

A Walking Tour For April 1st

by Lynne Belluscio

Have you ever taken a walk and all of sudden you see things a little different? Maybe it's just because spring is right around the corner, or that the first of April is here, but I've see some of LeRoy's landmarks a little differently.



#1 Soldier's Monument - On May 30, 1906, LeRoy dedicated this monument to the soldiers of the Civil War, which was known as the War of the Rebellion. Names of the men from the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and the Mexican War were also included on the plaques on the base. At one time, two massive canons flanked the monument, but they were buried when the LeRoy Beautification Committee noticed that they were aimed at the Baptist Church. During World War II they were dug up and given to the scrap drive, putting LeRoy well over its quota. Each year, the community gathers around the monument on Memorial Day to remember the men and women who have served their country in the armed forces.



#2 The Statue of Liberty - Two hundred of these statues were manufactured by Friedley-Voshart Company of Chicago and each one weighs about 290 pounds and originally cost \$350. Today, only about 100 of the original statues have survived including the one in LeRoy. The statues were part of the "Strengthen the Arm of Liberty" program that was started by J.P. Whitaker, the Boy Scout Commissioner of the Kansas City. It was a way to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Boy Scouts of America. LeRoy's statue was purchased by the Loyal Order of Moose and presented to the local Boy Scouts and dedicated September 17, 1950. The base and pedestal were designed by local architect, Ivan Cromwell.



#3 Woodward Memorial Library - Constructed of stone from the former Staunton Art

Conservatory of Ingham University, the library was given to the people of LeRoy by the children of Orator and Cora Woodward. Orator Woodward had purchased the rights to Jell-O in 1899 for \$450 and within a few years, created a business that would eventually be worth millions. Several members of the Woodward family enjoyed collecting rare and classic books. The library was dedicated on May 29, 1930 and is both a public library and a school library.



#4 US Post Office - Ernest Woodward, Chairman of the Board of the Jell-O Company wanted the LeRoy community to have a stately, classic post office. For eleven years, he pleaded and prodded the federal government to complete the project. Finally on August 21, 1938 it was dedicated. It has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1987.



#5 Oatka Creek - The Oatka Creek rises south in the hills of Wyoming and travels north slicing through the Town of LeRoy, on its way to the Genesee River east of Scottsville. Originally known to early settlers as Allen's Creek, it was named after a notorious pioneer, Ebanezer "Indian" Allen. It was said that the Indians would camp along the banks of the creek on hunting trips. In 1801, the settlers built a wooden bridge across the creek and the next year erected a dam to harness the water power for a grist mill and a saw mill. Here at the widest part of the creek you can see the mill pond that was formed behind the dam. Before the dam was built, this section of the creek was known as Buttermilk Falls, because the water flowed swiftly over the black rock and it foamed white like buttermilk. It was only after the dam was built that the great falls north of the village became known as Buttermilk Falls. In 1850, J.R. Anderson suggested that the name of the creek be changed and he asked the noted Seneca Indian, Ely Parker, for the Indian name. Ely responded that O-At-Ka meant "leaving the highlands" or "approaching a clearing" and the name was changed. Over time, silt and cattails filled the mill pond, so in the winter of 1933, the pond was dug out by hand, and a new dam was built. The creek is a haven for a wide variety of wild fowl.

Genesee County History
Open House
Sat., April 6th - 10 am to 3 pm
 Genesee Community College Forum
 Exhibits and Activities
 presented by the many
 historical societies, municipal historians,
 organizations and museums in
 Genesee County.
 Also a War of 1812 encampment.
 Free and Open to the Public
 Sponsored by the Genesee County
 Federation of Historical Agencies

