

Millard County Sheriff's Office Teams with Othram to Identify 1958 John Doe

After nearly 65 years, an unknown man found in the Utah desert has been identified as **Robert Holman Trent**, born on 15 January 1913 in Reidsville, Rockingham County.



Solved

Summary

In 1958, the remains of an unknown individual were found in Kanosh, Utah, a small desert town in Millard County. In 1979, the Utah State Medical Examiner's Office was notified about the existence of the remains. While records indicate the individual's remains were discovered in 1958, it is not known who discovered the remains or where they were stored prior to the Medical Examiner's Office receiving them twenty-one years later. The remains were stored without any clues to help determine who the unknown person may be. In 2020, more than sixty-years after the remains were discovered, a forensic anthropology analysis was completed. It was determined that the skeletal remains are likely that of a White male, estimated to be between 5'8" and 6'2" tall, who at the time of his death was between 25 and 35 years old.

The anthropological assessment determined that the decedent experienced skeletal trauma during his life. While estimates of an individual's lifestyle and occupation are not routinely estimated when examining skeletal remains, the extent of healed injuries that were sustained during the man's life indicate that he may have been a

working cowboy or rodeo athlete. Additionally, the man may have had a condition in which the knees tilt inward while the ankles remain spaced apart, commonly referred to as “knock-kneed.”

At one point it was speculated that these remains could be that of Everett Ruess, an American artist, poet, and writer who was known to be exploring the Utah deserts in the 1930s when he went missing. However, there were few leads to work from and after decades of effort, the identity of the man eluded investigators. In 2020, details of the case were entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP64653.

In 2023, the Millard County Sheriff’s Office teamed with Othram to determine if advanced DNA testing could help to finally identify the remains of the John Doe. A DNASolves crowdfund was established to fund the casework and we are so very grateful to everyone that contributed to help solve this case. Funding was a substantial barrier in this case.

Skeletal remains were sent to Othram in The Woodlands, Texas. Othram scientists successfully developed a DNA extract from the 65-year-old remains and then used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a comprehensive DNA profile for the unknown man. Othram's in-house forensic genetic genealogy team used the profile in a genetic genealogy search to develop new investigative leads that were returned to investigators.

Using these new leads, the Millard County Sheriff's Office conducted a follow-up investigation and met with a potential relative of the unidentified man. The follow up investigation combined with additional DNA testing, established that the remains from more than a half-century ago belong to Robert Holman Trent, born on 15 January 1913 in Reidsville, Rockingham County.

Investigators are still working to identify the Trent's cause of death and to determine what brought him to the area. Anyone that knew Trent or might be able to assist in the investigation is encouraged to contact the Millard County Sheriff’s Office and reference agency case number 197900337 or NamUs ID UP64653.