

Biographical Dictionary of America ...

by Rossiter Johnson, Vol. 1, 1906

BRADY, Matthew B., photographer, was born in Warren county, N. Y., in 1823. In his youth he studied the art of portrait painting, intending to make that his life work, but through the influence of Samuel F. B. Morse, the inventor, himself a portrait painter, Mr. Brady became interested in the invention of Daguerre, studied his process and, in partnership with Morse, opened a small gallery in New York in 1846, where he commenced making daguerreotypes. Success was immediate, the most distinguished men and women of the time became his patrons, and in 1851 he had a large collection of daguerreotypes for which he received the first prize at the London exhibition of that year. In 1855 he discarded the daguerreotyping and adopted the new photographing process at both his New York and Washington galleries. At the beginning of the civil war he sent a corps of well-equipped experts to the front and they succeeded in obtaining some thirty thousand views, many of the battlefields before, during and after some of the most famous engagements. His collection of battle scenes was afterwards purchased and used by the government in illustrating its official history of the war of the rebellion. His collection of portraits is extremely interesting as he photographed nearly every man and woman who appeared conspicuously before the public in his day. The Prince of Wales and his suite sat for him several times during their visit to America in 1860, and the faces of Lincoln, Seward, Chase, Webster, Clay, Calhoun, Andrew Jackson, Horace Greeley, Dolly Madison, Mrs. Polk, Washington Irving, Edgar Allan Poe, J. Fenimore Cooper, Bayard Taylor, Jefferson Davis and a host beside, appear repeatedly in his album. Mr. Brady died in New York city, Jan. 16, 1896.