

## Lewiston History Mysteries

Lewiston's shining moment in history happened in the middle of the night. That was when local volunteers in the mid-1800s, helped fugitive slaves from the South secretly reach the Canadian shoreline and freedom. Lewiston was the final stop for countless escapees on what was called the Underground Railroad -- a series of back roads and safe houses that were used by the enslaved to find freedom in the North. Lewistonians were vehemently against slavery and no one ever broke the code of silence.



### Tryon's Folly

The Freedom Crossing book called it the House with 4 Cellars. (You can see the descending cellars in this picture.)

It was built in Lewiston on the bank of the Niagara River in 1830 by Amos Tryon. Amos built it as a place of business and a new home for his wife, Sally Barton, who was Benjamin Barton's (a prominent citizen) daughter. However, because Sally refused to move from their existing home on 4th & Center Street, it was called "Tryon's Folly." But when Josiah, Amos' younger brother, figured out that it was an ideal spot to hide and smuggle slaves fleeing to Canada, it became anything but a folly.

After 1850, it was a crime to help the enslaved, but Josiah and his band of volunteers continued to assist and protect them from bounty hunters and slave catchers who were paid to return them to the South. Josiah (1798-1886), a humble and religious man, lived to see the day when slavery was abolished. He is buried in the Lewiston Cemetery next to the Presbyterian Church.

Today, Tryon's Folly is a private residence and not publicly accessible.

# Lewiston is Freedom Crossing!

Lewiston's shining moment in history happened in the middle of the night. That was when local volunteers in the mid-1800s, helped fugitive slaves from the South secretly reach the Canadian shoreline and freedom. Lewiston was the final stop for countless escapees on what was called the

Underground Railroad -- a series

of back roads and safe houses that were used by the enslaved to find freedom in the North. Lewistonians were vehemently against slavery and no one

ever broke the code of silence.

## The Book that Put Lewiston on the Map

In 1980, when Town of Niagara author, Margaret Goff Clark, published her book, Freedom Crossing, little did she know the impact it would have on school children across the country.



Today, thousands of 4th and 5th graders in the U.S. are required to read the book to get their first exposure to the Underground Railroad and what it meant to American history.

The story takes place in Lewiston and Mrs. Clark included detailed descriptions of many notable landmarks, including the Presbyterian Church, Center Street and Tryon's Folly on River Road.

The fictional heroine of the book, Laura Eastman, a young teenage girl, will also be depicted in the Freedom Crossing Monument to memorialize the book and the ideals that symbolize the courage of both the fugitive slaves and the volunteers who helped them escape as part of the Underground Railroad.

The book is published by Scholastic, the same publisher of the Harry Potter books. It is available at the Lewiston Museum, local bookstores and online.

# New Freedom Crossing Monument Scheduled for Fall 2009 Unveiling

Lewiston's new Freedom Crossing Monument will be a tribute to the courage of escaping slaves who sought freedom in Canada, and to those local volunteers who helped them on their journey.

It was the first project in Western New York approved to receive Niagara River Greenway funds, and is being constructed at no cost to the taxpayers. Also contributing are two organizations, the Margaret L. Wendt and KeyBank Foundations.

The bronze monument will last 1000 years and will commemorate Josiah Tryon, Lewiston's greatest citizen of all time. He was a local tailor, deacon at the Presbyterian Church and the volunteer leader of the local Underground Railroad which helped fugitive slaves get to Canada.

The monument will be located in the park (at the foot of Center St.) on the Niagara River. Organizers are aiming for a Sept. 2009 unveiling.



Here is a small clay model of what the new Freedom Crossing Monument will look like. It will depict Lewiston's Josiah Tryon helping escaping slaves onto his boat. Despite breaking the law, Josiah rowed countless freedom seekers across the swift Niagara river in the dead of night.

Lewiston artist, Susan Geissler, has been commissioned by the Historical Association of Lewiston to create the larger-than-life size bronze monument. She is pictured here in her Youngstown studio doing preliminary design work.



This placemat is brought to you by our sponsor:

### Since 1907: We've made a little history of our own!

- Expanded Emergency Dept
- New Imaging Technology
- Leader in Cardiology Diagnostics
- Maternity Services

*Proud to be part of this area's historic heritage while providing quality care for our patients!*



**Mount St. Mary's is a full-service community hospital serving Western New York and Southern Ontario**  
5300 Military Road, Lewiston, NY 14092  
Call us at 716.297.4800



## Welcome to Lewiston, NY

Lewiston Museum, 469 Plain St. 716-754-4214

Open June 3 - Aug. 26

from Wednesday to Sunday, 1:30-5:30pm

The Historical Association of Lewiston hopes you enjoy your visit to our historic and quaint village. Mark your calendar for our next spectacular Historic Tour of Homes on Dec. 5 & 6, 2009.

To get the latest news and monthly program notes, join our free email list by sending an email to: [join@HistoricLewiston.org](mailto:join@HistoricLewiston.org) You can also see and download our past placemats at our website: [HistoricLewiston.org](http://HistoricLewiston.org)

Historic Lewiston placemats written and designed by Association volunteer, Lee Simonson