

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

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Press Preview:
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SHERMAN'S CAMPAIGN: PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEORGE N. BARNARD

Twenty-seven photographs taken by George N. Barnard (1819-1902) during Sherman's campaign in the Civil War will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from January 27 to April 5, 1970. In 1864 and 1865, during and after the capture of Atlanta, the March to the Sea and the Raids on the Carolinas, Barnard rendered the devastated landscape General Sherman left behind. SHERMAN'S CAMPAIGN: PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEORGE N. BARNARD has been selected and installed in the Steichen Galleries by John Szarkowski, Director of the Museum's Department of Photography.

The photographs are from Barnard's album Photographic Views of Sherman's Campaign, published in 1866. It includes sixty-one contact prints, approximately 10" x 14", made from glass plates taken by Barnard in his capacity as official photographer for the Chief Engineer's office, Division of the Mississippi, United States Army.

Barnard states in the text of the album that "The rapid movement of Sherman's army during the campaign rendered it impossible to obtain at the time a complete series of photographs which should illustrate the principal events and most interesting localities. Since the close of the war the collection has been completed." As a result, notes Bill Burback, Curatorial Intern in the Department of Photography, the photographs "do not describe events but rather preserve their remains." The limitations of photographic technology at the time of the Civil War, with large cameras, long exposures, and the cumbersome wet plate process forced photographers, according to Mr. Burback, "to describe the war in symbolic terms."

A reviewer commenting in the December 8, 1866 issue of "Harper's Weekly" said: "before seeing this collection of Mr. Barnard we could not have believed

(more)

that there were such magnificent possibilities in an art so purely mechanical as to its mode of operation." The volume was acquired by the Museum in 1969.

George N. Barnard was an important photographer for more than forty years, having started his career at the age of twenty-three. While living in Oswego, New York in 1847, he made some of the earliest known news photographs. He moved to Syracuse in 1854, where he later returned after the war. In the 1870's he worked in Chicago and Charleston, South Carolina. In the following decade when he was "a kindly old man with beautiful white hair and beard" in his sixties he helped George Eastman introduce the dry plate process. Both men were made members of the Rochester Photographic Association on the same evening in 1884.

In the exhibition wall label Mr. Burbach says: "Viewing the pictures, it would seem that Barnard was less concerned with the horror of destruction than with the beauty of the now vacant landscapes; yet he does not mask the devastating impact of Sherman's March."

Additional information available from Jonathan Wright, Assistant, and Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, New York. 10019. (212) 956 - 7298, 7501.

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Wall Label

George N. Barnard (1819-1902) accompanied General Sherman on his Campaign at the close of the Civil War as official photographer for the Department of Engineers, Division of the Mississippi. He was provided with a driver, a covered wagon, and two mules, and dined with the general's staff. Barnard had been photographing the war since its beginning. Early in the war he collaborated with James F. Gibson on photographs some of which were included in Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War. Line engravings derived from his photographs were published in Harper's Weekly, and he made stereo views which he sold to H. T. Anthony and Co. The photographs in this exhibition were selected from the sixty-one prints of Barnard's volume Photographic Views of Sherman's Campaign, published in 1866 and sold for one hundred dollars a copy. Presumably the photographs were made in 1864 and 1865. In the introduction to the supplementary text Barnard states, "The rapid movement of Sherman's army during the campaign rendered it impossible to obtain at the time a complete series of photographs which should illustrate the principal events and most interesting localities. Since the close of the war the collection has been completed."

Sherman's Campaign advanced from Tennessee and included the capture of Atlanta, the March to the Sea, and the Raids of the Carolinas. It ended with the final surrender of Johnston's army on April 26, 1865 in Durham, North Carolina.

Although the war was documented in detail by many photographers, few of their pictures recorded important events as they were happening. The limitation of large cameras, long exposures, and the complexity of the wet plate process forced the photographers to describe the war in symbolic terms. Barnard, following in the wake of battle, photographed scenes of emotional importance with such care and deliberation that the actors, places and debris of the war are fixed in a kind of historic vacuum.

They do not describe events but rather preserve their remains. Viewing the pictures, it would seem that Barnard was less concerned with the horror of destruction than with the beauty of the now vacant landscapes; yet he does not mask the devastating impact of Sherman's March.

Bill Burback

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January 26 - April 5, 1970

Checklist

1. Mission Ridge Scene of Sherman's Attack. (409.69.12)
2. Savannah, Ga. No. 2. (409.69.50)
3. Chattanooga Valley from Lookout Mountain. (409.69.13)
4. Chattanooga from the North. (409.69.8)
5. Pass in the Raccoon Range. Whiteside No. 1. (409.69.6)
6. Nashville from the Capitol. (409.69.3)
7. Whiteside Valley below the Bridge. (409.69.5)
8. Rebel Works in front of Atlanta, Ga. No. 2. (409.69.40)
9. Rebel Works in front of Atlanta, Ga. No. 3. (409.69.41)
10. Rebel Works in front of Atlanta, Ga. No. 5. (409.69.43)
11. Rebel Works in front of Atlanta, Ga. No. 4. (409.69.42)
12. Rebel Works in front of Atlanta, Ga. No. 1. (409.69.39)
13. Ruins in Columbia, S.C. No. 2. (409.69.55)
14. City of Atlanta, Ga. No. 1. (409.69.45)
15. Destruction of Hood's Ordinance Train. (409.69.44)
16. City of Atlanta, Ga. No. 2. (409.69.46)
17. Buzzard Roost, Ga. (409.69.18)
18. Ruins of the R.R. Depot, Charleston, S.C. (409.69.61)
19. Scene of Gen. McPherson's Death. (409.69.35)
20. Ruins in Charleston, S.C. (409.69.60)
21. Columbia from the Capitol. (409.69.53)
22. Battle Field of New Hope Church, Ga. No. 2. (409.69.26)
23. The John Ross House, Ringold, Ga. (409.69.16)
24. Mission Ridge from Orchard Knob. (409.69.9)
25. Battle Ground of Resacca, Ga. No. 1. (409.69.19)
26. The Allatoona Pass, Ga. (409.69.29)