



Smithsonian

National Museum of the American Indian

Frank Lehner photographs of
Buffalo Bill's Wild West show

Nathan Sowry

2019

National Museum of the American Indian
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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | National Museum of the American Indian |
| Title: | Frank Lehner photographs of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show |
| Date: | (bulk 1868-1926) |
| Identifier: | NMAI.AC.147 |
| Creator: | Lehner, Frank Seiling, J. Braithwaite, Charles Henry |
| Extent: | 0.25 Linear feet 43 Photographs |
| Language: | English . |
| Summary: | This collection consists of 38 photographic prints of Native and non-Native peoples involved with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, primarily in the years 1890-1891. |
| Digital Content: | Image(s): Frank Lehner photographs of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

This collection was exchanged with Frank Lehner in 1932.

Processing Information

Processed by Nathan Sowry, Reference Archivist, in 2019.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; 1890; Frank Lehner photographs of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, NMAI.AC.147; National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

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Biographical / Historical

William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody opened the first Wild West show in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1883. Within four years the fame of the Wild West had grown so great that Cody took his fellow performers on an international tour of Europe, performing between 1887 and 1906 in the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Germany, Italy, Austria, and a host of other countries.

Undeniably, Cody's Wild West constructed and promoted inaccurate views of Native Americans, defining "real Indians" as only those who lived in tipis, rode horses, and wore feather headdresses. Such stereotypes have sadly been perpetuated in dime novels, television shows, and major motion pictures down to the present, ignoring the staggering cultural diversity of the Indigenous peoples of North America.

In spite of the Wild West show's culpability in creating and perpetuating narrow views of who Native peoples are and what they look like, several recent scholars have argued that there were some upsides for those Native Americans who chose to perform with this traveling show. One of the major bonuses was the relative freedom Wild West performers experienced compared with their community members who had to remain on the reservations. L.G. Moses in *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933* and Michelle Delaney in *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Warriors* both note Native performers' opportunities to not only see the world and earn an income, but also to practice their beliefs and live their days free from the interference of the ever-present missionaries, politicians, and BIA agents back at home.

In addition, Wild West performers experienced opportunities otherwise unimaginable to many Americans of their day, including being presented to Queen Victoria at her Golden Jubilee in London in 1887, attending the 1889 World's Fair in Paris with its debut of the newly constructed Eiffel Tower, and having their photograph taken by the daughter of the future King of Bavaria, Ludwig III, in Munich in 1890.

Scope and Contents

The Frank Lehner photographs of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show collection consists of 38 photographic prints (and 5 copy negatives created at a later date by the NMAI staff). The images portray Native and non-Native peoples involved with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show primarily in the years 1890-1891, and include a number of publicity and studio portrait shots. Notable photographs include King Ludwig III of Bavaria and his daughter, Princess Maria Ludwiga Theresia of Bavaria, visiting with and even photographing some of the Wild West performers in Munich, Germany, in 1890. Although the bulk of the photographs date to either 1890 or 1891, images in the collection encompass a time period of approximately a half-century, from 1876 to 1926.

The specific identity of the photographers of these images is not certain. While these photographs have historically been attributed to Frank Lehner, it is more likely that he was the collector rather than the photographer. It appears that at least one image (P10215) was probably taken by Bavarian Royal Court Photographer J. Seiling, and one image (P10192) or possibly two (P10193) were taken by Charles Henry Braithwaite, a portrait photographer in Leeds, England, in 1891.

Arrangement

The materials in this collection are organized into folders.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Apsáalooke (Crow/Absaroke)
Hunkpapa Lakota (Hunkpapa Sioux)
Inunaina (Arapaho)
Pikuni (Piegan) [Blackfeet Nation, Browning, Montana]
Sioux
Wild west shows

Cultures:

Apsáalooke (Crow/Absaroke)
Hunkpapa Lakota (Hunkpapa Sioux)
Inunaina (Arapaho)
Pikuni (Piegan) [Blackfeet Nation, Browning, Montana]
Sioux

Names:

Buffalo Bill, 1846-1917
Ludwig, King of Bavaria, III, 1845-1921

Places:

Germany -- Bavaria -- Munich

Container Listing

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| Photo-folder 1 | P10188: Drawing of One Bull, 1881 1 Photographic print Notes: Drawing of One Bull by Rudolf Cronau at Fort Randall, Dakota Territory, in 1881. Culture: Hunkpapa Lakota (Hunkpapa Sioux) |
| Photo-folder 1 | P10189: Coat belonging to One Bull 1 Photographic print Notes: Front view of coat with quill decoration belonging to One Bull. RESTRICTED: The object depicted in this photograph is not held in NMAI's collection. Culture: Hunkpapa Lakota (Hunkpapa Sioux) |
| Photo-folder 1 | P10190: Coat belonging to One Bull 1 Photographic print Notes: Back view of coat with quill decoration belonging to One Bull. RESTRICTED: The object depicted in this photograph is not held in NMAI's collection. Culture: Hunkpapa Lakota (Hunkpapa Sioux) |
| Photo-folder 1 | P10191: Child on horseback, 1890 1 Photographic print Notes: Photographic print of an unidentified child on horseback. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Culture: Sioux |
| Photo-folder 1 | P10192: Publicity photograph of Buffalo Bill, 1891 1 Photographic print Notes: Publicity photograph of William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. Photographed by Charles Henry Braithwaite at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show while touring the United Kingdom in 1891. |
| Photo-folder 2 | P10193: Publicity photograph of Buffalo Bill, 1891 1 Photographic print Notes: Publicity photograph of William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody in military dress uniform. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, possibly by Charles Henry Braithwaite while touring the United Kingdom in 1891. |
| Photo-folder 2 | P10194: Portrait photograph of Trapper John Nelson, 1891 1 Photographic print Notes: Studio photographic portrait of Wild West performer Trapper John Nelson. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. |
| Photo-folder 2 | P10195: Wild West show performers in camp, 1891 1 Photographic print |

Notes: Photographic print of Wild West show performers including Trapper John Nelson and unidentified Native Americans and cowboy. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.
Culture: Sioux

Photo-folder 2 P10196: [Portrait photograph of unidentified Mexican cowboy, 1891](#)
1 Photographic print
Notes: Studio photographic portrait of an unidentified Mexican cowboy Wild West performer. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.
Culture: Mesoamerica

Photo-folder 2 P10197: [Portrait photograph of an unidentified Inunaina \(Arapaho\) man, possibly Black Heart, 1891](#)
1 Photographic print
Notes: Studio photographic portrait of an unidentified Inunaina (Arapaho) Wild West performer, possibly Black Heart. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.
Culture: Inunaina (Arapaho)

Photo-folder 3 P10198: [Portrait photograph of unidentified Inunaina \(Arapaho\) man, possibly Black Heart, 1891](#)
1 Photographic print
Notes: Studio photographic portrait of an unidentified Inunaina (Arapaho) Wild West performer, possibly Black Heart. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.
Culture: Inunaina (Arapaho)

Photo-folder 3 P10199: [Portrait photograph of two unidentified Sioux men, 1891](#)
1 Photographic print
Notes: Studio photographic portrait of two unidentified Sioux Wild West performers. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.
Culture: Sioux

Photo-folder 3 P10200: [Portrait photograph of an unidentified Sioux man, 1891](#)
1 Photographic print
Notes: Studio photographic portrait of an unidentified Sioux Wild West performer. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.
Culture: Sioux

Photo-folder 3 P10201: [Two Sioux Wild West performers relaxing, 1891](#)
1 Photographic print
Notes: Photographic print of two unidentified Sioux Wild West performers relaxing in camp. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.
Culture: Sioux

Photo-folder 3 P10202: [Sioux Wild West performers on horseback, 1890](#)
1 Photographic print
Notes: Photographic print of a group of Sioux Wild West performers on horseback. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.

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| | Culture: Sioux |
| Photo-folder 4 | P10203 and N36521: Buffalo Bill Cody and Wild West performers on horseback, 1890 1 Photographic print 1 Copy negative Notes: Photographic print of William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody and Wild West performers on horseback. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Culture: Plains |
| Photo-folder 4 | P10204: Portrait photograph of an unidentified Sioux man, 1891 1 Photographic print Notes: Studio photographic portrait of an unidentified Sioux Wild West performer. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Culture: Sioux |
| Photo-folder 4 | P10205: Sioux Wild West performers in camp, 1891 1 Photographic print Notes: Photographic print of a group of Sioux Wild West performers in camp. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Culture: Sioux |
| Photo-folder 4 | P10206: Portrait photograph of an unidentified Sioux man, 1891 1 Photographic print Notes: Studio photographic portrait of an unidentified Sioux Wild West performer. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Culture: Sioux |
| Photo-folder 4 | P10207 and N20809: Publicity photograph of Buffalo Bill, 1891 1 Photographic print Notes: Publicity photograph of William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. |
| Photo-folder 5 | P10208: Sioux Wild West performers in camp, 1891 1 Photographic print Notes: Photographic print of a group of Sioux Wild West performers in camp. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Culture: Sioux |
| Photo-folder 5 | P10209: Portrait photograph of an unidentified Native American man, possibly Apsáalooke (Crow/Absaroke), 1891 1 Photographic print Notes: Studio photographic portrait of an unidentified Wild West performer, possibly of Apsáalooke (Crow/Absaroke) culture. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Culture: Apsáalooke (Crow/Absaroke) |
| Photo-folder 5 | P10210 and N36522: Sham battle scene from Wild West show, 1891 1 Photographic print 1 Copy negative |

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| | Notes: Photographic print of a sham battle scene performed for audience at Wild West show. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. |
| | Culture: Plains |
| Photo-folder 5 | P10211 and N36523: Portrait photograph of an unidentified Sioux man, 1891 1 Photographic print 1 Copy negative Notes: Studio photographic portrait of an unidentified Sioux Wild West performer. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Culture: Sioux |
| Photo-folder 5 | P10212: Portrait photograph of an unidentified Native American man, possibly Apsáalooke (Crow/Absaroke), 1891 1 Photographic print Notes: Studio photographic portrait of an unidentified Wild West performer, possibly of Apsáalooke (Crow/Absaroke) culture. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Culture: Apsáalooke (Crow/Absaroke) |
| Photo-folder 6 | P10213: Portrait photograph of Black Heart, 1891 1 Photographic print Notes: Studio photographic portrait of Inunaina (Arapaho) Wild West performer Black Heart. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Culture: Inunaina (Arapaho) |
| Photo-folder 6 | P10214: Portrait photograph of an unidentified Native American man, possibly Apsáalooke (Crow/Absaroke), 1891 1 Photographic print Notes: Studio photographic portrait of an unidentified Wild West performer, possibly of Apsáalooke (Crow/Absaroke) culture. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Culture: Apsáalooke (Crow/Absaroke) |
| Photo-folder 6 | P10215: King Ludwig III of Bavaria with Buffalo Bill and Wild West performers, 1890 1 Photographic print Notes: Photographic print of King Ludwig III of Bavaria, (at the time a prince), and members of his royal family with William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody and Wild West performers. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show in Munich, Germany, in 1890. Photograph most likely shot by Bavarian Royal Court photographer J. Seiling. |
| Photo-folder 6 | P10216: Buffalo Bill and Sioux Wild West performers in camp, 1891 1 Photographic print Notes: Photographic print of William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody with Sioux Wild West performers in camp. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Culture: Sioux |

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| Photo-folder 6 | <p>P10217: Princess Maria Ludwiga Theresia of Bavaria in Wild West camp, 1890 1 Photographic print Notes: Photographic print of Princess Maria Ludwiga Theresia of Bavaria with Wild West performer in camp. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show in Munich, Germany, in 1890. Culture: Plains</p> |
| Photo-folder 7 | <p>P10218: Princess Maria Ludwiga Theresia of Bavaria photographing performers in Wild West camp, 1890 1 Photographic print Notes: Photographic print of Princess Maria Ludwiga Theresia of Bavaria photographing Wild West performers in camp. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show in Munich, Germany, in 1890. Culture: Plains</p> |
| Photo-folder 7 | <p>P10219 and N36524: Portrait photograph of Wild West performer and son of Trapper John Nelson, 1891 1 Photographic print 1 Copy negative Notes: Studio photographic portrait of Wild West performer and son of Trapper John Nelson and an unidentified Sioux woman. The boy was possibly named Amos Grant. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Culture: Sioux</p> |
| Photo-folder 7 | <p>P10220: Portrait photograph of Trapper John Nelson, 1891 1 Photographic print Notes: Studio photographic portrait of Wild West performer Trapper John Nelson. Photographed at Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.</p> |
| Photo-folder 7 | <p>P10221: Beaded knife sheath 1 Photographic print Notes: Knife sheath with quill and beaded decoration. RESTRICTED: The object depicted in this photograph is not held in NMAI's collection. Topic: Sioux</p> |
| Photo-folder 7 | <p>P10222: RESTRICTED, 1868 1 Photographic print Notes: Photograph of Union soldier Lieutenant Philip Reade and Fort Dodge Chief of Scouts John O. Austin kneeling over the body of scalped hunter Ralph Morrison. Photographed by William Stinson Soule near Fort Dodge, Kansas, on December 7, 1868. RESTRICTED</p> |
| Photo-folder 8 | <p>P10223: Portrait photograph of an unidentified Native American man, possibly Pikuni (Piegan) [Blackfeet Nation, Browning, Montana], 1890</p> |

1 Photographic print

Notes: Photographic portrait of an unidentified Native American man, possibly Pikuni (Piegan) [Blackfeet Nation, Browning, Montana].

Culture: Pikuni (Piegan) [Blackfeet Nation, Browning, Montana]

Photo-folder 8

P10224: Buffalo Bill's gravesite, Golden, Colorado, 1926

1 Photographic print

Notes: The tomb of William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody and his wife, Louisa Maud Cody.

Photo-folder 8

P10225: Drawing of Crow King, 1881

1 Photographic print

Notes: Drawing of Crow King by Rudolf Cronau at Fort Randall, Dakota Territory, in 1881.

Culture: Hunkpapa Lakota (Hunkpapa Sioux)