

Music To Stir The Patriotic Bosom

by Lynne Belluscio

Plans are complete for the Bicentennial Program on Friday, June 8 and we hope that most of you feel welcome to stop by Trigon Park for a unique experience for this community. I asked Denise Duthe to put together the music for the evening and she has done a spectacular job.

The intention is to invite folks - young and old to add music to the evening. She has gathered an ecumenical choir from the churches and choral groups from the Wolcott Street School and Holy Family School. The Marching Knights will be performing, as well as the Knightengals and the Good Knights. Also performing that night will be the "Chimers" from the Presbyterian Church. And the LeRoy Town Band will play under the tent after the Town Meeting and before the fireworks.

Of course everyone will be invited to participate in the singing of the "Star Spangled Banner", but as most of you know, it was not our National Anthem until 1931 and hadn't been written when LeRoy's pioneers gathered for the first town meeting. (It was written in 1814). At the time that the first Town Board met, the most recognized national song was "Hail Columbia". The music had been written in 1789 for the inauguration of George Washington. The lyrics were written in 1798 and Hail Columbia was used as the National Anthem until World War I. Today it is played in honor of the Vice President, preceded by four ruffles and flourishes. The chorus:

*Firm, united let us be,
Rallying round our liberty,
As a band of brothers joined,
Peace and safety we shall find*

Another song that most of us remember from school is "My Country Tis of Thee." The music is familiar as the British song "God Save the King" but the American words were written by Samuel Francis Smith and it was first sung at a children's Independence Day Celebration in Boston, on July 4, 1831. There are thirteen verses (and no, not all



thirteen will be sung on June 8).

I wanted Denise to ask the ecumenical choir to sing "God of Our Fathers". This hymn was written by Daniel Roberts, an Episcopal minister from a small rural church in Brandon, Vermont. (This song is not to be confused with "Faith of Our Fathers" which was written in 1849 to commemorate the plight of persecuted Catholics from the time of the creation of the Church of England under King Henry the 8th). *God of Our Fathers* was written during the national Centennial in 1876. It was also chosen as the hymn during the celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the United States Constitution. The trumpet fanfare at the beginning of the song was added at that time.

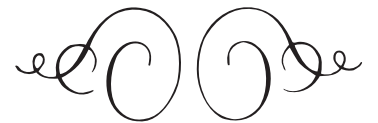
Probably the most moving piece of music that will be presented on June 8, will be *God Bless America* which will be sung by Patricia Fussell. The song was written in 1918 by Irving Berlin while he was serving in the U.S. Army. In 1938, with the rise of Hitler, Irving Berlin, who was Jewish, felt it was time to revive *God Bless America* as a song of peace. It was introduced during an Armistice Day radio broadcast

by Kate Smith. It became one of her trademark songs. On September 11, 2001, in the midst

of national upheaval because of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, members of the United States Congress gathered on the steps of the Capitol building in Washington and broke out in a spontaneous verse of God Bless America.

*God Bless America
Land that I love
Stand beside her, and guide her
Through the night with a light
from above
From the mountains, to the
prairies,
To the oceans, white with foam
God bless America, My home
sweet home
God bless America, My home
sweet home.*

Please join us for a memorable evening on June 8, at 7:30 and enjoy the music.



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