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*of McLean County, Illinois*



*By the LeRoy Bicentennial Commission*

1895

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# *Heritage of The Prairie*

**A History of LeRoy  
and of  
Empire and West Townships  
McLean County, Illinois**

Published By  
**The LeRoy Bi-Centennial Commission**

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1976

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## Foreword

As a part of this historic American Revolution Bicentennial observance, the LeRoy Bicentennial Commission decided one of its greatest contributions to posterity would be a book covering the LeRoy community's own contribution to the 200 years of development of this greatest nation the world has ever known. After all, this nation was still in its infancy, barely a half century old, when early settlers began pouring in to this fertile area and started developing the rich heritage that is ours today. It should be noted that this nation was only 59 years old when LeRoy was founded and thus it has 141 years of interesting historical happenings and sidelights to contribute to our country's 200th birthday.

Woodrow Wilson, scholar, historian and 28th President of the United States, had this to say about the value of local history:

"A spot of local history is like an inn upon a highway; it is a stage upon a far journey; it is a place the national history has passed through. There mankind has stopped and lodged by the way. Local history is thus less than national history only as a part is less than the whole. Local history is subordinate to the volume itself."

Every effort has been made to bring to these pages the significant highlights and sidelights in the founding, development and progress of LeRoy and surrounding community. Countless hours of research, delving into historical records, documents, pictures and papers have gone into the preparation of this book by dedicated local historians and writers to make it the most complete factual record to date.

As you read this volume you cannot help but become aware that this progressive LeRoy community and area that is ours today did not just happen. It came about through the struggles and trials, ideals and goals, monetary investments and hard work, dedication and devotion of many who have gone on before. This is our heritage! Let the history of the past be our inspiration for the future.

Yes, this community and this nation have been richly endowed and blest. Thus let us not forget the words of our first President, George Washington, who said in his first inaugural address: "No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than those of the United States."

April 1, 1976

O. J. LERE, Mayor

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In gratitude and honored respect for the thousands, who by their sacrifice have given of their time, talents and lives on land and sea and air in our military forces, that we may enjoy peace, prosperity and freedom unparalleled in the entire history of man.

May we pledge that their example be a guide and inspiration for us in the years ahead.

ARLO E. BANE

# In Appreciation

The Bicentennial History Book Committee pauses here to express their appreciation for the articles written - the pictures loaned or given - the scrapbooks loaned - information so freely given - your time, effort and interest.

To those who wrote articles:

George Lewis	Freda Horine
Greg Newlin	Addie Stewart
Frances Wagers	Ed Sennett
Florence Flegel	Byron Kline
John Fippenger	Helen Meadors
Randy Bowman	Rev. & Mrs. H. Hudson
Shirley Chancellor	Rev. & Mrs. B. Badger
Caroline Conn	Mrs. Everett Cockrell
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To those who loaned or gave pictures:

Mary A. Deffenbaugh	Joan Webb
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Florence Flegel	The LeRoy Journal
O. J. Lere	

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Linda Wagers	Nancy Lebeck
Janice Robinson	Helen Meadors
Marian Spratt	

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A. Lee Pray	Lois Evans
Judson Chubbuck	John Tompkins
J.T. & E.J. Crumbaugh Libr.	LeRoy State Bank

To those who secured the necessary ads:

Mary Lou Dean	Patsy Wright
Ron Wesbecher	Pat Michael
Therese Kennedy	

To O. J. Lere who edited these many pages

To Lloyd Conn for a special recognition

To all of you and any others who made this book possible, we are grateful.

Sincerely,  
The Bicentennial History  
Book Committee

## THE BICENTENNIAL HISTORY BOOK COMMITTEE

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# History of LeRoy and Empire Township



**Buckles Grove Today**

When Illinois became a state in 1818, no white settlers had ever come to that piece of the prairie which is now McLean County. Four years later, a few white families came across country from Pekin and started the little settlement of Blooming Grove, south of the present city of Bloomington. However, the very rich tract of land, 8 miles long and 6 miles wide composing Empire Township, was known only to roving bands of Indians, birds of the air and wild animals of the forest. The middle fork of Salt Creek flows through the entire length of the township and is joined by the West Fork in the southern part, together forming about 11 miles of running water the year around. Nine miles of Salt Creek was bordered with heavy timber composed of varieties of oak, walnut, hickory and many other valuable species. This grove covered about 7,000 acres. Besides this, there were about 2,000 acres across the north side, called "Old Town Timber."

In 1827 big John Buckles of Virginia happened to find this beautiful grove along Salt Creek. He had wandered around for years, hunting for the perfect location to settle his large family. He built a log cabin immediately in what was called Buckles Grove. John was a hunter, not a farmer, and this spot was ideal for hunting and fishing. Food, and logs for building, and fuel were right at his door.

John Buckles was a giant of a man weighing 380 lbs. He had 13 children but not all came here as some of the older ones had taken roots and settled along the way. He made a tannery, probably several of them, by hollowing out large oak logs for vats and using the bark in the tanning process. His boys soon became friends of the Indian boys who were nearby, playing games and running races.

Aside from the very valuable timber, there were about 22,000 acres of beautiful rich undulating prairies in the township. This as well as the timber attracted other settlers.

Jessie Funk and his brother-in-law, James Burleson, had driven a great herd of hogs into the grove the year after Buckles came. They established a camp for the hands caring for the hogs. There was much food there for swine including acorns. In that day livestock was driven across the country to market, often to Galena, Pekin or some other river town.

Also in 1828, Aquilla Conaway brought his family up from Kentucky. He bought Buckles' house and claim—Buckles moving west from section 28 to section 29.

Nathan T. Brittin and Thomas O. Rutledge came to Buckles Grove in 1829. In 1830: Henry Crumbaugh and son, J.H.L.; Daniel Crumbaugh and sons, William, John, and Leonard A.; Michael Dickerson and sons, Robert F., Henry C., and Caleb P.; Daniel Jackson, James Rutledge, Silas Watters and sons, John and Chalton; James Merrifield and son Otho; Levi Westfall, James Van Deventer, James and Jerry Walden, all settled in various parts of Buckles Grove.

All chronicals of that early day tell of the deep snow in the winter of 1830 and 1831. Persons caught out in it had to rely entirely upon the instincts of their horses or ox teams to find their way back home.

Wolves caused more trouble than anything else, coming right up to the houses to steal pigs, chickens and sheep. They destroyed much of the wild game the people needed for food. During the winter of the big snow, many wild animals perished but the wolves seemed more plentiful than ever. On moonlit nights, people could step to their cabin doors and see them frisking about in the snow. Deer, with their sharp little hooves cutting through the crusted snow, were an easy prey for the wolves. Wolf hunts were the main sport of the day, one farmer even trained hounds to catch them.

In December, 1836 a sudden change in weather from 40° above to 20° below, accompanied by a high wind from the west, froze water on the fields in waves. Horses out in it had an inch of ice on their skins and harness so stiff it couldn't be removed until the next day. Hiram Buckles' overcoat billowed out from him so stiffly frozen he couldn't get through the door. Salt Creek was frozen clear to the bottom and was bank full. As other water flowed over it, ice froze in tiers five feet above the banks.

Another menace to these pioneers was prairie fires. A small wind could whip a path of flames for many miles destroying all along the way. People ran to ponds and streams for protection until it burned itself out.

CERTIFICATE }  
N° 2730

# THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

To all to whom these Presents shall come, Greeting:

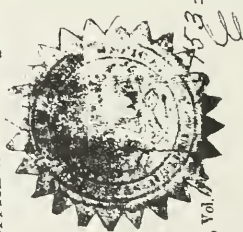
WHEREAS Peter Buckles, of McLean County, Illinois \_\_\_\_\_  
has deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE of the United States, a Certificate of the REGISTER OF THE LAND OFFICE at Marionville \_\_\_\_\_  
whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said Peter Buckles \_\_\_\_\_  
according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the 24th of April, 1850, entitled "An Act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands," for the best best guaranteed  
of Section Twenty Nine, in Township Twenty Two, North, of Range One East, in the Western, of the \_\_\_\_\_  
subject to sale at Marion, Illinois, containing one hundred and sixty acres \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ according to the official plat of the survey of the said Lands, returned to the General Land Office by the SURVEYOR GENERAL, which said tract has been purchased by the said  
Peter Buckles \_\_\_\_\_  
**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**, in consideration of the Premises, and in conformity with the several acts of Congress, in such case made and provided, HAVE GIVEN AND GRANTED,  
**NOW KNOW YE**, That the

and by these presents DO GIVE AND GRANT, unto the said Peter Buckles \_\_\_\_\_  
and to his heirs, the said tract above described: TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances of whatsoever nature, thereto  
belonging, unto the said Peter Buckles \_\_\_\_\_ and to his heirs and assigns forever.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I, Mathew Van Buren \_\_\_\_\_  
**PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**, have caused these letters to be made PATENT, and the SEAL of the GENERAL

LAND OFFICE to be hereto affixed.  
GIVEN under my hand, at the CITY OF WASHINGTON, the fourteenth day of March in the Year of our  
Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty seven and of the INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES  
the eighty first



BY THE PRESIDENT: Mathew Van Buren  
Richard B. Mason  
Secretary  
RECORDED BY THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE

Recorded, Vol. 6, p. 153 =

1837 Patent issued to Peter Buckles and signed by President Martin Van Buren

There is no record of anyone being molested by the Indians. There were Indians around—hundreds of them, who marched by single file on their yearly hunting trips along Salt Creek, always friendly but some inclined to steal.

In spite of the hardships and struggle to barely exist, church and school were not neglected. In 1832, the Clearwater School was built of logs about 1 mile south of LeRoy. Lame Will Johnson was the first teacher. His legs may have been weak but not his arms for he was first class with the hickory stick. He was pretty fond of whiskey and on one occasion passed it out to his pupils so all were slightly intoxicated. Once they locked him out of the school. He managed to climb to the roof, cover the chimney and smoke out his pupils. Once a month, he got religion and repented.

Church services also were held in Clearwater School. The first services ever held were in the William Conaway home by the Rev. James Latta, a missionary. In 1831 Rev. S. R. Begg came and made Buckles Grove a part of the Methodist Circuit. Silas Watters headed that group and was very active in the religious life of the settlement. In 1850 he met with other prominent Methodists, including Peter Cartwright, in Bloomington to establish Wesleyan University.

The Presbyterians in 1832 started holding services in the home of Peter Buckles and were called the "Salt Creek Congregation," a name given to it by Abraham Lincoln who surveyed this area. They met in the homes and Clearwater School until the town of LeRoy was started. Then Mr. Buckles donated the land for a church, the same site the present church stands on. The Rutledge family also were very active in establishing this church.

By the 1830s Buckles Grove, built around John Buckles original claim, had become quite a settlement. Also many were staking claims elsewhere in the township. J.W. Baddeley, an Englishman, deciding Buckles Grove would be an excellent site for a town, laid out the town of Monroe. He put up a store and stocked it for trade.

However, others had noticed the rapid growth of Buckles Grove. Among them Gen. A. Gridley and Gen. Merritt Covel, surveyors from Bloomington, who studied the lay of the land and decided that the natural knoll which lay almost in the center of the (Empire) township would be an ideal location for a town. About a mile to the east, south and west were the Buckles Grove settlers, while settlers to the north in Old Town Timber were only 3 miles distant. So in 1835 they purchased the 80 acres of which the elevation was surveyed and laid out the town of LeRoy. Mr. Baddeley was offered very liberal inducements to abandon his town and move his store to LeRoy. This he did and he and Amos Neal were the first to sell goods in the new town.

The early town was laid out around a square. Lots were sold in December, 1835 and bidding was spirited. However, building had a very slow start. About 1837 Hiram Buck put up a hotel and by the fall there were a few log houses, stores and one frame store building erected by Edgar Conkling. At that time Mr. Buck, also a surveyor, laid out Conkling's and Woods' additions embracing about 120 more acres, lying on the west, north, and east sides of the original town.

In 1838, a Post Route was established between Danville, Bloomington and Peoria, passing through LeRoy. A post office was opened in Buck Hotel with Mr. Buck the first postmaster. At first the mail came by a Post Rider (on horse) then by Fink and Walker "Mud Wagons" which by courtesy were called stages. For a long time this firm ran nearly all the stages in northern Illinois and Indiana.

The following excerpts were taken from a letter written and sent by Hiram Buck on December 18, 1836 from Bloomington with no envelope or stamp but marked 18c postage due.

"Land is slowly rising. I'm offered \$11.00 an acre for mine. Money is plenty. Pork worth 5 to 5½c; wheat \$1.00; corn 20c; oats 25c; all in demand. My stock and loose property is worth probably twice as much as I was worth altogether when I landed here. Should I sell this place, I shall move about 10



The Barnum Flour Mill was built in 1859 by Hohart and Dickerson. The flour from the mill was called "Empire State".

miles east and settle in the town of LeRoy and buy a farm adjoining the town and keep a public house. This town has been laid off within the last year and the proprietor was induced to lay off the addition spoken of before. It lays on the road leading from Danville to Pekin and has every advantage of travel.—It will no doubt become a place of business. At any rate it is as well located as any inland town in the west.

"Our country is about equally divided on the great question of politics. The candidates for the U.B party carried their ends in August by a majority of one vote and U.B. got 2 more than Harrison."

Early settlers listed by Simeon West (Article on Pioneers of Empire Township, 1904) and other historians are as follows:

1830 — Ambrose Hall, William Davis, James Lawrence, Richard Edwards, Jacob Karr, William Johnson.

1831 — Reuben Clearwater, Amos Conoway, Joshua Hale, Aaron Williams, Andrew Deffenbaugh.

1832 — Abram Buckles and brothers, Peter, Thomas, and William; T.G. Barnett.

1835 — Mahlon Bishop, James Wiley and brother, Thomas; John W. Baddeley and son, John C., from England; Isaac Murphy; James Lucas.

1836 — T.D. Gilmore (from Kentucky); Elijah Hedrick, Elisha Gibbs and son, Simeon; Steven Conkling.

1837 — Hiram Buck and son, Thomas; Robert and John Barr; James Lincoln; Thomas M. Whitaker; James Bishop; Minor Bishop; Levi and Daniel Knott.

1840 — John and Jessie Karr; Thomas Martin; Thomas Rice; Henry Rice; Hamilton Gilbert.

1841 — Montgomery Crumbaugh.

In 1843, E. E. Greenman, a popular peddler to Buckles Grove residents, was persuaded to open a store in LeRoy. He rented a building for \$1.00 a month and paid \$1.00 a week for board. When his landlord doubled his rent, he bought a lot across the street for \$10.00, hired a man to saw up logs from the nearby timber, and in 21 days was in business in his own building. S. D. Baker went in with him. In 1857 they moved the old building and built a fine brick structure for \$3,000.

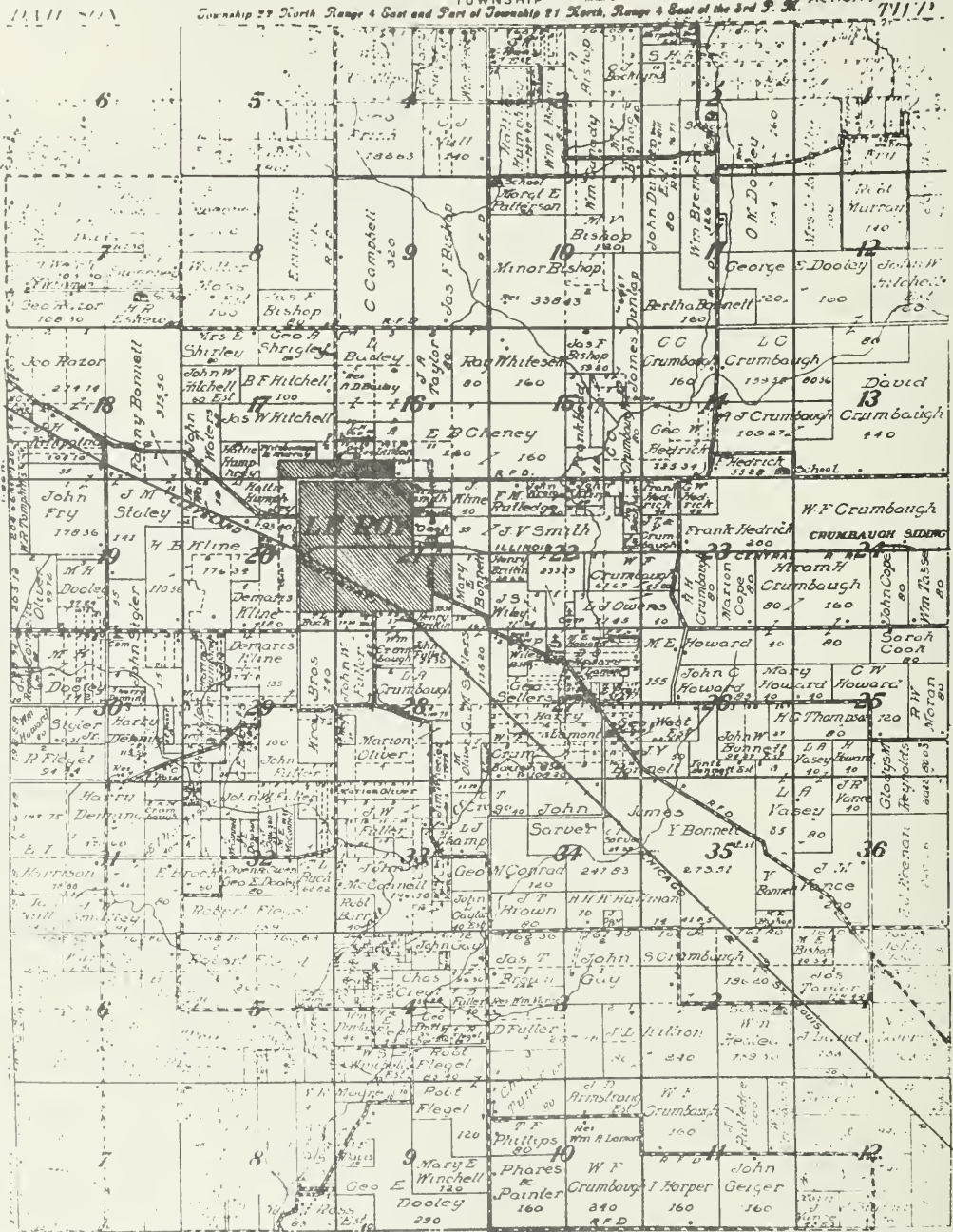
Other early merchants were Richard Edwards, Kimler and Bishop, L.H. and B.F. Park, E.L. Moorehouse and son, and Mr. McLean.

# 1874 Map of Empire Township

## EMPIRE

TOWNSHIP

Township 27 North Range 4 East and Part of Township 21 North Range 4 East of the 3rd P. S.





Fred Phillips and Ed Spearman at the Big Four Depot.

T.J. Barnett commenced trade in LeRoy in 1852 and the next year built the post office building which was the first brick structure in town. Later he sold this and bought the Greenman building. He went into partnership with J. Keenan and in flush years sold \$55,000 worth of goods. In 1854 and 1855, the firm of Crumbaugh and Reed had a large trade.

All the goods from these early stores came by way of Pekin, being shipped there from St. Louis on boats up the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. Farmers hauled their wheat to Pekin to be sold or ground for their own use.

In 1841 Elisha Gibbs built a good mill, run by steam, located on the south side of town. This served well until it burned in 1844. Buckles and Farmer built a steam grist and saw mill on the east side of town in 1853 and it burned in 1856. Hobert and Dickerson built a large steam mill in the west part of town near where the depot stood. This changed hands to Breener and Barnum, then Breener and Keenan and later to Barnum and Kennan who added a large grain and lumber trade.

On May 1, 1870 after years of legal tangling with the state and other difficulties, the Danville, Urbana and Bloomington and Peoria R.R. sent its first train through LeRoy. J.M. Myers was the engineer who ran the first engine that ever came into this city over the Big Four route. LeRoy citizens were very proud and happy for they had invested \$75,000 toward its construction. However, they were not quite satisfied for they felt the freight rates were too high, considering the amount they had subscribed toward its construction. So they immediately started a movement for a narrow gauge railroad between LeRoy and Rantoul. Mrs. J.V. Smith in her article on Pioneer Transportation states:

"The building of the section of road from LeRoy to Fisher is, I believe, wholly a LeRoy enterprise, and no history of our little city is complete without its mention." In March, 1876 a company was formed to build this narrow gauge road to Fisher with James Bishop, president; C.A. Barley, sec., and Joseph Keenan, treasurer. Practically all the right-of-way was donated and in 10 months the road was mostly built and in running order. It is commonly called the "Pumpkin Vine."

Soon after LeRoy had been laid out it was circled by a half-mile race track. Horse owners came from Bloomington and other nearby towns. There was lively betting and much excitement. Some people felt these races brought in an element unwholesome to the best interests of LeRoy.



I. C. Depot in 1975



Ed Beckham sprinkles down dust in streets



Town and City Hall  
1903

From 1835 to 1874 the town of LeRoy was governed by a president and board of trustees. However, the town prospered from the date of its founding so in August, 1874 an election was held adopting a city charter and electing a mayor, 6 aldermen, treasurer and city clerk.

The elected officials were as follows:

M. S. Stout	Mayor	Salary \$50 per year
John Kline	Alderman	\$2 per meeting
A. B. Johnson	Alderman	
J. W. Wright	Alderman	
A. T. Bishop	Alderman	
D. L. Buckworth	Alderman	
J. M. Stevens	Alderman	
J. W. Brown	City Clerk	\$75 per year
Peter VanAtta	Treasurer	\$25 per year

John F. Alsop was appointed marshal and superintendent of streets at a salary of \$50 per month.

The first meeting was spent in passing ordinances pertaining to the duties of the various elected officials. However, in subsequent meetings a large portion of the time was spent in passing ordinances pertaining to the building or repair of plank sidewalks. The building or repair being one of the duties of the city marshal.

An appropriation ordinance was passed in the amount of \$525 to finance the operation of the city for the year. This is in great contrast to the appropriation ordinance levied by the city in 1975 which was \$142,000.

Apparently Mayor Stout was not too popular as a mayor for at the second election J. W. Wright was elected mayor with a vote of 104 to Stout's 4 votes.

A saw mill was located on Cedar Street where the Minor Rees property now stands. An open slough was in this locality following where our present sewer crosses. A contract was let to furnish all material and labor to build a wagon bridge at this location, contract sum being \$37.50. The city marshal got 50¢ per head for burying dead hogs.

There being no law against animals running at large many complaints were received from residents. An ordinance was passed requiring all hogs to have a ring in their nose. Also an ordinance was passed that cows and heifers could run at large but bulls had to be penned up. However, women's lib didn't last very long as the city dads rescinded the ordinance after two months. An ordinance passed in 1883 decreed animals could not run at large in the city.

In 1882 an ordinance was passed for a corporation to lease and mine coal under the streets of LeRoy.

J. W. Brown and A. J. Keenan built a skating rink on the north side of Center Street where Stensel Funeral Home previously was.

In 1889 an ordinance was passed requiring all businesses to close on Sunday.

It seems that in the past ball playing on the city square had been allowed. However, at the council meeting of September 17, 1891 an ordinance was passed declaring ball playing on public square to be a nuisance.

At the meeting of May 8, 1893 W. H. Dooley headed a Township Committee on the question of building a Town Hall jointly with the city. A committee was appointed to investigate this.

The first ordinance creating the office of City Attorney was adopted on February 10, 1896. Prior to this legal council had to be obtained from some attorney in Bloomington. At the regular city election of April, 1896 John Mott was elected to fill this position. However, he only served a short time as William Owen was appointed to fill out his term of office at no salary.

A special meeting was called April 25, 1898 for the purpose of passing an ordinance to improve the city square and make it into a park. This was done by redesigning the streets around it and installing hitching racks. The park was designed by Sherman Smith and was an octagon shape with street on north and south side to be 80 feet wide and on east and west side to be 75 feet wide with concrete walk running both ways through the park. R. J. Lamont was hired to do all the concrete walk work. His price for labor was \$3 per day.

An ordinance was passed July 11, 1898 making it unlawful to carry a concealed weapon in LeRoy.

At the regular meeting of February, 1902 a proposition was presented to the council that a cannon could be procured from the U.S. government to be placed in city. Offer was accepted. This presumably is the present cannon in the park.

In 1902 a committee was formed to consider building a Town and City Hall. After several meetings it was agreed to build on the lots on the Southeast corner of square on lots owned by the city, the city and township to jointly supervise the building. Agreed by township and city at meeting of July 3, 1903 to build, city to pay \$750, and building to be jointly owned.



A petition was presented to the council in 1904 by the Bloomington Canning Company to obtain water from the city in the operation of canning factory, apparently start of LeRoy plant.

Barley and Pfizenmeyer subdivision known as the East Park Addition was accepted into the city in 1904.

McConnell Brothers Subdivision on South Chestnut Street was accepted into city in 1906.

On March 1, 1910 an epidemic of Scarlet Fever broke out in LeRoy. A special meeting was called and a proclamation was issued that no children under the age of 15 years could be on the streets unless accompanied by parents or adults, this to be in effect until epidemic had subsided.

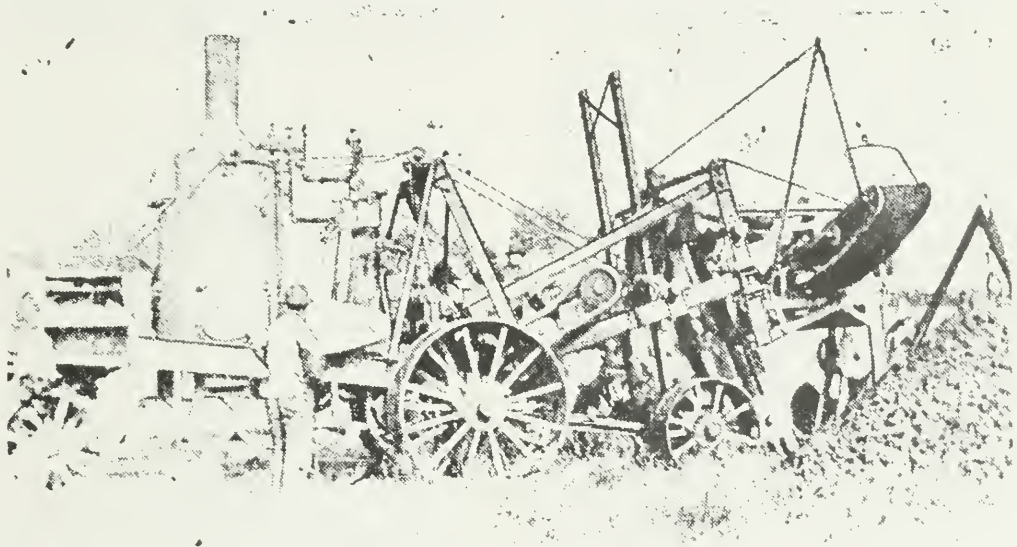
At a meeting of July 8, 1910 C. D. Jones and A. H. Morris were given permission to put gasoline tanks in the streets or alleys for the purpose of storage and sale of gasoline. This

apparently was the beginning of the filling stations in LeRoy. In 1910 an ordinance was passed making it unlawful to kill squirrels in city limits.

In 1926 State Route 39 which is now U.S. 150 was completed through LeRoy and in 1933 State Route 136 was completed giving LeRoy and area residents good access roads. Today LeRoy is located on busy U.S. Interstate 74.

In July, 1949 the city council adopted a new numbering system for LeRoy business places and residences. The old numbering system had become almost non-existent.

The city is divided into four sections with Center Street and Main Street the dividing lines. Lots are numbered from 100 up from the starting streets, the first block the 100 block, the second 200, etc. As a person starts from the dividing line, the lot numbers are odd on the right hand side of the street and even on the left side.



Machine Used in Putting in LeRoy's Sewer System

## SEWERS

LeRoy's first city sewer was laid in 1881 running from city square to East St. It was six-inch in size and was laid by John G. Kelly. Cost for material and labor was 90c per rod.

In 1898 some difficulty was being had with the cesspool at the school (former old Washington School). It was agreed by the city and school board to share the cost of a 15-inch vitrified tile to be laid as far as the I.C.R.R. Due to this a committee was appointed to investigate the feasibility of installing a proper sewage system for the city.

In August, 1900 the sewer on E. Center St. was continued from the corner of Center and East Streets to the open ditch at the corner of Center and Mill.

In 1903 the engineering firm of Charles Cottingham was engaged to draw up plans for a sewer system for LeRoy. Cost of plans was \$200. A board of local improvements consisting of three aldermen was formed. On December 10, 1903 an ordinance was passed for the laying of two main sewer lines. One is known as Mill and East Street sewer and the other is known as Main West and White Street sewer. These two main

sewer lines were recommended by state sanitary engineers working with board of local improvements.

Many requests for permission to build septic tanks and connect to sewers were made in 1907.

In 1913 an agreement was entered into with Crumbaugh, owners of land south of LeRoy, for easement for sewage outlet. Also, condemnation proceedings were instituted against the Big Four Railroad for easement rights.

In 1915 brick pavement was laid on E. and W. Center St., N. and S. Chestnut St., S. Buck St. and around the City Park.

A special bond issue in the amount of \$6000 for local improvements was placed on the ballot at the regular April 1930 election. Bond issue was passed. Using the \$6000 bond issue more sewers were laid and they have served the city until now. However, in keeping up with progress another bond issue was passed in 1973 amounting to about one-third of a million dollars. Land has been purchased south of LeRoy for a new modern sewage treatment plant. Plans are now being formulated and construction should be started in the near future.



One of five pumper-tanker trucks for the LeRoy Community Fire Protection District. Chief Jack Moss and Asst. Chief Floyd Spratt show truck.

## FIRE DEPARTMENT

Prior to 1874 the only fire fighting equipment was a hose cart, hand pumper and bucket brigade. There were several large cisterns in the business district which could be used for water supply in case of fire. In 1875 it was felt the city needed better fire protection so a committee of three aldermen were appointed to investigate the cost of purchasing a hook and ladder fire extinguisher. After several meetings it was decided to purchase a Champion complete with the latest hook ladders, hose and pumper. The cost was \$1750, \$800 to be paid on delivery and balance to be paid in 18 months with interest at 8%. When the final payment came due the treasurer was short \$300 in the treasury to complete the payment. This had to be borrowed locally and the interest was 10%. Finances were quite different then and now.

An ordinance was passed in 1892 requiring all roofs on building within the original fire limits be constructed of some kind of fireproof material and buildings in certain blocks in business area be of brick or stone.

In 1895 the fire department was composed of 30 members and a chief. The apparatus consisted of a chemical engine, 2 hose carts, and a hand engine.

The fire bell was placed on the engine house in June, 1895.

In 1925 the first fire siren was purchased. Prior to this a large bell was used to sound the alarm.

A new fire truck was delivered in November, 1938. It was the first 1939 model that the Boyer Fire Apparatus Company of Logansport, Ind. sold. It was one of the best and latest equipped in the state. Known as a 500-gallon per minute triple combination engine, it had a centrifuge type pump, 100-gallon booster tank, 150 ft. of booster hose with shut-off nozzle, 52 feet of ladders, siren (flasher type), searchlight, rear standard lamp together with front standard flasher type light, two hand searchlights, two three-gallon pump cans, 13-gallon foaming extinguisher, fire axe and crowbar, and a pike pole. The fire engine was demonstrated at the City Park before a large gathering of townspeople who viewed the operation with a greater sense of security against fire and with just civic pride. At one time, under 150 pounds pressure, two streams from 2½-inch hose and a stream from the 1½-inch hose were thrown about 100 ft. high and clear across the park. Fire Chief Don Jones with the other members of the volunteer department were on hand and took their first lesson in operating the apparatus.

Seeing the fine equipment, old-timers were reminded of the crude fire fighting equipment of other days, as the bucket brigade, some cisterns up-town, and a manpower force pump, later the water system and the hose cart drawn by hand, then the hose and ladder wagon drawn by horses.

LeRoy now has one of the finest fire departments in the state. It is equipped with the latest equipment. The department is maintained by a fire district and tax levy which encompasses more than 80 sections. Due to the fine fire department LeRoy enjoys a lower fire insurance rate than many communities.

## STREETS

The first tractor purchased by LeRoy for street maintenance was purchased from Ed Guard. It was a McCormick-Deering tractor and cost \$1150.

Ordinance passed in 1891 required that all walks in the area called the original town be constructed of brick or stone. This consisted of 28 blocks.

On April 9, 1894 an ordinance was passed for the sidewalk committee to purchase brick for the rebuilding of sidewalks in the business district instead of using boards. Previous to that the only brick walks built were in front of Keenan's Bank. This was done in 1892.

At the regular meeting May 13, 1895 a motion was passed that the city hire a street superintendent. Prior to that the city marshal had handled those duties. There is no record as to who was hired for the job or what the salary was.

The first concrete sidewalks were laid on the south and north sides of Center Street from City Park to East Street in 1904. An ordinance prohibiting spitting on the sidewalk was passed the same year.

The first record of an ordinance governing the speed of automobiles was passed on May 27, 1909. Speed limit was 10 miles per hour, a fine of \$10 to be levied for violations.

The first record of any concrete viaduct was in 1909 when a concrete viaduct was built on Center Street at the corner of Center and Mill Streets. Contractor was the Nelson Concrete Company of Pontiac who also had contract to build several concrete sidewalks in the city. Cost of viaduct was \$392.

The first use of oil on the streets was in October, 1911. Oil was sprinkled on the street around the square or park. Work was done by Ed Beckham. Cost was \$62. For several years prior Mr. Beckham had held a contract with city to sprinkle streets with water in dry dusty weather.

An ordinance passed for the placing of street signs on all streets and all houses were to be numbered. This was requested to assist in the delivery of city mail. Lester Bishop was given the contract of placing street name signs for a price of 40c per sign.

The city council on January 8, 1915 held a hearing to pave Center and Chestnut Streets, the cost to be \$75,975. The Center Street pavement extended from the first street west of the Big Four Depot and east to the corner of Dr. G. W. Wait's property (Park Ave.). The paving around the park is 27 feet wide. Also paved was Chestnut Street from Dr. J. A. Tutthill's residence on School Street south to the Big Four railroad.

With the paving of Chestnut and Center Streets, new hitching racks were needed and leased for \$50 per year for 20 years was the property west of the Bishop and Guard building belonging to Henry Brittin. Also purchased was property on Chestnut Street adjoining the Brittin lots which belonged to John Burns. The residence of John Burns, which he vacated Sept. 1, 1915, had been his home for almost 70 years and was the place of his birth on Sept. 25, 1845. (Part of the above pavement was covered with blacktop in 1972)



Old Waterworks

## WATER

In 1888 a well was drilled on the southeast corner of LeRoy's square and a windmill with a 12-foot wheel was erected to pump water in a holding tank with a capacity of 50 barrels. This apparently was the starting of the first city water system as no other mention has been made on water supply except a 40-foot well with iron pump in the city square.

A special meeting was called in June, 1889 regarding building waterworks for city. However, two weeks later a motion was made and passed to drop the matter.

Due to the fact that many people were hauling water from the tank at the town well an ordinance was passed in August, 1891 prohibiting this and notices were posted at the well to this effect.

The matter of a waterworks system was again brought up in August, 1892 when a motion was made and carried to hold a special election to issue \$7000 in bonds to erect a waterworks for LeRoy. The election results were as follows: 170 votes for the bond issue and 49 against. On Sept. 12, 1892 specifications were drawn up for the waterworks, the tank specification as follows: a brick tower 14 feet at the base - thickness of wall at top of ground 2 feet 9 inches and at top of tower 60 feet from ground to be 2 feet 3 inches thick. The street tank was 42 feet high and 12 feet across with tank pressure on main line to be 49 pounds. The well was to be 8 inches in diameter. A power house was to be built of brick and the city to lay about four blocks of water mains. On advertising for bids the contract was awarded to R. R. McGregor and Company at a cost of \$7100. However, the plans were changed from a brick to a steel tower. This is the present standpipe which has served LeRoy since the original waterworks was built. The bonds were sold to the Municipal Investment Company of Chicago at an interest rate of 5%, first bond to become due on April 1, 1894. Alderman A. J. Keenan made a trip to Chicago on the business pertaining to the sale of bonds. His expenses for the trip was \$10.61 which the city paid.

At a special meeting of the council on Saturday, July 1, 1893 acceptance of completed water tower was made and the contractor was paid in full. Also an ordinance was passed setting certain water rates as follows: bars and drinking saloons, restaurants and eating houses \$8 per annum. On July 6, 1893 an ordinance was passed prohibiting climbing on the standpipe. At a meeting of the council September 5, 1893, there being no further use for the tank and windmill on city square, a committee was appointed to dispose of pumps and windmill. Charles Wallace was hired to manage the new waterworks at a salary of \$30 per month and was to start work on Wed., Sept. 10, 1893.

At a meeting November 3, 1893 an ordinance was passed leasing the waterworks building to the Electric Light and Heating Company. The lease was for a term of 15 years, the

city to pay \$300 per year for 5 years and the Light Company to do all of the pumping of water and to keep the plant in working order at its expense. At the end of 5 years an equalization committee was to determine the amount the city would pay for the next 5 years and so on until end of franchise. The contract was signed by both parties at a special meeting November 4, 1893.

On June 11, 1894 an agreement was made with I.C.R.R. to furnish it water for \$22.50 per month and the Big Four R.R. \$35 per month. On June 13, 1894 a motion was made and carried to lay a six-inch water main from the corner at Odd Fellows Hall west to Big Four depot and an extension be laid from the corner of White and Center Street north to the I.C. depot.

In early 1906 it was felt by the mayor and council the city needed a gasoline engine of its own to pump city water in case of emergency. The city advertised for bids and on February 9, 1906 the bid of the Buckeye Engine Company of Joliet, Illinois was accepted. Engine was two-cylinder 30 H.P. The purchase price was \$1180. This was the first time the city owned any power equipment for water pumping.

In September, 1907 permission was given to put in a two-inch water line to swimming pool in "Boys' Hall" located in M.E. Church.

In the late teens three new wells were drilled in the northwest part of the city. This facility has served LeRoy well for some 50 years. However, the present water plant has served its time. Work is now in progress in building a new modern treatment plant and 250,000-gallon water tank on the city parking lot near the old tower. LeRoy is known to have one of the best water supplies in the state. LeRoy also was one of the first cities in the state to have fluoridation and chlorine treated water. The city council voted for fluoridation in 1952 but it was almost a year later on January 19, 1953 that Oliver Godden, superintendent of the waterworks, threw the switch which caused the small metering machine to begin pumping sodium fluoride solution into the water supply. Fluoridation and chlorination are now required by law in every city and village in the state. LeRoy was one of the few cities to put in a water softener system. This was done in the early 1940s.

When the new water treatment plant and elevated storage tank are completed and put into operation in July this year they will represent one of LeRoy's major "Horizon '76" projects for the Bicentennial year. The new water plant will be automated and the new tank will be a 250,000-gallon pedestal type 115 feet tall, 15 feet taller than the old standpipe. Contracts for the improvements, including four blocks of necessary new eight-inch water main, totaled \$471,539. Funding is through 40-year 5% water revenue bonds.

## OLD NEWS ITEMS

1895

September 6....Wanted: A wife at the Opera House Saturday night. Apply in person to A. T. Gordon at box office between 7:30 and 8:30 p.m.

September 5....Capt. Ament gave an exhibition of his expert sharp-shooting yesterday in front of the amphitheater.

September 6....World Record broken in a two-year old pace. The half-mile was broken by Lady Golden owned by C. A. Broadwell of Farmer City, in a remarkable fast time of 1:07.12. The mare was raised and bred on his farm.

1895....The old ice house which stood on west side of the public square was taken down and removed this week. The building has been in service 22 years, and greatly suffered from old age. There are 2 or 3 other old buildings which should be removed soon.



A parade of Binders and Mowers in 1893 sponsored by Birney & Hefling, implement dealers. George B. Chase leads the Band-Board sidewalks looking east.



South Chestnut street in downtown LeRoy in 1907. Vance hotel in center built in 1905 and burned in 1909. On the left is the back of Keenan's Bank where LeRoy State Bank is now.



The Standpipe and the Old Jail.



Center Street between 1904 and 1912 looking west.



**LeRoy Switch Board**  
 Seated - Birdie Middleton, Florence Van Alta Skillman, Ivy Nealy; Standing - Claude Dunkin,  
 Marshal James, Ben Bikes, Lyda Beckham, Emily Kimler Crumbaugh.

#### ELECTRIC

It being the request of the majority of the residents of LeRoy to light the city with electric lights an ordinance was passed on December 14, 1891 toward acquiring lights for the city. On June 18, 1892 a tax levy was passed in the amount of \$1500 to light the city streets in LeRoy with electric lights. Also, a committee was instructed to confer with the LeRoy Electric Light and Heating Company and agree on a franchise and draft an ordinance covering same.

On October 9, 1893 a franchise was granted to L. A. Reynolds and assignees to set poles and stretch wires upon the streets of LeRoy for the purpose of lighting the city with electricity. This was the first lighting of the city with electricity. Kerosene lamps placed in various locations were used before that.

As a previous franchise had been signed to have the LeRoy Electric and Heating Company furnish electricity to the city, at the regular city election April 16, 1895 the issue of the city paying for the lighting of all streets was placed on the ballot. The issue passed, the city to pay \$6 per month for each light installed.

On November 1, 1901 the LeRoy Electric Light, Power and Heating Company was purchased by W. F. Crumbaugh and a franchise was issued to him to furnish lights, power and steam heat until 1908.

On November 5, 1909 Wartena Bros. of Hammond, Ind. purchased the LeRoy Electric Light, Power and Heating plant from Morrell Tomlin for a consideration of \$15,000. Mr. Tomlin conducted the plant during the previous six years. In 1911 the Wartenas gave to LeRoy 24-hour service, the first of any town this size in Illinois. It soon became apparent that the old plant was inadequate to furnish the sort of service they wished to render and they undertook the building of a transmission line from Bloomington to LeRoy. With the completion of the line in 1912 the service was greatly improved and the old plant was dismantled. LeRoy's street lighting system was changed from the old arc-light method, blocks apart, to 60-watt lamps on nearly every street corner. Cluster lights were installed by the city a few years later on both sides of Center St. from the City Park to East St.

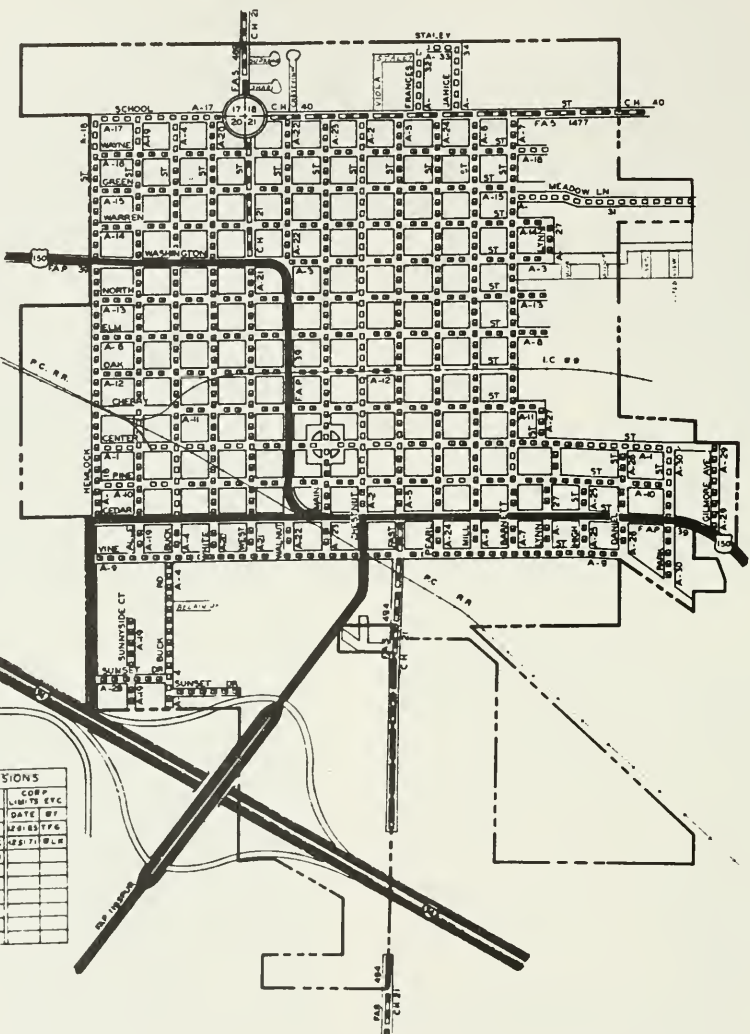
With the purchase of electricity from the Bloomington-Normal Power and Light Company the Wartenas continued to expand the operation of the LeRoy Electric Light, Power and Heating Company by including Downs, Ellsworth, Cooksville and Colfax in their service area involving about 100 miles of transmission lines and embracing more than 1000 customers.

Illinois Power and Light Company, a growing statewide utility, purchased the Wartena interests in 1926 and took over serving the area. The utility later shortened its corporate name to Illinois Power Company. IPC is now the second largest electric utility in the state.

LeRoy's first mercury vapor light system was first turned on in October, 1951, replacing the old ornamental cluster light system. The LeRoy Kiwanis Club sponsored a meeting a year earlier attended by business men and interested citizens at which groundwork for the new lights was laid. Then Illinois Power Company advanced an alternate plan to the city council, which was accepted. Thirty mercury vapor lights were placed on Center St. from the High School to Rt. 150, on Main St. from the City Park south to the Presbyterian Church, on Chestnut St. from the Methodist Church south to Cedar St. and two blocks on East Street.

#### TELEPHONES

At a special city council meeting September 23, 1897 a permit was granted to Central Union Telephone Company to erect poles and stretch wires on streets and alleys in the city of LeRoy. This is the first mention of public telephone service in LeRoy. At the regular meeting of the council on February 14, 1898 the McLean County Telephone Company was granted permission to erect poles and stretch wires in LeRoy. Then permission was granted in May, 1899 to the Farm and City Telephone Company to set poles and string wire on the streets and alleys of LeRoy. In 1906 a contract was given to A. T. & T. to set poles and string wires in the city.



REVISIONS		
STREET SYSTEMS	CORP. LIMITS	ETC.
DATE	BY	DATE
10-18-76	J.P.C.	2-2-81
1-2-77	J.P.C.	4-1-77
1-2-77	J.P.C.	4-1-77
1-2-77	J.P.C.	4-1-77

**LEGEND**

	PAVT	BIT	GRAN
SH. FABRILL MARKED			
OR US MARKED RT			
COUNTY HIGHWAY			
COUNTY HIGHWAY EXT			
ARTERIAL STREET			
NON-ART. MET. ST.			
UN-OPENED STREET			
CORPORATE LIMITS			

STATE OF ILLINOIS  
 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS & BUILDINGS  
 DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS  
**BUREAU OF LOCAL ROADS & STREETS**  
**ARTERIAL STREET MAP**  
 OF  
**LEROY**  
 MCLEAN COUNTY  
 POPULATION 1975 CENSUS 2435  
 SCALE IN FEET  
 0 100 200

CITY OF LEROY 1975



City Council

Left clockwise: DeGraff Murrell, Bob Abner, Dennis Henson, Mayor O. J. Lere, Juanita Dagley, city clerk, Loren Bean,

George Cook, Jack Gassaway.

**GAS**

Legal and financial obstacles were cleared in October, 1951 for the Union Gas and Electric Company of Bloomington to construct its 35-mile natural gas main to serve LeRoy, Farmer City, Bloomington and Normal. LeRoy natural gas customers are now served by Northern Illinois Gas Company.

**WATCH HER GROW!**

Except for a slump from 1910 to 1930, LeRoy has shown a steady growth from its inception. In 1874 when LeRoy changed from a town government and adopted a city charter a special census was taken showing a population of 1018. A hundred years later in 1974 a special census was taken showing the city had grown to 2631—a gain of 1613 citizens. Earliest available census figure is for 1850 when a population of 210 was recorded. A tabulation of official census figures, showing LeRoy's growth trend, from that early date to the present follows:

Year	Pop.	Year	Pop.
1850 --	210	1920 --	1680
1860 --	654	1930 --	1595
1870 --	862	1940 --	1783
1874 --	1018	1950 --	1819
1880 --	1068	1960 --	2088
1890 --	1258	1966 --	2436
1900 --	1629	1970 --	2435
1910 --	1702	1974 --	2631

**LEROY FIRSTS**

Elisha Gibbs and sons, Simeon and David, were mill-wrights by trade. They built the first steam saw and grist mill and wool-carding attachments in LeRoy in 1840. It was 40 ft. by 46 ft. and 2½ stories high. It had one set of three-foot stones and cost \$4000. It was built on the slough on the south side of town, south of the present Owens' Bi-Rite store, south of the railroad. It burned in 1844.

**31 LEROY MAYORS**

Thirty-one mayors have served LeRoy since August, 1874 when the city charter was adopted. The first mayor served less than a year until the first regular election in 1875. LeRoy mayoral elections are held in odd-numbered years. Mayors were elected for two-year terms until 1937 when four-year terms were instituted by statute. Mayoral election years and mayors who were elected and served LeRoy follow:

- 1874--M. S. Stout
- 1875--J. W. Wright
- 1877--J. M. Suggett and Samuel B. Barnum  
(appointed to fill term)
- 1879--A. B. Johnson
- 1881--Joseph Patterson
- 1883--Zachariah Chick
- 1885--J. Keenan
- 1887--M. R. Galusha
- 1889--Amos Rutledge
- 1891--George W. Payne
- 1893--Joseph Keenan
- 1895--Thomas Clarey
- 1897--W. H. Dooley and Amos Rutledge  
(elected to fill term)
- 1899--William H. Cline  
(appointed to fill term)
- 1901--Oscar Bonnett and T. W. Vanatta  
(appointed to fill term)
- 1903-1905-1907--T. W. Vanatta
- 1909--J. A. Tuthill
- 1911--L. A. Vasey
- 1913-1915--A. G. Bailey
- 1917--Z. T. Strayer
- 1919--A. G. Bailey
- 1921--H. H. Crumbaugh
- 1923--Z. T. Strayer
- 1925--E. F. Hall
- 1927--William H. Cline
- 1929-1931--Clark A. Smith
- 1933--Rev. Oceola McNemar
- 1935--George B. Strayer
- 1937-1941-1945--Lyle V. Morgan
- 1949--Merle A. Schlosser
- 1953--William D. Vance
- 1957-1961--Charles H. Henson
- 1965-1969--Edward B. Williams
- 1973--O. J. Lere

## EMPIRE TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS

1858 - 1861	James Wiley
1861 - 1862	Montgomery Crumbaugh
1862 - 1863	R. F. Dickerson
1863 - 1865	Malon Bishop
1865 - 1867	R. F. Dickerson
1867 - 1870	James Bishop
1870 - 1871	J. V. Smith
1871 - 1872	J. H. L. Crumbaugh
1872 - 1873	John Kline
1873 - 1875	D. O. Howard
1875 - 1879	Hiram Buck
1879 - 1880	John Kline
1880 - 1881	Joseph Keenan
1881 - 1886	W. H. Dooley
1886 - 1888	Samuel F. Barnum
1888 - 1890	James Bonnett
1890 - 1892	Oscar Bonnett
1892 - 1894	Thomas Clary
1894 - 1896	Samuel F. Barnum
1896 - 1900	Oscar Bonnett
1900 - 1901	Thomas F. Wiley
1901 - 1908	James Vance
1908 - 1912	George E. Dooley
1912 - 1914	C. Guard
1914 - 1916	George E. Dooley
1916 - 1926	William Vance
1926 - 1928	G. Grant Smith
1928 - 1933	Harry Denning
1933 - 1935	G. Grant Smith
1935 - 1937	Oscar Kirchner
1937 - 1941	William Vance
1941 - 1953	H. A. Denning
1953 - 1961	John Lee Smith
1961 - 1973	E. G. Dean
1973 -	John Kline

## OLD REMINISCENCES

### SIDNEY D. BAKER

Sidney D. Baker died at Council Grove, Kans. He was born Feb. 14, 1820 in Washington County, and came to Blooming Grove when he was six years old. His father surveyed the original townsite of Bloomington, named the town and streets, and about a year later, Sidney D. Baker was permitted to go to school in the first court house in Bloomington. He finished his schooling in the seminary on South Main street, taught by W. C. Hobbs. He went to Iowa in 1840, and came back to Illinois in 1842, and entered into partnership with E. E. Greenman in LeRoy. He told this story in 1906:

"We opened our mixed stock of goods, and as our capital was small, we had to replenish often, always had fresh goods. I would go to Pekin by team, there I would take the boat to St. Louis, buy my goods, ship them by boat to Pekin, then I would haul them to LeRoy, a distance of 60 miles, often getting mired in the mud. Our trade increased from year to year until our present quarters became too small, then we built a two-story brick building. We sold out after 18 years. We were very successful in this business. We also had the post office in our store, Mr. Greenman being postmaster. I was justice of the peace in 1847.

"I was commissioned under Gov. French. Barley H. Coffey, McLean County clerk, swore me into office. I married several couples, but became disgusted when trying a case as the defendant swore to a lie and I knew it, so I threw up the office. March 14, 1848, I married Laura A. Edwards. We commenced housekeeping in a log house, the main part, being log of one room and a frame kitchen. These rooms had puncheon floor. We paid \$1 per month rent. The rats were so bad they would almost carry our clothes off at night. We lived here a year when we built a new home. There were seven

children came to gladden our home, of whom two are living. (Frank W., with whom I am making my home, and Eva B. Smith of Topeka, Kans.) I dealt quite a good deal in government and other swamplands, ditching them and turning up sod and selling at good profit to people from east, who settled on these farms. Today they are beyond my greatest expectations in value. I told my son, Frank, before we left Illinois that I expected to see the day when McLean County lands would bring \$50 per acre, but now they are selling at \$100 and more per acre. I handled a great many horses. I would drive them across country to Milwaukee to market and on one occasion, I remember of one of my best ones getting a leg hurt so I could not take him farther than Chicago. When I returned from Chicago, he was still lame and I received an offer for a lot on Water Street even-up for him, and this perhaps was the biggest mistake of my life by not accepting this offer, but the lot was a frog pond. Then I found a man who gave me 12 dozen Seth Thomas clocks for a horse, and I sold them at good profit. I shall always have a warm side for our old town of LeRoy and its first settlers. My wife and five children are buried in the LeRoy cemetery, four children having died in infancy and one who lived to be seven years old. My wife was laid to rest in 1898, and that's where I expect to be laid when I am called home. I am the only living charter member of Masonic Lodge No. 221 of LeRoy.

"In the year of 1873, I moved to Topeka, Kans. thinking it would benefit some of the family who were never very rugged. I was delighted with the city until grasshoppers came and cleaned up all growing crops, a sight I can never forget; millions of them, thick as bees were on railroad tracks, so thick trains could not move, the mashing of the "hoppers" made wheels so slippery. This seemed to be dead shot for Kansas, although I have profited by other people's misfortunes. I bought up several carloads of horses and shipped them to Illinois, making a good profit. I moved back to Bloomington in the spring of 1875, and soon after began erection of two store buildings on South Center street. In one, my son, Frank, and I opened up a retail grocery store and continued some six years. When son's health failed, we sold out. I speculated in land awhile, and in the fall of 1882, my son's family and my wife and I moved to Council Grove, Kans. I have a comfortable home and 2,000 acres of tillable land which some day will be worth as much as Illinois land."

- S. D. Baker

[August 14, 1914]

Charlie Whitaker, as he was enjoying the pleasant shade in the city park last Sunday, became reminiscent. Among other things he mentioned, was that 70 years ago, he hauled a load of wheat to Chicago. His father also took a load. Mr. Whitaker's load was drawn by a team of horses, and contained 30 bushels. His father, Marshal Whitaker had a load of 45 bushels, drawn by two spans of oxen. It took four days to make the trip to Chicago, and as there were no bridges they had much experience fording the creeks and rivers.

Pontiac was the only town in his memory, through which they went. Near to Chicago was a large swamp the worst place on the road. Mr. Whitaker remarked that LeRoy now, is a better town than Chicago was at that time. The dwelling houses were mostly shacks and the streets were in bad condition. The price received for the wheat after being delivered 150 miles by wagon, was 50c per bushel.

The wheat was sacked and it was often necessary when stuck in a mudhole, to unload the wagons, pull out, and then reload. In order to get enough sacks for a trip like this, the whole neighborhood had to be depended on for sacks, which were about as scarce as stovepipe hats are at the present time.

### FIRSTS

Amos Neal built the first log house in LeRoy in 1835 on the southeast corner of Center and Chestnut Sts. T. J. Barnett built the second log house, a 14 by 16 ft. building, in Block 15.



# Old Time Memories of LeRoy and Vicinity

An interesting paper was read on May 14, 1915 by Thomas Buck at the McLean County Historical Society meeting:

The original town of LeRoy, 28 blocks, was laid out by Gridley and Covell in 1835, and has been enlarged until it covers more than one section of land and is still growing. A few families were in LeRoy in 1836: Edgar Conkling, Dr. Moran, Amos Neal, Hiram Patterson, Moses Kimler, and Leonard P. Morron. Hiram Buck came to Illinois in 1833, and to LeRoy in 1837; James Wiley in 1837; Daniel Proctor in 1837; Stephen Conkling, Harmon Buck and families in 1839. They were millwrights by trade and built the first steam saw and grist mill on the south side of town in 1840. It was of great benefit to this community to have our wheat and corn made into flour and meal at home. A little later, Josiah Horr introduced a wool carding machine and we thought it great when we could have our wool made into rolls right here. All the farmers kept some sheep, and homemade clothes were in style, and the spinning wheels were kept whizzing.

The first schoolhouse was built in 1839, and David P. Bunn taught the first school in it in 1840. It is still standing only a few rods from where it was built, two blocks north of the park on the Pete Hendryx block, west of the Thompson house and facing north on the I.C.R.R. The Methodist Church was built about the same time just west of the Alfred Morris residence.

John Baddely started a town one-half mile south of the southwest corner of LeRoy, and named it Monroe. He was running a general store there in 1834, but Gridley and Covell gave him a certain number of lots if he would move his building to LeRoy. He did, on the ground where the Christian Church now stands, and continued in business. Dr. David Edwards, also a Methodist preacher, came to LeRoy in 1840 and was pastor in the old church several years. Edgar Conkling put up the first lightning rod near his residence which is now the Emily Pray home. It was a large white oak pole set in the ground, was about 50' high, and his thought was lightning would strike the highest object and thus protect his house.

I well recollect when grass grew a foot high in two business stores of our city. I remember when the small town of LeRoy was on the inside of a half-mile race track.

There is one man who looms up in my estimation, head and shoulders above any of the pioneers; Edgar Conkling and his wife, Belinda, who was his equal in every good work. He put up a frame building on the old Park's corner, now Gilmore's restaurant, and was doing business as a general store in 1837. He invested his money in land and laid out a large number of blocks on the north side, known as "Conkling's addition to LeRoy." He was a hustler and seemed to have faith that LeRoy was going to be a big town. He employed carpenters and partially built about 25 small houses on the different blocks of his addition, supposing it would help the sale of lots; but the houses were never finished. The hard times began in 1838, and for about six years, LeRoy stood still. Later he sold out his holdings and went to Cincinnati and became quite wealthy, lived to a good old age, and was called to the higher life many years ago.

There were lots of snakes here in the early days. The Dickerson boys killed a bull snake that measured eight feet in length. One snake, the blue racer, we boys were afraid of. When we came to the tall grass, we would roll up our pants to our knees, spit on our hands, and then run for life to the short grass. The blue racer ran with his head about a foot from the ground, and it was said he would run as fast as a horse. Two boys went north of town for their horses; they had rope halter, heard a rustle in the grass and ran about a mile thinking a blue racer was after them...but it was only the rope which had dropped down, making a rattle.

Frank Kimler says that in 1836 the dogs chased a wolf through Main Street to the woods and lost it. Charles Whitaker is the best posted man on dates in LeRoy.

Frank Kimler was here in 1835, before there was any town. Amanda (Buck) Crumbaugh and myself were here in 1837. Mrs. Ellen (Buck) Kline and Charles Whitaker were here in 1838. These four persons with myself are the only ones left who attended school in the old schoolhouse; are still living in LeRoy, and are as sound as a dollar.

On the 4th of July, 1840, LeRoy had a celebration and barbecue. General Asabel Gridley of Bloomington gave the address. One thing he said was that it would not be many years until there would be a railroad through McLean County; north, south, east, and west. Gridley smiled and so did the people. In 1854, the cars were running from the south part of the state on the I.C. through McLean County through Chicago. In 1870, cars were running on the I.B. & W., now the Big Four, from Indianapolis, west to Peoria.

The city of LeRoy is beautifully located, almost surrounded by fine groves of timber. Buckles Grove is on the southwest, south, and east; Old Town Timber on the north; and Kickapoo Timber on the northwest, leaving a small opening on the west. All these groves have fine streams of water. I think something should be done to stop destruction of the growing timber of Buckles Grove. Every growing bush and every grove tree should be protected from the woodman's axe. If not, those who are here later on will look to the south and to the east as something artificial. But the beautiful forests of Buckles Grove will be gone. The groves were God's first temples and we have no right to destroy them.

We must not forget the early pioneers and their families of what is now Empire Township. They are the Buckles, Johnsons, Conoways, Dickersons, Merrifields, Bishops, Clearwaters, Whitakers, Crumbaugh, Brittins, Murphys, Gilberts, Rices, Dunlaps, Halls, Martins, Rutledges, and Jacksons. These are the ones who built the cabins and tore up the tough prairie sod and made it produce grain and vegetables for food and flax and wool for clothing. You may say what you please of the early settlers of LeRoy, and tell of the wonderful things they did. That is all right, but don't forget the early pioneers of Empire Township. They had problems to solve and they solved them.

I will say to you people gathered here to the McLean County Historical Society, that this little history I have given from memory as a boy, since 1837, to the present time, is about the last you will ever get from anyone who was here in those early days. The time is near when there will be no one to go back to the 30s and tell you the story as I have. Later, what you learn of early times of LeRoy and vicinity will be second-hand. -- Thomas L. Buck

## PRAIRIE PIONEERING

Lewis Cass Crumbaugh, whose father, Henry Crumbaugh, was a great cattle man, spent his boyhood summers herding cattle and his winters feeding them. They used an "Old Virginia Wagon" which was made entirely out of wood and built out wide over the wheels so it would hold 150 bushels of corn. Every night they would round up the cattle and put them in the "poind" to keep them from the wolves, and many times Mr. Crumbaugh shot both wolves and deer on the prairie. On Sunday it was a regular chore to salt the cattle in the morning and in the afternoon he would ride horseback to the Brittin schoolhouse where Sunday school was held. At that time there were only four houses between Old Town and the Mackinaw timber near Colfax, a distance of 15 miles.

He married Miss Rachel Travis of Indian Grove, south of Fairbury. At the time there were only two buggies in this part of the county, so he borrowed one to bring home his bride. He had to get his license in Pontiac. It rained and snowed and froze and it took him all day to make the trip. They commenced farming in a two-room house built near his father. He bought his first table at a sale for 25c.

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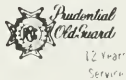
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## C. D. Jones and Frank Crumbaugh had the first two filling stations in LeRoy.

The gasoline tanks were kept inside and they brought the gasoline out in buckets and poured it into the cars. C. D. Jones and A. H. Morris were given permission by the City Council on July 8, 1910 to put gasoline tanks in the streets and alleys for storage and sale purposes. Later, Ed Wirt hauled and delivered to the rural area two barrels of gasoline at a time, each containing 55 gallons, in a spring wagon, for the F. Crumbaugh Oil Co.

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# History of West Township



West Park (donated by S. H. West)

West Township is located in the southern tier of townships in McLean County, Illinois. Bellflower Township is to the east and Empire Township to the west. Originally the entire area was covered by prairie grass with the exception of 30 acres in the northwest corner of the township.

Kickapoo Indians had occupied the area and there were no white settlers before 1850. In 1851 Henry West and his son, Simeon H. West, came to Illinois from Nicholasville, Ky. and settled on what was then known as "The Ridge" on the north side of the township. Some of the settlers decided to form a township government and decided on the name of Kickapoo, but soon learned that another township had that name so they gave the name West to the township in honor of the first supervisor, Henry West.

The land was very fertile and the area to the south of the first settlement was covered with prairie grass three feet tall, waving in the wind and full of rattlesnakes. Information soon spread about the fertile land and other families came to settle. Some of the first families along with Henry and Simeon West were the Hedricks and Cawbys whose later descendants were the Riddle, Murray, Fenstermaker, Dooley, Taylor, Horine and Reynolds families.

In the extreme northwest corner of West Township is located West Park which was given to McLean County by Simeon H. West. The park consists of 20 acres, the north half to be left untouched as virgin timber. Today the undergrowth is very thick and is home for all manner of wildlife. The south half of the park is very beautiful with many fine trees. For many years the park area was only an open area. William Dean, being township supervisor, some years ago organized the neighborhood men and built an enclosed brick shelter house with a large fireplace and tables and benches in the building. The park is popular in warm weather with gatherings of organizations as well as campers.

About a mile east of West Park is the site of an old Indian fort. A large stone marker designates the site of the former Indian settlement. Simeon H. West was instrumental in having the marker placed there.

Not far from the Indian settlement site is located the oldest home in West Township which is now occupied by the Merle Kirby family. The house was built by Henry West in 1851 and Mr. West, being a friend of Abraham Lincoln, Mr. Lincoln made the West home a frequent stopping place on his travels over Illinois as a young lawyer.

On one occasion when Mr. Lincoln was spending the night in the West home, Mr. West asked Mr. Lincoln's advice on a legal matter. A few days later when Mr. West received a thank you letter from Mr. Lincoln, enclosed was a bill for \$5 for legal advice rendered.

In years past country schools were located every two miles across the township. Some of the schools were Hamilton, Rosencrans, Kumler, Kimler, Grizzelle, Mt. Olive, East Crumbaugh, West Crumbaugh, Dockum, Salt Creek, White Star and Love.

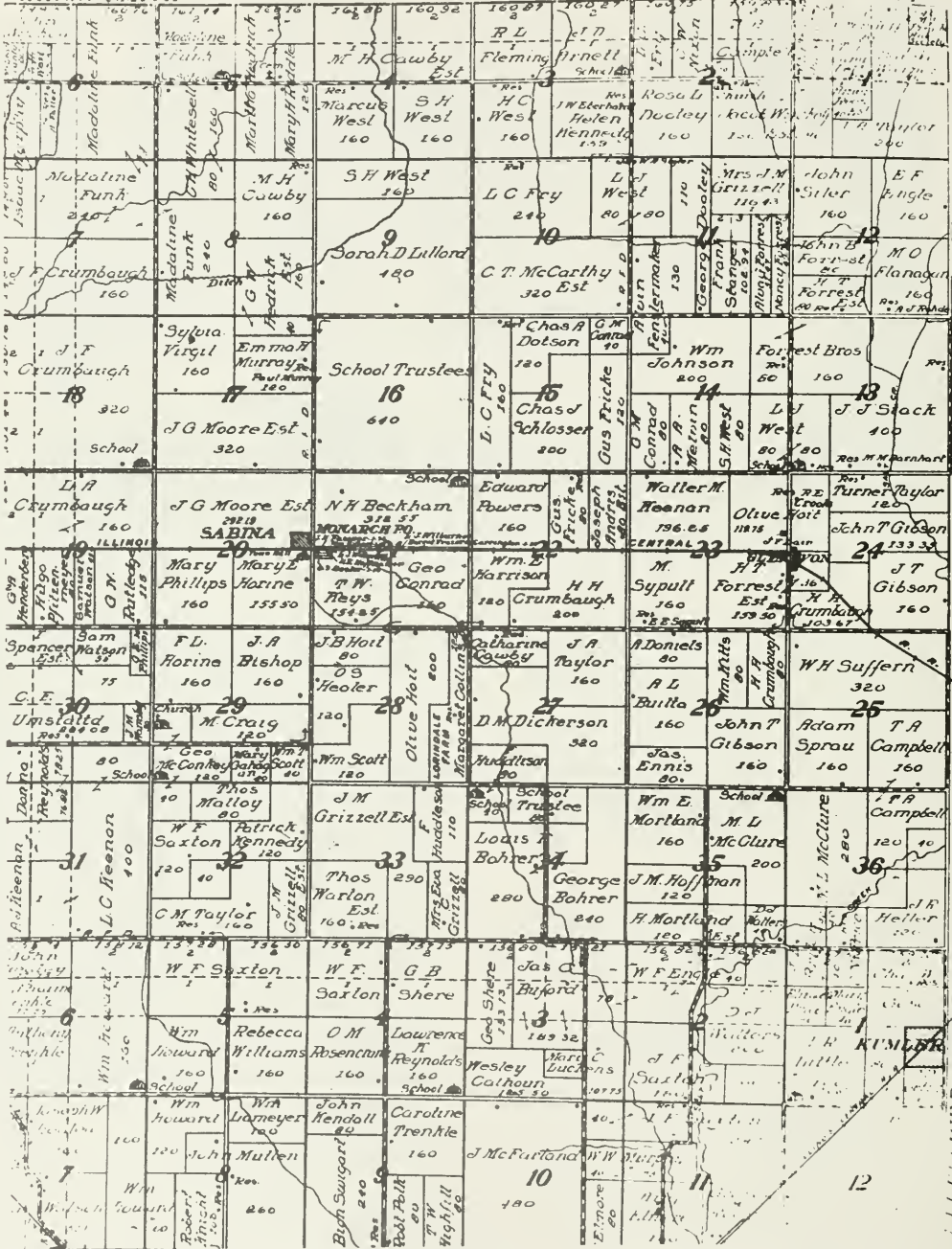
In the country schools, one teacher taught an average of 20 students in all eight grades. Many times there were only two or three students in a grade and in others both girls and boys were taller and sometimes older than the teacher. One of the social highlights of the school year was the school Christmas program which the entire community attended. There also were annual box suppers held in the various schools which were attended by all.

There being no high school located in the township, students graduated from grade school use to either walk or ride early each morning to Sabina to catch the passenger train and ride to Laurette, a railroad crossing one and one-half miles south of Bellflower, then walk up the Illinois Central Railroad tracks to Bellflower to attend high school.

IRROH SMITH

TOWNSHIP 22 North, Range 5 East and Part of Township 21 North, Range 5 East of the 3rd S. R.

TRIP

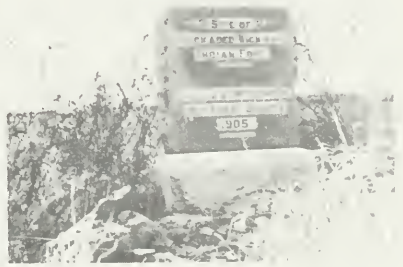




Henry West



Sabina Town Hall



Monument at Site of Stockaded Kickapoo Indian Fort.



Simeon H. West, donor of West Park.



Henry West Home



Lillard Horine Residence at Sabina

Their classes were so arranged that they could leave school in time in the afternoon to walk back to Laurette Station to catch the passenger train and return to Sabina about 4:30 p.m. Such was the method that several students from the Sabina and Glenavon area received their high school education.

There are three grain elevator stations in West Township: Sabina, Glenavon and Weedman. Sabina received the name from Mrs. Sabina Moore. Mr. Moore was a large land owner near Sabina and he gave his wife's name to the freight station. The grain station of Sabina is situated in the center of West Township. Many years ago there was a hotel, church and post office as well as two grain elevators, a general store and several homes. The hotel had a thriving business with salesmen and other travelers and visitors, who arrived on either the 7 a.m. train that ran from LeRoy to West Lebanon, Ind. or the 4:30 p.m. train on its return to LeRoy. The post office was located in the hotel lobby and was known as Monarch, Ill. The post office was discontinued many years ago. A branch line of the Illinois Central Railroad which passes through Sabina and Glenavon was popularly known as the "Pumpkin Vine." Also, a church flourished in Sabina, it being affiliated with the Christian Church in LeRoy. The church was located on the west side of the road and north of the railroad. After church services were discontinued the building was used as a residence for a time and later was torn down and the lumber used to build a home near Glenavon.

The general store stocked many items from tobacco, cough syrup and candy to canned goods. Sabina has had a general grocery store for many years. After the original store, which was owned and operated by Jay West was discontinued, several other owners operated the store, and most recently, the store was in the front rooms of a home, two houses south of the original store, and owned and operated by Ira Hess. All kinds of canned goods were available as well as a variety of cold meats and gasoline pumps were operated to supply the

farmers' needs.

At one time, there were stockyards located south of the railroad on the west side of the road. When the farm animals were ready for market, the farmers, assisted by their neighbors, walked or rode horseback, herding their cattle and hogs to the stockyards to be shipped out on freight cars to market.

Glenavon is located three miles east of Sabina. In earlier times Glenavon had a general store as well as a grain elevator. The passenger train stopped there twice a day as well as the freight train which hauled grain, coal and other supplies to and from both Sabina and Glenavon. The elevator station of Glenavon at one time had a post office named Delaney, Ill.

Weedman is located in the extreme southeast corner of West Township on the main line of the Illinois Central Railroad. Today it is a center for handling corn and soybeans with several homes and a thriving Methodist Church located across the road in DeWitt County.

The soil in West Township is deep black loam and very fertile. In earlier times the roads were an impassable quagmire, especially in the winter months. It was an all-day trip to drive to LeRoy in bad weather using a team of horses and buggy, and since the trains ran regularly, many township residents came to Sabina or Glenavon and rode the train to LeRoy, sometimes in the caboose of the freight train, having a couple of hours in LeRoy and then returning in the caboose.

In the 1930s, gravel was spread and most of the year the roads were quite passable. Now roads are all-weather blacktop.

Many years ago there was a church in Glenavon, also Mt. Zion Church was located on the north side of the township and Mt. Olive Church was located one mile south of Sabina, one mile west and a mile south.

At present there are 425 residents in West Township.



Sabina Station

**PICTURE OF SABINA STATION  
BRINGS NOSTALGIC MEMORIES**

A picture of the old Sabina railroad station and engine No. 442 in last week's Journal brought back some pleasant memories to Elmer Doggett of Pekin, former LeRoyan. He took occasion to write the following letter which is full of information on "the old pumpkin vine" and railroad lore as only a veteran railroader could tell it.

South Pekin, Ill.  
February 9, 1948

Editor, The LeRoy Journal:

The picture of the old Illinois Central depot and engine 442 at Sabina on page eight of last week's Journal brought fond memories to me, for it was on this branch line, more commonly called "the pumpkin vine" in those days, that I began my railroading many years ago. My first job was on the section under Foreman Charles Robertson in 1900 and in those days we would pump a hand car out over the line, work hard all day and pump it back home at night, all for \$1.10 a day. I was then just a kid, at exactly the right age to think that smoking cigarets and chewing tobacco was evidence that one who could take it, had reached manhood. At age 18 I took over the job at the old engine house, as we called it. My job was to clean the coaches and engine of the passenger train that tied up in LeRoy at that time, keep a sharp eye on the company property through the night, then fire up the engine and have the train ready when the crew came on duty in the morning. But before this I "played hokey" from school, wiped the jacket, hoed the ash pan for the fireman, and just about worked my head off, all for a ride out to Sabina or at whichever station the local met the passenger, and then fire the passenger engine back.

At that time, to me, a locomotive was the most wonderful thing on earth as was a horse to many of my chums at that time. To me, at age 12 or 14 the greatest thing the world held for me was to be a locomotive engineer, and I was determined to be an engineer. Later I went firing on this line and that is the main reason why I was so much interested in the picture and the item mentioned. Sabina was the first station stop on the line out of LeRoy although there was a side track called "Crumbaugh" at which we sometimes picked up or discharged some passengers, and I well recall that at the time the station building at Sabina was an old discarded box car.

I recall, too, that the building in the picture, was formerly the depot at Henning and was moved to Sabina after the Henning office was done away with.

But it is a long, long road from the 1316 and other engines of that day with their 16x24-inch cylinders and 140 pounds boiler pressure to the present engines with their 30x32-inch cylinders and their 275 pounds boiler pressure, and even now larger and more powerful engines are being developed on the drafting board and will soon be on the road. Just a few days

ago I came in on a modern three-unit diesel engine with a train of 120 cars and more than 7500 tons of everything one could think of in the consist, the engine alone being valued at between one-half and three-quarters of a million dollars and I leave to you what the train might represent in money.

But the romance was gone. To me it was just another job, that of taking the engine and train at one terminal and delivering it safely at the next without any delay that could be charged either to me or the engine.

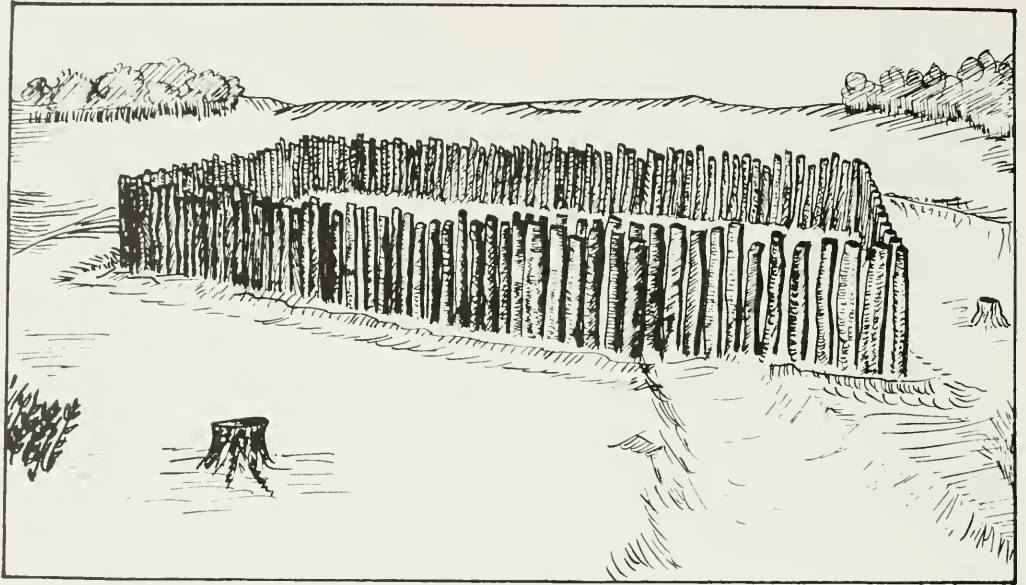
Many LeRoy boys of my age went railroading and many of them have passed on while others are still working or are on pension. I recall a few whose names will mean a lot to your older readers. There was Louie Houston, Lawrence Watt, Mel Gilbert, Ed Howard, Logan McClurg, Carl Tuthill, Walter Lyons, Clarence Alsop and many others. But I am still working and looking forward to the time when I can take my pension from the jack pot to which I have contributed for many years. Then, while I am not sure, I think I will return to LeRoy, which the late Dr. Keys described as "the heart of the world's Garden of Eden" or something like that, and there take my place in the park along with the others of my age, and with the rest of them spend my remaining days with a sharp knife and a piece of wood, and like the others who have gone before, whittle the stick until it is as round as a lathe could make it, then square it up and start all over again, all the while discussing the same old problems that were and still are the most important to the oldsters, politics, liquor, cigarettes, the tariff or the length of the ladies' skirts, which were discussed 50 years ago and will be 50 years hence.

I don't at this time know just what the name of the gathering will be, but when I first went railroading it was called "LeRoy's Sugar Tree Congress" with the late Joe Patterson as the chief orator, known then as LeRoy's Joe Cannon; and the first white child born in LeRoy, the late James Wiley, who could always be depended on to change the line of thought and argument when the going got too hot over the tariff or the gold standard, or any of the numerous questions then to the front, for in those days folks took their politics seriously.

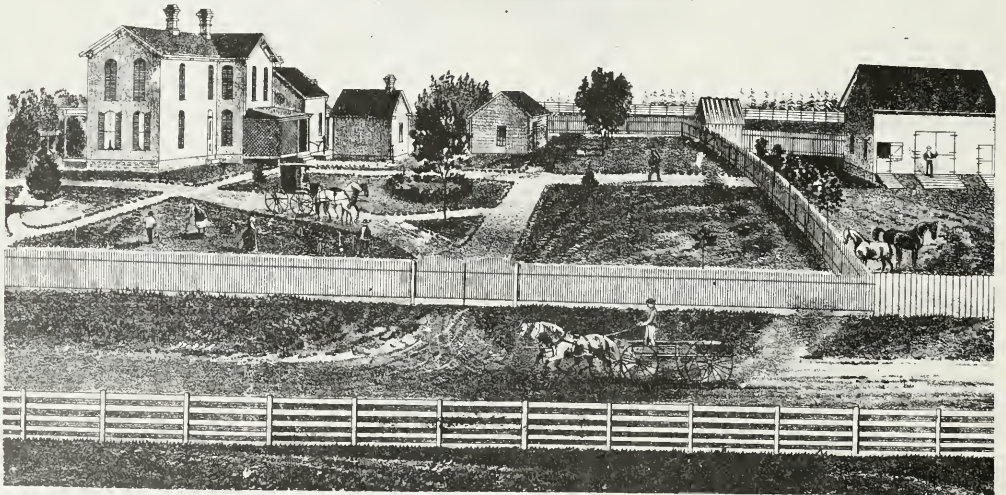
Elmer Doggett

**WEST TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS**

1858 - 1867	Henry West
1867 - 1868	John Weedman
1868 - 1869	Henry West
1869 - 1870	J. B. Leurs
1870 - 1871	J. M. Moon
1871 - 1872	William Biggs
1872 - 1873	Jacob B. Lewis
1873 - 1876	S. H. West
1876 - 1877	Stephen E. Clarno
1877 - 1881	S. H. West
1881 - 1883	W. J. Kimler
1883 - 1885	John Hamilton
1885 - 1886	G. W. Payne
1886 - 1887	W. J. Kimler
1887 - 1889	John Hamilton
1889 - 3/1892	W. J. Kimler
1892 - 1893	E. W. Clarke
1893 - 1897	Albert Whitaker
1897 - 1899	Harrison Horine
1899 - 1905	Thomas D. Irish
1905 - 1907	H. C. West
1907 - 1913	Thomas D. Irish
1913 - 1919	Charles Umstatt
1919 - 1927	R. A. Johnson
1927 - 1935	Harry W. Reid
1935 - 1947	W. P. Dean
1947 - 1962	Lillard Horine
1962 -	Freda Horine



Stockaded Kickapoo Indian Fort



Residence of John Weedman. West Township



In 1953 Frank Howard, who spent most of his 90 years in the LeRoy community, recorded some of the many memories he had of eastern McLean County around the Mount Olive church as it looked to him 80 years before.

"In those years, people helped each other do farm work, making hay, cutting oats, wheat and rye. In those days there were no twine binders but mowing machines cut the grain and dropped it in bunches. Then the men would bind the bunches by hand and shock the bundles to dry out ready to thresh with a horse-power threshing machine.

"The neighbors all joined the threshing ring to exchange work. The women worked together to help each other get dinner for the men. At dinner time there was always a picnic with songs and visiting and stories about fishing in the big ponds.

"I also remember the big time at the Mount Olive song service.

"The Whitaker boys and the Pray boys could make seines to catch the fish. A day was chosen and the fish catch was always plentiful. The neighbors all had fish to eat. The big turtles would bite the boys' boots and fingers while they took them out of the net. The boys all had sticks to club the turtles. What fun it was to lasso a big turtle and drag him out to a peg in the ground and have a big fight. Many were taken home for stew. Some turtles would weigh 20 pounds.

"We had a great time at Sunday school at Mount Olive church. The hitch racks were a mile long and filled with all kinds of vehicles and horses. After church the horseback boys would have a horse race swimming horses in the big ponds. The boys would break horses to ride while swimming. It was fun to see the big splashes and to see the horses stick their heads in the water and blow their noses and then try it over again.

"In the fall of the year, the O. D. Howard cider mill was the place to go after church in the afternoon. There was always free cider to drink with your picnic dinner. We'd have a song service and all sorts of play all afternoon. Sometimes there would be 200 present.

"What a lot of apples they raised in the country homes. One day Grandfather Shirley came to the cider mill with a big load of apples and four empty barrels pulled by a big yoke of oxen. It was fun to see a big steer lube around the vat grinding apples. Often a drunk neighbor would come to the cider mill and want some hard cider. (We were instructed not to give a drunk hard cider. He would say, 'I want some hard cider, do you hear me?' We would take him to a vinegar barrel and tell him to help himself. After awhile he would come to us and say 'You pointed me to the wrong barrel.' He was about sober by that time.

"I attended the Bonnett school. I was 97th on the roll. Congressman Thomas Sterling was the teacher. How the old black board would look with little children printing and making figures. Dr. W. E. Guthry was the next teacher. He kept every scholar busy. What a time we had singing while John Peavler played the violin. Then we would pitch horseshoes.

"After school began in the fall, the hazelnuts, hickory nuts and walnuts were ready to harvest. Say, did we not have some fun cracking nuts for the crowd? Thomas Sterling, our teacher, would say, 'Be careful not to eat too many as they may make you sick.'

"On Saturday evenings we would go to a spelling book race to see who was the best speller in the school. Then after the spelling race we would have a song service. Frank and Charley Hoyt of Mount Olive school would lead the song service with their violins. The fine songs and music caused the old school house to be jammed full of home folks. The hat was passed around to pay the Hoyt brothers for coming to play their violins.

"Now I will close my memories of 80 years ago. 'Kind words can never die' is my greeting to you all."

John Dawson and other early settlers found the ruins of an old fort east of Old Town Timber and near what was known as the "Grand Kickapoo Village." He found ditches and earthworks, and several large stockade posts still standing upright in the ground. The outline of the fort was visible in the ridges of the earth as late as the Civil War, but had disappeared under the plow by the 1880s.

The fort, which was about a mile east of the present West Park and near the northern line of West Township, commanded a view in all directions and the approach of friends or foe could be seen in advance of their arrival. Game could be seen from afar. Historical research revealed that the fort was built by the Prairie Kickapoos. In later years, captives of raids in Kentucky and southern Illinois were brought to this fort for torture and for ransom.

During the War of 1812, Major Zachary Taylor, who later became president, led an expedition against the Indians at Old Town, but they fled at his approach. In June of 1813, Colonel Bartholomew, with a small army, raided the area and destroyed the fort.

At the close of the war the Indians returned to rebuild their village, which was just west and northwest of the fort. In 1819, the Kickapoo chiefs and headmen signed a treaty and again, a month later, signed another agreement, relinquishing title to all their Illinois lands in return for a promise of annuities and lands in Missouri. Although the Indians in this country were permitted to live and hunt here, they chose to migrate to Mexico.

Bands of Delawares, Pottawatomies and Kickapoos moved into the county. They roamed from one camping spot to another at Blooming Grove, Randolph's Grove, Pleasant Hill, Old Town Timber, and to Indian Grove and Oliver's Grove in Livingston County. They were friendly to the white settlers when they came.

In 1832, at the close of the Blackhawk War, an order came for all the Indians to leave. A farewell party and dance was held at Blooming Grove and in a few days the Kickapoos traveled westward. General William Clark, Indian agent at St. Louis, reported that 250 Kickapoos and 550 Pottawatomies were removed from this area to a reservation in Kansas.

The above information was taken from "The Story of McLean County and Its Schools" by William B. Brigham, historian.

#### NEWS ITEMS

Mt. Olive Church was sold in 1920. L. C. Keenan paid \$415 for the building and \$186 for the fixtures.

John B. Savage died July 22, 1912. He was the first grain buyer in Sabina and also the first postmaster at Monarch, Ill. (Sabina).

December, 1902 - If you have a wild horse to break, call on Shaw & Troineham, the wild west horse tamers, Glenavon, Ill.

— Dr. J. F. Jones — Remembers that he when a boy took a ride on the little engine which made the first round trip from LeRoy to Rantoul on the then newly built narrow gauge railway, the LeRoy, Rantoul and Eastern. It was along in the seventies. His father, a blacksmith, and who did much work for the new road, was the fireman, and George Ives was the engineer. Dr. Jones remembers that it was a very bumpy and scary ride.

*C'mon in 'N Celebrate With Us . . .*



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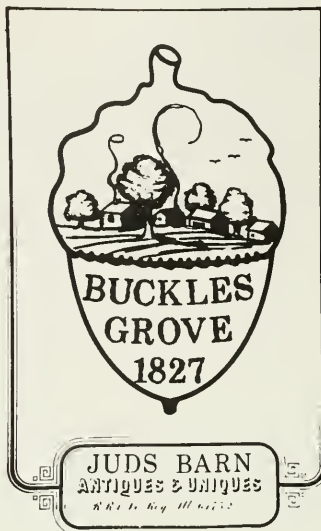
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Charlene Swallow  
Mary Ruth Schlosser  
Ron Litherland  
Cathy Reynolds

**Launder-Ette**



LeRoy City Park 1907



Band Stand donated by Clark E. Stewart

## Parks

LeRoy's first official park was primarily the work of Mayor Amos Rutledge. In 1898 the citizens of LeRoy saw the transformation of a frog pond and horse-watering station, complete with windmill, into the downtown circle park. The trees in the park were set out soon afterward.

On the first day of 1912, at 1:30 p.m. the population of LeRoy gathered to meet the newest prominent figure in town. On that date the Hon. Simeon H. West presented the city with a fountain, statue of a Kickapoo chieftain, Osaketa. The fountain was accepted, in behalf of the city of LeRoy, by Hon. Leslie J. Owen.

The span of 64 years has brought many speculations as to the symbolism in the statue's facing the old fort and burial ground. In actuality the \$1200 fountain statue was accidentally faced toward the old fort and burial ground (located in West Township), "and the sculptor who fashioned the figure didn't even know about Osaketa. He merely turned out a handsome Indian garbed in some of the accoutrements of the Kickapoos". This information was given on Jan. 2, 1912 by Marcus West, son of the donor Simeon West.

Enhancing the park is a cannon, a Spanish-American war relic, according to one source. It was a gift from the government and had been used to defend Ft. Wadsworth, Mass. during the Civil War and many years before. In 1922 a band stand was donated by Clark Stewart, a musician of Bloomington.

In addition to the circle park early citizens of LeRoy had unofficially adopted other spots outside of town for picnics and social gatherings. Among these were Fern Banks, approximately 3 miles south of town, and Sulfur Springs, located in an area east of the present LeRoy Country Club.

During the week of June 8, 1956 LeRoy was presented with a recreational site. A 45-acre tract of land on Salt Creek was donated by Mrs. T.H. Trevett, a childhood resident of this community. This generous offer was made in memory of Mrs. Trevett's parents, Mr. and Mrs. D. O. Howard. Mrs. Trevett was the former Mary Howard.

The name of the park was to be "The Howard Virgin Timber Park" and was to be primarily open for use to organizations and members of organizations residing in Empire township. In 1959, after extensive planning, fund raising, and work by local civic organizations and individuals, Howard Virgin Timber Park became a reality.

Early in the 1960s plans for yet another recreational site were being discussed. At that time LeRoy Community School District No. 2 decided to declare the Washington school

property as surplus property, and subsequently sold it at public auction as specified by the McLean County board of school trustees. The property was purchased by Community Recreation, Inc., a group of civic leaders who believed the property should be retained for public use.

About the same time it was learned that a former resident, Mary Grizzelle Helmboldt, had bequeathed \$20,000 toward construction of a swimming pool under the administration of a local governmental unit in order to guarantee its upkeep and maintenance.

In April of 1965 LeRoy Community Park District was formed with a board of five park commissioners to govern it. The Washington school property was turned over to the park board which set out to provide the community with a swimming pool.

On Oct. 7, 1965 the board accepted a bid of \$74,750 for the construction of the pool. The pool officially opened June 4, 1966. The bond issue to complete payment of the pool had been passed April 25, 1966 and was retired in 1971.

Since the opening of the pool there have been additions such as a horse shoe court, two regulation size tennis courts and an outdoor basketball court.

The early 1970s saw the latest addition to the recreational facilities. This new playground park is located on the northwest side of LeRoy and is the work of the LeRoy Jaycees and the City.



Howard Virgin Park

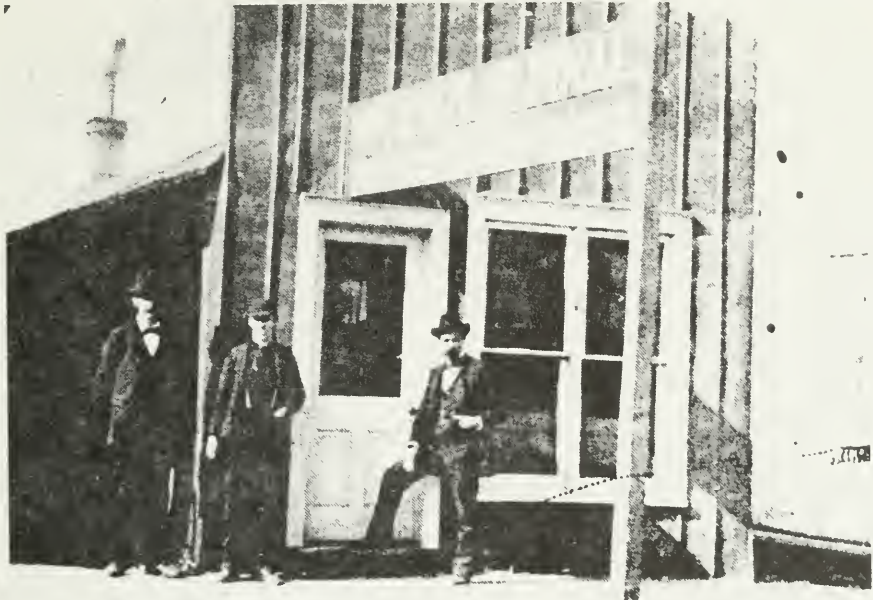


LeRoy Swimming Pool

Osaketa, fountain statue in the City Park.



City Park 1915 [Horse watering tank on left]



The LeRoy Journal  
Steam Printing House

This old frame building was located on the same site as the present block building just south of the Masonic Temple, which was built in 1902 and served as a tavern until 1905. This picture was evidently taken between 1893 and 1902. John Zethoef, on the right purchased the LeRoy Journal in 1893.

## Newspapers

LeRoy has been blessed with as many as 13 newspapers. The LeRoy Exchange was started by J. M. Wolfe in 1870. It, like many to follow, had a short life, ending its career in 1872 when John S. Harper started The Sucker State. Mr. Harper had the reputation of starting more newspapers in the state than any other man. Most of them, like The Sucker State which lasted less than one year, died soon after Mr. Harper started them.

A. C. M. Davis started the Enterprise in 1874. It lasted until 1882 when The LeRoy Free Press was started by A. G. Smith.

F. S. Nutt and E. L. Hendricks took over The Free Press in 1892 but ceased publication in 1894. Nutt and S. E. Murray started a publication, The LeRoy Journal, in 1887. Of all the ventures, it was the only one destined to last until the present time.

A Democratic paper, The Herald, came into being in 1885 for part of the year and was managed by G. S. Shy.

John S. Harper came on the scene again with The Eagle in 1887. It lasted two years but was revived in 1894 by J. A. Mace who took a partner, J. D. Clevenger. In 1905 Mace sold out to Clevenger who ran it until 1909.

In 1894 G. P. Rowley and a Mr. Curson began bringing out a semi-weekly, The LeRoy Laconic, which suspended publication in 1902.

According to one report, LeRoy had five newspapers in 1894, The LeRoy Journal, The LeRoy Free Press, The News, The Eagle, and The LeRoy Laconic. However, the earliest verified date for The News seems to be 1909.

The Enterprise was resurrected in 1899 under the joint

ownership of Young and McKenzie, who kept the publication alive until 1901.

In 1909 Joe Montgomery was editor and Edward G. Shoffer was publisher of The News.

John S. Harper, with a Mr. Marks, started another newspaper, The Harper's Free Press, a Republican paper, in 1910 but it folded in 1911.

The name of The News was changed to Eastern McLean County News in 1912 and was published by J. D. Clevenger. In 1917 it was sold to The LeRoy Journal and ceased publication.

The LeRoy Journal has had a long and interesting career. It was started in 1887 by F. S. Nutt and S. E. Murray who published it until 1893 when J. M. Zellhoefer bought it and published it until 1911. Ralph Parker took it over at that time for two years. M. A. Cline became the owner in 1913 and published it for 28 years, for a longer period of time than any other publisher.

O. J. Lere bought The LeRoy Journal in 1940 and soon made it one of the outstanding weeklies in Illinois, winning many awards sponsored by the Illinois Press Association, including the prized Will Loomis Memorial Award as the best non-daily Illinois newspaper of the year in 1954, and several National Editorial Association contest awards.

In 1963 Mr. Lere sold The LeRoy Journal to Kramer Publishers of Gibson City, publishers of several weeklies in the area, and they publish the paper at the present time. The LeRoy Journal has given 89 years of continuous news coverage and is the oldest LeRoy business operating under one name. It has been 106 years since the town had its first newspaper.



The LeRoy Journal, Mel Cline and Grace Cox



LeRoy Journal 1951, Elmo Zellhoefer, O. J. Lere and John Lere.

# Chronology of Postal Service



The Old Post Office, left - Harry Buckles, center - Daisy Carr Murphy and right - Claude Dawson.

1831

Mail was brought by post-rider to Cheney's Grove (now Saybrook) which was on the route from Danville to Pekin.

1838

LeRoy became a station on the Danville to Pekin route. The first post office was in Hiram Buck's wayside inn on the southwest corner of Center and Chestnut streets. The post-rider made his route one to three times a week depending upon the condition of the roads. In the spring when it was quite muddy, the mail came only once in awhile. One of the first mail carriers was William Pierce, an early settler. In time the post-rider was replaced by mudwagons, called stages by courtesy. The stage driver announced the coming of the U.S. mail with the sonorous tones of a brass horn and it is told that he became so proficient by practice that he could almost play a tune. The tone from the horn was eagerly welcomed for the most exciting event of the week was the arrival of the mail hack as it came rambling in from space, sometimes covered with mud, often ice-clad like a ship in the arctic. To hear from Ohio or back East was an event and the letter was passed around for everyone to read.

The driver was a hero who laughed at sloughs, unbridged streams, washed out bridges and bottomless roads. The stages were often swamped in the streams and had to be pulled out by oxen. When the roads were at their worst, the drivers would put their mail in a queensware crate on the front wheels of a wagon, hitch three horses to it and pull it through that way.

Stories have been told of drivers lost on the prairies on dark and stormy nights, of swollen streams, and of frozen hands and feet.

1842

Judge John E. McClun of Bloomington obtained the mail contracts of all routes coming into or through Bloomington. All carried mail on horseback except the line from Danville to Peoria, over which mail and passengers were carried with considerable regularity in two horse coaches twice a week.

1846

A Mr. Burhance followed Judge McClun and put on the route the first genuine stagecoach.

1850

Frink and Walker of Columbus, O. secured contracts for a line of stages from Covington, Ind. to Peoria and beyond and operated all the stage lines in this part of the state until the coming of the Illinois Central into Champaign. Sometimes sections of this line were sublet for a term of four years. The drivers received five cents a mile for carrying passengers, \$10 a month for carrying mail when driving two horses, and \$12 when using four. Thousands of dollars were entrusted to their care and parcels of all sizes and values, from a diamond ring to a sewing machine.

1851

The post office was in a building that in 1914 housed the Hardy restaurant.

1853

T.J. Barnett built the post office building. It was the first brick building in LeRoy. He built it away from the other business houses.

1854

B.R.M. Sill, who kept a hotel in LeRoy, ran the mail line for four years.

1858

Yountz Bonnett and J.V. Smith took the mail contract; Mr. Bonnett sold his interest to Mr. Smith in 1859.

1861

When Gideon Crumbaugh was postmaster the post office was in the "Old Saloon Building" which stood where the F. Crumbaugh building is now, and which was built by Minor Bishop about 1850. The frame building was torn down June 30, 1911.

1863

J. V. Smith sublet the route from LeRoy to Bloomington to L.A. Rike.

1866

Robert Semple and son carried the mail until railroad days in the 1870s.

1895

The plat book shows the post office just back of the I.O.O.F. building, facing the city park.

1897

A new post office was built while Dr. John Haig was postmaster. It was just east of the present Arlo Bane office on Center Street.

1900

On Sept. 1 the first rural free delivery in McLean County was made. More than 70 families took the requisite mail box to obtain free delivery of their mail. Clark McCain, the carrier, purchased a two-horse covered wagon, fitted with sacks, pigeon-holes and pouches.

1904

LeRoy had three rural mail routes and added two making a total of five.

1906

On or after July 1, patrons of the rural delivery service were required to display signals on their boxes when they left mail for the carrier to collect. Rural patrons also were reminded that any letter mailed required a two cent stamp, even if it were sent to a neighbor.

1912

On March 4, LeRoy's postal savings bank was opened for the first time. The city of LeRoy received free delivery of mail starting Nov. 1. Robert B. Johnson was appointed the first carrier. LeRoy was one of 50 towns in the United States where experiments of free mail delivery were made for cities of this size. Congressman John A. Sterling made application for this city, his former home. It was required that the names of the streets be posted on the corners, the houses numbered and that each residence furnish some sort of receptacle in which to deposit mail.

1913

In October a notice appeared in The Journal which warned that "the rural letter carriers must cease shopping for men and women on their routes and those who violate this rule are running a risk of losing their jobs. Patrons of the rural routes often place their carriers in an embarrassing position."

1918

Mrs. George Patterson received a letter from her daughter, Bernice, who is a clerk in the quartermaster depot of the war department in Washington, D.C., which was sent by airplane from Washington to New York City. It was the first air mail letter to be received at the LeRoy post office.

1927

P.D. Barnum received notice the post office would be upgraded and would become second class. Postmaster Barnum put into operation an electric automatic stamp canceling machine, furnished by the government to all second class offices. The name of the town and the date appeared in a one-inch circle and to the right were wave-like bars which canceled the stamp. The machine replaced the hand-stamper.

1932

The LeRoy post office had four rural routes. They were later consolidated to three.

1933

The post office was moved to the remodeled O.M. Phares



The Post Office Today

building and was opened March 1. At the time there were two city carriers who had 500 patrons each. They were Archie Bury and Dwight Cooksley. Clarence Skillman was a carrier for two years, starting about 1913. There were 350 rural boxes and 14 employees in addition to Postmaster Phares.

1949

Two night trains on the New York Central railroad were removed on June 18 and replaced by a new mail service, the Star Route Truck Service. By January, 1950 the last passenger train was removed. Post offices on wheels were put into service and the mail was sorted as the truck traveled along. LeRoy was on the Peoria to Indianapolis route.

1968

An open house was held on August 24 at the new brick post office at 104 E. Cherry St. at the invitation of Postmaster Richard D. Michael.

1976

A postage stamp for a letter today is 13c and many letters are sent by air mail without extra postage or cost. Letter postage back in 1851 was a "bit" or 12½ cents, but at that time the person receiving the letter paid the postage when he went to the post office to get the letter. There was no delivery then. No envelopes were used, the address was written on the outside fold of the letter and sometimes sealing wax was used to protect privacy of contents. The postmaster published names of persons who had unclaimed mail awaiting them. That practice continued until about 1920.

#### LeRoy Postmasters

Hiram Buck, first postmaster 1838-44 (4 mails a week)

Esek Greenman 1845

Dr. J. S. Weldon

S. D. Baker

James Kimler 1851

S. A. Moore 1858

Gideon Crumbaugh 1861-66, 1869-1877

David Cheney

J. W. Brown 1895

Harvey Parks

Judge Stillwell

Charles A. Barley 1888-93

Ham Brown

George Riddle 1902

Dr. John Haig 1903-13

E. D. Riddle June 13

Harry E. Buckles 1913-23

E. Fordyce Sargent 1923-27

P. D. Barnum 1927-31

Oscar M. Phares 1931-35

Wilber J. Strange 1935-57

Richard Michael 1957-





Christmas Mail carried by Aldo Smith and Kenny Dolley.

#### RURAL CARRIER

Aldo T. Smith, one-time rural route mail carrier, began his career when free delivery was still in its infancy. He received his appointment under Dr. John Haag, postmaster, in April, 1905 and retired 30 years later. His route in the beginning covered 27 miles, and later 45 miles. In the old days of the mail wagon and horse, it took all day to make the trips and often into the night. After years of using the horse and wagon, his delivery became motorized. He bought his first car for mail delivery in 1915. Prior to that time he used a motorcycle, when roads would permit, for three years. He would keep watch for rain clouds and would hurry to town to get a team with which to finish the route if the looks of the clouds warranted it.

He resorted to various ways during his 30 years to deliver the mail. He went on foot, horseback, sleigh, mailwagon, motorcycle, and automobile.

#### GEMS

There was a carding mill on the site where the Community Center is now.

Rev. James Latta was a missionary here at Buckles Grove in 1830 to 1832.

At the first meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the county of McLean, state of Illinois, on Monday, May 17, 1858, at the Court House in the City of Bloomington, the name of the township was changed from LeRoy to Empire.

A trip to Bloomington on the stage coach was 50c a fare which at that time was considered a high price. The stage went up in the morning and returned in the evening.

Once upon a time, all size chickens sold for 25c; turkeys 80c; eggs, 3 dozen for 25c.

The Cottage Hotel, which was built in 1862 for a private residence, was being managed in 1883 by Mrs. A. R. Arnold. The schools were closed six weeks during October and November of 1918 because of the influenza epidemic. Only two days' vacation was planned for the holidays and there was a possibility that school would be held on Saturdays in order to make up the schoolwork.

#### AMANDA BUCK, DUPTY POSTMASTER

Amanda Buck's father was a surveyor and had helped plat several small towns and as LeRoy was now on the map, he thought it would be a good place to locate and run a tavern. The location was on the southwest corner of Center and Chestnut streets.

By this time, little Amanda was quite a girl, nine years old, and could help with the work around the tavern. She did not like some parts of the work very well. While they lived in the tavern, her father sold one barrel of whiskey and it was with loathing she had to draw a pitcher of it for the travelers going through town.

The urge of farming came to her father and he bought a tract of land and lived there a year. The land had never been plowed and as they plowed the furrows Amanda dropped corn in every third furrow, the ground from the next furrow covering the corn. Then she had to wait for two more furrows to be plowed and it was tedious waiting for the oxen to plod along.

The spring of 1843 saw them back at the tavern with her father also as postmaster. This he did not care for, but John E. McClun, who had charge of the mails in his locality, insisted on him keeping it and decided that young Amanda was plenty old enough to do the work so she was sworn in as a deputy postmaster at the age of 15 years. The mail came from Farmer City by stage on Mondays, reaching LeRoy between 8 and 9 a.m. and returning from Bloomington about 3 p.m. On Thursday the stage came from Farmer City about 3 p.m. going to Bloomington and returning Friday morning. She had only seven minutes to unlock the mail pouch, sort out the mail for LeRoy, add the outgoing mail, lock the pouch and return it to the stage driver.

For young Amanda, it was an event for the stage to come in. They would begin blowing the horn well to a mile from LeRoy. Many a young man from Bloomington, after he had established a business or a practice in his profession, would go back east for his bride, and while waiting for the stage to go on, would get out and walk around, and the villagers would get a chance to see the latest eastern styles. -- From a brief biography of A. Buck by John D. Wells.

*Congratulations*  
*To The*  
*LeRoy Community —*

*Building A Promising Future*  
*On The Foundation of The Past*

*The LeRoy Journal*  
*and*  
*Kramer Publishing Co.*

# Doctors

The old-time country doctor seldom received the praise he deserved. Often, just as he drops off into a much needed sleep, a rap is heard at the door. A voice pleads that he hurry, a child is sick.

The night might be cold with a cold wind sweeping the swirling snow across the field and piling it in ever deepening drifts behind the fences and hedges and across the roads.

The doctor does not hesitate, but rides out into the storm. Throughout the farm lands not another light is seen. Slowly he makes his way toward a dimly lighted homestead and pulls into the yard, ties his horse to the fence. Within the house a child, his body racked with fever and suffering, tosses deliriously on the bed. The doctor goes directly to his bed and examines him. Out of his mysterious satchel, he takes some curious powders, mixes and administers them to the child with soothing words of kindness. Soon the child is eased and sleeping. The doctor turns and goes back into the storm, back over the long cold way to snatch a little rest before the new day, already appearing in the east, shall come.

Dr. T. W. Keys, who came here in 1869, was a typical doctor of that period. He drove around the countryside in a two-wheeled cart. His horse, be it male or female, was always called "Old Bill." He carried his surgical instruments in newspaper and before he used them he wiped them on his pants leg. He was physician, surgeon, and dentist. He lanced boils, carbuncles, pulled teeth, set broken bones, and delivered babies. He treated earaches with hot salt on little onions, and made poultices for abscesses, prescribed turpentine, lard and goose grease, and spring tonics from rhubarb or sassafras tea. He made all his own cough syrup and other syrups. Many times he arrived home so lousy he had to bathe on the back porch before entering the house.

Especially in contrast with the modern doctor were the facts that he wrote a beautiful hand, delivered all six of his own children, and made calls on patients as much as 20 miles away.

In 1895 there were six physicians in LeRoy: Drs. Fisher, Keys, Tuthill, McKenzie, Sargent, and Dr. Haig. The latter was six feet, two inches tall and was the originator of the LeRoy Fair and gave it the name of the "biggest fair on earth, competition open to the world."

One source states that Dr. Moran came to Buckles Grove in 1834, another that he came to LeRoy in 1836, shortly after LeRoy was laid out. Dr. Harmon Buck, ancestor of Byron treated all the old chronic diseases within miles of LeRoy. Dr. Fifield came later and practiced the same system. Dr. Weldon came here in 1839 and was here a few years. Dr. David Edwards came in 1840 and was also a Methodist preacher. He was one of the trustees of the "LeRoy Manual Labor University," which never came to pass. Other doctors who served here, and the date they came, if known, follows:

Dr. Burns 1840

Dr. Albert Luce 1840s

Dr. D. Cheney 1847 for many years and then became a merchant

Dr. S. W. Noble 1850 to 1865

Dr. Etheridge, first druggist

Dr. Coleman 1850s

Dr. Howard 1850s, eventually went to Champaign

Dr. T. D. Fisher 1855

T. W. Keys 1869

Dr. Little 1870s

Dr. Suggest 1870s

Dr. Berney 1870s

Dr. Rodgers 1870s

Dr. Gosset 1870s



Dr. T. W. Keys standing in front of his office on site of Arlo Bane's law office

Dr. Cravens 1870s

Dr. Rodgers, Jr. 1870s

Dr. Davis 1870s

Dr. Espey 1870s

Dr. Fisk 1870s

Dr. J. F. McKenzie, here by 1880

Dr. J. A. Tuthill 1881, retired 1930

Dr. John Haig 1895

Dr. E. E. Sargent 1893 to 1934

Dr. Cook

Dr. J. Y. Bonnett here in 1895

Dr. Wiley

Dr. J. F. Jones

Dr. Small

Dr. Taylor

Dr. Stevens

Dr. Gunderson

Dr. Clifford

Dr. Black

Dr. Bridges

Dr. E. R. May by 1923-1933

Dr. O. M. Thompson 1923

Dr. Bernice McConnell 1933

Dr. Louis Needels 1934

Dr. Ross 1934

Dr. George France

Dr. V. K. Pluira Jan., 1954



Dr. V. K. Pliura



Doctor's Clinic built by Dr. V. K. Pliura, now occupied by Dr. K. Soundararajan

Dr. Kalayanasundram Soundararajan May, 1973

Dr. Pliura was born in Lithuania. His parents, brothers, and sisters were deported to Siberia in 1944, but managed to escape. He graduated from Heidelberg University, Germany and came to the U.S.A. in 1949. Two professional style football goal posts were installed at McKean Field as a memorial to him. A memorial plaque in the foyer of the high school gymnasium is inscribed "In memory of Dr. V.K. Pliura for a lifetime of dedication to healing the sick and caring for the poor." His efforts on behalf of the community of LeRoy long will be remembered.

#### PIONEER MOTORIST

A LeRoyan, James Q. Bishop, owned the first car in McLean County. He paid \$1,000 for the Locomobile steam car, which he purchased in September, 1901 of Oscar S. Lear in Columbus, O. An engineer was furnished for a week to teach him how to drive it.

It was a one-seated car, with a bed like that of a buggy, very small wheels, and no windshield or top.

The steam-powered car carried up to 25 gallons of water and 5 gallons of gasoline for fuel. There were 300 boiler tubes and under each tube was a burner which started with a lighted torch. The car would run on 220 pounds of steam. It took only 20 minutes to get up the steam, even if the water was cold.

The car was guided by a lever and had a gong like a firebell to warn all to stay out of its way. The car could climb hills without difficulty.

Horses were frightened badly by the car. Once when Mr. Bishop was coming down the street and F. B. Humphrey was driving a bay mare to a buggy, the mare turned around and upset the buggy. -- Condensed from an article written by Abbie Bishop in 1935.

#### FIRSTS

The first lots in LeRoy were sold in December of 1835. Hiram Buck built the first hotel in town.

LeRoy's present doctor, Dr. K. Soundararajan, is a native of the Kolar Gold Fields of India. He is a graduate of Stanley Medical College, Madras, India, and came to New York City in 1964, and to LeRoy in May of 1973.

#### THERE'S A TOWN

There's a town in Illinois, That's a hummer, so they say;  
Where the people are so happy, And where they boast things every day.  
Every single business man, All the ladies and the men;  
Work to make that town a winner, Just a little now and then.

In this town in Illinois, All the comforts can be found;  
There in lifes' untold numbers, All earth's richest joys abound.

Working early working late, As the happy days pass by;  
Ever onward, never stopping, Is their vallant battle cry.

Over Illinois' most fertile soil, They have reared a city grand;  
Just by working and a planning They have beautified this land.

While the other towns were waiting For perhaps a better day,  
These people have solved the knotted problem And worked it out this way.

So I ask you, earnest readers, Is this grand old town your own?  
Can you answer with all freedom, "Yes, this city is my home?"

If you can, then, well you know All the pleasure—all the joy—  
Of a happy growing life In the town of Old LeRoy.

--Orval W. Baylor.

#### OLD NEWS ITEM

March 9, 1883...Alex McElfresh and Jake Hazel trade roosters. Tom Wamsley has constructed a wooden leg for Billy Watson. A mask dance was held at Keenan's hall.

# The LeRoy Fair . . . 1895-1924



LeRoy Fair 1914

The first LeRoy Fair was held September 3, 4, 5, and 6, 1895, on the grounds where Sunnyside homes are now located.

A license was issued April 26, 1895, to five men as commissioners to open books for subscriptions to the LeRoy Fair and Agricultural Association. These men were John McConnell, Dana A. Buckworth, George W. Hedrick, J. V. Smith, and Dr. John Haig. They disposed of \$8,000 worth of stock at \$10 per share.

The corporation was duly chartered, bearing the date of May 17, 1895. Among the list of original stockholders was one woman, Miss Oral Buck, on whose land the fairs were held. There was only a nominal rental fee.

The management was quite proud of the premium list, and thought it compared favorably to the lists of other Illinois fair groups. Rules and regulations regarding entries of exhibits to the different departments were quite clearly spelled out and lists of premiums to winners were made known. The departments included livestock consisting of horses, mules, ponies, colts, cattle, hogs, sheep and poultry. Some first prize money was as high as \$10 for the poultry division.

Other departments for exhibitors consisted of grain, seed (timothy and clover) and vegetables. Some departments of special interest to women were flowers, domestic arts, textiles, fine arts and education. There were riding and driving contests for boys, girls, and women.

On Tuesday of the first fair at 1 p.m., a parade of all livestock entered took place under the direction of the president and marshal of the fair. On Friday at 1 p.m., a parade of all premium winning stock took place.

Tickets of admission to the fair on Tuesday for one person was 25c; Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, one person 50c. Children under 15 years, Tuesday and Wednesday was 15c; Thursday and Friday was 25c. Family ticket, including man, woman, children under 15, and a team during the fair was \$2; person on horseback 25c. Season ticket admitting one person each day was \$1; ticket admitting team or horse for season was \$1.

By 1910, the LeRoy Fair and Agricultural Association felt that the improvement each year had brought to the organization made the fair one of the most popular in the state. The grounds were conveniently arranged and its location at the south edge of the city limits made it only a short distance from the railroad depots. This closeness and the stock chutes were the two things that visitors and stockmen alike greatly appreciated.

On the grounds there were 90 shingle-roofed box stalls for horsemen, a good well of water and new offices, all of which made this one of the best equipped fairgrounds in central Illinois.

There also was one of the finest half-mile tracks in the state with a track record at that time of 2:11, and a magnificent grandstand which was free to the public and from which every foot of the race track could be seen. The races were one of the leading features of the week.

In the year of 1910, a ticket admitting horse, team or automobile once was 25c. Admission to the grandstand for each afternoon performance was 10c. There were 26 different departments for exhibits that year.

The harness races each afternoon were pacing and trotting races with \$300 as the purse in each. Also, there were running races; on Tuesday a half-mile; Wed. 3/4-mile; Thursday 5/8-mile and one-mile dash running on Friday with \$50 purse for each race.

Five-mile car races were included in each day's program. Class A was for runabout or roadster costing under \$1200 with a purse of \$20; a purse of \$25 for a car costing over \$1200; a purse of \$30 for a touring car costing under \$2000; and a purse of \$35 for a car costing more than \$2000. There was a special premium for the best display of four or more one make of runabout or touring cars with a purse of \$15.

There was a special exhibit, a baby show with four divisions: babies under 6 months, 6 to 12 months, babies 12 to 18 months, and twin babies under 8 months. Prizes of silver



Racing at the LeRoy Fair

cups, knife, fork and spoon sets or medals were given to baby boy and baby girl winners in each division.

The 1911 fair was quite different from previous fairs in that old-time harness races were cut out in favor of up-to-date motor races. They and the bi-plane drew large crowds. Harry W. Powers, the bi-plane aviator, gave the crowd more than their money's worth. Each afternoon at 3:30, he sailed up several hundred feet, and flew several miles in a circular course above the heads of the spectators. He made these successful flights, always alighting with the same great skill and getting the same glad hand from the crowd.

The baby show was held Thursday morning with 40 babies on exhibit. Among them were four pairs of twins.

The fair association felt that the 1911 fair marked one of the greatest successes and attracted the attention of more people and over a greater scope of country than any county fair in the state.

On Thursday, August 19, 1915, the LeRoy Fair had the largest attendance in all of its 21 years. Auto loads from 50 and 60 miles away were in attendance. Men stationed at the gates in the evening counted the cars as they left and the count was 1,376.

Ruth Law, known as Queen of the Air, made flights three days. On Wed. and Thurs. she rose to a height over 2000 feet, and carried a passenger who made a parachute drop. As he descended, circles were circumscribed around him by the flying machine. This was a most spectacular stunt. Miss Law made a second flight each day, a race with an auto or motorcycle. She used a large sized Wright machine with a wing spread more than 40 feet. She was paid \$1000 a day.

The thirtieth annual LeRoy Fair was held August 12 to 16, 1924, and was a very successful one in all areas — attendance, exhibits, races, entertainment, and whatever goes to make up a county fair. The exhibits were larger in number as well as in size of the entries than they had been for several years. This was especially true of the garden produce and fruits.

There was real competition, especially in the cattle and swine departments. There were many entries in the sheep department as well, there being about 100 head. More horses were entered than ever before, about 150 head.

The fine exhibit of farm machinery, most of it in motion, was of particular interest in that it presented to interested buyers the latest in corn shellers, corn pickers, binders, cream separators and washing machines. Also on exhibit were three "Range Eternal" ranges that created much interest.

Other departments that included flowers, canned fruits, jellies, culinary goods, and textiles were swamped with entries.

Perhaps the one with the most entries was the Baby Conference with 207 entries and in which \$145 in premiums was distributed. Scoring was done with a scientific method developed by the American Medical Association. There were five areas of testing: mental; physical; oral and dental; eye, ear, nose and throat; weight and measurements. Each mother received a copy of the examination record and from this record it was possible to know in mathematical terms the degree of perfection of her child.

The most perfect child between the ages of one and five years was given a Sterling silver trophy by the state governor, Len Small.

The conference that year included a new division, the Improvement Class. This included all children under six years of age who were examined at the fair the year before and were entered again. Awards were made to the four children showing the greatest improvement during the year.

Governor Small gave a sterling silver trophy to the most perfect child, one to five years of age, and a certificate of merit to each child attaining a score of 90% or better.

The Better Babies Conference was inaugurated to encourage and promote better human stock.

There were some special features for the 1924 fair. A nine-piece orchestra, The Whispering Syncopators, entertained on the grandstand each afternoon and evening with the latest popular jazz and ragtime numbers. All could also sing and dance.

The LeRoy Band, under the leadership of Bernard Strongman, played from the amphitheater each afternoon. The band music was always one of the most pleasant features of the fair.

The night show featured special harness and saddle stakes



The Grandstand is full at the LeRoy Fair

and a fireworks display lasting 45 minutes. Some of the special set pieces were the Bombardment of Fort McHenry, Spark Plug and the noted Head-on Collision, where two locomotives come together. Trapeze performers and the "Bucking Ford" added their share to the entertainment for the week.

Passenger planes were on the grounds throughout the week and carried all passengers who cared to ride. Many took advantage of the opportunity for an airplane ride.

The harness races for Thursday featured a 2:09 pace, a 2:20 trot and a 2:25 pace. There also were running races.

The automobile races on Saturday were conducted by the Central Illinois Racing Association, whose headquarters were in Rantoul. The association guaranteed at least 16 cars at the races and often had as many as 25. Nine cars took part in the main 20-mile race for a stake of \$500.

The Fair Association felt that the 1924 fair was one of the most successful, and had accomplished what a county fair is supposed to do...provide entertainment and instruction through a diversified program featuring something of interest to every man, woman and child who attended.

Officers were elected and plans were made for another big fair in 1925, but one was not to take place. On April 8, 1925, after a high school track meet held on the fair grounds, the amphitheater caught fire and burned to the ground. The association decided to use the insurance from the fire to pay off the indebtedness and dissolve the Fair Association.

#### WOMEN AND THE LEROY FAIR

Fair time! Fair time! This announcement meant the time was drawing near for the LeRoy Fair to open. It had different meanings to the people of LeRoy and vicinity.

To many, and particularly the men, it meant harness racing, livestock shows, and equestrianism. For everyone it was entertainment — a time to forget one's work and cares and just enjoy the four or five days of the big LeRoy Fair.

The women had to begin planning long before the week of the fair, for there were many departments where they were

"Queen of the Show" and they reigned supreme in the Floral Hall where their many entries were exhibited.

There were about eight classes which were of special interest to women and to enter into competition in any one of these meant plans must be made far in advance of fair days.

If one were interested in the culinary arts, she must can the fruit at just the peak of ripeness, and make the jellies and preserves at that time. If her interest lay in the textile department, most likely the quilts, knitting, crocheting, tatting, etc. were all done during the long winter hours preceding the fair with each one dreaming of a premium or premiums she hoped would be hers.

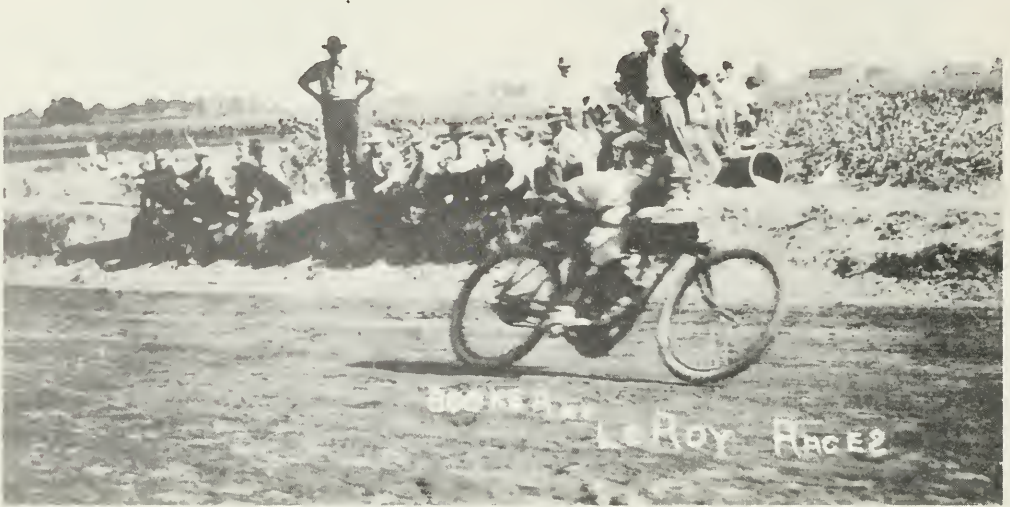
There were divisions that boys and girls could enter: textiles, produce, poultry, and educational. If sons and daughters wished to enter one or more, mother would have to oversee the work and make decisions as to what ones were ready for competition. This competition was by either age or grade in school. Father was usually too busy to help this supervision, either with the summer harvesting or perhaps getting some farm animals ready for exhibit.

A special exhibit in a class by itself was the Baby Show. The entries throughout the years grew from about 40 to more than 200. Who would be more involved beside the babies than the mothers?

There was still another classification of which the women became a part. This was the equestrianism class and men, women, boys and girls could compete. There was both riding and driving and competition was usually keen, particularly in the ladies' riding.

The fairs were looked forward to by not only local people but by former LeRoy residents. What better time to visit relatives and friends than Fair Time! So the home folks made ready to entertain guests in the homes for at least a part of the time, if not for the entire week. This required extra cleaning, cooking, and planning on the part of the homemaker.

Many families spent the entire day at the fair and usually planned a picnic dinner at noon. There was usually a little extra food provided in case some of the family met a friend or friends from out of town who would be invited to eat with the family.



Motorcycle Race, Carl Booker, at the LeRoy Fair

LeRoy Fair officials spared no time and expense to bring to the people of this vicinity unusual features and attractions. One year the fastest pole team in the world was here — a beautiful, bay in color, named Lady Maud C. and Hedgewood Boy.

The LeRoy Fair Association is said to have originated the \$1,000 harness and saddle stakes. For 10 years there were five \$1,000 harness and saddle stakes, attracting the largest stables in the central west, as well as stables in New Hampshire, Vermont, Kentucky, Tennessee, and other states. They attracted some of the finest horses in the United States.

Two noted flyers here were Lincoln Beachey and Lieutenant Locklear. Beachey was the first man to loop the loop and fly upside down. What a thrill for the LeRoy Fair crowd!

The fair in 1903 was advertised in a rather unique way by an advertising folder showing a pretty young lady in a bathtub. The copy on the folder advertised the fair as "more exhibitions, more races, more attractions, more amusements than any fair in the state." Spencer's Military Band of 24 men was slated to play every day of the fair. This advertising folder was found in a house that was being dismantled near Padua and brought to The LeRoy Journal in June of 1948.

In 1911, Aldo Smith of LeRoy purchased a new Indian motorcycle and expected to enter it in the races at the fair in August. Other boys who had motorcycles and took part in the races were Adlia Whitaker and Lester Moss of LeRoy, and Charley Bane of Ellsworth.

On Tuesday morning about nine o'clock August 15, 1911, before the fair was officially opened, Wilson Richmond of Champaign was killed while trying out his racer on the track. Permission had been granted him to do this. He was going 50 miles per hour and tried to make a square turn at the northwest corner of the track. The strain was too great for a

wheel which severed loose spokes. His machinist who was with him jumped and escaped with only a few scratches.

Part of the Rules and Regulations for 1913 stated that anyone hitching to or defacing any of the trees, or anyone getting into the fair grounds in an unlawful manner, would be prosecuted and fined \$5 and the cost of prosecution.

Much amusement was afforded the crowds by the mule races. The riders could never tell if they would go, and if they did go, where. The pony races were surer to go as expected and were a source of much interest to everyone.

One person who took advantage of what the LeRoy Fair had to offer was Mrs. Grace Brittin, who was interested in equestrianism and made a great success of it. She was started on her riding career by the Ball Brothers of Versailles, Ky. and was with them for 10 years. She had eight years with W. D. Alexander of Bloomington. Her first gaited horse riding was for Carl B. Hayes of Mt. Vernon. She also rode for other noted stables. Her successful career took her to many places in Illinois and in other states as well.

Attendance for four or five successive days at the fair required careful planning for each one's wardrobe. In those earlier days many women and girls made their own dresses and that required many hours of sewing long before fair time. Even though many made their own clothes, there always was shopping to be done. New shoes were needed, and in those days, all women and girls wore hats. To think of going to the fair without a hat, and usually a new one at that, was unheard of.

The LeRoy Fair was not all work, for the women availed themselves of the opportunity to see the livestock, the machinery, the races, and also to sit in the amphitheater, relax, and enjoy the band music. In this way they could forget the work and many hours of planning that had been theirs.





Parade at the LeRoy Fair



Automobile Race



Horse Racing Automobile

## P & J Cafe

Route 150  
LeRoy, Illinois

## Hubbard's Sunoco

301 S. Chestnut  
LeRoy, Illinois 61752  
Phone 962-9631

## Davis Standard

Highway 150  
LeRoy, Illinois 61752  
Phone: 962-9409

Our 25th Year of Continuous Service  
**Glenn L. Smith**  
**Farm Equipment Service**

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LeRoy, Illinois

JOE & FRANCES

**Miller's Poultry**  
FRESH EGGS  
BY THE DOZEN OR CASE



LEROY, ILLINOIS

962-9453

## Mart's Welding Shop

PORTABLE WELDING SERVICE  
BOLTS — BELTS — BEARINGS  
Phone 962-9160 LeRoy, Illinois

(309) 962-6921

**C F & H CONSTRUCTION**  
GENERAL CONTRACTOR

GEORGE COOK  
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500 E. CEDAR ST.  
LEROY, ILL. 61752

## Moss' Mobil Service

Complete Tire and Battery Service  
One Stop Truck and Auto Service  
Route 150 LeRoy, Illinois



LEROY COMEDY COMPANY

## The Opera House

There was always something going on at the opera house. It was the entertainment center for the whole community. Young and old climbed the long, steep stairs and settled themselves in the theater-type seats to view the most delightful plays, the latest musicals, the funniest comedies, the most educational lectures, or the most exciting melodramas when the audience always hissed at the villain. Local young people played their violins, piano solos, sang, read poetry or gave readings.

LeRoy had an orchestra that played the "Stars and Stripes" as the opening number for all performances. During fair week, nightly stage shows were scheduled. Tubs of ice with fans behind them served as coolers on those hot summer nights, long before air-conditioning.

Rivival meetings were held there for a week of evenings at a time. Graduation exercises also took place there.

The Opera House was built in 1892 after the fire which burned out most of the block by Adam Murray and Dr. William Buckworth, who operated the dry goods store and the drug store below. It was lavishly decorated with brightly

colored fresco, panels and ornate embellishments done in oils. It was wired for electricity in 1895. The backstage wall was, and still is, plastered with huge posters of the coming attractions of the times: "A Millionaire Tramp," "Burlesque, Burlesque, Burlesque," "The Old Hayseed" and others. The tiny dressing rooms are covered with the graffiti of actors' names.

In 1902 the Opera House was being managed by Murray and Buckworth. In 1908 the advertisement listed D. L. Buckworth as manager. After the death of Mr. Murray, Mrs. Murray was the manager for a time.

In 1914, she had a fire escape built. There was a platform along the windows on Center Street, 4 feet wide and 19 feet long. A ladder extended from the platform down to the sidewalk. In 1914, the 44 x 100' building was sold by the Adam Murrays' son, to J. E. Williams. The lower floor was occupied by Williams' Drug Store and the Variety Store for many years.

The Opera House was then used for dances frequently on Saturday nights with Mrs. Henry Oneal and her musical sons and daughters providing orchestra.



Play Bills on east wall of LeRoy Opera House



Money drawer in ticket office of LeRoy Opera House



Main light fixture in ceiling of Opera House



Decorations around stage opening



At the Chautauqua on East Center Street

A letter from Elmer Doggett in 1962 to the Journal in which he recalls the opera house days, follows in part:

"I then decided, for the benefit of the younger generation, to write a letter telling them about the LeRoy that I knew as a youngster and the closing of the Opera house as described by the former Bona Williams, for it leaves a memory of when I was 12 or 14 years old, shifting scenery in the opera house for the various shows that were held there. In return for this work, I was privileged to watch the shows from a "reserved seat."

LeRoy never was much of a show town, as was Rantoul and Bloomington, but it did have good entertainment put on by local talent known as the LeRoy Comedy company. There were also the usual number of medicine shows wherein the "Doctor," with his tall, silk hat, black mustache, rouged cheeks, and flashy "diamond" on his finger, would extol the merits of his tapeworm remedy and Kickapoo Indian Sagwah which was a sure cure (at a dollar a bottle) for any ache or pain the purchaser might be suffering from.

The local talent was excellent in productions such as "Dora Thorne," "Lena Rivers," and other novels of that age. LeRoy, being too far off the beaten track for the larger shows traveling to Chicago and St. Louis, had few of these big-time productions; however, we did see a few of these, including the operetta, "Under Southern Skies," and the comedy in three acts, "Pickin's from Puck." "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and "Ten Nights in a Bar Room" were also standard fare for winter entertainment.

The old opera house, whose passing so many oldsters mourn, was used for other purposes also. One of the most gala of these events was the annual charity ball. Before the dance, a dinner was served on the stage by a troupe of Negro waiters and waitresses imported from Bloomington for the occasion. These people were entertainers as well as waiters,

and we were held spellbound by their agility as dancers. Decked out in long-tailed coats, the gentlemen would approach their partners with a sweeping, low bow, and they would dance the "cake-walk" with grace and skill that I never have seen equaled. The manager, D. L. Buckworth, always engaged me to shine shoes between dances. The fellows were anxious to impress each other, so they were very generous with their tips. I often made \$25 to \$30 during the course of the evening, which was a small fortune in those days.

People in those days really knew how to dance. When the strains of the "Over the Waves" waltz or "Two Little Girls in Blue" would drift through the air, the couples would swoop and twirl gracefully down the length of the polished floor."

#### CHAUTAUQUAS

In the gay 90s or at the turn of the century the Chautauqua became the most American thing in America. LeRoy became a part of the Chautauqua circuit and was provided entertainment for four and five days at a time. The tent was placed on the grounds where the Crumbaugh Library and Church is now.

Chautauquas were still coming to town in the late 1920s. There were both afternoon and evening performances. They offered great orators, music, drama, magic, art lessons, comedy, debates, lectures, and political speeches. It was not only entertaining, but also educational and was advertised as a "Feast for the Mind."

A group of people would sign a contract or guarantee with the Chautauqua company. Because of poor attendance in 1928, a deficit resulted. The need for entertainment was being satisfied by movies, radios, and the automobile. With the passing of the Chautauqua LeRoy lost one of the finest types of entertainment and one that the whole family was able to attend together.



Races at the Fireman's Tournament looking west 1907-1912

#### TURKEY TROT DAY

A jaunty spirit would pervade the crowds on Turkey Trot Day. The town would swarm with people hoping to catch a turkey or other fowl for Thanksgiving dinner. It was Fourth of July without fireworks. It was a carnival day without sideshows.

Back in November of 1917 the first turkeys were catapulted from the embattlements of the store roofs at 10 o'clock on Turkey Trot Day, and then again on the hour for six hours. Every turkey had its own idea of how to reach terra firma, or the eager arms of its captor. Some took a tailspin, some looped the loop, some had enough "gasoline" to fly several blocks, some landed in tree tops and others lost control, but the pursuers were relentless and their capture followed.

A greased pole, eight inches in diameter, was placed horizontally and two boys straddled it, facing each other, and at the word "go" pummeled each other with sacks of straw until one fell off. As soon as one was knocked off, another boy took his place. About an hour later the winner received a chicken for the prize.

In November of 1930, the first Turkey Trot Day to be held since 1921, 150 turkeys, geese, ducks, chickens and guineas were given away. The fowls were not only thrown from roof-tops, but were given as prizes for winners in the fatmen's race, throwing the rolling pin contest, the pillow fight, the fiddlers' contest, the husband calling contest, funniest dressed couple, the oldest couple, the ladies' egg race, the wheelbarrow race and the couple with the largest family.

A greased pig was let loose and became the possession of the one most agile to capture it.

On Turkey Trot Day in 1931, guineas were released from a height. Some lit on window ledges and above awnings. There were daring pursuers who climbed walls to catch them. One lit on the roof of the Methodist Church and half a dozen men and boys found a way to climb up on the roof, but the guinea was captured by a lad on the ground.

These scrambles often caused some minor injuries, such as bruises, bumps and cuts. One boy fell eight feet from the Methodist Church roof and broke a bone in his foot. School was dismissed for the day and all had a real holiday.

#### HISTORIC SPOTS by Miss Oral Buck 1929

Naturally the historic spots which I will mention will be in and near LeRoy where I was born and raised. The building where Dr. Stephen Noble's office was located in the 1840s was a one-story substantial brick building which was razed only this year (1929) and an up-to-date structure erected in its place. The old building had been occupied continuously through these years - mostly by physicians - it being close in and convenient. My grandfather, Hiram Buck, was the first postmaster, justice of the peace and tavern keeper, having built this tavern in the early 1830s where the First National Bank now stands. \$1 per week for room and board was the price paid to my grandfather and I can assure you the food was good because grandmother was chief cook and practically everything else about the tavern.

In 1839 the first saw, grist and cording mill was built by Elisha and Simon Gibbs on a slough at the southeast edge of town. The C.A. Pierce house, a modern structure, stands there now.

LeRoy, itself, is an historic spot for at one time in the 1840s it was the center of a half-mile race track. Folks could stand in their doors and watch the races. Some of the names of the race horses were Jim Crow, Black Hawk, Roan, Copper Bottom, Tiger Whip, and Clear the Kitchen.

In the early 1840s Edgar Conkling set out a mulberry grove for the purpose of starting a silk-worm industry but it never amounted to much. This plot of ground is now occupied by the J. T. & E. J. Crumbaugh Church, parsonage, and library. The first schoolhouse was built in 1840. It was a small, one-room, frame affair - and is still standing only a few rods from where it was built; two blocks north of the park and a little west, facing on the Illinois Central railroad. My father, Thomas Buck, has often shown me this old schoolhouse...Some of the scholars in those days were Mrs. Amanda Buck, Crumbaugh, Aaron Conkling, Frank Kimler, Charles Whitaker, Ellen Buck Kline and Thomas L. Buck.

#### FIRSTS

The first election held for city officers was on Aug. 10, 1874.  
The first mayor was M.S. Stout.  
The first druggist was Dr. Esteridge.

# LeRoy's Centennial

The four-day celebration of the 100th anniversary of LeRoy from Oct. 17 to 20, 1935 was a great occasion and made a fitting grand finale for the end of the first century. The Centennial brought to thousands a consciousness of the ties that bound them to LeRoy. It was the awakening of the mind to the many astounding changes that had come through the century. The celebration had an all-star cast.

Miss Eloise Bonnett, president of the Centennial Association, officially opened the celebration in the city park, where much of the program took place. She introduced LeRoy's Centennial Queen, Miss Rose Bishop, and adorned her with the silver crown. Miss Margaret Adams and Miss Ellen Skillman were her attendants and Miss Joan Clarey was honorary attendant.

The Five Flying Fishers, aerialists; Art Canahan, skillful stunt pilot; and a balloon ascension with a triple parachute drop thrilled the crowd again and again.

Chief Evergreen Tree, noted Pueblo Indian speaker, imitated bird and animal calls, sang Indian songs and told of Indian lore. A trained animal circus performed.

There were musical selections each day by the Dixie Jubilee Singers, band concerts by the E.T.H.S. Band and Bloomington Community Band. The Odd Fellows' Orphans' Band and the orchestra of the Modern Woodmen of America performed.

On the second day there was a pet parade, a homecoming football game and a historical pageant. The pageant included a one-act play, "A Quilting Party," produced by the LeRoy Mothers' Club; the minuet and the Virginia Reel, danced by 12 members of the Eastern Star in colonial costumes with white wigs; and several Civil War tableaux presented by the Women's Relief Corps. Mrs. J. A. Tuthill, representing the Longfellow Club, read a carefully prepared history of LeRoy and told many interesting incidents of her own and her family's life in connection with the early days. The Oneal brothers, Emery, Rolly, Robert, and Herman, and their wives, all dressed in costume, danced the quadrille with such pep and gusto that they brought forth rounds of applause. The Junior Mothers' Club presented the Vera Kemp Ensemble of Bloomington.

Other features of the celebration were a husband and hog calling contest, the American Legion parade honoring Spanish-American War veterans, men's and women's drill teams, an old fiddler's contest, and a carnival.

Addresses were given by Arlo Bane, James F. Bishop, Chicago attorney, and Richard Henry Little, famed war correspondent, and both of the latter former LeRoy citizens.

LeRoy Country Club donated a rock to immortalize LeRoy's historic celebration.

Historical relics were on display in the First National Bank building and in other windows downtown.

The big parade was on Saturday. It included the official car with E. Fordyce Sargent, marshal of the Day, Chief Evergreen and his Indian friends rode ponies, others on horses and boys dressed as Indians, the centennial queens float, the marching bands, an old-fashioned surrey with folks dressed as in the gay nineties, C. E. Moots with his cart and pony, Byron Kline's covered wagon float with a cow tied on the back, a series of Ford cars, Model T, 1908, 20 yrs. later and the new 1936 model, two calliopes, and other floats by the high school, organizations and businesses. Lost in the parade was a horse drawing an old hack from Arkansas with Columbus Brittin as driver and John Pash sitting in the rear with fishing pole and line advertising hayseed and fish for sale.

A toy balloon race was won by Jean Evans whose balloon was found 250 miles southeast of Quebec, a distance of 1,100 miles. There were 500 balloons sent up, each bearing a

number and instructing the finder to report to LeRoy.

In keeping with the spirit of the one-hundredth anniversary of LeRoy's settlement by the pioneers of the prairie, the churches of LeRoy combined their efforts in preparing a worthy Sunday evening program. The Rev. Dr. John W.

Holland, scarcely needed an introduction, as many in the audience listened to his words of wisdom regularly over WLS. The Ward Brothers Quartet of Weedman, and Prof. J. A. New, soloist from Wesleyan, provided an inspirational ending to a most memorable event.

June 28 — 1935

LEROY'S  
CENTENNIAL SONG  
To the Tune of "Marching  
Through Georgia."

Come on friends and celebrate,  
And let us sing this song,  
Sing it with the spirit  
That will help the town along;  
Sing it as it should be sung,  
Some sixteen hundred strong,  
For it's LeRoy's centennial.

Gone is the old candle day,  
Old Dobbin and the shay,  
Now one hundred years gives us  
A more convenient way;  
Modern speed and light for us  
Have come here now to stay,  
As we march on through the ages.

Some of our good pioneers  
Were born in old LeRoy  
And so many helped to build  
Our town when just a boy;  
For them and the mothers dear,  
Our hearts are filled with joy,  
While we march on through the ages.

Chorus:  
LeRoy! LeRoy! A town one hundred years!  
LeRoy! LeRoy! We give one hundred cheers!  
Let us do the best we can and cast away our fears,  
While we march on through the ages.

The above is the song selected by the Centennial committee and was written by Effie Huddleston and Mrs. Sally Copeland.

## THE SLOGAN FOR LEROY'S CENTENNIAL

From several slogans submitted, the committee of the Centennial Association selected the following submitted by Postmaster W. J. Strange—"LeRoy—Proud of Her Past, Confident of Her Future."



Miss Rose Bishop, Centennial Queen of LeRoy



Centennial Queen's float, Miss Rose Bishop, Queen; attendants, Miss Joan Clarey, Miss Margaret Adams, Miss Ellen Skillman.



The How's float in the Centennial Parade

#### LE ROY CENTENNIAL

They called it Empire, and they reasoned well,  
 For 'twas indeed imperial domain  
 That welcomed the first settlers here to dwell—  
 Rich fertile soil and undulating plain;  
 Dense darkened timber in primeval state,  
 On either side of slow, winding Salt Creek,  
 Where oak and walnut towered tall and straight,  
 Beholding this, why further should they seek?

Since Buckles reared his cabin in the grove,  
 Forerunner of those hardy pioneers,  
 The little town they builded grew and thrive,  
 Now hale and lusty past a hundred years.  
 For what she was and is, we hail LeRoy,  
 A bright gem in the crown of Illinois!

— James Hart

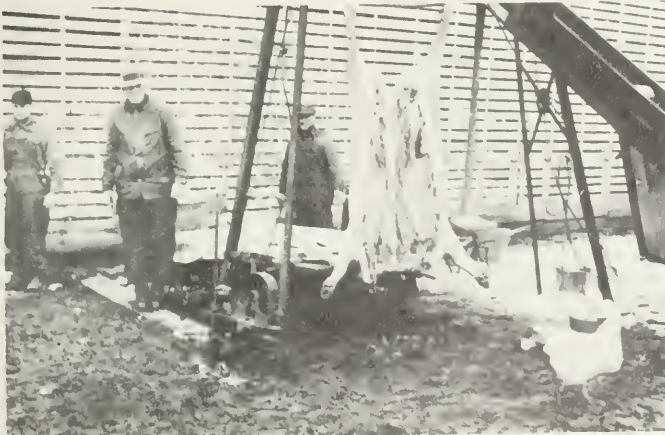
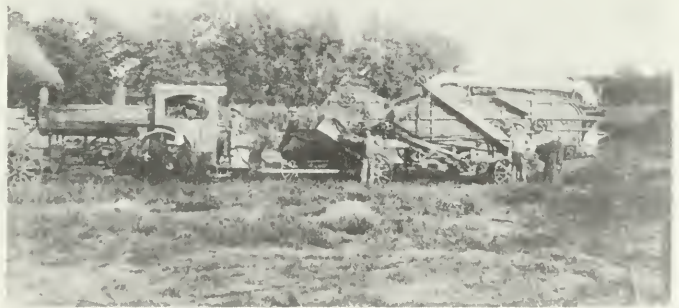


# Farming



Saw Mill on George Dolly farm

Preparing to Thresh



Butchering on the Flegel farm



**Water wagon for Threshing Run**



**Cutting Oats John Andris on the binder and Henry Clay Estes operates the Moline Universal.**



**Stacking Hay**



### Leroy Band

The first brass band was organized about 1860 with about 10 members including J. V. Smith, Ben Parks, A. E. Lewis, A. B. Conkling, director; C. S. Morehouse, E. E. Greenman and S. D. Baker. They took to the top of the Park building and made the air tremble. They played for burial of Civil War soldiers.

Community Orchestra  
 Played Star and Stripes for every  
 performance at the Opera House



### LeRoy Band at Dedication of Band Stand in 1922

Some identified: Front row: Bud Kincaid; Prof. Bernard Strongman, director; behind drum; next with hat in hand, Clark E. Stewart, donor of bandstand; next to last Dr. O. M. Thompson; last Charles Schuler. Middle row: Effie Huddleston; Imo Kincaid. Back row: 3rd Lyle Morgan

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Martha West Hedrick

Abraham Lincoln and David Davis came to the Henry West home one week-end in the 1850's. They had brought their guns and had come to hunt. A lake on the West farm was an attraction for deer and many other animals and birds.

In those days, guests were very welcome as they brought news of the outside world. Horses of the guests were put up in the barn, which at the time was across the road north from the home.

Henry West's daughter, Martha, did the cooking for the family and their guests. She later married George Hedrick.

It was on this week-end that Mr. West asked Lincoln's advice on a legal matter and later received a bill, along with his thank you letter, for \$5 for legal advice rendered.

Mrs. Aldo Smith (1888-1962) a resident of this community for many years, claimed to have been a relative of Abraham Lincoln. She was Alexine Dixon before her marriage and was a daughter of Alex and Mary Lincoln Dixon.

John C. Schuler was engineer on the Chicago and Alton locomotive that pulled Abraham Lincoln's funeral train from Washington, D. C. to Springfield, Illinois. They gave him an open track with no stops.

Mr. Schuler was born in 1832 and died March 16, 1895. He married Harriet Prince and eight children were born to the union. He is buried in Oak Grove Cemetery. Their home was the first house west of the present post office, on Cherry Street.

Excerpts from a letter to the editor of The Journal in Feb., 1952 by Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Bishop follow:

"Our grandfather, Mahlon Bishop, was one of the early settlers. Our farm was 1½ miles northeast of LeRoy...Our

grandfather served two terms in the Illinois legislature and there met Abraham Lincoln. I remember my father, Mahlon Bishop, showing me a letter from Mr. Lincoln asking my grandfather to put him up for the night on his way (on horseback) to meet Stephen A. Douglas in their famous debate. Whether my brother, A. L. Bishop, of Kansas City, Kans. still has those old letters, I do not know."

A letter from Aaron Bishop Feb. 24, 1930:

"Grandfather Bishop used to tell of Lincoln coming to the hotel of evenings and pulling the men down on their knees telling stories. Lincoln made Mrs. Cheney's (then Mrs. Minor Bishop) will in the old Marean home south of the Methodist parsonage. Lincoln had to stoop way low to enter the door."



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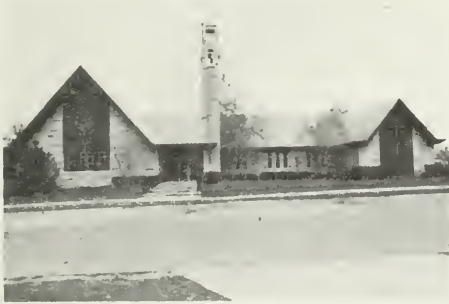
# Churches

Several of LeRoy's churches have had their beginnings in private homes or local establishments. In many instances it took several years before a church building was erected. According to *The Historical Memoire* published in 1904, there were four "prosperous churches in our little city and about one thousand members." These churches were: Methodists Episcopal, Cumberland Presbyterian, Christian and Universalist.

Later the J. T. & E. J. Crumbaugh Memorial Church, the Bethel Church and the First Baptist Church were founded.

Several other churches located in the community for a short time. Among these were the Gospel Tabernacle, Rev. M. D. Hornbeck, pastor; Church of God; Orthodox Catholic Church; the Nazarine Church and the Christian Science Society.

Following are the condensed histories of the more established churches of the community:



METHODIST CHURCH

In 1830, Rev. James Latta, a Methodist missionary, was preaching in this territory. This was five years before Gridley and Covell laid out the town of LeRoy. The first organized class was begun in the home of William Conaway. This original class consisted of the Leader, Silas Watters, and William, Nancy and Chalton Conaway, Martha Barnett, James Merrifield and wife, Jane and Rachel Conaway, Cathering Barnett and Christina Watters.

Rev. S. R. Begg had a regular circuit consisting of Hurley's Grove (now Farmer City), Old Town, Bloomington, Randolph's Grove and Hidell's Grove (now Clinton). Sunday services usually were held once a month. For a period of time services were held in the Clearwater Schoolhouse.

Edgar Conkling deeded two lots (lots 2 and 7 in block 4) to the trustees of the Methodist Church. In the year of 1838 the first church building was begun. It was completed in 1839. Fifteen pastors occupied the pulpit of that building during its 28 years of existence.

Around 1866, at the cost of \$10,000.00, a newer building was erected on the southeast corner of Chestnut and Cherry Streets. This building was made of brick and had stained-glass windows in the auditorium, carpet and hair cloth furniture in the pulpit. It was a very fine building in comparison to the old wooden one. Twenty-one pastors honored this building from 1866-1903. During Rev. B. F. Shipp's stay (1894-1899) the parsonage was built. That church building is the present Masonic Temple.

Around the turn of the century members began talking of a new building. In 1901 a request was sent to the conference for someone capable of organizing and managing the work on the new building. Rev. Thornton Clark shouldered those duties. At the cost of \$18,000 a new building on the northeast corner of Chestnut and Cherry streets was dedicated

January 4, 1903, free of debt. The site also accommodated both a gym and swimming pool. There are plans to put the bell from this church on a foundation in the church yard.

In 1962, the 1903 building was dismantled and ground was broken at the same site for a new church building. Estimated cost of the new building was \$194,600. The congregation's first service in the new facilities was Dec. 15, 1963.

## Early Methodist Organizations:

Ladies Aid, Missionary Societies,  
Women's Society of Christian Service

## Present Organizations:

United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men  
Methodist Youth Fellowship



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The congregation was organized by Rev. John M. Berry around 1832. It was then known as the Salt Creek Congregation. Peter Buckles, resident of Buckles Grove, James Rutledge, early settler of Empire Township, and J. D. Baker were the first three elders. The official ceremony of establishment was held in the home of Peter Buckles. Meetings were held in the homes of members until contributions built a log school house on the corner of Section 28. Salt Creek Congregation was given its name by Lincoln who surveyed this region.

Three buildings have been erected on the sight of the present church building. The land was originally donated by Peter Buckles. The first building was erected in 1836 or 1837. The frame of this building was 40 feet square with a foundation of granite. The building faced south with a porch from which a board walk led to the street or road. In 1851 the name "Salt Creek" was changed to Cumberland Presbyterian Church of LeRoy.

In 1865 a second church (brick) was built at cost of \$6,000. The new structure was built to face north. Rev. A. J. Thomas was pastor at that time.

In 1897 Rev. J. E. Aubrey fostered a movement for a new and more modern building. In January of 1899 the present church became a reality. The old bell used in the first brick church still hangs in the belfry. In 1957 an educational unit was added to the 1899 building.

## THE LEROY SEMINARY

In 1845 "The LeRoy Seminary" under the auspices of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church of LeRoy was established. This seminary with its corps of teachers continued until the beginning of LeRoy High School in September of 1864.

### THE MITE SOCIETY

The Mite Society was organized in 1885 during the pastorate of Rev. A. A. Allison. This was the second oldest women's society in LeRoy but no longer exists. Today the church has the United Presbyterian Womens' Organization.



Old Universalist Church, now American Legion Hall

### UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

The Universalist Church had its beginnings in 1840 when a stranger was entertained at the hotel of Hiram Buck. The man's name was Rev. E. Mainford. Since both Mr. Buck and Rev. E. Mainford were Universalists they planned a meeting in an empty building nearby which was lighted with a single tallow candle. A year later another meeting was held in the school house with the Rev. L. M. Westfall. In 1880 Rev. Thomas Woodrow settled in LeRoy and began preaching on alternate Sundays in the Keenan Hall.

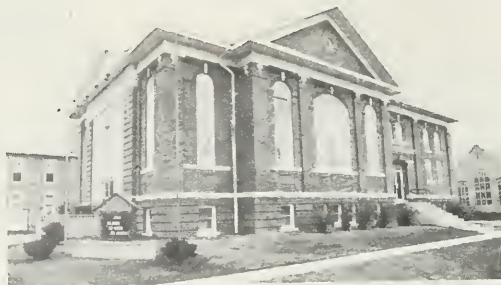
In 1883, Miss Carrie Brainard came to LeRoy, was ordained here, and at once set to work. Through her efforts the church building was built and dedicated May 18, 1884. The church was called Mercy Chapel after Mercy Buck, wife of Hiram Buck. Rev. Carrie W. Brainard organized the first ladies' church society, the Gleaners, in LeRoy. The church later obtained a reed organ at the reported cost of \$10,000.

In May of 1927 the church building was purchased by the American Legion Post. The building now stands as the American Legion Hall. The organ is now in LeRoy High School auditorium.

### FIRSTS

The first religious organization was a class of Methodists in 1831.

The first camp meeting was held on the Dickerson farm at Buckles Grove in 1835 or 1836.



### LEROY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The LeRoy Christian Church was organized December 16, 1888 by T. T. Holton, with 29 charter members. For the first 2 years and 10 months the church services were held in the Cumberland Presbyterian and Universalist church buildings until the erection of the first church building in 1891 at 108 N. Walnut Street where the Standard Oil Station now stands. That building was erected during the ministry of J. S. Clemets and was used for the next 20 years.

Around 1909 a movement began to purchase property and plan the present church structure. The property at 105 E. Center Street (just south of the city park) was purchased and paid for by Mrs. Emily Pray, with the exception of \$600 which was paid for by the church. The entire structure cost about \$20,000 when it was completed in 1910. Today it is valued at over \$300,000.

On October 28, 1906, the congregation adopted for its corporate name "The LeRoy Christian Church."

On February 27, 1966, the congregation voted to incorporate under the laws of the State of Illinois for the legal protection of the property and the right to be a Loyal New Testament Congregation of Christians.

Starting in 1966 a complete remodeling job from top to bottom, inside and outside, was undertaken and was completed around the close of 1971.

During the 87-year history of the church there have been 25 ministers serving the congregation. The present minister, Hal Hudson, is now in his eleventh year of service with the congregation.

In 1948 the church purchased the property at 511 N. Chestnut Street for a parsonage. On October 19, 1975, the congregation voted to add a minister of youth and education to the staff to work along with the minister. Clyde George of Salisbury, Md. was chosen to be the man to fill the position. He began his ministry on December 14, 1975. On November 23, 1975 the church voted to purchase the property at 202 E. Oak St. for a second parsonage to house the new minister of youth.

LeRoy Christian Church has a growing Bible school of some 17 classes. It also has three active women's councils which meet and work together each month. The church has two active youth groups that meet every Sunday night and plans are now being made to begin two more youth groups in order to meet the needs of the youth of this area.

### 1895 NEWS ITEMS

**Feb. 15** — Talking of a new M. E. Church and City Hall, someone suggested that the old church building would make an excellent City Hall. The basement is just the thing for the fire department and there would be abundance room to hold elections, courts, and other meets.





J. T. & E. J. Crumbaugh Spiritualist Church.



Bethel Church.  
BETHEL CHURCH

### SPIRITUALIST CHURCH

The story of J. T. and E. J. Crumbaugh Memorial Church begins with Mr. and Mrs. James Thomas Crumbaugh. Originally they were members of the LeRoy Universalist Church whose minister was the Rev. Carney, who later embraced Spiritualism. Through Rev. Carney the Crumbaughs became interested in the teachings and practices of the Spiritualist.

The Crumbaugh's only child was a son born July 2, 1865. The child called "Bright Eyes" died August 20, 1865. The sorrow the parents felt after the death of their baby prompted their desire for possible contact with the unseen Spiritual World about the well-being of their child. Records reveal that through a medium contact was made with the Spiritual World.

After the death of Mr. and Mrs. Crumbaugh (1905 and 1906 respectively) their will expressed the desire for the creation of a living memorial through the building of a church and library. All property and management was to be cared for through the estate, governed by the trustees.

The structure was completed in 1926 at a cost of \$60,000. The old Crumbaugh home west of the library now stands as the parsonage.

Bethel Church of LeRoy was founded by Rev. Melvin D. Hornbeck and had its beginnings in home meetings. The meetings, beginning in 1933, were held in various homes for a few months, then moved into a rented building. In 1938 the congregation moved into another rented building, now the site of the Poindexters' IGA store. Shortly after this move, pastors for short terms were Rev. Foster Stanley and Rev. Ransom Holloman. Rev. Hornbeck, who was then pastoring a church in Bloomington, again became the pastor on a part-time basis.

The present church building was begun in 1945. At this time Rev. Bruce Badger became the pastor and was active in the building program. The building was finished in 1946, and was paid for in three years.

Through the years several improvements have been made. In 1948 the coal furnace was converted to natural gas. In 1950 a nursery was added. In 1969 the vestibule was paneled and in 1970 a new roof was put on. In 1972 new draperies and carpet were purchased. In 1965 an organ was purchased for the sanctuary.

Bethel Church is an independent, interdenominational, fundamental congregation. Its pastors have been affiliated with a ministerial fellowship, Bethel Ministerial Association, with headquarters in Evansville, Indiana.

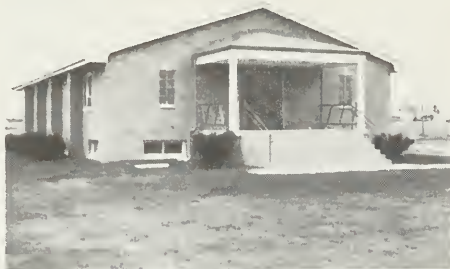
The present pastor, Rev. Badger, has been the pastor for 30 years.



J. T. and E. J. Crumbaugh Library.



J. T. & E. J. Crumbaugh Spiritualist Church Parsonage, S. W. Corner Center & Pearl Streets.



First Baptist Church of LeRoy.

### FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF LEROY

First Baptist Church of LeRoy was started as a mission November 23, 1956, and remained as a mission until January 13, 1957 when it was constituted into a church with 22 charter members.

At the start of the mission, there was no Baptist Work or Baptist building in LeRoy, so services were held in the American Legion Hall.

Rev. A. G. Rednour was the associational missionary of the East Central Baptist Association and was helpful in getting the work organized and started in LeRoy.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Henson donated to the church on December 7, 1957 the ground where the Baptist Church is now located and the building was erected in 1966.

Rev. Paul Pinkham was the first pastor. The charter members were:

Glenna Canada	Everett Cockrell
Alma Cockrell	Mary Cockrell
June Cockrell	Oris Miller
Kenneth Wilson	Marcella Wilson
Vonnie Redmond	Nora Jones
Farris Norfleet	Olena Norfleet
Sidney Sumner	Lucille Sumner
Shirley Henson	H. B. Williams
George Ober	Norma Ober
Margaret Pinkham	Ronald Pinkham
Janie Pinkham	

The following have pastored First Baptist Church of LeRoy since the work started in 1956:

Rev. Paul Pinkham	January, 1957 - April, 1957
Rev. L. L. Burks	June, 1957 - April, 1961
Rev. Bernard M. Johnson	August, 1961 - June, 1969
Rev. Haskel Martin	October, 1970 - October, 1974
Rev. Charles Cress	June 1975 -

### PLEASANT RIDGE

Pleasant Ridge Sabbath School was organized April 12, 1874. Wesley Brown was elected superintendent; Thomas Buckles, assistant; William J. Morris, secretary; and J. R. Cox, treasurer. The meetings took place in the Pleasant View school, later Fairview school. The school opened with singing and prayer led by Rev. Mr. Harris. The meetings continued throughout the summer. The school was reorganized on April 11, 1875 and the officers were Wesley Brown, John Fry, and E. Gilmore. --From The LeRoy Journal of March, 1917



Christian Church and Parsonage, 100 Block N. Walnut St. The Standard Oil Station stands on this site today.



Methodist Episcopal Church. The third Methodist church in LeRoy.

### REMINISCENCES ABOUT OLD TIMES

Sept. 27, 1935: Her first Sunday School attended was in the old Methodist Church which stood on the lot now owned by George McFadden. She remembers the first Christmas tree trimmed with popcorn and candles. Each child was given a present by her teacher, hers was a little glass bird, which she prized highly. Her first teacher was Mrs. Roach. The first day-school she attended was called the Fountain of Health, and it stood on the lot now used by the Legion Hall. Her teacher was Theda Gibbs. The next school was on the lot where Morgan's bakery now stands and the teacher's name was Mr. Stanger. Later she attended the seminary where Kelly Schultz' home stands. -- From Mrs. J. B. Patterson

### FIRSTS

John Baddeley had the first store in LeRoy.

### 1895 NEWS ITEM

Feb. 1 — Next week the interior of M. E. Church will be beautified with tasty wallpaper. Electric lights will take the place of present oil lamps. This is a much needed improvement.

At Sunday School after a few remarks by Prof. Blair, it was decided that each class should furnish an electric light for the church building. The lights will contain the name and number of the class.



Commercial Club meets at Houston Building N.W. corner Chestnut and Cherry.

## Fifty-Year Organizations

There are a number of organizations who have celebrated their 50th anniversaries. They are:

I.O.O.F. Lodge No. 140 was duly instituted on May 19, 1854. The charter members were J. W. Van Deventer, M. E. Johnston, B. F. Parks, J. H. Van Deventer, H. West, and W. Dooley. First Noble Grand, J. N. Van Deventer.

LeRoy Lodge, No. 221, A. F. and A. M. charter granted October 7, 1856. Charter members were Dr. D. Chaney, Worshipful Master, Hiram Buck, S. D. Baker, John M. Downing, E. E. Greenman, S. W. Noble, J. W. Hazel. In 1883, the Masonic Lodge was meeting over the King and Parks grocery store, on the Tuesday night before the full moon in each month.

Thomas Riddle Woman's Relief Corps No. 43 was organized April 6, 1886, with 50 members and 8 officers, installed by Comrade J. B. Patterson, commander of the Thomas Riddle Post, Grand Army of the Republic. Mrs. Alexine Murray was the first president.

May Queen Rebekah Lodge No. 210 was instituted May 2, 1888 with 37 charter members.

The Ladies' Longfellow Club was organized in 1895. Three sisters, Mrs. G. W. Simpson, Miss Clara Kline, and Mrs. Lida Tuthill thought that LeRoy needed a literary club just for women as the Shakespeare Club of that time was for both men and women. They called an organizational meeting. Mrs. Simpson was elected first president. The club motto is "Wisely Improve the Present." Mrs. Don Busey is the current president.

LeRoy Mothers' Club was founded November 8, 1904 for mothers in LeRoy. It first went by the name LeRoy Mothers' League, but was changed in 1912. During WWI, the years' activities were centered around sewing and knitting for the Red Cross.

Empire Chapter No. 281, Order of the Eastern Star was organized Jan. 14, 1907. Mrs. Rebecca Sigler was the first worthy matron. An earlier unit known as the LeRoy Chapter, had been organized Aug. 24, 1894, but had disbanded.

Rutledge Social Club was organized Jan. 31, 1907 by six women who were Mrs. S. W. Holderly, Mrs. Charles Brining, Mrs. Henry Baker, Mrs. McLean, Mrs. William Ellis, and Mrs. George Wilson. Mrs. Brining was first president. It is the oldest rural social club in this section of Illinois and was named for Rutledge School.

Empire Social Club was organized in May, 1913. First president was Mrs. Mabel Holderly.

The Womans Country Club — During the first 10 years of Rutledge Social Club, that is, before 1917, a group of members formed a new organization known as the Womans Country Club. This centered around the South Downs area.

LeRoy Garden Club — On February 1, 1916, 16 members of the "Longfellow Club" decided to continue their meetings during the summer months by going on excursions to the woods for wild flowers and having garden parties. The first president was Lida K. Tuthill.

Ruel Neal Post No. 79 of the American Legion was named in honor of Ruel Neal, killed in action at a front line trench on the Meuse River on October 2, 1918. The first post commander was Dr. O. M. Thompson.

The American Legion Auxiliary to Ruel Neal Post No. 79 received its charter in 1923 although it had been meeting for about two years before that. Miss Lyda Beckham was first president.

Sabina Social Club was first organized as a Ladies' Aid Unit of the Christian Church. It became an active service organization during World War I, doing a large amount of knitting, sewing and other work for the American Red Cross. It also adopted two French orphans. Following the war the organization became known as Sabina Social Club.

LeRoy Country Club was started in 1921 with A. J. Keenan serving as its first president. Associate membership fees at that time were \$25 per family.

Junior Mothers' Club was organized February 1, 1923. First president was Carrie Griffin.



LeRoy GUN CLUB. Front row: Oscar Phares, Harry Van Atta, Louis Moutier, J. Harrison Clarey, unidentified man. Second row: A. J. Sarver, unidentified man [possibly G. Grant Smith], Mrs. C. R. Keys, Court Keenan, Pearl Sarver, Mrs. Hal Conefy, Mrs. Childs. Back row: unidentified man, C. R. Keys.



LeRoy Community Center where many organizations meet. Purchased by the city from the school for \$1.00.



American Legion Post #79

LeRoy Country Club 1976





These 45 rabbits and possums were part of the menu consumed by the Ruel Neal Post Legionnaires and their guests at a feast held on Dec. 18, 1939. They were killed at a big hunting party of members on the Byron Kline and Lee Pray farms. Man at right is Paul Poindexter.

'Boge' Pash and Hugh Keys, cooks at the American Legion 'Rabbit and 'Possum Super'.



## The Pash Family

The Pash family should be remembered in LeRoy not because they were one of the few black families, but because Old John lived through a time in history which was a definite test to this nation's strength of unity.

John was a slave during the 1850s. According to an article published in The LeRoy Journal July 1, 1949, "John belonged to a good-hearted slave owner who gave him permission to be married. The negro's marriage was treated with as much respect by the white owner as he would have treated the marriage of his own son."

When the Civil War broke out a regiment of LeRoy volunteers found themselves in the area of the South where John Pash lived. He seemed to form an alliance with their regiment and traveled with them. At the close of the war John and his wife came to LeRoy with the regiment.

John and his wife made their home in this area. John had three children, two daughters and one son. The son of this

man became the father of John "Boge" Pash.

Early in "Boge's" life a tragic accident occurred when Boge and his father were hunting. Boge's gun accidentally discharged and his father was killed. Soon after Boge's mother left LeRoy. Left in LeRoy were old John and "Boge."

Around this time old John was asked his age. He replied, "Mighty near a hundred." In 1922 old John suffered a stroke one winter night while out walking. He fell into a snowbank where he was found—his hands being badly frozen. He died shortly after from the effects of a second stroke.

From then "Boge" lived in LeRoy by himself. In 1939 "Boge" served as chief when the LeRoy Legionnaires sponsored a possum and rabbit feast. "Boge" modestly told the boys he knew the "only way" to prepare possum.

In 1940, "Boge" moved to Bloomington to join his sister. A few years later news of his death was received in LeRoy. Thus ended the story of one pioneer family to settle in LeRoy.



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Owens' Bi-Rite — 1976

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# The LeRoy Schools



Washington School entrance was on north side.



Washington School. New addition was on the south side.

In 1832 the first school in Empire township, the Clearwater school, was built in Buckles Grove in the northern edge of the woods in Section 28. It was built of logs, chinked and daubed to keep out the cold with a log left out on one side, the space being covered with a greased paper for light. The building was used for both school and church requirements many years. The school was kept up by contributions.

The first teacher was William Johnson. He was lame. What he lacked in activity in his legs he made up with his arms and he "walloped" with a hickory stick. "Lame Will" Johnson, as he was called in those days, liked whiskey so at one time he passed it around and the pupils became somewhat intoxicated. At one time the pupils locked him outside the school house. He got on top of the building and covered the chimney until they were smoked out.

Requirements of a teacher were knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic and to be a strict disciplinarian. The teacher boarded around a week for a scholar and each parent furnished a quarter of a cord of wood to warm the school house. Teachers and pupils would cut wood at noon and recess.

The first school taught in LeRoy was in 1837 in a room where Nelson Humphrey lived at 512 N. Walnut St. First teacher was James Lincoln, thought to be or was, a relative of Abraham Lincoln.

First school house built in LeRoy for school purposes especially was erected in 1839, two blocks north of the park and west, lot 2, block 11. It was a 24x30' building with a loft. One day the pupils fastened all the windows, locked the door and awaited the teacher's coming. To their surprise the teacher dropped himself from the loft. They all took their seats - fun was over for that day.

That school was used until 1850. During the 50s school was held in various buildings. One was a day school called the Fountain of Health, where the American Legion building is now. Another was across east from Stensel's Funeral Home.

Because of the growing demand for better and more advanced learning the Cumberland Presbyterian Church erected at 412 N. Chestnut St. a large two-story building. That is where Mrs. K. B. Schultz now lives. It was built in 1854 and was known as the LeRoy Seminary. It was used until 1859 when it was taken over by the Public School Board and it accommodated both grade and advanced students.

A brick building was erected on Block 112 in Conkling's addition at the north side of LeRoy in 1864. The cost of the lot

was \$150 and a two-story brick building 38x48' cost \$4,200.

W. A. Monroe was the first principal. In 1872 the directors decided to establish a high school to be placed on the accredited list. Professor M. Jesse was hired as the first superintendent of LeRoy schools.

During the summer of 1872 two new rooms were added to the north of the old building and this served until 1892. The building, somewhat damaged by fire, was repaired and a stone trimmed brick building was added to the south side at a cost of \$11,000. This school was later called Washington School. A circular fire escape was later added.

Several buildings housed school rooms when Washington school overflowed. One was the two-story brick building across east from the Masonic Temple. Another was the building where the Fire Department is now.

Because of over-crowded condition, Eugene School was built in 1906 to house the lower grades. It was dedicated Nov. 6, 1906. It is now used as LeRoy Community Center.

In 1916 LeRoy Community High School No. 333 was organized. The school was conducted for two years by the de facto board of education. The Supreme Court declared the act, organizing this district, illegal in 1918. The district was dissolved. Empire Township High School No. 344 was then organized in 1919. C. E. Jones was superintendent. In 1921 a \$330,000 building was completed. An organ, gift from the Universalist Church, was given for the high school auditorium.

Four rural districts north of LeRoy consolidated in the 1940s as well as five districts to the south. On March 13, 1948 all schools in this area, The West Consolidated District and some territory in Downs Township and four rural schools north of LeRoy formed LeRoy Community Unit District No. 2 which presently serves the community.

There were nine rural schools in Empire Township. They were: District No. 34, New Enterprise School; Sterling School No. 35; Empire School No. 36; Bonnett School No. 37; Hickory School No. 38; Fairview School No. 39; West Crumbaugh No. 41; Brittin School No. 42 and Bishop School No. 43. They all became part of Unit District No. 2 in 1948.

## NEW ENTERPRISE SCHOOL NO. 34

In 1868 the site of the school was chosen because it was the center of the district. For many years it was known as the Cornstalk School. The Sunday School conducted there was Prairie Union. In 1883 a new building was erected and named New Enterprise.



Sterling School



Guy School.

**STERLING SCHOOL NO. 35**

School for a time was in the Ballard home. In 1856 a frame building was erected about three miles south of LeRoy. Donated by R. M. Guy it was known as Guy School. Fire destroyed that school in 1866. A brick house was then built on the site from bricks made by William Pfitzenmeyer. The brick building was torn down in 1911 and was replaced by a new frame building, which was called Sterling school.

For many years the "LeRoy Circuit" conducted Sunday School and meetings at Sterling School. A former pupil, John A. Sterling, a member of congress, was proud he got his start there. In his honor, a beautiful sign, Sterling School, was placed above the door. William D. Vance, prominent in county affairs, was a director of the school for more than 30 years.

**EMPIRE SCHOOL NO. 36**

The school was first known as Healea School because it was on the Edward Healea farm. It later was moved to Empire Station, and was named Empire.

**BONNETT SCHOOL NO. 37**

The Mt. Zion School, built in 1855, extended its territory so in 1869 a building was erected on what is now the highway two miles southeast of LeRoy. It was named Birney School for Hugh Birney who lived east of the school. An enrollment of from 50 to 60 was not unusual. At one time 97 attended. The first schoolhouse was burned in 1908. The new house was modern. For a long time it was called Bonnett School for Yontz Bonnett who owned the timber lot on which it stood.

**HICKORY SCHOOL NO. 38**

Hickory School was located on what is now the highway, one and one-half miles southwest of LeRoy. The many hickory trees in the yard suggested the name. In 1856 the children of the area attended a log school west of the road near the center of Section 31. That school served until 1866. White Oak School and Buckles Grove School united in 1873 to form Hickory District. The modern school was erected in 1903. The enrollment was always above average. Lyon Karr taught there in 1873 and later became county superintendent of Woodford County. Walter Dill Scott, who became president of Northwestern University, had his teaching experience there in 1890 and 1891.

**FAIRVIEW SCHOOL NO. 39**

Organized in 1863, the first school of the district was called Wolf Mound. The school was moved many times. A new house was built in 1875 north of the center of Section 18. The site was condemned in 1883 because it was low. The district voted to move the house to the hill in Section 7. The school then became known as Fairview. A Sunday School organized in 1874 with Wesley Brown as superintendent was called Pleasant Valley Sabbath School.

**WEST CRUMBAUGH SCHOOL NO. 41**

A neat frame school house was erected in Section 14 in 1858. The road turned north at the corner then instead of in front of the school. A new school was built in 1893. A new gravel road was extended to the west along the south side of the school in 1937. At one time this was almost entirely a Crumbaugh settlement and enrollment of 13 in the school was all Crumbaughs.

**BRITTIN SCHOOL NO. 42**

In the late 1850s a frame house was built on a hill south of center of Section 2. The home of Darrell Hubble now is located there. Pupils previously had attended a school about a mile west. It was named for Nathan Brittin who furnished the site. In 1919 it was put to a vote and it was decided to build a new modern house in the center of the district. It was the last of the rural schools to be erected and was one of the finest in the county.

**BISHOP SCHOOL NO. 43**

In the early 1860s a house was built on a site donated by James Bishop in the southeast corner of Section 10 near the creek. An interesting school was conducted there for many years. A site was selected on the Gilmore land and a house was built in 1879 and was consolidated with Bishop School in 1880. It was moved one-half mile south to the northwest corner of Section 10. Though for many years called Gilmore School the name Bishop was chosen in honor of the donor of the first site. Quite often the school was called Possum Flat.

All of the rural schools were modernized to meet standard requirements before they become consolidated.

In a newspaper article of August 26, 1902 a fifth grade teacher's pay was listed as \$42 per month. In 1904 a country-school teacher's pay was \$48 per month and a High School teacher's pay was \$60 per month.

A January 22, 1915 old school schedule for June, July, August, 1856 listed Dist. No. 5 Bonnett School teacher, M. O. Gibbs, was paid \$21 per month.

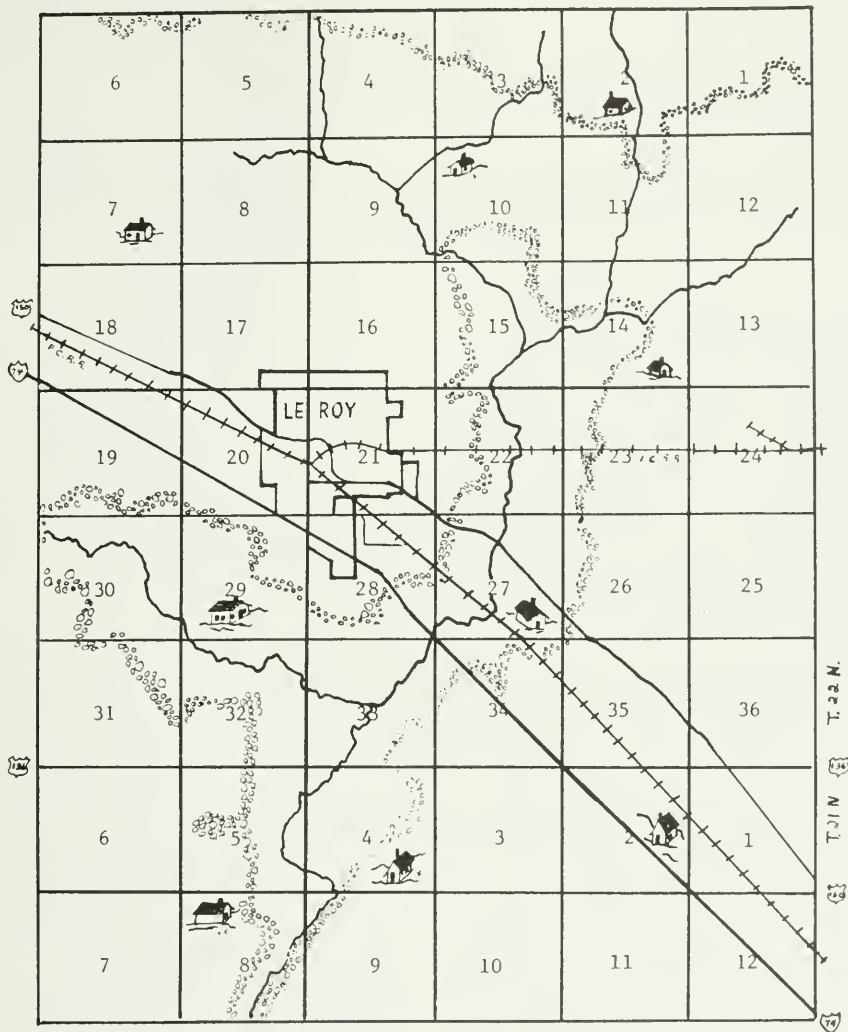
On December 29, 1954 voters of Community Unit School District No. 2 approved the purchase of Will Kuehling property and authorized building a new elementary school, and an addition to LeRoy High School for physical education and gym, and the issuing of bonds for \$597,000 to secure funds to carry out the building program.

LeRoy Elementary School was completed in 1955. Grades were moved to the elementary school during the Christmas vacation.

Board members were: George Staley, Pres.; Clarence Roark, Sec.; Ernest Beecher, William Dooley, Walter Jiles, and Paul Matlock. Past members during building were: Dean Bishop, Wendell Beeler and Eldon McConkey. Loren Nicol was superintendent and Edward Covey was principal.



# Empire Township



Timber Areas



Schools

- Sec. 2, T22N - Brittin
- Sec. 10, T22N - Bishop  
(Gilmore, Liberty)
- Sec. 7, T22N - Fairview  
(Wolf Mound)
- Sec. 14, T22N - West Crumbaugh

- Sec. 27, T22N - Bonnett  
(Birney)
- Sec. 29, T22N - Hickory
- Sec. 8, T21N - New Enterprise  
(Cornstalk)
- Sec. 4, T21N - Sterling

Sec. 2, T21N - Empire

The new wing was built in 1964. At that time, Dr. John Ingalls was superintendent and Edward Covey was principal. Donald Robinson followed Edward Covey in August, 1968 and is still principal at the elementary school.

The new LeRoy High School gymnasium was erected in 1956 and LeRoy Junior High School was erected in 1961. It was junior high until it became middle school embracing grades 6, 7 and 8.

In 1971 a wing was added to the southwestern end of the Junior High School providing space for a new concept in grouping pre-junior high and junior high students in a middle school.

Two new additions have been added since 1970 and have been paid for through building fund tax monies without referendum. They are a four-room addition to middle school in 1973 at a total cost of \$140,000 and a middle school media center between middle school and new gym at a cost of \$75,000.

#### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL RESOURCE OPPORTUNITIES

Students are given the opportunity to work with specially trained resource teachers if they have any problems that are interfering with their educational progress. These problems may be in a subject matter, health, social or emotional area.

**Psychological and Social Worker Services:** Through the Tri-County program services of a qualified psychologist (a person trained to do in-depth educational testing) and social worker are available to the school community as needed.

**Speech Therapy Services:** Speech correction is offered to all students, kindergarten through fifth, who through a screening process are found to have problems in this area. Each child is continued in the program as long as he or she has a need.

**Counseling Program:** Title III, ESEA Project "Why Wait?" is a counseling program which focuses on the personal, social, and educational needs of children in LeRoy Elementary School. The aim of the program is to identify and work through problems early before they become major ones.

**Media Center (Library):** In addition to the regular in-school services provided (checking out books, using library materials, etc.) pupils are permitted to take equipment home overnight.

A pre-school language development program is provided using adult volunteers. Children are given the opportunity to experience a readiness prior to entering kindergarten.

#### LeRoy Community Unit Schools in 1975-76

Board of education: Kenneth Cassens, Pres.; Kenneth Reeser, V. Pres.; Duane Johnson, Sec.; George Fluegel, Robert Rafferty, Donald Jenkins, Robert Morgan.

P. R. Dardano is superintendent of schools. Terry Park is high school principal. Middle school principal is Thomas L. Birge. Donald Robinson is elementary school principal with Mrs. Evelyn Lewis as assistant principal.

In 1967 LeRoy Community Unit School District No. 2 was given the top school award for schools under 6,000 enrollment in the North Central Region of the U.S.

LeRoy Community Unit School District No. 2 belongs to Parkland Junior College District.

#### Berry Gymnasium

On February 25, 1969, during LeRoy's last home basketball game the L Club dedicated LeRoy's gymnasium to Dudley C. Berry. Mr. Berry has been one of LeRoy's most loyal fans during his 97 years. Because of his unwavering devotion it was decided to dedicate the gym to him.

He received a plaque with the approved petition. It stated from this day forward the gym would be Berry Gymnasium.

#### FIRSTS

Will Johnson taught the first school in the township at Buckles Grove.

The first class which graduated from High School (old Washington School) graduated on June 7, 1878.



Leonard A. McKean.

Coach Leonard A. McKean, better known as "Mac", came to LeRoy in 1920. Immediately he developed his first unbeaten eleven. Then in 1926 and 1927 he produced two more unbeaten combinations playing against some of the stiffest prep competition in central Illinois. In 1929 he had another powerful team which easily rated along with the best but it dropped one game to Farmer City.

In the 1930s he dropped out of the coaching business for five years but when the war required all the younger coaching men he went back to work and in three years came through with another sensational team. That made five powerful teams for "Mac" in 20 years of coaching for E.T.H.S.

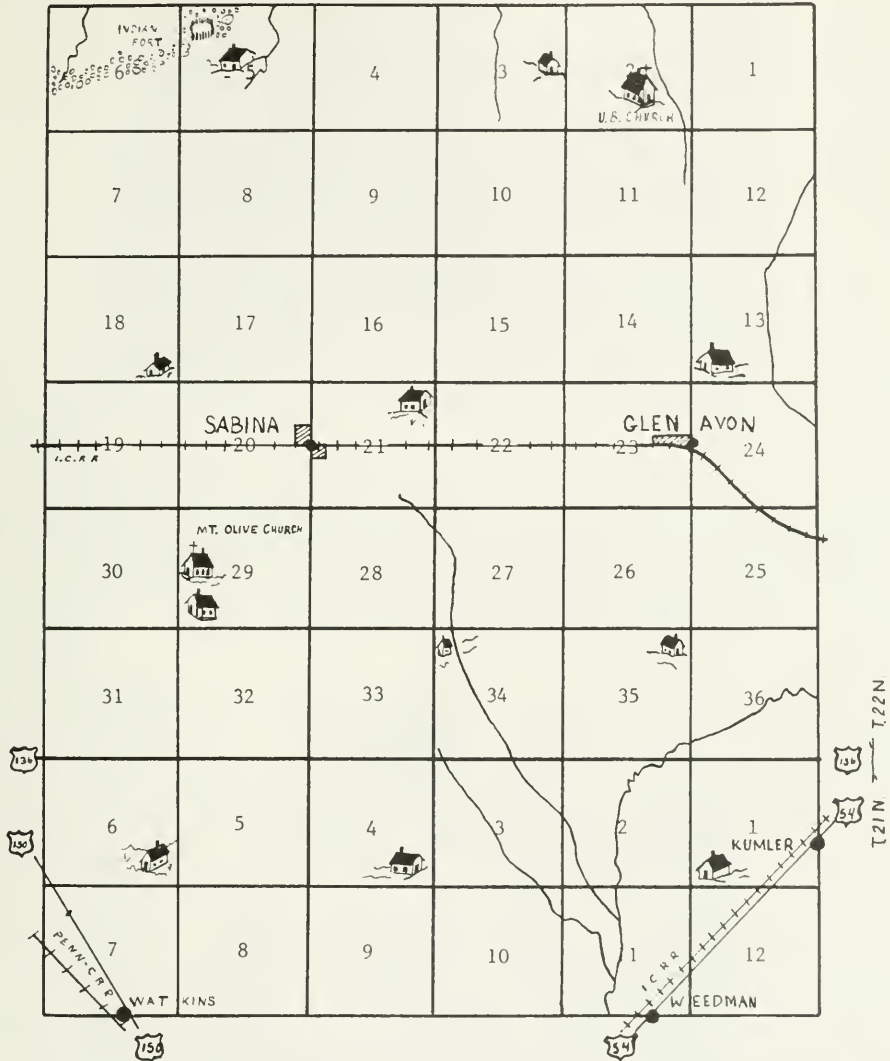
A resolution was passed to change the name of the football field, Fan's Field, to L. A. McKean Memorial Field in honor of Coach McKean, also known as LeRoy's Mr. Football. The dedication preceded a game between LeRoy and Mahomet-Seymour November 4, 1966.

"Mac" was a patient good-natured fellow who was interested in the scholastic and physical welfare of everyone attached to the institution of learning called E.T.H.S. It was he who perpetually kept the fire of "don't give up" burning in the minds of athletes.


#### Former Superintendents

LeRoy has been successful in the selection of superintendents. Francis G. Blair became superintendent of public instruction of the state of Illinois; Prof. S. K. McDowell, superintendent of schools of Bloomington; Prof. B. C. Moore, McLean County superintendent of schools; Prof. W. A. Goodier, principal of Bloomington High School.

# West Township



 Timber Areas

 Schools

- Sec. 3, T22N - White Star (Snook)
- Sec. 5, T22N - Love
- Sec. 18, T22N - East Crumbaugh
- Sec. 21, T22N - Dockum
- Sec. 13, T22N - Salt Creek

- Sec. 35, T22N - Kimler
- Sec. 34, T22N - Grizzelle
- Sec. 29, T22N - Mt. Olive
- Sec. 6, T21N - Hamilton
- Sec. 3, T21N - Rosencrans

Sec. 1, T21N - Kumler



Hickory School, 1910. Top row: Flossie Wagers, Arlo Marlow, Myrtie Reynolds, Florence Valborn, Audry Barnhouse, Hobart Shifflet, Howard McCracken, John Barnhouse, Clifford Dooley, Mr. Ottis Law. Second row: Helen Dooley, Irvin Shifflet, Lestere Gassaway, Norma Reynolds, Fred Valborn, Edna Sigler, John Newby, Cody Reynolds, Glenn Dooley, George Scott. Front: Lola Newby, Eva Newby, Opal Scott, Marvel Anderson, Arlene Denning, Ina Miller [visitor], Opal Shifflet, Woodson Newby, Raymond Scott, Oscar Scott, Amos Wagers, Richard Scott, Lucille Shifflet, Edith Middleton. Standing out in front: Faye Scott, Allene Gassaway.



The old FAIRVIEW school, Oct. 1936. Back row: Inez Morris, teacher, Bernadine Beasley, Kenneth Moss, Harry Wilson, Maurice Moss, Lyell Lamont, Lola Lamont, Mrs. Theo Davis, teacher. Front row: Jack Moss, Barb Palen, Hazel Hodfield, Donald Foster, Mary Moss, Roger Woodrey, Lynn Lamont.



Eugene Field School.

**PRINCIPALS AND SUPERINTENDENTS  
OF LEROY HIGH SCHOOL**

- 1854 - 57 Rev. Robert Patten
- 1857 - 58 John Long
- 1858 - 59 Miss Maltby
- 1859 - 60 A. B. Conkling
- 1860 - 61 Mr. Harris
- 1861 - 62 W. A. Monroe
- 1862 - 63 M. Huffman
- 1863 - 64 Noah Wantling
- 1864 - 65 W. A. Monroe, 2nd Term
- 1865 - 67 D. C. Clark
- 1867 - 68 W. A. Monroe, 3rd Term
- 1868 - 69 J. W. Barley
- 1869 - 70 John X. Wilson
- 1870 - 71 Mr. Shirk
- 1871 - 74 C. A. Barley
- (The above were all Principals)
- 1874 - 84 M. Jesse, 1st Supt.
- 1884 - 87 W. H. Chamberlin
- 1887 - 90 L. S. Kilborn
- 1890 - 92 J. W. Tavenner
- 1892 - 95 Francis G. Blair
- 1895 - 96 B. T. Templeton
- 1896 - 00 B. C. Moore
- 1900 - 01 C. J. Posey
- 1901 - 09 S. K. McDowell, 7½ Yrs.
- 1909 - 10 C. Kyner, 1½ Yrs.
- 1910 - 13 H. H. Kirkpatrick
- 1913 - 14 W. A. Goodier
- 1914 - 15 Bert Reeves
- 1915 - 17 F. W. McLemarrah
- 1917 - 19 S. E. LeMarr
- 1919 - 32 C. E. Joiner, Supt.
- 1933 - 40 Earl Taylor
- 1940 - 44 Clarence Crawford
- 1944 - 48 Virgil Bingnam
- 1948 - 49 Lowell Johnson, 1st. Supt Comm. Unit Dist. #2
- 1949 - 52 T. I. Anderson, Supt. & Prin.
- 1952 - 56 Loren Nicol, Supt. & Prin.
- 1953 - 57 Joseph Naffziger, Asst. Prin.
- 1957 - 59 A. M. Simpson, Supt.
- 1957 - 58 John Reakes, Prin.
- 1958 - 59 Harry Ryan
- 1959 - 68 William Lewis, Prin.
- 1960 - 61 Loren Klaus, Supt.
- 1961 - 70 John Ingalls, Supt.
- 1968 - 71 Richard Small, Prin.
- 1971 - 72 Marvin Mason, Prin.
- 1972 - 75 Terry Park, Prin.
- 1970 - 75 P. R. Dardano, Supt.

**WHAT HAPPENED TO LEROY UNIVERSITY?**

In an enactment granted and approved by the Illinois General Assembly in 1841 it appeared that LeRoy, a town of about 300 would possibly become the educational seat of Illinois with the proposed incorporation of the "LeRoy Manual Labor University." At that time the area was in a comparatively primitive state. The object of said corporation was the promotion of the general interest of education embracing preparatory collegiate and professional studies. It was to be open to all denominations of Christians.

Whether the university ever opened its doors remains unknown. In 1841 there was no newspaper in LeRoy nor Bloomington, to provide reference to the large scale plans of a few aggressive LeRoy pioneers.

**OLD NEWS ITEMS 1883**

April 13, 1883....Skating Rink opened and dedicated to the public. J. W. Brown and A. J. Keenan were the proprietors and managers. The building was 100 feet by 40 feet.

May 25, 1883....Injury to Prof. Jess by Capt. Vanatta's muley cow. Commencement of LeRoy Public Schools at the Rink.

June 1, 1883....Calico carnival at the Rink.  
June 22, 1883....Open air concert by Chase's Cornet Band.  
July 6, 1883....Number of children of school age in LeRoy School District, 375.

August 2, 1935 - D. F. VanDeventer, was ninety years of age last Monday. To celebrate the event a family reunion was held at Farmer City on Sunday and Mr. VanDeventer was honored with a large birthday cake and a number of other gifts. He is enjoying excellent health for a man of his age, and has retained his keen sense of hearing. His eyesight is good only requiring glasses to read.

He was born six miles south of LeRoy in 1845, ten years after the founding of the town. He has a vivid memory of the many incidents and associates reaching back to his young boyhood days. He recalls when visiting at the home of his grandfather, Squire James VanDeventer, which is now the location of the McBride home, that he was attracted by the calls of peafowls and came across what was open prairie then to the home of Dr. Fields, now the site where he himself lives, and took a good look at the peafowls.

His first school house was made of logs, the windows and doors hung with leather hinges. The new school house which followed was called the Fuller school.

Congratulations, Uncle Dan, and many more happy birthdays!



**Brittin School.**



**LeRoy Sophomore class of 1914-15. Front row: Fordyce Sargent, Russell Owens, Glenn Brown, Marvin Vance, Sr., Lyle VanDeventer. Second row: Hannay Keenan, Melba Kline, Leak Garst, Norma Brown, Emily Bishop, Letha VanDeventer, Maude Russell, Fairy Swartz. Third row: Lilita Kimler, Faye VanDeventer, Hazel Hall, Erma Clenenger, Herbert Tyner, Clifton Buckles, Edna Brand, Esther Hostler.**

# Today's Schools



LeRoy Elementary Schools

LeRoy Middle School.



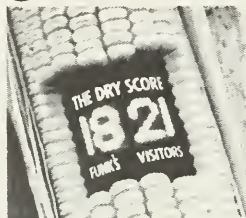
LeRoy High School.

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# Cemeteries



Old Oak Grove Cemetery.

There are four cemeteries in Empire township as of this year, 1976. There were others in earlier days but they have vanished from sight and almost from the memory of even oldest citizens. Many remains were moved from early cemeteries to larger cemeteries after they were established. Many of the early settlers have several descendant generations resting in the present cemeteries. Many who saw fit to leave this area to seek their fortune have had their mortal remains or ashes returned for burial in a local family plot.

Three of the cemeteries are located near one another about a mile east of LeRoy on Route 150. Oak Grove Cemetery is first with Old Oak Grove Cemetery lying to the north of its northeast quarter. Howard Cemetery lies just east of Old Oak Grove Cemetery across a strip of land and just off the east bank of Salt Creek. Howard Virgin Timber Park borders it on the south and a foot path through the timber is the only access to it now. There have been no burials in Howard Cemetery for many years.

When the early settlers came they followed the Indian trails for roads and when they staked out their cemeteries they often chose a site the Indians had already started for a burial ground, usually a high, well-drained location. Such was the case for the Howard and Old Oak Grove Cemeteries. One authority for this are letters written by Frank Howard in the 1950s and printed in The LeRoy Journal's "Much Ado" column. Frank Howard was born about 1864 and as a small boy hunted Indian arrowheads around Howard Cemetery east of LeRoy. His letters read in part, "The Howard Cemetery was planned by the Kickapoo Indians when they camped there. There were 23 Indians buried in the northwest part of the cemetery. The markers were rocks, deer horns and arrows. I have many of the arrow points I found in the timber near there - points healed in the trees where they practiced with bows and arrows and made points out of flint rock. They also had a camp in the north part of Old Oak Grove Cemetery, and some Indians are buried there. That

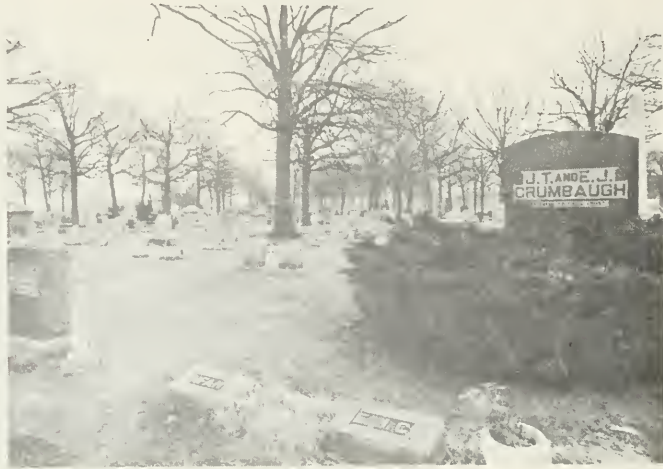
cemetery was staked out by an early settler, Thomas Rutledge, as a burying place for pale faces, the same as the Howard Cemetery was by Eleazer Howard. There are about 100 buried in the Howard Cemetery besides the Indians. My grandfather deeded the Howard Cemetery to the public. It is on record."

Thomas O. Rutledge staked out Old Oak Grove Cemetery in April, 1830. By some strange fate he was the first to be buried there as he died August 20, 1830. He also was believed to be the first white person to be buried in Empire township. This cemetery also has been called the Cope Cemetery, possibly because the land to the north and west of it was settled by the Cope family.

Until 1875 Old Oak Grove Cemetery was the burial place for most of the families of this vicinity and by that time there were very few spaces left. On Sept. 8, 1875 the Oak Grove Cemetery Association was incorporated and 12 acres were purchased from the Wiley Estate adjoining Old Oak Grove Cemetery on the south. This was surveyed and platted and roads laid out so lots could be sold. The first recorded burial was that of Theophilus Cornish Humphrey who died Dec. 5, 1875. There is some question that P. J. Watts may have been the first buried there but so far no one has come forward with dates to prove this.

After opening of Oak Grove Cemetery the Old Oak Grove Cemetery was somewhat neglected, only being cared for by each family as it saw fit for its own family plot. In 1907 the voters of Empire township voted to levy money to care for Old Oak Grove, Howard and Gilmore Cemeteries, and also elected trustees to carry out the work. In 1914 a board of commissioners was elected and Old Oak Grove Cemetery was given a good cleaning. Trees were trimmed, trash hauled away and all holes filled in so a lawnmower could be used. It has been well kept ever since.

About the turn of the century the ladies of LeRoy were desirous of a sidewalk to the cemetery. In 1903 they organized themselves and set out to raise the money for this sidewalk.



Beautiful Oak Grove Cemetery.

They thought it would take \$1000 to put in a board sidewalk and they talked of raising it to \$2000 which they thought would put in a concrete walk. They had suppers and all manner of fund raising affairs but were still short of their goal when the ladies of LeRoy Commercial Club took the idea of building a concrete road to the cemetery before the LeRoy Commercial Club in 1910. The men considered the idea impractical and dropped the matter. The matter was again taken up on February 8, 1912 and a committee was appointed to make an investigation.

On April 5, 1912 the sum of \$3,148. was obtained by a tax levy and on April 18, 1913 a new committee was appointed to work with the highway commissioner. The contract for the hard road was let on September 1, 1913 to the Davis-Ewing Concrete Company of Bloomington for \$1.16 per foot. The 4,930-foot long, nine-foot wide hard road was completed in eight days. The road from the east limits of the city to the cemetery cost \$5,817.80. This was \$6,669.80 more than the tax raised. The balance was paid off by public spirited citizens and property owners.

Shoulder work was yet to be done on the road so 20 carloads of gravel were ordered and when it was set on the Big Four siding the people of LeRoy decided to make the hauling of this gravel a gala occasion. The 200 to 300 men with shovels, approximately 100 wagons with teams furnished by farmers and others paraded through the town led by the LeRoy Band. Stores closed so all could help. They started at the cemetery working back towards town laying a three-foot wide shoulder of gravel on each side of the concrete. By noon the work was half done. The Commercial Club handed tickets to the workers to get dinner at the restaurants. By five o'clock all the gravel was hauled but one carload.

The rest of the "Road Day" program was a band concert in the park from seven to eight o'clock, then to the Opera House for a program of orchestra music, speeches by the chairman of the event and the state engineer of roads from Springfield, a solo by Miss Pearl Sarver, Glenn Patterson read a poem he had written for the occasion, more orchestra music and short

talks by LeRoy citizens. It was a day that made news--a day long remembered by those who took part--a day the ladies of the LeRoy had their fondest wish come true, they had more than a sidewalk--it was a ROAD TO THE CEMETERY.

Oak Grove Cemetery lies on a rise of ground that used to slope rather sharply on the south side. The family plot of Permelia Watters Wiley Crumbaugh was on the south edge of the cemetery and she decided to have a crypt or mausoleum built under her family plot. It had a beautiful arched entry. It wasn't quite understood as to whether she expected to be interred there or if she built it just to hold bodies being held for delayed burial for various reasons. She died in 1887 and was buried in the family plot. Some remember that it was used once when a body was shipped back to LeRoy for burial. The crypt has long since decayed and disappeared.

The sharp south slope of Oak Grove Cemetery disappeared about 1964 when all the brush was cut and some grading was done and a large amount of filling began which has continued until the present time. A road is being built along the south side connecting with the road on the east side which was rebuilt in 1964. Through the years new roads have been put inside the cemetery. They were graveled in the 1930s and are now covered with white rock. A large metal shed was built on the east edge of the cemetery to house mowers, tools, etc. A new section has been opened on the north side of the cemetery. Most of the improvements are made with donations of money and work by interested persons. The state has passed laws governing cemetery associations and their funds are accountable to state auditors. All cemeteries must keep a perpetual care fund and only the interest can be used by the association. The principal may not be used at any time.

Oak Grove Cemetery is said to be one of the most beautiful cemeteries in Central Illinois. This is due to the lay of the land, the fine stone markers, the care given each grave and the beautiful grove of native growth white oak trees from which it gets its name.

A LeRoy Journal article of 1903 tells of the very careful



Gilmore Cemetery.

records being kept of all interments in Oak Grove Cemetery. The record shows the name, date and place of birth, residence, age, sex, cause of death, date of interment, exact place of burial, undertaker and name of nearest relative. If these records have been kept this completely then they must have been a great help to Kenneth Humphrey, a fourth generation LeRoyan, who set out more than 10 years ago to make a record of every grave or grave site in all the cemeteries in this vicinity. A very noble work which consumes almost every spare minute of his time. He has yards and yards of maps with all graves in their proper location and thousands of index cards with any information and pictures available of the people in those graves. He has given special attention to veterans' records and has them catalogued to themselves. The majority of the work is done on the two Oak Grove Cemeteries and at present he is working on Gilmore Cemetery.

Gilmore Cemetery lies two miles southwest of LeRoy at what was once known as "Gilmore's Point." Nathaniel Gilmore, with his brother, William, came overland from near Cadiz, Ohio in 1851 and bought land in Sections 19 and 30 in Empire township. Nathaniel donated the land for Gilmore Cemetery where both brothers with their wives are buried, also many other members of their families. It is believed the Gilmores started it as a burial ground in the early 1850s. It is not incorporated but is cared for under township supervision by trustees elected for that purpose. Occasionally there are some burials made in Gilmore Cemetery.

In July of 1915 Governor Dunne signed a bill, sponsored by the Women's Relief Corps of Illinois, which stated that every soldier's and sailor's grave must be designated. That is, a certificate put on file with the clerk of the county in which the grave was located. The certificate must give the name; military service engaged in; number of regiment or company of soldier; the command of a sailor or marine; the rank and period of service; name and location of grave, of any person who has served in the military or naval service.

LeRoy has a traditional Decoration Day Parade with services in Oak Grove Cemetery when graves of veterans of all wars are decorated in both Oak Grove and Old Oak Grove cemeteries. Someone always walks across the creek to decorate the one soldier's grave in Howard Cemetery. Graves in Gilmore Cemetery and Rutledge Cemetery are decorated early in the morning before the parade starts at 10 o'clock. Rutledge Cemetery is about a mile west of Gilmore Cemetery and is in Downs township. There is no definite date as to the beginning of this parade or the decorating of the graves. Decorating the graves may have started after the organization of the G.A.R. in 1866 and especially after General John A. Logan's Order No. 11 went out in 1868. It was after that order that small groups of veterans and their families started decorating graves of Civil War veterans.

Thomas Riddle Post of G.A.R. was organized in 1883 and Women's Relief Corps was organized in 1886. It may be that the parade started about the time of the organization of these two bodies. Today they decorate about 56 graves in Old Oak Grove Cemetery and more than 260 in Oak Grove Cemetery. These are graves of veterans from all wars. Thomas Riddle Post has four lots in Oak Grove Cemetery dedicated to the "Unknown Dead."

There is one Revolutionary War soldier in Old Oak Grove Cemetery. He was John Tolliday who came to McLean County in 1830 and moved around, finally settling in LeRoy in the 1840s where he died in 1849. George Ross Kibbey who is buried in Oak Grove Cemetery may be another Revolutionary War soldier but so far there are no dates available for proof.

John Buckles, the only Illinois Ranger in the war of 1812 buried in McLean County, lies in Old Oak Grove Cemetery. Ten of his companions in arms who enlisted from various states rest near him.

Location of some early cemeteries that have now disappeared have been recalled by some cooperative citizens of LeRoy.

The Conaway Cemetery is in Section 28 of Empire township just south of LeRoy on the east side of what used to be the south LeRoy blacktop road. It was feared that I-74 would go through the cemetery but it is just north of I-74. Some of the people buried in that cemetery were moved to Oak Grove Cemetery after it was started but not all of them were moved.

The Deffenbaugh Cemetery is in Section 5 in the southwest part of Empire township.

There was one burial from the Buck family on what was once Cheney land just north of LeRoy in Section 16 of Empire township. Mrs. Cheney's maiden name was Buck. There was no name mentioned for this cemetery that hardly got started.

The Love Cemetery in Section 5 in the northwest part of West Township is another of the early cemeteries that now has vanished.

These early small family or community burial grounds were most in use during that period from early settlement until after the Civil War when there were no undertakers in this vicinity. The markers in these early cemeteries were usually sandstone or marble about three inches thick. This may be one reason these cemeteries disappeared. After some of the people were moved to larger cemeteries and the remaining graves neglected it was easy for the stones to be piled along a fence row so the land could be farmed or livestock grazing around them trampled them into the ground. Many of these stones, especially the ones in fence rows, were carried away by people for door steps, walks and even patios.

## Lowe's Log Cabin

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Your Neighbor Does"*

Ph. 962-5951 LeRoy, Illinois

## Station Liquors

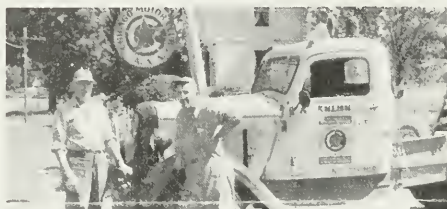
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## Hayloft Lounge

Leland & Pat Dehm

## A. L. Killion Garage

Retired 1971



Picture Taken September, 1957

Compliments of

**Mr. & Mrs. A. Lee Pray**

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LeRoy, Illinois

**Joe E. Harbison, R. Ph.**

# Businesses



Percheron Horse Co. owned by Ed Spence and Mr. Cotton. 2nd from left, Floyd Williams. Boy thought to be Dean Bishop. Taken in early 1900's, north side of alley north of Jones Oil & Supply.

Wirt & Martin Livery owned by E. W. Wirt and W. L. Martin. It was sold in 1910. Southeast corner Chestnut and Cherry. Patrons could rent rigs, stable horses, while shopping, board horses, and use hack services to and from the railroad depot.



Earliest business in the LeRoy area was the establishment of the farm. Each settler in new territory had to do this for his own survival and then later he could enlarge it if he chose to stay in the farming business. Today's businesses depend on the farm for much of their business now.

Much has already been written about the earliest merchants and shopkeepers but records on businesses during the period of 1840 until about 1870 are scarce.

Around 1870 LeRoy had a steam flour mill which had been erected at a cost of \$35,000 and capable of manufacturing 100 barrels of flour per day, 3 agricultural warehouses, 2 lumber yards, 6 dry goods stores, 2 tinware and hardware stores, 2 harness factories, 3 boot and shoe factories, one bank, 2 drug stores, 3 blacksmith and repair shops, one wagon making

establishment, one hotel, one livery stable, one merchant tailor, one watch and clock establishment.

The railroad was built through LeRoy in 1869 - 1870 making the shipment of goods into town much easier.

A list was compiled of businesses advertising in The LeRoy Enterprise, issue of June 23, 1876, published by G. M. Davis. It was noted that all business firms in the city were represented. That list of businesses of just 100 years ago follows:

Brindley & Stout, groceries; J. M. Stearns, boots and shoes; D. Cheney, dry goods; L. H. Parks & Sons, dry goods; William Jones, blacksmithing; Mrs. M. C. Hampton, millinery; Fisk & Miller, drugs; D. Roland, tailor; J. Hammond, picture gallery; A. M. Hopper, shoe shop; J. Keenan, banker; I. N. Kaufman, carpenter; Cottage Hotel, J.



Bus owned by Ingle's Livery.

The W. L. Martin grocery was housed in what is now the east side of The How. Groceries were delivered in this wagon. Homer Martin is in the wagon and Harry Fry and Charles Martin are standing.



H. Arnold, proprietor; R. C. Hallowell, pumps and lightning rods; C. A. Barley, insurance; S. A. Moore, G. D. Crumbaugh and H. M. Phillips, justices of the peace; T. D. Fisher, W. D. Marlow and Jehu Little, doctors; J. C. Mayer, barber; Tarman & Son, restaurant; W. A. McFarland, dray line; A. Murray, groceries; D. Young, clothing; William Buckworth, druggist; Corcoran & Bro., harness; J. Keenan, dry goods; R. S. Howard, undertaker; Louis L. Fry, painter; W. H. Beeney & Co., hardware; J. Schuler, restaurant; Bruner, Barnum & Keenan, mill and lumber; A. L. Moore, temperance saloon and billiard hall; Humphrey & Son, groceries; Ed Johnston, livery stable; Crumbaugh & Son, school books, jewelry, notions; B. F. Ayton, carriage and wagon shop; Barley & Davis, real estate; W. M. Tarman, proprietor of Transient House; N. L. Robinson, wagon maker; William Calhoun, carpenter; Mrs. J. A. Kies, plants and flowers; J. Baddely & Son, general merchandise (Sign of the Golden Boot).

By 1880 approximately a dozen new businesses had been added.

In 1895 Charles Chase published a LeRoy City Directory. It listed 67 different businesses with the majority having two or more merchants in each business. Some merchants handled two businesses - such as jewelry in a barber shop or china and glassware in a dry goods store. Agriculture implements could be bought from 5 different merchants. Other multiple businesses were 2 banks, 3 hardware, 5 groceries, 3 grain dealers, 4 shoe dealers, 7 sold china and glassware, 12 carpenters - builders and contractors, 10 dressmakers, 4 dry goods stores, 2 newspapers, 5 doctors, 10 painters and paper-hangers, 2 variety stores and 2 telephone companies. There were two stockyards in LeRoy. One was on Oak St. near the end of the "Punkin Vine" track. The other was on the southwest corner of Main and Cedar Sts. where "Dude" Wheeler now has his garden.

# LeRoy Savings & Loan Association

107 South Chestnut Street  
LeRoy, Illinois 61752  
Phone (309) 962-3691



*Incorporated*

*June 16, 1916*

## SAVE FOR THE FUTURE

### SAFETY EARNINGS AVAILABILITY

Three reasons why more people than ever before entrust their savings to our care. In any amount, your account is welcome.

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- Home Improvements
- College Education
- Travel (Vacation)
- Retirement
- New Car
- Emergencies (We Hope They Don't Happen)

*LeRoy's Oldest Financial Institution*

## Helping Serve The Energy Needs of This Community for Over 50 Years



## Jones Oil & Supply Co.

200 North Chestnut — LeRoy, Illinois



Restaurant of C. R. Keys



List Brothers Harness Shop. Probably taken in 1890s.



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COMPLIMENTS OF

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LeRoy Branch of Bloomington Canning Factory.



The Park Hotel built in 1911

The 1895 directory also listed two manufacturers of brick. The Wiley and Bishop yard was on the State Road and was for the making of bricks exclusively. Kelley and Son was on the corner of Buck and North Sts. making tile and brick and they also had a saw mill. An earlier brick maker was William Pfitzenmeyer who came from Germany and settled in LeRoy but after a year or two moved out to what is now the Dean Bishop farm and started making bricks about 1857.

L. C. Keenan owned machinery for making concrete blocks and bricks south of LeRoy on Salt Creek which he sold to John Lamont in 1913. Many buildings in LeRoy have been built of this material which has proven very satisfactory. Store buildings erected after the 1907 fire used the concrete bricks for the fronts which can be seen today. Mr. Lamont moved the machinery to his farm one and one-half miles east of LeRoy where Salt Creek ran through it and had fine gravel beds.

In 1873 William Brown, a hardware merchant in LeRoy, invented, patented and went into the manufacturing of the

Brown Hog Ring and Ringer. He continued this for two years then sold his patent for what he thought was a fair price and later learned he had let a small fortune slip through his hands.

In 1904 the Bloomington Canning Company built a branch of its canning company on the west edge of LeRoy for the purpose of canning sweet corn. It employed more than 200 persons every year that it operated. It changed hands several times and some owners contracted with farmers to raise sweet corn and for a few years one owner had his own machinery and mules and rented land and raised his own sweet corn. It did not operate in 1938-39-40. The plant operated again in 1941 with the last pack in 1950. The company was declared bankrupt in 1951 and the buildings and property were sold at auction in 1952.

The National Harrow Company was manufacturing farm machinery in the west part of LeRoy in 1909, employing six men steady. In February, 1912 the plant had an order to ship 50 harrows to Cape Town, Africa. Not long before that it had



LeRoy Veterinary Clinic.



Chubbuck's Feed Store, formerly the LeRoy Creamery Co.

an order for a shipment of goods to Buenos Aires, South America. There are no records of who started the factory or how long it operated.

In 1920 the Klemm Overall Factory at Bloomington rented the rooms above the city hall and started a branch factory in LeRoy. It hired young women to run the sewing machines. It operated only a few years.

In 1912 a creamery company was formed by 60 men with a capital stock of \$6,000. New buildings with the latest machinery were put in operation March 1, 1913. The company took advantage of large quantities of cream formerly shipped to other points. Its capability was 1,500 pounds of butter per week which was worth 30c per pound. This company operated until 1919 when it was purchased by W. F. Strain. He produced butter, cheese, ice cream, etc. taking many prizes with his dairy products at fairs. When milk and cream were no longer produced in quantity on farms he added a line of feed and operated until 1959 when he sold out to Judson Chubbuck who continued in feed for a few years. The building on West Oak St. is now painted a bright red with white trim.

The LeRoy Bottling Works was in operation in the 1920s. Rome Graham bottled soda pop in the south room of the present LeRoy State Bank which is now the farm department office. He moved the bottling machinery to his home, near the high school, before he sold it and left town in 1930.

An advertisement in a 1920 LeRoy Journal stated that "Three King Breakfast Food" was made in LeRoy and could be bought retail at Morgan's Bakery and wholesale and retail at LeRoy Feed & Supply Company's salesroom

Yeast was an important item when most homemakers made their own bread. Mrs. Green's home-made yeast could be bought at Hunter's restaurant in 1904. A few years later Lillie's Yeast could be bought at most grocery stores in LeRoy. It was made by Mrs. I. E. Buckles

The old canning factory site stood idle after its sale until November, 1955 when Hendrix Homes bought five acres and the southern most brick building and started a factory for making pre-cut homes. Under STYLECRAFT HOMES trademark they shipped their first unit in January, 1956. They continued to operate until February, 1957 when they sold out to Great Lakes Homes.



Permabilt, on the old Canning factory site.

Great Lakes Homes wanted to use all the buildings and during the dismantling of more of the old canning machinery a fire started which destroyed most of the frame buildings and a large quantity of stored housing material, causing a \$65,000 loss. They rebuilt and in July, 1957 shipped their first housing unit which they named "The LeRoyan" in honor of LeRoy. They operated using about 35 men most of the time and up to 100 men in peak seasons. In July, 1966 they abruptly went out of business.

In September, 1971 OMNI-TECH SYSTEMS, INC. announced the opening of a component housing factory at the old canning factory site. Their company executives had been busy since August preparing to produce OMNI-TECH'S specialized housing packages. They are operating today under the trade name of PERMABILT OF ILLINOIS.

Around 1904 there was a boom in building in LeRoy. Costly homes were being built in the Barley and Moorehouse addition. These homes were two-story with electricity and baths.

James Vance built a hotel in 1905 which burned in 1909 and left LeRoy without a hotel until Anna Parks built the Park Hotel in 1911. It opened in January, 1912 offering soft water baths at 25c. It is the same Park Hotel that is on west side of the park today.

In the early 1900s LeRoy real estate men did rather well. They were helping to establish colonies in other states. There was the "Georgia Colony" in Georgia and the "Yazoo Valley" in Mississippi. Much land changed hands in the following states: Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Texas and the Dakotas. In January, 1910, 17 families left LeRoy to go live in or near Clyde, N. D. They had a special 25-car train for livestock and goods with a car for the men going with it. The women and children were to go on a later train.

Most people were glad to live in LeRoy and in 1913 a rash of bungalow building was in progress. In 1919 a new bank, law office, the high school and The How building were being built. Building was gradual after that until around 1950 when the old fair grounds were used to start Sunnyside addition. Gilmore Acres on the east side of LeRoy soon followed which in turn was soon followed by Meadow Lane, just south of the new grade school; Golden Acres on the north edge of the Country Club; Staley's, Crestview and Supreme Court additions all north of School street; Buckles Grove south of LeRoy on the site of the first settlement in Empire township; Flying "W" development about two miles south of LeRoy; and Crumbaugh's addition just off the east end of Washington

street. Numerous new houses and apartment buildings have taken up most of the vacant blocks and lots all over town. Several of the older homes have been replaced with new ones. There also are about a half dozen apartments on the first floor of business buildings. There are three trailer courts in the west and southwestern parts of LeRoy.

New business buildings in this area in recent years include a veterinary clinic, restaurant, doctor's office with clinic and residence attached, new office and display room at the lumber yard, two grocery stores - one with laundrette, car wash, veterinary clinic, funeral home, telephone building, coin-op laundry, post office, 30,000-hen egg factory, Dairy Queen, dentist's office, bowling alley, two concrete grain elevators - both built in 1966, fertilizer plant on Route 136, greenhouse and florist shop, service station, boat warehouse now used for salesroom, Jud's Barn, tavern, large modern horse-breeding barn and several long metal sheds for the business of raising feeder pigs. Much other building was going on in this same period but that is mentioned in histories of churches, schools, etc.

After the railroads were built things began to change as larger volumes of grain and other farm produce could be shipped out. More lumber and building materials as well as other goods could be shipped into the area. Merchants no longer waited for the salesman with his trunk of samples to do their buying. They could go direct to the big cities and



Pillsbury Elevator



In the Business Section 1919. Looking east.

choose from large displays and do their buying. The average citizen also went by train to shop in neighboring cities. Many living today can tell of the large crowds at the local station waiting for the train to Bloomington, standing room only at times. The ticket agent usually averaged selling 1500 or more tickets per month before the days of the automobile, hard and blacktop roads.

The trains and unlimited use of electricity, automobiles and tractors all were the cause of many businesses closing, new ones opening and others just changing the line of goods they sold. It would be a history in itself to try to tell of all the changes over the years.

Business people of a town or community have a need for sound financial institutions near them. Earliest records of financial dealings in the LeRoy area are the lending of money by Nathan Brittin and Isaac Murphy. Mr. Brittin settled in the northeastern part of Empire township in 1829 and charged 12% interest. Mr. Murphy settled in the same area a bit later and charged 15%.

An advertisement, with indications it was of about 1870 vintage, states that W. and W. H. Somers were bankers in LeRoy.

In 1872 Joseph Keenan opened a private bank known as J. Keenan's Bank. His son, Arthur J. Keenan, became manager in 1880. It was incorporated as a state bank in 1909. They built the present bank building on the southeast corner of Chestnut and Center Sts. in 1919. On January 10, 1924 state auditors closed the doors of J. Keenan's Bank.

Leonard A. Crumbaugh came to LeRoy in 1882 and started a banking business. In February, 1883 his brother, James T. Crumbaugh, joined him and they opened the Citizens Bank. It was sometimes referred to as the Crumbaugh Bank. They built a new bank building on the southwest corner of Center and Chestnut Sts. in 1884. The name was changed to First National Bank in 1903. In January, 1932 the directors closed this bank for the protection of depositors.

After the closing of J. Keenan's Bank meetings were held to start a new bank. The LeRoy State Bank was chartered January 22, 1924 and opened for business January 28, 1924.

In the depression, when President F. D. Roosevelt closed all banks in March, 1933 meetings were held again as the people of LeRoy did not want to be without a bank. It was decided that if the depositors of the bank would sign 10% waivers on their deposits and the directors would sign 15% waivers on their holdings the bank could re-open. This was done by most every depositor and stockholder and the bank

opened for business on an unrestricted basis May 5, 1933. Federal Deposit Insurance was granted to LeRoy State Bank in January, 1934.

In 1948 stockholders of LeRoy State Bank voted to return the 1933 waivers and 672 checks were put in the mail. The bank had no legal obligation to repay the depositors but the action taken by the stockholders fulfilled a moral obligation.

In 1953 LeRoy State Bank added a trust department along with a farm service department which included a soil testing laboratory.

During the last week of October, 1975 ground was broken for a new LeRoy State Bank building on the south side of Route 150 in the 300 block of E. Cedar St.

In 1874 Empire Building and Loan Association was organized by Samuel F. Barnum, Charles A. Barley and others. It was one of the first organizations of its kind in this part of the state.

In the early years it was re-organized about every eight years and the name changed almost every time. When it was re-organized in 1916 it became The LeRoy Home Building Association which name it retained until it moved to its present location at 107 S. Chestnut St. The name was changed to LeRoy Savings and Loan Association at the time of that move in 1966. Savings and Loan Associations are governed by state and federal laws much the same as banks.



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LeRoy, Illinois

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Stensels Funeral Home



The new Princess Photoplay built in 1916.



The How, Aug. 13, 1915. Left to right: Harry Fry, Oren Lowe, Clifford Crumbaugh, Allan Willeg and Ralph Humphrey.

## 50 Years or More in Business

AND STILL SERVING THE PUBLIC

LeRoy Savings and Loan Association	1874
The LeRoy Journal	1887
The How	1895
Princess Theater	1916
Alexander Lumber Company	1914-1925
Stensel's Funeral Home	1923
LeRoy State Bank	1924
Jones Oil and Supply Company	1924
Poindexter's Grocery	1925
A. Lee Pray, Attorney	1926



Iden's piano boxes line sidewalk.



List Bros. Harness Shop.

**50 YEARS OR MORE IN BUSINESS  
BUT NO LONGER ACTIVE**

William Jones, Blacksmith & Machinist	1856 - 1940
Charles D. Jones, Machinist & Garage	
Don Jones, Garage (3rd Generation)	
J. Keenan's Bank	1872 - 1924
Barley Land & Loan Company	1874 - 1952
S. D. VanDeventer Drugs	1879 - 1931
Rike's Greenhouse & Florist	1880-82 - 1942
First National Bank	1883 - 1932 (49)
List Bros. Harness Shop	1889 - 1940
Iden Funeral Home	1902 - 1953
Holderly Dry Cleaners	1923 - 1973





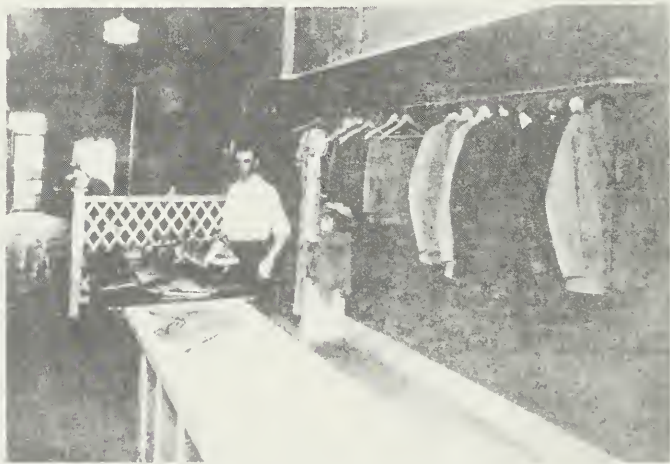
S. D. VanDeventer's Drug Store on 50th Anniversary Oct. 18, 1929. Left: S. D. VanDeventer. Far right: Lester Reeder



Model Laundry Co. Left to right: Wm. Arrowsmith, Nat Beckham, Bill Colaw, Bill's brother, Wash Bailey, Tom Hammond, J. R. Covey, Chas. Kaufman.



Poindexters' I. G. A. today.



D. E. Holderly's Dry Cleaning.



Kincaid's Barbershop. 1st chair - Faye Watters; 3rd chair - Dick Kincaid, 1914

1st Chair, G.I.N. Gillock.



Watter's Barber Shop. 1st chair - Hannah Keenan, Faye Watters, barber; 2nd barber - Bud Kincaid, standing - Roy Walker.



Group of bicyclists May 30, 1891. 5th from left: Alfred Keys, 6th Lark McCain, 8th John Confrey, 10th Charlie Jones, 11th Grant Smith, 13th George Barnum, 14th boy in straw hat

Charlie Alsup, 17th boy in stiff hat Lawrence Reynolds, 18th Jack Watters, 19th boy standing Fay Watters.



Aerial view of LeRoy after 1926.

# LeRoy Bicentennial Commission

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Vice Chairman	Jim Crouch
Secretary	Linda Wagers, Maxine Hillard
Treasurer	Ron Wesbecher

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Midge Bock, Co-Chairman

## Communications Chairman:

O. J. Lere

History Book Committee listed in front of this book.

## BOOK'S END

Simeon West once said "No absolutely correct history has ever been or can be written." We realize that this must be true and so apologize for the mistakes we have probably made. There wasn't room for all the material written and we hope to publish Volume II in a year or two. This volume will contain a section on sports, LeRoy in the wars, farming, Indian history of the area, old houses and buildings, depression days and a Who's Who section.

The committee has enjoyed the making of this book and hope that its readers will feel a closer tie to the past and a deeper pride in our local heritage.

Marian Spratt, Chrm.

# Patrons of The LeRoy Bi-Centennial

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**Dot's Beauty Shop**

**Dr. I. C. Caywood, D.D.S.**

**LeRoy Cleaners**

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**Ona's Beauty Shop**

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Phone 962-9322

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LeRoy, Illinois

**Lois' Beauty Salon**

**United States Postal Service**

Richard D. Michael, Postmaster

COMPLIMENTS OF THE

**Rike & Keenan Families**

[5 Generations in LeRoy 1850-1976]

COMPLIMENTS OF THE

**J. V. Smith**

**& Roy Smith Families**

## Special Thanks to The Following Contributors Who Helped Get Our LeRoy Bi-Centennial Started

**Empire Township**

**West Township**

**Richard Janko**

[Owner of Permabilt]

**Operation Recycle**

**LeRoy State Bank**

**LeRoy Kiwanis**

**LeRoy Association of Commerce**

**LeRoy Child Guidance**

**LeRoy High School L Club**

**LeRoy Fire District**

**Friendly Circle**

**LeRoy Women's Relief**

**LeRoy House Party**

**LeRoy Rifle Club**

**LeRoy 4th Grade Class**

**All The Businessmen & Women  
In LeRoy Who Purchased Ads  
In Our History Book**

**We At Marsh Stud  
Are Proud to Help LeRoy  
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