

# Finding LeRoy Footprints In New York

by Lynne Belluscio

A couple of weeks ago, I had a meeting in New York City and decided to spend a couple extra days to do a little more research on the LeRoy family. The LeRois were in New York before the Revolution. Herman LeRoy's house faced the Bowling Green.

In 1770, while still a loyal British Colony, New York erected a huge statue of King George and his horse in the middle of Bowling Green. An iron fence was built around the park and each fence post had a crown on the top. Six years later on July 9, 1776, a crowd gathered at the City Commons to hear the Declara-

tion of Independence. Enraged, the crowd marched to Bowling Green and wrenched the crowns off the fence and pulled over King George. The statue and crowns were melted down and turned into 42,088 musket balls for George Washington's Continental Army. (The fence still stands today.)

A month after King George was toppled from his horse, the English fleet arrived in the New York Harbor. Five hundred British war ships and 30,000 soldiers invaded New York. George Washington made a hasty retreat, which saved his army to fight another day. But before he left, he asked the Continental Congress for permission to burn New York City, rather than to turn it over to the British. His request was denied. But on September 21, after the English soldiers had already moved into the City, a fire broke out in lower Manhattan and burned straight up Broadway, consuming Trinity Church. I couldn't help but wonder where Herman was during all of this. The war compromised all the New York merchants. Some of them remained loyal to the Crown, but as far as we know, the

LeRois were not Loyalists.

The British occupied New York City for seven years. During that

time, the inhabitants left the City. Only 12,000 people remained. Living conditions were terrible. The British soldiers moved into homes, burned the furniture for firewood and made life miserable for anyone left behind. More than likely, Herman and his family moved out of New York. Another fire swept through the City in 1778.



It wasn't until November 25, 1783 that Washington returned triumphantly as President-elect to New York City. He rode down Broadway, past St. Paul's Chapel, which had survived both fires. St. Paul's still stands today, a testament to New York City's determination to rise above adversity. One door faces Broadway and the other faced the Twin Towers.

On the eventful day of September 11, St. Paul's church yard filled with debris from the collapsed towers. Firemen, police and rescue squads found refuge inside the Chapel. The pews were so badly damaged from rescue equipment that they are now being restored. George Washington and Martha prayed in this church while he served as President. His

pew is the only one that remains. And outside in the church yard, is a gravestone engraved "Jacob

process, which introduced cold air into the bottom of the tower, reduced the need for a tall tower,



LeRoy 1803." It's not certain which Jacob LeRoy is buried here, since some of the church records were destroyed, but it is probably Herman's brother.

A short walk from Bowling Green and Trinity Church is Hanoi Square where the merchant house of LeRoy and Bayard was located. I walked around with two maps in my hands. I'm sure there were a few people who wondered what I was doing, but I think I found the building that is on the former site of the LeRoy building. It's right next to a Belgian Chocolate shop, right around the corner from Delmonico's Restaurant.

Then several blocks in the other direction, on Water Street, around the corner from the Fulton Fish Market is the building that was built by Jacob LeRoy's son, Thomas. It was his factory. Since my last trip to New York, I discovered that it is now the Mark Joseph Steakhouse. Thomas held a patent for a new process for making lead shot for shot guns. The shot was made by pouring hot lead from the top of a tower through a series a sieves. His

but today there is no tower on the site and I have searched for a photograph or image of the shot tower.

A newspaper article which I found on the internet describes the shot tower which could be seen from the Brooklyn Bridge. I talked with the manager of the Mark Joseph Steakhouse, who is very interested in the history of the building, but he had no clues. I talked with a staff person from the South Seaport Museum who gives walking tours of the area and he had no additional information. And then I walked into the South Seaport print shop and on the wall was a color engraving of the Brooklyn Bridge and lower Manhattan. There, right in the middle was Thomas Otis LeRoy's shot tower. I bought a copy for \$10 to bring back to LeRoy. So after two days of sleuthing and walking my feet off, I thought that I deserved a little celebration, so I headed back to the Steak House, ordered a salad and a 10 ounce filet and a drink, with mango sorbet for dessert. I toasted the LeRois.