

Leghorns

by Lynne Belluscio

We know that Daniel and Edward LeRoy, two of Jacob LeRoy's younger brothers came to Le Roy in the 1820s. Edward owned a farm near the Genesee River north of the Wadsworth estate. Daniel who was five years younger than Jacob and according to *Beers' 1890 Gazetteer* came to Le Roy in 1822 and opened a store under the name of LeRoy & Co.

We also know that Daniel married Elizabeth Fish in New York City in 1826 and that their first child Nicholas, was born in Le Roy on December 28, 1827 and was baptized at St. Mark's Church. Nicholas died seven months later. The records do not show where their next child, Mary was born in 1829.

Beers states that Daniel did not continue long in business before returning to New York City. But who is the Mr. and Mrs. LeRoy who opened a millinery store on Main Street in 1829. We have always assumed that it was Daniel and Elizabeth. The *Gazette* includes an ad that states Mr. & Mrs. LeRoy "have recently established the DRY GOODS and MILLINERY business, under the above firm in the brick building recently occupied by H.G. Marvin in the central part of the village. Is this Daniel and Elizabeth? Was it possible that Jacob and Charlotte LeRoy opened a millinery store? I don't think so. The records indicate that their first child, Thomas was born in 1823, followed by Augustus born in 1824 and Charlotte born in 1826 and Caroline born in 1827 and Helen born in 1828 and Catherine in 1830. I don't think Charlotte was involved with the



millinery shop with eight children nor do I think she had to have an occupation. Of course there is the possibility that the Mr. & Mrs. LeRoy who owned the millinery business weren't related to either Jacob or Daniel and might have been another LeRoy family. All of the advertising that Jacob posts in the *Gazette* includes his full name – Jacob LeRoy not Mr. LeRoy.

The LeRoy Dry Goods Store carried a wide variety of items, not the least of which were ladies hats of the "newest and approved fashions." The fashion at that time included large brimmed hats woven of "Leghorn" straw from the Tuscany region of Italy. Fashion magazines often made references to Leghorn or Tuscan straw. The scarcity and expense of this imported straw encouraged milliners to experiment with different native straws. Soon English and American women were making their own straw hats.

It was a laborious process. The straw had to be split and then plaited (woven) into long strips that were sewn together and then blocked into shape. Coarse "chip" hats woven of thin strips of willow or poplar were also available. The LeRoy also sold silk hats with and without the trimmings, veils, collars and cuffs and artificial flowers. They also sold traveling trunks.

In October 1830 they advertised that band boxes, with elm sides and a "superior quality"

were available wholesale or retail. The band boxes were used as hat boxes and could be quite large to accommodate the large hats that were so popular. The LeRoy store also advertised that dresses, coats and habits would be made on the shortest notice.

In June 1831, Mrs. LeRoy hired Miss Whipple to work with her. And soon the advertisements disappeared from the *Gazette*. So another question has surfaced about the LeRois of Le Roy and so far there aren't any answers.

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