

Roy McPherson - A Historical Legacy

by Lynne Belluscio

Seventy-five people attended the first official LeRoy Historical Society meeting at the Woodward Memorial Library on Friday, February 16, 1940*. Mrs. Albert Kenny, the temporary chairman, presided. Miss Ruth Keeney was chairman of the Nominating Committee and presented the slate of officers: For President - Roy McPherson; Vice President - Albert McVean; Secretary - Mrs. Carlos Chapman; Treasurer - Mrs. Alfred Davis; and Curator - Mrs. J. Albert Kenny. And so, the LeRoy Historical Society began its mission to preserve and collect the history of the community. They decided to have four meetings a year and the annual meeting would always be held in May on a date closest to the 5th, in commemoration of the first meeting of the Village of LeRoy in 1834.

In August, 150 people gathered at President Roy McPherson's home on Oatka Trail. The meeting was called to order by the blowing of two conch shells. There was a presentation of a "playlet" "Home Activities of Long Ago." Costumed participants arrived in horse-drawn carriages. After the play, everyone was invited to tour the house and see the exhibits of antiques that had been assembled by President McPherson.

The Historical Society's first president was well suited for the job. During his eight years as president, he worked to acquire the Historic LeRoy House and to complete its restoration so it could become a community center for heritage and history.

In 1943, he wrote: "The LeRoy Historical Society has made progress beyond our expectations in these difficult years. We feel this is prophetic of greater accomplishments possible in the future. ...The work can go on only with the continued support of the members. We urge you to help increase the number by interesting your friends." It was said that Roy McPherson was ready to help promote the long cherished dream of Mrs. Mae Kenny for the LeRoy Historical Society and the acquisition of LeRoy House.

Roy McPherson was born in



Roy McPherson with grandson David Frost, Janet Hull Frost, Nancy Frost, Robert Frost, Mrs. Ethelyn McPherson and Betsy Frost.

1875 and lived his entire life where his great-grandfather, Alexander McPherson, direct from Scotland, had settled in 1802. His maternal great-grandfather, Simon Pierson, came to the Genesee country in 1807 and settled near Bergen. Roy McPherson's home on Oatka Trail became the repository for old things, old records, old traditions and old memories, which he sought to preserve. He attended the Fort Hill School and attended the LeRoy High School graduating in 1895. The old Academic Building was always in his thoughts, and he envisioned that someday it would become a museum for farm machinery and relics of the horse-and- buggy days.

In 1950, his collection of horse-drawn vehicles was moved into the basement of the Academic Building. His dream of a "Hall of Transportation" came to fruition in 2006, when the Transportation Exhibit, "On the Road: A Century of Ruts, Dust and Macadam" opened in the basement.

McPherson was first employed by the Chilean Nitrate Company of New York and worked at state fairs in New England. In the winter of 1903, he became a salesman for the Jell-O Company and

traveled to the Far South. Copies of his letters while traveling in the South are in the collection of LHS.

In 1910, he married Ethelyn Hull of Madison, Connecticut, and from 1910 to 1920 he spent winters conducting Farmer's Institutes in the agricultural areas of New York State. He continued to promote the fruit industry in the State and served as Secretary of the New York State Horticultural Society. In 1926, he was elected to the State Council of Farms and Markets. He also, served for 20 years on the Consolidated Board of Health. He was a member of the Oatka Falls Grange and the

LeRoy Business Association.

Roy McPherson died in 1951. In 1990, fifty years after the founding of the Historical Society, his grandson, David Frost, served as President. His great-granddaughter, Marny Cleere served two years on the Board of Trustees. Roy McPherson's legacy continues today, 75 years after the first meeting.

**(The handwritten record says that the meeting was held on Friday afternoon, and later the date Feb. 17-40 was inserted. But Friday was the 16. Memories are not always accurate.)*

