

Growing Up On The Fields of Rose Lawn

Michael F. McGraw

Revised September 7, 2013



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
The Beginning.....	3
□ History.....	3
□ The Kirsch Tract	6
□ Moving into 320 Kirsch Drive.....	6
The Early Years	8
□ Description of the Neighborhood in 1949	8
□ The Fields in 1951	11
□ L. Frank Baum in Mattydale.....	12
□ Rose Lawn and Military Lot 3 Line.....	14
□ The Witch’s Shack.....	14
The Fields of Rose Lawn	16
□ The Woods	16
□ The Trail.....	17
□ The Old Fort.....	18
□ Destination - Northern Lights	19
□ The Return Trip Through the Swamp.....	20
The History of Spring Farm.....	21
□ Introduction.....	21
□ Matty and His Hogs	21
□ Peter Michels	22
□ Murns E. Cook.....	22
□ Mattydale Cica 1952.....	23
The Vanishing of the Fields.....	24
□ Development Sets In.....	24
□ The Coming of the Apartments.....	25
The Old Rural Inn at Rose Lawn	26
□ The Old Rural Inn	26
□ Gatto’s Restaurant.....	27
□ The First Gatto’s Fire.....	27
□ The Second Gatto’s Fire	27
□ After The Fires.....	28
The Fields of Rose Lawn Today	29
□ The Silent Witness	29
□ Gone And Almost Forgotten.....	30
□ The Last Hurrah	30
Endnotes.....	31

Introduction

As a young child, the woods, the creek and the fields loomed large in my life - they were my playground. The fields came right up to the edge of my backyard and were constantly beckoning us to go on an adventure. Examining the memories of those adventures, years later, I have tried to capture what I thought then and compare it to what I know now. During those journeys through the fields we would unknowingly trip over pieces of Mattydale's history. Here I will connect some of those pieces to Rose Lawn, the childhood home of L. Frank Baum, the author of the Wizard of Oz.

This paper contains the recounting of childhood memories against the backdrop of a rapidly developing suburb of Syracuse, NY. Farms were becoming housing developments and the history of the small hamlet of Mattydale was quickly disappearing. Growing up in Mattydale and wandering its streets and fields allowed me to capture mental snapshots of that history. It is only now, years later, that I am able to fit those memories within the context of the evolving history of Mattydale.

Mattydale has been fortunate to have witnessed and actively participated in the long and interesting history of Central NY. That history has passed through, around and over the small entity of Mattydale. Unfortunately, the collective memory of that history is fading. Historical evidence is still out there, if one knows where to look and understands its connection with the past. Little has been written about the history of Mattydale.¹ Fortunately the Internet has come to the rescue in the form of on line access to census records and the archives of the local newspapers going back past 1850.

The Beginning

History

Mattydale has been described as a hamlet. It is an unincorporated village in the town of Salina in the northern part of Onondaga County. As such, it has no official boundaries. For all practical purposes the boundaries of Mattydale can be described approximately as follows. Ley Creek forms the southern boundary of Mattydale while Bear Trap Creek forms the western and northern boundaries. The eastern boundary is formed by Town Line Road that separates the town of Salina from the town of DeWitt. Bear Trap and Ley creeks are paralleled today by major thoroughfares. These are Interstate 81 and the New York State Thruway, respectively. The old Cicero Plank Road, opened on July 18, 1846, the first in the U.S., ran north and south through the middle of what would become Mattydale. The Cicero Plank Road was replaced by a modern road and now it is called Brewerton Road, or US Route 11.

Ley Creek enters the Town of Salina from the east, originating further east near Collamer. This innocent stream, was once much larger and had carried the Jesuit priest from Quebec. Father Simon LeMoyne traveled this creek in 1654 and arrived on the northeastern shore of Onondaga Lake. There he discovered [the Indians showed it to him] the salt springs near Green Point, which would drive the growth of the village of Salina and the city of Syracuse in the following centuries.

The land in Central New York was surveyed after the Revolutionary War and became known as the Military Tract. This land was split up among the soldiers who had fought in the Revolutionary War. Settlement of what would later become Onondaga County started in the 1790s. The first settlers in what is now the town of Salina were there for the salt and settled near the NE corner of the Onondaga Lake, calling it the village of Salina. This would later become the 1st Ward of the city of Syracuse. The center of the old village can still be seen in Washington Square, that was the original location of the first cemetery in the village of Salina.



FIGURE 1. This is a section of the town of Salina map from the 1874 Onondaga County Atlas. It shows the northeastern corner of the town of Salina, with North pointing up. Just several hundred feet to the northeast, from where this map ends, is the point where the towns of Cicero, Salina and DeWitt meet. At the bottom of the map the Cicero Plank Road, on the left, and LeMoyne Ave., on the right, come together at the Toll Gate, with Molloy Road going off to the East. The Cicero Plank Road then continues north with Sand Road coming in diagonally from the northeast. Clearly visible in the center of the map is the property of Benjamin Baum. Rose Lawn itself covered the 3-3/4 acres containing the “Res(idence)” shown on the map. The rest of the property (Spring Farm) follows the plank road north. The Green House was located approximately where the eastern wing of the Roxboro Elementary School is now located. A little further north, just across the plank road from Sand Road, was Benjamin Baum’s barn that will be described in more detail below.

Long before the first settlers arrived on the scene, the Indians had established a trail through the area that led north, up to the St. Lawrence River and Canada. The commerce that followed the production of salt in Salina turned this trail into a road in 1808, the Salt

Road. It passed through what would become the center of Mattydale. Later the Salt Road would become the first plank road in the United States. The earliest settlers were farmers. Among the largest farmers in 1860 were: Adams, Phillips, Lynch, Avery, Garrett, Gere and Molloy. According to an 1874 map of the town of Salina the new additions by that time were: Hinsdell (1867), Baum (1866) and Overacre. By 1892 Wright (1883) and Charles & George Skiff (1881) had settled in the area. By 1900 John Kirsch had left his father Michael's farm on Sand Road and settled on a farm of his own on Brewerton Road. In June 1900 Frank Matty bought out the old Zimmer farm² at a foreclosure sale, on the northeast corner of Brewerton Road and E. Molloy Road.

Around 1918 the first farmland in what would become Mattydale was subdivided into residential lots. The process began with the land being surveyed and the lots being laid out. This work was usually done by the owner or the developer. The developer came in and put in the streets, water and electrical power and marketed the improved lots to the public. Finally the developer or the owners of the newly purchased lots hired a builder to come in and build the houses. However, in some cases the owners built their own houses.

George Skiff appears to be the first farmer to be bitten by the development bug. In 1919 George Skiff sold 300 acres east of his farm (exact location to be determined) on the old Cicero Plank Road, for residential development. George had become interested in the apple business after meeting Mr. Charles Beak at the local regional market. They joined forces and the operation became known as Beak & Skiff, in the town of LaFayette, south of Syracuse. The fifth generation of the Beak & Skiff families are still running the business today.³

Skiff sold the rest of his farm to Byron G. Harrington in early November 1919. After that, Skiff devoted all his efforts to the apple business. [It is currently thought that out of that first 300 acres came Syracuse Villas. The exact chain of ownership still needs to be determined]. The first two tracts developed in Mattydale were: Syracuse Villas and Hinsdale Farms. These tracts were both on the east side of Brewerton Road and the lots went on the market in 1920. Syracuse Villas was the former farm of Daniel Overacre and extended north and south from Molloy Road to the railroad tracks. East and west it extended from the east line of Military Lot 18 to LeMoyne Ave. The land of Perry Hinsdell was the next to come on the market as Hinsdale Farms. Home Gardens went on the market in 1921 and was located between the Cicero Road and LeMoyne Ave, bordering Ley Creek on the south and Edgemere Road on the north. Mattydale was opened in 1922. In the 1923 real estate season, these first four were followed by Richfield Farms, Garden City, Northwood Tract and Harrington Farms. These were then followed in 1926 by the Wright Tract, in 1927 by the Kirsch Tract and in 1928 the Evergreen Tract joined the wave of conversion of farm land into residential neighborhoods.

The James Molloy farm was out at the intersection of E. Molloy Road and Town Line Road. He didn't subdivide his farm for residential development. Malloy died in 1936, on a Sunday afternoon while out inspecting his fields. His daughters Mary and Kathie, he had no sons, continued to live on the farm, in the old stone family homestead, after his

death. The farm was eventually “purchased,”⁴ by the US government during World War II, as part of the land needed for the construction of the Army Air Base in 1942.

It is somewhat ironic that the last man in ultimately had the entire area named after himself. The area never had a proper name before the residential development began. It had been variously described as “just over the city line,” “out on the Cicero Plank Road,” “right near the Skiff farm,” “just past the Old Rural Inn” or as Helen Burnham put it “Trolley Stops 2, 3 and 4.” By not appending a word such as Farms, Tract or Villas to the name of his property, but by simply giving it the one word name of Mattydale, Frank Matty, either knowingly or unknowingly, was able to have the whole place effectively named after him. For real estate marketing purposes this became a convenient label for that area “just past the city line.” This was an honor that Matty’s many new found political opponents in the Salina School District No. 3 would have never willingly bestowed upon him. After all, Matty was a newcomer, while several of the older families had been farming in that area for three generations.

The Kirsch Tract

Many of the farmers in Mattydale were subdividing their farms in the 1920s. Kirsch didn’t move in that direction until later in the decade. The Kirsch Tract consisted of Kirsch, Leonard and West Molloy, from Bear Trap Creek to Route 11. The Depression brought the growth of the subdivisions to a halt. Kirsch’s late start left his tract very sparsely populated as the Depression settled in. According to the 1930 census numbers, the Kirsch Tract had only 31 residences while the other developments south of West Molloy had 165 residences.⁵

There was a ban on all civilian residential construction during World War II, but Mattydale got lucky. It was selected as the site for the construction of an Army Air Base and the area nearby was selected for participation in the National Defense Home Program. With the construction of the base, there would not be enough housing for all the people employed on the base. The sparsely settled Kirsch Tract was selected for this program. The purpose of this Home Program was to build sufficient housing in the area to handle the expected increase in population due to the near by air base project. The National Defense Homes were all of a Cape Cod style and were purposely designed small. The main floor was 24’ by 30’ (720 sq ft) and the attic could be finished out by the home owner to add another 480 sq ft to bring the total to 1200 sq ft.⁶

The model home was located at 320 Kirsch Drive. The first occupants of that model home were Mr. & Mrs. Robert Sparks and family. In September 1949 the McGraw family moved in. The Sparks family moved to Hood Ave., on the north side of Syracuse, and we kept in touch with them for a number of years. I remember visiting them at least once at their new home.

Moving into 320 Kirsch Drive

We moved into the former National Defense model home on Kirsch Drive in early September, 1949. At the time we moved into that house my parents had two children

under 2-1/2 and my mother was 9 months pregnant. My brother Mark was born on September 14, 1949.

It was a little like moving out onto the frontier, with John Kirsch still farming the land right up to the edge of our backyard. The Kirsch family continued to farm the remainder of their land, prior to the construction of the Roxboro Road schools. In those earlier farming days the kids in the neighborhood would eagerly join many of the adult neighbors to gather up the potatoes that the tractor pulled harvester had missed. We wouldn't quit until our sacks were full. However, then we needed to carry our newly unearthed treasures all the way home. That meant making a journey of a few hundred feet across the deeply furrowed fields while balancing about 20 pounds of potatoes. This was a bit difficult for someone who was only four years old but I managed to get the potatoes home without losing any of them.

The Early Years

Description of the Neighborhood in 1949

I can remember farmer Kirsch alternating potatoes and wheat, or some kind of grain crop, on his fields. There were still other fields, beyond what Kirsch was plowing, beyond the south line of the old Military Lot 3, but they weren't in use for farming at that time, as far as I know. A 1927 map⁷ showed a plan for residential development all the way out to the northern end of the Kirsch farm, at the south line of Military Lot 3. The streets had even been given names, but that development never happened. No houses were ever built north of Kirsch Drive in the Kirsch Tract.

There were two types of houses in this section of Mattydale: the older ones were from the late 1920s when the Kirsch Tract first opened for development; the newer ones were Cape Cod style houses built during WWII as part of the National Defense Home Program. The newer houses were very similar in appearance but the builder would vary the orientation of the houses on the lots and the location of the garages to break up the pattern. The older houses had more variety since that earlier offering had been only for the lot - the owners were responsible for the construction of their own houses.

In the beginning there were no sewers, all the houses were on septic tanks. These tanks were in the backyards and as they aged, the thin metal covers would weaken. Sometimes they collapsed in the spring, if some unsuspecting person walked on them. Mothers cautioned their children not to go into the backyard during the spring when the ground was wet and soft from the melting snow. The girl next door did manage to drop into her family's septic tank one spring, but all turned out well. Other people would plant small flower gardens over the septic tanks to prevent people from walking in those areas. It would be several years before the sewers went in, on Kirsch Drive.

At first, everyone used coal to heat their homes. While walking to school, on those cold winter mornings, we listened to the crunching of the snow under our feet and watched the plumes of white smoke rising from every chimney, while the smell of burning coal filled the whole neighborhood.

Almost everyone switched over to natural gas in the early 50s, but there were some holdouts. That gave us a few more chances to enjoy a fast disappearing treat, the excitement of experiencing a coal delivery. Before long everyone had switched over to gas and the roar of coal sliding down the metal chutes into the cellar coal bins was heard no more in the streets of Mattydale. Also gone were those dreaded ash cans that needed to be dragged out to the curb each week after lugging them up from the basement where they had been filled with ashes from the furnace.

The first driveways were just dirt. That was followed in time by cinders, ashes, crushed stone and finally tarvia. There weren't any cement driveways that I can remember. The ashes from the furnace were used in the winter to give the cars enough traction on the snow and ice to make it out of the driveway. People would even put one of their ash cans, filled with ashes, in the trunk of their cars, along with a shovel. These would come in

handy if the car got stuck in the snow somewhere away from home. By Spring, when the snow melted, you had a driveway filled with ashes. When it came to shoveling snow in the winter, everything except tarvia was pure hell. The loose driveway material would be tossed onto the snow banks along with the shoveled snow. When the snow banks lining the driveway melted that material would be deposited on the lawn only to be rediscovered by the lawn mower in the summer

There were very few tall trees in the development itself. Since the entire tract had been farmland this was to be expected. Below is an early family photograph, from about 1951.



FIGURE 2 - Left to right the girls are: Nancy McGraw (320), Cynthia Bloomingdale (325) and Connie Miller (323). Someone had noticed that day, that the girls were all wearing the same dress and thought that called for a picture. The numbers in parentheses are their addresses.

This is a view looking east from the front yard of 323 Kirsch Drive in 1951. The houses on the left side of the street can be seen all the way up to the beginning of the 300 block. There were very few trees on that side of the street. The larger trees were in front of the

houses that had been built in the 1920s and early 1930s. The front of the house that can be seen between the two girls' heads on the right was at 315 Kirsch Drive. This was one of the original houses that were built on the street in the late 1920s when John Kirsch first opened his farm for residential development. Notice that it extends out further than the Cape Cod style houses that were built in 1942-43 as part of the National Defense Home Program. The first group of buyers purchased only lots and had to build their own houses or contract with a builder to do the job. As a result, there was not a common house style that constrained that first group of buyers.

The Miller driveway, the first one behind the girls, consisted of crushed stone and the one beyond that, at 321 Kirsch, appears to be tarvia. Another common feature of the Cape Cod houses was that almost all of them originally had pine or evergreen trees planted along the front of the houses.

The Kirsch property was on Military Lot 18, and was the former location of the Smith, Thorp and Hanchott Nursery. I always wondered if some of the seeds from those nursery fruit trees somehow survived over the years in our back yards on Kirsch Drive? We had two apple trees, next door was a peach tree and four doors up was a pear tree.

The Fields in 1951

Bear Trap Creek runs diagonally across the photo, from the middle of the top of the photo, down to the lower left hand corner. The extent of “The Woods” was quite a bit wider in 1951 than it would be in later years. Behind the houses on Kirsch Drive were the two fields that the Kirsch family was farming. The different coloration of the fields indicates the different crops that they were raising; typically wheat and potatoes.

The compound contained Kirsch Dairy, the old John Kirsch family homestead and several of the Kirsch barns. The Kirsch Compound is a useful name for descriptive purposes but the area was never referred to by that term.



Figure 3. This aerial photograph of the northwest section of Mattydale was taken in October 1951.⁸ Running along the bottom of the photo is Kirsch Drive. A close examination of the lots on Kirsch Drive shows that there were very few trees at that time. The linear structure, running north and south, along the right margin of the photo, is Route 11 (Brewerton Road). All along the western edge of this road were huge Elm trees, running all the way south, down to the intersection of Brewerton Road and E. Molloy Road. Over the 50s and 60s they became victims of the Dutch Elm disease that eventually killed off all of the tall and stately elm trees in Onondaga County.

The light colored area between the 200 and 300 blocks of Kirsch Dr. is an empty double lot, owned by the Kirsch family. On the right side of the empty lot was the large green-colored house, that was the home of Bernard (Sam) Kirsch. In 1953 the 100 block was the site of the construction for St. Margaret's School. At the time of this photo, a house, belonging to Leo Kirsch, was in the 100 block, on the NE corner of Kirsch and Roxboro, where the school would be located. In Kindergarten I rode the bus to school. One day, while on the bus, I looked out the back window and I saw Leo Kirsch's house behind us, in the middle of Kirsch Drive. The house was being moved down the street to make room for the school and was placed on the empty Kirsch lot in the 200 block.

L. Frank Baum in Mattydale

When I was growing up in Mattydale there was a story, actually more of a rumor, that L. Frank Baum, the author of the Wizard of Oz, had lived in Mattydale at one time. Calling it a rumor describes it best, since no one could ever answer the most important question: "Exactly where did Baum live?" The fact that there was a Dr. Leo Baum practicing medicine in Mattydale in the 50s and 60s caused confusion for some and was taken as confirmation of the rumor by others.

One version of the story was that Dr. Leo Baum was related to L. Frank Baum and that he was living, and practicing medicine, in the house that had belonged to L. Frank Baum. A variation on that story was that the house had originally been located on the NW corner of Bailey Road and Route 11. At some point the house had been moved about a mile south, down the road to Mattydale, and set down on the SE corner of Route 11 and Matty Ave. Supposedly, Dr. Baum's house had been moved again, at a later date, to make room for the Shell station that occupied that corner until recently (2006). I have not been able to verify the story that Dr. Baum's house had been relocated near Boulevard Street, on the south side of Mattydale.

It was easily determined that the two Baum families were not related. Dr. Baum had come from Germany in the late 1930s,⁹ while Frank Baum's family had been in the country since at least the 18th century.¹⁰ It was still possible, that these unrelated Baum families, through some set of coincidences, had wound up living in the same house. However that wasn't the case. A 1874 map of the town of Salina showed that the residence of the older Baum family was on the west side of the old Plank Road just south of the boundary line between Lots 3 and 18. (See map on p. 4).

In the early years, Dr. Baum's office was in his home that was a small bungalow style house, like those found all over Mattydale. It was a brown two-level house located on the southeast corner of Matty Ave. and Brewerton Road. This was clearly not the Rose Lawn house, which had three stories plus a huge veranda. In addition, the original Rose Lawn house had burned to the ground in February 1899,¹¹ but that fact was only recently re-discovered. The community and even the newspapers had lost the fact of the 1899 fire from their collective memory.

The front door of Dr. Leo Baum's house faced Brewerton Road and patients entered his office, in the back of the house, from an entrance on Matty Ave. During the summer of

1968 Dr. Baum was still practicing medicine at that location. While working for the Post Office that summer I had been bitten by a dog and needed a tetanus shot, which Dr. Baum provided. The next summer, just about a year after my visit, Dr. Leo Baum passed away on August 14th, after a short illness. He had been practicing medicine in Mattydale for 30 years.¹²

The last of the Baum property to be sold in the Mattydale area was Cynthia Baum's farm property along Bailey Road. This 97-acre farm was sold in 1891, by her son Dr. Henry Clay Baum, to Peter Michels.¹³ Henry grew up on Rose Lawn with his brother L. Frank Baum but at the time of the sale he was living with his mother in the city of Syracuse. Dr. Henry Clay Baum died on August 6, 1916 at a hospital in the city of Syracuse, at the age of 57 (4).¹⁴

So, here we have two Dr. Baums, some Baum family property, it was located on Bailey Road and the second Dr. Baum was living in Mattydale. With the exception of the moving of the house, here are all the basic elements of the story. Moving the house, at least in the story, might have been an attempt to link the two families together.

There might be a simple explanation for how these details got stuck together in a story. Stories passed down orally have a way of evolving as each teller, consciously or unconsciously, makes modifications to the story. The listeners also participate in this process by interpreting what they think they heard and sometimes making additional assumptions, based on facts that they know, when they retell the story. This evolution is not a linear process, it is more like a biological process. If five people hear the same story, at the same time, there will be five slightly different versions of this story as these five retell the story to the next generation of listeners. As these different versions are retold and evolve some will die out and others will continue to be retold. Unraveling the stories is impossible and all that can be done is to nail down the historical facts and then just speculate on how the story got scrambled.

Rose Lawn and Military Lot 3 Line

Rose Lawn was the name given to the original land purchased by Benjamin Baum in 1866. In addition to Rose Lawn itself, Baum purchased an adjacent farm to his north, called Spring Farm, which ran along between Bear Trap Creek and Route 11, then known as the Cicero Plank Road.

Standing in the middle of Kirsch's field and looking north you could see a line of trees that marked the northern boundary of the Kirsch farm. The line of trees ran east and west, and when extended east, all the way to Brewerton Road it followed the property line between a gas station and the Krueger Funeral Home on the west side of Brewerton road. This line was the southern boundary of old Military Lot 3 that was surveyed when the Military Tract had been laid out in the late 1700s, after the end of the Revolutionary War.

Rose Lawn itself was small, consisting of only 3.75 acres. It measured 330' east and west and 495' north and south.¹⁵ On the east side, its boundary went right down the middle of the present site of the south bound lane of Route 11. On the north side, the boundary was the south boundary of old Military Lot 3. The gas station was built much later on the original Rose Lawn property.

Starting at Rose Lawn, and continuing west along the southern Military Lot 3 boundary, past the confines of Rose Lawn itself, there was a single row of sporadically spaced trees. These marked the beginning of the fields to the north, passing behind the present day Roxboro Road schools. On the eastern end of the line there were sumac trees, with their familiar red shaped cones. Sloping gradually downhill, along the western end of the line, there were taller trees and finally Bear Trap Creek. North of this line was the location of the Baum farm known as Spring Farm. These were the Fields of Rose Lawn. Seen through the sumacs on the eastern half of the line, in the 1950s, they were covered with waist high weeds, growing wild, with the woods advancing up the western slope, reclaiming land some farmer had taken years ago.

The Witch's Shack

Before the trees in our yards grew tall and before the schools, that blocked our view, were built in the field behind our house, we could see a long way while just playing in the backyard. Looking to the northwest we could see horses running in a field across Bear Trap Creek. That was the Melvin property, and it still is in the hands of the Melvin family today as far as I know. When the horse ran down the sloping field, toward the creek, we thought it was coming after us. Mom assured us that there were fences around the field and that the horses couldn't get out.

We were too young to explore those distant fields for ourselves so we had to rely on what we saw, what our parents told us and on stories that we would make up. The scariest ones were always the best. I don't remember when the Witch Shack saga started but we all liked to tell stories about it. One year, during the week leading up to Halloween, I noticed the small wooden shack out in one of the fields beyond Kirsch's field. It was in the second field, beyond Kirsch's field, on slightly higher ground, and there was smoke coming from a small chimney that extended through the roof of the shack. The tiny, gray

colored, shack was really no more than a small one room structure. Saying it was 8' by 8' would be giving it the benefit of the doubt. To my young mind this was clearly a Witch's shack and she was obviously cooking up some evil brew in preparation for Halloween.

As the season moved deeper into fall the days grew shorter, the breezes were cooler and the smoke of burning leaves hung low, providing the neighborhood with an air of mystery. Add a full moon, a couple black cats and a few shadowy figures in the smoky distance and the stage was set for Halloween night.

The shack was still there come the next Halloween but I never saw smoke coming out of its chimney again. By the time we were old enough to explore the fields ourselves, the Witch's shack was gone. It had been located approximately where a pile of cut trees were located along the right side our trail through the fields. It might have been under that pile of trees - no one was ever brave enough, or fool hardy enough, to look. What would have been the purpose of that shack? We never figured it out, but for a while it scared us and that was purpose enough.

The Fields of Rose Lawn

The Woods

The trees along its banks are too few in number to constitute a forest. Even when we were young it was called “the Woods,” and never “the Forest.” The area has never been completely cleared and so it should exhibit many of the features found in virgin forests. I can remember crossing Bear Trap Creek on a natural bridge formed by a large fallen tree. The tree had fallen in a westerly direction and a large portion of its root system had been pulled out of the ground forming a natural ladder. We had to climb up and over



Figure 4. This aerial photo of the northwest section of Mattydale was taken in July 1966.¹⁶ A close look at Kirsch Drive shows evidence of a reversal of the tree situation in Mattydale. Kirsch Drive appears well populated with trees but the tall stately Elm trees that once lined the west side of Brewerton Road are all gone - victims of Dutch Elm disease. The Kirsch fields are now home to the Roxboro Middle and Elementary schools and the Salina Free Library, located at the corner of Belmont and Bernard Streets. Any evidence of the ball fields that had occupied the western end of the Kirsch fields, from 1952 until about 1959, is gone. St. Margaret's School now dominates the 100 block of Kirsch Drive on the northern side of the street. The Kirsch Compound on Brewerton Road is still intact. Bear Trap Creek now has a companion, in the form of Interstate 81 just to its west. Dominating the northern end of the Rose Lawn Fields is K-Mart Plaza. Between the schools and K-Mart Plaza is the last remaining portions of the Fields of Rose Lawn. All signs of prior cultivation are gone, the fields are overgrown with weeds. Much to the author's surprise this 1966 aerial photo clearly shows the trail that is the subject of this narrative. In its truncated version, as seen here, the trail extends from the NE corner of the Middle School parking lot to the back door of the short lived K-Mart Grocery store.

these roots to reach the now horizontal tree trunk. Here, and in other places, the pit and mound ground formations found in virgin forests were noticeable. These were seen on the west side of the creek. The east side was mostly new growth with a flat terrain that was easily walked.

The Trail

The trail started at a point behind the Roxboro Road Middle School. Walking through the waist high weeds, the trail was as familiar to us as it was well worn. The absence of trees over the upper portion of these fields gave evidence of recent cultivation but still at a time prior to our young memories. Our trek through the fields to the new Northern Lights shopping center (opened Nov. 16, 1955) had become a regular event. It was as much an adventure, and something to do, as it was a statement that we were old enough to cross the major highway on our own. The further away you could go from home, and the longer you could stay away, was a measure of how grown up you were.

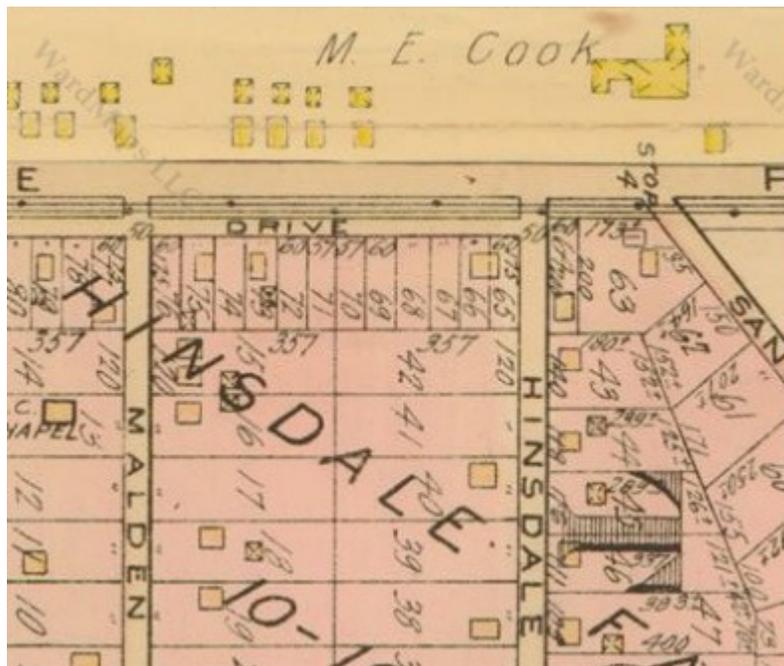


Figure 5. This map shows a portion of the northern section of Mattydale with north pointing to the right. The Hinsdale Tract is clearly visible on the map. Running across the top 1/3 of the map is a trio of transportation options. Starting from the top there was the Cicero Plank Road, the Electric Trolley was in the center, and Mattydale Drive was on the bottom. Note that Mattydale Drive ends at Hinsdale Drive. Sand Road comes in diagonally from the lower right corner of the map and ends at Trolley Stop 4. The top third of the map shows what was part of Benjamin Baum's Spring Farm. The large structure in the upper right corner is the old barn that was also seen on the 1874 map. It was the ruins of this structure that we called old Fort McKinley.

The first landmark on the trail was a familiar mound of downed trees and bushes, on our right, that had been cut down and piled up years before. The gradual westward slope of the land, down to the swamp, and to Bear Trap Creek that fed it, gave this pile the high

ground. To us it was a place to be avoided as it was home to bees and hornets that would attack anyone foolish enough to disturb them.

The Fields of Rose Lawn, at this point in time, were actually comprised of about four rectangular shaped fields running east to west.¹⁷ Old wooden fence posts and barbed wire traced out the east-west boundary lines but they showed years of neglect as they ran west into the encroaching tree growth and yet further in some areas into the swamp. Our trail took precedence over those aging boundaries, where the barbed wire had been neutralized by the frequent passage of young adventurers. In some places the fences were still in tact and provided a trellis for the grapes, raspberries and blackberries that had grown over the fences. The berries were tempting and we would stop to snack on them all during the summer while we waited on the grapes. We knew that after the first frost they would be especially delicious and then we would have to be quick before they disappeared. We weren't the only ones that traveled along that trail. It would not be too surprising if those berries and grapes were the surviving remnants of those grown at Rose Lawn by the Baum family over a century before.¹⁸

The Old Fort

Near the end of the trail the field narrowed as the trees encroached from the lower creek area on the west and also from the higher street direction on the east. It was at this point along the path that we had always noticed an overgrown stone structure a little way up the rise to the east. It was common knowledge among our crowd that these were the ruins of "Fort McKinley." This was a fort that had been burned by Indians the very day that it was finished and that explained why nothing had ever been written down about it - or so the legend went. One day, curiosity got the better of me and I climbed up the over grown walls of the structure to see what was inside. The part of the structure I approached consisted of two ruinous walls that met at a right angle, forming an "L," with the shorter bottom leg on the left, pointing at me. The first thing I noticed was that everything was made of stone. If there had been any wood in the structure it was long gone. The more I looked around the less it looked like a fort - inside there were what looked like stalls for animals. Then I realized this was the bottom half of some kind of barn. An uncle had a farm in Apulia Station, down in the town of Fabius, in the southern part of Onondaga County, so I knew what the inside of a barn looked like. The foundation of a barn was made out of stone and the upper structure was made out of wood. So, Fort McKinley was just some farmer's barn, which made more sense than the old fort story. But at the time I didn't know whose barn it was. Years later I figured out that this barn had been part of Spring Farm that had been owned by Benjamin Baum, the father of L. Frank Baum. The ownership of the structure was shown clearly on a 1874 map¹⁹ of the town of Salina. The shape of the structure was shown in more detail on a 1927 cadastral map of the town of Salina.²⁰ The presence of the barn on this second map is evidence that the barn was still in existence up until 1927. The L-shaped structure shown on the map matched the shape of the ruin that I had climbed over in the late 50s.



Figure 6. This aerial photo from 1951 shows the same region depicted in the 1927 map shown in Figure 5. Sand Road is coming in diagonally from the lower right hand corner. The small farm road directly across Brewerton Road, from where Sand Road intersects the main highway, is the present location of the main entrance to K-Mart Plaza. Just to the left of this farm road is the main homestead and just behind this homestead is the L-shaped barn shown in the 1927 map mentioned above. Other structures can be made out in this area but all traces of these other structures were gone by 1956-57 and the area was totally overgrown. The reason for their disappearance is uncertain at this time.

Destination - Northern Lights

Passing the “old fort,” we would continue our journey to the shopping center. At the extreme northern end of these fields, where the old trail ended at Route 11, there was mostly swamp, the tree growth had not proceeded that far. The area near the edges of the woods would sometimes be used as a dump. They were looking for the donation of hard fill but no one was on site to check the quality of the donations. Our young minds didn’t comprehend the signs. Where fill is wanted, development soon follows. All the area of the traffic circle and a portion of the shopping center area had been a swamp at one time. Old stories claim that quicksand could be found there.

Crossing Route 11, we entered the parking lot from the southwest and we came first to Acme. The supermarket was a welcome relief, especially on a hot day, the air conditioning and ice cold water fountain were just what we needed. After a quick check of the live lobsters in the water tank, in the meat department, we were on our way to the next store and made our usual round of visits to all our favorite stores.

The Return Trip Through the Swamp

On the way home from Northern Lights, instead of retracing our path, we would sometimes follow an old road that went through the swampy dump. The road then followed Bear Trap Creek south. The old road was on the west side of the woods and ran parallel and just east of Bear Trap Creek. It wasn't a real road, but more of a trail that had been worn down by the occasional passages of cars or trucks. The two evenly spaced ruts showed that cars, trucks or perhaps even tractors had used the trail. There was some evidence that an attempt had been made to add fill to improve the trail.

As we moved through the swampy area we passed the pond that, when frozen over in the winter, provided an excellent area for ice skating. We would check out the cattails around the pond and in other areas of the swamp to see if they were ready for harvesting. We would cut the cattails and then let them dry out in our garages before they were ready for smoking. Smoking a cattail actually meant just holding it in your mouth while it burned. They didn't smell all that good but the smoke helped keep the mosquitoes away. In a way we were like young farmers who didn't need to plant, we just harvested what Mother Nature had provided.

The History of Spring Farm

Introduction

The Fields of Rose Lawn is name that I have given to Benjamin Baum's farm that was known as Spring Farm. After buying Rose Lawn itself in 1866, Baum added to his holdings with the purchase of Spring Farm and some additional farmland further north, along Bailey Road. Spring Farm consisted of about 134 acres and the Bailey Road land contained of 97 acres. The family fortunes fell upon hard times and in 1880 Baum lost Rose Lawn and Spring Farm at a foreclosure sale. The farmland on Bailey Road was in his wife Cynthia's name and was not subject to the foreclosure action. At the foreclosure sale, Benjamin's son, L. Frank Baum purchased Rose Lawn for his mother. At the same foreclosure sale, George Nellis Crouse, Sr., had purchased Spring Farm. The property remained in the Crouse family for over two decades. The fate of Rose Lawn itself will be covered in another section.

Exactly what the Crouse family did with Spring Farm has not been determined. A farm left unused will become overgrown and the buildings will decay and become unusable and decrease in value. The Crouses were city people, they were not farmers. Perhaps the land had been leased out, but no record of that activity has been found. In December 1901²¹ the Crouses offered Spring Farm for sale or rent. George Sr. and his wife had both died in 1899 and so it was George Jr. and his sister who were trying to sell the property. Frank Matty took them up on the offer and was renting Spring Farm as early as September 1902²². Matty already owned land in the town of Salina. In June 1900²³ he had bought the Zimmer Farm, on the northeast corner of the Cicero Plank Road and Molloy Road, at a foreclosure sale after the death of Silas R. Zimmer's widow in mid 1899²⁴.

Matty and His Hogs

Matty wouldn't establish his residence in Salina until early 1913, but he did need a home for his string of trotters. Matty had a half-mile track built on the old Zimmer farm less than six months after he bought the property. He also used the farms to raise hogs which had free city garbage hauled right to their doorstep. Through his influence as an Alderman on the Syracuse Common Council and his close friendship with Sim Dunfee, the controlling power at the Syracuse Reduction Company, Matty's hogs were the recipients of four wagonloads of city garbage everyday. This was almost 16% of the total garbage collected daily, in the early part of that decade. In April 1904 Frank Matty bought Spring Farm from George Nellis Crouse and his sister Marletta Crouse. During 1902 - 1903 his free garbage situation had been thoroughly aired²⁵ (no pun intended) in the papers and Dunfee's support for continuing the practice proved insurmountable. This might have given Matty the confidence to buy Spring Farm, that, up until that time, he had only been renting.

Matty's popularity at the ballot box was waning and on December 24, 1904 his descent from the peak of political power in the city of Syracuse, began to accelerate. On that day, his friend and benefactor, Sim Dunfee, died unexpectedly²⁶. Dunfee had been the immovable object that ensured Frank Matty's uninterrupted flow of city garbage for his hogs. With his friend gone, Matty's free garbage probably came to an end and he had to

contract with restaurants for their garbage, like most other hog farmers always had to do. This drove up his operating costs and probably influenced his decision to sell Spring Farm a little over a year and a half after he had purchased it.

Peter Michels

At the end of December 1905, the Syracuse Herald reported that Frank Matty had sold Spring Farm to Peter Michels²⁷. In 1901 Dr. Henry Clay Baum, L. Frank Baum's, younger brother had sold his mother Cynthia's property up on Bailey Road to Michels²⁸. With the purchase from Matty, Michels was able to enlarge his operation that also involved raising hogs. In 1908 Michels was still selling hogs on Baum's old Spring Farm²⁹. In 1914, a fire burned down the homestead on Spring Farm while Michels was in the city, but the stables and the other structures were saved³⁰.

Murns E. Cook

Murns E. Cook had sold his farm in the Niles Settlement area in the southwest corner of the town of Lebanon in Madison County in March 1923³¹ and moved to the town of Salina. A September 1924³² news item described M. E. Cook as a farmer on South Bay Road. The 1927 G. M. Hopkins Map of Onondaga County showed that M. E. Cook owned the property that was known as the old Baum Spring Farm³³. Sometime between 1923 and 1927, Murns E. Cook took over the ownership of Spring Farm. It isn't known at the present time if Cook purchased the farm from Michels or someone else.

In the 1930 census³⁴ there was a Murns E. Cook living on Brewerton Road, two entries away from John Kirsch. However, Murns Cook listed his occupation as a Salesman and reported that he was not living on a farm.

Spring Farm was never broken up for residential development, like what had taken place on most of the other farms in that area of the town of Salina, with the exception of a few lots along the main road. Murns came on the scene just as the wave of residential development was building, but he doesn't appear to have been bitten by the development bug. The Depression of the 1930s slowed the flames of development and World War II put them out completely by forbidding any civilian construction during the war.

Niles Drive was a short road that went nowhere as it projected westward from Brewerton Road, just north of Campbell Road. It ran along the north side of Dr. Wester's house and veterinarian hospital in the 1960s (now the Mattydale Animal Hospital). It is now called Endres Drive and it serves as the entrance to the Orchard Estates apartment complex. From the old Sports-O-Rama (now the Action Sports and Skate Center), that was built on the Rose Lawn site, to the Northern Lights traffic circle, this was Benjamin Baum's old Spring Farm. In 1927, Murns E. Cook and his wife, the former Ethel Niles, were the owners of the farm. This short street was named after her family. The Niles family was one of the original settlers of the town of Lebanon in Madison County, NY. There is a region in the southwest corner of the town of Lebanon, called The Niles Settlement, where these Niles families first settled.

Mattydale Cica 1952

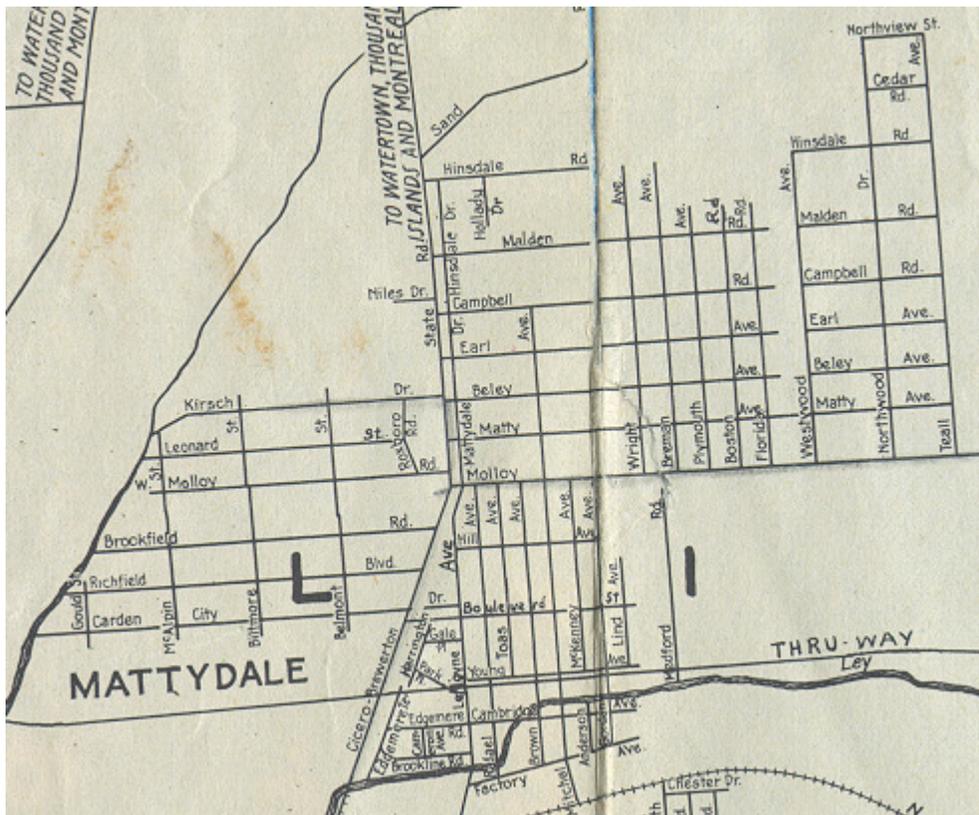


FIGURE 7. The map shown above was found in the back of a 1952 Syracuse City Directory³⁵, however the information on the map might precede that date by a few years. Niles Drive was more of a private road, no residences faced the short road and no driveways connected to it. What is now the northbound lane of Brewerton Road was then called Mattydale Drive and Hinsdale Drive. These were the names of the two residential developments for which these streets formed the western boundaries. The southbound lane of Brewerton Road was called the Cicero Brewerton Road. This modern road replaced the old Cicero Plank Road in 1914. The area between these two roads was the former location of the Trolley or Electric Railroad as it was called. The trolleys ran from 1912 until 1938, and were then replaced with the Syracuse-Oswego bus line. This trolley area became the median between the north and southbound lanes of Route 11. North of Mattydale the old trolley track beds became South Bay Road.

An aerial photo of the old Spring Farm area, from October 15, 1951, showed the main house, a large barn and several other structures that all looked in reasonably good shape. What happened between 1951 and 1956 is not known but by 1956 only the foundation of the stables remained and what might have been the main house, where a family was living. No one would have suspected that an active farm had been operating on that spot for over 100 years. In just over five years, almost all traces of Spring Farm had disappeared or had been reclaimed by nature. From the main road it appeared to be an impenetrable forest and although the trees were not all that large, they were spaced closely enough to prevent anyone from seeing very deeply into the property.

The Vanishing of the Fields

Development Sets In

As the Fields shrunk – so did our world – or maybe we were just growing up? The trend began with the baseball fields on the western end of the field that John Kirsch had been farming. In the spring of 1952 three baseball fields were constructed through volunteer labor and donated materials. Once the ball fields opened, the Kirsch family stopped planting in the fields behind our house on Kirsch Drive. My Dad coached the J&J Hardware Little League team with Ray King from the opening season at least through the 1959 season. For a while the Roxboro Road Junior High shared the former Kirsch fields with the ballpark. By 1959 the ball fields had moved to their permanent home on the eastern side of Mattydale.

All of these changes were part of a trend that was about to affect our fields. Just as nature abhors a vacuum, real estate development hates empty land. In 1962 or 1963, the northern portion of our world was removed by the excavation for the construction of K-Mart Plaza. The ruins of old “Fort McKinley” disappeared in the name of progress, however it is still possible to find its former location. At the time I had scaled the stone ruins to determine its true nature I could see a house, through the trees beyond the barn, in the direction of Brewerton Road. It was a gray frame house and there was only one house along that stretch of road. When the plaza was first constructed that homeowner didn’t sell and the house remained an island between the two Brewerton Road entrances to the plaza. That island is still there, but the house is now gone, having been replaced by a Goodyear Service Center. The old barn had been located right behind the present location of that store.

On the eastern end of the new K-Mart was a grocery store that was operated under the K-Mart name but in some way it was connected to the P&C food stores in the area. The food shipments came from the P&C warehouse. I worked at that K-Mart grocery store from July 4, 1964 until the spring of 1965. On my way to and from work I would walk through the remaining fields of Rose Lawn along our old trail that now led right to the back door of the K-Mart grocery store.

The land was in the process of transitioning and so was I. My job at K-Mart continued into my senior year of high school. Walking through the Fields of Rose Lawn, going to work each day, was symbolic of the transition from childhood to adulthood. The journey after work, through the fields of my youth, took me back home again. It is somewhat ironic that my first real job would be in a store built on the Fields of Rose Lawn where I had played as a child.

There was now a steep drop off in the trail behind the K-Mart store. During site preparation the eastern end of the site had been graded down to provide fill for the swampy western side of the site. A similar process had been carried out years before at the Northern Lights site. The result of this grading operation can also be traced in the drop off around the island where the Goodyear Service Center is located. This provided a steep slope to the eastern end of the K-Mart Plaza parking lot.

By the Spring of 1965 we were all rolling down the steep slope of the K-Mart parking lot on our home made skate boards – back when kids had to make their own toys. The skateboard craze had just started and there were no commercially available skateboards, at least not in Mattydale. Those metal wheels that had been cannibalized from our childhood “over the shoe” skates didn’t hold corners very well. So, in those early days of the sport we contented ourselves with speed rather than fancy maneuvers. They might have taken away part of our fields but we still found a way to play there.

The Coming of the Apartments

Sometime around 1967, most of the remaining fields, the actual Fields of Rose Lawn, were plowed up one last time. The encroaching forest was pushed back towards the creek as far as was practical and some fill was added to the lower lying swampy areas. On this newly reclaimed land the construction of the Orchard Estates apartments began. In the days of L. Frank Baum, on Rose Lawn and Spring Farm there had been orchards in this area but not in recent memory had any orchards occupied this land. The choice for the name of the apartment complex was probably just a coincidence since at that time the exact location of the old Baum property was not generally known.

It had been years since we had followed that trail through the Fields of Rose Lawn and it was seldom that I had even thought about them. However, when the final section of the fields was cleared for the construction of the apartments I felt that something had been lost.

The Old Rural Inn at Rose Lawn

The Old Rural Inn

The land that would become Rose Lawn was purchased by Benjamin Baum, in 1866. His son, L. Frank Baum, was 12 years when the family finally moved to that site in 1868,³⁶ just north of the Syracuse city line, in an area that would later become known as Mattydale. The delay in was due to the fact Benjamin was building the home in which they would live.³⁷ Cynthia, Benjamin's wife, chose the name Rose Lawn because of the large number of rose bushes they found growing on the property.

In addition to Rose Lawn itself, Baum purchased an adjacent farm to his north, called Spring Farm, that extended north and south between Bear Trap Creek and Route 11. The family home became a landmark on that stretch of the road. "It was one of the most conspicuous on the road, being a 3-story structure, with a large veranda in front and on the north side. The grounds were always kept up in first-rate condition."³⁸

Cynthia Baum sold Rose Lawn to Alfretta Kelley in 1887, shortly after the death of her husband Benjamin.³⁹ At that time Alfretta's husband James was operating a restaurant on Warren St., in Syracuse. The Kelley's set about turning the Rose Lawn residence into a roadhouse. The Kelley's ran the business for several years and in 1892 Alfretta sold the roadhouse to Thomas Brady who continued its operation. In March 1898 Brady lost the roadhouse to his creditors.⁴⁰

Lizzie Gannon became the owner of the property in 1898, having purchased it from Brady's creditors, and she also operated it as a roadhouse. On February 24, 1899, at about 7:30 in the evening, a kerosene oil lamp in the kitchen fell on the floor and broke. The oil ignited and in a few minutes the whole kitchen was on fire. Lizzie and the other occupants left quickly and attempted to get help in putting out the fire. Help arrived and a bucket brigade was formed, but it was mainly a battle to save the barns behind the house. They managed to save the barns but "the house was burned to the ground."⁴¹

In the first years of the new century, the old fire ravaged Baum residence was replaced by a similar structure. Mrs. Hattie A. Hallock bought the old Baum Rose Lawn property for speculation purposes on May 4, 1900.⁴² Her brother-in-law, John J. Hallock, owned a construction company and he might have been the one who actually built the new hotel. On October 4, 1901 Harry Jeffs purchased the property with a hotel on it and he called it the Central Hotel.⁴³ The property was offered for sale again between May and October of 1902.⁴⁴ By May 14, 1903 George Shimer was the owner of the old Rose Lawn property.⁴⁵ At some time between May 1903 and February 1904 Theodore Faatz took over the operation of the property but Shimer retained ownership. Faatz ran the roadhouse under the name the Old Rural Inn but many referred to it as Faatz's Hotel. He purchased the property in 1914⁴⁶ and continued to own the property until 1923.⁴⁷

After Faatz ended his long and colorful association with the property, several owners came and went. In the first half of the 1940s it was operated as the Normandie Inn. There

were several more owners after that and by 1956 Vincent Gatto was living and operating a restaurant in the structure formerly known as the Old Rural Inn.

Gatto's Restaurant

My first exposure to pizza was as a child in the 1950's. Early one morning, before anyone else was up, while searching in the kitchen for something to eat, I found a thin, square, white box that said Gatto's on top. Inside were curved pieces of what appeared to be some kind of bread. They had some tomato sauce on one edge and they tasted great. Upon asking my parents what these were, I discovered I had been eating the scraps of pizza crust left over from the night before. My parents had been entertaining their friends Dick and Eileen Mulcahy from nearby Collamer, and these were their scraps. After some typical begging, my parents finally started buying pizza for us and I didn't have to satisfy myself with the scraps anymore.

We had just started a family ritual with pizza from Gatto's, but it didn't last long. Sometimes my father would let me go with him when he went to get our pizza. I always had to wait in the car so I never got into Gatto's Restaurant itself. A fire at Gatto's soon stopped our pizzas for a while.

The First Gatto's Fire

That first fire started in the basement of Gatto's around 1:45 PM on October 15, 1957. I was in 5th grade at the time in St. Margaret's School, located on the other side of Kirsch Dairy, south of Gatto's. Unfortunately, I was on the west side of the school building and was totally unaware that there was a fire nearby. It happened after lunch so we were all back in our classroom, being bored to death by one of the oldest Franciscan nuns we had ever seen. She was so old that she couldn't even remember our names so everyone was either "Suzy" or "Johnny." We were desperate for any kind of diversion. A fire would have been GREAT - but we couldn't see it from our side of the building. As luck would have it all the desks in the classrooms on the east side of the building were facing south, so they wouldn't have been able to see the fire either.

The Second Gatto's Fire

On the night of April 19, 1958 I was awakened by the sound of sirens from the local Mattydale Volunteer Fire Department. It wasn't unusual to hear sirens at night but this time they just seemed to keep going off, which meant that there was a really big fire. I got out of bed and looked out of our west facing upstairs window and, off to the north, the sky was a shimmering reddish color. Somewhere to the east, and nearby, there was a big fire. Wandering down the stairs, I went to ask my parents what was going on, but they weren't there. I looked out the front windows and then out the back windows, but they were nowhere to be found. So, being curious I threw some clothes on, over my pajamas, and headed up Kirsch Drive toward the glowing northeastern sky. Quite a few of the neighbors were headed in the same direction so I figured I would probably run into my parents further up the street. At Kirsch and Belmont we took a left turn and headed north on Belmont into an area free of houses so we could get a better view. Now I could see that it was Gatto's restaurant that was on fire - again. It lit up the eastern half of the night sky. Even at a young age I could see that this was a lost cause and the firemen were

trying to control the fire more than put it out. Since this was the second fire at the restaurant this fire was just finishing what the first one had started back in October. The real concern was probably the gas station just north of the restaurant. The neighbor to the south was the old Kirsch Family homestead on Brewerton Road but they had a buffer area, in the form of a large garden, they planted every year along Brewerton Road.

I must have watched the fire for about a half-hour and not having found my parents I decided to head back home. When I walked in the door they were both sitting in the living room and looked very surprised to see me. They had thought I was upstairs asleep. It turned out that when they heard the sirens they went into the back yard to see what was burning. They walked up a couple houses to speak to some other neighbors and that was why I didn't see them in our backyard. I did a little fast-talking as I worked my way across the living room and back upstairs to bed. I don't remember any consequences from my late night excursion.

After The Fires

Each of the area Volunteer Fire Departments had their traditional week for holding their Field Days. The Mattydale VFD held theirs in mid-August and the Hinsdale VFD was earlier – around the end of June, but before the 4th of July. In 1959 the Hinsdale Fire Department held their annual Field Days on the Rose Lawn property. After the second fire the property was cleared and this provided a large empty lot just large enough to accommodate the annual Field Day event. It somehow seemed appropriate that after fires had destroyed the structures of Rose Lawn that a group of firemen would hold their Field Days there. For a few days at the end of their traditional week (Thursday, Friday and Saturday) a traveling carnival would set up their rides and tents on this empty piece of land where Gatto's Restaurant had been. When I was 12, I thought these were the greatest events going, but my interest began to wane after I entered high school. The location was later occupied by new construction in the form of the Sports-O-Rama during the summer and fall of 1959. Today it is home to Action Sports & Skate, a successor to that original sports venue.

The Fields of Rose Lawn Today

The Silent Witness

Even with all the surrounding development Bear Trap Creek just flows on as it has for centuries. Starting further north, just past Northern Lights Shopping Center, the creek meanders along the northern edge of that ever-evolving retail complex. It then winds its way through the traffic circle and along the western edge of K-Mart Plaza. It is only a narrow strip of land, about 150 feet in width, at its widest, and is sandwiched between the western edge of Mattydale and Interstate 81. This strip of land, extending south where it joins Ley Creek, is probably one of the last portions of undeveloped land in Mattydale. The tree growth cycles there have been uninterrupted since the days when the entire area was covered with forests and the Indians commanded the land.

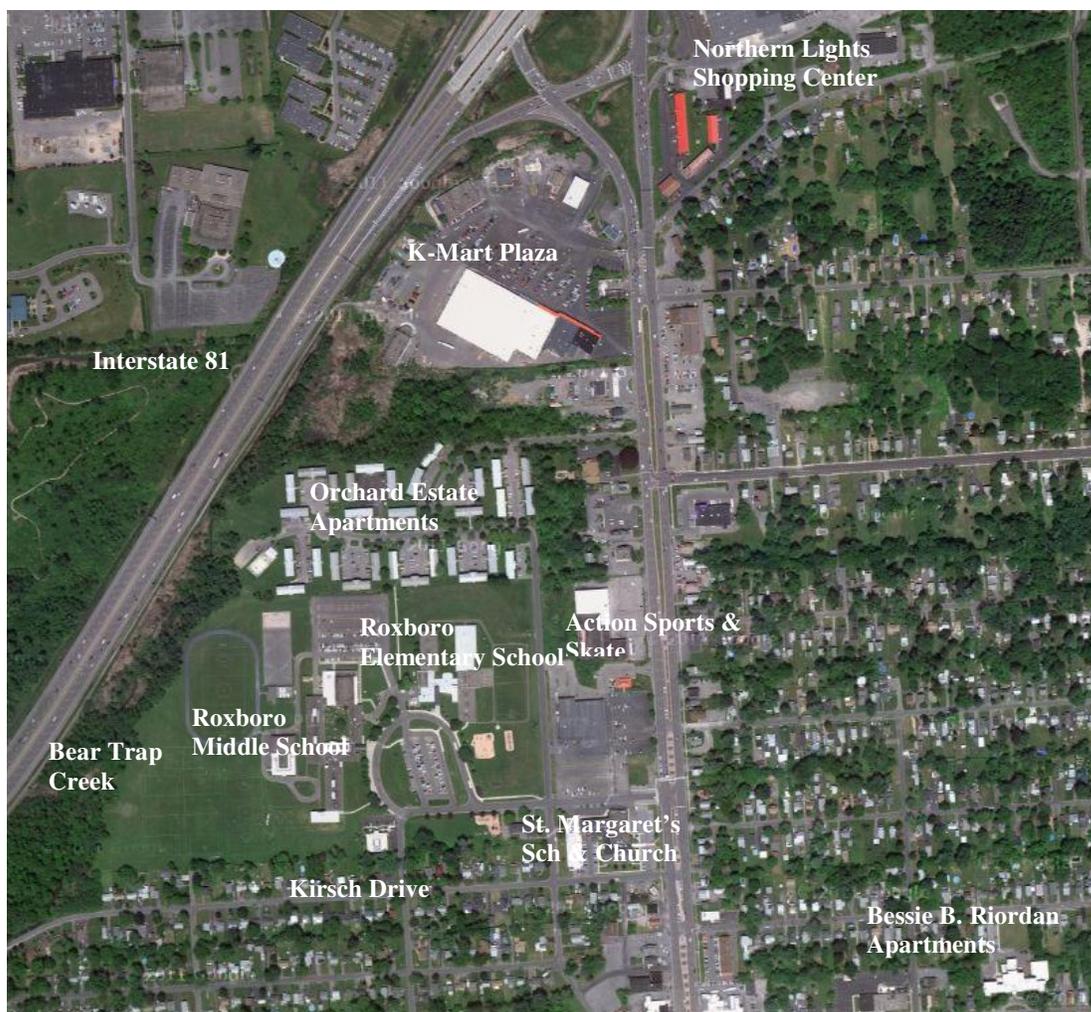


Figure 8. This is a recent satellite photo of the northwestern section of Mattydale today. The resolution is noticeably better than the old aerial photos from the 50s and 60s. The stark emptiness of Brewerton Road jumps out of the center of the photo. The emptiness due to the loss of the stately elms has been magnified by the large parking lots of the various businesses whose buildings are set back from the highway. In 1951 the elms, the houses and the few businesses that were there, crowded the road and made it hardly visible.

Gone And Almost Forgotten

The southern boundary of old Military Lot 3 can still be identified. It separates the Roxboro school grounds from the Orchard States Apartments. There is still a line of trees marking that remnant of the post-Revolutionary War days when the Military Tract was laid out. The old green house behind the Rose Lawn house was located where the eastern wing of the Roxboro Road Elementary School now stands. The stone barn that was part of L. Frank Baum's Spring Farm was located just behind the Goodyear store at the Sand Road entrance to K-Mart Plaza. Trolley Stop 3A was at Campbell Road, right across the Cicero Plank Road from the Rose Lawn residence.

During the summer of 1968 I worked for the U.S. Post Office and was assigned to the Mattydale office. My job was to take the place of the various regular carriers while they were on vacation. That provided an opportunity for me to visit just about every neighborhood in Mattydale to renew my mental images of all the old places. The new Orchard Estates Apartments were on one of the mail routes that I covered during that summer. I didn't realize it then, but as I was going from building to building, delivering the mail, I was walking through the "Fields of Rose Lawn" for the last time.

Rose Lawn itself might be gone but it lives on in the memories of those of us who are able to connect our youthful adventures with the remnants of its overgrown fields. We didn't see it in its glory years, but we did get to play there as we were growing up.

The Last Hurrah

The first fire at Gatto's, in October 1957, took place only 11 days after the Russians had launched Sputnik 1 into orbit around the earth. Gatto's Restaurant had been the latest, and the last, reincarnation of the old Rural Inn, located on the Baum family's former Rose Lawn property, on the old Cicero Plank Road. It was a reminder of an era that had ended long ago. The following Spring, in the cool night air, as we watched a second fire complete the destruction of the old Rural Inn, Sputnik was no longer in orbit. Despite the prediction of its early demise, it had stayed in orbit until early January 1958. The U.S. had launched Vanguard 1 on St. Patrick's Day in 1958. Vanguard was a much smaller sphere than Sputnik. The Space Race had begun and was only six months old. If the fire had not lit up the sky that April night we might have been able to see the satellite pass over.⁴⁸ But that night belonged to old Rose Lawn. It was a bygone era's last attempt to be noticed, by temporarily out shining one of the small silver spheres that were about to change everything.

Endnotes

-
- ¹ *Trolley Stops 2, 3 and 4*, by Helen Burnham, self published 1994;
The Family of the Wizard, The Baum Family of Syracuse, by Susan Ferrara, Ph.D., Xlibris Corporation, 2000;
A thirteen page, loose leaf, research paper on the History of Mattydale by Gertrude Duplessis, "Taken from files in Onondaga Historical Association." Date: prior to 1956; Helen Burham also found some of the work by Duplessis, as she mentioned in her book, she found "...a six-page typewritten essay compiled by a Mrs. Duplessis at an unknown date on file at the Salina Free Library..."
- ² *Buys a Farm*, The Evening Telegram, Syracuse, NY, June 21, 1900. The article describes a "mortgage foreclosure of the ninety acre Cushing farm." The legal action was the Cushing estate foreclosing on the Zimmer estate. Both parties were deceased. It was the Zimmer farm and Samuel R. Cushing of Cicero, NY, had provided a mortgage to Zimmer. Matty was always playing an angle. It isn't certain where he was headed with this but he took title to the old Zimmer farm "in the name of Anson E. Alvord."
- ³ http://www.beakandskiff.com/bea2_100thanniversary.html
- ⁴ In the spring of 1942 the persons whose property was needed for the Air Base were notified by mail that they had 30 days to vacate their property. The Government decided the value of the property and that amount was deposited into an account for the property owner. Many disagreed with the value of their property as determined by the Government. At least one property owner didn't settle with the Government on the price until the war was long over. *Two Clearing Houses To Help Families Move*, Syracuse Herald Journal, Syracuse, NY, March 15, 1942. *Valuation of \$101,296 Put On Farm Property*, The Syracuse Post Standard, Syracuse, NY, April 18, 1946. *Mautz Gets \$85,300 for Air Base Land*, The Syracuse Herald Journal, Syracuse, NY, May 18, 1947.
- ⁵ By streets: Kirsch - 10; Leonard - 7; W. Molloy - 13 and Roxboro - 1. South of Molloy: Brookfield - 43; Gould - 4; Richfield - 58 and Garden City - 60.
- ⁶ The Syracuse Herald American, Syracuse, NY, February 22, 1942. The houses consisted of a full basement and all on one floor: large living room, kitchen, 2 bedrooms and a bathroom. The unfinished attic had space for 2 more bedrooms. The main structure was 24' by 30' plus an attached garage.
- ⁷ G. M. Hopkins, Map of the City of Syracuse and Suburbs, Onondaga County, NY, 136-138 South Fourth St., Philadelphia, PA, 1927. Wardmaps LLC.
<http://www.wardmaps.com/browse.php?world=0&cont=1&count=1&state=5&city=307>
- ⁸ New York Aerial Photographs, Cornell University. Photo: ARX-3H-24, 10-15-1951
<http://aerial-ny.library.cornell.edu/photos/onondaga/1951/arx-3h-24>

-
- ⁹ *Dr. Baum Memorial Rite Sunday*, Post Standard, Syracuse, NY, August 22, 1969.
- ¹⁰ *The Family of the Wizard, The Baum Family of Syracuse*, by Susan Ferrara, Ph.D., Xlibris Corporation, 2000, p. 11 - “The Baum clan had come to America during the Palatine wave of immigration during the 1700s and settled in the Mohawk Valley.”
- ¹¹ *Old Road House Burned*, The Evening Herald, Syracuse, NY, February 25, 1899.
- ¹² *Dr. Baum Memorial Rite Sunday*, Post Standard, Syracuse, NY, August 22, 1969.
- ¹³ *The Family of the Wizard, The Baum Family of Syracuse*, by Susan Ferrara, Ph.D., Xlibris Corporation, 2000, p. 148.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 164
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 81-82
- ¹⁶ New York Aerial Photographs, Cornell University. Photo: ARX-3GG-44, 7-1-1966
<http://aerial-ny.library.cornell.edu/photos/onondaga/1966/ax-3gg-44>
- ¹⁷ It has not been determined if this field structure had been present during Baum’s ownership.
- ¹⁸ *The Family of the Wizard, The Baum Family of Syracuse*, by Susan Ferrara, Ph.D., Xlibris Corporation, 2000, p. 79.
- ¹⁹ This is a link to the 1874 Onondaga County Map Atlas.
<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures84/1874onondaga.html>
- ²⁰ G. M. Hopkins, Map of the City of Syracuse and Suburbs, Onondaga Co., NY. 136-138 South Fourth St., Philadelphia. PA, 1927. - Wardmaps LLC.
<http://www.wardmaps.com/browse.php?world=0&cont=1&count=1&state=5&city=307>
- ²¹ *Farm For Sale or Rent*, Syracuse Journal, Syracuse, NY, December 30, 1901.
- ²² *Pigs Will Not Hunger*, The Evening Herald, Syracuse, NY, September 12, 1902.
- ²³ The Evening Telegram, Syracuse, NY, June 21, 1900.
- ²⁴ *Died at Sixty-Eight*, Post Standard, Syracuse, NY, July 13, 1899.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*; *Disposal of City Garbage*, Syracuse Journal, Syracuse, NY, January 19, 1903; *Dr. Smith Says City Has the Best Case*, The Evening Telegram, Syracuse, NY, May 16, 1903.

-
- ²⁶ *John Dunfee Dies; Shock To The City*, The Post Standard, Syracuse, NY, December 26, 1904.
- ²⁷ *He Will Improve Another He Owns and May Live There Later*, The Syracuse Herald, Syracuse, NY, December 30, 1905.
- ²⁸ *The Family of the Wizard, The Baum Family of Syracuse*, by Susan Ferrara, Ph.D., Xlibris Corporation, 2000, p. 148.
- ²⁹ *For Sale-Pigs From 4 To 5 Weeks Old*, The Herald, Syracuse, NY, March 1908.
- ³⁰ *Flames Quickly Destroy House*, The Post Standard, Syracuse, NY, December 17, 1914.
- ³¹ *South Lebanon* - The DeRuyter Gleaner, DeRuyter, NY, March 8, 1923.
- ³² The Syracuse Journal, Syracuse, NY, September 23, 1924.
- ³³ G. M. Hopkins, Map of the City of Syracuse and Suburbs, Onondaga Co., NY. 136-138 South Fourth St., Philadelphia. PA, 1927. - Wardmaps LLC.
<http://www.wardmaps.com/browse.php?world=0&cont=1&count=1&state=5&city=307>
- ³⁴ 1930 NY Onondaga Salina - T626-1625-81B
- ³⁵ The map was published and copyrighted by R. L. Polk and Co. Inc. The base map was furnished by Planning, Park and Recreation. F. E. Maine, Delineator.
- ³⁶ *The Family of the Wizard, The Baum Family of Syracuse*, by Susan Ferrara, Ph.D., Xlibris Corporation, 2000, p. 82.
- ³⁷ “The house was built a number of years ago by Benjamin Baum.”; *Old Road House Burned*, The Evening Herald, Syracuse, NY, February 25, 1899.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ The detailed ownership information came from Sue Ferrara’s research (*The Family of the Wizard, The Baum Family of Syracuse*, by Susan Ferrara, Ph.D., Xlibris Corporation, 2000) and the newspaper article *Old Road House Burned*, The Evening Herald, Syracuse, NY, February 25, 1899.
- ⁴⁰ *Old Road House Burned*, The Evening Herald, Syracuse, NY, February 25, 1899.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² The Post Standard, Syracuse, NY, May 4, 1900.

⁴³ *Harry Jeffs Sells Out in Cleveland and Locates Permanently in Syracuse*, The Evening Telegram, Syracuse, NY, October 4, 1901.

⁴⁴ The Evening Telegram, Syracuse, May 18, 1902; The Evening Telegram, Syracuse, NY, May 23, 1902; The Telegram, Syracuse, NY, October 6, 1902.

⁴⁵ *Raid By Sheriff and His Deputies*, The Post Standard, Syracuse, NY, May 14, 1903; *Shimer's Place Raided*, The Auburn Bulletin, Auburn, NY, May 14, 1903.

⁴⁶ *The Family of the Wizard, The Baum Family of Syracuse*, by Susan Ferrara, Ph.D., Xlibris Corporation, 2000, p. 88.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁴⁸ As nostalgic as all that sounds, satellite watching was not all that easy. To see them you first needed to know when and where the satellite was expected to show up. In the early days of the space age a satellite would be launched and then the next problem would be to find out where it was. That required figuring out the orbit because there was the planned orbit and then there was the actual orbit. Sputnik was only about 23 inches in diameter and could not be seen with the naked eye, even in the night sky. Once its orbit was determined, its appearances could be predicted and fortunately the rocket that had launched Sputnik was in the same orbit - just 5 minutes ahead of the satellite. It was the light reflected from that rocket that most people saw, unless they were using binoculars or telescopes and viewing the night sky. At the time of the second fire (April 19, 1958) there were two artificial satellites in orbit: Explorer 1 and Vanguard 1 - both U.S. launched. Explorer was cylindrical in shape while Vanguard was spherical like Sputnik 1. The Vanguard was smaller than Sputnik, being only 6.4 inches in diameter and weighing only 3.2 lbs compared to Sputnik's 184 lbs. As such there was even less chance of seeing the Vanguard satellite pass over. Ironically, the Vanguard 1 satellite was smaller and lighter than the bowling balls in use in the bowling alleys in the back of Gatto's Restaurant. Note [Bowling balls can be between 8.500 and 8.595 inches in diameter and must weigh no more than 16 lbs. There is no minimum weight]. While Sputnik's orbital decay was about 3 months, Vanguard's is about 240 years. It's still up there with 186 years to go, unless it hits something.

This was all new to most people who might have viewed planets in the night sky but never these new "moons," as they were called before the term satellite caught on. People also didn't understand how they stayed in orbit with no source of power to propel them. The whole world was about to get a good dose of Newtonian mechanics as we all learned the elements of space flight over the next decade.