

\$1 Speeding Ticket For Going Too Fast Across The Bridge

by Lynne Belluscio

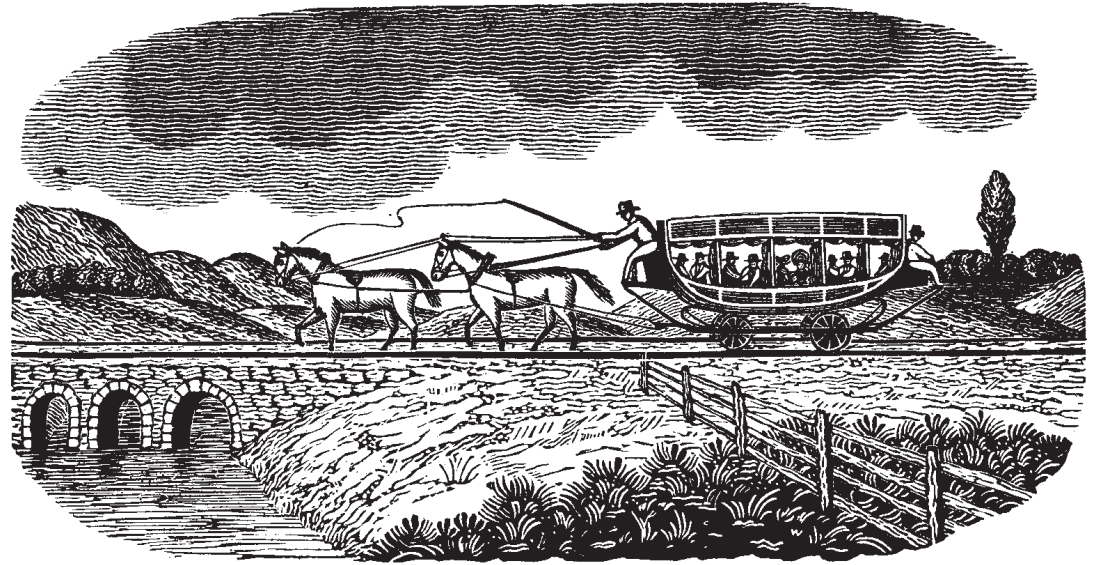
At the first Bellona (LeRoy) Town meeting in 1813, twenty eight men were voted to serve as overseerers of highways. It was also voted that they would serve as fence viewers.

There were 28 districts in the Town, which at that time included parts of Stafford and Pavilion. I haven't been able to find mention of where the 28 districts were located and I haven't been able to find a copy of the Statutes of the State of New York from 1813, but I do have Jacob LeRoy's two volume copy of the Statutes of New York from 1827-28.

Twenty-six pages are devoted to the duties of the commissioner of highways and the overseerers. All men over the age of 21, "excepting ministers of the gospel, priests of every denomination, paupers, idiots and lunatics" were expected to work on the roads. If they didn't show up, they were fined and if they showed up and didn't work very hard, or left early they were fined. If land within the district was owned by a person who didn't live in town, the overseer had to post a notice at the door of the place where the last town meeting was held and list the levy against them.

Men were also expected to provide teams of horses or oxen, carriages, sleds and equipment and were fined if they refused. The Town was allowed to levy money toward the repair and construction of highways, but according to the Statutes, the levy was not to exceed \$150. The Statutes allowed the highway commissioner to purchase an iron scraper or plow for a district if necessary.

Once a month, between April and December, the overseers were expected to notify the men in their districts to assemble and to remove stones from the roads and to maintain the boundary "monuments" or markers. All intersections on "post roads" (which were roads used for the transport of the mail) were required to be marked with guide posts. Anyone who defaced,



altered or removed the road signs were fined \$10. It was also the responsibility of the overseerers to "cause the noxious weeds on each side of the highway within their respective districts to be cut down or destroyed twice in each year, once before the first of July and again before the first day of September."

It was also permissible for land owners to set out trees along the highways and the trees had to be set at least six feet apart. It was also the responsibility of the highway overseerers to maintain bridges in their respective districts. And in the State Statutes for bridges, I discovered what may be the first sign for speeding: "The commissioners of highways of each town, may put up and maintain in conspicuous places, at each end of any bridge in such town, maintained at the public charge, and the length of whose chord is not less than twenty-five feet, a notice with the following words in large characters, "one dollar fine for riding or driving on this bridge, faster than a walk."

On June 8, this year, at the Bicentennial re-creation of the original town meeting, Steve Barbeau, the Town Supervisor, will appoint 28 honorary highway overseerers. I just hope they have a team of oxen to help keep the stones out of the highways. According to the Statutes, if they are appointed and refuse to do their duty or are negligent in their duties, they are fined \$10.

Just a couple of notes about the Bicentennial. We have learned that we have received a grant from the Pomeroy Foundation that will pay for the historic marker that will be erected on Trigon Park. In addition, we need to raise a little more money to pay for the fireworks, so if you haven't invested \$20 for your wooden nickel, stop by the Town Hall and see Pattie Canfield or Laura Brodie, or you can slip \$20

or a check to the LeRoy Historical Society Bicentennial project and mail it to: PO Box 176, LeRoy NY 14482, and we'll mail a nickel back to you.

Also, we have a couple of 15 star/stripe flags at the Jell-O Gallery for \$28. Fly the Star Spangled Banner this year. And last, but certainly not least, broadsides are ready for you to post. You can pick them up at the Town Hall or at the Jell-O Gallery.

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