

Thoughts On Board Ship

by Lynne Belluscio

Historical Society members just returned from our annual trip. This year, we traced the LeRoy family history in New York City in lower Manhattan.

On a frigid evening in February 1815, in the middle of a concert at the City Hall in New York, a messenger brought the news of peace. It took a couple of

alum, shellac, sago, twine, hides, indigo, cassia, turmeric, white cord, cotton, carpeting, straw matting, feathers, and cheap cotton textiles. The names of the cloth were as exotic as the lands where they were made: "sooty romals, red galas, beerboom gurrahs, frocketsay romals, and gauzipor baftas." Dry goods clerks simply called the material "hum hums." The cloth was cheap, and soon it became the first object of a protective tariff.

It's not noted how long it took the Emily to return to New York, but it's conceivable that it was late in November before Jacob saw the New York harbor again.

It's easy to imagine sailing up the East River. The docks were crammed with ships and people were milling all around. It must have been a jubilant day when the Emily returned home, laden with thousands of dollars of goods from India.

Jacob worked a few more years for his father, perhaps sailing to other ports to negotiate trade goods. The company was also involved with trade routes to Liverpool, La Havre and to Latin America, Cuba and the Caribbean. But soon land speculation in Western New York would draw Jacob LeRoy from the wharves of New York to a little town that carried his father's name. It was

said that Jacob may have been sent to upstate New York to "cool him down."

Whatever the reason, Jacob turned his attention to the development of LeRoy where he remained until 1837. Did he miss the hustle and bustle of the New York harbor? His younger brother, Edward who lived in nearby Avon certainly didn't. He lamented that he would have to leave his verdant farm to go to New York on business. Edward much preferred the life upstate, but we'll never know about Jacob.

He returned to New York City with his family in 1837, but not much is known about what he did. The family's merchant house had gone out of business in 1826. Much of lower Manhattan was destroyed by fire in 1835. In 1836, Jacob borrowed money to buy all of the remaining unsold land in the Northern part of the Holland Purchase and within two years, he was able to recoup all of his investment money.

In 1841, Herman LeRoy died in New York City. His son Jacob died in Fairfield, Connecticut in 1868. It was remembered that Jacob LeRoy once remarked: "Property seldom remains in one family through many generations. Wealth begets pride and luxury. The children of the rich have expensive habits without industry and in the division of the father's estate find their portion insufficient for the paternal style and entail poverty upon their posterity."



Last Sunday we set sail on the 158 foot schooner Clipper City for a two hour sail around the tip of Manhattan. As we cleared the New York pier on the East River, the crew hoisted the sails and we headed toward the end of Manhattan, toward Staten Island, Off the bow was Brooklyn and Governor's Island. In my mind, I turned off all the lights and noise of New York City and removed the Statue of Liberty from her pedestal and wondered what it was like for twenty-year old Jacob LeRoy to set sail on the Emily in May of 1815.

He was in a race to India for his father's company, LeRoy, Bayard and Company. At the time LeRoy, Bayard and Company was considered the foremost merchant house in New York City. During the War of 1812, the English had prevented American shipping. By 1813 they had set up a naval blockade along the entire East Coast.

Hundreds of vessels lay idle along the waterfront. New Yorkers were preparing for another English invasion. Then the British burned Washington and New York prepared for the worst. But the British were turned back at Baltimore and the victory at the Battle of Lake Champlain removed an attack from Canada.

months to make sure that all the British ships were notified that the war had ceased, but as soon as it was evident that the British were more interested in trade than opening fire on American ships, the race was on.

New York merchants set sail for foreign ports. The Diamond left for Havana on the 1st of March. Five days later the Othello headed to Ireland. A week after that, the Seneca left for Canton and the Emily was off to India with Jacob LeRoy on board.

After sailing 98 days across the Atlantic and around the tip of Africa at the Cape of Good Hope, the Emily arrived at Madras on August 20, 1815. Jacob was the first man off the ship and made contracts with merchants. He had part of the cargo loaded at Madras. Then the Emily proceeded up the coast to Sand Heads, where she picked up a pilot for the tortuous 130 miles up the river to Calcutta to load more cargo. Calcutta offered a much wider variety of trade goods than the conventional tea, silks, china and cassia from Canton in China.

Typical cargos from Calcutta included sugar,

