

# LeRoy's Black Vice President

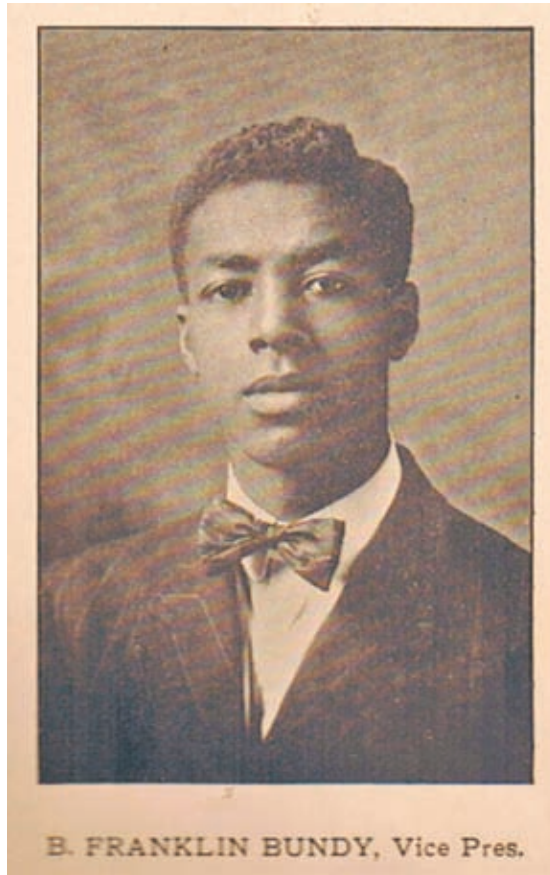
by Lynne Belluscio

LeRoy's African Americans have a rich legacy. B. (Benjamin) Franklin Bundy, son of Charles and Delilah Sellers Bundy, was born in 1894 in Caledonia. After graduating from the LeRoy High School in 1912, he worked on the staff of a newspaper in Rochester, and then worked in LeRoy. He owned a garage out by the Grove on West Main and worked at a garage on Lake Street. He and his wife Genevieve had two children, B. Franklin Jr. and Betty.

When Franklin was a senior at LeRoy Central School, he was the manager of the football team, captain of the baseball team, played on the basketball team, competed on the track team with shot put and broad jump and played the violin in the orchestra. He was also elected Vice President of the Senior Class and gave the Class Oration at graduation.

Franklin Bundy's speech in 1912 foretold the aspirations of the future generations that would eventually make history in 2008, with the election of Barack Obama. Here are some excerpts from Bundy's oration: "Of the various elements that make for a good man there are none of more importance than Perseverance. Webster defines Perseverance as the act of persevering, persistence as anything undertaken, continued pursuit or prosecution of any business or enterprise begun ... The practical meaning of Perseverance is that quality which aids in producing a man who does not know defeat.

The foundation of Perseverance is optimism. No man is persevering unless he is an optimist. Did you ever see a pessimist, a man seeing nothing in the world worth living for, who possessed the smallest particle of Perseverance? The man who lives his life in the passive voice; intent on what he can get rather than what he can do, will never accomplish anything. To the persevering man the great problems of life have no terrors. He is undaunted by the difficult tasks that arise in his path, because the future, veiled to the procrastinator, is opened to his eyes and he can see success wait-



ing to crown his efforts ...

What factor has brought the class of Nineteen-twelve before you tonight? Perseverance. (T)hrough the long struggle ... every discouragement and obstacle has been overcome. Now we stand before you ... about to launch upon the stormy sea of life. (But) no matter what our calling in Life may be, we are fortified with that great gift – Perseverance—and we are bound to succeed, for: 'What is worth

Success' name But carrying out a noble project to a noble end."

Franklin Bundy's perseverance was a legacy he left to his children. His daughter, Betty, was elected vice president of her class and won the highest award for girls in the Larkin Speaking Contest.

The note in the 1937 *Oatka* made reference to the Underground Railroad and the abolitionist newspaper, edited by Frederick Douglas: "This North Star will be the pilot light to millions

of her race." Kermit Arrington told me today that when it was time to select the Valedictorian of the class, Betty was "overlooked" even though she had a four point higher average than the person selected. Her mother went to Mr. Spry, the Superintendent and pointed out the "oversight" and she was given the honor.

Betty was awarded a State Scholarship to Cornell University and graduated in 1941. She was a laboratory technician at Strong Hospital, but tragically died in 1944. She was survived by her husband, James Young, and her 16 month old son, James.

Betty's brother, Benjamin Franklin Bundy, Jr. graduated from LeRoy High School in 1935. His honors were not as significant as his sisters, yet he was listed as the wittiest boy in the class. He attended Cornell University from 1937-1938 and then transferred to Ithaca College.

In 1943, he earned his commission from the Communication Aviation Cadet Corps of Yale University and was assigned to the Tuskegee Army Air Field in Tuskegee, Alabama.

Franklin Bundy, Sr. died in February 1963 and is buried in Machpelah Cemetery. He knew the importance of perseverance and passed it on to his children. I can't help but wonder what he would have thought about the election of America's first African American president.



## First Night Celebration In Le Roy

The LEADER group of the LeRoy Business Council is busy getting ready for a "New Year's Eve Family Celebration" in which live music, food and other activities will culminate in a *spectacular fireworks display over Oatka Creek at 9:15 pm.*

The group has been sponsoring several fund raisers including a Chicken BBQ at the Eagle, Pizza at Pontillo's and **coming up on November 9, MacDonald's** will donate \$1.00 for each Big Mac meal.

On **Sunday, November 16, Java's On Main** will host a **Pancake breakfast from 8-11 am** to raise additional monies for New Year's Eve.

Any other organization that would like to participate in a fund raiser or the event itself on December 31 may call **Candace Bower at 768-9564** or **Ann Walters at 768-8432** or stop in at The Hobby Horse.

*Pancake breakfast tickets are also available through these sources.*

