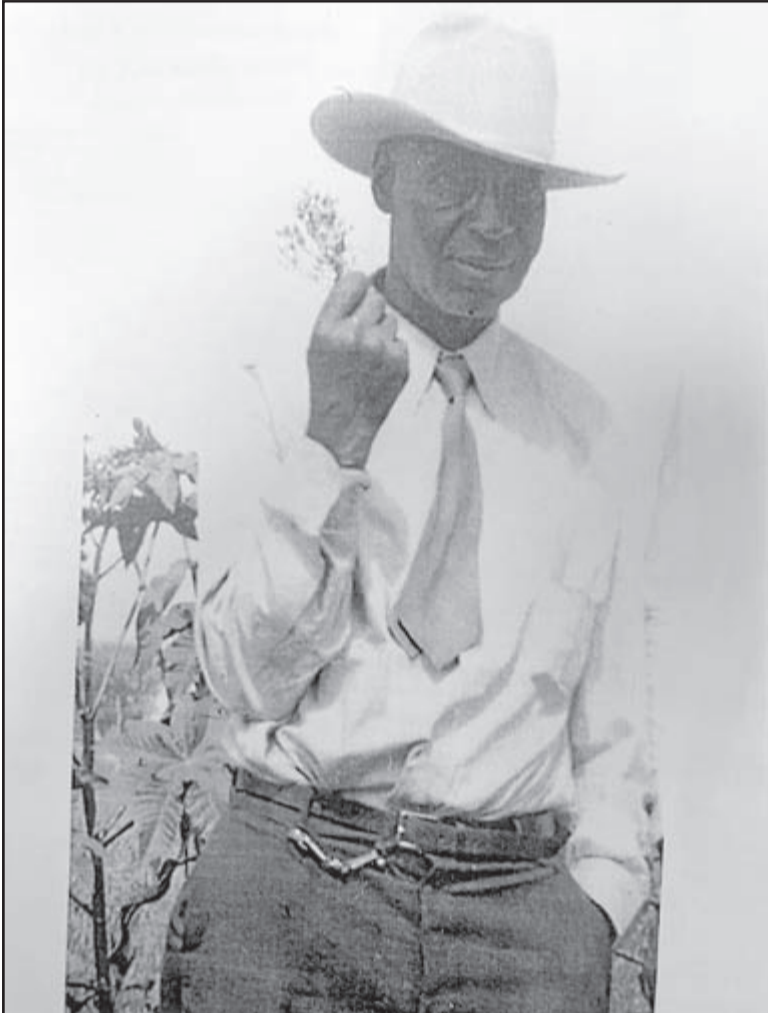


FIRST DRAFT

Legendary

African-American cowboy was well-known and liked in this region



COURTESY OF THE LOWER VALLEY HERITAGE CENTER IN FRUITA

Charlie Glass dressed for an outing, probably in the 1920s.

Always the consummate cowboy, Charlie Glass once stopped an impatient auto driver with his lariat.

Glass was one of several cowboys herding cattle for the S-Cross ranch from Glade Park into Grand Junction early in the 20th century. They were moving the jittery cattle over the Fifth Street Bridge when an eager driver in an open roadster came up on the herd from behind, determined to push his way through the cattle.

Glass positioned his horse behind the car, flipped his rope at the driver and caught the man around the neck, then gently pulled back on the rope. The driver stopped, and Glass held him there until all of the cattle had cleared the bridge.

"Then he rode up beside the man, pulled his rope from around the man's neck, tipped his hat to him and rode on without saying a word," said Yvonne Peterson of Fruita, whose father, John Evers, also rode for the S-Cross. Evers witnessed the roadster roping, and recounted the story to his daughter.

"My father loved Charlie," she added. "All the cowboys loved him." Sheepmen, however, feared him.

That was true even before Glass gained notoriety for killing a Basque sheepherder in 1921. Arguing self-defense, he was acquitted of second-degree murder.

Sixteen years later, Glass died in mysterious circumstances in a truck wreck near Cisco, Utah. Although Glass' death was ruled an accident, friends suspected Glass was the victim of a sheepherder vendetta.

Glass was born in Oklahoma in the late 1860s or early 1870s. His father was a Black man. His mother was a Choctaw and Cherokee Indian.

As a youth, he learned to ride and break rough horses. Later, in Grand Junction and Utah, he earned a reputation as a top-notch bronc rider. Often, when he approached people while on horseback, he would gallop his mount toward them, stop it abruptly and have it rear up on its hind legs.

Glass came to Colorado about the turn of the century. He worked first on a ranch near Pueblo before moving to the S-Cross on Glade Park.

In 1917, he joined the ranch

of Oscar Turner, who ran cattle in western Colorado and eastern Utah. Turner's ranch headquarters were on Nash Creek, north of Cisco, at the edge of the Bookcliffs.

In addition to his cowboy skills, Glass was noted for his enthusiastic embrace of frontier recreation. He participated frequently in rodeos and parades. He kept a room in Grand Junction, he frequently visited the city to play cards, drink and visit bordellos.

He always dressed in fancy clothes when he was out on the town — some say in a starched white shirt, others say a red shirt, or bright blue one — along with well-shined boots and his best Stetson.

Occasionally, he got in fights and ended up in jail. But he paid his fine with a smile, and usually was released with little fanfare.

He was kind-hearted, often had a pet dog with him, and helped young cowboys, especially when they were having trouble with difficult horses. Most of the people who encountered him liked and respected him, said James Newt Burkhalter of Grand Junction, whose father knew Glass.

By February 1921, Glass was range foreman for Turner's Lazy Y Ranch, and he tried to persuade sheepherders to stay off the Turner range.

He had legal backing for doing so. A state livestock inspector had worked with Turner and migrant sheep outfits from Colorado to establish a line around Turner grazing land that was off-limits to sheep. Even so, the sheepherders frequently crossed the line.

Charlie warned them to leave, but he tried to avoid violence. On Feb. 20, 1921, he used quick action and negotiating skills to defuse a near gun battle between a Basque sheepherder and another cowboy.

But on Feb. 24, when Glass encountered sheepherder Felix Jesui just a mile from the Turner ranch headquarters, it didn't turn out so well.

Glass later said he rode into the canyon where Jesui held sheep, dismounted and urged the Basque herder to move his herd, but Jesui argued with Glass. As Glass turned to walk back to his horse, Jesui fired a shot at him from a .30 caliber rifle. He missed, then fired four more off-target shots from a .25 caliber semi-automatic pistol.



COURTESY OF THE LOWER VALLEY HERITAGE CENTER IN FRUITA

Charlie Glass, left, playing cards with young cowboys, believed to be at the S-Cross Ranch on Glade Park. Yvonne Peterson said Glass would often lay his pistol down in plain sight during a card game and declare "This is the only rule book we need."

Glass whirled, drew his own .38 caliber pistol from a shoulder holster and fired multiple shots. One bullet struck the sheepherder in the forehead and killed him instantly.

Glass rode immediately to the Turner ranch and informed his boss of what had occurred. Turner called the Grand County sheriff, who soon arrived with the county coroner to examine the body and crime scene.

Glass turned himself in and was charged with second-degree murder. Turner paid Glass' \$10,000 bond. Then, with the help of other local cattlemen, he hired Glass' defense attorneys.

A change of venue for Glass' trial was sought, not by the defense as is usually the case, but by the prosecutors, who believed the pro-cattle faction was too strong in Grand County, Utah, to obtain a conviction. The request was denied, and Glass' trial began in late November, 1921, in Moab.

The trial lasted just over a week, and Glass' testimony was key. The jury took barely two hours to acquit Glass. He was heartily congratulated by many locals after the verdict was read.

That's not surprising since as the Moab Times Independent said, the case "was a contest between the resident stockmen of Grand County and transient sheepmen of Colorado" who had been threatening the livelihood of the cattlemen by overrunning their range.

Whatever the larger implications, Charlie Glass went free. He returned to work for Turner and continued to work for the Turner family until the end of

his life.

He also continued to visit Grand Junction regularly to enjoy nights on the town.

What led him to the card game in Thompson Springs on Feb. 22, 1937, is not known. But it appears he was eager to join two Basque men, Andre Sartan and Joe Savora, on a trip to Cisco that night for another card game.

A few miles west of Cisco, the pickup truck they were riding in skidded off the road and rolled three times, according to Savora and Sartan. A police report said the truck had been speeding on the icy road. Glass was thrown from the truck, the two Basque men said. Sartan suffered a broken arm and Savora had cuts and bruises.

The two managed to get the truck back on the road, and they loaded Glass in the back of it, then drove back to Thompson Springs, where a doctor pronounced Glass dead of a broken neck.

Despite the rumors that have lingered for more than 80 years, no evidence was ever presented that indicated Glass had been murdered.

His funeral was held in Fruita and he was buried in Elmwood Cemetery near his former employer, Oscar Turner.

Sources: "The Legend of Charlie Glass," by Walker D. Wyman and John D. Hart, Colorado Magazine, Winter 1969. Author interviews with Yvonne Peterson and James Newt Burkhalter. Historic editions of The Daily Sentinel and the Moab Times Independent at www.newspapers.com.

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RANGE WAR ENDS IN DEATH AT CISCO TODAY

Charles Glass, Cowpuncher, Kills Basco Sheepherder, and Will Give Himself Up to Sheriff.

Range troubles that have been brewing between transient sheepmen and cattlemen culminated in a clash today, when Chas. Glass, a negro cowpuncher, shot and killed a Basco sheepherder. News of the shooting was received at Moab at two o'clock this afternoon, and details are lacking. The name of the herder is not known, but he was employed by William Fitzpatrick, a sheepman of Montrose, Colo.

Glass was employed by Oscar Turner, and it is understood that the shooting resulted in a quarrel over range rights. Mr. Turner, as soon as he learned of the affair, rode to Cisco and phoned to Sheriff J. B. Skewes, who was at Green River. Sheriff Skewes left immediately for Cisco in a car, and he will be joined at Valley City this afternoon by Mons Peterson, justice of the peace, Dr. J. W. Williams, and Attorney Knox Patterson. County Attorney O. A. Tangren is on Wilson mesa, but has been advised of the killing and will doubtless proceed immediately to Cisco to attend the coroner's inquest.

Mr. Turner told the sheriff that Glass will surrender himself peacefully and would meet the sheriff and party this evening at the forks of the road between Cisco and Thompsons.

It is understood that Glass claims he shot the Basco in self-defense. According to the information received here, there has been trouble all winter arising over the alleged encroachment of transient sheep in charge of Frenchmen and Bascos onto the range of resident cattlemen, and the news of the killing has occasioned no surprise.

Glass, who is a negro, has been in the employ of Mr. Turner for many years, and is well known throughout the county.

FROM NEWSPAPERS.COM

An article in the Moab Times Independent on Feb. 24, 1921, announced that Glass had killed a Basque sheepherder.

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