

Bass reeves

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Black Reeves is best known as the first African-American Deputy Marshall West of the Mississippi River. He is considered as one of the greatest frontier heroes of America. Using his talent with firearms to “clean up” the chaotic Indian Territory, he was able to turn in numerous criminals into custody. Where he was actually born is shrouded in mystery as several sources say that he is either born in Texas or Arkansas.

At any rate, he eventually moved to Texas along with his master, George Reeves, a politician and farmer, with whom Bass Reeves last name, was taken (Weiser, 2009).

Bass Reeves, despite his big frame, was a good man, polite in his ways, and had a good sense of humor. These characteristics allowed him to be favored by his master—he became the “buddy” and personal servant of George Reeves. During the Civil war, George Reeves joined the Confederate army and tagged along with him Bass Reeves (Weiser, 2009). A sort of Civil War within Bass and George’s relationship also happened during the war. Bass Reeves, for one reason or another left his master and sought refuge in Indian land.

Rumors say that a fight broke out between George and Bass during a card game, another rumor says that the promise of being free after the war coaxed Bass Reeves into parting ways with his master. He spent a good deal of time with Seminole and Creek Indians, all the while honing his skills in shooting. He became so skilled in shooting that he was disqualified in most turkey shooting competitions (Weiser, 2009). The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 freed all the African-American slaves. Bass Reeves purchased land in Arkansas where he put up a farm.

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After a year of being a successful farmer, he was married to Nellie Jennie. Bass Reeves and Nellie Jennie raised a family of five girls and five boys while enjoying life on the farm (Weiser, 2009). The chaotic Indian Territory would be the cause for Bass Reeve's career change. The Indian Territory during Reeve's time became the hideout of all sorts of outlaws. This prompted the government to commission Isaac Parker as a judge in the District Court at Fort Smith, Arkansas, the closest fort near the Indian Territory.

In turn, Parker commissioned James Fagan, a US Marshall, to employ 200 deputies. Bass Reeves' familiarity with the Indian Territory and local languages (because of his exile there) came into Fagan's attention, resulting in the recruitment of Reeves. The deputies were hired for one purpose alone, and that is to eradicate the outlaws of the area at any cost (Weiser, 2009). Reeves soon started his duty as a US Deputy and worked alongside fellow frontier legends like Bud Ledbetter, Bill Tilghman, and Heck Thomas.

The US Deputies covered about 75, 000 square miles of land encompassing Oklahoma, which is within the jurisdiction of Fort Smith (Weiser, 2009). The law states that a warrant of arrest is needed in order for the arrest to be legal. An uneducated person would have trouble with this because warrants are written documents, and deputies often have to carry multiple warrants with them. However, illiteracy did not stop Reeves from carrying out his duty. He memorized each warrant by having it read aloud to him before they ride out.

He knew which warrant to show for each criminal (Weiser, 2009). As if his 6 foot, two-inch frame was not tall enough to intimidate criminals, Reeves, fully dressed with shined boots and all, rode a big stallion to be a dominant

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figure. Despite his fondness of looking at his best all the time, when the task required a little bit of creativity, he used a variety of guises to apprehend criminals as efficiently as possible. He always had with him two revolvers which he used, and he was adept at using them in both hands (Weiser, 2009).

Reeves pursuit of criminals would often mean that he would be out of the fort for months at a time and come back only to turn in his captured criminals and spend a short time with his family (Weiser, 2009). One capture that has immortalized Reeves is his capture of two outlaw brothers in the Red River Valley. His posse camped out a distance away from the house where the outlaws were thought to be hiding. Reeves disguised himself as a man in rags and knocked on the door of the outlaws. The outlaws' mother opened up and allowed him to stay, all the while fooling her that he wants to join forces with her sons.

The outlaws came home, and Reeves managed to convince the family to join forces. While the outlaws were on their sleep, Reeves handcuffed them without them even noticing. First thing in the morning, Reeves woke the outlaws and brought them to the camp where the rest of his posse was. The outlaws' capture brought in an additional \$5, 000 dollars to Reeves' name (Weiser, 2009). Another famous adventure that Reeves involved himself into is the encounter with Bob Dozier. Dozier was an infamous criminal and has managed to elude Reeves for the longest time.

Refusing arrest, Dozier was shot dead by Reeves (Weiser, 2009). The hardest arrest that Reeves had to do was the arrest of his own son. His son was charged by killing his own wife. Reeves volunteered to take his own son into

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custody. After half a month of pursuit, he turned in his son and was tried and sent to prison but was released earlier than decreed because of petition and a clean record while in prison (Weiser, 2009). After law enforcement was established in the area, deputies were no longer needed. He served as a patrolman in Oklahoma for two years. While he was in the office, crime was virtually zero.

Only sickness prevented Reeves from continuing his service, as he was diagnosed with Bright's disease. He died on the 12th of January 1910 (Weiser, 2009). Over 3, 000 outlaws were apprehended by Reeves in a p of 35 years. That means more than 7 outlaws turned in every month if we do the math. With just 14 casualties in all, Bass Reeves is probably the most efficient official in American history (Weiser, 2009). Reference Weiser, K. (2009). Black Reeves - Black Hero Marshall. Legends of America. com. Retrieved March 19, 2009, from <http://www.legendsofamerica.com/WE-BassReeves.html>.