

Getting Ready For Winter

by Lynne Belluscio

Just like everyone else, the Historical Society has to get ready for winter. "Cora" the cow, who greets visitors on the porch of the Jell-O Gallery has been taken downstairs to her winter quarters in the transportation exhibit. The winter entrance to the Gallery, under the porch, has been opened and the stairs are closed. The window boxes with the geraniums have been brought inside and put in the window wells in the basement. We'll try to keep them watered and alive until next spring.

The volunteers who help keep the sidewalk shoveled are being called and put on the weekly sign up - (we're still looking for a few more people who can help out with that. If you can help - give us a call.) The snow blower is getting a tune up and we've filled the buckets with sno-melt.

The thermostats have been reprogrammed to conserve energy and the heat at LeRoy House has been turned down to 58 degrees. The gardens have been cleaned and we're mulching the three fragile Ingham rose bushes. The porch furniture has been stacked and covered. The screen door on LeRoy House has been taken down and moved to the back porch.

At home, I have 3 pallets of wood pellets in the garage for the two pellet stoves. The chicken house is winterized to keep the wind and snow from blowing in. I've put two bales of hay over the water line into the barn. The geraniums have been brought in. I've plugged in the heated birdbath and filled the bird feeders and bought two 50 lb bags of sunflower seeds. The curtains in the log cabin are back up for the winter. I've moved the couch from in front of the window to in front of the fireplace. I dug out the draft dodgers for the doors.

This weekend, I'll unpack the curtains for my bed. I have what is called a "campaign" bed with a curved frame on the top. In the late 18th and early 19th century, it was common to put up "bed hangings" that would enclose the bed. There are eight separate curtains that are tied to the frame.



It's like sleeping in a pup tent. (The LeRoy family bed that is on the second floor of LeRoy House is the same type of bed, although it doesn't have bed hangings.)

Getting ready for winter, for some people means putting winter weight oil in the car and putting on the snow tires. The decision to sign a plowing contract has to be made. Not so long ago, getting ready for winter meant taking down the screens and putting up the storm windows and maybe banking the house foundation with bales of straw or hay. Some rooms would be closed off and not used in the winter.

In the old days, there were many more tasks that had to be done before winter set in. Firewood had to be dry, stacked and covered. Fireplaces had to be uncovered and chimneys cleaned. The root cellar had to be filled. Fruits and vegetables had to be put down (or put up depending on what you did with them.) Eggs would be stored in water glass because chickens don't lay eggs in the winter. Some families had to move the heavy iron stove from the summer kitchen into the house kitchen.

My family always had to get an order of coal delivered into the coal bin. My grandmother would close up the outhouse that was a walk away from the house and get the outhouse that was

attached to the house ready for winter use with a fresh bucket of ashes. Heavy wool blankets and quilts would be brought out of storage, aired out and put on beds. Woolen underwear, quilted petticoats, mufflers, and wool shawls became attire for the season. The sleigh would be brought out and a heavy coat of wax would be put on the runners. The wheels on the farm wagon would be taken off and the set of bobs would be put on. The sleigh bells would be taken down, shined up and ready to be put on the horse. The heavy buffalo skin lap robes would be aired out and the foot-warmers would be put near the fireplace, ready to be

filled with hot coals.

As daylight hours shortened in the winter, it was necessary to rely on kerosene lamps or candles and folks had to have everything in order. (Today we just prepare for higher electric bills.) It was the time to remind everyone to keep the pump handle up so it wouldn't freeze. Tools would be greased and oiled so they wouldn't rust. And it was time to get out the checkerboard and the spinning wheel for those long hours in the winter. That was then and now is now. Some of my friends have already booked their airline tickets to Florida which I guess is another way to get ready for winter.



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