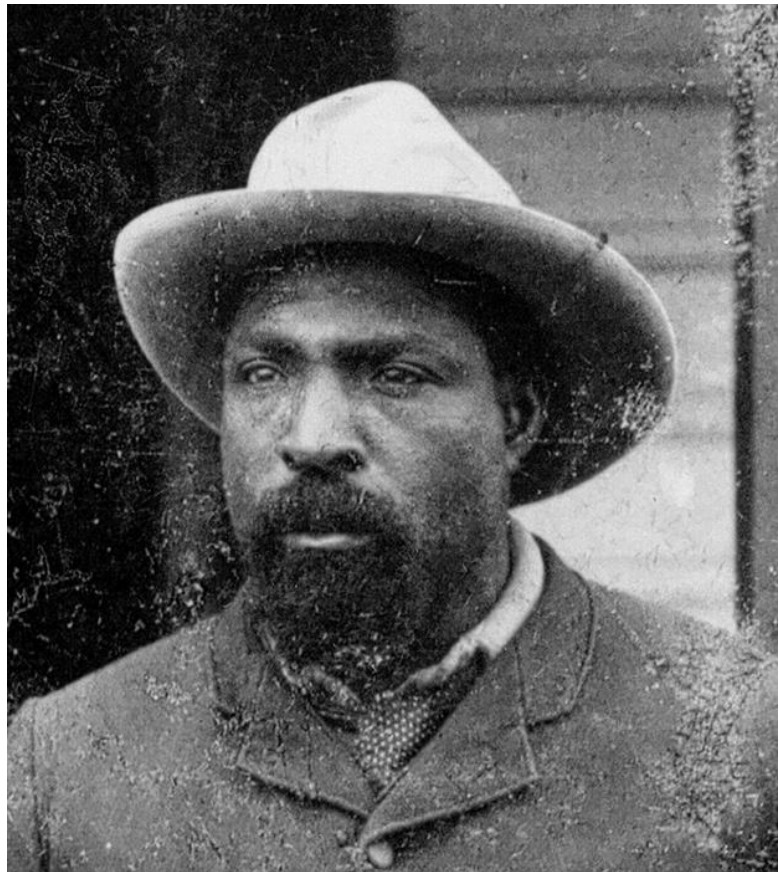


## John Ware

“I’d like a little worse horse and a little better saddle.”

Black ranch hands were not unheard of, but when he was hired to help trail 3,000 head of cattle north, John Ware was prepared to prove himself. Thinking they would have some fun at Ware’s expense, the other cowboys gave him a nasty bronc, but he rode the maverick to a standstill.

Ware’s skill with horses made people say he “could ride anything with hair on.” At six foot three, he towered above man and beast. A nimble roper, he was the first man in Western Canada to tie a steer in less than a minute. Wanting his own outfit, Ware established a ranch close to Sheep Creek, Alberta, married Mildred Lewis and started a family. When farming began to encroach on the open range, he bought land on the Red Deer River.



John Ware, Southern Alberta  
Glenbow Archives NA-263-1

One of the black pioneers of Alberta, Ware did what he did well, and earned everyone’s respect. Two months after his wife, Mildred died, Ware’s horse stepped in a hole and fell on him. The entire community mourned his passing.

### An Outstanding Horseman

A trail from Idaho led John Ware to southern Alberta. Experienced riders were needed to drive a herd of 3,000 cattle north to the Bar U Ranch and Ware was hired.

Ware stayed on to work at the Bar U and gradually developed a reputation in the local ranching community as an outstanding horseman. Round-ups were the perfect place for Ware to demonstrate his skills. The 1885 spring round-up involved 100 riders, 500 horses, and 15 chuckwagons.

The *Macleod Gazette* report on the round-up singled out John Ware. “John is...one of the shrewdest cowmen, and the man is considered pretty lucky who has him to look after his interests. The horse is not running on the prairie, which John cannot ride.”

ca. 1845 – Died: September 11, 1905

## Additional Resources

- **CBC Radio | Secret Life of Canada**  
<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/secretlifeofcanada/meet-john-ware-legendary-black-cowboy-1.5006879>
- **Parks Canada**  
<https://parks.canada.ca/culture/designation/personnage-person/john-ware>
- **The Canadian Encyclopedia**  
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/john-ware>

## Our Collections

### Glenbow Museum

<https://www.glenbow.org>

### Glenbow Western Research Centre | Glenbow Library and Archives

<https://libguides.ucalgary.ca/glenbowlibraryandarchives>

### Glenbow Library and Archives | Digital Collection

<https://digitalcollections.ucalgary.ca/asset-management/2R340826N9XM?WS=PackagePres&Flat=1>