

THE POSSIBLE DUALITY OF CLARENCE STORMS

By Michael F. McGraw

Revised: October 15, 2014

The most difficult puzzle to resolve in telling the story of the Plank Road roadhouses was determining if there were two persons named Clarence Storms. Was the Clarence Storms that ran the café at 1200 Wolf St., for a while in 1923, the same Clarence Storms who was shot and killed at the White Rock Inn on the evening of June 14, 1933?

Listed in the first table below are a few important events for the Clarence Storms who was shot and killed at the old Maples roadhouse. He has been labeled as the Auburn Storms since his trail is traceable back to that place. Clarence and his partner, and killer, Harold Stearn, had just renamed the place the White Rock Inn and were in their first week of business.

The trail of the person labeled as the Syracuse Storms was picked up in Syracuse in the 1900 census, where he was 11 years old and living with his mother and siblings.

Date	Description	Comment
1921	<p>Clarence Storms married the former Mrs. William Jones (Ella Baxter), in Auburn, NY. She had married Williams in 1902 or before. In September 1921 Clarence Storms and Helen Baxter got a marriage license in Syracuse [1921-09-17]. Clarence and Helen married about 1921.</p> <p>Harold M. Stearn's wife was Bessie Ball, she was married once before, about 1911, to Elmer Ball. They had separated in about 1914 and never divorced. Bessie was Ella Baxter's sister. She married Harold M. Stearn, who was going by the name Harold M. McBride, on August 13, 1921, in Bay City, Michigan. Helen and Bessie Baxter were sisters originally from Auburn, NY.</p>	<p>According to his wife's testimony Storms was formerly a brakeman working in Auburn, NY. Another reference has him working as a boiler fireman for Mercy Hospital in Auburn. In 1920, in Syracuse, he was a machinist working for a gear company.</p>

1934-05-02 This was the date of the paper where the information appeared.	<p>From Mrs. Storms' testimony: "...her husband's business career – <i>largely a matter of 'keeping restaurants,'</i> as such establishments were known under prohibition – up to May of last year. Then she pictured him as proprietor of the Union Labor Club in S. West st., where he tended bar and waited on customers and she did the cooking."</p> <p>"One night when they closed the place and walked downstairs to the sidewalk, she said, they met her sister and Stearn, here for what was intended to be a visit. They had been living in Chicago, where Stearn was a contractor, but had been compelled by economic conditions to give up their home there. The four, two sisters and their husbands, went to the Storms' home at 320 S. West st., where they lived in crowded quarters until a larger flat could be rented at 334 Seymour st. and the two families installed. Stearn, she said, went into partnership with Storms and rated as co-proprietor of the Union Labor Club."</p>	
May 1933	<p>Storms & Stearn families were living at 320 S. West St. By June they had moved to 334 Seymour St. and were renting a flat from James Corcoran. Corcoran lived in the other flat in the same two family house. The Stearns moved from Chicago to Syracuse in April 1933. [1934-05-02] This was the date of the paper where the information appeared.</p>	<p>Clarence Storms, 47 Harold M. Stearn, 41 Another reference has 422-1/2 S. West St.</p>
1933-06-15	<p>Clarence Storms was <i>shot and killed</i> by his brother-in-law and business partner, Harold M. Stearn, the previous evening. The shooting took place at the White Rock Inn, formerly The Maples, on old Liverpool Road. They had just leased the establishment the week before.</p>	

THE CLARENCE STORMS' TIME LINES

The table below combines the times lines for the Auburn Storms and the Syracuse Storms persons. There are no conflicts in the timeline over 35 years. The few times that a middle initial was used in a newspaper account of Storms' activities it was an "F" or "E." These can be easily mistaken for one another due to the poor quality of some of the newspapers and the low accuracy of name reporting found in these papers. In the three census records where a positive identification of a Clarence Storms was found, there were never two – just one.

In 1929 the Syracuse Storms was operating a restaurant on South West Street. When the trail of the Auburn Storms picked up in Syracuse, he and his wife were operating the Union Labor Club restaurant on South West Street. After that point there is no trail that could be identified as that of the Syracuse Storms. After Clarence Storms' death there were no trails for either man.

Based on all this evidence it would appear that there was only one Clarence Storms. He was living in Syracuse in 1900 and grew up there. He had some early run ins with the law and later ran a grocery and a restaurant, including Pard Orton's place for a little while in 1923. He ran into some trouble and skipped town for a while and then returned. He had some liquor law violation problems in 1929, with a restaurant he was running on South West St and went to Auburn, NY for a while. He left Auburn in 1930 and might have gone to Chicago to work for his brother-in-law, Harold Stearn, for a time. By early 1933 Clarence and his wife Ellen had returned to Syracuse and were running the Union Labor Club on South West St. The Stern couple came to Syracuse from Chicago and moved in with Storms. Both families moved to the larger flat at James Corcoran's house at 334 Seymour St. Storms and Stearn went into business together and leased the Maples and renamed it The White Rock Inn. It is uncertain if Corcoran played any role in that decision. The partnership had problems and this led to Stearn shooting and killing Storms on the evening of June 14, 1933.

THE TWO CLARENCE STORMS TIME LINES

Date	Auburn Storms	Syracuse Storms
1900 Census	This Clarence Storms not found in this census.	Clarence Storms, 11, living with mother and siblings at 202 Fabius St.
1900-08-08		Clarence Storms appears in court for stealing a bicycle.
1907-01-09		17-year old Clarence Storms of Fabius St. was arrested for assaulting a police officer.
1908-04-15		Clarence Storms fined \$25 for 3 rd degree assault.
1909	Helen Baxter received a suspended sentence in Auburn.	
1910 Census	Clarence F. Storms (23) was a Corporal in the US Army stationed in Piscataway, Prince Georges County, MD.	The Syracuse Storms would have been 20 or 21 at this time.
1910-08-10	Helen Baxter served 90 days in Onondaga penitentiary after an intoxication conviction.	
1914-02-02		Earl W. Storms, of 410 Gifford St., died a day after illness struck him. His brother was Clarence Storms.
1914-11-15	Helen Baxter paid a fine in Auburn after an intoxication conviction.	

1920 Census	Clarence F. and Helen Storms (his wife) were living at 303 Tully St. Clarence was a machinist at a gear factory. Clarence was 30 and Helen was 33.	This Clarence wasn't found in the census but he would have been 31, based on his 1900 census age.
1921-09-17	Clarence Storms, 250 Holland St. and Helen Baxter of 706(?) South West St. obtained a marriage license.	
1922-11-18		Storms of 231 Granger St., arrested.
1923-04-30		Storms, of 231 Granger St., arrested for possession of a bottle of liquor.
1923-05-11		Clarence Storms, of Syracuse, was arrested in Auburn for driving a car while intoxicated.
1923-06-09		Storms fined \$250 and placed on probation for DWI charge.
1923-07-13		Clarence Storms, proprietor of a café at 1200 Wolf St., was arraigned on charges of violating the Volstead Act.
1924-02-05		Storms, proprietor of a grocery store at 308 East Adams St., was arrested for a liquor violation.
1924-07-10		Storms skipped town.
1926-04-27		Bail jumper Clarence E. Storms , former grocer, caught on trolley in Syracuse. According to Storms he went to Detroit and worked there until two weeks prior to this date when he returned to Syracuse and was subsequently recaptured.
1928-10-03		Storms, of 524 S. West St., arrested for possession of 5 gallons of liquor.
1929-01-04		Storms denied he lived at 524 S. West St. and denies any knowledge of the liquor found there.
1929-01-16		Storms of S. West St was the proprietor of a restaurant. He was suspected of being a hit and run driver.
1929-03-16		Storms asked for dismissal of charges against him.
1929 - 1930	To make the events work together Storms needs to have been living in Auburn during this time. The paper [1933-06-15] said that he had lived on State Street and worked as a boiler fireman at Mercy Hospital during this time.	

1930	<p>Storms left Auburn.</p> <p>1933-06-15 – Auburn Citizen Advertiser. “for some time he [Clarence Storms] was a resident of Auburn. He left this city [Auburn] about three years ago.”</p> <p>Maybe this was when he went to Chicago.</p>	
1929-03 thru 1932	<p>No mention of a Clarence Storms in any Syracuse or Auburn newspapers.</p> <p>During 1929 – 1931, Bessie Stearn said that she and Harold lived in Chicago. Helen Storms said that her late husband, Clarence Storms, had worked for Stearn at one time. Somewhere in this time period would have been good time for the Storms to be in Chicago.</p>	
1933-04	Harold M Stearn and wife Bessie moved from Chicago to Syracuse.	
1933-05-XX	<p>Storms and Stearn families lived together at 422-1/2 S. West St. They then moved to 334 Seymour St where James Corcoran rented them a flat in his two-family house.</p> <p>]1934-05-02[This reference has the residence at 320 S. West St.</p>	
1933-06-14	Clarence Storms was shot and killed by brother in law, Harold M. Stearn. They were partners in the White Rock Inn, formerly The Maples, on old Liverpool Road.	
1934-01-12	In an end of the year round up of events The Auburn Citizen listed the murder of Clarence Storms. He was formerly employed as a boiler fireman at Mercy Hospital.	
1936	No more mention of Clarence Storms in newspapers after 1935.	

Clarence Storms not found in 1892, 1905, 1915, 1925 or 1930 census records.

THE STORMS BROTHERS? IS THERE A FAMILY RESEMBLANCE?

The Syracuse Journal, Syracuse, NY,
Thursday, June 15, 1933



CLARENCE STORMS.

The Syracuse Daily Journal, Syracuse, NY,
Monday, February 2, 1914

IS DEAD AFTER DAY'S ILLNESS



EARL W. STORMS.

The Clarence Storms on the left is the man who was shot and killed at the White Rock Inn on the evening of June 14, 1933. He has been called the Auburn Storms man. The Earl Storms on the right has been identified as the bother of the man that has been referred to as the Syracuse Storms. In Earl's 1914 obit a Clarence Storms was listed as one of his surviving brothers.