

When Gas Was 17 (Cents) A Gallon

by Lynne Belluscio

I sent this postcard down to the *Pennysaver* so it could be printed on the front of the announcement for the Historical Society's annual meeting on Thursday, May 8. The program that evening will be "Postcard Views of Le Roy" which will be quite interesting. The program starts at 7:30 pm and anyone is welcome to come.

We will have a short business meeting to elect our new trustees: Brenda Beal and Eileen Partise for a second 3 year term and Bruno DeFazio and Susan Doemling for a first 3 year term. Once that is taken care of, everyone will have a chance to see views of Le Roy captured on postcards. Some of the views are one of a kind. In an effort to inventory all the postcards in the collection, we have been accessioning the unaccessioned postcards and right now we are up to 500 and by the time we're finished, it will be closer to 600. The entire collection is probably more than 1000.

Today I added a new card that I bought on Ebay. It is most unusual because it is an advertising card from the Genesee Pure Food Company for Jell-O, Grain-O and the breakfast cereal that Orator Woodward offered - "It." I have one newspaper ad for It, but have always wondered what It was. According to the postcard it was a "prepared cereal food entire wheat already to eat crisp and sweet, good for breakfast, dinner, supper, good for lunch anytime." It was \$3.00 a crate. The post mark on the card is illegible, but I suspect, from the



numbers on the back that it dates to about 1903. I'm still not sure how I tell the Board of Trustees of the Historical Society how much I paid for the card, but it is rare and certainly needed to be in our collection.

The postcard of Townsend's Gas Station on Bank Street is a great piece of history. In the background is the steeple of St. Mark's Church. There are two gas pumps at the station and the Ford is getting a fill up. The gas station, which according to the ad in the 1925 Le Roy Directory, offered gasoline, kerosene and lubricating oil. With a magnifying glass, the sign reads "Gas 17 cents." (I think I paid \$3.49 yesterday!) Townsend had a second gas station at "The Grove" near their present-day distribution area on West Main Street and we have

a postcard view of that station too which will be included at the annual meeting program. The gas stations are long gone, but the building on the left in this postcard view was Ernest Townsend & Sons Insurance Company and that building is still standing. Townsend's Insurance Agency was established in 1876.

I showed the postcard to Ruth Harvie who works here and she immediately laughed and told me the story about the chicken. It seems that Lennis Roblee who worked for Paul Kennedy who ran the Townsend gas station, came into work one day and

when he opened the door, there was a chicken running around. He called his wife, Pearl Harvie Roblee and asked what he should do with the chicken. Pearl called her brother Ross Harvie and he agreed to kill the chicken and then he took the chicken to his wife, Ruth and she cleaned it and cooked it and the Roblees and the Harvies had a nice chicken dinner.

I suspect that as the postcard views are projected at the annual meeting there will many stories to tell so we hope some folks show up - even if you're not a member of the Historical Society.

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