

THE LEGEND OF WILLIE TELBERG AND SON

Written by
Jeff McMahon

essayfilms@yahoo.com
Cell: +61 433000130

FADE IN:

KANSAS - FALL 1865

EXT. OPEN COUNTRY - DAY

Two rabbits fornicate.

A kitten hops playfully.

EXT. WOOD CABIN - DAY

A basic but well built wood cabin nestled in a glade 'midst some gently rolling hills.

Out front, an 1860's Union Flag on a slender log pole barely manages a flutter.

Wispy smoke from the adobe chimney at one end of the cabin.

The autumn air is punctuated by the FAINT SOUND of a GUNSHOT.

WILLIE (V.O.)

Gotta make the first shot count,
son, while he has other things on
his mind.

A few clothes hang listless on a line strung between two neatly placed poles out back of the cabin.

Elsewhere, the makings of a vegetable garden.

The FAINT SOUND of a GUNSHOT again.

A nanny goat, bloated udder, tethered beneath a small tree nearby, BLEATS, looks up, alert.

EXT. OPEN COUNTRY - DAY

Lying prone, camouflaged amidst some low brush, Black American WILLIE TELBERG (late 30s), a giant in all respects, ruffles the wispy hair of his twelve-year-old son WALDO lying beside him.

WILLIE

Get his friend another time.

Willie stands, cradles his Spencer lever action Repeater rifle, and gives his Down Syndrome son a helping hand up.

He nods to his son's older model Springfield Muzzle loader which is almost as long as the lad is tall.

Waldo removes the percussion cap from the nipple, blows any dust clear of the Muzzle, shoulders the strap.

His distinctive eyes observe Willie who expertly:

- removes the tube magazine from the Repeater rifle butt-stock;
- removes any remaining cartridges;
- places them in a small leather sack attached to his belt;
- re-inserts the empty tube into the butt-stock.

Willie bends down and picks up two brace of rabbits lying alongside.

Waldo likewise bends down, scoops up a small guinea pig and tucks it inside his shirt.

Beaming mile-wide smiles, father and son head off to collect their latest bounty.

WILLIE

We'll try another spot tomorrow,
give these little critters here a
chance to make up their numbers.

Waldo nods his acknowledgement of the strategy.

EXT. LAURAVILLE MAIN STREET - DAY

A neat and tidy pioneering town: hotel, blacksmith, livery, church, bakery, a few cottages ... but not much more.

Townfolk, mainly older women, go about their business.

GENERAL STORE

On the facade above the veranda, a sign reads:

"LAURAVILLE GENERAL STORE: EST 1860

H & H. JOHANSEN PROPRIETORS"

Below on the timber boardwalk, two Old-Timers -- gray-bearded CHESTER and his wife GABBY sit in rocking chairs fashioned from small branches and saplings.

Surrounded by timber shavings, it's hard to tell one from the other as they whittle away.

Gabby consults a fob watch from her pinafore she wears.

GABBY

So what would you be wanting to do today, hon'?

CHESTER

Nothing, my sweet.

GABBY

But we did that yesterday.

CHESTER

Did we finish?

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Womenfolk go about the business of purchasing supplies.

On a stool behind the counter, teenager HARRIET JOHANNSEN, in a world of her own, puts her mind to needlework on what could pass as an infant's Christening gown.

Some customers check a display of fabrics, others check crockery.

Storekeeper HOWARD JOHANNSEN(40s) sporting a red apron emblazoned with a yellow letter "H" logo, attends to a line of women at a barrel of salted pork.

He fawns over KATIE (late 30s), one of the younger, more attractive customers with a bit of the Celtic wench about her. She is treated to an extra large portion of salted pork.

The other women in line tut-tut their disapproval and frustration.

Storekeeper HANNAH JOHANNSEN (40s) shoots daggers at Howard while she has to contend with a grumpy older woman who scrutinizes her weigh up a supply of flour.

EXT. OPEN COUNTRY - DAY

Willie and Waldo, weapons over shoulders, casually trudge across the golden plain with their haul of rabbits.

WALDO

We did good today, eh Pa?

WILLIE

"Well" son. We did "well". Don't know what I'd do without you.

Waldo beams, proud as Punch.

WILLIE

Best get our wares cleaned up. Those white ladies like their meat fresh. And there's not much of that around these parts since the war.

WALDO

Why that Pa?

WILLIE

Well they lost a lot of their menfolk from all the fighting during that time.

WALDO

And they was giving the white ladies their meat, fresh, as they liked it, is what you sayin' Pa?

WILLIE

Put it that way, son, you'd be telling the truth.

WALDO

So now us black menfolk --

WILLIE

"We", son. We black menfolk.

WALDO

We gotta give it 'em, is what you is saying, Pa?

WILLIE

In a manner of speaking, son, in a manner of speaking. It's what they call "the market".

Waldo mouths "meat market" to himself.

WALDO

Then I better get along and give those white ladies what they hangin' out for.

WILLIE

I can see you have a fine future here in Kansas, young man.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - VERANDA - DAY

Gabby stops her whittling, blows away the shavings, holds up her stick to check its shape.

She squints off into the distance.

Chester also squints as he follows her gaze.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Against a wall, a rack, over which a number of rabbit pelts have been slung. A huge tub of water alongside.

Waldo helps Willie as they finish skinning the bunnies.

WALDO

You give Mama her fresh meat when she wanted it, Pa?

Willie's eyes start, caught off-guard.

WILLIE

I guess I did young man. Yessir, I guess I did. If there's a lesson to be learned, their kind need special attention.

Willie observes his son digest this.

WILLIE

Now better finish up those cottontails if you're to get any money for your reading books. One day, your school teaching Mama be very proud of you.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Katie gives Howard a seductive smile as she accepts her package from him.

An almighty commotion is heard outside, GUNS FIRING, WHOOPING AND HOLLERING, causing consternation among all those within.

EXT. LAURAVILLE MAIN STREET - DAY

Four horsemen in remnants of Confederate Army uniforms, run riot.

Their leader, ALBERT GREESER(40s), wearing a Hardee hat, and his 'lieutenant', HECTOR (40s), oral hygiene wanting, in battered black Derby, front up to the General Store, dismount, grab their saddle bags.

Greeser addresses the two other riders, a hatless, weedy looking JEROME (late 20s) and the strapping ISAAC (late teens), barely able to grow some bum-fluff on his chin.

GREESER

That ride done made me thirsty. See what the town has to offer.

The innocent Isaac lifts his tattered straw hat, vacantly scratches his head, not comprehending.

GREESER

(to Jerome)

Educate the lad, will ya?

Greeser and Hector enter the store.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Greeser and Hector stomp to the counter, skittling the older woman lined up.

GREESER

Salted pork.

Howard turns from Katie, puts on an unconvincing brave front.

HOWARD

Well, now sir, you might be out of luck ... considering there's been a bit of a run on --

Hector waves his pistol at Howard, approaches Katie with lascivious intent.

HECTOR

And whatever else you ladies might oblige us with.

But Katie will have none of his advances and squares her shoulders and chest to him, dislodging his black derby.

Hector thinks twice, adjusts his hat and goes to the barrel and takes what salted pork remains.

Greeser throws his saddle bag to some of the other women who reluctantly deposit their supplies in them.

Greaser turns his attention to Harriet.

GREESER

And maybe something for desert.

He grabs Harriet's hand. She drops her needlework. He beckons her outside amidst the usual pleas from the women-folk.

Hannah tries to grab her daughter's other hand but to no avail. She turns to her husband.

HANNAH

Well don't just stand there.

But Howard does just that.

Hannah lunges for something behind the counter but stops on the SOUND of a pistol being cocked.

Greaser holds his pistol at Harriet's head.

Hannah slowly produces ... a parasol.

Greaser smiles, amused.

GREESER

Bad luck to use that inside.

Hector finishes securing the saddle bags. They retreat to the door, Greaser dragging Harriet by the wrist with him.

Katie brazenly grabs Harriet's other hand trying to restrain them but, in a tug-o-war, is herself dragged outside ...

...leaving Hannah to lay into the less than heroic Howard with the parasol.

EXT. COUNTRY TRAIL - DAY

On the trail leading into Lauraville.

Willie, cleaned up and in laundered shirt, a bright red kerchief neatly tied around his neck, drives a rickety 2-wheeled market cart pulled by a large work horse, MACDUFF.

Alongside, Waldo, also spruced up, guinea pig on his shoulder, rides bare-back on ABE, a small, aging pony with a slight impediment ...

... a rear hoof tends to drag more than lift, and leaves a slight scar in the dirt.

The SOUND of gunfire and SHOUTING alerts them.

WILLIE
 Stay close by, son.
 (to the workhorse)
 In your hands, MacDuff.

They trot on ... and Lauraville comes into view.

Willie stops the cart.

WILLIE
 Might be a good idea to hop aboard,
 son.

But Waldo looks eagerly toward the gunfire, tries to assert his independence.

WALDO
 Aw, pa. Can't I --?

WILLIE
 Know what you're wanting, son. But
 on this occasion.

Reluctantly, Waldo sidles up to the cart.

WALDO
 And tie Abe to the siding. MacDuff
 be okay. A veteran of gunfire. Just
 another day for him.

EXT. LAURAVILLE MAIN STREET - DAY

SALOON

Jerome and Isaac outside the saloon, arms laden with bottles of whiskey, firing shots randomly in the air.

A wailing publican, HARVEY JOHANNSON (Howard's twin brother) runs out after them and watches, helpless, as they stack up their saddle bags.

GENERAL STORE - VERANDA

Chester, unperturbed by the mayhem, stops his whittling, shuffles to the edge of the veranda.

Greaser man-handles Harriet across the veranda, the young teenager pleading for help from Katie and Hannah following with outstretched hands.

Chester looks beyond the unrest.

Greaser follows his gaze. His eyes light up.

Willie and Waldo approach in the very near distance.

MAIN STREET

Hector finishes securing his saddle bags over his horse, looks up at the new arrivals as ...

Greaser drags Harriet into the middle of the street.

The whole town gravitates to the street.

The Rabble all squint their eyes, trying to comprehend the sight of Waldo.

HECTOR

Well, lookie here. We got ourselves
a new breed.

Willie's cart pulls up before the mob.

GREESER

Bin coupling with the Indians. One
of the privileges of freedom, I
suppose.

Waldo secures his pet guinea pig inside his shirt. But it won't comply and pops it head out.

Willie nods towards Harriet's wrist straining under Greaser's grip.

WILLIE

You aiming to snap that off?

Greaser aims his pistol at Willie, gob-smacked by the comment.

GREESER

Now tell me. You look like you be a
God-fearing boy.

WILLIE

I am indeed, mister.

GREESER

Mister? Mister who?

WILLIE

I don't rightly know, sir, having
never made your acquaintance.

GREESER

Name of Albert Greaser. Captain
 Albert Greaser. Confederate
 Engineers Corps. Ring a bell in
 that ol' head of yourn?

Willie shakes his head.

Greaser beckons Isaac nearer. He releases Harriet's wrist,
 intimates that the young rebel keep guard over her.

Their youthful eyes meet. Isaac blushes fleetingly, but
 straightens himself and acts the hardened rebel.

Greaser delves inside his shirt, pulls out a sheet of paper.

GREESER

You never seen one of them before?

He waves a crude "Wanted" poster for Willie to see.

HAND-DRAWN PORTRAIT VAGUELY RESEMBLING GREESER.

WILLIE

Wanted? For what?

GREESER

Robbery and mayhem.

WILLIE

Nasty, nasty. But you wouldn't want
 to add "Murder" to that list, now,
 would you?

Greaser thinks about this.

GREESER

You just might have a point there,
 boy. You sound pretty clever for a
 colored boy.

He crudely shoves the poster back inside his shirt and grabs
 Harriet's hand again, training his gun on her.

GREESER

What's your name, boy?

Chester proclaims proudly:

CHESTER

That there be Mister Willie
 Telberg. An indispensable man in
 these here parts.