

Remembrances Of The Civil War

by Lynne Belluscio

John B. Olmsted was born in LeRoy in 1854. In 1935, the *LeRoy Gazette* published his "Recollections of Boyhood in LeRoy" which is a short booklet of wonderful memories from the Civil War and Ingham University, to attending school at the Academic Institute and playing baseball. I was particularly amused at his reference to Ingham University being located on the "Orient" side of the creek.

He was just a boy when the Civil War broke out. "I have often thought

it strange that my recollection of it would be so dim. I cannot recall that the firing on Sumpter made any impression on me. The Merrimac and the Monitor I remember chiefly through a traveling show which produced the battle in miniature and blew up the "Merrimac" with a flash and report that drew all the boys in town afternoon and evening. Fort Donelson seems to have been the first battle that awakened my interest. I had the idea in some way that it was not a real war unless you stormed a fort. I remember the regiment of soldiers that was quartered in the old car shops in the village (on the North side of the railroad tracks on Church Street), which got the name of the Barracks and the old German drill master, Captain Keyser, who came to train them, and become a town character. I remember many an afternoon I spent with my mother and other women picking lint. I remember

too a Sunday when the news came that Richmond had fallen. It proved to be false, but it served to turn the peaceful Sunday into an uproarious Fourth of July. It was on that occasion, I believe that our Harry H. Seymour, then a young boy from Mount Morris, was telegraph operator at the Erie Station in LeRoy. He got the news over the wire, but became so excited that a habit he then had of stuttering stopped his speech entirely. The crowd nearly tore him in pieces to their eagerness to get him the message he had taken off.

During the dark days of the War, when the news that came from the front was only of disaster to the Union armies, there was much talk of an invasion of Northern soil by way of Canada. One bitter cold day my brother and I spent the afternoon skating on Red Mill pond some tow miles from town. Returning in the red dusk of a winter's night, we heard



ing he used to be roused by a scraping on the outside window shutters made by an unseen hand. This was the signal that the Yanks were coming and his duty was to hurry out into the night, gather up the horses and mules and pack them off to a place of safety in the surrounding hills. He told me too how once he came near being shop for a bushwacker by a drunken Union officer when he was only firing at small game in the woods near town. We of the North know little of

what war really means. bug guns firing towards the West, and our young minds conjured up all sorts of horrors in store for us. We expected to find the rebels at the house when we arrived home and you may imagine our joy at getting nothing worse than a scolding which Ann Connors mitigated much by a hot supper which she had kept for us on the kitchen stove.

What horrors might have been was never brought home to me until years after, on a visit to Winchester, Va. When a lawyer there, about my own age, told me how he, then a boy of twelve or fourteen, was left the sole protector of his mother and sisters and how at two o'clock in the morn-

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what war really means. My most vivid of my remembrances of the War is the death of Lincoln. I was then eleven years old. I drove with my father on that April morning two or three miles east of the village. As we came back, a man on the tavern steps told my father that Lincoln had been shot. He drove home to tell my mother. I remember the onsternation and agony which her face expressed as she learned the news. She went to her room at once and it was nearly a day before I saw her again. I could not fully understand, but it seemed as though all things had come to and end."

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