Understanding the Library of Congress’s Civil War Photograph Collection

Directions: Answer the following questions using the Library of Congress’s (LOC) collection of Selected Civil War Photographs located at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwphome.html>

Using the homepage answer the following questions:

1. How many photographs does the LOC have on display on this site?
2. Who was the source of most of the photos?
3. Click on his name. How did the Library of Congress come to own the photo collection?

Scroll to the bottom of the Selected Civil War Photographs homepage and use the various articles included there to complete the following questions.

1. How many photographers are listed on the site?
2. What is the birth and death year given for Alexander Gardner?
3. Who was older during the Civil War, Alexander Gardner or Matthew Brady?
4. Is the identity of all photographers known?
5. Go to the “Taking Photographs…” link and complete the following paragraph:

During the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the process of taking photographs was complex and time-consuming. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ photographers would arrive at a location. One would mix \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and pour them on a clean glass plate. After the chemicals were given time to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the glass plate would be sensitized by being immersed -- in darkness -- in a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ solution. Placed in a holder, the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ would then be inserted in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which had been positioned and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by the other photographer. Exposure of the plate and development of the photograph had to be completed within \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; then the exposed plate was rushed to the darkroom \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for developing. Each fragile \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ plate had to be treated with great care after development -- a difficult task on a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

1. In photo technical terms explain why some images in the collection appear to be double images while others appear to be cut off.
2. What is the suggested "credit line" that is to be used in your bibliography if you were to use one of the photographs from the Library of Congress’s site in a publication or paper?

Click on the link "Does the Camera Ever Lie?" and answer the following questions.

1. Read the Case of the Confused Identity. Describe how historians have determined that these two images are actually of the same scene taken from different directions.
2. What piece of clothing is used to identify the troops as belonging to the Union 3rd Corps?
3. Refer to Hard Tack and Coffee and find out what badge Reynolds's men wore.
4. Read the Case of the Moved Body. Do you agree with Gardner's reasoning for moving the body? Why/Why not?

Go Back to the Homepage.

1. Click the "Browse" the subject index. Click the links From "Indiana Troops" to "Nail Industry". Click "Michigan Troops". Click on the image and describe the shirt and hat worn by the soldier.
2. What regiment is he from?

Go Back to the Homepage.

1. Go to "Search" by Keyword. Enter the phrase "Grant's Horse" and hit search. According to the title of the third image what are the names of U.S. Grant's 3 horses?
2. Hit "Gallery View" and scroll to the bottom of the page. Hit "Next Page". Who owned the stable shown in the upper right image on the second page? (hint, click on the image twice)
3. What is the name of the restaurant shown in the same image? (click Retrieve higher resolution JPEG version)
4. Browse the collection and find and image that interests you. Use the Photo Analysis worksheet available at http://mrhubbard.weebly.com/civil-war-resources.html to review the image further.