

Syracuse Herald American STARS MAGAZINE, Sunday August 28, 1988

"Bob Peel's Empire State"

### **Murdered young Irishman finally found his friends**

*A Complete stranger with barely an acquaintance in the entire North American wilderness, he innocently walked into town, was murdered and almost instantly made more and better friends than if he had stayed a long lifetime.*

William Farroll would have much preferred it the other way. He was a young Irishman who thought that he had come to the land of freedom, promise and happiness.

He was hiking west on the Skaneateles-Hamilton Turnpike. It was late winter in 1820. He was slogging through the mud into one of the new crossroads in southern Onondaga County.

This was Tully, recently named by a scholarly surveyor for the Roman general Marcus Tullius Cicero. The store was King's Barter Store, so named because Henry King bartered his goods for potash brought in by colonists busy felling and burning trees.

No-one can say for sure how many miles young Farroll had traveled that day, but it surely was damp and chilly. The stove in King's store looked mighty good. He saw nothing wrong either with the men gathered around it.

So he cleaned the mud off his boots, walked through the door, put the bundle containing all his worldly belongings down, bought himself a chunk of cheese and edged into the group around the stove.

He was eager for both warmth and advice. Instead, he was murdered.

His accent, you see, was entirely different. Ireland's brogue was still thick. The men studied him. One of them, an individual identified today only as Mason, was more than curious. He was suspicious. He didn't like what he heard at all.

"You wouldn't be one of those Catholics, would you?" he asked.

The Young Irishman was too surprised to give much of an answer. He backed away from what he had only a moment before thought was a friendly stove.

"Well, we don't want any of your kind around here!" bellowed the red-faced Mason. He made a rush at the stranger.

Others in the store got between the two and tried to calm the raging Mason. Storekeeper King's son, Rufus, stood next to Mason and turned to Farroll to suggest that maybe he had better move on for his own safety.

None of the actual fine details of the confrontation are absolutely recorded today. Some say that Mason followed Farroll outside, but one of the more accepted versions has Mason grabbing an ax and going after him right there in the store.

Peacemaker Rufus was in the way. The first wild swing broke his arm. The next swing murdered poor William Farroll.

But no one knew he was William Farroll. He was an absolute stranger with no identification on the edge of the wilderness. Contrite Tully townfolk buried him in the village cemetery. Mason was tried, convicted and sent off to jail.

A short time later, an acquaintance looking for Farroll on the trail West was able to give the full name of the victim.

Now Tully had a name, but it wanted to do more. It just wasn't right that a young man seeking his way in a bright new nation should be so terribly murdered on the town's doorstep.

A collection was taken and a fine gravestone was purchased. Someone with the talent of the period wrote this verse:

*Native of Ireland who came to his death by the hand  
of violence in a strange land.*

*March 12, 1820*

*'Twas unexpected he was slain,  
Eternity to view  
Scarce time to settle his affairs  
And bid this world adieu.*

The top of the stone is engraved "In Memory of William Farroll." That memory is still strong and dedicated today. The stone, shown to me by John Van Buskirk next to Lake Road just off Route 11 on the south edge of the village, is still in great shape. The grass is neatly trimmed and evidently, always has been for the past 168 years.

The Story has been carefully preserved. Folks such as former town historian Betty Kanar can recite it almost from memory. Tully still feels very badly about what happened to young, innocent William Farroll on its' doorstep, and Tully day by day continues to try to make amends.

As Lynn Fisher, current town historian, put it: "Maybe he didn't have any friends that night when he first walked into town, but he certainly has many, many true friends today."