ENDURING ENCOUNTERS

CINCINNATIANS AND AMERICAN INDIANS TO 1900

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Notwithstanding all that has been written and said, there is scarcely any subject on which the knowing people of the East, are yet less informed and instructed than on the character and amusements of the West: by this I mean the “Far West”—the country whose fascinations spread a charm over the mind almost dangerous to civilized pursuits.

—George Catlin

CINCINNATIANS EXPERIENCED the dangerous charms of frontier life for about a decade and then, almost before they realized it, their frontier years were over and they were citizens of the sedate Queen City of the West.

Cincinnati’s frontier period began on an icy day in December 1788, when a group of settlers stepped off their flatboats and founded Losantiville, the village that eventually became Cincinnati. Above them, literally covering the upper plain of the future city, were “low lines of embankments,” the earthen remains of a prehistoric Indian population. Soon after the pioneers’ landing, roaming parties of hostile Indians began attacking the infant settlement, which by early 1790 was protected by a large garrison of federal troops at Fort Washington. The Treaty of Greenville in 1795 brought peace to the troubled region, and with peace, numerous immigrants, so that by 1818 Cincinnati was officially a city.
Throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Cincinnatians had many opportunities to meet Native Americans and experience Native culture. During this time Cincinnatians’ encounters with living American Indians ranged from hostile confrontations in the region that became known as the “Miami slaughter house” to enthusiastic interactions with visiting Wild West show performers. Their responses to Indian art and artifacts ranged from careless destruction of Indian mounds to admiration and emulation. The legacies of these diverse encounters and interactions endure to this day.

The American frontier was a wide-open borderland where nonconformists, outlaws, and entrepreneurs of all types interacted with one another and with settlers and Native inhabitants in a dynamic free-for-all. As the frontier moved steadily west, farther and farther from Cincinnati, the public’s perception of Indians also changed. Whether white society thought of Indians as noble savages or savage Red Men often depended on how ferocious real confrontations were. By the late 1800s Cincinnatians, as well as other Americans, had romanticized Indians, creating an ideal Indian based on exaggerated or stereotypical images of America’s aboriginal people.

As the frontier receded into the western horizon, Indians living on the Great Plains, rather than the Eastern Woodland Indians with whom Cincinnatians were familiar, evolved as the stereotype of the Native American. This image was promoted by early American artists such as George Catlin, who featured Plains peoples, especially renowned warriors, in paintings and in exhibits of their artifacts and weaponry. Later, William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody’s popular frontier reenactments, complete with rugged scenes of the nation’s Wild West and the Congress of Rough Riders of the World, entered the public imagination and fused with the nation’s identity.

The tale of Cincinnatians’ contact with Native Americans is a labyrinth that scholars enter at their peril. The quest for authentic history—for a relevant and unprejudiced view of Indian relations with the city’s first settlers—is complicated by the inaccuracy and sheer wild invention of most of the early material. However, a few select sources whose information is confirmed by early documents or letters of that pioneer period illuminate the naked reality of frontier life during the city’s earliest years.

During the first quarter of the 1800s, Cincinnatians’ attitudes toward and perceptions of Indians varied widely. A few prominent citizens expressed their hatred of Red Men, while others immortalized them with personal collections kept as “cabinets of curiosities.” These exotic collections, crudely documented and quaintly organized by modern standards, often were haphazard displays of foreign coins, unique seashells from distant
regions, and moundbuilder artifacts, organized as much by personal whim as by any
temporal or scientific relationship between the specimens and artifacts. The collectors—
often educated men or wealthy businessmen, and the occasional scientist—later donated
these antiquities, together with more contemporary Indian artifacts, to local museums.

Other influential citizens chose to preserve a few Indian characteristics by joining
the Tammany Society, a national political organization that came to Cincinnati in 1811.
The society was named for the Delaware leader Tamenend, a benevolent man held in
high esteem by early colonists. Members belonged to a “wigwam” (geographical divi-
sion), smoked the calumet pipe, and participated in other Indian-inspired activities.
While the society was democratic in principle, it was distinctly aristocratic in practice.6

Literary-minded Cincinnatians from a variety of social classes also admired Indians
and featured the nation’s first people in poetry, fiction, and historical accounts, albeit
not always accurately. Artists portrayed Indians in a wide variety of media—even Rook-
wood’s pottery. Hundreds of works of art or invention emerged from the fertile minds
of Cincinnatians who encountered prehistoric relics, contemporary Indian artifacts, or
living Indians.

Without realizing it, and for the same reasons, Cincinnati’s first settlers had selected
a site on “the thoroughfare” used in prehistoric time, the picturesque Ohio River.7 The
town’s heavily forested site, located between the Great and Little Miami rivers and di-
rectly across from Kentucky’s Licking River, embraced two plains, a lower and an upper
plain (fig. 1). Present-day Third Street runs almost parallel to the brow that divides the
bottomland beside the river from the upper region. William Henry Harrison, who ex-
amined the city’s mounds with General Anthony Wayne in 1793, noted, “All the early
voyages on the Ohio, and all the first emigrants to Kentucky, represent the country as
being totally destitute of any recent vestiges of settlement.” What appeared to the settlers
to be an abandoned region was in fact a functioning hunting ground and battleground
for rival Indian tribes living south of the Ohio and those in Indian country north of the
river. For this reason, the “great highway” between the two Miami rivers became known
as the “Miami slaughter house.”8

This verdant, seemingly uninhabited scene invited settlement, deforestation, and
agriculture. Civilized farming was the dream of each settler; wresting the wilderness from
heathen savages was deemed proper and worth the risk. Numerous exaggerated tales about
Indian-settler confrontations fill the early literature. Fortunately, some learned men had
an eye for facts rather than hair-raising tales of Indian depredations.
Tales of Early Settler and Indian Conflict

In 1838 Doctor Daniel Drake, possibly the most respected physician, scientist, and literary personage west of the Alleghenies during those early years, delivered a speech, literally a historical memoir of the Miami country for the years 1779–94. Many of the city’s aging early pioneers attended this important event celebrating the semicentennial of Cincinnati’s first permanent settlement. Drake spoke for three hours to an overflowing audience who remained “enchained” while he narrated events that had occurred at Losantiville, North Bend, and Columbia, three villages now part of Cincinnati. Before relating stories of Indian and settler encounters, he enumerated the reasons for the antagonism, stopping to remind his listeners that prior to the settlement of the city in 1788, Indians already had been at war with eastern colonists. Drake maintained that the ensuing hostile relations and “almost every interesting incident” in Cincinnati’s early history “may, directly or indirectly, be ascribed” to that protracted war. Moreover, Indians were dis-

Figure 1. This early view of Cincinnati is from a 1903 painting, View of Cincinnati–1800, by Rudolph Tshudi (1855–1923). The scene illustrates the two plains on which Cincinnati was settled. The “brow,” present-day Third Street, divides the bottomland from the upper region that was covered with various types of earthworks. Courtesy of the Cincinnati Museum Center.

Enduring Encounters
satisfied with the treaties that gave the colonial government their lands, they disliked the
donduct of traders who made the Indians drunk in order to ensure favorable dealing,
and they vehemently disapproved of white encroachment and hunting on their land. To
complicate matters further, whites acquired some lands from tribes who may not actually
have had the right to cede them, thereby setting the scene for major misunderstandings
and outright conflict, because both parties believed they had “unquestionable rights” to
the land. The confusion generated hard feelings, resulting in retaliations that harmed
innocent people on both sides.9

Drake told of horrible scenes of frequent bloodshed and grim privation, including
stories of scalpings by Indians and by white settlers alike. Other tales demonstrated the
Indians’ desire for horses and explained why settlers frequently used oxen to pull their
plows. For example, Indians attacked men working in their cornfields; when the farmers
ran for their guns, the Indians quickly unhitched the horses and fled. In another incident
Drake recounted, Indians stole horses tethered outside a “house of entertainment” on
Main Street frequented by officers of the garrison.10

“Bloody 1791,” Drake said, was “emphatically the romantic & military year of our
history.” That summer presented a “novelty” with the capture of more than sixty “pianke-
shaw [Piankashaw] Delaware and Kickapoo” Indians, who were transported to and im-
prisoned at Fort Washington, the city’s military post, built in 1789. Drake confessed he
was unable to “collect anecdotes concerning them.” He probably names the tribes cor-
rectly, because his account of the attacks that brought the Indians from Indiana to Fort
Washington is accurate. In May 1791, General Charles Scott burned Wea and Kickapoo
villages on the Wabash River; in August, General James Wilkinson attacked Miami town
on the Eel River, and again burned Wea towns. (The Wea and the Piankashaw are some-
times grouped with the Miami in Indiana.) The captured Indians were marched to Fort
Washington via Kentucky, possibly because the Kentucky militia was involved in both
attacks.11

Two hundred years later, the anecdotes that eluded Drake can be found in an early
diary kept by Johann Heckewelder when he traveled down the Ohio River in 1792–93.
Heckewelder was the well-known Moravian missionary who worked and wrote about
his experiences among Ohio’s Indians. He published his detailed journal in Germany
in 1797; it remains the earliest firsthand account of our city and other nearby towns.

Heckewelder and General Rufus Putnam arrived together in Cincinnati on July 2,
1792. The missionary chose not to stay at the fort with the general, preferring instead to
stay in a local tavern and mingle with the townspeople. Despite some fearsome tales of
“savages” and the fact that the town was “overrun with merchants and traders and over-stocked with merchandise,” Heckewelder was impressed with the fact that the settlement kept a minister. After a brief rest Putnam and Heckewelder visited the Indian women and children imprisoned at the fort—the Indians that Drake mentioned in his speech. They were being held under a strict guard and were grateful when Putnam told them that their “redemption was near at hand.” The “Muster-master” assured Heckewelder that the lengthy imprisonment of “upwards of sixty prisoners” had cost the government over sixty thousand dollars. On August 16, 1792, the prisoners and their interpreter left Fort Washington for “Post St. Vincent,” probably Post Vincennes on the Wabash.12

The dishonesty of “worthless traders” sometimes led Indians to retaliate against the settlers.13 Drake and Judge John Cleves Symmes, who settled North Bend in 1789, agreed on this.14 In one surviving story, traders “villainously cheated” Indians by selling them watered-down whisky that froze in the casks before they reached their camp. On other occasions Indians complained to Symmes about being overcharged for gun repairs.15 During his 1792 Ohio River journey by flatboat, Heckewelder landed briefly at North Bend and visited Judge Symmes, who he said had gained the “love and friendship” of the Indians. This caring attitude, Heckewelder thought, was “better protection to the place, than a regiment of soldiers.”16

Another source of conflict centered on the government’s treaties with American Indians. James Hall—a Cincinnati lawyer, judge, historian, novelist, and publisher—recognized as early as 1835 that negotiations with Indians were “full of the strangest contradictions.” The treaty system, the young government’s method of dealing with its aboriginal people, acknowledged that those living within its territory were independent, autonomous nations, yet at the same time, treaties forbade them from acting as such. Indians, for example, were not allowed to sell their lands to anyone but the United States government. A hotly contested decades-long debate between humanitarian reformers and politicians ensued over the abolition of the treaty system, which was finally done away with in 1876. Hall’s assessment of a major cause for Indian retaliation against white settlers was absolutely correct.17

No account of Indian-settler interactions would be complete without a story about a settler captured by Indians and allowed to live in captivity among them. Cincinnati’s most memorable abduction occurred at Fort Washington during several days of celebration held in honor of the Fourth of July in 1792. Rounds were fired from the cannon, and a ball and a fine dinner were held at the fort. Colonel Oliver Spencer, a prominent pioneer who emigrated to the settlement at Columbia at the mouth of the Little Miami
in October 1790, had traveled downriver by flatboat with his family for the festivities in Cincinnati. While in the settlement, Spencer’s only son, a lad of ten, was taken by Indians. His story, written forty years later and republished many times, recounted tales of horse thievery, the first scalp to come “to the infant settlement,” his family’s near massacre, and General Scott’s capture of the Indians imprisoned at the fort. Young Spencer’s account of traveling with his captors, his aborted escape attempt, life with the Indians, his ultimate release seven months later, and his lengthy journey home permits a tiny insight into Indian life at that time. Heckewelder also remarked on this frightening incident in his journal.18

**Indians in Popular Literature**

Terrifying events such as Spencer’s abduction spawned numerous works of fiction about the West. The popular new genre known as the dime novel received its name from Beadle’s Dime Novels, a reference to the paperbacks’ highly affordable price of ten cents. The “spirited” dime novels, launched by Beadle and Co. in 1860, cornered the market on frontier stories for years to come. Thousands of Civil War soldiers read dime novels, and their popularity endured precisely because the stories belonged only to America. Tales of the frontier featuring exaggerated conflicts between Indians and settlers, gold miners, and cowboys in an eternally wild country were based on original American themes. Two novels actually were set in Cincinnati: *Joe Phenix’s Double Deal* and *Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Cincinnati.*19

The most widely known author in this genre was E. Z. C. Judson, writing as “Ned Buntline,” who created the literary persona of Buffalo Bill, thereby making William F. Cody a household name. Judson lived in Cincinnati in about 1844, prior to his success with Buffalo Bill, and together with H. A. Kidd published numbers one and two of the *Southwestern Literary Journal and Monthly Review* in the city. Later issues were published in Nashville.20

In addition to fictional stories originating from authorial flights of fancy, Cincinnatians also produced authentic frontier histories. The venerable publishing firm of Robert Clarke & Co. (1858–1909) gathered material typical of the area in its *Ohio Valley Historical Series.* All seven volumes, published between the years 1868 and 1871, contain early historical accounts of the region.21 Nor did schoolchildren escape the influence of the frontier, thanks to William Holmes McGuffey, immortalized by the series of Eclectic Readers that bear his name. McGuffey arrived in Cincinnati in 1835 from Miami University in Oxford,
Ohio. “The Lone Indian,” in the *New Sixth Eclectic Reader*, fostered a nostalgic attitude toward Indians in the story of Powontonamo, the last member of the Mohawk tribe, whose people had suffered the ravages of white civilization. The 1867 edition of the *New Sixth Eclectic Reader* was published in Cincinnati.22

**Early Cincinnatians and Indian Mounds**

Initially the city’s pioneers did not realize that, long before their arrival, a prehistoric people had selected exactly the same beautiful and strategically important site on which to build. Inconspicuous earthen relics—mounds, embankments, and enclosures—of the earlier civilization stood on the upper plain above the river’s bluff. The once numerous unknown people (today we know they were the ancestors of American Indians) who built the earthworks came to be known as the moundbuilders. The mounds themselves generated a great deal of speculation about the origins of their builders, including the theories that they were creatures from another race and that they were related to the Romans.23

In a history of Ohio’s aborigines he wrote not long before he was elected president, William Henry Harrison recalled the day when, as a young officer, he examined the earthworks. “The number and variety of figures in which these lines [of earthworks] were drawn, was almost endless” and nearly covered the plain (fig. 2).24

The first official notice about Cincinnati’s tumuli, as the mounds were referred to at the time, appeared in a letter dated September 8, 1794. Colonel Winthrop Sargent, secretary and governor *pro tem* of the Northwest Territory, wrote to Dr. Benjamin Smith Barton of Philadelphia and included drawings of “some utensils or ornaments” taken from an “extensive” mound on August 30, 1794. Several skeletons and bones were found with the artifacts, leading Sargent to think that the mound probably functioned as a burial site.25 Later, Robert Clarke, publisher of the *Ohio Valley Historical Series*, suggested that the mound could have served as a watchtower for approaches from Kentucky.26 This earthwork stood at the intersection of Third and Main streets, where a busy thoroughfare passed through the mound’s western side. Drake, in his 1815 publication *Natural and Statistical View, or Picture of Cincinnati and the Miami Country*, gave the measurements as “about eight feet high, one hundred and twenty feet long, and sixty broad.” At one time, he wrote, the mound attracted a great deal of attention, but due to the grading of Main Street, had been “almost obliterated.” Drake lamented the fact that the mounds had
been “hastily and superficially” “examined by strangers” and that the city’s citizens had “generally neglected” them.27

Cincinnati’s largest mound stood at the intersection of Fifth and Mound streets. Drake described it as being about twenty-seven feet tall and said that General Wayne, in 1794, had cut about eight feet off the top for the purpose of erecting a sentinel post. In 1841, when the mound was again cut away for the grading of another street, the Cincinnati Tablet was found (fig. 3).28 The tablet, consisting of a fine compact sandstone measuring five inches long and three inches wide at each end, excited scholars and the public alike. In later years, scientists began to debate its authenticity. Some archaeologists claimed the tablet was an outright fake produced by an “artful and sinister-looking man”
in a “marble shop.” Others thought it might have been deposited in the mound by a laborer. This furor prompted Robert Clarke to write *The Pre-Historic Remains Which Were Found on the Site of the City of Cincinnati, Ohio with a “Vindication of the Cincinnati Tablet.”* Clarke traced the history of the carved tablet from the moment of its excavation. He reviewed all pertinent publications and interviewed knowledgeable parties, even J. L. Wayne, a boy when he took the stone from the mound. Ultimately, the Cincinnati Tablet proved authentic; today it is in the Cincinnati Museum Center collections.

Drake scolded the public for its lack of interest in America’s antiquities: “In the United States, there is indeed no redundance of time or money; but even in this young and parsimonious state, it is not uncommon to see appropriations of both, to objects of greater expense and lesser interest, than a survey of these curious relics.” Cincinnati’s citizens were no different from most other Americans. In their haste to build a city, they leveled the ancient earthworks before they were properly surveyed and excavated. Yet there were several local poets who acknowledged the importance of Cincinnati’s mounds. In 1823 Moses Guest published his poem “On viewing the Mound in the western part of Cincinnati,” dedicating his work to the once spectacular earthwork at Fifth and Mound streets. Other poets, too, penned works entitled “Ancient Works upon the City’s Site” and “To the Old Mound.”

*Figure 3. The Cincinnati Tablet was found in 1841 in a mound located at Fifth and Mound streets in Cincinnati. Cincinnati Museum Center—Cincinnati Historical Society Library.*
In order to understand how the mounds themselves and the material excavated from them influenced Cincinnatians, we need to review briefly the work of an eminent Ohio geologist and a few Cincinnati archaeologists, both amateur and professional. In time, their zealous explorations captured the attention of some of the country’s most prominent scientists, who featured Ohio moundbuilder artifacts, maps of the earthworks, and publications about Ohio mounds at local and national expositions. The Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE), founded in 1879 under the aegis of the Smithsonian Institution, published scientific papers discussing Ohio mounds and moundbuilders, including Cincinnati sites. These scholarly publications and the exhibitions of moundbuilder artifacts and art had far-reaching influence on the work of future painters, pottery artists, and silversmiths. The drawings in the BAE publications stimulated them to fashion moundbuilder-inspired works of their own. Two of several Rookwood pottery vessels feature decorations replicating moundbuilder shell gorgets, a type of artifact presumably worn below the throat: cat. no. 7 is a vase with the gorgets made of copper overlay and cat. no. 43 is a loving cup with the gorget made of silver overlay.

Charles Whittlesey, a geologist and former president of the Western Reserve Historical Society, stands out for his work as a topographical engineer of Ohio. As a member of the corps that assisted with a geological survey of the state, he investigated venerable ruins—ancient tumuli, forts, excavations, ditches, and lines of embankments—during the years 1837 and 1838. He personally examined the ruins and credited some of the earlier descriptions as being accurate, finding others downright “fictitious.” The team completed two survey reports before funds were suspended. In his 1850 Smithsonian publication, *Descriptions of the Ancient Works in Ohio*, Whittlesey discussed the “Ancient Works at Cincinnati (Now Obliterated),” stressing the fact that both the moundbuilders and the “city builders of our own times” had selected many of the same sites for occupation.32

In 1845 Ephraim Squier and Edwin Davis began, at their own expense, a systematic exploration of the hundreds of earthworks throughout Ohio; they published the results of their research in the first volume of the *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge* in 1848. Whittlesey generously gave them the survey information they requested, and they in turn acknowledged the importance of his early fieldwork.33

The December 1841 discovery of the Cincinnati Tablet captured everyone’s attention—scholars and public alike—and roused a hotly contested debate about its authenticity. Squier and Davis discussed the tablet, noting that it is nearly impossible to replicate the
tablet’s delicate curvilinear carving, and admitting also that deducing its function “is another matter.”34 Many archaeologists today think that the tablet might have functioned as a printing stamp for leather and hide because red ochre has been found on other stone tablets from the same period.35

Later, the enigmatic moundbuilders and their earthworks became the avocation of Dr. Charles L. Metz, a physician from Madisonville, Cincinnati. He organized a group of amateur archaeologists under the name Literary and Scientific Society of Madisonville. Their work, conducted mostly in the late 1870s and 1880s, was well directed and resulted in carefully prepared articles that described their archaeological work and findings in the *Journal of the Cincinnati Society of Natural History*.36 Even though these endeavors demonstrated they were more than “mere weekend dilettantes,” the society’s real interest was in artifacts found in the mounds. Several accounts describe the group standing beside a Madisonville burial site “eagerly waiting to snatch its contents” for their personal collections.37 Metz’s obituary claimed that he “had the distinction of being the first person to find gold buried in prehistoric mounds.” In fact the term “gold” is used metaphorically: Metz did indeed excavate rare and valuable moundbuilder ceremonial artifacts in Anderson Township, but none were actually made of the metal gold. Fortunately, many of these objects in the Madisonville Society’s collections found their way into Cincinnati Art Museum collections.38

The Madisonville Society’s discoveries in the Little Miami Valley enticed Professor F. W. Putnam, of the Peabody Museum of Harvard University and the Chief of the Department of Ethnology and Archaeology for the upcoming World’s Columbian Exposition, to become involved in excavating the dense concentration of mounds in Anderson Township. Prior to this time members of the society conducted excavations at their own expense. Putnam retained Dr. Metz as the director of the excavation.39 In 1891, after the Columbian Exposition assumed financial responsibility for the excavation, Metz received an official notice appointing him Special Assistant in Putnam’s department. Putnam also asked Metz to oversee the construction of a relief map of the Little Miami River, displaying “its banks, then the terraces and the position of the earth-work on the upper terraces, with the hill, and the Whittlesey mound, rising above.”40 Metz, under the title “collector,” received twenty-five dollars for work done during June 1891, and, at the conclusion of the Columbian Exposition, a bronze medal and diploma for his scientific model.

While the society’s excavations lacked today’s precise methods and scientific knowledge, the members’ archaeological work and their personal collections attracted a great
deal of attention from the local businessmen who planned the city’s well-known industrial exhibitions. Metz’s first acclaim came in 1883 when the Ohio Mechanics Institute awarded him a silver medal for his arrangement of archaeological relics at the Industrial Exposition held that year. For Cincinnati’s 1888 Centennial of the Ohio Valley and Central States Exposition, the planners specifically asked Metz to prepare “as extensive and complete an archaeological display as possible.” Metz became known for his explorations both in Madisonville and in Anderson Township, and for his extensive collection. This prompted yet another request, from an officer for the Ohio Centennial exposition that was held in Columbus that same year.

Cincinnati’s Western Museum

Public interest in displaying local archaeological material in exhibitions and in museum settings can be traced to Daniel Drake, a true Renaissance man and progressive thinker. Drake respected the city’s excavated antique Indian relics and kept his own extensive collection of objects gathered from the mounds, together with fossils and shells. He and other like-minded citizens contributed their artifacts and oddities to the Western Museum Society, which on June 10, 1820, opened the museum in rented rooms belonging to Cincinnati College, today the University of Cincinnati. Drake addressed the assembled audience, stating his goal—to present a complete illustration of the region’s natural history with an emphasis on Ohio Valley zoology, fossil zoology, geology, and anthropology, along with a collection “of the weapons, utensils, trinkets, and other manufactures of our neighboring Indians.” Some were obtained from Indian tribes themselves or from their deserted villages, together with objects “disinterred from the rude stone or earthen tumuli.” Some of Drake’s ambitious plans for making Cincinnati the scientific capital of the West included scholarly investigations of Big Bone Lick in Kentucky and an in-depth study of the ancient Indian cultures of the Ohio Valley. In 1823, however, Drake suffered a reality check: the museum’s operating expenses exceeded income; meanwhile, the entire city was suffering an economic depression. Ultimately Drake and the other managers handed the collection over to Joseph Dorfeuille, the museum’s newly hired curator.

Dorfeuille, a Frenchman, possessed many of the same traits that would later make P. T. Barnum a national figure. Dorfeuille moved the museum close to the Public Landing, an area pulsating with activity—and with people who willingly paid to see not only
the scientific displays but also the sensational new waxwork exhibits, including the lurid “Dorfeuille’s Hell.” An 1828 review of the museum, however, claimed that the case containing Indian mound relics was the “most striking” part of the museum.44

During its heyday, under Dorfeuille, the Western Museum boasted a national reputation. After a disastrous fire and Dorfeuille’s death in 1840, the institution languished and was dissolved in 1867.45 In time a few of the moundbuilder relics from the Western Museum entered a private collection and eventually were donated to the Cincinnati Art Museum.46

Collectors and the Rise of Expositions

In addition to Metz, other prominent local individuals, such as Judge Joseph Cox, the Civil War general Manning Ferguson Force, and the wholesale grocer Thomas Cleneay, kept cabinets of curiosities containing archaeological collections (fig. 4). Cleneay, for example, one of the city’s “old-time businessmen,” possessed not only one of the largest coin collections in the United States but also an extensive group of “arrowheads” and “archaeological treasures” that he donated to the Cincinnati Art Museum.47

Cincinnati collectors’ passion for their archaeological hobby prompted them to exhibit their collections at various expositions: the Cincinnati industrial expositions, the 1888 Centennial Exposition of the Ohio Valley and Central States in Cincinnati and Columbus (a number of expositions commemorating the anniversary of the first settlement of the Northwest Territory and State of Ohio were held statewide), and national exhibitions in Philadelphia, New Orleans, and Chicago. While planning for the 1888 Ohio centennial expositions, state archaeologists considered the expense of preparing an exhibit of moundbuilder relics worthwhile; they hoped the displays of stone tools, projectile points, shell beads and ornaments, and human bones would generate interest in local archaeological treasures and elicit sufficient funds to produce a quality publication that would be a credit to the state. This was not idle reasoning; Ohio had received first place for its archaeological exhibits at expositions in Philadelphia and New Orleans. However, because of a shortage of funds, archaeologists had to draw their displays from existing collections, thereby leaving sections of the state unrepresented. Instead of assembling a full and complete exhibit of the state’s archaeology by going into the field and conducting fresh excavations, they were forced to depend on the generosity of collectors. Although lacking artifacts from some regions, the collections displayed were outstanding,
leading the archaeologists to recommend that Thomas Cleneay’s “magnificent collections” be exhibited in their entirety and become the property of the state.48

The history of exhibiting these personal archaeological collections helps us understand that, while some people relished the prospect of looking at grooved stone axes and chipped flint arrowheads, the majority of the public remained unenthusiastic unless the exhibit was enhanced in some way to capture their interest. Drake himself discovered that scientific exhibits alone could not generate enough admission income to offset the Western Museum’s expenses. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, exhibition planners and promoters, in Cincinnati and elsewhere, quickly realized that they needed to engage the public. They did so by adding and publicizing sideshow-style oddities and freaks of nature, exotic animals, and, increasingly, ethnographic displays of living aboriginal peoples from America and around the world. As disease, war, and poverty subdued Native Americans and the government confined the remaining Indian populations to reservations, American Indians became more attractive and romanticized because they were less of a threat.

Cincinnati had jumped on the bandwagon of hosting local expositions early in its history. The Ohio Mechanics Institute sponsored nineteen of these events, the first held around 1832.49 Initially, the city’s expositions were designed to educate the buying public about various useful and beautiful manufactured products newly available at the time, and were held with varying success until they were discontinued at the onset of the Civil War.

Figure 4. The source of this slate birdstone is unknown, but it was probably a surface find in the vicinity of Cincinnati. In 1885 Judge Joseph Cox gave the birdstone to the Cincinnati Art Museum. Cincinnati Art Museum. 1885:512.
Difficult economic times after the war led to the resumption of annual expositions featuring “every branch of manufacture in the city and vicinity,” in the words of Alfred T. Goshorn, who became known as the “father” of the Cincinnati industrial expositions. This brilliant series of industrial expositions began with a grand endeavor in the fall of 1870, and in future years followed the same general plan. Goshorn took over the 1871 and 1872 expositions, adding a department of natural history that included not only the expected fossils, minerals, and coins, but also displays of archaeological relics. (Goshorn’s reputation for mounting successful exhibits led to his appointment as director general of the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876.) Cincinnati’s industrial expositions came to an end with the most elaborate one—the Centennial Exposition of the Ohio Valley and Central States—held from July 4 through October 27, 1888.  

The 1870 guidelines for exposition exhibitors were specific, stating that they must advertise extensively to “insure crowded halls.” Awards encouraged exhibitors to prepare extravagant displays. Medals and diplomas were given for important machines capable of producing marketable items. Several awards went to the Cincinnati and Ohio archaeological presentations, including, in 1883, an Ohio Mechanics Institute silver medal to Metz for his display of archaeological artifacts.

Opening in September 1879, the seventh Cincinnati Industrial Exposition, the most successful on record, boasted more than a thousand exhibitors. P. T. Barnum’s six giant elephants were engaged to join the parade festivities. Elaborate exhibit halls of arts and industries displayed everything from kitchen stoves to enormous horticultural arrangements. The department of natural history embraced all aspects of the natural world, including archaeology. The exposition catalogue claimed this “may safely be considered the finest collection of this nature ever seen here, either in completeness or arrangement.”

The 1881 exposition prompted “a Vassar graduate” under the pseudonym “Clara De Vere” to write her own tongue-in-cheek “sketchbook” account of the exhibits (fig. 5). Cincinnati artist Henry Farny, later famous for his paintings of Plains Indians, illustrated the sketchbook. Farny’s cover drawing is a lighthearted homage to the famous painting The Artist in His Museum, by Charles William Peale. (Peale, whom Drake knew, was a Philadelphia painter-naturalist and the founder of America’s first public museum of science and art.) Farny’s cover shows a demure yet steely-eyed Victorian woman, complete with bonnet and fan, gracefully holding back a curtain to reveal her own cabinet of Cincinnati curiosities—a Rookwood vase (almost certainly by Rookwood founder Maria Longworth Nichols herself), books, furniture, and a bust by Hiram Powers, the Cincinnati sculptor who crafted waxworks for Dorfeuille at the Western Museum and
later became one of the most important artists of the nineteenth century. Farny’s other drawings for this booklet are caricatures of the fairgoers viewing the various oddities, such as the natural history hall, which the author calls the “The Chamber of Horrors.” There, viewers strolled among specimens of “dreadful and impossible creatures,” including a mammoth that stood sixteen feet tall. They peered into numerous display cases—some of which probably housed some of the city’s beautiful archaeological relics.53

The Emerging Role of Anthropology in Expositions

Cincinnati’s successful track record in its local expositions led to important roles for Cincinnatians on the national exposition scene, especially for Alfred T. Goshorn, director-general of the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. Congress appropriated $1,500,000 for this celebration of the nation’s hundredth anniversary. By the standards

*Susan Lahry Meyn*
of the day, Ohio’s aboriginal culture was well represented. The archaeological exhibit was housed in sixteen large cases holding moundbuilder artifacts and historic Indian antiquities. A “series of charts” showed several “interesting” earthworks and “impressions taken from track rocks and rock shelters.” Full-size reproductions of the state’s pictographs were featured. A large map noted the position of nearly all known tumuli, the former territories of the different Ohio Indian tribes, and “all that could be thus shown of historical and archaeological interest.” Eleven Cincinnatians lent artifacts to the archaeological display. The exhibit demonstrated that it was the “result of much labor and love,” and the State Archaeological Society received an award for it.54

The 1876 Centennial Exhibition is important because ethnology was regarded as a critical component of a national fair; however, government officials and fair planners were uncertain about the most appropriate way to portray America’s Native peoples. Spencer F. Baird, the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, had the responsibility of overseeing the entire Indian exhibit. A primary goal was to have “a series of objects illustrating the habits, customs, peculiarities, and general condition of the various tribes” in addition to the relics of their predecessors. The dilemma facing the government centered on whether to have Indians present a living demonstration of their culture or to produce simply a “static display of Indian arts, crafts, and ethnology.”55

Baird sent anthropologists into little-known areas of the United States to collect objects from Indian tribes who were under government pressure to acculturate, to become more “civilized” by abandoning traditional life ways and acquiring farming skills. Baird was concerned that large areas of the country would be underrepresented, so he sought the assistance of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), which in turn asked Indian agents on the different reservations to collect objects used at the time or in earlier times.

As the opening day of the exposition loomed closer, Baird focused on the idea of direct Indian participation. Again, BIA officials remained unenthusiastic, and after investigating the cost of such an endeavor, Congress refused to appropriate funding. Instead, Indians were reduced to the status of museum objects. Indian clothing was displayed on mannequins. Two famous frontier photographers contributed their images of Indians, thereby making it appear that Indians no longer existed. Without Indian participation the exhibit lost a key element that would have attracted audiences; the more profound loss was that white society failed to see any value in Indian societies. Ironically, the death of Custer and his troops at Little Big Horn occurred on June 25, during the Centennial Exposition, so Indians were featured prominently in the news of the day, though in an extremely negative light.56
Live Indians as Attendance Boosters

When costs for fairs and expositions soared, questions about their real purpose surfaced, forcing planners to consider the relevance of public pageantry or diversions such as the Art Department, which emphasized contemporary American artists. James Allison, president of the 1888 Cincinnati extravaganza, admitted in his report, “An exhibition of the Arts and Industries, pure and simple, no matter of what excellence, fails . . . to attract or satisfy the general public.” It was only when he introduced “certain forms of light amusements, that any appreciable increase in attendance was noted.”

Businessmen, organizers, and promoters—including government officials and anthropologists—were responsible for the financial success of fairs and expositions as well as for the underlying agenda. For this reason they sometimes decided to include ethnological exhibits in their plans. These lucrative attractions were an important component of international expositions in such major cities as Chicago, Philadelphia, Omaha, Atlanta, Buffalo, San Francisco, St. Louis, and New Orleans. Placing ethnological exhibits on the midway gave the expositions the aura of one of P. T. Barnum’s sideshows. In addition to satisfying the entrepreneurs and entertaining the white attendees who were the overwhelming majority, these multiracial exhibits reinforced the cultural supremacy of white society and the power of the United States. Whites, whether sipping lemonade or riding the Ferris wheel at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, could view the “exotics” in an aloof manner.

Indian Delegations and Visits

Beginning early in our nation’s history, numerous Indian delegations had made the difficult journey from their homelands in the West to Washington, where they aroused a great deal of curiosity. During the 1820s and 1830s powerful Indian leaders and their families traveled east, hoping to speak with the Great Father about pressing issues such as land allocation and the negotiation of treaties. They also planned to do a little sightseeing.

Presidents and other federal officials practiced subtle intimidation through diplomacy. Indians were showered with gifts and honors. Exalted chiefs were given peace medals, and brought to inspect military installations, arsenals, and troops. These peace medals were cherished possessions to be buried with the individual or passed down...
from generation to generation. Meanwhile, the Indian visitors returned home with amazing tales about what they had seen and with a heightened respect for American power and wealth.60

In late 1821 a delegation of influential headmen from different western Indian tribes traveled to Washington with government agent Benjamin O’Fallon. The Indians so impressed Washington society that they were invited not only to balls and parties but to private homes for tea. Their magnificent appearance and dignified deportment led Thomas L. McKenney, founder of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, to commission the American portraitist Charles Bird King to paint individual portraits of many of the delegates on canvas.61 Through his association with the Indian office, King painted more than one hundred pictures of prominent Native leaders between 1822 and 1842; the collection became commonly known as the War Department gallery of Indian portraits.

McKenney envisioned a mammoth publication featuring the gallery. However, he had difficulty identifying a funder for the project. After several major setbacks, McKenney joined forces with Cincinnatian James Hall, a prominent judge who was also a prolific writer. Hall became the project’s editor and agreed to write a biographical sketch of each Indian portrayed—a Herculean task requiring nearly a decade of research, because the promised background material for each Indian never appeared. McKenney and Hall’s History of the Indian Tribes of North America is doubly important because many of King’s original paintings were lost in a fire at the Smithsonian in January 1865, making the lithographic images created for the book the only surviving record of these Indians.62

**Great Plains Indians and the Public Imagination**

In the spring of 1833, Cincinnati was the site of what was probably the earliest showing of George Catlin’s Indian portrait gallery. Catlin’s mission was to record Plains Indians in the Far West before they passed into oblivion. During his journey he visited dozens of Plains Indian tribes, sketching and painting hundreds of individuals, all wearing traditional clothing and ornaments. He also painted famous warriors, “now prisoners of war,” such as Black Hawk, the Sauk war leader. Beginning on May 27 the Cincinnati Daily Gazette advertised the exhibit on four different days.63 This exhibition, held shortly after Catlin’s return from the West, exposed Cincinnatians early on to the image that soon became the stereotype of the American Indian.

During the early 1800s accomplished artists such as Catlin and the Swiss painter Karl Bodmer (who accompanied German scientist Maximilian Alexander Philipp,
Prince of Wied-Neuwied, on his exploration of the Upper Missouri River) functioned like the photographers of the future. Their sketches and paintings enabled people east of the Mississippi to witness the frontier. As the western frontier became more settled and moved farther from eastern population centers, these same images became the ideal to which eastern imaginations turned. People yearned to see Plains Indians, in flowing fringe, galloping after bison across a wide-open prairie. The artists’ written accounts of their experiences among the Indians disseminated the stereotypical image of the Plains Indians even farther, to Europe.

In 1832, on Catlin’s search for the true “Far West,” he first journeyed through Cincinnati. Here citizens told him, “Our town has passed the days of its most rapid growth, it is not far enough West.” The following year Catlin exhibited more than one hundred Indian portraits and explained the customs and manners of the people he had painted. Judge James Hall reviewed the works of this “ingenious artist” who at great personal expense and “hazard of life” had created an original enterprise. The collection also included sketches of the noble buffalo and open landscapes. A series of four pictures depicting a religious ceremony of the Mandans captured Hall’s particular interest. He deemed the gallery a “most valuable addition to the history of our continent, as well as to the arts of our country.”

**Cincinnati and the Indian Removal Act**

Catlin’s decision to paint Indians in their homelands west of the Mississippi coincided with the aftereffects of the Indian Removal Act of 1830. This law, inspired by white greed for Indian land, gave the federal army permission to forcibly remove eastern tribes to Indian Territory, a thinly settled area mostly in what today is the state of Oklahoma. President Andrew Jackson justified the act, claiming that relocating Indians on this land west of the Mississippi would keep Indian-white conflicts to a minimum. The tragic removal of the Cherokee tribe, which resulted in the deaths of thousands as they traveled on foot to their new home, is known as the “Trail of Tears.” Ohio’s tribes, all living in the northern part of the state, and Indiana’s tribes also were forced to relocate.

Hundreds of Indians passed through the Queen City on their journey west. During the 1840s Cincinnatians witnessed large groups of Indians in transit. Some stayed for a period downtown. The Indians’ activities have endured in local newspaper articles and in a memoir that includes artist Henry Farny’s illustration of an Indian family walking down a city street (fig. 6).
On August 19, 1843, approximately 650 Wyandot from Crawford County, Ohio, arrived in a long “melancholy” procession with wagons and horses. One columnist observed that the Wyandot “were but a sorry specimen of the ‘Noble Indian,’ of whose traits history and poetry, and romance have filled our mind with admiration.” The group camped for the night at the steamboat landing and embarked the next morning on the *Nodaway* and *Republic*. During their brief stay “fire water” was “liberally” given
to many of them. One intoxicated young Indian fell into the water and drowned. "And who," asked one reporter, "is licensed by this Christian city to deal out death to the infatuated Indian?"

The next to arrive were a Miami Indian chief, his family, and other headmen and their families. Along with approximately three hundred and fifty others, they had left their home on the Wabash River and were headed west. Most arrived via the Miami Canal on October 12, 1846, and walked down Main Street to the Ohio River, where they all boarded the Colorado for St. Louis. The contempt with which white people still viewed Indians is evident from the newspaper section under the headings "By the Miami Canal" and "Shipments." The report listed "350 Indians, with their Baggage." At the time, whites viewed Indians as a "shipment" on a par with "30 tons of Dry Goods" and "32 casks Government Stores." The contempt with which white people still viewed Indians is evident from the newspaper section under the headings "By the Miami Canal" and "Shipments." The report listed "350 Indians, with their Baggage." At the time, whites viewed Indians as a "shipment" on a par with "30 tons of Dry Goods" and "32 casks Government Stores."68

Watching Indians walk through the city's streets so impressed the young William Dean Howells that he wrote about the event in later years, when he was an established novelist. In *A Boy's Town*, Howells described the Wyandot removal through the eyes of a shy lad who lived with the hope of seeing a real Indian. Boys knew circus Indians were just white men dressed up and never dreamed live Indians would come to their river town. "The boys' fathers must have known that these Indians were coming, but it just shows how stupid the most of fathers are, that they never told the boys about it. All at once there the Indians were, as if the canal-boats had dropped with them out of heaven."69 Howells confused the Wyandot's method of transportation with that of the Miami. It is in this Howells work that Farny's drawing of a white family watching the Wyandot walk past their house appears. In *Stories of Ohio*, Howells wrote that as a boy in Hamilton during the early 1840s he "saw the last of the Ohio Indians passing through the town on three canal boats" and "out of the land that was to know them no more forever."70

Not all the Indians traveling through Cincinnati in the mid-nineteenth century were on a forced march, however. Just a few years after the passage of the unfortunate Miami and Wyandot, in late November 1848, thirteen Chippewa—six chiefs, four head warriors, two women, and a baby—rode around Cincinnati in a wagon beating a drum and announcing their visit to the city. They stayed for about a week in Cincinnati before leaving for Washington, hoping to meet with President James K. Polk and make him aware of their plight. Although, in the early years of the nation, Indian diplomats frequently traveled to Washington at government expense, the Chippewa visit was unusual in that they were taking themselves on tour. They paid for their trip with the money earned from their daily presentations. Through their interpreter, the Chippewa told a
Cincinnati reporter that they planned to visit other major Eastern cities, dress in all their finery, and present exhibitions of their dances, songs, and games. In Cincinnati they hoped to raise traveling funds for their journey by presenting scheduled musical performances from the balcony of the Masonic Hall, facing Third Street. Their rhythmic chants had the desired effect—"letters, at the post office, were left unasked for—the banks suspended their discounts—brokers dropped their piles of gold uncounted, and all Third st. [sic] stopped, stood still, and seemed lost in silent admiration." The reporter thought this was an excellent opportunity for citizens to learn something about aboriginal manners and customs.71

Through the power of literature and art, the stereotype of the Indian evolved so that in time Plains Indian images, abilities, and character traits became the Indian Americans yearned to see. All types of circus show owners, medicine showmen, Wild West show organizers, and even government officials used this Indian image. However, at the time of the Chippewa visit, most American artists did not consider either Indians or their picturesque western environment a worthy topic. Most artists tended to paint Indians “in the more attractive aspect of his demi-civilized degradation than in the wild freedom of aboriginal manhood.” Artists concentrated on the semi-assimilated Indian rather than showing Native Americans posing in “eminently picturesque and interesting” scenes peacefully sitting by their campfires or stealthily tracking an enemy or prey animal.72

Buffalo Bill and the Wild West

Realistic or even romanticized frontier scenes with Indians may not have titillated American artists, but the encounters certainly intrigued authors like E. Z. C. Judson, whose pseudonym was Ned Buntline. His dime novel The Scouts of the Prairie, featuring William F. Cody as Buffalo Bill, made Cody a hero and engraved his name into the history of the Great Plains. Prior to venturing into his well-known Wild West outdoor reenactment, Cody and Buntline took the Scouts on a stage tour. After appearing before a sold-out house in Chicago, the troupe opened a weeklong run in Cincinnati in late December 1872. Indian yells erupted from the crowd as they waited to purchase tickets. The play, according to the Daily Gazette, had “all the thrilling romance, treachery, love, revenge, and hate of a dozen of the richest dime novels ever written.” No fewer than “forty braves and pale faces” were killed during the course of the play. The “braves” were painted white impostors, who shouted, danced, and shot “with more regularity than any genuine sons of the forest.” Only one authentic Indian, an Apache, appeared. A week
later the newspaper stated that the spectators, who had packed themselves into the
gallery of Pike's Opera House, were not from the “cleaner classes of our population.”
The house, the announcement continued, would be closed for a few days of fumigation
after enduring its riotous western raid.73

Interest in Buntline's and Cody's stage presentation of the Wild West waned, but
escalated once Cody moved the show to an outdoor arena for an Independence Day
celebration in his hometown of North Platte, Nebraska, in July 1882.74 A year later, on
June 2, 1883, Buffalo Bill arrived in Cincinnati again—this time with eight buffalo, an elk
herd, Texas steers, and “comical Mexican burros burdened with the outfits of wandering
miners.” Sioux and Pawnee Indians in “full war-paint and feathers” marched to the “Base
Ball Park,” accompanied by Buffalo Bill, the self-proclaimed marksman Dr. W. F. Carver,
a band, and the actual Deadwood stagecoach. An immense crowd waited in the sun for
the start of the “most original, sensational and pleasing street picture” and besieged the
ticket office for nearly two hours. The park itself assumed a Wild West character. A
whitewashed fence encircled the inner field and functioned as a racetrack for quarter-
mile races. Cowboy, cook, and dining tents were located in the right-field corner and
Indian tipis occupied the center-field corner. It was “a small, though complete picture
of wild Western life transferred in realistic form to the heart of civilization.”75

Buffalo Bill himself enthralled everyone with a remarkable sharpshooting perform-
ance. Once he broke two glass target balls simultaneously while holding his rifle with
one hand. The outdoor show played to packed audiences, staying until June 10.76 The
following year, on October 19, 1884, the most celebrated of all frontier scouts again brought
his Wild West to the “Base Ball Park.” Cody's presence gave “an air of reality to the
mimic business.” The company was larger still. Texas steers and buffalo ran freely, then
were lassoed and ridden by cowboys and Mexicans. The performance concluded with
a simulated Indian attack on a settler's cabin, complete with cracks of rifle shot.77

During these early years the show endured financial difficulties and some hard luck,
but Cody's idea was gaining steam. Annie Oakley, who at age fifteen was supplying game
for a Cincinnati hotel, joined Buffalo Bill's Wild West in 1885; Sitting Bull, the famous
Lakota Sioux chief who dubbed Oakley “Little Sure Shot,” toured with the troupe that
same year—Sitting Bull's only tour with the legendary Great Scout.78 The rest is history.
Thousands and thousands of spectators in America and on the Continent, including
European royalty, paid to watch a dime novel in action.

By 1893, the year of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Buffalo Bill's
show was practiced and highly sensational, acting out the romanticized “historical” scenes
and western myths that people expected to see. Among other highly publicized events,
the program included a buffalo hunt, the Congress of Rough Riders, Indian war dances, the reenactment of Custer’s Last Stand at Little Big Horn, and scenes from the Ghost Dance. Buffalo Bill’s Wild West exhibition actually adjoined the Columbian Exposition fairgrounds near the main entrance; it was not part of the official site nor even affiliated with the exposition itself. Yet the show’s profit “was estimated at $700,000 to $1,000,000 for the season.” Exposition visitors felt they needed to see Buffalo Bill in order to say they had been to the world’s fair.79 Indians themselves enjoyed seeing both events.

For his “educational” shows Cody hired Indians, mostly Oglala Lakota Sioux, at the Pine Ridge Reservation in western South Dakota. Cody accepted Indians as equal to the other performers. His prestige and reputation for honest dealing allowed him to hire the Lakota without alarming either the Bureau of Indian Affairs or the Indian agents on the reservations, who were unnerved by any unexpected actions.80

The Tragedy of Wounded Knee

On December 29, 1890, the Massacre of Wounded Knee occurred at a creek of that name on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. This horrific event, called the last of the Indian wars, resulted in the death of an estimated three hundred Native American men, women, and children mowed down by Hotchkiss guns as they were surrendering to the Seventh Cavalry, Custer’s old unit. Throughout November the possibility of an impending Indian war in the West had frequently been front-page news in Cincinnati. Sitting Bull’s death during an arrest by the Indian police on December 15 intensified the situation that led to the massacre.

Sitting Bull had openly challenged the government’s land decision opening the Great Sioux Reservation to white settlement and dividing the land into six smaller reservations, thereby robbing the Sioux of millions of acres. Sitting Bull was also a disciple of the Ghost Dance movement, a religious ceremony prevalent on the Great Plains at that time. The people danced in circles and prayed for the return of their ancestors to earth, the restoration of Indian lands, and the return of the traditional Plains Indian way of life. The years before Wounded Knee had been grim; the despair and suffering on western reservations led many Indians to participate in the ceremony, a phenomenon that concerned some Indian agents. The Lakota Sioux were starving, owing to the near extinction of the buffalo and severe cuts in their government annuities. Even as far away as Cincinnati, newspapers reported on the desperation and hopelessness among the Sioux. These events led to the tragedy of Wounded Knee.
Prior to the massacre, a local reporter asked Cincinnati artist Henry Farny about the happenings in the West and the death of Sitting Bull. Farny was regarded as an “authority in Indian matters” because he had made trips west and had spent a great deal of time studying and painting Indians. He called the slaughter of Sitting Bull a “needless cruelty,” saying that he was afraid that Sitting Bull’s death might “cause a great deal of bloodshed.” Farny maintained that the better policy would have been to arrest Sitting Bull and move him to another part of the country. Sitting Bull, Farny reminded the paper’s readers, had come into prominence during the aftermath of the Custer disaster. Farny then proceeded to relate an anecdote from years before about the change in Sitting Bull’s demeanor when Farny had introduced the great chief to General Ulysses S. Grant. Instantly Sitting Bull “straightened up and assumed a dignified and important bearing.” Farny presented his ideas about the best way to solve the Indian question. Granting Indians citizenship (this did not happen until 1924, even though many had fought in the First World War) was one of Farny’s recommendations. Farny’s understanding of the importance of Sitting Bull’s death to the Lakota Sioux and the botched handling of the event proved prescient. He illustrated the far-reaching effects of the Massacre of Wounded Knee with his drawing of a grieving woman sitting beneath a burial scaffold that holds a dead warrior’s body and shield. The illustration, entitled “The Last Scene of the Last Act of the Sioux War,” appeared in an early 1891 issue of Harper’s Weekly.

**Indians in 1890**

The 1890 U.S. census precipitated an enumeration of all Indians living, literally a census of all Native Americans living within the United States, except the Alaska Territory. The goal was not only to count the Indians, but also to present a comprehensive study of their condition. This enormous project, with Thomas Donaldson as its director, resulted in a voluminous document with the unusual title *Report on Indians Taxed and Indians Not Taxed*. Summaries of all aspects of Indian life, plus many maps and numerous photographs, were included. To illustrate the report, artists journeyed west and painted elegant portraits of Indians, including one of the last pictures of Sitting Bull, dated September 1890.

The report is sobering. For example, it states that while in 1822 Ohio claimed 2,407 Indians—all residing in the northern part of the state—in 1890 Ohio reported only 206 Indians. Thirteen of these Indians, twelve males and one female, were in prison and thus not counted in the general census; 193 Indians were self-supporting and hence taxed and
counted. This meant that Ohio’s once plentiful Indian population had all either become acculturated (taxed) or moved west to Indian Territory. That region, mostly today’s state of Oklahoma, reported an Indian population of 51,279.84

The 1890 census pointed to another important fact—a demographic change in the population of the West. Areas once nearly devoid of people were now populated, proving that the frontier, with its unsettled border zone, really was disappearing. Popular literature had kept the mythic West alive by stimulating the imagination of Americans about this forever-wild region and its unique inhabitants as settlers advanced across the continent. Real events, however, the near extinction of the buffalo and the Massacre of Wounded Knee, were proof positive that the open spaces once roamed by bison and American Indians were populated by farmers, ranchers, and city dwellers who lived in place year-round. Maps—especially those with colorful pictures that depicted the physical features of North America, “the advancement of American settlement,” and “immigration intrusion”—illustrated the evolution of pioneer communities from a “primitive to a developed economy.” A census bulletin discussed the population density for 1890, stating that “at present the unsettled area has been so broken by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line.”85

The Closing of the Frontier

While Buffalo Bill was presenting his wildly successful rendition of the frontier adjacent to the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, a young historian, Frederick Jackson Turner, presented his “frontier thesis” before the American Historical Association’s meeting when he read his groundbreaking “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” at the exposition that July.

These two events emphasize the power of the idea of the frontier, one breaking attendance records with exaggerated reenactments of western history, the other postulating that the distinctive features of American civilization are a result of our country’s unique frontier environment. Ironically, Turner did not attend Buffalo Bill’s performance in company with the other historians, preferring instead to put the finishing touches on his paper.86

Turner’s thesis maintains that the most distinctive feature of the frontier was “the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward.” People, as they moved west taming the forests and plains, could
shed “cultural baggage” and the “complexities of civilization.” When more people arrived, however, those who put down roots in the newly settled areas “struggled” back to “maturity,” attempting to recreate the social structures and organizations they had left behind. Although they pursued cultural activities modeled on those in the East, their frontier experience inevitably transformed the resulting “civilizations” into something different from their eastern models.87

At the time many historians accepted Turner’s hypothesis unquestioningly. However, contemporary historians realize that he presented a one-sided analysis of the facts, forgetting that many factors such as diverse populations and resources profoundly affect history. The concept of a free, open land with its equally freethinking inhabitants led Americans to fall in love with their disappearing frontier. The creation of enduring stories and myths is an indication of the public’s love for its open spaces.

World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893

The World’s Columbian Exposition stands as a watershed anthropological event. Frederic W. Putnam of the Harvard Peabody Museum became chief of the Department of Ethnology and Archaeology, Department M, for the exposition. Early in the planning phase, Putnam decided to focus on the anthropology of America. Thus he determined the direction of the systematic and comprehensive exhibits, as well as living displays on the mile-long Midway Plaisance. Department M’s other exhibits, arranged in a special Anthropology Building, were organized to teach a lesson about “the advancement of [the] evolution of man.”88 Scientists from the Smithsonian planned their own anthropology exhibits, to be housed in the Government Building, and agreed that their smaller but no less important displays about evolutionary progress would not duplicate those of Department M.89 The ramifications of all these ideas eventually trickled south to Cincinnati.

Ethnology, or the branch of anthropology that deals with the comparative study of cultures, was a distinctive feature of the exposition’s Midway, where a “great variety of races” lived in “highly instructive villages.”90 The commercial Midway Plaisance, with its Ferris wheel and displays of peoples from all over the world, “humanity in all its dissimilitude,” scandalized some visitors with its strange sights and sounds. Most important to exposition planners, the Midway greatly increased gate receipts.91 Cairo Street, for example, had a theater where women danced in a “shockingly interesting way” and a thatched village where the Dahomeyans “in all their barbaric ugliness” performed war
dances and thrust dangerous weapons into the air.⁹² The western artist Frederic Remington claimed he “did all the savages in turn, as every one else must do who goes there, and Buffalo Bill’s besides, where I renewed my first love.” Remington believed that this “Barnumizing” of the Midway fulfilled “its mission as a great educator” in which the “universal Yankee nation” had “an opportunity to observe that part of the world which does not wear Derby hats and spend its life in a top-and-bottom tussel [sic] with a mortgage bearing eight percent.”⁹³

Henry Farny also observed ethnology in action at the fair. In March 1893, he had served as a member of the national jury of painters responsible for selecting works by American artists for the fair.⁹⁴ Sometime later Farny returned to Chicago, strolled down the Midway, and sketched the Dahomey dance for Harper’s Weekly.⁹⁵

Many years later Farny recalled seeing two Indians walking side by side down the Plaisance. As they came close he noticed that the little fingers of their inside hands were joined. Farny realized they were from different nations; this was their way of communicating with a friend. He recognized one man as a Lakota Sioux and spoke to him in “rusty” Lakota. The Lakota man told Farny that the cabin in which Sitting Bull had been killed was on the fairgrounds and that he, as a hired performer, was obliged to go into the dwelling on a regular basis. The Indian was visibly distraught because he had seen the spirit of Sitting Bull in the cabin and was worried about why the spirit had come all the way from South Dakota to Chicago. Farny understood the man’s fear and gave him train fare to return home.⁹⁶

Despite the popularity of the living ethnology displays, under Putnam’s direction of Department M it was archaeology that stood first in importance. Putnam’s plan included Cincinnatian Charles Metz, of the Literary and Scientific Society of Madisonville. In May 1891, Putnam wrote Metz, appointing him “Special Assistant” and telling him that “I am anxious for you to stir up an interest in Ohio in favor of the Exposition.” Putnam envisioned a “thorough representation of the archaeology” of Ohio. He told Metz that a relief map of Serpent Mound was in progress and asked Metz to investigate a “few places” at the Turner group and prepare a relief map of those mounds and enclosures. Metz’s $25.00 invoice for “salary for June 1891” was not itemized. In a handwritten note at the bottom Putnam tells Metz that when “you have expenses the items must be entered in detail even to a postage stamp.” It is hard to say if Metz, a practicing physician, continued in this employment under these circumstances; however, he did receive an official award for two models of mounds.⁹⁷ Putnam also appointed Warren K. Moorehead as a “field assistant for Ohio about January, 1891.” On April 1 Putnam and
his World’s Columbian Exposition team began excavating in various parts of Ohio in preparation for the archaeology exhibit. Moorehead organized a team of eleven or twelve men and worked at Fort Ancient in Warren County and at another site several miles away for four or five months (fig. 7). On Putnam’s recommendation Moorehead attempted to contact Metz, but was unsuccessful and proceeded with his own excavations until February 1, 1892. The “nucleus of exhibits” resulting from this work—cases of skulls and stone or flint relics together with cases of maps and dioramas showing the results of “systematic” excavations and well-known mounds—grandly illustrated the archaeology of Ohio.99

Yet Moorehead, an Ohio citizen, felt that the state’s exhibit was “not that which Ohio could make.” The display was “largely confined” to specimens taken “from the cabinets of several gentlemen” and the maps were “decidedly crude and insignificant” and had already been shown at other fairs and exhibits. Moorehead maintained that the Ohio commissioners should have “drawn upon the Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati
Society of Natural History, or the Western Reserve Historical Society.” Then Ohio “could have made an exhibit which would have been both scientific and important.” Moorehead was probably correct in this assessment because the lists of borrowed objects do not contain any spectacular moundbuilder art objects (fig. 8).

Another section of the ethnology department planned to show the “customs and arts” of different people “before they were influenced by the whites.” Again, American collections predominated. Unlike the sensationalistic living displays of the Midway, education was the stated goal of this display, and Indians from different parts of the United States, such as the Pacific Northwest coast, came to the fair to demonstrate their Native industries and use their ceremonial objects. “The meaning of the ethnographical specimens is made clearer by the presence of a small colony of Indians, who live in their native habitations near the Anthropological building.” Two “instructive” groups were the Iroquois in their bark houses and the Indians from British Columbia in their houses with their carved totem poles. The idea of having real Indians demonstrate traditional lifeways concerned Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas J. Morgan, who feared criticism over the contradictory message being presented to fairgoers. At the same time the govern-
ment sought to acculturate Indians by strongly discouraging any vestiges of their traditional culture, there would be an exhibit of live Indians conveying the message that Indians were an “exotic race” with little relationship to contemporary mainstream America.¹⁰²

Putnam’s plan, with Indians living in traditional houses, infuriated Richard Henry Pratt, a former brigadier general of the U.S. Army and head of the United States Indian Industrial School at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Pratt maintained that the effect of the exhibits “contrived” by the Smithsonian and the Bureau of Indian Affairs “was calculated to keep the nation’s attention and the Indian’s energies fixed upon his valueless past, through the spectacular aboriginal housing, dressing, and curio employments.” The Bureau of Indian Affairs exhibit of boarding schools on Indian reservations only encouraged Native Americans “to remain a separate and peculiar people.” Putnam’s focus on the anthropology of America and Pratt’s mission of leading Indians “into civilization and citizenship” had vastly different goals. Pratt said the two had “opposite and inimical purposes.”¹⁰³

The controversy over the best way to present America’s first people points to the wide discrepancy between the two organizers’ goals. Frederic Remington’s opinion about the educational benefits to ordinary Americans of seeing so many diverse foreign people cannot be ignored, but nevertheless the ethnological displays must have subtly reinforced the idea that whites were the superior race. One school of historical thought maintains that the Midway gave visitors an “ethnological, scientific sanction for the American view of the nonwhite world as barbaric and childlike.”¹⁰⁴ However, one cannot help but wonder what the Indians and participants from foreign lands thought about the manners of the gawking, pointing fairgoers.

The popularity of the World’s Columbian Exposition’s sensational living displays along the Midway confirmed the fact that the presence of Indians and people from foreign countries attracted an enthusiastic public that willingly spent its money. Not surprisingly, some Cincinnati businessmen decided to exploit the trend. Kohl and Middleton’s Dime Museum, located on Vine Street between Fifth and Sixth streets, promised to enthral and educate spectators by exhibiting oddities of nature, such as an eight-footed Arabian horse and a “dusky beauty who walks on swords.”¹⁰⁵ On two occasions a mixed-blood Indian and his “white wife” from the Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota traveled to Kohl and Middleton’s, probably to discuss traditional lifeways and demonstrate dances. The supervising agent at Cheyenne River maintained that such a museum display was “a concern of an entirely different nature from the ‘Wild West’ show.”¹⁰⁶ Kohl and Middleton’s Dime Museum is listed in the Williams’ Cincinnati Directory as operating in the city between the years 1886 and 1895.¹⁰⁷
Cincinnati’s Wild West

In 1895, when the owner of an unsuccessful Wild West show abruptly abandoned a group of Cree Indians in Bellevue, Kentucky, the Cincinnati Zoo’s administration acted quickly to exhibit live Indians. The Cree camped on the zoo’s grounds for two months that summer and the zoo’s admissions revenue increased. It was a win-win situation: the Cree earned enough money from the zoo to pay their fare home to Havre, Montana. So successful was the venture that one enthusiastic newspaper printed the headline, “What the World’s Fair Was to Chicago the Zoo Is to Cincinnati!”

John Goetz Jr., president of the Cincinnati Zoological Society, justified the zoo’s decision to incorporate ethnological exhibits: “The presentation of wild people is in line with zoology; and so, when we exhibit Indians, or South Sea Islanders, or Esquimaux, or Arabians, or any wild or strange people now in existence, we are simply keeping within our province as a zoological institution.”

For zoo officials, the idea of producing a more grandiose—and profitable—spectacle modeled after Buffalo Bill’s show held tremendous financial potential. The entire United States was gripped with nostalgia for the frontier. The memory of the sensational Columbian Exposition was still fresh. Buffalo Bill had visited Cincinnati three times with great success; even the Kohl and Middleton Dime Museum had exhibited live Indians. Capitalizing on the nation’s interest in its early history seemed a logical way to increase the zoo’s profits. An expanded program on a Wild West theme, the society reasoned, would appeal to everyone. The fact that the version would be mythical probably did not concern zoo officials, if they thought of it at all.

On April 11, 1896, Will S. Heck, the zoo’s manager, wrote his first letter requesting Indians from “Western Reservations” for the purpose of exhibitions. A rapid exchange of letters between Heck and various Bureau of Indian Affairs officials took place over the next few weeks, and by the end of April, permission for an Indian visit had been granted (fig. 9).

After receiving this official permission “to engage the services of, not to exceed one hundred, Indians,” Heck wrote the Indian agents at both Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations. On May 11, J. George Wright, the Indian Agent at Rosebud, wrote Heck about the Indians’ salaries. The average salary, Wright said, was $25.00 per month for each individual male Indian; $10.00 and $15.00 per month for each woman, and $5.00 per month for each child. Chiefs or head men would probably demand $30 or $35, or possibly $50 per month.
Wright told Heck that in addition the Indians would bring their “native costume, feathers, etc.” and that he, Heck, “would have no trouble whatever in controlling [sic] these Indians, provided strict discipline was maintained, and they not [sic] permitted to obtain liquor under any circumstances.”

The Society decided to “engage the services” of the Indians and Heck forwarded the required $10,000 bond to Thomas Smith, the Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs. This bond guaranteed the Indians’ salary and safe return to the reservation. Heck told Smith that Fred E. Nevin, a representative of the Zoological Society, would start for Rosebud Reservation on May 31.

On June 11, Charles E. McCchesney, United States Indian Agent at Rosebud Reservation, wrote the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, “I have the honor to transmit herewith fifty-nine Articles of Agreement between Fred E. Nevin, duly authorized representative

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of the Zoological Society of Cincinnati, Ohio, and sundry Indians of this Agency. These agreements cover 89 persons, who left this Agency for Cincinnati, Ohio, today.”¹¹⁶ This procedure—posting a bond, signing contracts, and sending a representative—was identical to the one Buffalo Bill followed when hiring Indians.

The contract was paternalistic. The Society promised to protect the Sicangu from all immoral influences and surroundings, and to provide all needful medical attendance and medicine, and do all such other acts and things as may be requisite and proper for the health, comfort and welfare of the said party of the second part, and to return [them] to the said Agency within the time specified by the Interior Department from the date hereof.¹¹⁷

When Nevin signed the contracts, the society incurred a serious financial responsibility. Goetz justified his decision in the annual report by saying that the board of directors believed that the $25,000 earned in 1895, the year the Cree camped at the zoo, “could be kept up and probably exceeded.”¹¹⁸ The board was banking on the public’s fascination with Wild West shows to offset any of the zoo’s current deficits. Also, both Will Heck, the zoo’s manager, and Fred Nevin, who represented the zoo and signed the contracts as a witness, had worked at the Kohl and Middleton Dime Museum and hence had additional experience with visiting Indians.

Thus, on June 11, eighty-nine intrepid men, women, and children from the Sicangu Lakota Sioux band embarked on a journey of more than a thousand miles from Valentine, Nebraska, a small town near their home on Rosebud Reservation in western South Dakota, to Cincinnati. The Sicangu packed their fine Plains clothing and large tipis, boarded their horses onto the train, and departed for the unknown. Their contracts called for them to camp on the Zoological Garden’s grounds for three months and participate in a series of educational programs illustrating frontier and pioneer life for Cincinnati’s citizens—a program that flagrantly imitated Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show (fig. 10).¹¹⁹

Before departing for Cincinnati, the Sicangu posed in front of Charles P. Jordan’s trading post on Rosebud for an official photograph by John A. Anderson, who documented numerous other Rosebud Sioux activities. The men looked splendid in their Plains Indian finery, many astride their horses with women and children seated on the ground in front.¹²⁰ By Saturday, June 20, Cincinnati residents knew that “legitimate Indians” were at the zoo, living in a “picturesque village” where visitors could see aboriginal life firsthand and meet Little Bald Eagle, Young Iron Shell, Spotted Owl, Goes to War, and other Sicangu.¹²¹ Newspaper articles invited the public to walk around and witness the
frontier as it once was; the board of directors felt that this event “gave a rare opportunity of showing the character and mode of life of the Indian tribes” to the city’s citizens. One headline claimed the zoo’s drama was “The Only Genuine Wild West Show and Congress of Rough Riders of the World Here This Season.”

Valentine McKenzie, a Sicangu who had been educated at Carlisle Indian School, served as interpreter when Cincinnati dignitaries, reporters, and visitors toured the camp. In Anderson’s photograph, and in many others taken that summer, McKenzie can easily be identified by his white cowboy hat, which is also noted in local newspaper articles.

The Sicangu erected their tipis in the northeastern portion of the zoo’s garden, a lovely wooded section quite different from most of the landscape in the Great Plains. One local reporter described the open-air camp: “The [Sicangu] village is diversified by hill and dale, and plain and valley. The tepees, whose sides are covered with rude pictures, showing the Indian’s passion, if not his talent, for drawing, are distributed with a charming disregard for symmetry and distance over the grounds.”

Figure 10. Some of the Sicangu who traveled from their home on Rosebud Reservation pose for a photograph on the Cincinnati Zoo’s grounds. The group camped for three months at the Cincinnati Zoo and allowed Cincinnatians to stroll through their “living” village. Cincinnati Museum Center—Cincinnati Historical Society Library.
The landscape probably was not the only thing that surprised the Sicangu. Cincinnati’s humidity must have made it uncomfortable to perform in leather or to wear their customary woolen blankets. Two Sicangu women brought and wore their finest apparel—Navajo Chief Blankets, coveted by Plains peoples, who did not weave, but appreciated superb craftsmanship and design (fig. 11). Numerous photographs, newspaper articles, and an unpublished manuscript reveal that the Sicangu were good sports as they went about their job of rehearsing for and performing in two entertainments daily, at 3:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Advertisements recommended that spectators attend the evening performances because the electric and pyrotechnic lighting and red-fire effects intensified the stirring frontier and pioneer scenes.

If the Sioux were surprised by the climate, Cincinnatians were equally surprised by the Sioux. The chefs, probably of German descent, hired by the zoo to prepare meals for the Sicangu quickly learned that the Indians had sophisticated palates. Soon after their arrival the Sicangu, accomplished butchers themselves, requested choice cuts of

Figure 11. Two women wear their best blankets for photographer Enno Meyer. The blanket on the left is a trade blanket with a beaded blanket strip; the one on the right is a second-phase “Chief’s Blanket” woven by a Navajo woman. The textile, distinguished by small red bars in the center and edged stripes, indicates that its wearer was a wealthy woman with considerable status. Cincinnati Museum Center—Cincinnati Historical Society Library.
beef, like sirloins and porterhouses, rather than the cheaper cuts the chefs had initially prepared. “Then they wanted more vegetables and expressed a preference for cabbage. Later they wanted blackberries and watermelons while nothing in the bake-shop came amiss.”

Obviously, the Sicangu enjoyed eating foods different from those available at Rosebud (fig. 12).

By late June, a couple of weeks after the Sicangu arrived, performances became more elaborate and even included the zoo’s interpretation of Buffalo Bill’s Congress of Rough Riders: Sicangu Lakota Sioux and Bedouin Arabs, who were on tour from the Near East, excitedly thundering around the zoo’s outdoor arena in “a grand combination drill of horsemen from the Wild West and the Wild East.” Other features on the program were the introduction of the Lakota chiefs and warriors, Native dances of all types, and reenactments of well-known historical events and stereotypical Indian-white encounters: the Massacre at Wounded Knee, the Battle of Little Big Horn, an attack on a frontier stagecoach, and the proverbial burning of a prisoner at the stake. A company of the First

Figure 12. Two Sicangu men and a child display their Plains finery for photographer Enno Meyer. The Sioux participated in two Wild West shows daily; in between they posed for photographs, toured the city, and shopped in local stores. Cincinnati Museum Center—Cincinnati Historical Society Library.

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Regiment of Infantry from the Ohio National Guard played the roles of the U.S. soldiers. These “educational” dramas distilled for Cincinnatians the romance of the West.

As the summer progressed, the zoo’s leaders, fired with creativity, staged Historical Cincinnati, a play that purported to portray the frontier history of the city. This engaged the zoo’s Rosebud Sioux visitors in an anachronistic show that stereotyped the eastern frontier of a century before. For the new play the Sicangu, wearing their Plains clothing, played the parts of Eastern Woodland Indians and participated in a sham battle staged before a gigantic scene depicting Fort Washington. The intense confrontation culminated in a thrilling attack on the fort, which was being bravely defended by frontiersmen. When they asked Indians to storm and attack Fort Washington, the zoo’s officials rewrote Cincinnati history. The fort had never suffered any attack whatsoever, and if it had, Plains Indians would not have been involved. Incidents in the lives of such renowned frontiersmen from the Ohio Valley as Daniel Boone, Simon Kenton, James Smith, and Colonel William Crawford were also depicted. The playwrights at the zoo used these historical figures to enliven their performances and fatten their gate receipts.127

In addition to the planned Wild West dramas, the Sicangu sometimes participated in special activities at the zoo. For example, when the McKinley Club opened the Republican presidential campaign, the Indians paraded in a spectacular grand entry.128 As a souvenir, McKinley supporters gave everyone a campaign button with his picture on it; the Sicangu liked these mementos. Thomas H. Kelley, an attorney who was an accomplished amateur photographer, took a picture of the Sicangu Goes to War wearing a campaign button; he had pinned it beneath his United States Indian Police badge. At least five other Indians posed for Kelley that summer.129

Even though the Sicangu were busy participating in two programs each day and posing for numerous photographers and artists, they still found time to dress in their finest Plains clothing for touring and shopping for themselves and their friends back on Rosebud. They visited the city’s best stores and purchased discriminatingly, being particularly fond of colored shirts, silk Windsor ties, and red blankets.130 Newspaper reporters frequently followed them on their various excursions. One article states that Young Iron Shell’s daughter bought large cotton handkerchiefs, beads, a feather duster, some sticks of peppermint candy, a red and yellow workbasket, and a majolica beer mug.131

Zoo officials felt responsible for the Indians’ welfare and, as far as is known, behaved professionally toward them. Two occasions in particular are documented. One night a major thunderstorm, accompanied by blasts of lightning and violent wind, caused zoo officials to urge the Sicangu to hurry to “an old road and lay flat so as not to blow away.”
Another incident occurred when Little Left Hand Bull became ill. Black Bear, a traditional medicine man, conducted a healing ceremony, while zoo officials enlisted the services of a Dr. Thompson. Despite both men's efforts, the child died. Relatives dressed him in Lakota finery and performed a mourning ritual. Following the ceremony, Black Bear carefully placed the child's body in a small casket, which was then put inside a white hearse provided by a local undertaker. The grief-stricken entourage included four additional carriages for relatives and friends and Black Bear, astride his horse, rode behind the procession. Mourners proceeded down the hill to Cincinnati's central train depot, where the child's parents and Young Iron Shell departed for the interment on Rosebud.\textsuperscript{132}

The photographer Enno Meyer, whose images first catalyzed contemporary research into the Lakota's Cincinnati visit, became friends with some of the Sicangu men close to his own age of twenty-one. Meyer's nephew William Meyer recollects a family story about Enno Meyer and Enno's father taking some Indians downtown to the family's photography studio for some portrait shots. (This probably explains the plain backdrop seen in some of the images.) Following this session the group went upstairs for coffee and cake. William Meyer remembered that one of the elderly Sicangu was not acquainted with stairs and was initially frightened by them. Another family story pertains to the fact that one of the Indians was fluent in English. Most likely this was McKenzie.\textsuperscript{133}

On the Sunday before the Indians departed, the \textit{Cincinnati Enquirer} noted that friends would be visiting the garden “in order to shake hands with them and bid them good-by before they turn their faces toward the setting sun.” The reporter wrote that they would not forget their stay and that “in their Western lodges this winter, around the blazing fagot fire while the wind is careening over the prairie, they will sit about and tell their friends who remained at home what wonderful things they saw in the Queen City of the West.”\textsuperscript{134}

The Sicangu's lengthy stay—shows began on June 20 and ended on September 6—allowed some Cincinnatians time to develop friendships with the Indians. Some people went to the zoo repeatedly to photograph, draw, or simply visit the Sicangu. Sometimes Cincinnatians took their Indian friends on excursions throughout the city, creating an unusual sight on the streets and in stores.

Young Enno Meyer's friendship with the Sicangu endured beyond the summer of 1896. Meyer not only took pictures of his new friends, but also wrote to them after they returned home to Rosebud. A few Sicangu wrote back and sent him different kinds of beadwork. These objects are in the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History, now part of the Cincinnati Museum Center. Meyer's fond memories of his experiences that summer...
prompted him to save his glass negatives and photographs of the Sicangu, as well as their letters to him, among his personal effects. Even though the letters are short, they are invaluable because they provide a rare view of Sicangu life from the Indians’ perspective.

The letters of the Sicangu Lakota who corresponded with Meyer and called him kola (friend) opened a window to their thoughts and the activities on Rosebud. Six of these letters survive today: Arthur Belt, whose Indian name was Blokaciqa, wrote on April 3, 1900, and April 2, 1901; Good Voice Eagle, whose Indian name was Wanbli Ho Waste, wrote on December 11, 1896, May 4, 1898, and August 8, 1898; and Oliver T. Bear wrote on May 29, 1901. A seventh letter, written by Belt to Joseph Henry Sharp, has been found in the collections of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming. Writing must have been arduous for each of the correspondents, just as it would be for us to compose a letter in a foreign language, but they were writing to a kola.

While in Cincinnati the Indians had established relationships with other people who frequented the zoo during their stay, particularly Henry F. Farny and Joseph Henry Sharp, artists renowned for their paintings of Plains Indians. In his 1900 letter, Arthur Belt asked Meyer: “Please let me know where is Mr. Farnning [Farny] you know him. and I am remember Mr. Sharp. But I don’t know his number street. tell him I send him my best regards.” He also inquires about Will Heck, reminding Meyer that “he is Manger [manager] in Zoo Garden. I want write to him” (fig. 13).

Another major hurdle to the correspondence was the scarcity of stamps on the reservation. Meyer’s friends begged him to send them stamps so that they could write to him. Wanbli Ho Waste, Good Voice Eagle, wrote, “I wait for you letter after while when I get a money I send you indian word I want some stamps I shade [shake] hand with you.” Blokaciqa, Arthur Belt, also needed financial assistance and offered to sell Meyer some Plains beadwork:

and now I got some bead work But I don’t Know How I sent you. if you can send me $1. I sent you some nice bead work for you. and I wish you send me a good Indian women picture. I know that you lots of pictures. I like have one of picture (goes to war) wife some of women picture too. don’t forget will you.

These letters reveal that Meyer’s portrait-style photographs of the Sicangu as they posed on the zoo grounds or in his father’s studio downtown were popular because each of the correspondents either thanks Meyer for the photographs he sent or requests additional ones. Obviously Oliver T. Bear saw the potential for marketing these pictures on Rosebud. In his 1901 letter he requested additional pictures (fig. 14):
Just received my picture and I am very glad that you have sent me my picture so again dear friend please sent me two of the picture which I stand with Black Hawk and his wife and also 3 of then Eagle Deer sister which she stand with Black Hawk wife and when you sent them please write to me and Let me know if you could sent all the different picture you got when we were at zoo garden. and I will pay you for it Because Indian are buying picture and it may be that if you sent them these picture they mine pay you for. Enclose my letter for this time Good bye friend bye bye
Your truely
Oliver T. Bear

Requests also came for tail feathers from the eagles at the zoo and pieces of red, blue, green, and yellow ribbon. Meyer must have been able to send some feathers because Good

Figure 13. Even though the contracts in the National Archives give the English names of the Sicangu men who traveled to Cincinnati, it is still difficult to identify all the people in Enno Meyer’s photographs because Meyer did not label many of them. This man, however, had his Indian name, “Blokiaciqa,” tattooed on his upper left arm. He was also known as Arthur Belt and Little Stallion. After his return to Rosebud, he corresponded with both Meyer and Rookwood artist Joseph Henry Sharp. Cincinnati Museum Center—Cincinnati Historical Society Library.
Voice Eagle asked for them again, reminding Meyer that “feathers I ask you Eagle tail Indian very want Eagle tail me made over head [probably meaning he made a warbonnet] you see last time I want send me to much when you get this letter.”

Their letters also reveal how the Sicangu felt about participating in another “play” at the zoo. In December 1896, Good Voice Eagle asked, “and I want questian Samething zoological play it Now I want your tell me which month get indian tell me and How many pay all he get tell me I want when the indian caming [coming] I came [come] Say and I come There.” Then in May 1898 he repeated his question, “Today I am going to write to you again How is Zoological words you have no more shows at zoologi[cal] or run again we want to hear that things.” On August 8, 1898 the same inquiry appeared, “Will [indecipherable word, but probably refers to Heck] now you know him To tell me and run Show again to tell me we want that Zoological gardens word.”

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*Figure 14.* The Sicangu liked the pictures Meyer made and even requested additional prints after they returned home to Rosebud Reservation. Here, several men relax on the Cincinnati Zoo’s grounds; one holds some pictures in his left hand. *Cincinnati Museum Center—Cincinnati Historical Society Library.*
The reason the Indians wanted to return pertained to their situation on Rosebud. Buying something as insignificant as a stamp proved a financial burden. Paper must have also been a problem because Good Voice Eagle’s 1896 letter is written on a zoo “Daily Report” form. The potential for earning a salary was critical to the destitute, reservation-bound Sicangu. But for the Zoological Society, the Sicangu visit that summer of 1896 was a financial disaster.

Despite high expectations, the Zoological Society’s speculative Wild West endeavor failed to generate the anticipated monetary returns. It failed for several reasons. Pawnee Bill’s Historic Wild West and Great Far East show, a smaller competitor of Buffalo Bill’s show, overlapped the Sicangu’s encampment for several weeks, and undoubtedly siphoned off some of the zoo’s potential attendance. More important, the streetcar facilities did not provide easy access to the Zoological Garden, and the inclement weather of that summer was not conducive to outdoor programs. The society’s president, John Goetz Jr., admitted that the “expense of exhibiting these Indians . . . exceeded by several thousands of dollars our receipts.” He blamed the nation’s economy, but felt “the real and principal cause of our loss this year was the unprecedentedly rainy season.” He said that it rained forty-six of the one hundred days of extra amusements and when it was not raining, the sky was “cloudy and threatening.” To make his point he prepared a table comparing the attendance and receipts of 1895 with those in 1896 for twenty-four of the rainiest days of the season. “On these twenty-four rainy days, the total attendance was 25,490 and the receipts were $5,670.65; the total attendance for the corresponding days of 1895 was 77,180 people . . . and the receipts were $14,724.50.” Even though the deficit was enormous, Goetz continued to believe that ethnological villages should be scheduled because they had “vast educational value” and were a “profitable investment.”

Unfortunately, the financial burden the society incurred through the Sioux visit was not relieved by the 1897 admissions, and the Zoological Garden went into receivership the following year.

A Pragmatic Evaluation

There were times when Indian participants in Wild West shows and other ethnological displays were exploited and sometimes abandoned, as happened with the Cree in Kentucky in 1895. But performing Indians understood the risks involved and some found meaningful careers that enabled them to travel the world. Such was the case with the
twenty-six Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians, including women and children, who joined Pawnee Bill's show, the Zoo's competitor that summer of 1896. They had left their reservation surreptitiously one early morning, having made arrangements with a go-between for Pawnee Bill without permission from government authorities. The Indians were willing to break rules and risk consequences in order to travel and perform.144

When the Rosebud Sicangu consented to participate in an educational program in Cincinnati, they committed themselves to an event that brought the romantic western frontier east. Their three-month stay left a legacy that created ties between Cincinnati and Rosebud; their visit generated not only official documentation, photographs, and an unpublished manuscript, but also fond memories of that summer that have survived generations. As one newspaper reported, “Many [Cincinnatians] have gone so often [to the zoo] that they have formed the acquaintance of a great many of the Indians.”145 Five years after the visit, Arthur Belt inquired about “my girl,” Dora Tucker, one of his Cincinnati friends.146

The Sicangu encampment also resulted in a treasure trove of additional documentation that has disclosed the complete story of this nearly forgotten event and permitted a study of Rosebud Lakota Sioux activities at the time when they were being forced to abandon their traditional ways of life. The research involved in the rediscovery of the Rosebud Sioux’s connection to Cincinnati included fieldwork opportunities with the Sicangu over a number of years.

The initial goal in 1989 was to identify the Sicangu in Meyer's photographs by matching the names on the contracts to the images. Several Sicangu were identified in a photograph album Meyer kept, but many of Meyer's original identifications of the people he photographed had become separated from the glass negatives. The Lakota Archives and Historical Research Center at Sinte Gleska University has become involved with the Sicangu visit project, and a complete record of all photographs, archival material, and other information as it continues to be discovered is deposited at the university.147 Since the initial deposition, for example, a Swedish researcher who studies Rosebud photographer John Anderson has been able to identify some of the Sicangu in the photographs.

Photographs of the Sicangu visitors continue to surface. The rare book section of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County contains six undated and unidentified images of the Sicangu Sioux taken by Henry Farny. The photographs, unposed images of the people at the zoo, show them astride their horses or standing beside a tipi (fig. 15).148
In 1997 the elderly granddaughter of Cincinnati Zoo manager Will S. Heck contacted the zoo about some pictures and a collection of Indian objects she had inherited. The pictures comprised another group of previously unseen images of the Cree and the Sicangu. The donor recalled a tale her grandfather used to tell about an Indian who sometimes hid in a hollow tree on zoo grounds; when night fell, he walked to a local bar. Heck had difficulty with the behavior of a few Indians, and the granddaughter did not recall how Heck resolved these issues. Most likely he relied on the chiefs to assist him.149

In 2002 previously unseen Sicangu images from the Rookwood Pottery Company collection were consigned to a Cincinnati auction house. The Rookwood designers used the company photo collection as inspiration for images of Indians on vases. Each of these new photographs was identified and the name matched to the census record. To date three images of the Sicangu—Eagle Deer, Young Iron Shell, and Owns The Dog—taken at the Cincinnati Zoo have matched the company’s finished pieces.

Susan Lahry Meyn
American Indian Observations

The Sicangu visit to Cincinnati has yielded information not only about Indian participation in Wild West events, but also about the deprivations and pleasures of life on a Lakota reservation at the turn of the last century.

The negative aspects of participating in these anthropological exhibits were numerous, beginning with the fact that exhibiting themselves had to be demeaning for many of the Indians. Even though the zoo’s officials carefully oversaw the needs of the Sicangu, most of the authorities and journalists probably still viewed the Sicangu in a paternalistic manner and retained a superior attitude toward them. The zoo’s leaders hoped to resolve their financial deficits by placing the Indians on display, and the newspapers hoped to garner additional readership by printing articles about the fierce Indians encamped at the zoo. There is no denying the fact that these Wild West shows placed the Sicangu in an anthropological zoo where visitors could stare relentlessly at their traditional clothing and foreign lifeways. In addition there was a language barrier, so visitors could not learn the Indians’ true feelings or really discover more about their culture. When Indians agreed to participate they had to trust the sponsor, who may or may not have been honest.

In today’s world of political correctness, displays of people, such as the Sicangu encampment, often cause a knee-jerk reaction leading critics to assert across the board that all exhibits of this type were deleterious to the participants. Before making this judgment, however, it is important to examine the specific incident fully and review it in the light of that time. All human experiences contain positive as well as negative aspects. A good case can be made that the zoo’s encampment enriched Sicangu lives by providing the people with hard cash, new experiences, and insights into the world beyond the reservation at a time when only Indian leaders generally traveled to the east.

For Indians participating as actors, performing may have prompted pride in their skills as audiences cheered them loudly. Wild West plays gave Native American men the opportunity to display their horsemanship and wear their regalia before an admiring audience. Other actors probably viewed the performances the same way most people think about a job—as a necessary activity to earn money.

It must be remembered that participation in the zoo’s event was voluntary; no one was forced to leave the reservation. The Sicangu certainly cherished no illusions about how whites regarded them and treated them. If being gawked at was the price they had to pay to see a new part of the world, no doubt the Indians decided the experience was worth that price. Another important fact is that the Indians, while being observed by
whites, observed white society in turn. Whether performing or resting in their “village,” the Native Americans could see how whites behaved to one another and to their children, how much liquor they consumed, and then could discuss their insights with each other just as people of all cultures do.

Probably the most valuable outcome of the Sicangu encampment was the friendship forged between Cincinnatians and Indians. Some visitors to the zoo cared enough to take and save photographs of their friends—photos passed down in their families for more than a hundred years. Today, the Sicangu have the opportunity to see those photographs in their archives and learn about a forgotten event in the history of their people.

The zoo’s Wild West event in 1896 lasted almost three months; Buffalo Bill’s visit in early May of that year lasted only two days.150 The ripple effects of this, Cincinnati’s own Wild West show, and its numerous other encounters with Indians have endured through time. Today the legacy of Cincinnati’s diverse Indian encounters is probably best reflected in the work of the city’s artists who became famous for their paintings of American Indians: most notably Henry Farny, John Hauser, and Joseph Henry Sharp. Each traveled west, met, and sometimes lived among Native Americans. Each painted in a studio crowded with mementoes of Native Americans—photographs, artifacts, and in one instance a letter from an Indian the artist had met years earlier.

In April 1901 Arthur Belt wrote Sharp, telling him, “This time I know where you are.” Enno Meyer had sent Sharp’s address to Belt, who said he wanted to see and talk to him. Belt also asked Sharp to send him four bottles of beer (fig. 16).151

Sharp and Farny, having spent time on Indian reservations, realized that Indian lives were changing, often in ways that did not benefit the people.152 The Bureau of Indian Affairs “order” instructing agents to insist that Indians cut their hair prompted Sharp to write William A. Jones, commissioner of Indian Affairs, in January 1902. Sharp pleads the Indians’ case, saying that this would be the “greatest sacrifice you could have them make.” Only on rare occasions, when their grief was overwhelming, did such traditional Indians cut their hair.153

Farny, after his return from a meeting with the Apache leader Geronimo at Fort Sill in Indian Territory, expressed his opinions about the overly strict government regulations. Like Sharp, he objected to the regulation relating to short hair. He thought it would be diplomatic if Uncle Sam catered “somewhat to the native taste in toilet of his savage soldiery [Indian police] by modeling his uniform on the general lines of Indian costumes.” This, Farny believed, would please the Indians and make them more comfortable.154 Haircuts and less restrictive clothing may seem insignificant to us, but these
requests to BIA officials demonstrate that Cincinnati artists had become knowledgeable about the people they painted and were concerned for their welfare.

On occasion Farny tried to educate Cincinnatians about the situation on Indian reservations from an Indian viewpoint. During one interview he took the time to explain why there were outbreaks of violence among Indians, saying that they retaliate “only when driven by hunger or an outrage upon their religious sentiment.” Government officials, he said, were “constantly interfering with their religion” and had suppressed certain ceremonies.155

Traditional Indians and their lifeways captured the imagination of the artists, who wanted to paint the real thing and believed that these subjects commanded an audience. According to an article in the Cincinnati Enquirer, the city’s artists felt their Indian paintings should bring good prices. Hauser spent $2,000 living in the Pueblo region for six months, an astronomical amount at that time, and Sharp spent approximately $800 living there for two months. “One of the artists said he could buy a better meal at a bird
store here than he would pay a dollar for there.” During the summer of 1896, when the Rosebud Sioux were camping at the zoo, the newspaper published a feature about Indians as a subject for artists. Hauser’s goal, the reporter said, was to “faithfully” interpret “the life and character of the race which is so fast disappearing.”

So enthusiastic were the local artists that it seems they were consumed by all things Indian. Around the turn of the century, for example, invitations to a number of events at the Cincinnati Art Club featured Plains Indian images and motifs. A photograph taken at the Cincinnati Art Club’s 1896 Christmas party shows some attendees dressed in Indian attire; Enno Meyer is wearing a beaded blanket strip around his neck and a pair of moccasins. (The blanket strip is now in the Cincinnati Museum Center collection and that photograph is also in the Cincinnati Museum Center.) We can see that, even though prominent local artists were well informed about Indian lives, they sometimes preferred to let themselves fall under the magical spell of the West (fig. 17).

**Figure 17.** Even in Cincinnati, the frontier myth of the Wild West, complete with Indians in eagle feather warbonnet, refused to die. Artist Joseph Henry Sharp sketched a Plains Indian for the Cincinnati Art Club Tombola, a party at which funds are raised through a sort of lottery. **Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Forrest Fenn, MS 22.424.**
In reality, the Wild West was no more. “The march of civilization has already turned a wild, savage populated country into a chain of cities and towns where education and civilization abound. . . . There are hardly anymore buffaloes,” the Cincinnati Times Star lamented in 1896.

And still, the myth persisted: “Indians, Indians, everywhere, yet not a scalp to take!” Cincinnati had its civilized pursuits, but, like the rest of the nation, refused to let go of the dangerous fascinations of the mythical West.

Notes

The epigraph to this essay is taken from George Catlin, Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Condition of the North American Indians (1841; reprint, Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1965), 1:62.

1. William Henry Harrison, A Discourse on the Aborigines of the Valley of the Ohio (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Express, 1838), 12.
8. Harrison, Discourse on the Aborigines, 12, 14, 31; Quaife, Indian Captivity of O. M. Spencer, xv.
10. Ibid., 59–62, 82, 86.
33. Baldwin, *Memorial*, 411; Ephraim G. Squier and Edwin H. Davis, *Ancient Monuments of the Mis-
50. Ibid., 171, 173, 179.
51. Ibid., 176–80; Metz Papers, CMC, Mss 596, box 11, file 4.

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56. Ibid., 118–29, 126.


60. Ibid.


62. Ibid., 15–21, 79, 118.


69. Howells, *Boy’s Town*, 150.


77. “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West at the Ball Grounds Yesterday,” *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*, October 20, 1884, 8.


84. Ibid., 6, 82, 242, 527.
86. Ibid., 127.
104. Rydell, All the World’s, 40.
106. Agent Charles E. McChesney to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas Morgan, November 15, 1889, #31536, Record Group 75, National Archives, Washington, DC. Hereafter cited as RG, NA, DC.
Herbert Welsh to Morgan, June 4, 1891. Letters Received 1891. #20212; Morgan to Herbert Welsh, June 13, 1891, Land–Vol. 109, RG 75, NA, DC. Commissioner Morgan sent Welsh the replies from various Indian agents to an Indian Office circular calling for information on the effects of Wild Westing.
107. Williams’ Cincinnati Directory (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Directory Office, 1880–1900). These years were reviewed.
110. Will Heck to John Carlisle, April 11, 1896, and Will Heck to Daniel Lamont, April 11, 1896; Letters Received 1896, #15220 (both letters), RG 75, NA, DC.
111. Will Heck to Hoke Smith, April 16, 1896; Letters Received 1896, #15327, RG 75, NA, DC. Jacob Bromwell to Daniel Browning, April 22, 1896; Letters Received 1896, #15327, RG 75, NA, Washington, DC. Twenty-third Annual Report, 10.
112. Will Heck to Thomas Smith, Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 2, 1896, Letters Received 1896, #16705, RG 75, NA, DC.
114. Ibid.
115. Will Heck to Thomas Smith, May 30, 1896, Letters Received 1896, #20489, RG 75, NA, DC. Charles E. McChesney to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 11, 1896, Letters Received 1896 #22637, RG 75, NA, DC. The contracts, #22637, are stored with #20489.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid.
118. Twenty-third Annual Report, 10.
119. J. George Wright to Zoological Society, May 11, 1896; Outgoing Correspondence for Rosebud, 1878–1910, Book 25, RG 75, NA, Kansas City Branch. Charles E. McChesney to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 11, 1896, Letters Received 1896 #22637, RG 75, NA, DC. The contracts, #22637, are stored with #20489.
120. Henry W. Hamilton and Jean Tyree Hamilton, The Sioux of the Rosebud: A History in Pictures (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), plate 96. Even though the caption under the photograph reads “1897,” this is incorrect because there was no Indian exhibit at the zoo that year. This photograph is also reproduced in Paul Dyck, Brulé: The Sioux People of the Rosebud (Flagstaff, AZ: Northland, 1971), plate 21. The captions are different in the two books because they are derived from different sources.

121. “Indian Shows at the Zoo,” June 20, 1896, 6; “Indian Squaws,” June 26, 1896, 9; “Our Indian Village Inhabited,” July 3, 1896, 8. All articles are in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*.


123. “Indian Shows at the Zoo,” June 20, 1896, 6; “The Zoo’s Wild West,” June 28, 1896, 19; “The Only Genuine Wild West Show,” June 29, 1896, 5. All articles are in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*.


125. James Albert Green, unpublished manuscript, 3, Mss G797u Box 2, CMC, Cincinnati Historical Society, Cincinnati, Ohio.


127. “Notes,” August 12, 1896, 10; “Historical Cincinnati Because . . .,” August 16, 1896, 19; “The Zoo To-Day,” August 23, 1896, 19. All articles are in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*.

128. “Small Was the Gold Meeting Held at the Zoo by the McKinley Club,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, August 20, 1896, 10.

129. Green’s unpublished manuscript contains six photographs taken by Kelley.

130. Green, unpublished manuscript, 3.


132. “Death Rode upon the Blast” and “Stormswept Was This City Last Night,” August 23, 1896, 1 and 5. Both articles are in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. A lead story details the widespread destruction left by the storm. Francis Paul Two Charger and Marie Kills Plenty to Meyn, June 22, 1993. The couple identified one of Meyer’s photographs as Francis Paul’s great-grandfather, Paul Two Charger, and said that he was married to Cheyenne Woman. Her name matches the census record. The couple then related a story about a storm, and their remembrance coincides with a newspaper article describing a night of heavy rain and wind. Marie Kills Plenty also recognized some of the beadwork designs as being a family pattern. For a description and sketches of the ceremonies surrounding the child’s illness and death see “Weird Scene in the Sioux Camp,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, August 1, 1896, 8, and “Weird and Wild Was the Ceremony,” August 3, 1896, 8. The name of the father is incorrect, because there is no contract for Big Brave, but there is one for Left Hand Bull, and his recently discovered photograph shows him with a young son.

133. William Meyer to Meyn, March 29, 1990. At the time, the family’s studio was located at 1309 Vine Street in downtown Cincinnati.


135. The six letters to Meyer are in the CMC, Cincinnati Museum of Natural History and have the numbers TT4899, TT4901, TT4902, TT4904, TT4905, and TT4906. For the seventh letter, see figure 16 in this essay.


137. Good Voice Eagle to Enno Meyer, August 8, 1898, TT4904.


139. Oliver T. Bear to Enno Meyer, May 29, 1901, TT4906.

140. Good Voice Eagle to Enno Meyer, August 8, 1898, TT4904.

141. Good Voice Eagle to Enno Meyer, December 11, 1896, TT4901; May 4, 1898, TT4902; August 8, 1898, TT4904.

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144. Woodson to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 23, 1896, Letters Received 1896 #23925; RG 75 NA, DC. Pawnee Bill’s group of show Indians did not sign contracts with the federal government because the Department of the Interior rejected Pawnee Bill’s request.
146. Arthur Belt to Enno Meyer, April 2, 1901, TT 4905.
148. Theodore A. Langstroth Collection Lithographs, #616, rare book section of The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. Langstroth was an obsessive collector who, according to library notes, colored Farny’s prints. The photographs may be identified on the reverse side, but they are glued to a piece of poster board. John Fleischmann, “The Labyrinthine World of the Scrapbook King,” Smithsonian 22, no. 11 (1992): 79–87.
149. Personal communication, Jean Linde Wagner to Meyn, October 1998.
151. Arthur Belt to J. H. Sharp, April 2, 1901, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, McCracken Research Library, Mss 22, series 1, box 3, folder 2.
152. “Painting Indians on Custer’s Battlefield,” Buffalo Bill Historical Center, McCracken Research Library, Mss 22, series 1, box 3, folder 2. The article has the handwritten date of December 29, 1903.
153. J. H. Sharp to Commissioner of Indian Affairs William A. Jones, January 18, 1902, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, McCracken Research Library, Mss 22, series 1, box 1, folder 21.
158. Forrest Fenn, The Beat of the Drum and the Whoop of the Dance: A Study of the Life and Work of Joseph Henry Sharp (Santa Fe, NM: Fenn, 1983), 99. The blanket strip, catalogue number A 13350, is now in the Cincinnati Museum Center collection. The moccasins appear in a photograph of Meyer’s personal Indian collection; that photograph is also in the Cincinnati Museum Center.
159. “Grand Display Was the Parade Made by Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show Monday Morning,” Cincinnati Times Star, May 4, 1896, 10.