

Thornburgh, The Wonder Dog

Thornburgh was found as a pup by some soldiers of Fort Bridger. They named him for a Major T. T. Thornburgh who had been killed by Indians in 1879. Thornburgh earned himself a place of respect over the years and is credited with several heroic deeds. They include the capture of a commissary thief during which he received a stab wound. Once he warned a sentinel of marauding Indians approaching the fort preventing theft or stampeding of the soldier's horses and mules. On one occasion he saved a young boy from drowning. During a fight he prevented one man from killing another by intercepting the arm of the man wielding a knife.

Although Thornburgh had many benefactors on the frontier Army post, he did not have a true 'master' until a civilian mule-skinner named "Buck" Buchanan came to work at Fort Bridger and took a personal interest in the dog. It did not take the two long to become inseparable friends. In 1888, when a fatal kick from one of Buck's mules ended Thornburgh's life, Buck buried him nearby and had a special tombstone carved which still testifies to the strong bond that developed between man and dog. The tombstone reads: "Man never had a better, truer, braver friend. Sleep on old fellow; we'll meet 'Across the Range'".

The tombstone still stands today, though it has faded somewhat. Thornburgh has his own little plot on Fort Bridger which today is a Wyoming State Historical Site. It is a lovely little spot and his plot, which is well-maintained, is surrounded by a white picket fence.

It is said that "Buck" Buchanan lies in an unmarked grave in Salt Lake City.

Major Thornburgh was killed in Colorado while leading a command of cavalry to rescue settlers under attack by Utes. He and 13 of his soldiers were ambushed and killed on September 29, 1879. His body was sent to Omaha for burial and was later reinterred in Arlington National Cemetery.



Thornburgh's Tombstone



Thornburgh's Gravesite