

Wreaths Across Main Street



by *Lynne Belluscio*

Evergreen wreaths have been part of Christmas traditions for centuries. In fact the symbolism of the wreath (an everlasting circle) traces its origins to before Christianity. For Christmas, the wreath is part of the advent story. The advent wreath is usually set on a table with four purple candles in the circle and a white candle in the center. One of the purple candles is lit on a Sunday before Christmas and the white candle is lit on Christmas day. In Sweden, St. Lucia wears a wreath in her hair with lit candles as part of the Christmas celebration. We hang Christmas wreaths on doors, and windows, over mantles, and in cemeteries.

The Christmas display in the front window of the Town Hall harkens back to the days when huge wreaths were hung across

Main Street. John Locastro, who had decorated the windows at the Town Hall for several years, called the Historical Society to see if we had a photo of the wreaths across Main Street, and sure enough, we had a couple. This one has a handwritten date on the back 1946-47. So we went to the 1946 LeRoy Gazette and looked for mention of the decorations. An article mentions that there were five wreaths hung across Main Street from the Masonic Temple to the Main Street Bridge. A smaller wreath was erected across Bank Street. The LeRoy Business Association raised the money for the decorations. But early in December, the plans for the new Yuletide trimmings were in jeopardy. The Federal Civilian Production Administration had ordered a mandatory brown out because of a massive coal strike. Twenty-one

eastern and mid-western states were ordered to reduce electricity usage by 25%. It was noted that this was even more drastic than during the recent War. All lights in store windows, advertising signs, and electric holiday decorations were forbidden and there were heavy fines and penalties for violations. Luckily the coal strike ended the same day that the decorations were scheduled to be strung across Main Street. The lights were turned on and were lit every night until January 1. John Locastro said that he remembered the wreaths being on Main Street into the 1960s.

By coincidence, I had a conversation with Gene Sinclair who said that each year, fresh greens were cut by some guys from Niagara Mohawk. They were given a day off to go up into the Adirondacks and the garlands were made of ground cedar,

not pine boughs.

Several years ago, the New York State Department of Transportation prohibited any signs or banners across Main Street, so these types of decorations are no longer allowed.

Just an unrelated note, the Jell-O Gallery will be open Monday through Friday 10 to 4 during January, February and March. The LeRoy House will reopen in the spring. The Jell-O Gallery will reopen weekends in April although it will be closed Easter Sunday April 1.

New Year's Eve—LeRoy House will be open from 7 pm until the fireworks at 9. Join us for some old fashioned games, warm cider, hot coffee and traditional Dutch treats. Plenty of parking behind LeRoy House. Just a short walk to see the fireworks.