

# Brady, Mathew Studio Union Civil War Camp photograph of African Americans

Mathew Brady Studio: Union Civil War Camp photograph of African Americans  
c.1864

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## Title Statement

Brady, Mathew Studio Union Civil War Camp photograph of African Americans  
Mathew Brady Studio Union Civil War Camp photograph of African Americans MSS 16833

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## Profile Description

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**Language Usage:** Description is written in: English, Latin script.

**Descriptive Rules:** Describing Archives: A Content Standard

## Descriptive Summary

### Unit ID

MSS 16833

### Unit ID

[Archival Resource Key](#)

### Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/1641

### Unit Date

c.1864

### Mixed Materials

BW 61 (box)

### Language

English

### Extent

.03 Cubic Feet 1 folder (letter)

### Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

## Administrative Information

### **Conditions Governing Access**

The collection is open for research use.

### **Immediate Source of Acquisition**

This collection was purchased from McBride Rare Books by the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia Library on 20 October 2023.

### **Preferred Citation**

MSS 16833, Mathew Brady Studio Union Civil War Camp photograph of African Americans, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library.

## **Biographical / Historical**

Mathew Brady (1822 or 1824-1896) was an American photographer as who was one of the earliest and most famous photographers in American history. He is best known for his scenes of the Civil War. He studied under inventor Samuel Morse, who pioneered the daguerreotype technique in America. Brady opened his own studio in New York City in 1844, and went on to photograph U.S. presidents John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Jackson, Millard Fillmore and Martin Van Buren, among other public figures. Brady is credited with being the father of photojournalism.

When the Civil War began, Brady's use of a mobile studio and darkroom enabled thousands of vivid battlefield photographs to bring home the reality of war to the public. He also photographed generals and politicians on both sides of the conflict, though most of these were taken by his assistants rather than by Brady himself.

After the end of the Civil War, these pictures went out of fashion, and the government did not purchase the master copies as he had anticipated. Brady's fortunes declined sharply, and he died in debt.

## **Content Description**

This collection contains an albumen photograph of a Union wagon camp in Virginia during the Civil War from the Washington D.C. studio of Mathew Brady. Brady was one of the earliest and most famous photographers in American history. He is best known for his scenes of the Civil War. He often photographed Black soldiers and laborers during the war, mostly in Union or contraband camps. The present image documents for posterity a number of Black soldiers and laborers working towards a Union victory in the Civil War, a watershed moment in the history for African American people.

The photograph measures 5 X 8 inches and is affixed to a 6 X 9 inches studio mount. It depicts numerous men standing amid three houses, tents, and a few wagons. One wagon has "U.S. 12 07" stenciled on its side. Among the soldiers and teamsters are five Black men.

Some of the men, dressed in simple work clothes, may have served as servants as "contraband of war," while other Black men in military uniform were likely enlisted as soldiers in the regiments of Black troops.

A penciled note on the verso reads, "Photograph of camp in Virginia where D.H. Plumb was located for a time in the Civil War." The most likely reference is to Reverend David Henry Plumb, a private in the 4th Massachusetts Cavalry, which served in Virginia in 1864-65. Reverend Plumb mustered into the 4th Massachusetts in January 1864 and served until July 1, 1865. A signature opposite the inscription reads "Helen Thomas," who was potentially a descendant of Plumb's due to the familiar nature of the inscription.

Sources: "Mathew Brady" Wikipedia. Accessed 4/4/24 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathew\\_Brady](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathew_Brady)

Dealer information.

## **Related Materials**

There are several books in our collections relating to Mathew Brady photographs including Mathew Brady: Portraits of a Nation; Mathew Brady: A Historian with a Camera; Brady's Album Gallery; and Gardner's photographic sketchbook of the war.

## **Keywords**

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Participation, African American  
African Americans -- Photographs