

Nyssa Gate City Journal

SECOND
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Charlie Brown ... Victim of Violence

By Mildred Adams

The body of Charley Brown has lain mouldering in its grave since 1885. Located high on the Squaw Creek slope of the French John hill, it is isolated and almost forgotten. Most of the old-time buckeroos, who ran wild horses, and gathered cattle in the area, have long since rode over The Great Divide. It was generally known by several persons that the grave was near "the elbow" in the French John road, but few knew the exact location. Brown had died with his boots on in a "shootin' fracas," with the odds four to one. Gun battles were common when Owyhee was young, and holsters and six-guns were worn as every day apparel.

John Ward, an early day sheepman in Owyhee County and eastern Oregon, was a friend of Charley Brown. He was among those who contended that Brown was innocent of the crime of which he was accused. The details of this controversial drama of the old west were debated by old-timers for years. Some maintained that Brown was an average fellow, quick on the draw, but not looking for trouble. Others classed him as a desperado.

There were dark rumors of a card game at The Rocks, in which Brown had not only won all the money of his assailants, but also a quitclaim deed or two to their ranches as well. In the cross-fire of opinions, there were those who believed that Brown had certain knowledge of recent activities of the four men, that they preferred to have known only to themselves.

Be that as it may, Charley Brown went down fighting, with seven bullet wounds in his body, along the lonely French John road.

The Owyhee Avalanche, published weekly in Silver City, gave this report in the issue dated March 21, 1885. **Avalanche Files** March 21, 1885

Brown: A man named Charles Brown was shot and killed on the 12th inst., about 40 miles northwest of Silver City, and about 5 miles from Sands Ranch on Jump Creek. We have not been able to learn the particulars of the shooting, which will doubtless appear at the preliminary examination today. The parties who did the shooting came in on Sunday and delivered themselves to the sheriff. The deceased was known throughout eastern Oregon as a desperado, and when under the influence of liquor was regarded as a dangerous man. He was buried within 20 feet of where he was killed by the citizens of that section of the country. The persons who surrendered are all well and favorably known in this section of the country, where they have resided for years. We will give fuller accounts of the shooting in our next issue.

A week passed before the subscribers of the Owyhee Avalanche knew the details of the shooting. In the March 28 issue a full account of the proceedings was given: The Killing of Charles Brown - Preliminary Examination on the 21st inst. before Probate Judge J. H. Wickersham.

The Killing of Charles Brown Preliminary Examination March 28, 1885

There were no witnesses to the shooting other than the defendants themselves, unless it was a man by the name of Smith, who was with the deceased up to the time the shooting commenced, but who began to run and never stopped until he reached Sommercamp's ranch, some distance from the scene of the affray. The prosecution introduced three witnesses, one to prove the death of Brown, and the others to testify as to statements made by defendants to them after the shooting.

L. N. Gates, the first witness for the people, testified in substance that he was called on, on the 12th inst. by one of the



Audrey Ward and Tom Johnson of Nyssa and Walt Adams of Homedale stand by the sandstone monument that they erected in memory of Charles Brown on March 27, 1967. Message on the slab reads: "Charles Brown, Victim of Violence, March 12, 1885. Grave 1/4 mile east in draw."

posse to assist in the burying of Brown; that he and the others reached the elbow in the French John road about sundown on that day. About a quarter of a mile off the road he found the body of Brown; that he was appointed by those with him to examine the body; he first examined a Colt's pistol that he found about four inches from Brown's right hand; found four empty shells in it; found one pocket knife and two letters in his pocket; found seven wounds on the body; one entering over the right eye and coming out at the base of the right ear; one entering over the left eye and coming out at the back of the head; one about an inch from the left nipple and coming

out a little to the left of the backbone, one entering the corner of the right shoulder and coming out under the left arm, one entering about an inch below and to the left of the last described shot and coming out under the left arm about three inches to the left of the last shot; there were also two flesh wounds, but of no consequence. Any of the five first described were mortal.

Gates stated that after he had examined the body that it was buried within 20 feet of where it was found.

Marion Philpot and Charles Craig were sworn in as witnesses, and they testified that the four men had told them substantially the same account

as had been related to Gates. These were the only witnesses introduced by the prosecution; Smith who was with Brown before the shooting could not be found, having crossed the Snake River the day after the shooting.

A rather lengthy statement was given by another member of the group, who told of the events that led up to the fatal day. It said in part:

Brown had come to the Jordan Valley country in the summer of 1884 and sold him 23 head of horses, with a \$200 down payment. Shortly thereafter the sheriff of Baker County, J. F. Locke, came after the horses and on trying to arrest Brown, he had fired one shot and got away.

When the sheriff had gone Brown came back and spent the winter at his ranch. After the robbery of Goodyear, Brown was asked to leave. Brown borrowed a horse from the witness and left for Succor Creek to find work. He returned the next day and Smith showed up soon after. Together they borrowed a buckboard and harness to take Brown's belongings to Sommercamp's summer ranch, where presumably Brown had found employment. They didn't return the buckboard as they had agreed to do, so the witness and a friend, who loaned a horse to Smith, went looking for them at Sommercamp's. They found that the men, buckboard, harness, and horses were gone. Then followed a report on the pursuit of the suspects. Brown and Smith, by leaving the main road, managed to elude the posse which now numbered four men.

Stopping overnight at The Rocks, the posse heard the buckboard pass by at one-thirty in the morning. At daybreak the four men resumed their pursuit. They followed them to the bend in the John French road at the top of the hill and found the tracks of the buckboard had left the road. The posse tied their horses after they had spotted the fugitives standing near the buckboard, over the brow of the hill.

As they approached, Brown came to meet them with his six-shooter in his hands. "I

(Continued on Page 14)

Athletes Feted. Keveren Receives Standing Ovation

Lions club members sponsored this year's annual banquet-meeting honoring NHS athletes. The event was held on the evening of March 30 in the school cafeteria.

Members of the Future Homemakers of America chapter served the meal, under supervision of their Adviser Virginia Steffens.

The various coaches were introduced by Harry McGinley, NHS athletic director. Among the coaches and awards they presented are John Moawad, football; Mel Calhoun, wrestling and Ralph Aldrich, basketball.

Henry Mendazona, Charles Quinowski and Charles Newkirk gave previews of baseball, tennis and track seasons.

Kinsey Keveren was introduced by McGinley as the "Old Pro" of the coaching staff. Keveren spoke briefly on merits of being a "Bulldog", and received a standing ovation from everyone in attendance.

Speaker for the evening was Dick Eardly, sports director for KBOI television station in Boise. His talk concerned participating sportsmen who are not true heroes, yet are very necessary for winning games.

PERSONALS

Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Jenkins visited Mr. and Mrs. Royce Roberts and son in Caldwell, Saturday evening guests in the Jenkins home were Mr. and Mrs. Dave Beers.

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Johnson returned last Tuesday from a 10-day trip to Quincy, Wash., where they visited their daughter Mr. and Mrs. Raymond F. Graham and family. While in Baker they visited other relatives. A weekend guest in the Johnson home was an aunt, Mrs. Sadie Doherty. On Sunday the Johnsons and Mrs. Doherty had dinner with their daughter Mr. and Mrs. Pat Sweaney and family.

Nu Acres

By Mabelle McKague

NU ACRES—It is reported that F. A. Johnson is confined to Caldwell Memorial hospital, where he underwent surgery last week. Reports indicate he is getting along as well as can be expected. Mrs. Johnson is staying at the home of her daughter while in Caldwell.

Harry Evans of Butte, Montana, visited April 11 at the home of his aunt, Mrs. Lucy Evans and Janice Evans.

Mrs. Arvin Kersey and three sons visited April 11 at the home of her mother, Mrs. Effie Nielsen.

Mrs. Ezada Betts and Mrs. Mabelle McKague attended an

April 11 meeting of the Payette county homemaker's council with county agent, Mrs. Margaret Jorgenson. Plans and a program were made for activities this year.

Mrs. Effie Nielsen accompanied her son, Elver Nielsen to Pendleton Saturday to visit at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Gary Nielsen. Mrs. Nielsen, Mr. and Mrs. Elver Nielsen returned the first of the week. Mr. and Mrs. Rollie Mills of Caldwell were Sunday visitors at the home of Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Durham.

ATTEND GOLDEN EVENT

Mr. and Mrs. Murle Marcum attended an April 9 golden wedding anniversary for cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Parker of Homedale.

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