



Art and Advertising in Buffalo Bill's Wild West

By Michelle Delaney

William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody, star of the American West, began his journey to fame at age twenty-three, when he met writer Ned Buntline. The pulp novels Buntline later penned were loosely based on Cody's scouting and bison-hunting adventures and sparked a national sensation. Other writers picked up the living legend of "Buffalo Bill" for their own pulp novels, and in 1872 Buntline produced a theatrical show starring Cody himself. The following year, Cody opened his own Wild West show, Buffalo Bill's Wild West, which ultimately became the foundation for the world's image of the American frontier.

After the Civil War, new transcontinental railroads aided rapid westward expansion, fostering Americans' long-held fascination with their Western frontier. The railroads enabled traveling shows to move farther and faster, and improved printing technologies allowed those shows to print in large sizes and quantities lively color posters and advertisements. Cody's show team partnered with printers, lithographers, photographers, and iconic Western American artists, such as Frederic Remington and Charles Schreyvogel, to create posters and advertisements for Buffalo Bill's Wild West. Circuses and other shows used similar techniques, but Cody's team perfected them, creating unique posters that branded Buffalo Bill's Wild West as the true Wild West experience. They helped attract patrons from across the nation and ultimately from around the world at every stop the traveling show made.

In *Art and Advertising in Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, Michelle Delaney showcases these numerous posters in full color, many of which have never before been reproduced, pairing them with new research into previously inaccessible manuscript and photograph collections. Her study also includes Cody's correspondence with his staff, revealing the showman's friendships with notable American and European artists and his show's complex, modern publicity model.

Beautifully designed, *Art and Advertising in Buffalo Bill's Wild West* presents a new perspective on the art, innovation, and advertising acumen that created the international frontier experience of Buffalo Bill's Wild West.

Michelle Delaney is the author of *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: A Photographic History* by Gertrude Käsebier and coeditor of *The Scurlock Collection and Black Washington: Picturing the Promise*.

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