

Recent Acquisitions

by *Lynne Belluscio*

Museums collect and preserve objects that support their mission. Objects are accessioned into the collection -- that means that they receive a number and paper work is filled out and the information is put into the computer. That includes who donated it and the provenance or story of the object, and measurements and description. My favorite story is that a long time ago, the Historical Society received a blue plaid wedding gown from the 1850s. Off the top of my head I don't remember whose it was, but it was written up in the year-end report of the Historical Society. So when we put together an exhibit about wedding gowns, I wanted to put the paid dress on exhibit. The problem was -- we had four plaid 1850s dresses. None of them had been assigned a number or was a number sewn in place. We also own a paisley shawl owned by Mrs. LeRoy -- guess what? We have several paisley shawls.

It is also important to know what to keep and what to say "no thank you." For example, it makes no sense for the LeRoy Historical Society to collect stuff from New York City -- except if it pertains to the LeRoy family who lived in New York City. And it is difficult to collect stuff that we can't take care of -- such as a buzz saw made by LeRoy Plow Company. All of this is determined by the "Collections Policy." But even with that, it takes time and effort to make sure that each item is accessioned properly. After about four years, we are finally back on track, thanks to Noreen Tillotson, who has decided that accessioning things, and writing little numbers on things and sewing twill tape into the left sleeve of clothing is "fun." Well it may be not fun, but certainly interesting. So Noreen accessioned the baseball uniforms from Mack Booten -- along with several baseballs and a phenomenal cross-cut saw. She also is accessioning recent purchases. Like I said, we have

to decide what things should go into the collection and we don't have room for everything, so it becomes even more contentious when we have to figure out how to pay for things that we should buy. That came to light a few weeks ago. With the renewed interest in the Donald Woodward Airport on Asbury Road, it became obvious that we should have some things related to Amelia Earhart. After all, Donald Woodward bought the Friendship -- the airplane she rode in across the Atlantic Ocean on June 18, 1928. Well Amelia Earhart stuff can be expensive. Luckily, in the Donald Woodward collection we have an autographed photo of "Lady Lindy." (Her autograph commands a pretty hefty price!) And an Amelia Earhart Bond Bread button and a medal didn't break the bank. But when I discovered a cast iron toy model of the Friendship up for auction, my heart sunk. I talked with a couple of people, and we all concluded it was something that we just weren't going to be able to purchase. After a week or so, I received a note from the guy who was handling the sale of the plane. His customer was willing to cut the price in half -- it still wasn't for the faint of heart. (After all, I discovered that a couple of years ago, one of these models sold for over \$10,000 -- yes you read that right.) But the new price was much lower than that and I reasoned that we had acquired other objects for that amount of money. I went to the Board of Trustees and made my case and everyone had a chance to ask questions and to object. At the end of the meeting, I called the owner and we bought the plane. (It will be on exhibit at the Airport on October 14, and the anniversary party.) In the meantime, I discovered an envelope on Ebay that was mailed from LeRoy on opening day of the airport. We had several in the collection, but this one was different. I put in a bid and heard from the owner -- "Are you interested in another one?" "Sure for that price, I'd



buy another. " Well it turns out, that he didn't just have one other, he had 155 others! He had recently bought them and didn't want to flood the market and see the price plummet. So we bought them all. We will not resell them. That's not what we do, but it shows what a "big deal" the opening of the airport was in 1928. We have several signed by Russ Holderman, who flew the airmail envelopes into Rochester. There are some post cards, which I had never seen before with a map of the airmail routes across the United States. Some of the envelopes are postmarked LeRoy. Others are postmarked with both Rochester and Buffalo. And with the Amelia Earhart connection, I thought that it might be good to acquire a few of the Amelia Earhart dolls that are now available. For the record, I am not particularly interested in her stuff after 1928. Yes that is what made her famous, but other museums can collect that.

I just want to include her story and the Friendship's story. And by the way, new research since Brian Duddy wrote his book "Wings Over LeRoy," sheds more light on what happened to the Friendship after it was shipped to Brazil. -- That's for another article . . .

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