

by Lynne Belluscio

This picture appeared in the 1984 pictorial history of LeRoy, published during the Sesquicentennial. There was no caption, but in our files is an original photo with information on the back. The three men are "Weasel (Jimmy) Houseman and Ransom Stevens on the left, who both lived on Mill Street.

John Crowe, son of Mike Crowe is on the right. The note on the back states that Mike Crowe might have been a hosteller for the LeRoy family (although I'm not sure which hotel he would have worked at or where that information came from).

John Crowe worked at Oz Tompkins' Livery Stable. The note goes on to say that "A cigar salesman was at Giles and McCarthy's Saloon and took this picture back to his company and they put out a brand of cigars called "The Three Crooks" with this picture on each box. So I googled "Three Crooks Cigars" and discovered that "crooks" are a kind of cigar. They are still made by the Jacob's Cigar Company in Red Lion, Pennsylvania. Red Lion, which is about 35 miles south of Harrisburg was at one time known as the cigar capital.



In fact, today, on New Year's eve an 8-foot long fiberglass cigar is dropped from the municipal building (a former cigar factory building) instead of the usual New Year's ball. So I called the Jacob's Cigar Company and talked with Joe Jacobs. He told me a bit about "seegars." The "crook" is about 5 1/2 inches long and has a blunt shape. Fifty of them

are put into a mold and then put under pressure for about twenty minutes. The resulting cigar is actually crooked. Jacobs says that their "Moonshine Crooks" are very popular.

The Wolf Cigar Company, also based in Red Lion manufactures a "Rum Crook" and "Rum Crookettes." Since I also found a copy of the photograph

in the Brooks, album, I suspect that the picture was taken by Charles Brooks, probably around 1905. So the mystery is somewhat solved. It's not that Weasel, Ransom, and John were actually crooks. In the picture, Weasel is smoking a cigarette and Ransom is smoking a pipe, but John is smoking a cigar - probably a crook.

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