

**BRADFORD COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

109 Pine Street

Towanda, PA 18848

Return Service Requested

Enclosed is an important
announcement from the
LeRoy Heritage Museum
and the Bradford County
Historical Society.

Non Profit Organization

U.S. Postage

PAID

Towanda, PA 18848

Permit No. 3

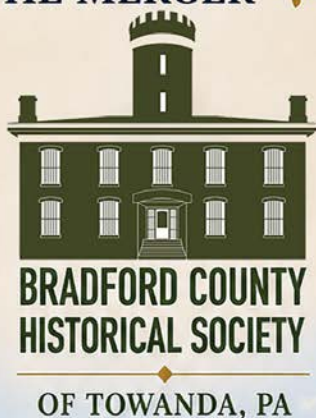
WELCOME TO A

NEW ERA OF LOCAL HISTORY PRESERVATION AND EDUCATION

ANNOUNCING THE MERGER



&



UNITED IN PRESERVING OUR PAST.
BUILDING A STRONGER FUTURE.

A GUIDE FOR MEMBERS & SUPPORTERS OF
THE LEROY HERITAGE MUSEUM AND THE
BRADFORD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



LeRoy Heritage Museum, LeRoy, PA

A Message from Matthew Carl

President of the LeRoy Heritage Museum

Executive Director of the Bradford County Historical Society

Members and Patrons of LeRoy Heritage Museum and Bradford County Historical Society:

I am writing to share exciting news about an important development at LeRoy Heritage Museum (LHM). After much careful consideration and planning over a period of six months, we are pleased to announce that LeRoy Heritage Museum, Inc., will be merging with the Bradford County Historical Society (BCHS). The documents have been signed by both boards and our attorney has filed with the appropriate government offices. The final merger is expected to occur near the end of the 2026 summer season.



This strategic decision has been made with the aim of expanding our outreach and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the work that has

been done in southwestern Bradford County over the past 25 years.

The merger represents a significant step forward in strengthening our combined resources, enhancing our programs, and providing even greater impact to those we serve. By joining forces, the two sites will be able to leverage each organization's strengths, reach more people, establish a satellite location for the county historical society in western Bradford County, establish joint promotional efforts, provide more benefits to members of both organizations, and preserve more of our county story.

This merger aligns perfectly with our shared vision of preservation and education and will provide both organizations with increased operational efficiency, improved financial stability, and broader community engagement. The boards from both organizations have worked together on this plan to ensure a smooth transition and to make sure that all services and programs continue seamlessly with no loss in any of these to the public.

Most importantly, LHM is not simply turning over its assets and walking away. In fact, the two formerly independent organizations are joining forces with representation from both groups. I will continue as Executive Director after the merger ensuring a smooth transition into the future.

THE BACKGROUND

LeRoy Heritage Museum is a project that started when I organized a meeting of community members at age 18 to discuss starting a museum in LeRoy, PA. I was concerned that the history of the area wasn't being preserved, and, in fact, was being lost. The group purchased the former Open Hand Grange building in 2001, which was on the verge of collapse at the time, and completed a \$260,000 building project to turn the historic grange into a museum and research library.

After opening in 2010 the museum board saw a need to not only focus on LeRoy, but to include Barclay Mountain/Laquin, Granville Township, Canton Township, and Canton Borough, ultimately focusing on southwestern Bradford County as a region. Month after month, the museum received numerous additions to its collection. The original building was not adequate to contain the museum, the research collection, office space, storage, and meeting space so the museum board began searching for a second building where the museum could expand.

In October 2015, the museum received a generous donation of 3.7 acres with an 1896 hotel building located on Route 414 in the center of LeRoy. The value of the donated property plus the building project represented a \$500,000 investment in local history preservation. The museum moved to this location after another multi-year renovation, opening in 2022. The original building then housed the research collection.



The original LeRoy Heritage Museum on Mill Street in LeRoy. Later it became the Rancy K. Morse Memorial Research Library. It will now be used for off-site storage and work space for both LHM and BCBS.

Over the last 25 years, LHM has preserved thousands of items that tell the story of southwestern Bradford County, Pennsylvania. Using these items, the museum has educated the public about local history through museum exhibits, research, books, magazines, videos, walking tours, theater programs, and special events. LHM is also the repository of history collections from many groups including the former Canton Area Historical Society, Manley-Bohlayer Farm (Rekindle the Spirit), Canton Independent-Sentinel/Troy Gazette-Register, Canton High School Alumni Association, and many past local historians.

WHY A MERGER?

The purpose of the merger is NOT the result of any decline in finances or community interest. The LeRoy Heritage Museum would be capable of continuing forward as an independent entity. This year, LeRoy Heritage Museum is celebrating its 25th anniversary and this is an appropriate time to look forward and plan for long term sustainability. I suggested the possibility of merger to the boards of both organizations after a year of thought on my part, and I wanted to share with you the reasons for pursuing this.

1. Although I have been directly involved in the formation, leadership and development of the LeRoy Heritage Museum, it is important for the future that the museum not be entirely dependent on me for survival. I would be doing a disservice to the organization and to the thousands of donors since 2001 if the museum was unprepared to carry on in my absence due to an unexpected accident or health issue. Now is the time to make adjustments to ensure that the last 25 years of preservation were not in vain. At the same time, I recognize that there are few who could dedicate as much time to managing the LeRoy Heritage Museum on a volunteer basis as I have and therefore, the method of operation must change to ensure long-term viability.
2. I have been connected with BCHS for 22 years. During the last 19 years as BCHS Executive Director, I have managed LeRoy Heritage Museum and BCHS simultaneously, one as a volunteer, and one as an employee. This means that for years, I've spent evenings, days off, and vacations doing the work of managing the LeRoy museum. The merger will enable me to manage both organizations as one entity, removing a lot of duplicate effort from my shoulders. One board made up of LeRoy board members and BCHS board members will oversee the operation across the county. Over the past 10 years, I have lived in the caretaker's quarters at the LeRoy Heritage Museum and now as BCHS Executive Director, I will continue living onsite as an employee.
3. LeRoy Heritage Museum is now responsible for the largest collection of southwestern Bradford County history in existence anywhere. It is especially concerning that its irreplaceable research collection is completely stored in a wooden building. This merger will enable us to move substantial portions of the research collection to the large research library at BCHS, a facility that is fire-resistant and secure, having once been the county jail. Researchers will have easier access to this material, since BCHS has paid staff and year-around library hours. The former grange building will continue to be used for off-site storage of museum pieces by both organizations and work space to care for items from both locations - a feature that both organizations have needed for years. It is interesting to note that Albert T. Lilley, who helped organize the Open Hand Grange in LeRoy in 1874, and saw its construction in 1876, was also a charter member and later president of BCHS. I'm sure Lilley would be pleased that the building will continue to be used for Bradford County history preservation for years to come.



LHM's property is nestled among the mountains of southwestern Bradford County.

WHY SHOULD LEROY HERITAGE MUSEUM MERGE WITH BRADFORD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY?

The Bradford County Historical Society is recognized as the official county historical society by the state of Pennsylvania and the county of Bradford. It was organized in 1870 and incorporated in 1875, making it the oldest historical preservation and education organization in Bradford County and one of the oldest in the state. In the past few years, BCHS has developed a strategic plan, reevaluated and updated its operations, focused on the use of new technology in the preservation and dissemination of local history resources, overhauled its publications, and planned for its own long-term sustainability. Its Board of Trustees is made up of representatives from across the county who have backgrounds in a wide range of fields including banking, legal, education, history, fundraising, marketing, community development, construction, and much more.

Although a historical society owning and operating more than one location is foreign in Bradford County, it is common in many counties across the nation. This doesn't mean that Bradford County Historical Society has blindly agreed to take on a second location. Over the last several months, BCHS has examined the property, buildings, collection, finances, and overall condition of LHM and I am proud to say that the organization was found in excellent condition. An established Endowment Fund, no debt, buildings well maintained and clean, and an attractive facility for visitors are just some of positives that the LeRoy board could offer. No significant maintenance issues exist in the buildings at LeRoy as both buildings have undergone major renovations over the years. The merger of two non-profit organizations is also unheard of in Bradford County so an attorney in southern Pennsylvania has assisted with the merger process.

I personally hope that this merger will serve as an example to other museums in the county, and will cause them to think outside the box when considering their own futures.

Matthew T. Carl

A Message from J. Kelsey Jones

President of the Bradford County Historical Society

The Bradford County Historical Society is proud to welcome the LeRoy Heritage Museum into the BCHS family. This merger represents an important step forward in preserving and sharing the rich history of Bradford County. LeRoy Heritage Museum has built a remarkable legacy of protecting local stories, artifacts, photographs, and traditions, and we are honored to continue that work.

By bringing our organizations together, we can strengthen collections care, improve public access to historical resources, expand programming, and help ensure the long-term sustainability of these important community assets. This partnership also allows our collections to grow stronger and more complete, preserving the history of southwestern Bradford County alongside the broader story of the county.

As we look to the future, our goal is to continue expanding the Society's footprint and growing our collections so more communities and stories can be preserved and shared for generations to come. We are grateful to everyone whose dedication made this exciting new chapter possible.

J. Kelsey Jones





Board members of the LeRoy Heritage Museum and the Bradford County Historical Society met in January 2026 to discuss the potential of a merger between the two organizations. Front row from left: Michelle Knight, BCBS; Ted Tomlinson, LHM; Ann Carl, LHM; Elaine Pierson, BCBS. Back row from left: Bob Storch, LHM; Matt Carl, LHM; Rich Gulyas, BCBS; Susan Roy, BCBS; Janet Holmes, BCBS; J. Kelsey Jones, BCBS; Vince Amoroso, BCBS; and Tom Carl, LHM. Those missing from the photo but who had to leave early are Janice Otis, BCBS; Lorelei Colton, LHM; and Jeanne Butters, LHM. Those unable to attend were Crawford Holmes, LHM; Wesley Kocsis, BCBS; Tamar Maryott, BCBS; and Jen Swain, BCBS.



View of LeRoy Heritage Museum property.



The LeRoy Heritage Museum in LeRoy, located in the former Lewis House, a hotel/ballroom/store that was built in 1896. The first floor houses a museum and gift shop. The second floor houses an event space, exhibits, and storage. A caretaker's apartment is in the east wing of the building.



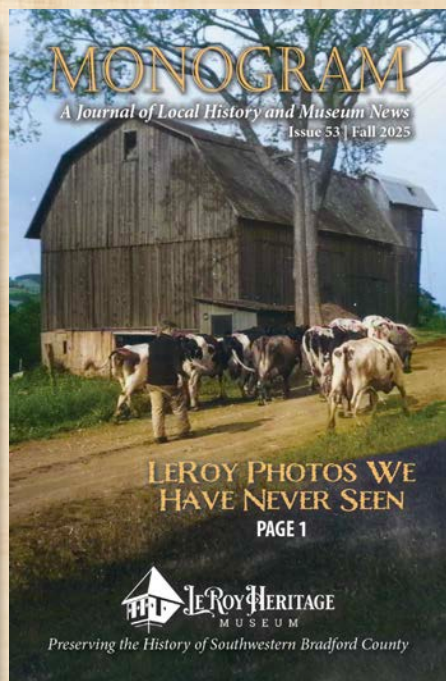
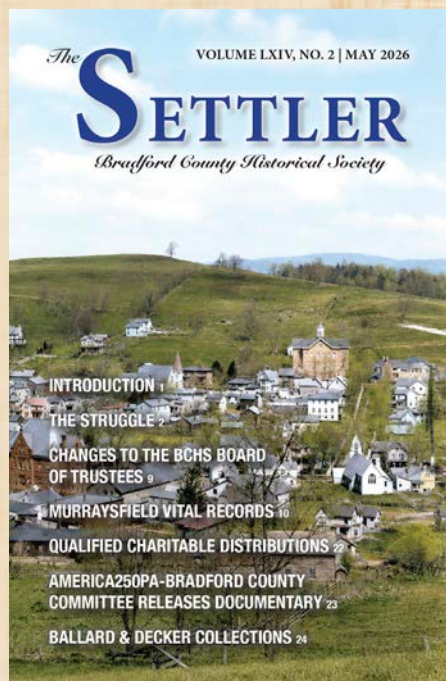




The Bradford County Historical Society in Towanda, located in the former Bradford County Jail, houses two-floors of museum exhibits, a third floor research library holding the largest collection of local history and genealogy in the county, and a large programming and event space. The 16,000 square foot building, featuring three-foot thick stone walls and bars on the windows, is a secure repository of Bradford County history.







Members of the Bradford County Historical Society will receive two publications as a benefit. The Settler will be published in February, May, August, and November. The Monogram will be published in April and October. This will enable BCHS to highlight activities, programming and news from both sites while members who are accustomed to either location will learn about what is happening at another BCHS location. Additionally, all 53 back issues of the Monogram will be added to digital membership accounts after the first year of the merger, enabling access to them just as BCHS digital members can access The Settler back issues now.



Learn more about the
history of both the
LeRoy Heritage Museum and
the Bradford County
Historical Society on
their **YouTube** Channels!

Frequently Asked Questions about the Merger of LeRoy Heritage Museum and Bradford County Historical Society

This magazine has been sent to members of both LeRoy Heritage Museum (LHM) and the Bradford County Historical Society (BCHS) in addition to free distribution to the public. We are sure that members of both organizations will have additional questions about how the merger will work beyond the details addressed already. Following are some frequently asked questions that our boards have already worked through. These topics were covered in the official Plan of Merger developed by both boards.

How will the two locations operate after the merger in terms of properties, governance, and finances?

- The real estate of the LeRoy Heritage Museum located at 10097 State Route 414, LeRoy, PA, and 257 Mill Street, LeRoy, PA will be transferred to the Bradford County Historical Society. Both sites will operate legally under the name of Bradford County Historical Society but the LeRoy site will continue to be known as LeRoy Heritage Museum with the addition of the historical society name being added to the sign.
- Both locations will operate as one organization under one board. The initial Board of Trustees, after the merger, will consist of members from both LHM and BCHS.
- All funds from LHM accounts will be used to pay regular bills of the LeRoy properties until depleted, after which the BCHS will assume responsibility for all locations. Those who wish to help support the LeRoy site may continue to do so by donating to the LeRoy Heritage Museum Endowment Fund at the Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers, from which an annual disbursement will help to cover expenses of LHM. BCHS also has its own Endowment Fund at the Community Foun-



dition for the Twin Tiers that anyone may also donate to at any time. By law, all restricted funds will continue to be used for their original intended purposes. It is especially important that current LHM members continue to support the museum through the BCHS going forward. Your continued support and volunteerism show that you value the LeRoy site.

Both organizations publish magazines and both have published books. How will this be handled going forward?

- The inventory of gift shop books currently owned by LeRoy Heritage Museum will be transferred to Bradford County Historical Society and will be shared between both locations for sale to the public. Both sites will sell the publications that have been produced by each organization.
- The *Monogram* magazine, published semi-annually by LHM, and *The Settler* magazine, published quarterly by BCHS, will be mailed to all members of the Bradford County Historical Society after the merger. The *Annual* magazine, published once each year by BCHS, will no longer be printed and the content of the *Annual* will instead be included in *The Settler* throughout the year. The final result is that all members will receive six magazines per year - four *Settlers* and two *Monograms*. Each magazine will include news and articles from their respective locations, offering a much wider range of information about what is being accomplished across the county. J. Kelsey Jones will continue to write *The Settler*. Matthew Carl will continue to write the *Monogram*, and Matthew will continue designing both magazines as he has done for several years.
- The rights to the books previously published by LHM will transfer to BCHS, allowing BCHS to reprint them as necessary.



What will happen to the research library owned by LeRoy Heritage Museum?

- The contents of the Rancy K. Morse Memorial Research Library located on Mill Street in LeRoy will transfer to the Bradford County Historical Society and will be housed together at BCHS as one collection called the "LeRoy Heritage Museum Collection".

- The research material will be cataloged into the BCHS Past Perfect online inventory system where anyone around the world will be able to search and discover where these materials are located. The materials will be available for research in the research library on the third floor at BCHS which is open Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and the first Saturday monthly, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (appointments also available). BCHS provides paid research services to those who are unable to visit the library in person.
- Housing the LHM research collection at BCHS will ensure that the materials are better protected in a secure, fire-resistant facility and are more easily available for access by visitors.
- The research building in LeRoy will become an off-site storage facility for both locations and will continue to be used to care for our collection.
- All permanent acknowledgements in the form of engraved plaques and signs in the research library building will remain in place. Those names will also be acknowledged in the museum along with other donors to the new museum so the public can still see them in the future.

Will LeRoy Heritage Museum continue to have an online presence?

- Yes. The LeRoy Heritage Museum website and social media will continue to exist and each location will cross-promote the events of the other location, thereby reaching a much larger audience for both sites.

How will membership work after the merger?

- All current members of LHM will be converted to members of BCHS for one year following the merger. After the first year, former LHM members will need to renew their membership at the BCHS rate.
- All past life members of LHM will be converted to life members of BCHS (new Life memberships are no longer an option at BCHS).
- Memberships to BCHS will be promoted and sold at the LHM site and through both websites.
- The annual appeal campaigns sent to members of both organizations

will be combined into one campaign that will benefit both locations (BCHS will be financially responsible for both sites).

Will the hours at LeRoy Heritage Museum remain the same?

- BCHS will operate the LeRoy location at least the same number of hours as previously operated by the board of LHM - three hours on one day per week, May through September and additional hours or days by appointment. The specific hours will be at the discretion of BCHS and may be adjusted as necessary. Volunteers will operate the LeRoy museum, supplemented by staff when necessary.

Will there continue to be programming at LeRoy Heritage Museum?

- LHM will be promoted and programming and special events maintained in conjunction with and in addition to the events that are held at BCHS. Events at both locations will be included in one annual programming calendar.
- All existing programs will be reviewed to determine how they can be integrated or expanded.



This promotional piece is sponsored in part by the Bradford County Room Tax Fund and the Bradford County Tourism Promotion Agency.



2026