

Guide to
PAWNEE BILL
Papers, 1894-1954

.8 cubic feet

Accession Number 9477

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Introduction

PAWNEE BILL, 1860-1942

Papers, 1894-1954

.8 cubic feet (1 slim document box, 1 document box, 1 F17 box)

Accession Number 9477

The Pawnee Bill papers were purchased from Charles Apfelbaum, a dealer, in 1987. Internal evidence suggests that the source may have been the Gordon L. Ostendorff family. The collection was generally in good condition. The photo scrapbooks, however, were deteriorating. Photographs were taken of the scrapbook pages and the negatives and contact prints now form a part of the collection. The collection has been placed in order and folder titles assigned as seemed appropriate and useful for research.

The collection should be cited as: Pawnee Bill Papers, 1894-1954, Accession Number 9477, Box Number..., Folder Number..., American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

RECEIVED AND ACKNOWLEDGED

Rick Ewig
Assistant Director

Date:

Biography

Gordon W. Lillie (Pawnee Bill) was born in Bloomington, Illinois, on February 14, 1860. The son of a miller, he began his career as a hunter and trapper. In 1878 he entered government service at the Pawnee Agency as interpreter and schoolteacher to the tribe. For two years Lillie interpreted for a group of Pawnees who participated in the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show. However, Pawnee Bill achieved fame through his own show, Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West. For many years he was a professional showman, performing in both the U.S. and Europe, and was a partner of Buffalo Bill (William F. Cody) from 1908 until 1913. In his shows, Pawnee Bill performed with his wife, May Emma Lillie, the daughter of a Philadelphia physician, who learned how to ride and shoot and became known as the "Lady Champion Horseback Rifle Shot of the World."

In 1889 Gordon W. Lillie led new settlers into Unassigned Lands of Oklahoma. In 1909 he established there an Old Town and Indian Trading Post and Pawnee Bill's Buffalo Ranch. He helped to build Highway 64 through Oklahoma, was a President of U.S. Highway 64 Association, Vice-President of the Fern Oil Corporation and Director of the Historical Society of Oklahoma. He was the author of *Thirty Years Among the Pawnee Indians* (1928) and co-author of several other books. He died on February 3, 1942.

Series Description

The Pawnee Bill Papers are arranged in 3 series:

Series I. Papers, 1894-1954. 6 folders. Correspondence of Gordon W. Lillie and May Lillie with members of the Ostendorff family and others, miscellaneous correspondence, biographical material on Pawnee Bill and others, printed material including magazines, rodeo program, clippings, Christmas cards, tickets.

Series II. Photographs, ca.1890s-ca.1930s. .45 cubic ft.+ 8 folders, 1 oversize item. Photographs of rodeo scenes in Cheyenne, Prescott, Calgary, etc.; portraits of Pawnee Bill, his wife, G.L. Ostendorff, Jose Berrera and others. Photocopies, negatives, and contact prints have been made and added to the collection. Arranged more or less chronologically.

Series III. Artifacts, no dates. 1 F17 box.

Scope and Content

The Pawnee Bill Papers, 1894-1954, contain information on various stages of Gordon William Lillie's life. Most of the correspondence appears to be addressed to members of the Ostendorff family including letters from May Lillie to Annie Ostendorff written while Pawnee Bill's Wild West show was touring Europe (1894-1895) and letters from G.W. Lillie to Gordon L. Ostendorff. Some correspondence has no clear connection with either Pawnee Bill or the Ostendorffs. The correspondence reflects the professional interests of Pawnee Bill: as a showman, in the early stages of his career; and, later, as a participant in the oil business and owner of a buffalo ranch and mail order store supplying Indian-made merchandise. Issues of *Cow Country* magazine include references to Gordon L. Ostendorff.

The biographical material contains information on Pawnee Bill and Gordon Ostendorff and includes a newspaper story on Pawnee Bill's Golden Wedding Anniversary.

There are four photo scrapbooks containing rodeo scenes from Cheyenne, Miles City, Glendive, Pendleton, Weiser, Prescott, and Calgary. A fifth album contains miscellaneous images of Wild West shows, rodeos, and performers. These albums, because of their fragility, have been photographed and photocopied for research use. Also included are individual portraits of Pawnee Bill, May Lillie, Jose Berrera, and Gordon L. Ostendorff. The artifacts relate to Pawnee Bill's show.

Folder List

Series I. Papers, 1894-1954

| <u>Folder</u> | <u>Title</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|---------------|--|---------------------|
| <u>Box 1</u> | | |
| 1 | CORRESPONDENCE OF G.W. LILLIE (PAWNEE BILL) | 1894-1935 |
| 2 | CORRESPONDENCE OF M.E. LILLIE To Annie Ostendorff while May Lillie was on tour in Europe. | 1894-1895 |
| 3 | CORRESPONDENCE (MISCELLANEOUS) | 1916-1920 |
| 4 | BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL Clippings on Pawnee Bill and Gordon L. Ostendorff, handwritten answers to the questionnaire <i>Do you remember?</i> by G.L. Ostendorff. | 1936-1954, no dates |
| 5 | PRINTED MATERIAL Issues of <i>Cow-Country</i> magazine (1919), rodeo program (1941). | 1919, 1941 |
| 6 | MISCELLANEOUS Stationery; Christmas cards; calling cards; show tickets. | 1917-1949, no dates |

Series II. Photographs, ca.1890s-ca.1930s

| | | |
|----|---|-----------------------|
| 7 | PAWNEE BILL, MAY MANNING LILLIE, JOSE BERRERA | no dates |
| 8 | WILD WEST SHOWS, RODEOS, PERFORMERS Photocopies for research use. | ca.1890s- ca.1930s |
| 9 | RODEO SCENES Cheyenne, Wyoming (1919); Miles City and Glendive, Montana (1919); Weiser; Pendleton, Oregon (1918); Pawnee Bill's show, Coney Island, New York (1917); photocopies for research use. | 1917-1919 |
| 10 | RODEO SCENES Calgary, Alberta; photos by W.V. Ring; photocopies for research use. | 1919 |
| 11 | RODEO SCENES Prescott, Arizona; photos by Thomas Bate; photocopies for research use. | 1919 |

Series II. Photographs (cont.)

| <u>Folder</u> | <u>Title</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|
|---------------|--------------|-------------|

PAWNEE BILL PAPERS, Accession Number 9477

Box 1 (cont.)

| | | |
|----|---|-----------------------|
| 12 | RODEO SCENES Prescott, Arizona; photos by Thomas Bate; photocopies for research use. | 1921 |
| 13 | CONTACT PRINTS Of images in photo scrapbooks. | ca.1890s- ca.1930s |
| 14 | NEGATIVES Of images in photo scrapbooks. | ca.1890s- ca.1930s |

Box 2

| | | |
|-----|--|-----------------------|
| 1-2 | WILD WEST SHOWS, RODEOS, PERFORMERS Photo scrapbook. | ca.1890s- ca.1930s |
| 3 | RODEO SCENES Cheyenne, Wyoming (1919); Miles City and Glendive, Montana (1919); Weiser; Pendleton, Oregon (1918); Pawnee Bill's show, Coney Island, New York (1917); photo scrapbook. | 1917-1919 |
| 4-5 | RODEO SCENES Calgary, Alberta; photos by W.V. Ring; photo scrapbook. | 1919 |
| 6-7 | RODEO SCENES Prescott, Arizona; photos by Thomas Bate; photo scrapbook. | 1919 |
| 8 | RODEO SCENES Prescott, Arizona; photos by Thomas Bate; photo scrapbook. | 1921 |

| | | |
|-------------|--------------------|-------------|
| <u>Item</u> | <u>Description</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|-------------|--------------------|-------------|

Box 3

| | | |
|---|------------------------------------|----------|
| 1 | PHOTOGRAPH OF GORDON L. OSTENDORFF | ca. 1918 |
|---|------------------------------------|----------|

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Series III. Artifacts, no dates

| <u>Item</u> | <u>Description</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|----------------------|--|-------------|
| <u>Box 3</u> (cont.) | | |
| 2 | LEATHER WRIST GUARDS Tooled and studded; these appear to be the wrist guards worn by Gordon Ostendorff in his portrait. | no date |
| 3 | WATCH FOB Leather strap with medal portraying Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill. | no date |
| 4 | PENNANT Depicting Indian head with lettering <i>Buffalo Bill's & Pawnee Bill's</i> . | no date |