

Now For A Commercial Break

by Lynne Belluscio

The Historical Society recently sent out a questionnaire to its members to see what programs might be of interest, and to learn which benefits they had utilized.

Those members who live near LeRoy had visited the Jell-O Gallery for free and had used their guest admission coupons. Many had used the gift shop discount. Many had attended the annual meeting in May and supported the organization by attending the annual dinner auction. The popularity of the quarterly newsletter was mentioned by most everyone. There were suggestions for future programs and exhibits and in response the Historical Society is planning a candlelight tour of LeRoy House in the fall when the "ghosts" of LeRoy House will tell the stories.

We received one interesting note from a long time member, who asked what is available in the research library. People who come to the library are often surprised at what is available. For genealogical research there are many resources. One file cabinet is filled with small little newspaper clippings – wedding and birth announcements, obituaries and news articles. Then there are the notebooks, filled with information about Genesee County families and the other set of notebooks filled with information about the origins of the Italian families in LeRoy.

The library also has files of genealogical research and correspondence as well as printed volumes of family genealogy.

Just recently we utilized old phone books to determine where someone was living in the 1950s. However, we do not have birth certificates, marriage certificates or death certificates. Nor do we have land or property transfer records. Those are on file at the County Clerk's office in Batavia. Recently there has been a lot of interest in researching the history of buildings and houses. That information is a little illusive and we do not have files on particular buildings. That takes a lot of digging.

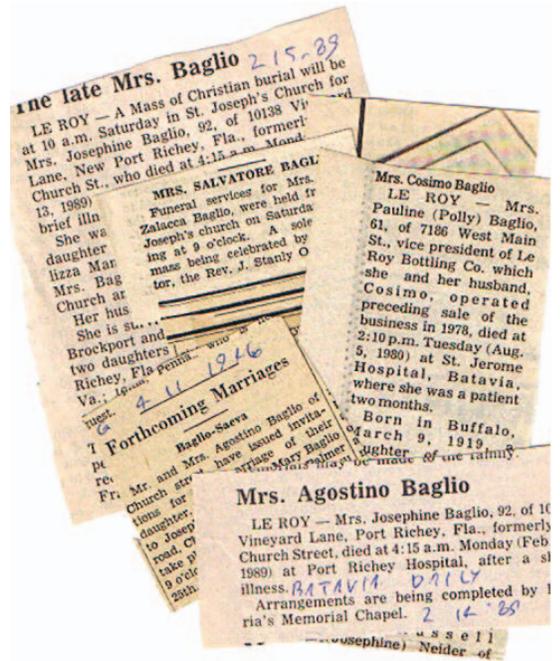
We also have compiled lists of Ingham University students because we receive frequent requests about whether great grandma attended Ingham. Jim DeLooze is in the process of reorganizing and digitalizing the photograph collection. This is taking a lot of time but it has paid off several times. Jim is able to do a computer search to look for images already in the system. All members of the Historical Society have free access to the research library which includes the history files, which continue to grow as more research is accumulated.

We also maintain the microfilm collection of the *LeRoy Gazette*, Ingham University and the Presbyterian Church. And just a note about microfilm and digitalization of records. Historians and archivists are more and more concerned about the "shelf life" of records. When microfilming was popular, everyone rushed to microfilm their collections. In some cases,

the original documents, especially newspapers were thrown out. Now, with digitalization there is concern that unless the computers that read the disks are preserved, or the systems updated frequently, the digital records could be lost. Microfilm lasts longer than a digital image, but with the phasing out of film, this could be a monumental issue. Just recently, I had to retrieve the records of the Grand Army of the Republic that I had stored on a floppy disc. Luckily I had an operating computer at home that was 13 years old that could retrieve the material. That material will be printed out and stored as a hard copy.

The Historical Society also has an archival collection. Some of the material has been indexed, but a lot of it remains in boxes that need to be sorted and rehoused in acid-free folders. Some day, we hope to be able to hire a part-time archivist to help with this project.

It was frustrating recently when we received a request for some material that I know we have, but the last time I saw it was when the archives were in the LeRoy



Clippings from the Baglio file.

House. Since then, most of the archival material has been moved to the 2nd floor Burton Spiller Archive Center and those files are in a "miscellaneous" box – one of thirty such boxes.

So with all of this said, the Historical Society is not just the Jell-O Gallery or the furniture in LeRoy House. There are many facets to the organization, including all the educational programming that is done with the school students as well as the library. As always, we could use your support and the best way to support the organization is to become a member. An individual membership is only \$20.



NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

Please make checks payable to the
"LeRoy Historical Society"

MAIL TO:
LeRoy Historical Society
23 East Main Street, PO Box 176
Le Roy, NY 14482-0176

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