

Coincidence?

by Lynne Belluscio

High school student Elizabeth Bolton has been working this year at the Jell-O Gallery and has become a great asset to the team. Her personality and enthusiasm enchants our visitors. Next weekend she will become one of the "ghosts" of LeRoy House. She has agreed to portray fifteen-year old Anner Peck from East Bethany who was a young student at Ingham University. Anner has come for tea with Mary Cox, whose family lives in LeRoy House, and whose father is the university's chancellor. (You may remember Mary from last year. She told the story of the peacocks - - left behind by the former residents of LeRoy House, the Bartows.)

I gave Elizabeth a copy of Anner's diary and she started reading it last week. "Mrs. Belluscio, you're not going to believe this. My birthday is the same day as Anner's! January 18." "I guess you were meant to tell Anner's story. I think you'll find her diary very interesting.

She was only 15 when she came to LeRoy to start her studies at Ingham. She was homesick and she hated the food. She didn't like her room because it was on the back of the building and she missed out on all the activity, especially the soldiers when they came to serenade the girls. She wasn't very impressed by Mary Cox's father, who tended to drone on at lectures and sermons. I think she was quite a typical young college student."

Sunday, February 4, 1862 - We, that is, Father, Mother and myself, started for Ingham University early this afternoon. On arriving, after an excellent sleigh ride, we looked at the rooms, and chose one in LeRoy Hall which is up but one flight of stairs, and occupied by a Miss Merle who is to be my room mate. We then went down town to get a few little things that I shall need, so that it was after four, I should think, when I came for good. Father and Mother staid a little while to arrange different matters, but when they left I did not know what to do, so I commenced using my handkerchief vigorously. Soon

Miss Merle came and took me to my room, and I took off my hood and shawl, opened my trunk, and had commenced arranging my possessions in the bureau when a bell rang which she told me was for supper, so I went down with her and was seated at one of four tables, while she went to another. The supper consisted of biscuits and butter, applesauce with nutmeg (which I detest) cookies with caraway seed, tea and water. I did not mind that, however as I had previously made up my mind to be starved. After tea we went to the schoolroom to attend prayers, and then up stairs again. When it came to study hours, I read one of Miss Merle's books while she studied, and thus endeth the first lesson."

Anner continued to keep her diary during her freshman year -- known at Ingham as her "Novian" year. On April 9th she wrote "*The Physiology class ranged itself upon the rostrum precisely at two o'clock this afternoon. Part of us did very well but part did not. I was questioned six times and did not fail once exactly although there was a very little I did not say quite right. If I was ever glad to see the clock point three it was today. After us the Geology class was examined. We received more good news tonight from the seat of war. Another great battle (The Battle of Shiloh) has been fought in which from thirty-five to forty thousand of the rebels were killed and from eighteen to twenty thousand of our troops. It is good news in one sense of the word but it is terrible to think of such a number of lives sacrificed over fifty thousand. I was tardy for breakfast this morning for the first time.*" The next day she went to a baptism and had a cryptic remark to make about Mary Cox's father: "*Dr. Cox performed the ceremony and as in his lectures Tuesday evenings, did not know when to stop.*"

June 3rd - 1862 - We Received sad news today, especially so for those at the college. There was a report that Colonel Stanton was wounded in the battle (Fair Oaks) that has recently occurred, whether slightly or mortally we

cannot tell. They say that Mrs. Stanton fainted away when she heard it but I don't know how true it is. She will start tonight to go to him. . . ."

Wednesday Sept 24 - 1862 - My roommate is practicing on the guitar in the room because she is afraid to go alone into any of the music rooms. It makes studying a rather difficult occupation for me."

Friday October 10 I have had the blues terribly today the chief cause I guess but hardly know myself that I failed in one or two of my classes and this noon I cried so hard that I was obliged to stay out of the schoolroom and one recitation this afternoon. Father made arrangements I expect for me to go to the dentists tomorrow. I dread to think of it but I must do it or I will have a worse time soon beside a bad looking smile."

Anner Peck graduated in 1866 and then taught music in Batavia before teaching in Chicago. She married Robert McWilliams in 1875 and moved to Detroit.

