

Stuart "Vic" Willis

by Lynne Belluscio

Last week I was checking the website – "LeRoy Then and Now" – and noticed that Mike Vinci had posted a picture of a paper envelope from Vic Willis' Sports Shop that he had found in an old Union Steel Chest tackle box. Several folks posted comments, including some of Vic's relatives. I asked Mike, that if he didn't want to keep the envelope, that it would be great to have it at the Historical Society, and he was kind enough to donate it to the collection. We are pretty sure that it held fishing hooks or leaders.

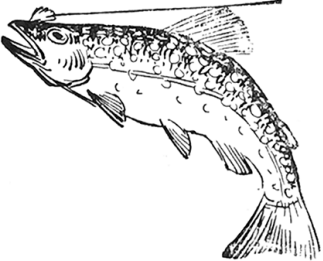
In the meantime, we started to do a little research. I found some articles in our clipping file, and then when Ruth Harvie came in last Thursday, I asked her what she knew. She said that a while ago, George Hall stopped by and brought in a similar envelope. She made a copy and said that she had found some other information including an ad in the 1931 Oatkan. The ad mentioned that the sporting goods store was in the "Wiss Block." Right now, I am not sure if that is the Wiss Hotel, or another building that Wiss owned. That will need some more sleuthing.

Stuart "Vic" Willis, was born in Springwater on September 8, 1885. He was the son of William and Orika Stuart Willis. He graduated from Geneseo Normal School and attended Rochester Business Institute. He was first employed as a clerk in Rochester for the Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburgh Railroad and for a while at the Times Union.


While he worked at the railroad he played on their semi-pro team. Apparently he was a pretty good pitcher, and he took his nickname "Vic" from a well-known professional pitcher, Vic Willis (who is in the Baseball Hall of Fame.)

An account of one game was published in the November 1918 "B.R. & P. Employee Magazine." It was during the last game of the season and the B.R.&P. team had to play the Ritter Dental team, which was favored 2 to 1 to win. "But quite unheralded "Vic" Willis, one of the best left-handed pitchers in Western New York had entered the employ

Come
to
the



"Vic" Willis Sport Shop
Wiss Block, Le Roy, N. Y.
-OPENEVENINGS
for
Fishing Tackle
and
Sporting Goods
—
EDISON and PHILCO
RADIO
PHONE 194



of this company at the general offices and Manager Taylor lost no time in securing his services. He held the Ritter Dental bunch helpless while his team scored 3 runs across the plate giving him a victory by the score of 3 to 1 and

sending Ritter into 2nd place." Vic played semi professional and professional baseball for a while.

He moved to LeRoy about the time he married Marion Rogers in 1913, and they lived at 22 Lincoln Avenue. They had three

daughters, Mrs. John McCulley and Mrs. John Carmichael and Mrs. Earl Sheard of Stone Church. He played for the LeRoy Athletics and we have an article from the front page of the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* of 1927: "LeRoy's Championship Baseball Club." "The grand old vet, Vic Willis, pitched himself to glory, and the LeRoy Athletics into the championship of Western New York out at Baseball Park yesterday afternoon when LeRoy defeated Fairport's fighting baseball machine in the final game of the little world series, 5 to 1. With the victory, the National Clothing Company trophy, symbolic of the championship of Western New York, goes to the LeRoy club."

Vic enjoyed being outdoors and spent time hunting and fishing in Canada and the Adirondacks. He operated the sporting goods shop for a while and worked for the IRS for sixteen years. He also worked for the Genesee County Department of Welfare for a while and was appointed Undersheriff in 1936 under Sheriff Forrest Brown. He died in 1949 and was buried in Machpelah Cemetery.

