

SUNDANCE

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Duchesne on Nov. 27, 1936, according to his step-granddaughter Etta Forsyth. Forsyth, 91, still refers to Long as her "Uncle Billy." She remembers him as kind and loving toward her grandmother, who had six children when she married Long in 1895 after her first husband was killed in a logging accident.

"My mom just knew he was part of the outlaw gang but didn't ever know who he really was," said Forsyth's daughter Diann Peck, who was with her mother at Friday's exhumation.

University of Utah biological anthropologist John M. McCullough, in an affidavit used to obtain a court order to exhume the body, said he compared a known photograph of Long against a known photograph of Longabaugh.

"It is clear that these two photographs are of the (same) person," McCullough told the court.

In a telephone interview with the Uintah Basin Standard, McCullough said he was able to take linear measurements from the two photos and found them to be "almost too good."

"I'd compare the ratios in one photo to the other and it was almost a line," he said. "This was just absolutely beyond belief. It was just so close."

Provo attorney Thomas Seiler represents five of the seven Long descendants who sought to have the remains tested. He said his clients want to determine their ancestor's true identity so they can complete genealogy work as part of their Mormon faith.

"They keep hitting a wall with him," Seiler told the Standard. "They can't find anyone behind him."

Speculation that Long and Longabaugh — sometimes misspelled Longabaugh — are the same person has grown stronger in recent years.

Long's skull and a femur



DESERET NEWS ARCHIVES

Historic Wild Bunch photo shows Harry Longabaugh, seated left, and Butch Cassidy, seated right.



CRAIG ASHEY, UINTAH BASIN STANDARD, POOL

Grave marker of William Henry Long in Duchesne says he died in 1936. His family wants to know if he was really the Sundance Kid.

were dug up several years ago by another relative, according to family members involved in the most recent exhumation. The individual had a rectangular piece of bone cut from the femur, apparently to conduct DNA tests. The results of those tests are unknown.

In November 2007, Long's remains — including the skull and femur — were reburied in the original grave site. The bones were

placed in a vault.

"We were trying to reverse the 'ethical damage,'" McCullough said.

According to Long's headstone, he was born in February 1860. His obituary in the Dec. 4, 1936, edition of the Uintah Basin

Record identifies him as a Duchesne farmer, born and raised in Wyoming's Big Horn Basin. It doesn't provide the name of a specific town in Wyoming, though.

Longabaugh was born in Pennsylvania in early 1867, according to the historical record, and moved to Colorado at 15 to homestead with a cousin. He earned his outlaw moniker after serving time in Sundance, Wyo., for stealing a horse and saddle

in 1887.

The Sundance Kid's association with Utah native Robert Leroy Parker, aka Butch Cassidy, and the Wild Bunch is believed to have begun nine years later in 1896.

A loose confederation of criminals, the Wild Bunch was credited with numerous bank and train robberies throughout the Midwest and West. Some, including Sundance, used an area of the Big Horn Basin known as the Hole-in-the-Wall to hide out from posses after their heists.

John Barton, a senior lecturer in history at Utah State University, said Sundance would have had a healthy geographical knowledge of the Uintah Basin during his time on the outlaw trail. Local history has members of the Wild Bunch frequenting Nine Mile Canyon and the homesteads of John Jarvie and Herb Bassett in Brown's Park near the Colorado-Utah-Wyoming border.

"They were well

acquainted here," said Barton, who teaches at Utah State's Uintah Basin campus and is not involved in McCullough's inquiry into a possible link between Longabaugh and Long.

"Those guys would have known all the routes," Barton said. "I have personally talked to people who knew them or knew people who knew them, but that's folklore."

Historians say Butch and Sundance left the country in 1901 for South America with Sundance's common-law wife, Etta Place. Place, whose true identity also remains in dispute, later returned to the United States. It's unclear if or when the two men returned to the country permanently.

In 1908, when a courier for a Bolivian silver mine was robbed of the company payroll, he fingered two Americans. The bandits — believed by some to be Butch and Sundance — were cornered inside a rooming house by authorities and killed in an ensuing gun battle.

They were buried together in an unmarked grave that remains undiscovered, leaving doubt about whether the two dead men were in fact the infamous American outlaws.

Several individuals have come forward over the years claiming they were Butch or Sundance, or that they spoke to the men after 1908. So far, historians have disputed each claim.

In her 1975 book, Cassidy's sister, Lula Parker Betenson, said her brother visited her

following the Bolivian shootout and said he and Sundance were not involved. She said her brother died in the Pacific Northwest in 1937 under the alias William Phillips.

"I have never believed they were killed in South America," Barton said, adding that McCullough's findings are "really kind of exciting."

"This is prima facie evidence," he said. "It's not, 'Grandma knew somebody who ran into Butch.'"

Still, for Barton, confirmation that Longabaugh and Long are one and the same would be bittersweet, given the romanticism that surrounds the legends of Butch and Sundance.

"As the mystery is solved and (Sundance) lives out his life as a poor farmer, probably struggling to make ends meet, raising a whole brood of not-his-own children, that's not as exciting as our imagination might run," Barton said. "It takes that element of the wild and exciting out of it."

The remains collected from Long's grave Friday will undergo a more refined analysis by McCullough sometime this week. Then DNA samples will be collected at Sorenson Genomics in Salt Lake City. They'll be tested against known samples from Longabaugh's family.

McCullough said it could take up to three months before results are available, depending on the quality of the DNA recovered.

"Only on TV do you get results in minutes," he said.

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