

A Christmas Sale

by Lynne Belluscio

The Jell-O Gallery Shop will be open 10 to 4, Monday through Saturday and Sunday, 1 to 4 for some unusual and unique items for the holidays. Make sure you stop by to see the daily specials and if you are a member of the Historical Society, don't forget to use your 10% discount on all items (except the Barn Quilt Calendar). There are a quantity of LeRoy Bicentennial shirts still available in most sizes and we have a sale on the embroidered Jell-O golf shirts. The LeRoy afghans are still a popular gift for those who want a warm cover for the cold days ahead - or they make a great tablecloth for a festive table!

I took my two grandsons to the Yuletide Tour at Genesee Country Village last week and there I learned that in 1849, the State of New York declared Christmas an official holiday. So today, I pulled the 1849 *LeRoy Gazette* down from the archive and started leafing through the pages. Sure enough, the *LeRoy Gazette* mentions that on April 7, 1849, the New York Legislature passed an "Act to designate holidays to be observed in the acceptance and payment of bills of exchange and promissory notes."

I found the notice of the new Bill in the August 15, *LeRoy Gazette*. The other holidays mentioned in the Bill included "New Year's Day, the Fourth of July, and a day appointed or recommended by the Governor of this State as a day of fast of thanksgiving ..." These holidays were to be considered as the "First day of the week, commonly called Sunday ..."

This law was not embraced by everyone, for there were many who believed that the celebration of Christmas on December 25th - which is not mentioned in the Bible - was inappropriate and nothing more than a way to commercialize a pagan celebration. And in LeRoy, it's hard to know exactly what was happening.

In 1847 and 1848, there is little mention of Christmas in the *LeRoy Gazette*. Only R.L. Samson had an ad for holiday



items for sale. He lists gold pens, rings, pins, ear rings, bracelets, card cases and a "great variety of fancy goods."

On December 19, 1849, there were several ads for Christmas and holiday goods. Adam Pratt offered "some rare bargains to his friends and customers and all who have any inclination to becoming such. He has reduced the prices from 20 to 30 percent on all." LeRoy's first recorded Christmas sale! He offered dress goods, linen handkerchiefs, shawls, French worked collars, capes, chimizettes, Italian silks, hosiery and gloves, table linens, sheeting, Damask napkins, towelings, and table and piano covers, English blankets, Marseilles quilts etc. etc.

"Not to be outdone, R.L. Samson mentions that he has a great variety of annuals (diaries) and other beautiful books for the coming holidays. Also a greater variety of toys, toy books, and fancy articles - than any other establishment in town - all which will be sold at a small advance on cost." (Layaway?) "Ho for the Holy days - Call at Chamberlin and Star's and see the largest

stock of toys, fancy glass boxes, wax dolls and gifts of every description ever before exhibited in this market."

And then Clark and Reese advertised "A Christmas Dinner," "The citizens of LeRoy are informed that we shall exhibit and furnish our customers with the most extra ordinary steaks, roasts and cuts from their premium cattle on Monday the 24th. Persons wishing choice of bits must leave their orders at the market in good season." So in 1849, one hundred and sixty three years ago, LeRoy was well on its way to celebrate the new holiday.

In keeping with the laws of New York State, the Jell-O Gallery and the Historical Society will be closed on Christmas Day and New Year's Day, but all of us here, Jim, Caroline, Terry, Eileen and Ruth wish you a Merry Christmas, and invite you to stop by and do a little Christmas shopping.

