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One of Our Own: Pawnee Bill's Life as Viewed by Bloomington Residents

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One of Our Own: Pawnee Bill's Life as Viewed by Bloomington Residents

Gordon William Lillie was born 14 February 1860 or 1861 in Bloomington, Illinois.¹ The son of a laborer, Lillie achieved fame as one of the great Western heroes, and became known worldwide as Pawnee Bill. While Lillie left Bloomington early in his life and only later achieved his considerable fame, and eventually retired to a privately owned ranch near Pawnee, Oklahoma, his home town remained aware of his pedigree and followed his exploits through newspaper reports and other media. Although his early activities with fellow Western icon Buffalo Bill were largely ignored by the local press (and often fabricated by dime novel writers who considerably confused the historical record), later visits from Lillie's wild west exhibition were often described in local papers, and when (primarily in his later life) he reinforced community ties by returning to Bloomington to visit, the local press showed an enthusiasm for him as a Bloomington native who had achieved international fame but not forgotten his local roots. Overall, Lillie was an international celebrity who eventually became a beloved local figure to the Bloomington community. The present paper examines Lillie's activities and life as viewed by the residents of the town of Bloomington, Illinois, primarily through newspaper reports. Information from other sources which likely reached local residents is also provided, as is information which was excluded (either deliberately or accidentally) from the local media.

[BW2016_04_Willey_Image 01]

Considerable confusion exists regarding the early facts of Lillie's life. The most recent comprehensive biography of Lillie is Glenn Shirley's *Pawnee Bill: A Biography of Major Gordon W. Lillie*. Originally published in 1958, Shirley's biography contains certain information regarding Lillie's early life which is very difficult to reconcile with other sources. For example,

according to Shirley, Lillie was introduced to Wyatt Earp when Earp was a peace officer in Wichita, Kansas. As Earp left Wichita for Dodge City in 1876, this would make Lillie fifteen or sixteen at the time of the meeting, and clearly preclude him from having graduated from Bloomington High as part of the class of 1879 (a date given in many other documents).² Other incidents from this time period as portrayed by Shirley appear to have been drawn more from dime novels and popular media than primary sources. While a bibliography is provided, Shirley's work does not provide citations in the body of his text, so checking his sources is difficult. Unfortunately, as this is a work by an academic author published by a university press, many later sources drew on it in their own narratives, making it difficult to sort out the facts of Lillie's first twenty years or so of life.

Lillie's early life in Bloomington, Illinois

While the earliest mention of Lillie in Bloomington newspapers is an 1889 article concerning his involvement with the Oklahoma land rush, as Lillie's fame grew the papers took more interest in his time spent in Bloomington as a youth.³ Upon Lillie's death in 1942 George C. Root (then of Syracuse, New York) wrote the *Pantagraph* that he remembered Lillie being born "in the neighborhood of Miller Park" and "had great admiration for Pawnee Bill as a genuine pioneer and builder of the new west."⁴ In 1940 it was said that, "Drinking warm blood from newly slaughtered beef cattle when he was a frail child in Bloomington was the thing that changed the life prospects of Pawnee Bill." Apparently Pawnee Bill told Edward Curtis of the Associated Press that "as a sickly boy in Bloomington, where he was born, he had been a pal of a butcher's son. The butcher noticed that young Lillie was frail, suggested beef blood as the remedy."⁵ Shirley's biography, as well as a later interview with Lillie, recorded the blood drinking incident as having happened at the suggestion of a butcher in Wellington, Kansas, as a cure for a winter

chill after the Lillie family left Bloomington.⁶ The reason for this discrepancy is unclear, although it may indicate this event is part of the romanticized version of Lillie's life created after he achieved his fame.

Not all tales of Lillie's early days were so macabre. In a 1938 article detailing a robbery of Pawnee Bill's home near Pawnee City, the author (W.B. Read) mentioned that he and Lillie delivered the *Daily Leader* newspaper in their youth.⁷ Perhaps unsurprisingly, in 1926 the local paper reminded readers that "'Pawnee Bill' Once Carried Pantagraphs" and noted that Lillie "started his career as a wage earner by carrying papers for the *Pantagraph* when a youth in school."⁸ A previous story from 1898 told readers that Lillie "while attending the high school was also a carrier for the *Pantagraph* for about two years."⁹ Yet another story from 1931 mentioned that Lillie was a carrier for the *Pantagraph*, adding that in a letter to local resident Bryan Carlock Lillie stated, "I am always proud to have my name appear in the *Pantagraph* because as a boy I carried a route for this paper."¹⁰ Local news media was certainly not above reminding readers that a famous figure once delivered their product.

The same article which mentioned Lillie carried the *Pantagraph* also reported the memories of local residents of Lillie as a student at Bloomington High. Lillie was described as a student who "was good in his studies, was fairly studious, and liked to serenade the girls by playing a guitar."¹¹ In a special alumni edition of the *Bloomington High School Aegis* (Lillie's portion was also reprinted in the *Pantagraph* in 1942) Lillie initially related his own feelings towards his education this way: "For two months after I graduated I had little use for my education," but then stated that eventually a day did come when he was called upon to use his education, and not only did he still have the knowledge he had acquired, but that:

my success was all due to the education I received at the old third ward school, the Bloomington high school, and a few lessons taught me at my good mother's knee. My dear readers who are members of the Bloomington high school, I say to you, you are on the right road. Too much value cannot be put on education. And had I a family of children I would rather endow them with a good high school education than all the riches in the world.¹²

An earlier piece mentioned Lillie's attendance at Bloomington high school before it segued into a report of Lillie's dislike of Shakespeare, and preference for the history of the early west. The anonymous author stated that not only was the early west period of history interesting, but that there was a moral lesson to be drawn from it. "It is an object lesson in courage, democracy, industry, and vision. The men who won the west were ardent individualists, faithful lovers of freedom. They knew what their job was and they were willing to spend their lives on it, working and fighting to bring reality to their dreams."¹³ Presumably Lillie was regarded by the writer as a locally produced archetype of these virtues. Not all of the stories about Lillie were used to launch such sermons, and a 1931 list of locally relevant historical trivia simply asked residents if they remembered "when Pawnee Bill as a boy attended the old Third Ward School?"¹⁴

Another academic adventure by Lillie that drew local interest long after it occurred was his brief stint as a teacher at a rural school near Bloomington, Illinois. A 1937 story mentioned that an "annual homecoming for the Brush College school will be held Sunday at the school, southwest of Arrowsmith [township]." While details of his time as a teacher were not fleshed out, the article did specifically mention "the famous Indian burying grounds are located near this school, where Gordon Lillie, 'Pawnee Bill,' was a former teacher."¹⁵ A follow-up article five days later related that during the reunion "a letter was read by Mrs. Lillis Wyckoff-Brown from an old time teacher and former resident, Gordon 'Pawnee Bill' Lillie."¹⁶ A third piece provided a much more dynamic account of Lillie's brief experience at the school. Titled "Pawnee Bill Once Tamed School Boys" the article related that in 1877, a seventeen year old Lillie learned that in Brush

College "the 'big boys' had beaten every teacher until none would take the job. The school closed." Lillie offered to teach at the school on what was referred to as a "produce or else" contract, and after his initial call for quiet was met by students with increased noise, "He leaped from his desk, and reached for the largest student, buried both hands in his hair and jerked. The amazed youth flew over the desk and went sliding across the floor on his nose. He missed the red hot stove by inches. In quick succession two others followed."¹⁷ The incident was described by County Superintendent of Schools William B. Brigham as "Lillie was a little boy, no taller than you but about seven inches wider. He 'subdued' those students. Then he told them to climb back to their seats-if they could. There wasn't any more trouble. Pawnee Bill had fun."¹⁸ In his biography of Lillie, Shirley stated that while a teacher at the Pawnee Indian School Lillie was attacked by a student who Lillie struck with a fire poker and knocked unconscious in self-defense. It is unclear if the fight in Arrowsmith may have been dramatized into this incident to accommodate other events in Shirley's timeline.¹⁹

The Lillie family heads west

At some point fairly soon after his experience teaching in Arrowsmith Gordon Lillie left Bloomington. Lillie's father, Newton Lillie, had embarked for Kansas some time earlier, leaving his wife and children in Bloomington. Considerable confusion as to when exactly both Lillies left Bloomington exists (likely created by attempts to shoehorn in Gordon Lillie's meeting Wyatt Earp and other apocryphal tales), but some facts may be gleaned from primary sources. On June 2, 1876 the Mayers and McPayne's Flouring Mill on South Main Street burned, and the mill was "a nearly total loss."²⁰ This was almost certainly the same mill on South Main Street later described by Louis Bibel as being owned by "Myers" [Mayers] which burned and prompted Newton Lillie to relocate to Kansas.²¹ This puts Lillie's father in Bloomington as late as 1876.

Newton Lillie's 1915 obituary also stated that the mill burned in 1876, and that Newton left for Kansas in the summer of 1878.²² The land patent for Newton Lillie's property in Kansas records the land as being sold to him on October 1, 1880, although in certain parts of the country it was not uncommon for settlers to live on the land for some time before buying it from the government.²³ Therefore, it seems reasonably certain that Newton Lillie left for Kansas after June of 1876 at the earliest, and likely in the summer of 1878 but before October 1, 1880. As for when Gordon Lillie left Bloomington, his own Natural Philosophy and Geometry final exams are dated May 20, 1879, putting him in high school on this date.²⁴ Given these facts, it seems likely Lillie's father left for Kansas in the summer of 1878, with Lillie graduating with the class of 1879, teaching at Arrowsmith in the 1879-1880 school year, and leaving Bloomington soon after.

Lillie himself confirmed this rough timeline in a retrospective he wrote for the alumni edition of the *Bloomington High School Aegis*, stating that

I graduated in the class of '79. The year previous my father had moved to Sumner County, Kansas, which is right on the border of the Indian Territory. My mother had promised me if I worked hard so as to pass all my studies she would send me to my father in the spring, as she thought sure he would send for us all by then and in this way her promise would be kept. But when spring came my father wrote that money was scarce and he would send for us in the fall.

While dime novels had Lillie heading directly for Kansas City and wild (and sometimes violent) adventurers, in this biographical sketch Lillie narrated that after making his way to the Indian Territory "The first work I did was handling a scraper on the Santa Fe Rail Ry., then I was waiter in a restaurant; then I went to trading horses with the Indians and in this way I learned the Indian language."²⁵ This timeline omits many of Lillie's early adventures as recounted by Shirley, but is consistent with other sources.

After leaving Bloomington and eventually Kansas, Lillie served as interpreter and secretary to United States Indian Agent Major E.H. Bowman, a position which Lillie described as getting "through the kindness of Adlai Stevenson, David Davis, M.W. Packard, and several others" (all prominent and well-known Bloomington area figures).²⁶ Based on this experience with the Pawnee language and people, Lillie joined Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show for the 1883 season. Lillie acted as interpreter and was generally responsible for the Pawnee Indians accompanying the show. While Lillie's motivations for joining the show at the time are not clear, Lillie stated that he "drifted into the show business."²⁷ Curiously, Lillie's sudden association with the legendary Buffalo Bill does not appear to have been remarked upon by the local press at the time.

Lillie drifts into show business

Other significant events which were apparently not remarked upon in local media were Lillie's marriage to May (full legal name "Mary") Manning, the daughter of a Quaker physician.²⁸ Lillie met May when the Wild West Show played in Philadelphia, and after a two year courtship they married in 1886. In 1888, the two of them launched Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West, which re-organized after a financially poor first year as the Pawnee Bill's Historical Wild West Indian Museum and Encampment Show. This second, smaller show went on to financial and popular success. 1888 was also the year Pawnee Bill began to appear in dime novels such as *The Buckskin Avenger or, Pawnee Bill's Pledge*. Ultimately, Lillie starred in seventeen dime novels, and appeared in many more as a supporting character to Buffalo Bill.²⁹ The wide circulation of these dime novels likely means at least some members of the Bloomington Community read these fictionalized tales of Lillie's life. [BW2016_04_Willey_Image 02]

Despite these major events in Lillie's life, the first article (chronologically) in a Bloomington newspaper to mention him was a February 4, 1889 story reprinted from Caldwell, Kansas, that mentions the role of "Pawnee Bill" in the Oklahoma land rush. Lillie was a prominent figure working on behalf of the settlers in the land rush, and the article noted that both Harry Hill and Frank Albright had come to Caldwell, Kansas to ask Lillie not to move onto the land until the bill had passed the senate.³⁰ The *Pantagraph* gave no indication to readers that Lillie was originally from Bloomington.

Local papers next noted Lillie's activities on April 28, 1893 when Lillie was granted permission by the Department of the Interior to "take a squad of Indians from one of the reservations for exhibition at the world's fair." This was in reference to the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, Illinois (World's Columbian Exhibition), and the article stated that "Lillie formerly lived here." This can hardly be considered an enthusiastic endorsement of Lillie's Bloomington roots, especially compared to later articles.³¹ [BW2016_04_Willey_Image 03]

Local papers made no comment at the time when Lillie took his show to Europe in 1894, but a report on Lillie's 1900 exhibition included a section titled "Lost Money in Europe." Readers were told that "Mr. Lillie stated that the venture cost him \$100,000. It was a success in every way but financial." The show itself was not described, but the financial troubles Lillie encountered were attributed to expenses such as transportation across the Atlantic, licenses which were not required in the United States, extra advertising costs, and costs being generally higher.³²

After the financially disastrous European tour Lillie's 1895 show was "billed in all the eastern cities of any consequence." Foreshadowing the enthusiasm that would later be shown by the local press, the article also noted that "Pawnee Bill is Gordon Lilly [sic], a well known

Bloomington boy."³³ Readers were also informed that Pawnee Bill's show was being held at the fair grounds on that day, and given a brief biography of Lillie. "He graduated in the high school class of 1879, went to Kansas afterward and is now playing to big business. The show arrived this morning from Kankakee and Gordon Lillie, as he formerly was known, will be welcomed by his old friends."³⁴ This emphasis on Lillie's local roots continued to appear most strongly when he was appearing in or visiting Bloomington.

Pawnee Bill brings his exhibition to Bloomington

Despite the enthusiasm for Lillie's return to his hometown, the exhibition itself met with disaster in the form of a sudden rainstorm. The event started off well, and "The western scenes, the robbing of the stage coach, the hanging of the horse thief, etc., were very vivid and thrilling." There was no further description of the exhibition itself, but the consequences of the sudden downpour are told in considerably more detail:

But the show was scarcely half done when it began to rain. Those less sheltered hurried away, but the band still played and the redskins whooped. It rained harder, and more people grabbed up their skirts and ran to cover, but the band still played on. The rain came down in a deluge, and more people, like drowned rats, slopped through the grass for shelter, but the band played on. And then the storm broke. The wind took the little tent over the band and sent it helter skelter over the ground and the musicians stopped playing and ran away. All this while the people in the reserved seats were standing and laughing immoderately at the antics of the poor wet creatures in their frantic efforts to get out of the rain. Women's lawn dresses hung to them like dish rags, children fell sprawling in the ponds, stalwart men came down on all fours."³⁵

A second gust of wind collapsed the canopy onto the laughing people in the reserved seats, and there followed a description of the thorough drenching received by all present; however, "it was a good-natured crowd throughout and many declared the rain was the best part of the performance." Despite this forgiving reaction by the audience, Pawnee Bill still "packed his things up early and went to Champaign [Illinois], where it was generally hoped he would have

better fortune than in his native city."³⁶ While the performance was a disaster, local goodwill towards Lillie was apparently undiminished. [BW2016_04_Willey_Image 04]

In 1898 international relations with Spain caused some trouble for Lillie and his performers. A July 30, 1898 advertisement announced that *Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West* would be showing in Bloomington on Thursday, August 4.³⁷ This advertisement promised a performance by Senor Francisco and his Vaqueros, but a follow-up story on August 1 announced that:

Owing to the prejudice engendered by the war [the Spanish-American War] Pawnee Bill, the Wild West showman, was compelled to cancel his contract with the troupe of Spanish bull-fighters which were a part of the entertainment. They withdrew at Anderson, Ind., on Friday night. They got into trouble in nearly every town the show visited, where patriotic Americans desired to take a fall out of them [lower their status or dignity] as representatives of the Spanish nation.³⁸

On the day of the show, August 4, the paper noted that "several extra policemen were put on duty last evening in preparation for the crooks who may be following the Pawnee Bill circus." The precaution was noted as being "usual" and that some of the thieves believed to be in the area also followed the Ringling show.³⁹ Despite these difficulties, Lillie and his performers arrived to play his hometown.

The *Bloomington Daily Leader* provided a description of the morning show, noting in the first paragraph that "the performance has materially improved since it was here two years ago, and many new features have been added, including a canvas covering over all the seats." Readers were informed that "Pawnee Bill was reared in Bloomington and lived here until a young man" before going west and eventually creating a wild west show. The show was described in complimentary terms ("even the adults were aroused to enthusiasm"), and some detail. In the morning parade

There was no glitter of flashily painted wagons and chariots, there was no calliope and nothing of that sort. It was a parade made up of rough people of the plains,

cowboys, Indians, Mexicans and the like, and it was just such a parade as the people wanted to see and they were delighted with it, for it was original from beginning to end, and the Bloomington people like original things.

With Pawnee Bill at the head of the parade, viewers were treated to the sight of "a battery of light artillery, while a genuine old-fashioned stage coach and prairie schooner showed the younger generations how their grandparents used to travel." Finally, it was noted that "a tally-ho coach [a coach with four horses rigged so it could be driven by a single person] was also in evidence."⁴⁰ The afternoon show was also generally described:

The band of Arabs is the best on the road and in every way a decided success. The military scene including maneuvers by the cavalry of six nations was heartily applauded. The "flags of all nations" display was incomplete. The Spanish flag, along with the Spaniards, was withdrawn some time ago and more recently the Austrian and German flags have been pulled down, as patriotic audiences insisted on hissing them. The people will stand the French flag, while that of England and Cuba are received with the same sort of enthusiasm as "old glory" itself.

Additionally, May Lillie was singled out for praise, as "she now performs all the wonderful feats on horseback formerly believed to be possible to only Buffalo Bill" (no specifics are given), and the show was highly praised in general.⁴¹ A very similar article in the *Bloomington Daily Bulletin* (the descriptions of the circus are nearly identical) added that "There are 300 people, 58 Indians, and 150 horses."⁴² After the rained out 1895 show, the 1898 show was a considerable success for the Bloomington audience.

In the wake of this success, a follow-up article the next day praised the exhibition, and included a five paragraph biography of Lillie. Lillie was identified as "distinctly a Bloomington product" and the story stated (erroneously as Lillie's year of birth on census records is 1870 or 1871) that Lillie graduated at the age of sixteen from Bloomington high school in 1879. A likely apocryphal tale of Lillie spending a night during a blizzard with the Jesse James gang was also mentioned, and a summary of Lillie's career was given with particular emphasis on Lillie's role in the

Oklahoma land rush. Finally, it was noted that "Pawnee Bill opened valuable lands to 70,000 families, and his name is revered in the western country." Although the time line presented is problematic, the piece was very complementary and specifically tied Lillie to the town of Bloomington.⁴³

A few days later an account by a man who knew Lillie as a child was printed and gave a much different version of Lillie's early career. It began by noting that during the parade Lillie stopped to shake the hand of an elderly man on the sidewalk. The man was Louis Bibel, who provided an account of Lillie's early life. According to Bibel, he served with Newton Lillie (Gordon Lillie's father) during the United States Civil War, but when Bibel arrived in Bloomington after the conflict he was unable to find housing. During his search for a residence Bibel met the elder Lillie who invited Bibel to share his home. Bibel agreed and moved into the Lillie home shortly before Gordon Lillie was born. Lillie was described as being "just like any other boy" and "no better and no worse." Bibel provided a brief history of the Lillie family:

the father went into business with a man by the name of Myers, and they conducted a mill on South Main street. The mill burned down, and in some way Myers got all the insurance, leaving Lillie with absolutely nothing. Lillie therefore concluded to try his fortune in the west. He went first to Missouri and settled on 80 acres of land which he homesteaded.

Bibel also provided an unusual account of Gordon Lillie's journey west, stating that

Mrs. Lillie also wanted to do her part to support the family, and she applied for a place in one of the Indian schools of the west. She secured it and was employed for some time in that work. Her son Gordon had grown to boyhood, and while with his mother at the Indian school he first met and associated with the Indians.

This account is quite different from the typical accounts of Lillie's journey west, in which he left his mother and siblings behind in Bloomington and they followed later. This may also have been an error on Bibel's part, as there is no other evidence to suggest Newton Lillie went to Missouri rather than Kansas after leaving Bloomington.⁴⁴

After this coverage, no further mention of Lillie occurred until a brief November 7, 1899 note that *Pawnee Bill's Wild West* had ended its season October 21, and was in winter quarters in Chester, Pennsylvania. The two sentence article stated in part that "the past season was a successful one and people are now being engaged for next year."⁴⁵

The next year there was an advertisement which notified Bloomington citizens that *Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West* was returning to Bloomington on Saturday, August 18 and promised both "10,000 seats for 10,000 people" and "500 people, 500 horses."⁴⁶ The account of the show given by the paper suggests this was a slight exaggeration, as it stated that "Pawnee Bill's show carries 300 people, including 40 Indians among whom are Ku-Suck-Sela, the great chief of the Kit-Ka-Kack band of the Pawnees, Spotted Tail, Bright Star, an Indian princess, and White Wolf and Stumbling Bear of the Commanche tribe. The Indians are from three tribes, the Cheyenes, Arrapahoes, and Commanches [sic]." After some discussion of the logistics of the show, including a mention of the "150 head of livestock" and "seventeen cars" which the show utilized, a lengthy paragraph described the show itself:

The performance which is given twice each day is full of entertaining features illustrating the life of the Indians when in their prime and the daring riding of the western horsemen. The Mohaje method of cremating their dead, the lassoing exhibitions of the cowboys and the crack shooting of Pawnee Bill and his daughter, Miss May Lillie, are among the most interesting acts of the show. The bucking bronchos and the wild riding of the cowboys and Coassacks together with the Indian, the standing races and the riding by the women of the company are thrilling events and were excitedly watched by the audience. The burning of Trapper Tom's cabin and the hanging of the horse thief depicted the former rough life on the plains in a graphic manner. The street parade which passed through the business part of the city at 11 o'clock in the morning was seen by crowds and is no small part of the show.⁴⁷

Following this description, several paragraphs provided a biography of Lillie, and specifically stated that "He has been here with his show three times and on each occasion it has been well

patronized. It is his native town and he cherished a warm regard for it."⁴⁸ Lillie continued to be held in high regard by local press, particularly when he visited.

Follow up articles brought less fortunate news, such as "Francis Forest Dolliver, a pickpocket following Pawnee Bill's show, who was arrested at Fort Dodge, Iowa, escaped from jail at that place, sawing the bars of his cell."⁴⁹ More unfortunate news concerning Lillie followed when a tornado struck the town of Mendota, Illinois and "Pawnee Bill's show was almost completely demolished, and a number of people were injured, but none fatally."⁵⁰ A week later readers were told that "Pawnee Bill (Gordon Lillie) with his Wild West show is calling crowds to Canton [Illinois] this week."⁵¹ After this there was a multiple-year gap in coverage of Lillie's show. The next mention on May 21, 1907 assured readers that "*Pawnee Bill's Wild West and Great Far East Show* will make its appearance at Houghton's Lake Park [Bloomington] today."⁵² The following paragraph did not describe the show beyond saying that "The parade in the morning was the first in the order of the day's event and was well patronized. It portrayed the vanished wild west in the most realistic manner. The show itself is as interesting and exciting as ever, the added feature of the train robbery doing its part to send thrills up one's spine. The show is on its way to Chicago and gave its full number of attractions during the performance here."⁵³ The lack of detail in describing the show is unusual, and further accounts could not be located.

[BW2016_04_Willey_Image 05]

Lillie combines shows with Buffalo Bill

In 1908 Pawnee Bill combined shows with Buffalo Bill, or as the *Pantagraph* headline stated, "Pawnee Bill Gets Buffalo Bill's Show." A sub-heading described the occurrence as a "Bloomington Man's Advancement," and Lillie was described as "the Bloomington man who

went out west and became famous as Pawnee Bill." The article then clarified that Lillie was "to be the acting manager of the combined shows next season with Buffalo Bill in charge of the arena work."⁵⁴ The following year (1909) it was announced that the show would be appearing in Bloomington on July 27, and was "a truthful representation of 'broncho busting' by real cowboys and real 'bronchs.'" Other than in the name of the show, Pawnee Bill was not mentioned in this article; however, it was said that "And in a class all by himself, the last of the great scouts, the plainsman, pioneer and hero horseman, Col. Wm. F. Cody, 'Buffalo Bill,' the original and only, appears in the saddle at every performance directing and participating in every exhibit given."⁵⁵ On the actual day of the show it was printed that "Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill, will arrive early this morning and encamp on the Lake Park show grounds." The show itself was described generally for readers:

Buffalo Bill, who, despite his 64 years, is as active as he was twenty years ago. He still does his shooting act from the back of a galloping horse, and appears seven different times in the arena. The horseback football game is one of the novel features of the big aggregation. Prof. Rossi's trained elephants is another amusing feature. Capt. Devlin's Zouaves have learned new tricks, and Joe Bailey, the famous trained horse of Ray Thompson, thrills the audience with his wonderful dancing. Johnny Baker, the crack shot, is the stage manager of the show.⁵⁶

Lillie was not described as a performer, but was mentioned: "Major Gordon W. Lillie, 'Pawnee Bill,' who was born in Bloomington, is the general manager of the biggest tent combination in the world."⁵⁷ The day after the event, the *Pantagraph* ran a story titled "Great Showman Visits Home Town," which stated that "when he [Lillie] was not occupied with business he was pleasantly chatting with old-time friends and reviewing happy days spent here when he was a boy." It provided no details of Lillie's youth, except for the likely slightly inaccurate statement that Lillie "left here to make his name and fortune in the far west when about 17 years of age." Lillie stated that business was good that season, he had cut his hair so that it was "very little

longer than that worn by the general run of representatives of the sterner sex," and that his agents had tried and failed to buy heavy draft horses from residents of the area.⁵⁸ Lillie received a considerable amount of press here, likely due to a well-attended show with no natural disasters.

The show ends

Nineteen-thirteen was the final year of *Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Pawnee Bill's Great Far East*, and the next mention of the exhibition was a brief, fatalistic note that "Those ancient worthies, Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill, seem at last about to be closed out by the sheriff. It is possible that civilization can worry along without them."⁵⁹ Less than a month later, this prediction came true and a legal notice in the *Denver Times* gave an inventory of property from *Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Pawnee Bill's Great Far East, Combined* to be sold at auction. This property consisted of

eight camels, four sacred oxen, about 208 horses, including draft horses, carriage horses, bucking bronchos, high jumpers and saddle horses, mules, oxen, ponies and other animals, circus tents, ticket wagons and other wagons, harness, saddles, one private railroad car, nine railroad sleeping cars, eleven railroad wooden flat cars, nine steel flat cars, four steel stock cars, ten wooden stock cars, one dining car, and other property too numerous to mention.⁶⁰

By August 22, further legal problems made the local news as the *Pantagraph* reported that

"Buffalo Bill" started court proceedings here today charging Maj. Gordon W. Lillie, "Pawnee Bill," with fraud in conducting the Buffalo Bill Wild West and Far East Show. The petition alleges the Lillie failed to account for receipts aggregating \$500 for every exhibition during a part of 1912 and all performances in 1913.⁶¹

This would be the final mention of Buffalo Bill's and Lillie's show in local papers until twenty years later, when an article chiefly discussing Lillie's activities developing an old west recreation trading post stated that Lillie had "made arrangements to revive his Pawnee Bill's Wild West Show and Rodeo and take it to the World's fair at Chicago."⁶² Lillie was not a part of the 1933

World's Fair, but around that time he did offer a wholesale catalog of merchandise from his trading post from which people could buy items such as finger bone necklaces, war clubs, and other merchandise made by, for, or occasionally purportedly from the remains of Native Americans.⁶³ While legal problems marked the end of Lillie's career as a touring showman, he continued to appear in the local press. [BW2016_04_Willey_Image 06]

Business in Oklahoma

Bloomington papers often reported on other aspects of Lillie's life, both before and after the dissolution of his touring company. An infrequent but recurring theme was Lillie's business activities in Oklahoma, where he purchased land and built a ranch. Lillie funded a water main to his ranch one mile in length, which would bring water to the residential district of the town. Lillie also loaned the city \$18,000 to build a high school, under "a low rate of interest."⁶⁴ Local news again noticed Lillie's financial activities when the *Pawnee Bill Oil and Refining Company* was established in Yale, Oklahoma.⁶⁵ A reprint of a *Denver Post* article discussed Lillie's home, Blue Hawk Peak, with particular praise for how Lillie ran the ranch as "not simply a background for a retired showman to continue his exploits in the 'show game' for the delectation of his friends. It is a real business place."⁶⁶ News of Lillie's recreation of a historic trading post at Pawnee, Oklahoma, also appeared in local papers, which described the process of building the trading post and gave a short description.⁶⁷ These articles identified Lillie as a former Bloomingtonian, and readers were advised that viewing his home was an "escape from monotony" as late as 1965, well after his death.⁶⁸ While Lillie's business activities did not generate the amount of coverage his circus career did, readers were still kept apprised.

[BW2016_04_Willey_Image 07]

Work with the buffalo

Another of Lillie's business interests which drew frequent local notice was his work with the American Buffalo. Lillie had ample opportunity to see the effects of the near extermination of the buffalo during his time with the Pawnee Indians, and in later years attempted to increase the numbers of the animals. In 1900 Lillie purchased a male buffalo from Miller Park in Bloomington, and had the animal shipped east to Philadelphia for inclusion in his show.⁶⁹ In 1903 the *Pantagraph* reprinted an article from the *Milwaukee Sentinel* (after adding their own remarks reminding readers of Lillie's local origins) which described Lillie's plan to build the first buffalo ranch east of the Mississippi River just north of Kenosha, Wisconsin. The reason given for the unusual location was to avoid annual bouts of "Texas fever" and that "the Indians, which have been pretty well subdued by the government troops, still pine for their feasts of buffalo and annually they make a raid on the herds."⁷⁰ In 1909 the local park board wrote Lillie, and asked for two head of bison to be placed in the Miller Park zoo.⁷¹ While Lillie denied the request, the newspaper noted that "Pawnee Bill has always thought a great deal of his birthplace and never fails to make a trip here with his show if at all possible."⁷² A year later the paper briefly noted that Lillie had allowed William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) to shoot and kill "an unruly old buffalo which was mistreating the other animals" which would be "used in the barbecue feast given in honor of Buffalo Bill."⁷³ In 1917 readers were informed that Lillie had lost four buffalo to poachers, and that "Pawnee Bill, one of the famous men who went out from Bloomington to gain fame and fortune in the world, is about to suffer the loss of one of his pet institutions."⁷⁴ Lillie's efforts to preserve the buffalo were again described in 1924, as "Pawnee Bill" rebelled at its [the buffalo's] ruthless slaughter and became a crusader to preserve it for posterity."⁷⁵ After Lillie's death, the *Pantagraph* noted that "the last curtain has fallen on the unusual life of Col. Gordon

Lillie, better known as Pawnee Bill." The article went on to state that the 34 remaining buffalo in Lillie's herd were sold at auction to individual buyers, for "about what they would bring when dressed for fresh meat."⁷⁶ Lillie's work with the buffalo appears to have tragically ended in nearly the same place where it began, with the unfortunate slaughter of the animals.

[BW2016_04_Willey_Image 08]

Lillie and the movies

Like many of his professional entertainer contemporaries, Lillie had something of a relationship with Hollywood and the movie industry. Lillie and his buffalo herd appeared in *The Days of the Thundering Herd* (1914) and in 1927 he sued the Independent Producers company over unauthorized use of his name and life history, alleging that not only was he not paid for a series of upcoming films, but that "the proposed pictures are going to be simply terrible."⁷⁷ Soon after this incident, local papers reported that Lillie had agreed to appear in a motion picture showing the story of Oklahoma's growth.⁷⁸ Legal complications with Lillie's movie endeavors continued to appear, and in 1929 Lillie was unsuccessfully sued by Lucina Bradshaw who alleged that he had made an oral contract "for \$750 a week for the writing of a motion picture scenario depicting 'Pawnee Bill's' life in the 'wild west' days of Oklahoma."⁷⁹ Lillie was also tied to the movie *Cimarron* (1931) by local papers. While Lillie does not appear to have been directly involved with the picture, the emphasis on the Oklahoma Land Rush in the movie was an opportunity for the *Pantagraph* to discuss Lillie's involvement with the Boomers.⁸⁰ A more direct link was reported regarding Lillie's involvement with *Out Where the West Remains*. Lillie was said to be the principal figure; however, this picture does not appear to have been made.⁸¹ A final movie which never materialized was mentioned in a 1936 article on the land rush, and stated that "the picture 'Cimarron' showed the rush into Oklahoma and was said to have been historically correct,

but on a much smaller scale than will be seen in a new Lillie picture, which will have the added interest of Pawnee Bill being personally in the picture."⁸² Overall, Lillie had a fairly minimal relationship with the movie industry, but the local press found ways to mention him in articles as cinema became more popular.

Personal and family life

In addition to his business dealings, local readers were also offered stories about Lillie's personal and family life. In 1912 the *Pantagraph* noted that "old memories and old affections brought to a sudden close the suit of Maj. Gordon W. Lillie ('Pawnee Bill') of Pawnee, for divorce from his wife, which was instituted several weeks ago."⁸³ The article does not give the circumstances of the suit, merely stating that Lillie "had been absent from home when the petition was filed. He returned a week or so ago, and at [the] sight of each other the wife and husband forgot their differences and were re-united."⁸⁴ The death of Newton W. Lillie (father of Gordon) was also noted by the papers, and they gave a brief biography of his life.⁸⁵ Other occasions were happier, such as a 1936 article that described how Lillie's golden (50th) wedding anniversary would include an Indian wedding ceremony, although no details of the ceremony were provided.⁸⁶ Shortly after the anniversary wedding party, a final article on Lillie's family life appeared under the very clear and concise headline, "Pawnee Bill's Wife is Dead." As the article reported, May Lillie died from injuries sustained during an automobile crash which occurred on September 13, 1936. The article noted that she was the niece of Daniel Manning, who was in the cabinet of President Grover Cleveland, and that "the Lillies had two sons, but both are dead."⁸⁷ This appears to be the only mention of the Lillie's children in the local press. Their first child, name unknown, died six weeks after being born in 1887 and complications from the delivery rendered May unable to have more children.⁸⁸ Their second child, Billy, (Gordon W. Lillie, Jr.), died in an

accident at the ranch in 1925 at the age of eight. A much later report attributed his death to accidentally hanging himself while playing cowboys with a neighbor child.⁸⁹ Aside from the brief mention in the article which described May Lillie's death, neither of their children appears to have been mentioned in the Bloomington press at any point.

The car accident itself was not mentioned in the local press when it occurred either. Other reports indicated that Lillie was at the wheel of the automobile they were given for their fiftieth wedding anniversary when "the car collided with one driven by Leslie Adair" near Cleveland, Oklahoma.⁹⁰ Cleveland Police Chief Meyer reported that in his estimation

the major could not see very well, what with the lights and the curves in the road and was on the wrong side of the oiled road without realizing it. Just before colliding with Adair's car, the major's car apparently forced another machine off the road, but the other driver whipped around a mail box and avoided a collision.⁹¹

Further details of the crash were not available in newspapers, but Leslie Adair released his claim against Lillie for \$850, and Y.C. Schooley (a passenger in Adair's vehicle) released his claim for \$650.⁹² This seems to indicate that Lillie was considered to be primarily at fault.

While events in Lillie's personal life seldom seem to have been remarked on either during or after their occurrence by the local press (non-local papers reported on a niece who committed suicide in his home by drinking carbolic acid, and Lillie's own possible brush with the law in New York), his returns to Bloomington were greeted with enthusiasm by the papers.⁹³

The Halloween parade and birthdays

Few actions in Lillie's life created more excitement in the local press than his appearance in a 1938 Halloween parade. Articles from October 28 through November 1 discussed how Lillie, at the age of 78, returned to Bloomington "to take part Monday night in the eighth annual

Hallowe'en Mardi Gras celebration."⁹⁴ The *Pantagraph* quoted the celebration leaders as promising a "gigantic parade" in which the "outstanding attraction will be Maj. Gordon W. Lillie, famous throughout the country as 'Pawnee Bill.'"⁹⁵ Lillie's return was promoted as one of the major highlights of the event, and a third article noted that "One of the outstanding events of the Mardi Gras will be the home-coming of 'Pawnee Bill'" and that "'Welcome Home' signs in store windows will greet him Monday."⁹⁶ This extensive promotion may have frustrated the *Pantagraph's* attempt to interview Lillie, as the next day an article with the headline "Pawnee Bill Interview Just Turns into a Reception" appeared. This article contained several quotes by Lillie, including an oft-repeated anecdote of his seeing Wild Bill Hickcok, Buffalo Bill, and Texas Jack as a child, and the story of how he carried the *Pantagraph* as a youth.⁹⁷ By the time the actual event was written up in the newspaper the parade had gone from being primarily "an annual affair" to serving as "a homecoming for a native son-Maj. Gordon W. 'Pawnee Bill' Lillie." A picture of Lillie riding in a car during the parade was included in the same issue of the paper.⁹⁸ After Lillie's death in 1942, "Taps" was played at the next annual parade in his memory.⁹⁹

In his later years a similar enthusiasm was found for noting Lillie's birthdays. His 78th birthday warranted a two paragraph mention in the paper, and after his appearance in the Halloween parade his birthday celebration was described for readers in greater detail.¹⁰⁰ In 1939, for his 79th birthday, the paper reprinted a few words from the *Pawnee Courier-Dispatch* lauding Lillie as an entertainer, and noted that the dinner (young buffalo and turkey) were "both raised on the Lillie ranch."¹⁰¹ Lillie invited several Bloomington residents to his 80th birthday party. This fact that got local press - along with his twenty-five pound birthday cake. That warranted its own article entitled "Pawnee Bill Gets a Cake."¹⁰²

Lillie's death

These celebratory announcements took a somber tone when Lillie died nearly two years later on February 3, 1942. An obituary for Lillie with an accompanying picture ran under the headline "Pawnee Bill, Bloomington Native, Dies." The story reminded readers of Lillie's attendance at the 1938 Halloween Party, and attributed his death as ultimately caused by the same car wreck responsible for May's own fatal injuries. Lillie's early life and service among the Pawnee Indians, and his time as a showman was described. The description concluded with Lillie's activities leading the Oklahoma Boomers.¹⁰³ A second, briefer obituary ran two days later under the headline "One of Our Own." There was a one sentence summary of Lillie's youth in Bloomington, and a paragraph which described him as "the man who became famous as plainsman, pioneer of the new west, soldier, showman, and scientist who tried to prevent extinction of the bison of the plains by cross breeding with domestic cattle." It also mentioned the car accident which killed May and its negative effects on Lillie's health, and concluded "Bloomington joins with other communities which knew him later, in according to Pawnee Bill the designation of a true American."¹⁰⁴

While Lillie died in 1942, his name continued to appear regularly in the papers as part of "How Time Flies" and "Remember When" columns. As recently as 2009 a column describing Pawnee Bill's life was featured in the *Pantagraph*.¹⁰⁵ While Lillie's fame as a showman is what endured most, during his life the local papers largely ignored his activities with the circus, except when he came to town. They primarily wrote of Lillie as a graduate of Bloomington High School, businessman, facilitator of the Oklahoma Land Rush, and (particularly in later years) a local resident who became famous but still maintained ties to the local community. This can be seen in the considerable enthusiasm for Lillie's return during the Halloween parade, which was not

shown even when he was at the height of his fame as a showman. Near Lillie's eightieth birthday, a column by Old Newt Plumm recalled the glory days of the Wild West showmen. The article noted that, "But them are the days that ain't no more... But even so, folks can't forget the glamour and drama of the old West. The dime novel has given place to the sexy, salacious literature, but the history of the civilization that once existed on the broad plains lyin' to the west of the Mississippi will be popular for centuries to come."¹⁰⁶ While this statement may exaggerate the effect of the "sexy, salacious literature" of the 1930s on society, Bloomington continued to remember Pawnee Bill first as a man who grew up and attended their local institutions before achieving fame in the wider world, and critically maintained those ties with his home town making him, for Bloomington residents, "one of our own." [BW2016_04_Willey_Image 09]

¹ Gordon Lillie does not appear in the 1860 census, which was dated July 9th. Had Lillie been born the previous February, he likely would have appeared in the census enumeration. The 1870 census, and many popular works, set Lillie's birth year at 1860; however, subsequent census data puts Lillie's birth year at 1861. For example, see FamilySearch, United States census, 1880, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MF5G-BDD>.

² Glenn Shirley. *Pawnee Bill: A Biography of Major Gordon W. Lillie* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1958).

³ "The Oklahoma Boomers." *Pantagraph*, February 4, 1889, 4.

⁴ "Pawnee Bill Born on South Side, Says Former Resident," *Pantagraph*, February 25, 1942, page 7.

⁵ "Rugged at 80, Pawnee Bill Tells How Unusual Diet Helped Him as a Frail Boy," *Pantagraph*, February 12, 1940, page 5.

⁶ Shirley, *Pawnee Bill*, page 21. Edward Curtis, "Pawnee Bill-Ace Showman Looks Back over the Trail as He Nears his 80th Birthday," *Tulsa World*, February 11, 1940 cited in Michael Wallis. *The Real Wild West: The 101 Ranch and the Creation of the American West* (Macmillan, 2000).

⁷ "What Do You Think About It?" *Pantagraph*, November 15, 1938, page 4.

⁸ "'Pawnee Bill' Once Carried Pantagraphs." *Pantagraph*, October 9, 1926, page 15.

⁹ "The Wild West." *Pantagraph*, August 5, 1898, page 7.

¹⁰ "Gives Buffalo Jones Credit." *Pantagraph*, April 5, 1931, page 25.

¹¹ "Gives Buffalo Jones Credit." *Pantagraph*, April 5, 1931, page 25.

¹² "Evolution of a Showman." *The Alumni Aegis*, June, 1906, page 152-3. Reprinted as "Pawnee Bill Reviewed Value of Studying for BHS Aegis." *Pantagraph*, February 6, 1942, page 11.

¹³ "Pawnee Bill, the Realist." *Pantagraph*, August 10, 1928, page 4.

¹⁴ "Do You Remember Way Back When?" *Pantagraph*, October 25, 1931, page 6.

¹⁵ "Annual School Program Planned." *Pantagraph*, September 2, 1937, page 9. Arrowsmith township is approximately 23 miles east of Bloomington, Illinois. Brush College School was a one-room school house in

Arrowsmith township, McLean County, Illinois. See William B. Brigham. *The Story of McLean County and its Schools*. (Bloomington, Illinois: 1951), page 144-5. <https://archive.org/details/storyofmcleancou00brig>

¹⁶ "Rural School Holds Reunion." *Pantagraph*, September 7, 1937, page 6. The contents of the letter are not described in the article.

¹⁷ "Pawnee Bill Once 'Tamed School Boys.'" *Pantagraph*, February 11, 1942, page 3. Lillie's first day at Brush College was also briefly described in "Pioneers Used Humor in Naming Some McLean County Schools; Pawnee Bill Tamed Brush College." *Pantagraph*, April 24, 1948, page 14.

¹⁸ "Pawnee Bill Once 'Tamed School Boys.'" *Pantagraph*, February 11, 1942, page 3.

¹⁹ Shirley, *Pawnee Bill*, 73.

²⁰ "Fire This Morning." *Pantagraph*, June 2, 1876, page 1.

²¹ "Rocked his Cradle." *Bloomington Daily Bulletin*, August 8, 1898, page 7.

²² "Father of 'Pawnee Bill' is Dead." *Pantagraph*, November 20, 1915, page 6.

²³ United States Department of the Interior, document number 9547, accession number KS3760__234, http://www.glorecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=KS3760__234&docClass=STA

²⁴ University of Oklahoma, Western History Collections, Gordon William Lillie Collection, box 10, folder 5.

²⁵ Lillie, "Evolution of a Showman," page 152.

²⁶ "Personality Parade: McLean County." *Illinois Quest*, Volume 2, no. 1, page 37. Shirley ascribed several notable adventures to Lillie, including killing "Trigger Jim Braden" in a gun fight, and spending a night during a blizzard with the Jesse James Gang. It is beyond the scope of the current paper to determine the accuracy of these statements, but given the contradictory nature of other incidents these events should be examined critically before being accepted as fact.

²⁷ Lillie, "Evolution of a Showman," page 152.

²⁸ Mary often performed under the name "May," and was generally referred to by that name. For the sake of consistency, the current article refers to her as "May."

²⁹ J. Randolph Cox. *The Dime Novel Companion: A Source Book*. Greenwood Publishing Group (2000), page 209.

³⁰ "The Oklahoma Boomer." *Pantagraph*, February 4, 1889, page 4.

³¹ "Will Have Indians at the Fair." *Pantagraph*, April 28, 1893, page 5.

³² "The Wild West," *Pantagraph*, August 20, 1900, page 3.

³³ "Showing in the East." *Pantagraph*, August 12, 1895, page 7.

³⁴ "A Bloomington Productions." *Pantagraph*, August 28, 1895, page 5.

³⁵ "Pawnee Bill: Wind and Rain Collapse His Tent and Thoroughly Drench Five Thousand People." *Pantagraph*, August 29, 1895, page 7.

³⁶ "Pawnee Bill: Wind and Rain Collapse His Tent and Thoroughly Drench Five Thousand People." *Pantagraph*, August 29, 1895, page 7.

³⁷ "Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West." *Pantagraph*, July 30, 1898, page 7.

³⁸ "Could Not Stand the Spaniards." *Pantagraph*, August 1, 1898, page 7.

³⁹ "Extra Police on Duty Today." *Pantagraph*, August 4, 1898, page 6.

⁴⁰ "Pawnee Bill's Performance." *Daily Leader*, August 4, 1898, page 1.

⁴¹ "Pawnee Bill's Performance." *Daily Leader*, August 4, 1898, page 1.

⁴² "Pawnee Bill's Show." *Bloomington Daily Bulletin*, August 4, 1898, page 4.

⁴³ "The Wild West." *Pantagraph*, August 5, 1898, page 7.

⁴⁴ "Rocked his Cradle." *Bloomington Daily Bulletin*, August 8, 1898, page 7.

⁴⁵ "Pawnee Bill's Wild West." *Pantagraph*, November 7, 1899, page 8.

⁴⁶ "Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West." *Pantagraph*, August 17, 1900, page 7.

⁴⁷ "The Wild West," *Pantagraph*, August 20, 1900, page 3.

⁴⁸ "The Wild West," *Pantagraph*, August 20, 1900, page 3.

⁴⁹ "Francis Forest Dolliver." *Pantagraph*, October 8, 1900, page 1.

⁵⁰ "Tornado at Mendota." *Pantagraph*, October 7, 1903, page 1.

⁵¹ "Around Home." *Pantagraph*, October 14, 1903, page 4. Canton is approximately sixty miles west of Bloomington.

⁵² "Pawnee Bill's Show Today." *Pantagraph*, May 21, 1907, page 7.

⁵³ "Pawnee Bill Here," *Pantagraph*, May 22, 1907, page 3.

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- ⁵⁴ "Pawnee Bill Gets Buffalo Bill's Show." *Pantagraph*, December 3, 1908, page 10.
- ⁵⁵ "One of the most diverting features." *Pantagraph*, July 23, 1909, page 5.
- ⁵⁶ "Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill Today." *Pantagraph*, July 27, 1909, page 3.
- ⁵⁷ "Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill Today." *Pantagraph*, July 27, 1909, page 3.
- ⁵⁸ "Great Showman Visits Home Town." *Pantagraph*, July 28, 1909, page 9.
- ⁵⁹ "Those Ancient Worthies." *Pantagraph*, July 31, 1913, page 4. This may refer to a \$66,000 suit brought against the company by the United States Printing and Lithograph Company of Cincinnati, Ohio on July 21, 1913. See *United States Circuit Courts of Appeals Reports: With Key-number Annotations* volume 144, 1916, page 55-56. <https://books.google.com/books?id=IXZNAQAIAAJ&pg=PA55>
- ⁶⁰ Notice of Publication in the Denver Times, 8/13/1913, Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685-2009, Bankruptcy Case Files, 1876-1948, "Petition for Ancillary Receiver in Re: Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Pawnee Bill's Great Far East, Combined", <https://research.archives.gov/id/292720>. A complete inventory can be viewed at <https://research.archives.gov/id/292691>
- ⁶¹ "Pawnee Bill is Sued." *Pantagraph*, August 22, 1913, page 7. William Cody had planned to leave the show as early as January 28, 1913, when he entered into an agreement with the Sells-Floto Shows Company to join them for the 1913 season (if an agreement with Lillie could be reached) or 1914. See Sarah J. Blackstone. *The Business of Being Buffalo Bill: Selected Letters of William F. Cody, 1879-1917*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1988, pages 105-107.
- ⁶² "Pawnee Bill Active at 73." *Pantagraph*, June 18, 1933, page 11.
- ⁶³ Gordon W. Lillie and Ray O. Lyon. *Pawnee Bill's Indian Trading Post (Oldtown), Wholesale Catalog No. 5*, Pawnee Bill's Indian Trading Post (Pawnee, Oklahoma, 193?).
- ⁶⁴ "Pawnee Bill as 'Angel.'" *Pantagraph*, August 7, 1911, page 4.
- ⁶⁵ "Pawnee Bill now is in Oil Game." *Pantagraph*, February 24, 1921, page 6. This article states that Lillie graduated Bloomington high school in 1889, likely a typo of 1879.
- ⁶⁶ "Old Plainsman Runs Big Ranch." *Pantagraph*, March 11, 1927, page 5. A portion of this article was re-printed in 1934. "Blue Hawk Peak." *Pantagraph*, December 30, 1927, page 5.
- ⁶⁷ "'Pawnee Bill's' Newest Project Proves of Interest to Friends." *Pantagraph*, May 4, 1930, page 25.
- ⁶⁸ "Escape from Monotony." *Pantagraph*, April 25, 1965, page 13.
- ⁶⁹ "Shipped the Buffalo." *Pantagraph*, March 20, 1900, page 5.
- ⁷⁰ "A Buffalo Ranch." *Pantagraph*, February 28, 1903, page 9. The land purchase does not appear to have been made, and ranch was not developed.
- ⁷¹ While the American Bison is exclusively native to North America, the terms "buffalo" and "bison" are often used interchangeably to describe the animal.
- ⁷² "Pawnee Bill Sends Letter." December 24, 1909, page 7.
- ⁷³ "While Visiting on the Buffalo Ranch," *Pantagraph*, December 23, 1910, page 10.
- ⁷⁴ "Buffalo Herd in Danger." *Pantagraph*, March 13, 1917, page 11.
- ⁷⁵ "Gordon Lillie, Former Bloomington Man, is Still Picturesque Figure." *Pantagraph*, April 9, 1924, page 12.
- ⁷⁶ "Pawnee Bill's Buffalo Herd Sold at Auction." *Pantagraph*, April 2, 1944, page 3.
- ⁷⁷ "Pawnee Bill in Movies." *Pantagraph*, September 22, 1914, page 26; "'Pawnee Bill' is on the Warpath." *Pantagraph*, January 22, 1927, page 3.
- ⁷⁸ "Motion Picture to Show 'Pawnee Bill' in Story of Oklahoma's Growth." *Pantagraph*, July 8, 1928, page 25.
- ⁷⁹ "'Pawnee Bill,' Sued for \$50,000, is Victor." *Pantagraph*, October 3, 1929, page 5.
- ⁸⁰ "Deeds of Pawnee Bill, Born Here, Recalled by Movie About Oklahoma." *Pantagraph*, March 29, 1931, page 21.
- ⁸¹ "'Pawnee Bill' to be in Western Picture." *Pantagraph*, January 7, 1936, page 9. Lillie's only known movie credits are *In the Days of the Thundering Herd* (1914), *Mutual Weekly, No. 132* (1917), and *Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Pawnee Bill's Far East* (1910). See http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0510394/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1
- ⁸² "Pawnee Bill Soon to be 76 Years Old." February 8, 1936, page 9.
- ⁸³ "Pawnee Bill and Wife Reunited." *Pantagraph*, October 17, 1912, page 15.
- ⁸⁴ "Pawnee Bill and Wife Reunited." *Pantagraph*, October 17, 1912, page 15.
- ⁸⁵ "Father of 'Pawnee Bill' is Dead." *Pantagraph*, November 20, 1915, page 6.
- ⁸⁶ "Golden Wedding of Pawnee Bill Will Include Indian Ceremony." *Pantagraph*, August 30, 1936, page 5.
- ⁸⁷ "Pawnee Bill's Wife is Dead." *Pantagraph*, September 17, 1936, page 11.
- ⁸⁸ Shirley, *Pawnee Bill*, 116-7.

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- ⁸⁹ Shirley, 220; Find A Grave, WWW site, Gordon W. "Billy" Lillie, Jr., <http://findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=19858872>; Jay Grelen, "A Tale of Tragedy for Pawnee Bill." *The Oklahoman*, October 24, 1999 (online), <http://newsok.com/article/2672328>.
- ⁹⁰ "'Pawnee Bill,' Wild West Showman, Wife Injured," *News Journal (Wilmington, Delaware)*, September 14, 1936, page 1.
- ⁹¹ "Pawnee Bill and His Wife Hurt in Wreck," *Miami Daily News-Record*, September 14, 1936, page 1.
- ⁹² University of Oklahoma, Western History Collections, Gordon William Lillie Collection, box 12, folder 8.
- ⁹³ "Suicided." *Muskogee Times-Democrat*. 28 October 1905, page 3. Lillie's niece is identified as Edith Juda, and the article states she left a note citing her school work as her reason for committing suicide. "Pawnee Bill Decamps." *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 28, 1866, page 4. An article from 1886 states that Lillie fled to New York after assaulting Bella Levine, and that it had not been his first offense. No other mention of this incident or record could be located, and it may not be accurate.
- ⁹⁴ "Pawnee Bill Plans to Attend Civic Hallowe'en Festival." *Pantagraph*, October 28, 1938, page 3.
- ⁹⁵ "Great Parade Scheduled at 7:15 P.M." *Pantagraph*, October 29, 1938, page 3.
- ⁹⁶ "Nine Bands to March in Festive Parade." *Pantagraph*, October 30, 1938, page 3.
- ⁹⁷ "Pawnee Bill Interview Just Turns into a Reception." *Pantagraph*, October 31, 1938, page 3. The date of Lillie's encounter with Wild Bill Hickock, Buffalo Bill, and Texas Jack (J. B. Omohundro) is often given as 1873; however, the only time *Scouts of the Plains* appeared in Bloomington was April 7, 1874 at Durley Hall. See Robert Wilson. *A History of Professional Theatre in Bloomington, Illinois From 1874 through 1896*. Illinois State University, 1967, appendix, leaf 3. J. A. Lord's Buffalo Bill Company did appear in Bloomington in Schroeder's Opera House on January 1, 1873, and this may explain the discrepancy in dates in some sources. See Ralph Duane Drexler. *A History of the Theatre in Bloomington, Illinois, From its Beginning to 1873*. Illinois State Normal University, 1963, page 129.
- ⁹⁸ "Goblins in Their Annual Parade Bring Fun to 25,000 Spectators." *Pantagraph*, November 1, 1938, pages 3, 5.
- ⁹⁹ "Rain Cuts Mardi Gras Crowd, But Enthusiasm High as Ever." *Pantagraph*, October 31, 1942, page 3.
- ¹⁰⁰ "Pawnee Bill to Mark 78th Birthday." *Pantagraph*, February 12, 1938, page 3.
- ¹⁰¹ "Pawnee Bill Entertains on his 79th Birthday." *Pantagraph*, February 23, 1939, page 14.
- ¹⁰² "Pawnee Bill Sends Invitations." *Pantagraph*, February 14, 1940, page 6. "'Pawnee Bill Gets a Cake." *Pantagraph*, February 20, 1940, page 12.
- ¹⁰³ "Pawnee Bill, Bloomington Native, Dies." *Pantagraph*, February 4, 1942, page 5.
- ¹⁰⁴ "One of Our Own." *Pantagraph*, February 6, 1942, page 3.
- ¹⁰⁵ Bill Kemp, "Wild West Legend Pawnee Bill got Start in Bloomington." *Pantagraph*, August 2, 2009, page 15. This column also comments on the multiple contradictory versions of Lillie's early life.
- ¹⁰⁶ "Famous Pawnee is Only Bill now in Circulation." *Pantagraph*, February 14, 1940, page 4.