

CULTURAL MOMENT FOR JULY 13, 2026 CELEBRATES THE HORSE IN THE CEMETERY

The following is a paraphrased rendition of H. Gordon Green's tale "The Horse in the Cemetery," which was published in the book Goodbye Little Town.

Today we are going to talk about a man named Uncle Yankee, and the peculiar scrape his damfoolery once got him into. The story began, as many did, at the old home-town hotel - over a mug or two with the regulars - and carried on behind it in the livery stable, where the innkeeper kept his massive draft stallions.

One year there stood a celebrated Clydesdale, Sir Craigie - an enormous, near-ton beast of impeccable pedigree. He'd sired some of the finest colts in the country, but time caught up with him, and he lost all interest in life and duty alike. His owner, faced with the inevitable, asked Yankee plainly: "For a couple of bucks, will you take him out and shoot him?"

"For a couple of bucks and a couple of drinks, I might," Yankee replied.

After the drinks - and plenty more besides - Yankee decided Sir Craigie deserved better than a quiet end in a swamp. Swearing a trusted companion to secrecy, the two slipped out of town at dusk, leading the old stallion toward the Greenfield Cemetery a couple miles west of Arthur.

"We'll bury him proper," Yankee said. "On hallowed ground. It's what I'd expect for myself."

They dug a grave while Sir Craigie peacefully grazed nearby. When the hole seemed deep enough, they said their goodbyes, gave the old horse a final pat, and with a well-placed shot, sent him into it. Only then did they discover the problem: the grave was too small, and Sir Craigie far too large. No matter how they tried, his four shod feet stuck up well above the ground.

They tried mounding dirt over them, but it slid away as though kicked aside. Tired and pressed for time, they did what they could - leaving a large mound, topped with a second-hand wreath for dignity - and returned to town.

By morning, the village was in uproar. A prominent lady claimed proof that a horse had been buried in the cemetery and demanded its removal. Yankee feigned innocence, but no one was amused.

"You'll have to get that horse out - and fast," the innkeeper warned. "The constable's already looking for you."

Faced with the impossible task of moving a dead ton of horse, Yankee gathered advice at the tavern. Engineers suggested using block and tackle to move him; others proposed burying the horse deeper. None of it seemed practical.

"Blast it all," said Yankee. "And all I wanted to do was give the old boy a little glory and a decent goodbye!"

Then someone said, "Why not blast him?"

That led them to Mike Gainer, a former mule-skinner from Montana who claimed he could blast anything. For five dollars, Mike promised results and suggested they do it at night.

They set charges carefully, then added extra for good measure. As the fuse burned, Mike advised everyone to remove their hats and pray - not only for Sir Craigie, but for themselves.

The explosion was tremendous, heard miles away in Kenilworth. It rattled stones and shattered glass, and by morning, Sir Craigie was... gone. Whether truly obliterated or simply scattered beyond recognition became the subject of local legend.

No proof remained, and the matter quietly died - at least officially. Back at the tavern, most agreed they'd accomplished the impossible. But Uncle Yankee, fond of fine horses, took little comfort.

"No matter what he was," he said over a drink, "that was one hell of a send-off - and I reckon I'll answer for it someday."

Today, when the Arthur and Area Historical Society gives tours of the cemetery, a popular stop is at a "divot" where Sir Craigie was last seen on this earth...

Submitted by the Wellington North Cultural Roundtable, paraphrasing H. Gordon Green's tale in the book "Goodbye Little Town."