

FIRST DRAFT

Of cattle, killings and court verdicts

The murder trial in the autumn of 1902 galvanized Grand Junction. The

Daily Sentinel would later call it "one of the greatest criminal court cases in the history of western Colorado."



BOB SILBERNAGEL

Charles Sieber, a leading citizen and co-owner of one of the largest cattle operations in western Colorado, had been gunned down on his ranch a few months earlier.

Joe Harris, a flamboyant cowboy who owned a smaller ranch near Westwater, Utah, was on trial for Sieber's murder.

Harris was convicted of voluntary manslaughter, but his conviction was overturned by the Colorado Supreme Court. He was acquitted at a second trial, claiming self-defense, the Sentinel reported.

Harris would be shot down by another Westwater rancher seven years after his trial. And that killer, a man named Joe Pace, would be found not guilty based on self-defense.

Grand Junction may have viewed itself as a civilized community in 1902, but remnants of the Wild West remained.

Butch Cassidy and his friends had just decamped for South America earlier that year, but their Robbers Roost hideout in Utah was still frequented by local cattle rustlers and members of the Wild Bunch.

There was open hostility between cattlemen and sheepmen that occasionally erupted in violence. And local newspapers reported frequent shootings and holdups.

Sieber was a native of Germany who moved to Mesa County in 1885 and formed what became Sieber Cattle Co. He and his wife maintained a home in Grand Junction, but he spent much of his time at the ranch on Piñon Mesa.

Harris had worked briefly for Sieber, but by 1902 he had his own ranch at Westwater.

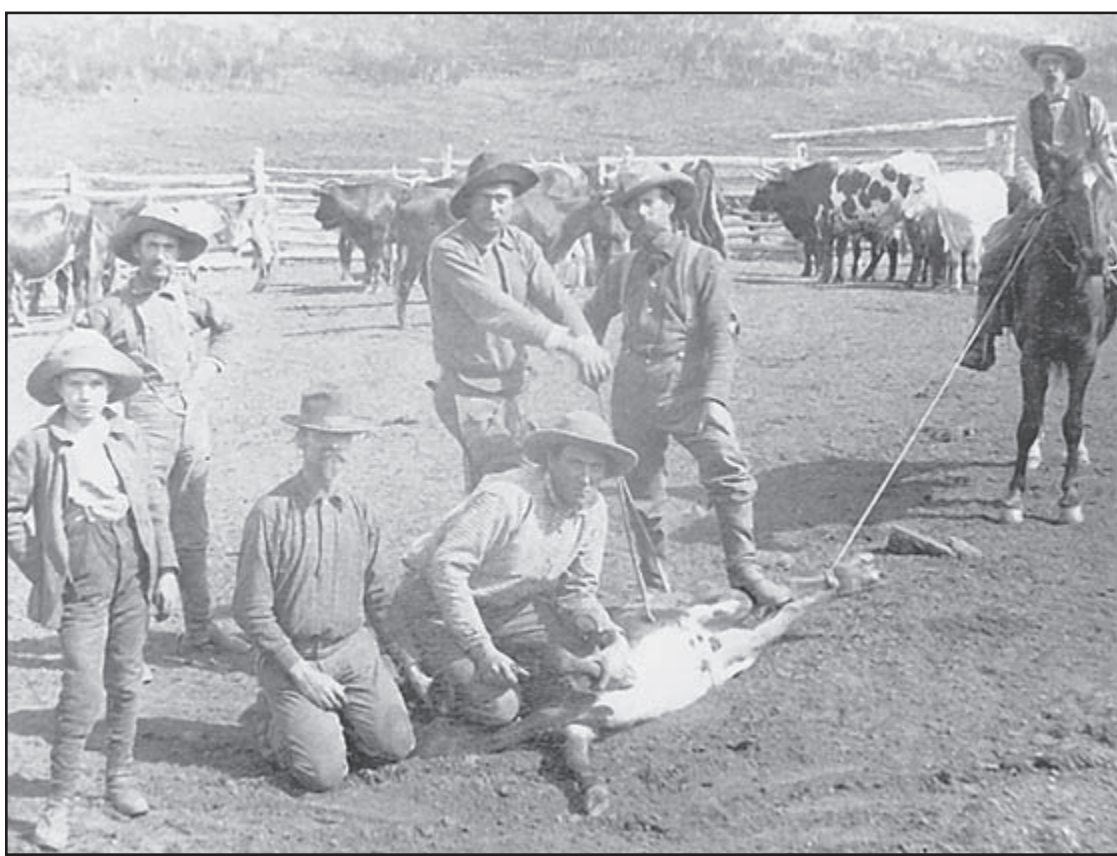
His dispute with Sieber stemmed from complaints that Sieber's cowboys pushed large herds of cattle through his ranch each spring and fall, often tearing up Harris' fences and eating his grass.

Both men accused the other of rustling some of their cattle.

Harris and Sieber encountered each other on the morning of Aug. 22, 1902, at what the Sentinel described as "the summer camp of the Sieber Cattle company on Piñon Mesa, about 35 miles southwest of this city."

Harris testified he confronted Sieber about the cattle issues. Harris had a pistol with him, and that concerned Sieber enough that he rode over to one of his cowboys and borrowed a 30/30 rifle from the cowboy's saddle scabbard.

Here the accounts differ: Sieber's employees all said he approached Harris with the rifle held sideways across the



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF WESTERN COLORADO

Sieber cattle ranch, circa 1887, was one of the largest operations in western Colorado. It was co-owned by Charles Sieber, a leading citizen of Grand Junction.



Joe Harris was the ostentatious cowboy from Westwater, Utah, who gunned down cattleman Charles Sieber on Sieber's ranch in 1902. Both men accused the other of rustling some of their cattle. This photo was taken in about 1900 near Fourth and Main streets in Grand Junction.

saddle. But Harris maintained that Sieber rode with the rifle pointed directly at him.

Fearing for his life, Harris said he drew his pistol and shot three times. Sieber fell from his horse, Harris stopped to pick up Sieber's rifle, then rode away.

Two of Sieber's men galloped to Grand Junction and reported the killing to Sheriff's Deputy George Smith that same afternoon.

Later that day, Smith climbed on the train bound for Westwater, where he found Harris waiting to turn himself in.

Harris' murder trial began on Oct. 14, 1902, and concluded Oct. 18 with the verdict of voluntary manslaughter. Harris' attorneys immediately announced they would appeal.

In February 1904, the court ordered the new trial that resulted in Harris' acquittal.

Harris returned to his Westwater ranch, where, according to the Sentinel, his life included frequent conflict with his neighbors.

He had repeated confrontations with Pace, who had also worked for Sieber but in 1909 was foreman of another small ranch at Westwater. Harris had threatened Pace's life on several occasions and filed a lawsuit against him.

Things came to a head on Oct. 3, 1909, when Pace encountered Harris herding some of Pace's cattle off his property.

After a few words were exchanged Pace said he believed Harris was reaching for a pistol.

With that, Pace jumped from his horse, pulled a rifle and shot Harris three times.

It turned out that Harris was unarmed, but their history turned the jurors in Pace's

favor. They found Pace "not guilty" of murder on Nov. 14, 1909.

The Daily Sentinel noted the irony in the two killings:

"Charles Sieber was shot three times by Joseph Harris on that August morning in 1902; Joseph Harris was shot three times by Joseph Pace. The killing of Sieber occurred out on the cattle range; so did the killing of Joe Harris ... Sieber was killed by a cattleman with whom he had had trouble; the same can be said of the death of Harris ... Harris claimed that he killed Sieber in self defense; Pace claims that he took the life of Harris in self defense."

Thanks to Michael Menard of the Museum of Western Colorado and to Marie Tipping.

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New scholarship aims to get workers back in college

By EMILY SHOCKLEY
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Western Colorado businesses interested in having their employees get a tuition break on Colorado Mesa University or Western Colorado Community College classes have until Aug. 11 to apply for the Grand Junction Area Chamber Workforce Development Scholarship.

The scholarship gives recipients a 25 percent discount on tuition in 2014-15 — a cost that will be absorbed by the university.

The employee who wants to take classes and that person's employer apply jointly for the scholarship and must share the remaining cost of the employee's tuition.

Scholarship recipients can take up to six credit hours of classes per semester this coming school year at Colorado Mesa's Grand Junction or Montrose campuses, at WCCC, or online and must work at least 20 hours per week for their employer.

The idea for the scholarship came out of a conversation between executives at the university and at the chamber, according to Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce President and Chief Executive Officer Diane Schwenke.

University personnel noticed fewer people with jobs in their desired career field were enrolling in classes.

Schwenke said that was likely because many businesses struggling in a difficult economy have dropped tuition benefits for employees to save costs.

While the impetus for the scholarship didn't come

from employers themselves, Schwenke said many she spoke with after that conversation said they would like to take advantage of an outside tuition scholarship.

"The point is to get the adult population updating their skills. We've all seen with the pace of business, even if you have a skill set today, that skill set may not be totally effective six months or a year from now."

DIANE SCHWENKE
Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce

One local non-profit group has applied for the scholarship so far, and Schwenke hopes to attract about 19 more applicants within the next couple weeks, although there is no cap on scholarship recipients interested in brushing up on their professional skills.

"The point is to get the adult population updating their skills," Schwenke said. "We've all seen with the pace of business, even if you have a skill set today, that skill set may not be totally effective six months or a year from now. It's important for everyone in the workforce to invest in the future."

The scholarship is available to companies — Grand Junction Area Chamber members or not — operating in CMU and WCCC's 14-county service region that encompasses Delta, Eagle, Garfield, Grand, Jackson, Mesa, Moffat, Montrose, Ouray, Pitkin, Rio Blanco, Routt, San Miguel and Summit counties.

Non-chamber members will be charged a \$50 application fee, but there is no charge for chamber member businesses to apply for the scholarship.

Visit www.gjchamber.org for details and to download an application.

Call Kris Calvin in the university's admissions office at 248-1458 for information.

REGION SENTINEL WIRE SERVICES

2 wild horses die in Utah roundup

SALT LAKE CITY — Two wild horses died in a roundup of mustangs in Utah conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. BLM spokeswoman Lisa Reid said a yearling filly died instantly after apparently charging into a side panel of a corral and breaking its neck.

She said the agency had to euthanize a 7-year-old mare with a severely deformed leg and protruding hip from a previous fracture. Both deaths occurred Wednesday during the BLM's Blawn Wash gather in Beaver County, about 35 miles southwest of Milford.

In all, the agency removed 143 horses from the range there as part of its ongoing program to thin what it calls overpopulated herds on western rangelands.

Anne Novak of California-based Protect Mustangs criticized the BLM for the horses' deaths, saying they could have been avoided.

Fireworks accident injures 10 in Utah

ROY, Utah — Authorities said an accident at a fireworks show in northern Utah injured 10 people.

Fire officials said the spectators at the annual Roy Days festival all escaped with minor injuries after an unexpected sideways fireworks blast just after the show's finale.

Roy Fire Chief Jason Poulsen said all 10 victims were treated at the scene and included both children and adults.

He said the show was operated in line with required safety standards and the fireworks malfunction could not have been predicted.

He said an earlier firework caused a small grass fire, but it was put out by crews while the show continued.

Showdown with feds 'a spiritual battle'

ST. GEORGE, Utah — Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy said the April confrontation between the federal government and his family and armed militia supporters was part of an age-old spiritual battle between good and evil.

Bundy, a Mormon, told an Independent American Party gathering in St. George on Saturday that God provided him personal inspiration in the showdown over cattle in Bunkerville, Nevada, about 80 miles northeast of Las Vegas.

Bundy said people from across the country rallied around him in Bunkerville because they were "spiritually touched," and they wouldn't have prevailed had God not been on their side.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management backed down, citing safety concerns. Bundy's allies subsequently released the 380 cattle collected from the range during a weeklong operation.

BLM officials have said Bundy will be held accountable for his role in the standoff and they continue to pursue the matter "aggressively through the legal system."

The case remains under investigation by the FBI and U.S. Justice Department.

Lab that walked 30 miles back home adopted

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEDAN, Kan. — An aging Labrador retriever that walked 30 miles back to a Kansas family who didn't want her took a private jet to her new home with a Florida heiress.

Kelsey Loyd, with the Chau-

taqua County Animal Shelter in southern Kansas, says the dog, named Lady, was adopted twice, but the first family said the old dog didn't get along with other pets.

A second family adopted her 30 miles away, but Lady escaped and walked back to her previ-

ous home.

Loyd described Lady as a "super dog, gentle, calm dog" and struggled to understand why no one wanted the friendly lab.

"If I had to pick a dog this would have been the dog I would take," she said.

Lady's life changed when

Helen Rich saw her story on Facebook. Rich is an heiress to the Wrigley gum company and owns an animal sanctuary.

She sent an assistant to Kansas in a private jet to retrieve the retriever.

The dog arrived in Tampa, Florida, last Thursday.

BLOTTER COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

Mountain bike recovered

Fruita police officers recovered a black Trek 3700 mountain bike in the 200 block of West Roberson Drive on Saturday.

The bike's owner should call 858-3008 during business hours to talk with an evidence technician.

According to the Grand Junction Police Department:

■ Tyler Thurston, 30, was arrested July

21, on suspicion of third-degree assault in the 1500 block of U.S. Highway 50.

■ Property valued at less than \$1,000 was stolen from a hotel room in the 700 block of Horizon Drive on July 31.

■ Holly Nauroth, 60, was contacted on suspicion of trespassing after hours at a business in the 2800 block of North Avenue on Friday and was arrested on two active warrants.

■ Daniel Allen, 60, Grand Junction, received a summons Friday on suspicion of having a revoked driver's license in the 2900

block of Patterson Road.

■ Cassandra Murillo, 19, Grand Junction, received a summons Friday on suspicion of driving with a revoked license after being contacted in the 400 block of Main Street.

■ A vehicle was broken into in the 2200 block of North 17th Street on Saturday.

■ Six juveniles broke into a building in the 3000 block of D½ Road on Saturday and caused damages valued at less than \$500.

The Mesa County Sheriff's Office did not release crime reports on Sunday.

Cash 5 Sunday: 4-6-14-22-28

Pick 3 Sunday: 0-0-6

For information, go to www.coloradolottery.com.

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