

# F AIRVIEW CEMETERY • BROWNSTOWN, INDIANA

## William S. Loozman

Occupant Name: William S. Loozman

Location: Section E

Date of Birth: 10/25/1866

Date of Death: 7/23/1887

Date of Burial: 1887

Veteran: No

Multiple Occupants: No

Comment:



### FOUND DEAD ON THE RAILROAD!

#### Was William Loozman Murdered?

The dead body of a young man was discovered lying on the side of the Ohio and Mississippi railroad track, about midway between Seymour and Shields Station, on Saturday morning by the engineer of a passing freight train. A few hours later the switch engine and a caboose, with a number of men, were dispatched to the scene to view the surroundings and convey the dead man to Seymour. Upon his person was found a letter addressed to L. T. Gorrell, Brownstown, Ind., which gave rise to the rumor that Gorrell was killed, which spread rapidly and led to all manner of conjectures as to the cause of his death. About 10 o'clock in the morning, a telephone message was received, stating that the dead man was identified as William Loozman, and that Wright Vermilya was his guardian. This proved to be correct, and Mr. Vermilya started immediately for Seymour to look after the disposition of the remains. Coroner Brown held an inquest upon the body, but as there was no evidence to show that the man was killed by a railroad train, and circumstances gave plausibility to the theory of foul play, he wisely withheld a verdict, in the hope that additional revelations might enable him to determine whether death was the result of accident or of blows from persons with murderous intent. The young man was lying outstretched upon his back, with one hand upon his bosom, and his head, with his hat on the top of it, resting between two ties, outside and close to the rail on the west side of the track. No footprints, nor signs of any kind to indicate a struggle, could be discovered, nor blood at any spot except as it oozed from the wounds where the man was lying when found. Above his left eye was a wound and another just back of his left ear, having the appearance of injuries inflicted by a bludgeon of some kind. The knuckles of his right hand were somewhat bruised, as if they had been used combatively in resisting attack upon him. Neither the nature of the wounds nor the position of his body could be reconciled to the supposition that he was struck by a locomotive and killed. The only rational, plausible theory is that he was knocked down and killed for the purpose of robbery, and his body borne to the spot and placed in the position it was when found. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that during his stay in Seymour, on Friday, he frequently claimed that he had \$1,300 in his pockets, which he desired to invest in a farm.

The last seen of Loozman alive, as far as is known, was in Seymour on Friday night between 11 and 12 o'clock, at which time Marshal Hamp Bruning met him near the O. & M. Depot and had a conversation with him, in which Loozman stated that he was alarmed at the movements of two fellows who seemed to be following him. The Marshal told him he must either find a bed or leave town, as night loitering was not tolerated within the city limits. Loozman remarked that he had no money. His movements after that are unknown. There is no trace of him from that point to the spot on the O. & M. Railroad, about three miles west of Seymour, where he was found stark and stiff in death the next morning. The prevalent opinion is that he was foully murdered, with robbery as the incentive, but where or by whom the dastardly deed was committed is a mystery. It is a reasonable presumption that after leaving Marshal Bruning he started for Brownstown on foot down the railroad. The suspicious characters who shadowed him either followed him down the railroad or went down the wagon road and reached Hangman's Crossing ahead of him, and waylaid him at some favorable spot west of there, robbed him of the only valuables he had in his possession, and carried his body to the point and placed it in the position it was when discovered the next morning. Circumstances justify the conclusion that the murderous blows were not struck at the spot where the dead body was found.

William Loozman was a son of George Loozman, who years ago lived at Medora, served in the war for the Union as a private soldier in Company G, Twenty-fifth Regiment of Indiana Volunteers, and died a few years after his discharge, leaving a wife and child in destitute circumstances, who were subsequently sent to the Poor Asylum. William was taken from the Asylum when a small boy by Levi Bridgwaters, who kept him until about six years ago. The mother afterwards left the Asylum and married Buck Foutz, by whom she had one child—a son.

Foutz died a few years later, and his wife, with the Foutz child, again became a county charge, and both have been in the Asylum ever since. The mother is nearly blind and in poor health. Both are feeble-minded. Of late years, William had been working at farming and such other labor as he could perform. On the fourth day of July last, he started for Columbus to commence work in the starch factory. A short time before his guardian, Wright Vermilya, had purchased him a nice gold-filled watch and pocket knife, and there is good reason for the belief that these articles were upon his person on the night he met his death. A few weeks ago young Loozman became the beneficiary to \$1,300 pension money, awarded by the Government on account of the military service of the father, which money is in the hands of his guardian. His knowledge of this little store of wealth which fell to him, doubtless induced him to talk so freely of his money at Seymour, and which talk evidently led to the plot for his assassination, which was so successfully carried into execution before the dawn of the next day.

William Loozman was a young man of 19 years and 9 months of age. His habits were reasonably good generally, and he was not given to indulgence in strong drink, nor is it said that he was intoxicated while in Seymour. He was weak intellectually, like his mother and step-brother, and his glib, boastful talk at Seymour was owing to his defective mental qualities, and not to inebriacy. Mr. Vermilya ordered a handsome casket, upon the lid of which was a plate bearing the inscription, "AT REST," in which the body was placed and brought down to Brownstown on Saturday night and placed in Huber's undertaking establishment. At 10 o'clock on Sunday morning, the casket was borne to the M. E. Church, where services were conducted by Rev. B. W. Cooper, after which the interment took place in the new cemetery. In the last sad rites, Mr. Vermilya did all that the living could do for the dead. The deceased was given honorable, christian burial, and the sad circumstances surrounding his death enlisted the sympathies of the people and caused the church to be well filled upon the occasion of the obsequies.

There is little room for doubt that William Loozman was brutally murdered for the money which the assassins believed he carried upon his person. If such be the case, the murder was most foul, and every possible effort should be brought into requisition to bring the murderers to condign punishment upon the gallows. His assassination in many of its features is a counterpart to the Hugh Moore Woodmansee murder at Seymour some 20 years ago.