

Sign Of The Times

by Lynne Belluscio

The next time you drive past LeRoy House take a look at our new sign. It is a work of art and we have Bob Stephani to thank for getting it done and installed in time for our 75th Anniversary meeting held at LeRoy House this past Sunday. The members elected Anne Frew, Shelia Furr, Bob Collette and Marny Cleere to the Board of Trustees.

The election was a bit special, because President Dan Cote turned the gavel over to David Frost, who was president of the Historical Society in 1990, during the 50th Anniversary. It was David's grandfather, Roy McPherson who was the first president of the Historical Society. After the election, David turned the gavel over to his daughter, Marny Cleere who adjourned the meeting. The passing of the gavel was symbolic of the legacy passed from one generation to another.



David Frost, grandson of first president Roy McPherson, takes the gavel from President Dan Cote and passes it to his daughter Marny Cleere.

David told me a wonderful story about his grandfather. In August, 1940, the Historical Society held its meeting at his grandfather's house on Oatka Trail. The house was built next to the site of the original family log cabin. Shortly after the summer meeting, a fire broke out in the house. The family highboy was taken out the front door, and although the house was badly damaged, David's grandfather was determined to repair the old house in time for Christmas.

The old kitchen fireplace was removed and replaced. David,

who was two at the time, remembers with great fondness the day his grandfather stood with him in front of the new fireplace. A fire had been laid on the hearth, and with his grandfather's guidance, he reached for a long wooden match, and lit the first fire in the new fireplace. This rekindling of the home fire, again, symbolic of the rekindling of a family's heritage.

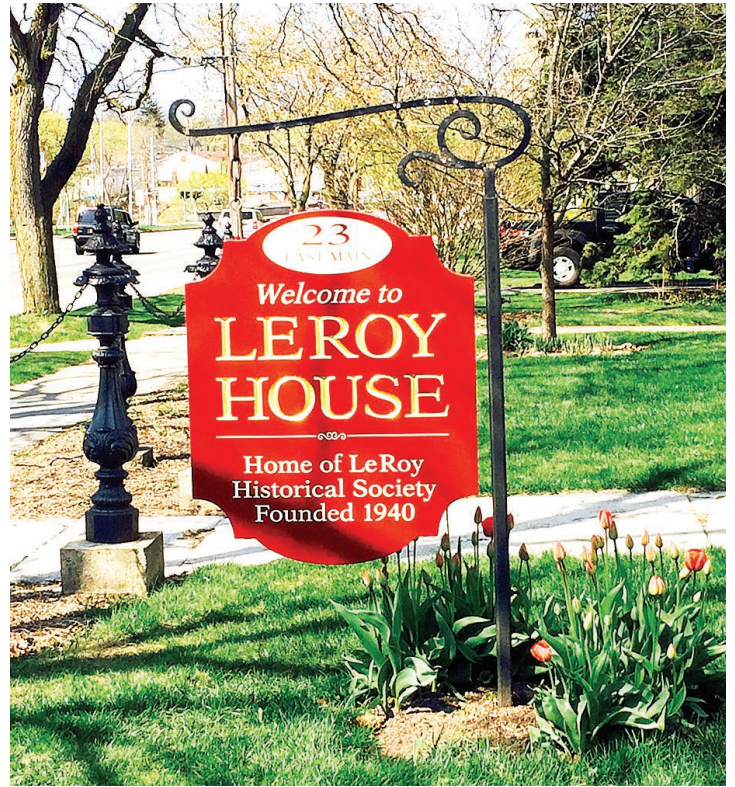
And so too, the Historical Society is rekindling its commitment as it celebrates its 75th year. As I told the group, history is a guidepost, not a hitching post. Today, it appears that Americans are turning their attention away from our history and our heritage. The noted author David McCullough wrote: "A nation that forgets its past can function no better than an individual with amnesia." This may explain why our government, and our children are not able to function. And so the challenge for the small local historical society is to make sure that our history is not forgotten.

Garrison Keillor addressed the Association of State and Local History and remarked that "history is local - - everything has to take place somewhere." A character in Michael Crichton's "Timeline" says: "If you don't know history, you don't know anything. You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree."

It scares me sometimes when I learn of local historical societies who have to disband because they can't attract new members or their members are so old, they can't keep their museum open. That was the case a few years ago, when the Pavilion Historical Society disbanded and sent some of their collections to us for safe keeping.

In the past two weeks, I learned of two other historical societies that are on the brink of disbanding. Right now, the LeRoy Historical Society is still growing and enjoys the support of a very diverse group of members. And we are most appreciative of the support of our business members. Many of our members are the younger members of the community who know about our commitment to student education.

We know that they do not have the time to attend meetings or lectures but we benefit from



their financial support. Luckily, David Grayson has encouraged me to share historical articles in the *LeRoy Pennysaver* that fulfills our mission to share the history of LeRoy. And luckily, LeRoy has a great history that is fascinating and worth the effort to preserve. We have the story of women's education, American entrepreneurial success, innovation, significant art and artists, and political relevance.

I like to think that the work of the Historical Society has only just begun and there is so much more to do. I am still buoyed by the excitement of kids when they discover how to churn butter or when they find the name of Myron Pierson on the Civil War monument. I am proud of the work of the volunteers who help place flags on the graves of veterans for Memorial Day. There is a lot of

satisfaction in helping folks find their family in the clipping file or the genealogy files. Imagine what it is like to show someone a photograph of their grandmother or uncle who they had never seen before! I wish more people could be at the door when our visitors walk in to exclaim - "I've always wanted to stop and today we're here! I can't believe there's a Jell-O Museum." Last year, a lot of you helped make the Mini Cooper folks welcome - - and they are still talking about their visit to LeRoy.

If you are not a member of the Historical Society, we encourage you to join us and help support our efforts. If you decide to join at the \$50 level, we still have a few copies of the special edition of the *LeRoy History Saver* that we will send you. But we welcome any member at any level.

Correction: Very sorry that Shirley Garner was slighted in last week's article and was mistakenly named Sylvia several times.

Black Wooden Spindled Quilt Rack Missing

If someone removed a black wooden spindled quilt rack from the back of my blue truck, I would really like to have it returned. It was given to me by my grandmother and it belonged to her mother. It has a lot of sentimental value.

If you could return it, no questions asked, put it on the back porch of the LeRoy House.

Lynne Belluscio