

# Kemp & Lane and Goff's Taffy

by Lynne Belluscio

Two weeks ago, we received two boxes in the mail from Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The letter explained that the contents belonged to Stewart Luther Johnston who had spent his childhood in LeRoy and later worked briefly for Jell-O, before serving with the Merchant Marines and the United States Navy for 23 years. Stewart married a woman from New Hampshire where they lived in the 1950s. Stewart Johnston always maintained connections to LeRoy and visited many times a year. Stewart's father and mother were Stewart ("Cy") Johnston and Marjorie Luther Johnston of LeRoy. Cy was a nickname going back to his baseball days. He was a lifelong friend of Donald Woodward and worked many years for Kemp and Lane. The album is a treasure trove of photographs of the medicine wagons that traveled around the country selling the various products manufactured in LeRoy by Kemp and Lane, which was part of Orator Woodward's Medicine business. In 1891, before he acquired Jell-O, he bought the rights to Kemp's Balsam and soon acquired Lane's Tea, Sherman's Headache Cure and other patent medicines, including Raccoon Corn Plasters - The Raccoon Always Get's Its Corn. In fact it seems that one of the wagons traveled with a live raccoon. The medicines were packaged on Main Street, first at 17 Main

and then on the second floor of 58 Main Street. During this time he developed a very successful network of traveling salesmen. Some of the wagons were made by the prestigious firm of Abbot and Downing, in Concord, New Hampshire. In 1899, Woodward purchased the rights to Jell-O and it is pretty evident that he applied his successful marketing plan to his new product. In 1906, Orator Woodward died. Eventually his eldest son controlled the Jell-O Company and his youngest son, Donald, in 1920, bought the O.F. Woodward Medicine Business and reorganized it under the name of Kemp and Lane. Eventually, Donald built a new factory on North Street, opposite the tracks from the Jell-O factory. In 1927, Kemp & Lane merged with the Orangeine Chemical Company of Chicago and in 1929, bought Goff's Salt Water Taffy of Camden New Jersey. Goff's taffy was sold to organizations such as the YMCA and the Boy Scouts as a money raiser. At one time Goff's was producing a millions pounds of salt water taffy a year. There was a standing order of two train-car loads of 110,000 pounds to be sent to Minneapolis. Orders were sent to Hawaii and Canada. Don Woodward died in 1959 and his wife, Adelaide became the president of Goff's until it was sold to the Terry Candy Company of Elizabethtown, NJ in 1961.



*A pair of mules on a Kemp and Lane wagon*



*Pet raccoon who traveled with one of the wagons*



Recently I posted some of the photos on LeRoy Then and Now and folks shared some great stories: "I spent many an afternoon sitting in the bins of salt water taffy eating to my hearts desire! I often wondered how many people found empty wrappers in their box of candy." Another comment mentioned

that when they were kids, if you went up and knocked on the back door, a sweet gentleman would give you a box of taffy. Now those were the days.



*Mules on a cold day with "bobs" on the axles*