

## **Buffalo Bill: Nebraskans' Performative Act of Imagination and Identity**

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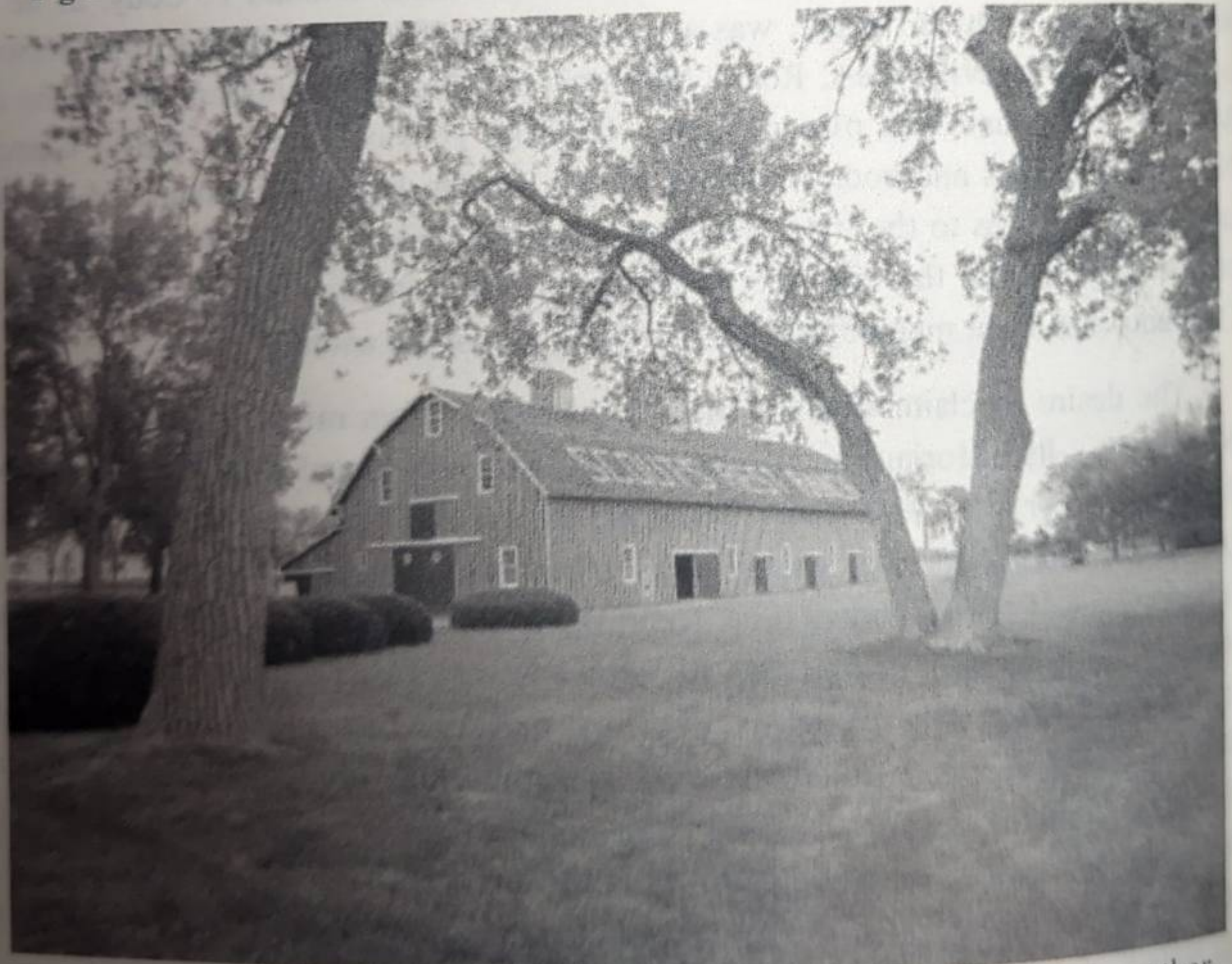
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It is not uncommon for a Nebraskan to travel to the Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park in North Platte, Nebraska. Also called Scout's Rest Ranch, the expansive range of land that the famous Buffalo Bill once called home is located about four and a half hours west from Omaha. At the park stands a tall, white Victorian-style home and a large red barn that is now filled with Wild West show photos, stagecoaches, and other memorabilia (See Fig. 1 and 2). For those interested in an assortment of Buffalo Bill themed or western souvenirs, the Fort Cody Trading Post is located a couple miles away, right off the interstate exit. In front of the Fort Cody Trading Post a giant two-dimensional replica of Buffalo Bill towers over the parking lot, and inside houses a detailed, miniature motorized replica of the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show. Visiting North Platte it is understandable why many Nebraskans believe Buffalo Bill is a fellow Nebraskan. William F. Cody, as he is named on his birth certificate, was a scout for the 5<sup>th</sup> Calvary in Fort McPherson, opened the "The Wild West, Rocky Mountain and Prairie Exhibition" in Omaha on May 17, 1883, and was placed in the Nebraska Hall of Fame in 1967.<sup>1</sup> Current Nebraska websites and books continue to call Buffalo Bill a Nebraskan and cite his many contributions to the state. Yet, despite all the claims of his "Nebraskaness," it can be easy to miss that the state celebrates a man who was born in Iowa, died in Colorado, and spent much of his life travelling across the country.

The desire to claim Buffalo Bill as Nebraska's own raises a question of why Nebraskans—its historians and proud locals alike—would endeavor or care to do so. Arguably, Nebraska, like many Midwest states, has fewer icons or remarkable geographic landmarks that enable it to place itself within a recognized national consciousness. For the readers here, Nebraska is not as well-known as Texas, known for the Alamo, its size, or its BBQ, to name a few of Texas's claims to fame. Aside from a small list of famous actors, directors, and sports stars that were born within the state, and the occasional national championship win of the University of Nebraska football team, Nebraska does not frequent many American history textbooks or make most national news stories comparatively to other states in the country. In the dearth of nationally recognized events to define its identity, many in the state perform an act of constructing an identity through a "different sort of



**Fig 1.** Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park, North Platte, Nebraska. Photo by author.



**Fig 2.** Cody's large horse barn, featuring "Scout's Rest Ranch" on roof. Photo by author.

imaginative work.”<sup>2</sup> Kent C. Ryden explains in his article “Writing the Midwest: History, Literature and Regional Identity” that Midwestern states frequently create identity by amplifying the significance of the local and accentuating the role of the nationally known people, places, and events. This history gives equal significance to commemorating and valorizing the local hero as it does to asserting itself into national memory: both acts validate the desire for those within the state to claim it has a history that matters. This crafted identity, Ryden posits, is an act of “selection, privileging, and public and artistic reinforcement of certain episodes, periods, and personages.”<sup>3</sup> Buffalo Bill fits into this identity construction by performing the roles of both the local hero that is remembered within the state and the national icon that Nebraska can claim some possession toward. In asserting ownership of Buffalo Bill and his history, this essay explains how and why Nebraskans have built and performed a selected state history connected to Cody that is based on notions of space and imagination. The state stakes the legitimacy of its claim on the idea that the man known as Buffalo Bill lived on this land, performed on this soil, and contributed to the state’s history and identity in a way that is transient, real, and never fully contested.

### **Buffalo Bill’s Ties to Nebraska**

William Frederick Cody was born in LeClaire, Iowa on February 26, 1846. Cody resided in many locations across the Midwest during his lifetime. Yet, it is in Nebraska where Buffalo Bill first staged his renowned “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show.” The first dress rehearsal occurred in 1883 in Columbus, Nebraska. Cody had performed in other shows prior, but the Wild West Show reinvented the possibility of what popular, live western-themed entertainment could be. He was deemed the “First matinee idol...No Hollywood star ever rose to recognition and fortune with more celerity.”<sup>4</sup> It is a strong description, but all the more noteworthy given that Cody did not live in the age of social media and was not a box office film star. His notoriety and popularity nevertheless flourished for a considerable time during his life as a performer and P.T. Barnum-like figure. His Wild West Shows were enormous in size, complicated in spectacle and design, and symbolic of a type of showmanship that was beginning to become increasingly rare by the end of the nineteenth century. The show itself ran for thirty-three consecutive years, being staged for twenty-three of those years within the United States alone.<sup>5</sup> Its notable performers, such as Will Rogers, Annie Oakley, and even Sitting Bull for a short stint, helped create what Louis S. Warren calls in his book *Buffalo Bill’s America* “mass entertainment out of frontier myth.”<sup>6</sup> The show preserved a vision of America that was as unruly and dangerous as the West could be, or perhaps, more importantly, be imagined. Warren describes the show as a response to a future that

saw an America of urbanization, progression, "advancing artifice," and "civilized decadence."<sup>7</sup> Cody, countering this encroaching modernity, tapped into a mythic West built on rugged individualism and the days of the last cowboys. It was a West that audiences came in droves to see.<sup>8</sup>

More remarkably, for Nebraskans, it was a West constructed and performed on the soil of Nebraska. The early staged shows used many Nebraska locals, performers, and horses. During this time, Cody built his first home in North Platte, titled "Welcome Wigwam." "We know little" of this first residence, and the home was eventually torn down rather than historically preserved.<sup>9</sup> Shortly after this period, Cody built Scout's Rest Ranch out in North Platte "for public admiration as much as private enjoyment."<sup>10</sup> The Nebraskan ranch was built and designed by his sister and brother-in-law in 1886, and given Buffalo Bill's rising popularity and success, "No expense was spared" in its construction.<sup>11</sup> With his wife, Louisa, and children moving to the ranch in 1887, it was quickly recognized by the locals that "when Buffalo Bill was in town...there was always something doing"—including practicing some of his shooting tricks for his show or creating a buzz around his ranch, as it was "the handsomest house, [with] the biggest barns, [and] the finest blooded livestock in the country."<sup>12</sup> Cody seldom did anything on a small scale, and both the home and grounds continued to be renovated, including the addition of five large rooms in 1909. It is not surprising that the day to day was "always pleasant and lively at the ranch."<sup>13</sup> Cody himself remained a character in town, sometimes for less positive reasons. Nellie Snyder Yost in *Buffalo Bill* includes interviews with many North Platte locals, who described his excessive drinking and his "association with dance hall girls" in town.<sup>14</sup> Yost writes in great detail about the thirty-five years Cody called North Platte his "home and headquarters."<sup>15</sup>

While Cody's stays were not always long given his business and travels, his family was very much a part of the local culture. Cody lived at the ranch off and on until 1913, when he moved to what would later be called Cody, Wyoming. The widely-documented marital troubles between Louisa and William exacerbated his desire to move out of state. Yet, while Cody's presence in town was never entirely consistent, Louisa was a staple in the community. Over the years in North Platte, Cody would accommodate many politicians, entertainers, and notable guests at his lavish home in the small town, which brought some of the most powerful people in the nation deep into the state of Nebraska.

Buffalo Bill's life is infused with many moments that place him within Nebraska borders and tied to Nebraska's history. Even travelling to London in 1887 to stage his show in Europe, he chartered the *S. S. Nebraska*.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps no story illustrates his lifelong ties to Nebraska more than the etymology of his popular title as the

“Honorable” William F. Cody. It is said that Cody was elected to the Nebraska State Legislature in 1872, but because of his growing popularity as a performer, he turned down the position. Cody writes in his book, “I had always been a Democrat and the State was largely Republican, I had no idea of being elected. In fact I cared very little about it.”<sup>17</sup> He kept the Honorable title, however. Kato Buss describes that the decision to keep Honorable as part of his name “turned a momentary political career into a lifelong legitimization of his heroic identity.”<sup>18</sup> It was a legitimization that Nebraska helped build; it was a legitimization that also served Nebraska in giving some credit to its claims on Buffalo Bill. Interestingly, Warren writes that Cody actually lost the election by forty-two votes.<sup>19</sup> Illustrating the blurriness of fact and fiction when analyzing Cody’s life—something many scholars researching Cody encounter—Buss writes:

“Yet, so much has been written about the King of the Border Men, that it is difficult to distinguish fact from fiction. [. . .] Indeed, when considering the scope of Cody’s career, from scout to showman, it is clear that, for most of his life, he walked a line between man and myth.”<sup>20</sup>

In linking Nebraska to Cody and Cody to Nebraska, the outcome of the election is irrelevant, and the fact that he never served on the legislature is treated as a footnote. The act of taking the title and using it unites Nebraska’s history with Cody’s history. Buffalo Bill found value in using a title Nebraska bestowed and Nebraska remembers, evident in the many Nebraskan centered texts about Cody that recall this event and his decision to keep the title. It was not the only time that Cody would receive such honors from Nebraska. According to a placard located in Cody’s house at Scout’s Rest Ranch, in 1887 Nebraska Governor John Thayer appointed Cody ambassador of the state, representing Nebraska at the American Exhibition in London. It is apparent that Nebraskans, then and now, desired Cody’s representation of and for the state.

Buffalo Bill’s life has milestones threaded throughout Nebraska’s history and geography, but many other Midwestern states have also staked a claim in his history. There is a Buffalo Bill Center in Oakley, Kansas, the Buffalo Bill Historic Center in Cody, Wyoming, and the Buffalo Bill Museum in Le Claire, Iowa that all vie for the same idea: Buffalo Bill was here. Buffalo Bill may belong to a larger, national memory, but for the states in the Midwest he became part of an honored cultural project that is based on imagination and space. As Ryden suggests, against the outsider perception that the Midwest has nothing historically interesting to offer, those in the Midwest “continually construct the past anew from the materials at hand,” emphasizing those people, places, and things which are marked as unique or “immediate to their lives.”<sup>21</sup> In North Platte, Nebraska there is a large annual

celebration called Nebraskaland Days. Celebrated since 1882, the event has a carnival, art shows, frontier revue, and the Buffalo Bill Rodeo. Buffalo Bill is central to the embodied memory that is active in North Platte during this festival. Ryden describes that in the Midwest the remembered regional history is not conceived as "a spot in the past but a spot on which they stand."<sup>22</sup> The soil of Nebraska, which once felt the stomping feet of the horses belonging to Buffalo Bill's Wild West shows, now feels the stomping feet of horses at a rodeo in honor of Buffalo Bill. It is a space shared by history and the present, as if the current reenactments preserve the memories on the very ground below.

The ground below was not only the foundation of his performance and identity as Buffalo Bill, but it was ground that William Cody also humbly called home. Cody brought attention to North Platte being one of its revered residents, and this benefitted him too. Marvin Carlson describes that the traditional distinction between an actor and their "personal experience and history" versus the character that they play, which has a separate history and experience, collapses in autobiographical performance. He writes that Buffalo Bill is a notable example of an autobiographical performer, playing "himself in countless stage and later film reenactments of his scouting days and fights with the Indians."<sup>23</sup> This of course elides the fact that the "Buffalo Bill" Cody performed was a construction of self-aggrandizement, that worked in large part due to the authenticity he could claim by still being tied to the roots of modesty, rural living, and ranching, something his North Platte home provided. He moved with "constant ease among the aristocrats who flocked to his show," but he could still ride "into an arena on horseback...mak[ing] the crowds gasp."<sup>24</sup> Even though he would travel to big cities and spend months in Europe, he would come back home to Nebraska. And while this was not an empty gesture—a manipulation to declare that he was still a cowboy at heart—the symbolism and claims of his authenticity could stand with those roots planted and his family in place. Jefferson Slagle examining the notion of authenticity describes it as the "perception of correspondence between a western individual or story and the popular narrative of western history." He explains that the "ubiquitous" idea of authenticity in this case is the "measure of how well a western or westerner fits notions of what westerns and westerners should be."<sup>25</sup> While Slagle goes on to explain how others mimicked individuals, texts, and performances to authenticate their Westernness, Buffalo Bill is the ultimate exemplar. Cody himself was the one creating this role in a way fabricated and genuine, autobiographical and make-believe.

There are many scholars who have debated the legitimacy of Buffalo Bill's shows, including the historicity of the events performed, but his Westernness and his cowboy persona was less of a devised crafting of authenticity and more of an exaggeration of ideas he aspired to be. Upon his arrival in North Platte, he was

“ready to comb the vast region to the northwest to gather, sort, and brand the cattle ranging there.”<sup>26</sup> Yet, while Cody did relish his time out on his property, Yost writes, “That the ranch was more of a diversion for Buffalo Bill than a business is the consensus of most of his contemporaries.”<sup>27</sup> His livelihood did not depend on his ranching, and he instead was often more interested in keeping it fun—including random contests, cigars and liquor being shared with the men, and many poker games. He appeared to like claiming being a rancher more than the realities of the role. Yet there he was, a ranch owner nevertheless, with many cattle and many horses, and a soon to be ostentatious rural home in Nebraska. By setting himself up in Nebraska, he not only added to the landscape of North Platte and Nebraska in colorful fashion (that Nebraskans like myself enjoy claiming), but it also cemented him as the genuine article. It is a performative act that many politicians and national heroes have before and since played, staking one’s authenticity in Midwestern roots, even if it was an act Cody did not have to boldly proclaim. Instead, it is an act Nebraskans boldly claim on his behalf.

Yost describes a fair in the late 1880s that illustrated how Cody contributed to the increased vitalization of the area, and that his ranch was considered “one of the finest on the American continent.”<sup>28</sup> Walking around Scout’s Rest Ranch, the local and state pride bestowed to Cody is evident. Similar sentiments are embedded into many historic, tourist spots. We travel to a location where someone was born or something memorable occurred, hoping that being in the actual location has more meaning than simply looking at a photograph of it. We believe the present location is endowed with a past remembered. I too wanted to have this experience by revisiting Scout’s Rest Ranch, trying to investigate if a stronger connection between Cody and Nebraska could be observed by walking around his house that stands on Nebraska terrain. By going to such locations, the public also ensures that the space and site continue to have meaning. Joy Sather-Wagstaff writes in “Picturing Experience: A Tourist-Centered Perspective on Commemorative Historical Sites” that “An event in and of itself does not inherently make historically meaningful the space in which it occurred. Instead, various social practices engender meaningfulness...enacted by individuals, institutions and the dialogic engagement between them at the event site.”<sup>29</sup> It is a circular remembrance of history that takes place on the same land: an annual festival honors Buffalo Bill in Nebraska, and his former house welcomes tourists, thereby making Buffalo Bill’s Nebraskan history meaningful and solidified.

### **A Man of the West: Myth and Fact**

Inevitably, a series of factors complicates Nebraska’s desire to claim Buffalo Bill as part of its history. One significant fact is how much Cody traveled. Liza Nicholas writes in *Becoming Western*, “For all his western upbringing, his greatest

success would take him far from the plains."<sup>30</sup> Additionally, Nebraska claims Buffalo Bill as a Nebraskan with little regard that the man is no more a Nebraskan than he is an Iowan, Coloradoan, Wyomingite, and Kansan. Superseding these state claims, the prevailing impression described in many books about Buffalo Bill is that he is an American. Buffalo Bill remains an American icon that personifies a rural, wild, and western ideal that simultaneously called nowhere and everywhere home. Frank Christianson adds to this idea, writing in his introduction to Cody's autobiography, "Like the ever-shifting boundary of the American frontier, Cody's life was characterized by frenetic movement."<sup>31</sup> Christianson's statement demonstrates how Cody's dynamic life and his interest in restaging the undefined frontier are emblematic of the myth of Buffalo Bill, the America he lived in, and Cody's personal history and travels.

To position Buffalo Bill within the context of one state can overlook his contribution to American history and national imagination as a whole. He was a travelling performer, belonging more to the road than any stationary site. He also represented a collection of larger, national concepts. He perpetuated the dream of the mythic West, an American notion popularized in Bill's shows, which defined Cody as much as he defined it. His name conjures images of a Wild West that he both purportedly lived and reenacted in performance. Simply, Buffalo Bill is an iconic American who reached heights of popularity few performers ever do and evokes more ideas and debates regarding nationality, culture, race, and gender than few Americans ever will. One example includes his use of Native American performers in his shows. While "they generally were treated and paid the same as other performers," and encouraged to "retain their language and rituals," the shows simultaneously stereotyped them as "mounted, war-bonneted warriors, the last impediment to civilization."<sup>32</sup> Buffalo Bill and his performances continue to garner attention from scholars due to what he and his shows depicted and larger questions they provoked about identity and performance.

Buss writes of Bill's shows, "the audience believed he was the real deal—an authentic frontier hero reenacting Wild West adventures on stage."<sup>33</sup> Walking around the Fort Cody Trading Post store and museum it is apparent that the rural and western life still celebrated and commoditized is stewarded by a particular and vivid memory of what Buffalo Bill was, wanted to be, and is remembered for. There are local foods, cowboy boots and hats, various western and Nebraskan trinkets and knick-knacks, and Native American jewelry for sale, and the walls are adorned with various animal heads. It is a kitschy throwback to walk inside the store and museum, and it feels like a place not far out of step with Buffalo Bill's own brand of entertainment. Absorbing the Buffalo Bill experience in North Platte, it is clear his name can still conjure up an idea of an America that was once authentic and wild.



even if that authenticity and wildness was never quite real—at least in the way Bill constructed it on stage. Buffalo Bill's life and our memory of him straddle such dichotomies. Many of the stories he performed were not history as fact but rather history as imagination. "In the latter part of the nineteenth century," writes Nicholas in *Becoming Western*, it was a "particularly turbulent time in American history," and the notion of the West "took hold in the national consciousness."<sup>34</sup> Today, this nostalgia of what the West symbolized still holds some appeal for many Americans in our ever-unsteady times. Helen McClure writes that the American West in popular imagination "has always been a region of endless possibilities, a vast, magnificent, ideal stage for the national drama of liberty, equality, and the pursuit of happiness."<sup>35</sup> She adds that the "heroic figures of the American West have provided familiar, inspiring models for current conditions and problems, particularly during periods of economic transition, rapid cultural changes, or social stress."<sup>36</sup> Cody provides us such glory of a yesteryear we believe may be engrained in our American ethos—even though this was often a performative construction by Buffalo Bill himself.

Not that it entirely de-legitimizes the idea that Cody was a man who enjoyed the life of the West: the horses, the gun shooting, the small town he called home, and the life of a rancher. Historicizing Cody is complicated given his larger than life status, his hold on the public's imagination of the West and an America we no longer experience, and the inability to often separate myth from fiction regarding his life. These components situate Buffalo Bill in a mutually indefinable real and definably imaginative space. Buffalo Bill exists as much in reality as a man who lived and entertained as he does in "our imagined horizon" as a symbol of the West and a mythic idea of America we may still want to collectively recall.<sup>37</sup> As is evident throughout this essay, writing about Buffalo Bill one cannot help but paint him in broad terms that evoke large American ideals—something I too cannot seem to avoid. Nicholas describes Buffalo Bill as a symbol of "not just westernness, but true Americanness, the embodiment of independence, self-sufficiency, and freedom."<sup>38</sup> Nicholas continues, explaining that this performance by westerners depended "on clearly distinguishing themselves from all things federal, eastern, and at times, progressive."<sup>39</sup> Buffalo Bill played the part with zeal.

### **A Midwest Man**

How Buffalo Bill fits this or any definition of "authenticity" or the "West" is difficult, if not unnecessary for my purposes. What interests me in Nicholas's definition is how Buffalo Bill represented the opposite of federal, eastern, and progressive in ways that could easily describe the Midwest itself. This could be a part of the reason why the Midwesterners have gravitated towards commemorating Buffalo Bill as much as they have. In the blurry and imagined perception of Buffalo

Bill, Nebraska and other states intervene. Nebraska places statues, signs, and museums at various places where Buffalo Bill's life occurred and restages "Wild West" like performances at the same locations. With these sharp, defining markers, Nebraska attempts to own a piece of the eclectic history of a man that is often hard for writers to pinpoint with accuracy. However, why Nebraska performs this act is less about Buffalo Bill and more about its inhabitants wanting a place in national perceptions.

Arguably and perhaps not a sentiment most Midwesterners freely admit to, the want to reshape the national consciousness and conversation about the Midwest is a real phenomenon.<sup>40</sup> Being from the Midwest one hears the thoughts and stereotypes: the flyover states, the middle of nowhere, lacks culture, lacks diversity—ask a Midwesterner and they could add more to this list. Even as a child I do not recall many television shows or movies set in Nebraska, and I seldom can remember a photographic representation of Nebraska in textbooks or national news stories that was anything more than a silo in a cornfield. Ryden describes the Midwest as a region perceived by outsiders as composed of large, untouched landscapes dotted with unremarkable towns and cities. The region, by many accounts, has missed the descriptive history and geography that separates the East, South, and West. Ryden writes that such "haze of generalities," which frequently characterizes the region, creates a need for those within it to "counteract it by inscribing the landscape with meaning and experience."<sup>41</sup> The Midwest does not have the Revolutionary and nation building history of the East, the Civil War history of the South, or the Manifest Destiny dreams of the actual West. Instead the region is left to craft an identity "based as much on things that are *not* there as on things that *are*."<sup>42</sup> The mythic and historical West, which may geographically be considered a facet of the actual West, is seized by the Midwest as one of the imaginative markers of its historic identity. After all, who can claim where the West or frontier stops or starts? It may just be an act of hopeful imagination of the Midwest to claim a part of this mythic West. Nevertheless, evident in the design of the Fort Cody Trading Post with its Native American imagery, Old West Museum, and cowboy nostalgia, it is an act that has traction and that pits Buffalo Bill center stage within it.

Ryden also describes the identity formation of the region as a cultural project where the region attempts to posit its identity into national history and consciousness that it seldom finds itself privy to. To do so, the region builds two histories. One history is locally pinpointed, such as the naming of streets in honor of local sports heroes. The other history hones in on the moments of national history it was a small, fleeting part of.<sup>43</sup> This is reminiscent of the many site markers throughout Nebraska noting where Lewis and Clark travelled and camped, despite that this celebrated American historical moment never began or ended in Nebraska. To compare, Buffalo

Bill constructed performances that left a permanent memory on national history *and* he has a personal history that is woven throughout the Midwest. For the Midwest region, Cody is the rare homegrown hero actively remembered inside and outside state borders. Moreover, as much as Cody represents a Midwestern mythos of frontier and tradition, he also is a man with an extraordinarily vibrant life who constructed extravagant performances. Cody's personal life and performance history as Buffalo Bill is anything but boring, and maybe this is why, in part, Midwesterners stand behind him. He is symbolic of defying the outsider perception that nothing interesting ever happens in the fields and towns of the Midwest.

Obviously Nebraska's claims to Buffalo Bill are no more legitimate than the claims Iowa, Wyoming, Kansas or other Midwest states would make. My own bias as a Nebraskan in discussing why Nebraska has a legitimate claim to Buffalo Bill is evident. Ryden explains that this too is symptomatic of writing about the Midwest. When trying to assert a state's relevance in relation to national consciousness, writers discussing the Midwest often define their region claiming it is "not *the* Midwest, but *our* Midwest."<sup>44</sup> North Platte residents felt such possessiveness themselves. Many interviewed in the 1940s described their sadness that some of Cody's treasures were moved away from the local area, and Yost describes that in 1912, Cody "had offered to the city of North Platte his entire collection of Indian relics...When the city fathers *could not find a place* to store the priceless collection" the family took them to Cody, Wyoming. Of this decision, Yost includes a quote from local Joseph Basking, who states, "Cody was connected with every social and community activity here...we as a community have fall far short in honoring a great man."<sup>45</sup>

Why many Midwesterners' desire for their state to linger in the national consciousness and history is demonstrated by how they attach significance to the life and history of Buffalo Bill. If he is a part of American consciousness and also is a part of the region's history, maybe the hope is that the region by proxy will be a bigger part of American consciousness too. It may be a distorted hope, appearing frivolous or unnecessary to others, but it is a hope that I believe those Nebraskans visiting Scout's Rest Ranch would not entirely deny. Furthermore, in valuing Cody and the American ideals he embodies or at least is attributed to embody— independence, self-sufficient, capable, and rugged—the Midwest can claim its stake of upholding these same virtues. We too might possess these virtues, even though we are not the iconic western hero we claim as our own. At Scout's Rest Ranch stands a historical marker (see page 27, fig 3) that states, "William Frederick Cody (1846-1917), known to the world as 'Buffalo Bill,' was the most noted Nebraskan of his day." In the space where he lived and in the imagination that the frontier spirit lives on because of him, Nebraskans have invested in Buffalo Bill to construct a piece of

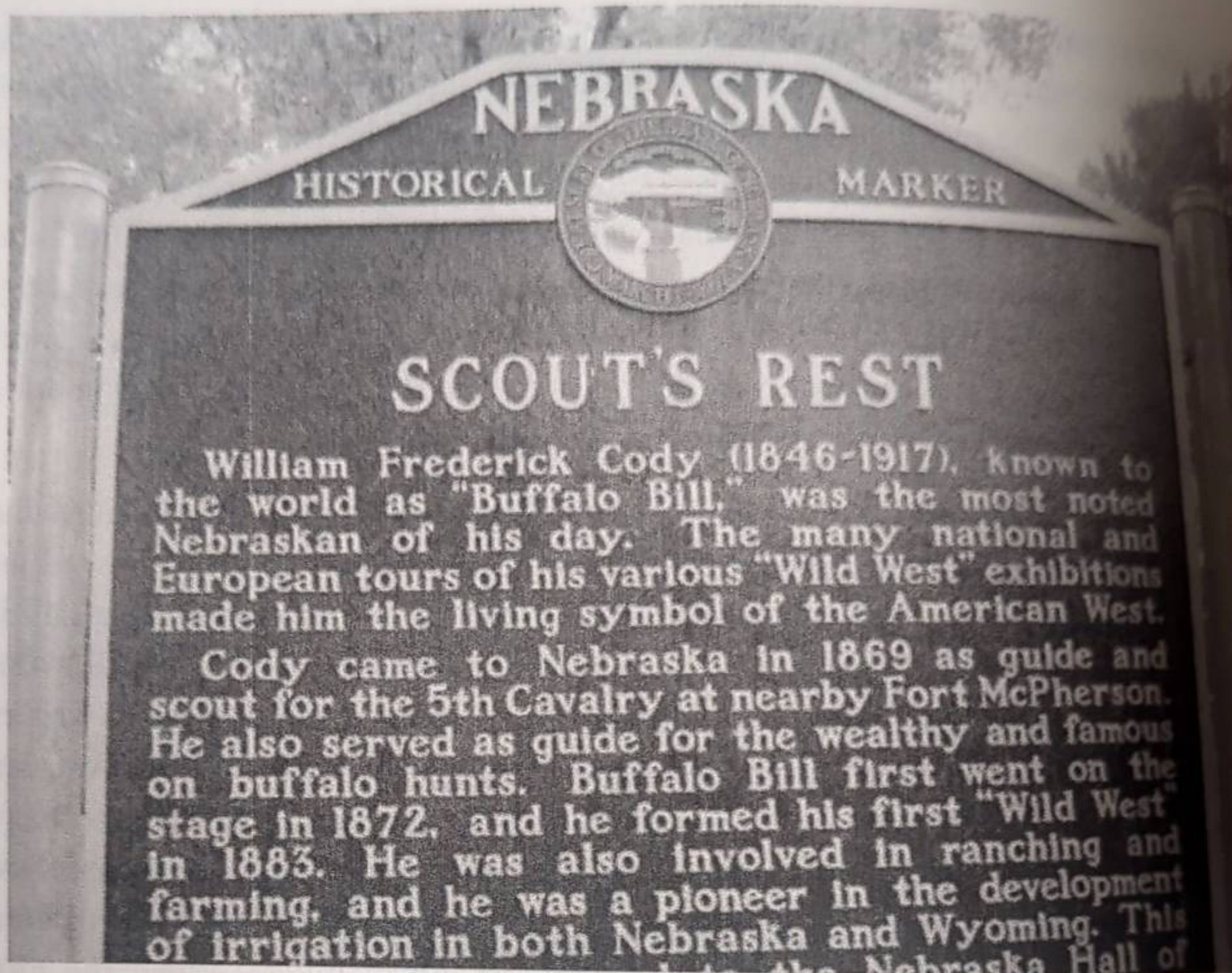


Fig 3. Historical marker at Buffalo Bill Ranch State Park. Photo by author.

their own history and identity. Whether the construction has actually permitted Nebraska to enter the national consciousness in a noticeable and permanent way is questionable. Regardless, we Nebraskans will imagine that it has, evident when we read such words about one of our noted Nebraskans and feel a sense of pride.

<sup>1</sup> Jean Sanders, *Notable Nebraskans* (Lincoln, NE: Media Productions and Marketing, Inc. 1998), 59-60.

<sup>2</sup> Kent C. Ryden, "Writing the Midwest: History, Literature, and Regional Identity," *Geographical Review* 89, no. 4 (October 2009): 513.

<sup>3</sup> Ryden, 513.

<sup>4</sup> James Monaghan, "The Stage Career of Buffalo Bill," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1908-1984) 31.4 (1938): 411.

<sup>5</sup> Louis S Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005) 53

<sup>6</sup> Warren, 216.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>8</sup> Liza J. Nicholas, *Becoming Western* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 34.

- <sup>9</sup> Nellie Snyder Yost, *Buffalo Bill: His Family, Friends, Fame, Failures, and Fortunes* (Chicago: Sage Books, 1979) 100 and 446.
- <sup>10</sup> Warren, 232.
- <sup>11</sup> "Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park," *Nebraska Game and Parks Commission*, 15 May 2012, <<http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov>> (accessed 4 August 2014).
- <sup>12</sup> Yost, 111.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 438.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.
- <sup>16</sup> Sanders, 59.
- <sup>17</sup> William F. Cody, *The Life of Hon. William F. Cody, Known as Buffalo Bill*, ed. Frank Christianson (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011) 372.
- <sup>18</sup> Kato Buss, "Performance on the Plains: Staging the Great Sioux War in Buffalo Bill's *Red Hand Right*, 1876," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 26.1 (Fall 2012): 130.
- <sup>19</sup> Warren, 205.
- <sup>20</sup> Buss, 129.
- <sup>21</sup> Ryden, 513.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 514.
- <sup>23</sup> Marvin Carlson, "Performing the Self," *Modern Drama* 36 (1999): 599-600.
- <sup>24</sup> Louis S. Warren, x
- <sup>25</sup> Jefferson D. Slagle, "The Heirs of Buffalo Bill: Performing Authenticity in the Dime Western," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 39.2 (2009): 121.
- <sup>26</sup> Yost, 101.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>28</sup> Yost citing *Omaha World Herald*, Dec 6, 1885, pg. 154.
- <sup>29</sup> Joy Sather-Wagstaff, "Picturing Experience: A Tourist-Centered Perspective on Commemorative Historical Sites," *Tourist Studies* 8.1 (April 2008): 79.
- <sup>30</sup> Nicholas, ix.
- <sup>31</sup> Frank Christianson, "Editor's Introduction," *The Life of Hon. William F. Cody, Known as Buffalo Bill*, ed. Frank Christianson (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), xvii.
- <sup>32</sup> Paul Fees, "Wild West shows: Buffalo Bill's Wild West," *Buffalo Bill Center of the West*, <<https://centerofthewest.org/learn/western-essays/wild-west-shows/>> (accessed 5 Aug. 2016).
- <sup>33</sup> Buss, 132.
- <sup>34</sup> Nicholas, xv.
- <sup>35</sup> Helen McLure, "The Wild, Wild Web: The Mythic American West and the Electronic Frontier," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 31.4 (2000): 457.
- <sup>36</sup> McLure, 458.
- <sup>37</sup> Warren, 542.
- <sup>38</sup> Nicholas, 34.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.
- <sup>40</sup> Ryden, 512.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Ryden, 512.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 518.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 522.

<sup>45</sup> Yost, 446.