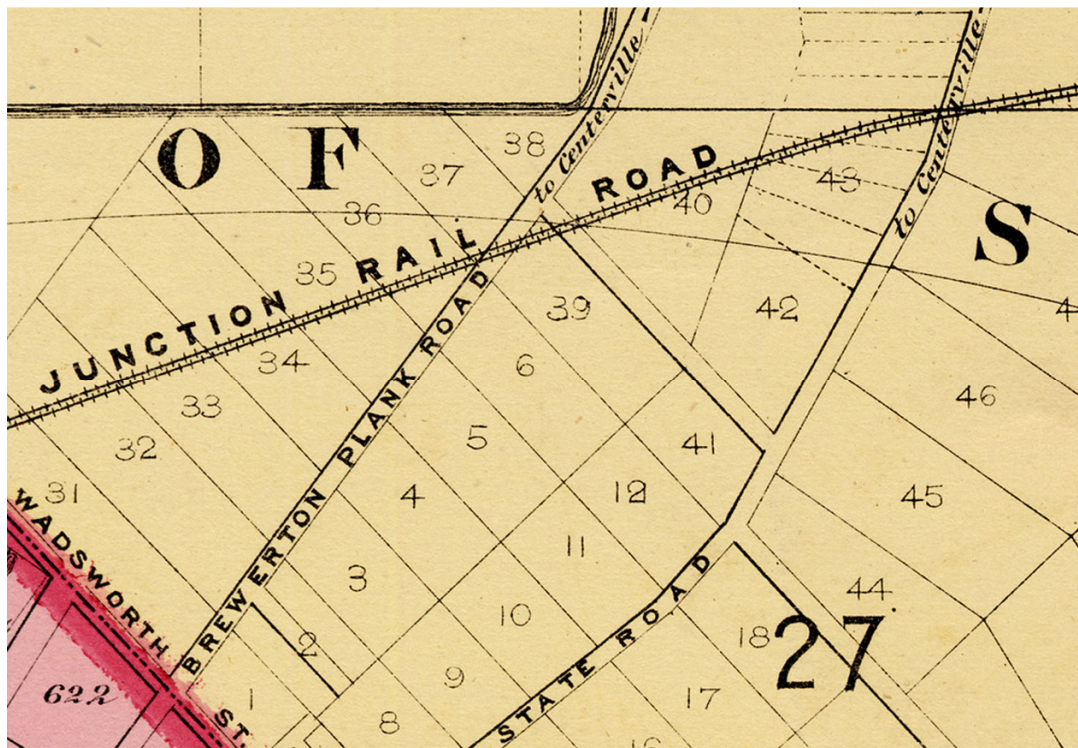


# HOW WOLF STREET GOT THE PLANK ROAD AND MATTYDALE GOT ITS TRIANGLE

By Michael F. McGraw

The Salt Road became the Cicero Plank Road. Every history of Onondaga County that I have ever read has always made that point. In the big picture of historical events, that statement adequately described the situation. However, the details show that there are always deviations from the grand historical statements and the plank road was no exception. The discrepancy with the grand statement comes to light by examining the streets in the old village of Salina, located on the northeast corner of Onondaga Lake. As the salt business grew, an improved road was needed to move the salt to Oswego and Watertown. In 1806 Mr. Elisha Alvord laid out the new State Road that became known as the Salt Road. It started at the center of the village, at a point known today as Washington Square, and followed Center Street north, out of the village. At 5<sup>th</sup> North Street, the State Road (Lemoyne Ave) branched off to the right and continued north, across Ley Creek, through what would become Mattydale, up Pitcher Hill and on to Centerville (North Syracuse) and ultimately reaching Oswego and Watertown.

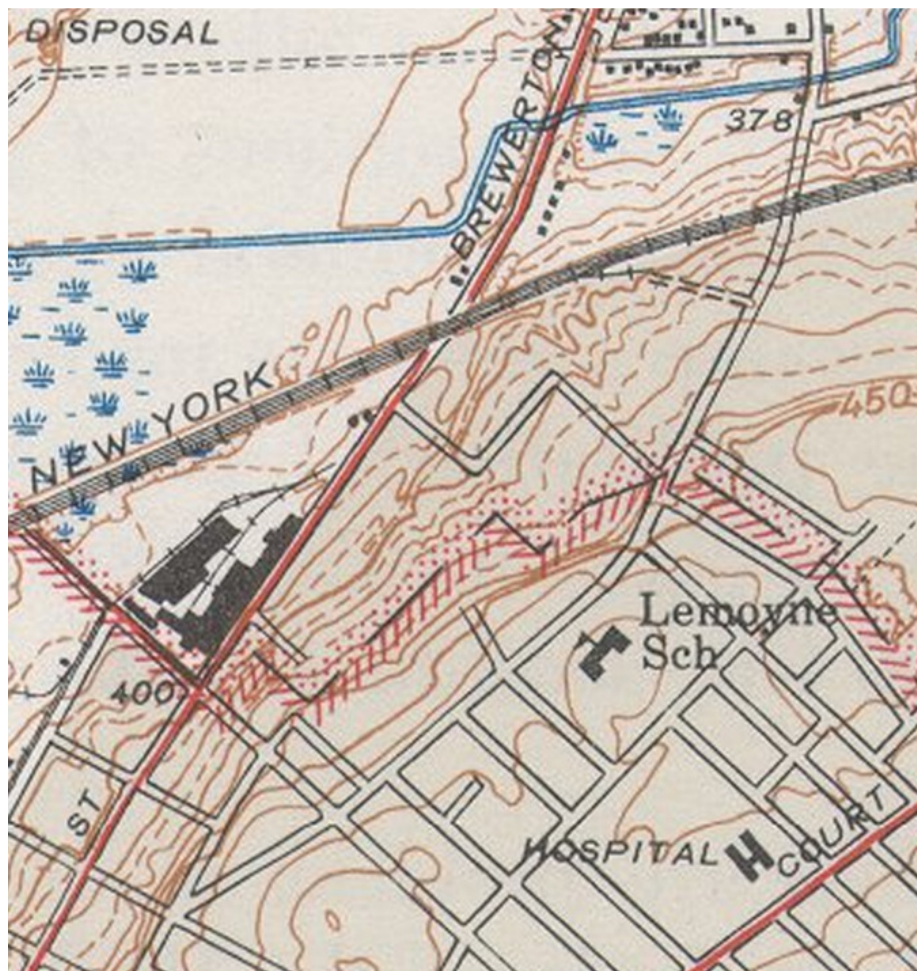


This detailed 1874 map provides an excellent view of the Plank Road, the State Road and Dippold Road and Dippold Crossing. The red area in the lower left corner is the edge of the First Ward of the city of Syracuse which was the former village of Salina. The yellow area is the town of Salina. Above the large letters in the word "OF" is Ley Creek which enters from the north and then flows west and finally empties into Onondaga Lake.

By 1874, all the basic structures that are still found in that area today were already in place. In order to address the basic question it is necessary to consider each of these structures and the order in which they appeared. Ley Creek was obviously there first and that was followed by an Indian trail that became the State Road.

The Salt Road was originally used for hauling salt north to Oswego from which it could be distributed, via the Great Lakes, to the various customers. As farms spread to the area outside the village of Salina, a need arose to transport heavy loads of farm products into the village. The salt wagons had no trouble with the Salt Road because in the northward direction, leaving the village, was downhill. However, the farmers headed into the village of Salina had to navigate a steep uphill climb, hence the Dippold cutoff. This allowed the farmers to switch to the not so steep Wolf St for the final approach to the village of Salina.

The Wolf Street route into the village of Salina rises approximately 40 feet as measured from Ley Creek. The Lemoyne Ave route (the old Salt Road or State Road) rises approximately 100 feet from Ley Creek to a high point within the village of Salina. The last 60 foot of rise begins just at the point where Dippold Ave begins and it provides a downhill path to the lower Wolf Street. The road now known as Dippold Ave might have originally come into existence as an alternate route for the heavy wagons that couldn't navigate the steeper Lemoyne Hill.



1947 USGS Map. Information surveyed in 1939, road structures from 1947 data. The main contour interval is 10 feet and the dotted contours represent 5 foot intervals.

Unless there has been some human intervention the elevation contours are a fairly stable element of the environment. A quick observation shows the difference in elevation of Wolf St. and the State Road. At the intersection of Wolf St. and 7<sup>th</sup> North St. the elevation is 400 feet. The intersection of the State Road and Wadsworth St. is 450 feet. Whereas the State Road crosses the contours at almost a right angle (the



line of steepest descent), Wolf St. follows the contours along a parallel path. The question could be asked: Why didn't the State Road cutoff occur sooner? Examining the more detailed contour information on the 1947 map might provide further insight into the question.

The blow up of the 1947 USGS map below allows a closer examination of the elevation contour lines. Where the contour lines are closer together the elevation changes more rapidly with distance. The more level areas are represented by contour lines that are widely spaced.



Near the “450” elevation indicator on the left side of the map there are four 10 foot contour lines crowded very close together. This represents a 40 foot rise in elevation over this short distance. Following the 430-450 contour lines to the west, it can be seen that the 430 to 450 foot change in elevation occurs right at the point where the Dippold cutoff begins. This steep incline probably proved too much for many of the wagon and so they turned off at this point and made their way to Wolf St. This can be seen to be the steepest portion of the road and that would explain why the Dippold cutoff was located here.

Initially, Wolf St. probably didn't extend up to Molloy Road but was extended later to provide a smaller and more gradual climb for the farmers hauling heavy loads into the village of Salina. This can be seen to be a reasonable assumption since in the early days of the Salt Road there was no need for two north roads heading out of the village. The Dippold turnoff could only occur after the State Road had crossed Ley Creek and fortunately the road hadn't gotten too steep at that point. Originally there probably wasn't a road there but it soon became a well worn path and was then improved to a certain degree. It might not have been until the construction of the plank road in 1846 that Wolf St. was extended to Molloy Road. The timing of the Wolf St. extension is still an open question.

It was the extension of Wolf St that created the familiar triangular piece of land that is a well known landmark in Mattydale. That triangle featured housing developments (Home Gardens and Harrington Farms) on the lower half and the Mattydale Shopping Center on the northern part.

The State Road turnoff has been given the name Dippold for convenience because that was the name of the person who owned the land back in 1874 and what remains of the turn off is named Dippold Ave today. The Syracuse Branch Railroad was constructed by the New York Central Railroad in 1874 and one of the person from whom they purchased a right of way was one L. Dippold. As can be seen in the first map the placement of the tracks cut the Dippold turnoff into two pieces, thus creating the Dippold Crossing. Why they did this I haven't yet figured out. Since the less steep Wolf St. had been included in the plank road in 1846, the turnoff hadn't been functioning in that capacity for some time. However, for pedestrians that was still a short cut between the two roads and they used the Dippold Crossing on a regular basis, even if it was sometimes a most dangerous short cut, as described in the article below.

The Evening Telegram,  
Syracuse, NY,  
Tuesday, May 28, 1901

## **FARM HAND KILLED ON FREIGHT TRACKS**

Gottlieb Kern, a farm hand, 50 years old, was struck by a shifting engine on the freight tracks of the New York Central railroad, near the Cicero plank road, last evening and was instantly killed.

Kern was employed on the farm of W. House. He had unhitched a team of horses from a wagon and was driving them across a private cross road which is just east of the road. A shifting engine was coming down the track at a high rate of speed which the man failed to see, and while he was in the middle of the track he was struck by the engine and fell under the rear wheels of the tender. The engine was stopped, but when members of the crew walked back to where the man lay he was dead.

Kern was a widower and is survived by a son and a daughter. After the accident his remains were removed to McCarthy's undertaking rooms, from where the funeral will be held tomorrow afternoon at 2 o'clock.

Eventually the railroad officials took action to close Dippold Crossing.

The Evening Telegram,  
Syracuse, NY,  
Thursday, June 19, 1902

## Railroad Commission Meets Here and Grants Permis- sion to Close a Crossing.

Col. Ashley W. Cole and George W. Baker, railroad commissioners, met here this morning and granted the application of the New York Central railroad to close up the grade crossing on the freight line of the road over the Cleero plank road.

This crossing is what is known as the Dippold crossing, and is where a man was killed a short time ago. There are two roads intersecting at that point. It is proposed to fence in the tracks of the railroad and buy a small parcel of land running from the Dippold crossing to the crossing over the Cleero road. The Dippold crossing cannot then be used. The application was to close up a crossing and build a connecting highway.

This afternoon Commissioners Cole and Baker went to Wolcott, Wayne county, where there will be a hearing. Yesterday afternoon they sat at Utica on the proposed \$500,000 improvements by the New York Central on their property in the city.

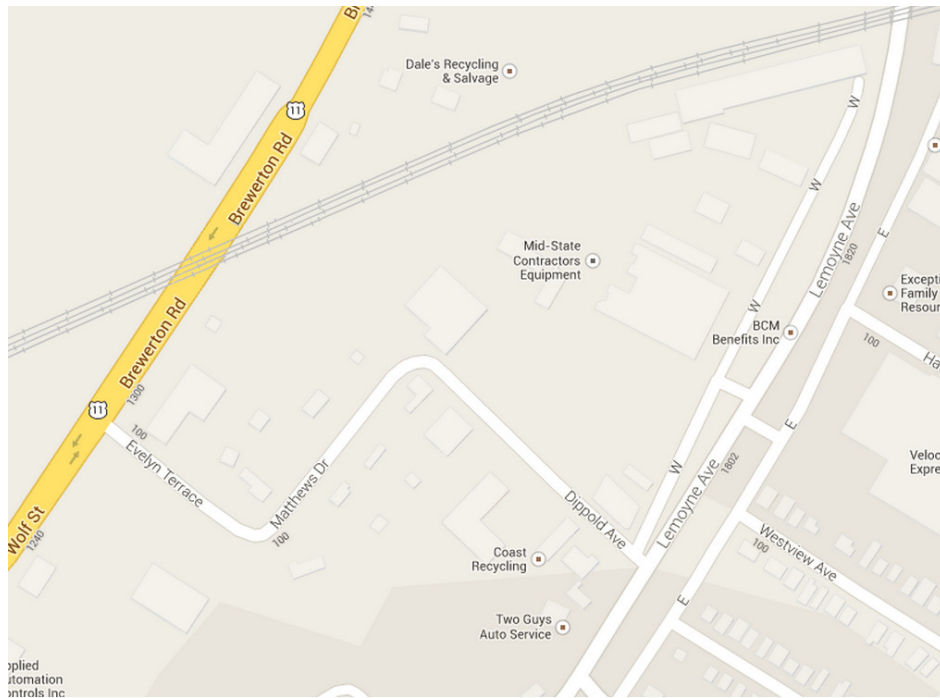


1926 Dippold Ave – Trolley Tracks and Brewerton Rd in the distance



In this 1926 aerial photo Brewerton Road is in the upper left hand corner, shown just as it comes out of the underpass. The Syracuse Northern Electric Railway (the Trolley) is shown just east of Brewerton Road and is running alongside Brewerton Road as they exit at the top of the picture. A small portion of Lemoyne Ave. can be seen in the lower right corner of the picture. Extending perpendicular to Lemoyne Ave. is Dippold Ave.

Extending the line of Dippold Ave. to the railroad tracks shows that it intersects the tracks right at the trolley underpass. Therefore the underpass for the trolley was constructed right under the old location of the private road Dippold Crossing that had been closed down in 1902.

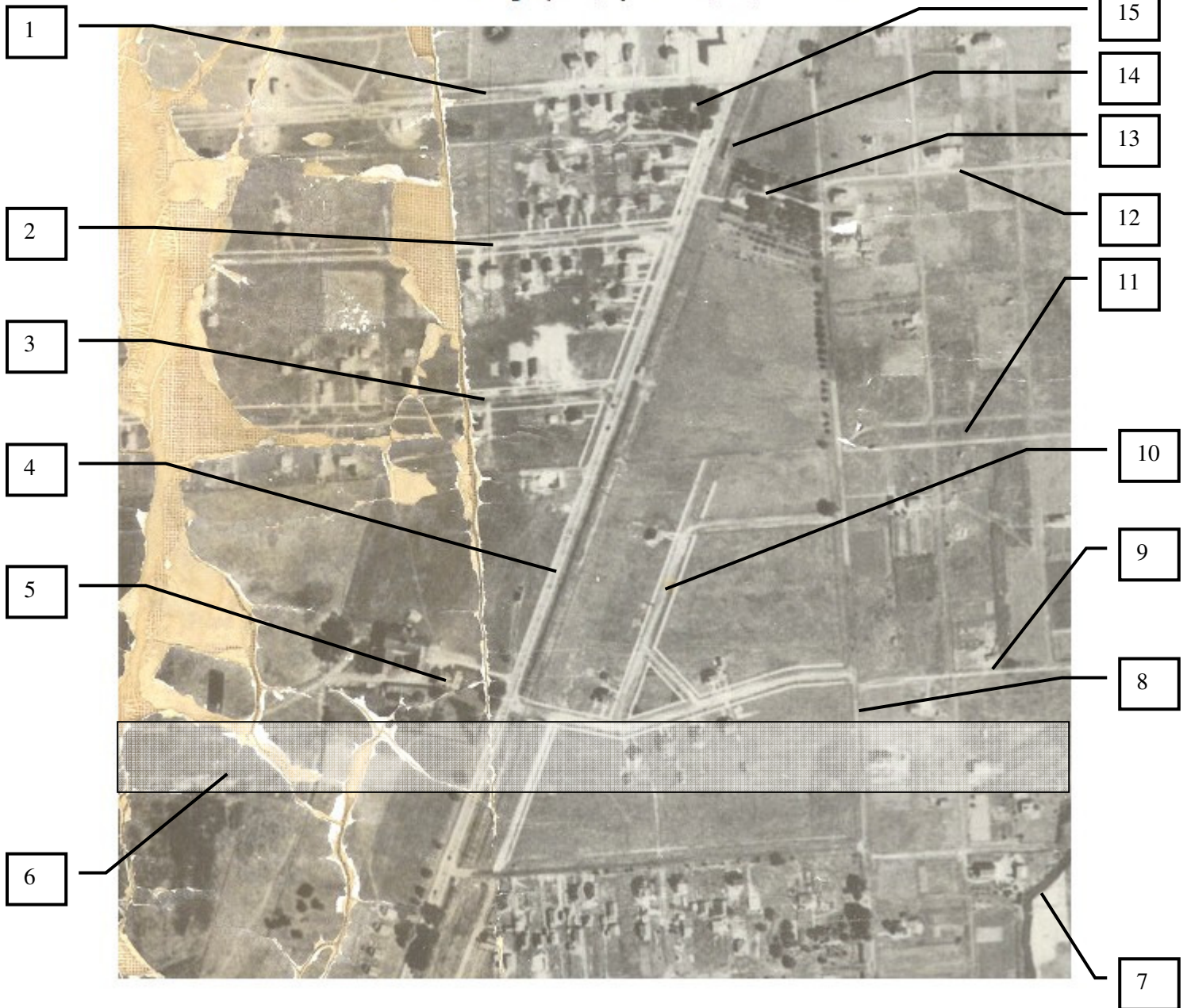


This is a modern map that shows how the road structure in the area has evolved over the years. The section of Dippold Ave. that had extended to Brewerton Road (the old Plank Road) is gone. The remainder of the road has merged with two other roads to provide a much safer short cut between the two larger roads. Lemoyne Ave was widened and moved west in the late 1950s and given a railroad underpass, instead of the old on grade crossing. The old Lemoyne Ave, one of the last remaining sections of the old Salt Road, is labeled “E” in this map.



# THE MATTYDALE TRIANGLE FORMED BY JOINING OF THE PLANK ROAD AND THE SALT ROAD

Aerial Photograph 2, Syracuse, NY, North Central Quadrant



The western edge of this photo has started to disintegrate but there was still much valuable information to be found. The three white lines on Brookfield, Richfield and Garden City streets are sidewalks.

1. Brookfield Road	6. Approximate Path of NYS Thruway	11. Boulevard Street
2. Richfield Blvd.	7. Ley Creek	12. Hill Avenue
3. Garden City Drive	8. Lemoyne Ave	13. Buchanan homestead
4. Brewerton Road	9. Young Avenue	14. Trolley cars on trolley tracks
5. Charles Skiff farm	10. Harrington Street – parallel white strips are sidewalks	15. George Skiff house



## WHEN WAS THE WOLF STREET EXTENSION CONSTRUCTED?



**Source:** Map of the County of Onondaga. By David H. Burr. Published by the Surveyor General, pursuant to an Act of the Legislature. Entered according to an Act of Congress January 5th. 1829 by David H. Burr of the State of New York. Engravedd. by Rawdon, Clark & Co., Albany & Rawdon, Wright & Co., New York.

This early map shows that there is only one road heading north out of the village of Salina. This would be the State Road that was constructed in 1808 and became known as the old Salt Road. In 1829 there was no extension of Wolf Street to the north. The extension that met the State Road at approximately in the center of Lot 18 was probably constructed during the construction of the Cicero Plank Road in 1846.

In the final analysis, Mattydale has a triangle because the Salt Road entering the village of Salina was too steep for the farmers headed south.