November 6, 1908

Two heavily armed “Americanos, on jaded mules” ride into the high mountain village of San Vicente, Bolivia. As the sun is setting, Butch and Sundance rejoin Bellot in their room, which opens onto Casasola’s walled patio. The Americans ask Bellot about the road to Santa Catalina, an Argentine town just south of the border (this was probably a ruse to throw off any pursuing posses) and the road to Uyuni (their real path), located about 75 miles north of San Vicente. They also ask where they can get sardines and beer, and Bellot sends Casasola to buy some with money provided by Sundance.

After more small talk, Bellot leaves and goes to the home of Manuel Barran, where a four-man posse from Uyuni is staying. The posse had ridden in that afternoon, warning Bellot and other locals to be on the lookout for two Yankees with a mule belonging to the Aramayo mining company, whose payroll was recently robbed.

The posse consists of Captain Justo P. Concha and two soldiers from the Aharoa Regiment and Inspector Timoteo Rios from the Uyuni police department. Captain Concha is unavailable, but when Bellot gives Inspector Rios and the two soldiers the news, they immediately load their rifles.

Accompanied by Bellot, the three posse members march to Casasola’s home and enter the patio. As the Bolivians approach the bandits’ room, Butch appears in the doorway, draws his Colt and fires, hitting lead soldier Victor Torres in the neck. Torres gets off a shot with his rifle, then runs out the patio door and collapses at a nearby house. He dies within minutes.

The other soldier and Inspector Rios also return fire, before scurrying out with Bellot. After retrieving more ammunition, the soldier and Rios go back to the patio door and again fire into the house.

By now it’s dark, as Captain Concha runs up and commands Bellot to find some locals and watch the roof and the back of the adobe house so the bandits can’t punch a hole and escape. As Bellot rushes to comply, he hears “three screams of desperation” coming from the bandits’ room.

By the time the San Vicentinos are posted, the firing has ceased and all is quiet. Minutes turn into hours, and there’s no response from the fugitives. The guards remain at their stations throughout the bitterly cold and windy night.

The next morning Bellot and others enter the room and see Butch’s lifeless form stretched out on the floor, one bullet wound in the temple and another in the arm. Sundance’s corpse sits on a bench behind the door, hugging a large ceramic jar. He has been shot once in the forehead and several times in the arm. According to one report, the bullet removed from Sundance’s forehead came from Butch’s Colt. From the positions of the bodies and the locations of the fatal wounds, the witnesses conclude that Butch put his partner out of his misery, then turned his gun on himself.
Odds & Ends

The outlaws were buried in the local cemetery that afternoon. The Aramayo payroll, which Butch and Sundance had stolen, was found intact in their saddlebags. Once the outlaws' possessions had been inventoried (see page 61) and placed in a leather trunk, Captain Concha absconded to Uyuni with the loot, leaving the Aramayo company to battle for months in court to recover its money and the mule that Butch and Sundance had also taken.

Two weeks after the shoot-out, the bandits' bodies were disinterred, and Perú (the Aramayo manager) identified them as the same pair who had held him up. Tupiza officials conducted an inquest of the robbery and shoot-out, interviewing Perú, Bellot and several others, but were unable to ascertain the dead outlaws' names.

In July 1909, Frank D. Aller, the American vice-consul in Chile who had known Sundance, wrote the American legation in La Paz for “confirmation and a certificate of death” for the two Americans—one known as Frank Boyd or H.A. Brown and the other as Maxwell—who were reportedly “killed at San Vicente near Tupiza by natives and police and buried as desconocidos.” Boyd had been Sundance’s alias in Chile; Brown and Maxwell were aliases that he and Butch had used in Northern Bolivia. Aller said the need a death certificate to settle Boyd’s estate in Chile. The legation forwarded the request to the Bolivian foreign ministry, stating that the Americans had “held up several of the Bolivian Railway Company’s pay trains, as also the stage coaches of several mines, and... were killed in a fight with soldiers that were detached to capture them as outlaws.”

Numerous stories circulated about Butch cheating death in Bolivia and returning to the United States. (Sometimes Sundance is included, but most of the legends name only Butch.) Probably the most persistent tale is that put forth by Lula Parker Betenson, one of Butch’s sisters, who insisted that Butch visited the family in 1925. Others in the family disagree, saying that Butch never returned, but Lula still has her believers.

In 1937, an elderly Matt Warner, a former member of the Wild Bunch, scribbled a note to historian Charles Kelly: “Forget all the reports on Butch Cassidy, they are fake. There is no such man living as Butch Cassidy. His real name was Robert Parker, born and raised in Circle Valley, Utah and killed in South America, he and a man by the name of Longwos [sic] were killed in a soldier post their [sic] in a gun fight. This is straight.”

Recommended reading: Digging Up Butch & Sundance by Anne Meadows, Butch Cassidy: A Biography by Richard Patterson and Sundance, My Uncle by Donna Ernst.