

THE SHOOTING OF MICHAEL GLEASON

Sunday, April 28, 1872

OVERVIEW

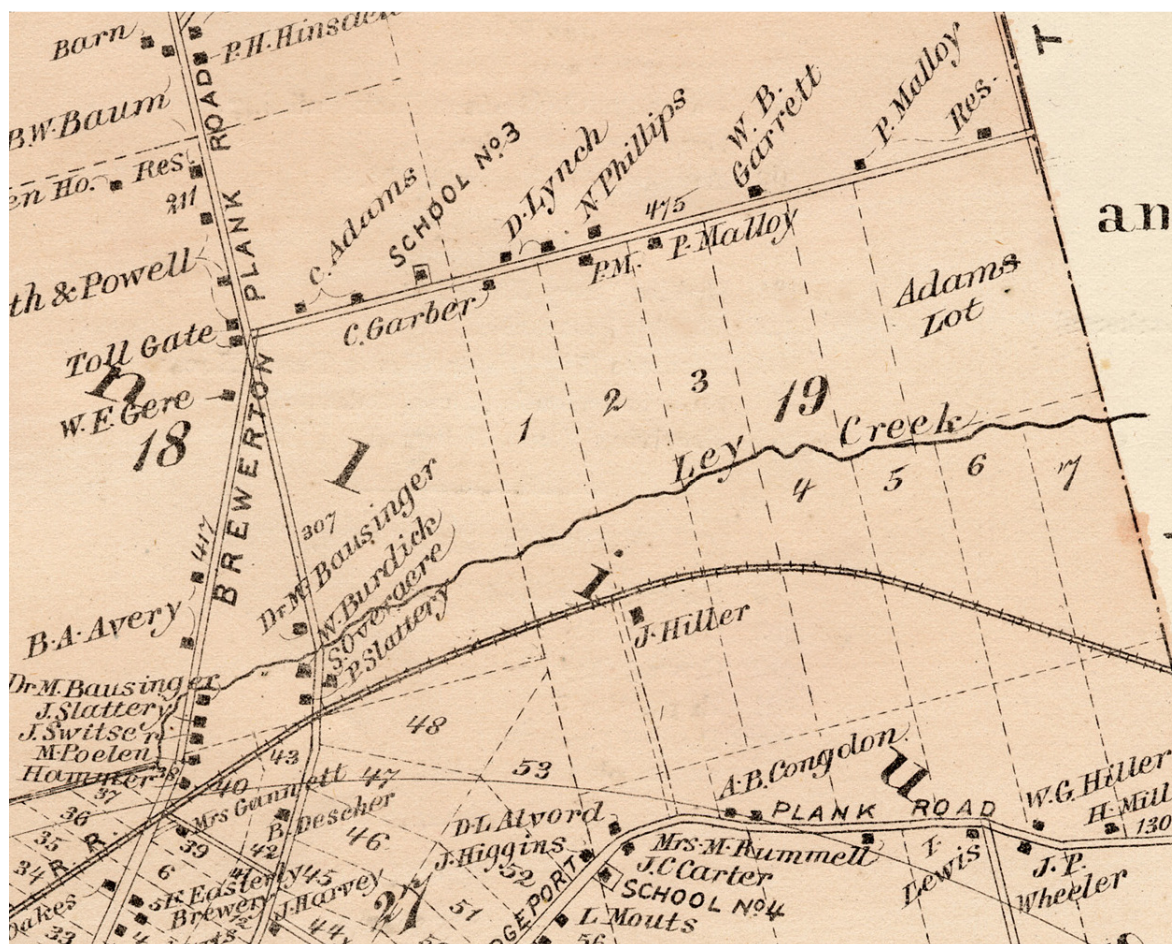
Many of the crime and accident reports found in the old newspaper archives are very short, a little vague and sometimes the names and locations are just wrong. A few of the short ones are accurate but they contain just the basic facts. Those articles are the kind that provide facts and can be used in a story to document an event, but they come across as very dry. Now, every once in a while there comes along one of those long, multi-column and sometimes even one of those continued on a second page type of articles. In those cases the reporter has outdone himself and interviewed multiple persons, dug up all the available facts and folded it into an article with a good deal of references to geography and other landmarks. Those articles are begging to be transcribed in all their detail. The older ones and some with poor reproduction quality absolutely need to be transcribed. As an added bonus, these long articles almost always contain some nuggets that can help resolve other mysteries and sometimes create new mysteries.

What follows is a short overview of the events that transpired that Sunday morning on April 28, 1872, on the Malloy farm. The details are in the transcribed newspaper articles. William Garrett, town of Salina Game Constable, while at Michael Gleason's farm, was notified by neighbors that men were hunting nearby, in violation of the "No hunting on Sunday" law. The hunters were on the Malloy farm, next door to Garrett's place on Malloy Road. Garrett went in search of the hunters and Gleason and Garrett's hired man Moore accompanied him as he set off for the ridge where the hunters were last seen. They catch up with the hunters and Gleason wants to take them to a Justice of the Peace and they resist. The hunters are armed while Garrett and his "posse" are unarmed. Garrett goes after Roch, Gleason tries to subdue Sterzer and Moore goes for help. Gleason grabbed the barrel of Sterzer's shotgun and during the struggle it went off wounding Gleason in the right side. Sterzer then joined Roch who was trying to get away from Garrett. Roch and Sterzer beat up Garrett and made their escape with the severely wounded Garrett in pursuit. They ran in a southwesterly direction, heading for the city. The pair went by the Alvord farm on the Bridgeport Plank Road where Garrett sought help. Roch was caught but Sterzer escaped only to turn himself in to police later that day. The short and the sweet of it was Garrett recovers, Gleason dies and Sterzer is tried and found not guilty.

In the case of the Garrett-Gleason affair there are two long articles: one from The Syracuse Daily Journal and the other from the Syracuse Daily Courier. The accounts differ on some details and they even have different spellings of the surnames of the two hunters. The Courier identifies the hunters as George Stetsher and Louis Raueke while the Journal identifies them as George Sterzer and Louis Roch. The Journal was the one that got the names correct. The Journal has Sterzer

working for the Haberlee Brewing company (old Congress beer) and the Courier has him working for C. C. Bradley and company.

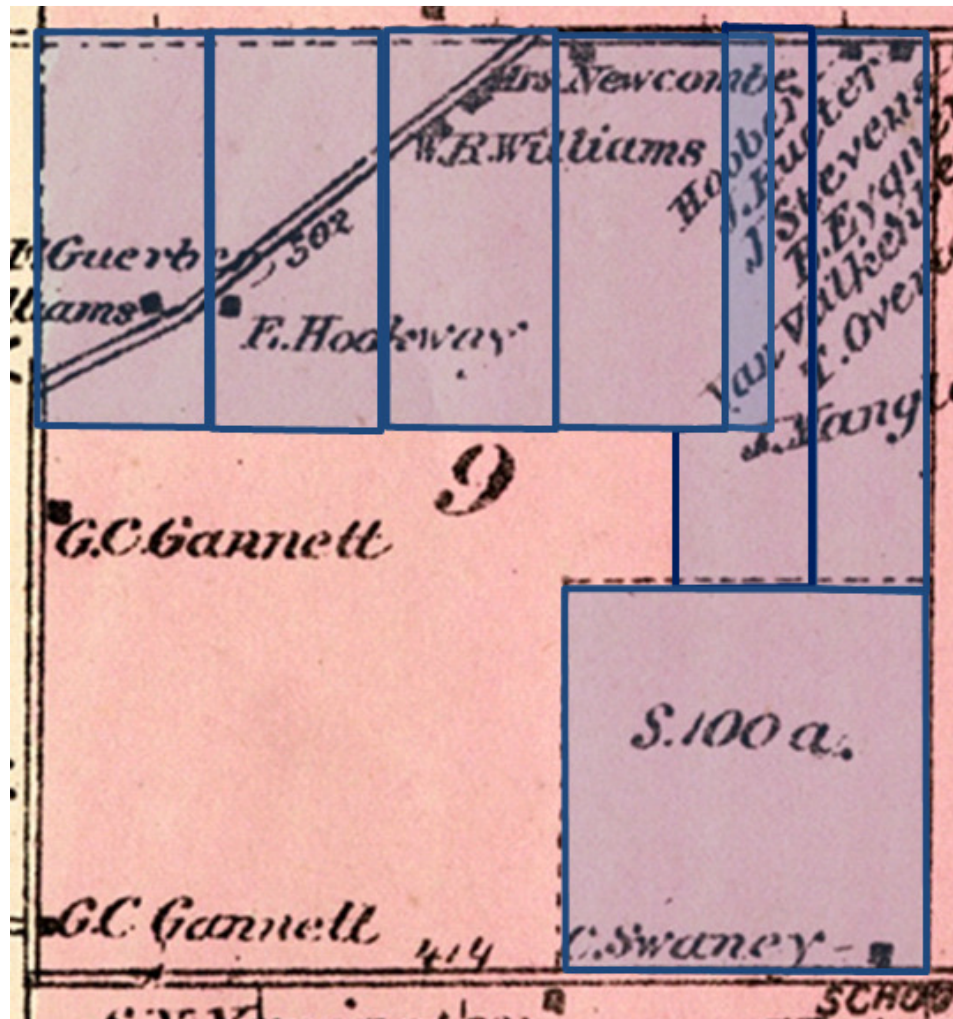
The primary events mentioned in the newspaper articles describing the 1872 affair can be identified on the 1874 map of the town of Salina shown below.



This 1874 map shows Malloy Road intersecting the Brewerton (Cicero) Plank Road at the 1st toll gate. The old State Road runs north, out of the village of Salina, and also intersects the other two roads at the same toll gate. William Garrett's farm can be seen as the third from the right along Malloy Road. The railroad tracks were constructed in 1874, just in time to make it on the map, however, they were not there when the Gleason shooting took place in October 1872. Along the bottom of the map is seen the Bridgeport Plank Road. In one of the articles it was mistakenly identified as the Brewerton Plank Road, today it is known as Court Street. As shown by the numbering of the lots, the properties ran from Malloy Road down to Court Street, it was wide open farm land with no Thruways or railroad tracks to break up the landscape. Being farm land there were no trees to obscure the view, farmers on Malloy Road could see the barns of the farmers along the Bridgeport Plank Road. Ley Creek, one of the ancient landmarks in the area, which was shallow and had a slow current, could be easily forded in places, if one didn't mind

getting a little wet. There also might have been some impromptu crossing devices in place that were never recorded on the official maps of the area.

The location of Michael Gleason farm could be identified. Gleason wasn't found in the 1870 census but William Garrett was found. Since Gleason died in 1872 his family might have moved off the farm by the time of the 1880.



This is a portion of another map from the 1874 Onondaga County Atlas. The red area shows the northwest corner of the Town of DeWitt where it abuts the Town of Cicero on the north and the Town of Salina on the west. The road entering between the “T” and “N” in “Salina” is Malloy Road, which jogs south and then continues east where it intersects Thompson Road with Ley Creek flowing diagonally just north of the intersection. Townline Road runs north along the Salina – DeWitt township boundary and then makes a 45° turn to the northeast followed by another 45° turn to the east and runs parallel through an intersection with Thompson Road and then ends just past the farm of P. Mangle. Michael Gleason’s farm was the narrow rectangle that is a slightly bluer shade than the other properties.

On the next page is an excerpt from the 1870 census from the town of DeWitt. The Millers and Rein are seen to be neighbors of Michael Gleason in that census. This area today is in the northeast corner of Hancock International Airport in the section that was Air Force housing for the personnel running the SAGE building.

559	568	Miller George	43	m	w
		— Catharine	37	f	w
		— William	10	m	w
		— Mary	8	f	w
		— Samantha	7	f	w
		— Rosa	4	f	w
560					
561	569	Miller Samuel	71	m	w
		— Rachel	68	f	w
562	570	Rein Frank	39	m	w
		— Mary	35	f	w
		— John	14	m	w
		— Frank	12	m	w
		— Mary	9	f	w
		— Josephine	7	f	w
		— William	4	m	w
563	571	Gleason Michael	28	m	w
		— Sarah	29	f	w
		— Michael	4	m	w
		— Michael	70	m	w
564	572	Burnings Daniel	35	m	w
		— Julia	34	f	w
		— Eugene	15	m	w
		— Jeremiah	10	m	w
		— Julia A.	8	f	w
565	573	Synch Mary	50	f	w
		— Cornelius	23	m	w
		— E.	15	m	w

1870 NY Onondaga DeWitt – Michael Gleason – M593-1060146A

Michael Gleason and his wife Sarah had a four year old son, Michael. The 70-year old Michael Gleason, who was living with the family, was probably Michael's father. Everyone but the youngest Michael had been born in Ireland. At the time of the 1860 census, Michael and Sarah might not have been married, or might have still been in Ireland. No evidence was found of them

in New York in 1860. By 1880 the elder Michael would have been 80 and since he wasn't found in the NY census it can be assumed he had passed away. Sarah might have remarried but no 39 year old Sarah, with a 14-year old son named Michael, were found in the NY 1880 census.

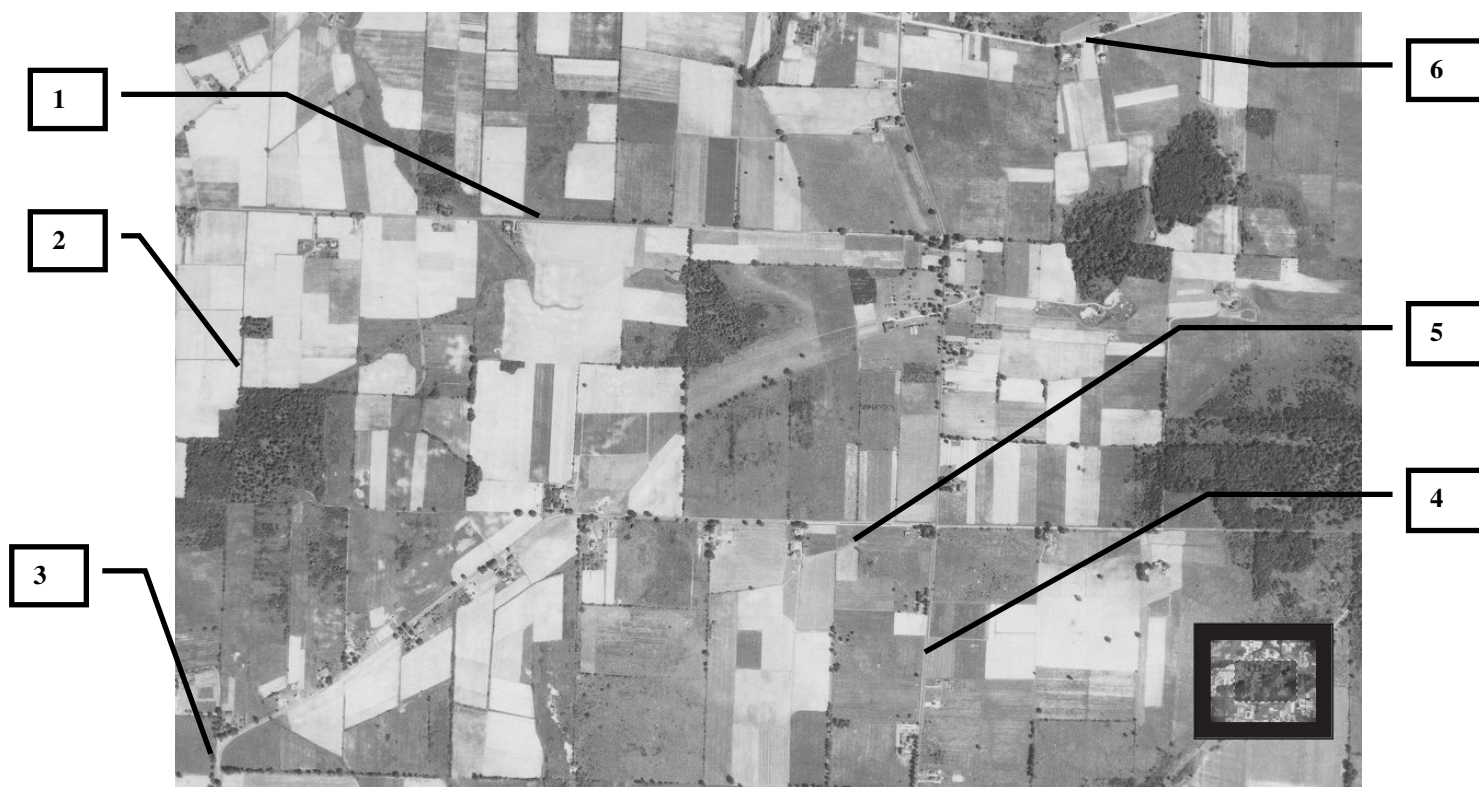


1898 USGS map showing the boundary between the town of Salina and the town of DeWitt

1. Approx location of Gleason farm	5. Higgins & Alvord farms	9. Thompson Road
2. Malloy farm (Ridge)	6. Bridgeport plank road (Court St)	
3. Garrett farm	7. Barton Corners (GM Circle)	
4. Malloy Road	8. Malloy Road	

Shown above is an 1898 USGS map that references survey data from 1893. The buildings and structures are represented by little squares and show the approximate location of the structures but most of them are not labeled with the names of the owners. The purpose here is to reference the elevation contours and to apply the information to the Gleason shooting. The contour interval is 20 feet and most of Malloy Road is relatively flat, at an elevation between 400 and 420 feet above sea level. The elevation of Ley Creek, from another source, was 374 feet. Across the creek, near the Alvord and Higgins farms (mentioned in the articles) the elevation is over 440 feet, so the Bridgeport Plank Road, in this area, is about 20-30 feet higher in elevation compared to the Malloy Road. In the articles it described the party of Garrett, Gleason and Moore traveling from the Gleason farm, heading south, heading toward the Malloy farm and continuing across Ley Creek toward the Alvord farm on the Bridgeport Plank Road.

THE FORMER LOCATION OF MICHAEL GLEASON'S FARM IN 1938



NYS Aerial Photographs – ARX-27-71 July 5, 1938. The area shown is where Hancock International Airport is located today. Townline Road on lower left, East Molloy Road running east and west just out of picture on the bottom. Thompson Road is running up the middle and Taft Road running east and west along the top of the picture.

1. Town of Cicero & DeWitt border	4. Thompson Road
2. Town of Salina & DeWitt border	5. Approximate area of Gleason farm in 1872
3. Townline Road	6. Taft Settlement Road



This composite show the 1938 aerial photo superimposed upon a modern map of the area. All of the area covered by the photo is within the boundaries of Hancock International Airport today. In the areas not covered with runways or other service roads some of the farmers old crops would sprout up in the spring. Thompson Road had been diverted to the east so that it passed around the end of the runway but the old Thompson Road can still be seen today.

WILLIAM GARRETT'S HOME TODAY



The former William B. Garrett homestead on E. Molloy Road in 2007.