

# THE COLLAMER TRAGEDIES

The Syracuse Journal, Syracuse, NY, Tuesday, December 27, 1870

## FURTHER DETAILS OF THE MURDER OF TALLMAN , AND OF THE SUICIDE OF THE MURDERER, GARRETT.

In Saturday's issue of the Journal we gave the main particulars of the terrible tragedy at Collamer on Friday last. In addition to the facts given then, our reporter, who has visited the scene of the murder and suicide, learned the following additional particulars:-

### THE SCENE OF THE CRIME

The locality of the tragedy is the town of DeWitt, one south of Collamer post office, on the main road. The house of James C. Tallman is a large two-story frame structure with wings. This building is surrounded by a number of barns and other buildings on the west, distant about four rods from the house. A narrow lane connects the barn yard with the house. Lorenzo D. Garrett lived in a story-and-a half frame house, situated about sixty rods east of Tallman's house. A good barn and other buildings surrounded his house. The farm on which Garrett lived joined one of fifty acres belonging to Tallman. Both parties to the tragedy were industrious, hard-working men, and were generally respected by the people of that vicinity. On arriving at the house of Tallman, the

### PLACE OF THE MURDER

was first visited. The barn-yard, in which Tallman was killed, is about six by twelve rods in extent, and fenced in on three sides, the rear end being enclosed by barns and stables. Near the south-west corner of the

yard and within ten or twelve feet of the front and west fences, was found, on scraping away the snow, a pool of blood, which marked the exact spot where the murder was committed. Nothing but an inch square picket of pins and some bloody corn stalks were to be seen at this point. Entering the house, which was partially filled with people, the room containing the body of Tallman was visited. The body of the

### MURDERED MAN

was lying on a couch, where it was placed, on being removed to the house. The body was clothed in the ordinary every-day apparel of the deceased. A pair of buckskin mittens were still upon the hands, and the hay seed on his clothing was evidence of his having recently fed his stock. A ghastly wound was in the back of the head, the skull having, been crushed in by a blow of an implement, supposed to be an axe. The skull was forced in for about four inches in length and an inch in width. Another wound of a similar shape, extended from that in the back of the head, to the jaw, on the right side. The jaw is broken at the upper half. The skull on the right side was broken into small pieces, making a ghastly wound from which the brain was exuding. From the nature of the wound it is probable that death ensued upon the receipt of the first blow.

### THE FAMILY OF TALLMAN

consisted of himself, wife and one son; his only daughter being the wife of Garrett, to whom she was married about fourteen years ago. Tallman lived in a comfortable style. The two families have for some time been involved in quarrels, proceeding mainly from differences about the property of Garrett.

From Mrs. Tallman the following version of the manner of

#### THE MURDER

was learned: Her attention was first attracted by the cry of ‘murder’ by her husband. She stepped to the kitchen door, and as she emerged from the door, the cry was repeated, and looking in the direction from which the sound came, she saw Garrett standing near her husband with his right arm raised, and holding in his hand a short piece of wood with steel on the end; but whether it was an ax or a hammer she could not say. She saw Garrett strike her husband on the head a blow, which felled him to the earth, when Garrett struck him again. Remembering a warning received in the earlier part of the day – her daughter having been at the house in the forenoon and told her parents to be on their guard, as Garrett was acting strangely, and had made threats of killing them – she got a revolver and started to the rescue of her husband. On nearing Garrett, she presented the pistol, with the intention of shooting him: she pulled the trigger, but the pistol failed to go off. Garrett, on seeing her, started towards her, when she again pointed the pistol toward him. Garrett turned, and started for the barn-yard gate, when she pulled the trigger again, without any discharge.

Subsequent examinations showed that in her hurry and excitement she had only half cocked the weapon. Garrett, on reaching the gate, jumped over it and proceeded leisurely toward his own house. The cries of Mrs. Tallman, on discovering that her husband was dead, attracted the attention of Messrs. George Powlesland, Jacob Landers and J.F. Houghton, who were passing along the road. They immediately went to the spot, and learned of the murder. The body of Mr. Tallman was removed to the house, and search was immediately made for

#### THE MURDERER

On inquiry at Garrett’s house, as to his whereabouts, his wife said that she saw him come into the gate and go toward the barn a short time before. Those in search of the murderer proceeded thither, and after calling and receiving no answer, further search was made, which ended in the finding, by Messrs. P.B. Baker and Alexander Richards, of Garrett’s body hanging by a rope about the neck, from a cross-beam over the floor of the barn. A wagon was brought into requisition, from which the rope was reached and cut and the body lowered. Life was found to be extinct, and the body was conveyed to the house and placed in a bed, where it was left to await the action of the coroner.

#### SCENE AT GARRETT’S HOUSE

When our reporter left Tallman’s house to go to Garrett’s, he was informed that the key to the house was with Mrs. Garrett, who was at Tallman’s. Obtaining the key, under promise of “locking all up safe,” the house of Garrett was visited. On opening the door nothing was to be seen intimating the

presence of death. There was no living person in the house, but on looking in several rooms, the body of the murderer and suicide was found, lying in a bedroom on a bed, in the same condition in which it was cut down. The clothing and boots were still upon the corpse, and beside it lay the piece of rope, the knot in which had been so tightly drawn that it was necessary to cut that portion which encircled the neck. The rope is of jute, three-quarters inch size.

#### THE THEORY OF THE SUICIDE

is that on entering the barn, Garrett climbed to one of the main beams or girders, along which he crawled several feet, and sitting down upon the beam tied the rope about his neck and to the cross beam, allowing slack sufficient for a fall of five or six feet, and then jumped of the beam. From the discolored appearance of the face of Garrett, it is probable that death ensued from suffocation, as his neck was not broken. The body was still warm when cut down.

#### CORONER'S INQUEST

Coroner Didama held an inquest on the two [*sic*] bodies on Saturday afternoon, and verdicts were rendered in accordance with the facts.

#### AN INDIFFERENT WIDOW

The wife of Garrett, during the stay of our reporter, exhibited the utmost indifference at the loss of her husband, and there was no change in her manner up to the removal of the body by the undertaker on Sunday.

#### FUNERALS.

The funeral of Tallman took place on Sunday from the family residence. The

funeral of Garrett took place this (Tuesday) morning, from his father's residence, at Green Point. The

#### CAUSE OF THE MURDER

was the bitter personal feud which had grown up from the supposition, by Garrett, that his wife, at the connivance and instigation of her parents, was determined to get possession of his property. During the rebellion, Garrett enlisted in the Second N. Y. Cavalry, in which he served for nearly a year and until the end of the rebellion. During his absence, his wife and two children boarded at her father's, for which her father presented a bill of \$600 or \$700. Whether this bill was settled, we do not know. About two years ago, a quarrel arose between Garrett and his wife, during which she claimed he was insane and that she would sue for a divorce. The father siding with the daughter, Garrett was arrested, at their instigation, as an insane man, and application made that a guardian be appointed over him. A commission, consisting of Dr. Bennett, Peter Mosher and A. W. Wilkin, pronounced Garrett insane, and about eighteen months ago, his wife succeeded in obtaining a title deed of his farm of 84 acres. Since that time, frequent quarrels have taken place between the members of the two families. Garrett trying to get back the title to his property, but without success, some ten months since, Mrs. Tallman let Garrett have two hundred dollars, taking a chattel mortgage on his personal property as security therefor. The foreclosure of this mortgage by Tallman, who had obtained it from his wife, and the taking of one of Garrett's horses, led to a new quarrel between the two men. This

transaction had since been arranged between them, Garrett getting his horse back, but it would seem that the bitter feeling engendered by this action, and others of a like nature, has continued to rankle in Garrett's breast and has finally culminated in a terrible revenge.

#### INCIDENTS.

From reports current in the vicinity, it would seem that Garrett believed that he was to be stripped of all his property, and then turned adrift to shift for himself, and that he saw no way to avoid this result but to rid himself of the instigators of the plot, and it is probable that he intended to destroy both Tallman and his wife, but was intimidated from killing the latter by the sight of the revolver in her hand. Garrett bore the reputation in the vicinity where he lived of being a hard-working, industrious, temperate man.

Not only were quarrels frequent between Garrett and his wife's parents, but they were

of frequent occurrences between his wife and her parents, all arising from the same cause.

Garrett left two children, a boy and a girl.

From the conversations carried on at the scene of the crime, it is evident that the sympathies of all the community are with Garrett's side of the case.

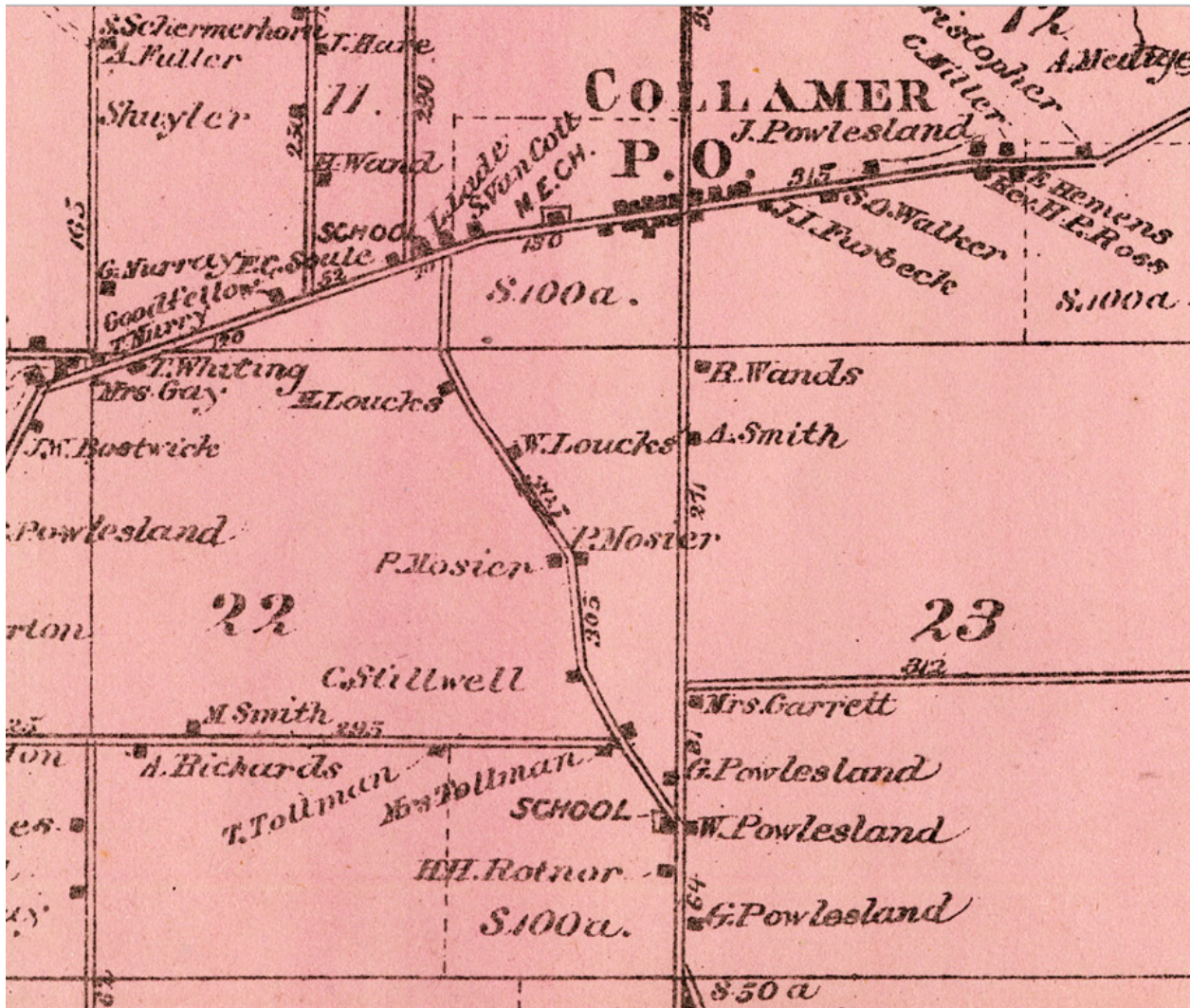
As yet no traces of the weapon with which Garrett crushed in the skull of Tallman have been found. It is supposed that it was a hatchet or small ax. The son of Garrett says he saw his father put a hammer in his side coat pocket, previous to his going to Tallman's. He may have thrown the weapon into one of the lots by the roadside, where it is covered with snow; or it may be hidden in the hay in his barn.

The scene of these terrible occurrences is within a mile and a half of the Johnson farm, where Cary committed murder in April.

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#### Corrections & Additions:

The parents of Lorenzo R. Garrett were Jonathan and Betsey Garrett of the town of Salina. Their farm was on Malloy Road (sometimes known as Richmond Road) two farms west of Patrick Malloy's farm. The family did not live in Greenpoint as stated in the article – that was James Garrett family, of Buckley Road, just north of 7<sup>th</sup> North Street, descended from the Garrett family of Pompey, NY.



1874 Map from the Onondaga County Map Atlas, showing the northwest section of the town of DeWitt. Near the “v” are the farms of the widows Mrs. Tallman and Mrs. Garrett.