Robert Taft photography research notes

Section 30, Pages 871 - 900

These research notes document the research Robert Taft undertook in writing his works on the history of American photography. This series complements the series of Taft's photography correspondence included on Kansas Memory as unit 221204.

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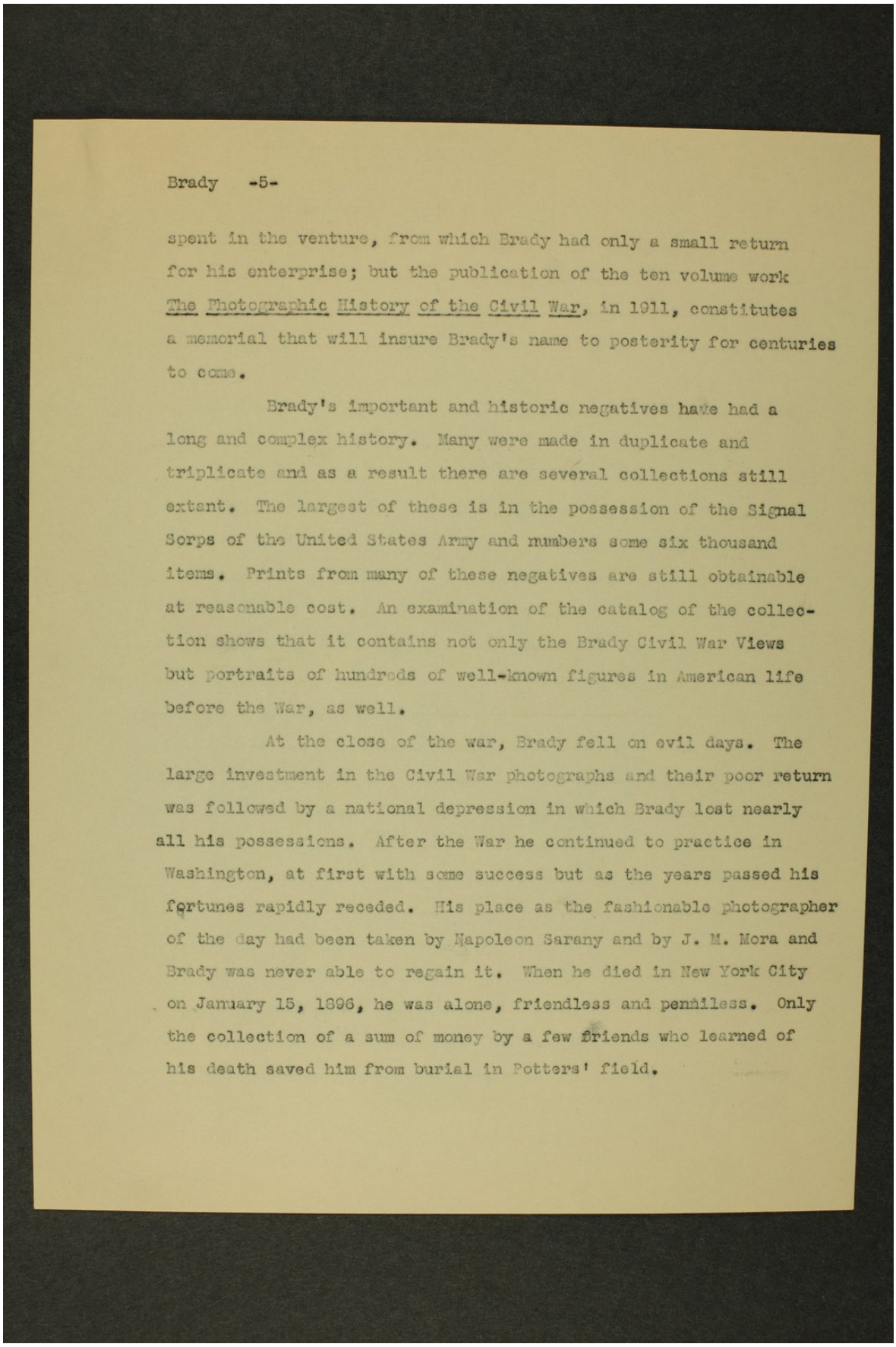

spent in the venture, from which Brady had only a small return for his enterprise; but the publication of the ten volume work The Photographic History of the Civil War, in 1911, constitutes a memorial that will insure Brady's name to posterity for centuries to come.

Brady's important and historic negatives have had a long and complex history. Many were made in duplicate and triplicate and as a result there are several collections still extant. The largest of these is in the possession of the Signal Sorps of the United States Army and numbers some six thousand items. Prints from many of these negatives are still obtainable at reasonable cost. An examination of the catalog of the collection shows that it contains not only the Brady Civil War Views but portraits of hundreds of well-known figures in American life before the War, as well.

At the close of the war, Brady fell on evil days. The large investment in the Civil War photographs and their poor return was followed by a national depression in which Brady lost nearly all his possessions. After the War he continued to practice in Washington, at first with some success but as the years passed his fortunes rapidly receded. His place as the fashionable photographer of the day had been taken by Napoleon Sarany and by J. M. Mora and Brady was never able to regain it. When he died in New York City on January 15, 1896, he was alone, friendless and penniless. Only the collection of a sum of money by a few friends who learned of his death saved him from burial in Potters' field.

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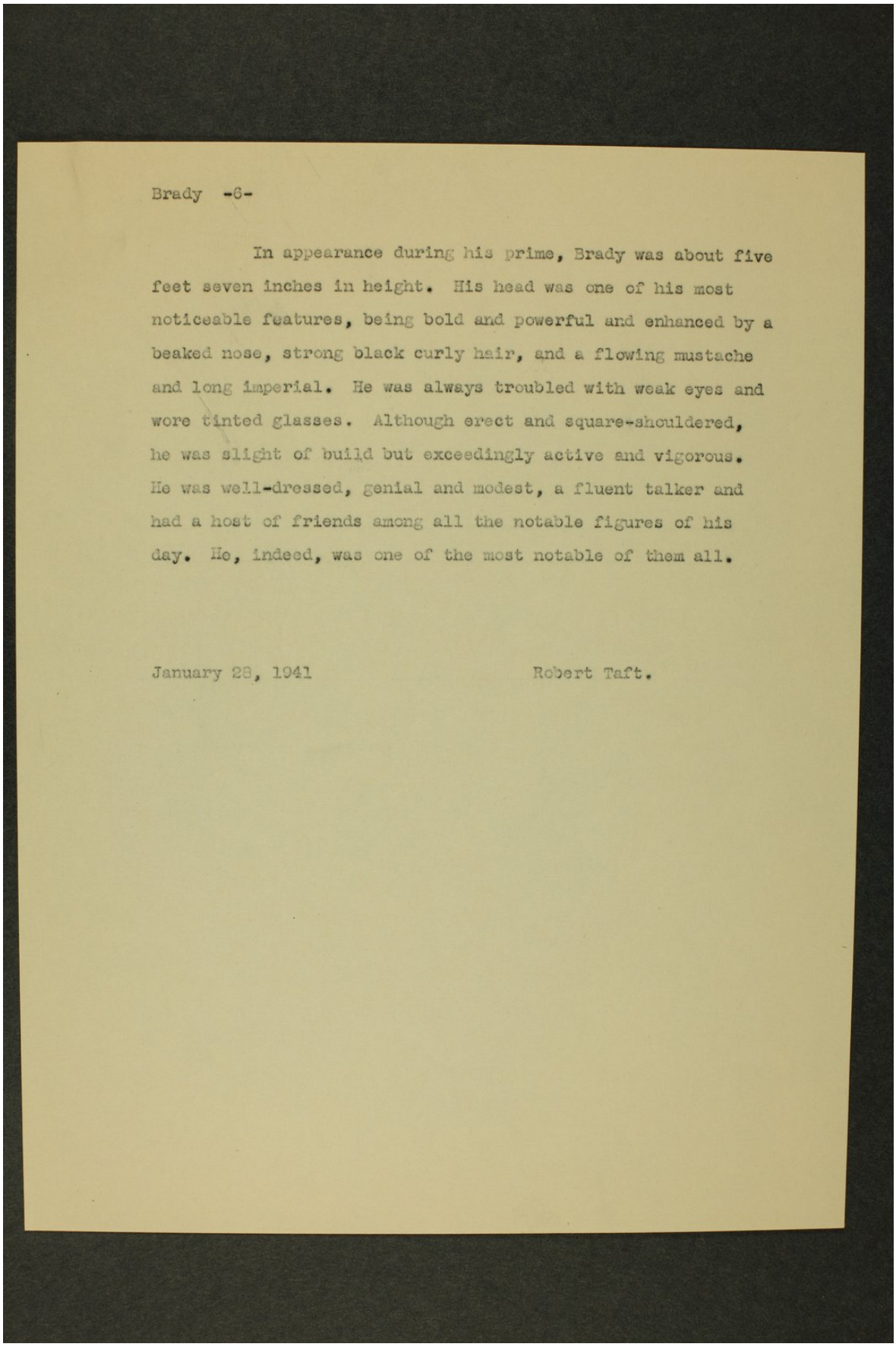
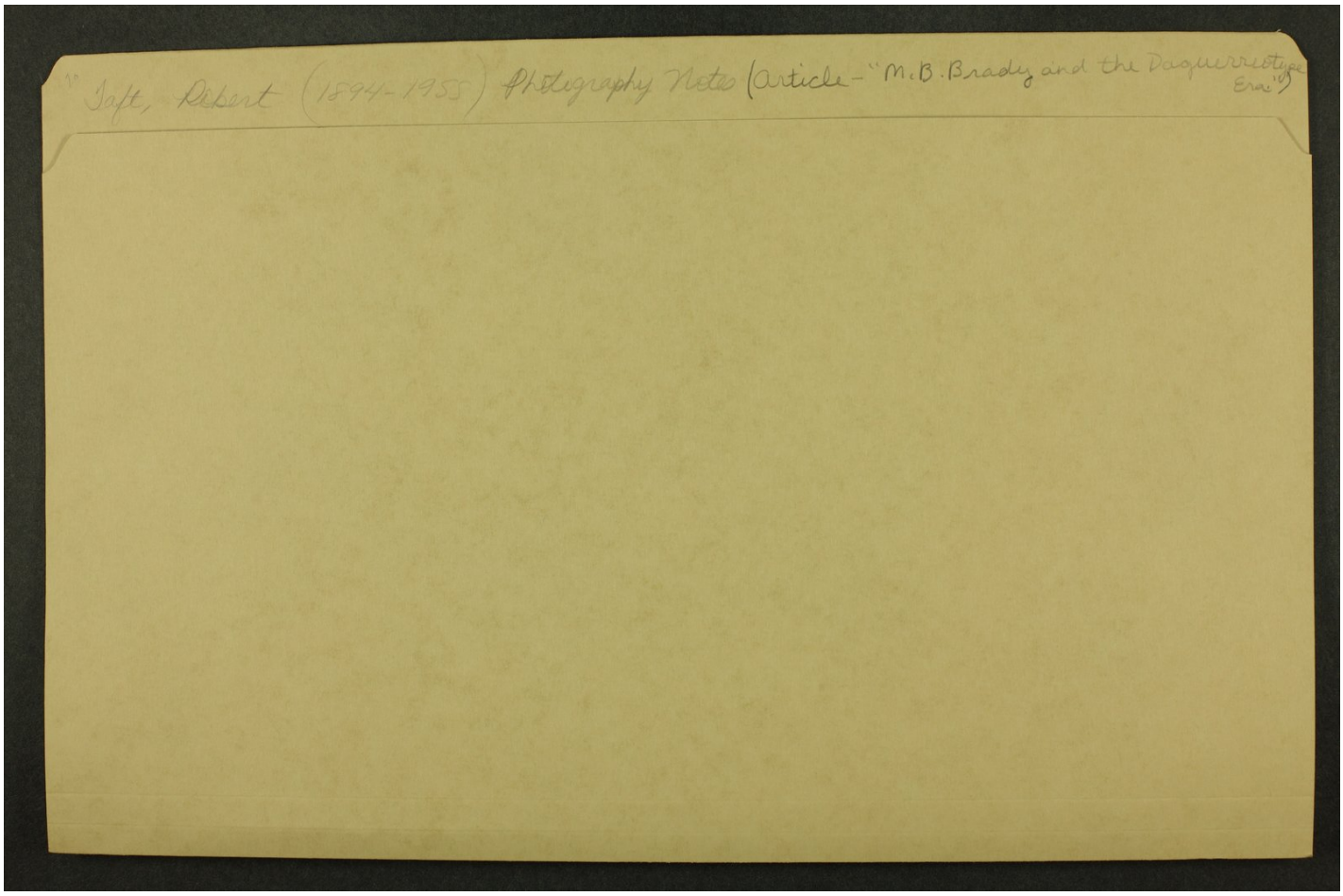


Brady -6-

In appearance during his prime, Brady was about five feet seven inches in height. His head was one of his most noticeable features, being bold and powerful and enhanced by a beaked nose, strong black curly hair, and a flowing mustache and long imperial. He was always troubled with weak eyes and wore tinted glasses. Although erect and square-shouldered, he was slight of build but exceedingly active and vigorous. He was well-dressed, genial and modest, a fluent talker and had a host of friends among all the notable figures of his day. He, indeed, was one of the most notable of them all.

January 28, 1941 Robert Taft.

Robert Taft photography research notes



M. B. BRADY and the DAGUERREOTYPE ERA*

by

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It is February 14, 1849, a bright morning in late winter in a long ago decade, and a small, wiry and trim-appearing young man is hurrying with his assistant to the White House, where he has an appointment with the President, James K. Polk. The butler admits them and directs them to the large dining room, saying, "The President will be in when you are ready, suh."

Brady, for it is the well-known photographer, and his assistant immediately begin making their arrangements. The drapes are pulled back from a large window, a chair placed near it with the head rest behind, and the camera set up. "Are we ready?" Brady inquires.

"All ready", his assistant responds, and the butler is told to inform the President that everything is prepared.

President Polk enters, and Brady quietly steps forward. "Good morning, Mr. President. I deeply appreciate your courtesy in giving me this sitting, sir. We are ready for you. Will you be so good as to sit here?"

The President takes the chair designated and inquires if he will be detained long, as business is pressing during the closing days of his term. "We will detain you but a few minutes, Mr. President," Brady

*Author's note -- The facts upon which this article is based and discussed at length in a history of American photography now nearing completion and upon which I have been working for some years.

replies, as he adjusts the head rest and changes the position of a Presidential arm. "Turn your face toward the window slightly, Mr. President. That's it, thank you. Now direct your eyes toward me, please. It will be necessary to hold your position for about thirty seconds, sir. It is not necessary to keep from blinking your eyes any more than you are acustomed to, Mr. President. Relax and sit as naturally as possible, sir." The thirty seconds pass, and President Polk heaves a sigh of relief. Several other exposures are made, and the President then returns to his office, after again receiving the thanks of Matthew B. Brady.

Polk, although he was not the first president to be photographed during his term of office, was probably the first to be photographed, or we should better say daguerreotyped, in the White House; and the event is characteristic of Brady's initiative in this direction.

Of men who were prominent in the nation's eye during the middle of the nineteenth century, less has been published about the life of this man Brady than of almost any other individual who could be named; and a considerable fraction of what has been published is incorrect. We shall, however, be concerned here chiefly with Brady's place in the daguerreotype era, a period which extends roughly from 1839 until 1860.

Working details of Daguerre's process reached this country on September 21, 1839. Soon after this date there were a number of amateurs, for, of course, they were all amateurs then, at work preparing photographs upon the silvered plate. Among the earliest of these workers was Samuel F. B. Morse, a portrait painter of note, but known to later generations

as the inventor of the electric telegraph. Morse's interest in daguerreotypy soon took a practical form, for, as the result of the work of Alexander Wolcott and Dr. John W. Draper, also New Yorkers, it became possible to make daguerreotype portraits. This last result had not been expected by Daguerre himself, due to the long exposures required, but Yankee ingenuity had surmounted this difficulty, and the first application of daguerreotypy to portrait taking was made in this country.

Morse became associated with Draper for a time, and together they constructed a house built entirely of glass on the roof of the old University of New York building on Broadway. Draper's connection with Morse did not last long, and Morse continued unaided in his work in portrait making by this process. As a matter of fact, Morse supported himself for nearly a year by making daguerreotypes and giving instruction in making them. It was a period of intense anxiety and disappointment for Morse: he had no other income, save for occasional lessons in portrait painting; and he and his friends were attempting to get from Congress an appropriation, which was very slow in coming, for the purpose of constructing a trial telegraph system. It seems evident, by studying the letters of Morse during this period, that he would have been entirely destitute without his income from daguerreotypy.

One of Morse's promising pupils of his painting days was William Page, who later achieved a reputation in his own right as a popular portrait painter. Page lived for some years at Saratoga Springs, New York, and while there he made the acquaintance of the boy, Matthew B. Brady, Brady, the son of Irish immigrants, was born in 1822 in Warren County, New York, near Lake George. In the late thirties he was also a resident of Saratoga Springs which was only some twenty miles

distant from his birthplace.

Brady's friendship with Page became a very real one, for it is apparent that Brady worshipped the older man, and even made attempts to learn his profession of portrait painting. About 1839, both Page and Brady moved to New York City. Brady, from what little information I possess of him at this time, made his livelihood as a maker of jewel and miniature cases. It was but natural that Page should introduce Brady to his teacher, Samuel Morse. Morse at this time had just returned from Europe, and was beginning his experiments in daguerreotyping. His interest was passed on to Brady, and Brady himself took some lessons of Morse in the new art. Dr. Draper, Morse's partner, also gave Brady advice. Brady continued for several years after his introduction to Morse to make daguerreotypes "on theside". Finally, in 1844, he obtained the necessary capital and launched into the business of portrait taking as his sole occupation, fitting up rooms on the top floor of a building at the corner of Fulton and Broadway.

His decision to take this step was doubtless based in a large measure upon a growing conviction of the merits of the process, which had been materially improved since its introduction. The successes achieved by John Plumbe, Jr., in establishing a number of "galleries" in several cities, and by Anthony*, Edwards & Co., in New York and Washington, were also contributing factors in Brady's decision.

Brady, taking a hint from the glass house of Morse, built, not another glass house, but a large skylight in the roof, his rooms, it will be recalled, being on the top floor. As far as I have been able to ascertain, Brady was solely responsible for the introduction of this now very familiar adjunct of the photographer's equipment.

*The Anthony of this firm was Edward Anthony, who later founded the celebrated photographic house of E. & H. T. Anthony & Co.

adjunct of the photographer's equipment.

Brady entered his work with enthusiasm. He was young, energetic, enterprising, and industrious; and he devoted himself unreservedly to the new craft. He took his work seriously and attempted to raise the new profession to the dignity of the older arts. He was, of course, not alone in this attempt; but the majority of the early practitioners of the art regarded it merely as another method of adding a little to their incomes and pursued other vocations as well, so that their products must have been extremely crude. As one pioneer in daguerreotypy stated, "It was no uncommon thing to find watch repairers, dentists, and other styles of business folk to carry on daguerreotypy 'on the side'. I have known blacksmiths and cobblers to double up with it, so it was possible to have a horse shod, your boots tapped, a tooth pulled, or a likeness taken by the same man; verily, a man -- a daguerreotype man, in his time, played many parts."

It is no wonder then that men of native ability, such as Brady, who were willing to devote their entire interest to the craft to learn each step of the art, not only by doing, but by reading all that was published on the subject to experiment when the day's work was done, and to consult chemists and artists for any aid that they might furnish, were bound to succeed.

As a result of such devotion, the names of Brady and of Jeremiah Gurney in New York, of John A. Whipple and Southworth and Hawes in Boston, Marcus Root in Philadelphia, Fitzgibbon in St. Louis, and Hesler in Chicago, among others, were well known the country over by 1850. But this is the story of Brady and his part in the daguerreotype era, a story which is

more or less typical of all, although the name of Brady has survived where the others have been all but forgotten. The reason for the permanence of his fame will soon become apparent.

Brady, as we have said, began business in 1843. The following year hte American Institute of New York held its first exhibition of daguerreotypes, probably the first competitive photographic exhibit in this country. Brady was quick to realize the advantage of competition and spent much time preparing his daguerreotypes for it. As a result, his work was judged to be the best on display, and he received a silver medal in recognition of his merit. The American Institute made this an annual affair for many years, and Brady received not only in 1844, but in 1845, 1846, 1847, 1848 and 1849 the highest award given at the exhibition. At first the exhibits were largely local, but in later years the competition became keener, with entrants from most of the larger cities. The recognition of Brady's work given by the American Institute was followed more or less naturally by an increasing patronage of his "salon", which enabled him to enlarge his establishment, employ competent help in all its departments, and thus relieve himself of much of the detail and actual labor.

It was not his merit as a photographer, however, which has won Brady a name in history, but the conception of an idea which occurred to him first in 1845, and which was to remain a guiding principle with him for most of his long professional life. This was the project of collecting the portraits of all the distinguished individuals he could induce to sit before his camera. The importance of this idea and of its execution has been overlooked in the light of Brady's subsequent career; for, when the name of Brady is mentioned the reply almost invariably is, "Oh, yes,

Brady, the Civil War Photographer". But Brady's career prior to the Civil War is as important in the history of the nation as it was during the War, if not more so. For, by means of the camera, Brady recorded for posterity practically all the American notables who lived any part of their lives in the public eye from 1844 on. In order to do this the more readily, he established , beginning in 1847, a temporary gallery in Washington, during the Sessions of Congress, in addition to the original one in New York. The breadth and scope of his career is well illustrated by the fact that he photographed every President of the United States from John Quincy Adams, the sixth President, down to and including William McKinley with one exception. Not all of them were photographed while they were in office, since Adams, for example, was President from 1825 to 1829, before daguerreotypy was introduced; but as he lived well into the eighteen forties, not only Brady, but other photographers obtained his likeness. The lone exception to Brady's remarkable record was William Henry Harrison, who died only a month after his inauguration in 1841, and three years before Brady began his photographic career.

A roster of the individuals who sat for Brady during the daguerreotype era reads like a roll call of all the country's historic names. Listen to the names of these individuals, all of whom Brady daguerreotyped; Mrs. Alexander Hamilton; Mrs. James Madison (wife of the fourth President of the United States; -- but the lively Dolly Madison had become a sedate old lady when she sat for Brady); Edgar Allan Poe; Winfield Scott; Santa Anna; Daniel Webster; Father Matthew; Kossuth; James Gordon Bennett; Horace Greeley; James Fenimore Cooper; Washington Irving; Jenny Lind; Philip Barton Key; Fanny Ellsler; Fremont; Cass; Cahoun; Clay; Pere de Schmidt; Audubon; Prescott; Colt; Bryant; Hiram Powers; and the list could be extended almost through

an indefinite number of pages.

"The original daguerreotypes --?" you ask. Ah, that's another question. Many, doubtless, are still in existence, but so widely scattered and so difficult to find as to be of little value at present. It is strange, with so many fads of collecting, that the collecting of daguerreotypes has not been pursued with more vigor. There are really no extensive collections of American daguerreotypes in existence, not even in our more important museums. Fortunately, many of Brady's portraits of the daguerreotype era have survived in some form or other. Brady himself, after the introduction of the wet plate (collodion) process, copied his daguerreotypes on negatives and made from these large prints which he called imperials, and of which we shall have more to say in a page or so. These large prints were worked over by hand, especially the backgrounds, with India ink or crayon, or even sometimes in oil. These prints were in turn photographed at the time, and many of these negatives are still in existence. The U. S. government acquired in 1875 some six thousand negatives and transparencies from Brady himself for the sum of $27,840. While it was generally understood that these were the famous Brady Civil War photographs, an actual examination of the catalog of this collection, and of many prints made from these negatives, shows that a considerable proportion of the whole number were portraits of American notables taken prior to 1860. The prints of John Quincy Adams, of Andrew Jackson, of James K. Polk, and of Zachary Taylor, which accompany this article were obtained from this source. Incidentally, it might be mentioned that this extremely valuable collection has, until very recent years, been much neglected; and many negatives have been broken or destroyed since

the government acquired title to them. At the time they were purchased James A. Garfield, later President Garfield, told the House of Representatives that in his opinion the collection was worth at least $150,000. It is difficult, since its value was recognized at that time, to account for the wanton neglect of these priceless pictorial records.

Many of these portraits have been reproduced in individual biographies. In fact, if an extended search is made of these biographies it will be found that far more portraits are credited to Brady than to any other source. Unfortunately again, many of these reproductions are not fac-simile: certainly for the majority of those published before 1880 is this statement true. The modern half-tone process was not developed until 1880 and did not come into extended use until some years after this date. Publishers were therefore dependent upon the hand-engraved metal or wood plate or the lithographic stone for the reproduction of photographs before this date, and the results many times left much to be desired. Especially was this true of the popular illustrated magazines such as Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper and Harper's Weekly, which first began publication between 1855 and 1860.

The publishers of such journals were of economic necessity forced to use wood engravings for illustrations, and most of these were hurriedly done. As a result, many of them were extremely crude representations of the initial subjects. But in many cases such reproductions are the only surviving portraits of men of prominence during this period. Whatever may be the value of these portraits, an examination of these early illustrated journals has an important bearing upon our history of Brady. For instance, in Leslie's Newspaper for 1856, there appear some 123 illustrations (all portraits) which had been copied from photographs. Of these

123 photographs, ninety-seven were made in Brady's gallery: -- which certainly shows the assiduity with which Brady pursued the notables of the day. The term "Photograph by Brady" became the best known "by-line" of its kind, not only to past generations, but also to those of the present who have had occasion to delve into the events of the past.

I have discussed this phase of Brady's career at some length, for I believe it is the key to his entire life. It was an absorbing passion, conceived early in his career, and pursued with vigor for many years -- a passion to record the features of distinguished men and women of his own time for future generations; he was an instinctive historian, a Bancroft of the camera. The photographing of the Civil War was thus only a logical step in his career: Brady was the self-appointed pictorial historian of his age, and when the great war between the states broke out, the most important event in American History during the nineteenth century, Brady was there to record it.

If we stop to reflect for a moment it becomes apparent that it was no idle fancy or sudden whim that led him to this step. Brady, at the outbreak of the Civil War, was a portrait photographer, not a landscape artist, and from his large and fashionable gallery he obtained a very comfortable competence. By inclination Brady was a cosmopolite and a good liver, fond of the comforts of life. This life of comparative ease must be exchanged for the discomforts of the road and the camp. Even more powerful were the arguments of his friends, and his wife, all of whom sought to dissuade him from the undertaking. But Brady would not be deterred. "I felt that I had to go. A spirit in my feet said, 'Go'; and I went". This absorbing passion of Brady's life had surmounted all argument--argument so effective that many a weaker man would have been stayed in his purpose.

In order to make our story of Brady complete, however, we must continue the chronological record of his career. As a result of his successes at the fairs of the American Institute from 1844 to 1849, coupled with the growth of his national gallery (a name given to his collection of daguerreotypes of notables) which was on display in his salon, and a flair for effective advertising, Brady had by 1850 achieved a prominent, if not the prominent, place in American photography. Notice that I have said not the best, but the most prominent. Brady always did good work, or insisted that it be done, but there were other operators who were as capable, and probably more capable than he. This is not my judgment, however, but that of his contemporaries and competitors, which has been culled from many sources of information. As a result of this prominence, achieved by seven years of hard labor, Brady became by 1850 the fashionable photographer of the day, a position which he maintained up to Civil War times.

His reputation was still further enhanced by undertaking in 1850 the publication of what he called "The Gallery of Illustrious Americans". This was a series of large lithographic prints copied from daguerreotypes in his collection, and accompanied by a biographical sketch of "the most eminent citizens of the American republic since the death of Washington". As originally contemplated, the gallery was to contain twenty-four portraits; actually only twelve were published, Zachary Taylor, Calhoun, Webster, Silas Wright, Clay, Fremont, Audubon, Prescott, Winfield Scott, Fillmore, Channing, and Cass. The lithography was very capably done by Francois D'Avignon and the prints were said to be remarkably true to the originals by those who had seen both. It must be recalled that no direct copies of the daguerreotype could be made: only one daguerreotype could be produced for each exposure of the camera so that hand-executed copies were made when more than one portrait was desired, and this condition continued up until the introduction of

commercial negative processes.

Brady financed the venture, paying D'Avignon a hundred dollars each for the lithographic stones from which the prints were made; but, as the returns from the venture did not pay for the cost of the stones, only twelve were published, rather than the announced twenty-four. The press, however, was universal in its praise concerning "The Gallery", and it served to advertise Brady extensively, even if it did not bring him immediate profit.

Brady, however, had achieved a considerable financial competence from his gallery by this time and was able to lessen his personal labors materially. Continued and excessive work from 1844 up to 1851 had made considerable inroads on his health. It became necessary for him to recuperate, and in June of 1851 he sailed for Europe and was abroad nearly a year, leaving his gallery under the supervision of George S. Cook of Charleston, S. C., His trip abroad, however, was not entirely planned as a pleasure and health-seeking excursion. His health was benefited very considerably by the vacation, but while abroad he visited the important photographic galleries of England and France, seeking to add new ideas and methods to those he already possessed. In addition, he actually did some photographic work abroad, here again of notables. Of these, probably the best known was Emperor Louis Napoleon of France. His most important experience abroad was an inspection of the pictures at the great Exhibition of 1851, near London, the first of the great world's fairs. Among the exhibits were displays of daguerreotypes, Talbotypes, and prints from albumen and collodion negatives which were just then coming into use. It was an important event, not only for Brady, but for all the photographic world, for it was the first inter-

national competition among daguerreotypists and photographers. Brady took far more than a casual interest in this exhibit, since he himself was a competitor, as were many other American daguerreotypists, who had their first chance to compare their work with those similarly engaged in England, France, Austria, Prussia and other countries, all of which were Germain.

The American exhibit of daguerreotypes at the Great Exhibition proved to be one of the outstanding contributions of the Americans, and proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that the American daguerreotypist was the equal of any, and the superior of most, in this profession. The critic of The Illustrated London News, after viewing the exhibit of daguerreotypes, reports as follows: "After a very minute and careful examination we are inclined to give America the first place. Whether the atmosphere is better adapted to the art, or whether the preparation of Daguerreotypes have been congenial with the tastes of the people, or whether they are unfettered with the patents in force in England, certain it is that the number of exhibitors has been very great and the quality of production super-excellent. The likenesses of various distinguished Americans by Mr. Brady, are notable examples of this style of art. The family of Mr. Churchill is a very pretty group; and the series of views illustrating the falls of Niagara are a very appropriate example of American industry by Mr. Whitehurst, of Baltimore. The large specimens by Mr. Harrison are also excellent."

But more important than the impressions of this critic were the decisions of the jury who judged the exhibit. Only three prize medals were awarded to exhibitors of daguerreotypes and all three went to Americans: M. M. Lawrence of New York; John A. Whipple of Boston; and the ubiquitous M. B. Brady. Lawrence was awarded his medal for a large portrait daguerreotype (10 1/2" x 12 1/2") probably of William Cullen Bryant, although he had an-

other of the same size on exhibition. Whipple's award was based on a whole plate daguerreotype of the moon, which the jury stated "must be regarded as indicating the commencement of a new era in astronomical representation."

Brady had on exhibition some forty-eight daguerreotype portraits, and his award was based on the collective merit of the group. The jury's report of these daguerreotypes states that "they are excellent for beauty of execution. The portraits stand forward in bold relief, upon a plain background. The artist, having placed implicit reliance upon his knowledge of photographic science, has neglected to avail himself of the resources of art." In order to understand this last sentence it is necessary to know that Claudet, the London daguerreotypist, had, before the date of the exhibition, introduced the use of painted backgrounds into portraits. Such a practice was much admired abroad, but fortunately was not used by Brady and his confreres on this side of the water--fortunately, because in my judgment at least, the simplicity gained in this treatment adds rather than detracts from the very beautiful portraits obtainable in the best daguerreotypes. Such a well-made daguerreotype possesses detail and brilliance which even modern methods cannot surpass. Indeed, several able photographers who have practised all the processes, from daguerreotypy down to and including the gelatin dry plate, have voiced the opinion in no uncertain terms that the daguerreotype made the portrait par-excellence. Not that the daguerreotype is without serious fault: the reversal of image from right to left, and the mirror-like reflection produced when viewed at many angles, are the most serious of these.

It can reasonably be inquired why American daguerreotypists excelled in their field or why, as Horace Greeley stated with satisfaction,

if not with modesty, it was that "In daguerreotypes we beat the world."

It was not the climate, as was suggested by the critic of the London paper quoted above, for time has shown that this was not so. Rather, it can be ascribed to two factors: first, the general use of sky-lights, following Brady's example. This, at least in the hands of skillful operators, would assure top and side lighting (the latter from windows), which prevented the flatness so evident when direct or general illumination was employed. Abroad, it should be stated, the general practice at that time was to follow the ideas of Draper and Morse and make a glass house, thus giving general illumination. While, by the use of screens, this could be avoided, the ordinary operators, as was quite obvious, were not sufficiently trained to secure this effect. The second factor which contributed to the success of the Americans in general was the introduction of mechanical devices such as power driven buffs, etc., by which a far greater and more uniform polish and brilliance of the silver plate could be obtained. The leader in introducting such mechanical devices was Whipple of Boston, but the practise was rapidly copied by other leading operators. Abroad,polishing and buffing were almost entirely done by hand, as Daguerre had outlined in his original process published in 1839.

I am quite certain that this accounts for the "beauty of execution" and the "bold relief" so much admired by the jury of the Great Exhibition in Brady's daguerreotypes, qualities which were more or less characteristic of all the better American operators. Of course, these effects were probably more noticeable in the larger daguerreotypes, i.e., whole plate

size (6 1/2" x 8 1/2") and larger than it was in the far more common quarter-plate (3 1/4" x 4 1/2", also 3" x 4") and sixth plate (2 3/4" x 3 1/4"), also 2 3/4" x 3") sizes. Incidentally, it may come as a surprise to many modern photographers to know that daguerreotypes were made in very large sizes. The largest of these of which I have found mention were made by M. M. Lawrence, and were daguerreotype portraits, 15" x 17", although the so-called "mammoth size," 13 1/2" x 17 1/2", was made by most of the leading American daguerreotypists.

Not only were the fifties a period of big business in daguerreotypes and in big daguerreotypes themselves, but a marked reduction in the time of exposure was effected by the American operators. Originally the sensitivity of the daguerreotype plate has been small, and exposures of a minute or more were not uncommon. By 1853, however, the average time of exposure for a portrait daguerreotype had been reduced to fifteen or twenty seconds, and exposures of two or three seconds were not uncommon. Southworth and Hawes in Boston were advertising that "Our arrangements are such that we take miniatures of children and adults instantly." Cody of New York, as well as Alexander Beckers and Meade Brothers of the same city were able to obtain instantaneous daguerreotype views, i.e., daguerreotypes in which motion was arrested, among them being views on Broadway and steamboats leaving the wharf with wheels in rapid motion. "The waves, the spray, and objects generally, were defined as beautifully as though standing still at the taking." That such exposures were possible during the daguerreotype era is not now generally known, it being the customary

opinion that minutes were always involved in such exposures.

Brady remained abroad some time after the decision of the jury of the Great Exhibition in the fall of 1851, but finally returned to New York in May, 1852. His reputation, as well as that of Lawrence and Whipple, had been still further enhanced by the results of the Great Exhibition. But not only did these operators profit by it, but all daguerreotypists noticed an increase in their business; and the daguerreotype rose still higher in popularity, reaching its heyday in 1853. Operators were forced to build larger and larger establishments in order to accommodate their patrons; and here Brady, with an eye to business, was again in the lead, for early in 1853 he moved from his original quarters into new and elaborate ones farther up Broadway. The following account, taken from a journal published at the time, describes his new gallery. While rather long, it is given in full, as it is typical of the many elaborate establishments of the decade succeeding the Fabulous Forties.

"Mr. Brady's rooms are situated at 359 Broadway in the most central part of the city. At the door hangs a fine display of specimens which are well arranged in rich rosewood and gilt showcases. The Reception Rooms are up two flights of stairs and entered through folding doors, glazed with the choicest figured cut glass, and artistically arranged. This room is about 26 x 40 ft., and is the largest Reception Room in this city. The floors are carpeted with superior velvet tapestry, highly colored and of a large and appropriate pattern. The walls are covered with satin and gold paper. The ceiling frescoed, and in the centre is suspended a six-light gilt and enameled chandelier, with prismatic drops that throw their enlivening colors in an abundant profusion. The light through the windows is softened by passing the meshes of the most costly

needle-worked lace curtains, or intercepted, if occasion requires, by shades commensurate with the gayest of palaces, while the golden cornices, and festooned damask indicate that art dictated their arrangement. The Harmony is not in the last disturbed by the superb rosewood furniture -- tetes-a-tetes, reception and easy chairs, and marble top tables, all of which are multiplied by mirrors from ceiling to floor. Suspended on the walls, we find Daguerreotypes of President, Generals, Kings, Queens, Noblemen and more nobler men -- Men and Women from all nations and professions.

"Adjoining the Reception room is the business office of the establishment. This department is about 20 x 25 feet and is fitted up with a variety of show cases, where can be seen samples of all the various tyles of Frames, Cases, Lockets, etc., used in the Art.

"Still further on passed the office, is the Ladies' Parlor, which has all of the conveniences to make the Patrons comfortable and delighted. The walls are covered with the richest green velvet satin and gold paper. The ceiling frescoed with a center, through which is suspended a large enameled chandelier. The two windows have curtains to correspond with the general appearance; between them is a large oval mirror, with a massive carved gilt frame -- cottage chairs, rosewood tete-a-tetes, covered with green and gold brocatelle, while the exquisite velvet tapestry contributes to the perfection of the room.

"On the same floor we pass to the Operating Rooms. There are two-- one having a sky and side light of a northern, and the other, of a southern exposure. To go into a description of the apparatus and ar-

rangements, would be repeating what every first class operator is familiar with. Suffice it to say, that nothing here (operator included) is of the second quality. The foregoing described rooms are on the third floor, occupying a space of about 150 ft., in depth.

"On the next floor above is the Plate-cleaning Department, also the Electrotype Room. Over these, and on the next floor is another room with a sky light nearly flat, inclined toward the west; and adjoining this is a Chemical Room."

If the reader thinks that the rococo character of the Brady establishment is exaggerated, he can be told that the reporter who wrote the above account very carefully stated that he had confined himself "to a plain description" of the premises. It must be recalled that the fifties were an ornate age, when taste was apparently governed by a desire to obtain the maximum of elaborateness, not only in interior furnishings, but in architecture, in dress, and in literature, as well. It is strange, considering the character of the times, that American daguerrotypists did not adopt the avidity the foreign custom of introducing the painted background into the daguerreotype portrait, but this custom was reserved for a later period.

As we have said, the daguerreotype reached the height of its popularity in this country in 1853. At this time well over two million of these metallic photographs were being made annually. Their great popularity attracted an increasing number of operators into this field, with an accompanying decrease in price as the competition increased. The older and well established galleries had received during the forties a

good return for their efforts, five dollars being a common price for the sixth-plate size. The average price steadily decreased with the years. For example, in 1853 D. D. T. Davie, a prominent daguerreotypist of Utica, N. Y., stated that he received an average of $2.53 for the sixth plate size, and $4.35 for the quarter-plate size. Davie, it might be said, was one of the few who kept a careful record of his accounts during this period.

While the well-known establishments received, say $2.50 for the sixth-plate size, new competitors were actually advertising daguerreotypes for twenty-five cents, and even as low as twelve and half cents. While such daguerreotypes were much smaller than even the sixth-plate size, they offered very serious competition to the elaborate galleries such as Brady's who had large investments involved in their establishments. It is not to be wondered at that Brady and his colleagues were genuinely alarmed at this competition. Brady himself appealed to the New York public by inserting the following advertisements in the daily papers.

Address to the Public. - New York abounds with announcements of 25 cents and 50 cent Daguerreotypes. But little science, experience, or taste is required to produce these, so-called, cheap pictures. During several years that I have devoted to the Daguerrian art, it has been my constant labor to perfect and elevate it. The result has been that the prize of excellence has been accorded to my pictures at the World's Fair in London, the Crystal Palace in New York and wherever exhibited on either side of the Atlantic.....

Being unwilling to abandon any artistic ground to the

producers of inferior work, I have no fear in appealing to an enlightened public as to their choice between pictures of the size, price and quality, which will fairly remunerate men of talent, science, and application, and those which can be made by the meanest tyro. I wish to vindicate true art, and leave the community to decide whether it is best to encourage real excellence or its opposite; to preserve and perfect an art, or permit it to degenerate by inferiority or materials which must correspond with the meanness of the price.

M. B. Brady.

It is doubtful if Mr. Brady's address to the public had any great effect on the patronage of these cheaper galleries, as the people attracted to their rooms would naturally be those who could not afford the more expensive specimens obtainable at the fashionable galleries. It doubtless aided to some extent in preventing those who could afford it from patronizing these cheaper places. It should be stated that many of these "daguerreotype factories" did fairly creditable work, producing small pictures, of course, and mounting them in cheaper cases. They were undoubtedly the means of preserving the likenesses of many loved ones whose miniatures could never otherwise have been obtained.

The competition of these new galleries with the older ones was very probably responsible for a sudden interest which the older galleries took in the paper processes. The details of the collodion, or, as it was more frequently called, the wet plate process, had been described by the Englishman, Scott Archer, early in 1851; and English

amateurs began practicing it with enthusiasm. The professional operators in this country at first paid little attention to it, although some few did experiment with it. Brady, on his trip abroad, undoubtedly must have seen some results of the method, but there is little evidence that he practised it until he was forced to do so by the competition of the cheaper galleries, which was more or less typical of many leading American operators. Whipple, of Boston, was a remarkable exception, who as early as 1845 had made attempts to use a negative process employing albumen, and had achieved some local celebrity with the pictures produced by it. With the advent of the collodion process, Whipple was the natural leader in developing it, and during the early fifties trained many operators for other leading American establishments in the intricacies of the new form of the art, which were markedly different from those of the daguerreotype.

The paper prints from the wet plate negatives were a novelty, and the older galleries began offering them to the public to offset inroads that the cheaper establishments were making. The first of these paper prints to obtain any popularity were those made from whole-size negatives, for the specification of size begun in the daguerreotype era was continued through the era of the glass negative down to the present. The prints from these negatives were expensive, possibly costing the patrons as much as fifteen dollars apiece, so that their popularity was not very extensive; but an outgrowth of the new process swept into very rapid favor in 1855 and reached the height of its popularity in 1856 and 1857.

This was the ambrotype, which for the time being supplanted the daguerreotype in the public eye. The ambrotype was in effect a very thin collodion negative ~~negative~~ which, when placed against a black back-

ground and viewed by reflected light, gave the appearance of a positive. Very probably the reader himself has noticed this in working with a badly underexposed film. If placed on a piece of black paper it appears as a "positive". The ambrotype was backed with black velvet or varnished with black japan and mounted in a case in the same fashion as was the daguerreotype. It had the advantage over the daguerreotype that it could be seen in any position, thus correcting the mirror like character of the daguerreotype. An ambrotype may or may not be inverted from right to left, depending upon the method of mounting. Since the glass was transparent, it could be mounted so that the collodion film was on the side of the glass farthest away from the observer, in which case the inversion was corrected. This necessitated looking through the collodion film to see the image, however, which robbed the picture of clarity and of much of the detail, so that the practice naturally was not very extensive. Usually, then, the ambrotype was mounted with the collodion film toward the observer and covered with a protecting glass, as was the daguerreotype. In this form the same inversion occurred as in the daguerreotype.

The ambrotypes, as a class, were far inferior to the daguerreotype, although I have seen some beautiful specimens, all of which were made in Brady's gallery. This fact is again characteristic of Brady, for, upon noting the rising tide of popularity of ambrotypes, he employed the best maker of them available, L. E. Walker, also a New Yorker.

While in 1856 and 1857 the ambrotype was the photographic leader, daguerreotypes continued to be made in considerable numbers, even up to 1860. Brady and other leading professionals continued their efforts with

the paper print, sensing its possibilities. Brady here again demonstrated his shrewdness by importing skilled operators from abroad, where the collodion process had been more extensively cultivated. The most outstanding of these was a Scotchman by the name of Alexander Gardner, who arrived in Brady's gallery in 1856, and who had mastered rather successfully the making of enlargements, at that time not an easy process, from the whole plate negatives. He made these enlargements in two sizes, 14" x 17" and 17" x 20", both of which Brady introduced to the public as "imperial photographs." In order to cover up the defects in these enlargements which were almost always present, the prints were usually retouched or worked over with India ink, crayon, pastel, or water and oil colors. These imperials proved to be the most popular of all the paper prints so far produced, and Brady's reputation as the fashionable photographer was easily maintained.

Competitors of Brady, in order to cope with Brady's success with the imperials, went to even greater extremes with regard to size; and "life-size" portraits were introduced. Some of these were as large as 5 x 7 feet in dimensions, and, like the imperials, were liberally reinforced with oil colors or other coloring media. Brady was at times given credit for introducing the life-size portrait, but the credit, if credit is due, should go to C. D. Fredericks, another able New York photographer.

Looked at with modern eyes, these life-size portraits are excellent examples of artistic atrocities, but to the public of the late fifties they were the ne plus ultra of the photographic art, and the press went into raptures. "Photography was born in the United States, and

the sceptre has not departed from us," grandly declaimed a writer in Harper's Weekly after he had viewed a collection of these huge photographs. While the public may have admired them, not many were purchased, since they were priced as high as $750.00 apiece, the price depending, I suppose, upon how much oil color had been expended upon them. They are difficult to locate at the present time, however, for such institutions as the National Museum in Washington and the New York Public Library possess no examples of this form of "art".

The success with the imperial photograph warranteed an increase in the scope of Brady's activities so that early in 1858, he opened a permanent branch gallery in Washington and Alexander Gardner, the Scotchman, was placed in charge. The advertisement by which Brady announced the new gallery is typical of the times. It reads:

M. B. Brady respectfully announces that he has established a gallery of Photographic Art in Washington. He is prepared to execute commissions for the Imperial Photograph, hitherto made only at his well known establishment in New York.

A variety of unique and rare photographic specimens are included in his collection, together with portraits of many of the most distinguished citizens of the United States.

Mr. Brady brings to his Washington Gallery the results of fourteen years experience in Europe and America, and the choicest products of his art during that period. He feels confident that the resources at his command and the artistic quality of his work will commend his gallery to the attention of the Washington public.

No. 352 Pennsylvania Avenue, over Sweeny, Rittenhouse, Faut and Co's Banking House.

An enterprising reporter visited the branch gallery soon after it was opened and advised his readers to "while away an hour or so in scanning this array of beauty, diplomacy, living senatorial and clerical celebrity, besides the speaking, almost startling countenances of the great ones who have passed from earth." So it is evident that the display of these notable collections in themselves attracted many patrons to the Brady establishments.

During the various photographic fads and fancies of this period the daguerreotype had still remained a popular method of preserving the likenesses of the members of society. Even as late as the summer of 1859, Oliver Wendell Holmes reported that Whipple, whose name we have mentioned several times, and who was one of the leading Boston operators, made "a much greater number of miniature portraits on metal than on paper." Brady, himself, was one of the last to abandon the daguerreotype, even though he kept abreast of the times with the newer processes.

The death blow to the daguerreotype was delivered in 1860 by the rising popularity of the carte de visite photograph, which by 1861 eclipsed completely every other form of photographic fad, before or since.

The carde carde de visite photograph, abbreviated later to "card photograph", was of foreign origin and was first introduced into this country in 1859 by George Hockwood, a prominent New York Photographer. Card photographs were small prints mounted on a card approximately 2 1/2" x 4". They were so called because they were supposed to take

the place of the visiting card or the "carte de visite", although it is doubtful if they were much used for the original purpose. It is difficult for the present generation to realize the tremendous number of the card photographs made; this large volume of business was largely due to the fact that there was then no method of fac-simile reproduction, such as the modern half-tone process; paper photographs were still a novelty, and the small size and cost of the "cards" put them within the reach of even the humblest home. But it was the photographer who supplied the pictures of the day's notables and not the illustrated papers. The card photographs of celebrities were in great demand, but then, as now, the public was fickle concerning its favorites; for, as a well-known magazine of the time stated "A popular singer or actor or a successful prize fighter will sometimes have a run entering ten of thousands of copies; but the demand will suddenly collapse, and their names will be heard no more."

Each new development in the photographic art resulted in marked