

Document Citation

Title	Buffalo Bill and the Indians
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Publisher name not available</i>
Date	1976 Sep
Type	other
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	Buffalo Bill (1846-1917)
Film Subjects	Buffalo Bill and the Indians, or Sitting Bull's history lesson, Altman, Robert, 1976

Buffalo Bill and the Indians, ^{Sept 76}

The action of Robert Altman's film takes place between 1885 (when Sitting Bull joined the Wild West Show) and 1890 (when Sitting Bull was killed).

A Chronology of Relevant Facts

- 1834 Sitting Bull born (?)
- 1846 William Frederick Cody born
- 1867 Cody, employed to supply buffalo meat to Goddard Brothers, food contractors to Kansas Pacific Railway, earns title of "Buffalo Bill"
- 1868 The Black Hills in Nebraska, considered worthless, granted by treaty to the Sioux
- 1869 Cody meets Ned Buntline, who writes a serial, "Buffalo Bill, the King of the Border Men" for the *New York Weekly* (December 23–March 10, 1870)
- 1872 A play, *Buffalo Bill, the King of Bordermen*, based on Buntline's serial by Fred G. Maeder, staged in February; in December, Buntline persuades Cody to appear as himself in his play *The Scouts of the Plains*
- 1874 Gold rush to Black Hills causes Sioux anger, arrival of Custer's cavalry
- 1875 Washington Commission fails to persuade Sioux to relinquish Black Hills. White ultimatum (early 1876) followed by cavalry action
- 1876 Custer killed at Little Big Horn after initiating attack on Indian camp; Sioux led by Crazy Horse and Gall—Sitting Bull not present on battlefield
- 1877 Tired of fighting, Sitting Bull retreats to Canada
- 1881 Granted asylum in Canada but nothing else, Sitting Bull returns to U.S. and imprisonment (though promised a pardon)
- 1883 Sitting Bull released and sent to Standing Rock reservation; Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show gives first performance
- 1884 A tour of fifteen American cities authorised for Sitting Bull, now a celebrity
- 1885 Impressed by success of Sitting Bull tour, Buffalo Bill obtains permission from McLaughlin, Indian agent at Standing Rock, for him to join Wild West Show for season
- 1887 Concerned about land-grabbing, Sitting Bull declines Buffalo Bill's invitation to tour Europe with Wild West Show
- 1888 Washington Commission visits Standing Rock with unsuccessful proposals (large areas of Great Sioux Reservation required for white settlement)
- 1889 General Crook sent to persuade Sioux; Sitting Bull objects, McLaughlin tricks him, and the Great Reservation is broken up
- 1890 The Ghost Dance religion spreads among Sioux, causing white alarm since—partly borrowed from Christianity—it involves Indian Messiah and belief that the earth is imminently to be reborn and replenished, with the white man disappearing and the Indian re-inheriting. As a result of these fears of Indian conspiracy, Sitting Bull arrested on December 15 and accidentally shot dead. On December 29, with the Sioux making little resistance because of their Ghost Dance convictions, the massacre at Wounded Knee

The Characters

BUFFALO BILL (William Frederick Cody, 1846–1917) Began as bull-whacker and mounted messenger with freight trains; 1860, rider with Pony Express; 1863, scout against Kiowas and Comanches; 1864, enlisted in army as scout; 1866, married; 1867–8, buffalo hunter; 1868–72, service with army, becoming chief of scouts to 5th Cavalry, acquiring celebrity when his superior Major Frank North declined to be made a dime novel hero by Ned Buntline, proposing Cody instead; 1872, elected to lower house of Nebraska legislature, but declined to serve; made first appearance on stage, continuing as actor until 1876 (with brief scouting expedition in 1874); 1876, again chief of scouts to 5th Cavalry for Sioux war, then continued on stage, simultaneously partnering Major North in cattle business; 1882, invited to become Grand Marshal of Fourth of July celebration in North Platte, Nebraska, an "Old Glory Blowout" (or rodeo); this gave Cody idea for Wild West Show, and his cowboy star BUCK TAYLOR (also hero of dime novels); first performance of "The Wild West Rocky Mountain and Prairie Exhibition" (later Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show) given in 1883, in association with MAJOR JOHN M. BURKE (press agent, business manager) and Dr. W. F. Carver; in 1884, Carver withdrew and was replaced by NATE SALSBURY, Cody's producer and partner till his death in 1902; despite financial difficulties, the Show continued till 1917.

NED BUNTLINE (Edward Zane Carroll Judson, 1823–1886) Adventurer who ran away to sea as cabin boy, claimed to have soldiered in Mexican war, bounty hunter, political rabble-rouser, fugitive from justice after involvement in *crime passionnel*, self-styled Colonel. Began writing in late 1830s (sea stories, Mexican war stories, temperance tracts). Turned to West to meet popular interest, writing over 200 dime novels, many featuring Buffalo Bill, for whom he fabricated a persona drawn from Fenimore Cooper. Replaced by Prentiss Ingraham as Cody's "biographer" after latter broke with Buntline in 1876 over share-out of profits.

PRENTISS INGRAHAM (1843–1904) Career soldier, commander of scouts, then soldier of fortune in Mexico, Crete, Africa, Austria, Cuba, etc. From 1870 drew on experiences to write more than 600 dime novels (over 200 about Buffalo Bill), plus plays, poems. Almost certainly ghosted Cody's "autobiography" (1879): *The Life of Hon. William F. Cody, known as Buffalo Bill, The Famous Hunter, Scout and Guide. An Autobiography*. Continued change in Buffalo Bill's image started by Burke, from mere daring scout, hunter and guide to epic hero and pioneer of civilisation (also dressing him increasingly colourfully).

ANNIE OAKLEY (Phoebe Anne Oakley Mozee, 1860–1926) Crack shot from age of nine, local celebrity; sent to compete against vaudeville performer Frank Butler, aged fifteen, and beat him; after several years of correspondence they married, she entered his act when his assistant felt ill; so successful that he became her assistant and manager. They joined Wild West Show, in 1885, and she starred for seventeen years, continuing her sharpshooting after partially paralysed by injury in train wreck in 1902.

JAMES McLAUGHLIN (1842–1923) Agent and inspector in Indian service. At Devil's Lake Agency in North Dakota, 1876, succeeded in abolishing the savage Sun Dance of the Sioux. Transferred to Standing Rock Agency, 1881; active in persuading Sioux to come to terms regarding "sale" of Great Reservation. Opposed military intervention in Ghost Dance affair, but it was he who ordered arrest of Sitting Bull.

SITTING BULL (1834?–1890) Hunkpapa Sioux chief. Early reputation as warrior, but became more active (and influential) as medicine man and political leader. Always hostile to whites because, like Crazy Horse, he refused to become a reservation Indian. His camp in buffalo country became rallying point for hostiles. Head of war council in 1875.

STEPHEN GROVER CLEVELAND (1837–1908) President of U.S., 1884–8, 1892–6. He did indeed marry in 1886, and did visit the Wild West show, but the film advances his election worries.

Films featuring Buffalo Bill

- 1894 Seven of the Wild West Show's acts filmed by W. K. L. Dickson for Edison's Kinetoscope.
- 1897 *Buffalo Bill and Escort* (Edison)
- 1898 *Parade of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show* (Edison)
- 1902 *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Parade* (American Mutoscope & Biograph)
- 1910 *The Life of Buffalo Bill* (d: Paul Panzer)
- Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Pawnee Bill's Far East* (Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill Film Co.)
- 1913 *The Indian Wars* (d: Theodore Wharton, for Wm. F. Cody Historical Picture Co.)
- 1914 *Sitting Bull—The Hostile Sioux Indian Chief* (American Rotograph)
- 1915 *Patsy of the Circus* (d: Henry MacRae)
- 1917 *The Adventures of Buffalo Bill* (largely material from *The Indian Wars* reissued on Cody's death)

Films representing Buffalo Bill

- 1923 *In the Days of Buffalo Bill* (d: Edward Laemmle; as BB, Art Acord)
- 1924 *The Iron Horse* (d: John Ford; as BB, George Waggner)
- 1925 *The Pony Express* (d: James Cruze; as BB, John Jox Jnr.)
- 1926 *The Last Frontier* (d: George B. Seitz; as BB, Jack Hoxie)
- Buffalo Bill on the U. P. Trail* (d: Frank S. Mattison; as BB, Roy Stewart)
- Fighting with Buffalo Bill* (d: Ray Taylor; as BB, Wallace MacDonald)
- 1927 *Wyoming* (d: W. S. Van Dyke II; as BB, William Fairbanks)
- 1930 *The Indians are Coming* (d: Henry MacRae; as BB, Tim McCoy)
- 1931 *Battling with Buffalo Bill* (d: Ray Taylor; as BB, Tom Tyler)
- 1933 *The World Changes* (d: Mervyn LeRoy; as BB, Douglas Dumbrille)
- 1935 *The Miracle Rider* (d: Armand Schaefer, B. Reeves Eason; as BB, Earl Dwire)
- Annie Oakley* (d: George Stevens; as BB, Moroni Olsen)
- 1936 *Custer's Last Stand* (d: Elmer Clifton; as BB, Ted Adams)
- 1937 *The Plainsman* (d: Cecil B. De Mille; as BB, James Ellison)
- 1938 *Outlaw Express* (d: George Waggner; as BB, Carlyle Moore)
- Flaming Frontiers* (d: Ray Taylor, Alan James; as BB, John Ruth-erford)
- 1940 *Young Buffalo Bill* (d: Joseph Kane; as BB, Roy Rogers)
- 1942 *Overland Mail* (d: Ford Beebe, John Rawlins; as BB, Bob Baker)
- 1944 *Buffalo Bill* (d: William Wellman; as BB, Joel McCrea)
- 1947 *Buffalo Bill Rides Again* (d: B. B. Ray; as BB, Richard Arlen)
- 1949 *Law of the Golden West* (d: Philip Ford; as BB, Monte Hale)
- 1950 *Annie Get Your Gun* (d: George Sidney; as BB, Louis Calhern)
- King of the Bullwhip* (d: Ron Ormond; as BB, Tex Cooper)
- Cody of the Pony Express* (d: Spencer G. Bennet; as BB, Dickie Moore)
- 1952 *Buffalo Bill in Tomahawk Territory* (d: B. B. Ray; as BB, Clayton Moore)
- 1953 *Pony Express* (d: Jerry Hopper; as BB, Charlton Heston)
- 1954 *Riding with Buffalo Bill* (d: Spencer G. Bennet; as BB, Marshall Reed)
- 1958 *Badman's Country* (d: Fred F. Sears; as BB, Malcolm Atterbury)
- 1964 *The Raiders* (d: Herschel Daugherty; as BB, James McMullan)
- Sette Ore di Fuoco* (d: José Romero Marchent; as BB, Rick Van Nutter)
- Buffalo Bill, L'Eroe del Far West* / *Buffalo Bill, Hero of the Far West* (d: Mario Costa; as BB, Gordon Scott)
- 1966 *The Plainsman* (d: David Lowell Rich; as BB, Guy Stockwell)
- 1974 *Touche pas la femme blanche* (d: Marco Ferreri; as BB, Michel Piccoli)