



# Hanged by a Dream?: The Facts Behind the Legend

*Perry Young*

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## **Hanged by a Dream?: The Facts Behind the Legend** Perry Young

HANGED BY A DREAM? On a bitterly cold winter's night in January 1881, Joshua Young was disturbed by an incredible dream or vision. A young woman with a broken neck appealed to him for help. He kept trying to sleep but the dream persisted. Next morning, he and a neighbor stopped a funeral cortege that was walking by. When they opened the casket, Joshua was astounded to see the woman's face from his dream. He lifted her body up and her head fell back. Young held the husband and sent for the coroner and sheriff. The woman's husband, Stephen Effler, was tried, convicted and hanged for beating his wife to death. Author Perry Deane Young had heard this story about his grandfather's first cousin from the time he was a child growing up on a farm in the mountains of Western North Carolina. Recently, he went in search of the facts behind the many tall tales and legends. This led him to the trial documents and the murderers own chilling confession written in gory detail the day before he was hanged. Young is the author of nine non-fiction books and two plays. His book, *The Untold Story of Frankie Silver*, tells another true Appalachian story of a woman who cut her husband's head off with an axe. Young found some similarities and many telling differences in the stories. Frankie Silver was hanged because she could not take the stand in her own defense; Stephen Effler was hanged because he did testify and lied. Hundreds of people signed petitions to save Frankie from the gallows; nobody thought Effler was innocent.

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