

# Jacob's Wall

by Lynne Belluscio

When Jacob LeRoy came here in 1823, he enlarged the land office and made it into what we now know as LeRoy House. Off the back of the house he built a large veranda – much bigger than the porch that is on the back now. It extended beyond the house on each side and then had galleries that extended north which embraced a large paved courtyard.

His father's gardener came up from New York and designed a large garden and orchard. Plants from around the world were in Jacob's garden and he had a brick wall with espaliered (trimmed and trained on wires) fruit trees. Around the garden, Jacob had a high wall . . . that was topped with broken glass. I'm ready to restore Jacob's wall.

We have had unbelievable vandalism this year. Last year, we installed speed limit signs on the driveway to encourage people to reduce their speed when coming in the driveway. So many kids play on the driveway, that we felt we needed to warn drivers of the hazard and danger. Well, last year's signs disappeared – last year and this year we put up new signs - - and they disappeared. I suspect that they are on some kid's wall - - by now the wall should be filled.

This year they even removed some signs that had been in place for a couple of years. We even tried security bolts and I guess that just made it more of a challenge. Now that the barn door is closed, so to speak - - I've wondered if a liberal wad of axle grease would have been more of a deterrent. (I have discussed electric charged fence posts and fencing, but that's probably not feasible.)

Two years ago, the wrought iron arbor was part of the game. Every few days it would be pushed over and the beautiful blue morning glories would be gasping to be rescued. I would put them back in and water them gently and they recovered several times – until in the fall, it was just too much and I had to cut them down. Last year, the arbor was sunk in cement and the morning glories survived, but the smoke bush didn't. It's branches were

snapped off. It's sending up a few shoots this year, but it's in pretty poor shape. The day before yesterday, the other smoke bush got hit. Two major branches were torn off and we hope that it isn't targeted again.

A few years ago, just before the peony bushes were ready to bloom, all the buds were plucked and became handy projectiles for a war in the back yard. One time I watched as a kid with a baseball bat, hit – with great velocity – stones at our windows. We have had some great Jell-O banners that welcome folks to the museum, and they too have found another home. Just last night a giant yellow one disappeared. I would have liked to see the kid hanging from the upper rail of the porch pulling the banner off. I have thought that I could stand guard with a camera - - "Smile! You're on candid camera!"

I think the problem is called the "lack of social conscience." Some people just don't instill that in their kids. Not that it is anything new. I have read articles in the *Gazette* of the 1800s that described the kids that would hang around on Main Street. Many women were afraid to walk downtown because of the taunting. One year in particular, the *Gazette* mentioned that on Sunday mornings, the kids would congregate and deter people from walking to church. Back to the broken glass on the top of the wall - - I remember seeing walls with broken bottles in St. Kitts and then a couple of years ago, when I was in Shanghai, I took pictures of a high wall with broken sheets of window glass stuck in cement on the very top. The picture didn't come out too well, but the wall was certainly a deterrent to anyone wanting to get in the courtyard.

A long time ago, we were telling someone about the glass on Jacob's garden wall and they asked if that was to keep the Indians out and of course I laughed,



because it wasn't the Indians that were the problem. I suspect that I can't get a grant to build the wall with glass on top. Somehow, I suspect that if Jacob's wall had survived, the insurance company would want us to remove it, but there is something nice about having a garden without the worry of it being destroyed. The Don MacKenzie Memorial Gazebo on the creek also suf-

fered some damage this year. I guess, all of us just need to be a little more observant. If you're up town, take a short drive back to the Little League. (Be careful about the speed bumps, because the kids took the signs!) or drive slowly down Wolcott Street and report anything suspicious to the police. Maybe as a community we can lick this situation.

LeRoy Historical Society

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