

Birds-Eye-View of LeRoy



by *Lynne Belluscio*

Published birds-eye-view maps were very popular from 1840 through 1920 – before the airplane made it possible to actually get an aerial view. These maps are sometimes called pictorial maps, illustrated maps, panoramic maps and perspective maps. They were not used as a map per se. Drawing these maps required a lot of work. The map makers would have to walk all the streets and roads of the village and sketch the buildings from the ground level, and then transfer their sketches to the map of the village and draw them from an imaginary perspective point. (Even today, birds-eye-view maps are used to highlight tourist spots such as restaurants,

specialty shops, historic places and museums.) Sometimes the maps were exaggerated, showing a bustling town with factories and mills, when in reality, the main street was deserted and the factories were much smaller than depicted.

There were several leading panoramic map artists in the United States: Herman Brosius, Camile Drie, Thaddeus Fowler, Henry Welge and others. The Library of Congress has a collection of over 1800 panoramic maps and many of them have been reproduced. The Historical Society has two original 1892 LeRoy maps by Lucien Burleigh of Troy, New York. He also produced a map of Caledonia and he is known for 228 different maps. Lucien

R. Burleigh was listed as a civil engineer in Troy in 1883 and three years later he was listed as a lithographer. His firm was known for doing “fine work in all branches of engraving and printing with views of buildings and villages a specialty”. Most of his maps were published between 1885 and 1890.

Recently, we acquired an excellent reproduction of the LeRoy map and had it framed and it is now hangs in the Village Hall, with a couple other reproduction maps of LeRoy. The LeRoy map has many details, including the LeRoy salt well derricks, the three railroad bridges across the creek as well as the old suspension walk bridge. The O.F. Woodward Medicine Company is locat-

ed in the Lampson building on the north side of Main Street. (This was seven years before he bought the rights to Jell-O.) The large malt factory can be seen between the creek and Church Street. The old town hall on Bank Street is pictured with the tower used to dry fire hose. The buildings of Ingham University, which was to close in 1892, are also pictured. There is a lot of history recorded on this map.

If you have the chance, stop by the Village Hall and take a close look at the map, or if you stop by the Jell-O Gallery, we have a framed original on display in the basement. If you are interested in acquiring a reproduction of this map, we bought ours on Ebay, but there are other sources for them.

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