

*ART PERPETUATING FAME: THE POSTERS OF BUFFALO BILL'S WILD WEST*

By

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Art History and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## Abstract

From 1883 until 1913, Buffalo Bill's Wild West attracted fifty million people in more than one thousand cities in ten countries. William Frederick "Buffalo Bill" Cody's globe-galloping extravaganza would not have attained its status as one of the most widely attended and wildly popular turn-of-the-century spectacles without an extensive and effective promotional system to perpetuate its fame. Using the exhibition's posters as primary objects of inquiry, this dissertation examines the Wild West's most iconic and resonant elements. Each of four case studies is anchored by a key image—a poster that serves as a platform from which to investigate other imagery devoted to the same theme—and incorporates visual and contextual analysis, contemporary public reception, and an exploration of influential iconography originating from both fine art and popular sources as well as their literary counterparts.

The first chapter focuses on the man at the center of it all, Buffalo Bill himself, and the meanings of the various roles he played within the Wild West's arena and in its advertising. The second chapter analyzes the complicated and shifting status of Indians near the close of the nineteenth century. The cowboy, who, like the Indian, experienced a change in reputation vividly chronicled by the Wild West and its promotional imagery, is the subject of the third chapter. The Congress of Rough Riders of the World, a reflection of increasing American imperialism, cultural hegemony and exceptionalism during an era when the word "frontier" no longer strictly referred to the American West, is the topic of the final chapter.

The posters of Buffalo Bill's Wild West advertised more than a traveling exhibition that captivated millions for three decades. A century after the exhibition met its fate on the auction block, the posters designed to promote it still perpetuate its fame. Simultaneously, images of Buffalo Bill, Indians, cowboys, and multinational Rough Riders continue to illuminate many

defining currents of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. When considered in their cultural context, the posters of Buffalo Bill's Wild West both influenced and underscored complex sociopolitical ideologies, perspectives, and values that challenged and shaped America.

## Acknowledgements

A graduate student in any discipline who makes it to this stage in her academic career is keenly aware that the moment never would have arrived were it not for the intellectual, financial, and emotional support provided by many. An art historian who writes her dissertation on an unconventional topic, takes a leave of absence from her day job, commandeers her family's dining room for a year, and posts a "Keep Out!" sign at toddler height outside that makeshift "office" fully realizes the extent of her debts and is exceptionally grateful.

I would not have undertaken this examination of Buffalo Bill's Wild West posters without the example set by Dr. Karal Ann Marling. Her work demonstrated to an awe-struck undergraduate Golden Gopher that an art historian can dedicate serious scholarly attention to topics at the fringes of what most might label "outside-the-canon." It was also Dr. Marling who recommended that I continue my study of American art, from the canonical to the quirky, at the University of Kansas with Dr. Charles Eldredge as a mentor. Her advice was unerring. My first exploration of the imagery used to advertise Colonel Cody's extravaganza occurred in a seminar led by Dr. Eldredge on the art of the American West, broadly defined. His validation of this topic then as one that fit within the purview of art history, as well as his steady encouragement (and extraordinary patience) as my primary advisor over the duration of this endeavor to secure my "union card" has been invaluable. Likewise, I extend my thanks to the faculty and staff of the Kress Foundation Department of Art History at the University of Kansas, and especially to the KU faculty who rounded out my dissertation committee and agreed to sign on in spite of the imposition of a mid-summer defense, the Drs. David Cateforis, Stephen Goddard, Susan Earle, and Chuck Berg.

In addition to many things I learned from Dr. Eldredge, including how imperative it is to look closely at an object at the same time that you cast a wide net to divine meaning, discover influence, and determine impact, another lesson he imparted has proved itself time and again. A scholar is nothing without a good librarian. These I was fortunate to find in spades at the Buffalo and Erie County Public Libraries; Chester County Historical Society; Cincinnati Art Museum; Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin; the Western History Collection at the Denver Public Library; the McCracken Research Library at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody Wyoming; the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County and, especially, at the University of Kansas.

My research for this project also benefited from travel grants received from the Kress Foundation Department of Art History. These grants allowed me to mine the collection of posters, drawers of original art, and folders of programs, couriers, and newspaper clippings at the Circus World Museum Library. They also permitted me to profit from the rich repository of materials on Cody and his extravaganza held by the Denver Public Library. In the summer of 2012, the Buffalo Bill Historical Center awarded me a fellowship at a time when it was most needed to snap my thinking into focus and fuel several upcoming months of writing. My residency in Cody country provided the opportunity to pour over and ponder Wild West ephemera, archival material, and an incredible collection of art of the American West in the company of generous and hospitable experts that included Dr. John Rumm, Mindy Besaw, Laura Fry, Lynn Houze, Beverly Perkins, Linda Clark, and Mary Robinson. That fellowship (in both meanings of the word) resulted in many discoveries that shaped this dissertation.

Having led a double life as a student and as a museum professional, it would be appropriate for me to include the staff list of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art as an appendix to

this dissertation to ensure that each colleague is duly acknowledged. I am fortunate to work in an institution lead by a director who values scholarship, Dr. Julián Zugazagoitia. Persuaded by Dr. Margi Conrads, from whom I learned the curatorial ropes and who recognized my struggle to balance student obligations and a career, Dr. Zugazagoitia temporarily released me from my duties at the Museum. This critical leave of absence allowed my dissertation to be my nine-to-five job instead of a gig that I took up on the occasional evening and infrequent weekend. It made it possible to take advantage of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center fellowship opportunity and to gain the much-needed momentum necessary to complete this project. I am also grateful for the regular in-the-hall, before-a-meeting, and on-the-way-to-the-galleries checks on my progress made by curators Drs. Catherine Futter, Robert Cohon, Gaylord Torrence, and Leesa Fanning. The solidarity expressed by fellow dissertating junior colleagues, Nicole Myers and April Watson, similarly imparted a boost more times than I can count.

Great appreciation also goes to friends, especially Dr. Randy Griffey, Dr. Brittany Lockard, and Jennifer Talbott. Each of them has been a tireless cheerleader, particularly over the past year and even when the task at hand sometimes prevented me from being the kind of friend I wanted to be to them. Motivation also came from friend Dr. Jerry Smith's success at "slapping the pig"—a euphemism, inspired by a genre painting we can no longer recall, for writing seminar papers that evolved to apply to the dissertation process and resulted in a small collection of miniature swine knickknacks as well as a custom t-shirt.

At this point it is impossible to calculate what is owed to family. Thank you, thank you to my parents, Joyce and Don Fox, who first took me to Circus World and to Cody, Wyoming, on long ago family trips and who not once expressed concerns about my chosen field. They never doubted (even when I seriously did) that their seemingly perpetual-student daughter would clear

this final hurdle. They showed their support in countless ways that I will never be able to repay. I am also grateful to my brother, Benjamin Fox, and to my in-laws, Ken and Leanne Knappe, who, like my parents have been there for me over this long haul and during times of deep sorrow as well as tremendous joy. Parents, brother, parents-in-law—each offered love and encouragement and none made me feel guilty for ordering take-out on Thanksgiving or postponing a visit because a chapter was due. My dear, sweet, smart, and silly daughter, Kaleia Celeste, exhibited more patience when Mama was working on her “paper” than should be expected of such a little person. She also provided daily motivation to finish so that there would be more time for cooking, reading, and singing together, dancing in the kitchen, and “playing buttons.”

Finally, my greatest debt of gratitude truly is to the one who was first a friend then family—my husband Brett. I hope that he knows how much I appreciate his partnership each day and that I do recognize all of the many, many things he has done to ensure that, *eventually*, we would be Dr. and Dr. Knappe. Were it not for him, I would not be writing these acknowledgements. And, even though he told me not to, I dedicate this dissertation to him.



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## Introduction

The most noticeable pictures in Paris to-day, outside the Louvre, are the Calhoun Printing Company's stirring delineations of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.

—"Display Show Bills," *Hartford (CT) Courant*,  
July 13, 1889, 8

In 1895 the Courier Lithographic Company of Buffalo, New York, published a poster to advertise the traveling extravaganza Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World, an amalgam of historic reenactment, patriotic pageant, menagerie, sporting demonstration, educational enterprise, and popular entertainment. One of hundreds designed over three decades to promote the exhibition, this poster featured at its center the renowned nineteenth-century French painter Rosa Bonheur seated before her easel. Two anachronistic subjects vie for a place on her canvas. Napoleon Bonaparte, atop a white horse, is at the left. A far cry from how he appears in the French neoclassical artist Jacques-Louis David's painted tribute in 1800, he sits slouched in the saddle and wears an expression of consternation. Eschewing national loyalty, Bonheur has turned her back to her fellow countryman. She opts instead to paint the portrait of Colonel William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody—scout, guide, thespian, entrepreneur, and showman. Cody possesses a carriage and countenance as far from Napoleon's as the American West is from Waterloo. Arrow-straight astride his steed, trim, and confident, Cody is the mounted manifestation of the mythic frontier. He is the living legend who, as the poster boasts, is known from "The Yellow Stone to the Danube. From Vesuvius to Ben Nevis." A banner drapes the lower edge of this poster that Courier Lithographic Company subsequently reprinted for multiple seasons. The banner is emblazoned with a fitting caption for this vignette

of brush-and-palette favoritism and one equally apt for describing Wild West posters *in toto*:  
“Art Perpetuating Fame.”<sup>1</sup>

The posters that promoted Buffalo Bill’s traveling extravaganza not only brought fame to William Frederick “Buffalo Bill” Cody (1846–1917) and his exhibition, but also solidified a place in the collective imagination for that amalgamation of fact and fiction—the American West. Smacking of the hyperbole so ubiquitous in the promotional materials designed to boost ticket sales to the twice-daily, rain-or-shine performances of the Wild West, an article appearing in the *Frontier Express and Buffalo Bill’s Pictorial Courier* on July 6, 1895, asserted that “No more permanent good has been accomplished by the Wild West’s existence than the influence it has had on art.”<sup>2</sup> That quotation may be overstatement, but during the thirty-year run of the Wild West artists including Bonheur, Frederic Remington, Louis Maurer, Charles Schreyvogel, Gertrude Käsebier, Irving R. Bacon, and even James Abbott McNeill Whistler fell under the spell of Buffalo Bill himself, as well as the “Attack on the Settler’s Cabin,” “Cow-boy Fun,” and the Congress of Rough Riders of the World. These artists contributed to the body of imagery that fostered and sustained the Wild West’s world-wide acclaim.

Art, of course, in the form of posters such as the 1895 Courier lithograph, was also good for the Wild West. The success of the exhibition depended not only on the merit of the performance that took place within the arena, but also on the quality of the materials that advertised it and their ability to fuel desire and ignite imagination. The Wild West would not have attained its status as one of the most widely attended and wildly popular turn-of-the-century spectacles without an extensive and effective promotional system. Whether based in myth, reality,

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<sup>1</sup> This poster will be discussed at greater length in chapter one of this dissertation.

<sup>2</sup> “Rosa Bonheur,” 1895 Wild West courier, 3, William Frederic Cody/Buffalo Bill Papers, WH72, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library (hereafter DPL), Box 2, Folder 6.

or a well-crafted combination of the two, the art that promoted “America’s National Entertainment” was praised for the fidelity with which it reflected the exhibition it advertised. “They [Buffalo Bill’s Wild West] carry everything they advertise and more, too,” confirmed the Janesville, Wisconsin, *Daily Gazette* in 1896.<sup>3</sup> Art in the form of Wild West posters perpetuated the popularity of the exhibition, cemented the celebrity of its progenitor, and elevated the stature of its signature performers. It amplified the fame of a West that never really was, or was rapidly changing. It reinforced the contemporaneity of the exhibition and ensured that it kept pace with a changing world and changing definitions of what constituted “the frontier.”

The inaugural performance of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West took place in Omaha, Nebraska, on May 19, 1883.<sup>4</sup> By this date, the West celebrated by Buffalo Bill reflected little of the contemporary content or character of that part of the country. Many American Indian tribes were forcibly gathered onto reservations. Vast herds of buffalo had been slaughtered. The raucous reign of the cowboys waned as miles of newly invented barbed wire corralled the cattle that previously grazed the open range. The tracks of two transcontinental railroads cut swathes across the prairie. Riding these rails as earlier homesteaders rode their wagons, immigrants journeyed westward and forever changed the racial and ethnic make-up of the region. Law-abiding communities tamed the signature rough-and-tumble wildness of the West. None of this lessened the allure or impact of Cody’s romanticized vision of the West. If anything, his exhibition’s indulgence in nostalgic reverie during an era of tremendous change increased its appeal. In 1888, five years before the historian Frederick Jackson Turner’s announcement of his frontier thesis, the sportsmen’s periodical *Field and Stream* reported: “The performance is thoroughly realistic

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<sup>3</sup> Untitled newspaper clipping, *Daily Gazette* (Janesville, WI), August 28, 1896. Small Collections, Circus World Museum Library, Baraboo, WI.

<sup>4</sup> The original title of the exhibition was Buffalo Bill and Doc Carver’s Wild West, Rocky Mountain and Prairie Exhibition. The partnership between Cody and William “Doc” Carver dissolved after six months.

and is enough to stir the blood in the veins of any old timer whose memory can go back twenty years ago when all the scenes were common in the wild, wild West, now, alas, wild no longer.”<sup>5</sup>

Cody realized astutely that his version of the American West could likewise attract audiences across the Atlantic. He and his troupe set sail for London in 1887 to perform as part of the American Exhibition in honor of Queen Victoria’s Jubilee. Tours of France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, Belgium, England, and Scotland followed.<sup>6</sup> When the internationally acclaimed exhibition returned home in 1893, it was as Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World. The new title in tandem with an expanded scope fittingly debuted outside the gates of the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. As the world grew smaller and the influence of the United States increased, the content of the exhibition evolved accordingly. Its founding focus on the West was adjusted to incorporate reenactments of contemporary events such as the Battle of San Juan Hill and the Battle of Tien-Tsin into its program of spectacles, eventually merging with Pawnee Bill’s Great Far East in 1908. For three decades, the exhibition thrilled audiences that numbered more than fifty million across ten countries until Cody’s enterprise went bankrupt in 1913.<sup>7</sup>

A century later, it is estimated that there are between three hundred and four hundred extant examples of distinct Buffalo Bill’s Wild West poster designs.<sup>8</sup> However, the exact number

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<sup>5</sup> “The Wild West Show,” *Forest and Stream* 30, no. 20 (7 June 1888): 390.

<sup>6</sup> Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Route List, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Following the sale of the bankrupt exhibition in 1913, Cody continued to travel as Buffalo Bill with the Sells-Floto circus. He joined the Miller Brothers and Arlington 101 Ranch Wild West in 1916. Cody died in Denver, Colorado, on January 10, 1917. Throughout this dissertation, the title Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, or simply the Wild West, will often be used even when the exhibition officially went by another title. This is not only for brevity’s sake, but also because it reflects the way in which the exhibition was commonly cited in contemporary reviews, regardless of whether it featured its original cast of Cody, cowboys, and Indians, had expanded to include the Congress of Rough Riders of the World, or had merged with Pawnee Bill’s show.

<sup>8</sup> James W. Wojtowicz, *The W.F. Cody Buffalo Bill Collector’s Guide with Values* (Peducah, KY: Collector Books, 1998), 105.

designed, printed, and propped in store windows, or pasted onto the sides of buildings, barns, fences, and even outhouses during the thirty-year run of the exhibition that coincided with the golden age of the American poster is not known. It would not be unusual for the Wild West's indefatigable advance men to arrange for local bill posters to cover seemingly every available vertical surface with between six thousand and eight thousand of "Bill's bills" in the hard sell of a one-day-only appearance. These posters—colored wood engravings and lithographs—varied in size depending on how many sheets the composition required. The basic unit was one sheet that measured twenty-eight by forty-two inches. This unit could be utilized in either a horizontal or a vertical format based on the needs of the poster design. The posters published to promote Buffalo Bill's Wild West ranged from petite, half-sheet "scattering work" to a legendary panoramic one-hundred-and-eight sheet billboard, with some fifty thousand sheets regularly published each season.<sup>9</sup>

Responsibility for all that paper, as the posters were often called in contemporary parlance, dedicated to the promotion of Buffalo Bill's Wild West fell to more than a dozen firms in the United States as well as England and France. The exhibition frequently employed more than one firm to cover its promotional requirements during a given season, so extensive was its need for paper. The firms on which the Wild West most frequently relied to ensure that the posters used to promote the exhibition were as vivid and engaging as the exhibition itself included Calhoun Printing Company located in Hartford, Connecticut; A. Hoen and Company of Baltimore, Maryland; Courier Lithographic Company of Buffalo, New York; the Enquirer Job Printing Company and Strobridge Lithographic Company, both in Cincinnati, Ohio; and the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 105 and 117; Charles Philip Fox and Tom Parkinson, *The Circus in America* (Waukesha, WI: Country Beautiful, 1969), 35; Sarah J. Blackstone, *Buckskins, Bullets and Business: A History of Buffalo Bill's Wild West* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1986), 50; and Jack Rennert, *100 Posters of Buffalo Bill's Wild West* (New York: Darien House, 1976), 4–5.

Forbes Company located in Boston, Massachusetts.<sup>10</sup> Much admired and highly collectable today, the quality of the paper produced by these firms to promote the Wild West was equally recognized in its day. “Theatrical people say the Carver and Cody bills are the finest specimens of the show engraver’s art they have ever seen,” Connecticut’s *Hartford Daily Courant* reported to its readers regarding the work of the Calhoun Printing Company in 1883, the year the Wild West debuted.<sup>11</sup> Six years later, the same newspaper, which, not inconsequentially, shared a building with Calhoun, continued to laud the talent of the firm. Citing a series of posters that featured compositions after art by Frederic Remington published in 1889 to advertise the exhibition when it performed just outside Paris’s Exposition Universelle, the newspaper declared, “Some of these Wild West posters are the best samples of pine wood engravings ever seen.”<sup>12</sup>

This dissertation contributes to the already extensive scholarship on Buffalo Bill’s Wild West through a consideration of the posters that perpetuated its fame.<sup>13</sup> Despite the dizzying

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<sup>10</sup> It was less common for the Wild West to seek the services of a foreign firm, but when it did so, it often used Stafford and Company and J. Weiner, Ltd. in London or Imprimerie Chaix or Weiners in Paris. Rennert, *100 Posters of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> “A Big Contract,” *Hartford (CT) Daily Courant*, April 18, 1883, 1.

<sup>12</sup> “Display Show Bills,” *Hartford (CT) Courant*, July 13, 1889, 8. Cody was one of Calhoun’s most valued patrons. The firm not only printed Wild West posters, but also other promotional materials. The active role Cody took overseeing their production caused residents of Hartford to believe that he had moved there. “An Eventful Century in Printer’s Ink,” *Hartford (CT) Courant*, July 20, 1952, SM9.

<sup>13</sup> Recently, scholars who represent a variety of disciplines have taken up the challenge of accurately assessing the showman and appraising his extravaganza. Louis S. Warren’s *Buffalo Bill’s America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005) is the most ambitious and fastidiously researched inquiry into the ongoing fascination with Cody and his exhibition. Important for its comprehensiveness, the deft manner with which its author discerned fact from more than a century of fiction, and the acute attention paid to the symbolism inherent in the Cody’s Wild West, Warren’s text joined works such as *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000) by American studies scholar Joy Kasson. For her hybrid biography/cultural history situated at the intersection of popular cultural and national identity, Kasson traced Cody’s rise from scout to superstar and the meticulous manner in which his public image was shaped along the way. See also Robert A. Carter, *Buffalo Bill Cody: The Man Behind the Legend* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2000). Preceding the work of Warren, Kasson, and Carter were texts by historiographers who aimed to chronicle Cody’s life in epic monographs. It may be argued that early biographies such as Richard J. Walsh and Milton S.

amount of work dedicated to the analysis of Cody's enterprise from countless angles and approaches, this critical component of the Wild West experience has not been examined in depth. With the visual material provided by Wild West posters as the primary objects of inquiry, this project expands the purview of art history and makes elastic the boundaries between high art and mass culture. This intensive study of the imagery that brought fame to Buffalo Bill's Wild West treats this rich material as not only historically, socially, and politically important, but as art historically significant as well.

Four case studies offer a thorough examination of the iconic components comprised by the Wild West—Buffalo Bill, Indians, cowboys, and the Congress of Rough Riders of the World. Each case study is anchored by a single key image—a poster that serves as a platform from which to survey and investigate other examples devoted to the same theme. The case studies incorporate a careful analysis of the context in which each particular aspect of the exhibition and its associated promotional materials were originally viewed in addition to a consideration of contemporary public reception. These case studies are further enhanced by an exploration of iconography originating from sources both fine and popular that influenced the art that in turn perpetuated the fame of Buffalo Bill's Wild West.

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Salsbury's *The Making of Buffalo Bill: A Study in Heroics* (Kissimmee, FL: International Cody Family Association, 1928) and Don Russell's *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960) did more to propagate the legend of Cody than to offer any revelations about the man or his Wild West. Rupert Croft-Cooke and W. S. Meadmore, *Buffalo Bill: The Legend, the Man of Action, the Showman* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, Limited, 1952) and Nellie Synder Yost, *Buffalo Bill: His Family, Friends, Fame, Failures and Fortunes* (Chicago: Sage Books, 1979) likewise fall into this category. The history of Buffalo Bill's Wild West and of western-inspired spectacles in general is documented by Don Russell in *The Wild West or, A History of the Wild West Shows Being an Account of the Prestigious, Peregrinary Pageants Pretentiously Presented Before the Citizens of the Republic, the Crowned Heads of Europe, and Multitudes of Awe-Stuck Men, Women, and Children Around the Globe, Which Created a Wonderfully Imaginative and Unrealistic Image of the Wild West* (Fort Worth, TX: Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1970); Paul Reddin in *Wild West Shows* (University of Illinois Press, 1999); and in dissertations by William Evans Deahl, Jr., "A History of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, 1883–1913" (South Illinois University at Carbondale, 1974); Sarah Jane Blackstone, "Buffalo Bill's Wild West: A Study of the History, Structure, Personnel, Imagery and Effect" (Northwestern University, 1983); Antoinette McCloskey Gustafson, "The Image of the West in American Popular Performance" (New York University, 1988); and Thomas Anthony Freeland, "The National Entertainment: Buffalo Bill's Wild West and the Pageant of American Empire" (Stanford, 1999).



The case study presented in Chapter One takes as its subject ““Buffalo Bill—Himself.”” A twelve-sheet lithograph published in 1898 by Cincinnati’s Enquirer Job Printing Company provides the opportunity to consider Cody as patron of the Wild West as well as the multivalent resonance of the various roles he played within the exhibition’s arena and in its advertising. His presence was guaranteed at every performance, while his likeness graced posters that appeared from Los Angeles to London, and points beyond. Although ephemeral, these promotions reinforced Cody’s status as a manifestation of the mythic frontier and a living legend who eclipsed others whom history had valorized. A champion all-around shot, centaur in the saddle, legendary Chief of Scouts, and buffalo hunter, Buffalo Bill the showman was an integral element in the majority of the Wild West’s promotional imagery and its perpetual main attraction—the “most absorbing incident of the whole performance.”<sup>14</sup>

Even taking the eminence and exploits of its progenitor into account, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West would not have been nearly such a draw nor quite as wild without the American Indian performers who traveled with it from its first season to its last. Chapter Two, “The Former Foe—Present Friend, the American,” centers on a one-sheet lithograph from the mid-1890s, also published by the Enquirer Job Printing Company. This case study offers an object lesson on the complicated status of Indians both within and outside the Wild West arena near the close of the nineteenth century. It underscores a revealing perceptual dichotomy that casts Indians as brutal savages who wage incessant attacks on emblems of civilization, while also presenting them as revered national symbols—a contradiction that could be encompassed in a single performance of the Wild West, or even a single poster.

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<sup>14</sup> “Famous Buffalo Bill Here,” *Evening Telegram* (Providence, RI), May 28, 1898, Nate Salsbury Scrapbooks, Vol. 7, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

Just as the Wild West would have been lacking without Indians, cowboys were integral to its appeal and success as well. The relationship between the exhibition and its trail-driving, cattle-roping, round-up wrangling, bronco-busting cowboys was symbiotic. Their presence and prowess enhanced the Wild West by providing some of the most popular features on its program. Concurrently, the Wild West improved cowboys' reputation from blackguard to icon. In Chapter Three, "Actual Scenes—Genuine Characters: American Cowboy," an 1896 one-sheet published by the Courier Lithographic Company in Buffalo, New York, highlights the apotheosis of this most American of figures born of the frontier.

The frontier was a malleable concept at the turn of the century as well as in Buffalo Bill's Wild West. When Cody rode to the center of the arena surrounded by veterans from multinational cavalry detachments and accomplished horsemen recruited from five continents to announce, "Ladies and Gentlemen, permit me to introduce to you a Congress of Rough Riders of the World!," what constituted "the frontier" expanded and his exhibition became global. Chapter Four takes as its title Cody's signature pronouncement delivered with a sweep of his sombrero at the conclusion of the first act of every performance of his exhibition beginning in 1893. The case study that is its focus turns on another 1896 Courier one-sheet lithograph to examine the significance of Cody's aggregation of international equestrians in light of America's imperial aspirations.

Buffalo Bill's Wild West posters advertised more than a traveling exhibition that captivated millions over three decades. Although designed to tempt and tantalize, the posters selected as key images, as well as the multiple other examples that further the lines of inquiry pursued in each chapter, are indicative of more than overt commercialism. Their function extended beyond faithfully capturing the substance and spirit of the enterprise, attracting an audience, and

securing legendary status for its star and myriad performers. A century after the exhibition for which they were designed met its fate on the auction block, the posters of Buffalo Bill's Wild West still perpetuate its fame. Simultaneously, when considered in their cultural context, they continue to propagate visual metaphors for many of the dominant issues that concerned America in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

### **“Buffalo Bill” Cody—Himself**

There are few persons left so constituted by nature that they have never seen Buffalo Bill himself, but even these know him by his pictures, which have been everywhere for the last twenty years, and they would recognize him if they saw him anywhere.

—“Buffalo Bill’s Portrait,” *New-York Tribune*,  
April 29, 1900, C15

A demure sure-shot who could zing the ash off the end of a cigarette held in her husband’s mouth. “The Deadwood Stage Coach.” A legendary Hunkpapa Lakota chief renowned for his support of the Ghost Dance and defiance of the United States’ government. “Attack on the Settlers’ Cabin.” An aggregation of accomplished equestrians from around the globe. The fourth-largest buffalo herd in captivity. All of these spectacles and more shared the Wild West arena with Colonel William Frederick Cody (1846–1917), but it was Buffalo Bill himself who was the exhibition’s largest draw and its enduring feature. He was the “the most absorbing incident of the whole performance,” “real sight of the whole thing,” the “one man [who] attracts more than all others put together,” and for whom “the simple announcement of his name...causes the public to stand in their seats.”<sup>1</sup>

For thirty years Buffalo Bill himself kept audiences filling the stands at the extravaganza over which he presided and in which he starred, a performance that dramatized picturesque elements of the fading frontier and restaged contemporary world events in living color. He performed before more than fifty million people, in more than one thousand cities in ten countries. Buffalo Bill, “the original and only,” reliably drew standing-room-only crowds

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<sup>1</sup> Newspaper from 1883 quoted in Jack Rennert, *100 Posters of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West* (New York: Darien House, 1976), 3; and “Buffalo Bill With Us Today,” unidentified newspaper (Decatur, IL), 1907, Circus World Museum Library, Baraboo, WI (hereafter CWML), Small Collections, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, Clippings, 1900–.

composed of all ages and walks of life.<sup>2</sup> “Bank presidents and barefoot boys, society women and small girls,” admirers ranging from waifs to Queen Victoria attended his exhibition despite competition from other western-themed shows, challenges to his claim on his moniker, and occasional allegations of audience-duping by an imposter.<sup>3</sup> Beckoning, he gazed out handsomely from equally handsome engravings and lithographs propped in store windows. His portrait graced posters pasted to fences, barn sides, and billboards from Los Angeles to London, and points beyond. Witticisms resulted regarding the omnipresence of his likeness: “I may walk it, or ‘bus’ it, or hansom it still / I am faced by the features of Buffalo Bill. / Every hoarding is plastered, from East-end to West, / With his hat, coat, and countenance, lovelocks and vest.”<sup>4</sup> “I am Coming,” “*Je Viens*,” his image announced, alerting residents of big cities and small towns in

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<sup>2</sup> “Buffalo Bill With Us Today,” CWML.

<sup>3</sup> “Wild West in Town Today,” *Superior (WI) Telegram*, August, 7, 1912, CWML, Small Collections, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, Clippings, 1900–; and “Buffalo Bill With Us Today,” CWML. In 1885 four shows competed with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West for audiences’ attention, in addition to more than fifty traveling circuses. Robert A. Carter, *Buffalo Bill Cody: The Man Behind the Legend* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2000), 241 and 267.

William E. Matthewson, a mountain man, scout, hunter, Indian fighter, and supplier of buffalo meat to starving Kansas settlers during a notorious 1860 drought, was just one of the men who claimed rightful ownership of the nickname “Buffalo Bill.” Bill Nye, “Bill Nye in Kansas,” *Topeka (KS) Weekly Capital*, March 20, 1890, 9; and “The Real Buffalo Bill: Lives in Kansas and Wears His Hair Short,” *Kansas City (MO) Star*, July 9, 1894, 5. The controversy continued to make news nearly two decades later when the *Boston Post* reported that “some fellow out of Kansas [has come] along and says he’s the original ‘Buffalo Bill,’” concluding that “it would be an awful blow to the small boys if they made Colonel Cody ‘take off his name.’” Untitled newspaper clipping, *Boston Post*, June 18, 1911, William Frederick Cody (hereafter WFC) Collection, McCracken Research Library (hereafter MRL), Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY (hereafter BBHC), Box 3, Folder 18. For other men who shared Buffalo Bill’s nickname see Don Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 90–92.

A 1901 advertisement for the exhibition that explained “Just What it [the Wild West] is” and how it “Differs from All Other Exhibitions” emphasized that “the class to which Col. W. F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) belongs consists of ONE. He has never had a double. Then, who can take his place?” Advertisement, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 14, 1901, 36. A year later the *Los Angeles Times* reported that “When Col. Cody rode in... all doubts were put to rest as to his real identity. All sorts of rumors had circulated... But there was no mistaking the genuineness of the cavalier, majestic man who dashed around the flank of his curious and unparalleled assortment of heroes...” “Greatest Rush That Ever Was to See Buffalo Bill’s Congress,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 24, 1902, A2.

<sup>4</sup> “Buffalo Bill,” *Globe* (London), April 26, 1887, William Frederick Cody/Buffalo Bill Papers (hereafter WFC/BBP), WH72, Western History Collection (hereafter WHC), Denver Public Library (hereafter DPL), Box 3, Scrapbook, Johnnie Baker, Series 3, Memorabilia/Publications.

this country and abroad that the Wild West was imminent. Once Buffalo Bill's exhibition arrived, his presence at the twice-daily, rain-or-shine performances of his "World-Endorsed American Enterprise!" was consistently proclaimed and always guaranteed.<sup>5</sup> Even when the aging scout's role in the show diminished in a concession to his passing years, audiences were assured that Colonel Cody himself "still holds the reins."<sup>6</sup>

In addition to reproducing his name and image countless times each season in its myriad promotional vehicles, Buffalo Bill's Wild West featured at least one poster each year solely dedicated to its originator. One such example is a twelve-sheet poster lithographed by the Enquirer Job Printing Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1898. (Figure 1.1) During a season that boasted "Real Soldiers from the Armies of All Nations," and "Custer's Last Battle" reenacted with "Over 800 Soldiers, Savages, and Horses," this poster exemplifies the sort of paper, as these ubiquitous promotional pieces were known, that reinforced Cody's status as the Wild West's perpetual main attraction—the "most absorbing incident of the whole performance."<sup>7</sup> The poster lacks a banner that proclaims the exhibition's title. Instead, the only text included is "Col. W. F. Cody (Buffalo Bill)" spelled out in blue lettering against a yellow field ornamented with red

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<sup>5</sup> Advertisement, *Boston Daily Globe*, June 9, 1895, 18; advertisement, *Atlanta Constitution*, October 6, 1907, C8; and advertisement, *Washington Post*, May 30, 1901, SM3.

<sup>6</sup> "It's Buffalo Bill's Day," unidentified newspaper (Galesburg, WI), 1896, CWML, Small Collections, Buffalo Bill's Wild West, Clippings, pre-1900.

<sup>7</sup> Advertisement, *Emporia (KS) Daily Gazette*, September 6, 1898, 3; and "Col. Cody's Wild West," *Argus* (Albany, NY), June 15, 1898, Nate Salsbury Scrapbooks (hereafter NSS), Vol. 7, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18. This poster, with a few minor modifications, was reproduced in a preview for the Wild West's one-day stand in Providence, Rhode Island. "Famous Buffalo Bill Here," *Evening Telegram* (Providence, RI), May 28, 1898, NSS, Vol. 7, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18. The composition was later used as the cover art for *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Songster*, a 32-page song book published by Frank Tousey in New York around 1899. The cover of the *Songster* is reproduced in James W. Wojtowicz, *The W. F. Cody Buffalo Bill Collector's Guide with Values* (Paducah, KY: Collector Books, 1998), 238. A preliminary watercolor and gouache sketch and a drawing, both of which correspond without variance to the twelve-sheet lithograph, are in the collections of the Circus World Museum Library.

arabesques. Ideal as a case study, the Enquirer twelve-sheet zealously spotlights the Wild West's premier performer, while offering opportunities to explore other posters and images of Buffalo Bill himself. Each element of this lithograph—the central portrait of Cody flanked by buffalo heads and the vignettes that showcase him as an unerring marksman, lassoing horses, in the guise of scout and guide, and hunting buffalo—examined in the context of the origins and affinities of these themes as well as related promotional imagery reveals the meanings these oft-repeated motifs held for the Wild West, the public that viewed them, and for the subject himself.

### **The Central Life and Likeness**

While posters featuring Buffalo Bill resonate with meaning beyond that of their promotional purpose, the objective for which they were intended was to whet appetites and build expectations. An assessment of the Wild West's star published by a Stamford, Connecticut, newspaper in 1898 speaks to the achievement of this mission: "A man of enormous stature and gigantic build, clear eyed instinct with resolute energy and of singularly handsome features, Buffalo Bill more than fulfilled the most extravagant anticipations."<sup>8</sup> The 1898 Enquirer twelve-sheet lithograph is dominated at its center by a portrait of Buffalo Bill that surely stoked those "most extravagant anticipations." The portrait is flanked by a pair of buffalo heads and accented by four vignettes. This design is remarkably similar to a concept devised by the German-born sculptor Karl L. H. Müller for the well-known pair of commemorative *Century Vases* manufactured by the Union Porcelain Works in Greenport (now Brooklyn), New York, on the occasion of the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876. (Figure 1.2) A novel and visually

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<sup>8</sup> "Buffalo Bill's Show," *Stamford (CT) Telegram*, May 24, 1898, NSS, Vol. 7, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

appealing combination of portraiture, historical moments, and contemporary events strikingly embellished with bison heads for handles, the *Century Vases* and the popular, mass-produced souvenirs they inspired may have influenced the composition of the Enquirer poster twenty-two years later. Imagery drawn from Cody's biography as well as his Wild West exploits takes the place of the vase's representations of the Boston Tea Party and men stringing telegraph wire, while Buffalo Bill himself—father of the Wild West exhibition—replaces George Washington—father of the nation—as the focal point. No alteration of the buffalo-head motif was necessary.

The same front-and-center pride of place that Cody occupies in the Enquirer lithograph was logically reserved for Buffalo Bill in many of the posters that incorporated his likeness.<sup>9</sup> During 1898, a year when a cast of 467 people traveled with the Wild West over 10,253 miles for 345 performances, this portrait reinforced the concept of Cody as the man at the center of the show, both literally and figuratively.<sup>10</sup> Even on Wild West posters that showcase aspects of the exhibition other than Buffalo Bill himself, such as its Indian performers, its Congress of Rough Riders of the World, or its specific spectacles like the “Attack on the Settlers’ Cabin,” Cody frequently makes a cameo appearance.<sup>11</sup> In such instances, small portrait medallions bearing his

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<sup>9</sup> This holds true for many of the Wild West program covers as well. Beginning with the 1887 program, seventeen covers are composed of vignettes around a large, central portrait of the exhibition's namesake (this tally includes two covers for the 1893 season). The inaugural program in 1883 features cameo portraits of both Cody and Dr. William F. Carver; the 1909, 1910, and 1911 covers include a double cameo of Cody and Pawnee Bill. Thirteen program covers from 1884–1913 show Cody in action on horseback (rather than in a more formal bust-length portrait). In these instances, the orbiting vignettes are not included. For illustrations of all the Wild West program covers, see Wojtowicz, *The W. F. Cody Buffalo Bill Collector's Guide*, 10–47.

<sup>10</sup> George H. Gouch, *Route-Book—Buffalo Bill's Wild West 1899* (Buffalo, NY: Matthews-Northrup Co., 1899), unpaginated. The 1899 Route-Book includes the routes and information on performances from 1895, 1896, 1897, and 1898.

<sup>11</sup> The Wild West was not alone in reserving a place on its promotional posters for its originator. The inclusion of portraits of the owners of other entertainment spectacles, such as circuses, on show bills was common in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Charles Philip Fox, ed., *American Circus Posters* (New York: Dover Publications, 1978), unpaginated, 12, 21, 22, 40, 43, and inside back cover. Many of these spectacles shared the



likeness are typically found in the upper left corner of the composition, usually as an antecedent to the title of the show, or as an ornamental element between “Buffalo Bill’s” and “Wild West.” Alternatively, his visage is sometimes incorporated creatively into the lettering that spells out the exhibition’s title by nestling it into the open space at the top of the uppercase letter “B” in “Buffalo” (with his partner, Nate Salsbury, occupying the lower space). The large portraits of Cody, such as the one on the Enquirer example, as well as the smaller portrait medallions, reminded viewers of Cody’s role as the “President” of the Wild West who oversaw every aspect of the enterprise. They also functioned as his endorsement, especially when his image was reproduced in tandem with his signature. The press regularly echoed this notion, confirming Cody’s seal of approval and personal guarantee as a component critical to the show’s appeal. On May 4, 1898, the *Philadelphia North American* reported that “the whole exhibition is under the personal direction of Col. Cody himself, and, backed by his experience and ingenuity, there is bound to be a smooth and varied performance.”<sup>12</sup>

In addition to emphasizing Buffalo Bill’s role as the creator and president of the exhibition and providing a visual emblem of his essential validation of the Wild West, the large central portrait of Cody in an oval frame, as well as the smaller portrait medallions, are reminiscent in appearance and impact to broadly disseminated images of another legendary national hero celebrated for his steady hand and steadfast leadership—George Washington. These portraits of Cody, large and small, call to mind the so-called porthole portraits of Washington painted by Rembrandt Peale between the 1820s and the 1860s and reproduced and

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same lithographers as the Wild West, such the Enquirer and Strobridge companies in Cincinnati, Ohio, and the Courier Lithographic Company in Buffalo, New York.

<sup>12</sup> “The Wild West Show,” *Philadelphia North American*, May 4, 1898, unpaginated.

circulated as prints. The portrait of the father of the Wild West exhibition in the Enquirer lithograph shares a particular affinity with Peale's *George Washington (Patriæ Pater)*.<sup>13</sup> (Figure 1.3) The most elaborate of Peale's posthumous portraits of Washington, this 1824 composition purchased by Congress in 1832 for the Senate Chamber features the *trompe l'oeil* inscription "Patriæ Pater" "carved" into the ledge beneath the illusionistic masonry portal that encircles the portrait. Posed before ambiguous, glowing, atmospheric backgrounds that convey an otherworldly status upon the sitters, both Washington and Cody possess a mien that is resolute and ambitious. Each portrait recalls notions popular in Peale's day that continued to resonate in the late nineteenth century. Theories, such as those espoused by the seventeenth-century French theorist and painter Charles LeBrun and the eighteenth-century Swiss theologian and poet Johann Caspar Lavater, lauded the primacy of the head as the epitome of a person and dictated that outward appearance was indicative of the inner self.<sup>14</sup> Both Peale's *George Washington (Patriæ Pater)* and the Enquirer twelve-sheet distill the essential qualities of a symbolic entity while imparting an arresting truthful likeness of the man—requisite characteristics for both a painting promoted as the quintessential portrait of our nation's first president as well as for a poster that publicized "America's national entertainment" based on the enduring appeal of its progenitor.

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<sup>13</sup> For more on Rembrandt Peale's creation of his "standard national likeness" of the symbolic father of this country, see Lillian B. Miller, *In Pursuit of Fame: Rembrandt Peale, 1778–1860* (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, 1992), 144–48, and 196–97; Carol Eaton Hevner, "The Paintings of Rembrandt Peale: Character and Convention," in Miller, *In Pursuit of Fame*, 279–82; and Wendy Bellion, "Phantasmagoric Washington," in Bellion, *Citizen Spectator: Art, Illusion, and Visual Perception in Early National America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 283–328 passim.

<sup>14</sup> Lavater's theories were first published in this country in Boston in 1794 as *Essays on Physiognomy; for the Promotion of the Knowledge and Love of Mankind*, and Peale was likely introduced to his ideas by his father, Charles Willson Peale. Miller, *In Pursuit of Fame*, 146 and 298n64. For discussions of theories of physiognomy and its lingering impact, see Lucy Hartley, *Physiognomy and the Meaning of Expression in Nineteenth-Century Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Cody was extremely patriotic and aware of the power of being linked to such an awe-inspiring figure as Washington. When the Wild West performed in Paris in 1889, a correspondent for the *Topeka Weekly Capital* noted that Washington's portrait graced the entrance of Cody's tent on the exhibition grounds where he met visitors.<sup>15</sup> Another newspaper reported that during a breakfast for Thomas Edison hosted at the Wild West camp in Neuilly, Cody's chair was positioned directly beneath a large portrait of Washington.<sup>16</sup> The 1907 Wild West program featured an article titled "Scouts Who Led to Empire: The Men Who So Bravely Wore the Buckskin," which was complemented by an illustration of Washington on horseback. The illustration bore the caption "Gen'l Washington as a Colonial Officer, Graduated from the Buckskin."<sup>17</sup> Three years later, the Wild West program for 1910 again traced the fraternity of "Men Who Wore the Buckskin" from Washington before he went on to become "the first pioneer in popular government" to Buffalo Bill himself.<sup>18</sup>

Similar to the effect of the velvet drape that spills over the illusionary stonework in Peale's Washington portrait, the clever lariat loop *cum* frame in the Enquirer poster scarcely contains the founder of the Wild West. The result is a visual amplification of the notion of

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<sup>15</sup> Paul Hudson, "Last View of Paris. Buffalo Bill Interviewed," *Topeka (KS) Weekly Capital*, September 5, 1889, 8.

<sup>16</sup> W. A. "A Visit to Paris," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 13, 1889, 2. In these instances, Cody's aim may have been to make reference to Washington and General Marquis de Lafayette as comrades in arms while the Wild West performed in France. Lynn Houze, Assistant Curator, Buffalo Bill Museum, BBHC, e-mail to the author, 22 June 2012.

<sup>17</sup> "Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Historical Sketches and Daily Review," 1907 Wild West program, WFC/BBP, WH72 WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 39. Additionally, the cover of the menu for a Fourth of July dinner held in conjunction with the Wild West in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1908 is graced by a seated portrait of Washington. An allegorical figure draped in stars borrowed from Old Glory bears laurel wreaths in each hand. She extends one towards Washington, while raising up the other to the words "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" at the top of the menu's cover. See James Wojtowicz, *The W. F. Cody Buffalo Bill Collector's Guide*, 245.

<sup>18</sup> 1910 Wild West program, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 43.

Buffalo Bill as a figure who loomed larger than life with a reputation to match, thanks to shelves of dime novels, seasons of melodramas, and Cody's own (often sensationalized) 1879 autobiography.<sup>19</sup> Throughout the first three decades of this life, before he added consummate western showman to his lengthy résumé, Cody lived the "real" West first hand. In a 1901 interview he commented that, "There were a heap of occupations for boys in those days and I guess I tackled 'em all."<sup>20</sup> As a youth, he worked on wagon trains, prospected for gold, and may have ridden with the Pony Express, depending on whether you take Cody at his often-embellished word or believe his debunkers. During the Civil War he drove a stage coach, served as an army scout and guide, and enlisted with the Seventh Kansas Regiment. Following the war, he worked on contract for the United States Army, continuing his scouting and guiding duties. He tracked and fought Indians on the northern plains and rose to the rank of Chief of Scouts in

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<sup>19</sup> Cody was first cast as a hero in popular literature by Edward Zane Carroll Judson (Ned Buntline), whom he met in Nebraska at Fort MacPherson. Buntline wrote a serial titled *Buffalo Bill, the King of the Border Men* that was published in the *New York Weekly* from December 23, 1869 to March 10, 1870, and which hundreds of newspapers subsequently syndicated. More than five hundred distinct stories based on Buffalo Bill's exploits (always a mix of embellished fact and total fantasy, but leaning more heavily on the latter) were published in this country, with a total, including collections and reprints, in excess of 1,700. J. Randolph Cox, *The Dime Novel Companion: A Source Book* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2000), 43. Cody's numerous biographers recount further details regarding his early fame in serial and dime novels. For commentary on Cody treading the boards performing in his first melodrama, *The Scout of the Prairie* (1872), and other plays with friends Texas Jack Omohundro, Wild Bill Hickok, and Major John M. "Arizona John" Burke, see Joy S. Kasson, "Dime Novel and Stage Showman," especially pages 20–27, in *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory and Popular History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000). See also Roger A. Hall, *Performing the Frontier, 1870–1906* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Cody's first of four serious attempts (beyond the dime novels he purportedly authored) to preserve his legacy for posterity, *The Life of Hon. William F. Cody, Known As Buffalo Bill, the Famous Hunter, Scout and Guide: An Autobiography*, was published by Frank E. Bliss in Hartford, Connecticut. It included eighty illustrations that appear to be by many different hands. Although concerned with having control over his reputation, Cody did permit his press agents to print and reprint biographical inaccuracies, many of which originated in dime novels and melodramas, in the Wild West promotional material and did not shy away from retelling half-truths or complete falsehoods himself. As historian of American popular culture Kasson notes, Cody's "literary identity was fast becoming his primary public role." Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, 25. Perhaps aware of this notion and eager to confirm that there was, indeed, some "there there," the conclusion of his biography printed in a courier for the Wild West's inaugural season emphasized that despite the impression that Buffalo Bill's fame was solely due to "the romancer and novelist, had they never been attracted to him... William F. Cody would none the less have been a person of character in American history." 1883 Wild West courier, 4, CWML.

<sup>20</sup> "Col. W. F. Cody Talks of Early Days in the West," *Broad Axe* (St. Paul, MN), June 13, 1901, 3.

the Fifth Cavalry. He hunted buffalo for meat to feed the crew of the Kansas Pacific Railroad—an occupation at which he was so successful that he was bestowed with his famous moniker.<sup>21</sup>

Biographical posters that highlight many of these aspects of Cody's legendary life were among the types of posters that the Wild West's extensive publicity machine produced to lure audiences to the exhibition. The Baltimore, Maryland, printer A. Hoen and Company was responsible for a lithograph of this sort that promoted the Wild West in both 1883 and possibly later in the decade as well.<sup>22</sup> (Figure 1.4) It does not present Buffalo Bill as the star of a western extravaganza, however, but as the star of an extraordinary western life. Cody, at the center of the sheet dressed in full plainsman regalia, reclines at total ease against his saddle. Confident and self-reliant, he is the embodiment of the Romantic natural man—a latter day incarnation of Leatherstocking. In pose and attitude, he also recalls the protagonist in the German artist Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein's popular painting of an earlier cultural hero, *Goethe in the Roman Campagna*, that depicts the poet at one with nature (1787; Städel Museum, Frankfurt, Germany). In addition to transplanting to the American West a familiar eighteenth- and nineteenth-century

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<sup>21</sup> These very basic biographical notes emphasize some of the types of activities in which Cody participated that influenced and inspired spectacles in his Wild West. Recounting the nuances of Cody's life and sorting out truth from myth is beyond the purview of this dissertation and best left to Cody's numerous biographers. Additionally, what matters most for this study is what those who saw the Wild West's posters, other promotional material, and the exhibition believed to be true, regardless of veracity.

<sup>22</sup> The imagery that makes up this biographical poster was first used to promote Cody the thespian during the late 1870s and early 1880s. A circa 1877 version of this poster as well as a second poster for the Buffalo Bill Combination performance of the "new drama" "The Prairie Waif," both published by A. Hoen and Company, are in the collection of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center. The 1883 version of the poster advertised the first iteration of Cody's extravaganza, the Wild West—Cody and Carver's Rocky Mountain and Prairie Exhibition, as indicated by the text at its top edge. This poster had a pendant that paid tribute to the man who shared the billing with Cody, Dr. William F. Carver, the "Evil Spirit of the Plains" and "Champion Rifle Shot." Both posters are reproduced in R. L. Wilson and Greg Martin, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: An American Legend* (Edition, NJ: Chartwell Books, 2004), 45. A later version of the biographical one-sheet poster that features Cody is included in Rennert, *100 Posters of Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, 9 and 53. Rennert dates this poster, also printed by A. Hoen and Company, to circa 1888. It was not unusual for imagery to be recycled from Cody's days treading the boards and from season to season by the same printer who originated the design or even by different ones.

trope used in portraits of gentlemen relaxing outdoors, the central figure of Buffalo Bill also harkens back to ancient Herakles lounging on the east pediment of the Parthenon. Cody's labors on the prairie have been accomplished, his prowess proved, and his hat now rests atop his spotting scope at his moccasin-clad feet. His trusty Winchester, rather than being cocked and at the ready, is casually cradled in the crook of his arm, while a lariat dangles from his fingers—more attractive accessory than necessary equipment. Steaks from a recently killed antelope sizzle over an open flame. A tin cup near the fire indicates that thirst will be satisfied, too. Cody's white horse, freed from responsibilities and his saddle, calmly grazes nearby while a picturesque herd of buffalo stampede in the distance across the vast prairie bathed by a glowing sunset. Ten tableaux that illustrate Buffalo Bill's frontier credentials radiate around this central image. These include a twelve-year old Cody as the wagon master for the freighter Russell, Major and Company and a young Cody trapping beaver and riding with the Pony Express. He is also shown driving a stage for the Overland Mail in 1863, performing a marriage at Fort McPherson, scouting, being chased by "Kiawas" [*sic*], claiming the "First Scalp for Custer," dispatching buffalo to feed Kansas Pacific Railroad crews, and guiding a legendary buffalo hunt for the Russian Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich with General Philip Sheridan in 1872, an exploit that generated much interest and was widely covered in the press. These scenes are accented by renderings of a diamond pin and a pin in the shape of a buffalo head with diamond eyes—gifts from grateful patrons, such as Sir George Watts Garland and Grand Duke Alexandrovich, in honor of successful hunts for which Cody served as the guide. A representation of his Congressional Medal of Honor, awarded on May 22, 1872, for his actions in the on-going Indian

Wars, is included as well. Enscorced as such, “Hon. W. F. Cody” may justifiably rest on his laurels, as poster historian Jack Rennert aptly asserts.<sup>23</sup>

The always entrepreneurial Cody was never one to rest on his laurels or elsewhere, however. In dime novels, stage plays, with the Wild West’s debut in Omaha, Nebraska, on May 19, 1883, and for three decades to follow, he participated in restaging and reinventing events based on his own life, as a scout, guide, and buffalo hunter, in a commercial enterprise that capitalized on the growing mythology of the romanticized West. Beyond familiarizing the public with heroic episodes from the life of the Wild West’s headliner that were frequently replayed in the arena, biographical posters such as the 1880s A. Hoen examples, as well as the 1898 Enquirer poster, cater to the desire for veracity that was important to audiences eager to buy what Buffalo Bill sold, even if what they actually received was often based on fumes. From the start, the exhibition promised “No Tinsel! No Gilding! No Humbug!” and proclaimed Cody “an authentic participant, repeating heroic parts played in actual life.”<sup>24</sup> Reviews of the exhibition are revelatory of the degree to which the Wild West’s brand of authenticity satisfied its audience: “Men and women of the west—the real west—played the parts of the west. . . . Buffalo Bill’s show is the ‘real thing.’ Whatever else may be said, it will always remain, the ‘real thing.’”<sup>25</sup> By emphasizing that “the genuineness of the show starts with Colonel Cody himself” and that Buffalo Bill was a man who “has played his part in the drama of Western life,” biographical

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<sup>23</sup> Rennert, *100 Posters of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 9.

<sup>24</sup> 1884 Wild West courier, 2, CWML. In fact, Cody refused to call his exhibition a “show” because he did not want to convey that the content of exhibition was anything less than true.

<sup>25</sup> Untitled newspaper clipping, *Superior (WI) Telegram*, August 28, 1908, CWML, Small Collections, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, Clippings, 1900–.

posters aligned Cody with the type of man who experienced critical stages of frontier life.<sup>26</sup> He is a match for the true pioneer whom historian Frederick Jackson Turner would describe in 1893 in his influential thesis, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.”<sup>27</sup> Much like his starring role in narrative accounts—dime novels, the Wild West’s programs—the visual imagery of Wild West posters inspired by Cody’s life and reputation also helped shape the public and history’s assessment of Buffalo Bill as a living artifact, “a legendary figure, the incarnation of all the romance of Fenimore Cooper, of all the many virtues of all the adventure of all the stories of the Last Frontier.”<sup>28</sup> Buffalo Bill himself underwent an apotheosis into the ranks of the pantheon of archetypal frontier heroes that included the likes of Daniel Boone, Hawkeye, Kit Carson, and Davy Crockett.<sup>29</sup>

Reputation, whether based on fact or fiction, or some creative combination of the two, only gets one so far, however, especially in an era during which illustrated periodicals, newspapers, and novels filled newsstands, and advertisements relied more and more heavily on image, rather than text, to convey their messages. Louisa Maude Frederici Cody, the woman with whom Cody shared a widely publicized tempestuous marriage, reminisced after her husband’s death, “I’m afraid that even with the stories of his prowess on the plains, Buffalo Bill would not

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<sup>26</sup> “With Buffalo Bill’s Show,” *Times* (Kansas City, MO), September 23, 1898, NSS, Vol. 7, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>27</sup> See Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, ed. Harold P. Simonson (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., Inc., 1973); Ray Allen Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Teacher, Scholar* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), especially 82–131; Richard White and Patricia Limerick, *The Frontier in American Culture: A Exhibition at the Newberry Library* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); and Matthew Rebirthorn, *Pioneer Performances: Staging the Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4.

<sup>28</sup> “Buffalo Bill’s Farewell,” *New-York Tribune*, April 27, 1913, B7.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 74.



have been Buffalo Bill without the long hair, without that moustache and that little goatee—at least, he would not have been the unusual appearing character he was, nor would have been so handsome.”<sup>30</sup> She was not alone in her estimation of Cody’s appearance. Rare was the Wild West review that did not favorably comment on Buffalo Bill’s look, one influenced by “the fashion out West” comprising fringed buckskins, a wide-brimmed sombrero, flowing tresses, up-turned moustache, and goatee.<sup>31</sup> Even men of such esteem as General Nelson A. Miles, who served in both the Civil War and Spanish-American War, were not immune to Cody’s physical charms. Miles commented at a dinner held in Cody’s honor that “the Colonel was the finest and handsomest man he had ever met, and that not one of the millions of men he had met since had made a similar impression on him.”<sup>32</sup> Cody adopted the guise for which he was renowned in the late 1860s while scouting for General Eugene A. Carr and the Fifth Cavalry. “You’re not a regular scout unless you’ve got this sort of rigout,” he claimed, and subsequently cultivated it as his stylistic signature for more than forty years.<sup>33</sup> Cody was a man exceedingly well attuned to cultivating a look. He recounted in his 1879 autobiography his preparations for a hunting party in September 1871 that included editors of the *New York Herald* and *Chicago Evening Journal* for which he served as a guide: “I rose fresh and eager for the trip,” he recalled. “As it was a nobby and high-toned outfit which I was to accompany, I determined to put on a little style myself. So I

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<sup>30</sup> Louisa Frederici Cody and Courtney Ryley Cooper, *Memories of Buffalo Bill* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1919), 156–57.

<sup>31</sup> “Monument to Indians for New York Harbor,” *New-York Tribune*, May 13, 1901, 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Cody and Cooper, *Memories of Buffalo Bill*, 155–56.

dressed in a new suit of buckskin, trimmed along the seams with fringes of the same material, while on my head I wore a broad sombrero....I felt first-rate that morning, and looked well.”<sup>34</sup>

Whether as the protagonist in dime novels, while acting in melodramas with the Buffalo Bill Combination (Figure 1.5), on the pages of his autobiographies, or performing in the Wild West arena and appearing in the show’s promotional material, Cody’s trademark appearance, the one so grandly displayed in the 1898 Enquirer poster, had a pedigree that predated his scouting days.<sup>35</sup> Early and mid-nineteenth-century artists drawn to the American West, such as Alfred Jacob Miller, Charles Deas, Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait, Louis Maurer, and William Tylee Ranney, among others, celebrated frontier life and capitalized on a growing interest in frontier imagery. This curiosity was spurred by a host of factors, including the rapid appropriation of western territory and the ever-changing demarcation line that defined the border between what was West and what was East. Trailblazing expeditions undertaken by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, Zebulon M. Pike, Major Stephen H. Long, Colonel John C. “The Pathfinder” Frémont and his guide Kit Carson were widely publicized and lore surrounding such frontier figures as Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett was popularized. Federal laws such as the Preemption Act (1841) encouraged settlement in territorial lands with the lure of a low per-acre purchase price following residence on site for fourteen months, and consequently westward migration along the Oregon

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<sup>34</sup> Cody, *The Life of Hon. William F. Cody*, 288. For more on Cody’s deliberate cultivation of his signature appearance prior to the Wild West, see Carter, *Buffalo Bill Cody*, especially 156–57; and Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 76–77.

<sup>35</sup> The word “trademark” is especially apt. On February 11, 1911, the Supreme Court of New York declared that the Yankee Film Company did not have the right to use Cody’s likeness in their movie. The court decided that “Buffalo Bill has a sort of copyright on goatees of the peculiar form and color that adorn his chin.” It was announced that “the moustache and goatee and other distinguishing features of Buffalo Bill constitute a valuable trade asset and should not be used by others.” Quoted in Rennert, *100 Posters of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 9. See also Sarah Jane Blackstone, “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West: A Study of the History, Structure, Personnel, Imagery, and Effect” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1983), 194.

Trail increased. The official annexation of the Republic of Texas (1845) and the Oregon Treaty (1846) formalized the country's expansionist philosophy of Manifest Destiny.<sup>36</sup>

Among the sources in which artists found inspiration to satisfy the expanding market for images that epitomized the West were the hearty types of men who lived at the margins of civilization or beyond it. These buckskinned trappers and hunters such as those who appear in Deas's *Long Jakes*, Ranney's *The Trapper's Last Shot*, and Tait's *The Prairie Hunter—One Rubbed Out!*, and reached a wide audience as engravings or lithographs, were among the visual predecessors for Buffalo Bill.<sup>37</sup> (Figures 1.6–8) Popular printing firms such as Currier and Ives, a leading purveyor of graphic images during the nineteenth century, aided by artist-delineators including John Cameron, Frances Flora Bond Palmer, and Louis Maurer, as well as institutions like the American Art-Union and Western Art Union brought these men and the myths that surrounded them out of the frontier and into the sitting room.<sup>38</sup> Authors also fed a growing fascination with rugged types, such as James Fenimore Cooper's introduction of Natty Bumppo (Leatherstocking).<sup>39</sup> Artists and authors like these filled canvases, portfolios, and pages with

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<sup>36</sup> For more on the motivation for American artists to adopt western types as subject matter, see Elizabeth Johns, "From the Outer Verge of Our Civilization," in Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 60–99.

<sup>37</sup> For more on Deas, see Carol Clark, *Charles Deas and 1840s America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2009); on Ranney see Linda Bantel and Peter H. Hassrick, *Forging and American Identity: The Art of William Ranney: With a Catalogue of His Works* (Cody, WY: Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 2006); and on Tait, see Warder H. Cadbury and Henry F. Marsh, *Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait: Artist in the Adirondacks* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986).

<sup>38</sup> See Bernard Reilly, Jr., "The Prints of Life in the West, 1840–1860," in *American Frontier Life: Early Western Painting and Prints* (Fort Worth, TX: Amon Carter Museum, 1987), 167–92 for a review of mid-nineteenth-century print culture and the production and dissemination of images of the West. See also William H. Goetzmann and William N. Goetzmann, *The West of the Imagination*, second ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), passim.

<sup>39</sup> For more on literary contributions see Jules Zanger, "The Frontiersman in Popular Fiction, 1820–1860," in John F. McDermott, ed., *The Frontier Re-Examined* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967).

western figures whom Buffalo Bill would later resemble. Although often described as having no equal or antecedent, “a picturesque figure in contemporaneous history that will never see his prototype,” Cody and his iconic image owe much to these precursors—the real men, intriguing and exotic in buckskins and long locks, as well as the visual depictions and verbal descriptions they inspired.<sup>40</sup> These artistic and literary forerunners primed the public’s imagination for what Cody offered, a living, breathing link to this well-established heritage. A possible reason that Buffalo Bill himself appeared so authentic, if not a bit anachronistic, may be because he so closely approximated an already established vision of the frontier popularized by artists and authors and their popular culture counterparts.

While Buffalo Bill may have appeared familiar, he was, at the same time, decidedly distinct. The front page of a courier for Buffalo Bill’s Wild West in 1884 included a wood engraving of Cody that accompanied a biography of the showman.<sup>41</sup> (Figure 1.9) Just as he would appear fourteen years later in the Enquirer poster, he wears his one-man-against-one-hundred gaze. His long hair tumbles untamed to his shoulders from beneath his sombrero. To the left and the right of Buffalo Bill are portraits of his business partners for that season, manager Nate Salsbury and Captain A. H. Bogardus. Although Salsbury was an experienced stage actor and Bogardus a veteran Civil War sharpshooter and champion competitive marksman who performed in the exhibition with his four sons, the trio of portraits in the 1884 courier leaves no question as to which of the three men was the Wild West’s star attraction on whose frontier

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<sup>40</sup> Untitled newspaper clipping, *Milwaukee (WI) Sentinel*, August 16, 1896, 6.

<sup>41</sup> 1884 Wild West courier, CWML. These same portraits are reproduced in the Wild West program in subsequent years, an example of the Wild West’s recycling of imagery.

experience (real, embellished, or completely fabricated) many of its acts were based. Simply put, neither Salsbury nor Bogardus looked the part.

The Wild West relied on the visual impact of a similar “which-of-these-things-is-not-like-the-other” approach for three posters published in the late 1880s by A. Hoen and Company. (Figures 1.10–12) In an effort to ensure an eager audience for the Wild West and a welcome befitting its star when the exhibition took its maiden voyage across the Atlantic to perform at Earl’s Court as an adjunct to the American Exhibition in London in 1887, the Wild West’s general manager, Major John M. Burke, secured a military title for Cody. He also solicited testimonials from esteemed generals from whom ready praise for the newly-minted Colonel would be guaranteed to flow.<sup>42</sup> Portraits of “Some of the Famous Generals of the U. S. Army under Whom Buffalo Bill has Served” bedecked in epaulets and accompanied by signed commendations surround a portrait of Cody, likewise presented “in uniform.” (Figure 1.10) One general represented on this poster was necessarily mum when it came to praising Cody—Brigadier General George Armstrong Custer. Despite Burke’s talents and confirmed status as one willing to stretch the truth if the result was increased ticket sales, he did not secure a from-the-grave accolade for his star from “The Hero of the Little Big Horn.” Rules of hieratic proportion dictate that the significance of Cody, whose portrait is twice the size of the orbiting

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<sup>42</sup> At the urging of Burke, Nebraska Governor John M. Thayer conferred upon Cody the rank of Colonel and an appointment as aide-de-camp in the state’s National Guard on March 8, 1887. Buffalo Bill historian Don Russell has called this a “very ordinary sunburst title,” noting that “it is characteristic of the Buffalo Bill legend that of all the endorsements collected by Major Burke, the one that was most effective had in it a touch of the phony.” Russell, *Lives and Legends*, 326.

generals, may even eclipse that of the highly decorated men who laud—or, in the case of Custer, whose presence endorses—Cody’s credentials.<sup>43</sup>

Following the return of the Wild West to the United States in the spring of 1888, A. Hoen printed a coordinating pair of posters based on the “Some of the Famous Generals” composition, but designed to impress the home crowd. (Figures 1.11 and 1.12) “Distinguished Visitors to Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, London, 1887” presents the same portrait of Cody as utilized the year prior, but ringed by likenesses of the kings of Sweden and Greece on one sheet and “H. M. the Queen” and the “Queen of the Belgians” on its complement.<sup>44</sup> The pair of posters, featuring the crowned heads and aristocrats of Europe “in doll-eyed, high-colored admiration at Colonel William Frederick Cody,” promoted the opportunity for citizens of a nation *sans* monarchy nevertheless to have an experience on par with that of a king or a queen.<sup>45</sup> Along with multiple other posters based on the motif of Buffalo Bill before royalty, they also promote the notion of a sort of reverse conquering. They provide visual evidence of the New World, not yet a world power, colonizing and captivating the Old—at least for as long as the Wild West was in town.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Wild West programs and other promotional material subsequently reproduced this poster along with the complete testimonials from the fourteen living generals. The composition of this 1887 poster published by A. Hoen and Company may have had its origins in an 1884 poster printed in Boston by Forbes’ Lithographic Company and widely reused by the Wild West in its publications. Much like “Some of the Famous Generals,” this poster features a portrait of Cody (dressed in a suit but still wearing his sombrero) surrounded by portraits of sixteen men associated with the Wild West in 1884.

<sup>44</sup> A. Hoen and Company also printed a related pair of posters, “Royal Visitors to Buffalo Bill’s Wild West London 1887” that pictured five kings encircling Cody and “Distinguished Lady Visitors to Buffalo Bill’s Wild West London 1887” that reproduced the likenesses of a countess, duchess, grand duchess, and princess in each corner with Cody at its center. See Wilson and Martin, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 85.

<sup>45</sup> The quote that describes this pair of posters was printed fifteen years after they were first published in an article on Cody’s supposed retirement, “Buffalo Bill’s Farewell,” *New-York Tribune*, April 27, 1913, B7.

<sup>46</sup> There are several posters that include vignettes documenting the Wild West’s appearance before the Her Majesty the Queen and the British royal family at Earl’s Court, including “Prairie to Palace” printed by Russell and Morgan Printing Company of Cincinnati around 1910 and “Scenes in the Life of Col. W. F. Cody ‘Buffalo Bill,’” printed by A. Hoen and Company of Baltimore in 1895. (Both in the collection of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center) In 2012

Underscoring this point are advertisements that ran in the *Washington Post* in 1895. These announcements for Wild West performances in the nation's capital reprinted the 1888 "Distinguished Visitors" posters with text that touted the "Triumphant Return, After a Peaceful Conquest of the Capitals of Europe, of the One and Only Distinctively Representative American Exhibition to the Capital of Its Own, Its Native Land."<sup>47</sup> Together, the celebrity endorsements directly and indirectly implied by the "Some of the Famous Generals" and "Distinguished Visitors" posters not only suggest an elevation of Cody's status by association, but also illustrate the manner with which the Wild West traded on the uniqueness of Buffalo Bill's physical appearance, and all that it symbolized, by casting the distinction into high relief. Furthermore, by presenting the long-haired, buckskin-clad frontiersman poised and at ease in the midst of military greats and royalty, these examples point to another ingredient crucial to Buffalo Bill's appeal—his inherent duality. The Honorable William F. Cody, "Buffalo Bill," mixed with crowned heads and cowboys alike. While he hobnobbed with society, he retained his status as a rugged symbol that had escaped civilization's restraints. He was "a genuine specimen of Western manhood" who was yet "free from the common faults of the typical frontiersman."<sup>48</sup>

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the Buffalo Bill Historical Center acquired a massive thirty-two sheet wood engraved poster printed in Hartford, Connecticut, by the Calhoun Printing Company in 1888 that takes as its larger-than-life subject "Her Majesty the Queen at Buffalo Bill's Wild West, London, May 11, 1887." It is doubtful that this pristine, vibrant, four-color, twenty-eight-foot-long show bill was ever posted, perhaps due to almost imperceptible flaws such as a slight bleeding of the ink. John Rumm, Ernest J. Goppert Curator of Western American History, BBHC, in conversation with the author, June 4, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> Advertisement, *Washington Post*, September 29, 1895, 18; and advertisement, *Washington Post*, September 22, 1895, 16. Building off the language used in the advertisements, one could equate the portraits of the royalty that encircle Cody with trophies of conquest, akin to the pair of buffalo heads at either side of the central portrait of Cody in the 1898 Enquirer poster.

<sup>48</sup> "Hon. W. F. Cody—"Buffalo Bill," 1884 Wild West program, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 7, Folder 20.

## **The Corner Vignettes, Foundations for Fame**

Cody's prominence as a symbol of Western manhood is emphasized in each of the four corners of the 1898 Enquirer lithograph. Similar to the A. Hoen and Company biographical posters of the 1880s, the Enquirer twelve-sheet incorporates vignettes into its design, but with a less obviously didactic intent. Unlike the example a decade earlier, its scenes are not captioned with explanatory notes or dates. By the late 1890s Buffalo Bill's exploits in life and those he enacted for the Wild West were well known. Rather than functioning as an introduction to Cody, an illustration of his credentials, or evidence that would add to a semblance of authenticity, these four vignettes are more dedicated to enticement and entertainment than education. As a group they are not exclusively explicit references to Cody's pre-show biography. Nor are they unequivocal allusions to performances within the Wild West arena. Instead, they are a hybrid quartet. These four scenes simultaneously conjure Buffalo Bill the plainsman and the showman, and they do so against backdrops that are not geographically specific, but nevertheless undeniably western. All four vignettes take place under a wide open blue sky (decidedly miles away from a performance under the roof of Madison Square Garden, for example, a favorite venue for Cody where the Wild West played several long stands). The prairie is evoked in the upper pair of tableaux, while mountain peaks rise in the distance in the lower two scenes. As in many Wild West posters, critical elements of western ambiance that would be lacking or insufficient, even with the aid of transplanted trees and elaborately painted canvas backdrops in the arena, are more than adequately supplied here. The illusionary environment and vistas cancel out the grandstands, scaffolding, nuts and bolts that were less-than picturesque logistical requirements for a Wild West performance.



It may seem ironic that the setting and imagery found in three of the four vignettes was created by a German artist who had never traveled to the American West. The American West instead traveled to him courtesy of Buffalo Bill's exhibition. Carl (or Charles) Henckel saw it dramatized in Munich and throughout Germany as the invited guest of Buffalo Bill himself from spring to early autumn 1890.<sup>49</sup> Henckel was a Berlin-born painter and illustrator who trained and worked in Dresden, Munich, and Stuttgart.<sup>50</sup> Like his contemporary Karl May, the German author of exceedingly popular ahistorical escapist fantasies set in an American West he had only experienced in his imagination, Henckel was captivated with the frontier. Both men were products of a culture harboring a long-standing interest in that legendary frontier across the Atlantic. German traveler Gottfried Duden's *Bericht einer Reise nach dem westlichen Staaten Nord-Amerikas* (1829), accounts sent home by waves of German emigrants in the United States during the 1840s, and vivid *Wildwest Geschichten* written by novelists and adventurers provided glimpses of the American West. Likewise, the popular prints after Karl Bodmer's paintings that documented German Prince Maximilian's expedition to the American West, illustrated travel books by Rudolf Daniel Ludwig Cronau, and the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde filled with American Indian art and artifacts gathered by German ethnologists that opened in Berlin in 1886, offered to many Germans the American West as a mythical place free from political

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<sup>49</sup> Carl Henckel, "Eine Sommerreise mit Buffalo Bill," *Buffalo Bill und Sein Wilder Westen; Zeichnungen nach dem Leben von Carl Henckel* (Munich, Germany: Bruckmann'sche Buchdruckerei, 1891), unpaginated. Henckel's account of his time as artist-in-residence with Buffalo Bill's Wild West that serves as the introduction to the portfolio was first published in the *Münchener Neuesten Nachrichten* in April 1891.

<sup>50</sup> Peter C. Merrill, *German Immigrant Artists in America: A Biographical Dictionary* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1997), 98. See also Peggy Samuels and Harold Samuels, *The Illustrated Biographical Encyclopedia of Artists of the American West* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976), 217.

repression and economic depression.<sup>51</sup> Buffalo Bill's Wild West debut in Germany in 1890 only fueled that fascination.

Henckel's experience with the exhibition beginning in April 1890 in Munich followed by thirteen other German cities, as well as Vienna, Austria, provided ample inspiration for the artist.<sup>52</sup> He made detailed sketches in black ink wash that captured the excitement of the Wild West's signature spectacles and recorded moments in its performers' lives behind the scenes.<sup>53</sup> In Munich the following year, he also made pen and ink drawings that were presented in portfolios. These portfolios were published with variable numbers of plates and in assorted languages, sizes, and formats (uncolored or tinted) by printers in both Germany and England. An early iteration, *Buffalo Bill und Sein Wilder Westen; Zeichnungen nach dem Leben von Carl Henckel*, was published in Munich in 1891.<sup>54</sup> It included fourteen uncolored illustrations captioned in English,

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<sup>51</sup> Ray Allen Billington, *Land of Savagery, Land of Promise: The European Image of the American Frontier in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1981), 48–56, 73, 291–92; Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 353–55; and Wanda Corn, "Marsden Hartley's Native Amerika," in *Marsden Hartley*, ed. Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 74. For more on the German fascination with the American West, see also Peter Bolz, "Indians and Germans: A Relationship Riddled with Clichés," in *Native American Art: The Collections of the Ethnological Museum of Berlin*, eds. Peter Bolz and Hans-Ulrich Sanner (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 9–21.

<sup>52</sup> Henckel, "Eine Sommerreise mit Buffalo Bill," unpaginated; and Buffalo Bill's Wild West Route List, BBHC, 2012.

<sup>53</sup> Twenty of these sketches, all signed and inscribed "München 1890," are in the collection of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center.

<sup>54</sup> Henckel, *Buffalo Bill und Sein Wilder Westen*. The Wild West made a return engagement to Germany in 1898, playing in ten cities over the course of two months, but did not make a stand in Munich. Buffalo Bill's Wild West Route List, BBHC, 2012. Smaller, more portable accordion-folded tinted albums of Henckel's drawings were also published that year under the title *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* and may have been sold as souvenirs at the exhibition when it performed in Germany, Belgium, and England that year. Mary Robinson, Housel Director, MRL, BBHC, e-mail to the author, June 20, 2012. Although the captions to the illustrations are in three languages (English, French, and German), the title is in English, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, and the artist's first name has been Anglicized to Charles. An example of both the large *Buffalo Bill und Sein Wilder Westen; Zeichnungen nach dem Leben von Carl Henckel* and smaller *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* album are in the collection of the McCracken Research Library, Buffalo Bill Historical Center. A version of the album with only English captions published by Barber & Farnworth,

German, and French and accompanied by a foreword and introductory essay by the artist. An expanded volume of sixty-one plates drawn by Henckel and published under the title *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Review* garnered the following accolade: "A very vivid description is given in this work of the character of Colonel Cody's far-famed shows, with life as it exists in the Far West....The book is well deserving of attention, and next to actual sight-seeing, will supply a better idea of the exhibition than any work we are acquainted with."<sup>55</sup> Perhaps due to praise such as this, many of Henckel's illustrations were subsequently reprinted in Wild West programs and couriers for years to come or were adapted into Wild West poster designs. Three of the five illustrations that featured Cody from that early portfolio published in Munich in 1891 were later appropriated, with only minor alterations, for the 1898 Enquirer poster: *Buffalo Bill Shooting While Riding, Lassoing Wild Horses, and Buffalo Chase*. (Figures 1.13–15)

### **Buffalo Bill as Marksman**

Unfolding somewhere between the frontier of Henckel's imagination and the grandstand, in a place that only existed in the realm of the Wild West's promotional imagery, the vignette at the upper left of the 1898 Enquirer lithograph highlights a talent that Buffalo Bill developed on the frontier out of necessity, but honed in the arena to elicit applause—superior marksmanship. The translation of Henckel's 1890 drawing to the Enquirer poster resulted in a scene that is all breathless action that strains against the confines of its limited zone in the poster's overall

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Printers in Manchester, England in 1891 is in the holdings of the Denver Public Library, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, Box 2, Folder 80.

<sup>55</sup> "Reviews," *Publishers' Circular and Booksellers' Record of British and Foreign Literature* 57, no. 1367 (10 September 1892): 277. The notice of *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Review*, edited by William Langan, goes on to state: "We understand that over 25,000 copies have already been sold." Ibid. Attempts to locate this portfolio have been unsuccessful.

design.<sup>56</sup> What could be judged as a compositional deficiency achieves an exciting if-you-blink-you-will-miss-it effect. Dressed in his signature fringed buckskins with his long hair flowing over his shoulders, Cody grips his horse with his thighs as it gallops at full tilt. The animal's break-neck speed is conveyed by the flurry of dust kicked up by its pounding hooves. Cody confidently aims his Winchester and shoots, eliciting a puff of white smoke from the rifle's barrel. He has already broken one glass ball tossed in the air by his Indian companion.<sup>57</sup> Its shattered pieces hang in a cluster as if frozen in the air. There is no question regarding the impending fate of the second ball.

In contrast to the so-called “fancy shots,” Buffalo Bill was touted as “America’s Practical All-Round-Shot, Shooting with Rifle, Shot Gun, and Revolver, on Foot and Horseback.”<sup>58</sup> An essay reprinted from James William Buell’s *History of the Heroes of the Western Plains* (1882), explaining the significance of this distinction and why the latter was the more esteemed, was first included in the 1884 Wild West program printed by the Calhoun Printing Company of Hartford, Connecticut, and repeated multiple times thereafter. A practical all-round shot could not only guarantee his shot “with any weapon...at any foe...at any game...in any position...at any

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<sup>56</sup> Possibly in an effort to make the vignette less cramped, the anonymous Enquirer artist responsible for a preparatory watercolor sketch in the collection of Circus World Museum that plotted out the poster’s composition altered the position of the forelegs of Cody’s mount. The flying gallop of Cody’s horse in Henckel’s drawing has been changed in the preparatory sketch and final lithograph to a gait in which the horse’s forelegs are tucked beneath its body, while its still-extended extended back legs are cropped by the left edge of the composition. The Wild West’s claims of truthfulness seem not to have extended to equine locomotion, despite photographer Eadweard Muybridge’s ground-breaking experiments with the zoopraxiscope in 1878 and his later *Animal Locomotion: An Electro-Photographic Investigation of Connective Phases of Animal Movements* (1887).

<sup>57</sup> Cody partnered with a variety of assistants to aid him in this spectacle. Young girls, Indians, and Mexicans all galloped around the arena beside him tossing up targets from a basket hung from their elbows. Sarah Jane Blackstone, “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West,” 124. To add to the drama of the spectacle, the glass balls were sometimes filled with feathers or confetti. Concerns regarding the risk that glass shards posed to the Wild West’s horses’ hooves resulted in development of special resin balls that proved less harmful. Steve Friesen, *Buffalo Bill: Scout, Showman, Visionary* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, Inc., 2010), 55.

<sup>58</sup> List of events, 1885 Wild West program, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 19.

speed,” but also pledged “to meet the circumstances face to face, whatever they may be, and achieve, by cool precision, deserved victory in the field and embellish history with deeds of heroism.” Practicality, of course, demanded that within the Wild West arena the all-round shot demonstrate his faculties using targets such as glass balls, rather than the “chicken, jack-rabbit, antelope, deer, buffalo, bear, or elk” that Buell assured were no match for a marksman such as Buffalo Bill.<sup>59</sup> A wood engraving of Buffalo Bill shooting at targets thrown in the air while astride a horse shown running in the long-standing, yet physically impossible, “flying gallop” convention accompanied the article. (Figure 1.16) The previous season the identical image was reproduced in the program published to promote the debut of “The Wild West, Cody and Carver’s Rocky Mountain and Prairie Exhibition.” However, in the empty sky to the left of the shooter in the 1883 program were the words “Dr. Wm. F. Carver, Evil Spirit of the Plains, Champion Rifle Shot of the World.”<sup>60</sup> (Figure 1.17) For an exhibition that staked its reputation on being genuine and that religiously proclaimed the status of Buffalo Bill himself as the “one and only,” this blatant appropriation of an image previously clearly identified with Carver is curious. Yet, as historian of the West and popular culture Joy Kasson astutely points out, in that very first season Cody and Carver were practically interchangeable in the publicity created for their show.<sup>61</sup> (Figure 1.18) Perhaps due to the manner with which Cody came to be featured in the exhibition’s shooting demonstrations—the audience chanting his name during a less-than-

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<sup>59</sup> James William Buell, *History of the Heroes of the Western Plains* (St. Louis, MO: Historical Publishing Co., 1882), 322, quoted in 1884 Wild West program, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 19.

<sup>60</sup> 1883 Wild West program, 6, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 7, Folder 19. William F. “Doc” Carver was Cody’s partner for the first season of the Wild West. Their partnership dissolved after only six months.

<sup>61</sup> Kasson, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 49.

stellar display of marksmanship by Carver in 1883—the usurpation of Carver’s image for his own is justified.<sup>62</sup>

Representations of Cody performing this extremely popular Wild West act were repeated on posters, and in programs, heralds, couriers, and newspaper advertisements, and even on a sheet music cover from the second season onward.<sup>63</sup> Once Buffalo Bill was firmly established in that role, variation from the formula to which the 1898 Enquirer twelve-sheet poster adhered was minimal. In at least one instance on a poster printed by A. Hoen and Company, the setting for the feat deviates from the common, more generalized western backdrop. (Figure 1.19) Instead, Cody demonstrates his unerring skills with the rifle before a mixed camp of scouts, cavalry, and Indians who mill about in front of their tents and tepees positioned under a prominent American flag. More generally, when differences did occur, they usually involved the number of shattered glass balls still hanging in the air or the gender or ethnicity of Cody’s assistant. The most frequently represented identity of the assistant was, however, an Indian who tossed the targets for Buffalo Bill’s rifle, rather than being one himself as occurred in other spectacles on the Wild West program and in the days before Buffalo Bill became a showman. The skill with which he annihilated the innocuous targets prompted at least one observer to ponder its impact years

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<sup>62</sup> For more on Cody as a marksman and the 1883 Wild West season, see Friesen, *Buffalo Bill*, 46–49.

<sup>63</sup> Henckel’s version of the scene, which would later appear on the 1898 Enquirer poster, was featured as in illustration in the 1893 Wild West program, 14, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 25. See also, for example, advertisement, *Emporia (Kansas) Daily Gazette*, September 6, 1898, 3. For the cover of “The Sharpshooter’s March” composed by Edward Lux and copyrighted in 1894, see Wojtowicz, *The W. F. Cody Collector’s Guide*, 236. The status of Cody’s shooting act as one of the signature spectacles in the Wild West is further underscored decades later by its mention in a poem titled “Buffalo Bill’s” written by e. e. cummings in 1920, seven years after Cody’s exhibition went on the auction block in Denver: “Buffalo Bill’s / defunct / who used to / ride a watersmooth-silver / stallion / and break onetwothreefourfive pigeonsjustlikethat / Jesus / he was a handsome man / and what i want to know is / how do you like your blueeyed boy / Mister Death” Leslie Pockwell, *100 Essential American Poems* (New York: Macmillan, 2009), 246.

earlier before the Wild West was corralled in an arena, “Appalling must have been that rifle against the Indians.”<sup>64</sup>

### **Buffalo Bill as Equestrian**

While the vignette of Cody shooting glass balls in the upper left corner of the 1898 Enquirer poster was an established and beloved element of the Wild West program, the scene in the poster’s upper right corner does not seem to directly reflect any role Buffalo Bill played in the exhibition. There is no act that specifically stars Buffalo Bill described in Wild West programs that matches this scene. Regardless, it was deemed suitably western in flavor to promote the show, offering a more general tableau played out on the prairie with which Cody was well versed—lassoing wild horses.<sup>65</sup> Once again, this vignette appropriated art made in Munich in 1890 by Carl Henckel that was later published in the multilingual portfolios and smaller albums in addition to being used prior to 1898 by the Wild West. A nearly identical scene starring Buffalo Bill based on Henckel’s illustration and captioned “Lassoing Wild Horses on the Platte in the Old Days” was reproduced in the 1893 Wild West program and in subsequent programs.<sup>66</sup> (Figures 1.14 and 1.20) The repurposing of Henckel’s horizontally oriented illustration to a nearly square format for the 1898 Enquirer poster resulted in a compression and

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<sup>64</sup> “The Wild West,” *St. Louis (MO) Republic*, September 29, 1897, NSS, Vol. 6, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>65</sup> According to the list of events printed in the Wild West programs each season, Mexican vaqueros who performed with the exhibition, especially champion roper Vicente Oropeza, as well as the American cowboys were the ones who demonstrated the use of the lasso for audiences at the Wild West. Nevertheless, there was a tradition in Wild West promotional material for casting Cody in that role. Versions of the theme of Cody swinging his lariat also appear on the Wild West program cover in 1885, 1891, and 1892, as well as on one of the two 1893 covers. A poster published by A. Hoen and Company around 1892 in the collections of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, shows him astride a white steed as he tightens his lasso around the neck of a rearing black horse while two cowboys, lassoes at the ready, pursue the stampeding herd.

<sup>66</sup> 1893 Wild West program, 19, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 25.

cropping of the scene. The two cowboys in the distance at the left are nearer to Buffalo Bill in the poster vignette. The dark horse closest to the picture plane in Henckel's drawing is reduced to merely a neck and head extending from the lariat that surrounds Cody's portrait in center of the poster, creating a rhyme with the buffalo head just below it.

To those with a romantic imagination, wild horses such as the ones that stampede across sketches or paintings by artists such as George Catlin or Alfred Jacob Miller suggested the unfettered West and, by extension, a life of unrestrained freedom.<sup>67</sup> The horses in this Enquirer vignette, however, unless destined to be cast as "plunging buckers" in Cody's exhibition, are fated to be civilized. They are relatives of the Texas mustangs pursued in William Tylee Ranney's painting *Hunting Wild Horses (The Lasso)*. (Figures 1.21) In contrast to contemporary reports that declared "War on Wild Horses" citing overpopulation, an article published in the Wild West's 1886 program sets a more romantic scene for the Enquirer vignette and could likewise outline the impetus for the action that plays out in Ranney canvas: "For the purposes of the trail, the hunt, the battle, the pursuit, or the stampede, it was essentially necessary to select for chargers with which to gain success, animals excelling in the qualities of strength, speed, docility, courage, stamina, keen scent, delicacy of ear, quick of sight, sure footed, shrewd in perception, nobleness of character, and general intelligence."<sup>68</sup> In this high-energy scene at the

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<sup>67</sup> For more on contemporaneous beliefs regarding wild horses, see Richard W. Slatta, *The Mythical West: An Encyclopedia of Legend, Lore, and Popular Culture* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2001), 366; and Dawn Glanz, *How the West was Drawn: American Art and the Settling of the Frontier* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), 91. See also Hope Ryden, *America's Last Wild Horses: The Classic Study of the Mustangs—Their Pivotal Role in the History of the West, Their Return to the Wild, and the Ongoing Efforts to Preserve Them* (Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2005).

<sup>68</sup> "The War on Wild Horses," *New York Times*, December 26, 1884, 2; and "'Old Charlie,' the Horse that Carried Buffalo Bill One Hundred Miles in Nine Hours and Forty-Five Minutes," 1886 Wild West program, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 20.



upper right of the Enquirer lithograph, Cody and two companions, lassoes in the air, are poised to “select for chargers with which to gain success.”

Part of Buffalo Bill’s own success undoubtedly derived from the impression he made in the saddle. In his 1879 autobiography he quipped that he “had been born in the saddle” and admitted that he “felt more at home there than any other place.”<sup>69</sup> In the each of the four corner scenes in the 1898 Enquirer twelve-sheet, Cody is shown “at home.” The figure of Cody in the upper right vignette, confidently astride a rearing white horse with arm raised in preparation to throw his lasso, gives a subtle wink at a widely known portrait of Napoleon Bonaparte. Cody is the distant American cousin of the wind-whipped French military leader atop a fiery white mount as described in the French neoclassical painter Jacques-Louis-David’s tribute of 1800. Like his predecessor, but nearly a century later, Buffalo Bill is shown as an exceptional equestrian, able to remain calm and in control of his wildly rearing steed.

Contemporary descriptions of Cody on horseback offer an additional affinity that Buffalo Bill himself embraced, having repeated the analogy in his epic 816-page tome, *Story of the Wild West and Camp-Fire Chats* (1888). He informed his readers that the popular London satirical periodical *Punch* offered its subscribers an illustration of “your humble servant pictured as a centaur, with bull-whip and revolver” to accompany stanzas titled “The Coming Centaur”:

“Midst the cheering tremendous, / O’er valley and hill / A marvel stupendous / Of courage and skill / He’s quickly advancing, / With singing and dancing / That Centaur Heroic called Buffalo Bill.”

He also included a quotation from a review of his appearance during a performance at Erastina on Staten Island. The assessment was often reiterated in contemporary appraisals

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<sup>69</sup> Cody, *The Life of Hon. William F. Cody*, 48 and 91.

regarding his prowess: “He is the complete restoration of the Centaur. No one that I ever saw so adequately fulfills to the eye all the conditions of picturesque beauty, absolute grace, and perfect identity with his animal. . . . He is the only man I ever saw who rides as if he couldn’t help it. . . .”<sup>70</sup> This conjuring of a half-man/half-horse provides an immediate visual cue to augment the author’s admiration of Cody’s equestrian abilities. In fact, in the vignette at the upper right of the 1898 Enquirer poster, Cody’s right leg merges with the right back leg of his rearing horse. The arch of his back perfectly rhymes the curve of his horse’s neck. The two become one. The equation of Buffalo Bill (a sobriquet that itself combines beast and man) to a centaur was also in keeping with the showman’s mythic status and dual identity—at once civilized, yet still wild. Louis Warren, historian and author of an exhaustive Cody biography, delves more deeply into the centaur metaphor. He connects the implied hyper-virility of the mythic hybrid creature with the “manly and muscular heroes of the saddle and lasso,” none other than Buffalo Bill and his cowboy cohorts.<sup>71</sup>

Cody as the epitome of manliness was a theme repeated in contemporary accounts of the Wild West to the point of fixation. Commentary that crowned Buffalo Bill a “magnificent specimen of American manhood” amplified scenes like those occupying the four corners of the 1898 Enquirer poster.<sup>72</sup> Together, such words and images that paid homage to Buffalo Bill

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<sup>70</sup> William F. Cody, *Story of the Wild West and Camp-Fire Chats* (Chicago: R. S. Peale and Co., 1888), 715 and 721. A version of that description of Cody may also be found in “Buffalo Bill,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 29, 1886, 2, which is a reprint of a story in the *New York World* by Nym Crinkle, a pseudonym adopted by the journalist and gadfly Andrew Carpenter Wheeler. Nearly the same statement also appears in Nebraska Ned, *Buffalo Bill and His Daring Adventures in the Romantic Wild West* (Baltimore: L. and M. Ottenheimer, 1913), 180–81.

<sup>71</sup> Louis S. Warren, “Buffalo Bill Meets Dracula: William F. Cody, Bram Stoker, and the Frontiers of Racial Decay,” *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 4 (October 2002): 1124–57, especially 1140–41.

<sup>72</sup> “Buffalo Bill’s Show,” *Stamford (CT) Telegram*, May 24, 1898, NSS, Vol. 7, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18. See also, “Buffalo Bill’s Show Opens,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 27, 1893, 2; and “Buffalo Bill,” *Toledo (OH) Bee*, August 17, 1897, NSS, Vol. 6, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

offered a counterpoint to many contemporary apprehensions that beleaguered a certain class of white American males. In the midst of increased industrialization, immigration, and agitation for women's advancement; recurring economic depressions; the perceived threat of over-civilization and decadence; diagnoses of neurasthenia; and prescriptions for a more vigorous physical culture to offset mental work and ensure moral and bodily welfare, Buffalo Bill provided an emotional safety valve.<sup>73</sup> In the face of a loss of "clean manly ideals" and fears of the "sporting incubus" that plagued men who focused too ardently on mandates for a sound body at the cost of a sound mind, Buffalo Bill himself embodied a healthful equilibrium—a balance that had been struck and tested on the frontier.<sup>74</sup> Both the Wild West's posters and its other promotional vehicles emphasized this notion. The 1893 Wild West program described Cody as "Young, sturdy, a remarkable specimen of manly beauty, with the brain to conceive and the nerve to execute," while the courier for the 1898 season reprinted a statement from a "leading journalist" that positioned him as "the one connecting link that holds together the wild, rough frontier past with all its glories of physical manhood, and the almost too intensely refined present mental manhood, machine action and emasculating commercialism."<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, when American manliness,

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<sup>73</sup> See George Miller Beard, *American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1881); "Progress of Civilization," *Methodist Review* 5, no. 2 (March 1889): 300; and Felix L. Oswald, "American Auguries," *Open Court: A Quarterly Magazine* 4, no. 147 (19 June 1890): IIA. For more on concerns regarding American manliness at the turn of the century and possible antidotes see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformation in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); and T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880–1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981). As late as 1907, the Buffalo Bill and his Wild West were promoted as "an incentive to manliness and an inspiration to Young America." Advertisement, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 21, 1907, I2.

<sup>74</sup> "True and False Athleticism," *New York Observer and Chronicle* 76, no. 26 (30 June 1898): 904.

<sup>75</sup> 1893 Wild West program, 7, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 25; and 1898 Wild West courier, quoted in Jefferson D. Slagle, "Performing the Wild West," in *A Companion to the Literature and Culture of the American West*, ed. Nicolas S. Witschi (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2011), 438.

and by extension, the prowess of the country, was called into doubt during the last decades of the nineteenth century, prompting men like Theodore Roosevelt to advocate for “the life of strenuous endeavor” to ensure “true national greatness,” it was men like Buffalo Bill who had proved himself in that most American and manly of places, the West, who provided a model for emulation.<sup>76</sup>

### **Buffalo Bill as Scout and Guide**

Hand-in-hand with reinforcing a version of a late-nineteenth-century American ideal, the four Buffalo-Bill-on-the-frontier vignettes showcased on the 1898 Enquirer twelve-sheet also speak to contemporary trends of hero worship. Historian T. J. Jackson Lears writes in *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880–1920* that warrior heroes achieved an elevated status in the context of late-nineteenth-century crisis. In an effort to stave off the stagnancy of modernism, some critics held up medieval warriors and romantic literary heroes for emulation and exalted their “moral certainty” and “ability to act decisively.”<sup>77</sup> Lears states that at the turn of the century, “the romantic man on horseback focused growing admiration for martial values,” and notions of chivalry were posited as a remedy for modern indifference.<sup>78</sup> The vignette at the lower right of the 1898 Enquirer poster, in particular, offers Buffalo Bill as a hero and embodiment of bravery and righteousness to those who sought such a figure. He was, as a reporter for the *Stamford [Connecticut] Telegram* wrote in 1898, “the

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<sup>76</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life; Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Co., 1899), 20–21.

<sup>77</sup> Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 57.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

fearless ranger, the intrepid scout, the potent and resourceful warrior.”<sup>79</sup> In the guise of the scout or guide, whether out West or with his Wild West, Cody was an invincible hero, a knight-errant of the frontier.

Compared to the other three scenes that convey the rush of energy and wild excitement synonymous with Cody’s dramatization of the West, the lower-right vignette is more staid. No dust swirls, no glass balls shatter. No horses race or rear. No weapons are aimed, no hooves thunder. Instead, the scene imparts a different sort of awe, one more reverential and monumental. Beneath the same lightly clouded blue sky under which the other three vignettes unfold, is a younger version of the man at the center of the lithograph who presides over the exploits of his doppelgangers. Here is Cody, “the fearless ranger, the intrepid scout, the potent and resourceful warrior.” He is depicted before a mountainous backdrop in a manner that dwarfs the range behind him and, therefore, amplifies his presence. An icon of certitude and vigilance riding a white charger at the head of a column of anonymous uniformed cavalry that winds into the distance, this is Cody cast in a role he debuted in the early 1860s. His experience as a buck-skinned scout and guide, whether for the Ninth Kansas Volunteers, with the “Red Legged Scouts” of the Seventh Kansas Volunteer Cavalry, “Jennison’s Jay-hawkers” from the main unit of the Seventh Kansas Cavalry, the Fifth Cavalry under Eugene Carr, or as Chief of Scouts appointed by General Phillip Sheridan, helped him to achieve heroic status as “a plains celebrity

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<sup>79</sup> “Buffalo Bill’s Show,” *Stamford (CT) Telegram*, May 24, 1898, NSS, Vol. 7, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

‘UNTIL TIME SHALL BE NO MORE.’”<sup>80</sup> It established him as the descendant of a coterie of heroic men indispensable for their part in laying “the foundation for the winning of the West.”<sup>81</sup>

A decade prior to the publication of the *Enquirer* twelve-sheet, Cody confidently posited himself as a link in the nation’s chain of distinguished scouts and guides. In 1888 he authored the heavily illustrated *Story of the Wild West and Campfire Chats, by Buffalo Bill (Hon. W. F. Cody), a Full and Complete History of the Renowned Pioneer Quartette, Boone, Crockett, Carson and Buffalo Bill*, that featured a color reproduction of the painter Chester Harding’s 1820 half-length portrait of Daniel Boone as its frontispiece.<sup>82</sup> Ten years later, in its review of Buffalo Bill’s exhibition in 1898, the Albany, New York, *Argus* also cited examples of the men from whom Cody’s fame and honor descended: Daniel Boone, Jim Bridger, and Kit Carson.<sup>83</sup> Wild West programs, such as the one published for the 1907 season, frequently adopted Janus’s vision to further expand this lineage, resulting in an outcome not unlike that given rise to by the “Some of the Famous Generals” or “Distinguished Visitors” posters of the late 1880s with Cody’s fame burnished by association. Enumerated in this fraternity of courageous men “imbued with the spirit of the Scout,” were Christopher Columbus and Captain Miles Standish, as well as “our first and present [Theodore Roosevelt] presidents.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> “Scouts Who Led to Empire: The Men Who So Bravely Wore the Buckskin,” 1907 Wild West program, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 39.

<sup>81</sup> “Col. Cody’s Wild West,” *Argus* (Albany, NY), June 15, 1898, NSS, Vol. 7, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>82</sup> Cody, *Story of the Wild West and Camp-Fire Chats*, frontispiece.

<sup>83</sup> “Col. Cody’s Wild West,” *Argus* (Albany, NY), June 15, 1898, NSS, Vol. 7, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>84</sup> *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West: Historical Sketches and Daily Review*, 1907, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 39. Biblical Noah’s dove is even lauded as a scout in this essay for the manner with which “its report spoke volumes in a simple twig.” Ibid. Analogies between Columbus and Cody abound in Wild West material, including, fittingly, on the exhibition’s letterhead for the 1893 season. The stationery featured portraits of the pair along with

The vignette that presents Cody the scout and guide with the celebrated heritage is the only one of the quartet that anchors the corners of the 1898 Enquirer poster not directly derived from Carl Henckel's drawings. Although Henckel did pay tribute to "The Scout Buffalo Bill. – Buffalo Bill, le chef des éclaireurs. – Der Oberst der Kundschafter Buffalo Bill." with a drawing published in the large 1891 portfolio that was also selected as the cover image for the smaller albums printed that year in Munich and Manchester, he treated his subject as a lone pathfinder, rather than a leader upon whom a contingent depended. (Figure 1.22) Henckel's version of Cody the scout—rifle cradled in the crook of his elbow, leaning forward in the saddle with a hand raised to his brow to better discern the way ahead—was exceptionally popular. It reappeared in Wild West promotional materials and seems to have inspired an exceedingly similar portrait by the Italian artist Pappacena in 1892 that has long been rumored to have been the scout's favorite painting of himself.<sup>85</sup> (Figure 1.23) Despite all of this, it was another artist's conception of Cody in the guise of a scout that the 1898 Enquirer poster emulated. The vignette in its lower right corner shares striking affinities with a vision of Cody created by the Hungarian-born artist

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the captions "Pilot of the Ocean, 15th Century—the First Pioneer" and "Guide of the Prairie, 19th Century—the Last Pioneer." Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, 162.

<sup>85</sup> Pappacena's *Cody the Scout* was a gift to the Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave in Golden, Colorado, by the widow Cody who claimed that her late husband had preferred it to the portrait of him painted by the acclaimed French artist Rosa Bonheur. A statue based on Pappacena's depiction of Cody was proposed for installation on Lookout Mountain, the site of Cody's grave outside Golden, but never realized due to a dearth of funds. Steve Friesen, Director, Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave, Golden, Colorado, e-mail to the author, 15 June 2012. See Friesen, *Buffalo Bill*, 145 for a rendition of the ill-fated Pantheon of the Pioneers of America, the monument topped by the statue after Pappacena's painting that was intended to mark Cody's grave. I would like to thank Steve Friesen for entertaining my many questions regarding this portrait of Cody by the little-known painter and for encouraging my hunch that the artist was inspired by Henckel's drawing. It is difficult to discern when or where Cody came to acquire the portrait by Pappacena for his personal collection. The Wild West toured Scotland and England in 1892. It had not performed in Italy since the spring of 1890 and would not appear there again until the spring of 1906, but that would not preclude the well-connected Cody from attaining the portrait. Buffalo Bill's Wild West Route List, BBHC, 2012. Although the portrait has been dated 1892 by the Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave, it is possible that it could have been painted a few years earlier. If that is the case, Pappacena's painting could plausibly have been an influence on Henckel. Postcards of Pappacena's painting published around the mid-twentieth century by the Copper Post Card Co. of Lakewood, Colorado, date the portrait to 1889. WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 7, Folder 2.

Paul Frenzeny. Frenzeny received his artistic training in Paris and was, himself, a member of the French cavalry during the mid-1860s. Following his move to New York in 1867, he became a prolific illustrator for *Harper's Weekly*. In the summer of 1873 the popular periodical sent him West with the French artist Jules Tavernier to document the region for its curious readers. After a period of commercial work in California and a trip to Central America in 1878, Frenzeny returned to New York and continued his contributions to *Harper's*, which included sketches from the National Horse Show at Madison Square Garden in 1883, among many other illustrations depicting horses.<sup>86</sup> By 1888 it was reported that he had become “a long-haired, fiercely-bearded cowboy artist with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.”<sup>87</sup> A photograph of Cody and some of his staff posed with a group of dapper gentlemen taken when the Wild West toured England in 1887 includes Frenzeny in the back row. His appearance, however, is the antithesis of the description that the *San Francisco Examiner* published just one year later.<sup>88</sup>

Based on the inclusion of the not yet “long-haired, fiercely-bearded” artist's illustrations in the Wild West program for that 1887 season abroad, it is probable that Frenzeny's association with Buffalo Bill began prior to that year and stateside. His drawings included a cowboy trying in vain to tame a bucking mustang and a portrait of Cody on horseback in the guise of the scout.<sup>89</sup> The Forbes Company of Boston, a lithographer responsible for many of the Wild West's

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<sup>86</sup> Scott Shields, *Artists at Continent's End: The Monterey Peninsula Art Colony, 1875–1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 19 and 22; and Special Supplement to *Harper's Weekly* 27, no. 1401 (27 October 1883): S1/S2.

<sup>87</sup> “In a Tropical Prison,” *San Francisco Examiner*, January 22, 1888, quoted in Shields *Artists at Continent's End*, 22.

<sup>88</sup> Photograph, “Cody with Group,” NS-130, Salsbury Collection, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, Western History/Genealogy Department, DPL.

<sup>89</sup> Frenzeny's depiction of Cody the scout was also featured on the exhibition's letterhead for the 1887, 1889, and 1891 seasons (at the very least), on envelopes in 1890, and stamped on gilt bronze, brass, and aluminum souvenir



early posters, also published a single-sheet lithograph titled “The Scout—Buffalo Bill—Hon. W. F. Cody” with Frenzeny’s signature. (Figure 1.24) It is possible that the Forbes poster originally could have been created to promote Cody’s stage endeavors, which would date Frenzeny’s ties to Buffalo Bill even earlier. Although the issue of which came first, the program illustration or the poster, is a chicken-and-egg like challenge, it may be said more confidently that it was Frenzeny’s interpretation of the motif of Cody as scout, regardless of where it made its initial appearance, that influenced the vignette at the lower right of the 1898 Enquirer poster—with a dose of inspiration also possibly drawn from canvases by Jean-Louis-Ernst Meissonier, such as his *Campagne de France, 1814* (1864; Musée d’Orsay), and other French military painters of the mid-nineteenth century.

The essential components of the 1880s Frenzeny images and the 1898 vignette are equivalent: Cody, dressed in his buckskins, armed with his Winchester astride his white horse, leading a troop of cavalymen from whom he is clearly distinguished. However, although the action in the Enquirer vignette is greatly decelerated from the speed and energy implied in its three complements, it still conveys forward motion and momentum. Cody, looking directly out at whoever fell under the spell of the impressive twelve-sheet, guides the cavalry down a distinct path that leads into the viewer’s space. In contrast, in the Forbes lithograph based on Frenzeny’s composition the cavalry have halted their mounts while Cody scans the distance, the slightest stream of smoke trailing from his just-fired rifle.<sup>90</sup> The viewer of the poster is not the object of

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medals in 1893 to commemorate the “Wild West at Worlds [*sic*] Fair.” Examples of these usages for Frenzeny’s art are reproduced in Wojtowicz, *The W. F. Cody Buffalo Bill Collector’s Guide*, 138, 147, and 204; and Wilson and Martin, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 70. The J. B. Pace Tobacco Company of Richmond, Virginia, also chose Frenzeny’s image of Buffalo Bill to grace the lid of its tins of “Buffalo Bill Plug Cut Tobacco.” See *Ibid*.

<sup>90</sup> The just-fired-rifle motif appeared some two decades later in a 1910 poster published in Cincinnati, Ohio, by Russell and Morgan Printing Company. The lithograph, in the collection of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, shows

Cody's glance. Rather, he peers off to the right, beyond the border of the image, with the same iconic, formidable gaze he casts in the central portrait that dominates the 1898 Enquirer poster. In this atmosphere of stillness and tension, the only truly animated aspect of the Frenzeny/Forbes one-sheet is Cody's horse. It has cocked its head to one side, tossing its forelock and reins, and assumes the role of the one who engages the viewer—a responsibility it performs with such personality as to threaten to steal the scene.

Much like Henckel's drawings, Frenzeny's version of Cody the scout appeared so frequently in Wild West programs and advertising as to become emblematic by the time it was appropriated for incorporation into the 1898 Enquirer lithograph. After appearing in the 1887 program for the Wild West's inaugural trip abroad, it continued to enhance the exhibition's programs through 1889 when the Wild West performed in conjunction with the Exposition Universelle held in Paris. It was reproduced in newspaper advertisements when the exhibition performed outside the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, accompanied a biographical profile of Cody in that season's program, and may have inspired *Chicago Daily News* columnist Amy Leslie to opine, "How an heroic statue of Buffalo Bill with his magnificent physique, picturesque accoutrements and scout impetuosity would have stood out among the dulcet elegances of foreign art! Clad in fringed deerskins...with the high boots which typify hardship and the country's savage estate, his inseparable gun, fiery horse and incomparable inherent pose!"<sup>91</sup> Frenzeny's portrait of Cody as scout was also part of a collage of imagery that adorned the program covers for the 1894 through 1898 seasons. Additionally, this depiction of

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Cody on horseback posed before a glowing sunset with a curl of smoke rising from the barrel of his Winchester in a visual pun to the accompanied by text: "'The Farewell Shot' Positively the Last Appearance (in the Saddle) of Col. W. F. Cody, 'Buffalo Bill.'"

<sup>91</sup> 1895 Wild West courier, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 6.

Cody was deemed so successful that it was reprinted by the Baltimore publisher A. Hoen and Company, but without the artist's signature that appears in the lower left of the Forbes lithograph. (Figure 1.25) Following the well-established Wild West tradition of underscoring Cody's ancestry, achievements, and notable associations, the A. Hoen and Company version added a line of small type beneath the image: "A MAN WITH A HISTORY—RECORD—A NAME!—Gen. Wm. F. Sherman." The scale of this text sandwiched between the monumental mounted scout and the bold, red block lettering that identifies the hero suggests that Buffalo Bill himself is even greater than any accolade.

Buffalo Bill's reputation as a scout and guide translated to his role as the founder and president of the Wild West. This is, perhaps, a reason that Frenzeny's version of Cody in this guise, shown as the leader of a multitude rather than alone as in Henckel's conception, was chosen for the 1898 Enquirer poster. As the head of an enormous aggregation of performers, Buffalo Bill not only confidently guided the Wild West to parts unknown, but simultaneously served as the infallible and trusted official escort to the Wild West for the audiences who flocked to see it. From the outset, he took this responsibility seriously. In an 1884 courier for the exhibition, he vowed to "leave an impression that will serve as a guide and instructor to the present and rising generation."<sup>92</sup> A decade later, to promote the appearance of his Wild West at Ambrose Park in South Brooklyn, the Springer Lithographic Company of New York published a whimsical one-sheet that completed Cody's transformation from frontier guide to a guide to his exhibition. (Figure 1.26) This 1894 lithograph takes artistic license with the Wild West's oath of truth and reality—as well as with gravity. It presents a glorious Buffalo Bill astride a horse that emulates Pegasus. Backed by the glow of a fiery sunset, the pair dramatically soars over a

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<sup>92</sup> 1884 Wild West courier, 2, CWML.

detailed map of Greater New York. Recalling statuary of ancient Roman emperors such as Marcus Aurelius at the Capitoline Hill, Cody raises his imperial right arm. The gesture exhorts all to follow him. Continuing the play on ancient Roman references but with a Cody-centric twist on the adage, the poster proclaims that “All Roads Lead to Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World.”<sup>93</sup> Lest a greenhorn get lost along the way to the “Covered Grand Stand Seating 20,000,” directions for “How to Get There for 5 & 10 Cents” are generously included. The universal way-finding emblem of a hand with outstretched index finger indicates “Where We Are”—the impressive arena at Ambrose Park reproduced in miniature in the lower right corner of the lithograph.

Whether flying over the Statue of Liberty in the 1894 Springer Lithographic Company poster, guiding the cavalry in the lower right vignette of the 1898 Enquirer poster, or posed on horseback in innumerable other Wild West posters, myriad equestrian portraits of Cody reflect the influence of centuries of propagandistic depictions devised to connote power and prestige. (Figure 1.27) The tradition of portraying statesmen of the ancient world, crowned heads of Europe, conquering military leaders, and United States’ presidents on horseback doubtless informed equestrian portraits of Buffalo Bill and conditioned those who viewed such Wild West promotions to see Cody enveloped by a similar aura of strength and dominance. In fact, according to Wild West publicity that never shied from an opportunity for one-upmanship, Cody

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<sup>93</sup> The “All Roads Lead to Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” slogan was also used the year prior to attract visitors to the exhibition when it performed outside the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Advertisement in *Handbook of the World’s Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: Rand, McNally, 1892), 3.

“sat upon his horse beneath all the greatest equestrian statues of the art centers of the Old World and always gained by the comparison.”<sup>94</sup>

In 1895 the Courier Lithographic Company of Buffalo, New York, published a poster that it subsequently reissued for multiple seasons.<sup>95</sup> Each version combined conventions of equestrian portraiture and an acknowledgement of the power of such imagery to sustain renown with evidence that when Buffalo Bill was in the saddle, all others were put to shame. (Figure 1.28) At the center of this single-sheet lithograph, the celebrated nineteenth-century French painter Rosa Bonheur sits before her easel. Bonheur was revered in both Europe and the United States. In 1865 she was the first woman to be made *chevalier* in France’s *Ordre national de la Légion d’honneur*. In 1887 the American industrialist Cornelius Vanderbilt donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art her highly acclaimed entry to the 1853 Paris Salon, *The Horse Fair*—a painting widely known in the United States through engravings.<sup>96</sup> The Courier poster presents the esteemed *chevalier* and animal painter with two unlikely subjects, given her *oeuvre*. Napoleon is on the left. He is presented as “Man on Horse of 1796.” Perhaps as a nod to the artist Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier’s attendance at the Wild West’s opening performance at Parc de

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<sup>94</sup> 1895 Wild West courier, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 6.

<sup>95</sup> Wild West press agent Dexter Fellows recalled in that in 1895 “one of the posters we featured that year showed two men on white chargers. One was Cody and the other Napoleon. In the center sat Rosa Bonheur painting Cody to ‘perpetuate his fame.’ The caption under one of the riders read ‘The Man on Horse of 1795’ and on the other ‘The Man on Horse 1895.’” Dexter Fellows and Andrew A. Freeman, *This Way to the Big Show* (New York: Viking Press, 1936), 83–84. The composition also appeared on the first page of a Wild West courier for 1895. WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 6. Based on contemporary reports and extant posters, Courier produced at least five versions of this poster, each with a different date ranging from 1895 to 1900 to conclude the caption “The Man on Horse of. . . .” Poster historian Jack Rennert claims that this poster was originally published in 1894, but I have not located a version dated that early. Rennert, *100 Posters of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 11.

<sup>96</sup> For biographical details for the artist, see Anna Klumpke, *Rosa Bonheur: The Artist’s (Auto)biography*, trans., Gretchen van Slyke (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); and Dore Ashton, *Rosa Bonheur: A Life and a Legend* (New York: Viking Press, 1981).

Neuilly on May 18, 1889, his 1862 portrait of the Emperor following the exhausting, but ultimately victorious battle that concluded his French campaign in 1814 offers the basis for this likeness of Napoleon.<sup>97</sup> (Figure 1.29) In what amounts, then, to a double betrayal, Bonheur has turned her back to two of her fellow countrymen. She has chosen instead to paint the portrait of Buffalo Bill, “The Man on Horse of 1895,” or “...1896,” or “...1900,” or whatever year the Wild West management determined that *Courier* should reprint the popular poster. The banner that drapes the lower edge of the poster spells out an especially apt caption for the scene that unfolds above it: “Art Perpetuating Fame.”<sup>98</sup>

Although the assembly represented in this *Courier* poster—Bonheur, Napoleon, and Cody—is an artistic invention, the scenario it sets up is not entirely fiction. In 1889 Bonheur indulged a curiosity that her biographer Dore Ashton characterizes as an extension of a French tradition, citing similar fascinations with the American frontier held by Chateaubriand and Baudelaire. The sixty-seven-year-old *animalier* was drawn from her atelier at Chateau de By and her collection of prints and photographs of the American West by the lure of Buffalo Bill’s extravaganza.<sup>99</sup> A tandem request to Cody from Bonheur’s dealers, the Tedesco brothers and their American counterpart Charles Knoedler, secured permission for the artist to plant her easel

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<sup>97</sup> Meissonier was an artist of whom Cody was aware even before the painter attended the Wild West in 1889. A clipping in Cody’s scrapbook from 1887 reports on Meissonier’s “1807 picture” on view in London. T. C. Crawford, “Meissonier’s ‘1807,’” *New York World*, 1887, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 3, Folder 14. For other dignitaries who attended the inaugural performance of the 1889 season in Paris, see Jill Jonnes, *Eiffel’s Tower And the World’s Fair Where Buffalo Bill Beguiled Paris, the Artists Quarreled, and Thomas Edison Became a Count* (New York: Viking, 2009), 121.

<sup>98</sup> The poster and the truth behind its maxim were even referred to in an *Art Amateur* article in 1900 regarding a proposed hall of fame at New York’s Columbia College. Addressing how the decision to admit the hall of fame’s esteemed members would be made, the article mentioned “such picturesque individuals as Colonel William F. Cody (in his great act of turning his back on the image of Napoleon I)” and cautioned that “artists, it is well to remember, will have all to say in the long run.” “The Note-Book,” *The Art Amateur* 43, no. 1 (June 1900): 1.

<sup>99</sup> Ashton, *Rosa Bonheur*, 144.

wherever she pleased on the Wild West grounds, which were located just outside the site of the Universelle Exposition, and to sketch or paint whatever and whenever inspiration struck.<sup>100</sup> Newspapers reported on her visit, using language that may have inspired the caption of the Courier lithograph. “The Wild West is to be perpetuated on canvas by Rosa Bonheur,” proclaimed *Zion’s Herald* in October 1889.<sup>101</sup> Underscoring the long-lived cachet that the exhibition’s press agents felt Bonheur’s presence on their grounds lent to the show, a courier published over a decade after the Wild West’s six-month stand “on the shores of the Seine” includes an article that describes the artist’s motives for establishing herself as an artist-in-residence.<sup>102</sup> It quotes a statement of gratitude she supposedly made to Buffalo Bill himself, which may be as much a blend of fact and fantasy as the scene depicted in the “Art Perpetuating Fame” poster: “You have brought to my very doorstep the life I have been dreaming of for years and which my age and sex made it impossible for me to seek in the heart of your American Continent. It has as exhibition an art education educational advantage as marked as its historical value, and is altogether the most wonderful exhibition in the world.”<sup>103</sup>

During her time with the Wild West, Bonheur made seventeen paintings and countless sketches. The majority of her output focused on depictions of the exhibition’s menagerie and its

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<sup>100</sup> Jill Jonnes, *Eiffel’s Tower*, 243; and Ashton, *Rosa Bonheur*, 155–53. Cody was one of three Honorary Commissioners appointed by the governor of Nebraska who represented the United States at the Universal Exposition. *Reports of the U. S. Commissioners to the Universal Exposition of 1889 at Paris* vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1891), 80.

<sup>101</sup> “About Men,” *Zion’s Herald* 67, no. 43 (23 October 1889): 342.

<sup>102</sup> Many sources claim that the Wild West performed just outside Paris for seven months in 1889, while others shorten the troupe’s stay to only six or seven weeks, but the stand was from May 18 through November 14, 1889. Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Route List, BBHC, 2012.

<sup>103</sup> “Rosa Bonheur,” 1900 Wild West courier, 8, CWML.

Indian performers.<sup>104</sup> The most well-known result of her association with the Wild West, however, was a small equestrian portrait she painted of Guillaume Buffalo.<sup>105</sup> (Figure 1.30) Bonheur's representation of a dark-haired Cody in buckskins gazing with intensity over his shoulder while astride a white-charger has affinities with Frenzeny's rendering of the scout and the posters, such as the 1898 Enquirer twelve-sheet it inspired. However, the still-smoking Winchester in Cody's firm grip and the pistol that hangs conspicuously from his saddle in Frenzeny's composition are absent in Bonheur's canvas, where the subject is simply "The Man on Horse" as the French artist's portrait is described in a 1895 Wild West courier that is embellished with the "Art Perpetuating Fame" composition on its cover.<sup>106</sup> Additionally, the cavalrymen and the see-for-miles western plains setting of Frenzeny's scene have been replaced in Bonheur's portrait by lush trees and a locale more reminiscent of the forest of Fontainebleau than the American frontier.<sup>107</sup> Wild West general manager and chief publicist Major John Burke's 1893 history of the exhibition includes an illustration that shows the artist at her easel in

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<sup>104</sup> Gabriel P. Weisberg, "Rosa Bonheur's Reception in England and America: The Popularization of a Legend and a Celebration of a Myth," in *Rosa Bonheur: All Nature's Children* (New York: Dahesh Museum, 1998), 21. See also Leigh Jerrard, "Rosa Bonheur Revealed as a Painter of Westerns. French Artist, Famed for 'The Horse Fair,' Depicted Scenes from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show; List of Subjects Given," *Westerners Brand Book* 10, no. 6 (August 1953): 41–42.

<sup>105</sup> Although it is Bonheur's portrait of Buffalo Bill that is the most widely known product of the artist's association with the Wild West, it was the Indian performers that most fascinated her. "I have a veritable passion, you know, for this unfortunate race," she said when discussing her time with the Wild West, "and I deplore that it is disappearing before the White usurpers." Quoted in Ashton, *Rosa Bonheur*, 155. See also Klumpke, *Rosa Bonheur*, 24 and 193; and T. C. Crawford, "Treated as Princes by Rosa Bonheur," *New York Herald*, 1892, Bonheur curatorial object file, Whitney Gallery of Western Art, BBHC.

<sup>106</sup> 1895 Wild West courier, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DLP, Box 2, Folder 6.

<sup>107</sup> Some sources locate the site where Cody and Tucker posed for Bonheur as Chateau de By at the edge of Fontainebleau, including an article published in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* just weeks following Bonheur's death in 1899. "Rosa Bonheur's Life's Work," *Brooklyn (NY) Daily Eagle*, September 13, 1882, 22. See also Rosalia Shriver, *Rosa Bonheur with a Checklist of Works in American Collections* (Philadelphia: Art Alliance Press, 1982), 43.



similarly verdant surroundings.<sup>108</sup> It places Bonheur in a heavily forested and densely ferned and flowered landscape. She is swathed from bonneted-head to cape-covered toe in dark fabrics, her open paint box on a chair positioned at her side, brushes in hand. Her equestrian portrait of Buffalo Bill is on her easel, in a state of near finality, if not completion. The artist, her wardrobe and pose, and the tools and product of her trade are identical to an 1889 photograph that also provided source imagery for Courier's "Art Perpetuating Fame" lithographs, although the environment in which she is situated greatly differs.<sup>109</sup> (Figure 1.31) Although Bonheur sits at her easel amidst ferns and flowers in the 1893 illustration and in an expansive field in the Courier posters, in the photograph she is posed in a dirt arena against a white wooden fence. Where trees stood in the illustration and army tents and tepees occupy the posters, an empty grandstand looms instead. Whether Bonheur painted Cody when he visited Chateau de By or from studies made during sittings with the showman in the exhibition's camp, the repeated reproduction in programs and couriers of this carefully staged photograph of the artist seemingly in the act of creation is evidence of a strong desire to link the Wild West to artistic production as directly and intimately as possible.<sup>110</sup> In 1901 the photograph was reproduced in *The Wild West Illustrated* and described as "a portrait of the artist herself in the very act of painting the

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<sup>108</sup> John M. Burke, *Buffalo Bill from Prairie to Palace: An Authentic History of the Wild West* (Chicago and New York: Rand, McNally and Co., Publishers, 1893), 235.

<sup>109</sup> Rosa Bonheur, 1889, DPL, Salsbury Collection, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, Album 1, NS-361.

<sup>110</sup> The 1900 courier mentions that Bonheur made studies on site at the Wild West from which she painted the portrait. 1900 Wild West courier, 8, CWML. An article published in the *New-York Tribune*, however, claimed that Bonheur painted the portrait on the show grounds, citing the 1899 photograph, which it reproduced, as proof. "Buffalo Bill's Portrait," *New-York Tribune*, April 29, 1900, C14-15. For the Wild West's many reproductions of the 1889 photograph of Bonheur see, for example, the 1895 Wild West courier, 3, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 6; *The Wild West Illustrated* 2 no. 8 (1901): 3, CWML; and "Art and the Artists: The Living Models for Great Painters," *Rough Rider* 6 (1911): 13, CWML.

picture...seen by more millions of people than any public character in the world's history."<sup>111</sup> As late as 1911, the photograph appeared in the Wild West's *Rough Rider* herald with the caption "Rosa Bonheur at the Easel. (From an actual photograph taken while painting the portrait of 'Buffalo Bill,' Paris, 1889)."<sup>112</sup> (Figure 1.32)

The paint on Bonheur's canvas was scarcely dry before her portrait of the famous scout received notice by international press. Some of the articles included lofty predictions for its destiny, both in terms of the location where it should be hung as well as its symbolic import. The *Washington Daily Post* quoted a *London Evening News* account that indicated that the painting would soon be on its way to Washington, D.C. The *Post* editorialized that Congress should not hesitate to designate a "conspicuous place in the Senate Chamber" to install the portrait, citing it as "emblematic of the new States that have just come in off Bill's ranch."<sup>113</sup> Despite the reports that following the Wild West's stand just outside Paris, the painting would be en route to the nation's capital, the actual destination of the painting was Cody's home, Welcome Wigwam, in North Platte, Nebraska. According to the oft-repeated lore surrounding Bonheur's portrait, when Cody received a telegram reporting that Welcome Wigwam had caught fire, he replied, "Save Rosa Bonheur's picture, and the house may go to blazes."<sup>114</sup> The volunteer fire brigade was

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<sup>111</sup> *The Wild West Illustrated* 2, no. 8 (1901): 3, CWML.

<sup>112</sup> "Art and the Artists: The Living Models for Great Painters," *Rough Rider* 6 (1911): 13, CWML.

<sup>113</sup> Untitled newspaper article, *Washington Post*, December 8, 1889, 4. The "new States" to which the article refers include North and South Dakota, Montana, and Washington, all of which were granted statehood in November 1889. The story of Bonheur's portrait of Cody heading to the United States Capitol was reported in many newspapers, but not all were as enthusiastic as the *Washington Post*. The *Topeka Weekly Capital* praised the painting and lauded Buffalo Bill as "a pride to his fellow country," but concluded that "he is just not the kind of stuff to honor as a national hero in the capitol." "Colonel William F. Cody," *Topeka (KS) Weekly Capital*, December 12, 1889, 4.

<sup>114</sup> Helen Wetmore Cody, *Buffalo Bill, Last of the Great Scouts: The Life Story of Colonel William F. Cody* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 266.

successful in rescuing much of Welcome Wigwam's contents, allowing the portrait to hang later on the walls of the Irma, Buffalo Bill's hotel in the Wyoming town that bore his name.

Although Buffalo Bill valued Bonheur's painting as an object to be cherished, the fact that the famous artist had painted him in the first place turned out to be more sacred and significant than the actual portrait. When promotional materials were being prepared for the Wild West's return engagement in France in 1905, Weiners lithographic firm in Paris published an adaptation of Bonheur's canvas six years after the French artist's death. (Figure 1.33) The poster is "signed" and dated beneath the hooves of Cody's steed and bears a card laid illusionistically across its lower left corner that reads: "The last of the great scouts. Portrait on horse of Col. W. F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) from the famous painting of Rosa Bonheur." The preposition "from" is key. Although the Weiners lithograph and several other versions of it bear Bonheur's signature, the likeness of Buffalo Bill she painted in 1889 was altered for its transformation into a poster. Her impression of Buffalo Bill was rendered in a much less painterly manner. Among other modified details, Cody dark hair and goatee have silvered (effectively and appropriately aging the sitter sixteen years) and the shape of his sombrero has changed. It is an often repeated bit of Buffalo Bill lore that Cody eventually grew dissatisfied with Bonheur's depiction of him. According to the well-worn tale, he asked the Paris and Munich-trained Robert Ottokar Lindneux, whom he met when the Wild West performed just outside the Exposition Universelle in 1889, to repaint his face on Bonheur's canvas.<sup>115</sup> Recent technical examination of Bonheur's portrait of Cody under ultraviolet light and with a microscope does not support this claim,

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<sup>115</sup> Russell, *Lives and Legends*, 350.

however.<sup>116</sup> The evolutionary process from Bonheur's original portrait to its approximation on Wild West posters and other promotional materials included, instead, an intermediary step—an undated painting *après* Bonheur by Lindneux. (Figure 1.34) It is, in fact, Lindneux's version of Buffalo Bill based on Bonheur's painting that had been adapted to advertise the Wild West.<sup>117</sup> And, it appears that adjustments had already been incorporated into the Wild West's repertoire of images even before Weiners published their posters in 1905. In 1902 the Courier Lithographic Company published a courier with an aged version of Lindneux's portrait after Bonheur on its cover. (Figure 1.35)

The continual reminders issued by the Wild West of Bonheur's connection to the exhibition years after the fact also underscore a frequently emphasized symbiotic relationship between artists, Buffalo Bill, and his spectacle. With artists consistently rubbing elbows with emperors, prelates, and kings on the roster of distinguished visitors touted by the exhibition, it was clearly viewed as a benefit to the Wild West to have such representatives of high-mindedness and culture seated in its grandstands or wandering its grounds with sketchbooks in hand, "looking for subjects for their brush and chisel."<sup>118</sup> Simultaneously, an artist's own reputation could be polished due to a connection with the Wild West, an advantage scholar of French art Gabriel Weisberg notes was not lost on Bonheur, who was exceptionally savvy in the power of publicity.<sup>119</sup> Additionally, the exhibition's promotional materials' bold assertions such

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<sup>116</sup> Technical report by Carmen Bria based on an examination of Bonheur's *Col. William F. Cody* (1889) made on November 12–13, 2012, BBHC. I am grateful to Beverly N. Perkins, chief conservator at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, for her generosity in sharing this report with me.

<sup>117</sup> Friesen, *Buffalo Bill*, 78.

<sup>118</sup> Burke, *Buffalo Bill from Prairie to Palace*, 236.

<sup>119</sup> Weisberg, "Rosa Bonheur's Reception in England and America," 5 and 21.

as “No more permanent good has been accomplished by the Wild West’s existence than the influence that it has had on art, sculpture and painting,” highlight its management’s aspirations.<sup>120</sup> That the Wild West would have lasting value beyond its ability to thrill and entertain was keenly desired. Indeed the Wild West perpetuated art just as art perpetuated its fame. The article from an 1895 courier that contained this statement goes on to stress the advantages a visit to the Wild West could offer European artists whose conceptions of the American West, and especially its native inhabitants, were often ill informed. When the Wild West visited Munich, Rome, and Florence, the author contended, these art centers “reveled, and in the future the stirring scenes of the Western American frontier will occupy the space its deserves in all the art galleries of the Old World.”<sup>121</sup> General manager Burke also expressed the management’s hope that the exhibition’s ability to attract and inspire such distinguished foreign artists as Bonheur might encourage American painters and sculptors “to find in their own country material enough to prevent their going to other lands to get artistic inspiration.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> “Rosa Bonheur,” 1895 Wild West courier, 3, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 6. This article included a drawing captioned “Rosa Bonheur painting Col. Cody and horse, Paris, 188.,” that showed the ubiquitous image of Bonheur with her paint box, palette, brushes, easel and portrait of Buffalo Bill but against a forest of tepees and tents populated by Wild West performers of all types, including Indians, Arabs, Cossacks, Irish Lancers, and cowboys.

<sup>121</sup> “Rosa Bonheur,” 1895 Wild West courier, 3, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 6.

<sup>122</sup> Burke, *Buffalo Bill from Prairie to Palace*, 238.

## Buffalo Bill as Buffalo Hunter

The vignette at the lower left of the 1898 Enquirer poster takes as its subject a truly American tradition that enticed artists long before Cody engaged in it or replicated it in the Wild West—the buffalo hunt.<sup>123</sup> Although the visual trope of the hunt was not distinctly American, the massive quarry was. The buffalo became an icon of the American West and its pursuit the great sport of the plains. Nineteenth-century American artists such as Titian Ramsay Peale, George Catlin, Alfred Jacob Miller, John Mix Stanley, and Carl Wimar depicted buffalo chases and hunts in which the native species was dispatched by men who shared its indigenous pedigree, reflecting the reliance on the animal by many Plains Indians tribes for subsistence as well as ceremonial purposes.<sup>124</sup> Other artists pictured white hunters in pursuit of buffalo. In 1862 Currier and Ives published a lithograph based on Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait's *Buffalo Hunt* painted the preceding year. (Figure 1.36) The popularity of images such as Tait's signaled the beasts' increasing value to the country's non-indigenous population and its foreign visitors, not only as a source of food and hides, but also as entertainment. Vivid descriptions of thrills elicited by buffalo hunting—even for women—peppered contemporary newspapers and periodicals, with railroads promoting the sport as a leisure activity for tourists as early as 1868.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Historian of Cody and Wild West Don Russell speculates that it is likely that publicity for Buffalo Bill's Wild West contributed to the use of the word "buffalo" to apply to the animal technically known as "bison." Russell, *Lives and Legends*, 348. "Buffalo" will be used here as it was more common parlance during the Wild West's heyday.

<sup>124</sup> For more on the buffalo as an artistic subject see Larry Barsness, *The Bison in Art: A Graphic Chronicle of the American Bison* (Fort Worth, TX: Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1977); and Brian W. Dippie, "'Flying Buffaloes': Artists and the Buffalo Hunt," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 51, no. 2 (September 2001): 2–19. For the connection between many Plains Indians and buffalo, see entry on buffalo, in *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, ed., David J. Wishart (Lincoln: Center for Great Plains Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2004), 576–77; and Paul H. Carlson, *The Plains Indians* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998), 42.

<sup>125</sup> Buffalo hunts often made headlines during the last decades of the nineteenth century, not only in specialized publications dedicated to sport and outdoor pursuits, but also in the daily press. "Description of an Exciting Buffalo

Legends and names were to be made through buffalo hunting for both sustenance and for sport. This was surely the case for Buffalo Bill. His prowess at bringing down his prey—4,280 animals in a mere eight months between 1867 and 1868—while under contract with the Goddard Brothers who supplied meat to Kansas Pacific Railroad crews, inspired his moniker as well the frontier rhyme: “Buffalo Bill, Buffalo Bill / Never missed and never will; / Always aims and shoots to kill / And the company pays his buffalo bill,” which Cody proudly included in his 1879 autobiography.<sup>126</sup> He also served as a celebrity guide for hunting parties composed of military officers, scientists, journalists, East coast elite, and foreign dignitaries eager for what Buffalo Bill scholar Juti Winchester has termed “a mediated yet still authentic experience on the prairie.”<sup>127</sup> The most famous of these many expeditions to increase Cody’s ever growing reputation occurred in January 1872. Cody led Generals Philip Sheridan and George Armstrong Custer, one hundred members of the Brulé Lakota tribe under chief Spotted Tail, and the young Russian Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich on a lavishly appointed buffalo hunt, the plans and realization for which were widely followed by the press. *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, among others, provided details regarding the nearly 500-person entourage and their exploits. It accompanied its report with an illustration by Albert Berghaus of the Grand Duke attempting to

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Hunt—Ladies Take an Active Part in the Sport,” *New York Times*, July 27, 1871, 1; and Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 129.

<sup>126</sup> Cody, *The Life of Hon. William F. Cody*, 162. See also Russell, *Lives and Legends*, 88–90, especially 88–89 for an argument against the often cited eighteen-month duration of Cody’s tenure with the Goddard Brothers. Sensitive to the plight of the buffalo in the late nineteenth-century and in an effort to distance Cody from the reports of their imminent extinction, a biographical article on the front page of an 1884 courier stressed that Cody’s killing of the 4,280 buffalo was strictly “for food purposes.” “W. F. Cody—Buffalo Bill,” 1884 Wild West courier, front page, CWML.

<sup>127</sup> Winchester, “All the West’s a Stage,” 22. See also Russell, *Lives and Legends*, 164–84; Wilson and Martin, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 7–10 and 16–19; and Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 125–49.

shoot a buffalo with his pistol, a tenderfoot error Cody eventually remedied.<sup>128</sup> Years after the fact, the illustrious hunt was firmly established as a defining adventure in Buffalo Bill's biography. In 1894 the painter Louis Maurer dedicated a canvas to the subject (Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY). In 1908 Cincinnati's Strobridge Lithographic Company published a poster that highlighted the hunt as one of six noteworthy events in the life of the showman, while ten years later the cowboy-artist Charles Marion Russell painted *Running Buffalo*, a composition that described Buffalo Bill himself directing the famous hunt (Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, OK).

With the buffalo hunt so central to Cody's identity as well as to the mythology and romance of the frontier, it is no surprise that it was a feature in Buffalo Bill's Wild West for thirty years. During the inaugural season of the Wild West in 1883, the program not only included a rousing illustrated essay titled "The Hunt of the Bison," but also promised that "a reproduction, as far as practical, of the method of buffalo hunting, will be a feature of the Cody & Carver's 'Wild West,' with a herd of bison, real Indians, hunters, and Western ponies."<sup>129</sup> The buffalo hunt, or chase as it was variously known, reenacted by Buffalo Bill alone or in the company of Indians and/or cowboys immediately became a dramatic staple in the Wild West program of spectacles, complete with rifle reports, clouds of smoke, and powder burns. These mock hunts were made to seem all the more exciting, as well as real, through imagery like that

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<sup>128</sup> "Alexis Among the Buffalo," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, February 3, 1872, 325. See also William Tucker, *The Grand Duke Alexis in the United States of America* (1872; rpt. New York: Interland Publishing, 1972).

<sup>129</sup> "The Bison Hunt," 1883 Wild West program, 10, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 7, Folder 19. In typical Wild West fashion, the essay and illustration were reproduced in subsequent programs. Buffalo Bill was not the first to stage a buffalo hunt for an audience. P. T. Barnum may have presented the earliest one in Hoboken, New Jersey, in 1843 with his "Grand Buffalo Hunt" enhanced with Indian dancers. John Springhall, *The Genesis of Mass Culture: Show Business Live in America, 1840–1940* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 106–07.



found in the lower left corner of the 1898 Enquirer twelve-sheet. Like the two action-packed vignettes at the corners of the upper register of the Enquirer poster, the gripping scene at the lower left that so ably transports viewers to the West is based on a drawing by Carl Henckel included in the portfolios and albums of his art published in 1891.<sup>130</sup> (Figure 1.15)

Backed by a majestic mountain range, Buffalo Bill charges on horseback diagonally across the composition through long prairie grasses. He confidently raises Lucretia Borgia, his favored single-shot Springfield rifle, steadies his unerring gaze, and takes aim at a scattering herd of wild-eyed buffalo. The artist responsible for translating Henckel's version of the buffalo chase to the Enquirer lithograph simplified and cropped the composition to omit two figures who accompanied Cody in the heat of the hunt. The pair of mounted Indians with bows drawn tautly who race along with the legendary buffalo slayer is omitted. As in the other Enquirer vignettes, the spotlight belongs to Buffalo Bill; like the winning of the West, this is a white man's game. An Indian might assist him by tossing glass balls in the air in the scene at the upper left corner, but the glory of this hunt is not to be shared, despite the reality in the West or the Wild West. There is literally and figuratively no room for equal partners in the vignette, but in what may be an acknowledgement that a successful buffalo chase is unlikely to result from a solo endeavor, the Enquirer artist added a fellow buckskin-clad pursuant, barely visibly in the middle distance, to aid Cody, but not outshine him.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Henckel, *Buffalo Bill und Sein Wilder Westen*, unpaginated.

<sup>131</sup> Interestingly, the same year that the Indians were edited from the Enquirer poster, one appeared in pursuit of a buffalo on a four-cent postage stamp adapted the Bureau of Engraving and Printing from a Seth Eastman composition and issued in conjunction with the Trans-Mississippi Exposition held in Omaha, Nebraska. *The American Philatelist* 113: 692.

The elimination of the Indians is not the only erasure. A calf that struggles to keep pace with the rapidly dispersing herd in Henckel's drawing has also been deleted from the Enquirer poster, the space it previously occupied condensed as if it was never there. When Henckel's art was incorporated into a collage of images for the cover of the paperback version of Burke's *Buffalo Bill from Prairie to Palace* sold during the Wild West's run outside the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, the calf was likewise expunged, whereas the Indians were retained.<sup>132</sup> The motivation for the omission in both instances may have been less dictated by matters of composition and more a decision influenced by sensitivities to contemporary fears surrounding the imminent extinction of the buffalo. Even before Cody staged his first hunt in the arena, reports of a dubious future for the continent's largest mammal were already widespread. Headlines predicted "The Doom of the Buffalo—Wholesale Slaughter Thinning Out the Herds."<sup>133</sup> "The Buffalo Slowly Disappearing" rang the lament in newspapers in 1883.<sup>134</sup> The exhibition itself published commentary in its inaugural program that hastened the species' demise, characterizing the buffalo as the "fast-disappearing monarch of the plains" while simultaneously touting the Wild West's "herd of healthy specimens."<sup>135</sup> By 1898, the season Enquirer published its twelve-sheet, the popular magazine *The Youth's Companion* had already explained the disappearance of the buffalo to its young readers and their families. It faulted the

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<sup>132</sup> The cover of this version of Burke's book is reproduced in Wojtowicz, *The W. F. Cody Collector's Guide*, 127. The first time that buffalo appear on the cover of a Wild West program as quarry rather than a picturesque element lending ambiance is on the cover of the second of the two programs issued for the 1893 season. See *Ibid.*, 23 for a reproduction of both covers from that year. Cody shooting buffalo does appear on the back cover of the 1886 program. 1886 Wild West program, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 20.

<sup>133</sup> E. V. S., "The Doom of the Buffalo—Wholesale Slaughter Thinning Out the Herds," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 10, 1882, 15.

<sup>134</sup> "The Buffalo Slowly Disappearing," *New York Times*, September 10, 1883, 5.

<sup>135</sup> "The Buffalo," 1883 Wild West program, 23, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 7, Folder 19.

railroad for providing access and encouraging easy shots from the safety of its passenger cars and condemned wanton slaughter by hide hunters. The didactic article vividly described the mountains of bleaching buffalo bones that littered the plains, citing the gathering of over thirty-one million skeletons for carbon works in St. Louis and other cities.<sup>136</sup> Even Buffalo Bill himself, in an essay on big game hunting, quoted no less a western authority than General William Tecumseh Sherman who firmly stated that the showman's namesake "all are now gone."<sup>137</sup> Sobering reports from Smithsonian Institution scientists on the herds' dwindling numbers, calls for corrective action by Congress, and the proposal of preservation strategies through the establishment of breeding ranches lest "the taxidermist... present all that is left of the king of the plains" were all familiar.<sup>138</sup> In such an atmosphere, promoting the Wild West with a depiction of its star gunning down a defenseless buffalo calf—a prince of the prairie, emblem of the next generation on this frontier monarchy—may have been deemed unsavory.

Why then reenact the buffalo chase each season and continue to include it in Wild West advertising such as the 1898 Enquirer poster? This was the era of fraternal societies for

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<sup>136</sup> "Why They Disappeared," *The Youth's Companion* 72, no. 3 (20 January 1898): 36. For more on the common frontier phenomenon of mind-boggling mounds of buffalo bones and their commodification, see C. H. Ames, "The Passing of the Buffalo," *Forest and Stream* 26, no. 8 (18 March 1886): 144; and "The Extinction of the Buffalo," *Friends' Intelligencer* 47, no. 44 (1 November 1890): 704. See also John R. Cook, *The Border and the Buffalo* (Topeka, KS: Crane and Company, 1907), 135.

<sup>137</sup> Col. Wm. F. Cody, "Big-Game Hunting in the Far West," *The Independent* 49, no. 2531 (3 June 1897): 4. The letter by Sherman from which Cody quotes attempts to cheer the reader that the estimated 9,500,000 buffalo that roamed between the Missouri River and the Rockies after the Civil War "have been replaced by twice as many meat cattle." Sherman continues with an admission that the fate of the buffalo adversely affected the indigenous people dependent on the animals, but offers by way of consolation that they "have been replaced by twice as many white men and women, who have made the earth to blossom as the rose and who can be counted, taxed, and governed by the laws of nature and civilization"—a statement that casts the elimination of the Indians in the Enquirer buffalo hunt vignette in a more sinister light. *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Frank G. Carpenter, "The Last of the Buffalo," *Los Angeles Times*, February 9, 1896, 13; "Rival of Buffalo Bill," *Washington Post*, June 6, 1897, 27; and Albert Huber, "Practical Plan to Preserve the King of the Plains," *Washington Post*, March 20, 1898, 28. See also William T. Hornaday, "The Extermination of the American Bison," *Report of the National Museum, 1886-'87* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1889): 369–548.

gentleman hunters, such as the Boone and Crockett Club founded in 1887 that counted among its members the author Owen Wister, the historian Francis Parkman, and the artists Albert Bierstadt and Frederic Remington. These organizations championed hunting as an insurance towards a “vigorous and masterful people” distinguished by “energy, resolution, manliness, self-reliance, and a capacity for self-help,” characteristics “without which no race can do its life work well” to quote Boone and Crockett Club co-founder Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>139</sup> Additionally, as Cody explained in 1897, “buffalo hunting is now a thing of the past... a phase of American hunting life which will never be forgotten.”<sup>140</sup> Viewed through the veil of history—“a buffalo hunt as in old times”—the spectacle symbolized both the West as well as its transformation.<sup>141</sup> The performance and promotion of the buffalo hunt spectacle contributed to the educational mission of the exhibition, while the animal performers, the fourth largest herd in captivity, constituted an act of conservation, allowing spectators to lay eyes on the endangered beasts and stoking preservationist sentiments.

The West was not the West without buffalo or at least their memory. Nor was Buffalo Bill Buffalo Bill without his namesake, or his Wild West the Wild West without the beast as a sort of shorthand logo. Posters that feature the buffalo hunt are not numerous. However, other instances include a double appearance in the early 1880s biographical poster published by A. Hoen and Company (Figure 1.4), as well as a pair of twentieth-century examples dating to 1907 and 1910 published by Cincinnati’s Strobridge Lithographic Company and Russell and Morgan

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<sup>139</sup> Roosevelt quoted in Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 37. For more on groups like the Boone and Crockett Club in the late-nineteenth century, see George B. Ward, “Bloodbrothers in the Wilderness,” PhD dissertation (University of Texas, Austin, 1981).

<sup>140</sup> Col. Wm. F. Cody, “Big-Game Hunting in the Far West,” *Independent* 49, no. 2531 (3 June 1897): 4.

<sup>141</sup> “Wild West in the Arena,” *New York Times*, April 24, 1900, 2.

Printing Company respectively (Figures 1.37 and 1.38). While their numbers may not have appeared great on posters, buffalo faced no threat of extinction as a trademark for the Wild West and Cody. From the start the beasts stampeded and grazed their way through Wild West programs and couriers. Buffalo in silhouette adorned flags flown during the exhibition while their flesh-and-blood counterparts raced around the arena. Caricatures that conflated man and beast giving visual form to Cody's sobriquet abounded, including the so-called *Fancy Portrait* signed "A. B." preserved in the Wild West scrapbook in 1892 (Figure 1.39).

Six years following the whimsical *Fancy Portrait*, concurrent with Enquirer's publication of the twelve-sheet lithograph, the New York map printing firm Bien and Company contracted with the Wild West for a single season of show bills. Another union of the Colonel and a buffalo resulted that evolved into one of the most iconic mergers. (Figure 1.40) The horizontal one-sheet lithograph is dominated by a bounding buffalo. His massive hump provides ample real estate for a profile portrait of Cody, offset from the shaggy hide by the familiar cameo device. "I am Coming" the poster proclaims. The pronoun refers not only to the showman, but encompasses all that he represents for Buffalo Bill himself had become emblematic of his exhibition. A testament to this phenomenon is the jettisoning of the show's title from both this lithograph and the Enquirer twelve-sheet.<sup>142</sup> Other show printers subsequently refined and reanimated Bien and Company's design. In 1900 the Courier Lithographic Company freed the charging buffalo from the confines of the composition. (Figure 1.41) Horn and hoof break through the margins while foam flies across the animal's muzzle, adding a degree of energy and excitement absent in the

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<sup>142</sup> Banners could be pasted to the lower edge of the posters to confirm the date, time, and place where Buffalo Bill and his Wild West would be seen. The exhibition's title may have been printed there as well, relegated, as such, to the "fine print." More often than not, however, the exhibition's title would be printed on the poster itself, in addition to a likely appearance in an appended banner, making the various versions of the "I am Coming" lithograph noteworthy.

more static prototype. The heads of both the buffalo and Bill are rendered in three-quarters profile, which likewise increases the potency and appeal of the image over the earlier Bien and Company poster in which the protagonists are presented nearly in profile. In Courier's version, as well as later adaptations such as the French firm Weiners' 1905 translation (Figure 1.42) and an 1908 iteration by Strobridge Lithographic Company (Figure 1.43), Cody faces the same direction as the buffalo who speeds him from the frontier to the Wild West arena. Rather than a passive passenger who gazes over already traveled ground as in the Bien and Company example, Cody, in the later versions, although silver-haired and noticeably aging, pilots this bovine ferry. He is in charge of his destiny and looks towards future conquests. In a sad bit of irony, however, even after Buffalo Bill lost control of his enterprise due to financial insolvency, this motif continued to be used. It promoted his turn with the Sells-Floto Circus in a 1914 Russell and Morgan Printing Company poster and appeared on the cover of the 101 Ranch's Wild West Show in 1916, Cody's final year as a performer.<sup>143</sup>

Despite the Wild West's efforts to preserve its relevance with contemporary references—tributes to Cuban insurgents, a restaged Battle of Tien-Tsin, or the introduction of a rolling, electrified version of the "I am Coming" poster as an "automobile buffalo" complete with flashing eyes, fiery nostrils, and an illuminated portrait of Cody (Figure 1.43)—the majority of the spectacles presented, along with Buffalo Bill himself were relics of a bygone era.<sup>144</sup> They were collection of specimens real in every sense of the word, yet carefully arranged and fastidiously presented. As such, Cody and his enterprise exemplify a Gilded Age penchant

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<sup>143</sup> The poster is in the collection of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center; the program cover is reproduced in Wojtowicz, *The W. F. Cody Buffalo Bill Collector's Guide*, 47.

<sup>144</sup> For more on the Wild West's "automobile buffalo," see "A Bounding Bovine of the Billowing Prairie," *Rough Rider* 6 (1911): 13, CWML.

towards nostalgia, accumulation, and display. These characteristics further suggests affinities with still life, particularly of the *trompe l'oeil* variety popular in late nineteenth century America. Much like William Harnett, the preeminent American exponent of the genre, who earned renown by “dusting off old objects and bathing them in reverential light,” Buffalo Bill achieved acclaim by offering “days and deeds of men and methods, that can return no more; a marvelous, masterly, glorious and instructive incarnation of romantic fact.”<sup>145</sup> Consistently billed as historic and genuine, Cody and his Wild West were calculated to appear real, to fool the eye while delighting the imagination with the aura of authenticity.

A still-life aesthetic also permeated the visual culture associated with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West. Photographs of Cody circulated in which the showman was posed much the same way he appeared in the central element in the early 1880s biographic poster from A. Hoen and Company (Figure 1.4), with accoutrements that connote the West arrayed aesthetically at his side. (Figure 1.44) Caches of artfully arranged weapons—often a mix of Indian and non-native arms—accented by feathers, beads, saddles, and other paraphernalia frequently embellish exhibition posters and other printed material. (Figures 1.45 and 1.46) These carefully curated collections not only functioned as a design element introduced to provide added visual interest, but they also increased a critical sense of place, as well as time. Often a buffalo head trophy, such as the ornaments on either side of Cody’s portrait in the 1898 Enquirer lithograph, anchors these Western assemblages as it does on the program cover for the debut of Wild West in 1883. (Figure 1.18) The imposing head of the majestic beast dominates the program cover. Offset against a patriotic palette of red, white, and blue contributed by a pair of flags and a shield, the

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<sup>145</sup> David M. Lubin, *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 302; and Nate Salisbury, “Introductory,” 1899 Wild West program, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 33.

buffalo head dwarfs the portraits of the Hon. Wm. F. Cody and Dr. Wm. F. Carver as well as the picturesque profile of an Indian at the lower edge of the composition. A powerful symbol of the frontier, trademark of the Wild West, namesake of its progenitor, and, in its stuffed and mounted form, emblem of the taming of a region critical to the nation's ethos and the passing of a defining era in its history, the buffalo is the multivalent centerpiece of a heraldic image, a Western coat of arms. A close relative of that same buffalo appears in a series of *trompe l'oeil* still-life paintings by the American artist Astley D. M. Cooper, including *Relics of the Past*, circa 1910, owned by Buffalo Bill himself.<sup>146</sup> (Figure 1.47)

The West was in Cooper's blood. The native of St. Louis, Missouri, was the great nephew of the explorer William Clark and the grandson of Major Benjamin O'Fallon, an agent for the Missouri River Indian tribes who collected Indian artifacts and was an early patron of George Catlin.<sup>147</sup> After traveling west to find inspiration for his own sketches and paintings of Indians, Cooper worked as an illustrator assigned to the Custer campaign by *Frank Leslie's Weekly* and eventually made his way to California.<sup>148</sup> Earning a reputation as an Indian painter and portraitist, he opened a studio, first in San Francisco, and then in San Jose, where he

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<sup>146</sup> In addition to the painting owned by Buffalo Bill that hung in his hotel, The Irma, in the Wyoming town he established, other examples of this series include *Trophies of the Hunt* (circa 1910; William B. Ruger Collection) and an untitled canvas (1905; Greg and Petra Martin Collection). The former is illustrated in Adrienne Ruger Conzelman, Linda S. Ferber, and Peter H. Hassrick, *After the Hunt: The Art Collection of William B. Ruger* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002), 54, the latter in Wilson and Martin, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, 235.

<sup>147</sup> *A Festival of Western Art at Hirschl & Adler* (New York: Hirschl and Adler, 1984), 49; Wilson and Martin, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, 234; and Selby Kiffer, "Four Paintings by George Catlin from the Benjamin O'Fallon Collection," *American Paintings, Drawings & Sculpture at Sotheby's New York*, 1 December 2011, Lots 73–76.

<sup>148</sup> Wilson and Martin, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, 234; and entry on Cooper in Conzelman, Ferber, and Hassrick, *After the Hunt*, 54.



amassed a collection of western props and artifacts.<sup>149</sup> It was likely in San Jose where the artist met Buffalo Bill when the Wild West performed there in September 1909.<sup>150</sup> Art historian Angela Miller places Cooper's *Relics of the Past* in a category of paintings that present the West as a mythic site that exists "only through representations, trophies, and icons." She deftly points out its complex layers of illusions, such as the painted photographs of Cody and Sitting Bull who played themselves in the arena, and the increasing primacy of depiction over lived experience—a phenomenon on which the Wild West depended for its success, but that it concealed in rhetoric of the genuine, the real, and the authentic.<sup>151</sup>

An article published in the exhibition's *Rough Rider* explains the Wild West's philosophy regarding representation versus reality, specifically as it applies to art. "The art connoisseur raves over a painting, not because it is a painting, but because it so nearly resembles nature, and the closer that resemblance the more fascination is produced. . . . But in every instance the reality—the genuine article—is more interesting and causes a deeper feeling than the art and artist do with their best works of imitation."<sup>152</sup> To prove the point, one can imagine this statement accompanied by a painting such as *Relics of the Past* or, better yet, an earlier, now-lost, *trompe l'oeil* still life inspired by Cody. (Figure 1.48) In 1894 the artist George Cope began painting, "to

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<sup>149</sup> Robert E. Bonner, "'Not an imaginary picture altogether, but in part': The Artistic Legacy of Buffalo Bill Cody," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 61, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 57; and Wilson and Martin, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, 234.

<sup>150</sup> Buffalo Bill's Wild West Route List, BBHC, 2012. For more on Cooper and an assessment of him as a member of the "third circle" of American artists who contributed to the still life genre in the late nineteenth century, see Alfred Victor Frankenstein, *After the Hunt: William Harnett and Other American Still Life Painters, 1870–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953), 156.

<sup>151</sup> Angela Miller, "Chasing the Phantom: Cultural Memory in the Image of the West," in *Redrawing Boundaries: Perspectives on Western American Art* (Denver, CO: Institute of Western American Art, Denver Art Museum, 2007), 76.

<sup>152</sup> "Art and the Artists," *Rough Rider* 6 (1911): 13, CWML.

the order of a well-known wealthy Philadelphian,” *Buffalo Bill’s Outfit* based on trappings borrowed from Buffalo Bill himself.<sup>153</sup> Echoing Harnett’s manly cabin-door compositions, Cope’s life-sized depiction of Cody’s hat, lariat, weapons, quarry, and buckskin hunting jacket was rated “his masterpiece,” a painting “exceedingly fine in handling and close to the thing itself.”<sup>154</sup> Although admired for its meticulous approximation of “the thing itself” and likely as well for the aura surrounding the objects it simulated, this composite image was not a replacement for “the genuine article” as privileged in the *Rough Rider* essay. The objects replicated in *Buffalo Bill’s Outfit* did not add up to Buffalo Bill.

Turning this notion on its head, however, is a Wild West half-sheet poster that offers the sum of Buffalo Bill achieved through the parts of a disassembled Western still life. (Figure 1.49) Channeling paintings by the idiosyncratic Italian artist Giuseppe Arcimboldo such as *The Librarian*, circa 1566, that depicts the prolific court historian Wolfgang Lazius as, literally, a man of books (Figure 1.50), Alick P. F. Ritchie, a British cartoonist and caricaturist, charmed a bevy of frontier ciphers to coalesce and form a convincing portrait of Cody as a man of the West.<sup>155</sup> Described and defined by the tools of his trade, the amalgamated Buffalo Bill likewise

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<sup>153</sup> “A Fine Work of Art,” *Daily Local News* (West Chester, PA), June 21, 1894; and “George Cope’s Latest Painting on Exhibition in Philadelphia,” *Daily Local News* (West Chester, PA), March 23, 1895, Chester County Historical Society Library (hereafter CCHSL). See also Alfred H. Ritter, “Is Art Progressing?,” *Arthur’s Home Magazine* 45, no. 12 (December 1895): 963. Early in his career as a melodrama actor, Cody resided in West Chester, see Wayne E. Homan, “Buffalo Bill’s Flop,” *Philadelphia Inquirer Magazine* (1 December 1963), CCHSL. *Buffalo Bill’s Outfit* has also been published as *Buffalo Bill’s Traps*. See Frankenstein, *After the Hunt*, Plate 68.

<sup>154</sup> “A Fine Work of Art,” *Daily Local News* (West Chester, PA), June 21, 1894; and “Artistic,” *Daily Local News* (West Chester, PA), December 19, 1894, CCHSL. The painting was widely exhibited during the spring and summer of 1895, including at the New York hotel, the Hoffman House, well-known for its art as well as for hosting Buffalo Bill as a resident. Untitled newspaper clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester, PA), July 17, 1895, CCHSL. For a discussion of inherent masculinity of many late nineteenth-century American *trompe l’oeil* still-life paintings, see Lubin, *Picturing a Nation*, 278.

<sup>155</sup> For more on Arcimboldo, see Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Arcimboldo: Visual Jokes, National History, and Still Life Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010) as well as Giancarlo Maiorino, *The Portrait of*

relates to composite prints by the French artist Bernard Gaillot, which were discussed and reproduced in a supplement to *Scientific American* in 1885.<sup>156</sup> Gaillot's *Arts et métiers* lithographs of 1838 were clever portraits of representatives from various professions composed with objects closely identified with their vocation. (Figures 1.51 and 1.52) Buffalo Bill appears rather tame when compared to Gaillot's carpenter or café-keeper, but Gaillot's creations were not responsible for promoting a globe-trotting exhibition, nor did they need to communicate so clearly to such a wide audience.

Ritchie's Wild West poster was printed in 1892 by J. Weiner Limited in London where the Wild West had a five-and-a-half month stand that year. (Figure 1.49) It was miniaturized as a postcard in 1903 and 1904, and reissued in Paris in 1905 for the exhibition's year in France.<sup>157</sup> Five years later, Russell and Morgan Printing Company changed the background color from red to light blue and cast Buffalo Bill's inherent "Western-ness" into even greater relief by adding the tag line "A Far Eastern Artist's idea of Buffalo Bill." (Figure 1.53) In each iteration, cartridge belts form eyebrows and stirrups define eyes. An eagle feather bonnet, a pair of snow shoes, and a buffalo head stand in for Cody's signature flowing hair and trademarked mustache and goatee, while more than a dozen additional elements complete his physiognomy, suggest his sombrero and jacket, and spell out the title of his exhibition. The manner in which this portrait is

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*Eccentricity: Arcimboldo and the Mannerist Grotesque* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1991). Ritchie contributed cartoons to *Vanity Fair*, *Sketch*, and *Bystander*, made cubist and futurist-inspired caricatures of celebrities, designed playful cigarette cards that featured a range of public figures from Charlie Chaplin to Winston Churchill and Al Jolson rendered in his unique style. [www.npg.org.uk/collection/search/person/mp07891/alick-pf-ritchie](http://www.npg.org.uk/collection/search/person/mp07891/alick-pf-ritchie), accessed 25 April 2012. The Buffalo Bill Historical Center has in its collections Ritchie's original art for this poster.

<sup>156</sup> "Composite Portraits," *Scientific American* supplement 20, no. 497 (11 July 1885): 7938.

<sup>157</sup> The postcard version of Ritchie's concept is reproduced in Wojtowicz, *The William F. Cody Buffalo Bill Collector's Guide*, 209. The 1905 version is in the collection of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center.

composed of distinct objects aligns with the approach commonly taken in the press to describe Buffalo Bill. In a twist on the notion that a man *is* greater than the sum of his parts, reporters often detailed Cody's appearance piece by piece. They carefully called attention to his identifying features one by one, from hat to high boots, until the parts equaled the whole as if in an effort to discern just what made this man.<sup>158</sup>

As Ritchie's lithographs and postcards emphasize, the West made Buffalo Bill. Buffalo Bill, in turn, made his exhibition in much the same way that Ritchie crafted his portrait, from what one reporter described as "small parts of the good old West...that he is saving in little pieces."<sup>159</sup> Buffalo Bill—champion all-round shot, centaur of the frontier, legendary Chief of Scouts, and buffalo hunter—was simultaneously a collection of the West and a collector of West, a status likewise underscored by the 1898 *Enquirer* twelve-sheet. The numerous posters that bear Cody's likeness perpetuated his embodiment and accumulation of the "small parts" and "little pieces" of the epic, mythic American frontier and all that it symbolized to both Americans and the world. The multitude and variety of "Bill's bills" underscore his reputation as the Wild's West "most absorbing incident" and offer compelling visual evidence that "Buffalo Bill himself is the real attraction."<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> For one of the many examples of this practice, see "Buffalo Bill Dips into the Past and Tells of Changes in the West," *Washington Post*, May 10, 1908, SM8.

<sup>159</sup> "Bill and His Hair at the Garden," *New York Evening Telegram*, March 30, 1899, NSS, Vol. 8, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>160</sup> "Col. Cody's Wild West," *Argus* (Albany, NY), June 15, 1898, NSS, Vol. 7, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18; and "Buffalo Bill," *Terre Haute (IN) Gazette*, October 11, 1899, NSS, Vol. 8, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

### **“The Former Foe—Present Friend, the American”**

With Colonel Cody as the artist, the Wild West gives a detailed picture of Indian life at the times of hostility between the redskins and the whites.

—“Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show Center of Local Interest Today,” *Atlanta Constitution*, October 7, 1907, 6

The redman who roved the continent when Columbus landed represented the fast-disappearing race—‘the last of the Mohicans’—marching by the side of his erstwhile foe, now friend, the scout and frontiersman.

— H. C. Ashbaugh, “The Pride of All,” *Evening Press* (Eau Claire, WI), September 8, 1896<sup>1</sup>

Although William Frederick “Buffalo Bill” Cody himself constituted the premier draw for the Wild West, the hundreds of American Indians who traveled with and performed in his exhibition since its debut in 1883 were also significant inducements. “He [Cody] has with him the greatest celebrities of wild life in the West,” a reporter for *Pomeroy’s Democrat* of New York wrote on July 3, 1886. The article continued:

Among them are nearly two hundred Indians, selected from several of the leading, most powerful tribes now roaming the plains or living in the mountains of the only partly explored country. These Indians, male and female, adults and infants, are perfect specimens of their race and tribes. They are clad in their native costumes, ride their hardy Indian ponies, illustrate the hunt, the scout, the charge, the attack on the cabin of the pioneer, their mode of warfare, of killing and scalping; their war and other dances. . . . A more intense, satisfactory exhibition, illustrative of the actualities and casualties of Western life and warfare cannot possibly be given.<sup>2</sup>

As scholar of American Indian history L. G. Moses notes, “Without them there would have been no Wild West.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Circus World Museum Library, Baraboo, WI (hereafter CWML), Small Collections, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, Clippings, pre-1900.

<sup>2</sup> “Buffalo Bill’s Realism,” *Pomeroy’s Democrat* (New York, NY), July 3, 1886, Nate Salsbury Scrapbooks (hereafter NSS), Vol. 1, Denver Public Library (hereafter DPL), Reel 1, Microfilm 18.

Exhibitions of indigenous people for the edification or entertainment of white audiences were a tradition by the inaugural season of Cody's Wild West. Christopher Columbus returned to Spain from his first voyage with native men, women, and children, and later explorers likewise went back to their home countries with Indians in tow.<sup>4</sup> In the 1830s and 1840s, George Catlin, an artist as concerned with authenticity, education, preservation, and showmanship as Cody, enhanced the dramatic appeal of his painted Indians with those of flesh and blood. He presented the theatrical result to eager audiences at home and abroad. *Catlin's Indian Gallery* of nearly six hundred paintings, sketches, and artifacts opened at Clinton Hall in New York City in 1837 and subsequently traveled to Washington D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Boston before making a return engagement in New York in 1839. The following year Catlin took his *Gallery* to London's Egyptian Hall. He continued to augment the exhibition of his art with lectures and eventually featured *tableaux vivant* that starred members of the Ojibwa and later Iowa tribes as more authentic replacements for the local actors he had originally hired to perform Indian chants and dances. Catlin and his Indians, both on canvas and the real thing, traveled to Paris in 1845.<sup>5</sup> Buffalo Bill's Wild West was an amplified Indian Gallery—an analogy actually suggested by

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<sup>3</sup> L. G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians 1883–1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), xi.

<sup>4</sup> Joy Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory and Popular History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 67; and Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 10–11. For more, see Carolyn Thomas Foreman, *Indians Abroad, 1493–1929* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943), xix.

<sup>5</sup> For more on Catlin, see George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Conditions of the North American Indians: Written During Eight Years' Travel (1832–1839) Amongst the Wildest Tribes of Indians in North America* 2 vols. (London: the author, 1841). See also William H. Truettner, *The Natural Man Observed: A Study of Catlin's Indian Gallery* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979); Harold McCracken, *George Catlin and the Old Frontier* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1959), especially chapters 21 and 22; and John Springhall, *The Genesis of Mass Culture: Show Business Live in America, 1840–1940* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 113–14.

Cody's contemporaries.<sup>6</sup> The exhibition offered "living pictures," as its own programs and many reviews described, that were intensified with rifle reports, puffs of smoke, red-tipped arrows, and, of course, real Indians.

Not only were Indians—or, more correctly, white conceptions of them—synonymous with the West for many who came to see Cody's living-color dramatization of the fading frontier, but their presence in the Wild West arena and on the posters that promoted the exhibition burnished the aura of authenticity promised at every performance, occasional fabrications of tribal associations notwithstanding.<sup>7</sup> "They may not be Arapahoes and Crows, and Shoshones and Blackfeet, and all the rest that the orator in the amphitheatre says they are," a *Harper's Weekly* reporter alleged in 1894, continuing that he suspected "such a mixture would result in continuous bloodshed that would marvelously increase the death rate in Brooklyn. . . . They are genuine Indians, and some are so very genuine that the Indian agents were glad to get rid of them as being the malcontents of their bands."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, several of the genuine Indians most worrisome to the Bureau of Indian Affairs became show Indians who, in performance after performance, provided worthy adversaries for the white race and westward progress, certifying white prowess and making inevitable victories all the more inspiring. Among the Indians considered most dangerous who were granted permission to travel with the Wild West were

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<sup>6</sup> "Washington Letter," *Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York* 1 (1 January 1892): 451.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the "invention" of the "Indian" as a concept, see Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 3–4. Early on Cody actually had been cautioned against using Indians of the sort that would ensure that his exhibition's "everything's genuine" claim rang true. His ranching partner and former scout, Frank North, suggested, "You want about twenty old bucks. Fix them up with all the paint and feathers in the market. . . . To make it go you want a show of illusion no realism." Quoted in Nellie Snyder Yost, *Buffalo Bill: His Family, Friends, Fame, Failures, and Fortunes* (Chicago: Sage Books, 1979), 133.

<sup>8</sup> Julian Ralph, "Behind the 'Wild West' Scenes," *Harper's Weekly* 38, no. 1965 (18 August 1894): 775.

Short Bull, Kicking Bear, Young-Man-Afraid-of-His-Horses, and, most famously, Sitting Bull, all members of the Lakota tribe. Historian Vine Deloria, Jr., asserts that by joining the Wild West, these men were likely spared persecution by the United States government that would have been difficult to escape had they stayed on the reservation. Approximately thirty Indians who had survived the massacre at Wounded Knee and were considered hostile were sent on tour with the Wild West in lieu of a prison sentence.<sup>9</sup> Their participation in simulated assaults against emblems of civilization, such as the iconic emigrant wagon train or settler's cabin, was key to the safe yet stimulating thrills the exhibition offered, while their demonstrations of ceremonial dances and displays of aspects of daily life both in the arena and on the grounds were essential to its educational mission.<sup>10</sup> Indians were also crucial for maintaining the western essence of the exhibition as it evolved. They kept the West front and center even as the exhibition expanded to include accomplished equestrians from around the globe and re-enactments of contemporary military feats undertaken far from the frontier such as the Battle of Tien-Tsin. Likewise, Indians ensured that the Wild West stayed true to its origins when, courtesy of the 1908 merger with Pawnee Bill's Great Far East, camel caravans shared the program with bison herds.

The complex relationship between Indians and the Wild West, the roles the mostly Oglala Lakota performers from the Pine Ridge Reservation assumed, and the manner in which they were depicted in the visual materials associated with the exhibition reflected Indians'

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<sup>9</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr., "The Indians," in *Buffalo Bill and the Wild West* (Brooklyn, NY: The Brooklyn Museum, 1981), 52; and Sarah Jane Blackstone, "Buffalo Bill's Wild West: A Study of the History, Structures, Personnel, Imagery, and Effect" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1983), 181. For a discussion of the term "show Indian" and its origins in print media see Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, xiii.

<sup>10</sup> Historian of the West Richard White points out that Buffalo Bill's Indians "were imitating imitations of themselves. They reenacted white versions of events in which some of them had actually participated." Richard White, "Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill," in *The Frontier in American Culture: An Exhibition at the Newberry Library*, ed. James R. Grossman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 35.



complicated status.<sup>11</sup> During the reign of Buffalo Bill's extravaganza, many ramifications of the "Indian problem" were still unresolved. Additionally, a belief persisted that was established in the era of New World exploration and shaped centuries of perceptions and creative expression from high art and literature to their popular counterparts. The belief assumed that a good/bad dichotomy formed the foundation of the inherent nature of native peoples.<sup>12</sup> This notion informed what audiences saw at the Wild West and in its promotional pieces. A vivid one-sheet lithograph published by the Enquirer Job Printing Company in Cincinnati, Ohio, to promote Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World in the mid-1890s is an extension of this dichotomy and underscores prevalent perceptions of Indians held by whites during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>13</sup> Augmenting the examination of this poster with a discussion of other related Wild West images in tandem with their fine art and popular culture complements yields an object lesson on the "former-foe-now-friend" theme. The lesson is grounded in the perceived triumph of civilization over savagery and culminates with the Indian as "the American" in "America's National Entertainment." (Figure 2.1)

The mid-1890s Enquirer one-sheet, like the twelve-sheet poster dedicated to Buffalo Bill himself on which the previous chapter focused, relies on montage for its impact. The implication behind this design choice is that the Wild West offers so much that its contents can scarcely be described, even in multiple images. The title of the exhibition that this pastiche promotes is

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<sup>11</sup> The Oglala Lakota, referred to as Sioux in Wild West records, comprised the majority of shown Indians. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, xiii.

<sup>12</sup> Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*, 71; and William H. Truettner, "Ideology and Image: Justifying Westward Expansion," in *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820–1920*, ed. William H. Truettner (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1991), 44.

<sup>13</sup> The Circus World Museum Library holds original art related to this lithograph. Its collection includes two preliminary graphite drawings with notations and one fully developed watercolor and gouache composition.

emblazoned across the top of the poster in red and blue letters: “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World.” The poster’s lower edge is punctuated with an artfully arranged western still life composed of a shield, hatchet, beads, and a pipe adorned with eagle feathers. A stern-faced, finely costumed Plains Indian stands at the left side of the composition. He wears an eagle feather war bonnet, bears a lance and feathered shield, and presides over the assembled imagery. A sweeping column of warriors on horseback rides directly towards the viewer at the upper-right side of the poster, while a glimpse of a ceremonial dance occupies the center. The thrust of the lithograph, however, is a trio of vignettes that evoke violent incidents of racial animosity all staged in landscape settings. “An Attack on an Emigrant Train by the Indians,” “Attack on a Settler’s Cabin by Hostile Indians,” and “Attack on the Deadwood Stage Coach by Indians” were perennially popular and emblematic Wild West spectacles.

Part life-on-the-frontier fact and part dime-novel fiction, these scenes of hostility in the Wild West program, as well as other sources both high and low, hinged on a notion that sanctioned Manifest Destiny and remained in circulation even after the 1890 census declared the frontier officially closed. This belief contended that the Indian was a rapacious, relentless foe and an impediment to the appropriation of the West. An article in the Minneapolis, Minnesota, *Penny Press* in 1896 that urged potential audience members to attend the Wild West is grounded in the sort of Indian-hating rhetoric that helped authorize westward expansion. It also reads as the textual parallel to the us-against-them imagery featured in the mid-1890s *Enquirer* one-sheet:

No fancies of fiction can equal the stirring romances of real life among the pioneers in their struggles against the countless dangers and difficulties which beset them and their contentions against the fierce dumb brutes of the forests and foothills, and the still fiercer savages of the plains and canyons. All these things have almost passed from the actual cognizance of the present generation, and in a few short years at most will have been relegated to the limbo of the past and fade forever from remembrance. It is well, therefore, for those who have the

opportunity of beholding the still existing evidence of these troublous and exciting times not to neglect the fortunate chance.<sup>14</sup>

Both this statement and the Enquirer poster cast Indians as a foil for whites, a fundamental historical trope of racial opposition exploited by the frontier romances written by the popular and prolific early nineteenth-century author James Fenimore Cooper and frequently employed throughout the century by other authors, as well as artists and showmen such as Buffalo Bill.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the text and image inducements for the Wild West each imply that whites are the antithesis of Indians with civilization the purview of one and a violence-inducing bane to the other. By extension, they are also evidence of an ideology that produced a conflict iconography based on a narrative of inverted conquest.

Historian Richard White asserts that the foundation of inverted conquest rhetoric and imagery consists of badly abused conquerors along with valiantly heroic victims. The construction may have lessened lingering guilty feelings regarding the westering enterprise.<sup>16</sup> It was perpetuated by mid-nineteenth-century literature, both high and low, as well as paintings of frontier racial conflict and a host of popular prints that underscored the aggressive attitude that accompanied westward expansion. Although portraits of Indians and scenes of their daily life dominated the production of painters such as Karl Bodmer, George Catlin, and Alfred Jacob

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<sup>14</sup> "Nothing Like It," *Penny Press* (Minneapolis, MN), September 14, 1896, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 15.

<sup>16</sup> White, "Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill," 27 and 34. This notion of inverted conquest as a defining narrative in Buffalo Bill's Wild West was noticed by the French when the exhibition performed outside Paris in 1889. An article published in *L'Illustration* in June of 1889 highlighted the fact that whites were "more savage" than the Indians "since they carry with them into Indian territory all the savagery of their civilization" and were the reason for much of the violence on the frontier that the Wild West celebrated. Quoted in Albert Boime, "The Chocolate Venus, 'Tainted' Pork, the Wine Blight, and the Tariff: Franco-American Stew at the Fair," in *Paris 1889: American Artists at the Universal Exposition*, ed. Annette Blaugrund (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989), 85–86.

Miller in the early nineteenth century, the next generation of artists inspired by the West during the height of expansion towards the Pacific increasingly took as their subjects brutal encounters with ignoble savages. Many of these, in fact, stand as precursors to the three melodramatic attack scenes featured in the mid-1890s *Enquirer* poster.<sup>17</sup> A conviction informing both art and entertainment maintained that violence perpetrated by whites was self defense or retaliation on the part of the ambushed, assaulted, or abducted. When whites on the frontier did attack, whether in art, in the Wild West arena, or on its posters, it was only after provocation and they were merely coming to the rescue.

“An Attack on an Emigrant Train by the Indians” is the example of the sort of inverted conquest and justified racial conflict iconography that dominates the *Enquirer* lithograph. Season after season the Wild West wagon train and its outriders entered the arena. While camp was pitched, some performances of this spectacle featured novelties such as “Cow Boy Fun” or “The Virginia Reel on Horseback.” During every reenactment, however, interlopers with nefarious intentions disrupted the scene. They announced their presence with threatening whoops and rushed into the arena on horseback—the effect of which is suggested by the surging band of fearsome mounted warriors who thunder along the upper-right edge of the *Enquirer* poster.<sup>18</sup> A firefight ensued. In the end, regardless of seasonal variations in the action, the implacable foe

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<sup>17</sup> For a history of images of the Indian in nineteenth-century American art, see Julie Schimmel, “Inventing ‘the Indian,’” in *The West as America*, 148–89.

<sup>18</sup> The scene of the column of Indians at the right could be read as the antagonists preparing for the attack presented in any of the three violent vignettes featured in this poster. It also makes a perfect illustration for a poem by “Buckskin Sam” drawn from *Beadle’s Weekly*. This poem was included in Wild West programs at least since 1885 and into the 1890s. A stanza from “Cody’s Corral; or the Scouts and the Sioux” reads: “Then thundering round the mountain’s dark adamant side, / A hundred hideous, painted, and fierce Sioux warriors ride; / While from their throats, the well-known and horrible death knell, / The wild, blood-curdling war-whoop, and the fierce and fiendish yell / Strikes the ears of all, now ready to fight, and e’en to die, / In that mount-inclosed [*sic*] valley, beneath a blood-red sky!” 1885 Wild West program, William Frederick Cody/Buffalo Bill Papers (hereafter WFC/BBP), WH72, Western History Collection (hereafter WHC), DPL, Box 2, Folder 19.

was always vanquished. Presented in the lithograph, this spectacle is distilled to its most heart-racing moments. It appears within a red circular element that mimics the effect of watching the scene unfold from a safe distance through a spotting scope. The circular element and the bold yellow sky under which the attack takes place set it off from the other action-packed tableaux that vie for viewers' attention.

This particular rendition of the popular Wild West set piece appears inspired by the German artist Carl (or Charles) Henckel's interpretation of the spectacle as witnessed during his travels with the Wild West throughout Germany and Austria in 1890.<sup>19</sup> Several details appear lifted without alteration from Henckel's *Emigrant-Train Attacked by Indians*, a pen and ink sketch included in various portfolios published in the early 1890s based on his observations as Wild West artist-in-residence.<sup>20</sup> (Figure 2.2) Henckel's Indians on horseback brandishing spears, pistols, and tomahawks while attacking three covered wagons pulled by startled mules provided a pulse-racing template. The unknown artist responsible for the Enquirer composition enhanced the setting with distant foothills, incorporated greater space into the scene to make the action more legible, multiplied the number of Indians in the foreground, and emphasized or invented elements that increased the scene's dramatic impact and ability to tantalize. As pioneers wielding rifles defend the besieged prairie schooners, flashes of red and puffs of smoke issue from the firearms of the attackers and the attacked, punctuating the mayhem. A dark horse, possibly felled

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<sup>19</sup> Henckel, the art that resulted from his time with the Wild West, and the appropriation of his imagery are discussed at greater length in Chapter One. The theme, although not this same execution, of Indians attacking a wagon train appeared in other Wild West-related materials such as the color lithograph by Avil Company Lithography of Philadelphia and the engraving by the Philadelphia Wood Engraving Company that served as the frontispiece and title page illustration, respectively for William F. Cody, *Story of the Wild West and Camp-Fire Chats* (Chicago: R. S. Peale, 1888).

<sup>20</sup> *Emigrant-Train Attacked by Indians* in Carl Henckel, *Buffalo Bill und Sein Wilder Westen; Zeichnungen nach dem Leben von Carl Henckel* (Munich, Germany: Bruckmann'sche Buchdruckerei, 1891).

by one of the frontiersmen's bullets, lies near the lower edge of the circular frame. Its unfazed rider is already on his feet. He reaches for a knife sheathed at his side as he moves toward the wagons and fires his pistol. While he advances, one of the wagons' defenders crouches behind another downed horse—white, not insignificantly—to use it as a shield as he pulls the trigger of his rifle. The bullet finds its target at the opposite side of the vignette where a mounted Indian reels backwards, his right arm raised to the sky. Seated in the lead wagon, a man, his wife (a sister of so many prairie Madonnas bestowed a halo courtesy of her wagon's arching canvas), and their tiny infant witness the terror.<sup>21</sup> Although miniscule in scale in the Enquirer poster, the woman facing this peril as she rides west with her family made a significant impact in the arena, especially upon those in the audience who shared her gender. "What brave women were those who endured every hardship to accompany their husbands in the emigration to the West!" a female reporter for New York's *Commercial Advertiser* exclaimed. "We end-of-the-century women," she continued, "with fads and fancies and few ideas beyond self seem blots in the 'scutcheon [*sic*] in comparison."<sup>22</sup>

An emigrant train falling prey to Indians was a nightmare that plagued the sleep of overlanders and might motivate a mothers to weave burial shrouds before her family embarked on the Oregon Trail.<sup>23</sup> It was a gripping spectacle that infused the waking hours of Wild West attendees with breathless excitement and provoked reviewers in the stands to muse, "many a

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<sup>21</sup> For an essay on the Madonna-of-the-prairie phenomenon in art, see Annette Stott, "Prairie Madonnas and Pioneer Women: Images of Emigrant Women in the Art of the Old West," *Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies* 21 (October 1996): 299–325.

<sup>22</sup> "A Woman Sees the Wild West," *Commercial Advertiser* (New York), June 9, 1894, NSS, Vol. 4, DPL, Reel 1, Microfilm 18.

<sup>23</sup> Michael L. Tate, *Indians and Emigrants: Encounters on the Overland Trails* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 3.

grizzled pioneer turned to catch his wife's eye; this they knew about, and this they watched together with the thrill of a common memory."<sup>24</sup> Nightmares, day-time thrills, and memories notwithstanding, Indian attacks on wagon trains were less common than made to seem by the well-worn accounts, reenactments, and images such as the mid-1890s Enquirer lithograph, or an 1899 poster published by the Courier Lithographic Company of Buffalo, New York.<sup>25</sup> (Figure 2.3) That is not to say that the experiences of pioneers along the westward winding trails were accurately captured by Frances Flora Bond Palmer's chromolithograph, *The Rocky Mountains—Emigrants Crossing the Plains* (1866). (Figure 2.4) The scene, printed by Currier and Ives, shows a mother and her child ensconced in their wagon with nothing to fear as it rolls past a pair of Indians posed as welcoming ambassadors, rather than hostile aggressors. As increasing numbers of pioneers pushed West in the mid-nineteenth century motivated by numerous factors including the 1862 Homestead Act, the greatest perceived menace to safe passage and a promising future were the people through whose lands the white settlers' wagons made their ruts. Historian Michael L. Tate asserts that "False rumors of constant Indian threats and periodic massacres of wagon trains abounded at midcentury, always obscuring the larger relationship that

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<sup>24</sup> "Wild West Arena," *Morning Oregonian* (Portland), August 27, 1902, William Frederick Cody (hereafter WFC) Collection, McCracken Research Library (hereafter MRL), Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY (hereafter BBHC), Box 3, Folder 16.

<sup>25</sup> Michael L. Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 3–4. As with the mid-1890s Enquirer one-sheet, the 1898 Enquirer horizontal two-sheet poster bears traces of inspiration drawn from Henckel's 1890 version. These include the nearly exact translation of his Indian hanging from the neck of a dark horse in the foreground of the portfolio image to the 1898 Enquirer poster. The 1899 poster was one of a series of six by the Courier Lithographic Company that shared a similar design to highlight various representatives of Buffalo Bill's Congress of Rough Riders of the World. Not every Wild West poster that included a wagon train portrayed it under attack by Indians. A massive twenty-eight-sheet lithograph published by Enquirer in 1898 was inspired by Emanuel Leutze's stereochromed mural for a wall of the United States Capitol, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*. The Wild West version places Cody at the center of the image confidently leading the caravan of emigrants to their destiny. Cody is so skilled at his responsibility that the Enquirer artist was even able to leave out the pioneer burial vignette that occupies the middle ground of Leutze's iconic picture. The poster is in the collection of Circus World Museum.

was based on mutually beneficial trade, cooperation, and friendship. In this increasingly hostile atmosphere, too many emigrants saw an Indian lurking behind every tree and a scalp hanging in every tipi, even when there was no evidence of either.”<sup>26</sup> Of the estimated ten thousand pioneers who died along the trail, four percent of those perished at the hands of Indians.<sup>27</sup> More frequent hazards for emigrants included accidents, starvation, dehydration, the elements, or taking a bite from a misidentified poisonous plant. However, these frontier dangers did not provide as lurid a fodder for artists such as Carl Ferdinand Wimar in his *The Attack on the Emigrant Train* painted in 1856 (Figure 2.5), Emanuel Leutze and his 1863 canvas *Indians Attacking a Wagon Train*, or for showmen such as Cody. Nor did these assailants as thrillingly invigorate the national narrative implied by the call “Westward Ho!”

Like the emigrant train wending across the frontier, the settler’s cabin enjoyed iconic status during the nineteenth century. It was an emblem of both the West and the nation itself. Its importance as a symbol of the nation’s humble origins, self-reliance, civilization, and progress was deeply ingrained.<sup>28</sup> For twenty-three years from its second season through 1907, The Wild West program featured “Attack on a Settler’s Cabin by Hostile Indians,” often as its finale. Scouts, cowboys, and occasionally vaqueros were responsible for the repulse of the adversaries, with the entire “desperate and deadly conflict in which all the blank cartridge was used that was

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<sup>26</sup> Michael L. Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 145.

<sup>27</sup> Frank McLynn, *Wagons West: The Epic Story of America’s Overland Trails* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 434–35. Between 1840 and 1860 it is believed that approximately 362 emigrants were killed by Indians, whereas 426 Indians met their deaths at the hands of emigrants. John Unruh, Jr. *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 185.

<sup>28</sup> For a discussion of cabin iconography and its significance in the nineteenth century see White, “Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill,” 19–26. White notes that “the achievements of modern America made frontier cabin symbols of progress,” explaining that only from the vantage point of achievement did a seemingly lowly icon attain its value. *Ibid.*, 21.



left over from the previous battle” frequently overseen by Buffalo Bill himself.<sup>29</sup> This Wild West mainstay appeared as illustrations in countless exhibition programs and in the lower left corner of the mid-1890s Enquirer poster. As with the depiction of the attack on the emigrant train, this violent vignette dispenses with all preliminary set up. The scene would typically unfold in the Wild West arena with a prelude that hearkened back to paintings by Thomas Cole such as *Home in the Woods* (1847) or Jasper Francis Cropsey’s *The Backwoods of America* (1858), but no industrious settler chops wood or returns from a successful hunt, nor does a dutiful wife hang laundry or prepare supper. (Figures 2.6 and 2.7) Nothing is included in the vignette that would detract from the most nail-biting instants of the popular spectacle: “an onslaught of a whole band of whooping red devils” and “a splendid charge of cowboys.”<sup>30</sup> The anonymous Enquirer artist arrayed these clashing figures throughout the scene in a manner that compels the eye to zig-zag across the composition in order to absorb all the action. It is curious that this poster would include such a great degree of detail in each of its vignettes rather than focus on a single, easily consumed and comprehended image. Such busy scenes, like “Attack on the Settler’s Cabin by Hostile Indians,” may reveal an intention to stress the authenticity of both the promotional poster and the exhibition it advertised. The degree of explicitness suggests, perhaps, that nothing has been interpreted or imagined in any way other than it actually was—that everything, as the Wild West mantra insists, is genuine.

In this particularly enthralling moment, a sturdy log cabin nestled at the edge of a wood seems destined to become ashes. An Indian with a spear in one hand and a flaming torch in the

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<sup>29</sup> “Wild Western Scenes,” *Hamilton (Ontario) Daily Spector*, August 27, 1885, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 3, Folder 14. Occasionally, the spectacle might shift from a cabin to a ranch, but there was no escaping the Indian attack.

<sup>30</sup> Review of the Wild West, *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), December 24, 1884, 4, quoted in William E. Deahl, Jr., “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, 1885,” *Annals of Wyoming* (Fall 1975): 148.

other menacingly approaches its front door. The cabin's owner, dressed in brown pants and a blue shirt identical to the man with his family in lead wagon who endured the attack on the emigrant caravan, struggles valiantly to defend his home from yet another surprise assault by Indians. He has fired his revolver, signaled by a puff of smoke, and his aim is true. As the foiled assailant stumbles backwards, the pioneer's wife falls to her knees. Her arms desperately cling around her husband's neck in a reaction of both fear and relief. The stalwart settler is not alone in this fight, however. Three men, all wearing red shirts that suggest they are members of the same frontier fraternity, have come to the pioneers' aid, and not a moment too soon. One engages in hand-to-hand combat. Another, on horseback, fires at a mounted Indian at the center of the scene, while the third takes aim at the Indian about to set the settler's cabin ablaze. The entire drama is staged within an oval reminiscent of the format of so many idyllic mid-nineteenth-century landscape paintings from which the vignette likewise borrows its glowing sunset. The lower curve of this oval, however, is broken. This encourages viewers to feel as if they could rush in and assume a hero's role, perhaps dispatching the Indian who so stealthily creeps into the scene at the lower left.<sup>31</sup>

Despite what must have been an understanding shared by most Wild West attendees as well as those who saw its ubiquitous promotional materials that the outcome of such an attack would be in favor of the settler and his family, many details of the Enquirer poster nevertheless build suspense. The ultimate safety of the pioneers is not yet guaranteed. The tomahawk may prove deadly efficient in hand-to-hand combat. The shot that will stop the torch-wielding Indian

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<sup>31</sup> Portfolios of Carl Henckel's pen and ink drawings based on Wild West spectacles and daily life at camp include *Attack on a Log Cabin*, see *Attack on a Log Cabin* in Carl Henckel, *Buffalo Bill und Sein Wilder Westen; Zeitungen nach dem Leben von Carl Henckel* (Munich, Germany: Bruckmann'sche Buchdruckerie, 1891). Unlike Henckel's *Emigrant-Train Attacked by Indians*, his version of this event does not appear to have as significantly influenced the Enquirer artist.

has not been fired. More Indians might lurk just out of sight, co-conspirators of those who lie in wait in William de la Montagne Cary's 1868 illustration for *Harper's Weekly*, *Sioux Indians in Ambush Preparing to Attack Settlers*.<sup>32</sup> (Figure 2.8) This uncertainty, even when accompanied by the strongest hunch that the day will indeed be saved, undoubtedly conjured other threats such as forcible captivity and subsequent unthinkable fates.

Sagas of Indian attacks on whites that escalated to hostage-taking have been part of the national narrative since the colonial era. In seventeenth-century Puritan New England, harrowing tales of whites held and tortured, or worse, by indigenous people with barbaric ways and fiendish motives developed as a way to instill the importance of steadfast faith, even in the direst circumstances, and its power to deliver.<sup>33</sup> Widely read first-person accounts such as Mary Rowlandson's archetypal tale of thirteen weeks in captivity following an Indian attack on Lancaster, Massachusetts, in 1675 riveted readers along with hundreds of similar fictitious stories. Captivity narratives dominated frontier-based tales between the late 1600s and the mid-1700s and continued to be popular, influencing literature, art, and entertainment, over the next century and a half as the frontier shifted ever westward.<sup>34</sup> Authors such as James Fenimore Cooper in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), artists like George Caleb Bingham with paintings

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<sup>32</sup> Cary's illustration complemented the article "Indians in Ambush" and described "the mode of warfare practiced by these predatory bands upon the unsuspecting and defenseless settlers." "Indians in Ambush," *Harper's Weekly* 12, no. 592 (2 May 1868): 281–82.

<sup>33</sup> Michael L. Tate, *Indians and Emigrants*, 4. Between 1675 and 1763, white captives from New England numbered 1,641. June Namias, *White Captive: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 7–8.

<sup>34</sup> *A True History of Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, published in 1862, went through thirty editions. Authors James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Henry David Thoreau, and Mark Twain all fashioned plots around captivity themes. Namias, *White Captive*, 8–9, and 22; Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 14; and Ron Tyler, *Visions of America: Pioneer Artists in a New Land* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1983), 95.

such as *Captured by Indians* (1848) and Eanger Irving Couse with his canvas titled *The Captive* (1891), as well as Buffalo Bill exploited the iconography associated with captivity narratives. (Figures 2.9 and 2.10)

If the Indian attackers had not been repelled, the scene that followed the Wild West's "Attack on the Settler's Cabin" might resemble F. O. C. Darley's *An Indian Foray*, an engraving published in 1873 in which bare-chested Indians race away on horseback with livestock and a frantic pioneer woman about to be "carried into a captivity worse than death," while a log cabin burns in the distance and "terror and desolation reign along the frontier."<sup>35</sup> (Figure 2.11) Or, the next scene might be of a particularly grisly order such *The Death of Jane McCrea* painted in 1804 by John Vanderlyn. (Figure 2.12) Alternatively, if the captives were more fortunate than poor Jane McCrea divorced from her scalp in 1777, perhaps their ordeal would culminate in a scene akin to the moment described in a circa 1894 Wild West one-sheet published by A. Hoen and Company of Baltimore. (Figure 2.13) Indians lower torches towards the bowed head of a bound white man. His wife, hopeless in her torn dress, shields her face from the already glowing coals and billowing smoke at the base of the tree to which her husband is tied. Resigned to their fate, they are unaware of what their captors have just noticed—Buffalo Bill astride his white horse and undaunted by the rifle aimed his way as he charges to their rescue. This poster and others in which Buffalo Bill stars as liberator, such as "A Realistic Representation of the Historic Battle of Summit Springs," published in 1907 by Strobridge Lithographic Company in Cincinnati, Ohio, as well as the artist Charles Schreyvogel's *The Summit Springs Rescue—1869* painted the following year, are part of a lineage of ideology and imagery that includes Horatio

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<sup>35</sup> F. O. C. Darley, "An Indian Foray," *Harper's Weekly* 17, no. 854 (10 May 1873): 393; and "About the Council Fire," *Harper's Weekly* 17 no. 854 (10 May 1873): 394.

Greenough's sculpture *The Rescue* installed at the United States Capitol in 1853. (Figures 2.14–16) Indians cast as foes and whites as victims and heroes were staples in the inverted conquest chronicle that defined the nation.

The pitting of Indians against whites also helped fortify masculinity at a time when the concept was tested. Of the three attack vignettes featured in the mid-1890s *Enquirer* lithograph, “Attack on the Settler’s Cabin by Hostile Indians” puts the defenders in the closest proximity to their attackers and the fight is waged, literally, on home soil. An integral part of this home is the woman whose life and honor the male settler vigorously defends. This spectacle, along with many others in the exhibition, highlighted manly virtues.<sup>36</sup> When manliness was called into question by the increasing feminization of culture accompanied by calls for suffrage and equal rights in the last decades of the nineteenth century, an emotional safety valve was found in conjuring images such as “Attack on a Settler’s Cabin.” Although the Wild West employed women such as Annie Oakley and Lillian Smith who were expert markswomen and accomplished equestriennes, the pistol-packing members of the fairer sex did not take active roles in the dramatic scenes of conflict represented in the show or on its posters. Instead, women in the most violent Wild West acts are passive, frightened witnesses, as in the *Enquirer* poster’s “Attack on an Emigrant Train,” or collapse in the face of grave danger, as in “Attack on the Settler’s Cabin.” In this vulnerable state they serve as a foil for robust American masculinity as much as Indians.

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<sup>36</sup> Louis S. Warren, “Cody’s Last Stand: Masculine Anxiety, the Custer Myth, and the Frontier of Domesticity in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 56. Warren’s nuanced essay provides a rich reading of this spectacle and its myriad broader meanings with a focus on its domestic connotations in light of Cody’s own biography and evolutions of frontier mythology.

This showcase of masculine virtue and prowess likewise addressed what historian Louis S. Warren defines as “fixity and settlement triumphing over mobility and nomadism.”<sup>37</sup> The title of the spectacle was not “Attack on the Settler and his Family,” but rather “Attack on the Settler’s Cabin”—that symbol of settlement and the antithesis of the portable tepee. By fighting so intensely to save the cabin, both the settler and those heroes who rushed in from the wings were defending a result of Manifest Destiny, a marker of civilization. The vignette at the lower left of the mid-1890s *Enquirer* one-sheet, by extension, shares affinities with nineteenth-century depictions of other emblems of white progress sabotaged by Indians who sought to protect their own ways of life and traditions from unrelenting interlopers. Rather than stand as passive witnesses while signs of one race’s imperialism multiplied and threatened the existence of their own, as depicted by Asher B. Durand in *Progress* (1853; Private collection), fittingly painted at the behest of a railroad executive, the Indians of the Wild West did not stand by or stand down. Cody’s own *Story of the Wild West and Camp-Fire Chats* published in 1888 included an illustration captioned “Sioux Indians Destroying the Telegraph Line.”<sup>38</sup> The antagonists of this illustration share motives and destructive remedies with those who populate Theodor Kaufmann’s 1867 painting *Westward the Star of Empire*. (Figure 2.17) Kaufmann’s moonlit picture depicts the moments leading up to the ambush of a Union Pacific freighter rolling west near Plum Creek in Nebraska in early August of 1867. Seven people were killed and damages were estimated at \$30,000 to \$40,000.<sup>39</sup> Members of the Cheyenne tribe upon whose hunting

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>38</sup> William F. Cody, *Story of the Wild West and Camp-Fire Chats* (Chicago: R. S. Peale, 1888), 659.

<sup>39</sup> “The Indian War,” *New-York Tribune*, August 8, 1867, 1; and “The Indian War,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 8, 1867, 1.

grounds the Union Pacific encroached dislodge rails from the silver track.<sup>40</sup> They lurk in the shadows as the beaming headlight on the engine of freighter pierces the darkness. It announces the imminence of a dual disaster—the derailment of not only the train, but also of progress.

In addition to the railroad, settlers' cabins, and emigrants' wagons, the stage coach was an emblem of the West, a status it attained in part due to the newspaper stories, tourist accounts, and frontier fiction that romanticized and glamorized it as a mode of transportation. It was also a hallmark of the nation's progress, both westward and otherwise, and as such it was vulnerable to the supposedly malicious actions of those perceived to stand in the way of such advancement.<sup>41</sup> Stories and illustrations in the popular press such as that supplied to *Harper's Weekly* by eye-witness artist/reporter Theodore R. Davis of an attack by the Cheyenne on Butterfield's Overland Dispatch Coach near the Smoky Hill Spring stage station in Kansas in November 1865, fixed the embattled stage coach as symbol of the truly wild West.<sup>42</sup> (Figure 2.18) It became an enduring icon upon which Buffalo Bill and his exhibition capitalized. An assault by Indians—those who “defied the advance of civilization”—on the Deadwood stage coach was another of the many acts offered by the Wild West to “illustrate life as it is witnessed on the plains.”<sup>43</sup> The perpetual

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<sup>40</sup> Contemporary newspaper reports blame ties placed across the tracks, rather than rails as Kaufmann depicts. The Cheyenne who ambushed the train burned the cars and threw the bodies of the seven casualties, which they reportedly also scalped, into the flames. “The Indian War,” *New-York Tribune*, August 8, 1867, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Despite its status as a symbol of the American West, the stage coach was, in fact, a British import. New World conditions necessitated design changes that resulted in a uniquely American vehicle, the Concord, which was the primary mode of long-distance transportation until it was eclipsed by the railroads. Joan Carpenter Troccoli, *Painters and the American West: The Anschutz Collection* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 104. For more on the history of the American stagecoach see Ralph Moody, *Stagecoach West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

<sup>42</sup> Davis's illustration titled *On the Plains—Indians Attacking Butterfield's Overland Dispatch Coach* appears on page 248 of *Harper's Weekly* 10, no. 486 (21 April 1866). It accompanies the article by the artist “On the Plains” in the same issue, pages 249–50.

<sup>43</sup> John M. Burke, “Salutatory,” 1886 Wild West program, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 20.

attack on the frontier relic, “stained with blood in many a fierce encounter with Indians on the plains,” was a staple set piece each season for thirty years.<sup>44</sup> Likewise, it was a frequent feature in the exhibition’s advertising throughout the decades. (Figures 2.19–20) From the inception of the exhibition in 1883 through its bankruptcy in 1913, it was a spectacle much like “Attack on the Emigrant Train” and “Attack on the Settler’s Cabin” that played on fears linked to westering and frontier life, especially when depicted with no rescue party in sight as in an 1884 wood engraving published by Calhoun Printing Company of Hartford Connecticut. According to an essay that appeared repeatedly in Wild West programs from its debut season onward to recount the exhibition’s version of the provenance and frontier history of its “scarred and weather-beaten veteran of the original ‘star route’ line of stages,”

Every inch of that beautiful country has been won from a cruel and savage foe by danger and conflict. . . . The history of the wagon trains and stage coaches that preceded the railway is written all over with blood, and the story of suffering and disaster, often as it has been repeated, is only known in all of its horrid details to the bold frontiersmen, who . . . penetrated the strongholds of the Indians, and backed by the gallant men of the army, became the *avant couriers* of Western civilization and the terror of the red man.<sup>45</sup>

Similar to the other attack spectacles, “Attack on the Deadwood Stage Coach” endorsed whites as above reproach while they rolled, uninvited, through Lakota, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, and Comanche lands. It firmly placed those who resisted the trespass in the role of the aggressors

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<sup>44</sup> “The Wild West,” *Free Press and Times* (Burlington, VT), August 6, 1885, NSS, Vol. 1, DPL, Reel 1, Microfilm 18.

<sup>45</sup> “A Historical Coach of the Deadwood Line,” 1883 Wild West program, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 7, Folder 19. The accuracy of this essay in terms of its recounting of the actual use and abuse of the coach that Cody rescued from abandonment and had refurbished for his exhibition is called into question by Blackstone “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West,” 94–95.



(despite the reality that road agents and brigands were the more likely antagonists) destined to be subdued for their actions against the rightful and inevitable civilization of the West.<sup>46</sup>

Evidenced by the representation of the “Attack on the Deadwood Stage Coach by Indians” in the lower right corner of the mid-1890s Enquirer lithograph, the spectacle was still presented as “startling” and “soul-stirring” more than a decade into the Wild West’s run as it was when the *Hartford [Connecticut] Daily Courant* described it as such during the exhibition’s inaugural season.<sup>47</sup> However, despite the wild air of this western scene, particular bits of the action in the vignette have been tempered compared to the source on which the Enquirer artist likely based this image—Carl Henckel’s 1890 sketch of the subject included in a portfolio published in Munich in 1891.<sup>48</sup> (Figure 2.21) Unlike the poster version of the “Attack on the Emigrant Train” that is nearly a one-to-one translation of a Henckel sketch as far as the key dramatic elements are concerned, in this case aspects of the German artist’s interpretation of the spectacle that suggest that the passengers and crew of the Deadwood stage are in greater peril than their assailants have been modified and moderated. The dramatic tension necessary to maintain suspense is preserved, but a balance between presumed good and evil has been restored. The odds are certainly not presented as possibly tilting in the Indians’ favor as Henckel’s rendition of the attack might imply. With the specter of Little Big Horn still looming large in the

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<sup>46</sup> William Manns, “Western Icon on Wheels,” *American Cowboy* 11, no. 6 (March–April 2005): 54.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 1. Of the three attack vignettes featured in the poster, this is the only one not contained by its own framing device. Instead, the lower and lower right margins of the lithograph crop the image at the bottom and right edge, while the top is capped by the lower member of the frame in which the vignette of a ceremonial Indian dance is presented. The left side of the scene is bordered by the still life of a cache of Indian weaponry. This uncompartmentalized vignette balances the large standing Indian at the left edge of the poster who likewise is presented unframed.

<sup>48</sup> *Attack on the Old Deadwood Coach* in Carl Henckel, *Buffalo Bill und Sein Wilder Westen; Zeichnungen nach dem Leben von Carl Henckel* (Munich, Germany: Bruckmann’sche Buchdruckerie, 1891).

nation's psyche and "Custer's Last Fight" sporadically commemorated by the Wild West during five of its thirty seasons, perhaps one inglorious defeat at the hands of Indians was enough for the exhibition and the materials devised to promote it.<sup>49</sup> (Figure 2.22)

In both Henckel's sketch and the mid-1890s *Enquirer* vignette, the progress of a passenger-filled Concord with luggage piled atop its roof has been suddenly halted by several Indians on horseback who have surrounded it on all sides. In each, the driver of the coach struggles to control the vehicle and prevent it from overturning due to the abruptness with which the six-mule team has stopped in its tracks in reaction to the ambush. In Henckel's description, however, the mules are more a jumble than a well-harnessed team. Their skittering hooves kick up dust. One of the pair of lead mules has stumbled to the ground, while an Indian yanks the reins of the other. None of the mule-related mayhem is presented in the *Enquirer* poster. A colleague of the driver of the coach seated to his left in the *Enquirer* poster fires a rifle at an Indian who raises a spear in the air in the distance at the far right of the scene. This same man is thrown from his seat while his hat flies from his head in Henckel's composition. A third stage employee, riding backwards with the luggage on top of the coach, barely needs to steady himself as he shoots a revolver at another mounted Indian in the poster. His forerunner in Henckel's sketch leans dramatically backwards to counterbalance the momentum of the hastily halted coach while he fires. In the confusion, it is difficult to discern whether he has hit his target. His counterpart in the *Enquirer* poster, however, has clearly been knocked off-kilter in the saddle and brings his right hand to his shoulder where he has presumably been winged. The variations from Henckel's composition multiply from there. In *Enquirer*'s version of the scene, an Indian

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<sup>49</sup> "Custer's Last Fight" was re-enacted throughout the 1894 season and during portions of the 1887, 1893, 1896, and 1898 seasons. It is possible that it was a feature during the same season for that the late 1890s *Enquirer* one-sheet promoted.

wearing an eagle feather bonnet rides in from the right. He carries a spear in one hand. With the other he raises a pistol aimed at a red-shirted frontiersman (an outrider or heroic relative of those who rescue the settlers at the poster's lower left) who has likewise drawn his gun. A puff of smoke fills the space between the two men and their horses, revealing that one of them has fired at point-blank range. As with the attack on the wagon train, one of the Indian's horses has fallen in the foreground—a final holdover from the Henckel sketch. Without hesitation, its rider has dismounted and fires at the besieged coach.

Both Henckel's conception and its translation provided by the Enquirer poster match textual descriptions of act during which spectators reportedly sat spellbound throughout the exchange of "rapid shots" and while the Indian attackers were "pouring shot after shot into the driver, whose capacity for lead seemed unlimited."<sup>50</sup> The fierce fire fight, indicated by the puffs of white smoke with which the Enquirer artist punctuated this and the other two attack vignettes, was, in fact, a defining detail of this particular Wild West spectacle that was frequently cited by reviews. A reporter writing for the *New York Evening Telegram* commented in 1899 on how those fending off the attack on the stage coach were "prompt in burning powder" and concluded with the wry assumption that "Powder is everywhere. It must be cheap."<sup>51</sup> All of that powder in the smoke-filled arena or in the form of white lithographic ink emphasized a theme so integral to the Wild West that it was outlined in an essay published in many of its programs beginning its inaugural season. "The Rifle as an Aid to Civilization" commenced with a reiteration of the adage "the pen is mightier than the sword." It continued with the assertion that "It is equally true

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<sup>50</sup> "Attack on the Deadwood Stage," *Washington Post*, June 23, 1885, 1.

<sup>51</sup> C. E. T., "Bill and His Hair at the Garden," *New York Evening Telegram*, March 30, 1899, NSS, Vol., 6, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18. See also untitled newspaper clipping, *Chicago Evening Post*, August 31, 1897, NSS, Vol., 6, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18; and "The Wild West," *Globe* (Toronto, Ontario), August 24, 1885, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 3, Folder 14.

that the bullet is the pioneer of civilization, for it has gone hand in hand with the axe that cleared the forest, and with the family bible and school book. Deadly as has been its mission in one sense, it has been merciful in another; for without the rifle ball we of America would not be today in possession of a free and united country, and mighty in our strength.”<sup>52</sup> Indeed, the rifle plays a prominent role in not just the “Attack on the Deadwood Stage Coach,” but in all three attack scenes in the mid-1890s Enquirer one-sheet.

In addition to reinforcing the inverted conquest story of civilization brought west and aided by the rifle, “Attack on an Emigrant Train by the Indians,” “Attack on a Settler’s Cabin by Hostile Indians,” and “Attack on the Deadwood Stage Coach by Indians” considered as a trio shed light on possible reasons why the frontier held such a fascination during the height of the Wild West’s popularity. At the same time that these images described white defense of the hallmarks of civilization against the uncivilized who would destroy them, the popular spectacles and their depictions simultaneously speak to contemporary concerns of overcivilization. Posters such as the mid-1890s Enquirer lithograph not only promoted the Wild West, but also provided a visual prescription of vicarious participation to fulfill a perceived need for intense experience and to shore up the status of American masculinity. Beginning in the late 1880s some members of the American populace recoiled from what they believed was the overcivilization of their modern existence. There was a fear that the muscular fiber America had strengthened through the winning of the West had atrophied due to urbanism, industrialization, and days spent behind a desk. The intense physical and spiritual experience that was once a privilege of living in a land where the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny held sway was lost in the minds of many late Victorian

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<sup>52</sup> “The Rifle as an Aid to Civilization,” 1884 Wild West program, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 7, Folder 20.

bourgeoisie. Due to what they perceived as the effects of overcivilization, there was a growing feeling among some Americans who lived in urbanized, industrialized areas that life had lost all potential for intense experience.<sup>53</sup>

According to historian T. J. Jackson Lears, a popular notion arose during the late nineteenth century that “domestic realism was not realistic enough, because it failed to embrace the reality of life as struggle.”<sup>54</sup> Many Americans believed that an assurance of being real and alive could be attained through acts of aggression or through the sweat and strain of struggle. In America’s growing cities, the bodily testing and intense physical experience that the “real” life of rural existence fostered was absent. “Many yearned to smash the glass and breathe freely—to experience ‘real’ life in all its intensity,” Lears contends.<sup>55</sup> However, an afternoon spent as a witness of intense spectacles that set whites against Indians, such as those promoted by the mid-1890s *Enquirer* poster, could vicariously quell those yearnings. If the businessman in New York or the shopkeeper in a little town west of the Mississippi had no outlet to experience the struggle and violent aggression that was the mark of being alive, the frontier protagonists in the trio of attack vignettes could act as surrogates for that experience. As emigrants riding wagons, log cabin-dwelling settlers, and passengers ferried by stage coaches struggled violently for their lives, a Wild West audience member could vicariously struggle for his own.

The foes with whom the western men and women struggle in these attack scenes are integral in the context of turn-of-the-century ideologies as well. Indians portrayed in opposition to white men played a vital role in Americans’ cultural consciousness, especially in light of the

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<sup>53</sup> T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transition of American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), xiii, and 30.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 48, and 102–03.

Anglo-American-centric and hyper-masculine rhetoric favored by contemporary politician and author Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt set the “virile manliness” of the white American male in opposition to the “unmanliness” of Indians. Gail Bederman, scholar of gender studies explains, “Manhood was the essential characteristic of the American race, whereas Roosevelt’s Indians ‘seemed to the white settlers devils not men.’”<sup>56</sup> In 1896 the Madison, Wisconsin, *State Journal* reported that, “There is nothing disappointing about Col. Cody’s Indians. They are of the real ‘killing’ variety and impress one with awe to think that they and we should belong to the same race.”<sup>57</sup> In the four volumes of his *The Winning of the West* published between 1889 and 1896, Roosevelt consistently likened the American West to a fire in which the white “American race” was forged. Fuel for this fire was masculine racial conflict.<sup>58</sup> In each of the attack scenes featured in the Enquirer lithograph, the frontier serves as a backdrop before which the supremacy of the American masculinity and the “American race” was proven. Casting Indians as a foil for this triumph smacked of contemporary social Darwinist ideologies. However, as historian L. G. Moses argues, “Although Indians played supportive roles in the victory tableau of pioneer virtue triumphing over savagery, they themselves had nevertheless survived the contest. They may have been defeated, but they were never destroyed.”<sup>59</sup> Despite the daily rain-or-shine defeat of Indians during performances of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, they were never portrayed as doomed in its arena or its imagery. It would not do to present Indians with the resignation of Thomas

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<sup>56</sup> Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 181.

<sup>57</sup> “Wild West is Here,” *State Journal* (Madison, WI), CWML, Small Collections, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, Clippings, pre-1900.

<sup>58</sup> Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 178.

<sup>59</sup> Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 8.

Crawford's *Dying Chief Contemplating the Progress of Civilization* installed in 1863 in the *Progress of Civilization* pediment above the east entrance of the Senate wing of the United States Capitol, or as literally pushed to the brink in the last-of-their-race style of the painters Tompkins Harrison Matteson (1847) and John Mix Stanley (1857). (Figures 2.23–25) They had to appear as worthy opponents able to be repeatedly repelled season after season. The decades of Wild West Indian-attack spectacles and the corresponding vignettes in the mid-1890s *Enquirer* poster serve as microcosmic views of the bloody race wars fought on the frontier. Much as Roosevelt believed that racial conflicts on the frontier acted as the mechanism that melded myriad white European immigrants into a single, cohesive society, the Wild West's various attack scenes not only celebrated the fulfillment of what was held as destiny, but also united witnesses of these reenactments in a bond of hostility against those demonized as foes of progress and civilization.<sup>60</sup>

Although the Wild West perennially presented the popular Indian-attack acts and emblazoned posters such as the mid-1890s *Enquirer* lithograph with depictions of these spectacles, it was never Cody's aim for his exhibition to deliver only object lessons that cast indigenous people as enemies. Many have asserted that whites' perceptions of Indians in the late nineteenth century were often inflected by their opinions regarding white civilization. Indians' status as bad or good, foe or friend frequently depended upon whether the person forming the

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<sup>60</sup> For an in-depth analysis of Roosevelt's *The Winning of the West* in conjunction with the notion of a "manly American race" and concerns of overcivilization, see Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, especially chapter five; and Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, 248. See also White, "Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill"; Richard Slotkin, "The 'Wild West,' in *Buffalo Bill and the Wild West* (Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Museum, 1891), 27–44; Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*; and Jonathan D. Martin, "'The Grandest and Most Cosmopolitan Object Teacher': *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* and the Politics of American Identity, 1883–1899," *Radical History Review* 66 (Fall 1996): 92–123.

judgment embraced or was critical of white society.<sup>61</sup> The United States government increasingly sought to “domesticate and civilize wild Indians...the accomplishment of which should be a crown of glory to any nation” with legislation such as the Dawes Act of 1887.<sup>62</sup> It also endeavored to assimilate native peoples by forcing them into the reservation system or into schools such as the Carlisle Indian Industrial School founded in 1879 in Pennsylvania on the motto, “To civilize the Indian, get him into civilization. To keep him civilized, let him stay.”<sup>63</sup> In this context, those who felt civilization lacking or who desired experiences antithetical to its complexities occasionally looked with admiration to the very people and ways of life that so many were working so hard to eradicate.<sup>64</sup> A fascination with “primitives” led some late-nineteenth-century middle-class white men to find powerful expressions of masculinity and primal virility where others saw only savagery. Fraternal organizations such as the long-standing Improved Order of Red Men provided these types with opportunities to enact their Indian-inspired fantasies.<sup>65</sup>

In an era during which perceptions about Indians were in flux and Indians themselves were experiencing tremendous change, the mission of the Wild West as explained by its general

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<sup>61</sup> Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 7–28.

<sup>62</sup> *Annual Report of the Commission of Indian Affairs*, 24 October 1881, quoted in Francis Paul Prucha, ed. *Documents of United States Indian Policy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 155.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Richard Henry Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867–1904*, ed. Robert M. Utley (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 283.

<sup>64</sup> Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 63 and 72.

<sup>65</sup> Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 22; and E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 128. See also E. Anthony Rotundo, “Learning about Manhood: Gender Ideals and the Middle-Class Family in Nineteenth-Century America,” in J. A. Mangan and James Walvin, *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800–1940* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 35–51.



manager Major John M. Burke to none other than the Commission of Indian Affairs comprised the “honorable ambition to instruct and educate the Eastern public to respect the denizens of the West by giving them a true, untinselled representation of a page of Frontier history that is fast passing away.”<sup>66</sup> Motivation for such an objective may have included deflection of criticism leveled at Cody by Indian reformers. Many believed that his Wild West traded on the perpetuation of the lowest, most savage characteristics of Indians, that it debased its native performers, and that it was “demoralizing, both to them and to the crowds who witness such an exhibition of the contact and conflict between barbarism and imperfect civilization.”<sup>67</sup>

Throughout the Wild West performances staged each season, in the pages of its programs, and on its posters, Indians entertained and educated the audience with more than their roles as antagonists in the ambush of wagon trains, the assailment of settlers outside their cabins, and the assault of stage coaches. These dime novel-type spectacles in which Indians incessantly played the villains were balanced by essays that explored “An Indian’s Religion,” “The Bow and Arrow,” and “Indian Names of States” printed in Wild West programs and claims of “Here you see the red man at home” published in Wild West couriers. They were offset in the arena by dramatizations of “The Indian. As he was before the discovery,” demonstrations of buffalo hunts,

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<sup>66</sup> Quoted in L. G. Moses, “Interpreting the Wild West,” in *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Brokers*, ed. Margaret Connell Szasz (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 164.

<sup>67</sup> Quotation from an untitled article, *Friends Review* 44, no. 34 (19 March 1891): 536. See also “Church Gleanings,” *Christian Union* 43 no. 15 (9 April 1891), 481; Moses, “Interpreting the Wild West,” 164; and Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 38. The criticism against Buffalo Bill’s Wild West as it relates to Indians in the exhibition also included charges that after touring with the exhibition—an experience that reinforced the nomadic lifestyle of many of its Indian performers—show Indians would be unfit to return to the reservation. Some reformers felt that the Wild West and performing traditional tribal ways was counter to the assimilation aims of the Indian Bureau that included exposure to education, Christianity, and agriculture, while others alleged exploitation, cruelty, and abuse. *Ibid.*, 68–69; Juti A. Winchester, “All the West’s a Stage: Buffalo Bill, Cody, Wyoming, and Western Heritage Presentation, 1847–1997 (PhD diss., Northern Arizona University, 1999), 36; and Blackstone, “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West,” 64. See also Chauncey Yellow Robe, “The Menace of the Wild West Show,” *Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians* 2 (July–September 1914): 224–25.

displays of native horsemanship including bareback races, and illustrations of “the Indian way” of fighting, games, songs, and various dances including those endorsed as war, grass, corn, and scalp. Such articles and acts alleged a degree of ethnographic authenticity, much like George Catlin’s painting *War Dance, Sioux* (1845–48) and cast Indian performers in a sympathetic light, or at least one not as colored by fear and obscured by gun smoke. (Figure 2.26)

The Enquirer poster from the mid-1890s highlights this aspect of Indians’ participation in the Wild West with a narrow horizontal vignette set off by a thin blue frame just below the center of the composition. Five Plains Indians, four of whom wield battle weapons that include a rifle, hatchet, spear, and club, dance in a circle. They are watched by others in the camp who stand in the distance at the left and kneel on an animal skin in the foreground in front of two tepees, creating a *repoussoir* at the right. The tepees are set at the edge of a wood, mirroring the location of the settler’s cabin in the lower left of the lithograph. At the center of this vignette, two Indians face each other. They wear the impressive eagle feather trailer war bonnets associated with the Lakota, breech clouts, and bright blue moccasins.<sup>68</sup> They are bent forward at the waist, each with the leg closest to the picture plane raised. As with many elements in this poster, the Enquirer artist based this pair of figures as well as a third on Carl Henckel’s 1890 sketch of a similar subject, *Indian War Dance*. (Figure 2.27) The nearly ground-grazing trailer and pose of the dancer at the left is identical to a figure in Henckel’s sketch, as is the attitude of the dancer whom he faces, but who wears a roach, rather than a war bonnet. A third figure in the dance circle likewise has a parallel in the German artist’s scene—the figure carrying a rifle—although he

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<sup>68</sup> By the time Enquirer published this poster, eagle feather war bonnets had become divorced from some of their political or spiritual symbolism, instead reading as a sign of “Indianness” that was even appropriated by tribes for which this type of headdress was not traditional. A war bonnet with as long and magnificent a trailer as worn by the left figure in the pair may have been created after the complex feather heraldry of the Lakota tribe had lost some of its symbolism. Michael Johnson, *Tribes of the Sioux Nation* (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2012), 41.

wears modest buckskin trousers rather than more revealing, albeit accurate, leggings. The Enquirer Indians have also lost their intricate body paint that cloaked them in protection and Henckel's sketch in a measure of authenticity. In this instance, perhaps the desire to clarify and simply an image intended for leisurely perusal for the purposes of a promotional image trumped the faithfulness usually touted by the exhibition. This impulse may have also resulted in the omission of the fire around which Henckel's Indians dance. Additionally, by not replicating this aspect of Henckel's composition, the Enquirer artist avoided a potential barrier that could keep viewers out of the scene. The lack of a fire creates greater open space in the foreground of the vignette. This space becomes a device, like those employed in the poster's other vignettes such as a spotting-scope view, a fallen horse, or a broken oval frame, to lead viewers—and potential Wild West ticket purchasers—into the scene.

Segments in the exhibition and its promotional posters that showcased ritual dances—such as the war dances that appeared on the program in the 1890s and as the gunpowder-less interlude between the attack scenes in the Enquirer lithograph—offered alternative roles for show Indians to blood thirsty parts, even if a particular dance would have been in preparation or commemoration of a violent act. “The dancing should be studied in great detail,” according to a reporter for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* in 1894, “There are some artists in it—some great artists. There are many different movements and lots of specialties.”<sup>69</sup> “The American Indians, in their primitive state, with no ornament save paint and feathers, were a realistic picture of early life on the western plains, as they performed the grotesque dances,” wrote a Toledo, Ohio, reviewer in

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<sup>69</sup> “At the Wild West Show,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 17, 1894, 16.

1897.<sup>70</sup> These elements not only served the educational mission of the Wild West while they entertained, but they also preserved traditions threatened by proponents of assimilation as they were being performed. If sequestered on Pine Ridge or at Carlisle, the same Indians would have been forbidden to don ceremonial regalia or dance.<sup>71</sup> In comments representative of those made by his contemporaries, Julian Ralph, a reporter for *Harper's Weekly*, described seeing Buffalo Bill's show Indians preparing for a dance in August 1894 and its effect:

For clothing they wore only breech-clouts and moccasins, but for ornament they had full suits of yellow and blue and green paint, and many pounds of feathers, fur tails, elk teeth, pocket mirrors, buckskin fringe, bone breastplates, beribboned lances, fringed and feather *coup* sticks, bits of beadwork, bear claws, and all the rest that makes a soulless idiot liken the Indian to rag-bags, but which appeals to a sense of the romantic and the picturesque as no other costume in the world begins to do.<sup>72</sup>

Spectacles such as the ceremonial dance featured in the mid-1890s Enquirer one-sheet and in the Wild West may have encouraged audiences “to respect the denizens of the West,” served as an archival mechanism, and appealed to an appreciation for the romantic and picturesque, but they also conveyed another message.<sup>73</sup> As L. G. Moses asks, “How better to substantiate the victory than to display the vanquished?”<sup>74</sup> The last major battle in the Indian wars, the massacre at Wounded Knee that suppressed the Ghost Dance movement, took place in South Dakota in December 1890. Despite the Wild West's reiteration of Indian attacks on

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<sup>70</sup> “An Excellent Show,” *Toledo (Ohio) Commercial*, August 18, 1897, NSS, Vol. 6, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>71</sup> Michelle Delaney, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Warriors: A Photographic History by Gertrude Käsebier* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2007), 15 and 21.

<sup>72</sup> Ralph, “Behind the ‘Wild West’ Scenes,” 775.

<sup>73</sup> Quoted in Moses, “Interpreting the Wild West,” 164.

<sup>74</sup> Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 12.

markers of white progress such as the emigrant train, the settler's cabin, and the stage coach, the frontier had changed and with it the Indian and perceptions of him. The meaning of the Indian in Buffalo Bill's Wild West was highly mutable. He could be a fearsome aggressor in the inverted conquest narrative so integral to the nation's definition of itself. Alternatively, the once-threatening foe, much like the hatchet in the still life that anchors the lower edge of the Enquirer one-sheet and whose lethal potential has been arrested by the artful arrangement, could function as trophy on display, an evocative reminder of a place and time in history.<sup>75</sup>

Additionally, members of the Plains tribes, principally the Lakota people who fought at Little Big Horn and Wounded Knee, hired by Cody for his Wild West provided many signifiers that connoted Indian-ness—eagle feather bonnets, tepees, lances, peace pipes, buffalo hides, charging ponies, skirmishes with settlers—within the exhibition, its promotional materials, and far beyond.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, the Wild West, as many have argued, played a critical role in the establishment of the very notion of an emblematic, quintessential, and enduring “Indian.”<sup>77</sup> The mid-1890s Enquirer poster is rich with these signs. It further emphasizes the concept with the

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<sup>75</sup> Carl Henckel included a still life of a painted shield adorned with feathers and a club on the contents page of his 1891 portfolio *Buffalo Bill und Sein Wilder Westen; Zeichnungen nach dem Leben von Carl Henckel* in which his 1890s sketches were published. Other early nineteenth-century artists drew and painted still lifes composed of Indian accoutrements and weaponry, including Catlin, and the Wild West had a tradition of incorporating western still lifes into its promotional material as discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation. Predating the use of still-life motifs in Wild West promotional materials, a macabre arrangement comprising the war bonnet, shield, and scalp of the Cheyenne warrior Yellow Hair whom Cody dispatched at the Battle of War Bonnet Creek in northwestern Nebraska in July 1876 was displayed in storefronts to advertise Buffalo Bill's melodramas and increase his authenticity. Slotkin, “The ‘Wild West,’” 31. Incidentally, Buffalo Bill's Combination was banned in Boston as a result of this ghastly promotional device. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 73.

<sup>76</sup> This adoption of the Lakota people as the “American Indian” permeates popular culture to this day.

<sup>77</sup> See for example, Blackstone, “Buffalo Bill's Wild West,” 255; Marsha C. Bol, “Defining Lakota Tourist Art, 1880–1915,” in *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Post Colonial Worlds*, eds. Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 215; Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 1; Bobby Bridger, *Buffalo Bill and Sitting Bull: Inventing the Wild West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 12; Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 89; and John C. Ewers, “The Emergence of the Plains Indian as the Symbol of the North American Indian,” in *Indian Life on the Upper Missouri* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1968), 187–203.

inclusion of the full-length Indian at the left side of the composition. Designed to promote an extravaganza that boasted “everything is genuine,” and depicted in a manner that echoes the ethnographically minded traditions of George Catlin or Karl Bodmer’s portrayals of important chiefs, the large figure who stands at the left of the Enquirer one-sheet cannot actually stand up to a dissection of his costume. Although elements of his attire reflect realities of Lakota dress and ornamentation, such as hair-pipe breast plate and gorget, other aspects are the result of artistic invention. The figure’s full eagle feather bonnet trimmed with ermine suggests the classic Plains Indian symbol that distinguished the wearer as one marked by bravery, political stature, and deep respect. However, it is inaccurate in terms of scale and proportion. The browband consists of too many components with artistic embellishments added, perhaps, to increase its decorative effect and allure. The figure’s red shirt accented with shoulder fringe and the vertically striped fabric sash he wears around his waist likewise appear to be eye-catching constructions. His trousers read less as traditional leggings and more like European-American pants in their cut, while his moccasins appear of Woodlands’ or Eastern Plains’ origin, rather than of Lakota manufacture.<sup>78</sup>

This confusion of authenticity, even when the Wild West management could have presumably supplied the Enquirer artist with photographic records of its most picturesque show Indians dressed in their regalia, certainly does not affect the impact of the figure. Although not the “real thing,” he is an effective symbol of the real thing, an amalgamation of recognizable elements based on fact and fantasy and interpreted with creative license to appeal and resonate

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<sup>78</sup> I am grateful to Gaylord Torrence, Fred and Virginia Merrill Senior Curator of American Indian Art, at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO, for his expertise, insights, and a tutorial regarding the truthfulness and inaccuracies of the costume and accoutrements of the standing Indian.

much like the poster overall and the Wild West itself. Even in its inauthenticity, a flaw that would have likely gone undetected by the majority of viewers, this emblem of *the* American Indian who stoically presides over the dramatic vignettes lends a certain cachet and credence to the specific spectacles portrayed and, by extension, to the Wild West in general. The figure occupies the position reserved for Buffalo Bill himself in countless Wild West posters, asserting a presence that functions both as an endorsement of and a trademark for the enterprise. (Figure 2.3) Interestingly, however, in an early preparatory graphite sketch for the Enquirer one-sheet, the Indian bore even greater resemblance to the ubiquitous depictions of Cody as the progenitor and superintendent of the Wild West. He was depicted on horseback and holding a rifle. Subsequently he lost his mount and his firearm, which he traded for the more picturesque, and “Indian,” lance and a painted and be-feathered shield.<sup>79</sup>

At the same time that the full-length figure standing at the left side of the Enquirer poster approximates the role of Buffalo Bill as chief of the Wild West, if not his exact presentation, it also represents the many Indians who received marquee billing with the exhibition and were recognized leaders of their own tribes. American Horse, Red Shirt, Red Cloud, Black Fox, Short Bull, Kicking Bear, Iron Tail, and the legendary Sitting Bull, among many others, achieved celebrity for their roles on the frontier and in the exhibition. They belonged to the esteemed coterie that this figure exemplifies. Sitting Bull, the Hunkpapa Lakota chief and survivor of the

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<sup>79</sup> See the first chapter of this dissertation for examples and a discussion of this use of Cody’s image. The graphite preparatory drawing is in the collection of Circus World Museum Library. Although the Indian in this finished poster functions as a surrogate Cody, only a single image exists in which Buffalo Bill adopted the guise of an Indian. The photograph, taken around 1878 during his days as a thespian, shows him in an eagle feather trailer bonnet and moccasins and is reproduced in Kasson, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 118.

battle of Little Big Horn, left Standing Rock reservation to tour with the exhibition in 1885.<sup>80</sup> He was the premier show Indian. His name appeared only slightly smaller than “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West” in newspaper advertisements during the exhibition’s third season and his presence in the arena launched a preference for members of the Lakota tribe as the most highly sought after show Indians. Sitting Bull did not participate in the various mock attacks, but instead rode into the arena alone to be taunted as General Custer’s murderer or hailed as a respected statesman of a great Indian nation.<sup>81</sup> Tatanka Iyotake’s single season with the Wild West during a time of considerable hostility between the Lakota people and the United States government, inaugurated an object lesson on the theme “Enemies in ’76, Friends in ’85.” This caption frequently accompanied the most widely distributed cabinet card from a series of eight made by William Notman and Sons of Montreal when the Wild West toured Canada. (Figure 2.28) The photograph featured Cody and Sitting Bull, both participants in the Black Hills War of 1876 and performers in the Wild West, standing side-by-side adorned in their finest performance attire.<sup>82</sup> It was often reproduced in Wild West materials, including in the lower left corner of a pastiche poster published by A. Hoen and Company a decade later. (Figure 2.29) In the years to come, even as the Wild West restaged raids on the Deadwood stage coach, just-in-the-nick-of-time rescues of

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<sup>80</sup> For Cody’s intricate negotiations with the Bureau of Indian Affairs for permission for Sitting Bull to travel with the Wild West, see John Polacsek, “The Marketing of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Shows,” *Bandwagon* 34, no. 2 (March/April 1990): 24; and Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 27. Following his time with the Wild West during the 1885 season, the Bureau of Indian Affairs never allowed Sitting Bull to leave Standing Rock again. Delaney, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Warriors*, 31.

<sup>81</sup> Moses, “Interpreting the Wild West,” 168–70; and Vine Deloria, Jr., “The Indians,” in *Buffalo Bill and the Wild West* (Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Museum, 1981), 51.

<sup>82</sup> Cody was a scout for the Fifth Cavalry during 1876 and Sitting Bull was notorious for his participation in the Battle of Little Big Horn. See Louis Pfaller, “‘Enemies in ’76, Friends in ’85’—Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill,” *Prologue* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1969): 17–31. For an analysis of the set of cabinet cards created by William Notman and Sons, see Kasson, *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 178–79.



white captives, and Custer's demise, this simultaneous vilification and expression of allegiance was persistent and broadly applied to characterize white-Indian relations.<sup>83</sup>

The Indian standing at the left side of the mid-1890s Enquirer lithograph possesses representational power beyond the evocation of the many eminent Lakota who had traveled with Buffalo Bill's Wild West, amplifying its appeal and authenticity while fixing Plains people as "the Indian" in imaginations at home and abroad. The figure operates even more essentially as a late nineteenth-century homage to a centuries-old convention of using a depiction of an Indian to signify the New World or America such as Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues' sixteenth-century description of René Laudonnière and Chief Athore (1564; New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations), or even as reflected by the disguise chosen by rebellious colonists in 1773 during the Boston Tea Party. Maps, prints, decorative arts, numismatics, as well as paintings and literature in a quest for a national subject, and even trade figures advertising tobacco, first in England and eventually in the United States, cast the Indian as the embodiment of America. The full-length figure in the Enquirer poster does, in fact, bear some resemblance to a cigar store Indian in his rigid stance and sculptural features. Even the feathers that adorn his shield rhyme the tobacco leaves frequently held by his polychromed wood counterparts who stood like sentinels outside countless turn-of-the-century American tobacco shops.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> The foe-now-friend concept was furthered by spectacles such as Indian-versus-cowboy football on horseback, an act that was actually quite dangerous with knees and ankles frequently dislocated courtesy of the five-foot in diameter football. Harry E. Webb, "My Years with Buffalo Bill—Part II," *Real West* 13, no. 79 (February 1976): 61.

<sup>84</sup> For a survey of such figures and a preference for those resembling Plains Indians during the late nineteenth century, see "Wooden Indians and Noble Savages," in Ralph Sessions, *The Shipcarvers' Art: Figureheads and Cigar-Store Indians in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1990), chapter 3. A reporter for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* went so far as to draw a direct parallel between the Wild West show Indians and trade figures. Describing the post-performance atmosphere, the reporter noted, "All the white men seek some

The Wild West explicitly embraced the notion of the Indian as America. At the same time that Roosevelt was writing about the white “American race” in opposition to the Indian, in several posters and throughout its programs, the exhibition conveyed upon the Indian the iconic status of the “American” in “America’s National Entertainment.” This honorific appears at the lower edge of an 1893 lithograph published by A. Hoen and Company that, in a promotional practice common for the Wild West, recycled an image of a buckskin-clad Indian mounted on horseback first printed around 1885 by the Forbes Company of Boston. (Figure 2.30) The textual addition not only identifies the equestrian subject during the season in which the Congress of Rough Riders of the World debuted in Chicago across the street from the international exposition that was the focus of the world’s attention, but it also reinforces the conflation of the United States and its first people.<sup>85</sup> When the image was reproduced in the 1893 Wild West program as an illustration for an article lauding Cody’s abilities as a progressive educator, it bore the caption, “The Former Foe—Present Friend, The American,” a description of the Indian that could only begin to ring credible in the wake of Wounded Knee.<sup>86</sup> In another lithograph published by A. Hoen and Company for the Wild West’s stand at the World’s Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893 and reproduced as a line drawing in advertisements that ran in the city’s newspapers, a cameo portrait of an Indian suggesting affinities to a peace medal displayed

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sort of play or amusement, but the Indians just stand around with feathers in their hair and vermilion on their faces, their blankets folded about them absolutely still and expressionless like wax works or cigar signs. “At the Wild West Shows,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 17, 1894, 16.

<sup>85</sup> Drama critic and *Chicago Daily News* contributor Amy Leslie described a detail of the opening ceremonies of the World’s Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893 that she felt “gave an unexpected American tinge to the climax.” As flags rose at the direction of President Cleveland to the strains of *My Country ’Tis of Thee*, she noticed “braves in their blazing war paint, gorgeous necklaces and representative American savagery.” *Amy Leslie at the Fair* (Chicago, 1893), 13.

<sup>86</sup> 1893 Wild West program, 10, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 25.

against an array of native weaponry and accoutrements was appended with the classification “The American.”<sup>87</sup> (Figure 2.31) Three years later, as the exhibition performed throughout the eastern and central United States, the Courier Lithographic Company of Buffalo, New York, created a series of posters based on a tri-register format with a nuanced portrait in the center to celebrate Cody’s collection of first-rate equestrians from across the globe, his Congress of Rough Riders of the World. One design in the set was dedicated to the “The American.” (Figure 2.32) It was not a cowboy or a member of the cavalry who bore this title, but rather an Indian. The top register of the poster depicts what is labeled as “Historic Scenes”—signature Wild West attack-and-rescue imagery. Below, on either side of the portrait, a “War Dance” and a “Peace Council” are described. The final register shows Cody, the cavalry, and scouts in riotous pursuit of a band of Indians, but within the confines of the Wild West arena. Together the “Actual Scenes—Genuine Characters” showcased in this Courier lithograph read as synopsis of the progression of the Indian so sensitively portrayed with dignity and individuality at its center from foe to friend and finally as “The American.”<sup>88</sup>

Perhaps the ultimate confirmation of the Indian as representative of America occurred near the end of the decade after the publication of the *Enquirer* one-sheet montage that promoted the Wild West in the mid-1890s. On May 12, 1909, Colonel Cody rushed from a Wild West performance at Madison Square Garden to attend a dinner in his honor in the ballroom of Sherry’s in New York. He was introduced by the toastmaster as “a man who had won the heart of the red man and had done much to educate the American people out of their old prejudices

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<sup>87</sup> Advertisement, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 30, 1893, 39.

<sup>88</sup> The central portrait in this 1896 Courier poster is quite similar to an iconic and widely reproduced photograph of Sitting Bull taken in 1881 by Bismark, North Dakota, photographer Orland Goff in the State Historical Society of North Dakota.

about the race and into a real understanding of the fine sides of Indian character.”<sup>89</sup> When he had the opportunity to address his devotees, Cody shared a suggestion proposed by the Philadelphia department store magnate Lewis Rodman Wanamaker for a statue on Governor’s Island in New York Harbor. The tribute, as Cody described it, was to be “a lasting monument to the first Americans” whom he had known all his life and found honorable in both war and peace.<sup>90</sup> The mammoth bronze, christened “Miss Liberty’s Bridegroom,” was never realized, but its very proposition underscores the valuation of the Indian as a national symbol, a status underlying the iconography of the mid-1890s Enquirer lithograph, and even more overtly expressed in other Wild West posters of the decade.

Season after season as Cody negotiated with the government to recruit a steady supply of indigenous talent for his exhibition and as humanitarians and policy reformers debated the evils and benefits of his Wild West, a complex network of perceptions surrounding Indians influenced the manner in which these performers were portrayed.<sup>91</sup> They were considered savages to be feared and nobles to be admired, brutal adversaries and trusted allies, citizens in need of assimilation and people with traditions worth preserving. Synonymous with the West as both a

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<sup>89</sup> “Monument to Indian for New York Harbor,” *New-York Tribune*, May 13, 1909, 3.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*; and “Plans for Placing Indian Statue on Governor’s Island,” *New-York Tribune*, May 21, 1909, 3. The *New York Times* took a more cynical view of the proposal, describing the monument as “an Indian figure with arms outstretched, welcoming all the world to the land that once was his.” “Indians at Dinner for Cody,” *New York Times*, May 13, 1909, 7.

<sup>91</sup>The Bureau of Indian Affairs commenced regulation of Indian employment in exhibitions such as the Wild West in 1886, going against the Standing Bear Decision of 1879 that declared that Indians could freely leave the reservation. Regulations stipulated that contracts, salaries, room and board, interpreters, medical attention, chaplains, and return travel to the reservation all must be provided or the exhibitions’ management would risk penalties. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 63. Several sources include information regarding these evolving governmental guidelines, including salary recommendations. See Blackstone, “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West,” 183; Don Russell, *The Wild West: A History of Wild West Shows* (Fort Worth, TX: Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1970), 67; and Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 316. For Wild West general manager Major John B. Burke’s explanation of these regulations and the agreements signed by Indian performers see “Indians in the Wild West Show,” *New York Times*, April 21, 1901, 20.

place and a time, they embodied its dangers and served as its enduring emblem. The manner in which the Wild West presented Indians in its “living pictures” and in its graphic imagery resonated powerfully with the complicated images and attitudes in audiences’ minds informed by a conqueror’s version of history and the products of culture both high and low. During a single Wild West performance, or on a single poster, the Indian could be demonized and lauded, depicted as the antithesis of a nation and its aims and simultaneously embraced as “The American.”

### **“Actual Scenes—Genuine Characters: American Cowboy”**

The exhibition of the cowboys was probably the most enjoyable of the show. There was just one fault with it—it did not last long enough.

—“Wild West,” *Morning Citizen* (Lowell, MA), July 11, 1899<sup>1</sup>

The duration of the Wild West’s cowboy acts in relationship to the performance time of the entire exhibition is analogous to the reign of the cowboys compared to the epic sweep of the history of the American West. Scholars of the cowboy—a potent symbol whose presence still looms large—have recognized how curious it is that such a rich and abiding mythic status was conferred upon this figure. Cowboys’ actual contribution to the western narrative of this country lasted only about three decades. Even in their heyday they numbered surprisingly few, just one-tenth of one percent of the nation’s agricultural workforce. The birth of the cowboy of legend coincided with an increased market for beef, particularly in urban areas of the East, and the open range ranching system that developed to satiate that desire. The opening of enlarged grazing tracts after the Civil War, an Army presence to subdue potential threats by American Indians, a progressively integrated rail network, and new packing and refrigeration methods all supported the burgeoning industry. But it was the image of the cowboy on the open range that is most immediately identified with the short-lived system that thrived from roughly the mid-1860s until a disastrously cold winter in 1887 that ushered in the beginning of its end. Throughout the Great Plains and west of the Rocky Mountains, young, mostly Southern men bore the responsibility of driving vast herds of market-ready cattle from pasturelands unparceled by barbed wire to the nearest railhead. An estimated six to nine million cattle were escorted north from Texas to Kansas between 1869 and 1890, but each 1500 head required only about ten cowboys to ensure a successful drive, even one lasting two to three

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<sup>1</sup> Nate Salsbury Scrapbooks (hereafter NSS), Vol. 8, Denver Public Library (hereafter DPL), Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

months and covering hundreds of miles.<sup>2</sup> “By all rights,” Western historian Lonn Taylor contends, the cowboy “should have joined the hunters of Kentucky, the whalers, the flatboatmen, the plainsmen, and all the other American types who briefly caught the popular imagination, were popularized on the stage and in song, and were forgotten.”<sup>3</sup> The reality of the cowboy’s historical presence belies the brightness with which he shines in the pantheon of American heroes.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the cowboy’s romantic luster held wide-spread appeal. It attracted authors, politicians, artists, and showmen, among many others, who not infrequently emulated the object of their admiration. In contrast to those who might disparage the cowboy as a reckless blackguard, they understood the value in burnishing his reputation. They venerated him for what he embodied, which was confidence, freedom, bravery, individuality, and masculinity. They respected him for what he was not, bound by the strictures of what artist Frederic Remington summarized as “the Derby hat and the starched linen—those horrible badges of the slavery of our modern social system.”<sup>4</sup> They saw powerful iconic potential in the cowboy even as he grew obsolete with the closing of the frontier that gave him rise and with which he was synonymous. They found meaning in capitalizing on nostalgic feelings for the defining figure of a fading era at a cultural moment distinguished by increasing industrialization, immigration, economic depression, labor strikes, agitation for women’s rights, and concerns regarding overcivilization. Despite their relatively scant number and the limited time during which they actually lived the life for which they are celebrated, the cowboys’ impact was substantial. It was significant both in terms of the role they played as an integral members of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and as legendary figures in American history, with the former certainly influencing and enhancing the latter.

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<sup>2</sup> For details regarding the phenomenon of “such an enormous feast on so little food” as it relates to the iconic status of the American cowboy, see Lonn Taylor, “The Open-Range Cowboy of the Nineteenth Century,” in *The American Cowboy*, Lonn Taylor and Ingrid Maar (Washington, D.C.: American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, 1983), 17–21; and Jack Weston, *The Real American Cowboy* (New York: Schocken Books, 1985), 209–10. See also William W. Savage, Jr., *The Cowboy Hero: His Image in American History and Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979).

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, “The Open-Range Cowboy of the Nineteenth Century,” 17.

<sup>4</sup> Frederic Remington, “Buffalo Bill in London,” *Harper’s Weekly* 36, no. 1863 (3 September 1892): 847.

The cowboy, understandably, was ubiquitous in the promotion of the Wild West. Season after season the wood engravings and lithographs published to advertise Cody's exhibition relied on the appeal of the cowboy's image to lure audiences to the Wild West's grandstand. A one-sheet poster published in 1896 by the Courier Lithographic Company of Buffalo, New York, to promote Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World serves simultaneously as an engaging promotional vehicle and a vivid apotheosis of the cowboy. (Figure 3.1) It is one in a series of posters designed to showcase performers of various nationalities who comprised Cody's renowned Congress of Rough Riders of the World. The compositional format of a central portrait in the midst of three registers filled with dramatic vignettes echoes the biographical posters that featured Buffalo Bill himself and established his credentials while encouraging Wild West tickets sales. The arrangement also calls to mind precious objects associated with devotion, such as early medieval ivory and metalwork codex covers adorned by Christ or saints likewise surrounded by panels that depict important deeds or moments from the central figure's life.

A portrait of a handsome figure identified as "American Cowboy" dominates the center of this poster. The front edge of his broad-brimmed hat, so crucial for protection against the sun while on the range, is turned back in a manner that denies its frontier usefulness. The manipulation reveals the attractive face and blue eyes of this "American Cowboy" and a confident, steady gaze that recalls similar portraits of Buffalo Bill. He is the visualization of Theodore Roosevelt's description of the cowboy that first appeared on the pages of *The Century Magazine* in 1888. He epitomizes a group of men the future president identified as "as hardy and self-reliant as any men who ever breathed—with bronzed, set faces, and keen eyes that look all the world straight in the face without flinching as they flash out from under the broad-brimmed hats."<sup>5</sup> The register above and those that flank this "American Cowboy" depict his cohorts excelling in their element. They appear "At Home" and "In Prairieland." They do what only they

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<sup>5</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, "Ranch Life in the Far West," *Century Magazine* 35, no. 4 (February 1888): 502.



do best during a “Round Up” and dominate “Buckers.” These vignettes in the upper two registers, combined with the register beneath the central portrait, underscore the exhibition’s pledge of “Actual Scenes—Genuine Characters” who show off their skills in an “Open Arena with Covered Grand Stand Seating” in front of “20,000 People, Twice Daily—2 & 8 P.M.” The 1896 Courier lithograph, along with other examples of cowboy-centric Wild West posters, reflect the transformation of a frontier laborer to an American icon with far-reaching resonance. As an emblem of the exhibition itself, these posters also highlight the Wild West’s integral role in that conversion.

Just as American Indians were featured performers beginning with the exhibition’s inaugural season, cowboys, likewise, were also highly touted Wild West talent from 1883 on. In fact, their association with Cody predates the first performance of his extravaganza that year in Omaha, Nebraska. In 1877 Cody’s accomplishments as a renowned scout and guide, coupled with his success on the melodrama stage, provided him with the finances to become a partner in a ranch on the Dismal River north of North Platte, Nebraska. The ranch he oversaw with brothers Luther, James, and Major Frank North (a performer in the Wild West until he died in 1885) in the heart of prosperous cattle country employed hired hands skilled in one profession Cody could not officially claim on his frontier résumé, that of cowboy. A cowboy at heart, if not in practice, Cody made it a point to attend the ranch’s roundups. The prowess that the men in his employ exhibited during the roundups, which incorporated all manner of competitive displays of mastery over cattle and bronco as well as elements of so-called “cowboy fun,” impressed and inspired the ranch’s celebrity co-owner.<sup>6</sup> In his 1879 autobiography Cody commented on the “most magnificent horsemanship” and the “dexterity and daring in the saddle” he had witnessed by “invariably skillful and fearless horsemen,” these “‘cow-boys,’ as they are called.”<sup>7</sup> Three years later, on

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<sup>6</sup> Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America: William Cody and The Wild West Show* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 208–09; and Howard R. Lamar, “The Cowboys,” in *Buffalo Bill and the Wild West* (Brooklyn, NY: The Brooklyn Museum, 1981), 57 and 60.

<sup>7</sup> William F. Cody, *The Life of the Hon. William F. Cody Known as Buffalo Bill the Famous Hunter, Scout and Guide* (Hartford, CT: Frank E. Bliss, 1879), 362.

July 4, 1882, he hosted an “Old Glory Blowout” in North Platte. The occasion drew hundreds of participants who vied for glory and cash rewards in various tests of cowboy skill.<sup>8</sup>

For the debut of his traveling exhibition the following year, Cody enlisted cowboys to round out the cast. “Con” T. Groner, the “Cowboy Sheriff of the Platte,” left his appointment in Lincoln to join Cody’s endeavor, as did cowboys throughout western Nebraska. The roster also included men from Cody’s own ranch such as the twenty-nine year old Texan William Levi “Buck” Taylor. The program for that first exhibition in 1883 described this Wild West headliner as “a man whose great strength, nerve, endurance, and skill is historical in the West.”<sup>9</sup> By the following year, the program expanded its sketch of Taylor to outline specifically his areas of expertise. His forte on the frontier included “horsemanship, lassoing, and general ‘cow-sense,’” as well as “leading the stampede, excelling in the round-up and gaining such distinction as a rider and tamer of mustang and broncho” as well as a “mastery of wild horses.”<sup>10</sup> In the Wild West arena he awed audiences with the caliber of his tricks such as leaning precariously low off his galloping mount to pick up a handkerchief lying the sawdust.<sup>11</sup> In short, he was acclaimed in all the categories of cowboy aptitude displayed in the upper two registers of the 1896 Courier poster, as well as elements of cowboy showmanship described in its lower register. Although the cowboy at the center of the lithograph is identified generically as “American Cowboy,” Taylor, who performed with the Wild West into the 1890s, may have provided inspiration for the figurehead. (Figure 3.2) His talents, likely combined with his oft-remarked upon good looks, secured for him the royal

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<sup>8</sup> Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 210; and Lamar, “The Cowboys,” 58. The “Old Glory Blowout” echoed one of the first of such events held in this country in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1847 as described in the annals of Captain Main Reid. Guy Logsdon, “Rodeo” entry in *Reader’s Encyclopedia of the American West*, ed. Howard R. Lamar (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1977), 1028.

<sup>9</sup> 1883 Wild West program, William Frederick Cody (hereafter WFC) Collection, McCracken Research Library (hereafter MRL), Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY (hereafter BBHC), Box 7, Folder 19.

<sup>10</sup> “‘Buck’ Taylor, King of the Cowboys,” 1884 Wild West program, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 7, Folder 20.

<sup>11</sup> Untitled article, *Evening Express* (Boston), July 25, 1885, quoted in William E. Deahl, Jr., “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, 1885,” *Annals of Wyoming* (Fall 1975): 145.

sobriquet “King of the Cow-boys.” He also earned the distinction as the first cowboy hero to reign between the paperback covers of a dime novel when, in 1885, Beadle’s Half-Dime Library published Prentiss Ingraham’s *Buck Taylor, King of the Cowboys; or The Raiders and Rangers: A Story of the Wild and Thrilling Life of William L. Taylor*.<sup>12</sup>

When Cody launched his Wild West and Ingraham wrote his Taylor-inspired fiction, the men riding off the open range and into the arena or onto the page were not universally perceived as monarchs. Rather, they were commonly viewed with reproach. Instead of “cowboy” as a qualifier that garnered esteem, it was frequently used as a pejorative. In 1874, nine years before the first Wild West performance, the cattle baron and founder of Abilene, Kansas, Joseph Geiting McCoy, wrote the first history of the cattle industry. Despite the personal success he owed to the cowboy, McCoy’s *Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and Southwest* was hardly an endorsement of the men who ensured that Texas longhorns safely made their way to his Abilene stockyard. Although McCoy described their hard work and detailed the dangers they endured, he found fault with the inherent nature of the cowboy. He underscored his criticism of the unsavory behavior to which these rough men were prone with illustrations supplied by the Topeka, Kansas, artist Henry Worrall. One such illustration bore the less-than-flattering caption “Drunken Cow-boy on the ‘War-path.’”<sup>13</sup> The wood engraving depicts a cowboy, mouth open in a boisterous yell, as he fires a pair of six-shooters into the moonlit sky. Townspeople look on with consternation as he rides past with abandon—a predecessor of the quartet of raucous cowboys letting off steam in Frederic Sackrider Remington’s 1902 bronze, *Coming through the Rye* (Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, TX). The following decade, in 1881, President Chester A. Arthur cited cowboys for lawlessness, public disturbances, and violence that provoked him to request

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<sup>12</sup> For more on William Levi “Buck” Taylor, see Savage, *The Cowboy Hero*, 109–12.

<sup>13</sup> “Drunken Cow-boy on the ‘War-path’” illustrated in Joseph G. McCoy, *Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and Southwest* (Kansas City, MO: Ramsey, Millet and Hudson, 1874), 136. For more on Worrall, see Karen De Bres, “Imagining Kansas: Place, Promotion, and Western Stereotypes in the Art of Henry Worrall (1825–1902),” *Great Plains Quarterly* 27 (Summer 2007): 177–92.

intervention from the Army.<sup>14</sup> That same year *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* indicted cowboys as vandals. The illustration that dominated the front page of the January 29, 1881, issue of the popular periodical depicted a pair of cowboys carelessly shooting down telegraph wires.<sup>15</sup> A year later, in an article originally published in the Cheyenne, Wyoming, *Daily Leader* but widely reprinted in the East, cowboys were deemed “foulmouthed, blasphemous, drunken, lecherous, [and] utterly corrupt.”<sup>16</sup> In 1883, the same year that cowboys went on strike in west Texas and Buffalo Bill's Wild West first performed throughout the Midwest and the East, humorist Bill Nye took a satirical approach to cowboys' much besmirched reputation. He introduced a caricature-filled article published in *Puck*, “The Cowboy: As He Is,” with the following statement: “So much amusing talk is being made recently anent the blood-bedraggled cowboy of the Wild West that I rise as one man to say a few things. . . regarding the so-called or so esteemed dry land pirate who, mounted on a little cow-pony and under the black flag, sails out across the green surge of the plains to scatter the rocky shores of Time with the bones of his fellow-man.”<sup>17</sup>

The Wild West aimed to counter such allegations against the cowboy and his character, both serious and tongue-in-cheek, that would make him appear an ill fit for the wholesome enterprise. The first season's program reprinted a laudatory article from *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times* that extolled the virtues of “falsely imaged,” “greatly despised,” “little understood” cattle wranglers.<sup>18</sup> The tribute, written by the late

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<sup>14</sup> Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 109–10.

<sup>15</sup> *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 51 no. 1322 (29 January 1881): cover.

<sup>16</sup> *Daily Leader* quoted in Robert A. Carter, *Buffalo Bill Cody: The Man Behind the Legend* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2000), 261. For more on negative views that surrounded the cowboy, see Weston, *The Real American Cowboy*, especially chapter one, as well as Savage, *The Cowboy Hero*.

<sup>17</sup> Bill Nye, “The Cowboy: As He Is,” *Puck* 14, no. 352 (5 December 1883): 212.

<sup>18</sup> J. B. Omohundro (Texas Jack), “The Cow-Boy,” *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times* (24 March 1877), reprinted in 1883 Wild West program, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 7, Folder 19. Omohundro's testimonial was frequently repeated in Wild West promotional publications.

John Burwell “Texas Jack” Omohundro, a scout who had shared the melodrama stage with Cody during the preceding decade, was prefaced with the statement intended set straight the record. Omohundro assured audiences that “These will be the genuine cattle herders of a reputable trade, and not the later misnomer of ‘the road,’ who, in assuming an honored title have tarnished it in the East, while being in fact the cow-boys’ greatest foe, the thieving, criminal ‘rustler.’”<sup>19</sup> Thirteen years later, posters like the 1896 Courier lithograph provided visual confirmation of Omohundro’s pledge and continued the Wild West’s boosterism.

The pair of “Actual Scenes” populated by “Genuine Characters” that occupy the first and second register on the left side of the poster pay tribute to two of the distinct and defining features of the open range cattle industry: the trail drive and the round up. Although actual as far as their frontier inspiration, the scenes naturally reflect artistic license. Technically, the round up, that biannual mustering of cattle owned by multiple ranchers in order to brand calves and sort out cows bearing the same identifying marks, shown in the middle tier, would occur prior to the arduous drive that moved 500 to 1500 cattle from their grazing lands to a railhead as presented in the upper register. However, the decision by the Courier artist to ignore frontier fact in order to feature the trail drive in the top register provides that vignette with slightly more space than if it had to fit into the zone between the left margin of the poster and the left side of the central portrait where it might make more chronological, but less compositional sense. The action in the second register is suited to complement the available space without compromising its content—a showcase for cowboys’ cattle roping and even steer riding skills in the “Round Up.” The curving back of the downed cow whose horns and hind legs are securely caught in the tandem cinches of two cowboys’ taut lariats rhymes neatly with the negative space created between the underside of the brim of the large central cowboy’s hat and the slope of his bandana-covered shoulder. The scene recalls real work by real cowboys and offers a preview of the sort of action one could expect to

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<sup>19</sup> “The Cow Boys” preface to J. B. Omohundro (Texas Jack), “The Cow-Boy,” *Wilkes’ Spirit of the Times* (24 March 1877), reprinted in 1883 Wild West program, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 7, Folder 19.

see on the Wild West program. It also shares affinities with the type of iconic cowboy imagery used by promoters of the West who, like Cody, found it rife with possibilities that could lead to financial gain. For example, in 1872 the Texas and Pacific Railroad circulated *What I Saw in Texas*, a tract written by the Philadelphia journalist John W. Forney. Forney's text, enhanced with wood engravings, including an illustration that showed cowboys working a round up, aimed to convince Congress to provide a subsidy to expand the railroad, ironically one of the very factors that would lead to the demise of the open range cattle industry as well as the closure of the frontier.<sup>20</sup> (Figure 3.3)

In the register above the "Round Up," nomadic cowboys are "At Home" on a cattle drive. The Courier artist adeptly negotiated the various components of the composition in order to use the space between the up-turned brim of the hat worn by the cowboy in the center of the poster and the lettering that spells out the exhibition's title to good advantage. The way this scene and the space it occupies are treated implies something of the character of the open range. Not even the bold and blocky lettering of the title treatment confines this cattle drive. "And Congress of" is interrupted intermittently by cowboys' sinuous whips, while the hat of a red-shirted cowpuncher overlaps with the "o" in the word "of" just left of center. The orthogonal created by the line of cattle punctuated by the cowboys who urge the herd towards its destination stretches an indeterminable distance from the picture plane. Livestock, cowboys, and their mounts grow smaller, fainter, and less precise—just a hazy network of u-shaped lines that evoke the signature attribute of Texas cattle—until they disappear beyond the limits of perception. By 1896 seemingly innumerable cattle expressed through a shorthand sea of horns was a familiar trope in illustrations of the cattle trade published in popular periodicals. London-born illustrator Alfred Rudolph Waud's *A Drove of Texas Cattle Crossing a Stream* in the October 19, 1867, issue of *Harper's Weekly* is

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<sup>20</sup> John W. Forney, *What I Saw in Texas* by John W. Forney (Philadelphia: Ringwalt & Brown, 1872), 5.

likely one of the first representations of a trail drive to appear in a magazine.<sup>21</sup> (Figure 3.4) Under a low-hanging full moon and the watchful eye of pair of cowboys, an endless wave of cattle, eventually reduced only to horns, pours into the composition from the left and across the stream in the foreground. Six years later, *Harper's Weekly* sent artists Jules Tavernier and Paul Frenzeny west to record life on the frontier. The following spring it published an illustration titled *Texas Cattle Trade—Guarding the Herd* co-signed by Tavernier and Frenzeny in which a lone cowboy overlooks an expanse of horns so vast that it gradually merges with the horizon.<sup>22</sup> (Figure 3.5) As with its visual predecessors, the effect of describing so many cattle extending into deep space suggests not only the vast number of the animals for which cowboys were responsible on a drive, but also conveys the hundreds of miles that they had to cover together along the Chisholm or Goodnight Trails to railhead towns such as Abilene or Dodge City, Kansas. This is specialized work for a special breed of men.

As the cowboys and their charges move across the top left corner of the Courier poster in the vignette labeled “At Home,” the energy in that vignette is anything but contained. In fact in keeping with traditions established by the seasons of Wild West posters that preceded it, the action is amplified. Rather than a measured procession, cowboys and cattle rush out of the dust-filled distance with a furious thundering of hooves. Horses’ manes and tails fly as their whip-wielding riders compel the cattle forward with great speed. Perhaps such velocity is necessary to propel the herd up a ravine, a possibility suggested by the angle of several of the cattle’s bodies in the middle ground. Alternatively, the break-neck pace of the animals whose hooves scarcely make contact with the ground may be motivated by impending danger, such as a prairie fire or other threat beyond the imaged scene, but very real on the frontier. The cowboys’

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<sup>21</sup> Alfred Rudolph Waud, *A Drove of Texas Cattle Crossing a Stream* in *Harper's Weekly* 40, no. 564 (19 October 1867): 665, to accompany the article “Texas Cattle Raising” on the following page.

<sup>22</sup> Jules Tavernier and Paul Frenzeny, *Texas Cattle Trade—Guarding the Herd* in *Harper's Weekly* 18 no. 900 (28 March 1874): 272, to accompany the article “Texas Cattle Trade” on pages 272–73. Tavernier and Frenzeny also made a series of nine illustrations depicting elements of the open range industry two months later. *Harper's Weekly* 18, no. 905 (2 May 1874): 387.

goal may be to quell a stampede such as described in a dramatic 1902 Courier lithograph for the Wild West captioned “Perils of the Cowboy.” (Figure 3.6) Flames and smoke fill the horizon while hundreds of longhorns charge directly out at the viewer. There is a degree of danger and panic that is not present in the 1896 poster in which the cowboys “At Home” are masters of their domain and retain control. In the later Courier poster, control slips away. A pair of cowboys tries desperately to remain ahead of the horns and pounding hooves. A third, one foot still in the stirrup, is crushed under his fallen horse. An equally heart-stopping scene, but with a less tragic outcome, was included in the program for the Wild West’s inaugural season and frequently reappeared in programs thereafter. The engraving *Terrors of a Stampede* by Nathaniel Orr, the New York illustrator who had enlivened Mayne Reid’s historical novels on the subject of early Texas in the previous decade, pictures a cowboy reaching down to rescue a fresh-faced, albeit horrified, version of the cowboy pinned under his horse nineteen years later during the mayhem presented in Courier’s 1902 stampede.<sup>23</sup>

Such imagery confirmed the West as a locus of action and a place that spawned heroes. However, although deeds may breed heroes, it is through the recollection of exploits and the commemoration of feats—the Wild West’s stock and trade—during a period in which such fodder is craved that heroes like the cowboy grow in stature and prominence. A review of the Wild West in Portland’s *Morning Oregonian* newspaper highlights both the appetite and the vicarious satisfaction that the exhibition and its cowboys delivered with each performance: “Those whom long years in office and at desks had enervated work to the knowledge of their birthright of physical vigor and activity, and the many

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<sup>23</sup> N. Orr, *Terrors of the Stampede*, 1883 Wild West program, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 7, Folder 19. Four of Orr’s wood engravings that illustrate *Reid’s Wild Life: or, Adventures on the Frontier. A Tale of the Early Days of the Texas Republic* were published in 1879. Mavis Parrott Kelsey, Robin Brandt Hutchinson, *Engraved Prints of Texas, 1554–1900* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 2005), 159.



plainsmen and miners and ranchers who thronged in every section glowed with the feeling that this was almost the apotheosis of their own deeds.”<sup>24</sup>

The apotheosis of the cowboy continues in the upper two registers at the right side of the 1896 Courier one-sheet. Cattle may have been a cowboy’s *raison d’être*, but he was nothing without a horse. It was his companion and collaborator in the rough work of the open range and a bucking beast against which he could test his mettle, not to mention the strength of his thighs. The scene in the top register describes horses pursued by four cowboys “In Prairieland.” It is imagery such as this and the playing out of similar scenes during performances of the Wild West that resulted in newspapers like the *Emporia [Kansas] Gazette* crediting the influence of Buffalo Bill’s cowboys for the phenomenon of boys proudly sporting “rope marks on their necks where they have been lassoed.”<sup>25</sup> The effort with which two of the horses in the vignette fight the lariats tightening around their necks, combined with the scrambling of the others to avoid similar fates, suggest that the horses the cowboys rope are truly wild, rather than from a remuda.

To those with a romantic imagination, wild horses such as the ones that stampede across sketches or paintings by artists like George Catlin or Alfred Jacob Miller suggested the unfettered West.<sup>26</sup> Art historian Linda Ayres asserts that the subdual of wild horses reads as a metaphor for the restraining of the wild West.<sup>27</sup> This is a feat that one could argue Cody achieved in his presentation of frontier life

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<sup>24</sup> “Wild West Arena,” *Morning Oregonian* (Portland), August 27, 1902, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 3, Folder 16.

<sup>25</sup> “Buffalo Bill,” *Emporia (KS) Daily Gazette*, September 26, 1898, 4.

<sup>26</sup> For more on contemporaneous beliefs regarding wild horses, see Richard W. Slatta, *The Mythical West: An Encyclopedia of Legend, Lore, and Popular Culture* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2001), 366; and Dawn Glanz, *How the West was Drawn: American Art and the Settling of the Frontier* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), 91. See also Hope Ryden, *America’s Last Wild Horses: The Classic Study of the Mustangs—Their Pivotal Role in the History of the West, Their Return to the Wild, and the Ongoing Efforts to Preserve Them* (Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2005).

<sup>27</sup> Linda Ayres, “William Ranney,” in *American Frontier Life: Early Western Paintings and Prints* (Fort Worth, TX: Amon Carter Museum, 1987), 84.

guaranteed appropriate for all audiences regardless of walk of life, age, or gender. In fact, the cowboy closest to the picture plane whose tightly pulled lariat causes the horse in the foreground to rear precariously back on its hind legs bears a resemblance to Buffalo Bill. In both appearance and deed this cowboy is reminiscent of the Wild West's namesake in a poster published by A. Hoen and Company of Baltimore around 1893. (Figure 3.7) Buffalo Bill's cameo on the range among the cowboys in the A. Hoen poster shows him astride a white steed, his lariat around the neck of a rearing black horse while two cowboys, lariats at the ready, pursue the stampeding herd. By catching a wild horse, he has captured the wild West. Indeed, that emblematic action that is the focus of the both the A. Hoen poster and the "In Prairieland" vignette is tamed through its transportation from the range to the very heart of civilization, Buffalo Bill's "Grand Open Arena" with "Covered Grandstand" in the lowest register in the 1896 Courier composition. The subsuming of the scene into the depiction of a Wild West performance reinforces the oath printed along the poster's bottom edge. It provides visual proof that "Actual Scenes—Genuine Characters" will occupy that "Grand Open Arena," a place where frontier work is translated into "Cowboy Fun" and the cowboy and his talents are showcased alongside a collection of remarkable international equestrians who accompany him in a race around its ring and vie for the audiences' applause.

However, as the *Toledo [Ohio] Commercial* reported in 1897,

While the Cossack and the Mexican performed daring feats on horseback, it remained for the American cowboy to eclipse them all in horsemanship. When the 'cowboy fun' part of the program was reached, there was a general craning of necks. That the bucking broncho and horse is the meanest animal on earth was proven to the entire satisfaction of everybody. If ever a lot of cantankerous buckers were gathered together, they were yesterday. As they humped their backs, jumped, kicked, and tore around everybody held their breath, expecting to see the riders dashed to the ground, but the boys knew their business and stuck to the saddles like leeches.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> "An Excellent Show," *Toledo (OH) Commercial*, August 18, 1897, NSS, Vol. 6, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

Bronc-riding Wild West cowboys often garnered “the most wonderment and wide-awake attention” of all the exhibition’s offerings.<sup>29</sup> Reviewers relished recounting the beast-versus-man spectacle in which horses so frantically tried to unseat their riders that they were “humping their backs like wild-cats, bounding into the air and landing stiffly on all fours with the force of a pile-driver.”<sup>30</sup> Vivid language of this sort and the type used by a reporter for New York’s *Evening Telegram* exemplifies the verbal gymnastics that made readers feel as though they had just sat in the same unstable saddle:

A bucking horse will go through as many contortions as a cat engaged in a clawing match with a dog. The degree to which a horse can arch its back is surprising to the onlooker secondary only to the wonder occasioned at the amount of jolting the human frame can stand when the beast jumps into the air and comes down on all four feet at once. Then it rears on its hind legs until in danger of falling backwards, and a fraction of a second later is trying to stand upon its head with its hind legs aiming at the ceiling. Then there is a scurry down the arena in an effort to shake off the rider, but endurance conquers, and at the end it is noticed the man is still there.<sup>31</sup>

Just as no Wild West performance would be complete without broncos that “bucked and snorted and careened like an egg shell in the Great South Bay” and cowboys who “stuck to the task like a book agent to a prospective victim,” the 1896 *Courier* poster would be an inadequate record of the “Actual Scenes—Genuine Characters” it touts without the vignette that occupies the right side of its middle register.<sup>32</sup> Similar to the three other scenes in the two upper registers, the image on the right side of the middle register transports viewers to the open range. There the cowboys endured the same plunges, twists, crowhops, and pitches so popular in the arena, but with the goal to break horses for use in round ups and cattle drives rather than merely to entertain. Although what audiences enjoyed during a Wild West performance recalled real frontier events, it was not a reenactment in the same category of spectacles such

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<sup>29</sup> “Greatest Rush That Ever Was to See Buffalo Bill’s Congress,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 24, 1902, A2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> “Bucking Broncos in the Garden,” *Evening Telegram [New York]*, April 24, 1900, NSS, Vol. 9, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>32</sup> “Greatest Rush That Ever Was to See Buffalo Bill’s Congress,” *Los Angeles Times*, A2.

as “Attack on the Emigrant Train.” The hazards—bloodied noses, broken bones, internal injuries, or worse—were real, though some did question the degree of reality presented in the Wild West’s display of bucking broncos. However, in these demonstrations there was no stagecraft equivalent to the puffs of harmless smoke that signified danger in an “Attack on the Settler’s Cabin” or other such signature Wild West dramatic spectacles.<sup>33</sup> Defending against accusations that the horses in his arena performed, rather than acted naturally, Buffalo Bill scoffed, “He [the horse] cannot more be trained to ‘buck’ than can a kangaroo to play on a key bugle. . . . the bucking broncos are genuine from start to finish.”<sup>34</sup> Ever one to capitalize on a celebrity endorsement, Major John Burke, the Wild West’s general manager, even cited in an interview a letter that the exhibition received from Mark Twain. In said letter, the humorist upheld the exhibition as a paragon of authenticity by which other accounts of Western experience might be measured. According to Burke, Twain expressed gratitude to the Wild West for its ability to convince skeptics that there was no hyperbole in the jarring description of his experience as a tenderfoot shot “straight into the air a matter of three or four feet!” while riding a bucker.<sup>35</sup>

As a popular, if not occasionally questioned, mainstay of the Wild West, broncos and the men brave enough to ride them appear on numerous Wild West posters throughout the exhibition’s thirty-year run, including the 1896 Courier lithograph. The focus of the scene in its middle register, captioned “Buckers,” is three cowboys who struggle to remain astride their high-spirited horses. The effect is not one that would generate commentary likening the cowboys to centaurs as did their performance in other

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<sup>33</sup> The Wild West’s management, as well as much of the press vouched for the authenticity of the demonstrations, often citing the element of actual danger. “Many of the untraveled citizens have doubted the genuineness of the bucking broncho, many ignorantly thinking that he is a trained exhibition animal. Such, however, is not the case, as is testified by the fact that in the last three weeks sixteen expert riders have been sent to the hospital in the cities of New York and Brooklyn.” “Cody’s Army,” *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), May 9, 1901, NSS, Vol. 10, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>34</sup> Cody quoted in Jack Rennert, *100 Posters of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West* (New York: Darien House, 1976), 6.

<sup>35</sup> “Here is Work That’s Really, Truly Strenuous,” *Atlanta Constitution*, September 21, 1902, A7. For Twain’s description of his ride on the “Genuine Mexican Plug” he purchased for twenty-seven dollars at auction, see “I Ride a Bucking Horse,” in Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (Hartford, CT: The American Publishing Company, 1871), chapter 24, especially 169–70.

Wild West equestrian acts. Although united as one by the rider's intent to stay in the saddle, the union of man and beast is conflicted. Motivated by the urge to keep their "center of gravity always over the center of devilry," the men angle and shift their bodies while one horse strikes the ground with its front hooves as its hind legs kick the air, another rears, and a third arches its back and completely leaves the ground.<sup>36</sup> These undeniably wild rides contribute yet another display of athleticism and determination to a poster designed to instill awe of the cowboy and provide vicarious thrills through the showcasing of his exploits. For as popular as the bronco riders may have been, it was not uncommon for an appreciation of their performance to conclude with a statement similar to that published in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1902: "I don't believe there was one man in the crowd who would have exchanged places with him."<sup>37</sup>

With slight variation, this trio of cowboys in "Buckers" enlivened earlier Wild West posters, among them two lithographs published at least a decade apart by two different printers. (Figures 3.8 and 3.9) Down to the prairie roses over which the dark mustang at the center of each seems to levitate, the similarities between the pair are remarkable, save for the figure at the right and the embellishment or lack thereof in the background. The imitation of Boston's Forbes Lithographic Company poster published around 1885 (Figure 3.8) by A. Hoen and Company for their circa 1893 one-sheet (Figure 3.9) was unquestionably deliberate. As poster historian Jack Rennert observes, just as imagery from Wild West promotional lithographs and engravings was reused in heralds, couriers, and programs, this sort of wholesale recycling of poster compositions, even one designed by another printing firm, was not at all unusual in Wild West publicity.<sup>38</sup> Although the theme of all three posters is identical—conditioning a horse to accept both a saddle and a rider straddling its back—its treatment is more convincing in the 1896 Courier one-sheet than in the versions printed by either Forbes or A. Hoen. Perhaps the Courier artist had

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<sup>36</sup> Philip Aston Rollins, *The Cowboy: An Unconventional History of the Civilization on the Old-Time Cattle Range* (1922; Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 305.

<sup>37</sup> "Greatest Rush That Ever Was to See Buffalo Bill's Congress," A2.

<sup>38</sup> Rennert, *100 Posters of Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, 6.

a greater familiarity than his counterparts at the other firms with frontier types and horseflesh either through direct experience, the mediated sort offered by an afternoon with the Wild West, or through photographs. Or, perhaps the artist was simply more adept at conveying broncos and bronco riders. The heightened veracity in the 1896 lithograph may also have been due to the Courier artist's knowledge of the paintings, drawings, illustrations, and sculpture by Frederic Sackrider Remington. Remington's interpretation of a cowboy and bucking bronco in *Bronco-Buster*, his first sculpture, prompted fellow artist and art critic Arthur Hoeber to assess the effort and comment, "The serious fight between man and horse is given with a realism and intensity that came only with profound knowledge."<sup>39</sup> (Figure 3.10)

In histories of Cody's traveling extravaganza, Remington's connection to the exhibition is often limited to his visit to the Wild West during its five-month stand in London in 1892 and the resulting article he penned for *Harper's Weekly* accompanied by ten drawings. Or, to a lesser degree, it is discussed with regards to his circa 1899 painting *Buffalo Bill in the Limelight* used as an illustration in Helen Cody Wetmore biography of her brother, *The Last of the Great Scouts* published in 1899.<sup>40</sup> (Figure 3.11) In addition to these instances, imagery by the prolific artist who shared the Wild West's preservationist philosophy and its reputation for trusted realism perpetuated the fame of the exhibition in more than these most commonly cited ways.<sup>41</sup> At least three Wild West posters dedicated to the bronco-busting theme and

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<sup>39</sup> Arthur Hoeber, "From Ink to Clay," *Harper's Weekly* 34, no 2026 (19 October 1895): 993.

<sup>40</sup> Frederic Remington, "Buffalo Bill in London," *Harper's Weekly* 36, no. 1863 (3 September 1892): 847; and Helen Cody Wetmore, *The Last of the Great Scouts* (Chicago: The Duluth Press, 1899), opposite 243. Remington's portrait of Cody, in the collection of the Whitney Gallery of Western Art, Buffalo Bill Historical Center was also reproduced on the cover of the Wild West program in 1900 and 1907, as well as on posters published by Cincinnati's Strobridge Lithographic Company in 1907 and 1908. Remington also painted *Hiding the Trail*, used as the frontispiece for the Wetmore biography.

<sup>41</sup> Remington's impressive creative output included an estimated 2,750 paintings and drawings (including illustrations in 142 books), twenty-five bronze sculptures, eight books, a novel and a play, as well as numerous articles in magazines such as *Harper's Weekly*, *Outing*, *Youth's Companion*, and *Century* among many others. Matthew Baigell, *The Western Art of Frederic Remington* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1976), 10; G. Edward White, *The Eastern Establishment of the Western Experience: The West of Frederic Remington, Theodore Roosevelt, and Owen Wister* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 101, 103–07; and R. M. Harvey, "Some Inside Facts About Buffalo Bill's Wild West," *Bandwagon* 3, no. 1 (January/February 1959): 14; and Lamar, "The Cowboys," 65.

at least one that describes the dangers cowboys faced on the open range directly quote Remington's art. (Figures 3.12–15) The “Buckers” vignette from the middle register of the Courier one-sheet resonates with Remington's influence. These examples highlight specific tandem efforts of an artist renowned for his Western subject matter along with the premier Western exhibition that together contributed to the immortalization of the cowboy. Additionally, they underscore a long-standing synergy between Remington and the Wild West that was mutually beneficial. Reviews equated Remington's art to the Wild West. “His drawing is full of vigor and dash, his pictures have a suggestion of Buffalo Bill and the Wild West,” Susan Hayes Ward wrote in *The Independent* in 1890.<sup>42</sup> Seven years later, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* recounted the artist's endorsement of the exhibition: “Frederic Remington, the noted artist in Western scenes, is warm in his praise of the present exhibition and says that it is a great educator for all classes and a treat for all lovers of horses.”<sup>43</sup> The Wild West, Remington, and the cowboy were inextricably linked.

In 1889 the *Hartford [Connecticut] Courant* published an article about the printing company “where the great amusement display cards are made,” that occupied the fourth floor of the newspaper's building in Hartford, Connecticut. The story boasted that “the most noticeable pictures in Paris to-day, outside the Louvre, are the Calhoun Printing Company's stirring delineations of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.” Its description of the seven tons of “artistic sheets of paper” that the Calhoun Printing Company shipped to Paris in 1889 notes that “Some of the Wild West pictures are the best example of pine wood engraving ever seen. Two or three of them are copies of Remington's sketches in the *Century*, notably ‘The Bucking Bronco’ and ‘Saddling a Kicker.’”<sup>44</sup> Indeed, at least three posters printed for the Wild

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<sup>42</sup> Susan Hayes Ward, “Fine Arts,” *Independent* 42, no. 2161 (1 May 1890): 7.

<sup>43</sup> “Colonel Cody in Town,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 4, 1897, 27.

<sup>44</sup> “Display Show Bills,” *Hartford (CT) Courant*, July 13, 1889, 8. The year 1892 is usually cited in scholarship on Remington and the Wild West as the beginning of the artist's association with the exhibition. These Courier engravings establish the start of the relationship three years earlier.

West's stand in Paris in conjunction with the Exposition Universelle, where Remington showed five paintings and was awarded silver medal for a tension-filled picture titled *The Last Lull in the Fight*, were transcriptions of illustrations by the artist for Theodore Roosevelt's *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*.<sup>45</sup> (Figures 3.16 and 3.12, 3.17 and 3.15, and 3.18 and 3.13) Roosevelt's memoir of the years 1884 through 1886, when he aimed to escape his "Jane Dandy" reputation by outfitting himself in cowboy attire and settling on a Dakota Territory ranch, was first published serially in 1888 by *The Century Magazine*, a periodical associated with Eastern gentility, before it was published in an expanded book form in a number of editions.<sup>46</sup> With Calhoun Printing Company's appropriation of Remington's illustrations from Roosevelt's *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, not only was "America's National Entertainment" exported to the world stage in 1889, but along with it the work of an American artist that amplified the words of a future American president. Like the Wild West and Remington's art, Roosevelt's *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* was an ode to the frontier way of life defined by a physicality and masculinity integral to the nation's ethos. In all three, that way of life, which many feared was rapidly disappearing, was embodied by the American cowboy.

All three of the Calhoun wood engravings for the Wild West that replicated Remington's illustrations in 1889—the same season that the French painter Rosa Bonheur was so enamored with Buffalo Bill's exhibition—relate in varying degrees to the action and figures in the "Buckers" vignette in the 1896 Courier poster. Before cowboys could break a horse, it had to be introduced to the saddle. This was a tempestuous courtship. Calhoun's poster captioned "Saddling a Bucker" (Figure 3.12), based on Remington's drawing *Bronco Busters Saddling* first published in *The Century Magazine* (Figure 3.16), is

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<sup>45</sup> Although currently unlocated, Remington's *The Last Lull in the Fight*, 1888, is known today through an engraving published after it in *Harper's Weekly* 33, no. 1684 (30 March 1889): 244–45 with accompanying article on 247.

<sup>46</sup>Theodore Roosevelt, "Ranch Life in the Far West," *Century Magazine* 35, no. 4 (February 1888): 495–510; Theodore Roosevelt, "The Home Ranch," *Century Magazine* 35, no. 5 (March 1888): 655–69; and Theodore Roosevelt, "The Round-Up," *Century Magazine* 35, no. 6 (April 1888): 849–67. For Roosevelt's early biography, including his escape West, see Edmund Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Ballantine, 1979).



the precursor to the scene at the right of the middle register on the Courier one-sheet.<sup>47</sup> In Remington's description, the perilous procedure is undertaken by a cowboy to tighten the cinches of a saddle newly arranged upon a horse's back while his partner holds tight to the reins of the hackamore occurs within a corral.<sup>48</sup> In the Calhoun translation, however, as with each of the four scenes in the top two registers of the 1896 Courier poster, the range, unbroken by fences, is the site where the pair of cowboys works carefully to avoid a collision with a flurry of hooves. Compared to Remington's source illustration, the Calhoun product presents a lowered horizon where the distant hills reach the sky. This alteration increases the impression that the scene takes place on a vast, wide-open range—a romantic location unrestricted by borders of any kind.

A second of the Calhoun posters that reprised one of Remington's illustrations from Roosevelt's *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* relates to the action unfolding almost unnoticed in the middle ground at the left of the Courier "Buckers" scene. Just beyond three bronco riders in the foreground, three other cowboys kneel or lie on the ground using their horses for cover as they take aim at some unseen threat. This aspect of the largely well-planned composition initially yields an unintended humorous result—Lilliputian cowboys firing ineffective miniature pistols at the Gulliver-in-scale "American Cowboy" at the center of the poster. A more likely purpose for their presence is to evoke one of the Wild West's signature attack-by-Indian spectacles, such as the "Attack on the Emigrant Train" given the covered wagons in the distance, during which cowboys ride to the rescue of those under assault. Just as probable, however, is that it is the cowboys themselves who are besieged. This is the subject of the 1889 Calhoun poster (Figure 3.15) that replicates and enhances with full color an engraving captioned *An Episode in the*

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<sup>47</sup> Frederic Remington, *Bronco Busters Saddling*, in Theodore Roosevelt, "Ranch Life in the Far West," 508.

<sup>48</sup> Remington revisited his *Bronco Busters Saddling* sketch in 1903 when he painted *His First Lesson* (Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, TX). The painting was published in full color in *Collier's* in a two-page spread that same year. Frederic Remington, "His First Lesson," *Collier's* 31 (26 September 1903): 18–19.

*Opening Up of a Cattle Country* after Remington's 1887 *en grisaille* painting of the same title.<sup>49</sup> (Figures 3.17 and 3.19) Remington's last-stand description of cowboys and their horses surrounded by Indians provides a gripping complement to the New York state assemblyman-turned-rancher's equally riveting account of such an attack. *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* details how cowboys and a ranch foreman in Powder River country, in an effort to secure choice new grazing lands, ventured too close to a "dangerous district" and "were suddenly charged by fifty or sixty Indians."<sup>50</sup> Roosevelt prefaced his account of the harrowing event, in which only one of the cowboys was killed, by noting that "A few cool, resolute whites, well-armed can generally beat back a much larger number of Indians if attacked in the open."<sup>51</sup> Without Roosevelt's confident—albeit prejudiced—words, however, the outcome of Remington's portrayal of unyielding courage against grim odds is uncertain. The breastwork the outnumbered cowboys improvised with their horses may not be sufficient. One of their number has already fallen, his foot still caught in the stirrup while his body hangs in an angular heap. At least one of their horses has died. Another seems on its way to expiring.

Given the frequency with which such pulse-pounding, breath-holding scenes of survival appeared in its advertising, it is no surprise that Remington's image was translated into a Wild West poster.<sup>52</sup> Both Remington's composition and the subsequent Calhoun poster also accentuate in a highly dramatic manner an objective of Buffalo Bill's Wild West. As long as cowboys kept shooting, the West as a concept

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<sup>49</sup> The engraving captioned *An Episode in the Opening Up of Cattle Country* appears as an illustration in Theodore Roosevelt, "Ranch Life in the Far West," *Century Magazine* 35, no. 4 (February 1888): 497. Remington modeled subsequent paintings after the basic compositional format he employed in the *en grisaille* oil on which *An Episode in the Opening Up of a Cattle Country* is based, including the now-lost *The Last Lull in the Fight*, which hung in the American exhibition at the Exposition Universelle at the same time that the Calhoun posters based on *An Episode* hung in shop windows in Paris. There is a clue to the identity of the Calhoun artist responsible for translating Remington's imagery into an engraving to promote the Wild West. A monogram of an entwined "F" and "L" (or "L" and "F") is tucked in the negative space created by the slightly upraised foreleg of the horse in the foreground at the engraving's left side.

<sup>50</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* (New York: Century, 1888), 104.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> See chapter two of this dissertation for examples.

essential to the nation's identity survived, despite the accelerating changes in modern life that threatened to render it a relic. What Cody aimed to achieve with his exhibition mirrored what Remington desired to accomplish with his art. At the height of his career, in a special Remington number of *Collier's*, the artist explained his motivation:

I saw men all ready [*sic*] swarming into the land. . . . I knew the derby hat, the smoking chimneys, the cord binders, and the thirty-day notes were upon us in a restless surge. I knew the wild riders and the vacant land were about to vanish forever. . . and the more I considered the subject, the bigger the forever loomed. Without knowing exactly how to do it, I began to try to record some facts around me, and the more I looked the more the panorama unfolded.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the menace of the “the derby hat, the smoking chimneys, the cord binders, and the thirty-day notes,” and the closure of the frontier, Remington and Buffalo Bill's Wild West ensured that the “wild riders” were in no danger of disappearing. If anything, cowboys grew more emblematic. A third Remington illustration from Roosevelt's *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* is based on a circa 1888 grisaille painting titled *A Bucking Bronco*. It is an iconic cowboy image.<sup>54</sup> (Figures 3.18 and 3.20) Like *Saddling a Bucker* and *An Episode in the Opening Up of a Cattle Country*, the Calhoun Printing Company translated *A Bucking Bronco* into a color wood engraving in 1889. (Figure 3.13) As a painting, an illustration, and a poster, it is a study in arrested action. This quality, ideal for a thrill-a-minute enterprise like the Wild West, owes to Remington's first-hand experience and to 1880s photographs such as those taken by cowboy photographer L. A. Huffman, of Miles City, Montana, or Eadweard Muybridge,

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<sup>53</sup> Frederic Remington, “A Few Words from Mr. Remington,” *Collier's Weekly* 34 (18 March 1905): 16.

<sup>54</sup> The engraved Remington illustration is in Theodore Roosevelt, “The Home Ranch,” *Century Magazine* 35, no. 5 (March 1888): 663. A testament to the assertion of iconic status for this particular image extends beyond its appropriation by the Wild West. It was embossed in silhouette onto the cover of the 1911 edition of Roosevelt's *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*. As is noted in the catalogue raisonné of Remington's paintings, watercolors, and drawings, it was copied by George Berger as an illustration in multiple editions of *Gems of Colorado Scenery* by William Henry Jackson, first published in 1890. *A Bucking Bronco* was also reproduced as the cover art for Edward S. Ellis's *Trailing Geronimo* (1908). Peter H. Hassrick and Melissa J. Webster, *Frederic Remington: A Catalogue Raisonné of Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings* vol. 1 (Cody, WY: Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 1996), 127.

renowned for his revealing photographic studies of animal and human locomotion.<sup>55</sup> The coiled energy of the horse's hind legs, his front hooves reaching for the ground, the arc of the reins extended by the supple quirt, the cowboy's bandana trailing up over his shoulder, his foot slipping from the stirrup, and his hat that has flown off his head as the bronco begins its descent to earth all contribute to the blink-and-you-will-miss-it quality of the scene. Even the clouds that billow in diagonal striations across the sky, an enhancement to Remington's image made by a Calhoun artist that adds depth and even greater energy to the poster, might be different in the next moment. The horse will assume another contortion in a split second. Will its rider, despite the intense concentration that furrows his brow, the determination reflected in the set of his jaw and the flexion of his every muscle so great it can be read even through his clothes, remain in the saddle? He does in the "Buckers" vignette in the *Courier* one-sheet nearly a decade later—reins still gripped, torso canted, thighs tensed, and hat flying while the obstreperous bronco plunges to unseat him. But will he persist a second later?

The Wild West capitalized on this sort of anticipation so expertly and palpably conjured by Remington. It also traded on the artist's celebrity and an assumed familiarity with his art in order to increase its own appeal. Rather than select easel paintings to emulate that may have garnered accolades when exhibited at the National Academy of Design, but were unlikely to be seen by a wide audience, those in charge of promotion for the Wild West shrewdly chose to appropriate art by Remington that was already out in the world. The sources not only included Remington's illustrations for Roosevelt's *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, but also his lithographs and works reproduced in books and periodicals to meet the growing public interest in the artist. For example, in addition to being a cousin of the cowboy in

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<sup>55</sup> See Estelle Jussim, *Frederic Remington, the Camera, and the Old West* (Fort Worth, TX: Amon Carter Museum, 1983), especially "The Camera, the Horse and the Cowboy," 41–73. A story related by a former Wild West cowboy Harry E. Webb brings to light that the Wild West also relied on photographs to aid in the authenticity of their promotional imagery. Webb recalled being told by Cy Compton, the lead cowboy who was putting new talent through its paces, to pull back on both reins as his bronco reared. The answer Webb received from Compton to his question "What the hell's the idea?" was "See those cameras there? They're taking pictures for the lithographs." Harry E. Webb, "My Years with Buffalo Bill's Wild West, Part I," *Real West* 13, no. 78 (January 1970): 53.

Remington's *A Bucking Bronco*, Courier's bronc rider at the far right of the "Buckers" vignette also shares a pedigree with a pair of cowboys in two Remington lithographs. (Figures 3.21 and 3.22) Davis and Sanford Company of New York published the prints titled *A "Sun Fisher"* and *A Running Bucker* in 1895.<sup>56</sup> In addition to these lithographs possibly being a source of inspiration for the Courier artist, printer A. Hoen and Company slightly altered *A "Sun Fisher"* for its "Plunging Bucker" poster published for the Wild West sometime after 1895. (Figure 3.14) Although both the bronco's tail and the cowboy's proper right arm are raised in the A. Hoen lithograph, the resemblance to Remington's *A "Sun Fisher"* is too close to be a coincidence. Even Remington's bronzes, such as his *Bronco-Buster* that reached a wide audience when *Harper's Weekly* published a photograph of it to accompany Arthur Hoeber's review of the artist's foray into sculpture, have their corollaries in the Wild West's imagery.<sup>57</sup> The middle cowboy on the rearing horse in the "Buckers" triad, for example, bears a striking likeness to Remington's first sculpture, a sculpture on which the artist based his prediction that he would "rattle down through all the ages."<sup>58</sup>

The Remingtonesque moments that rattle down through the "Buckers" vignette (and arguably through all the scenes of the 1896 Courier lithograph in addition to many other posters), highlight a powerful alliance between Remington and the Wild West. In addition to encouraging ticket sales, this association helped to raise the profile of the cowboy from a dubious frontier type to an American figure worthy of respect and admiration. This bond and its influence were not lost on the exhibition's audience as they sat in the grandstand. "The cowboys dexterous handling of the bucking horses as these cavorting equines hurled themselves into attitudes made familiar by Frederick [sic] Remington. . . were worth going miles to see," a reporter in the heart of cattle country pronounced after attending a performance of the

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<sup>56</sup> Both *A "Sun Fisher"* and *A Running Bucker* were reproduced in Frederic Remington, *Drawings by Frederic Remington*, ed. Owen Wister (New York: Robert Howard Russell, 1897).

<sup>57</sup> Hoeber, "From Ink to Clay," 993.

<sup>58</sup> Frederic Remington in a letter to Owen Wister, January 1895, reprinted in Allen P. Splete and Marilyn D. Splete, *Frederic Remington—Selected Letters* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988), 263.

Wild West.<sup>59</sup> “The broncho ‘busting’ was like one of Frederick [*sic*] Remington’s pictures and provided fun and excitement to spare,” declared a writer for the *San Francisco Call*.<sup>60</sup>

The Wild West and the Remington-esque images that enlivened its posters played a significant role in the conferral of legendary status upon the cowboy. The circumstances and context in which those performances were held and those images were consumed also contributed to the apotheosis suggested in the 1896 Courier lithograph. The late nineteenth century marked a period of great change in general and perceived challenges to the authority and power of white middle-class manhood more specifically. Economic depressions and bankruptcies between the 1870s and 1890s crippled self-made-man aspirations. Between 1870 and 1910, the percentage of middle-class men who were self-employed was nearly cut in half, from sixty-seven percent to thirty-seven percent. An increase in clerical and office work accompanied an increase in neurasthenia. This diagnosis was attributed to excessive “brain work” and mental strain that resulted in a “nervelessness,” or deficiency of “nerve-force,” according to George Miller Beard, author *American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences* published in 1881. Labor unrest around the turn of the century, including an estimated 37,000 strikes between 1881 and 1905, many of which turned violent, likewise caused alarm.<sup>61</sup>

Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and its imagery such as the 1896 Courier poster awarded cowboys a romantic, mythic status that captured imaginations and provided an escape from such concerns. The exhibition also supplied an outlet for anxiety regarding perceived threats to masculinity as well as frustrations with the standards of Victorian civility and gentility. In the Wild West arena and on its

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<sup>59</sup> “An Immense Throng Saw the Cody Show,” unidentified, undated newspaper clipping, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 3, Folder 13. This article appears to be a review of the Wild West’s stand in Dallas where the exhibition performed in 1900, 1902, 1908, 1910, and 1912. Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Route List, BBHC, 2012.

<sup>60</sup> “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Draws Multitude to Exhibition Ground,” *San Francisco Call*, September 8, 1902, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 3, Folder 16.

<sup>61</sup> Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 11–14; George Miller Beard, *American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1881); and Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Politics in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 80.

posters, the cowboy and his adventures could satiate a craving for an intense experience that would loose the fetters of Victorian responsibility and improve Gilded Age apathy. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* claimed that witnessing such “specimens of hardy manhood” as Wild West cowboys on horseback “made the observers’ blood tingle and nerves vibrate”—the perfect antidote for “nervelessness.”<sup>62</sup> By the 1880s, as historian Gail Bederman notes, a growing number of middle-class men were drawn to a rougher sort of working-class masculinity than previously acceptable and found attraction in things antithetical to traditional definitions of buttoned-up, middle-class Victorian manhood.<sup>63</sup> In an interview published in the *New York Tribune* in 1884, Theodore Roosevelt, firmly ensconced on his Dakota Territory ranch, extolled the virtues of the cowboy way of life. “For good healthy exercise,” he is quoted as saying, “I would strongly recommend some of our gilded youth go West and try a short course of riding bucking ponies, and assist in the branding of a lot of Texas steers.”<sup>64</sup> The coarser brand of manhood advocated by Roosevelt and epitomized by Cody’s cowboys found champions in the fairer sex as well. In 1894 the *New York Advertiser* reported on the ogling that the Wild West cowboys endured during a performance in Brooklyn. It cited a member of the Women’s Professional League of New York as unabashedly admitting that “These are the kind of men that excite my admiration. . . . Big, strong, bronzed fellows! How much superior they are to the spindle-shanked, eye-glassed dudes!”<sup>65</sup>

Those men who could not follow Roosevelt’s prescription and those women to whom “Buck” Taylor appealed over any number of “spindle-shanked, eye-glassed dudes,” could rely on Cody and his exhibition to fulfill what they desired. For those of both genders who resented the restrictions of order, refinement, and strict morality placed on masculine freedoms by a perceived increasing feminization of

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<sup>62</sup> “Expert Rough Riding,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 10, 1894, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 3, Folder 16.

<sup>63</sup> Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 17.

<sup>64</sup> “Interview,” *New-York Tribune*, July 28, 1884, quoted in Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, 281.

<sup>65</sup> “Actresses See Cowboys,” *New York Advertiser*, July 31, 1894, quoted in Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 215.

culture, the rough-and-tumble cowboys in Buffalo Bill's Wild West and its imagery serve as avatars of masculine proclivities, alternative idols to milquetoast civilization, and a safeguard against overcivilization. Just as Mark Twain instilled the young Huckleberry Finn with a desire to "light out for the territory" to escape being "sivilize[d]" by his Aunt Sally, the supposedly lawless, anarchic cowboy served as a talismanic protection against the "Aunt Sallys" *en masse* of genteel, civilized society.<sup>66</sup>

The way of life and image of the cowboy was a flexible one, however, which likely helped to increase his popular acceptance. He was able to balk at the "sivilized" world, but was not as "uncivilized" as the Indian in the Wild West's "Attack" spectacles during which cowboys often rode to the rescue. He was an intermediary between the dark and dangerous defiance that some equated with the West and the cultivated realm of manners and decorum that others found equally threatening. As Cody himself said of his cowboys, they were "Very good men. They're western men, of course, with western ways, but if they're properly treated they're all right."<sup>67</sup> This malleable nature is evoked in a quote printed in Madison, Wisconsin's *State Journal* in 1896, categorizing cowboys as "'bad men' of the gentlemanly order."<sup>68</sup> This ability to walk in the sphere of "bad men" and gentlemen alike helped to elevate the status of the cowboy to that of heroic archetype. Similar to Buffalo Bill, cowboys could even become substitutes for mounted medieval warriors in a country without a time-worn mythology populated by valiant knights. Americans could look to the open range of the wild West as the birthplace of its native mythology and to cowboys for an incarnation of its heroes.

The 1896 Courier poster offered direct-from-the-open-range glimpses of "Actual Scenes—Genuine Characters." It also provided potential ticket buyers who found a hero in the "American

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<sup>66</sup> Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Tom Sawyer's Comrade)* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1885), 405.

<sup>67</sup> "An Interview with the Hon. W. F. Cody," *Montreal (Quebec) Herald and Daily Commercial Gazette*, August 17, 1885, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 3, Folder 14.

<sup>68</sup> "Wild West is Here," *State Journal* (Madison, WI), Circus World Museum Library, Baraboo, WI, Small Collections, Buffalo Bill's Wild West, Clippings, pre-1900.



Cowboy” with a panoramic preview of the experience of the “Grand Open Arena with Covered Grand Stand Seating” and the action it scarcely contains. A canvas awning punctuated by electric lights accented with red pennants marks the perimeter of the arena and defines the top edge of the lower register before it sweeps across the poster’s lower left corner. The boast that “20,000 People” could enjoy the Wild West from the comfort of the covered grand stand is backed by visual proof. Innumerable tiny ovals fill the area under the awning—a packed house for just one of the “Twice Daily” shows. Their multitude signifies that the Wild West, its Congress of Rough Riders, and especially the exploits of the “American Cowboy” must not be missed. The scenes playing out on the open range above the open arena verify the intense realism for which the exhibition was renowned and confirm the authenticity of its cowboy performers. Since its earliest seasons they were recognized as distinct from “actors trained for the work,” and valued as “men who have spent their lives in just such scenes as they are called upon to represent before the audience. The cowboys are real cowboys, men who have gained their livelihood in the performance of just such work as they are set to do every afternoon.”<sup>69</sup> Akin to thought balloons in cartoon strip imagery, the four vignettes in the top two registers appear above the impressive crowd gathered to watch the roping, trick riding, and even a recreation of the short-lived Pony Express. Positioned as such, these vignettes suggest what a performance of the Wild West should conjure in the audiences’ minds—another time, another place, a Western time and a Western place that grows increasingly farther from the present.

Other than the glimpse of the Wild West experience described in its lowest register, by 1896 what the Courier poster, as well as the exhibition it promotes, presented was largely history. Homesteading, barbed wire, spreading rail networks, including a direct rail line connecting central Texas to Chicago, and the introduction of heavier breeds of cattle such as Herefords were among the factors that by the late 1880s contributed to fewer round ups and less frequent trail drives. Horses still needed to be broken, but once tamed, they worked a ranch, rather than the open range. The generations of cowboys who succeeded

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<sup>69</sup> “The Wild West,” *Globe* (Toronto, Ontario), August 24, 1885, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 3, Folder 14.

those immortalized by the Wild West and its imagery repaired windmills, piloted mowers, and baled hay.<sup>70</sup> In some instances, they spent their time contributing to the decline of the open range. They dug postholes and mended the existing fences that turned the once vast frontier into apportioned pastures. None other than Remington described such an ironic undertaking in his elegiacally titled painting *The Fall of the Cowboy*, which *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* published as an illustration in September of 1895, the year before the Courier one-sheet, to accompany Owen Wister's article "The Evolution of the Cow-Puncher."<sup>71</sup> (Figures 3.23 and 3.24) In this context, the Courier lithograph strengthened established affinities between the Wild West and a rich western archive. "A library of printed volumes," an article published in the *Pittsburgh Times* in 1897 claimed, "could not teach such a graphic lesson in the history of this great country as that inculcated by Buffalo Bill and his Wild West."<sup>72</sup> What audiences saw during Wild West performances and on its posters cast episodes and characters from the not-so-distant past in a romantic light. It offered edifying and entertaining spectacles that also tapped into the longings and concerns of the present. The star in many of those episodes was the "American Cowboy," an authentic figure, hardy, confident, self-reliant, and becoming more iconic and revered with each performance and every poster.

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<sup>70</sup> Taylor, "The Open-Range Cowboy of the Nineteenth Century," 19; and Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America*, 398.

<sup>71</sup> Frederic Remington, *The Fall of the Cowboy*, illustration for Owen Wister, "The Evolution of the Cow-Puncher," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 9, no. 544 (1 September 1895): 616.

<sup>72</sup> "A Romance of Reality," *Pittsburgh Times*, August 14, 1897, NSS, Vol. 6, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

**“Ladies and Gentlemen, permit me to introduce to you  
a Congress of Rough Riders of the World!”**

Imagine a kaleidoscope, with an object field four and a half acres in extent, occupied by a swiftly moving mass of figures, individually picturesque, brilliant with metallic reflections and gay with color momentarily springing and flashing into new combinations and modes of motion which dazzle, confuse, and fascinate the eye of the beholder. Such is the spectacle presented by the three hundred and eighty “rough riders” of the “Wild West” show when going through their evolutions together.

—“Rough Riders of the World,” *New York Sun*,  
May 27, 1894<sup>1</sup>

The vivid equation made by a *New York Sun* reporter in 1894 between the colorful bits that tumble inside a kaleidoscope and the effect of Buffalo Bill’s Congress of Rough Riders of the World as they charged on horseback around the Wild West arena was one frequently invoked. It aptly described the experience of watching members of cavalry detachments from the United States, France, England, and Germany ride alongside equestrians from Russia, the Sudan, Mexico, and Argentina, as well as American cowboys and Indians. Whether a viewer enjoyed the rotations of a kaleidoscope or the revolutions of the Congress of Rough Riders of the World, colors and patterns continuously changed in endless variety. Disparate parts coalesced in visually stunning unity. In 1893, just one year prior to the review in the *New York Sun*, the optical sensations created by the Scottish physicist Sir David Brewster’s invention had been conjured to convey the impression of another convergence of people from a multitude of countries. Observing the phenomenon of representatives of many nations “marching up and down in different directions” along the Midway Plaisance adjacent to the World’s Columbian Exposition

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<sup>1</sup> Nate Salsbury Scrapbooks (hereafter NSS), Vol. 4, Denver Public Library (hereafter DPL), Reel 1, Microfilm 18.

was likewise equated to peering through a kaleidoscope.<sup>2</sup> Concomitant with the world's fair and its neighboring mile-long showcase of "a mixture of all foreign lands under the sun," Colonel William Frederick Cody's newly renamed international aggregation made its formal debut.<sup>3</sup> Just outside the exposition gates, at the expansive show grounds located between Chicago's 62<sup>nd</sup> and 63<sup>rd</sup> Streets at Grace Avenue, Buffalo Bill sat astride his horse in the arena surrounded by military veterans and accomplished equestrians recruited from five continents. Following the Cowboy Band's rousing rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner," he doffed then dramatically swept his sombrero and announced, "Ladies and gentlemen, permit me to introduce to you a Congress of Rough Riders of the World!"

From its inception in 1883, Buffalo Bill's Wild West featured an international cast. Mexican vaqueros had performed in its arena since the first season. Its retooled billing in 1893 as "Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World," however, appropriately projected the ambitious increase of its scope. The exhibition had been in a mode of continual expansion over the past decade both in terms of its presence and the offerings of its program. After four seasons of travel throughout the Midwest, East Coast, and South, as well as the Canadian provinces of Quebec and Ontario, Cody sailed abroad with his troupe. In 1887 the Wild West performed as part of the American Exhibition held at Earl's Court in London in

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<sup>2</sup> "Like a Kaleidoscope: Midway Plaisance Thronged with People of All Nations," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 29, 1893, 2; and "Nations in Review," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 18, 1893, 1.

<sup>3</sup> "The Midway Plaisance," in Trumbull White and William Iglehart, *World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893: A Complete History of the Enterprise: A Full Description of the Buildings and Exhibits in All Departments: and a Short Account of Previous Expositions* (Philadelphia: C. Foster Publishing Company, 1893), 561. The opening of Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World in Chicago on April 26, 1893, actually preceded the opening of the World's Columbian Exposition by five days. It closed nineteen days prior to the fair's final day on October 30. Buffalo Bill's Wild West Route List, Buffalo Bill Historical Center (hereafter BBHC), Cody, WY, 2012.

conjunction with Queen Victoria's Jubilee. This six-month stand was followed by tours in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, Belgium, England, and Scotland that kept the exhibition performing on foreign shores and exposed to foreign cultures through the 1892 season.<sup>4</sup> Following the massacre at Wounded Knee on December 29, 1890, however, there had been a period of uncertainty regarding a critical element of the Wild West. Questions arose as to whether Cody would be permitted to continue to hire Indian performers to travel abroad with his exhibition. In the event that cowboys *sans* the expected foil provided by Indians would constitute the Wild West, the exhibition's vice-president and general manager, Nate Salsbury, launched a back-up plan. He significantly broadened the exhibition's focus beyond the celebration and commemoration of American westward expansion by revisioning its cast. Wild West performers fresh from the American frontier, already often described as "rough riders" in publicity materials that appropriated the term from dime novels, were joined by distinguished horsemen from abroad. Salsbury and Cody recruited decorated troops from widely publicized cavalry units in England, Germany, and the United States for a total sixty soldiers, along with a dozen Russian Cossacks. These men joined twenty Mexican vaqueros, six Argentine gauchos, twenty-five cowboys, and six western girls, as well as one hundred Indians to compose the reformulated cast of the 1891 season.<sup>5</sup> Together they created an international enterprise two years prior to the exhibition's formal and fitting promotion as such on the world stage in the shadow of the Columbian Exposition. At the same moment that Chicago hosted both Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World as well as the 1893 World's Fair, some two hundred

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 79; and Don Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 370–71.

historians traveled to the city in mid-July for the annual meeting of the American Historical Association. The University of Wisconsin historian Frederick Jackson Turner presented at this gathering his thesis, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” In the conclusion of his eulogy for the faded frontier, Turner maintained that, “American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise.”<sup>6</sup>

An emblem of “American energy” in an age of increasing American influence, Buffalo Bill’s new Congress of Rough Riders of the World exemplified that “wider field.” To look beyond the West to new frontiers and to use “the World” to qualify the origins of the expanded coterie of “Rough Riders” enhanced the contemporaneity of the exhibition. It added instruction in ethnology, anthropology, and a greater global awareness to its educational mission. These object lessons retained the high entertainment value for which the Wild West was renowned and tapped into a vogue for equestrian- and martial-themed amusements, such as horse shows and military tournaments, which were widely publicized throughout the 1890s. The experiment to rebrand Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, magnify its focus, and enlarge its cast achieved such success that the exhibition became an influential force. Within just five years of the inauguration of Colonel Cody’s Congress, the public branded as “Rough Riders” Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt’s First United States Volunteer Cavalry raised for the Spanish-American War—a conflict that effectively ended the Spanish empire and resulted in several new island possessions for the United States in an era of expansionism. According to the nonchalant Roosevelt, the

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<sup>6</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, ed. Harold P. Simonson (1893; repr., New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1963), 57.

christening of his regiment as “Rough Riders” by the American populace occurred “for some reason or another.”<sup>7</sup>

An article in the 1899 Wild West program addressed Roosevelt’s snub. The same season that Wild West audiences enjoyed the new “Battle of San Juan Hill” spectacle that featured veteran First Volunteer Cavalry alongside former Cuban insurgents, they could also read in the exhibition’s program that, “The ‘some reason or other’ for calling his regiment ‘Rough Riders,’ regarding which Colonel Roosevelt seems to be in doubt, is so readily found and explained that his failure to discover it is really surprising.”<sup>8</sup> The article implied that even those who had not attended a performance of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World in the years since its debut in Chicago in 1893 and the conflation of its performers with Roosevelt’s esteemed soldiers in 1898 had surely read about or seen lithographed likenesses of the diverse troupe of exemplary horsemen.

The exhibition’s expanded purview along with its updated cast naturally demanded new paper, as the posters used to promote the exhibition were called. Posters that featured Wild West mainstays—Buffalo Bill himself, cowboys, and Indians—continued to have a strong presence in the exhibition’s advertising. However, barn sides, fences, billboards, and shop windows were increasingly populated with German Cuirassiers, Royal Irish Lancers, Russian Cossacks, and Riffian Arabs. A one-sheet poster published by the Courier Lithographic Company of Buffalo, New York, in 1896 featured representations of all of these groups and more. (Figure 4.1) This striking poster, full of whirling motion and vivid color, evokes the kaleidoscopic experience so

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<sup>7</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders: An Autobiography* (1899; repr., New York: New American Library, 1961), 15.

<sup>8</sup> “Origin of the Name ‘Rough Riders,’” 1899 Wild West program, 36, William Frederick Cody/Buffalo Bill Papers (hereafter WFC/BBP), WH72, Western History Collection (hereafter WHC), DPL, Box 2, Folder 33.

often equated with an encounter with Cody's Rough Riders. It also suggests a target, a visual pun that accentuates the boastful claim "Center Hit of the Century" spelled out along its lower edge. Although atypical in design, this ambitious composition keenly captures much of what the Congress of the Rough Riders of the World brought to the Wild West and its audiences. Examined in the context of the 1896 program of acts, as well as other posters and contemporary reviews dedicated this international aggregation, the 1896 Courier one-sheet provides an opportunity to explore what the exhibition itself and its audiences valued and found so appealing about the Congress of Rough Riders of the World at a time when the word "frontier" no longer strictly referred to the American West.

Representatives of the Wild West cast that had grown in number and diversity occupy the four corners of the 1896 Courier lithograph. According the exhibition's "Salutatory" printed in its program for that year, they have been brought together "from far distant countries" to form "the most unique congregation of equestrians since the Creation."<sup>9</sup> Their presence at the poster's corners may have been simply the solution for how to treat the negative space that remained after a circle was inscribed within the standard rectangular format of a one-sheet. It also may have been a play on an oft-repeated assertion regarding Buffalo Bill's powers of recruitment. "The people comprising this immense army may be said to have been literally gathered from the four corners of the globe," claimed a review published in Chicago's *Inter Ocean* in 1896. "Never before have so many people of divers [sic] races been gathered together for purposes of instruction as well as entertainment."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Nate Salsbury, "Salutatory," 1896 Wild West program, 5, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 28.

<sup>10</sup> "Wild West at the Coliseum," *Inter Ocean* (Chicago), June 7, 1896, NSS, Vol. 5, DPL, Reel 1, Microfilm 18.



The mostly three-quarters-view descriptions of the Rough Riders that fill each of the four corners of the poster aid in the appreciation of the “divers races” whom Cody gathered together. Adhering to the rules of hieratic proportion in which size conveys prestige, the largest figure in each corner is a delegate from one of the four cavalry units that toured with the Congress that season. A member of the United States cavalry in full dress uniform dominates the upper left corner. In the other three corners he is joined, moving clockwise, by representatives from France, Germany, and England, the last two of which appear with their mounts. Behind the United States and French cavalry representatives at the top of the poster are the emblems of the equestrians who signify the six remaining groups of Rough Riders that rounded out the Congress in 1896. Accompanying the United States cavalryman at the upper left are other Rough Riders who hail from North and South America: an American Indian, a Mexican vaquero, and a gaucho from Argentina. The neat geographical association breaks down in the right-hand corner, however, where an Arab, a Russian Cossack, and an American cowboy fall in line behind the member of the French cavalry.

These depictions of the Rough Riders function as a Who’s Who of the cast of an exhibition that had expanded its roster of performers beyond the predictable cowboys and Indians on which it built its fame. Together they serve as a preparatory primer that could be consulted before a performance much like the cover of the exhibition’s program for the 1896 season (a design that had been carried over from the past two seasons). (Figure 4.2) Ten small, conveniently labeled cameos cascade diagonally across the program’s cover beneath a large portrait of Buffalo Bill. With the exception of the cowboy, who appears to have been modeled on the exhibition’s general manager, Major John M. Burke, these exact same images of the Rough Riders make an encore appearance in the season’s official souvenir booklet where the labeled

sketches appear above lists of the names of the flesh-and-blood counterparts whom they represent. The cameos on the program cover, those included in the souvenir booklet, as well as the figures stationed at the corners of the Courier one-sheet are described with a degree of specificity that lends credibility to the guarantee of “Genuine Characters” made at the poster’s lower left edge and echoed in assessments of the exhibition. “Everything is real, refreshingly real, from Buffalo Bill himself to all down the line.”<sup>11</sup> However, although individualized as far as being easily distinguishable from their fellow Rough Riders of the World and recognizable due to the inclusion of shorthand visual cues to connote stereotypical differences of race, nationality, or military affiliation, such as facial hair and headgear, their depictions are not distinct enough to be called portraits. They are types—relatives of the same stock characters who populate many of the Wild West posters dedicated to the glory of the Rough Riders, whether as a Congress or as individual groups.

The figures at the corners of the Courier poster share a kinship with illustrations accompanying articles published in contemporary periodicals that offered an occasion for arm-chair travel to far-off places as well as an opportunity to become acquainted with exotic types from around the world. In the early 1890s, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* published a series of essays of this sort with a distinctly martial bent written by the peripatetic journalist Poultney Bigelow. Bigelow’s “In the Barracks of the Czar,” “Side Lights on the German Soldier,” “The Cossack as Cowboy, Soldier, and Citizen,” and “An Arabian Day and Night,” among others, were enhanced with sketches by his former Yale classmate Frederic Sackrider Remington with whom he traveled to Germany and Russia in the spring of 1892 and to North Africa in early

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

1894.<sup>12</sup> At this point in Remington's career, when the frontier on which he founded his reputation had been deemed closed, the artist echoed Frederick Jackson Turner in his belief that "the West is all played out." As Remington's biographers have noted, he felt that it was vital for his career to expand the subjects of his art beyond America and specifically the West.<sup>13</sup> This search for new themes coincided with the opportunity to collaborate with Bigelow. The result was a West-to-the-world trajectory that paralleled Buffalo Bill's enterprise in the presentation of foreign cavalries and exotic horsemen. The sketches that Remington produced during these trips abroad, published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, included detailed vignettes that featured multiple foreign troops in descriptive settings as well as much simpler studies of individual soldiers standing alone or on horseback divorced from any sort of context. The latter correspond in effect to the figures who occupy the corners of the Courier lithograph. Their impact is that of a type, a way to present a manner or category of horseman—a German cuirassier, or Russian Cossack—to readers, in Remington's case, or to potential audience members, in the case of the poster.

In the midst of these generalized types composed to stand for a larger group, is a true individual. A portrait of Buffalo Bill is at the poster's center—the bull's eye. As it had in posters published to promote previous seasons and would in subsequent years, the familiar placement of this portrait of the one and only Buffalo Bill himself reinforces the message that he remains at

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<sup>12</sup> Poultny Bigelow, "In the Barracks of the Czar," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 86, no. 515 (April 1893): 771–86; Poultny Bigelow, "Side Lights on the German Soldier," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 87, no. 518 (July 1893): 213–32; Poultny Bigelow, "The Cossack as Cowboy, Soldier, and Citizen," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 89, no. 534 (November 1894): 921–37; and Poultny Bigelow, "An American Day and Night," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 90, no. 535 (December 1894): 3–14. For more on the Bigelow and Remington's travels together for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, see Peggy Samuels and Harold Samuels, *Frederic Remington: A Biography* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1982), 169–80 and 204–06.

<sup>13</sup> Samuels and Samuels, *Frederic Remington*, 204.

the center of his exhibition even as its focus stretched from the West to the wider world. A trio of concentric circles evocative of that expansion radiate from the central portrait. These circles alternate red-white-red and strengthen the target motif. The red and white rings are filled with multiplied and miniaturized versions of the representatives of Cody's Congress who occupy the corners of the poster. They race dizzily in different directions around the man under whose aegis they have been gathered and under whose watchful eye they perform. Each group from the Rough Riders' roster is identified with a caption to ensure that the visual cues provided by costume, comportment, accoutrements, and flags are clearly recognized. (Figure 4.3)

Reminiscent of the descriptors that accompanied the artist and naturalist John James Audubon's renderings of birds or quadrupeds, or of categorical labels in an anthropological or ethnological display, the captions within the concentric rings of the 1896 Courier one-sheet identify and classify each group it features. Nationalities are called out and, when applicable, military affiliations. The overall effect suggests that the Congress of Rough Riders of the World is a vast collection and that Buffalo Bill is a great collector.

Near the close of the nineteenth century, the American public could already appreciate what would become many of the nation's most significant institutional collections. The American Museum of Natural History and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the University of Pennsylvania's Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, Chicago's Field Museum, and the Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh were all established by the 1890s. In additions to institutions, individuals were engaged in the kind of calculated accumulation that brought the world closer to home, but often for personal delectation and prestige rather than the enlightenment of the larger populace. The artist William Merritt Chase, for example, lavishly

furnished his rooms in New York's Tenth Street Studio Building with picturesque and intriguing objects of foreign origin such as Chinese porcelain, Japanese screens, Italian swords, and Persian carpets, while the industrialist Charles Lang Freer became a connoisseur of treasures from the Middle East and Asia in addition to American and British paintings. Cody's expanded enterprise was in line with the Gilded Age predilection for collection and display, especially of treasures perceived to be exotic. For example, the additions to his Congress of foreign cavalry units, Russian Cossacks supposedly descended from the Zaporogians whom Lord Byron immortalized in his 1819 poem "Mazeppa" and South American gauchos with "fiery Hispanolian temperament" were described in terms of "collecting" and "latest acquisitions" throughout the 1896 program.<sup>14</sup> From his central position on the Courier poster, or in the arena, Cody proudly displays his living cabinet of curiosities in a manner that even recalls one of the country's earliest collectors, the American artist, naturalist, and museum founder Charles Willson Peale. At a time when the newly established country was striving to develop its own identity as a nation, Peale filled his *Wunderkammer* on the second floor of Philadelphia's Independence Hall with native natural specimens and portraits of the founding fathers. Like Peale in his 1822 self-portrait, *The Artist in His Museum*, Cody is cast in the 1896 Courier poster as the assembler of an edifying collection confidently offered for public consumption. (Figure 4.4) However, while Peale amassed a deliberately national collection, Cody's collection was intentionally global and asserted the country's imperial aspirations at the end of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>14</sup> See 1896 Wild West program, 49, 52, and 53, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 28. Although consistently billed as Cossacks from the Caucasus, the Russians who rode with Buffalo Bill's Rough Riders were actually Gurians from Georgia. Irakli Makharadze and Akaki Chkhaidze, *Wild West Georgians* (Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia: New Media Tbilisi, 2002), 5–8.

A full-page illustration published in 1895 in *The Frontier Express and Buffalo Bill's Wild West Pictorial Courier*, one of the exhibition's many serial promotional vehicles also printed by the Courier Lithographic Company, paid tribute to the Rough Riders and also emphasized this notion of the Congress as collection and one with international import at that. (Figure 4.5) Elements of the drawing were reproduced in the 1896 program and may have inspired the concept for the 1896 Courier one-sheet.<sup>15</sup> A dozen rectangular placards, their object-ness enhanced by the shadows at their lower and right edges, form a collage around a vignette titled "'Buffalo Bill' (Col. W. F. Cody) Leading the Cavalry of All Nations"—a scene that itself underscores the collection motif. The placards resemble the cards lithographed with celebrity likenesses used to stiffen cigarette packages in the late nineteenth century. There was precedent for the appropriation of these collectable tobacco cards by Wild West poster designers for use in their compositions. A stunning 1894 six-sheet by the Enquirer Job Printing Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, included four *trompe l'oeil* tobacco cards printed with portraits of important American Indians associated with the exhibition. (Figure 4.6) The Enquirer artist pasted actual tobacco cards to the final watercolor and gouache preparatory sketch to create the illusion in the finished poster that quartet of cards were propped against a large, framed, black-and-white portrait of Buffalo Bill, the man who, for all intents and purposes had collected for his exhibition the men whose portraits graced the cards.<sup>16</sup> (Figure 4.7) The *trompe l'oeil* approach to the

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<sup>15</sup> "Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World," in *The Frontier Express and Buffalo Bill's Wild West Pictorial Courier* 12, no. 95 (1895): 5, Circus World Museum Library, Baraboo, WI (hereafter CWML). The central vignette in this illustration was recycled for use in the Wild West program the following year. 1896 Wild West program, 49, WHC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 28. It also appears in a circa 1895 one-sheet poster published by A. Hoen and Company of Baltimore, Maryland.

<sup>16</sup> Likenesses of Buffalo Bill, many of the Indian performers, as well as other headliners for the Wild West graced the collectable tobacco cards in the late nineteenth century, but none have been located for this study that featured members of the Rough Riders. See James W. Wojtowicz, *The W. F. Cody Buffalo Bill Collector's Guide with Values*

description of a collection of overlapping, nearly planar objects utilized in the 1894 Enquirer six-sheet poster as well as in the 1895 Courier illustration aligns the imagery with an aesthetic that characterized a specialized and exceptionally popular niche of late-nineteenth-century still-life painting in the United States. The Wild West examples share affinities with the Philadelphia artist John Frederick Peto's illusionist "patch" pictures. For these *trompe l'oeil* compositions, Peto "affixed" assemblages of painted photographs, postcards, letters, receipts, and other relatively flat objects to a vertical surface such as a wall or letter rack.<sup>17</sup> Particularly apt as a point of comparison in terms of both composition and effect is Peto's undated *Patch Self-Portrait with Small Pictures*. (Figure 4.8) Like the 1894 Enquirer lithograph that features a portrait of Buffalo Bill at its core accented by his tobacco-card Indians and especially similar to the 1895 Courier illustration where Cody is the focus of a central vignette surrounded by placards depicting members of his Congress, Peto's self-portrait, painted illusionistically onto a curling, unstretched canvas "tacked" to a wall, is encircled by other small "canvases" that variously depict a landscape, ship's portrait, bright-eyed dog, and three still-life compositions. In all three examples, the collection of *trompe l'oeil* objects showcases the breadth of subjects under the mastery of the figure they surround.

Each of the ten groups under Cody's aegis in the Rough Riders in 1895 is accounted for on the illusionistic placard or tobacco card-like elements in the Courier illustration (the American Indian is described three separate times). (Figure 4.5) As with the factions that encircle Cody in the concentric rings of the 1896 Courier poster, each representative is labeled: Arab of

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(Peducah, KY: Collectors Books, 1998), 162–73 for examples. The Circus World Museum Library in Baraboo, Wisconsin, holds the original art for the 1894 Enquirer six-sheet.

<sup>17</sup> For more on Peto and his *trompe l'oeil* paintings, including the "patch" and "rack" pictures, see John Wilmerding, *Important Information Inside: The Art of John F. Peto and the Idea of Still-Life Painting in Nineteenth-Century America* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1983).

the Desert, German Uhlan, Royal Irish Dragoon, and so forth. Similarly, they are each depicted on horseback in the highly dynamic attitudes and poses that served as their trademarks throughout the visual materials that promoted the Congress—horses charge and rear, swords are drawn, rifles are raised. Careful attention is also paid to characteristic details of costume and accessories, likely the result of first-hand experience, or the translation of reliable source material as may have been the case with the Cossack of the Caucasus that appears on the card at the lower center. This Cossack who stands on his saddle, tails of his ulster flying to either side of this body, with his arm raised to wield a saber, while his horse furiously gallops directly towards the viewer, as well as the pair of riders who trail behind him, all seem to be based on sketches by Frederic Remington. Remington made a composite drawing in June 1892 during his visit to the Wild West while it performed in London following his travels in Russia with Poultney Bigelow. *Harper's Weekly* published the drawing as a half-tone illustration three months later. (Figure 4.9)

The Cossacks riding with the Wild West that Remington sketched and *Harper's Weekly* reproduced in 1892 became a frequently relied upon template for depictions of these performers in myriad Congress of Rough Riders-themed promotions for several years to come. These included the 1895 Courier illustration, and the 1896 Courier lithograph in which the Cossacks are the only Rough Riders to charge straight out at the viewer from their position at the top of the middle ring of concentric circles that encompass Buffalo Bill, as well as a poster published by the Parisian lithographer Chaix for the exhibition's tour of France in 1905.<sup>18</sup> (Figure 4.10)

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<sup>18</sup> *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in London—The Cossacks and Guachos [sic]—Drawn by Frederic Remington, Harper's Weekly* 36, no. 1863 (3 September 1892): 844. Remington's drawing was followed a few pages later by an article the artist wrote titled "Buffalo Bill in London," *ibid.*, 847. In this article, Remington equated the Cossacks' performances to paintings by the Polish painter known for his battle scenes, Józef Brant. The Remington catalogue raisonné points out that details from this illustration published in *Harper's Weekly* were appropriated for a Wild West herald printed shortly after the appearance of Remington's sketches in *Harper's Weekly*, in addition to a lithograph to promote Buffalo Bill's exhibition when it toured throughout France in 1905. Peter Hassrick and



Whether a Cossack à la Remington, an American cowboy, or a French Chasseur, the figures in both the 1895 and 1896 Courier products are shown as representational types meant to be recognizable and distinguishable. They are presented to be studied and compared. The 1895 illustration is clear in its encouragement of this sort of assessment by the viewer. All the representations of the Rough Riders have been gathered together under a banner that reads, “An Ethnological—Anthropological—Etymological Congress.”<sup>19</sup> This sort of billing for the Rough Riders of the World was common enough to inform how viewers of both the Wild West’s posters as well as the exhibition itself approached and understood what they were seeing. “All kinds, all colors, all tongues” boasted an advertisement that ran in the *Mansfield [Ohio] Weekly Shield and Banner* in 1896, while another from the *New-York Tribune* four years later continued the theme, “A Pre-Babel Congregation of Men Representing All Nations, All Tongues.”<sup>20</sup> At a time when the country itself was becoming increasingly heterogeneous, the notion of Cody’s particularly diverse assemblage as worthy of recognition and appreciation for its educational as well as its entertainment value was highlighted in contemporary reviews as well. They lauded the exhibition for its ability to “give the spectator a better idea of the manners and customs of many previously unknown people than all the books of travel and adventure could teach him.”<sup>21</sup> Others

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Melissa J. Webster, *Frederic Remington: A Catalogue Raisonné of Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings 1* (Cody, WY: Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 1996), 442.

<sup>19</sup> The reference to etymology is underscored by the vignette at the lower right of the illustration. “The Compounding of Tongues—First Meeting Since Tower of Babel BC 2217” the caption for this sketch that bears a remarkable resemblance to Pieter Brueghel the Elder’s *The Tower of Babel* painted in 1563 (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna).

<sup>20</sup> Advertisement, *Mansfield (Ohio) Weekly Shield and Banner*, July 4, 1896, CWML, Small Collections, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, Clippings, pre-1900; and advertisement, *New-York Tribune*, April 22, 1900, 12.

<sup>21</sup> “Ready for the Big Show: Coliseum Receives ‘Buffalo Bill’ and His Aggregation,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 1, 1896, 3.

spoke of the exhibition's role as a teacher and its appeal to the students who daily purchased tickets to its "class."<sup>22</sup> A reporter for Chicago's *Sunday Times-Herald* wrote in 1897, "It can be called something more than a mere entertainment, for it offers to the intelligent onlooker educational features, while to the student much information is presented as to the habits of varied races."<sup>23</sup> That same year, the *Sherbrooke Daily Recorder* in Quebec, Canada, reprinted a question first posed by Opie Read in the *Chicago Post*: "If man's greatest study is man, of what worth has Buffalo Bill been to the student?" The article went on to supply the answer:

Strip him of romance, of history, and regard him simply as a collector of the human species, and then note the distance he advances beyond any 'showman.' When Barnum gathered wild beasts from the dark corners of the earth wise men applauded, for they declared that he had brought home to every child the truths of natural history. And what has Buffalo Bill done? He has opened a great school of anthropology, and not only wisdom but royalty has been forced to applaud.<sup>24</sup>

The 1896 Courier poster provided a condensed sneak peek of the object lessons offered by Cody's "great school of anthropology." Circumnavigating the ring closest to Buffalo Bill are the Indians who perpetually attacked the Deadwood Stage Coach. Year after year they enacted this siege in the exhibition's arena and were set to do so again in the thirteenth act of the 1896 season. The cowboys who incessantly came to the rescue of those under threat in coaches or cabins, as well as roped cattle and rode broncos in demonstrations of "Cowboy Fun," complete this inner circle. This is the terrain of the West and the domain that formed the core of the

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<sup>22</sup> "Buffalo Bill's Big Wild West Show is Here," unidentified newspaper, Connellsville, PA, September 11, 1901, NSS, Vol. 10, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>23</sup> "The Wonderful Wild West," *Sunday Times-Herald* (Chicago), September 5, 1897, NSS, Vol. 6, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>24</sup> Quote from Opie Read, *Chicago Post* in "Buffalo Bill's Work," *Sherbrooke (Quebec) Daily Record*, June 17, 1897, also reprinted in the *Evening Recorder* (Brockville, Ontario), June 25, 1897, William Frederick Cody (hereafter WFC) Collection, McCracken Research Library (hereafter MRL), BBHC, Box 3, Folder 16.

exhibition since 1883.<sup>25</sup> The winning of the West, reenacted during each performance as well as in this innermost ring, served as a valuable blueprint for the winning of the world. In the second of the three concentric rings that emanate from Buffalo Bill, Mexican vaqueros twirl riatas, South American gauchos throw bolas, Russian Cossacks brandish swords, and Royal Irish Lancers ride in tight formation. As in that middle ring, the outer circle is populated by five distinct groups. One-fifth of it is the territory of Arabs who wield long lances. The apparent disorder of their band as horses and riders move in multiple directions, contrasts with the precision that characterizes the martial bearing of the equestrian outfits with whom they share this outer ring: a unit from the German cavalry protected by their trademark cuirasses, representatives from the United States cavalry who charge with sabers drawn, and their counterparts from France whose helmets trail black horsehair plumes. The lower arc of this third concentric circle contains a further reminder in miniature of the foundation of the exhibition. It comprises a display of acts that still had a place on the Wild West's program in 1896 even its flavor became more cosmopolitan. Buffalo hunters pursue their quarry; the "Cowboy Kid," Johnny Baker, fires a rifle backwards over his shoulder; and the Wild West's progenitor shoots glass balls on horseback. Annie Oakley, "Little Miss Sure Shot," likewise takes aim at the same time that four different nationalities of riders jump a hurdle and compete in a Darwinesque "Race of Races"—a staple of the exhibition since its early days. It is all here. Each of the "Actual Scenes—Genuine Characters" that the 1896 Courier posters claims will thrill and delight, educate and entertain potential audience members during the season's twice-daily performances has been compacted into the densely populated concentric circles that surround the likeness of

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<sup>25</sup> For examples and an analysis of the role of Indians and cowboys in Wild West posters see chapters two and three of this dissertation.

Cody. Like ripples in a pond that travel out from a central point, the exhibition has extended its reach and representation to become progressively global.

This move toward a global focus was a hallmark of the era. Although the international League of Nations was still decades in the future, its forerunner, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, was established in 1889. The purpose of this body was to recognize global diversity and, simultaneously, to mitigate threats to global peace. Much like Buffalo Bill's Congress of Rough Riders of the World, characterized by a reporter for the Easton, Pennsylvania, *Sunday Call* as "a strange mingling of strange men and a striking plea for peace!" and promoted in advertisements as "Hereditary Enemies United in Showing the World the Victory of Peace," the Inter-Parliamentary Union brought together disparate nations in order to foster familiarity and universal good will.<sup>26</sup> Founders William Randal Cremer and Frédéric Passy aimed to unite delegations from around the world in order that nationalist brio and tendencies towards bellicosity might diminish. In the arena and through its imagery, such as the 1896 Courier lithograph, the Wild West's own amicable assembly of disparate nations embodied a Family of Man that extended beyond geographic borders. These "warriors of all nations [who] join hands" and "sons of fighting forefathers [who] march to the spirit of peace" projected the potential for nations to coexist without conflict even when historical precedent suggested otherwise.<sup>27</sup> This model of harmony was not lost on the audience who attended the expanded Wild West. "The first march through our street of such widely different peoples," a review published in an Eau

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<sup>26</sup> E. W., "Day with the Wild West," *The Sunday Call* (Easton, PA), August 12, 1894, NSS, Vol. 3, DPL, Reel 1, Microfilm 18; and advertisement, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 11, 1897, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 3, Folder 16.

<sup>27</sup> Quote from Opie Read, *Chicago Post* in "Buffalo Bill's Work," *Sherbrooke (Quebec) Daily Record*, June 17, 1897, also reprinted in the *Evening Recorder* (Brockville, Ontario), June 25, 1897, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 3, Folder 16; and "A Strange Spectacle," *Evening Recorder* (Brockville, Ontario), June 29, 1897, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 3, Folder 16.

Claire, Wisconsin, newspaper in 1896 asserted, “is one that marks the progress of man’s brotherhood and is the first exemplification that in time, knowledge and acquaintance will dispel racial prejudices and national hatred and emphasize the fact of all mankind’s kindred-ship. Only such a man as Col. W. F. Cody,” the article concluded, “could cause such a scene.”<sup>28</sup> Whereas the Courier one-sheet implies this claim, a poster published three years earlier by Baltimore’s A. Hoen and Company emphatically states it through imagery as well as text. (Figure 4.11) The message signaled by the transnational bouquet of flags against which Buffalo Bill is posed is reinforced by a quotation from Marie François Sadi Carnot, president of the Third French Republic. Printed below the image and above the words “Col. W. F. Cody ‘Buffalo Bill,’” are Carnot’s words, “A Factor of International Amity.” This descriptor refers to both the man as well as the diverse, yet amicable troops he leads in the A. Hoen composition and by which he is surrounded in the Courier poster.<sup>29</sup>

The expanded scope of Cody’s exhibition to include the Congress of Rough Riders of the World not only showcased an exemplar of global brotherhood, but also extended the narrative of American cultural hegemony that had begun in the West. The Rough Riders kept the Wild West in step with a growing consciousness of America’s role in an ever-changing modern world. Complementing the references already suggested by the multivalent circular element that dominates the 1896 Courier poster—kaleidoscope, target, ripples in a pond, nations and mankind united—the overall visual effect of Courier’s presentation of Buffalo Bill’s international aggregation also evokes a solar system. Multiple planets orbit around a central sun. Cody’s

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<sup>28</sup> Newspaper clipping, *Evening Press* (Eau Claire, WI), September 9, 1896, CWML, Small Collections.

<sup>29</sup> This composition was originally published by Stafford in 1892 for the exhibition’s summer stand in London, with the British flag where the flag of the state of Nebraska is in the later version. Jack Rennert, *100 Posters of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West* (New York: Darien House, 1976), 15.

central presence and “gravitational pull” ensures his Rough Riders’ successful revolutions and, by extension, a successful enterprise. An astrological undercurrent likewise pervades the central motif of a one-sheet lithograph published by Buffalo, New York’s, Enquirer Job Printing Company in 1899. (Figure 4.12) As in the 1896 Courier poster, a portrait of Buffalo Bill graces the center of Enquirer’s “The Cody Calendar,” titled as such for the columnar calendars of six months each that frame the figurative elements of the poster. Twelve representatives of the multi-cultural Congress, including a “Cuban Insurgent” and “Hungarian Chico” who joined the Rough Riders’ ranks since the 1896 season, encircle the portrait of Cody set against a brilliant blue field.<sup>30</sup> A banner beneath this gathering reads “Zodiac of Rough Riders.” The Enquirer designer may have found inspiration for this unusual composition in the hundreds of posters created to promote the Wild West from the Czech artist Alphonse Mucha’s wildly popular image published as a calendar by the prestigious French printing firm Ferdinand Champenois in 1896.<sup>31</sup> (Figure 4.13) The French avant-garde periodical dedicated to the literary and visual arts, *La Plume*, reproduced Mucha’s stunning creation as its calendar the following year, and his profile of a maiden dripping in jewels and crowned with a zodiacal halo appeared in several other iterations for use as a decorative panel.<sup>32</sup>

If appropriated from Mucha, the treatment of this theme by the Enquirer artist responsible for the 1899 Cody Calendar was fittingly transformed to have a distinctively western, rather than

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<sup>30</sup> In the first of a series of preparatory sketches for “The Cody Calendar” held in the collections of Circus World Museum Library, there were only eleven Rough Riders represented. They were displayed in three tiers underneath the left hand calendar column. A pencil notation on this original conception of the poster reads, “have twelve heads around Cody portrait, with a Lariat to form a wreath.”

<sup>31</sup> Rennert, *100 Posters of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, 7.

<sup>32</sup> Mucha Foundation, Gallery, <http://www.muchafoundation.org/gallery/browse-works/object/242> (accessed February 2, 2013).

art nouveau, flavor. Twisted rope twines around the dozen cameos set in medallions that orbit the buckskinned Buffalo Bill. Despite the possibility that the influence for this poster may have originated on foreign shores, within the context of expansionism, first westward then beyond, that defined the nineteenth century, the lithograph speaks to influence and authority traveling in the opposite direction. When considered within its cultural context, one that included the seizure of the remains of the Spanish empire in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, as well as the annexation of Hawaii, this poster resonates with undercurrents of boastful nationalism and jingoistic propaganda more emphatically expressed in the politically charged illustrations published in the press, books, and popular periodicals. In 1898 the Philadelphia newspaper the *Press* printed a sketch of an eagle perched atop a map of the United States. (Figure 4.14) The eagle's wingspan reaches ten thousand miles from Manila to Puerto Rico. The feat is awe inspiring when compared to a second smaller map included in the illustration that reveals the extent of the nation one hundred years earlier when the Mississippi river established the boundary of its Northwest Territory and just sixteen states and the District of Columbia composed its domain in the East.<sup>33</sup> The following year, the January 25, 1899, issue of the satirical magazine *Puck* included an expansionist-themed caricature by the cartoonist Louis Dalrymple. (Figure 4.15) A towering, stern-faced Uncle Sam, in the guise of a teacher, lectures to "children" who range from the studious California, Texas, New Mexico, and Alaska to more reluctant pupils identified as the Philippines, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, while China

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<sup>33</sup> "Ten Thousand Miles from Tip to Tip," reprinted in Marshall Everett, *History of the Philippines and the Life and Achievements of Admiral George Dewey* (Chicago: J. S. Ziegler and Co., 1899), 130.

cautiously peers in through the classroom's doorway.<sup>34</sup> Fine artists, likewise, treated America's new place in the world as its presence was increasingly amplified. The painter and war correspondent Francis D. Millet's canvas *The Expansionist* dates to the same year as Dalrymple's caricature for *Puck*. (Figure 4.16) Millet's widely exhibited painting of a parlor filled with treasures of far-off origins includes a prominently placed globe at the center of its lower edge. Taken together, the accumulation of colorful piles of appealing foreign plunder, the conspicuous globe, and the painting's title, surely resonated in the context of the era's imperialistic agenda and expansionist rhetoric.<sup>35</sup>

During the 1899 Wild West season that treated audiences to "representatives from our new colonial possessions, including Hawaiians, Philippines [*sic*] and Cubans" as well as a smoke-filled reenactment of the Battle of San Juan Hill, Cody's enterprise even advertised itself as "A Great Exemplification of Expansion; Annexation Expounded!"<sup>36</sup> "As far as the term Wild West is concerned," a Baltimorean who took in a performance suggested, "Colonel Cody's exhibition has branched out to such an extent that Wild West doesn't stand responsible for it. It might as well be the Wild East as the Wild West. . . the scope of the show really extends all

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<sup>34</sup> "School Begins," *Puck* 44 (25 January 1899): 8–9. For a detailed analysis of "School Begins," see Servando D. Halili Jr., *Iconography of the New Empire: Race and Gender Images and the American Colonization of the Philippines* (Diliman, Quezon City: University of Philippines Press, 2006), 50–52.

<sup>35</sup> The painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy exhibition in 1899 as well as Paris's Exposition Universelle in 1900, among other expositions. *Report of the Commissioners Representing the State of New York at the Universal Exposition at Paris, France, 1900* (Brooklyn, NY: Brooklyn Daily Eagle and Job Printing Department, 1901), 50. On the occasion of its showing at a Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts exhibition in 1900, Millet's *The Expansionist* was reproduced in *Harper's Weekly* 44, no. 2250 (3 February 1900): 107.

<sup>36</sup> "Buffalo Bill," *Terre Haute (IN) Gazette*, October 11, 1899, NSS, Vol. 8, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18; and advertisement, *Boston Daily Globe*, June 11, 1899, 19.



around the world.”<sup>37</sup> This expansionist estimation of Cody’s enterprise echoes the rhetoric put forth in the inaugural issue of the exhibition’s own advance courier, *The Rough Rider* in 1899. “A momentuous [*sic*] and triumphant geographical paradox has been achieved,” the courier proclaimed.<sup>38</sup> It went on to quote from the *New-York Tribune* as further proof of its feat:

The Wild West has extended so far West that it has met the East. It has also reached a point where it is considerably wider than anything that has held ranks as a Wild West in a considerable number of years. It has passed beyond Hawaii, and has crossed the line where the date changes and where you gain a day or lose a day, and so it has become the Orient. Colonel Cody has already included Arabs and Cossacks in his show, and now that Filipinos and Hawaiians are taken in, it is pretty hard to say whether it is a Wild West or a Wild East. The show has become so broad as to reach nearly around the earth, and perhaps “The Wild World” would be a good name for it.<sup>39</sup>

With Buffalo Bill—a synecdoche of that most American of enterprises and by extension, America—at their centers and depicted in a scale that dominates representatives from a host of other countries, Rough Riders posters such as the 1899 Enquirer example as well as the 1896 Courier one-sheet read as illustrations for theories of American exceptionalism and expansionism. Not only did they promote the promise of a thrilling performance, but they also functioned as convincing visual metaphors for the growing role the United States increasingly aimed to play in world affairs.

The premier act on the Wild West program since the debut of its expanded scope replicated the United States’ developing international influence as well.<sup>40</sup> The “Grand Review”

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<sup>37</sup> “Rough Riders Did Well,” unidentified Baltimore newspaper, April 18, 1899, NSS, Vol. 8, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>38</sup> “The Wild West Absorbs the Strange, Barbaric East,” *The Rough Rider* 1, no. 1 (1899): 15, CWML, Small Collections.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> The “Grand Review” had been the first act since 1892 (the year prior to amendment of the exhibition’s title in 1893) and would remain so through 1913 when the Wild West went bankrupt.

commenced as the full Congress of Rough Riders of the World, accompanied by flag bearers, roared dramatically into the arena. Mounted Indians, cowboys, vaqueros, gauchos, Cossacks, and members of the English, French, German, and, finally, the United States cavalries galloped on horseback at full speed past the breathless spectators in the stands to afford them the first opportunity to appreciate and assess their equestrian abilities. Another poster from the 1896 season, an impressive, horizontal six-sheet also published by the Courier Lithographic Company, captures this experience in a sweeping panorama. (Figure 4.17) The cleverly devised composition, captioned “Perfect Illustration of the Interior of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West,” places right there in the covered grandstand amidst a rapt and well-dressed audience those who may have come across the poster pasted to a fence in downtown Kansas City or plastered to a barn side in rural Wisconsin. Although their singular focus is the impressive Grand Review, individuals turn their heads in different directions in a visual testimony to the overwhelming amount to see in just these first few minutes of the exhibition from which spectators reportedly “came away exhausted with the strain upon their attention.”<sup>41</sup> The claim that “there is no room for ennui” is reinforced by the example set by the captivated crowd in tandem with the object, or, more correctly, multiple objects, of their attention.<sup>42</sup> This “sight of a life time” unfolds in a dense and colorful spectacle of rank after galloping rank of horses and riders, flags and sabers, the familiar and the exotic, the West and the world.<sup>43</sup> The effect makes an even greater impact when the dimensions of this lithograph, four-and-a-half by ten feet, are considered. The insistent

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<sup>41</sup> “Wild West Now Open,” *Inter Ocean* (Chicago), August 31, 1897, NSS, Vol. 6, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>42</sup> “Buffalo Bill Here,” *Daily City Item* (Allentown, PA), August 3, 1897, NSS, Vol. 6, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>43</sup> “Men on Horseback,” *Evening Recorder* (Brockville, Ontario), June 26, 1897, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 3, Folder 16.

scale conveys the messages that like the poster, Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World cannot be missed.

The climax of the Grand Review, this “spectacular an event as one could wish to see,” described as “a solid, vari-colored mass being” and “a picture of wild beauty,” “which for grouping, coloring and action would be difficult to equal,” occurred when Buffalo Bill appeared at the center of the arena on horseback.<sup>44</sup> This signature highpoint of the first few minutes of the exhibition was ideal fodder for its promotional imagery, as evinced by the 1896 Courier six-sheet as well as others by the lithographic firm such as a pair examples from 1902. (Figures 4.18 and 4.19) After Cody made his official review and, with a sweep of his sombrero, introduced the men from many nations that he had the power and influence to oversee, his Congress of Rough Riders of the World set in motion once again, “a whirling circle of bewildering elements.”<sup>45</sup> With its portrait of Buffalo Bill at the center of a vortex of international equestrians, the multivalent 1896 Courier one-sheet presented an abstracted, bird's-eye perspective of the dense, colorful, revolving, and Cody-centric Grand Review. Simultaneously, it provided a visual compendium of what the exhibition offered beyond its first act—equestrians “differing in race, language, habits, customs, dress, as well as in skill, style and methods of horsemanship.”<sup>46</sup>

Following the conclusion of the Grand Review, after Annie Oakley skipped into the arena and amazed the audience with her shooting skills while charming them with her femininity,

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<sup>44</sup> “Wild West a Big Hit,” *New York Press*, April 3, 1898, NSS, Vol. 7, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18; “Many Thousands Here,” unidentified newspaper (Pittsburgh, PA), May 16, 1899, NSS, Vol. 8, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18; “Wild West Arena,” *Morning (Portland) Oregonian*, August 27, 1902, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 3, Folder 16; and “Buffalo Bill's Wild West Draws Multitude to Exhibition Ground,” *San Francisco Call*, September 8, 1902, WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC, Box 3, Folder 16.

<sup>45</sup> “Col. Cody's Wild West,” *Argus* (Albany, NY), June 15, 1898, NSS, Vol. 7, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>46</sup> Nate Salsbury, “Salutatory,” 1896 Wild West program, 5, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 28.

members of the emphatically masculine Congress of the Rough Riders of the World appeared again for an inter-ethnic equestrian competition. A version of this horse race that pitted riders of different ethnicities or nations astride equally distinctive mounts had been a mainstay of the exhibition since its debut. Pulse-pounding graphic descriptions of this spectacle, complete with rolling dust clouds, straining horses, cracking whips, and determined riders clearly differentiated in attire and physiognomy, also appeared frequently as program illustrations as well as on posters. (Figures 4.20–22) Over the years, the origins of the competitors expanded from North America to multiple continents, while the length of the race or its complexity (hurdles occasionally provided an added challenge) varied from season to season. In the case of the 1896 season, both a horse race that featured an American cowboy, Russian Cossack, Mexican vaquero, and South American gaucho as well as a hurdle race “between Primitive Riders” appeared on the program as the second and tenth acts respectively.<sup>47</sup> As previously described, the hurdle race appears at the center of the lower edge of the outermost concentric ring on the 1896 Courier poster. However, similar to the manner in which the poster as a whole reflected the Grand Review, the entire trio of red and white circles filled with a global contingent of continuously galloping horseman likewise suggests the “Race of Races” writ large.

The Race of Races resonated with the racialist rhetoric of social Darwinism that went hand-in-glove with imperialist ideologies. Additionally, during the late nineteenth century when an influx of immigrants altered the racial make-up of the United States, the notion of “survival of the fittest,” which had governed the natural world for eons, could be expanded to apply to the human world as well. Between 1890 and the start of World War One, fifteen million immigrants,

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<sup>47</sup> 1896 Wild West program, 2, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 28.

mostly from eastern and southern Europe, came to the United States.<sup>48</sup> As the Wild West scholar Louis S. Warren points out, it is within this context that the Rough Riders promoted comparison between those who were Americans and those who were not.<sup>49</sup> Although contemporary reviews that commented on this particular act reveal that the winner of the contest was not predetermined, in the two circles on the 1896 Courier lithograph that include Americans among their tenants—the inner- and outermost—those riders come out on top, literally. Cowboys ride at the crest of the inner circle right above Cody’s head, while the United States cavalry, with Star-Spangled Banner held aloft, appears at the apogee of the outer ring.

In addition to the acts during which the Rough Riders occupied the ring together or were placed in direct competition with one another, Cody’s expanded exhibition offered audiences additional opportunities to assess his Congress. Even before the exhibition was formally renamed to reflect its international scope, the artist Frederic Remington called attention to the effect created by interspersing its signature western spectacles with acts that showcased the equestrian talents of each group in its newly international cast. In an article inspired by his visit to the Wild West in London in 1892, published by *Harper’s Weekly*, the artist noted that “The great interest which attaches to the whole show is that it enables the audience to take sides on the question of which people ride the best and have the best saddle. The whole thing is put in such tangible shape as to be a regular challenge to debate to lookers on.”<sup>50</sup> As reflected by the distinct groupings of Rough Riders within the concentric rings of the 1896 Courier one-sheet, each faction of the Congress took to the arena for its own opportunity to demonstrate the skills that

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<sup>48</sup> Paul Johnson, *A History of the American People* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1999), 514.

<sup>49</sup> Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 422.

<sup>50</sup> Frederic Remington, “Buffalo Bill in London,” *Harper’s Weekly* 36, no. 1663 (3 September 1892): 847.

earned a place on the Rough Rider roster and to vie for audiences' admiration. Each season, in addition to lithographs that promoted the Congress as an entity, such as the Courier poster, others dedicated to each of the different groups were published that vividly captured the unique character, appearance, and style of horsemanship of the assorted delegations, from the vaqueros of Mexico to the Riffian Arabs and the Royal Irish Lancers to the United States cavalry.

Action-filled individual tributes were often published as a series in a given season with the different nationalities of horsemen inserted into a standard compositional framework. For an exhibition that had grown increasingly diverse in content, the decision to publish posters that maintained a similar form created valuable cohesion. In addition to the Courier lithograph that featured Cody encircled by concentric rings filled with his Rough Riders, in 1896 the firm also published a series of posters that separately featured each contingent of the Congress. (Figures 4.23–26) Each poster in this series was constructed in a tri-register format dominated by a large central portrait head. The top two tiers of these one-sheets established the Rough Riders' origins, whether snow-covered Russia or the Argentine pampas, and highlighted their trademark abilities in their specific geographical milieu. This origins-and-abilities motif also served as the basis for a series published by the Baltimore printing firm, A. Hoen and Company, in 1893 for the official debut of Cody's Congress in the United States. (Figures 4.27 and 4.28) This motif and A. Hoen's treatment of it was especially fitting in the context of the World's Columbian Exposition and its myriad ethnographic displays. The foreground of each poster in this beautifully lithographed set featured a Rough Rider on horseback posed above an identifying caption and the claim "First Ever Seen in the United States." From his costume to his accoutrements and his horse's tack to its tail, the single Rough Rider and his mount are rendered in a highly detailed and nuanced manner. In the atmospheric distance, in a landscape evocative of his homeland, others of his ilk

demonstrate the culturally specific equestrian skills for which they are renowned, such as riding with head on the saddle and feet in the air or throwing bolas, that would distinguish themselves from other horsemen of the world.

The lower registers of the three-tiered Courier poster series transplanted the “Actual Scenes—Genuine Characters” from their international origins to the Wild West arena.<sup>51</sup> Many other Rough Rider posters took this approach when marketing the individual groups of the Congress. Even when the arena itself, as presented in the lower register on the posters in the 1896 Courier series (Figures 4.23–26), is not described, it is often implied. Such is the case with another Rough Rider series published in 1899 by Courier. (Figures 4.29–31) In this series, “The Brave Cossacks of the Caucasus in Wild Strange Feats and Fearless Equitation,” “South-American Gauchos, the World Famous Bolas Throwers and All-Around Rough Riders of the Pampas,” and “A Group of Mexican Vaqueros and Lariat Experts in Marvelous Feats, Sports, and Pastimes,” clearly perform as part of an exhibition, rather than riding, wrangling, or roping in their native contexts. This distinction is confirmed by the consistent presence of Col. W. F. Cody and the manager of his enterprise, Nate Salsbury, who appear in portrait medallions installed in the upper left and right corners of each lithograph. Their presence, just like that of Cody at the center of the 1896 Courier one-sheet, is also a visual reminder that each Rough Rider unit was selected and collected for a specific purpose that contributed to the mission of the exhibition to educate and entertain as well as helping ensure its success.

The exhibition’s posters consistently provided visual evidence of the unique reasons why each equestrian group was selected for inclusion in the Congress of Rough Riders of the World.

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<sup>51</sup> For an analysis of the “American Cowboy” poster of this 1896 Courier series, see chapter three of this dissertation.

The culturally specific attributes and distinct talents that earned them a place in the exhibition were underscored in the focused tributes to the individual delegations, even as they appeared *en masse* and in miniature in the concentric circles surrounding Cody in the 1896 Courier lithograph. In an age characterized by a romantic fascination with the exotic Orient in art and literature, as well as the decorative arts and design, the Riffian Arabs of the Rough Rider Congress were a popular attraction.<sup>52</sup> (Figure 4.32) Their depictions on posters complemented the manner in which their performances were described in the press—the “most picturesque” of the Rough Riders, with “their long cloaks flying. . . . They are like a leaf from ‘Aladdin.’ They are like a dream from Asia.”<sup>53</sup> The Mexican vaqueros contributed unparalleled roping tricks to the exhibition as well as apparel that rarely escaped comment in reviews. It was discussed at length in the Wild West program from its earliest season through the 1890s and was captured vividly in its posters. (Figure 4.33) Although it was noted that there was “only a slight line of demarcation” between the American cowboy and the Mexican vaquero, what truly distinguished the two was what was perceived as the “dandy” qualities that defined the vaquero’s costume: tall-crowned, broad-brimmed sombrero, richly embroidered jacket, colorful silk waist sash, and trousers slit to the knee accented with copious brass or silver buttons.<sup>54</sup> A Wild West vaquero did not appear in the arena or on a poster unless so attired. Although the gauchos of Argentina wore

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<sup>52</sup> For more on the appeal of the Orient in the United States during the late nineteenth century, see Holly Edwards, ed., *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870–1930* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>53</sup> “A Woman Sees the Wild West,” *Commercial Advertiser* (New York), June 9, 1894, NSS, Vol. 4, DPL, Reel 1, Microfilm 18; and “The Buffalo Bill Show,” *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, June 25, 1893, NSS, Vol. 2, DPL, Reel 1, Microfilm 18.

<sup>54</sup> “The Vaquero of the Southwest,” 1896 Wild West program, 29–30, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 28.



equally distinctive garb, their claim to Rough Rider fame was their mastery of the bola that could fell an animal from a distance of sixty feet.<sup>55</sup> In countless posters, and even in their diminutive guise in the middle ring of the 1896 Courier one-sheet, they appear swinging the iron balls attached to rawhide thongs that became their signature attribute. (Figures 4.24 and 4.30) The Cossacks' dual reputation as peerless and fearless trick riders as well as expert swordsmen was likewise emphasized without fail. On sheet after sheet they ride "in about every conceivable way a horse could be ridden" and charge the viewer with glinting sabers held high above their fur-capped heads.<sup>56</sup> (Figures 4.10, 4.23, and 4.29) Their appearance and comportment reliably elicited comments that characterized the Cossacks' status in the Congress of Rough Riders as one that straddled "the wild irregulars and the trained and drilled military."<sup>57</sup> This distinction is accentuated by the precision of their orderly, saber-wielding charge at the top of the middle concentric ring in the 1896 Courier poster when compared to the much less regimented conduct of the Riffian Arabs, Mexican vaqueros, and South American gauchos more aptly described as "wild irregulars."

Just as they were distinguished in the 1896 Courier lithograph as the largest figures in the poster's corners and at the forefront of their fellow Rough Riders, true members of "the trained and drilled military" representing cavalries from the United States, France, Germany, and England likewise enjoyed their own place on the Wild West program and their own paper. In 1896, detachments from the Seventh United States Cavalry from Fort Riley, the Dragoons of the

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<sup>55</sup> "South American Gauchos at the 'Wild West,'" 1896 Wild West program, 53, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 28.

<sup>56</sup> "Amusements," *Free Press and Times* (Burlington, VT), June 16, 1897, NSS, Vol. 6, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>57</sup> Untitled newspaper article, *Milwaukee (WI) Sentinel*, August 16, 1896, 6.

Republic Française, the Garde Cuirassiers of His Majesty Kaiser Wilhelm II, and the Fifth Royal Irish Lancers were featured in the exhibition's "Military Musical Drill."<sup>58</sup> During this act the detachments presented their various evolutions and exercises, including both tent-pegging and slicing a lemon while on horseback. Perhaps due to the inherent discipline required of their subjects as well as their uniforms and uniformity, the compositions that feature military veterans are, in general, less dynamic than those that showcase the non-martial members of the Congress of Rough Riders. (Figures 4.34 and 4.35) However, an act like the "Military Musical Drill" was directly in step with another form of popular entertainment of the day. Tournaments such as the widely covered National Guard Military, Bicycle, and Athletic Carnival held in January 1897 at New York's Madison Square Garden, appealed to the same martial spirit that made the cavalry drills demonstrated under Cody's aegis so popular.<sup>59</sup> Although less overtly competitive than one of these types of tournaments, or the exhibition's own "Race of Races" from which the cavalry detachments of the Congress were excluded, direct comparison between representatives from the various groups that performed with Cody's exhibition inevitably occurred. "Of all the riders that Buffalo Bill has brought together who offer their specialties in daring horsemanship," Chicago's *Sunday Times-Herald* opined, "the American can well feel proud of the fact that the feats

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<sup>58</sup> "Programme," 1896 Wild West program, 2, WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL, Box 2, Folder 28. The specific units of the military detachments varied from year to year. For example, in addition to members of the Seventh United States Cavalry, veterans of the Fifth and Sixth United States Cavalry also performed with the exhibition in various seasons.

<sup>59</sup> For contemporary assessments of the National Guard Military, Bicycle, and Athletic Carnival, see "The Military Tournament: Exhibition by Crack Regular Troops—The Programme for Tomorrow Night," *New-York Tribune*, January 10, 1897, A12; "A Novel Tournament," *New York Times*, January 10, 1897, 12; "Brave Scenes at the Garden," *New-York Tribune*, January 12, 1897, 6; and "Soldiers and Athletes," *New York Times*, January 12, 1897, 7.

performed by the detachment of the Sixth United States cavalry are not equaled by that of any other group of riders in the outfit.”<sup>60</sup>

As the Wild West, “America’s National Entertainment,” expanded to include the world at a time when the world was progressively becoming the purview of the United States, perceptions of Buffalo Bill’s exhibition grew increasingly patriotic. The appearance of the United States cavalry on the same program, in the same arena, and on the same posters as foreign detachments as well as those “wild irregulars” from other countries provoked strong nationalist sentiment. “You enjoy the dash, the fire and the glitter of it all,” an Easton, Pennsylvania, reporter proclaimed of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World in 1894. The review continued, “You are immensely pleased with yourself because your patriotism has thrilled you so and your blood has leaped in your veins.”<sup>61</sup> Following a performance by the exhibition in Albany, New York, before an audience of 5,000, a reporter for the local newspaper admitted, “Next to witnessing the stirring, patriotic pageantry of real war, and the daring deeds of actual heroism at the cannon’s mouth, it is a jolly lot to sit on the bleaching boards of the big tent at Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, and ‘Rah.’”<sup>62</sup> As the 1896 Courier lithograph and other posters that feature the Congress of Rough Riders of the World reveal, by increasing the scope of his exhibition beyond the West and aligning his focus with contemporary expanded definitions of the frontier, Cody extended the narrative of American cultural hegemony that had begun in the West to the world.

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<sup>60</sup> “The Wonderful Wild West,” *Sunday Times-Herald* (Chicago), September 5, 1897, NSS, Vol. 6, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>61</sup> E. W., “Day with the Wild West,” *Sunday Call* (Easton, PA), August 12, 1894, DPL, NSS, Vol. 3, Reel 1, Microfilm 18.

<sup>62</sup> “Col. Cody’s Wild West,” *Argus* (Albany, NY), June 15, 1898, NSS, Vol. 7, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

## Conclusion

It is an immense aggregation, fully up to its advertised promise in points of splendor and numbers.

—“The Wild West,” *Press and Dakotan*  
(Yankton, SD), September 13, 1899<sup>1</sup>

In *The Poster in History*, historian Max Gallo makes the analogy of a poster to a mirror that both reflects and distorts. Although indicative of a flaw in a mirror made of glass and silver, distortion in a poster has the potential to provide valuable historical evidence and insight. In fact, once detected, distortion can often be among the most revealing aspects of promotional imagery examined for its worth beyond ephemeral commercial tools.<sup>2</sup> Gallo’s correlation is particularly apt for the posters that advertise Buffalo Bill’s Wild West—the art that continues to perpetuate the exhibition’s fame. As reflective mirrors, the posters discussed in the preceding chapters replicate many of the popular elements of Colonel William Frederick Cody’s extravaganza including Buffalo Bill himself; the Indian in the guise of foe, friend, and American; the genuine American cowboy; and the multinational equestrians gathered together to form the Congress of Rough Riders of the World. From half-sheets to multi-sheet panoramas, the hundreds of posters designed to promote Buffalo Bill’s Wild West fulfilled this task with such a high degree of presumed veracity and alleged authenticity that they generated frequent praise in their day. Concurrently, when studied in tandem with an exploration of their social, political, and cultural milieu, Wild West posters expose widely resonating distortions. These include the fantasies, misconceptions, and stereotypes embodied by the exhibition itself as well as other western-themed examples of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century material culture, both high and

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<sup>1</sup> Nate Salsbury Scrapbooks (hereafter NSS), Vol. 8, Denver Public Library (hereafter DPL), Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

<sup>2</sup> Max Gallo, *The Poster in History* (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), 12.

low.

As is the case with many other “documents” of the West, including art and literature inspired by the region, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West posters are that much richer when considered in a context that extends beyond the West. Because these posters promoted an exhibition that traveled extensively, their success depended on an ability to entice potential audience members who hailed from small towns and metropolises across the country and even across the Atlantic. Likewise, given the exhibition’s thirty-year run from 1883 to 1913, it was critical that its wood engravings and lithographs clearly signified the deft manner with which Buffalo Bill’s Wild West kept pace with the changing world beyond the American West and the exhibition’s arena. These qualities, as well as the posters’ capacity to provide a graphic complement for a Wild West trait singled out as “remarkable” by a Chicago reporter in 1898—a facility to powerfully suggest “the very atmosphere of time and place”—make Buffalo Bill’s Wild West posters rewarding objects of inquiry.<sup>3</sup>

The power of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West posters extends far beyond their proficiency to lure more than fifty million audience members to performances in ten countries over three decades. The posters, like the exhibition itself, reveal the amalgam of fact and fiction that defines the American West. Simultaneously, they publicize a complex constellation of sociopolitical ideologies, perspectives, and values for which the American West was at the center. The posters of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West not only announced that Cody’s aggregation was coming and continue to perpetuate the exhibition’s fame, but they also illuminate for viewers one hundred years or more later aspects of the collective conscious and defining currents of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

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<sup>3</sup> “Buffalo Bill Here,” *Chronicle* (Chicago), July 24, 1898, NSS, Vol. 7, DPL, Reel 2, Microfilm 18.

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Figure 4.33 Courier Lithographic Company, Buffalo, NY. Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World one-sheet lithograph, 1899. 40 ½ x 27 ½ inches. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art Poster Collection, Sarasota, FL. Tibbals Digital Collection, ht2003902.

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Figure 4.35 A. Hoen and Company, Baltimore, MD. Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World one-sheet lithograph, nd. 27 ¾ x 41 ¾ inches. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art Poster Collection, Sarasota, FL. Tibbals Digital Collection, ht2003882.

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### Abbreviations

CCHSL (Chester County Historical Society Library, West Chester, PA)  
CWML (Circus World Museum Library, Baraboo, WI)  
WFC/BBP, WH72, WHC, DPL (William Frederick Cody/Buffalo Bill Papers, WH72, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library)  
WFC Collection, MRL, BBHC (William Frederick Cody Collection, McCracken Research Library, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY)  
NSS (Nate Salsbury Scrapbooks)

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