

Valera Lavetta Mullins About 1923 – December 25, 1941

(Beckley Post-Herald Dec. 26, 1941)

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Girl Found Dying In Camp Car Near Brooks

HINTON, Dec. 25—Valera Mullens, about 18, of Brooks, was found in a dying condition in a Chesapeake & Ohio railway camp car near Brooks about noon today, and died before medical aid could be rendered. She made no statement to police authorities, and an investigation was being conducted by state and railroad police, as well as city and county officers, to determine whether or not poison, which caused her death, had been self administered.

Two men, Forrest Morrison and Frank Stewart, who lived in the camp cars, were being held for investigation, Corporal S. C. Ballard, of the state police, said. No formal charges, however, have been filed.

Sheriff I. E. Briers, who participated in the investigation, said officers were told the girl had spent the previous night and morning in the camp cars.

Corporal Ballard said her presence in the cars was reported by Morrison, one of the men held for investigation, who told them he found her there upon his return from a visit to the postoffice.

The body was brought to the E. M. Meadows Funeral Home on Park Avenue, where an inquest was held and an autopsy conducted. A coroner's jury returned a verdict of death by poisoning, but

did not specify whether the poison had been administered in an attempt at suicide, or had been given her by some other person or persons, thus leaving the matter open for further police investigation, Prosecuting Attorney Thos. L. Read said.

The viscera will be sent to Charleston for analysis to determine the nature of the poison, he said.

Dr. J. W. Stokes, county health officer and coroner, performed the autopsy.

Funeral arrangements had not been completed this afternoon. The girl is the daughter of Mrs. C. T. Houchins, of Temple street, but resided with grandparents at Brooks, officers said.

Officers participating in the investigation were Corporal Ballard, Trooper M. C. Yoak, Sheriff I. E. Briers, Chief of Hinton Police Earl Hellems, Hinton Patrolman C. H. Shirey, C&O Special Agent E. O. Allen, and Prosecuting Attorney T. L. Read.

MULLENS RITES SET ON SUNDAY

Girl Who Died In Camp Car Will Be Buried At Brooks

HINTON, Dec. 26 —Funeral services for Valera Mullens, 18, who was found dying of poison in a railway camp car near Brooks, Christmas afternoon, will be held at the Brooks Baptist Church Sunday afternoon at 2 o'clock by the pastor, the Rev. Earl Ward, and burial will be made in the Fox cemetery near Brooks.

Pallbearers will be Hampton Bragg, Scott Owens, Hazel Marion, Clay Marion, Connie Marion, Okey Compton and Johnny War.

State Police and C. & O. railway officers continued an investigation into the circumstances of her death following a verdict by a coroner's jury that death was due to poisoning. The girl made no statement to police after she was found, and died before medical attention could be provided.

Two men, Forrest Morrison and Frank Stewart, occupants of the camp cars, who were detained for investigation by police after the girl's death, were still in the county jail late Friday evening, awaiting an examination by police authorities, probably Friday night.