Our project is a three dimensional virtual simulation of Mathew Brady’s photo gallery and an account of the historical importance of the camera along with its impact on the Civil War and reconstruction era. While the camera itself was invented and brought to America around 1830 it still managed to play a significant role in the war and how it was perceived by the public.

Because of recent advances in communication such as the telegraph this war was vastly different from any others. The new technology allowed information to be moved across large distances in a very short amount of time. This heavily affected fighting by allowing generals to communicate, but its effects were much farther reaching than that. Telegraph technology allowed reporters to give reports very quickly, meaning they could watch a battle happen one day and their eye witness report could appear in multiple papers the very next day. This brought war into the public eye for the first time, and in a much more personal way than officer reports of battles months after the fact.

This led to a newly vested interest in the day to day proceedings of the war in common society. And this new interest was compounded even further by the use of the camera to document the war. Mathew Brady was a famous photographer who made it his mission to fully document the Civil War through pictures. He is often seen as the father of photojournalism for his efforts of leading what is one of the first field reporter groups.

With all these photographs he eventually opened up a photo gallery in New York during October 1862. He called this gallery “The Dead of Antietam”, and it created quite a stir. One New York Times reporter said that if it hadn’t brought the dead and laid them out then it had done “something very like it”. As people lined the streets hoping to get a look inside this new gallery there were also people running from the building in disgust and horror, both for the same reason: realism. The pictures that Brady released were the first photographs that the public had seen of battlefields before the dead had been cleaned up. This brought people to view the war in a whole new light and quickly brought Mathew Brady into prominence in the public eye.

After the gallery’s release and success people saw the war in a more realistic light. In addition to affecting the Civil War itself his efforts set a precedent that many followed in later eras. Many attribute Mathew Brady as inspiration to Jacob Riis and other “muckraking” photographers who used photography to influence people's opinions and actions.

To show the importance of his efforts and the effect of the camera as a whole we have created a simulation of it that you can explore in real time through a computer. Put in a photo gallery atmosphere you can walk around and when prompted to click “E” you can do so to read more information about the object you are near. In it there are pictures that were actually taken by Mathew Brady and his team, as well as a representation of the type of camera that they used back then.