

# Loren Wetzel's View of LeRoy

by Lynne Belluscio

Several years ago, when Janet and Loren Wetzel moved to Buffalo and sold their house, they donated a huge landscape painting of the Main Street bridge to the Historical Society. We hung it above the file cabinets in the research library. But not many people could appreciate it, so when plans were made to upgrade the Village Board Room at the Municipal Building, it seemed like a perfect place to hang the Wetzel landscape. The Historical Society Board approved a long term loan and the Village Board agreed that it would be a good idea. Bobby Lathan agreed to help move it - - when the weather warmed up. (That was a close call.) In the meantime, Humphrey Security Systems had to move a security sensor. But everything worked out, and the painting was in place for Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul's visit to dedicate the Women's Suffrage marker on April 2.

The painting has an interesting story. Back in 1978—or 79, Loren Wetzel had received a promotion at Graham Manufacturing in Batavia, and his wife, Janet, asked Marge Bald, a local artist and art teacher, to sketch a painting that could hang in Loren's new office. Marge painted the detailed buildings – St. Mark's Church, the Post Office and the Creekside, but Janet and the Wetzel kids – Keith, Brian and Lynne painted the background and the water. Janet said she remembered painting



the pillar supports on the bridge and Keith painted the three pine trees. The painting was so big, it had to be painted on the back porch of the Wetzel/Olmsted house on East Main Street. For some reason, the painting never made it to Loren's office and when Loren and Janet moved to their new house on Route 5 opposite the golf course, the painting was in Janet's real estate office. After Loren had a stroke, and they moved to a care facility in Buffalo, the painting found a new home at the Historical Society. As Janet said, "It was supposed to go to Batavia, but it never left LeRoy."

When the decision was made to move the painting to the Municipal Building, I tried to contact Janet to let her know, but I didn't get an answer to my message, and I suspected that Loren's health had deteriorated, so I wasn't surprised to learn that Loren had passed away on Saturday, April 7. Keith had posted the news to Facebook so I sent him a note to ask if the family would be in LeRoy. The funeral was planned for Saturday, April 14 and the family was to be in LeRoy to make plans on Wednesday. I asked if it was possible for the family to meet at the Municipal Building

for a photograph. In the meantime, I had a call from Mallory Diefenbach of the Batavia Daily News. She wanted to do an article about Loren and I suggested that she meet us at the Municipal Building to meet the family and to hear the story about the painting.

Loren Wetzel was an enthusiastic member of the Historical Society, as well as the Presbyterian Church, the Rotary Club and the men's golf league. This painting is a tribute to him and the Wetzel family. Now it can be shared with the community that he loved.



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