



*The grave marker on Lookout Mountain*

Unfortunately, Buffalo Bill died while visiting his sister May Cody Decker in Denver. The end came fairly quickly of uremic poisoning (kidney failure) but not quickly enough to prevent his wife Louisa from getting to his bedside in time. The “official” version of the story says that on his deathbed, Buffalo Bill told his wife Louisa, a priest and another friend that he wanted to be buried on Lookout Mountain near Denver. This burial supposedly occurred 5 months later when the snow melted and the mountain roads became passable.

Exhausted, cash poor, yet still exhibiting his charismatic wit, Buffalo Bill slipped into the great beyond at 12:05 p.m. on January 10, 1917 in a second floor bedroom at his sister’s home located at 2932 Lafayette Street. The house still stands today, as does the official version of the June 3, 1917 Lookout Mountain burial.

However, there are those who insist Cody’s corpse buffaloed them all and was secretly switched, snatched and shanghaied back to Cody, Wyoming and buried on the top of Cedar Mountain by three friends fulfilling the old scout’s longstanding request. This was necessary, the story goes, because Cody’s wife Louisa – long unhappy in her marriage to the western legend – sold the military hero’s body to the owners of the Denver Post for \$20,000. Buffalo Bill had been the most famous man on earth at the turn of the century and Post owners Harry Tamm and Frederick Bonfils wanted his body buried near Denver to attract tourists.

Third generation Cody resident and tour guide Bob Richard is an ear-witness to an alternate version of history. According to Richard, his father and grandfather both told him what actually happened. Three people orchestrated the switch -- his granddad Fred Richard, granddad’s good friend Ned Frost, and an unnamed sympathetic undertaker who happened to be friends with Buffalo Bill. Hearing the tale directly from his granddad’s and father’s own mouths has only made the story more plausible to Richard who shares the story on his CD, “The Road to Yellowstone.”

“The local undertaker, who was a friend of my granddad’s and Ned Frost as well as Bill Cody, was quite upset with the fact that Bill Cody was not going to be buried on Cedar Mountain,” says Richard. “And the more they talked about it, the more they started looking for some old cowboy or somebody who might pass away that they could take down and exchange. Well, it came to pass. A cowboy passed away in early May and nobody claimed his body. The mortician trimmed up his beard and moustache, looked at him and thought he might pass for Bill Cody. He got on the phone and called Fred Richard and Ned Frost and said come on to town, we’re going to Denver.”



*The mortuary in Denver that handled Buffalo Bill’s remains*

Richard says the men drove the iced-down body of the stranger to Denver, convinced the mortician there to let them into the basement crypt room to pay their last respects and then cased the joint to make their plan. The trio somehow acquired a key and returned after midnight, made the switch and headed back to Cody with Buffalo Bill’s body. They promptly buried it on top of Cedar Mountain where, according to this alternate history, it remains today.

## ***Could this be true?***

Cody died on January 10, 1917 but he wasn’t buried on Lookout Mountain until June 3, 1917. According to newspaper clippings of the time, Cody was embalmed by Joseph Bona of Olinger Mortuary shortly after 1 p.m. on January 10 in the second floor bedroom where he died. The body remained in the home of his sister for viewing for the next three days. The home is now a private residence and is being refurbished to reflect the décor of that moment in time.

At 9 a.m. January 14, the body was moved from the Decker home to the Denver State Capital Building where

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