

## ALEXANDER GARDNER'S PHOTOGRAPHIC SKETCH BOOK OF THE CIVIL WAR

The Civil War was the first major conflict to receive extensive photographic coverage. The science of photography was twenty-two years old when the war broke out, and almost immediately adventurous photographers loaded their cumbersome photographic gear into wagons and set out to follow and photograph the armies. This exhibition presents, in the form of actual original prints, the astounding results they achieved, and recreates dramatic moments of the Civil War. It is also a tribute to Alexander Gardner, one of the greatest of the Civil War photographers.

In 1856, Alexander Gardner brought his family to America from Scotland, with the intention of settling on the Western Frontier as a businessman. However, illness forced a change in these plans and the Gardners went instead to New York City, where Gardner sought employment with Mathew B. Brady, then proprietor of a noted portrait studio. Brady, impressed by Gardner's superior knowledge of photography and business sense, sent him to Washington, D. C., to open a branch gallery.

Gardner arrived in Washington in 1858, opened Brady's gallery, and during the time that he was its manager, made the business prosper. Gardner was employed by Brady until May, 1863, when he established his own gallery independently, and in competition with Brady. After the two men separated, Gardner's reputation, both as a photographer and a businessman, gained steadily.

In 1862, following the outbreak of the Civil War, Gardner joined the headquarters staff of General George B. McClellan as a civilian connected with the U. S. Topographical Engineers, to make photographic copies of maps and documents. Sometimes working with other photographers authorized to photograph military operations, notably T. H. O'Sullivan, G. N. Barnard, Wood & Gibson, he traveled in a darkroom wagon with the army, equipped to work the arduous "wet-plate" process. This photographic technique demanded that the photographer flow glass plates with a liquid called collodion, make it light sensitive, expose the plate in a camera, and develop it, all within the span of ten minutes. Despite the limitations of these difficult working conditions, Gardner achieved unforgettable photographs of the terror of war.

Gardner published many of his war views and supplied photographs to the journals of the day, particularly "Harper's Weekly" and "Leslie's Illustrated News", which they published as wood engraved illustrations. In 1865, he published, THE PHOTOGRAPHIC SKETCHBOOK OF THE WAR, containing 100 of the finest photographs made by himself and other photographers on the battlefield. Originally produced in two folio volumes, it is the source of the 34 photographs chosen for this exhibition.

Following the close of the war, Gardner kept up his photographic business, especially acting as official photographer for the Union Pacific Railroad, making views along the line in the midwest. In his later years he became interested in philanthropic projects. He died in Washington in 1882.

This exhibition is circulated by George Eastman House, Rochester, New York.