

and enlargements suitable for exhibit or sale. Two important product innovations based on this improved technology—the stereograph and the *carte-de-visite*—occurred in the years just before the Civil War. The stereograph was a double image produced by fitting two lenses on a single camera. When viewed through a stereoscope, a handheld device that could be purchased from a photographer's studio, it produced a three-dimensional effect. Stereoscopes helped turn the viewing of photographs into a leisure activity that could occur in every home. The *carte-de-visite* was a small print made by fitting four lenses onto one camera, which produced four identical images on a single plate. Prints from such a negative, when cut into quarters, were used as calling cards. Brady led the way in marketing them as collector's cards (sometimes called album cards), selling *cartes-de-visite* of famous figures in numbered series much like baseball cards are sold and collected today.

Paper reproduction in such formats made photographs available to even working-class people. A portrait-size print might cost \$1.50, a stereoscope 50 cents, and a *carte-de-visite* only 25 cents. When Union and Confederate armies mobilized in 1861, soldiers in uniform rushed to have their portraits taken as souvenirs of their service or as keepsakes for loved ones at home. The vast majority of the tens of thousands of Civil War photographs fall into this category. Once photographers realized the demand that the war was creating for their services, they expanded their work to include other subjects that they thought might turn a profit.

### What Can Civil War Photographs Tell Us?

The most obvious advantage to using such photographs as a historical source was one immediately realized by the government and military. Photography made possible the recording and communication of visual information with much greater speed and detail than other media. Armies had long relied on sketch artists to record useful information about the scene of battle. During the Civil War, generals added photographers to their staffs so that they could make images of fortifications, bridges, railroads, and natural landmarks, not to mention portraits of the generals themselves as they sallied forth into history. Military photographers also aided in the reproduction of maps. Ever since, historians have used these images to reconstruct the military history of the war, from engagements on rural battlefields like Antietam to scorched-earth attacks on cities such as Richmond, Virginia, and Charleston, South Carolina.

Cultural and social historians find many advantages to working with these photographs as well. How people create visual images of war tells us much about the values and emotions they associate with it. Paintings, drawings, and photographs of battlefields are as much attempts to create meaning out of the violence and death of warfare as are letters home, diary entries, and memoirs. Before the invention of photography, the visual record of U.S. warfare was usually created by painters who worked long after the battle raged. John Trumbull was the most famous painter of the American Revolution, and the federal government commissioned his work for the new nation's Capitol in the early