

# “Loyalty, Purity, and the Flame of Freedom’s Fires”



by **Lynne Belluscio**

I'm almost finished with the newest barn quilt. It is in commemoration of New York State's adoption of women's suffrage in 1917. All across the state, communities are recognizing the contributions that were made to guarantee the right of women to vote. I will be designing a second barn quilt that will be at the Oatka Festival for folks to paint. That barn quilt will have nine squares, each with a different symbolic pattern. One square will be the "log cabin" pattern, for the women pioneers. One will be symbolic of Ingham University. Another for Charlotte LeRoy. There will be one for Susan B. Anthony and another for Elizabeth Cady Stanton. In the meantime, this one needs a home. So if you are interested in having this barn quilt which is 8 x 8, contact me at 768-7433 or email me at jel-

lodirector@frontiernet.net.

The bold colors of purple, white and gold are the colors adopted by the Women's National Party in 1913. The purple is for loyalty. The white for purity and the yellow or gold is for "the Flame of Freedom's Fires." They are the colors being used in 2017 during the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in New York. (Yes it has been brought to my attention that the purple and gold are the colors of Pavilion Central School, but that is just coincidence) The gold traces it's history to 1867, when Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were in Kansas, campaigning for women's rights. They adopted the state flower, the sunflower and it's golden color. Many flags, pins and banners were all yellow. (In England, the colors of women's suffrage were purple, white and green.)

In addition to finding a home for this barn quilt, LeRoy will have a new historic marker. Delia Phillips, was the first woman to vote in LeRoy. That election was held on April 2, 1918 at the Municipal Building. This past week, I went to the Village Board and asked them to approve the placement of the historic marker in the area in front of the Municipal Building. I also asked them to contribute \$500 toward the purchase of the marker. Thank you gentlemen for your support. As I reminded

them, in 1917, the men of LeRoy voted against giving women suffrage, and this gesture would help rectify that historical error. The Historical Society will need to raise another \$1000 or more, to complete the project. Commemorative t-shirts with this design will be available for sale soon and during the Oatka Festival for \$19.17 and all proceeds will go toward the historic marker project. Donations may be made to the LeRoy Historical Society, designated to the Suffrage Project. I will be ordering the new marker this week, and it will take about two months for it to be shipped. We hope to plan a special dedication in the fall. In the meantime, we hope to learn a little more about Miss Philips. She was 91 when she voted for the first time and lived on Myrtle Street. We'd like to locate some relatives.

In the meantime, the exhibit at LeRoy House, "Remember the Ladies" was featured in the Batavia Daily, in an article by Mallory Dieffenbach. Visitors seem to enjoy exploring the journey I have taken in learning about women's history. I had the opportunity today to talk with some recent high school graduates from Buffalo. "So what do you learn about women's history in high school, because when I was in high school, we didn't talk about women's history." "Rosa Parks. Susan B. An-

thon. Women during the war. Women's suffrage." Good answers I told them. "What do you know about Title IX?" "Equal opportunity for women students, especially in sports." "You bet. And when I was in school, we could only play half-court basketball, because they thought full court was too strenuous." One of the advisors with the student group, had received her masters from SUNY Brockport, and was a gym teacher. "Title IX was a turning point for women's sports." "And if I tell you that in LeRoy, in 1857, women dared to go to college, and their parents who paid for that education were flirting with danger, because in the 1800s it was believed that if you stimulated a woman's brain, she might become infertile and not be able to have children. It was also believed that women were too fragile to be educated. Women were considered passive, dependent on men and ill suited for life outside the domestic realm and their education was valuable only to become educated mothers and wives." One of the boys in the group piped up. "My mother has her Phd. I don't think she would agree with any of that." "Yes, it does sound silly today, but it's important to remember that is where we have come from. Have any of you heard of Mary Wollstonecraft? She lived in England in the 1700s and she said that women do not want power over men; they just want power over themselves. And Jeannette Rankin, the first woman in Congress said, 'We're half the people; we should be half the Congress.'"

The exhibit continues to grow. Soon I will have labels for the "Women on the Walls" which will give a brief explanation of who the women are in the portraits throughout LeRoy House. There are some interesting stories.