



# Department of Justice

Acting United States Attorney L. Robert Murray  
District of Wyoming

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## FORREST FENN TREASURE HUNTER DIGS HIMSELF INTO A FEDERAL SENTENCE

Acting United States Attorney Bob Murray announced today that **RODRICK DOW CRAYTHORN**, 52, of Syracuse, Utah, was sentenced by Chief Federal District Court Judge Scott W. Skavdahl, for excavating and damaging archeological resources in the cemetery of the Fort Yellowstone National Historic Landmark in Yellowstone National Park. Craythorn received a sentence of six months of imprisonment plus six months of home detention, to be followed by two years of supervised release. He was also ordered to pay \$31,566 in restitution.

Craythorn was found digging in Fort Yellowstone's cemetery in late 2019 and early 2020, while looking for a treasure believed to be worth millions. Rangers and special agents of the National Park Service discovered seventeen sites of illegal excavation, including damage to an historic grave. The cemetery is a multicomponent archeological site with historical human burials. The cemetery is included in the National Register of Historic Places and more specifically designated on July 31, 2003, as a National Historic Landmark. Yellowstone National Park was established in 1872 as the nation's first national park, and the U.S. Army was dispatched to the park in 1886 to protect its natural features and wildlife. Originally established as Camp Sheridan in 1891, it evolved into Fort Yellowstone and served as the Army headquarters until their departure in 1918. The Army began internments in the cemetery in 1888. At least 54 people were buried in the cemetery between 1888 and 1916, most of them civilian employees of the Army and relatives of military personnel.

A Santa Fe, New Mexico, art dealer named Forrest Fenn buried a chest of gold, silver, and gems in the western United States and then left a clue-filled poem to solve its location. The investigation into this matter revealed that Craythorn had done extensive research on the Forest Fenn treasure and documented his efforts to family and friends. Craythorn did not find the treasure during his criminal adventure. It was found later in Wyoming by another person.

“Yellowstone is one of the country’s most popular national parks and we must do everything in our power to investigate and prosecute those who damage and destroy its natural and cultural resources. A national park is no place to stage an adult treasure hunt motivated by greed. The harmful actions of Mr. Craythorn, no matter the reason or intent, destroyed valuable archaeological resources that cannot be undone”, stated Acting United States Attorney Bob Murray. “I am pleased with the results of this case. The teamwork between Assistant United States Attorney Stephanie Hambrick and the rangers and special agents with our National Park Service resulted in the successful prosecution of a crime that a sentence of imprisonment is rarely imposed. Craythorn deserves time in a federal prison, no matter the length. Yet this case really serves to remind those enjoying our national parks the importance of respecting and preserving it for the whole of America”, Murray said.

“This is the most significant investigation of damage to archaeological resources in Yellowstone National Park’s recent history,” said Superintendent Cam Sholly. “I want to sincerely thank law enforcement officers, special agents, archaeological staff, the Department of Justice District of Wyoming and the U.S. District Court Judge for their outstanding work on this complex case.”

“This is an example of a highly egregious resource violation stemming from the Forrest Fenn treasure hunt saga,” said Yellowstone National Park Chief Ranger Sarah Davis. “Today’s action by the DOJ sends a clear message that these types of transgressions will be aggressively investigated and prosecuted.”

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Additional Information and Resources:

Website: [Fort Yellowstone Cemetery \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/fortyellowstone/)

Images: [News Media](#) | [Flickr](#)