assumed the government would buy them, but when he offered, the government declined. He died in New York City in 1896, before anyone recognized how important his photographs were.



Self-portrait of Mathew Brady



Portraits

Outside of the battlefields, Brady took portraits of nearly all of the presidents in his lifetime and many other famous people. His most famous portrait is that of Abraham Lincoln. His portrait of Lincoln has since been used as the model for the engravings on the five dollar bill and the penny.

Match the following names to their portrait by Mathew Brady.

Robert E. Lee Mary Todd Lincoln Abraham Lincoln

Clara Barton Walt Whitman

