

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department and California DOJ Team with Othram to Identify 1991 Mentone John Doe

A young boy, only a few years old at the time he went missing in 1991, has now been identified as **Derrick Burton.**

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Highlights

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department

Mentone, California

Media Inquiries

Summary

In October 1991, a hunter was quail hunting in a rural area of Mentone and located a human skull, without teeth and mandible. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Homicide Detail was contacted and assumed the investigation. A search of the area was conducted for more human remains, but none were located. A torn plastic trash bag with decomposition odor and child's clothing was located and kept for evidence. The remains could not be identified, and no further leads were discovered at the time.

In November 1991, an autopsy was performed, and the coroner determined the human skull belonged to a child between 4 and 8 years old. The cause of death was undetermined. The case was entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP2550, but with no other leads were available, the case eventually went cold.

In October 2022, with funding provided by Roads to Justice (RTJ), the CA DOJ sent Othram forensic evidence from the human remains was sent to the DNA sequencing and forensic genomics laboratory, Othram Inc. Othram used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a comprehensive DNA profile for the unknown young boy and Othram's in-house genetic genealogy team used the profile in a genealogical search to generate investigative leads in the case.

In February 2023, Othram revealed distant genetic relatives to the decedent located in Houston, TX. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department Homicide Detail contacted the genetic relatives and received consent for their DNA for further testing.

With the assistance of the Riverside, CA and Houston, TX FBI offices, Patricia Clark was identified as the young boy's mother. Clark was contacted and it was discovered Clark reported her child missing to the San Bernardino Police Department in 1991. However, the child was never found. Clark's DNA was obtained and confirmatory DNA testing then revealed a parent-child relationship between Clark and the human remains of the unknown child. This child is now known to be Derrick Burton and he was only a few years old at the time he was reported missing. The Sheriff's Homicide continues to investigate the circumstances around Burton's disappearance and death.

Anyone with additional information is asked to contact Detective Edward Hernandez, Specialized Investigations Division – Homicide Detail, Cold Case Team, at [909-890-4904](tel:909-890-4904). Callers can remain anonymous and contact WeTip at 800-78CRIME or www.wetip.com.