

# Human remains found in northern Nevada identified 45 years after discovery

Florence Charleston of Cleveland, Ohio was found dead in 1978



Photo by: Nevada State Police

More than four decades after her remains were found in northern Nevada on Oct. 26, 1978, Florence Charleston has been publicly identified thanks to advanced forensic genealogy testing.

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(KTNV) — The identity of a woman whose remains were found in Nevada more than four decades ago was revealed on Wednesday.

Florence Charleston of Cleveland, Ohio was found dead in a remote area in northern Nevada on Oct. 26, 1978, Nevada State Police announced in a news release.

A garment bag containing Charleston's remains was located in a remote area near Scossa Road, approximately 13 miles west of Imlay, Nevada in Pershing County, a state police public information officer stated.

Authorities noted a "variety of evidentiary items" were also collected at the scene. The remains were sent to medical examiners in Washoe County, where an autopsy determined the victim was a Caucasian female, approximately 40 years old or older, state police said.

"Due to the remains being heavily decayed, a cause of death could not be determined," authorities stated. "No identifying information for the female remains was located during the investigation."

In May of 1979, Pershing County sheriff's deputies tapped investigators with Nevada State Police to assist in their investigation.

Efforts to identify Charleston included news releases, requests for information from the public, following up on tips and submitting dental records for comparison, state police noted. Investigators enlisted the FBI for help tracing the woman's identity through articles of clothing, facial reconstruction, and obtaining a mitochondrial DNA sample from the remains.

No significant leads were developed, even after the case was entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons system to cast a wider net for potential information, the state police spokesperson wrote.

Othram, a company specializing in forensic genealogy that's generated new leads in a slew of Nevada cold cases in recent years, was enlisted for help in March of 2022. Scientists there performed advanced forensic DNA testing on the remains and did a genealogy search — generating "several new investigative leads," authorities said.

After years without a name, the woman was identified as Charleston. Investigators learned she had moved to Portland, Oregon "sometime in the early 1970s." By 1978, Charleston's family had lost contact with her, state police said.

The investigation into Charleston's death is ongoing. Nevada State Police asked that anyone with information about the case contact the Investigation Division at 775-684-7456.

In April, Nevada State Police announced the identity of [another woman whose remains went unidentified](#) for decades after they were found in northern Nevada. Othram Labs assisted in that case, too, investigators noted at the time.

And in February, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police announced [breaks in two cold case investigations](#) dating back to the 1990s with the assistance of forensic scientists at Othram.