

# Deseret News

## Is Sundance really buried in Duchesne?

By Geoff Liesik

Deseret News

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DUCHESNE — The bones of a man buried in the city cemetery 72 years ago have been exhumed for testing to determine whether he is actually Harry Alonzo Longabaugh, better known to most of the world as the Sundance Kid.

The skeletal remains of William Henry Long were disinterred Friday by a University of Utah anthropologist and the executive director of a Salt Lake City genetics lab as some of Long's relatives looked on. A documentary film crew recorded the event.

Long took his own life at his home outside 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 Longbaugh — are the same person has grown stronger in recent years.

Long's skull and a femur 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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Tuesday, December 16, 2008 — Last update: 2:45 p.m. MST

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# Deseret News

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## Reader comments: Is Sundance really buried in Duchesne?

31 comments | Read story

Cooooo! | 2:13 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

Now THAT is a cool story. I don't really see the resemblance between the bones and the photos but who knows?

Will Robert Redford attend a press conference about it?

Best of all, nobody is going to argue BYU - Utah on this topic!

Was I wrong? | 6:37 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

I thought Sundance died in a shootout in Bolivia.

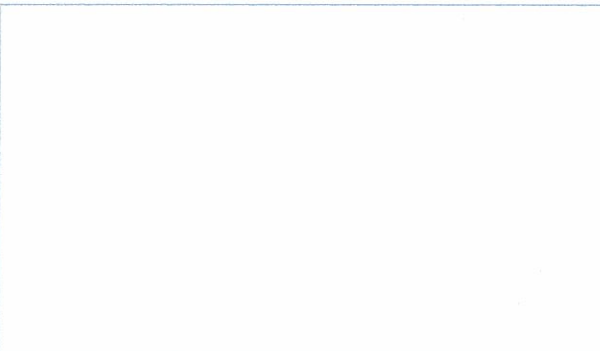
Joe Moe | 8:17 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

@was I wrong Did you read the article?

Anyway, I myself met "Sundance" shortly before he died, at a cafe in Myton, 20 miles east of Duchesne. He gave me the whole shtick and made me promise not to say anything until they discovered it and published it. So now I can come out of the closet. Whew.

Another fun little factoid: "Sundance" did some scouting jobs for Pres. John Taylor. But that's another story.

Comments continue below



There's always \$\$\$\$ | 8:32 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

...in coming up with a conspiracy theory, a "they're not really dead" or other piece of fantasy.

So the results of the previous DNA tests are unknown? No, they ARE known - but they'd ruin the story and money-making potential.

Kenneth in Texas | 8:39 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

Very interesting article!

I am curious to know exactly what evidence is being sought that would definitely identify these remains as those of the real "Sundance". The article talks about collecting DNA samples. But, it seems the use of DNA would require an existing sample that is known to have come from Sundance or one of his relatives. Besides, I don't think the full remains would be necessary for DNA testing. What happened to the earlier DNA sample?

Clues? | 8:42 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

These clues are much too apparent to not know more than this already. Here

STORY PHOTOS

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Craig Ashby, Uintah Basin Standard

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.

GALLERY (5 PHOTOS)

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These clues are much too apparent to not know more than this already. Harry is a nickname for Henry, Longabaugh and Long. Born in the Bighorn Basin. Surely someone had put all of this together before now, especially since his granddaughter was saying what she was...

If it's him..... | 8:56 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

Little town Duchesne will be known to the world.....LOL!!

Stopping in Duchesne every once in a while, I'm not sure if the Farmers there would like that, but I guess curious minds of the intellects will always be around, with us.

If it was up to me? I'd say let him rest in peace...

Dave | 8:58 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

WHY ARE WE DIGGING UP DEAD PEOPLE. LET THE DEAD ALONE. HOW WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR BONES DUG UP IN 75 YEARS. THIS IS JUST PLAIN CRAZY.

Dig me up Dave | 9:07 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

You can dig me up in 70 years, I am sure I will not mind. I hear Hitler is buried in Fountain Green!

LOL | 9:14 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

Dave who would care if your dead you wont know you are being dug up!!!

Chachi | 9:33 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

I find it ironic that the comment at 8:32 takes a cynical view of conspiracy theories--and then imagines that there's a cover-up to hide the DNA evidence!

dead body | 9:37 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

Dave... it is after all, just a dead body. Regardless of your religious beliefs or lack of, once a person has died the body, or in this case bones of the body, are just hanging out until the rest happens, so it's not really a big deal as long as the family is okay with it. Which they are. So it's fine.

Woody SideWood | 9:40 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

I knew "Black Jim" when I was a young boy living on a ranch in MID-Utah. He was living on the same ranch and he was very very old. He told stories of how he would have the relay horses in place while the others would rob the banks. I remember him telling about Winnemucca and Belle Fourche specifically. In the winter a local rancher would take supplies (over the mountain) to Butch and the gang. This rancher's spread really grew during these years. After three generations that ranch has been split into a few peices. Interestingly, some crooks are still on it.

ute | 9:43 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

Go Utes and go Arizona!

observer | 10:01 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

I recognize him from the skeletal remains.  
It's my old boss.

K2 | 10:30 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

This story has some real "holes" in it and the writer surely knows that. So, just hoping we have some timely followups. Perhaps chock it up to lack of space (for advertisements?). Just for once I wish the media would take the dramatics out of a report to its non-tabloid readers. Question - How long were this person's remains out of his "final resting place/s" while relatives and lawyers sorted (fought over?) out their options?

Jerry | 10:36 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

I am from Georgia and have been in Salt Lake for 17 years, go to Duchesne regularly and just love the people and area. If history can be complete and peace of mind come to this family I think that great. Might be the only way the long legend dies! That is what I love about Utah rich in history and people. When is the next train robbery?

Sandy | 10:43 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

I think they should dig up all the Mormon polygamist bones and do some DNA work on those people as well, and make certain that everyone belongs to who they say they do. It would be a marvelous and great adventure for the Mormon people living today.

Does anyone know if the Sundance kid's clan were Mormon?

The ENGLISH people love digging up graves. It's a pass time in England, and

very traditional. They even make documentation films for TV. Very interesting.

**hey dave...** | 10:54 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

why do you think it matters if someone's decayed bones are disturbed?

**DNA man** | 11:10 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

There is nothing wrong with digging up dead people. It helps history research. It's good for learning and study, and it does not hurt the dead person. The spirit has left the body and the bones are only remaining residue that should be researched to the fullest.

**Duchesne resident** | 11:27 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

The community members of Duchesne have long been aware that Mr. Long may have been the Sundance Kid. This article isn't yielding any new information to the long time residents of the city. There are people who currently reside in Duchesne who knew Mr. Long and his children personally. Many of these people have known for years that he was indeed the Sundance Kid. An interview or two with those people who knew Mr. Long would yield much more info than this article could uncover.

**Bambie** | 11:43 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

There is a lot more to this story and the whole truth will rise when it is time. This family is ready to heal itself and the rest of the real story will stand as a light of understanding reaching across generations that all of us may receive the whole truth as is available.

This is not a romanticized western movie, this is our history which others have found intrigue with. We are a part of a whole community who's shared life stories is remarkable.

The truth is even more remarkable then the fiction. May we all come together for the highest good of all and bring to light that which will strengthen and add to our life experience.

This is our blood and guts along with those who lived through this time of remarkable history. Let us honor ourselves and others who came before us by standing in truth and doing our best to benefit the whole while relating exciting and fascinating information about where we came from and what our ancestors really did.

Funny thing, the truth is infinitely more exciting then the fiction.

**Sundance not Mormon** | 11:53 a.m. Dec. 16, 2008

Sundance Kid was from Pennsylvania and his family was at that time was not Mormon generally.

**wyoming** | 12:53 p.m. Dec. 16, 2008

The town in Wyoming was Afton, in Star valley. He and Butch Cassidy stole from my great-grandfather's grocery store because he had raised the prices too high for the townspeople to afford food. Classic rob-the-rich-to feed-the-poor story...

**new definition** | 1:04 p.m. Dec. 16, 2008

This kind of changes the meaning of "final resting place", doesn't it? I think I want to be cremated.

**Mr. Bean** | 1:08 p.m. Dec. 16, 2008

What's the problem? You'll just bury them today and dig them up tomorrow...A Great British Tradition.

**stillinut84651** | 1:19 p.m. Dec. 16, 2008

re; Joe Mo, LOL. Good idea to use the word factoid in your posting since a factoid is something that everyone says is true but that may or may not be true.

**Glen from Tucson** | 1:29 p.m. Dec. 16, 2008

...born in Wyoming's Big Horn Basin in 1860? Not impossible, but pretty remote. John Coulter from the Lewis and Clark Expedition went through the northern part of the Big Horn Basin in 1807. Jim Bridger created the Bridger Trail which led from the Mormon trail through the Big Horn Basin up to Montana in 1864. Some ranchers got there in the 1870s. The towns didn't start happening until about 1900 give or take a few years.

**Joe Moe** | 1:32 p.m. Dec. 16, 2008

@stillinut

I just love myths and folklore. I figure maybe I can make up my own, write a book, make some money. Ya think?

book, make some money. ya think?

Shauna | 1:48 p.m. Dec. 16, 2008

Hazel Bernice Peck is my deceased mother-in-law. Harry Hoagland Forsyth is my deceased father-in-law. Don Hoagland Forsyth, my deceased husband, would have loved reading this and knowing this. He commented on this history several times. How nice to put all of this together. Shauna Gygi Forsyth

Otis Johanson | 2:30 p.m. Dec. 16, 2008

Glen from Tucson... you have to appreciate that nothing Long ever said about his history was true just like the rest of the outlaws. They had a bunch of aliases and stories to throw people off their trail. It seems to me that these people are honest about trying to find out who Long was. If they're doing a documentary it doesn't seem like they'd be able to hide the truth about anything. I'm sure they'll report what they find out. Actually Joe Moe, you probably wouldn't make any money if you made stuff up. Without any evidence at all, you call this myth and folklore. Why don't you tell us what's in your craw so we can understand where you're coming from and what your beef is?

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