

Grand Buffalo Hunt! Poster advertising event organised by Sidney Barnett in August 1872.

Researched by Lifan Zhang

My exhibit is a copy of a poster advertising the “Grand Buffalo Hunt” at Niagara Falls in August 1872. The poster specifically mentions the famous Western legend “Wild Bill” Hickok as the main star and as a selling point.

“Wild Bill” Hickok’s real name was James Butler Hickok. He is one of the most famous legends of the American West. He was a gunslinger in Western culture, known for his accurate marksmanship and legendary adventures.¹

In the background of end of the 19th century, as the West gradually developed, romantic stories about cowboys and gunslingers began to become popular in North America, because, as a 2020 CBC news story put it, “there’s no more powerful story in the American imagination than how the West was won.”² Therefore, this buffalo hunting event held in Niagara Falls can be seen as the yearning of the people in the Niagara region for American popular culture in the 19th century.

I selected this poster advertising because hunting buffalo is a very old school and serious subject. Buffalo is a mammal that used to be found in large numbers in North America. They have long established a relationship with Indigenous people, such as a source of food or cultural beliefs. But in the 19th century, buffalo were hunted in large numbers for leather or as an entertainment sport for people like Wild Bill, the decline in buffalo population was horrible.³

Notes

¹ [Joseph J. Di Certo, “Wild Bill Hickock,” Britannica.com \(Last Updated: January 14, 2025\)](#)

² “How the Idealized Cowboy Helped Build an Imagined America,” CBC News, (Oct. 15, 2020): <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/how-the-idealized-cowboy-helped-build-an-imagined-america-1.5762273>

³ M. Scott Taylor, “Buffalo Hunt: International Trade and the Virtual Extinction of the North American Bison,” *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 101, No. 7 (December 2011): 3162-3195.