

## **Sgt. Wilde W.B.**



**WILDE, WM. BROCK - SGT. Regimental No. 857**  
November 10, 1896 - Dry Forks, North-West Territories Age: 42

Sgt. Wm. Brock Wilde was killed in the performance of his duties by a Blood Indian named Charcoal. For a long time after that killing, Charcoal evaded the posse that pursued him. Ultimately, it was Charcoal's own brothers who captured him. They took the renegade murderer by surprise, subdued him and turned him in to the North-West Mounted Police. At Charcoal's trial, it was one of those brothers, Left Hand, who testified: "All the Indians and White Men think that the prisoner (Charcoal) is crazy."

CHARCOAL (ALIAS Bad Young Man) may have been insane. If he wasn't, then he was one of the most lawless criminals ever to ride the Canadian Prairie. On March 16, 1897, he paid for his lawlessness by being hanged in front of six witnesses in the horse corral at Fort Macleod, North-West Territories. This put an end to his spree of violence and killing that began six months earlier, and ended with the murder of Sgt. William Brock Wilde of the NWMP.

The beginning of Charcoal's streak of violence started in the hay fields of the Blood Reserve in the summer of 1896. The Indians had contacts to deliver large quantities of hay from the Reserve to the NWMP detachments at Stand Off, Kipp and Macleod (in what is now southern Alberta). While Charcoal was out working in the hay fields, one of his wives, Pretty Wolverine Woman, was staying home and having an affair with a handsome young Blood brave named Medicine Pipe Stem. Charcoal caught them once and warned them to stop. But they continued and, in the fall, when Charcoal found them together in a log stable, he shot Medicine Pipe Stem in the head and left him for dead. His body was found by a small group of Blood maidens that included Singing-On-The-Shore and Troubles Shining. They were able to recognize him immediately because Medicine Pipe Stem was admired for his beauty by all the young women on the Reserve.

The date of that killing was October 11, 1896. A police investigation was held and a warrant was issued for Charcoal's arrest. Insp. A.M. Jarvis of the NWMP was assigned the task of finding Charcoal and bringing him to justice.

After that first killing, Charcoal seemed to go crazy. He must have been convinced that he would hang for Medicine Pipe Stem's murder because he began to behave as if nothing mattered any more. On the night of October 12, he went to the home of the former farm instructor on the Blood Reserve, Mr. Edward McNeil, and shot through his window and wounded him in the side. In the dark of November 2, Sgt. W. Armer was watering his horse at the Cardston NWMP detachment when, for no known reason, Charcoal took a shot at him with his rifle and grazed his forehead. Charcoal also began bragging to many of his tribe that he intended to kill both the Indian Agent on the Reserve, Mr. Wilson, and Red Crow, the chief of the Blood Tribe. It seems that anyone who opposed him in any way could expect to be a target.

Through all this, Insp. Jarvis' police posse stayed on his trail. Assisted by native scouts, they were able to track Charcoal in the first snows of winter and discovered the whereabouts of his camp. After surrounding his teepee and cautiously advancing on it, they discovered that the fugitive had already fled with two of his wives and one son. Three other family members who had been left behind were taken into custody.

After that, Charcoal was spotted many times in the Porcupine Hills and along Beaver Creek, but no one was able to capture him. His reputation of shooting on sight made the other Indians afraid to challenge him. Gradually, Charcoal's behaviour became more and more desperate, and more bizarre, so that even his son and wives feared him. At one point they tried to betray him to the police, but he was still able to escape. As time went on, more and more police scouts were assigned to find him.

On November 5, Charcoal was seen near Pincher Creek and Sgt. Wilde, who was in charge of the detachment there, quickly organized a patrol to join the chase. He rode out with a posse of five: three Peigan Scouts (Many Tail Feathers, Blue Blanket and Big Face); a Blood Indian Scout named Ambrose; and Charlie Holloway, the NWMP Indian interpreter.

A few days later, a Peigan named Jack Spear, who had a very strong and fast horse, found Charcoal's trail. He stayed on it until he could see Charcoal, but kept a safe distance behind the unpredictable killer. On Tuesday, November 10, he was joined by Wilde's posse from Pincher Creek. By then, all their horses were played out with the exception of Sgt. Wilde's own horse, Major.

At sunset, as the posse closed the distance on Charcoal, the fugitive yelled at his Indian brothers to keep away, assuring them he had no quarrel with his own people. The natives stayed back as the sergeant continued on alone. Near Thibaudeau's ranch at Dry Forks Corral, Wilde called for Charcoal to stop, but he refused. The sergeant rode closer with his revolver in his hand, though his rifle was strapped securely on his saddle. As Wilde approached, his uniform was easily discernible - fur hat, cloak, NWMP overcoat with his three sergeant stripes visible on the arm. When the policeman got within eight feet, Charcoal turned on his horse and fired a rifle that was partially concealed under his blanket.

Shot through the lung, Wilde fell from his horse and lay on the ground. When Charcoal saw Wilde move slightly and raise his head, he jumped off his horse, stood over the fallen policeman and shot him again, point blank, in the stomach. Wilde died there in the snow while Charcoal took the sergeant's horse and rode off. His brutal murder of Sgt. Wilde only served to strengthen the resolve of both the police and Indians alike to capture him.

Two days later, Charcoal showed up at the home of his two brothers, Left Hand and Bear's Back Bone. He didn't realize that the two men had promised the police that they would help capture their renegade brother. To Charcoal's surprise, his brothers (with their wives' help) overwhelmed him, tied him up and turned him over to the authorities. Charcoal (alias Bad Young Man, alias Johnny Dried Meat) was tried before Judge David Scott at Macleod and found guilty of murder with no recommendation for mercy. He was hanged at the Common Gaol at Macleod on March 16, 1897, with the death song on his lips.

Sgt. William Brock Wilde died a single man. Before coming to Canada, he had spent ten years in the British cavalry. Seeking still more adventure, he had come from England to challenge the great Canadian West. His tenure of service with the North-West Mounted Police would not extend beyond three short years.

**NWMP Superintendent Sam Steele said this of Wilde:**

*"He was one of the finest men who had served in the Mounted Police, faithful, true and brave, useful in every capacity. The citizens of Pincher Creek erected a monument to his memory. Poor Wilde had two large and faithful hounds always on guard where he was, and when the pall-bearers entered his room at Pincher Creek to remove his remains, one of the animals would let no one approach and had to be shot."*

**Sadly, Wm. Brock Wilde was the last remaining member of his family. He was buried at the Protestant Cemetery at Fort Macleod. The monument in his honour stands at Pincher Creek Memorial Park.**