

## Early Life and Living with the Pawnee

There is little known, and much speculation on Hugh Glass's early days before his adventuring. He was born in Philadelphia, although the date and exactly what city is unsure, it was sometime around 1783. A newspaper article published in the Philadelphia Portfolio speculates on Glass' background.

**“Whether old Ireland, or Scotch-Irish Pennsylvania, claims the honour of his nativity, I have not ascertained with precision...”** *–For the Portfolio, Letters From the West, No. XIV, the Missouri Trapper*

It is known, however, that sometime in between the years 1817-1820, Hugh Glass was commander of an American ship that was commandeered by famous French pirate Jean Lafitte.

There has been much controversy on whether or not Hugh Glass really did live and experience such extraordinary things, or if he simply had the gift of telling tall tales.

Those who are convinced such things really happened, choose to rely on the documents that have withstood time and back up our man of legend. George C. Yount is considered to be one of the primary sources of Hugh Glass' story. Yount joined the fur trade via the Santa Fe trade in 1825, and traveled throughout the Rockies claiming to have personally known and befriended Hugh Glass.

Yount, on his death bed, recounted his memoirs to a Catholic priest named Reverend Orange Clark, who thought it would make an interesting book and took the liberty of writing it down. It was not until 1923 that Charles L. Camp edited the memoirs and published them for the Quarterly of the California Historical Society.

Yount could recall Glass expressing his experience and days as a pirate. He was most likely in his 30's when Lafitte's band of picaroons boarded his ship, and since Lafitte was trying to grow his numbers, gave him the choice: join their gang or die. It can be assumed that Hugh Glass was something of worth for the Pirate to offer him an alternative to death. Glass accepted the offer, reluctantly, and lived in the small pirate port Campeachy off the Galveston coast for the next year.

Glass described to Yount **“The reality of being a pirate far topped in horror any vision of the trade possible to one who hadn’t been enmeshed in it...there are monstrosities of conduct belonging to a society which has cut itself off from honor and compassion that outsiders can only understand at the price of forced association.”** – *The Saga of Hugh Glass, Pirate, Pawnee, and Mountain Man. By John Myers Myers*

Hugh Glass must have not enjoyed the experience and been a God fearing man due to what Yount told Reverend Clark: **“...the cruel murders to be perpetrated daily, - As they shuddered from their inmost souls & shrunk from those deeds of blood, it was impossible for them to conceal from their despotic lord the emotions of their hearts”** – *The Chronicles of George C. Yount, California Historical State Society, Vol 2 No. 1, April 1923*

The island of Campeachy was in a dangerous location, “the mainland on both sides of Galveston Bay was infested with Karankawa Indians” who were of the cannibal tribes. Also being surrounded by murky waters that alligators and poisonous snakes lurked in, it was almost impossible to escape.

These facts, however, did not stop Hugh Glass and one of his companions from trying to leave Campeachy to find refuge on the shores. It was after being so revolted by the pirate way of life that they mutinied. They remained unpunished but awaited a **“hearing before Lafitte following the return to Campeachy from wherever at sea their captain logged them as having gone on strike.”**– *The Saga of Hugh Glass, Pirate, Pawnee, and Mountain Man. By John Myers Myers*

Since being unfit for pirate life, they would be doomed to death for the following day. But, being left alone on the ship while others went to shore, having only enough time and space to take a few items of trade, they jumped ship and swam two miles through the dangerous waters. Reaching the shore they were able to stay alive by living off the creatures in the sea, even the poisonous ones. They also managed to avoid any of the cannibal Indian tribes on their 1,000 mile trek up North. It was unfortunate then, that upon meeting a band of Wolf Pawnee it was their custom as ceremony to offer up a human sacrifice by fire. Hugh Glass had to watch his companion not only burned at the stake but pierced with slivers of burning pine.

We can only imagine the horror Hugh felt upon the realization that he too would face such a fate.

**“Because such murders are ritualistic, it is not likely that Hugh’s black bean was promptly drawn. During the period of waiting until another suitable ceremony, moreover, Pawnee practice called for treating the victim well, out of honor the god or spirit to which he would be dedicated.”** – *The Saga of Hugh Glass, Pirate, Pawnee, and Mountain Man. By John Myers Myers*

We are sure Hugh Glass couldn’t imagine, after being through the terrors he just faced, his life ending in this way. A strong will to survive must have been engrained in this man, this along with his quick thinking and wits continued to keep him alive. **“Now came his own final hour- And as two approached him to strip him of his apparel, the ruling Chief stood by to pierce his skin with the first splinter, which was deemed to royal privilege – Glass thrust his hand into his own bosom & drew from thence a large package of vermillion; an article which the savages value above all price- He gave the packet to the proud & haughty Brave, with an air of respect & affection & bowed his final farewell”** - *The Chronicles of George C. Yount, California Historical State Society, Vol 2 No. 1, April 1923*

The chief of the tribe was so impressed and convinced it was a sign from the gods that he proceeded to affectionately spare Hugh’s life and adopt him as his son.

**“It is not on record that any Thanksgiving turkey has ever been whisked away from under the raised ax and promoted to the status of a household pet, but if such an event ever does take place it will form the only parallel to this escape-with-honors on the part of Hugh Glass.”** – *The Saga of Hugh Glass, Pirate, Pawnee, and Mountain Man. By John Myers Myers*

Hugh Glass lived with the Pawnee for several years before joining the fur trade. Going to war with his tribe, taking a wife, learning which plants and insects were edible and living off the land. This was knowledge he must have recalled to mind as he made his famous 300 mile trek after being attacked by a Grizzly. Knowledge that probably saved his life and made it possible to push on.

Hugh Glass, interim Pirate and adopted Pawnee, these experiences shaped Hugh into the man he was, and his will to survive started long before his Mountain Man adventures, truly he was an unforgettable man.

