

The Missing Rose Lawn History

April 9, 2013

The events related to Rose Lawn, the former residence of the Benjamin Baum family on the Cicero Plank road, display a large gap.¹ From the late 1890s up until the sale of the property to Theodore Faatz by George and Mary Gronau in 1914 there are no transactions related to this property recorded in the Onondaga County Deed books. After Cynthia Baum sold Rose Lawn to the Kelleys in 1887, they had transformed the Baum residence into a roadhouse. The Kelleys sold out to Tom Brady, in 1892, and Brady carried on the roadhouse business. At this point the situation becomes a bit more difficult. Brady ran into financial problems and lost the ownership of the property in 1894 but he continued to operate the roadhouse for several more years. In 1897 Lizzie Gannon became the owner of the property and also ran the roadhouse. After this the trail of events had gone cold.

The primary reason for initiating this search was to determine if the original Baum homestead had survived down to October 15, 1957 when it was damaged by fire while it was being operated as Gatto's Restaurant. It was then destroyed in a second fire on April 19, 1958. There was a picture that appeared the North Syracuse 75th Anniversary publication, November 22, 2000, that was supposed to be the original Rose Lawn homestead. Written across the picture was a note, by local historian Robert Henry, which stated "recent research" had shown that the original structure had been destroyed in a fire and a similar structure had been rebuilt on the same site. No references were cited, as regards the note, and an approximate, hand written, year for the fire was given as 1889.

The search for the missing history was conducted in the newspaper database on the Old Fulton NY Post Card Website. There are presently 21,790,000 newspaper images in that database and it is searchable. The first pass was to search for the obvious search terms such as Rose Lawn, Baum, fire, roadhouse, etc. The results of this initial search were used to set up a preliminary time line and that identified some interesting events and some new names and places. Those events, names and places formed the basis for new searches. After many searches the pieces of the puzzles eventually start to come together and fill in the missing history.

Three major categories develop: Owners, leaseholders and employees. Any of these three could be identified with activities related to the roadhouse without their exact status or connection being fully or even correctly stated in the newspaper articles. After a "critical mass" of newspaper articles had been assembled it became possible to sort out the players and the locations with an increased sense of certainty.

It took a while for the key evidence to surface, but it was finally determined that the original Baum homestead at Rose Lawn had been destroyed by a fire on February 25, 1899. Lizzie Gannon was operating the hotel as a roadhouse, at the time of the fire. Between May 1900 and October 1901, a second hotel was constructed on the same site. The John J. Hallock Construction Company might have built the new hotel. By the fall of 1901 a roadhouse at Rose Lawn was in operation once again, named the Central Hotel, with new owner and proprietor Harry Jeffs.

Rose Lawn Property Events

Date	Event Description
Feb 24, 1899	The original Rose Lawn residence of the Baum family is destroyed by fire on the evening of February 24, 1899. ^{2,3}
Sept. 5, 1899	Elizabeth Gannon was listed as owing a tax of \$53.58 on 4 acres of land on Farm Lot 18 (Rose Lawn). ⁴
May 4, 1900	Mrs. Hattie A. Hallock, wife of Horace H. Hallock, bought the Baum hotel property on speculation from the Skaneateles Savings Bank. ⁵ This bank had been one of Lizzie Gannon's mortgage holders. Horace's brother, John J. Hallock owned a construction company. Before Horace went into real estate he was involved in his brother's company. John J. Hallock built and later owned the Iron Pier on the northeastern corner of Onondaga Lake. It was probably John J. Hallock's company that rebuilt the hotel on the Rose Lawn property.
Oct. 4, 1901	Harry Jeffs purchased the property with a hotel. He named the place the Central Hotel. ⁶ Jeffs had become known to the citizens of Syracuse as the builder of wooden indoor tracks for bicycle races. Given his occupation it's ironic that his roadhouse was on the Cicero Plank Road. His wife, May Allen, was the British champion female bicyclist.
May 18, 1902	1 st ad by H. H. Hallock offering the Baum property with a "roadhouse" on it for sale. ⁷ In this ad and in the subsequent ads it was the property's location that allowed its identification as the old Baum property. Evidently Jeffs' interest in settling in the Syracuse area didn't last very long.
May 23, 1902	Another ad for the Baum hotel property. ⁸
Oct. 6, 1902	A new ad. Hallock now has two hotels for sale. ⁹
May 14, 1903	During a roadhouse raid by the sheriff, to take possession of a slot machine, George Shimer was described as a "new proprietor" of the roadhouse. A 1907 article, described below, gives evidence that the roadhouse raided that night was the new roadhouse on the Baum property. ^{10,11}
May 1903 - Feb 1904	This is the most likely time period for Faatz to have taken over the Rose Lawn roadhouse. At some point prior to February 1904 Shimer probably leased the roadhouse to Theodore Faatz but retained ownership of the property. Faatz relocated from the Switzer hotel (Plankington House) and settled at this new Rose Lawn hotel. This is based on a February 23, 1904 article (referenced below) showing that Faatz was no longer at the Plankington Hotel. A more detailed scenario describing this change of location is given on the following pages.
Feb. 23, 1904	D. (Daniel) T. Evans was the proprietor of the Plankington House. This was Theodore's Faatz's original partner. ¹² On September 26, 1899 when the

	original lease was signed Faatz and Evans were partners. The original Faatz - Evans lease was for one year and could be extended for five years. They dissolved the partnership on March 12, 1900. ¹³
Nov. 5, 1905	Faatz - Rural Inn - Slot Machines. This is the earliest article using the name the Rural Inn and also the first time Faatz was linked to the property.
Sept 8, 1906	Rural Inn article in combination with mention of Faatz. ¹⁴
Feb 15, 1907	A fire started in a barn behind the Rose Lawn hotel, which was called the Rural Inn at that time. This barn was referred to as the property of George Shimer. This shows that Shimer had bought the property. At the time of the fire the barn was still referred to as his property showing, that Shimer still owned the property. ^{15, 16}
1907 - 1914	Some time after the 1907 fire, Shimer sold the property. It might have been to George and Mary Gronau. During this time Theodore Faatz remained the operator of the Rural Inn roadhouse. At some point the property came into the hands of the Gronaus. They acted as owners and not operators since Faatz continued in that capacity. During the 1900 - 1914 time period the Gronaus were operating a farm on the Cicero side of the Cicero-DeWitt border.
Sept. 30, 1914	George and Mary Gronau sold the Rose Lawn property to Faatz. ¹⁷

May 1903 - Feb 1904 -- Theodore Faatz Moves to Rose Lawn - Possible Scenario

On September 26, 1899 Theodore Faatz and Daniel T. Evans signed a one-year lease with Anna Switzer on her late husband, Jacob Switzer's hotel.¹⁸ This was a one-year lease that could be extended to five years. This hotel was located on the east side of the Cicero Plank road between the railroad tracks and Ley Creek. They called the hotel the Plankingdon House/Hotel and it was sometimes referred to as Faatz's Hotel. Faatz and Evans dissolved their partnership on March 12, 1900.¹⁹ Around the fall of 1903 an opportunity to take over the new Rose Lawn hotel might have developed. Faatz might have gotten his ex-partner (Evans) to take over the Switzer hotel to finish out that lease so he could move on the Rose Lawn opportunity. The original lease would have run out in September 1904. By February 1904, Evans was back as proprietor of the Plankingdon hotel.²⁰ By March 1905, Evans was gone and a new proprietor, named John L. Wall, had taken over.²¹ These events are consistent with Evans helping out his old friend, Theodore Faatz.

Just to finish up the history of this old roadhouse I add the following items. During the summer of 1906 DeWitt Spencer was the proprietor of the Plankingdon that had been renamed the Bay Road Hotel. On December 10th of that same year Spencer committed suicide by drinking carbolic acid at the Pompey House. It was said that Spencer was despondent over "his intemperate habits."²² On May 4, 1908 John Wall was the proprietor of the old Switzer Hotel once again, now called the Bay Road Hotel.²³ On August 30, 1909 Lovilla J. Strail was the proprietor of the Bay Road Hotel.^{24, 25} During an early morning fire, in the hotel that day, Lovilla, his wife and a woman staying at the hotel barely escaped the fire in their nightclothes. The Bay Road Hotel burned to the ground and that night the lights of another roadhouse on the Cicero Plank road had gone out for the last time.

The Case of George and Mary Gronau

The roadhouse on the Rose Lawn property attracted an interesting group of characters over the years. Restaurant, hotel and saloon ownership best described their common experience and background. George and Mary Gronau were farmers. How did these comparatively normal people join company with these more colorful personalities?

There is more than enough evidence to show that Theodore Faatz had been running the Rural Inn at Rose Lawn from November 1905, when George Shimer was the owner of the property, up through the time (Sept 1914) that he bought the property from the Gronaus. There was no opportunity for the Gronaus to actually operate the Rural Inn themselves and there is no evidence that they had ever operated the roadhouse.

The Gronaus, like Hattie Hallock, probably bought the property on speculation, with no intention of actually managing the roadhouse. Farmers are not normally known to have extra money to invest. Most farmers are borrowing against their farms every year just to get seed money for next year's crop. However, around the turn of the last century, in the Salina area, there were many successful farmers. Perhaps the Gronaus were one of those.

It has not been determined if Shimer had sold the Rose Lawn directly to the Gronaus. However it happened, prior to September 1914 George and Mary Gronau became owners of the property.

The newspaper database was searched intensively over the period 1907 to 1914. The initial year of 1907 was chosen because George Shimer was considered to still be the owner of the property at that time. The names Shimer and Gronau never came up in connection with the Rural Inn roadhouse. During this period of time there were two types of involvement: the owner and the person leasing the roadhouse. The owners were practically invisible while the roadhouse proprietor was always in the newspapers for one thing or another. The actual sale by the Gronaus to Faatz was recorded in the Onondaga County Deed Books but no mention of it appeared in the newspapers of that time. Therefore it might be expected that no mention of the Gronau's purchase of the property would have appeared in the newspapers.

In 1900 and 1910 the US Census²⁶ indicated that George Gronau was farming on Town Line Road in the town of Cicero, just over the Cicero-Dewitt town border. A newspaper article describing a home fire²⁷ on Lawrence Road, in 1914, indicated that George Gronau was a neighbor, i.e. Gronau was still living on his farm. According to the 1920 census²⁸ the George Gronau family had left the farm and was living at 713 Court St. in the 1st Ward of the City of Syracuse. He owned his house free of a mortgage and was employed as a laborer on some else's farm. George Gronau left his farm somewhere in the period of October 1914 to 1920.

The Monarski picture,²⁹ supposedly showing George Gronau in front of the Rural Inn on the Rose Lawn property is undated. That might be the Rural Inn in the background but the individual in the picture is almost certainly not George Gronau. It is more likely Theodore Faatz or possibly one of Faatz's bartenders. There is an additional problem here. The information concerning the Gronau's operation of the Rural Inn and the identity of the picture itself, was based on notes by Edward Monarski found at the Onondaga Historical Society. Just before his death in November 2005 Mr. Monarski's credibility was seriously undermined.³⁰



Note: Latest research indicates Roselawn burned
 Cir: 1899. This home was built on the same
 site soon after. Robert Henry 10/19/4

George Gronau is shown in front of the Baum family's country estate, Roselawn, on the Plank Road. Gronau and his wife Mary ran the Rural Inn on the site. They sold the property in 1914 to Theodore H. Faatz, who ran the Faatz Hotel.

The Edward Monarski picture of the old Rural Inn, with the Robert Henry note is shown above. Below is a picture that is thought to be the same structure. It was taken at the time of the Gatto's Restaurant fire on October 15, 1957.³¹



Smoke pours from Gatto's in Mattydale as firefighters battle to get blaze under control

FOOTNOTES

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- ¹ *The Family of the Wizard, The Baums of Syracuse*, Sue Ferrara, Ph.D., Xlibris Corporation, 2000, p. 87.
- ² *Old Roadhouse Burned*, The Syracuse Evening Herald, Syracuse, NY, February 25, 1899.
- ³ *Fires On Plank Road*, The Evening Telegram, Syracuse, NY, February 25, 1899.
- ⁴ The Evening Telegram, Syracuse, NY, September 5, 1899.
- ⁵ The Post Standard, Syracuse, NY, May 4, 1900.
- ⁶ *Harry Jeffs Sells Out in Cleveland and Locates Permanently in Syracuse*, The Evening Telegram, Syracuse, NY, October 4, 1901.
- ⁷ Evening Telegram, Syracuse, NY, May 18, 1902.
- ⁸ The Evening Telegram, Syracuse, NY, May 23, 1902.
- ⁹ The Telegram, Syracuse, NY, October 6, 1902.
- ¹⁰ *Raid By Sheriff and His Deputies*, The Post Standard, Syracuse, NY, May 14, 1903.
- ¹¹ *Shimer's Place Raided*, The Auburn Bulletin, Auburn, NY, May 14, 1903.
- ¹² *Mr. D. T. Evans, Proprietor of the Plankingdon House*, The Syracuse Herald, Syracuse, NY, February, 23, 1904.
- ¹³ *Faatz Wanted Water - Sues for \$1000 Because He Didn't Get It*, The Syracuse Journal, Syracuse, NY, September 25, 1901.
- ¹⁴ *Runaway Team Dashes Driver to His Death*, Syracuse Post Standard, Syracuse, NY, September 8, 1906.
- ¹⁵ *Bible Class Saves Fire Doomed Hotel*, The Syracuse Post Standard, Syracuse, NY, February 16, 1907.
- ¹⁶ *Bible Class Fights Fire*, The Syracuse Herald, Syracuse, NY, February 16, 1907.
- ¹⁷ Deed Book 444, p. 11, Clerk's Office, Onondaga County, Courthouse, Syracuse, NY.
- ¹⁸ *Faatz Wanted Water - Sues for \$1000 Because He Didn't Get It*, The Syracuse Journal, Syracuse, NY, September 25, 1901.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ *Mr. D. T. Evans, Proprietor of the Plankingdon House*, The Syracuse Herald, Syracuse, NY, February, 23, 1904.
- ²¹ The Syracuse Herald, Syracuse, NY, March 20, 1905.
- ²² The Syracuse Journal, Syracuse, NY, December 11, 1906.
- ²³ *Fell From Car*, Syracuse Journal, Syracuse, NY, May 4, 1908.
- ²⁴ *3 Barely Escaped in Hotel Fire*, The Post Standard, Syracuse, NY, August 31, 1909.
- ²⁵ *Escaped in Night Clothes*, The Syracuse Herald, Syracuse, NY, August 31, 1909.
- ²⁶ 1900 Cicero - George Gronau T623-1134-50A; 1910 Cicero - George Gronau T624-1054-49B
- ²⁷ *Siddon Homestead Burned to Ground*, The Syracuse Herald, Syracuse, NY, October 11, 1914.
- ²⁸ 1920 Syracuse WD01 - George Gronau T625-1247-20B
- ²⁹ This copy of the Monarski picture was in a North Syracuse 75th Anniversary publication, November 22, 2000.
- ³⁰ *No Matter the winner, lesson was same*, Syracuse Post Standard, Syracuse, NY, November 12, 2002; *Korean vets group is not legitimate*, Syracuse Post Standard, Syracuse, NY, June 4, 2004; *Phony veteran 'leader' thrives on confusion*, Syracuse

Post Standard, Syracuse, NY, June 10, 2004. One of the charges against Edward Monarski was that he dealt in fake memorabilia. It causes one to wonder if Monarski's Onondaga County Historical Society notes were placed there to establish the credentials for the Gronau-Rural Inn picture that Monarsjki claims to have sold to an unidentified collector.

³¹ *Fire Sweeps Sports Center*, The Syracuse Herald Journal, Syracuse, NY, October 15, 1957.