

The Rooneys of County Down

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Introduction

During the years following the Civil War the northern states experienced a period of rapid inflation. The prices of land rose to values undreamed of in those long ago pre-war days of 1860. During the war, Edmond McGraw and his son Michael had been farming a small 60 acre plot of land on Morgan Hill among their fellow Irish immigrants in the town of Cuyler, Cortland Co., New York.

Cuyler had been carved out of the eastern end of the town of Truxton in 1858 in much the same manner as the formerly larger town of Truxton had been carved out of the southern portion of the town of Fabius when Cortland County was formed out of Onondaga County in 1808. The evidence of these divisions is still visible in the lot numbers originally assigned when the Military Tract was divided among the veterans of the Revolutionary War. The numbering of the 100 lots begins in northwest corner of Fabius and reaches 50 at the southeastern corner of the township with the lot count continuing uninterrupted on through to 100 with the second 50 lots being shared by the southern towns of Truxton and Cuyler.

At the end of the conflict Edmond and Mary (Ryan) McGraw's youngest son John returned to their Morgan Hill farm after completing his service in the Army. Before his enlistment at Fabius, NY in 1862 John had been working on the Patrick Gleason farm at the northern end of Morgan Hill. With the family back together and with the prices of land rising, Edmond, Michael and John banded together and purchased 225 acres on Labrador Hill in the northwestern corner of the adjacent town of Truxton. Although the new residence was on the northern portion of Kettlebail Road in the town of Truxton it was closer to the Village of Tully which was only 2 miles to the northwest on the Truxton-Tully Rd (West Hill road).

The early years on Labrador Hill went well despite the fact that the McGraw family had borrowed \$10,000 from Edward Miller of Tully to cover the purchase price of their new farm. At some point, Edmond's wife's nephew Thomas Sheahan was taken in as a partner. This might have been a sign that the McGraws were having trouble making the payments on the ten year loan that would have had an annual payment of about \$1000 per year. In 1873 Edmond had taken another loan from Edward Miller for \$650 on his old property back in Cuyler on Lot 76 subdivision 2. They were never able to make the payments on this second loan and Edward Miller foreclosed on the Cuyler property and gained ownership after a public auction on the steps of the Cortland County Courthouse on April 28, 1874. It was downhill from there for the McGraws and Sheahans and by August, 1874 Edward Miller was the owner of the Kettlebail Rd property on Truxton lot 51 and 52 after a second foreclosure.

The events of 1874 were precipitated by the Panic of 1873 but there is evidence that the family finances were in trouble before that fatal month of September 1873 when the stock market crashed. The family scattered as they tried to find other work. John McGraw had married Ellen Comerford (a Morgan Hill neighbor) in 1870 and had two small children: Mary (1871) and John J. McGraw (1873) and went to work for the railroad. For a while he lived on a very small farm on Shackham Road in the town of Truxton with his parents Edmund and Mary McGraw. By the time of the 1880 census Michael McGraw was still single and was living and working on the Miles farm on Mile High Road on the Tully side of the Tully-Fabius town border.

Alice Rooney

It was at this point that young Alice Rooney came into Michael McGraw's life. In the summer of 1881 Michael was 38 years old. As a student long ago at the Bardeen School just north of Kenney Settlement he had impressed others with his mathematical abilities. However, here he was, years later, recovering from a farm foreclosure, and working as a hired hand on someone else's farm. Not much to show for a life of hard work, but his luck was about to change. Alice Rooney, a 16 year old from Co. Down, Ireland was on her way to America and needed someone to meet her in Albany, NY.

According to family tradition Michael W. McGraw, my g-grandfather, and his friend Orson Waters had traveled to Albany, New York to meet Alice Rooney's boat when it arrived from Ireland. The original story had Alice and her older sister Mary coming to America together but Mary now appears to have arrived several years later in 1888. The two sisters version of the story had always presented a problem for me.

Orson had been a widower since July 12, 1872 when his first wife, Margaret Comerford Waters died. He remarried sometime in 1879 and his second wife, Lucy Andrews Waters, herself a widow with three children, gave birth to their first child together in February 1880. How would a newly married man with three children of his own, three step children and a new infant manage to travel to Albany with a single guy to escort two single young Irish girls back to Onondaga County? This Lucy would have to have been the world's most tolerant wife to let her new husband of less than two years go on that 19th century road trip with Michael McGraw. The situation changes dramatically with Alice traveling alone, now Orson is seen as more of a chaperone

According to Lucy Waters Sprague, Orson Waters' granddaughter, the Waters were protestant and very anti-Catholic. However, they kept marrying Irish Catholic girls. Michael McGraw and Orson Waters were living almost two towns apart. Michael was living on the James Miles farm on the Tully – Fabius town line just north of the present Route 80. Orson Waters had a farm on the top of Arab Hill that is presently in the Highland Forest County Park that was close to the Fabius – DeRuyter town line and about two miles south of the present Route 80. The relationship between the families in the 1880s and again later was by way of marriage. Michael's brother John had married Ellen Comerford, the sister of Orson's first wife Margaret Comerford. All had lived as neighbors on Morgan Hill in Cuyler at one time. Later, Orson's son Levi would marry Michael and Alice's eldest daughter Mayme Isobelle McGraw.

The tradition also says that Michael was sent to Albany by relatives to pick up Alice. It is fairly certain that the McGraws and the Waters were not related to the Rooneys. Therefore, perhaps it was the Miles family where Michael McGraw was working in 1881 that were the Rooney relatives. Since Michael was working for James Miles his trip to Albany would have needed Miles approval to be away from his job for a few days. The most logical explanation would be that there was a connection between the Miles and Rooney families. Michael would probably want to be paid for those days he was away and why would Miles pay him if this wasn't one of his relatives or friends that Michael was meeting in Albany.

In the Griffith's Valuation from County Down (1863-1864) there is a James Rooney living in the parish of Kilkeel in the townland of Tullyframe. That was the townland where Alice Rooney was born and her father was named James Rooney. In that same survey there were four Miles families living in County Down and one of them was a Mary Miles living in the townland of Greencastle in the same parish of Kilkeel as James Rooney. Although it isn't possible to nail down the exact relationship, if any, between these two families with this limited information it does make it plausible that the Rooneys might have contacted the Miles in Tully and asked them to have someone meet Alice's boat in Albany when it arrived from New York City.

I will revisit this Tully connection later when we discuss Alice's sister Mary Rooney.

Between the time of the June 1880 census and his marriage to Alice Rooney on April 7, 1882 Michael was probably living on the Miles farm on the Tully-Fabius border. After her arrival in America in 1881 it is not known for certain where Alice Rooney was living. It might have been on the same farm as her future husband Michael McGraw or maybe on one of the neighboring farms. In the spring of 1882, with his marriage drawing closer, Michael needed to find some place for he and his bride to live. The typical space allotted to a hired man on the farm was hardly suitable for a new bride.

Michael's parents, Edmond and Mary McGraw, had a very small 1-1/2 acre farm on Shackham Road in the Town of Truxton. Michael and Alice might have moved on to the farm on Shackham Road with his parents sometime after their marriage in 1882 and remained there until the late 1880's.

Since Michael and Alice's son Edward was born in the farmhouse on the North Road on Jan 1, 1890 the family had to be occupying this property prior to that time. The rest of their children were born there, grew up and moved away. They attended school in the Truxton Schoolhouse No. 2 about 2 miles up the North Road.

In the 1900 census Michael's occupation was given as a "stone mason." It is interesting to note that this hand written occupation of "stone mason" bears a striking resemblance to "store manager" which had also been described as one of Michael's occupations.

In 1910 Michael (age 67) and Alice McGraw were still living in the farm house on the North Road. They had been married 27 years and had 8 of their 9 children still living. Michael was a laborer. Four of their children were living at home at the time of the census: Edwin C. (age 20), Alice (age 13), Agnes E. (age 12) and William M. (age 10). Edwin's occupation was listed as a teacher in a public school. Although he was born as Edmond and went by Edward for most of his life this is the first time that the name Edwin before had been associated with him.

This was the McGraw homestead for almost 25 years. Around 1915, the farmhouse was destroyed by a fire whose details have been lost in time. The family moved to a temporary house on Upper Prospect Ave and remained there a short time until they bought the house at the corner of Prospect and Main in 1915. That would be their last house. Michael would die there on April 9, 1923 and later Alice's sister Mary, herself also a widow by that time, would move in with her around 1927.

The house at Prospect and Main was tiny but it seemed large to the many grandchildren who descended upon Truxton and invaded the small house on Sunday visits to see Grandma Alice. They numbered 33 in all and when they met up with their in-town cousins they proceeded to give Grandma's hand pump a good work out, threw "things" in the creek that ran through the back yard and made many visits to Kenney's Grocery store just across the street and down a ways.

Alice remained in the house until her death on January 20, 1940. Ownership of the house was transferred to Alice's sons Bill and Tom McGraw in June 1938.

Rooney Arrivals

There have been several stories related to the arrival of the Rooneys in America.

1. Alice and Mary came together in 1881 and John Rooney had come earlier.
2. Alice, Mary and John all came together in 1881.
3. Alice lived and worked on the Casey farm in Apulia after she arrived and prior to her marriage.
4. Alice Rooney came to America when she was 16.

The following information summarizes what is presently known about Alice, Mary and John Rooney's arrival and marriages in the U.S.

- Alice Rooney – arrived 1881 – married April 7, 1882 to Michael W. McGraw
- John Rooney – arrived March 1886 – remained single – naturalized October 28, 1892
- Mary Rooney – arrived 1888 – married February 11, 1890 to John W. McGraw. Death certificate has Mary arriving in the U.S. in 1880. One census has her arriving in 1888.

James Rooney and Mary Sloan of Tullyframe, Kilkeel parish, Co. Down, Ireland, had five children, three daughters and two sons. James was the eldest son and Mary was the eldest daughter. Whether Mary or James was older is unknown. James remained in Ireland and never married but as the eldest son he probably inherited the family farm. Assuming James was the oldest then the sequence would be James, Martha, Mary, Alice, and John. This information came in a letter dated 2/23/1970 from Mary Alice Cunningham Hennity who was the daughter of Martha Rooney Cunningham. Martha was the older sister of Mary and Alice Rooney and she remained in Ireland. Only the women in the Rooney family married. James and John Rooney remained single so there were no male heirs to carry on the Rooney name. Of the three daughters only Alice and Martha had any children.

Mary Rooney

Mary Rooney probably arrived in America in 1888. Her younger sister Alice had arrived in 1881 and younger brother John Rooney had come to America in 1886. It wouldn't be unreasonable to conclude that Alice had played matchmaker and fixed her sister up with Michael's recently widowed brother John McGraw (his wife and three children had died in Aug-Sept 1883). John was living on a farm on the North Road before that tragic summer but had relocated to the village of Truxton at the urging of family shortly after the death of his wife and children. The remaining children had been split up and were living with relatives. Nellie, the youngest (b. 1883), was living with Michael and Alice. John J., the eldest son, had moved into the Truxton House Hotel across Main Street by the fall of 1885.

John married his second wife, the former Mary Rooney, sister of Michael's wife Alice, on February 11, 1890. John purchased 6-1/2 acres in Lot 82 from Jeremiah O'Connor on November 26, 1890 and the deed was recorded at the Cortland County Courthouse on December 26, 1890. However, in the Cortland County Directory for 1889 John McGraw was listed as the occupant of 6 acres of land in the Township of Truxton. This is most likely a reference to the land in Lot 82 that John purchased in 1890 and therefore he was probably renting the property prior to his purchase. This is the 6 acre property shown on the 1876 Truxton map as belonging to P. Hennesy. This property was located about 2 miles out of Truxton on the West Road. The location of the farmhouse on the 1876 Truxton map places the structure on the west side of the West Road heading out of the village of Truxton on the way to the Village of Tully. On a family visit to Truxton as a young boy, my father pointed out to us the location of John McGraw's farm on the West Road. The house was no longer standing in the 1960's when our visit took place but the general location was consistent with the land records and the 1876 map.

According to Doug Currie (A Geneology of the McGraw's of Truxton, New York, p.6) "Mary was reported to have at least two miscarriages during the early years, but apparently the marriage was a rocky one and after a period of time they separated." From other relatives I have heard the comment, "that marriage just didn't take."

At the time of the 1900 Truxton census [T623\1020\Part2, Res. 145, Fam. 146]. John McGraw was alone and was boarding with John Miller, Jr. and gave his age as 54 (actually 56), his occupation as a "farm laborer" and his marital status as a widower. John's wife Mary wasn't living with him and wasn't found living anywhere else in Truxton or the surrounding area. Also absent were the children of John McGraw but since the youngest (Nellie) would have been almost 17 years old they were probably all off on their own.

Michael and Alice McGraw raised Nellie according to tradition, however Nellie wasn't shown as living with Michael in the 1900 census. Perhaps she was with her step mother Mary Rooney McGraw, who was also among the missing in the 1900 census.

Michael's occupation on this census was given as a "stone mason." It is interesting to note that this hand written occupation of "stone mason" bears a striking resemblance to "store manager" which had also been described as one of Michael's occupations.

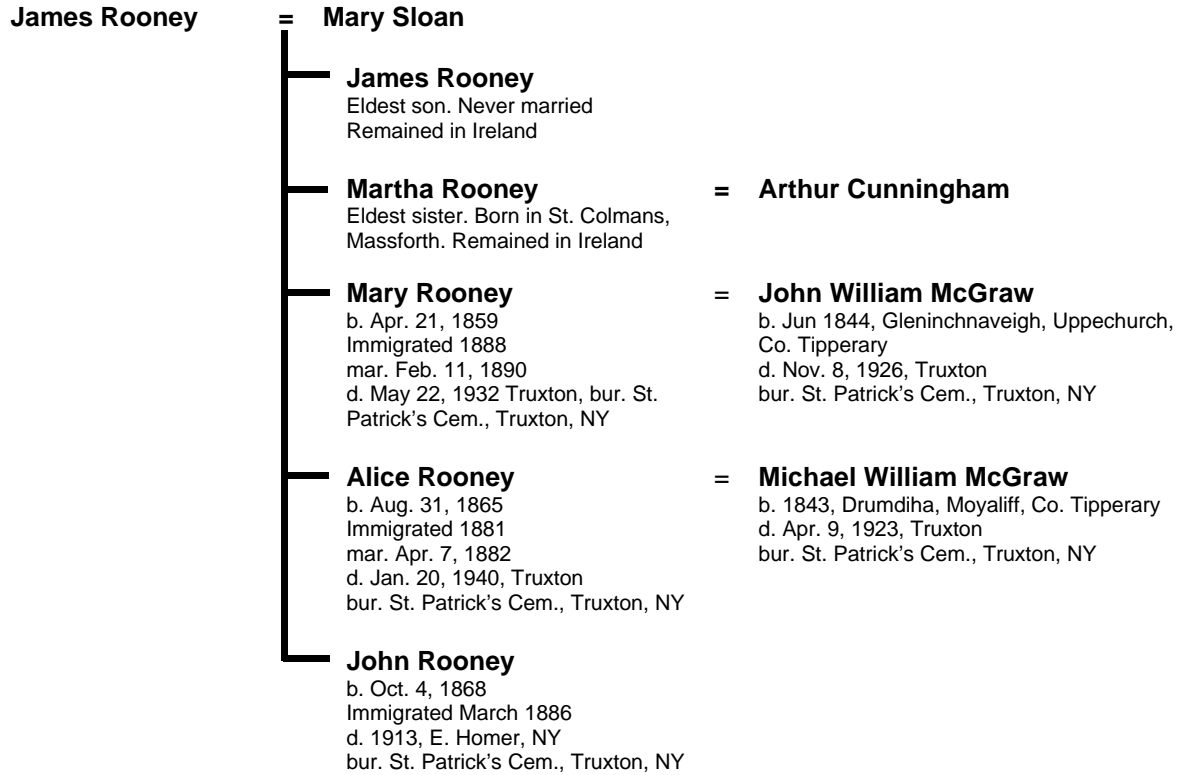
Again from Doug Currie, "About 1903, she (Mary Rooney McGraw) was a cook in a hotel in Tully, in 1907 she lived in Apulia Station and in 1927 was living in Truxton with her sister Alice." Alice's husband, Michael, had died in their home at Prospect and Main in the Village of Truxton on April 9, 1923.

In the 1910 Census John McGraw was staying at the O'Connor Hotel that was run by John O'Connor. This was the same hotel, some twenty-five years earlier, that was known as the Truxton House when Mary Goddard was running that establishment. This was the very hotel where John's son, John J. McGraw, would live for several years after his father chased him out of the house one cold rainy night in the fall of 1885. Even though his second wife was still alive and living in the area John told the census enumerator that he was a widower.

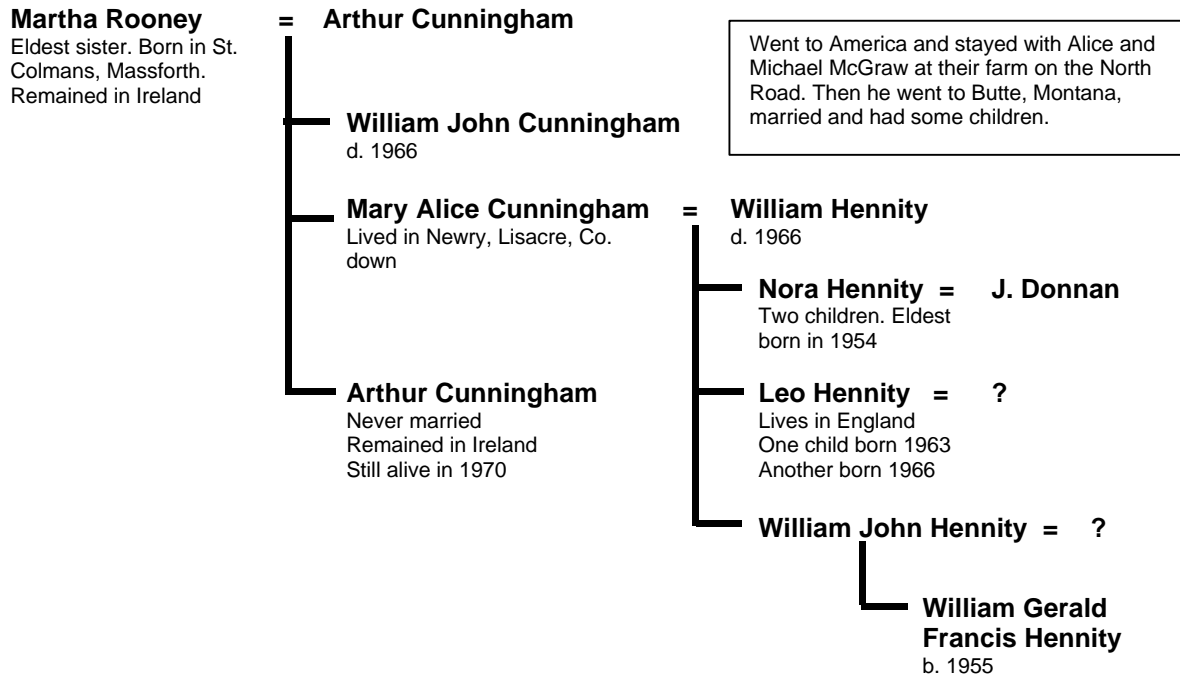
At the time of the 1920 Census Mary McGraw, age 54, was living with the Patrick Comerford family in the village of Truxton. Patrick was the brother of John McGraw's first wife Ellen Comerford. Mary was recorded as being married (to John W. McGraw) at the time of the census and told the enumerator that she had come to America in 1888 and had been naturalized in 1895. Her occupation was given as a servant to a private family, probably the Comerfords. The residence was on the Truxton State Road (Route 13) near the end of Kenney Brook Road (West Road). The William and Anna Ryan family was living on the Truxton-Cuyler State Road. They had a boarder named John McGraw who this time around, in contrast to his 1910 census information, listed his marital status as married. Even though both John and Mary McGraw acknowledged that they were married they were still living apart but in the same small village. John probably continued to board with the Ryan family after 1920.

On November 8, 1926 John McGraw died while he was boarding at the Truxton home of Anna Ryan who provided the information for his death certificate. Anna O'Brien Ryan was the widow of William Ryan who had also died in 1926. Anna's parents were Michael O'Brien and Julia Comerford – Julia was the older sister of John's first wife Ellen Comerford. William Ryan's parents were Patrick Ryan and Mary Dwyer. The Comerfords, O'Briens, McGraws and Ryans were all neighbors from the old days on Morgan Hill in Cuyler.

The James Rooney Family



Arthur Cunningham and Martha Rooney



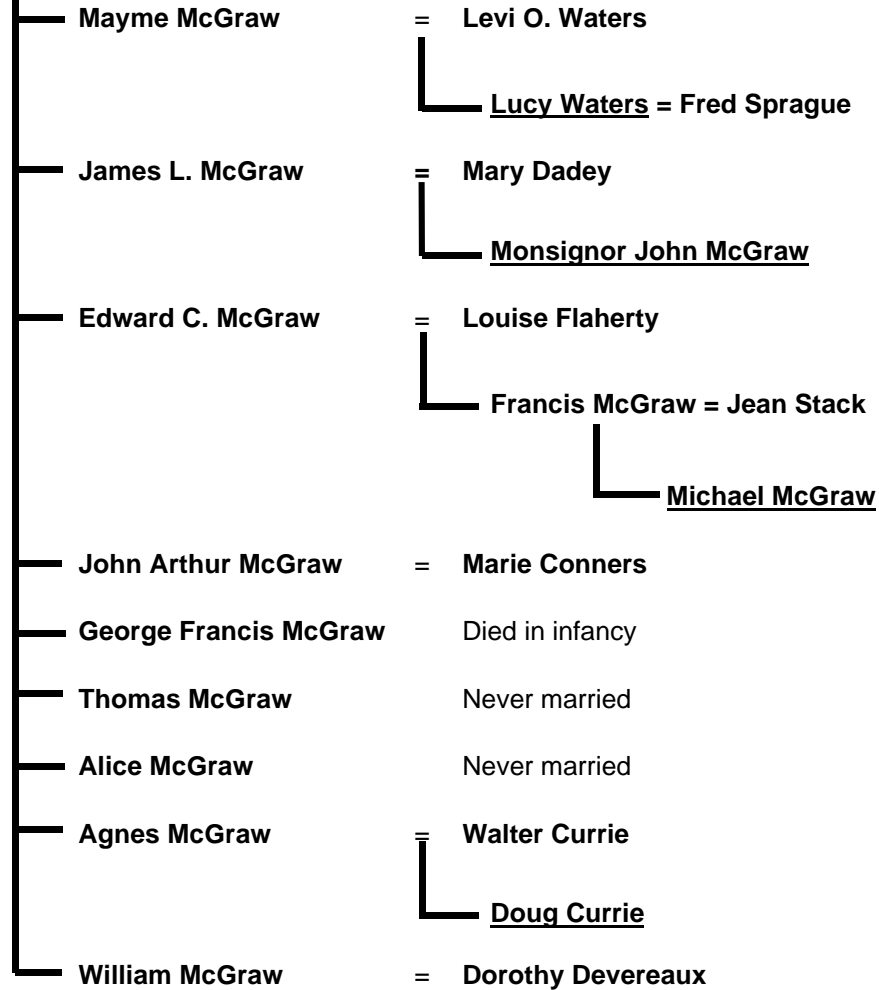
Michael McGraw and Alice Rooney

Alice Rooney

b. Aug. 31, 1865
 Immigrated 1881
 mar. Apr. 7, 1882
 d. Jan. 20, 1940, Truxton
 bur. St. Patrick's Cem.,
 Truxton, NY

= Michael William McGraw

b. 1843, Drumdiha, Moyalliff, Co. Tipperary
 d. Apr. 9, 1923, Truxton
 bur. St. Patrick's Cem., Truxton, NY



This tree is a little sparse on dates because all the details can be found in *The McGrath Family of Truxton, New York*. Below are some other family contacts. Lucy and Doug actually remember Alice.

<p>Lucy Waters Sprague 157 Flower Ave. West Watertown, NY 13601 315-782-2171</p>	<p>Doug Currie 202 Pear Tree Drive Camillus, NY 13031 315-487-1666 DouglasDC11@aol.com</p>	<p>Rev. Msgr. John Thomas McGraw P.O. Box 124 DeWitt, NY 13214</p>	<p>Michael McGraw 9108 Middlebie Dr. Austin, TX 78750 mfmcgraw@austin.rr.com</p>
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Above is a picture of Alice Rooney McGraw and her eight children. The picture was taken in about 1924 or a little later. It was taken in the side yard of her house at the corner of Prospect and Main in the Village of Truxton, NY. Alice's house is out of the photo on the right. From left to right: Edward C., Tom, William, Alice, Agnes (Currrie), Art, Alice, James and Mayme (Waters). Her husband Michael is not in the picture because he died on April 9, 1923.

On the right is a portrait of Michael William McGraw. The year of the photo is unknown.



Casey Farm Story

There is still the question of where Alice stayed after arriving in America. The tradition in our family was that Alice worked on a farm in Apulia owned by a family named Casey prior to her marriage to Michael McGraw in 1882. The basic problem with this story is that there was no Casey farm in Apulia, Town of Fabius until after the turn of the century. Around 1910 three Casey brothers moved up from Truxton into Apulia.

There is a history in our family of young men and women meeting while working on someone's farm and later getting married. In Michael's case this would have meant that Alice went to work on the Miles farm where Michael was employed. I can't prove or disprove that theory but it's possible.

The Casey part comes into play several ways. In Tully, across the valley from the Miles farm, into the town of Fabius, is the present day Casey farm that has been in their family since the early part of the 20th century. If, in retelling the Alice Rooney story, someone made a reference in the 1940s to the Miles farm back in 1881, they could have been confused with the Casey farm of the 1940s. From something as simple as this the tradition could have started that Alice Rooney had lived on the Casey farm after she came to America.

The parents of these three Casey brothers who settled in Fabius, lived in Truxton on the North Road. The Casey farm in Truxton was located across the road from where Michael and Alice Rooney McGraw were living from shortly before 1890 until 1915 when the McGraw homestead was destroyed by fire. The original Casey farm on the Apulia Road, in Truxton, was owned by the Casey's from the late 1860's up through about 1900. This was where the three Casey brothers were born and grew up. The farm is presently owned by the Hartnett family.

There are a few other connections between the Caseys and the McGraws but these are the two that have caused all the confusion over where Alice Rooney was living after she arrived in America. We still don't know for sure where Alice was living.

An alternative explanation involves Mary Rooney, Alice's older sister. It has been determined that there were two separate trips to pick up Rooney girls since Alice and Mary arrived seven years apart. Alice in 1881 and Mary in 1888. Their youngest brother, John Rooney arrived between the two of them in March 1886. Michael McGraw went to pick up Alice in 1881. Michael, John McGraw and John Rooney could have gone together to pick up Mary Rooney when she arrived in 1888, although it wasn't really necessary for Michael to be included on this second trip. Michael had already found his Rooney girl and now brother John (McGraw) could go get his own and John Rooney would serve as his chaperone. John McGraw and John Rooney are sometimes mentioned as having made the trip to Albany with Michael. Allowing for separate arrivals of the two sisters makes it easier to fit in all the players. There is a possibility that John and Mary's marriage was pre-arranged. Alice and John Rooney might have sent for their older sister as a wife for the widowed John McGraw.

Perhaps it was Mary Rooney and not Alice that lived and worked on the Casey farm (in Truxton, not Apulia) on the Apulia Road before her marriage to John McGraw on February 11, 1890. In 1889, and perhaps for a short time earlier than that, Michael and Alice McGraw were living on the North Road, aka the Apulia Road, in Truxton and were neighbors to the John Casey family. Finding Mary Rooney a place to live on a neighbor's farm after her arrival in America would have been a natural thing to do. All of this would help explain a considerable amount of family tradition but then we are still left with the unknown circumstances of Alice Rooney's emigration to America. Why did she come? Did she have a sponsor? Was she traveling alone or with relatives or friends?

This mystery still persists and it might never be solved but as each year goes by more pieces of the puzzle seem to fall into place.

Still More Age Variation Data

In what follows Alice's birthday of Aug. 31st is assumed to be correct and Mary's birthday of April 21 is also assumed to be correct. These are celebrated every year and would be remembered – it is the birth years that present more of a problem.

- **1900 census**
 - T623\1020\Part2\257B – Truxton, Cortland Co. [June 9th & 10th, 1900] Alice Rooney McGraw, born **Aug. 1856**. Married 17 years [implies 1883; actual April 7, 1882], emigrated 1881.
- **1910 census**
 - T624\934\Part2\309A – Truxton, Cortland Co. Alice Rooney McGraw, **age 50 [implies 1859]**, married 27 years, emigrated 1881.
- **1920 census**
 - T625\1096\Part1\299B – Truxton, Cortland Co. [June 16, 1920]. Alice Rooney McGraw, **age 59 [implies 1860]**, emigrated 1883, Naturalized 1883.
 - T625\1096\Part1\296B, Res. 18, Fam. 18. Also in the same 1920 Truxton census, sister Mary Rooney McGraw was living with the Patrick Comerford family and gave her age as 54 that implied she was born in **1866**. She gave her year of immigration as 1888 and her naturalization year as 1895. Mary was employed as a “servant-private family.” The Comerfords were living on the State Road (Route 13) near the end of Kenney Brook Road. [Patrick Comerford was the brother-in-law of Mary's estranged husband John McGraw. Patrick was the brother of Ellen Comerford, John's first wife.]
- **1930 census**
 - Pg 7B, Res. 145, Fam. 145. Truxton, Cortland Co. [April 23, 1930]. Alice Rooney McGraw is listed as a widow and gives her age as 67 (b. **1862**). She listed her age at the time of her first marriage as 21 and her year of immigration as 1883. Based on her then present age of 67 and her marriage age of 21 she was married in 1883. The short interval between her arrival in America and her marriage to Michael McGraw is correct but the rest of the numbers don't match earlier records. Mary Rooney McGraw was also listed as a widow and gave her age as 66 (b. **1864**) and her age at the time of her first marriage as 25 with 1886 as her year of immigration.
 - The place of birth of both Alice and Mary was listed as the “Irish F. State,” or the Irish Free State. Both sisters were born in Co. Down, which is in Northern Ireland, so this entry is curious.
- After their last child, William Michael (#9) was born in 1899 Alice threw her husband, Michael W. McGraw, out of their bedroom. This happened when she was 40, according to Alice's oldest daughter Mayme McGraw Waters, because he was an old man (57 years old) and she had given birth to nine children. This implies Alice was born in **1859**.

Problem Death Certificates

Mary Rooney McGraw, b. April 21, 1859, died May 22, 1932
Informant: Mrs. Alice McGraw (sister)

Alice (Rooney) McGraw, b. Aug. 31, 1859, died January 20, 1940
Informant: Thos. McGraw (son)

If this information is to be believed then Mary and Alice were born only four months apart. A resolution to this problem is possible if it is assumed that the information on Mary's death certificate is more accurate because her sister Alice had provided it. On the other hand, Alice's

death certificate information was supplied by one of her youngest sons, Thomas McGraw, who was living with his mother in the family home at the corner of Prospect and Main at the time of her death. While it might be less accurate it can be assumed that Thomas did know his mother's birthday. Since there was a tradition in our family that Alice came to America at age 16 and the census information gave 1881 as the year of her arrival perhaps her birth date was Aug. 31, 1865. But, with the good goes the bad. It was Alice who provided 1880 as the year of her sister Mary's arrival in the U.S. on her death certificate – which is probably incorrect.

Taken all together these sources have Alice's birth year ranging from 1856 to 1865 while Mary pops in with 1864 to 1866 for her birth year range. In light of all this variation it is certainly possible that Alice could have been born in 1865 as I theorized above. However, we are then left to explain why a woman would tell everyone that she was 5 years older than her actual age. In the end, the story of the Rooney's is like an old carpet that won't lie flat – smooth it out in one area and a new bump just shows up somewhere else.

John Rooney

As for John Rooney I am told he went back to Ireland for a visit, came back to America and died in a railroad accident in East Homer, NY. The cadence of the wording in the letter makes me believe his death occurred shortly after he returned to America from his visit to Ireland. According to my information John was killed in an accident while he was unloading a railroad car in East Homer, NY. This trip back to Ireland probably took place after 1910 and by 1913 John Rooney was dead. He is buried in the McGraw family plot along with his sisters Alice Rooney McGraw and Mary Rooney McGraw and nine more family members in St. Patrick's Cemetery in Truxton, NY.

At some point John Rooney's nephew, William John Cunningham came to America and stayed with Alice and Michael at their house on the North Road. After a while William moved on to Butte, Montana. Perhaps this visit from the old country is what motivated John Rooney to return to Ireland for a visit.

The information below was developed over the past few years while trying to discover any connections between the Rooney family of Co. Down and another Rooney family in the Town of Tully, Onondaga Co. Special thanks go to Greg Rooney who supplied a copy of his Rooney family genealogy and Marlene Parks who provided census records and the Naturalization Record for John Rooney. They were very helpful in sorting out some more details in the obscure life of John Rooney from County Down, Ireland.

According to the naturalization record John Rooney of Cortlandville, Cortland County, NY was born on October 4, 1868 in Co. Down, Ireland. This makes him the ideal candidate for the younger brother of Alice and Mary Rooney. He came to the U.S. in March of 1886 and was naturalized on October 28, 1892. It is curious that he had Bernard Doud and Will J. McAuliff as witnesses instead of one of his relatives in the area.

At the top of one of the naturalization forms were the words "NATURALIZATION UNDER EIGHTEEN YEARS." Since John Rooney was obviously over 18 years of age it must not have been the applicant's age that the "eighteen years" was referencing. The reference was probably related to how long the applicant had been in the U.S. prior to applying for citizenship.

I don't understand the reason for the insertion of the following italicized words into John Rooney's naturalization form

"...and that it [has been for the three years next preceding this application & now] is my bona fide intention to become a citizen of the United States,..."

The 1900 census [T623\1020\193B, Res. 250, Fam. 297] [June 18, 1900] finds John Rooney, age 29 (b. Oct. 1870), still single and working as a farm laborer in the town of Cortlandville, Cortland

County. He could read, write and speak English and gave his year of immigration as 1886. The important point here is that he was NOT working on the railroad.

The 1910 census finds John Rooney, age 39, still single and working as a "hired man" on the dairy farm of Richard Ryan in the town of Homer, Cortland Co. Once again he was NOT working for the railroad.

Assuming his birthday of October 4th is correct and knowing that both the 1900 and 1910 census were conducted in June then John Rooney's age, as given in both censuses indicate that he was born in the year 1870 and not 1868 as stated by him in his naturalization papers.

In light of this information this John Rooney (of Co. Down) is not the John Rooney mentioned in the *Tully Times* excerpts of 4/20/1907 and 5/18/1907. John Rooney of Co. Down doesn't appear to have been employed by the railroad during that time period and wasn't in a position to have someone working for him. However, since he died in an accident while unloading a railroad car accident in East Homer around 1913 it would appear that he was employed by the railroad after his return from Ireland. Those earlier *Tully Times* excerpts are mostly likely about Greg Rooney's John L. Rooney.

These are the items about a "John Rooney" in the Tully Times newspaper. For what it's worth here they are:

Tully Times, April 20, 1907 – Apulia Station – April 18 – "William McCallen, who has been night man at the D.L.&W. station for some time, has been transferred to Oswego, **John Rooney, of Onativia**, takes his place."

Tully Times, May 18, 1907 – Bromley – "L.P. Norton of Homer is working his farm this year. John Shanahan (Shanahan) of Syracuse is working for **John Rooney** and Corelon Van Denburg of Preble is helping his son, Marvin."

The first John Rooney worked for the railroad as did my John Rooney after 1910. Prior to that John Rooney of Co. Down worked as a farm laborer. The John Rooney above was identified as being from Onativia and not from Tully - where Greg's John Rooney was from. The second John Rooney appears to be from Tully since no other location was associated with him. Since John Shanahan is working for this John Rooney it is probably safe to conclude that this John Rooney was a farmer. This second John Rooney was probably the husband of Ellen Barnwell that Greg mentioned in his letter.

The Rooney of Co. Down Letters

Michael W. McGraw married Alice Rooney in April 7, 1882 and his brother, John W. McGraw married Alice's sister Mary as his second wife on February 11, 1890.

It usually falls to the female side of the family to maintain correspondence with the other family members. On the McGrath side of the family Mary Ryan McGrath was unable to write and communication broke down with those in Ireland. After many years we were able to re-establish communications with the Ryan side in Upperchurch Co. Tipperary in 2000. With the Rooney side of the family communication was maintained up through the 1970s. In the beginning Alice probably wrote home to Ireland and this was picked up by her eldest daughter Mayne McGraw Waters. This effort was carried on by Mayme's younger sister Agnes McGraw Currie and also by Mayme's daughter Lucy Waters Sprague. In 1970 these Rooney lines of communication broke down. Thanks to the Internet communication with the Rooneys of Co. Down have been opened once again. Gerry Hennity, great-grandson of Martha Rooney Cunningham has recently contacted me via e-mail.

From Agnes McGraw Currie – Sept. 2, 1969

"The only relatives (first cousin, Mary Alice) we know live in or near Newry in North Ireland. That is where Grandma (my Mother) [Alice Rooney McGraw] came from. They lived there on a small farm that her parents, and I think her grandparents, owned. The last letter I had from her and she had been very ill, and had to go live with her daughter in Kilkeel. We were there at her daughter's when we were in Ireland. Nice apartment."

"She, the mother, Mary Alice Hennity is a daughter of my mother's sister. Mother had two sisters and two brothers. Aunt Mary who came to Truxton after mother did and married Uncle John (father's brother [Michael W. McGraw]), the father of John J. McGraw (ballplayer). The other sister was the oldest and she stayed in Ireland and is the mother of Mary Alice, and a son who came to Truxton and then went out west, and no one has heard from him since. Mary Alice married William Hennity and their children are Nora and Leo. Nora had two small children about 3 and 2. Their son Leo and wife came while we were there⁷² and they (had) a baby about 9 months."

Follow up letter: From Lucy Waters Sprague – September 24, 1969

"Mary Alice Hennity is our first cousin on Mom's side (Rooney). Mom's sister, Martha married a Cunningham. She had two brothers, Artie, never married, whom we met at Nora's apt., and Willie John who came over and lived at our home on the North Road, Truxton, then went out to Butte, Montana, and got married and had some children. I believe his wife used to write at first but that was a long time ago."

"Mary Alice did not move in with Nora until after her husband died... Nora's husband is a fisherman for some concern. Her brother went to England and works there. The other boy was married and had a son and came to the house when we were there along with his wife and baby..."

"Our cousin Mary Alice, lived in Newry, not in the city, but out in the country. The address we wrote to was 'Newry, Lisnacree, Co. Down, Ireland.' Kilkeel is a village just about a mile cross lots from their house. It is on the ocean and right on the border of North and South Ireland (or Erie)."

"We hired a taxi to take us from Newry, where we went on the train from Dublin, and stayed overnight. It was about a half or three-quarters of an hour ride to Mary Alice's home. We had the taxi wait while we visited them. Then he came back and took us and Mary Alice to Nora's apt. in Kilkeel. Then he waited and took us back to Newry for the night. We left the next morning for Dublin on the train."

From Lucy Waters Sprague

Lucy Waters Sprague corresponded with her mother's (Mayme McGraw Waters) cousin, Mary Alice, in Ireland. "She lived with her daughter Nora. After she died, there was no more correspondence. Nora would not write. My letters did not come back, but neither were they answered."

The last correspondence was in 1970. Lucy sent her letters to Mrs. William Hennity (Mary Alice) c/o her daughter Nora:

Mrs. J. Donnan
26 McGoldrick Villas
Derryogue, Kilkeel
Co. Down, North Ireland

"Msgr. John McGraw was ordained in Rome, Italy. Mother (Mayme), Uncle Jim (James Leo McGraw) and Aunt Mary (Mary Dady McGraw) and Aunt Agnes (Agnes McGraw Currie) went over for the ordination. They returned by way of Ireland and Father John said mass there."

Letter Lucy received from Ireland

26 McGoldrick Villas
Derryogue, Kilkeel
23-2-70

My Dear Cousin & Family:

In reply to your very welcome letter and Christmas card received some time ago. Sorry to be so long in answering but you realize how it is at that time. I am not so active as I used to be and sometimes forgetful.

Pleased to hear about your family and that all are quite well. My family are all doing fine. T.G. Nora's two eldest are 16 years and William John's boy is 13 years. Leo's children are small yet. The eldest is seven and the next four.

You asked me about some names of your grandmother's family. Her mother's maiden name was Mary Sloan. Father's, James Rooney. They had five of a family. Eldest son, James Rooney. He never married. Eldest daughter, Mary Rooney. She went to America and married John McGraw. Your grandmother, Alice Rooney, who married Michael McGraw. My mother, Martha Rooney, who married Arthur Cunningham, and last John Rooney who went to America, came back on a visit, returned to America, and died.

I am sorry I can't tell you anything about your Grandfather's family. My mother used to tell us all the news but it is so long ago I don't remember.

My mother had three of us. William John, who went to America, married, died four years ago. (Myself) Mary Alice, who married William Hennity. He died three years ago. And Arthur who never married but is still alive on his own.

How the years go by and we never seem to notice until old age comes. Please write soon again as I miss your mother's letters very much.

The Rooneys are buried here in St. Colmans, Massforth, the church where we go to mass on Sundays, and where Father John McGraw said mass when he was here on his way home from Rome.

With Love,
God Bless.
Mary Alice (signed)

How many of a family have you and how many girls?

The Tully Connections

The major unanswered Rooney question is still this: Why did Alice Rooney come to America? A sixteen year old Irish girl, living in Co. Down doesn't just get up one morning, pack her bags and head for the next boat leaving for America. She came to America for a reason and the most likely reason would have been the presence of relatives or family friends already living in the Central New York area. Based on several observed Tully connections involving the McGraw family and the Rooneys from Co. Down I believe the sponsoring friends or relatives were living in the Tully area. All of these locations mentioned below are located within a three mile radius.

1. 1868-1874 McGraw farm on Kettlebail Road – foreclosed in Aug. 1874 – 2 miles southeast of the Village of Tully.
2. Michael was working on the James Miles farm on the Tully side of the Fabius-Tully border in 1880 when “relatives” asked him to go to Albany and meet Alice’s boat.
3. Mary Rooney McGraw was cooking at a Tully Hotel in 1903
4. Mary Rooney McGraw was living in Apulia Station in 1907, just a few miles east of the Village of Tully.
5. My uncle, the late John Casey of Apulia was the son of Neil Casey, one of the three Casey brothers raised in Truxton and who settled in Apulia, Town of Fabius. John attended St. Leo’s Church in the Village of Tully and on many occasions he would tell me about this man he would see at the church that was the “spitting image” of my father – but unfortunately he did not know the man’s name. I never pursued it because there weren’t any relatives that I was aware of in the area that John wouldn’t already have known. But now, with this convergence of circumstantial evidence on the Tully area perhaps there is a relative there – maybe even a link to the Rooneys.

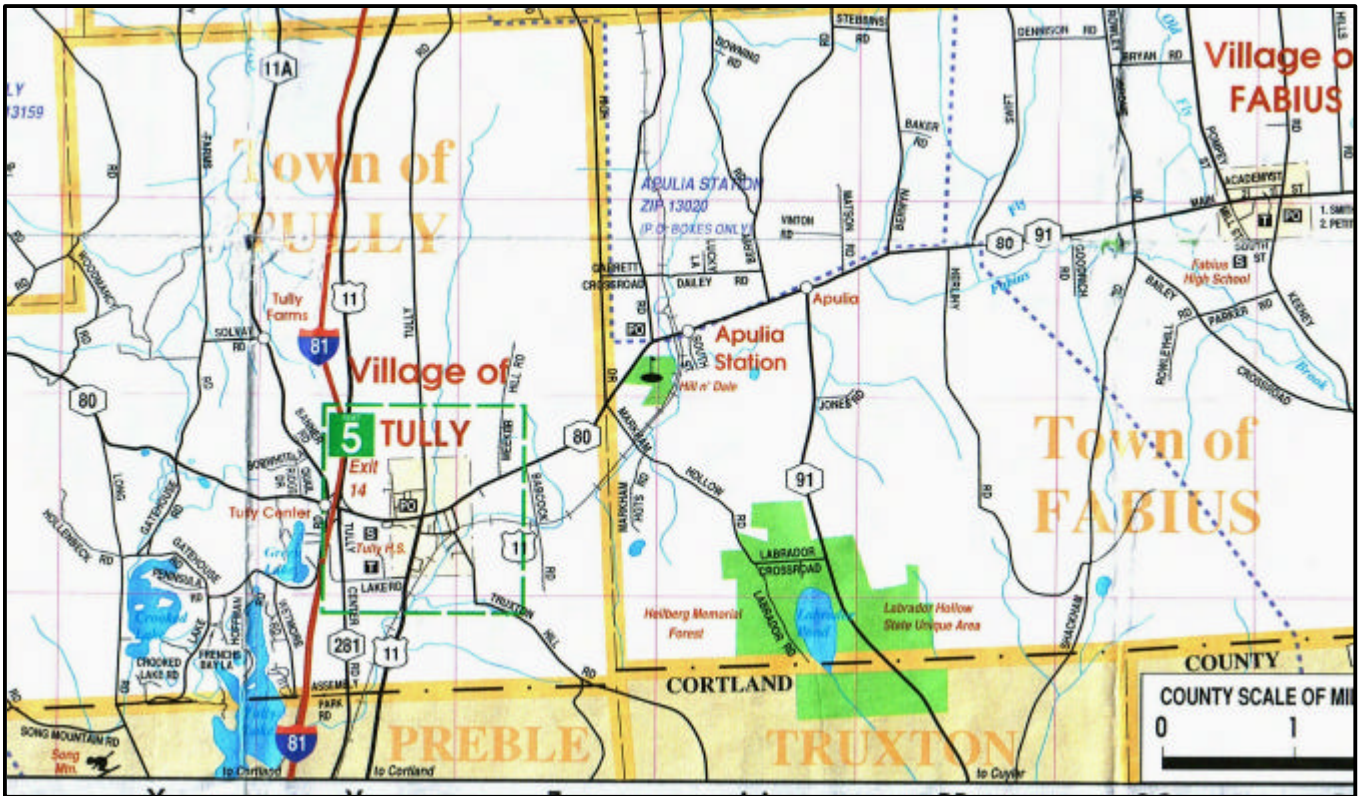
The maps on the following pages show the closeness of the Village of Tully, the Miles farm on Mile High Road, the hamlet of Apulia Station and the former McGraw farm on N. Kettlebail Road. From 1868 when they moved from Cuyler until they were foreclosed in August 1874 the McGraws were closely associated with Tully. The man from who they had borrowed their mortgage money, Edward Miller, lived and worked in the Village of Tully. Even later, Michael was working on a farm within walking distance of the Village of Tully in 1880.

On one of the following pages there is a family tree of the Michael Rooney and Mary Finlon family. I have corresponded with descendants of James E. Rooney for several years trying to find a connection between their Rooneys and the Rooneys of Co. Down. Based on naturalization record of one “James Roney” that appears to be that of James E. Rooney this family has been assumed to have come from Co. Carlow, Ireland. This tentative identification might ultimately turn out to be correct but a Rooney family living in the Tully area from around 1870 is just the missing piece of information that I need to complete my Rooney puzzle. For now the search will continue.

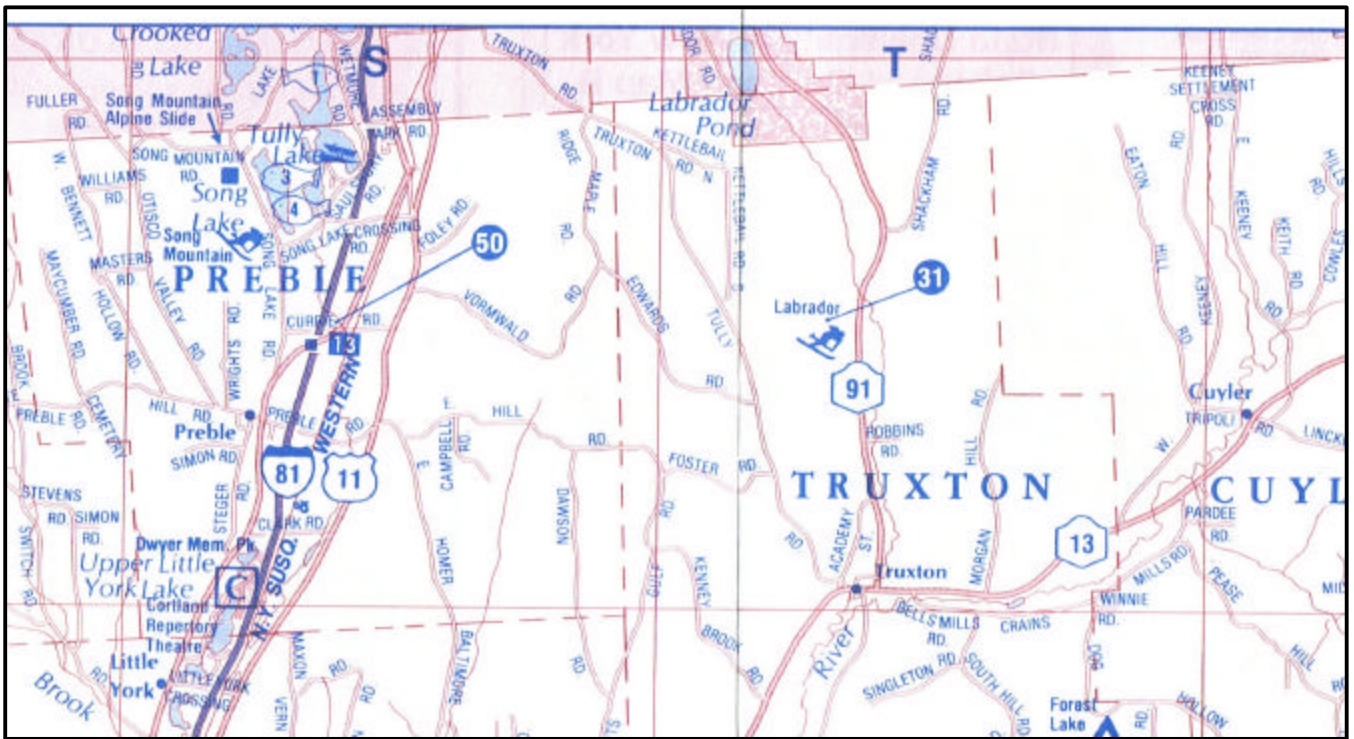
A Savage Connection to Ireland?

Edward McGraw was the third born child of Michael and Alice. He married Louise Flaherty of Truxton in 1919. Their second born child was my father, Francis Michael McGraw, he was born on the Flaherty farm in Truxton on the North Road on Dec. 20, 1922. His godparents were Mary Flaherty, cousin of Louise, and Francis Savage, who was another of Louise’s cousins.

Francis Savage was a lawyer in Syracuse, NY just north of Cortland Co. Edward and Louise’s eldest child, daughter Marjorie, would later work in the law offices of Francis Savage. Francis had a brother named George who was a politician in Onondaga County. The name Savage has connections back to Co. Down and the Savages, maybe not this particular family, were the first Irish settlers in Onondaga County.



The towns of Tully and Fabius along the southern border of Onondaga Co.



The towns of Preble, Truxton and a portion of Cuyler along the northern border of Cortland Co.

James Rooney of Tully, New York
 Revised May 15, 2006

