

Joe M. Tolliver

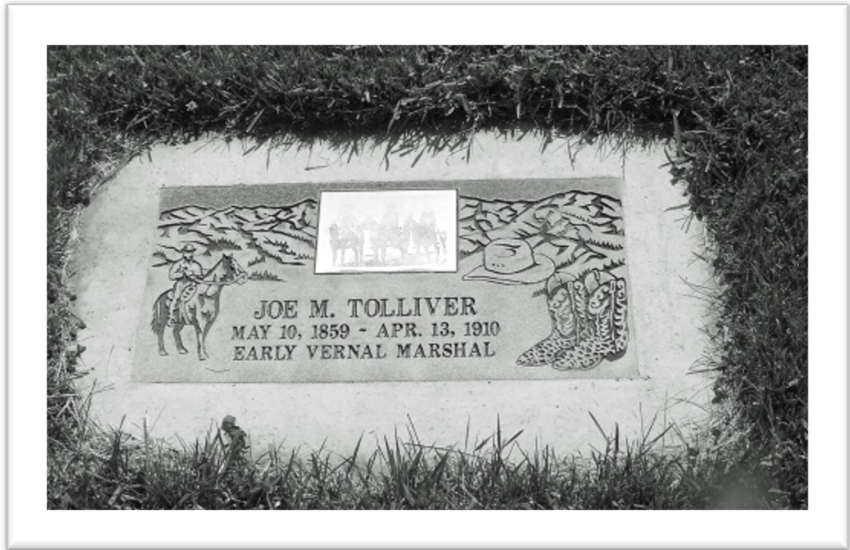
Joe Tolliver was born on May 10, 1859, and became living proof that not every law enforcement officer in the old west was a good guy. It would appear that Tolliver would be the antithesis of John Theodore Pope. They both served as Vernal Town Marshal in the same era. Tolliver served two terms as Town Marshall. He was the self-proclaimed wrestling champion of Brown's Park. Matt Warner once related that the toughest hand-to-hand fight he had ever had in his life was with Joe Tolliver over a woman. It ended in a draw, with both contestants so badly battered and so utterly exhausted that they literally could not raise their fists to strike another blow.

At a Christmas celebration held in the Crouse cabin December, 1891, Tolliver issued a challenge to anyone present to beat him in a contest. Charley Seger, a recent arrival in Brown's Park, who was unaware of Tolliver's reputation, took up the challenge and, surprisingly, soon had the "champion" pinned to the floor. Tolliver was so infuriated that he drew his knife and commenced to carve Seger up seriously. Mary Crouse and Josie Bassett tended to Seger's wounds, but by the following morning, he was dead.

That incident had occurred in about 1900. Two years later, Joe Tolliver came upon Mike Flynn in his buckboard at Bridgeport, and the scene was almost repeated. Tolliver pulled his gun on Flynn and threatened him, and Mike sat there grinning. Charley Crouse arrived at this juncture, and he rode alongside Joe Tolliver, saying, "Give me that gun." Joe said, "NO! I'm gonna kill him here and now!" Crouse grasped the gun from his half-brother's hand, and told the grinning Mike Flynn to get out of there. Tolliver argued with Crouse, telling him if he hadn't interfered, Mike Flynn would be dead, and the Park would have been rid of a nuisance. Crouse argued back: "That man would have killed you with his Winchester or his knife."

Shortly after this incident, Joe Tolliver moved over to Vernal where he became Town Marshal. On April 13, 1910, he went into the barber shop for a shave, and, as he sat in the barber-chair lathered up, he took out his pistol and began twirling it. The barber told him, "Joe, put that thing away, before you hurt somebody." Tolliver exclaimed, "Hell, the thing's perfectly safe," and, with that, put the gun to his head, pulled the trigger, and blew his brains out! The obituary headline said, "Joe Tolliver loses his life while proving the safety of an automatic gun." He was the father of 13 children, all but four died young.

He is buried in Vernal Memorial Park in Vernal, Utah, among some of his family members.



Joe Tolliver's Tombstone