

THE LAST OUTLAWS

BUTCH CASSIDY

AND THE

SUNDANCE KID

1 X 53 HD



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Long before they were immortalized on screen by Paul Newman and Robert Redford, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid captivated Americans from coast to coast. In the 1890s, their thrilling exploits—robbing western banks and trains and then seemingly vanishing into thin air—became front-page news and the basis of rumor and myth. But who were Robert Leroy Parker and Harry Alonzo Longabaugh? And how did they manage to pull off some of the most spectacular holdups in western history? Separating fact from fiction, the latest installment of the popular AMERICAN EXPERIENCE series *The Wild West* explores the last pair of outlaws to flee on horseback into the setting sun.

In an era in which cold-blooded killers like Jesse James and the Younger Brothers terrorized the West, Butch Cassidy, the Sundance Kid, and their Wild Bunch gang were a new breed of outlaw. Smart and methodical, Cassidy had elevated bank and train robbery to an art form. Born Robert Leroy Parker in 1866, Butch was raised in a devout but poor Mormon family. At age 13, he took a job at a nearby ranch and met a small-time cattle rustler named Mike Cassidy who schooled young Parker on the finer points of larceny. By the time he was 18, Parker was itching to strike out on his own.

Parker found work in the mines of Telluride, Colorado, but quickly tired of the grueling, fruitless labor. Robbing the local bank seemed a much better bet and on June 24th, 1889, he and two new cohorts successfully pulled off a heist. Knowing his crime would break his mother's heart, Parker changed his name to Butch Cassidy.

Across the country, in the grimy mill town of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, a young boy named Harry Longabaugh dreamed of a life of adventure on the open range. At age 14, he began working on his cousin's ranch in Cortez, Colorado. He quickly became an admired cowboy but, after a terrible winter that wiped out most of the herds, he turned to crime and was eventually arrested for horse stealing. When Harry emerged from his yearlong stint in jail, he had a new nickname—the Sundance Kid. He retreated to the steep canyons and unforgiving terrain known as the Outlaw Trail that ran from Montana down to New Mexico, and soon met Butch Cassidy.

Boosted by their newly formed gang, the Wild Bunch embarked on a daring and successful spree of bank and train robberies. But their wide-open, freewheeling world was quickly fading into the past. Powerful railroad executives, mining barons and cattle kings were determined to usher in their own modern brand of law and order, and they hired the famed Pinkerton Detective Agency to catch the gang. The Pinkertons had over 2,000 full-time agents and 30,000 paid informants and part-timers and used the most up-to-date crime-fighting techniques. Butch, Sundance, and the Wild Bunch were no match for the all-seeing Pinkertons; slowly, members of the gang were captured or killed.

Knowing the only way to elude them was to flee the country, Butch and Sundance escaped to Argentina with Sundance's companion, the mysterious Etta Place. But even in South America, Butch and Sundance were unable to escape the long arm of the Pinkertons. Forced back into a life of larceny in their attempts to elude old and new enemies, they met their end after a shootout in Bolivia. Yet even in the drama of their deaths, many refused to believe the era of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid had truly come to an end.

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CREDITS

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