

Postcards from Home

by *Lynne Belluscio*

John Horgan, Jr. was born in Plugville, north of LeRoy on June 18, 1859. His parents were Irish immigrants who were born in Kerry County, Ireland. When John was nine, his mother died and he was sent to live with his aunt and uncle, Mary and John Coleman, an Irish farm family in LeRoy. In 1879, when he was 20, he left home to work as a traveling photographer with the Union View Company of Rochester. He worked in New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania. By 1885, he was in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, working for the Cambria Iron Works. His photographs were used to illustrate the company's catalogue. In 1887, he moved to Birmingham, Alabama and his photographs appeared in publications and engineering catalogues. In 1891, he worked in New Orleans "to take a series of views illustrating the growth of cotton and its preparation for the market." When he returned to LeRoy in 1894, he married Margaret Atchinson, the daughter of Irish immigrant, William Atchinson. The wedding took place at St. Peter's Church. Although John traveled extensively, he returned to LeRoy frequently and his photographs were used for a series of postcards. His postcards can easily be identified by his name in red letters in the white margin. In 1901, Horgan traveled to Ecuador to serve as the official photographer for the Guayaquil and Quinto Railroad Company. He moved to Scranton, Pennsylvania in 1903 and became the Principal of the American School of Art of Photography, which was a correspondence school. Between 1904 and 1921, Horgan was the photographer for the Hudson Coal Company and during that time produced nearly 1700 negatives. In 1932, the company published a promotional book titled, "The Story of Anthracite" with many of Horgan's photographs. John died in 1926. In November 1992, the Anthracite Heritage Museum in Scranton

opened an exhibit of Horgan's photos in the anthracite mines. It is interesting to note that his photographs appeared in the National Geographic magazine, McGraw-Hill textbooks, and the Pan-American Union. John Horgan, Jr. died on July 8, 1926 at the age of 68. His grandson is Sid Horgan of LeRoy.

An exhibit of his LeRoy postcards as well as some other LeRoy views is being prepared for display at the LeRoy Municipal Building.

