

A Very Busy House

by Lynne Belluscio

This week I am Charlotte Otis LeRoy - - Mrs. Jacob LeRoy. When the first grades appear at the front door, my ladies maid meets them and brings them into the front parlor. I expect them to introduce themselves and the girls must curtsy and the boys must bow. I introduce myself and tell them to pronounce my name correctly "Luh Roy." My husband's family are French Huguenots and I am sure they would appreciate hearing the correct pronunciation of their name.

I was born in Boston in 1800. My father Thomas Otis was a prominent businessman and my family moved to France where I attended school. My mother died when I was twenty one and is buried in France. I returned to the United States and married Jacob LeRoy, the son of one of the most prosperous men in New York City.

My father-in-law decided to send us to upstate New York as soon as we were married, to a town that was named after him. He owns 86,000 acres of land, known as the Triangle Tract, and the three previous land agents had not met his expectations, and he thought that my husband was well suited to replace the land agent.

When Jacob and I arrived, there was no suitable home for us. The land office was a small brick building, east of Allen's Creek. We decided to board a few months at Auntie Wimples, while additions were made to the land office. The new house has a ballroom for dances on the third floor and several rooms for our servants. Jacob brought his father's gardener from New York City to design and plant the vast estate with orchards, flower and vegetable gardens, espaliered trees and an arboretum with plant specimens from exotic places.

Mr. LeRoy insisted that a tall brick wall be built around the garden. I guess because he was afraid that people might steal fruit from his orchards, he put broken glass shards on top of the fence. Mr. LeRoy was particularly proud of his garden and visitors from Batavia



remarked that they had never seen such large cauliflowers. Mr. LeRoy takes a very active interest in the agriculture in town. He became the President of the first Agricultural Society in Genesee County. It is in his best interests to promote the valuable farm land in the Triangle Tract so more people will be attracted to the area.

With his father's backing, he bought the old flour mill and enlarged it. The flour is shipped in barrels to Brockport. After the Erie Canal opened in 1825, LeRoy flour was shipped by canal to Albany. Mr. LeRoy is part owner of a mercantile business at the east end of the Main Street bridge and he also owns a distillery. A little while ago, he found some gold rocks and he thought he had discovered gold, but after sending samples to New York City, he discovered that all he had was "fools gold."

Mr. LeRoy's two brothers have moved here. Edward lives on a large farm, in Avon, near the Wadsworth family. Daniel moved here from New York, but he does not expect to stay here long and will move back east to marry Susannah Fish. She wants to live in Newport, Rhode Island.

I have a ladies maid, and a cook, who enjoys using all the

receipts that I brought with me from Pelham. I so enjoy lemons. They are very expensive, because that have to be shipped across the Atlantic Ocean from Spain. We often have lemon tarts, lemon pie, and lemon cakes. Of course, I have to buy the very expensive white loaf sugar to sweeten the lemons. I am very fortunate that my husband has the money to pay for the lemons and the sugar because everyone here uses maple sugar that is dark brown.

Every afternoon I invite friends in for afternoon tea in the back parlor. Following the most recent fashion, I serve tea on the mahogany table without

a linen tablecloth. We use small placemats instead. The museum here, still has my gold band sugar bowl and Britannia tea pot.

Mr. LeRoy and I have 10 children. Thomas was born soon after we arrived in town in 1823. We have a governess who takes charge of their education and watches over the very young children. There are two more boys, Edward and Augustus and there are seven girls, Caroline, Charlotte, Catherine, Helen, Julia, Louisa and Mary. It is a very busy house. But in a couple of years, we will sell this house and move back to New York City to be near the rest of our family.

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