

## FIRST DRAFT

# Buffalo Bill consummate showman during Grand Junction visit in 1908

The first time William F. Cody — better known as Buffalo Bill — appeared on stage in early 1872, he could barely utter a word, he recalled.

By the time he brought his famous Wild West Show to Grand Junction in September 1908, he was the world's best known showman. He had taken his show to New York and other large cities, had performed before presidents and the queen of England and had toured Europe.

So it's no surprise that when he visited Colorado 110 years ago, Cody knew how to stage an event.

"The show itself is superb, but it is dominated at all times by its owner," wrote a Cañon City newspaper, after the Wild West Show performed there in late August 1908. Cody outshone all other performers, it said.

In addition to Cody, the show had more than 500 people. They included American Indians, American cowboys, Mexican vaqueros, Russian Cossacks, Japanese and Beduin horsemen, celebrated marksmen and bronco busters.

It featured re-enactments of a famed Indian battle, a train robbery, a buffalo hunt, a Pony Express ride and more.

The famous show attracted more than 10,000 people in Grand Junction near Ninth Street and Pitkin Avenue, The Daily Sentinel said on Sept. 7, 1908.

"It was perhaps the greatest crowd that ever gathered at one time in Mesa County," the paper added.

Cody wasn't the only nationally known celebrity to visit Grand Junction that week. Socialist presidential candidate Eugene Debs drew a modest 1,000 people to his Labor Day rally, the Sentinel said.

People came from far and wide for the Wild West Show. A special train ran from Ouray to Grand Junction, with stops in Montrose and Delta.

Buffalo Bill's appearance disrupted events around the region. The Hotchkiss baseball team canceled a game so its members could attend the show. A Ouray newspaper complained that the town's Labor Day celebration was diminished because so many locals left to see Buffalo Bill.

Cody and his show had already peaked by the time they played Grand Junction. By 1913, with competition from motion pictures emerging, Cody was in financial trouble. The Wild West Show closed in 1916. He died in 1917 and was buried near Denver.

Between Cody's first awkward public performance in 1872, and his stop in Grand Junction in 1908, there occurred a remarkable transformation of a rough-hewn frontiersman to world-renowned entertainer.

It's clear Cody exaggerated some of his frontier resumé. One recent book argued that Cody made up much of his personal history — including his claim to have ridden for the Pony Express. But there was much that was true.

This much is known: Cody was born in Iowa in 1846, but his family moved to Kansas while he was young. His father, an anti-slavery activist, was involved in the Kansas border wars, fighting pro-slavery militia. He died in 1857.

William Cody claimed to have ridden



William F. Cody on his horse Isham, near the end of his career, from a 1950s postcard in the author's collection.

for the Pony Express when he was only 14. There is no question he worked for Alexander Majors, a noted freighter and one of the founders of the Pony Express, beginning when he was 12. Majors later wrote that Cody had ridden for the Pony Express.

Cody served briefly as a scout for the Union Army during the Civil War, and shortly afterward married Louisa Frederici, with whom he had four children.

By 1867 he became a buffalo hunter for the Kansas Pacific Railroad, where he earned both his nickname and his reputation as a marksman. He honed his storytelling skills around campfires, while also working as a hunting guide.

In 1868, he began serving as a scout for the Army's Fifth Cavalry in the Indian wars, service that earned him one of the few Medals of Honor awarded to civilian scouts.

In the early 1870s, he became the hero of a dime novel and a play staged in New York. While attending the play in 1872, Cody was asked to come on stage, but he couldn't speak coherent words.

His stage fright soon vanished, however. Later in 1872, he began appearing on stage in Chicago. Soon afterward, he starred in his own stage show, re-enacting frontier scenes with Texas Jack Omohundro and the legendary Wild Bill Hickok.

By 1876, Cody was back with the Army, scouting in the campaign against the Sioux and Cheyenne. In a brief battle on July 17, Cody killed and scalped a warrior named Yellow Hair. He reportedly held up the scalp and declared, "First scalp for Custer!" Lt. Col. George Custer and his troops had been annihilated at Little Bighorn three weeks earlier.

Then, amazingly, Cody abandoned the battlefield for the stage.

According to a Chicago journalist who was with the Army in 1876, Cody left his scouting duties less than a month after killing Yellow Hair, even though the campaign against the Indians continued.

"Buffalo Bill, who had theatrical engagements in the East ... forsook us also, and started down the Yellowstone (River) on the steamer," the journalist wrote.

As a civilian scout, Cody could not be



This is a copy of an advertisement that appeared in The Daily Sentinel on Aug. 19, 1908, for the Wild West Show.

charged with desertion. Moreover, he was a favorite of Gen. Phil Sheridan, who viewed Cody's stage shows as a way to win public support for the Army's actions when many in the East were sick of Indian wars.

But indoor venues were too small for Cody's ambitions. In May 1883, Cody staged his first outdoor Wild West Show, in Omaha, Nebraska.

Working with his press agent, John Burke, and partner Nate Salisbury, Cody developed ever-more elaborate shows and added celebrated performers.

Sitting Bull — one of the Indian leaders against Custer in 1876 — joined the Wild West Show for one season in 1885. Sharpshooter Phoebe Ann Mosey, aka Annie Oakley, was a star from 1885 to 1902.

Cody took his show to Europe in 1887 and had a command performance before Queen Victoria. Then the show toured Europe to universal acclaim.

Although other entertainers soon began imitating Cody's frontier docu-drama, thanks largely to Salisbury, his Wild West Show was noted for its professionalism — appearing on time all scheduled acts. No rivals threatened his entertainment empire.

By 1908, the show's publicity arm was a well-oiled machine. Advertisements like the one here ran for weeks in the Sentinel.

Some Colorado newspapers even printed portions of Cody's autobiography in the weeks before the show appeared in their towns. The Sentinel didn't do that.

But it did run news stories as well as advertisements. And it left little question that Cody was still a star.

"It was a great show," the paper said.

"Cody was given a big ovation every time he appeared. The raven curls have turned white, but the grand old scout is as handsome as ever."

Sources: "The Life of Honorable William F. Cody," by William Cody; The Daily Sentinel archives; Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection; "Buffalo Bill's America," by Louis S. Warren; "Did 'Buffalo Bill' Cody Ever Ride for the Pony Express?" by Meghan Saar; True West magazine; Sept. 29, 2017; Buffalo Bill Center of the West, centerofthewest.org.

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## BLOTTER

COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

### Arrest made in stabbing

A 63-year-old Grand Junction man accused of stabbing his roommate Saturday afternoon was arrested on suspicion of first-degree assault, according to police.

Russell S. Olson, of 828 Grand Ave., was taken into custody after officers responded to a report from the roommate that was received at 4:44 p.m. Saturday, said Grand Junction Police Sgt. Cory Tomps.

The victim was hospitalized with what Tomps believed were non-life-threatening injuries. Tomps didn't have information on the victim's age or gender Sunday afternoon.

Olson is also facing a drug possession charge. He is expected to appear today in court for bond setting.

### Fire burns Dodge truck

The Grand Junction Fire Department was not able to determine what started a fire that burned a Dodge truck in the early morning hours of Saturday outside a Grand Junction home.

The fire — which according to non-emergency dispatch was reported at 1:54 a.m. in the driveway of 935 Teller Ave. — did not injure anyone, said Grand Junction Fire spokeswoman Ellis Thompson-Ellis.

Both fire crews and the Grand Junction Police Department responded to the fire. A Fire Department investigator finished an inquiry Sunday, Thompson-Ellis said.

A police investigation is ongoing, according to Sgt. Ryan Piotrowski.

### Walmart robber sought

Authorities are asking for information about a suspect in a robbery at the Montrose Walmart earlier this month, according to Montrose Regional Crime Stoppers.

The Montrose Police Department and Crime Stoppers are asking for help identifying the man believed to have stolen merchandise from the store at 11:17 p.m. Aug. 17.

The man — who had a stubble beard and black hair — is believed to have hidden merchandise in a backpack and tried to leave

before being confronted by a store greeter. The release said the man then retreated into the store before trying to exit again.

"When confronted by the greeter the second time, the robber wielded a fixed blade knife and fled with the merchandise, driving off in an older model blue sedan," the report said.

Anybody with information about the crime or the man's identify may make an anonymous report at 970-249-8500, at P3tips.com, or using the phone app P3 Tips, the report said. If the tip results in an arrest, the tipster could receive a cash reward.

### According to the Grand Junction Police Department:

- Raymond Ayers, 46, and Hayley Kuntz, 22, are each accused of theft, attempted theft and complicity Tuesday.

- Dustin Dickinson, 21, is accused of assault Thursday.

- Andrew Arms, 18, is accused of providing false information to a pawnbroker Wednesday.

- Christina Hofferber, 48, is accused of assault Friday.

## REGION

SENTINEL WIRE SERVICES

### 25,000 pounds of beef may be tainted

DENVER — U.S. agricultural officials say Fort Morgan-based Cargill Meat Solutions is recalling nearly 25,300 pounds of ground beef that might be contaminated with E. coli.

The recall notice by the U.S. Department of Agriculture says the meat was shipped to warehouses in California and Colorado. It's labeled "Excel 9 3/7 Fine Ground Beef" and was produced Aug. 16 with a Sept. 5 expiration date.

The notice says the meat processing plant discovered the problem Aug. 22 after a records review found the beef might be associated with a product that is presumed positive for the E. coli bacteria.

There have been no reports of illness due to eating the meat. E. coli can cause dehydration, diarrhea and abdominal cramps, and it can cause a life-threatening form of kidney failure.

### Dog lost after crash reunited with family

CHAFEE COUNTY — A dog that survived almost three weeks in Colorado's Rocky Mountains after being thrown from a vehicle in a crash has been reunited with its family.

The year-old canine — a golden-doodle named Bentley — was lost when the vehicle it was traveling in slid off the edge of a mountain road west of Pueblo and plunged 600 feet down an incline on Aug. 7.

The crash killed Jennifer Orr of Wichita, Kansas, and seriously injured her daughter, Samantha, 21. Samantha Orr returned to the crash scene after being released from the hospital. She and others spotted Bentley early Saturday and lured the animal with food.

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9/5, Sentinel Weekly ..	8/29, Tuesday, 12 Noon	
9/6, Thursday .....	8/31, Friday, 5 PM	
9/7, Out & About .....	8/31, Friday, 3 PM	
<b>Classified Liner Ads (Private Party &amp; Commercial)</b>		
9/4, Tuesday-E-edition Only .....	8/31, Friday, 4 PM	
<b>Legals</b>		
9/2, Sunday .....	8/28, Tuesday, 2 PM	
9/3, Monday-E-edition Only .....	8/28, Tuesday, 2 PM	
9/4, Tuesday-E-edition Only .....	8/28, Tuesday, 3 PM	
9/5, Wednesday .....	8/31, Wednesday, 4 PM	

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