

Brownstown Police Department and Michigan State Police Team with Othram to Identify a 2014 John Doe

After ten years, a man whose remains were discovered in Brownstown, Michigan, has been identified as **Michael Joseph Fanning**, born October 19, 1959.

Solved



Summary

In October 2014, hunters discovered the remains of an unidentified individual near the intersection of Inkster and West Roads in the Wayne County, Michigan charter township of Brownstown. Officers with the Brownstown Police Department responded to a vacant lot where the skeletal remains were recovered. The individual's remains were provided to the Wayne County Medical Examiner for further examination where it was determined that the remains were that of a White male who was between the ages of 35 and 65 years. Investigators estimated that the man was 6'1" tall.



Investigators determined that the man had likely died several months prior to the discovery of his remains. His identity could not be determined, and the man became known as Brownstown John Doe. At the time that his remains were discovered, Brownstown John Doe was wearing a Led Zeppelin tee shirt, denim shorts, white socks, and white New Balance tennis shoes. Investigators also found an old-fashioned transistor radio next to the man's body.

A forensic sketch depicting how Brownstown John Doe may have appeared during his life was developed and released to the public in hopes that it would generate new leads about his identity. Details of the case were entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP13067. Traditional DNA testing was performed and an STR profile was developed and entered into CODIS, but there was no match to a known individual.

In June of 2024, the Brownstown Police Department and Michigan State Police teamed with Othram in hopes that the man's identity could be determined through the use of advanced DNA testing. Forensic evidence was submitted to Othram in The Woodlands, Texas where a DNA extract was developed from the man's remains. Using Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing®, Othram's scientists successfully built a comprehensive DNA profile for the man. Othram's forensic genetic genealogist then used this profile in a genetic genealogy search, which yielded new leads in the case.



Using these new leads, investigators launched a follow-up investigation, conducting interviews with a possible relative of the man. A reference DNA sample was collected from the relative for comparison to the John Doe's DNA profile. This investigation concluded that Brownstown John Doe, whose body was discovered on October 29, 2014, is Michael Joseph Fanning. Fanning was born October 19, 1959.

Michael Joseph Fanning's identification represents the eighth case in the State of Michigan where officials have publicly identified an individual using technology developed by Othram. To read about other cases in Indiana that have been solved, visit [DNASolves](#).