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The tented portion of this wagon was used as a traveling darkroom for preparing and developing large glass photographic plates. The men seated may have worked for Mathew Brady, whose name appears on the box in the front of the wagon.

## Photographers & Artists Capture the War

MATHEW BRADY, whose name is associated with thousands of Civil War images, hired more than 20 photographers to capture the war up close. They photographed soldiers playing cards, officers writing at camp desks, surgeons preparing to amputate limbs, the Signal Corps stringing telegraph wire, black teamsters handling mules.

And they photographed young men lying dead on the battlefield. "If [Mathew Brady] has not brought bodies and laid them in our dooryards and along streets, he has done something very like it," the *New York Times* commented early in the war.

Brady's field photographers used portable darkrooms in which to prepare and develop the images. Historian Barry Pritzer explains the steps. "Inside the wagon were cameras of different sizes, chemical tanks, tripods, and several hundred fragile glass plates, upon which the success of the entire operation depended. When ready for use, the plates, usually 8" x 10", were carefully coated with collodion (a delicate operation even in a normal studio) lowered into a solution of nitrate of silver for three to five minutes and then placed in a holder, ready for insertion into the camera. After

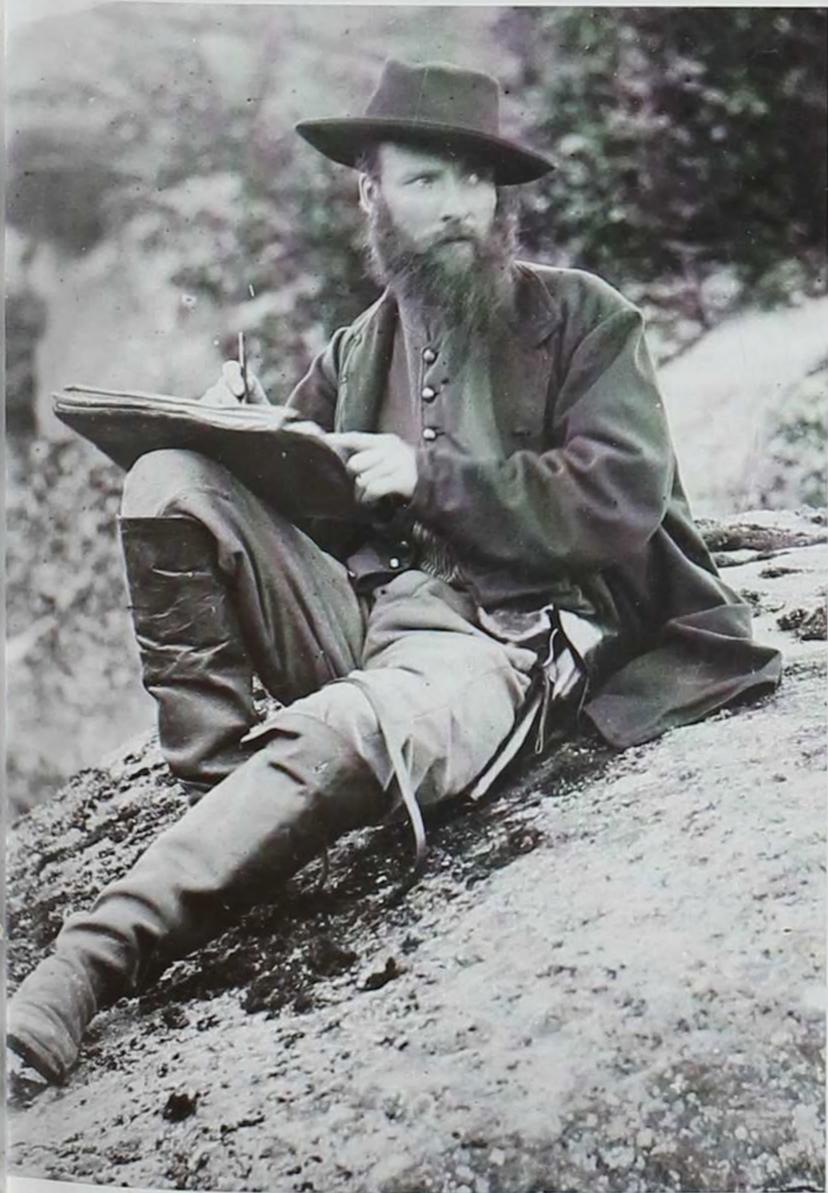
exposure, the plates were returned for developing to a darkroom that was stuffy at best and rank from post-battle aromas at worst. The time between coating the plates and developing them did not normally exceed eight or ten minutes. . . . A breath of wind, a bit of light or a sudden jolt could ruin the whole process."

Photographers could not capture action because long exposure times were needed. But field artists did this quite well, effectively conveying the chaos of cannons firing, trees crashing, and soldiers charging. Eyewitness field artists, including Winslow Homer, Thomas Nast, and Iowa's Alexander Simplot, sketched scenes and then sent them to *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, which published full- and double-page engravings based on the sketches. Field artists also sketched ordinary scenes in camp and sentimental scenes of soldiers' families back home. *Harper's Weekly*, it was said, "has been read in city parlors, in the log hut of the pioneer, by every camp-fire of our armies, in the wards of our hospitals, in the trenches before Petersburg, and in the ruins of Charleston."

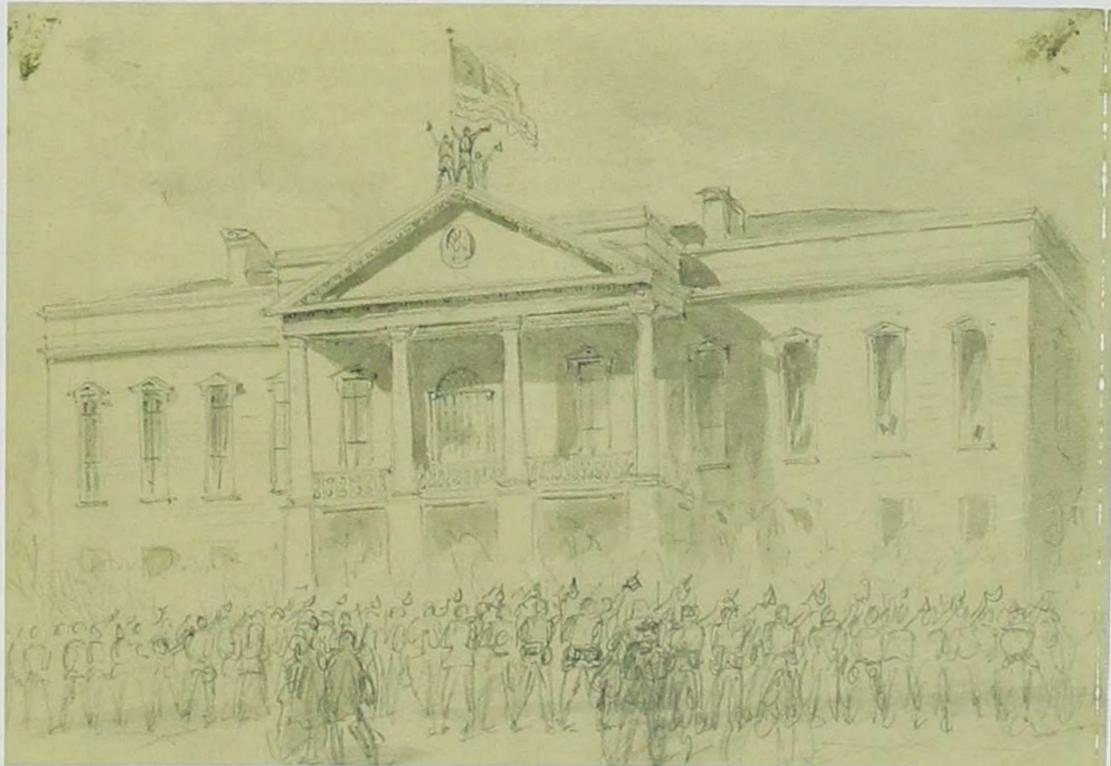
—by Ginalie Swaim



Below: Alfred Waud was one of several "special artists" hired by illustrated magazines to sketch war scenes. Artists back in New York created detailed drawings from the sketches and prepared them for engraving and publication.



Above: A soldier reaches for a cartridge pouch from another who has fallen, in this sketch titled "Spare Cartridges" by field artist Alfred Waud. In the background, soldiers continue to fire.



Above: Lt. Col. J. C. Kennedy of the 13th Iowa raises a flag over the South Carolina State House, February 1865. The engraving based on this sketch by William Waud appeared in *Harper's Weekly* on April 8, 1865.

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