

## Lewiston History Mysteries

*"There is no town in the country richer in picturesque scenery and historical interest than Lewiston."*  
-- Sanford's History of Niagara County, 1878

### Amazing Story of Survival at the Devil's Hole Massacre

The Seneca Indians own and operate the casino in Niagara Falls. However, it was a different story 242 years ago.

Back then, the British had troops in this area and the Senecas were designated by their Iroquois Nation as "Keepers of the Western Door." For a number of reasons, things weren't going well between the British and Senecas.

Hostilities broke out on Sept. 14, 1763, when the Senecas ambushed a British wagon trail at Devil's Hole, an area which is now a state park just a couple of miles south of the Village of Lewiston.

Dozens of British soldiers were killed and many jumped or were thrown off the deep gorge cliffs.

However, there were three survivors. One was the 13-year-old drummer boy, William Mathews, who ran and jumped off the cliff in terror. He was caught in a tree when his drum straps got caught in the branches.

Later in life, Mr. Mathews became a wood craftsman across the river in Queenston, Ontario. He entertained listeners for years with his tales of the famous Massacre and how he survived his miracle jump.



**Drummer boy  
saved by a branch**

### Modern History Quiz

- 1) What is the name of the bestselling book that chronicles growing up in Lewiston in the 1950s?
- 2) Where was Lewiston's first stop light?
- 3) Before 1960, what Lewiston street was used to get up and down the Escarpment?
- 4) What establishment occupied Apple Granny's present location?
- 5) What book was published in 2001 that details Lewiston's rich history?
- 6) What volunteer group preserves and promotes our area's history?

#### Answers

- 1) Too Close to the Falls by Catherine Gildiner
- 2) 4th and Center Streets
- 3) Portage Road
- 4) Helm's Grocery Store
- 5) Lewiston: Crown Jewel of the Niagara by Margaret Laurie
- 6) The Historical Association of Lewiston, of course! We're located at the Lewiston Museum, 465 Plain St, Lewiston, NY 14092 Phone: 800-714-9540

## Welcome to Lewiston, NY

### The Square Mile of History!

We hope you enjoy your visit to our historic and charming village.

To keep up with the latest news and historical tidbits, join our free email list. Just send an email to:  
**join@HistoricLewiston.org**

### Tryon's Tailor Shop

Josiah Tryon, the volunteer leader of the local effort to help escaping slaves from the South, ran a tailor shop on Center Street. If you look closely, his shop was located in the building on the right side of this historical photo, on the spot that is now Apple Granny Restaurant's parking lot. It is not known when it was built or what became of it.



Josiah befriended bounty hunters looking for escaped slaves and offered to make them jackets as a gift. He made them bright colors, so everyone in town would know who they were and NOT talk to them!



### Who was the first European woman to set foot in Lewiston?

Mrs. Marie-Therese Cadillac, the 31-year-old French woman who journeyed here in 1702 on her way to visit her husband's post in Detroit. Yes, the same Cadillac they named the car after. But her trip from Quebec City wasn't luxurious. It was 1000 miles by canoe!

## Secret Passages in Lewiston

**Lewiston was the final stop for escaping slaves from the South, seeking freedom in Canada, during the early to mid-1800s.**

They called it the Underground Railroad, even though it wasn't a railroad. The "trains" were the large farm wagons that could conceal and carry a number of slaves. The "tracks" were the back county roads which were used to evade the slave catchers. The "stations" were the homes and churches where the slaves were fed and cared for as they moved along. The "conductors" were the fearless men and women of both races who led the slaves toward freedom, and the "passengers" or "parcels" were the slaves who dared to break for liberty.

Lewiston's citizens hated slavery and many of them volunteered to help smuggle thousands of slaves across the border. There was a code of silence and Lewistonians never trusted or spoke to outsiders about their secret activities.

Lewiston's "station master" was Josiah Tryon. He and his fellow citizens, hid and guided slaves at the First Presbyterian Church at 5th and Cayuga Streets, the Episcopal Church at 465 Plain Street (now the Lewiston Museum) and at a home on the river called "the house of the seven cellars." Josiah used a row boat countless times, under the cover of darkness, to carry his precious cargo across the river to Canada and freedom.



This is a rare photo of a secret Underground Railroad passageway in Lewiston. Escaping slaves could see Canada through the window at the end of the tunnel. If they could get across the Niagara River, they were free! (The actual location of this passageway is not disclosed because it is not publicly accessible.)

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**The School of the Arts and Gallery**  
402 Center Street, Lewiston  
(across the street from Apple Granny)

**Contact: Linda Hankin, Director**  
**471-5379 or 905-382-3450**  
**email: schoolofideas@on.aibn.com**