

Harry Cross (- 13 Feb 1913)

Martinsburg Statesman Democrat, February 14, 1913, p. 1

Cumbo Laborer Is Found Dead Along Highway Harry Cross Beaten to Death on Way to Camp Man With Bloody Face Arrested at Cumbo Who Says When He Woke Up After Being Beaten by Robbers Found Himself Lying Along Hedgesville Road Beside Body of Dead Man, Who Proves to be Harry Cross

With the back part of his skull crushed as though by some blunt instrument, and his body frozen stiff from lying out on the ground all night, a man by the name of Harry Cross, about 50 years old, a laborer at the construction work at Cumbo, and who came to this section early last fall from Washington, where his wife is said to reside, was found dead early this morning along the Hedgesville road about a mile and a half northwest of town.

There is every indication that the man died from his injuries, hastened perhaps by exposure in the cold night air; but the circumstances of the tragedy have not been obtainable so far. The deed may have been committed in a fight, because if robbery were the motive the murderers missed \$15 that Cross had in his right hip pocket.

Coroner Kline was notified by telephone of the occurrence, and he and Undertaker Wilen went to the scene this morning and brought the dead man to town. Near the body were two caps, one of which belonged to the dead man, presumably, and two whiskey bottles, one empty and the other partly full. Near where the body lay along the road were ashes where a fire had been built. Cross was identified by a B & O brass check with number 6037 in his pocket, later ascertained to be Cross' number by inquiry at the Cumbo office.

Early this morning a man with a bloody face was seen walking along the road, not far from the scene of the tragedy, and going in the direction of Cumbo. Constable Wild was sent after this man and found him at the latter place. The man was brought to town at noon and taken to the King's Daughters Hospital, and afterwards was placed in the lockup as a material witness at the coroner's inquest to be held tomorrow afternoon.

This man is Jere Nolan, who says he came from Philadelphia to Cumbo to work last December, and knew Cross quite well. When seen by a representative of The World this afternoon Nolan told a rather remarkable story. He said that he, along with the other workmen at Cumbo, got paid off yesterday morning and then came to town to get his check cashed and make a few purchases of store goods. He left town about 5 o'clock in the evening with about \$22 in his clothes, he said, on his way to the camp at Cumbo. When he reached the place where Cross' dead body was found he stopped along the road to warm his hands at a fire that two men whom he didn't know had just built. While he was warming his hands there one of the strange men, he says, felled him with a black jack, and after beating him up, robbed him of his money. He described the men as being tall and the other short. One wore a black slouch hat and a black coat. The smaller man wore a soft hat and brown coat.

Nolan says that the blows rained on his head and face knocked him senseless. He revived some time afterward, it then being dark, and found himself lying beside a man. He spoke to the man and when the latter answered he says he recognized the voice of Harry Cross, whom, he says, he hadn't seen there before. Cross told him he had been beaten up. Then Nolan relapsed into unconsciousness and so remained until about daylight this morning when he discovered that Cross was dead and his own,

Nolan's feet frozen from exposure. He then started up the road and says he stopped at a house and told of what had happened to him.

How much of this story of Nolan's is true is, of course, not known; nor what part, if any, he had in the death of Cross. It is known, however, that Cross and three companions were seen by several persons walking along the Hedgesville road in the direction of Cumbo about 5 o'clock yesterday evening on their way from town. Cross was very much intoxicated then, and Mr. W.E. Brannon, from Ganotown, who has a boarding house at Cumbo and does hauling there, says he told the men not to allow Cross to lie down along the road or he might freeze to death. But what happened afterward is not known except that Cross was found dead this morning at the place and in the manner described. Nor will anything be known of the circumstances of the tragedy till Cross' companions yesterday evening are apprehended. Therefore mystery still surrounds the death of a Cumbo workman. Nolan says that Cross and his wife did not live together, as he had gathered from Cross' conversation at various times.