

Art Acord

Castle Dale's Famous Cowboy and Silent Film Star



Castle Dale was once home to a famous cowboy, rodeo champion, stuntman, and silent film actor. Art joined the Cody's Buffalo Bill Wild West Show at the age of 18 and was named the World's Champion Cowboy three consecutive years, 1912 through 1914.

John Wayne reminiscing to a friend, years later said, "There were a lot of tough guys around in those days, working in the picture business. Probably the toughest of all those guys was a guy by the name of Art Acord. He was the toughest son of a bitch I ever saw."

Artumus "Art" Ward Acord was born in Glenwood, Sevier County, Utah, in 1890 to Valentine Louis Acord and Mary Amelia Pedersen, pioneers and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He was the youngest of eleven children.

Art's mother died when Art was just 19 months old while the family was living in the Stillwater, Oklahoma area. The Acord family had moved there for the mother's health and took part in the September 28, 1891, Oklahoma Land Run. She died a few weeks later on November 28, 1891. After her death, the family moved back to Utah. His childhood home in Castle Dale is still standing today.



Photo taken in 2015

He left home at age fourteen where he worked as a ranch hand on the Nutter Ranch in Nine Mile Canyon. Local author and historian Edward Geary remembers, "When I first saw this panel in 1980, the 'Acord' was still visible in the lower part of the oval. The axle grease has since oxidized and eroded away. This is at the Preston Nutter ranch in Nine Mile Canyon. Nutter's son-in-law Howard Price told me that according to ranch lore Art was a wild kid when he came to the ranch and not well liked by the older hands. Nutter fired him after he injured some horses by driving them too hard."

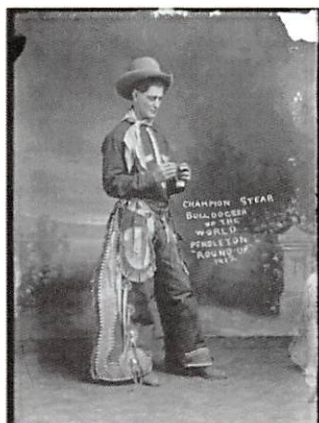


Art Acord on Buddy in 1926.



Art Acord on Cyclone.

Steamboat was widely considered among the best bucking broncos in rodeo history. Nicknamed *the horse that couldn't be ridden*, the black gelding was christened Steamboat after a nose injury caused the horse to make a whistling sound whenever he bucked. Art Acord was one of the few cowboys to have ridden the acclaimed bucking horse for the full eight seconds. Steamboat later inspired the bucking horse logo on the Wyoming license plate, and Steamboat was inducted into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in 1975 and the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame four years later.



In 1912, Art won the World **Steer Wrestling (Bulldogging)** Championship at the **Pendleton Round-up** and won that same World Championship title again in 1916, defeating challenger and friend **Hoot Gibson**.

By 1916 Art Acord had accumulated the following as reported in the *New York Telegraph* of October 22, 1916. His winnings included:

- 42 hand carved saddles
- 36 silver mounted bridles
- 26 pairs of chaps
- revolvers by the dozens
- numerous hats and boots

From Cowboy to Actor

Art started in pictures in 1909 and supplemented his acting income by writing stories for the company, for which he received \$10 each. He starred in many silent motion pictures between the years 1910 and 1929. During that time Acord enlisted in the United States Army in World War 1 and served overseas. He was awarded the Croix de Guerre for bravery. (Later disputed)



At war's end, he returned to the motion picture business, riding with the famous Buffalo Bill Show and starring in the Buck Praven series. After the series, Art briefly left the Westerns to co-star with Theda Bari in William Fox's production of *Cleopatra* in 1918. In 1919 he returned to Wild West Shows and started on the road to fame in Universal Films. Art Acord was a skilled performer, stuntman and was equally at one in action or comedy. An excellent horseman, he was also an accomplished trick and fancy roper.

After his death, this article appeared in *The Los Angeles Times* - "Acord had led a rough life — working with the Dick Stanley Wild West Show in 1919 and with Buffalo Bill in 1911. He took part in many round-ups and won the championship in bronco riding at Klamath Falls in 1912. In motion pictures he was starred in Charles E. Van Loan's stories. "Buck Parvin in the Movies," "The Mayor of Gopher Hall" and others. Acord was more than six feet tall and in his prime weighed 186 pounds. Almost all of his pictures were made for Universal."

For his contribution to the motion picture industry, Acord has a star on the [Hollywood Walk of Fame](#).

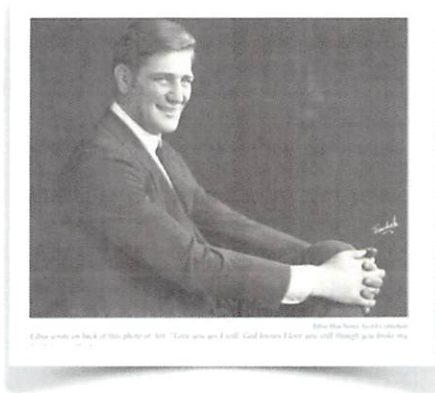
It would be no surprise that this prominent actor would meet and marry women who were also in films.

Art met one of the few successful cowgirls starring in films in the 1910's, action heroine Edythe Sterling. He married this former rodeo rider during the Salt Lake City Roundup July 22, 1913, and they later appeared together in low-budget Westerns. They divorced in 1916. (Edith May Kissinger 1892-1962).



Art was truly smitten with Edna Mae Nores when he met her in 1917. However, he was summoned to serve in the Army beginning February 1918. With his knowledge of horses, Art was assigned to the 114th Field Artillery Regiment, as horses pulled the heavy weaponry. He was in Europe a short period up to Armistice Day. As such, claims Art was a highly decorated soldier weren't true.

Upon his return, his former marriage to Edythe Sterling resolved, Edna Mae and Art were married in 1920. Nores filed for divorce in 1924 citing physical abuse and infidelity. The divorce was finalized the following year.



Edna wrote on back of this photo of Art, "Love you yes I will. God knows I love you still though you broke my heart to pass the time away."



Photo of Art which is signed "To Edna with love now and always, Sincerely Art"

Art's third marriage was to actress Louise Lorraine (Louise Escovar 1904-1981), who became very popular in action-filled serials such as *The Radio King* and *With Stanley in Africa* in 1922. Their marriage lasted two short years from 1926 to 1928.

In the final years of his life, Acord had filed for bankruptcy and was in and out of trouble with the law. In 1929, after jumping bail on a liquor charge, bondsmen caught him in Nogales and brought him back to

Los Angeles for trial. He settled his case by paying a fine of \$150 and then announced that he was returning to Mexico to recoup his fortunes.

Art Acord died January 4, 1931, at age 40 in Chihuahua, Mexico. The cause of death was cyanide poisoning. Although Mexican police officially listed his death as a suicide, many of his friends over the years insisted that he had been murdered by a Mexican politician who had caught Art Acord having an affair with his wife. It has also been rumored the he was depressed and told the doctor who treated him shortly before he died that he had intentionally taken poison because he wanted to die. His body was sent back to California by train.

Military personnel escorted his remains to the gravesite at Forest Lawn Cemetery. An Army Chaplain shared this about Art, "...Art's life was more than the sum total of its individual episodes. That a man's character emerges over and above his individual acts and circumstances was eminently true in Art's case. Whatever is foolish, or even ignoble, in a man's life fades to insignificance when the same man possesses the gifts of compassion, insight and love. Let this be the last word on Art. A volley of three shots was fired and the bugler sounded taps." Artumus "Art" Ward Acord was buried in the Vale of Memory section in Forest Lawn Memorial Park Cemetery in Glendale, California.

The late Buck Rainey in his excellent book *The Strong Silent Types* remarked: "...Only a handful of faithful Western fans today remember the magnificent physique and the hauntingly and sad features of Art Acord, the rodeo and Wild West star who helped to make Universal Pictures what it is today." How soon we forget.

Although there is a debate surrounding his death, we are certain that Art Acord was an extremely talented man, who left home at the age of 18 to pursue a career as a rodeo cowboy, winning numerous awards, then turning his talent for acting and horsemanship into an amazing career. He was the brother of the late Acord sisters, Minnie Unger and Adelia Jensen, both of Castle Dale.

Emery County is proud to acknowledge and honor one of our own, Art Acord!

by Joyce Jensen Miya

Anyone interested in more information concerning the life of this great cowboy may visit the Cowboy Library at the University of Wyoming where nineteen standard volumes covering his life and accomplishments are available. List of movies he was in can be found on Wikipedia.