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## Article Title: Omaha Charleyö and the Bristol Collection of Native American Artifacts

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Article Summary: During the 1870s-1890s Omaha Charleyö Bristol traveled the dime museum and lecture hall circuit, giving lectures about Indian life and culture. Visitors viewed his photographs and Indian artifacts and saw performances by entertainers. Although some items were not authentic, the Bristol collection educated and continues to educate the public about Nebraska's Native Americans and its Wild West era.

### Cataloging Information:

Names: David Charles Omaha Charleyö Bristol; Mary Eleanor Thompson Bristol; Buffalo Bill Cody; Charging Eagle; Mary Jemison, the White Woman of the Geneseeö; Charles Mountain Charlieö Stewart Stobie; Riley Miller; One Starö Lettie Ann Hunter Hinman; EE Blackman; NT Nevada Nedö Oliver; HB Texas Harryö Hicks; Princess Nenetahö Hicks; Dr Jim The Diamond Kingö Lighthall

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Photographs / Images: David Charles Omaha Charleyö Bristol; inset page from Bristol's scrapbook showing an advertisement for his Indian Museum; Bristol with his wife Lettie and three of their sons; group photograph including Bristol and a boy holding a box of Sagwaö a cure-all elixir sold by the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company; NT Nevada Nedö Oliver with a performer named Spotted Wolf ; scalp shirt that Bristol claimed had been presented to him by Standing Bear in 1876; Bristol's jacket, 1880s; turtle leg necklace owned by Young Spotted Tail; quiltwork moccasins made by Standing Bear's wife; HB Hicks and his wife, Nenetah, traveling evangelists on the medicine show/vaudeville circuit; Dr Jim The Diamond Kingö Lighthall; a Bristol collection club made from a horse's hoof (possibly not an authentic artifact)

# “OMAHA CHARLEY”



AND THE BRISTOL COLLECTION  
*of* NATIVE AMERICAN ARTIFACTS

BY TINA KOEPPE

Left: David Charles Bristol, aka "Omaha Charley,"  
1834-1925. NSHS RG0798-11-05

*"Ladies and gentlemen, we have come  
To show these relics at your home;  
The best collection of the kind,  
To show the skill of Indian squaws,  
Which on your curiosity draws,  
To see and hear explained entire,  
Their handy work at your desire.  
You listen as we pass around  
And unto you these things expound..."*

—Poem from handbill for "An Exhibition  
of Indian Relics" by Elisha Blakeman, 1892.

In 1906 Nebraska State Historical Society curator Elmer Ellsworth "E. E." Blackman traveled by train from Lincoln to Homer, Nebraska, to visit a man named David Charles Bristol. Locals in Homer knew Bristol as a "Buffalo Bill-like gentleman . . . driving his four high-stepping horses, hitched to a 'Democrat' wagon."<sup>1</sup> People from Dakota County knew about the expansive Indian artifact collection he maintained in a building on his property. He took pride in showing friends and neighbors his personal museum and telling stories about his experiences living and working with Indians in the late nineteenth century. Blackman planned to view this private museum, rumored to contain nearly five hundred objects, and introduce himself to its owner and caretaker.

"This collection was arranged and packed in cases which stood in a small frame building where four incubators . . . heated with oil lamps, kept going day and night," Blackman later said of his first visit to Homer.<sup>2</sup> Bristol had grown weary of caring for hundreds of objects. Realizing the danger of fire, he "seemed anxious to place this collection in a safe place," and expressed his desire to make the collection "a memorial to his life."<sup>3</sup> Blackman, convinced that this was the most valuable and best authenticated collection in the West, began to talk to Bristol about moving his collection to the Nebraska State Historical Society.

Using the name "Omaha Charley," Bristol toured the United States during the 1870s-1890s, giving lectures about Indian life and culture and presenting a touring museum complete with performers to entertain the crowds. An early biographical sketch explains, "In the early days among the scouts and trappers it was the custom to address individuals by the given name only and it was modified by some significant term to distinguish him from others by the same name, i.e. Mountain Charley and Pawnee Charley." Because of his close association with the Omaha tribe, Bristol became known as "Omaha Charley."<sup>4</sup>

Clippings in Bristol's scrapbook illustrate his years traveling the dime museum and lecture hall circuit in cities across the Midwest and eastern United States. In 1891, a Chicago newspaper advertised one of Omaha Charley's appearances in Chicago: "The principal attractions in the main curio halls of Kohl & Middleton's Clark Street dime museum will consist of Madame Carver the fat lady, and her midget son; Omaha Charley, the famous cowboy scout; Quebo, the marvelous razor walker..."<sup>5</sup>

Bristol came from a prominent East Coast family, but little is known about his early life. He was born in 1834 at Canandaigua, Ontario County, New York, to David Bristol, Sr., and Sarah (Knickerbocker) Bristol. One account explains, "Farm life in

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will consist of  
Madame Carver  
the fat lady, and  
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Omaha Charley,  
the famous cow-  
boy scout;  
Quebo, the  
marvelous  
razor walker . . ."

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# To-day and To-Morrow at the **OPERA HOUSE.** Omaha Charlie's **INDIAN MUSEUM !!**



**Over 2,000 Indian curiosities on ex-  
hibition. A collection of 37 years.**

**WILL INTRODUCE GENUINE INDIANS IN THEIR NA-  
TIVE DANCES AND COSTUMES.**

What we promise we exhibit. Ladies and children treated with  
respect. A treat of a life time. Indians just from the reservation.

**ADMISSION, - - - 10 Cents.**

RANTOUL PRESS Print.

upper parts of the Empire State held no lures for the boy."<sup>6</sup> He went to work for the railroad at age seventeen. Interviews with descendants suggest that youthful rebelliousness and a preference for spending time with Indian friends may have led to family estrangement.<sup>7</sup> He worked as a brakeman on the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway. At the age of twenty-one, he established a trading post thirty miles east of Black River Falls, Wisconsin, where he did business with and befriended members of the local tribes. In 1865 he married Mary Eleanor Thompson of Union City, Pennsylvania. The 1870 census places David and Mary Bristol in Greenfield, Wisconsin, where his occupation is listed as "huckster."

Bristol moved to Nebraska in his thirties, living and working in Decatur, Gordon, Rushville, and

finally in Homer. He often chose to live on Indian reservations. Mary, perhaps tired of this lifestyle, sought a divorce and moved to Neligh, Nebraska, where she remarried Judge Robert Wilson in 1873.

After his divorce, Bristol said that he worked as a manager and costumer for Indian performers in Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West.<sup>8</sup> Records from the Buffalo Bill Historical Center contain no mention of Bristol's name, but he did claim to live in Rushville at some point during the late 1870s and early 1880s. According to one source, "Many South Dakota Indians and cowboys who took part in the Wild West Show outfitted in Rushville, Nebraska and took the train from Rushville in special cars."<sup>9</sup> Cody employed hundreds of staff and crew members for his show during the 1880s. In the early days of the Buffalo Bill show, newspapers reported on incidents of fights and heavy drinking amongst Cody and his crew, so it's possible that record keeping was not a priority. It's also plausible that Bristol may have exaggerated his professional connections in order to advance his own career. Family legend suggests Bristol and Cody ended their professional relationship due to a disagreement about money.<sup>10</sup>

The next step in Bristol's career involved the largest traveling medicine show of the nineteenth century: the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company.<sup>11</sup> Modeling its selling techniques after the Wild West shows, the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company sold a variety of "cure alls" and entertained customers with vaudevillian style performances featuring Indians hired straight from the reservations. At the height of their success, the Kickapoo Medicine Company employed around eight hundred Indians and fifty white "medicine men" and "agents" touring the country selling their products.<sup>12</sup> The best selling product from the Kickapoo Medicine company was "Sagwa," a laxative made with a combination of herbs and alcohol, and promoted as a cure for ailments such as rheumatism and dyspepsia.<sup>13</sup>

During his time with the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company, Bristol began to display a collection of relics to "enlighten the public on Indian life." He also found himself acting as referee and advocate for the Indians traveling with the show. During one stop on the medicine show circuit, local townsmen gave alcohol to the Winnebago performer Charging Eagle. Later in the afternoon, with a crowd gathered around, an intoxicated Charging Eagle came out on stage with his face painted, and flourishing a war club. He began chasing the show's manager. During this tour, tensions between the Kickapoo management and the performers had been high, with the

management accusing the Indians of laziness. Bristol intervened before the situation got out of control. Despite this, local authorities briefly arrested Charging Eagle, and Bristol bailed him out of jail. When Charging Eagle reappeared on stage at a later performance, the infuriated manager drew a gun on Bristol, but he recalled years later, that he was saved by one of the Indians, "who had the would-be murderer covered in the twinkling of an eye."<sup>14</sup>

Eventually, Bristol left the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company and set out on his own, planning to exhibit his artifact collection in the big cities. Charging Eagle and another Winnebago man, Eddie Priest, joined him on tour. This traveling museum, called "Omaha Charley and his Band of Wandering Sioux," toured through the United States, primarily the Midwest. Additional Indian performers joined the group and wore the costumes and demonstrated implements for the entertainment and education of the audiences. During the closed theatrical season, Bristol traveled to reservations and purchased more objects for his collection. In addition to looking for items with unusual and high quality beading, quillwork, and decorative details, he sought out objects with interesting stories behind them or associated with famous people. While traveling on the East Coast, he purchased several items from the family of Mary Jemison of New York. Jemison, the "White Woman of the Genesee," had been kidnapped in the mid-eighteenth century and raised by the Seneca tribe after the murder of her family. Bristol accumulated items connected to other famous personalities such as Red Cloud, Young Man Afraid of His Horses and Standing Bear.<sup>15</sup>

Friends helped add to his traveling museum. Gifts from Little Priest included a saddle blanket, a quirt and a whip with scalp marks on the bone handle. From Charging Eagle, there is a catlinite stone pipe with a long wooden stem and a necklace made of delicate white dentallium shells. Bristol's friendship with Charging Eagle and the Priest family was not unusual; he continued to build and maintain friendships with Indians over the years, and his collection grew as he received gifts from his friends.

When asked where he obtained the items for his collection, Bristol explained that often when an Indian visited his home he "went away without his moccasins. It is a custom among the Indians to present a friend with some part of their costume." He also bought and bartered for many items.<sup>16</sup>

Bristol achieved modest financial success with his traveling museum, and in 1887 bought paintings



Bristol with his wife, Lettie, and three of their sons. Bristol married Lettie, a Winnebago woman, in 1891, when he was fifty-seven and she was nineteen. NSHS RG0798-11-04

from the renowned artist Charles "Mountain Charlie" Stewart Stobie, who had a studio in Chicago. Bristol's purchases included paintings of Chief Gall, Rain in the Face, and Sitting Bull, as well as two portraits of himself. One portrait of Bristol resides at the Colorado State Historical Society; the Nebraska State Historical Society owns the other four known paintings.

For a period around 1891-92, Bristol teamed up with a former government scout named Riley Miller. At seventeen, Miller fought in the Civil War, on the Union side with the Eighth Iowa Cavalry, Company G. In 1864, Confederates captured Miller and held him at the notorious Andersonville Prison. He survived and went on to become a government scout, a meat hunter for mining camps in the Black Hills and a marksman for the South Dakota Home Guard.

In December 1890, Miller participated in the violent events leading up to the Wounded Knee massacre. Another Home Guard soldier, Peter Lemley, later described Miller's role in the event. According to Lemley, Miller was part of a group of young soldiers sent to:



**"Omaha Charley" Bristol, second from right, circa 1880. In the front row, a boy holds a "Sagwa" box, the cure-all elixir sold by the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company. NSHS RG0798-03-02**



stir up the Indians by rushing into their Ghost Dances, shootin' em up and then high-tailing it back to where the rest of the unit waited in ambush. There was a bunch of men there. We went over and stirred them (Indians) up and a lot of our fellows laid in at the head of a gulch. We kids went over to the stronghold and got'em after us and they chased us down Corral Draw. Riley Miller was at the head of it and layin' up there behind the trees and rocks. This Riley Miller was a dead shot, and he just killed them Indians as fast as he could shoot . . . We killed about seventy-five of them. Riley Miller and Frank Lockhart went back there and got some packhorses and brought out seven loads of guns, shirts, war bonnets, ghost shirts and things.

Lemley goes on to say that he heard Miller took these things to Chicago and earned his income displaying them to the public.<sup>17</sup>

A handbill created to advertise the variety of items exhibited in Bristol and Miller's exhibition describes a shocking item: a mummified baby papoose.

And best, and wonder most of all,  
A papoose found in tree top tall.  
Dried up and mummy-like entire  
Without the help of gums of fire,  
Complete in every limb and part  
From outside form to tiny heart.<sup>18</sup>

Museum staff believes the mummified baby may have been part of Riley Miller's Wounded Knee collection.<sup>19</sup>

Bristol and Miller held different philosophies regarding the place of Indians in society. In an 1891 interview with the *Lewiston Lance* of Mason City, Illinois, Bristol said, "It was a mistake that only the dead Indian was good, but on account of the treachery and cruel treatment of heartless government agents, the Indians had been compelled to suffer even starvation, and many of them craved

death as a refuge from such a government."<sup>20</sup> Perhaps due to these differences in opinion, the partnership between the two men soured. Miller sold his collection and left for the Klondike gold rush, abandoning his wife and eight children on a South Dakota homestead.<sup>21</sup> Later in his life, Bristol condemned the Wounded Knee massacre and described the sadness of seeing little red papoose caps from the massacre site with as many as three bullet holes in them.<sup>22</sup>

In 1891, fifty-seven-year-old Bristol married nineteen-year-old "One Star" Lettie Ann Hunter, a Winnebago woman whose family he lived with while working as a trader on the reservation in Thurston County.<sup>23</sup> Lettie attended the Carlisle Indian Boarding School in Pennsylvania and reportedly possessed an excellent singing voice.

Bristol continued touring after his marriage. In the fall of 1891, Lettie gave birth to a son named William. "Omaha Charley and his Band of Wandering Sioux" continued to tour during the early 1890s, exhibiting at Kohl and Middleton Museum in



**N. T. Oliver, aka "Nevada Ned," right, poses with a performer named Spotted Wolf and an unidentified man. Oliver was one of the founders of the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company and was known for his flamboyant costumes. NSHS RG0798-10-01**



Bristol wrote that Standing Bear presented him with this scalp shirt in 1876. But was it the famous Ponca leader, or perhaps a Lakota of the same name? Bristol's records are unclear. Based on age and construction, it could have been the Standing Bear who sued for his freedom in 1879. Either way, the shirt and the accompanying quillwork moccasins (p. 186) are fine examples of work that appear to pre-date the Reservation era. NSHS 338



D. C. Bristol's jacket, 1880s. The jacket is made of thick cotton oilcloth and is decorated with floral beadwork. NSHS 1788-1



A necklace (left) owned by Young Spotted Tail, and made of forty-four turtle leg bones and metal beads. NSHS 2199



Quillwork moccasins  
made by Standing  
Bear's wife. NSHS  
76-1-2



H. B. Hicks and his wife,  
Nenetah (misspelled  
on photo), were travel-  
ing evangelists on the  
medicine show/vaudeville  
circuit. NSHS RG0798-10-04

Chicago in 1891 and at Huber's Palace Museum in New York in January 1892. Newspaper accounts and advertisements for these exhibits refer to "Major" Bristol and describe his fringed buckskin suits and long hair that resembled the other Wild West performers of the era. The troupe at this time included "two squaws and a papoose." It is unknown whether the "Band of Wandering Sioux" included Bristol's wife and children, but it is possible they went on the road with him. He reportedly earned around \$50 a week during the touring season, a decent income for a man without formal education.

During an era when the general public and government treated Indians as second class persons and sideshow oddities, Bristol desired to educate and share his views about prejudice and inequality. He watched as traditional Native American culture rapidly disappeared and realized that many objects and customs would be lost forever if he did not help take action. With the history and use of every item in his collection committed to memory, he continued touring and exhibiting around the country.



Bristol attributed his close friendships with Indians to the fact that he “always made it a point in my trade and transaction with them to tell them the truth and treat them fair and honest. As an Indian loses his respect for any white man who deceives him once, for this reason I attribute my success and friendship with them.”<sup>24</sup>

By 1898, the family grew to include four sons: William, Charles, Albert, and James (a fifth son, Harold was born in 1910) and the years of touring came to a close. When “Omaha Charley” retired to Homer, Nebraska, he brought his traveling museum home as well. The eagle feather headdresses, dozens of moccasins, weapons, tools, and household goods illustrated the colorful stories about life as a trader and showman in the early Wild West vaudeville circuit. In addition to a farm, the Bristols owned property in Homer, including a long building they built as a museum for the artifact collection. When their church needed a larger house in which to worship, the couple, who were devout church members, moved the collection to a small frame building on their farm, and donated the building to the church.<sup>25</sup>

In 1906, in the small building with the oil powered lights burning day and night, E. E. Blackman spent time talking to Bristol about his collection and his life. Blackman later wrote about the meeting, recalling: “On my recent visit to them, he (Bristol) remarked, ‘of course I have been pretty wild and a great sinner, but with the help of God, I am trying to live right and do right by everybody.’” Blackman reported, “Not a home in the state is more neatly kept and its owner has plenty of this world’s goods to make his old age enjoyable.”<sup>26</sup>

Bristol, now in his mid-sixties, agreed the collection should be in a fireproof storage place where a greater number of people might enjoy it. He also worried that the collection would be divided up after his death, and confided to E. E. Blackman that he wanted to avoid this situation and “desired the collection to remain in some museum as a monument to his memory.”<sup>27</sup> Financial gain did not interest Bristol and he turned down several lucrative offers for individual items from his collection. At one point, he reportedly refused \$4,000 for a leather beaded dress. Even during one of Blackman’s visits to Homer, a neighbor stopped by the farm with his checkbook, asking to purchase a buffalo robe. Bristol rebuffed the neighbor, explaining that nothing was for sale and sent him on his way empty-handed.<sup>28</sup>



**Dr. Jim Lighthall was known as “The Diamond King.” His entourage included a licensed physician to help protect him against accusations of practicing medicine without a license. NSHS RG0798-10-06**

Lettie initially did not want to loan the collection and argued for keeping it in the family. She worried that Blackman wanted the collection for his own personal use and was not being honest about it going to the museum. Following intense family debate, reassurance, and negotiation, the couple finally signed a contract in September 1906, agreeing to loan the entire collection. The Society promised to safely store, catalog and display the collection and agreed that the collection would be returned to the family at their request. In 1910, the family, free of the responsibility of managing a small museum, sold their farm and moved to a large two-story house in downtown Homer.

The Society exhibited some of the Bristol collection in the old museum in what is now Architecture Hall on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus. Plans to build a new museum and storage space had been delayed repeatedly during this time. In 1915, dissatisfied with the lack of new development, lack of security, and general care of the collection, the Bristol family requested its return.<sup>29</sup> The *Nebraska State Journal* reported that Bristol considered reviving his traveling show and going on tour through the East, but finally agreed to give the Society an opportunity to keep the collection in hopes that the legislature would soon approve funds for a new building.<sup>30</sup>

David Charles Bristol died at home on September 14, 1925, at the age of ninety-one. After the death of her husband, Lettie Bristol and the youngest sons relocated to southern California, where they had relatives. In the following years, several of the Bristol sons requested the return of his collection and made plans to auction the items so the money could be divided between the heirs. A legal dispute followed and the auction ultimately was called off due to all Bristol heirs not being present (one minor son was still in California), nor had they all agreed to the sale in writing. After months of negotiation, the family finally agreed to keep the collection intact to honor their father's wishes. As a result the Historical Society purchased the collection for \$3,000 in 1929. In 1934 Lettie remarried a man named Robert B. Smith. She died in 1954 at the age of eighty-three.

The David Charles Bristol collection still resides within the walls of the Nebraska History Museum and the Nebraska State Historical Society archives. In addition to objects, the collection includes photographs and the scrapbook Bristol kept during his travels in 1891-93.

The photograph collection includes cabinet photos of Indians, vaudevillians and some of the most well-known characters from the late nineteenth century Wild West and medicine show circuits. Cabinet photos provided performers and entrepreneurs with a valuable promotional and money-making tool during the late nineteenth century. These photos may have been purchased or received from friends met on the road.

One of the earliest photos in the collection provides a glimpse into life with the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company. In this mid-1880s photo (shown on p. 184), Bristol wears a wide brimmed hat, an elk tooth earring, and shirt decorated with pins made from animal tusks. Two Indian women and five Indian men pose with Bristol. A white man in a three-piece suit, possibly the manager of the troupe, sits in the center of the group with a cigar in his hand. In the front row, a solemn young boy holds up a "Sagwa" box, the cure-all elixir sold by the Kickapoo Company.

In a cabinet card photo (p. 184), N. T. Oliver aka "Nevada Ned," possibly one of Bristol's managers during his Kickapoo days, poses along with a young Indian performer named Spotted Wolf and an unidentified man.<sup>31</sup> Oliver, one of the founders of the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company, was famous for his flamboyance and wore gold coins as buttons on his jackets and vests. When reminiscing about his costume later in life, Oliver bragged that he wore "\$3,000 worth of real diamonds and two

gold-mounted .44's."<sup>32</sup> After his medicine show days, Oliver found some success as a writer of dime store Western novels and serials.

Other celebrities from the medicine show/ vaudeville circuit represented in this photo collection include traveling evangelists H. B. Hicks ("Texas Harry") and his wife "Princess Nenetah." (p. 186). The couple appears in several photos, posing in flamboyant costumes, resplendent in a hodgepodge of tribal and souvenir beadwork and jewelry. Dr. Jim Lighthall, another famous showman from the late nineteenth century, appears in a dog-eared and battered photo (p. 187). Lighthall, aka "The Diamond King," due to his affinity for diamonds (which he wore in abundance), poses in a fringed buckskin jacket. Lighthall's entourage included a licensed physician to help protect him from accusations of practicing medicine without a license. He also displayed "Indian curios" as part of his show.<sup>33</sup> Lighthall died of smallpox in 1886 at the age of thirty, after becoming one of the earliest and wealthiest "snake oil" salesmen in the country.<sup>34</sup>

The scrapbook kept during 1890-93 contains a variety of newspaper clippings, business cards, handbills, letters, and advertisements for the "Omaha Charley and his Band of Wandering Sioux" exhibit. Now incredibly fragile, Historical Society archivists have digitized the pages of the scrapbook to prevent further damage and wear to the brittle pages. Within the pages of the scrapbook, a sampling of the motley crew of characters Bristol encountered during his travels is evident: tightrope walkers, facial contortionists, musicians, medicine show performers, jugglers, and trapeze artists. The scrapbook includes yellowed and brittle newspaper clippings that shed light on the real-life dramas involving Indians and the government that riveted the nation at the end of the nineteenth century.

The majority of Bristol's collection illustrates the reservation era of Plains Native American life, and the world of the traveling vaudeville museum and medicine show. Clues re-emerge in photographic details: men and women performers, dressed in full regalia, pose for pictures, frozen in a moment of time when life on the vaudeville circuit provided more stability and income than life on the reservation. David Charles Bristol's largest legacy remains in the artifact collection at the Nebraska History Museum. The collection includes examples of clothing, tools, weapons, artwork, and household implements. The artifacts in the Bristol collection provide glimpses into the minds of the makers and wearers. Many of the moccasins have soles made of recycled painted parfleche (painted raw-

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hide bags used for carrying meat, clothing, and gear). Small leather bags show evidence of previous incarnations as leather boots. The jingling tin cones trimming the hems of dresses and bags were constructed from old tin vegetable cans and snuff containers. While Indians earlier in the century famously used "every part of the buffalo," the poverty on the reservations led people to recycle common household goods (and sometimes heirlooms) to make moccasins and decorate clothing.

Like many of his Wild West peers, Bristol blended mythology with real life. Some of the stories in newspapers and his biographical statements provide contradictory details, dates, and vague information. There are still mysteries left to unravel. In the 1980s, museum staff inspected a scalp shirt that reportedly belonged to Crazy Horse and discovered machine stitching and other details inconsistent with the date originally assigned to the shirt.<sup>35</sup> While the shirt did in fact belong to a man named Crazy Horse, research revealed it was not the famous Crazy Horse. Some of the items in Bristol's collection are believed to have been constructed for costuming entertainers. Other items, including a set of four horse hooves made into clubs, definitely seem to have been created for their sideshow appeal.

In 2007 the museum received a federal Saving America's Treasures Grant and a private donation to fund the conservation of the Plains Native American artifact collection. Over the course of two years, technicians stabilized, re-housed, and cataloged hundreds of artifacts, including the Bristol collection.

Over one hundred years later, thanks to a collector's joy in amassing such a comprehensive array of artifacts and the perseverance of Historical Society staff from the past and present to keep this collection intact, the Bristol collection survives and continues to educate museum visitors about Nebraska's late nineteenth century Native American and "Wild West" culture. ■

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Dakota County Historical Society Notes*, May 21, 1964. A Democrat wagon is a type of small lumber wagon.

<sup>2</sup> E. E. Blackman statement, October 13, 1927, Nebraska State Historical Society, RG2948.AM.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> "D. C. Bristol Answers Call," *Homer Star*, September 17, 1925.

<sup>5</sup> Newspaper clipping, dated 1891, found in Bristol collection donor files, Nebraska State Historical Society.

<sup>6</sup> *The Omaha Daily News Magazine*, March 7, 1920.

<sup>7</sup> Author interview with David Charles Bristol's family members in May 2009.

<sup>8</sup> *North Nebraska Eagle*, May 19, 1892.

<sup>9</sup> Margaret Lemley Warren, *The Badlands Fox* (Hermosa, S.D.: Margaret Lemley Warren, 1991), 32.

<sup>10</sup> Author interview with David Charles Bristol's family members in May 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Despite the name, Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company employed no actual Kickapoo Indians.

<sup>12</sup> Brooks McNamara, *Step Right Up* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995), 85.

<sup>13</sup> Laura Browder, *Slippery Characters: Ethnic Impersonators and American Identities* (Cultural Studies of the United States) (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 70.

<sup>14</sup> *Homer Star*, August 15, 1915.

<sup>15</sup> The name "Man Afraid of His Horses" was given to a chief considered so fierce that his enemies were afraid of even his horses.

<sup>16</sup> *Omaha Daily News Magazine*, March 7, 1920.

<sup>17</sup> Warren, *The Badlands Fox*, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Poem from Handbill for "An Exhibition of Indian Relics" by Elisha Blakeman, 1892, Bristol collection donor files, Nebraska State Historical Society.

<sup>19</sup> A thorough search through correspondence, records and files dating from the original date of the donation does not mention or include information about a mummified baby presented as an artifact or as the subject of artwork.

<sup>20</sup> *Lewiston Lance*, July 9, 1891.

<sup>21</sup> Renee Samson Flood, *Lost Bird of Wounded Knee* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 53-54.

<sup>22</sup> *Homer Star*, August 15, 1915.

<sup>23</sup> There are contradicting dates for Lettie and D. C. Bristol's marriage. In many of the resources consulted for this article, the wedding year is provided as 1881, however Lettie Bristol, born in 1871, would have been ten years old. Several other resources, including census records, give the date as 1891. An interview with Bristol descendants in 2009 revealed a family rumor about Lettie being promised, traded or sold to D. C. Bristol as a young girl, so there may be more to the story than has been documented so far.

<sup>24</sup> E. E. Blackman, "D. Charles Bristol (Omaha Charley)," *Nebraska History* 2, no. 4 (1919): 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Omaha Daily News Magazine*, March 7, 1920.

<sup>26</sup> E. E. Blackman's correspondence 1906, Nebraska State Historical Society RG2948.AM.

<sup>27</sup> E. E. Blackman statement 1925, Nebraska State Historical Society RG2948.AM.

<sup>28</sup> E. E. Blackman, "D. Charles Bristol (Omaha Charley)," *Nebraska History* 2, no. 4 (1919): 3.

<sup>29</sup> *Omaha World-Herald*, October 23, 1915.

<sup>30</sup> *Nebraska State Journal*, Nov. 14, 1915.

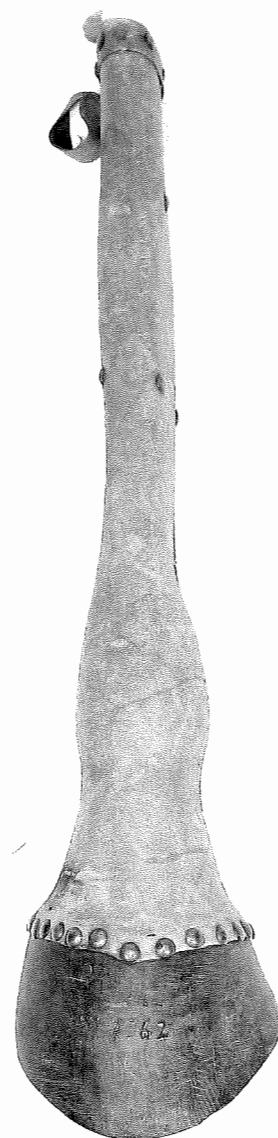
<sup>31</sup> Dr. Ned Oliver was the pseudonym of E. O. Tilburn. He wrote several detailed accounts of the American medicine show for the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1929.

<sup>32</sup> Ned Oliver, *Saturday Evening Post*, September 14, 1929, 169.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> "Diamond King Dead," *New York Times*, January 27, 1886.

<sup>35</sup> Gail DeBuse Potter, "The Crazy Horse Scalp Shirt," *Nebraska History* 77 (1996), 96.



Some objects in the Bristol collection seem to have been created for sideshow appeal, such as this club made from a horse's hoof. NSHS 1762-2