Sanborn Maps

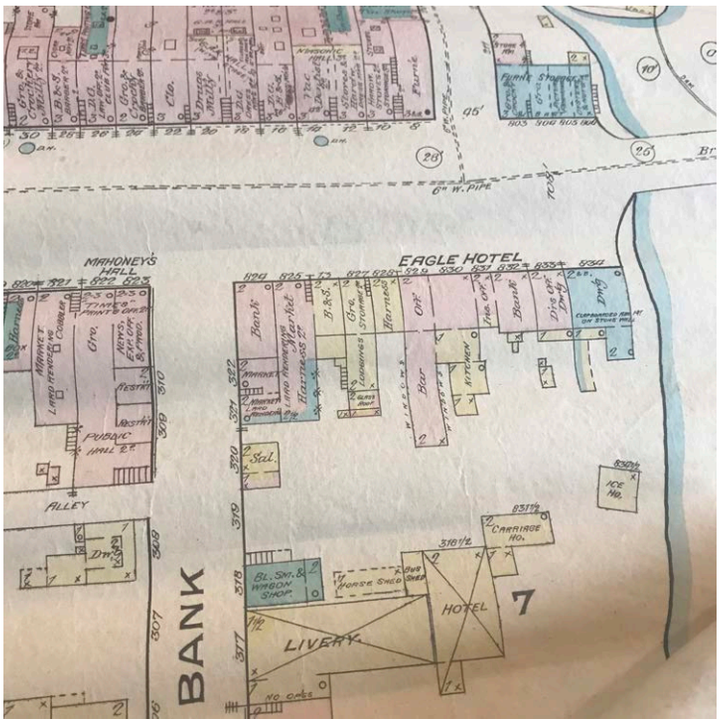
by Lynne Belluscio

Bob Lathan stopped by this last week with two tightly rolled pieces of paper. When we unrolled them, I was ecstatic. It was an 1885 Sanborn map of LeRoy. He was cleaning out a cupboard at the DPW garage and came across it. The Historical Society has a couple of Sanborn maps 1927 and 1897 but none as old as these. We also have older maps of LeRoy, but Sanborn maps are insurance maps and include a lot of details that aren't found on other maps.

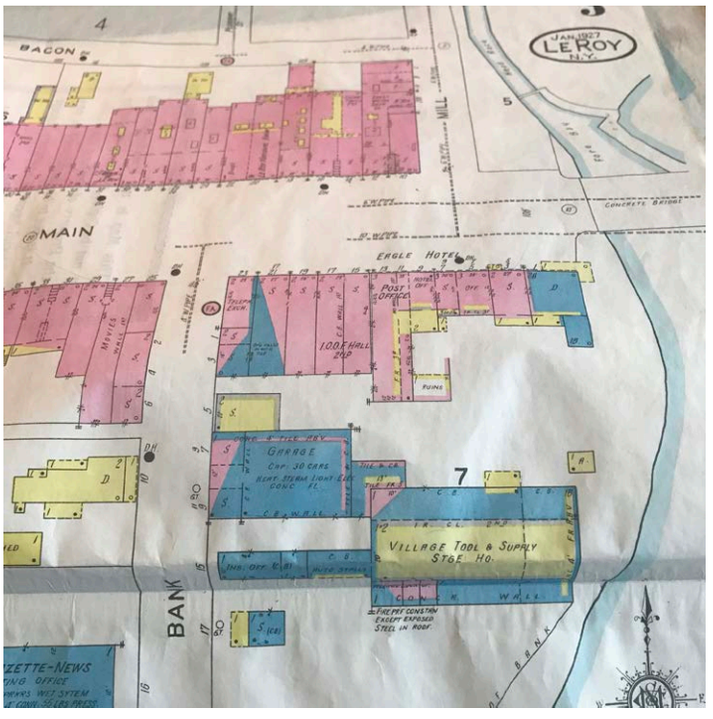
In 1866, Aetna Insurance Company contracted Daniel Sanborn to create maps for areas in Tennessee. A year later he published a map of Boston. Soon, he was publishing his detailed maps for New York City. The maps include an outline of the buildings and are colored to indicate what they are made of - -brick, stone, wood. The locations of water and gas mains as well as fire hydrants are included. What is really fascinating is that the use of the building is listed. On the 1885 map, the building on the corner of Mill and Main (where the post office is located now) had a grocery and crockery store on the corner. Next to it, to the east, was another grocery store and next was a picture framing store. Next to the bridge was a store that sold oysters and nuts. The crockery and grocery store was still on the corner in 1897 but the other stores were now offices. By 1927, the building had been torn down in anticipation of the new post office. Across the street on the corner of Bank Street (Shelby's former store) – In 1885 and 1897 it was the bank building but in 1927 it was the telephone exchange.

In 1885, the LeRoy Flour and Feed Mill was still in operation on Mill Street. It was owned by C.F. Prentice. There were 5 mill stones and 10 sets of Stevens' Roller mills. He had a Sturtevant fan (sifting machine) for bran and 10 bolting reels on one floor. Bolting reels were reels that were covered with material that as the milled flour passed through the reels, it was separated into coarse and fine flour. On another floor there were five more bolting reels and on the third floor there were 2 Eureka smutters. (used to remove wheat smut.) The mill used water power, but when the water was low, the machinery was driven by a coal fired steam boiler. The mill was lit by kerosene lamps. The mill had a "double fire pump" and 100 feet of hose. There was no night watchman.

In another note, the map records that the mill had a double LaFrance water power fire pump with an independent wheel, also connected with main wheel of the flour mill. Water from the creek was forced through a 6 " water pipe through the principal streets of the town. There were 19 fire hydrants. It also mentions the double tank, Babcock engine (the antique engine owned by the Chemical Hose Company) and one hook and ladder truck (owned by Excelsior Hook & Ladder) The 1927 map indicates that there were 104 public fire hydrants and 27 private hydrants. The average water pressure on Main street was 60 pounds and that 80% of the streets were paved. The fire department was volunteer with 1 chief and 3 companies with a total of 100 men. The equipment included 1 Stutz triple combination pumper, hose carrier and chemical engine. It had two 40 gallon chemical tanks and 1000 feet of 2 ½ inch hose and 240 feet of 1 inch hose There was also a Stutz hook and ladder truck



1885 Sanborn Map



1927Main and Mill Street

with 216 feet of ladders and a Ford truck with two 35 gallon chemical tanks and 700 of 2 ½ hose kept at the railroad yard. There were 12 Gamewell fire alarm boxes with the siren at the Village Hall.

The Sanborn Map Company bought out many competitors and became the largest most successful American map company, and it monopolized the business. The company had hundreds of surveyors to record building footprints and relevant details about buildings. At the peak in the 1920s, the company employed about 700 people, including 300 field surveyors and 400 cartographers, printers, managers and salesmen. Some cities were surveyed every six months. The last Sanborn maps were published on microfilm in 1977.