

## Lewiston History Mysteries

# Lewiston Legends

## Rescue Attempt Sends State Trooper on Wild Ride Down the Escarp- ment Through Under- ground Drainage Tunnel

Fish Creek is the small creek that runs through the Niagara Falls Country Club golf course on top of the Lewiston Escarpment. Before the Robert Moses Parkway was built in the early 1960s, the creek just fell over the edge of the escarpment near Artpark. It was a miniature falls.

However, when the parkway was constructed, a culvert and drain pipe were built to divert the water under the parkway and through a large underground tunnel to the bottom of the escarpment near the Niagara River.

Over 40 years ago, on December 26, 1967, State Trooper Kenneth Troidl rushed to the scene in an attempt to rescue a neighborhood girl who slipped through the tunnel's entrance grate on the golf course. After he and another trooper tied two ropes together, Troidl went into the tunnel. But the incline was so steep and the water was rushing so swiftly, that the spliced rope snapped when Troidl slipped on some ice and he was carried over 250 feet for a harrowing ride through the cavernous tunnel.

Moments later, Troidl was rescued near the bottom of the gorge. He said, "I thought I was a dead man. I prayed and thought about my wife and three girls. It seemed so long going down. It was a miracle I survived." Troidl would be 68 years old today and his whereabouts are unknown.



Sketch by Fay Bailey



## Does Tom Sellick Own That Mansion Across the River?

If you stand at Lewiston's river-front, it's one of the most noticeable landmarks on the other side of the Niagara River.

For years, rumors have persisted as to what famous person owned the huge white mansion in Queenston, Ontario. Celebrity Tom Sellick is often mentioned as a possibility.

Alas, no famous celebrity owns it but it does have a fascinating history.

It's called Glencairn and was built by John Hamilton in 1832 (his older brother George founded the City of Hamilton, Ontario.)

In 1824, John established the Queenston Steamboat Company which operated a number of ships transporting goods on Lake Ontario. He enjoyed a great vantage point watching his steamships going up and down the river and docking at Lewiston.

In 1900, John D. Larkin, the well known owner of a soap factory and thriving mail order business in Buffalo, purchased the property. His friend, architect Frank Lloyd Wright, visited the property in 1905.

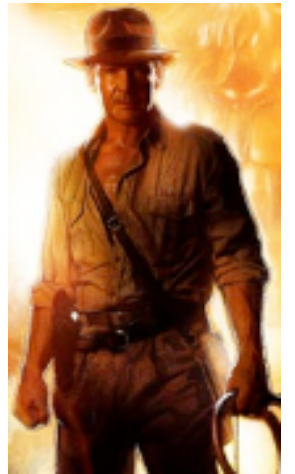
Today, Glencairn is still privately owned and is undergoing an extensive restoration.

Local residents in Queenston say it was part of the Underground Railroad.

# Calling Indiana Jones!

There's a lost artifact from Lewiston's history and efforts by the Historical Association to find it have come up short. Where's Indiana Jones when you need him?

Back in 1958, local historian Margaret Robson, wrote in her book *Under the Mountain*, that, "J. Copeland Gray of Lockport has an unusual cane which was given to him by his great grandfather, Arthur Gray, by a runaway slave who was helped to freedom here in Lewiston. The Gray home on River Road, now (1958) occupied by the George Gleason family, was one of the last links in the chain that led to freedom in Canada.



"Arthur Gray who arranged to row slaves across the river found one poor old negro quite sick when he reached Lewiston. Put to bed and nursed back to health by the Grays, the slave was eventually ferried across the river. When bidding Mr. Gray goodbye, he wished to show his gratitude, but except for the clothes he wore, he owned nothing but a cane made of thornwood and entwined with tendrils from a vine growing on the original tree. He gave his one possession to Arthur Gray and in turn, Mr. Gray has passed the cane on to his descendants."

The lost cane has become a valued symbol with the new emphasis on Freedom Crossing and Lewiston's role in the Underground Railroad. If anyone has information on the cane's whereabouts, please contact the Historical Association immediately.

Two other Lewiston treasures have been lost to history. When French General marquis de Lafayette visited Lewiston in June 1825 on his tour of America, he accidentally left behind his lunch basket and mahogany medicine chest at the Kelsey House at 625 Center Street. George Washington considered Lafayette a close personal friend and historians believe that Lafayette's help during the Revolution tipped the scales to an American victory. The location of the basket and chest remain a mystery.

This placemat is brought to you by our sponsor:

## Kinetic Kitchen & Bath

Service • Knowledge • Selection • Value

Is it time to update your kitchen or bath, or are you thinking about a design for your new home? Call us today for the ideas you're looking for and find out why more and more Lewiston-Niagara area homes are turning to Kinetic to get the best value for their kitchen and bath projects.

We service builders, contractors and retail customers.

Call 716-297-7100

1655 Factory Outlet Boulevard

behind the Factory Outlet Mall, formerly Perfetti Hardware.

You can see us from the Thruway!

www.kinetickitchens.com



Visit our Design  
Showroom

Mon. & Fri. 9-5

Tues. Wed. & Thurs. 9-8

Sat. 9-2

Call for after hours appt.

## Welcome to Lewiston, NY

www.HistoricLewiston.org

The Historical Association of Lewiston hopes you enjoy your visit to our historic and quaint village. Mark your calendar for our next spectacular Historic Home Tour on

Dec. 6 & 7, 2008.

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

Phone: 716-754-4214

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

