

FIRST DRAFT

Killing by Sundance Kid uncovered

Outlaw escaped punishment in death of Chilean policeman

Although he was a skilled gunman, there is little evidence that Harry Alonzo Longabaugh — the Sundance Kid — killed anyone during his outlaw career in the United States.

However, recently discovered records indicate he killed a Chilean policeman in 1905. Before he could be sent to prison he disappeared, probably with Butch Cassidy.

It has long been known that Sundance got into legal trouble in Chile and may have killed someone. But the details were unclear.

Last year, husband and wife “banditologists” Daniel Buck and Anne Meadows unearthed long-buried court records at the national archives in Santiago, Chile. They wrote about their findings in the December, 2022, issue of the Wild West History Association Journal.

The court records tell how 24-year-old policeman Arturo Gonzalez was killed on Aug. 21, 1905. They also indicate that Sundance was arrested, convicted of homicide and released on bail with the aid of an American diplomat with Colorado connections.

Longabaugh was born near Philadelphia, Pa., in 1867. He became the Sundance Kid after his arrest for horse theft in Sundance, Wyo., in 1887. Robert LeRoy Parker was born at Beaver, Utah, in 1866. He took the name “Butch” Cassidy after a stint in the Wyoming Territorial Prison.

By the late 1890s, Butch and members of the loosely aligned gang known as the Wild Bunch were notorious for daring bank, train and payroll robberies.

By 1900, the Wild Bunch was being tracked by the Pinkerton National Detective Agency, and there was a multi-state effort to capture members. So, Butch and Sundance decided to leave.

In February 1901, with Sundance’s girlfriend, Ethel Place, they left New York City for Argentina. Soon, they settled on a small ranch near Cholila, in Patagonia, where they appeared to be law-abiding ranchers.

“I think they meant to go straight, but they always needed money,” said Anne Meadows, explaining why they turned to crime again.

Their first Argentinian robbery may have occurred in March 1904, when Cassidy and another man supposedly stole \$5,000 pesos from a ranch inspector. No charges were filed against them.

In February, 1905, when a bank was robbed in Rio Gallegos, Argentina, Butch and Sundance probably weren’t involved. But they may have helped plan the robbery, which mimicked their American crimes, with relays of fresh horses and careful scouting of the site.

Soon Argentinian authorities, encouraged by the Pinkerton Agency, were snooping around the Cholila ranch. Butch, Sundance and Ethel high-tailed it north into Chile.

In the summer of 1905, Sundance sailed to the United States with Ethel. He returned to Chile in August, but it’s unclear if Ethel accompanied him. Upon his return, Sundance used the alias Frank Boyd, a name the Pinkertons had linked to



BUCK AND MEADOWS COLLECTION

The only known photograph of Butch and Sundance in Bolivia in 1908. Butch is seated on the mule on the left. Sundance is standing by mule in center. Photo was taken at the hacienda of Angelberto Valdez in Capiñata, Bolivia.

him since 1899.

In Antofagasta, Chile, then a rough-and-tumble port city, Boyd met up with a friend called Thomas Fisher, believed to be Butch Cassidy.

“We’re nearly 100 percent certain that Frank Boyd is Sundance,” said Daniel Buck.

In addition to the Pinkerton information, Antofagasta court records show Boyd was the same age as Sundance and had been born near Philadelphia. Moreover, Sundance later wrote a letter to his family in Pennsylvania saying he’d had problems in Antofagasta.

Butch’s identity is less certain because Thomas Fisher was not a known Cassidy alias. But Fisher and Boyd described themselves as North American cattle buyers, not unlike stories Butch and Sundance had told before. And Fisher’s handwriting on Antofagasta legal documents is not dissimilar to Butch’s handwriting. Moreover, others who later told of Sundance’s troubles in Antofagasta placed Butch at the scene.

The two weren’t together when the Gonzalez shooting occurred, however. Frank Boyd spent the night at a brothel in Antofagasta. About 3:30 a.m., he invited the madam of the house and several others to dine with him at a nearby restaurant.

While there, Boyd got into an altercation with another customer. Soon afterward, the restaurant closed and the customers departed into a dark street, where the dispute resumed.

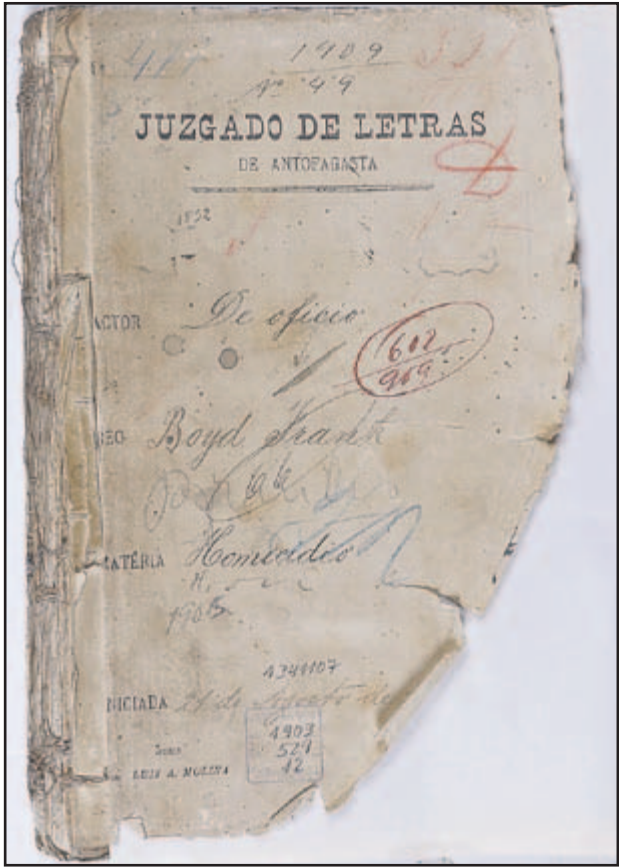
When several people tried to break up the confrontation, Boyd, fearing attack, pulled his pistol. The gun went off – accidentally, Boyd claimed – and Gonzalez was killed.

Boyd retreated to his hotel, where he was arrested that day. Along with Fisher, he was taken to the courthouse and interviewed. Fisher was released when it became clear he wasn’t present at the shooting.

Boyd was jailed and interviewed again a week later. He offered to pay about \$16,000 in today’s dollars to the widow of Gonzalez and her young son. Later, he doubled the offer. She accepted some of the money, but complained that the sentence Boyd eventually received was insufficient.

Boyd’s personal effects were held by the court, while Fisher’s belongings were given to Aller to hold. Between them, Boyd and Fisher had roughly \$110,000 in today’s dollars.

In early September, the Antofagasta district attorney filed an indictment saying Boyd was guilty “simple homicide,” the Chilean equivalent of manslaughter. Although



ARCHIVO NACIONAL DE CHILE, COURTESY ANNE MEADOWS AND DANIEL BUCK

The torn cover page of the 150-page criminal record of the prosecution of Frank Boyd for the killing of Antofagasta policeman Arturo Gonzalez.

he noted Boyd’s regret for the killing and discounted witnesses who claimed the shooting was intentional, he recommended a four-year prison sentence.

Boyd didn’t dispute the shooting, but he maintained it was accidental. On Sept. 29, he asked to be released on bail. Aller guaranteed the bond for \$5,000 pesos — about \$50,000 today.

Aller was an employee of the American Smelting and Refining Co., in Antofagasta, and a part-time vice consul for the U.S. State Department, a position that allowed him to assist American citizens in Chile. There is no evidence he knew the real identities of Boyd and Fisher.

Shortly after Boyd was released, he disappeared along with Fisher. Because most of their cash had been used for court costs, payment to Gonzalez’s widow, attorney fees and bond, the pair were nearly broke. They apparently turned to crime once more.

On Dec. 19, 1905, four people robbed a bank in Villa Mercedes, Argentina, about 1,000 miles south of Antofagasta. Three men robbed the bank while the fourth, possibly a woman, held their horses. With a posse on their tail, they escaped to Chile.

Once again, Butch and Sundance were suspected. Photos of them, supplied by the Pinkertons, appeared on wanted posters and in newspapers throughout Argentina. But they weren’t captured.

Meanwhile, Frank Boyd was still wanted for killing Gonzalez, but the case languished for more than three years. Finally, in spring 1909, the Antofagasta court ordered Boyd arrested and his bond for-

feited if he didn’t appear. But the legal action came too late. In November, 1908, Butch and Sundance are believed to have been killed during a shootout in San Vicente, Bolivia.

Aller was responsible for Sundance’s bail money, even though by 1909 he had resigned his consulate position and moved to another town in Chile.

He heard about the deaths in Bolivia, and, perhaps to relieve his bond obligation, he sought proof that Frank Boyd and Thomas Fisher had been killed. In 1911, Aller received a letter from the Bolivian government confirming that two unidentified Americans had been killed in San Vicente. Nothing further appeared in the records of the Boyd murder case.

Aller returned to the United States in 1918. In 1921 he was named athletic director and instructor of metallurgy at the Colorado School of Mines, his alma mater. He died in Golden in 1944.

Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid live on in movies, books, magazine articles and newspaper history columns.

Sources: Telephone interview with Anne Meadows and Daniel Buck, who have written multiple books and articles about Butch and Sundance; “The Sundance Kid in Chile: Boyds will be Boyds,” by Daniel Buck and Anne Meadows, Wild West History Association Journal, December, 2022; “Butch Cassidy, My Uncle,” by Bill Betenson; “Butch Cassidy’s Wild Bunch: Meet Utah’s Most Famous Outlaws,” by Brian Higgins, www.utah.com, August, 2022.

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