

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Pearl Bryan

Pearl Bryan

Young girls, if you'll listen, a story I'll relate
That happened near Fort Thomas in the old Kentucky State

On January the thirty-first the dreadful deed was done
By Jackson and by Walling; how cold Pearl's blood did run!

But little did her parents think when she left her happy home,
Their darling girl just in her youth would never more return.

How sad it would have been to them to have heard Pearl's lonely voice
At midnight in that lonely spot where those two boys rejoiced!

And little did Pearl Bryan think when she left her home
The grip she carried in her hand would hide her head away

She thought it was her lover's hand she could trust both night and day
Although it was her lover's hand that took her life away

The driver in the seat is all who tells of Pearl's sad fate
Of poor Pearl Bryan away from home in the old Kentucky state

Of her aged parents we all know well what a fortune they would give
If Pearl could but to them return her natural life to live

In came Pearl Bryan's sister and falling to her knees
Begging to Scott Jackson, "My sister's head, O please!"

Scott Jackson he set stubborn not a word would he proclaim
"I'll meet my sister in heaven, where I'll find her missing head."

In came Walling's mother, Pleading for her son

"Don't take my son, my only son; from him I cannot part
O please don't take him to prison; it would break my poor old heart!"

The jury gave a verdict, and to their feet they sprung:
"For the crime these boys committed they surely must be hung."

DT #751

Laws F2

From A. Friedman, Penguin Book of Folk Ballads

"Pearl Bryan, the daughter of a wealthy Greencastle, Indiana farmer, was

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murdered by Scott Jackson and Alonso Walling, Cincinnati dental college students, in January 1896. Jackson was the father of Pearl's unborn child. The decapitated body was discovered a few days after the murder, and in March 1897 the men were executed. The girl's head was never found." [AF]

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