



Buffalo Bill on the Silver Screen: The Films of William F. Cody (The William F. Cody Series on the History and Culture of the American West)

Sandra K. Sagala

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For more than thirty years, William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody entertained audiences across the United States and Europe with his Wild West show. Scores of books have been written about Cody’s fabled career as a showman, but his involvement in the film industry—following the dissolution of his traveling show—is less well known. In *Buffalo Bill on the Silver Screen*, Sandra K. Sagala chronicles the fascinating story of Cody’s venture into filmmaking during the early cinema period.

In 1894 Thomas Edison invited Cody to bring some of the Wild West performers to the inventor’s kinetoscope studio. From then on, as Sagala reveals, Cody was frequently in the camera’s eye, eager to participate in the newest and most popular phenomenon of the era: the motion picture. In 1910, promoter Pliny Craft produced *The Life of Buffalo Bill*, a film in which Cody played his own persona. After his Wild West show disbanded, Cody fully embraced the film business, seeing the technology as a way to recoup his financial losses and as a new vehicle for preserving America’s history and his own legacy for future generations. Because he had participated as a scout in some of the battles and skirmishes between the U.S. Army and Plains Indians, Cody wanted to make a film that captured these historical events. Unfortunately for Cody, *The Indian Wars* (1913) was not a financial success, and only three minutes of footage have survived.

Long after his death, Cody’s legacy lives on through the many movies that have featured his character. Sagala provides a useful appendix listing all of these films, as well as those for which Cody himself took an active role as director, producer, or actor. Published on the eve of the centennial anniversary of *The Indian Wars*, this engaging book offers readers new insights into the legendary figure’s life and career and explores his lasting image in film.

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