

*Lewiston  
History  
Mysteries*

# Joseph Brant: Lewiston's most famous resident of all time

Passionate and adventurous Mohawk leader lived in Lewiston from 1779 to 1785  
His Lewiston farm was located on the southeast corner of Ridge and Creek Roads

*(Excerpts from Famed  
Mohawk Chief by Ann-  
Marie Linnabery,  
Niagara County History  
Center, Lockport)*

## World Leaders Knew Him

He was a hero to some and a villain to others. But one thing is for sure -- everyone knew who he was, including George Washington and King George.

Joseph Brant was probably the Native American of his generation who was the best known to the Americans and British.

He was born in Ohio of humble means but rose to prominence because of a prestigious education, abilities and connections to British officials, particularly the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs for New York, Sir William Johnson.

## Fought for the British Side During American Revolution

At the outbreak of the American Revolution, Brant went to England and pledged Mohawk support. However, when he returned, many of

the Mohawks, and indeed the entire Iroquois Confederacy, wanted to remain neutral. They thought Brant was a radical.

He persevered and ended up recruiting more white citizens who were loyal to Britain (called Loyalists) than Native Americans. The group became known as Brant's Volunteers. He led raids throughout New York State against the Americans and used Fort Niagara, a British stronghold, as his base of operations. That's when Brant moved to Lewiston and bought a farm on Ridge Road in 1779.

Even though he was against killing women and children, and he saved the lives of many prisoners, he earned the nickname "Monster Brant." This bothered him deeply. He was also upset that when natives killed white people it was called a "massacre" but when whites killed natives it "was just part of war."

When the Mohawks were driven away from the Mohawk Valley (Schenectady and Rome, NY area) during the war, they moved to Lewiston to be near Brant. A Mohawk community lined both sides of Ridge Road, from today's Academy Park to Model City Road. Brant's 50 acre farm was on the Southeast

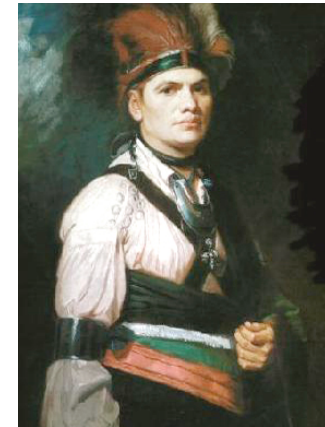
corner of Ridge and Creek Roads. Behind his home was a fresh water spring which still exists and is called Brant's Spring Park. The park is difficult to access and has been called the "smallest park in the United States."

Brant was a devout Anglican and even built a log church near his home on Ridge Road. A bell that was given to the Mohawks in the early 1700s by Queen Anne of England, was brought to this church. However, the bell has been lost to history.

## Moved to Ontario After the War

He was "completely bowed down with grief" when he found out that Britain had lost the war with America. But the British were grateful for his services and gave the Mohawks 760,000 acres of land in Southern Ontario known today as the Grand River Reserve. He and his fellow Mohawks moved there in 1785.

Brant had a colorful and influential personality and left a respected legacy. He always put his loyalty to the Iroquois Six Nations above his relationships with Britain or the U.S. and continuously struggled to improve the lives of the people of the First Nations.



## Joseph Brant (1743-1807)

Brant was a Native American who was a political and military leader during the American Revolution. He sided with the British. After the U.S. won the Revolution, he moved from Lewiston and settled in Canada to the Six Nations Reserve, just south of Brantford, Ontario which was named after him.

## Fascinating Story About Queen Anne's Gifts to the Mohawks

In 1710, Queen Anne of England had gifted the Mohawks a Bible, prayer book and a silver communion service as a token of friendship. These gifts were cherished by the Mohawks.

Many years later, Brant fought for the British side during the American Revolution, and he was afraid that the items would be confiscated by American troops. So he buried them in a field, safe from "grubby" Yankee hands.



After he left Lewiston to settle in Canada, Brant led a secret operation to recover the hidden treasure. He was successful and brought the pieces to a new church he had built called St. Paul's, Her Majesty's Royal Chapel, located in today's Brantford, Ontario. The items are still there and safely kept.

In 1850, the remains of Joseph Brant were moved from the original burial site in Burlington, to a tomb at St. Paul's Chapel. The remains of Brant's son, John Brant, also rest in the tomb.

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

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## Tuscarora Heroes Book

The amazing and true story of how the Tuscaroras saved Lewiston citizens from the brutal British attack during the War of 1812. The book is now available at DiCamillo Bakery and the Lewiston Museum for \$10.



## Tuscarora Heroes Coin

This beautiful new commemorative coin represents the "good luck" the Tuscaroras brought to Lewiston citizens. Available at Apple Granny and the Lewiston Museum for \$10. (All proceeds go to the monument fund.)

## Brant's Lewiston Farm in the 1780s

Here is a map of where Brant's farm was in Lewiston, just southeast of today's Ridge Rd. (Rt. 104) and Creek Rd. (Rt. 18) intersection. (At the time, Lewiston was known as "The Landing.") His land was worked by Indian and African slaves and he was known as a strict but fair master.



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