

Mississippi State Medical Examiner & Mississippi Bureau of Investigation Team with Othram to Identify a 1991 John Doe

After 33 years, the remains of a man discovered in Mississippi have been identified as Warner Washington, born in 1908.

Solved

Summary

In February 1991, the skeletal remains of an unidentified individual were discovered in Picayune, a small town in southwest Mississippi. The discovery was made in a wooded area near a public recreation facility in Pearl River County. It was determined that the remains were that of an adult male likely between the ages of 55 and 65 years, whose ancestry could not be definitively determined. The man's height and weight were estimated to be 5'10" and 190 pounds, respectively. With no clues about the man's identity, he became known as Pearl River County John Doe and details of the case were entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP4766.

In 2022, the man's remains were transferred to the Mississippi State Medical Examiner's Office so that an anthropological analysis could be developed in hopes that the individual could be identified. Pearl River John Doe's identity being a mystery for nearly thirty years, when in 2023, the Mississippi Office of the State Medical Examiner & Mississippi Bureau of Investigation submitted evidence to Othram's laboratory in The Woodlands, Texas in hopes that advanced DNA testing could help to identify the man. Funding for Othram's casework was provided by Mississippi native and philanthropist, Carla Davis.

At Othram, scientists successfully developed a DNA extract from the evidence and then used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a DNA profile for the John Doe. An initial biogeographical analysis definitively determined the individual's ancestry to be of African descent, and Othram's in-house forensic genetic genealogy team worked to develop new leads in the case, hoping to identify the John Doe.

These leads were returned to investigators who conducted a follow-up investigation that led to potential relatives of the man. The unknown man's DNA profile was compared to the DNA profile of a potential relative. This investigation led to the identification of the man as Warner Washington, born December 29, 1908. It was

determined during the initial investigation that Washington's death was not due to foul play.

The identification of Warner Washington represents the 35th case solved in the State of Mississippi using technology developed by Othram. To learn about other cases in Mississippi, [visit DNASolves](#).