

# Mother's Work Is Never Done

by Lynne Belluscio

For twenty-five years the LeRoy Historical Society has offered a hands-on program for the Wolcott Street School fourth grade students. It's called Pioneer Sampler. It provides an opportunity for the students to learn a little about the life of the early settlers. The kids churn butter, roll out biscuits that are baked on the griddle in the open hearth fireplace; they scrub clothes on the back porch and then they play some old fashioned games. This year they will have an opportunity to sew some pieces for a quilt. We've been doing Pioneer Sampler for so long, that the parents of some of the kids remember coming to LeRoy House when they were in fourth grade.

It begs the question, why are the kids still doing this? First of all, it is important for kids to learn that there is change over time. That a long time ago, life was different. That kids didn't have electronic games yet they still had fun playing trap ball and jump rope. We don't expect that the kids are going to grow up and work in a dairy making butter, or working in a museum cooking over an open hearth. We just hope that by doing some of these things they will appreciate what has happened before. Maybe it will spark their excitement about learning.

At one time I was a resource teacher and the program that we were offering had a - - I guess you'd call it a motto: "I hear - I forget. I see - I remember. I do - I understand." You can read about making a quilt, and you see a quilt, but until you actually sew on a quilt, you can't appreciate the work that goes into a quilt. Henry Ford is credited with saying, "History is bunk," which is confusing since he founded one of the largest living history museums in the United States. In actuality, he built the museum not as a museum, but as a place for kids to learn about the progress that had gone before - - the work of Edison, the Wright brothers and George Washington Carver.

The students learned in the actual environment of Edison and

Carver. I guess it was a type of early charter school.

None of our programs at LeRoy House would be possible unless we had some very dedicated volunteers. Silvia Frazer will be tending the fire in the kitchen and helping the kids to bake biscuits. Cheryll Fernaays has agreed to churn butter and Barb Elliott is on the back porch scrubbing clothes. Joanne Graham has mastered the knuckle-knocker, the graces and skittles. And Shelia Furr will be quilting. Our volunteers are wonderful and do a terrific job. And I'd like to thank the moms who were able to chaperone the kids this year. The teachers had a hard time getting

volunteers. One mom even took the afternoon off from work. With Mother's Day this Sunday, the Pioneer Sampler activities might be a little more poignant since the kids are experiencing what mom had to do in the "good old days." - A Mother's Work is Never Done - - and that certainly was the truth when she had to churn the butter, cook over an open fire, scrub the clothes and make all the clothes and quilts for her family.

We hope that the kids who come to LeRoy House get excited about history. Every so often I hear people say that the kids of today aren't interested in history. I don't



**Back Row: Shelia Furr and Joanne Graham. Front Row: Cheryll Fernaays, Barb Elliott and Sylvia Fraser.**

believe that. However something can dull their enthusiasm between Pioneer Sampler and their American history exam. I didn't care much for World history in high school and wasn't all that great in American history. I really expected to go into some type of science career. I wanted to be a geologist. I became a teacher. I met my old high school American history teacher a few years back, and he was surprised that I was in the "history business." I guess I'd rather think of it as being in the business of our kids' future, and if we can use history as a way of getting them interested and excited about learning, than that is our mission.

If your kids, or your grand kids have been able to visit LeRoy House for one of our fifteen programs, we could use your help. Perhaps you might be interested in becoming a volunteer. Or you might be interested in becoming a docent at LeRoy House. We'll be having some training sessions soon. Just call 585-768-7433 for information. Or, you can become a member of the Historical Society and make a contribution that will help fund our programs. Just fill in the form below and send it back to us. It's more than preserving our history, it's really an investment in our future and the future of our community's children.



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