

LeRoy Place

by Lynne Belluscio

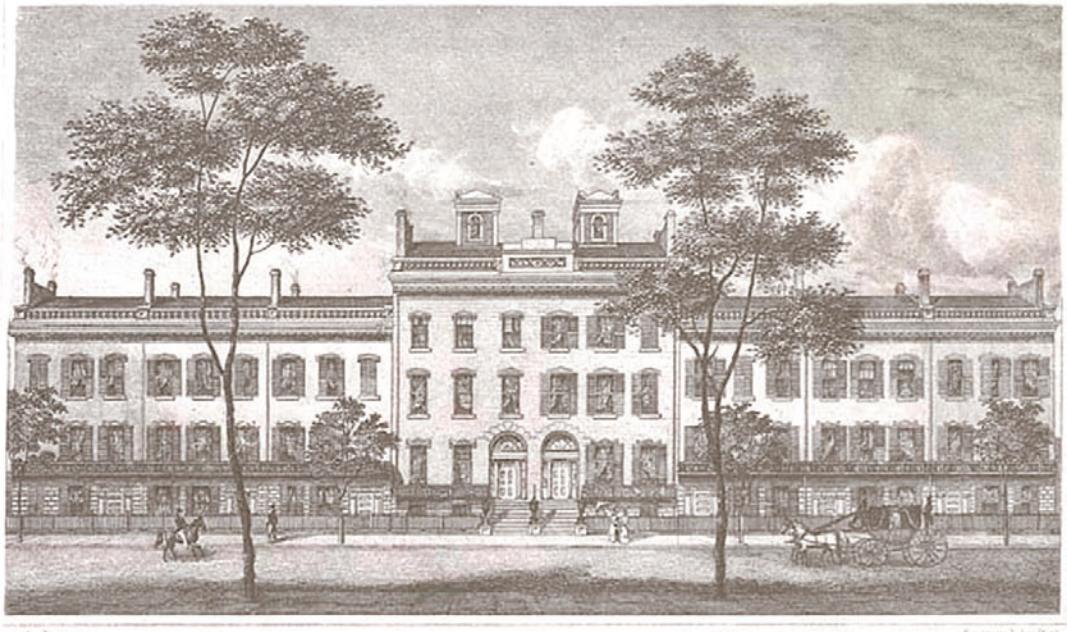
Sometimes I luck out with ebay. It depends on what I search for. A couple of weeks ago, I discovered a very interesting photograph of a building in New York City that was known as LeRoy Place. I had seen sketches of LeRoy Place but I had never seen a photograph.

LeRoy Place was built in 1827 by Isaac G. Pearson, a wealthy merchant and builder. He purchased all the lots on Bleeker Street between Mercer and Greene Streets. The lots were worth, at that time \$400 to \$600 each.

On both sides he erected rows of elegant residences for fashionable wealthy people. The buildings were the first "winged residences" with a large central building situated close to the street, with raised entrances and lantern-like roof projections. The side wings had small park-like yards in front. In fact, it was stipulated that each house should have a front yard 10 feet wide.

This part of the city was a very desirable area for the wealthy and it was a mark of gentility to "live above Bleeker." The houses sold for enormous sums at the time. Number 13 was sold to Benjamin Stephens for \$11,250. In order to set his elegant building apart from the neighborhood, Isaac Pearson petitioned the City to rename the block after the prominent international trader, Jacob LeRoy -- who we know as our Jacob LeRoy's grandfather.

In the photograph is #15 LeRoy Place. It was sold by Isaac Pearson



to Joseph C. Yates in 1829, for \$12,000. His wife was the daughter of John De Lancey, one of the more prominent men in New York City. The fashionable house on LeRoy Place became part of the De Lancey legacy. Number 13 which is also in the photograph was sold to Benjamin Stephens for \$11,250. He was the father of the famous traveler and antiquarian. (These houses became 103 and 105 Bleeker Street).

Another prominent owner was Edward Thebaud, the prominent son of Joseph Thebaud, an agent of the French East India Company. Although Thebaud retained a country home in Morristown, New Jersey, his primary residence was in New York on LeRoy Place.

By the late 1830s, LeRoy Place was no longer "the place to be"

and it lost its luster for the wealthy and aristocratic families of New York. After the Civil War the elegant homes became houses for foreign immigrants. This photograph shows what was left of #103 LeRoy Place, shortly before it was torn down in the 1870s. George Ehrets Lager Beer sign on the basement of the building to the left, in addition to segars, liquors, ales, porter and "Beer drawn from wood under pressure served here" indicates the seedier side of Bleeker Street. On the right,

Lorwens Company advertises its "Fancy Ostrich Feathers."

The photograph which I purchased is a page from a book "Early New York Houses" published in 1900. The brief description states: "The signs on these houses are sufficient to show that they are no longer fashionable residences and in all probability they will soon make room for buildings of a very different class, as has been the fate of all the rest of the mansions on LeRoy Place."



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