

Newton Girl Held in Killing of Mattoon Baby

Ruth Auteberry Being Questioned
in Alleged Murder of New Born
Infant at Mattoon, Last April 24

Mattoon, June 29. ¹⁹⁴²—An investigation is being conducted in the death of an infant, a boy, born to Mrs. Ruth Zike here April 24, following the discovery of the child's body, buried in a card board box in the garage at the rear of the Zike home Friday afternoon. The authorities have been given signed confessions of Miss Wilma, 16 year old daughter of Mrs. Zike, and Miss Ruth Auteberry, 19 year old Newton girl, who admitted they had made away with the child at the suggestion and request of his mother.

The two girls stated, according to Howard Clark, deputy coroner, and State's Attorney W. K. Kidwell, that Mrs. Zike had told them that she did not want the child, born early in the afternoon of April 24, and suggested and requested that it be smothered to death. According to Clark, the baby was laid on a bed and covered with blankets, later placed in a cardboard box and then locked in the garage.

The baby, which lived four or five hours, was then buried in a grave about a foot and a half deep beneath the boards of the garage. The body was recovered by authorities late Friday night.

A Coincidence

Mrs. Alice Caton, the county court's west side probation officer, had visited the office of a local physician a few days ago and in some way the Zike family was mentioned. The doctor asked Mrs. Caton how the baby, born to Mrs. Zike, was getting along. Mrs. Caton stated there was no baby born that she knew anything about. The doctor then told Mrs. Caton that Mrs. Zike had paid his office a visit in April for an examination. He ordered her to go home at once and stay there as she was soon to give birth to a child. The baby was born without medical aid, and the chance conversation between Mrs. Caton and the physician brought out the murder of the infant.

Mrs. Caton first got in touch with Deputy Coroner Howard Clark and State's Attorney Kidwell, then made known her information. An investigation of several days revealed the true state of affairs which was followed by the signed confession of the Zike and Auteberry girls.

Question Mrs. Zike

Mrs. Zike, who was taken to the Woman's reformatory at Dwight last week, was visited and questioned late Saturday by Deputy Coroner Clark, State's Attorney Kidwell and Mrs. Caton. It may be decided to return her to Mattoon to appear at the coroner's inquest set to be held here today.

The Zike girl is in the charge of Mrs. Caton and the Auteberry girl is being held in jail to await the findings of the coroner's inquest. Should the facts be borne out as given in the signed confessions it will mark one of the most brutal and cold blooded killings in Coles county's history.

Mrs. Zike, who was arrested on a charge of contributing to the delinquency of her eight children, was found guilty of the charge in the Coles county court. She was sentenced to serve one year at the Woman's reformatory at Dwight by County Judge John T. Kincaid, after he had denied her petition for probation. She had been returned here from Champaign where she was serving a thirty day sentence on a vagrancy charge.

Place Children in Home

The eight children were declared delinquent in a hearing in the Coles county court. Judge Kincaid placed them in care of Mrs. Alice Caton of Mattoon, who found refuge for seven of them in the Cunningham Home, at Urbana. The eighth child, the daughter Wilma, was too old to be granted admittance to the home. She returned to Mattoon and has been under the watchful eyes of Mrs. Caton.

Zike, husband of Mrs. Zike, was recently released from the state penal farm, where he had been serving a year's sentence, imposed in the Coles county court by Judge Kincaid.

The body of the dead child has been placed in a receiving vault in Dodge Grove cemetery to await the result of the inquest to be held today.