

# Honoring Those Who Served



Undated photo of the D.A.R. Marking Revolutionary Graves (volunteers this Saturday do not need to wear suits and ties and ladies do not need to wear their hats).

by **Lynne Belluscio**

Saturday morning, May 27, teams of volunteers will meet at the entrance of Macpelah Cemetery on North Street to place nearly 500 flags on the graves of our veterans. We will be meeting a little early, at 8:30, because there are three funerals scheduled that day. If you plan to join us, please park next door at the Jell-O factory and walk down the street. Bring bug spray (the black flies are out), water, and sun screen. It usually takes 2 or 3 hours to place all of the flags and one good thing about all the rain, the ground isn't as hard as usual.



The history of "Decoration Day" which is now known as "Memorial Day" goes back to the Civil War. On May 6, 1866 the nearby village of Waterloo decorated the graves

of soldiers who had lost their lives in the Civil War. Waterloo was declared the official Birthplace of Memorial Day by President Lyndon Johnson in 1966.

The placing of flags on Revolutionary War veterans, as far as I can determine, began with the Daughters of the American Revolution which was founded on October 11, 1890 in Washington, D.C. Frustrated by their exclusion from men's organizations that had been formed to perpetuate the memory of ancestors that had fought in the Revolution, the D.A.R. was - -and is - - open to women who can trace their ancestry to a person who fought in the Revolution. The paperwork and research is very precise and demanding. It has to be based entirely on primary source material such as military records, birth and death records and marriage records. The LeRoy chapter of the D.A.R. was founded on February 25, 1916. It was named the Te-Car-Na-Wun-Na Chapter, a Seneca word for "many rapids" in reference to the rapids of the Oatka Creek in the village of LeRoy. There were 36 charter members and Martha Keeney Harmon was named the first Regent. When the LeRoy Historical Society was formed in 1940 and acquired the his-

toric LeRoy House, the D.A.R. designated the LeRoy House as its permanent meeting place. At that time, many antiques and archival material that had been collected by the D.A.R. was given to the Historical Society. Through the efforts of the D.A.R. the historic marker was placed at the apex of the Triangle Tract on Summit Street. As membership numbers declined, the local Te-Car-Na-Wun-Na Chapter in 1963 decided to merge with the Batavia chapter



In the 1920s, the local chapter of the D.A.R. surveyed the local cemeteries. Their primary goal was to locate the Revolutionary veterans graves and to document the gravestones, but they also surveyed the entire cemetery. Many of the fragile onionskin typed copies of their surveys are the only records of their work and provide invaluable informa-

tion which in many cases has disappeared as the gravestones are damaged or have become so worn that they are no longer legible. As the Historical Society has slowly resurveyed the eight abandoned cemeteries in LeRoy, we have come to rely on the work that was done by the D.A.R. Our surveys have included the East Main Cemetery; the Keeney Road Cemetery; the St. Marks Cemetery; the Twing Road Cemetery, and the west half of the Myrtle Street Cemetery. Although some field work has been done, not all of the photographs and written accounts have been assembled. Remaining is the east half of the Myrtle Street Cemetery; the Jug City Cemetery; the Fort Hill Cemetery and the Asbury Road Cemetery.

Veterans from World War I and World War II were included in the records of the American Legion, who at one time decorated graves. These lists were turned over to the superintendent of Macpelah when the Legion could no longer afford the expense of buying the flags and had fewer volunteers to put the flags out at Macpelah. Veterans who have passed since then, and veterans from the Vietnam War whose graves should be decorated, are added to the list if family members notify the cemetery or the Historical Society. Through the past several years, many names have been added to the list for flags because families have notified us at the Historical Society. And the names include anyone who has served in the military, not just those who served during wartime.

If you would like to join us on Saturday, please feel free to join the volunteers. If you would like to make a donation to help pay for the new flags that will be put out this year, donations can be made to "Flags" LeRoy Historical Society PO Box 176 LeRoy, NY 14482. We appreciate any help that will make this project a success.