

Mrs. Wadsworth's Lemon Liquor

by Lynne Belluscio

This past weekend, I had an opportunity to share some of the research that I am doing on the little manuscript recipe book that was owned by Charlotte LeRoy. The Genesee Country Village hosted a Domestic Skills Symposium and I had an hour to ramble on about the little book and what I was learning about Charlotte LeRoy.

When Charlotte LeRoy arrived in town in 1822 (or 1823 – we're not sure), she brought the recipe book with her. It seems that after she moved to LeRoy, she added some recipes from her friends here. Mrs. Redfield, shared her soft gingerbread recipe. The mayor's wife, Mrs. Lathrop shared a loaf cake recipe and cookie recipe with caraway seeds. And there is a recipe for Mrs. Wadsworth's Lemon Liquor. Since the Wadsworths were from Genesee, I am assuming it came from a Mrs. Wadsworth connected with either James or William Wadsworth, so I looked up the genealogy of the Wadsworth family.

Since William never married, Mrs. Wadsworth mentioned in Charlotte's recipe book had to be James' wife, Naomi. She was born in Connecticut in 1777. She married James Wadsworth in 1804 and moved to Genesee. The "Homestead" at the south end of Main Street in Genesee was built about that time. Naomi had five children and by the time young Charlotte LeRoy met the Wadsworths, Naomi was in her forties.

The LeRoys and the Wadsworths were probably on the same socio economic level. Both men were interested in developing the land, but the Wadsworths were looking for tenants for the land. The LeRoy's were selling off the land. Jacob's brother bought land just north of the Wadsworths, west of the Genesee River, and enjoyed farming.

Charlotte LeRoy apparently asked Naomi for her recipe for Lemon Liquor and it is carefully written in the little recipe book.

Take the rinds of 18 fair lemons, steep them in 1 gallon of good brandy for three or four days – then take out the rinds, put to

the brandy 3 lbs. of Loaf sugar and a pint & a half of new milk, let it stand two or three days more, stirring it well once or twice each day, then filter it through paper.

A substitute for Citron: When the rinds are taken out of the brandy put them in a ?? of loaf sugar.

Pat Mead, a historic cook at Genesee Country Museum, adapted a variety of recipes for the Domestic Skills symposium. She chose Charlotte LeRoy's recipes for Lemon Cheesecake and Julia LeRoy's mince-meat recipe for tarts. But she also tried Mrs. Wadsworth's recipe for Lemon Liquor and before I left GCV on Saturday, she gave me a small bottle. It is quite delicious.

Yesterday, I called the "Homestead" in Genesee to see if they might have a portrait of Naomi. Will Wadsworth answered the phone and I explained why I was calling. He said that they might have a portrait of Naomi, but they have so many portraits, there's no way of knowing for sure which one might be Naomi. We also talked a bit about his sister, Naomi Wadsworth, who was one of the pilots who flew the Whiskey 7 World War II plane across the Atlantic last year for the anniversary of the Normandy invasion. As he explained, the Wadsworth family has kept the name "Naomi" in their family lineage for many generations. So someday soon, I will take a sample of Mrs. Wadsworth's Lemon Liquor down to the Homestead.

In the meantime, I called Newb LeRoy, who is the great, great grandson of Charlotte LeRoy, and asked him to send me a copy of the LeRoy family's Christening Punch – which I think might be more lethal than Mrs. Wadsworth's Lemon Liquor. As Newb said, they weren't teetotalers. He said the handwritten



punch recipe was found in some family papers and it has been served several times at family christenings, but he doesn't know much about it. From reading the recipe, I think it is good that the LeRoy family is large, because it would take quite a crowd to drink this much punch and still remember why they got together. The recipe:

- 1 Pineapple cut in slices (soak in the rum overnight)
- 3 Oranges cut in slices
- 3 Lemons cut in slices
- 1 Pint lemon juice
- 1 Pint orange juice
- 2# Cut sugar (1 Quart simple syrup)

- 1 qt. Champagne
- 1 bottle Rum
- 1/4 Bottle Brandy
- 1/3 Bottle Peach brandy
- 1/3 Bottle Red Curaçou
- Large pieces of ice

Tonight, the Board of Trustees of the Historical Society met, and at the beginning of the meeting I shared a little of Mrs. Wadsworth's Lemon Liquor. The meeting went very well and it was decided to make more Lemon Liquor and perhaps serve it at the annual Dinner Auction. I'm a little hesitant about the Christening punch. It might be better when people had to drive a horse and carriage home.

Autumn Is In The Air