

## “A Vanishing Race”?

### The Native American Films of J. K. Dixon

CAITLIN McGRATH

On November 22, 2014, National Public Radio aired a show titled “Imagined Nations: Depictions of American Indians.” Produced as an episode of WAMU’s *Backstory*, the series aimed at giving “historical perspective to the events happening around us today,” with this episode focusing on the controversy over the Washington, DC, NFL team’s name, the Redskins.<sup>1</sup> The show contextualized the debate by exploring key moments, “taking a long look at how Native peoples have been represented—and misrepresented—in U.S. history.” The sixth and penultimate segment of the show, titled “Cigar Store Colossus,” detailed the never-completed National American Indian Memorial in New York Harbor proposed in 1913 by Rodman Wanamaker, the son of John Wanamaker, founder of the Wanamaker department stores.

*Backstory* framed Wanamaker’s portrayal of Native Americans as an unequivocal misrepresentation. This viewpoint could well have been informed by a 1979 piece written by William Franz, “The Colossus of Staten Island,” echoed in the segment’s title.<sup>2</sup> Though he was not mentioned in the show, Wanamaker’s public lecturer and filmmaker, J. K. (Joseph Kossuth) Dixon, produced Wanamaker’s Native American films and photographs and also championed the memorial. In his discussion of Dixon, Franz exhibits a deep skepticism of his work; he describes, for instance, “bombastic introductory remarks by ‘Doctor’ Joseph Kossuth Dixon, head of Wanamaker’s ‘education department’ and the leader of his earlier Indian expeditions,” implying not only that Dixon was not a doctor but also that the education department was not a serious endeavor.<sup>3</sup>

FIGURE 1.1. Dr. Joseph K. Dixon and Scolds-the-Bear, Crow Reservation, Montana, 1908. Mathers Museum of World Cultures, Indiana University.

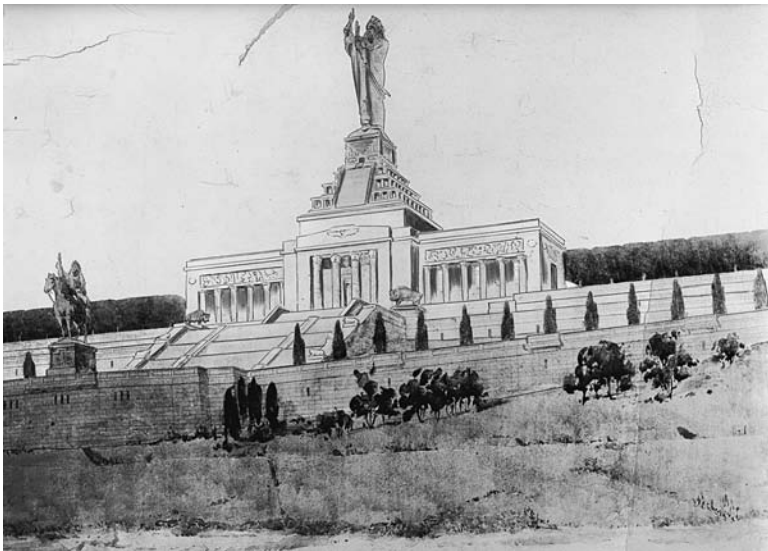


FIGURE 1.2. Hand-modified print of proposed Indian Memorial, 1913, New York. Mathers Museum of World Cultures, Indiana University.

Franz's assessment of Dixon has been echoed in the work of historians Russel Lawrence Barsh and Alan Trachtenberg.<sup>4</sup> For Barsh, Dixon was a Rasputin figure. He compares Dixon's films of Native Americans to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), echoing Chinua Achebe's influential call to banish such representations from the canon.<sup>5</sup> In his analysis of the various iterations of *Hiawatha*, Trachtenberg's chapter on Dixon paints him as a charlatan; he notes the mixture of education and display, but reads Dixon's involvement with Native Americans as an "opportunity to act out his impulses as a romancer."<sup>6</sup>

This chapter does not deny Dixon's paternalism. The aim is rather to reveal the complexities at work in the intersection of his protoethnography, educational imperatives, Native American advocacy, and involvement in a capitalist enterprise. Dixon was working in the early days of anthropology and ethnography. To dismiss him as a salvage anthropologist because he spoke of "the vanishing race" condemns his images, and the history they contain, to a kind of oblivion.<sup>7</sup> His sentimentality has led to a wholesale rejection of his work, which overlooks the unusual uses of nontheatrical film within Wanamaker's display practices and is more accurately described as an instance of what Ben Singer has termed "ambimodernity": "Modernity is better understood as a heterogenous area of modern and counter-modern impulses, yielding cultural expressions that reflected both ends of the spectrum, along with, and perhaps more frequently, ambivalent or ambiguous positions in between."<sup>8</sup> Further, Dixon's photographs and films have not been appreciated in conjunction with his fight for the rights of Native Americans who served in World War I and his repeated attempts to get Congress to reconsider its stance on extending the benefits and privileges of U.S. citizenship to Native Americans.<sup>9</sup> Dixon's films—and the accompanying illustrated lectures, performances, and displays—were part of a complex system of in-house and traveling entertainment dedicated to an educative and moral goal, and were deployed in his fight for Native American enfranchisement. To tell this history without consideration of nontheatrical media as a tool for public education impoverishes any understanding of why these images were made and how they circulated.

Between 1908 and 1913, Dixon made three photographic and filmmaking expeditions to over 80 Native American communities, visiting 169 different tribes.<sup>10</sup> The resulting 8,000 photographs and 34,000 feet of film were edited into a series of photographic exhibitions, illustrated lectures, and plans for three films—*Hiawatha*, *The Battle of Little Big Horn*, and *The Last Great Indian Council*—with *Hiawatha* being shown extensively from 1908 through

1913.<sup>11</sup> Researching this massive creative output presents several challenges. Dixon's extant photographs, papers, ephemera, and film fragments are spread among three locations: Indiana University's Mathers Museum, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP), and the Smithsonian's Human Studies Film Archive (HSFA), where the remaining film fragments are housed. Many of Dixon's photographs (which include some production stills) have survived and are held at the HSFA and in the Wanamaker collection of the Mathers Museum, while paper materials, which include John and Rodman Wanamaker's correspondence, are in the HSP archives.<sup>12</sup> There were over seventy reels in the Wanamaker collection in the 1920s, ranging from in-house productions of short clips to accompany illustrated lectures, longer freestanding films, and commercially produced (and purchased) educational and fiction films. Susan Applegate Krouse helped process the film fragments now housed at HSFA in 1985 when they were "discovered in a basement in Red Lodge, Montana, wrapped in newspapers from 1911."<sup>13</sup> The length of existing footage is quite close to that of Reel 70 of the Wanamaker catalog, which is described as "cutouts, not be used but to be saved. For File Only. 1,000 feet."<sup>14</sup> Krouse and others at the Smithsonian determined that their footage was likely the outtakes.

These surviving archival materials suggest an evolution of Dixon's position over the course of these three expeditions, over time seeing his films and photographs as impetus and support for conveying the necessity of enfranchisement to the public and the U.S. government. Dixon's involvement with the Wanamakers began in 1907, with his employment as a photographer and lecturer for the country's wealthiest father-son department store magnates. The Wanamakers strove to provide what they described, in one of their oldest slogans, as "More Than Just a Store."<sup>15</sup> This "more" manifested itself in numerous ways, one of which was to serve as a hybrid news outlet and educational resource. The first two expeditions, in 1908 and 1909, seem to have been motivated by this declared desire to bring the world within reach. The final expedition, in 1913, was more focused on Native American citizenship, shortly following the groundbreaking for the ill-fated National American Indian Memorial. The collaboration between department store magnate and filmmaker/public lecturer, and the ensuing films, photographs, and public lectures, reveals an approach to visual media as an educational tool at a time when Native American culture was little understood by the general public.<sup>16</sup> Dixon may not have been an acknowledged part of the burgeoning field of anthropology, but he was keenly aware of visual media's abil-

ity to influence public sentiment in matters related to indigenous cultures. In order to understand his awareness of visual media's power, we must account for Dixon's work at the Wanamaker department stores and his earlier work as a lecturer for Kodak.

### "A Vast Public Museum": The Wanamaker Stores' Culture of Visual Display

In promotional literature, Wanamaker described one of his stores as "a vast public museum" and the Egyptian Hall, on the third floor where public lectures and performances took place, as "This Splendid Temple . . . devoted to the cause of Music and Education." He proclaimed the stores' higher attendance numbers (in comparison to those of other museums or art galleries) were a result of Wanamaker's egalitarian (free) admission policies.<sup>17</sup> Wanamaker's first store, the Grand Depot, was modeled on the architecture of the world's exhibition, and its 1876 opening was timed to coincide with that year's Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, for which Wanamaker served as chairman of the Board of Finance. Wanamaker strove for more than visual similarities to cultural predecessors, however. Company literature proclaimed, "To give people the things they want is not enough for the Wanamaker stores. . . . They must be a leader in taste—an educator. . . . They go a step farther . . . and present exhibitions and lectures by men of national reputation, in Science, History, Literature, Art and Music. . . . Educative exhibits of art and life and history have been part of the Wanamaker purpose from the beginning."<sup>18</sup> Wanamaker aspired to create a store culture of uplift and high-class entertainment: education with a touch of wonder and amusement.

But what did a store striving to be a "vast public museum" look like? After the success of the Grand Depot, Wanamaker moved to a new property just down the street, built another store next to it, joined the two, and expanded again. The final building at the corner of Juniper and Market Streets in Philadelphia represented an evolution from the single-story, radial-planned world exhibition model of the Grand Depot toward a multistory Greco-Roman museum, with an open atrium on the ground floor, classical marble columns, and themed auditoriums on the upper levels. These auditoriums, Greek Hall and Egyptian Hall, were flexible spaces that at times displayed merchandise such as ladies' fashions and grand pianos but were increasingly used as lecture halls to hold crowds of two thousand or more. Wanamaker



FIGURE 1.3. Postcard of the Egyptian Hall, Wanamaker store, Philadelphia, featuring John Philip Sousa's Military Band, 1908. Courtesy of Glenn Koch.

expanded his empire to New York City with the purchase of the former A. T. Stewart Department Store, turning it into a hybrid store-museum, with a permanent exhibition hall, Wanamaker Auditorium, with fixed seating for 1,500.<sup>19</sup>

The Philadelphia store's organizational structure involved what I have divided into three tiers of engagement, each reflecting a more structured and focused educational agenda. Confidence in the power of visual media as an educational tool permeated all aspects of Wanamaker's display practices, from the casual in-house displays to the public lectures to the employee school system. The first tier included large-scale displays on the lower floors that utilized the open space of the main atrium, which was known as the Grand Court. Examples included a morning concert demonstration of an early phonograph in 1907, or the celebration of John Wanamaker's birthday in 1911, when over ten thousand guests crowded into the Grand Court. On this occasion, a show of lantern slides and films celebrating his lifetime achievements were projected on an enormous screen draped over the upper balcony.<sup>20</sup>

Unifying this tier were slightly smaller thematic exhibits dotted throughout the store, which customers might happen upon without explicitly seek-

ing them out. For example, the third and fourth floors contained replicas of the birthplace cottage of Robert Burns, King Edward's coronation chair and crown, a series of wax tableaux depicting the French Revolution, and a Japanese gate. These displays were often tied into celebratory days during the store's Anniversary Month of March, which had a different theme each day—Paris Day, Scottish Day, and so on.<sup>21</sup>

The second tier consisted of daily illustrated lectures that usually took place in the Egyptian or Greek halls. These lectures utilized lantern slides, were free and open to the public, and covered topics from architecture to zoology. They were led either by local academics from area institutions such as the University of Pennsylvania or Temple University or by famous authors or experts. Once Dixon was hired, he became the head lecturer and began incorporating films.

The third tier concerned the formal education of the store employees, which took place on the upper floors and roof of the store. The store school began by offering classes for young boys and girls who worked on the shop floor and expanded over time into the accredited University of Trade and Applied Commerce, with classes not only on topics relevant to the store's operation but also on subjects that contributed to a well-rounded arts and science degree. By 1911, over 7,500 students had passed through the Wanamaker classrooms, and a significant portion of employees received some degree of education from the twenty-four full-time teachers employed in the Wanamaker system. Film was also integral to this final tier. In a letter dated June 14, 1916, to film producer George Kleine, H. H. Kaeuper, director of education at the Philadelphia store, wrote, "We are particularly desirous of finding films that will effectively supplement classroom work in history, geography, and general school and commercial subjects."<sup>22</sup> Dixon was most heavily involved in the second and third tiers, focusing on the role of films and photographs in the transmission of knowledge. It was from this position as in-house lecturer and educator that Dixon traveled to capture images—both film and photographic—of Native Americans.

It is not clear who initiated the first expedition, though the Wanamakers had long expressed an interest in Native Americans, beginning with John Wanamaker's trip west for a restorative cure in his youth. As he told his biographer, "Sad was it to witness their desolation and listen to the story of their suffering wrongs—Oh! That their history could be blotted from the page of remembrance for Alas! It is a bitter reflection upon the humanity and christianity [*sic*] of the White Man."<sup>23</sup> In 1900, John Wanamaker began donating large sums of money to the University of Pennsylvania Museum to

fund a series of expeditions.<sup>24</sup> Franz Boas was consulting with the museum at the time, and Wanamaker became interested in funding research into Native American culture, donating a “rare Indian totem” in 1901.<sup>25</sup> In November 1903, a display of Wanamaker’s collection of Native American items was announced by the Penn Museum, and in 1905 he donated his entire private collection of over three hundred items. A subsequent, larger exhibition showcasing the bequest opened the same year.<sup>26</sup>

In the first two expeditions in 1908 and 1909 to the Crow Reservation in Montana, Dixon photographed and shot footage for three films. The nonfiction short *The Last Great Indian Council* attempted to gather all the most senior Indian chiefs to be photographed and filmed. The film of Custer’s Last Stand, *The Battle of Little Big Horn*, was part of the popular historical reenactment genre in early cinema, functioning as a kind of newsreel by providing the public with visuals to match the accounts in print, though Dixon was dissatisfied with the footage, and it was never edited into a completed film.<sup>27</sup> Dixon engaged a number of Native Americans who had been at the original battle more than thirty years earlier, to provide a measure of authenticity as well as to move away from using white actors in red-face, a widely employed practice.<sup>28</sup> For his most popular film, *Hiawatha*, a film adaptation of Longfellow’s epic poem, Dixon again employed Native Americans rather than whites in makeup, a point he made sure to promote.<sup>29</sup> Upon Dixon’s return after both the 1908 and 1909 expeditions, displays of ephemera, photographic exhibits, film screenings for schoolchildren, and a children’s primer on the story of *Hiawatha* were produced in the Philadelphia and New York stores as tools for his form of spectacular pedagogy.<sup>30</sup>

Since only fragments of these films remain (in the case of *Hiawatha*, only stills), it is difficult to assess the relationship between Dixon and his actors or the quality of the films themselves. Surviving descriptions of his multimedia performances, scripts of his lectures, and outtakes and production stills, give a sense of the final product and the filmmaking process, however. All three films, though they range from documentary to reenactment to fictional film, exhibit a romanticism typical for the period, as well as moments of engagement with the Native Americans as individuals. Dixon worked with Native American photographer Richard Throssel, and he did not shy away from documenting Native Americans as modern contemporaries, as with his photo of Crow Chief Plenty Coups driving a car. Publicly, Dixon focused on representing Native American culture as under threat, but there are photographs and glimpses in the films of a more complicated truth.





FIGURE 1.4. Portrait of Hiawatha and Minnehaha from 1908 filming of *Hiawatha*, Crow Reservation, Montana. Mathers Museum of World Cultures, Indiana University.

## “The Eye Is a Great Educator”: Dixon and the Pedagogical Potential of the Visual Image

In a letter discussing the screening of *Hiawatha* in the New York store’s auditorium, Dixon underscores the primacy of the moving image: “I very much want people to go from that auditorium saying that they never saw such pictures as at Wanamaker’s. They will forget the music, they will forget what I say, but they will never forget what they see. The eye is a great educator.”<sup>31</sup> Dixon’s emphasis on the visual was partly a result of his years working for Kodak, where his job was to draw attention to the potential of the medium.

In 1904, Dixon began working for George Eastman as a traveling lecturer with the Kodak Exhibition in Europe and in the United States, where he quickly became respected for his illustrated lectures and demonstrations of photographic equipment.<sup>32</sup> The Kodak Exhibition began touring the United States and Europe in 1896 with a series of prints displayed on screens set up in hotels, lecture halls, public meeting spaces, and churches. Although the traveling lecture was well established in 1904, excitement over Dixon in both testimonials and reviews indicate that this was a new phenomenon for the Kodak Exhibition. In his work for Kodak over the course of three years, Dixon performed from a script with hand-tinted lantern slides, the photographic screens, and—for the first time—films. Dixon boasted to Eastman that he had acquired films for his lectures from the new Urbanora series on personal loan from film producer Charles Urban, using the films to start and end most of his lectures.<sup>33</sup> Coming in 1904, at the beginning of Urban’s career, this collaboration suggests a measure of Urban’s belief in the Kodak Exhibition’s mission of outreach and education and, more specifically, recognition of a like-minded soul in Dixon.

Much like motion picture exhibitors and lecturers Lyman Howe and Burton Holmes, and even Sagar Mitchell and James Kenyon in the U.K., verisimilitude ensured the success of his performances. The key difference between Dixon and his contemporaries was that Dixon had to answer to George Eastman. While the upside of having the sponsorship of the Eastman Kodak Company was the security of a salary and the backing of perhaps the most well-known name in photography, it came with distinct challenges. For example, churches were key venues for his traveling programs, and they often balked at the “trade idea” of promoting Kodak products though the lectures.<sup>34</sup> More importantly for his later work as a pedagogue at Wanamaker’s, Dixon was using the technology, format, and visual tools of the illustrated lecture to sell the underlying technology—cameras, lenses, and film. As such,

Dixon's relationship to photography and film was different from that of other lecturers. Howe and Holmes used technology to lecture on a subject; Dixon was using various subjects to lecture on and market a technology. Lectures such as "The Call of the Kodak," "The Fruit of the Lens," and "The Kodak, a Moral Force" indicate Dixon's approach. The aims of the exhibition were to raise the profile of photography as an art form, while Dixon's job was to assure the audience that, through the wonders of Kodak equipment, the same images were achievable by everyone. Using technology to sell technology prepared Dixon for another balancing act: packaging education as entertainment to be consumed within a department store.

"Too Many Prayers and Not Enough Potatoes":  
Dixon at Wanamaker's

In mid-1905, between his first and second seasons with Kodak, Dixon produced a small pamphlet, "Just Hatched," laying out the tenets of his most popular lectures. In it he announced, "A Great moral and educational idea has just broken its shell."<sup>35</sup> He repeatedly mentioned the "intellectual and moral force" of photography, an idea he included in his correspondence with George Eastman, to whom he wrote: "I love it—there is an educational and moral value to it."<sup>36</sup> This idea that photography and film had the power to uplift was in tune with the outlook of John Wanamaker, whose Quaker background compelled his educational philanthropy as a necessity to balance his stores' commercialism. Wanamaker did not want passive consumers. Dixon's challenge to audiences to become engaged could help further realize Wanamaker's vision of a "vast public museum" to foster "education with a touch of wonder and amusement."

On January 5, 1907, John Wanamaker wrote an offer of employment to Dixon in St. Louis, where he was touring with the Kodak Exhibition: "I duly received your letter and confirm the engagement with you at Three Hundred Dollars per month, to take up work in the Photographic Departments of our New York and Philadelphia stores, especially in conjunction with Mr. Wilson in Philadelphia."<sup>37</sup> Although Dixon's agreement with George Eastman required only one month's notice, Wanamaker wrote to Dixon on the same day inquiring whether he might be released sooner to the mutual benefit of Wanamaker and Eastman: "I believe Mr. Eastman's business will be greatly advanced by the new departure that we shall be the leaders of and that he will want to give us his support as much as we will want to have it."<sup>38</sup> The impact of Dixon's use of film at Wanamaker's was immediately felt. On

March 27, 1907, for Pennsylvania Day, films were shown in the Philadelphia Wanamaker store for the first time and, according to newspaper accounts, the audience numbered five thousand.<sup>39</sup>

As Dixon began lecturing in earnest, Wanamaker kept close watch, as evidenced by a letter of constructive criticism sent to Dixon a few months into his tenure, which provides insight into the experience of the lectures:

I stood in the back row yesterday afternoon, because I could not get any closer to you, and listened to your lecture as you showed pictures of the store. The crowd was all right, the pictures were all right, and you were very stately yourself and handsome, but your voice did not carry except when you “thundered.” I think the lecture was prosy. In these days people do not want thick sandwiches between the pictures, especially when they find an advertisement tagged on them. It reminds me of a friend of mine some years ago when visiting Saratoga, who had been accustomed to staying at Dr. Strong’s sanitarium. I supposed of course my friend would be stopping at Dr. Strong’s, but he told me he was not. I asked him why, and alluding to the family worship there every morning he said “had too many prayers and not enough potatoes.” I am thinking of that in connection with your lecture. It wants more pictures and two or three epigrams between them. I hear on all sides congratulations over your work.<sup>40</sup>

Wanamaker wanted his patrons to become actively involved in the store’s ecosystem of education and entertainment. In this instance, he asked for less talking and more images, understanding the entertainment value of using moving images as a tool for engaging visitors. These lectures were more than an afternoon at the picture show. They served as an alternative public education for large numbers of the middle-class patrons that constituted the stores’ primary clientele. Audiences were unusually large compared to those of the standard fifty to one hundred people in the storefront nickelodeons of the day.<sup>41</sup> In his public lectures at the stores, Dixon regularly spoke to crowds of up to two thousand.<sup>42</sup> In addition to using the format of multimedia presentations from the Kodak Exhibition for his work at Wanamaker’s, Dixon was making films in-house as well as purchasing films from Urban and Kleine.

Increasingly, Dixon’s lectures melded with preexisting systems for selling modern life through all of Wanamaker’s cultural and technological displays and exhibits as outlined above in the tiered system while anticipating how this form of display could generate a desire for goods that visitors did not even know they wanted. For example, commercially produced films—such as Edison’s

*Paul Revere* (1907) and Porter's *The Teddy Bears* (1907)—were repurposed for the educational and consumer aims of the store, respectively; *The Teddy Bears* was included in the 1907 holiday program for Christmas shoppers.<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, themed celebrations of commemorative days at the stores such as Old Folks' Day, Grand Army Day, Children's Day, Paris Day, Shamrock Day, and so on were opportunities for the stores to create a festive atmosphere, to highlight related goods, and to create public edutainment with displays of wax figures, art shows, re-creations, and lantern-slide lectures. Once Dixon joined the staff, film was woven into these celebratory days, usually as part of his illustrated lectures. Compiled by Dixon, a total of forty-three completed films are listed in the only known catalog of films owned by Wanamaker's.<sup>44</sup> A little over half were films purchased from outside firms, including commercially produced films. The list also featured many nontheatrical subjects such as *The Paris Flood*, *Logging in Norway*, *Atlantic Sea Voyage*, *Funeral of King Edward VII*, *Life of the Bee*, *Paris Fashions*, *Perils of the Alps*, *Life in a Burma Teak-Wood Forest*, and *Royal Drive through London*.

It was into this system of educational display that the first expedition to the Crow Reservation was introduced in 1908. Instead of isolating Dixon's Native American photography and filmmaking as Trachtenberg, Barsh, and others have done, understanding these materials as part of a larger system for public education places them in a different light. In this way, the display of Native American materials within the store was not an anomaly. Rather, these lectures were equal parts history, literary adaptation, and—over time for Dixon—social justice advocacy, honed between 1908 and 1916 to provide an easily digestible message to the general public about the current conditions of Native Americans and what he perceived to be their plight.<sup>45</sup> This campaign ranged from lectures for the general public to messages crafted for politicians in Washington, DC, whom Dixon lobbied in the 1920s to make substantive moves toward granting the rights and privileges of U.S. citizenship to Native Americans. Dixon's efforts to raise public consciousness about the unjust treatment of Native Americans on reservations was always grounded in and reinforced by his use of films and photographs as tools for drawing out “the eye [as] a great educator.”

### “In All Fairness”: Dixon Advocates for Native American Citizenship

There were three large-scale attempts to gather the experiences of Native Americans in the Great War. Two were made by governmental agencies—the Office of Indian Affairs, tasked with tracking Indian assimilation, and

the U.S. Army's Historical Section—looking for evidence of the “Indian as warrior” to make a case for their use as scouts. The third was made by Dixon.<sup>46</sup> Unlike the other two efforts, Dixon let Native Americans speak for themselves, transcribing their memories directly rather than relying on an officer to interpret their answers.<sup>47</sup> He also asked them questions the government did not think to ask—about their loss of livelihood, land, or property, and the emotional effects of World War I. His photographs and first-person interviews with returning servicemen, which he collected between 1917 and 1926 and intended to publish before his death in 1926, were not published until 2009. Krouse argues that Dixon was invested in the case for U.S. citizenship for Native Americans and marshaled his documentation to this end. As a result, “his records illuminate the struggle for Indian citizenship, and the confusion surrounding citizenship status for Indians, in the early decades of the twentieth century.”<sup>48</sup> Dixon's records are the only ones from this period that represent the viewpoints of Native Americans concerning their experiences in World War I and its aftermath.<sup>49</sup>

This shift from recording to advocating occurred during the 1913 expedition to all 169 Native American communities in the United States. Krouse locates the shift at the dedication of the site for the National American Indian Memorial, where a number of the chiefs in attendance stated that they finally felt heard by the U.S. government. The chiefs were urged to sign the Declaration of Allegiance to demonstrate to leaders in Washington that they were not the stereotypical warring Indians and instead were keen to have enfranchisement for their communities. In fact, a number of the chiefs who came to the dedication of the memorial site helped draft the Declaration of Allegiance.<sup>50</sup>

After returning from the 1913 expedition, Dixon focused his efforts on further educating the public through the San Francisco Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915, where the Wanamakers had a pavilion in the Palace of Education, titled the Rodman Wanamaker Historical Expedition to the North American Indian. The pavilion won a Gold Prize for its contributions to the cause of Native American citizenship. Dixon's accompanying lectures, which included his photographs and films, were a resounding success. The exhibit was praised for its contributions to public education, as a contemporary newspaper report reveals: “Examination of the Indian from the realm of politics is the goal of the Wanamaker campaign. It is proposed to crystallize public sentiment into a pressure, which will lift the administration of Indian affairs out of its present politics-ridden condition and make it non-partisan, humanitarian and just. For perhaps the first time the conditions under which the Indian is forced to exist are being made public.”<sup>51</sup>

[42] Caitlin McGrath



FIGURE 1.5. Thirteenth Infantry, Co. G., *Group of Indians*, March 31, 1919, Camp Mills, Long Island, New York. Mathers Museum of World Cultures, Indiana University.

The *New York Herald* described Dixon's work during the exhibit by noting that "resolutions memorializing Congress to redress Indian wrongs were adopted unanimously."<sup>52</sup>

After this successful public awareness campaign at the 1915 exposition, Dixon began arguing for Native Americans to be given citizenship in exchange for military service. As Dixon described his efforts to his patron, Rodman Wanamaker, "If a man is willing to lay his life on the altar of his country, he should, in all fairness have the privilege of becoming a part of that country, sharing its privileges, possibilities and obligations."<sup>53</sup> In 1917 and 1918, Dixon lectured in Philadelphia, Washington, DC, and New York, arguing that Americans could not in good faith claim to be on the right side of history during the Great War without first dealing with their own injustices at home. He implored, "Is it not time to clear our own land of autocracy before we attempt to wipe autocracy from the map of Germany? Isn't our treatment of the Indian too autocratic and too despotic? Have we not interred a whole race of people—not for a period lasting during the war, but for life?"<sup>54</sup>

### The Afterlife of Dixon's Images

Previous considerations of John and Rodman Wanamaker have tended to dismiss the wealthy entrepreneurs as solely committed to capitalism and have posited Dixon as a racist opportunist. With this chapter, I have presented evidence for a more nuanced view that includes the Wanamaker enterprise's use of nontheatrical media for communication and education. If we see the department store only as a space of display and commerce, it is easy to construe Dixon's work as consisting of little more than superficial showmanship. But when we probe the myriad levels of educative engagement undertaken at the store, the role of film becomes more complex.

Trachtenberg echoes Franz in his dismissal of the store's educational projects: "The imprint of Rodman Wanamaker signified not only a term of ownership under the capitalist form but also a mode of display (though this was disguised under the heading of 'education') designed to bring potential customers into the store and add another facet of pleasure to Wanamaker merchandise."<sup>55</sup> Understood in the full context of its mission and operations, education was actually a major undertaking within the department store, and one for which film became a fundamental component starting in 1907. Education and commerce are not antithetical: the Wanamakers were



successful entrepreneurs who also were committed to an educational ideal. Dixon was a savvy producer of photographs and films who was cognizant of visual media's potential to sway audiences, and along the way became an outspoken advocate for Native American enfranchisement.

In some cases, the photographs and films Dixon took are the sole surviving record of communities. As Krouse describes his efforts to document "the vanishing race," "Dixon's lasting contribution rests not in his advocacy, nor in his bombastic and argumentative prose, but in this data he collected, beginning with his photographs and ending with his documentation of Indian veterans."<sup>56</sup> In the brief excerpts that have survived, Native Americans look into the camera or playfully act out their roles assigned by Dixon. The images of Native Americans not statically posed or passively acting out an assigned role are records of active engagement with the process of representation. The relevance of Dixon's images to Native American communities has also been borne out over time. When Dixon's photographs were put on display at the Mathers Museum, some family members were able to identify and see images of their ancestors for the first time. Krouse herself came to the Dixon photographs and films with a general interest in North American Indians and found images of her own Oklahoma Cherokee tribe in the collection. Dean Curtis Bear Claw used some of Dixon's footage in his 1992 documentary about Crow history, *Warrior Chiefs in a New Age*, which recounted the lives of two chiefs of the reservation era, Plenty Coups and Bear Claw's grandfather Medicine Crow.

The varied educational endeavors within the New York and Philadelphia Wanamaker department stores constituted an ecosystem that relied heavily on a multimedia environment that is crucial to understanding Dixon's and the Wanamakers' engagement with Native American culture. Dixon used the term "vanishing" to galvanize public sentiment, and he strove to utilize his platform as a public lecturer to influence the U.S. government. The proposed memorial was to house a museum in its base that included all of Dixon's photographs and films as well as ephemera and artifacts gathered from his travels. However, what is remembered—and mythologized—are the ostentatious plans for the statue above the museum. World War I was the cause of the memorial's abandonment—by Dixon, the Wanamakers, and the public—but it also provided the impetus for Dixon's new approach to his educative missions, leading to the series of interviews of Native American soldiers who served a country that did not acknowledge them as citizens. Dixon's work must be understood within the context of the Wanamaker network of educational display and Dixon's own developing understanding of

the inherent power of the image. That these images and films have continued to be interpreted and repurposed by later generations—Krouse and Bear Claw—speaks to their enduring relevance and to the need to bring them out of obscurity.

#### FILMOGRAPHY

All available films discussed in this chapter can be streamed through the book's web page at <https://www.dukeupress.edu/Features/Screening-Race>.

*Dixon-Wanamaker Expedition to Crow Agency* (1908), original length unknown, silent, 35mm (original)

PRODUCTION: Joseph Kossuth Dixon and Roland Dixon. DIRECTOR/WRITER/CAMERA: Joseph Kossuth Dixon and Roland Dixon. ACCESS: Human Studies Film Archive, Smithsonian. SUMMARY: Inducted onto the Library of Congress National Film Registry in 2018, this film footage is the only known surviving film from the 1908 Rodman Wanamaker–sponsored expedition to record American Indian life in the West. Filmed by Joseph K. Dixon and his son, Roland, the film captures rare glimpses of life on Crow Agency, Crow Fair, and a re-creation of the Battle of Little Bighorn featuring four of Custer's Crow Scouts. Film was donated to the Human Studies Film Archives, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, and preserved by Cinema Arts in 1983.

#### NOTES

- 1 All of the information about and quotes from the show can be found at “Imagined Nations: Depictions of American Indians,” *Backstory*, National Public Radio, November 22, 2014, <http://backstoryradio.org/shows/imagined-nations/>.
- 2 William C. Franz, “The Colossus of Staten Island: A Ponderous Memorial to a People Who Refused to Vanish,” *American Heritage* 30, no. 3 (April/May 1979): 96–98.
- 3 See also Joy Porter, ed., *Place and Native American Indian History and Culture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); Lucy Maddox, *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race and Reform* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Eric L. Buffalohead and M. Elise Marubbio, eds., *Native Americans on Film: Conversations, Teaching, and Theory* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013); M. Elise Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden: Images of Native American Women in Film* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006); Michelle H. Raheja, *Reservation Realism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans on Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010).
- 4 Alan Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha: Staging Indians, Making Americans, 1880–1930* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004); Russel Lawrence Barsh, “An American Heart of Darkness: The 1913 Expedition for American Indian Citizenship,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (spring 1993): 91–115.

- 5 Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness,'" *Massachusetts Review* 18 (1977): 18.
- 6 Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha*, 233. The accounts of Dixon by Trachtenberg and Barsh have been repeated by later writers and have led to an image of Wanamaker and Dixon as unredeemable. See Steven Conn, *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Sherry Smith, *Reimagining Indians: Native Americans through Anglo Eyes, 1880–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor, eds., *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003); Edward Carter, ed., *Surveying the Record: North American Scientific Exploration to 1930* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1999).
- 7 David R. M. Beck, "The Myth of the Vanishing Race," in *Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indian Project*, Northwestern University and American Memory Project (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 2001). Dixon's own collection of photographs and essays from 1913 was titled *The Vanishing Race* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, 1913).
- 8 See Ben Singer, "The Ambimodernity of Early Cinema: Problems and Paradoxes in the Film-and-Modernity Discourse," in *Film 1900: Technology, Perception, Culture*, ed. Klaus Kreimeier and Annemone Ligensa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 38.
- 9 Susan Applegate Krouse, *North American Indians in the Great War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).
- 10 Krouse, *North American Indians*, 11.
- 11 See *Wanamaker Primer on the North American Indian: Hiawatha Produced in Life* (Philadelphia: John Wanamaker, 1910); and *The Vanishing Race* (Philadelphia: John Wanamaker, 1913).
- 12 There is only a very small snippet on the HSFA site, accessible through the book's web page at Duke University Press. Krouse wrote two earlier articles that have been referenced by Alison Griffiths, *Wondrous Difference: Cinema, Anthropology, and Turn-of-the-Century Visual Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); and Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), where Dixon is mentioned briefly in the context of early anthropology and ethnography. See Susan Applegate Krouse, "Filming the Vanishing Race," in *Visual Explorations of the World: Selected Papers from the International Conference on Visual Communication*, ed. Jay Ruby and Martin Taureg (Aachen: Edition Herodot im RaderVerlag, 1987); and Susan Applegate Krouse, "Photographing the Vanishing Race," *Visual Anthropology* 3, nos. 2–3 (1990): 213–33.
- 13 Krouse, "Filming the Vanishing Race," 258.
- 14 "List of Indian Motion Picture Film for Use in Indian Lectures," Mathers Museum of World Cultures, Indiana University, Bloomington, MMUS-057-025-9.
- 15 See Joseph Herbert Appel, *Golden Book of the Wanamaker Stores: Jubilee Year, 1861–1911* (Philadelphia: John Wanamaker, 1911).

- 16 For more on the history of educational cinema, see Devin Orgeron, Marsha Orgeron, and Dan Streible, eds., *Learning with the Lights Off: Educational Film in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), in particular Jennifer Peterson's and Oliver Gaycken's chapters.
- 17 Wanamaker compared the number of annual visitors to his stores to those of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, arguing that his lack of admission price democratized the experience and gave more of the public the chance to experience art and culture. Appel, *Golden Book*, 249.
- 18 Appel, *Golden Book*, 238.
- 19 Wanamaker bought the A. T. Stewart Department Store in 1896. Appel, *Golden Book*, 292.
- 20 This birthday event is described in in-house records, Jubilee Night, October 28, 1911, box 48.52, HSP. The films produced in-house by Dixon are listed in the catalog of films held by Wanamaker's generated by Dixon in the 1920s and now held by the Mathers Museum, MMUS-WD folder 57.
- 21 For more on the history of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century exhibition culture, see Philippe Harmon, *Expositions: Literature and Architecture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
- 22 H. H. Kaeuper to George Kleine, June 14, 1916, Educational Films 1916, 1920–30 folder, Container 18, George Kleine Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
- 23 Herbert Adams Gibbons, *John Wanamaker* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1926), 36.
- 24 Large Black Scrapbook, number 1, HSP, Philadelphia.
- 25 Large Black Scrapbook Series, HSP. Later, between 1914 and 1916, Rodman Wanamaker funded the work of Louis and Florence Shotridge, a husband-and-wife team, to return to Alaska to record the Tlingit language and cultural practices.
- 26 Large Black Scrapbook, number 1, HSP.
- 27 The reenactments of the Boer War (1900) perhaps were some of the earliest examples of this trend. See Kristen Whissel, "Early Cinema Encounters Empire: War Actualities, American Modernity, and Military Masculinity," and "Placing Audiences on the Scene of History: Modern Warfare and the Battle Reenactment at the Turn of the Century," in *Picturing American Modernity: Traffic, Technology, and the Silent Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).
- 28 Seen most recently in the documentary *Reel Injun* (Neil Diamond, Catherine Bainbridge, and Jeremiah Hayes, 2009).
- 29 This was not the first film version of *Hiawatha*. Theatrical productions of *Hiawatha* were popular across the country, and three motion pictures were either finished or in production at the time. See Andy Uhrich, "'Beautiful to the Eye, Pleasing to the Ear': Educational Performance in *A Pictorial Story of Hiawatha* (1904–1908)," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 13, no. 4 (2015): 256–75.
- 30 Large Black Scrapbook series, box 20, Scrapbook 8.1909.3.1, HSP. According to numerous clippings and internal advertisements, *Hiawatha* was shown daily in the Egyptian Hall at this time.

- 31 Dixon to M. J. Chapman, April 1, 1909, MMUS-WD folder 40, page 35, Wanamaker Papers, Mathers. In the same letter he continues, "The screen must be in size 22 × 24 [feet]. . . . The screen is to hang on a Hartshorn roller and when it falls there should be a rod of sufficient weight at the bottom to pull this screen absolutely taut, four-square. It ought to hang as straight and taut as a pane of glass."
- 32 There was no contract per se. Dixon was engaged for £546 per year. In the summer of 1905, he moved back to America to tour with the Kodak Exhibition, this time on a basis of \$60 per month, with one month's notice for termination. It seems it was these terms that Wanamaker was eager to break. Eastman Papers, George Eastman Museum (GEM), Rochester, NY.
- 33 Dixon to George Eastman, April 4, 1905, GEM.
- 34 Dixon to Mr. George Davison, March 15, 1905, 1, GEM.
- 35 J. K. Dixon, "Just Hatched," 7, MMUS-WD-022.
- 36 Dixon to Eastman, April 4, 1914, GEM.
- 37 John Wanamaker to Dixon, January 5, 1907, Letterpress folders, HSP.
- 38 Wanamaker to Dixon, January 5, 1907.
- 39 "Pennsylvania Day Thousands at Brilliant Celebration at Wanamaker's," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 28, 1907, 2. See also Large Black Scrapbook Series, 1909, 48–60, HSP.
- 40 John Wanamaker to Dixon, October 16, 1907, Letterpress folders, HSP.
- 41 A closer approximation to Dixon's public lectures were the lectures held at the Armour Institute in Chicago and the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, but the Wanamaker series was free and open to the public and within a commercial establishment, setting the store's activities apart.
- 42 Appel, *Golden Book*, 257. The title "Dr." seems to have been purely honorary. Dixon is also at times referred to as Reverend.
- 43 Presumably these films (*Teddy Bears*, *The Night Before Christmas*, and *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere*) were the Edwin S. Porter films of the same year. For more on contemporary examples of *Paul Revere* in a theatrical context, see Charles Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 430–31.
- 44 "Educational and Store Films, Positive and Negative, Where positive prints have been purchased from outside firms, words 'No Negative' will be placed, following the title of each reel." "Miscellaneous notes, lists of slides, lists of motion pictures for lectures," MMUS-WD folder 57, Mathers.
- 45 Some of his lecture notes survive in the Wanamaker Papers at the Mathers Museum.
- 46 Krouse, *North American Indians*, 5.
- 47 Interviews were conducted in English, but were not synopsisized as the military had done. Dixon quoted the servicemen directly, in their own words.
- 48 Krouse, *North American Indians*, 6.
- 49 Many of these interviews are published in their entirety in Krouse, *North American Indians*.
- 50 Krouse, *North American Indians*, 10.

- 51 “Wanamaker’s Indian Exhibit Wins Medal,” Wanamaker clipping file, HSP.
- 52 “Wanamaker Gift Will Help Indian,” *New York Herald*, October 19, 1915, HSP.
- 53 Dixon to Rodman Wanamaker, March 25, 1917, Wanamaker Documentation, in Krouse, *North American Indians*, 11.
- 54 Speaking to the Poor Richard Club in Philadelphia, quoted in Krouse, *North American Indians*, 12.
- 55 Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha*, 232.
- 56 Krouse, *North American Indians*, 7.