

A Barn Storm

by Lynne Belluscio

I never imagined that the LeRoy Barn Quilt project would take the town by storm. I figured 25 or 30 quilts. I think at last count we are closing in on 100. I've been asked why it's become so popular and I have to think that LeRoy, after all it's been through lately, needed an opportunity to be happy about something. And discovering one of these colorful quilts on a drive through the countryside is a delightful experience.

In a few weeks, with the help of the Tourism Office of Genesee County Chamber of Commerce, we'll have a slick, colorful brochure and map. In the meantime, because a lot of folks are interested in finding the quilts, we have a very plain, black and white folder with the addresses of the quilts and a simple map. You can find the maps at the Jell-O Gallery, Crocker's, D & R Depot, Timberline Campground, Genesee Country Campground, Magnolia's Antique Shop and Crnkovich Farm Market.

Right now, on the back porch of LeRoy House are three 8x8 boards and eight 4x4 boards, waiting to be painted. All of them have been sold. Quilts patterns with the names of "Prosperity", "Dog Bones", "Corn and Beans", "Circling Fields", "Stars and Stripes", "Lady of the Lake", and "Sunflower" all have a story to tell. Eventually those stories will be posted on the LeRoy Barn Quilt website.

One of the more interesting stories has to do with the first barn quilt, "Jell-O Jigglers" which I painted last year during the Oatka Festival. It hangs in front of the Jell-O Gallery. A few months ago we were contacted by Eileen Casey Gianiodis. She told us that she had made a crib quilt based on the Jiggler design. She had a friend that was going to hand dye some material and make kits for the quilt. This week we received the quilt and three kits. We sold one kit within 15 minutes to a lady from Syracuse. Eileen wrote a great letter with her quilt. I'd like to share a bit of it with you.

"The inspiration for this quilt comes from my hometown,



LeRoy, NY, the birthplace of Jell-O. LeRoy celebrates its Bicentennial in 2012. A part of the celebration includes a barn quilt trail. Local organizers have invited residents to make their own barn quilts and be part of the tour. The Jell-O Museum's quilt square is aptly called Jell-O Jigglers. It's bright and colorful and looks like triangles of fun Jell-O colors. For many people, their hometowns are places they can't wait to leave. I was no different.

It's now, that I live more than 450 miles away, that I realize what a true gem it is. LeRoy is a town small enough where you can walk to the post office, school, local restaurants and yes, even to the Jell-O Museum. It's small enough that most people know you, or your parents. And it's a town with a history – not only with its founding, its Jell-O ties, but my own.

My mother grew up in LeRoy. My grandfather was a police officer and owned a hardware store there. My grandmother worked for the village. My great grandfather was mayor. My parents still live there. The streets are full of people who I either went to school with, or whose children I went to school with. The cemetery markers remind me where we come from. It's

personal and special. I hope you enjoy this quilt as much as I have!"

This week, an exhibit about the LeRoy barn quilts is opening in the 2nd floor exhibit room in LeRoy House. There are four quilts that inspired barn quilts, as well as stories about many of the farms and barns where the barn quilts are located. The 4x4 barn quilt that was painted by the 2nd grade students at the Wolcott Street School will be on exhibit this summer. They chose the

pattern "Log Cabin" because they had been studying the pioneers and there are sixteen log cabins on the barn quilt. In the center of each cabin is a bright orange square that represents the hearth fire. Eventually the barn quilt will hang in the 2nd grade hall at the school.

If you are still interested in a barn quilt, we are selling them \$50 for 4x4 and \$150 for 8x8. All proceeds help to fund the bicentennial this year. Call 768-7433.

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