

# LeRoy's Red Cross During World War 1

by Lynne Belluscio

When the United States finally entered the war in April 1917, the war had already been raging in Europe for nearly three years. In LeRoy, men and women immediately volunteered to join the war effort, either in the military or in supportive positions such as the Ambulance Corps, the YMCA or the Red Cross. But before the official LeRoy Red Cross chapter was formed, the women were meeting twice a week in the Municipal Building to make hospital supplies for the base hospitals in France. The LeRoy branch of the National Surgical Dressing Society in May sent out a shipment of 400 absorbent pads; 205 okum absorbent pads; 34 pillows; 270 slippers for bandaged feet; 240 mitts for bandaged hands; 35 fracture pillows; 170 slings; 40 body bandages; 280 linen compresses; 150 T bandages; 5 packages of linen pieces; 5 packages of cotton pieces; 72 pairs of wristlets; 3 pair of hand-made hose; 1 knitted scarf; 7 bath mitts; 2640 gauze compresses; 300 muslin bandages; 88 medicine glass covers; and 50 eye bandages. The group asked anyone who had Victrola boxes to bring them to the Municipal Building because they were strongly built and were excellent for shipping supplies. Mrs. Ernest Woodward had been directing the work of the Surgical Dressing Society and in June, she was elected the chairman of the newly formed Red Cross Chapter. Mr. Samson made a short address to the group and expressed the appreciation of the "splendid work that had been done by the local branch of the National Surgical Dressing Society and knew that LeRoy was a community with the reputation of "doing things." The Red Cross met in the rooms on the second floor of the Municipal building. Various committees were formed to undertake all the work that was needed in the war effort. Within a short time, the membership of the Le Roy chapter had grown to over 1000 people, including members of the Junior Red Cross.



*Members of the LeRoy Chapter of the Red Cross working in the meeting room on the second floor of the Municipal Building.*

One of the tasks that the group assumed was serving meals and refreshments to the soldiers in the truck motorcades traveling along Route 5. Lunches had to be prepared on short notice and packed in boxes to be handed to the soldiers. But then, apparently, there was a change of plans and it was announced, much to the disappointment of the women of the Red Cross, that the Government had decided that the soldiers had to prepare their own food from stores that they carried with them. "This step was taken by the government in order that these men, who soon are to go across, may have the experience and training in looking after their own needs."

An appeal was made to collect waste leather of every description, such as gloves, furniture covers, and worn-out fur coats. This leather was to be sewn into a brown cloth foundation to make wind-proof vests for the soldiers during the winter. In addition, the local chapter decided to assemble "comfort bags" which contained a mirror, a box of talcum powder, a bar of chocolate, 2 large-eyed needles, heavy white and black thread, 6 black and white buttons, 6 safety pins, common pins, 1 wash cloth, 1 tooth brush, 1 tooth paste, 1 cold cream, 1 handkerchief, 1 pad and twelve envelopes, 1 soft pencil, a small game or puzzle, 1 bar of soap, chewing gum, absorbent cotton, mustard plaster,



adhesive plaster, a candle, small book or magazine, knife, cob or other pipe, picture post card with message giving donors name and address. All of these things were to be put in a bag made of cretonne or some other strong material. It was suggested that women who could attend the sewing meetings at the Municipal Building might make the bags at home, and the men in

LeRoy would purchase the materials to go in the bags. It was noted that the LeRoy Gazette News would supply all the pads and pencils and envelopes. The Red Cross also asked for donations of 7 sewing machines, an electric iron and ironing board, a bandage winder, 2 packing trunks, and packing boxes for shipping finished work.