

Bicentennial Committee To Be Formed

by Lynne Belluscio

The LeRoy Historical Society will be creating a committee for the Town's 200th Anniversary which will be commemorated on Friday, June 8, 2012. On that date, in 1812, the New York State Legislature approved a new town, in Genesee County, to be created from the Western portion of the Town of Caledonia. (*See last weeks article for additional history.*)

The Town was called Bellona, but was changed a year later to LeRoy. I am researching that part of the story and have been in contact with the New York State Archives and the New York State Library in Albany. I am curious who decided that the name should be changed and who petitioned the legislature. Was it the people from Bellona or was it Herman LeRoy? After all, Herman owned only a portion of the land in the new town. Maybe his ego played a part in this decision and he used some of his political influence to have the town named after himself. As far as we know he never came into this part of New York, and it wasn't until 1822 that he sent his son to become the land agent. Anyway, that's some of the mysteries that I hope to pursue.

In the meantime, Irene Walters, the Town Historian and Chris Smith from the Town Board have agreed to meet with the Bicentennial Committee. Sue Doemling, President of the LeRoy Historical Society has agreed to work with the committee. (She wants fireworks that night.) And we are looking for a few other folks to help with the project. If

you have an interest, give me a call at 768-7433. We expect to have a meeting in October.

Here are some of the ideas that have been proposed:

#1. Historic Marker on Trigon Park - Since the first Town meeting was held in the school on the town square (Trigon Park), there will be a dedication ceremony on the evening of June 8.

#2. Lecture Series about the history of the Town of LeRoy.

#3. Time Capsule.

#4. Essay contest for students in LeRoy about the best things about living in LeRoy and LeRoy History.

#5. Bicentennial Barn Quilt Project with a unique Town design painted by the citizens of LeRoy to be displayed in the Town Hall and erected on the Town barns.

#6. Series of articles about the Town in the *Pennysaver*.

#7. Working with the Oatka Festival for a Bicentennial Celebration.

#8. An exhibit of quilts at LeRoy House to coincide with the Barn Quilt project.

#9. Town Bicentennial information to be included in the Genesee County Tourism Guide.

#10. Concert to include the 1812 Overture (With cannons?).

1812 was an auspicious year. The United States declared war on Great Britain and in October, General Stephen Van Rensselaer was defeated in the Battle of Queenston Heights, Canada on the Niagara Frontier by the British and the Indians. About 100 Americans were killed or wounded and British General Isaac Brock was killed during the engagement. (His statue can be seen as you cross into Canada at the Lewiston bridge.

A small monument to his horse is nearby). James Madison was reelected president of the United States, defeating DeWitt Clinton of New York. (Dolly Madison was known for serving ice cream and making it popular. So maybe our June 8 event should be an ice cream social!)

I also discovered that the political term "gerrymandering" came into use in 1812. In Massachusetts, the legislature decided that to give political advantage to particular senatorial offices, the usual county lines would not be followed and new senatorial districts would be drawn. The bill was signed by the Massachusetts Governor, Elbridge Gerry. One of the new districts resembled the outline of a salamander, so the district was called a Gerrymander.



The third LeRoy Barn Quilt on the entrance to the Jell-O Gallery. This geometric design, is a 4 x 4 foot square which has been named "Jell-O Jigglers." The colors represent some of the Jell-O flavors, lemon, lime, grape, strawberry and orange. The Historical Society will have several 4 x 4 boards ready for design and several 8 x 8 boards available. If you are interested in purchasing the boards or need help with designs, call 768-7433.

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