

ANALYTICAL VETERINARY TECHNICIANS

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19.7 CHAIRMAN

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DEAR READER...

The first thing that made me want to choose Annie Oakley as my hero for this project was, simply, this one of her quotes:

"I ain't afraid to love a man. I ain't afraid to shoot him either."

This posed questions for me. I wanted to know all about Annie Oakley and how her character impacted the world. From this quote, I could gather she didn't have a conventional attitude, and I wanted to know what she was like. Was she an activist? Did she disregard people's expectations of women? It sounded like Annie was an interesting lady, and a good person to research if you're a feminist. I went for it, and I definitely enjoyed researching Annie Oakley.

A big part of my choice was how Annie was always a mixture of two "different types of girl". In this era, it was expected that, basically, women had to be feminine and docile, tender and maternal. However, Annie mixed this style of feminine dress with a tenacious attitude, wiping away the lines that separated a "motherly" and a "tough" girl. I admire this, and I argue that her disregard for gender stereotypes has made an impact on today's society.

I add Annie Oakley was a symbol of fighting for equality, even in the 1800s: she was strong, tough, and not afraid to tell someone they were being biased. Annie competed against men in everything she did and almost always won. Even with a rough start to her life, she showed that you could do anything you wanted to.

In doing this project, I learned a few things. I learned a bit more about Annie's origin and how she came to be a star, and I learned how, throughout her life, she fought for women to have the same opportunities as men. In my project, I examine how these two things reflect on each other. For example, her stardom allowed her to have more of a voice to speak for women, and her activism made her more popular with the female population. Finally, I learned that even in the 1800s, people were fighting for feminism.

As you read, keep in mind that even though Annie Oakley may not be the most household of names, she played a major part in the diminishing of gender roles.

Veronica Bennett



A WILD WEST FEMINIST

Flashback to the late 1880s: Annie Oakley was taking the United States by storm. Dressed in lacy Victorian frocks and toting her shotgun, Oakley “projected an image so feminine... ladylike... most people thought of cowgirls as charming. Annie made it acceptable and even admirable for women to appear... in wild-west arenas....” (Riley 19). Oakley was a hero in her own right, showing girls that they could accomplish whatever feat they wanted to, while still dressing how they wanted and without being judged as too “girly” or feminine.

Oakley’s life began Darke County, Ohio, on August 13, 1860. Her father, John Moses was a vast influence on Annie’s sense of independence, including “[teaching] her to make traps out of cornstalks... by the time she was seven, Annie was already trapping quail and rabbit for the family table.” (Kasper 4). This was a pivotal development of Oakley’s character: she provided food for her family, when during this period it was usually the males who did just that. Further, it’s easy to understand how Annie had an attitude of equality, since she’d been doing things considered “manly” since the age of four.

When Annie was six years old, her whole life took a turn for the worse. To illustrate, her father went out in a snowstorm and perished from frostbite, her sister died from tuberculosis, and her family had to sell their family cow. Unable to provide for all her children, Annie’s mother sent her to live on a faraway farm at the age of ten. There, Oakley was horribly mistreated. Kasper wrote that Annie “talked of scars and welts on her back and said that one night the farmer’s wife threw her barefoot into the snow after falling asleep while doing some darning... one Spring day... the already independent and resolute Annie ran away.” (6).

After this, it only made sense for Annie to make a new life for herself. She went to a local butcher and struck up a deal, starting a business in selling game to the store. From this point onwards, Annie’s gunnery skills allowed her to pay her own way.

After she’d been dealing wild meats for a while, Annie paid off a two-hundred dollar mortgage on her mother’s house. Kasper adds that “Annie was proud of the story... as she would always be proud of her self-sufficiency and earning power. She was fond of saying that from the time she was ten years old, she never had a dollar that she did not earn.” (9). This just goes to show that Annie took pride in doing things herself.

By the 1880s, performance shooters were becoming quite popular. In fact, by this time Annie had already won many sharpshooting competitions and was even excluded from some because of her remarkable skills. Take into account that she was barely in her twenties and only five feet tall, and it’s easily comprehensible that Annie was a spectacle.

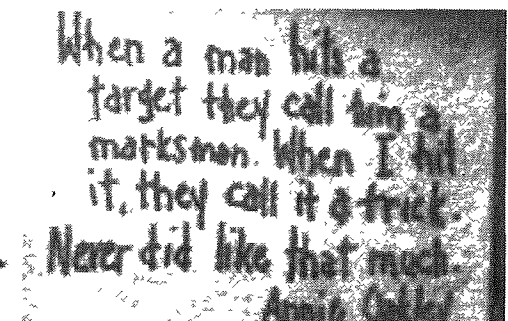
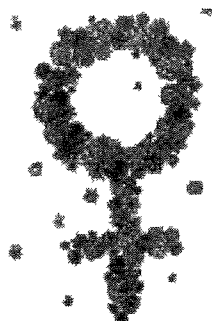
Her whole life changed again in 1885, when Annie defeated a man named Frank Butler in a shooting contest. He was quite impressed by the skill of this girl, barely 110-pounds, and not much sooner, Annie and Frank got married. It was said that the two never fought, only lived together as loving equals.

Later in 1885, Annie joined Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, a traveling show featuring other shooters like her. With Frank as her publicist and manager, Annie was surely a standout star. Riley presents that Annie “had no intention of... [creating] a genre of western women called the cowgirl... At the time, popular writers, poets, and artists included women in their work,

but they tended to present them as victims....” (20). Indeed, Oakley redefined society’s image of a woman. It was no longer the norm for men to be the only strong people, Annie’s cowgirl could easily rope them up, so to speak. Even then, Annie’s work and shots were still seen as her trying to be like the boys. On one instance, she said “When a man hits a target, they call him a marksman. When I hit it, they call it a trick.”

In spite of her celebrity, Annie’s life wasn’t the easiest. In one instance, Annie was accused of stealing to buy cocaine. How did she respond? Annie sued 22 newspapers and magazines for libel, winning 21 of the cases. Another standout part of Annie’s character was that she was all about empowering women and giving them the attitude that they could be their own people. When Oakley had retired from the show business, she and Frank traveled across the nation and gave young women lessons on how to handle a gun properly. At one point, Annie stated the importance of teaching girls that they shouldn’t be forced to rely on men. She even wrote to the Secretary of War, proposing an armed regiment for home defense composed entirely of women. Ultimately, this was overruled.

All of these things come together in the idea that Annie was a hero and inspiration for women, in the 19th century and today. We still see her character of a cowgirl in pop culture today, in everywhere from Toy Story to Broadway. Her ideas for giving strength and individuality to women made her a feminist in a time nobody knew what that word meant. It’s definitely my personal opinion that Annie was a hero to women of yesterday and today alike, giving women and girls an empowered sense of mind and proving that they could be rough and tumble while dressing exactly as they pleased, without facing judgement.



THE CONTEST

Annie was walking down the street
early one Saturday morning,
when a man slowly approached her
She gave him a warning,
but then he said, "Are you Annie Oakley?
The sharpshooting champion? The one and only?"

"Would you like to enter this contest?
I've heard you're a surefire shot."
Annie gave him a look and said,
"Thanks, but I'd rather not."
"Come on", he said. "Let's give it a whirl.
I've heard that you're a hell of a girl."

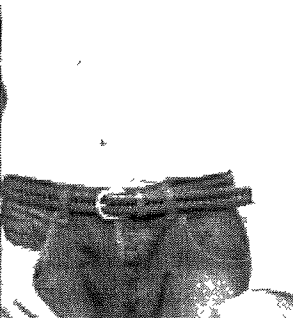
"You can pair with the top male shooter."
"If I compete, I work alone.
A man only slows me down and messes me up."
Annie replied, and by her tone
The man could tell she was a one-woman show.
One or nothing, it was the way to go.

"Alright, that's final," He responded.
"I'll see you Monday at the contest."
"Okay," Annie replied. "I'll see you then."
The man responds: "And don't forget to shoot your
best!"
He walks off, and Annie smirks to herself.
"I always shoot my best, without any help."

The day of the contest had come
and Annie was ready to win.
She arrived, toting her gun
and on her face a big grin.
She told everyone her name, and the audience gawked.
Annie just smiled more, her gun she cocked.

An opponent approached, a man named Butler.
He gave Annie flirtatious smiles.
She shot a hole right through the wall,
wooing him with feminine wiles.
After the contest was done,
(and by the way, Annie won)

Butler asked Annie on a date.
She agreed on a whim.
They went out a few more times,
and Annie fell deeply for him.
It wasn't long before they got married,
and the weight of their love she carried.

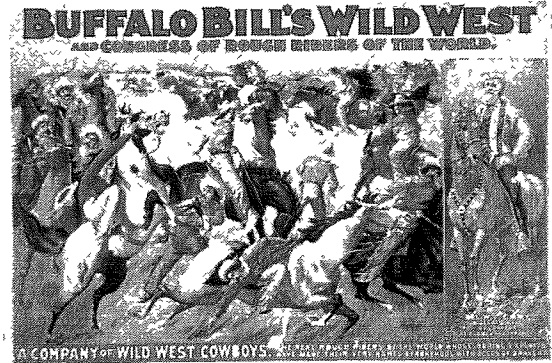


THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

FEBRUARY 27, 1885

THE WILD WEST'S NEWEST STAR: A WOMAN?

BY FRED HARRIS Calling all ladies and gentlemen who crave excitement and adventure: Buffalo Bill's Wild West Traveling Show is in town! This show just can't be missed. It doesn't seem like that long ago Buffalo Bill and his gang were visiting Ohio, but they've received a new addition since then: young lady Annie Oakley, the "Champion Marksman," a sharpshooter from our very own town of Darke County. Annie joins Texan girl Lilian Ward in the underrepresented female cast. We stopped by the venue to get a few words with Oakley herself:



FRED HARRIS: So, Annie, tell us about life in the show business.

ANNIE OAKLEY: Hi! Oh, it's a lot of fun. We get to travel all around America and meet lots of interesting people.

FH: Sounds like a dream! What was your first performance, last month, like?

AO: I was extremely nervous. My husband, Frank, was there to support me. We were in Topeka, and the audience was packed. I could feel everyone's eyes on me. I just got up the stage and did my routine. Everything went smoothly, and I feel so lucky to have this opportunity.

FH: Excellent! All of us in Cincinnati heard that you kept the audience on the edge of their seats. Did you do the trick with the playing card? That one's great. Anyway, the point is, you're on your way to fame. This performance was a stepping stone, how do you feel about that?

AO: The thought makes me nervous, and also a little scared. It seems like not long ago my father was teaching me how to hold a shotgun, now this. It's a lot.

FH: I see. Annie, we know you and Lilian are the only major ladies in the cast. Do you ever feel any stigma associated with that?

AO: Actually, yes. There's a certain idea that lots of people've got in their heads, that Lilian and I are floozies who only do the show to be around men, or that we're just trying to brag. That's not true at all. Rather, we enjoy competing and showing in a sport that just so happens to be dominated by men.

FH: So, people think you're just sharpshooting to be noticed by men.

AO: Exactly.

FH: Would you call yourself an icon to any women looking to get their name out there in the world of athletics?

AO: I wouldn't call myself an icon, but I do believe that every girl should learn to do what I do, to be able to hold her own and stand tall if a man tries to take charge.

FH: Well said, Annie. Now, do you have any last words of wisdom for the girls reading this?

AO: Just keep doing what you love, and don't let anyone stop you. By the way, I am trying to start a program to teach girls to shoot. I'll let you all know how that turns out.

Come on down tomorrow to see Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, featuring Annie Oakley: the girl who paves the way for women everywhere.

ANNIE & THE WOLVES

It was cold. So, so cold. Annie ran her fingers through the rough wool she'd been untangling. She'd been stuck here for a while now, in the hell of the wolves' home. Sent to live with these two cruel strangers about a year ago, Annie's sanity was hanging on a string. A girl of ten, there was only so much she could handle. The beatings, being left out in the freezing cold, it was all horrible.

Craaaaack. The screen door behind Annie's perch flew open, revealing the austere and terrifying face of one of the wolves. It didn't matter whether it was the husband or wife to Annie, their piercing glare and exaggerated features were enough identification.

"What do you think you're doing?" the wolf howled. Its eyes seemed to glow from anger.

"I'm just spinning this wool... Isn't that what you *wanted* me to do?"

"That doesn't look like what you're doing. Work faster."

The wolf disappeared back into the cabin, which was radiating heat into the polar outdoors. Annie's teeth chattered, her fingers numbing from both the temperature and the labor the wolves had been forcing her to do all day.

It was in this moment that Annie knew she had to escape. Annie had stayed with the wolves for as long as she could, but this day, this being left out in freezing weather with little more than a dress and stockings on, this being forced to work until her fingers bled: Annie knew. She began to scheme, her anger steaming in her, when a wolf came back out. Heavy footsteps shook the porch where Annie sat.

"The hell are you doing now?" the wolf snarled.

"I'm just working on the wool, like I've been doing all da-" A sharp sting hit Annie's face. The wolf's eyes glinted.

"It doesn't look like you're working, looks to me like you're talking back. You're gonna work all night, just for that. When I come back out in the morning, you'll have this whole basket of wool finished, got it?"

Annie looked up and the wolf was gone. She watched the windows with bloodshot eyes, all the light in the house dying out until it was dark outside and in. She'd given up on trying to warm herself up by this point. There was no way she could return to a reasonable body temperature simply by rubbing her small hands up and down her bony arms. Annie shut her eyes, hoping to catch a moment of rest before it was morning and she'd have to continue her forced labor.

"Annie, wake up." Annie bolted upright, expecting to see her tormentors standing in front of her. But it wasn't one of the wolves, it was a shimmering figure, an apparition of sorts. The shade shared the same eyes as Annie's four-years deceased father, the man who'd taught her to hunt and to not to let anyone take control of her. How ironic now, that Annie had fallen into that exact pitfall of not being able to escape control.

"Father, is that you? No, that's stupid, I must be hallucinating," Annie thought to herself. She blinked her eyes to adjust to the daylight and realized that the materialization in front of her was flickering.

"You're not wrong, Annie. Part of me is your father. But yes, I am dead, and no, I won't mysteriously return to save you from what we both know will end disastrously if you stay with these people. You call them the wolves? Fitting."

A look of astonishment flickered on frozen Annie's face.

"Now I must be dreaming. Why are you even here, Father? This is just unearthly," she responded.

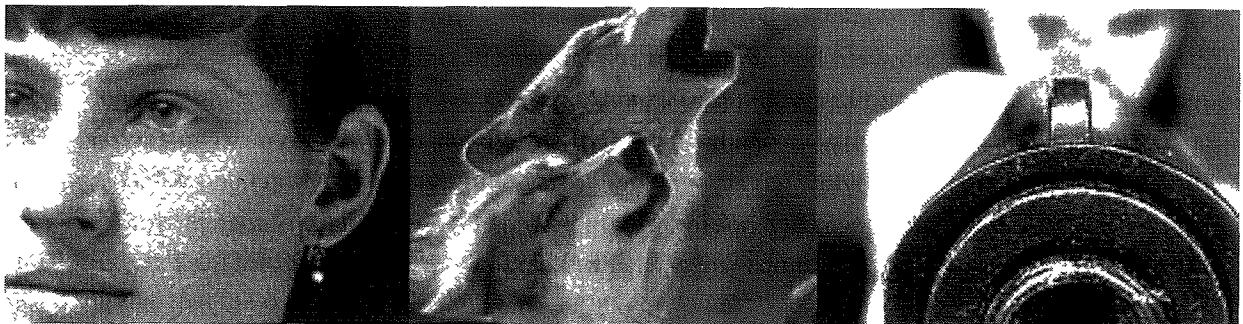
"I'm here so you'll realize what you need to do. Annie, darling girl, you need to leave this place. Nothing good will come from you staying. I've seen what they do to you, what *he* does to you, and Annie, only you can end this. And you have to end this. My daughter, you'll figure out how to escape. I have to go now. Goodbye." The figure flitted away, not even a print in the snow where Annie's father had just stood.

What does he want me to do? Annie thought to herself. *I really must have just been dreaming from the cold, if my father were really here he would've surely offered better advice. At any rate, that spirit was right. I need to escape, I need to get out of this hell. I've heard the wolves talking about a town a few miles away. Maybe if I can get away soon-* Her inner monologue was interrupted by footsteps inside the house.

"Oh, no," Annie's breath fogged up the snowy air. "I need to go now if I'm going at all." She cast a glance down to the basket of wool, realizing that she hadn't finished her work and that the wolves would do worse than beat her once they noticed. Annie's gaze redirected towards the cabin, but she truly had no belongings to receive. When she'd come to live with the wolves they'd taken away every memento of her real family. The only thing worth grabbing was the wolves' shotgun, perched front and center against the façade of the cabin. She picked up the weapon and realized it had been a while since she'd fired a rifle. That didn't matter, of course, Annie was just compelled to take something precious to the wolves as they'd taken her pride and being.

With this small act of thievery, Annie fled. Raggedy shoes flopping under her feet, she tore from the front porch. Her feet stamped prints into the snow. When she'd gotten about 100 feet from the cabin, far away enough to duck out of view if the wolves came outside, Annie turned around to drink in this part of the woods one more time. She sincerely hoped this would be the last time she'd ever be subject to anyone's ruthless control. Her father's, or whatever sort of thing had appeared before her the previous night, words had stuck in her head. Only she could escape from the wolves' torment.

With this last thought and image in her mind, Annie raced to a new life. Shotgun in hand, Annie ran to town like her life depended on it. Which it did.





DON'T WORRY, BOYS...
I'll handle it.

NOTES PAGE

Throughout my project, I kept a few things constant. I kept the same font at the top of every page, a western-inspired typeface reminiscent of the propaganda posters hung by Buffalo Bill's troupe to get people to see them perform. I also included a series of three images at the end of every component. I picked these pictures because they reminded me of Annie, either because they showed her personality and femininity (lipstick, for example) or her skill (guns, arena). In my writings, I also brought up the theme of independence and individuality again and again. I mentioned on several occasions how Annie's spirit and intensity redefined roles in 1800s society.

PAGE 2-3: EXPOSITORY KEYSTONE

In this piece, I explored Annie's life and how it all came to impact who she was later in life. I discuss how each part of her life has made her into an icon and activist, someone I look up to.

The images I chose were a cabin because that's where her life started, the feminist symbol because she was an advocate for women's rights, and her quote because that's my favorite quote and it helped to inspire me to choose Annie as my hero.

PAGE 4: NARRATIVE POEM

In my poem, I wanted to narrate an important life in Annie's life. I thought the time she beat her future husband in a duel was pretty significant. I decided to start the poem with Annie being persuaded to enter the contest to showcase her stubborn personality and how she'd only do things if she decided to herself. I included the bit about Annie only doing the contest if she was by herself because she was most likely used to being independent since her childhood, and it seemed appropriate. The images I chose were a western style bar because that's where I imagined this conversation to take place, a couple holding hands to represent Oakley and Butler, and a duel because that's what the poem is about.

PAGE 5: NEWSPAPER

This piece was to represent how Annie would have been an icon to girls at the time. I wanted to include an interview to show how Annie might have interacted with others, as well. Additionally, I mentioned how Annie was doing the shows for herself, not to get close to men, because that was her attitude. Annie never did anything she did to impress someone. I didn't include my three images at the bottom of the page because that did not fit in with the newspaper set-up.

PAGE 6-7: 3RD PERSON NARRATIVE

I knew from the start that I wanted to write a narrative about Annie's life at the wolves's house, or so she called her "parents". During this time, Annie developed an "eat-or-be-eaten" attitude and a sense of self-sufficiency that would impact her later in life. The images I chose were a picture of Annie after she had escaped, wolves to represent her captors, and a gun barrel to show her passion for shooting.

PAGE 8: DRAWING

In my drawing, I just drew Annie with silhouettes in front of her to represent people she may have competed against. I wanted to represent how she took control in situations where other women might've let the men be in charge, which is why I included the speech bubble. I added the detail of the feminist symbol on her necklace to show her beliefs. I did not include the series of 3 images because it did not fit in with the drawing.



Works Cited

Kasper, Shirl. Annie Oakley. University of Oklahoma Press, 1992.

Riley, Glenda, and Richard W. Etulain, eds. "Wild Women of the Old West." (2003).