

The History of Mattydale

Revised August 20, 2013

This collection of papers, describing the history of Mattydale, was given to my 6th grade class when I was a student at St. Margaret's Catholic School during the 1959-60 school year. It appears to be a research paper by Gertrude Duplessis, "taken from the files in Onondaga Historical Association." It consists of 13 mimeographed 8.5 by 11 inch pages that I stapled together around the time they came into my possession. A yellow sheet of construction paper was the front cover and a piece of cardboard from the back of a tablet served as the back cover. The pages are organized into sections I, II, III, IV, V and XI plus two pages on St. Margaret's Church that do not contain any section numbers and might have been added by the Sisters of St. Francis who ran the school at that time.

I am fairly certain that these are all the papers that I was given and do not know what happened to sections VI, VII, VIII, IX and X or if there were any sections after section XI. It is my speculation that some other author excerpted material from the research paper by Duplessis. However, there is no indication as to who that other author might be and I can't remember anything being said about the authorship of these papers at the time I received them.

With the exception of the excellent little book by the late Helen Burnham, *Trolley Stops Two, Three & Four*, (1994) and the original Duplessis research paper this is the only history of Mattydale that I have been able to find.

In what follows I have transcribed the content of those papers, only correcting typos and obvious misspellings. If all the information in those papers is assumed to originate in the Duplessis paper then it might be possible to establish an approximate date for the writing of the Duplessis paper

Salina Library – (Burnham 2,3,4) - In 1947 John Kirsch donated land at 107 W. Molloy Road for a library. At a later date Mr. Fred Bauer arranged for a building in Skaneateles that could be had for the taking to be moved to the Mattydale location. No hint as to the time interval between these two events is given in the Burnham book. But from a newspaper article in the Syracuse Herald Journal (Jan. 22, 1986) the Salina Free Library was operating at the W. Molloy location in 1948.

In these papers the land had been donated and "Some day there'll be a new library building," (Section IV Salina Free Library) but the building had not been acquired. From Section II, "It is likely that after January 1, 1946 busses will operate up East Molloy Road. "

Hence the Duplessis paper was written or at least used sources that were from 1945.

Section 1

Early History and Settlers of Mattydale (See Note)

Late as 1800, bears, wolves, deer and all kinds of wild birds were in abundance in the area between Ley and Bear Trap Creeks. Eel and salmon lived in these waters.

The Indians chose camp sites between these two streams. Battles were waged against the French along the banks and as an evidence of the fact, flint arrow heads and other Indian relics have been found on the farms of Kirsch, Wright, Matty, and Malloy. Father LeMoynes traveled the waters of Ley Creek.

The early white settlers found farming not too difficult, for the land was extremely level and the soil productive. The settlers, chiefly farmers, were not too far distant from Syracuse where their produce could be readily sold.

Some of the very earliest settlers had names such as Adams, Lynch, Phillips, Malloy, Gere, and there were others. Richard Adams had a commission for building the Salina and Central Square Plank Road.¹

Besides farming, some of these residents had interests in the salt business along Onondaga Lake.

In the early 1840's there were large nurseries which were operated by Smith, Thorpe, and Hantchett.²

Pre-Mattydale was chiefly devoted to agriculture until the coming of Frank Matty in the 1900's.

Today, the only outstanding farm in Mattydale belongs to John Kirsch, also an early settler. He and his sons conduct a large dairy business which is located on Brewerton Road.

Note: Research paper by Gertrude Duplessis
Taken from files in Onondaga Historical Association

¹ "Onondaga Centennial" – Dwight H. Bruce – The Boston Historical Co. Publishers 1896 – Vol. 1 pp. 236-7.

² "Gone are the Days" – E. Alexander Powell – Little, Brown & Co. 1938 – Boston – p. 115

Section II

Matty, the Man Who Made Mattydale

Francis Victor Matty, better known as Frank Matty, began life in Mexico, New York on November 19, 1850.

He was of French descent. His mother being a French Huguenot while his father was a French Catholic. When a child, his parents moved to Syracuse.

Frank Matty left school at an early age to learn the coopers' trade. Many of the barrels, he and the other coopers made were used to pack salt. His income from this type of work was very good. At the age of twenty-six, Matty was forced to give up his trade and take over his father's wood business in Syracuse.

Later, a livery stable was opened by Matty on the site of the present Syracuse Post Office. Here, the people from round-about left their horses while on business in the city.

In 1907, Matty ran for Mayor of Syracuse and was defeated. He then went to his farm – formerly Adam's – on Cicero Road, and thus began his life in the unincorporated village which now bears his name.

At the rear of his spacious home, were large barns where he kept several splendid racing horses. Matty was always a great lover of horses.

As time marched on, Matty divided his ninety acre farm. In 1908, some of the frontage was taken by the Electric Railroad Company. Later, other land was given for streets, for homes on parts of Mitchell, Matty, Beley, and Earl Avenue (this section is the true Mattydale). Homes built were to be in the bracket of from \$2,000 to \$3,500.

Matty also had a tremendous interest in the education of the younger generation. He served for many years as the chief trustee of the school.

Frank Matty died February 11, 1939.

Streets

When Mr. Matty divided his ninety acre farm for building lots and streets, the latter were named in honor of his family.

Beley Ave. was named in honor of a Frederick Beley who was an alderman in the city of Syracuse. Earl Ave. was named for a friend.

East and West Molloy Roads were named for the early settlers --- Molloys. Kirsch Drive and the homes thereon were once part of John Kirsch's farm.

LeMoynes Street in Mattydale is named in honor of Father LeMoynes, the Jesuit, who traveled the waters Ley Creek.

Of course, Mattydale Drive and Matty Ave. signify the founder's name.³

Even at the time when Mr. Matty was an alderman in Syracuse, he had charge of the interests of the Syracuse and Oneida Lake Electric Railway Company. This road would benefit the farmers in the area from Oneida Lake to Syracuse. It was to have begun in April, 1896 and completed by September of the same year; however, Mayor Amos did not approve and the time was

³ "Early Landmarks of Syracuse" by Gurney S. Strong – 1894 – Times Publishing Co. Syracuse – pp. 388-9

extended for two years. More time than this elapsed before action was taken. "On April 12, 1905, the State Railroad Commission gave the Syracuse and South Bay Company permission to build, and it spent the rest of the year in track laying." Two and two hundredths acres of Matty's farm were given to the South Bay Electric Company. These trolley cars, which ran on this line, were the second means of public transportation through Mattydale. (The first was the stage-coaches.) This conveyance was the last electric railroad to pass from existence. The trolley cars were replaced on January 19, 1932 by five semi-deluxe buses. At the present time, the Oswego Bus Company serves Mattydale and North Syracuse areas. It is likely that after January 1, 1946 busses will operate up East Molloy Road. Better bus service than the present will serve the many people of Mattydale who travel from their suburban homes to their city places of employment.

Section III Roads

No doubt, we all realize that animals had trails by which they hunted their food. The Indians traveled along these trails. The white man has followed the Indians' routes and improved upon them as needs required.

This brings us to the first road of importance in Pre-Mattydale which was known as the Old Salt Road. This by-gone highway was the first road laid out from Salina to Cicero. It was surveyed on August 19, 1809 and ran from the intersection of Salt (now Park St.) and Free Streets (now Hiawatha Blvd.) along the line of the latter street connecting with the present line of the Brewerton Road and then to the town line of Cicero. This road was opened in 1812.

Shortly before the middle of the nineteenth century, George Geddes, a prominent citizen of Onondaga County, visited Toronto, Canada. Where he beheld an astounding sight --- roads made of planks. When Geddes returned from his trip he quickly told about the marvelous road which he had seen in Toronto. Men with fore-sight immediately became interested.

So it happened that Onondaga County built the first plank road in the United States.

On April 12, 1844, "The Salina and Central Square Plank Road Co." was incorporated by the legislature and Orsamur Johnson was named one of the commissioners to open stock subscription books.

The road was completed and ready for use on July 18, 1846. So important was the event that a procession was formed in Syracuse to march to the starting point. Dinner was served at Brewerton.

This road was over fifteen miles in length. Four miles were of double track. This portion was near Syracuse. The planks were of hardwood which was milled timber. The cost of building the road was \$23,000. It was so successful, especially to farmers who brought their produce to Syracuse, that it paid for itself.

Of course the planks became uneven and worn in spots as the result of weathering and traveling; however, the planks were replaced and repaired by money which was obtained from tolls. The tolls were collected at toll gates. No farmer could pass the toll gate without paying. At the toll gate, near the present stop light of Mattydale, a farmer paid ten cents a horse.

One settler in particular was so annoyed by paying toll that he built himself a private road which was laid west of the toll gate. He thus avoided paying the fee for the use of the road. Farmers, who frequently used the highway, were given reduced rates.

During the heyday of this wooden highway, heavy, yellow stagecoaches carrying passengers, mails, and freight went clattering along.⁴

This Salina-Central Square Plank Road not only was boon to farmers, but also the abolitionists who helped the slave escape to Canada.

Jerry, a famous Negro slave who caused great excitement in Syracuse by being brought to trial and then rescued by sympathetic white men, was smuggled

⁴ "Gone are the Days" – Ibid. p. 29 "canary colored Concord stagecoaches bore passengers, mail and freight...lumbering vehicles went clattering out the Plank Road."

over this plank road to Mexico. From Mexico, he was taken to Oswego --- thence to Kingston and his freedom.⁵

Man was progressing. So must his roads. This famous plank road has been replaced by Route 11 which is a north-south route of New York State. This million dollar highway was completed in 1928.

Section IV Salina Free Library

The Mothers' Club of Mattydale School over \$137 in May 1941 for a fund to start a library in School District #3 – Town of Salina which became known as the Salina Free Library.

Salina Free Library is now located at the corner of LeMoyne and Grand Boulevard. The building was a former gas station and is rented. Money is raised during the year by social gatherings – namely, benefit dances and card parties.

Mr. John Kirsch has donated a lot on West Molloy Road. Some day there'll be a new library building.

There are over 400 regular borrowers, and the circulation is nearly 5,000 a year.

Salina Free Library operates under a provisional charter given by the Board of Regents of New York State.

Education

From an early map of Onondaga County dated 1860, there was a school on the present East Molloy Road which was designated as Number 4.

The original one-room school burned in 1902. It was replaced by another one-room wooden structure. This was located at the western end of where the present building now stands. This early school was moved to Matty Ave. in 1922 and is occupied as a private dwelling. The second school once had an enrollment of eleven children.

With the shifting of population from Syracuse to suburban areas, including Mattydale after World War I, a larger school became necessary.

A four-room, brick school with a small auditorium was erected in 1922. Mattydale was growing; therefore, four years later an addition was made to the rear thus giving four more classrooms and another room.

The enrollment was increasing rapidly. In 1931, extensions or wings were made on the east and west sides. This addition consisted of twelve additional classrooms, the new office, the health service room, and four lavatory rooms. In 1938, the auditorium was enlarged.

In 1942, the United States government took many homes for the Army Air Force Base including the Molloy homestead.

⁵ "Fire Ball in the Night" – Constance Robertson – Henry Holt & Co. – 1944 pp. 335-7 – pp. 340-2.

In June 1945, Living Memorial Services were conducted on the lawn of the school. At this solemn occasion, trees newly planted, were dedicated to the boys of Mattydale who made the supreme sacrifice in World War II.

The Mattydale Grammar School, Salina 3, is the largest common school in the state. It is under the worthy direction of Miss Bessie B. Riordan.

Churches

Neither of the churches in Mattydale is old.

The first religious services were conducted in the school by both Catholics and Protestants.

When the Catholic people had a bazaar, it was held in Mr. Matty's Hall at the rear of his home.

The first worship in the Calvary Church at the corner of East Molloy Road and Mitchell Avenue took place on February 6, 1927.

The Catholic diocese obtained land about the same time as the Protestants did. Their land, once a part of the John Kirsch farm, was donated by Mr. Kirsch. He gave enough land for a church and a priest's home.

St. Margaret's parish was organized by the Reverend George Olay on October 1, 1926. The dedication services took place on June 12, 1929.

Recreation

Mr. Matty's wish for a theater in Mattydale was fulfilled in 1934 ("3" is uncertain) when Mr. Louis Byer built the Hollywood. The land on which the building is located was once part of the Kirsch farm. The seating capacity is 500.

In the early part of 1945, representatives from the twenty-five or more organizations in the vicinity of Mattydale, formed a Recreation Committee.

The summer of '45 brought the youngsters of this community an opportunity which previously had not heretofore been given to them – namely – a supervised playground, held at school. Here, they had organized games and handicraft. The program lasted for six weeks.

The Recreation Committee raises as much money as it can and a supplement is generously given – that is, within reason – by the War Fund of the Community Chest.

Section V

The Mattydale Fire Department

Mr. Matty's barn besides having a large dance hall, had one section devoted to the housing of fire equipment.

The beginning of the Mattydale Fire Department was in 1929.

The original equipment was comprised of a Model T chemical truck.

Prior to 1940, land was purchased from Mr. Matty at the northwest corner of East Molloy Road and Mitchell Avenue for the site of the new fire house. This building was not erected until 1940. The purchase of the lot and building amounted to \$19,500. The fire house has kitchen facilities, a large recreation room, tow other smaller rooms, and a section which houses two fire apparatus. One of which is the 500 gallon Buffalo pumper.

The fire chief is

The captain is

He makes his home at the station. There are 70 volunteer firemen.

Section XI

Then and Now

Mattydale has made tremendous advancement from the time of the early settlers until the present day.

At one time there was only one store. It was more or less a small shack operated by an Italian named Pete. This was located a little southeast of the intersection of the Molloy Highway and the Brewerton Plank Road. This shack burned. The site is now occupied by the Red and White Store. There are now four grocery stores, a gift shop, a dry cleaner, a dry goods store, an ice cream establishment, and a few other miscellaneous enterprises.

ST. MARGARET'S BAZAAR

Matty Hall, Mattydale, N.Y.

November 29th, 30th and December 1st, 1928.

St. Margaret's Catholic Church, now under construction, is situated on the Brewerton Road, John Kirsch Farm, known as the Kirsch Tract in a beautiful Mattydale suburb.

The recently completed million dollar New York State highway traverses our district North and South connecting the great city of Syracuse with the St. Lawrence River and all points North.

The first plank road built in the United States was completed on April 12th, 1844 and passed through our suburb, covering a distance of sixteen and one-half miles connecting the village of Salina and central Square at a cost of \$23,000.

Mattydale is three and one-quarter square miles in area, and is bounded on the South by Ley Creek and on the North by Bear Trap Creek, and as late as the year 1800 bears, wolves, deer and all kinds of wild birds were in abundance in this section, both streams of water were fished by the various Indian Tribes. Eel and salmon inhabited these waters. Camp sites were chosen by the Indians between the two streams. Battles were waged against the French along the banks, and as evidence of this fact flint arrow heads and other Indian relics can be found this day on the farms of Kirsch, Wright, Matty and Molloy.

On August 12th, 1652, Father Simon LeMoyne, S.J., arrived at the head of the Salmon River. After several days' travel he arrived at an Indian settlement where he was dined, and cared for overnight. The place is now known as Collamer, N.Y. From thence he proceeded to Onondaga Hills, now known as Pompey, N.Y.

In 1654 he retraced his steps to Collamer, thence by canoe through Ley Creek to Onondaga Lake, where he discovered a salt spring on the east side of Onondaga Lake, now known as Liverpool, N.Y. Father LeMoyne shortly afterward returned to Montreal, and later returned to Onondaga in the year 1661.

It is now two hundred and seventy-five years since Father LeMoyne, S.J., administered to the sick, baptized the young and old, preached the true words of Jesus Christ, and brought peace to the warring tribes, and today the Rev. Jerald Dunn is erecting a Catholic Church on one of the sites where the Indian first heard the words of the Christian religion.

SOME HISTORICAL FACTS

Champlain was the first white man to visit Onondaga in the year 1615. Father LeMoyne, S.J., arrived from Montreal in 1652. Father LeMoyne discovered the salt springs in 1654. Villages of Onondaga burned April 21st, 1779. Townships were named in 1790. Onondaga County was formed March 5th, 1794. The first court was held in Onondaga County at the home of Asa Danforth, the Honorable Egbert Benson presided, July 21st, 1794. The State of New York took over the salt springs in 1797. The population of the town of Manlius, which also comprised what is now the Town of Salina, was 131 in 1798. The Village of Salina was laid out in 1799 and was a square 16 blocks, each block six chains square with

intermediate streets and not a lot was to be sold for less than fifty dollars. The Town of Salina was formed March 27th, 1809. The first newspaper published in 1811. The Bank of Salina was incorporated with a capital of \$150,000 in 1836. The Village of Salina was separated from the Town and annexed to the City of Syracuse in 1847, and was known as the First Ward.

St. Margaret's Church Parish covers territory which includes over one thousand homes, a population of 3,500, two schools with a daily attendance of 900, four churches and assessed valuation of over \$2,800,000.

(On separate page)

The picture on the opposite page [there was no picture] is the architect's sketch of the church which is now under construction. It is of English style of architecture with entrances on the side which makes it possible to have a large stained nave window in front, an unusual feature in a small structure. The exterior is of face brick with stone trim.

The church will seat 450 and it is so planned that when necessary it can be added to at the back to eventually seat 850. The back end of the building is now being built of wood so that it can be removed when extension is added at a later date.

The church will have wood trusses supporting the roof, with trusses so designed that they will enhance the beauty of the interior. A basement with a clear height of thirteen feet, without columns will be used for dinners, entertainment, basketball, etc. Off basement hall is kitchen, toilets, a shower and boiler room.

Father Dunn with the splendid support of his trustees Frank Kinderdine and Aloysius Kirsch, and his parishioners is working hard to get a real parish organized and the amount of work done since he has had charge of the parish shows that there is need for a church here in Mattydale, and that there is a desire on the part of the people to have a church.

Father Dunn is looking forward with his parishioners to the day when a complete church group will be built including Church, Rectory, School, and Convent all of which will take time and effort.

The site, on the corner of State Road and Kirsch Drive is a conspicuous place and when eventually the group of buildings is finished, it will be seen by hundreds traveling on the State Road.

It is expected that present building will be finished for services by February fifteenth.

Comments

Section !

“Pre-Mattydale was chiefly devoted to agriculture until the coming of Frank Matty in the 1900’s.”

The area was referred to as Salina School District No. 3 and its occupants engaged in agriculture and dairy farming. Frank Matty purchased his first Salina property in June 1900. He used the property to provide a place for his stable of trotters to live and train. The first thing Matty set out to build on his new property was a half-mile race track. He also raised hogs which, thanks to his political connections, he was able to feed for free, with city garbage delivered to his farm.

Frank Matty didn’t actually move to his Salina farm until late 1913 or early 1914. However, Matty didn’t come to Salina with a plan to build the community, he left Syracuse because he was going broke and couldn’t afford to live in the city anymore. In 1915 Frank Matty declared personal bankruptcy. He was able to keep his Salina property only because he had put the property in the name of his friend, Minnie Earl Mansfield. In 1920 Minnie was listed in the census as Frank’s housekeeper. By mid 1923 she was his 3rd wife.

Nothing fundamentally changed in the area with either Matty’s “first coming” – the 1900 purchase of his property; or his “second coming” – when he actually moved to the town of Salina in 1914. It wasn’t until 1920, when the Hinsdale Farm property opened for residential development, that things began to change in old School District No. 3. Hinsdale was quickly followed the same year by Syracuse Villas. In 1921 Home Gardens (former Thayer farm) went residential. Matty, the “pioneer” followed in 1922.

Section !!

“Earl Ave. was named for a friend.”

Earl Ave. was named for Frank Matty’s long time companion and 3rd wife, Minnie Earl Mansfield.

“Of course, Mattydale Drive and Matty Ave. signify the founder’s name.”

There was a footnote reference for this line, to a book published in 1894. The street name of Matty Ave. didn’t come into existence until 1922 and Mattydale Drive a bit later. There is nothing in the book that refers to the naming of these streets.

Section IV

The original one-room school house was built in about 1853. On January 24, 1902 the original school house burned down and was replaced on the same site by another one. The new 4-room brick school was built on the adjacent lot, to the east, that had been donated by Frank Matty. After a difficult bond issue campaign, led by Kathie Malloy, the residents finally passed the bond issue and the school construction was started in 1922. The children moved from the old school to the new in February 1923. Therefore the old building could not have been moved in 1922.

Section V

The new fire house on Molloy and Mitchell wasn't constructed until 1942.