

CAMP 1872

Digitally Telling the Story of the Great Royal Buffalo Hunt



Camp1872.ToonsTech.Com

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Digital Program Proposal

Draft Version 1.0

After three years of bloody conflict along the ragged edges of the American frontier, the Sioux were at peace for a brief interval, due in no small measure to the efforts of a Lakota chief named Sinte Galeska (“Spotted Tail”). Born sometime in the mid-1820s, in his early 30s he had spent a year imprisoned at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas with some of his family, including one of his daughters. Out of that curiously cordial confinement developed a respectful, if wary, appreciation for the power of the United States and its “Long Knife” soldiers. For some three decades he skillfully negotiated with Army officers, treaty negotiators, government provisioning agents, Washington politicians, and even Christian missionaries to keep his band of Brulé relatively safe and well supplied.

After most other Lakota bands were forcibly confined to their Dakota reservations, his clan was allowed the winter of 1871-72 to again chase buffalo across their historic hunting grounds between Platte and Republican rivers in southwest Nebraska. Numbering upwards of 1300 souls and some 300-400 buffalo-skinned lodges - as well as hundreds of ponies - they and the bison they sought would become the centerpiece of American international diplomacy with one of Europe’s greatest powers: the Russian Empire.

In the fall of 1871, the fourth son of Tsar Alexander II arrived in New York harbor aboard the Russian Navy frigate *Svetlana*. Grand Duke Alexis was just 21, but an “admiral” sent by his father to hopefully patch up relations with the United States, then on the outs with the Empire’s bellicose Ambassador Kostantin Katakazi. Tall, handsome Alexis would be wined and dined from New York to Denver to New Orleans, but the highlight of the four-month American journey was a three-day hunt on Red Willow Creek some 50 miles southwest of North Platte, Nebraska. He would be the guest of US Army Lt. General Phil Sheridan, who was in charge of the military district of the Missouri, encompassing much of the Great

Plains west of Omaha. It was also the ancestral hunting grounds of the Sioux, Pawnee, Cheyenne and other, smaller tribes, including the Omaha, Ponca, and Winnebago.

Given Spotted Tail's relatively tolerant disposition towards white men, in general, it was to his band that Sheridan dispatched an invitation to meet him and his important European dignitaries on the Red Willow Creek. In return, Washington would provide the tribe with tons of supplies, including flour, coffee and sugar.

It is this historic event 150 years ago that the CAMP 1872 Project seeks to commemorate using state-of-the-art computer technology that merges Xtended Realty and Deep Learning with the goal of helping us better *learn from the past by virtually reliving it.*

MEET THE “VIRTUAL” ACTORS

Three social groups participated in the hunt: Lakota, American and Russian. Spotted Tail's Brulé band numbers an estimated 1000 or more. The more than a hundred US Army officers and troopers included the 2nd Cavalry's brass band. Also present were civilian teamsters (a descendant of which flew the Omaha-to-North Platte leg of the AirMail100 Centennial Flights¹ project last September). Helping with transportation and communication for the parties was Frank Thompson, a senior representative for the Union Pacific railroad, as well as an unidentified New York Herald correspondent/stringer (possibly out of Omaha) and the Omaha-based photographer, E. L. Eaton. The Grand Duke's entourage included seven diplomatic and Russian naval officers.

The five key figures on whom we propose concentrating our attention are Grand Duke Alexis, Lakota chief Sinte Galeska ('Old Spotted Tail'), US Army officers Philip Sheridan and George Custer, as well as civilian scout and by-then dime store novel hero William Cody. The only known females present during the

¹ <http://airmail100.com>

hunt were Lakota women. Two in particular attracted the flirtatious attention of the 22 year-old Grand Duke (who celebrated his birthday during the hunt) and Custer who, according to one of the dispatches from the encampment, took a particular interest in one of Spotted Tail's teenage daughters (Appendix 3).

It is the intention of this project to make use of motion capture and CGI rendering to create as near life-like 3D “avatars” as computing and telecommunications — as well as financial — resources allow. These can be displayed in Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR) and holographically via PORTL-like display (see page 5).

While we plan to eventually give each avatar (a.k.a. “immersive agent”) two-way conversational “chatbot” capabilities moving towards full AI responsiveness, the initial Phase One goal will be programmed presentations by each character beginning with the Cody character, who we see acting as the “budding” showman that he will become, presenting the other characters, as well as narrating the “show.”

STAR TREK HOLODECK MEETS THE MANDALORIAN

As depicted in Appendix One, we are proposing the development of a digital theater-in-the-round similar to the LED “stage” used by ILM and Epic to shoot Disney's “Mandalorian.”² The digital backdrop is of the Red Willow Creek country in Nebraska, but 150 years ago, prior to occupation by immigrant pioneers. It still teemed with vanishing herds of buffalo, which appear to stampede during the buffalo hunt sequence at the viewers who are allowed onto the “set” in limited number for COVID-19 precautions.

Each “showing” is 30-45 minutes in length and moves through a Sunrise-to-Sunset (Reveley-to-Lakota War Dance) lighting experience during which each main character appears on the screen to tell us their personal story and reflect on events following the hunt.

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ufp8weYYDE8>

Where AR optics are available, we'd like the bison to appear to stampede across the stage and through the spectators, not unlike the original NY Times Cardboard VR³ experience in 2016. Also AR would allow digital random "avatars" of soldiers and Lakota to wander the stage as the "day" unfolds: cooking breakfast at dawn, troopers and Indians tending to their horses preparing for the hunt, enjoying dinner in the doubled-hospital tent. The "show" culminates at twilight with the Lakota "war dance" that Sheridan organized for the Grand Duke the last night.

The program concludes with an "exit" epilogue recounted movie credit-fashion or by the characters themselves what explains their individual "fates": Cody gains fame as Wildwest show impresario, Custer blunders into the giant Sioux and Cheyenne encampment on the Little Big Horn, Spotted Tail is murdered a decade later by his former reservation police chief, Alexis goes into voluntary exile in Paris after the disaster naval engagement during the Russo-Japanese war for which he is partially blamed. By 1889, less than 1000 bison are alive in North America. Some are sequestered and still endangered in Yellowstone National Park, some can be found in small herds in Canada and Montana and a handful still roam protected on Goodnight's ranch in Texas and 'Buffalo Jones' small herd sheltered in a private preserve on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon.

PORTL TO THE PAST

Dave Nussbaum recently debuted his breakthrough PORTL⁴, a enclosed hologram technology that projects detailed, life-sized 3D images ranging from small inanimate objects like watches to live humans. Projected images can be acquired from real-time motion capture or digitally transformed into fantastic characters such as demonstrated by Doug Roble during his 2019 TED Talk⁵

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/21/opinion/sundance-new-frontiers-virtual-reality.html>

⁴ <https://www.portlhologram.com/>

⁵ https://www.ted.com/talks/doug_roble_digital_humans_that_look_just_like_us?language=en

We suggest that the first character portrayed in the PORTL be William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody who greets program attendees and serves as the “digital docent” for the program. Other characters can appear in sequence: Grand Duke Alexis, Sinte Galeska, George Custer, Phil Sheridan.

A SELFIE WITH HISTORY

In addition to the main “show” that chronicles a “day in the camp” as projected on the surround LED digital stage, an adjoining enclosure resembles a 1870s photographer studio and bellows camera that captures the attendee’s photo and using AR projects one or more of the lead characters posing with them. Individual AR optics would also enable the attendee to see a projection of the photographer, perhaps a young woman in Victorian garb similar to the lady in Appendix 2.

AR/VR APP

Development and free distribution of an AR/VR app for Android and Apple would be a key marketing tool to generate interest in the exhibition. Used within the exhibit it would reveal added features such as the female photographer or the interior of the luxury Pullman car entrance. A 3D Bill Cody, circa 1892 for example, could invite the user to the event based on the cellphone’s location and date. It would preview the exhibit in movie trailer-style. The user could book and pay for their admittance via the App, as well as receive some ‘upgrade’ features not available on the ‘free’ version. Additionally, they could also access, pay for, and download musical albums of Brulé (see below), the Lakota music group.

MOTION CAPTURE MUSIC

Volumetric video capture would, via AR/VR projection, climax of the experience as Brulé initiate their ‘war dance’ in 3D in the center of the stage around an AR/VR bonfire. Near the end of the dance, they transform into

modern Sioux dancers⁶ who perform to the music of Brulé ⁷, a modern day Lakota musical group based Sioux Falls, SD.

Prior to the war dance, the 2nd Cavalry Brass Band⁸ gives a final brief concert. They also play *GaryOwen*⁹ as the hunting party departs in the morning and the Imperial Russian national anthem¹⁰ of 1870s as they return late in the afternoon

SUMMARY

CAMP 1872 is envisioned as a truly immersive and memorable experience that enlightens, entertains, and leaves a lasting impression on the viewer of the real history of the struggle over the possession of the Great Plains and its resources. Its objective is to kindle thoughtful dialogue on the actions of our ancestors and how they formed the world we experience today.

The best way to learn from the past is to ‘virtually’ relive it.

By better understanding how and why decisions were made in 1872, we hope, through mutual respect and collaboration, mentor a future that benefits the planet and all its inhabitants both today and tomorrow.

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⁶ <https://youtu.be/bxsy-c5JqmA?t=182>

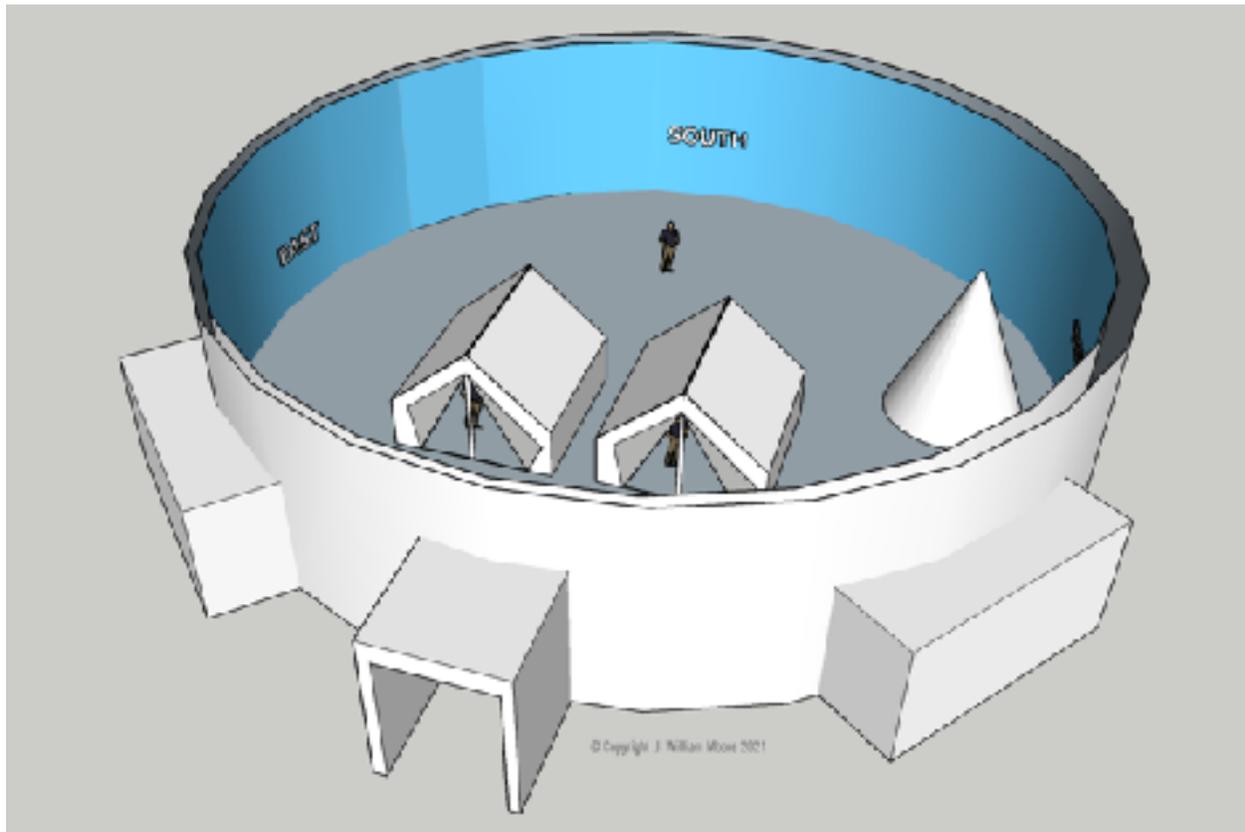
⁷ Brulé Records: <https://brulerecords.com/>

⁸ 2nd Cavalry Mounted Band: <https://www.facebook.com/2ndCavalryBrigadeBand/>

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZ5nDTQiTfU>

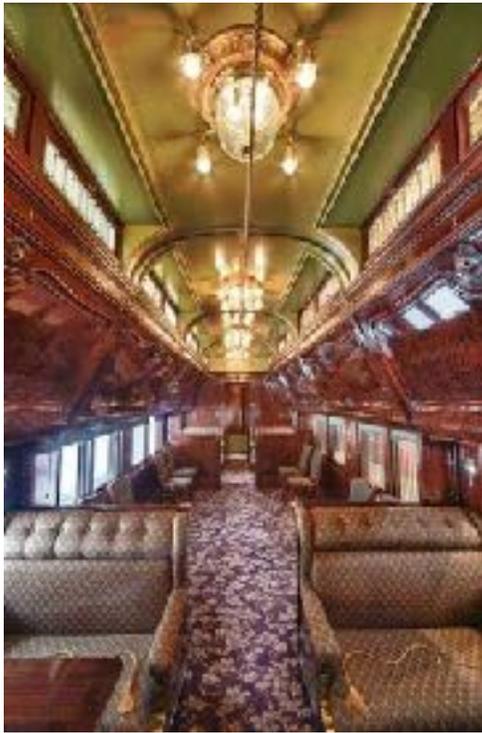
¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzSWUKYvXgo>

APPENDIX ONE

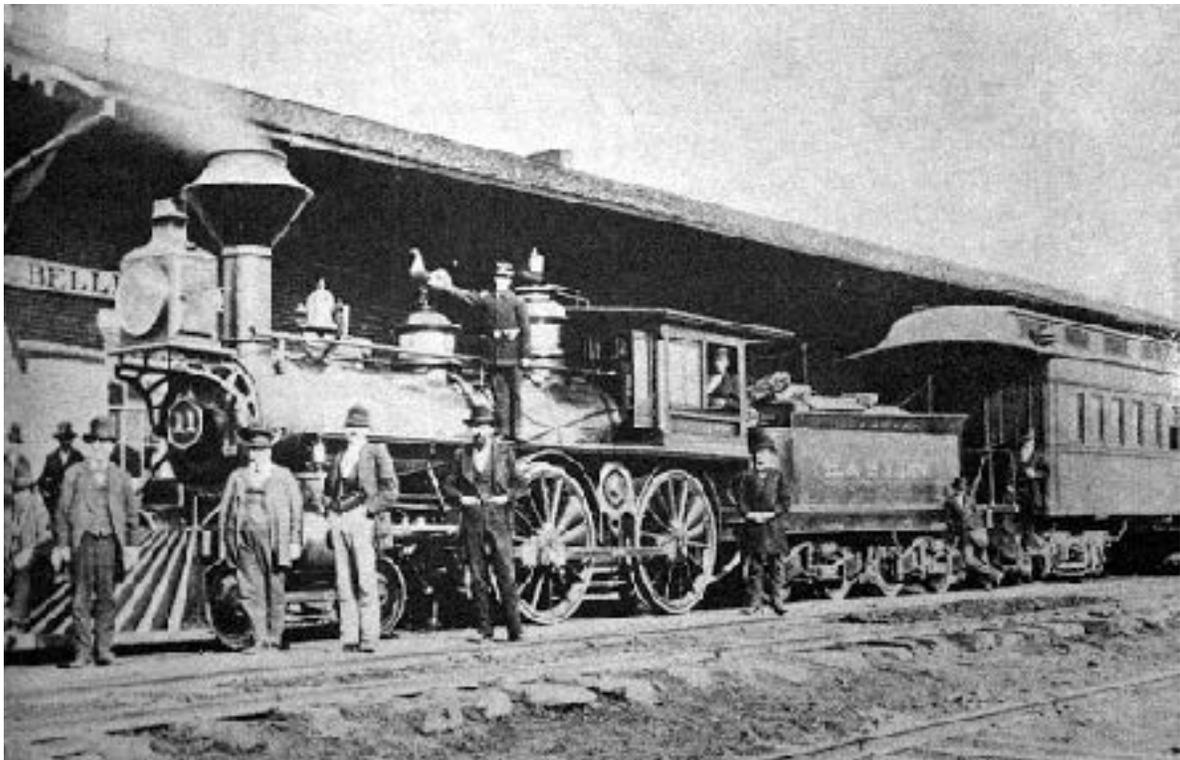


Camp 1872 digital stage is based on similarly-sized unit developed for ILM and Epic for Disney’s “Mandalorian” spin-off of the “Star Wars” franchise. Like ILM’s, it measures some 75 feet in diameter and 20 feet high. Sixty percent of the inner ring consists of multiple LED panels. A full-sized real-world Civil War army hospital tent and an full-size Sioux lodge/tipi occupies the lower 40% of the “stage” are outfitted with period objects or replicas. Between them and opposite the entrance is a PORTL hologram cabinet featuring a life-sized 3D ‘Buffalo Bill’ Cody.’

Entrance unto the handicap-accessible “stage” is via a portal that when wearing AR optics is transformed into the interior of a luxury Pullman train car (illust. 2) similar to the one below that might have been similar to the car used by the Grand Duke.



Illust. 2 Luxury Pullman car would be rendered digitally as an AR 'portal'



APPENDIX TWO



Above: Illust. 3 Honorable Bill Cody circa 1890. Below: 26 yr-old Cody photographed in Omaha before the hunt.





Clockwise top left: Sinte Galeska (Spotted Tail), Custer and Alexis, Phil Sheridan, Spotted Tail's daughters and his primary wife.



APPENDIX THREE

SUGGESTED PROGRAM SCHEDULE

We propose each “showing” is 45 minutes in length followed by a 15-minute sanitizing period to prevent spread of infectious diseases, especially COVID-19.

0-10 minutes: Showgoer/viewer admittance and exploration of exhibits within the LED stage, including programmed chatbot Q&A “face-to-face” with PORTL 3D Bill Cody in his 1890’s Wild West Show attire.

At 10 minute mark the lights dim and in the distance to the west we see the twinkling of camp fires inside hundreds of Lakota lodges (tipis). To the east the horizon lightens and sounds from a stirring camp fade in. Horses whinny.

From 10-20 minute mark, Cody introduces General Sheridan who welcomes the showgoers/camp visitors. He introduces Grand Duke Alexis , then Custer, followed by Sinte Galeska (“Spotted Tail”). Sheridan explains the purpose of the hunt and why he invited Spotted Tail.

At 19 minute mark, Cody rides up and says he’s found the bison and Sheridan orders everyone to mount up and then for the next 10 minutes using VR/AR the showgoers follow the hunters across the broken hills and gullies, at one point finding themselves in the middle of a stampeding herd of bison as Lakota bring down bison with amazing skill. If feasible, the stage floor reverberates to the stampeding bison.

At 30 minute mark, as sunsets in the west, Spotted Tail invites showgoer to visit his camp where freshly killed bison is being roasted. Through a translator, he explains the importance of the buffalo to his people and the hope that he and his children can always be free to hunt them. The Grand Duke gives presents to Spotted Tail and his sub-chiefs, under the watchful eye of Sheridan and Custer.

At 35 minutes, Spotted Tail's warriors begin to do their war dance to traditional drumming. At 38 minutes the digital 1870's warriors transform into modern Lakota dancers to the music of Brulé.

At 40 minutes, the dancers begin to fade as the lights come up and aged 1900's Cody appears and tells the fate of the main characters. He thanks the showgoers for their patronage and urges them to tell their friends.

At 45 minutes, the exhibit area is cleared and the cleaning crew goes through their sanitization procedures, readying the venue for the next "show."