

“Bronco” Charlie Miller

Born 1850 – Died January 15, 1955

Plot 6 Lot 22

Charlie H. Miller was born between two buffalo robes in a covered wagon out west in Shasta, California in about 1850. His Father and Mother were a part of a 300 wagon train heading for Fort Sutter and the gold rush. His father had worked as a suit maker for Lord and Taylor and his mother had been a school teacher.

At 11 years old, Charlie was hired as a Pony Express rider. As the story goes, Charlie and his father were in Sacramento, the western terminus of the pony Express, when the riderless horse with the bloody saddle came in. The Superintendent called for a volunteer to ride the mail to Carson City and Charlie was in the right place at the right time. And so, Bronco Charlie, Pony Express Rider was born. There were 240 riders and Charlie was the youngest. You had to be small and hardy to ride, you could weigh but 125 pounds. It was a brutal route from St. Joseph, Missouri to Sacramento, California. The Pony Express only was in operation from April 3, 1860 to October 1861. He was such a young man that it made him famous, as he was known throughout the whole United States.

After Charlie's stint in the Pony Express he went from town to town running riding stables, breaking horses and living an adventurous life for 20 years. During his 20's, his parents were captured and scalped by Indians. In 1844 he had come east and met the great Teddy Roosevelt. He broke horses for Teddy and even joined the Bull Moose Party.

Charlie joined the Buffalo Bill Cody Wild West Show and was honored to perform at the Queen Victoria Jubilee in 1887. He traveled with the show and when they played in Glens Falls in 1888 he met Carrie Potter. Carrie's family didn't take to Charlie and thought him unworthy of their daughter. Even though Charlie was 40 and Carrie but 20 years old, he wrote that he was 27 on the marriage certificate and they ran away together. Carrie joined Charlie's Wild West act, he threw knives at her; but, Carrie was never afraid. They had three children, Adelina, Frederica and Charles; but, tragically in 1896 during a diphtheria epidemic they all died during one week. This changed Carrie and she felt that it was her fault for traveling with Buffalo Bill that had caused the illness. When she was with child again in 1898, she moved back to Glens Falls and set up housekeeping on 9 Thompson Avenue. It was a perfect situation for Charlie and he kept on with Buffalo Bill with an adventurous life and made visits home to Carrie on a regular basis. In 1903 another daughter was born.

One day he was hungry for food and companionship, so he went to a Salvation Army Meeting and surprising even himself, he turned his life over to God. He began preaching and was known as the Converted Cowboy. Charlie returned to Glens Falls and ran a riding stable. Charlie was not cut out for such a domestic life so, he would travel regularly speaking and performing while Carrie stayed at home.

When the United States went to war in 1917 Charlie tried to enlist. He was a better fighter and in better condition than most men, but he was turned down because he was 67 years old. He went to Canada and convinced them he was only 44 years old. He soon was in Europe fighting for the Allies. Back stateside Charlie did what he could by purchasing War Bonds. He placed most of his worth and saving into these bonds.

After the war, he continued to make public appearances in Vaudeville and Rodeos. He spent almost 20 years on the road spreading the word of God and the adventures of a cowboy.

Bronco Charlie was saddened by the passing of Carrie at age 66 on March 28, 1936. He decided to sell his war bonds a few years later and at age 92, he sold them for a half million dollars. Charlie lived until 105 years old, whiling the hours away painting pictures and making carvings. Bronco Charlie Miller died on January 15, 1955 from pneumonia. His recipe for a long life was "Live right and be friendly". Some of his paintings and carving can be seen at the Chapman Museum.

Prepared by Mrs. Kyle Graves from a theatrical script written by William Woodward for the Chapman Historical Museums fall Glens Falls Cemetery tours in 2002 and 2007.

Questions and comments should be directed to the Glens Falls City Historian at: City Hall 42 Ridge St. Glens Falls, NY historian@cityofglensfalls.com 518-761-3871.



Bronco Charlie's grave stone and a publicity photo take of him in his 80's.

