

## Charlie Glass was a dandy cowpuncher

Part One in a series

By Kathy Jordan

Charlie Glass, the cowboy in the white Stetson, became a legend in his own time in ranching circles in Western Colorado and Eastern Utah.

Charlie, said to be three-quarters African-American and one-quarter Cherokee, arrived in Grand Junction in 1909 with a string of horses belonging to Thatcher Brothers of Pueblo, who also owned the S-Cross ranch on Pinon Mesa. He didn't talk much about his life before moving to this area, which most likely added to speculation about his background.

Charlie, who knew horses, was soon hired as a wrangler and worked under the S-Cross foreman, Frank Parks.

In March 1912, when the Thatcher Brothers sold their property to Big Park Water Irrigation and Power Co., Charlie and several other S-Cross cowboys went to work on the Cunningham cattle ranch in the Cisco-Thompson area in eastern Utah.

In 1917 Charlie moved to Oscar Turner's Lazy Y cattle ranch, which adjoined the Cunningham property. In the early 1930s he returned to the Cunningham ranch.

Bill Cunningham, who met Charlie as a young boy, described him as one of the most respected cowboys and loyal ranch workers of that era. Cattlemen respected him and sheep ranchers both respected and feared him.

Cunningham said after a shepherd was shot in 1921 Charlie was given the job of keeping the sheep out of designated grazing areas for cattle. He continued that job until the grazing act became law and permits were issued designating areas.

Charlie was a showman, said Josephine Dickey of Grand Junction. He was a frequent visitor at Josephine's family home on Kimball Avenue when she was a young girl. She said that she and her siblings could hear the thunder of Charlie's horse's hooves pounding on the dirt street. Charlie would ride into the yard, rearing his horse so that all you could see were the horse's belly and the soles of Charlie's boots. Then he would fire his gun into the sky, get off his horse roaring with laughter and hand each child a silver dollar.

Charlie was also mischievous.

Marie Tipping of Grand Junction said that her grandfather, George Corn, worked with Charlie. Her father, Boots Corn, recalled that when he was about seven he liked hanging around the bunkhouse with the men. Angora chaps or "woollies" were in fashion, and Boots wanted a pair. A cowboy just back from town was sleeping "real heavy" and his chaps were lying nearby. Charlie told Boots to take them and just cut them off because

the cowboy wouldn't care. Boots did as Charlie suggested, and Charlie and Boots' father had to buy the cowboy a new pair of chaps.

Charlie was humorous and entertaining.

Cunningham said that in the early 1930s Charlie was working at the family ranch. Charlie left the ranch to go ride the 'riva' to check on the cattle. Charlie made it as far as Cisco, where he opted to socialize with friends at a bar rather than go check the cattle. When he entered the bar he had on a nice winter coat, which he took off. The next day when he sobered up he discovered that someone had taken his coat. He borrowed a full-length bearskin coat, put a white scarf around his neck, a white silk stocking skullcap on his head, placed his white Stetson over that, and rode off for the ranch.

Cunningham said that his parents were somewhat upset with Charlie because they knew that he had not made it to the river. When Charlie entered the kitchen, he removed his hat in a wide sweeping motion, bowed his head a bit and said "Good evenin' folks. Things are fine on the 'riva'." His parents couldn't help themselves and started laughing at the sight of Charlie in the bearskin coat with his white Stetson. Charlie was back in their good graces.

Charlie also enjoyed a game of poker and coming to town for a little drinking and enjoying the company of a woman.

Cunningham said Charlie, a husky athletic man, always wore the white Stetson and Blucher boots which were handmade for him by the Blucher Boot Co., in Olathe, Kan. Charlie loved to play poker, and this was reflected in his boot tops, which had white inlaid spades, diamonds, hearts and clubs.

Something of a dandy, he wore a silk shirt that was white, blue or of mixed colors with a brightly colored scarf tied around his neck when he came to town. His pants were pressed and boots polished.

His horse's bridle wasn't just an ordinary one. It was decorated with silver conchos.

The Barbary Coast was one of his stops when he was in town, and, according Josephine, he had a room there where he kept some of his belongings.

Charlie had already become a well-known figure in Western Colorado, but what happened in 1921 increased his reputation.

(Next Friday: Charlie has a brush with the law, adding to his colorful legend)

