

# ANNIE OAKLEY



**FAMOUS  
FIGURES  
• OF THE •  
AMERICAN  
FRONTIER**

CHARLES J. SHIELDS

FAMOUS FIGURES OF



# ANNIE OAKLEY

THE AMERICAN FRONTIER





**FAMOUS FIGURES OF  
THE AMERICAN FRONTIER**



**BILLY THE KID**  
**BUFFALO BILL CODY**  
**CRAZY HORSE**  
**DAVY CROCKETT**  
**GEORGE CUSTER**

**WYATT EARP**  
**GERONIMO**  
**JESSE JAMES**  
**ANNIE OAKLEY**  
**SITTING BULL**

FAMOUS FIGURES OF  
ANNIE OAKLEY  
THE AMERICAN FRONTIER



CHARLES J. SHIELDS

CHELSEA HOUSE PUBLISHERS  
PHILADELPHIA

Produced for Chelsea House by  
OTTN Publishing, Stockton, NJ

### **CHELSEA HOUSE PUBLISHERS**

Editor in Chief: Sally Cheney  
Associate Editor in Chief: Kim Shinnars  
Production Manager: Pamela Loos  
Art Director: Sara Davis  
Series Designer: Keith Trego

© 2002 by Chelsea House Publishers, a subsidiary of  
Haight Cross Communications, LLC. All rights  
reserved. Printed and bound in the United States of  
America.

<http://www.chelseahouse.com>

First Printing

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

The Chelsea House World Wide Web address is  
<http://www.chelseahouse.com>

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Shields, Charles J.

Annie Oakley / by Charles J. Shields.

p. cm. — (Famous figures of the American frontier)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-7910-6489-1 (alk. paper)

ISBN 0-7910-6490-5 (pbk.: alk. paper)

1. Oakley, Annie, 1860-1926—Juvenile literature. 2. Shooters  
of firearms—United States—Biography—Juvenile literature.  
3. Women entertainers—United States—Biography—Juvenile  
literature. [1. Oakley, Annie, 1860-1926. 2. Sharpshooters.  
3. Entertainers. 4. Women—Biography] I. Title. II. Series.

GV1157.O3 S55 2001

799.3'092—dc21

2001028866



# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>AN AMERICAN LEGEND</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>A CHARMING LITTLE GIRL</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>FRANK AND ANNIE</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>THE WILD WEST SHOW</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>FAME AND FORTUNE</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>HOME TO OHIO</b>	<b>53</b>
	<b>CHRONOLOGY</b>	<b>58</b>
	<b>GLOSSARY</b>	<b>60</b>
	<b>FURTHER READING</b>	<b>62</b>
	<b>INDEX</b>	<b>63</b>



Berry  
Photo

Annie Oakley poses with her gun in this 1887 photograph. She had already built a career as a trick shot when she was invited to join Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. The show would launch her to incredible popularity both in the United States and in Europe.



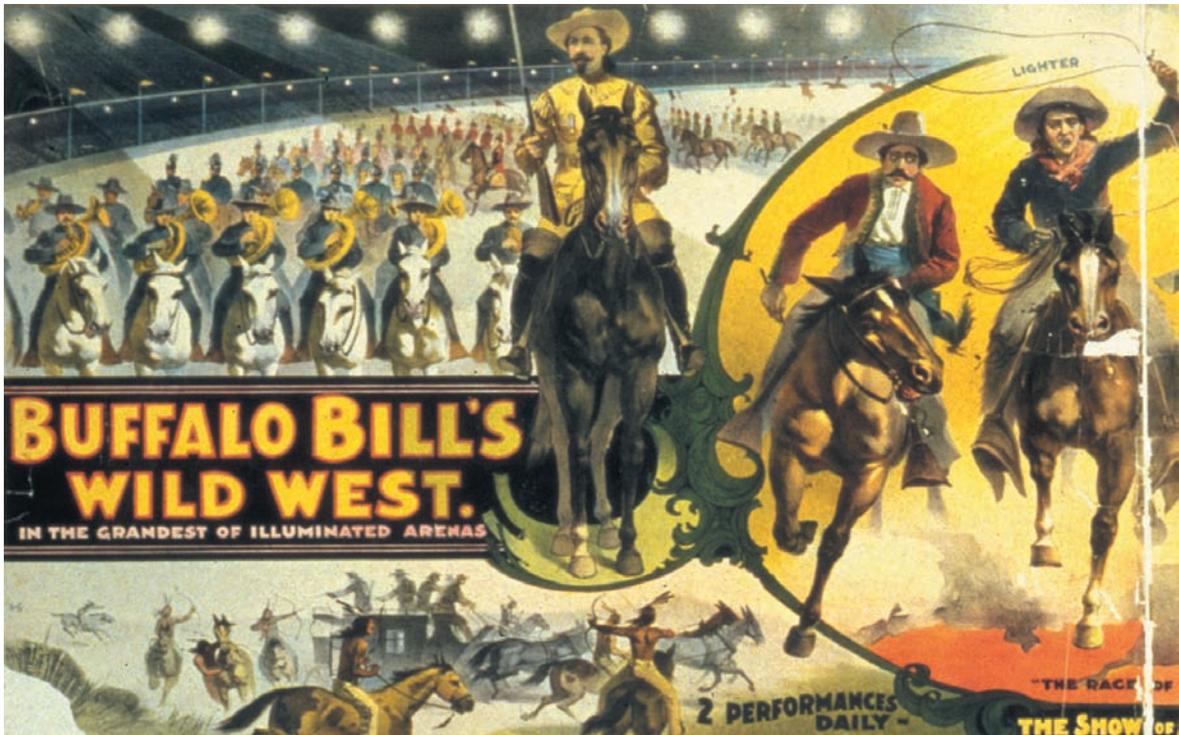
# AN AMERICAN LEGEND

**N**ate Salsbury had seen pretty much everything in show business. He had been a respected actor and later the manager of a highly successful touring company called the Troubadours. Hundreds of entertainers had *auditioned* for him—some good, many poor.

So when Buffalo Bill Cody—the Pony Express rider and army scout turned showman—asked Salsbury to

help him manage a whole new concept in entertainment called the Wild West Show, Salsbury signed on. He could see the appeal of such a spectacle. Folks would be treated to a whirling *kaleidoscope* of Indians in war dress, deafening pistol shoot-outs, hard-riding cowboys, thrilling ambushes, and even reenactments of historic incidents, such as Custer's

An 1899 poster for Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. After meeting the show's manager, Nate Salsbury, Annie Oakley joined the show in 1885. The female sharpshooter soon became one of the Wild West Show's favorite attractions.



defeat at the Little Bighorn. It would be part circus, part theater, and part American history lesson.

Unfortunately, though, a short time after its *debut* in Omaha, Nebraska, the Wild West Show struck a vein of bad luck. In December 1884, a steamship carrying some of the show's equipment down the Mississippi River collided with another steamer and sank. Cody's partner, Captain Adam H. Bogardus, a popular sharpshooter whose demonstrations of *marksmanship* filled grandstands with audiences, lost his guns, targets, and props in the



accident. Disgusted, Bogardus went with his three sons to recover damages from the steamship company. Afterward, he decided to pull out of his partnership with Cody altogether.

In April 1885, the Wild West Show, deeply in debt, was camped in St. Louis. On the morning of the 24th, Salsbury was strolling among the white tents when something drew his attention. Down in the arena, a young couple was setting up to audition, and Salsbury—always on the lookout for talent—took a seat in the *grandstands* to watch. The woman was small, only about five feet tall, with dark, flowing hair. Salsbury was surprised when she produced a rack of shotguns and loaded them. She looked too small to withstand the hard punch in the shoulder from a shotgun's *recoil*. The man helping her was strong looking, though, and he seemed a more likely candidate to be handling a shotgun.

Suddenly, the arena was alive with gunfire. The man threw glass balls high into the air, and the woman shattered them rapidly. She fired from her right side, from her left—and even held the shotgun upside down and blasted away. For a moment, there was a pause while the man set up a mechanical device and she chose another shotgun. Then she

---

---

shouted, “Pull!” and a clay pigeon went sailing out across the arena like a bird. She fired and pulverized the target into a puff of gray dust.

Salsbury had seen enough. He hurried down the grandstand steps. “Fine! Wonderful!” he exclaimed. “Have you got some photographs with your gun?” He didn’t even know the woman’s name, but he was already thinking of ways to publicize her.

Her name was Annie Oakley, and the man with her was her husband and business manager, Frank Butler. Only 10 years before, she had lived in an orphanage because her mother was destitute. She and Butler had met in a shooting contest after she had learned to hunt for a living. In the few years following their marriage, she had perfected a trick shooting act. But her *winsome* personality was what captivated audiences most.

Nate Salsbury was not immune to her charm, either. He hired her on the spot, without even consulting Buffalo Bill. He knew outstanding talent when he saw it.

And he was right. Not only would Annie Oakley become one of the main attractions of the Wild West Show, but over the years she would become something even more rare—a genuine American legend.

---

---