

The story behind the ballad:

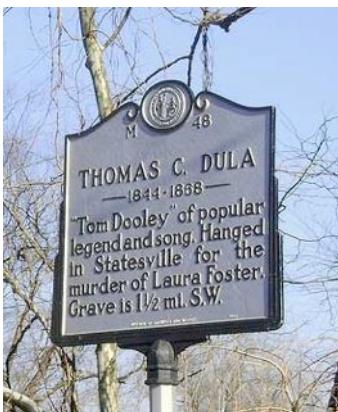
"Tom Dooley" is a North Carolina folk song based on the 1866 murder of a woman named Laura Foster in Wilkes County, North Carolina.



Laura Foster was a beautiful young girl with blue eyes and chestnut hair. Bob Cummings, a Yankee schoolteacher, was courting her. When Laura met Tom Dula (pronounced "Dooley"), a tall handsome Confederate soldier returning from the war, she instantly fell in love. Ann Melton also fell in love with Tom Dula. She was a wealthy, married woman who was even more beautiful than Laura. One day, Laura Forster disappeared. The pregnant girl was found buried in the wood. Somebody had brought her to death with a large knife.

When Tom Dula was blamed, he fled into Tennessee. Was it him who killed his girl-friend or was it Ann Melton who stabbed Laura Foster to death out of jealousy? Dula was hunted with Cummings in the lead.

Colonel Grayson of Tennessee (mentioned in the song as the sheriff) helped the North Carolinians to capture Dula and bring him back to North Carolina. Tom Dula was imprisoned in Wilkesboro's jailhouse. Ann Melton was imprisoned there as well. A witness who could have provided an alibi for Dula was paid by Cummings not to testify. So Tom Dula was found guilty and sentenced to hang. He confessed to the murder and exonerated Ann Melton. Was this a noble gesture from the condemned man on the eve of his execution, saving the woman he loved?



On the gallows Dula was freed from his handcuffs. He raised his right hand to swear. "Gentlemen, do you see this hand? I didn't harm a hair on the girl's head." These were his last words.

Ann Melton became insane. It is said that years later when she died people heard the sizzling of cooking meat and saw a black cat climb the wall as the devil came to take her to hell.

Are you a good detective?

- What could have been the motives of Tom Dula?
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- What could have been the motives of Ann Melton?
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- What could have been the motives of Bob Cummings?
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- Could it have been suicide?
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- Could it have been somebody else who killed Laura Foster?
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chestnut hair: brown hair
Yankee: Union soldier during the Civil War (1861-65)
to court: ask in marriage, flirt
handsome: good looking
the Confederates: the Southern States during the Civil War
wealthy: rich
pregnant: expecting a baby
to bury: put in the earth
to blame: to accuse
to stab: to injure with a knife
to flee, fled, fled: run away
jealous: envious
lead: guide, head
to mention: to notice
to capture: to catch
witness: observer
to testify: to give evidence
to sentence: to condemn
to confess: to admit
to exonerate: to excuse
gesture: signal
to condemn: to sentence
eve: the evening before
gallows, scaffold, hangman's tree
handcuffs: chain, clamp
to swear: to testify
to harm: to hurt
insane: mad
sizzling: a hissing sound when in contact with heat

Tom Dooley, Lyrics:

Throughout history there've been many songs written about the eternal triangle. This next one tells the story of a Mr Grayson, a beautiful woman, and a condemned man named Tom Dooley... When the sun rises tomorrow, Tom Dooley... must hang...

Hang down your head, Tom Dooley
Hang down your head and cry
Hang down your head, Tom Dooley
Poor boy, you're bound to die

I met her on the

There I took

Met her on the mountain

Stabbed her with

Hang down your head, Tom Dooley
Hang down your head and cry
Hang down your head, Tom Dooley
Poor boy, you're bound to die

This time tomorrow

Reckon I'll be

Hadn't a-been for Grayson

I'd a-been in Tennessee

Hang down your head, Tom Dooley
Hang down your head and cry
Hang down your head, Tom Dooley
Poor boy, you're bound to die
Hang down your head, Tom Dooley
Hang down your head and cry
Hang down your head, Tom Dooley
Poor boy, you're bound to die

This time

Reckon where I'll be

Down in some..... valley

Hangin' from a

Hang down your head, Tom Dooley
Hang down your head and cry
Hang down your head, Tom Dooley
Poor boy, you're bound to die
Hang down your head, Tom Dooley
Hang down your head and cry
Hang down your head, Tom Dooley
Poor boy, you're bound to die
Poor boy, you're bound to die
Poor boy you're bound to die
Poor boy, you're bound to die...