

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF WRIGHT HOUSE RECALLS OLD DAYS

By Ronald Graham

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MATTYDALE – The light green, white trimmed, 15-room house at 323 E. Molloy road, Mattydale, observes its 100th anniversary tomorrow.

It may be older, but the first notation on the search of title on the property states that it was on October 31, 1855, that it was sold by Cyrel and Rose Carpenter to Daniel Lynch. At that time there were 120 acres adjoining.

Lynch sold all but 10 acres of the farm to Albert D. Wright on October 13, 1883, and the place came to be known as the Wright Homestead. Albert Wright lived to the ripe old age of 92 and was widely known in the region. He died in 1944.

ON FARM 61 YEARS

During most of the 61 years that he owned the farm Albert Wright operated a dairy. He sold his milk from a wagon in Syracuse, dipping it out of a 40-quart can.

Raymond K. Stockholm, the present owner has lived in the house since 1949 with his father, William J. Stockholm, who is 85. William Stockholm, who lived on a farm near North Syracuse when young, recalls that, as a boy of nine, he helped his father drive cattle down Route 11 to be sold to Albert Wright.

Up until the close of World War I, most of the properties north and northeast of Syracuse were dairy or vegetable farms. Largest, of course, were the dairy farms. Now, where cows once roamed pastures,

row on row of modern houses stretch in all directions. The sylvan glades are gone and traffic and the hustle and bustle of many people about their daily business has transformed the area into a new type of community.

OLD TIME FARMERS

In the by-gone days, dairy farms were operated along Route 11 by John Kirsch, George Thayer, Bruce Smith, Daniel Overacre, Charles Skiff.

On Molloy road were the dairy farms of Albert Wright and Gilbert Mautz.

On Buckley road, dairy farms were conducted by John Podger, Patrick J. Ragan, Asel J. Melvin, Nicholas Michaels, August F. Warner, William Kearney.

Then, in 1920, the area began to take on a new look.

And now, in 1955, there is not a single dairy farm listed on the inspection books of the town of Salina.

As the changeover got underway, the Skiff farm became the Richfield Farms and Garden City tracts, the Kirsch farm became the Kirsch tract, on the west side of Route 11.

However, the farm of Asel J. Melvin is now occupied by one of his sons Crandall Melvin, president of the Merchants National

Bank & Trust Co. The other son, Myron S. Melvin, an attorney, lives in Syracuse.

NAMES ARE CHANGED

On the east side of route 11 the Overacre farm became Syracuse Villa Sites. The Thayer farm became Home Gardens and Harrington Farms.

Frank Matty, who lived at the corner of Route 11 and Molloy road was one of the first to begin developing the area as a residential section and he gave it his name – Mattydale.

Matty kept race horses instead of milk cows on his place, and he was more interested in politics than tilling the soil,

Many of the old timers of the towns north of Syracuse have passed on and, if they could return for a look at the countryside today, they would not recognize it. Frank Matty had a vision of residential growth, but it is doubtful that he would believe his eyes if he could return in 1955 and see what has occurred since his death not so many years ago.

CORRECTIONS:

“Lynch sold all but 10 acres of the farm to Albert D. Wright on October 13, 1883”

Lynch could only sell what he owned. He had purchased 120 acres in 1855 but he had sold 10 acres to Nelson Phillips in 1859. In 1883 Lynch sold all the land he had, all 110 acres, to Albert Wright.

“...the Skiff farm became the Richfield Farms and Garden City tracts,”

The Skiff brothers (George and Charles) had bought the B. A. Avery farm in April 1882. In the early 1890s they added the next farm to the north, the old William F. Gere farm, to their holdings. It was this Gere farm that became Richfield Farms and Garden City. The Avery portion of the Skiff farm was sold to Harrington in 1919. He had originally planned to continue farming but opened Harrington Farms for residential development on the part of his farm between Route 11 and LeMoyne Ave and bounded by Boulevard St on the north. The Thayer development, Home Gardens, which was very small, bordered Harrington Farms on the south.

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Frank was actually number four in line. Hinsdale Farms and Syracuse Villas went first in 1920. Homes Gardens opened in 1921. In 1922 only 20 acres of Matty’s farm was available for residential development, he held back the rest. While people were moving into this little area called the Mattydale Tract, Frank and two business partners were trying to get the garbage contract from the city of Syracuse for all the city’s garbage to be hauled to a huge pig farm on

the remaining 65 acres of Matty's property. Fortunately for these early residents of the "Mattydale Tract" the city turned Matty and his partners down. Originally the term Mattydale only referred to those 20 acres. This included: Hinsdale Farms, Villa sites, Home Gardens. The area on Route 11 just past the city line never had a name, other than Salina School District No. 3, and that sure doesn't roll off the tongue. By either, dumb luck or shrewd planning, and with Frank Matty it was difficult to know which, the name of his development was the only one, among the four that were open at that time, which sounded like the name of a village or hamlet. The newspapers quickly used the label Mattydale to describe the whole area where residential development was rapidly expanding. Opening in 1923 were Northwood Tract, Garden City, Richfield Farms and Harrington Farms. For several years these developments tried to maintain their separate identities. Northwood, Hinsdale and Garden City each had their own volunteer fire departments. The different developments each fielded teams in several sports and had competitions among themselves at least through 1927-1928.

"Frank Matty had a vision of residential growth..."

Frank Matty bought the old Zimmer farm in 1900 to house his race horses and as a place for his hogs to live, which, at that time, were getting free city garbage, while Matty continued to live in the city. When he finally moved to the farm, in about 1914, it was not because of a vision, it was because he was going broke and couldn't afford to live in the city anymore. The following year he declared personal bankruptcy, after placing the title for his Salina farm in the name of his girl friend/house keeper, the widow Minnie Mansfield. By 1917 he was recovering financially and Matty made \$15,000 raising and selling hogs that year. At that point, his vision was to get appointed to a position with the Canal Administration but that didn't happen so he planned on opening up a small portion of his farm (20 acres) for residential development. However, there was one small snag here in his vision. He couldn't sell what he didn't own – the deed to the farm was still in Minnie's name. On October 5, 1921, a newly married Minnie Mansfield Matty, signed a new deed giving Frank and herself joint ownership of the Salina farm. He also began planning his massive pig farm / garbage processing program. When the city turned down the garbage processing offer, Frank started selling some of his land, which he had initially held back, as residential lots. Frank also turned his attention to the politics of running a very rapidly growing school district, one that he would soon refer to as "his school." Although Matty had hosted many school board meetings and balloting in his large double barn, those were riotous affairs that required the regular attendance of law enforcement officers to maintain order, he wasn't a member of the school board.

Frank Matty was elected to the Salina School District No. 3, Board of Trustees, for the first time in 1925. After that election there were charges of ballot stuffing that led Frank and other members of his faction to appear before the Grand Jury. Fortunately for Matty and his followers the laws governing school board elections were so loose that the D.A. couldn't find anything to prosecute and the matter was dropped.

