

# The Odd Suicide of Jacob Switzer

June 26, 1899

## Three sources:

A: *Three Fatalities*, The Syracuse Evening Herald, Syracuse, NY, June 26, 1899

B: *Switzer Committed Suicide*, Syracuse Evening Telegram, Syracuse, NY, June 26, 1899.

C: *Claimed That Illness of Switzer Caused Him to Commit Suicide*, The Syracuse Daily Standard, Syracuse, NY, June 27, 1899.

There were varying descriptions as to the position of the body when it was found. Source B and C are in agreement with each other and are consistent with a possible suicide. Source A describes someone who just stood next to the barrel and then held his own head under water.

A	B	C
“She [his wife] was startled when she stepped to the rear of the house and discovered him <u>in a leaning posture</u> , his head being completely submerged in a barrel of water.”	“He was found <u>head first in the barrel</u> at his home on the Cicero plank road by his wife.”	“Jacob Switzer, ... , was found dead early yesterday morning with <u>his legs protruding from a cistern barrel</u> partly filled with water.”

Source “A” was the longest and the most detailed. This source recorded the thoughts of the deceased’s friends and relatives. These folks were “inclined to believe that death was accidental, for if he wanted to commit suicide he could have drowned himself in a watering trough in front of the building, or in the creek [Ley Creek], which runs within 100 feet of the place, and the water in which is four deep in many places.”

9 PM - Jabob Switzer went to bed

3 AM - Mrs. Switzer was awake and she said that “her husband was then in bed.”

4 AM - Mrs. Switzer was awoken by two men knocking on her door. When she discovered that they just wanted something to drink (probably liquor, since there was a water trough out front) she chased them away.

“Upon returning to her room she found that her husband was gone and she started to search for him.”

Mrs. Switzer Found the Body – When Did She Start Searching?

A	B	C
4 AM – Mrs. Switzer chases away two men who knocked on her door. “Upon returning to her room she found that her husband was gone and <u>she started to search for him</u> . She was startled when she stepped to the rear of the house and discovered him in a leaning posture, his head being completely submerged in a barrel of water.”	“He was found <u>head first in the barrel</u> at his home on the Cicero plank road by his wife.”.	“Mr. Switzer arose early in the morning and was not seen again until he was found by his wife about ? o’clock.”
Mrs. Switzer started looking for him right away.	There is no mention of when the search began	Sounds like no one looked for Switzer for a while

Hypothesis - Jacob woke up when he heard his wife chasing away the two men at the front door and came down stairs. Without passing his wife he made his way outside and got into an argument with the two men. Angered and probably a little drunk they drowned him in his own rain barrel by sticking his head in the water and holding it there until he died. They then left him there in the “leaning posture” in which his wife later found him.

He must have come out the back and yelled at them from the backyard. If he went out the front his wife would have seen him and the men would have drowned him in the more convenient watering trough that was in the front of the building. The position in which Mrs. Switzer found her husband, as described in Source A, makes one think of an “Assisted Suicide.”

But in the end, coroner Weaver ruled that Mr. Switzer had accidentally fallen into the barrel. Or did he?

A	B	C
“Coroner Weaver was called and after investigating the case he issued a certificate that death was due to drowning.”	“Coroner Weaver was notified, but decided that the case was one of clear suicide.”	“Corner Weaver was notified. On investigation he decided that an inquest would be unnecessary as it seemed to him a clear case of suicide.”