

**Lewiston
History
Mysteries**

Intriguing Mysteries That Still Baffle Lewiston Historians

Over the years, local historians have, at times, scratched their heads thinking about some local mysteries. Here are just a few:

Where is the Fort Gray Plaque?

Fort Gray was a American military outpost located at the top of the Escarpment

(above today's Artpark) overlooking the Niagara River. Whatever remnants were left of it were destroyed when the Parkway was built in 1962. But local historians still believe that a plaque that commemorated the site is still there — probably covered with weeds and brush, located somewhere between the east side of the Parkway and the County Club golf course. Its exact location is still a mystery. And yes, Fort Gray Drive is named after the lost, but not forgotten, fort.



Fort Gray, 1760's

Tunnel at the Scovell-Starkweather Mansion

The book, *The Gully Treasure* (available at DiCamillo's Bakery), quotes a Sept. 28, 1913, article in the Buffalo Sun Journal newspaper that confirms there was an old narrow tunnel paved with stones that was located on the north side of today's painted parking lot at Artpark. It was attached to the Starkweather Mansion, known as Oak Hill, that was destroyed by fire in 1974. Is it still there? No one knows. And it's against the law to dig or excavate on state property. Maybe someday, the state will sanction an archaeological project to explore what might be inside the tunnel. Is there an unknown treasure in the mystery tunnel?

Frontier House Square Stone

When you face the Frontier House on Center Street, you'll see a square stone on the third floor between the two top windows on the left side. It looks so different and unusual from the stones around it, that it begs the question, "What is it doing there?" Local historians have no idea if it was randomly pulled from a pile of stone, or if it has some historical significance.

Another Frontier House mystery that baffles historians is why, or how, Benjamin Barton, the "Father of Lewiston", built the Frontier House on property he didn't own. Despite intense research, historians have come up empty handed in trying to



understand the arrangements Benjamin Barton may have had with the property owners. Construction on the Frontier House began in 1824 and it opened in 1826. Barton didn't take possession of the property it stood on until 1828.

Lafayette's Medicine Chest

This is the Bicentennial of the Marquis de Lafayette's visit to Lewiston in 1825. At the time, he was of one of the most famous men in the world and was revered by Americans as a hero for his help in winning the American Revolution and our independence. In 1958, Margaret Robson wrote the book "Under the Mountain," considered the Bible of Lewiston history. She said, "Lafayette left behind a mahogany medicine chest, 5-1/2 inch. deep by 6 inch. wide by 10 inch. long. There were compartments for bottles and a shallow tray for powders. The chest has been preserved and may be seen in the Niagara County Historical Museum in Lockport." However, the Museum has no record of it. Where did it go?



**A French medicine chest
from the 19th Century**

Jenny Lind's Gloves

She was the Taylor Swift of the 1800's and a worldwide sensation. She came to Lewiston in July 1851 to attend the wedding of a maid she befriended during her tour in Buffalo. The wedding took place at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, now the Lewiston Museum.

She overnighted at the Frontier House and left her gloves behind. The gloves were thought to be part of the Lewiston Museum collection, but no record can be found today. Where are Jenny's gloves?



**Jenny Lind "The
Swedish Nightingale"**

Pemberton Torture Tree

During the American Revolution, the Mohawks had a settlement in Lewiston, led by Chief Joseph Brant. In 1778, James Pemberton, a prisoner, was brought to Lewiston to be tortured and killed at a tree to revenge the death of a Mohawk warrior. However, Brant took a liking to him and arranged his escape. But where was the tree? Some reports suggest it was near the southwest corner of the lower Artpark parking lot, near the Gully. Or was it somewhere else? Is the tree still there?

Welcome to Historic Lewiston, NY

A Cultural Town, Historically Renowned

We hope you enjoy our quaint village. Visit the Lewiston Museum at 469 Plain Street (phone: 716-754-4214). You can download and see our past placemats at HistoricLewiston.org. Placemats written and designed by volunteer, Lee Simonson. **"Top Ten Best Small Towns in America" — USA Today**

**J.R. SWANSON
PLUMBING
HEATING & COOLING**
Call 716-283-3802

FREE ESTIMATES

- Fast 24-hour emergency service
- Furnace and AC tune-ups
- Tankless water heaters
- Drain and sewer cleaning
- Expert installations and service

Buying or Selling?

With 28 years of award-winning service, our expert agents turn your real estate dreams into reality.

GreatLakesRealEstate.com



Call 716-754-2550



WARNING! Oak wilt disease is threatening oak trees in the Niagara region. Fatal cases confirmed in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Critical risk areas: Lewiston, Youngstown, Niagara Falls, Grand Island. Protect your high-valued oak trees with preventative vaccinations.

Call or text: 716-273-5522
Email: info@savingoaks.com
Website: SavingOaks.com

**Choose to bank
where you belong**



Regular banks pay dividends to their shareholders.
Credit Unions pay dividends to YOU as a member!

716-284-4110

3619 Packard Road and 900 Main Street, Niagara Falls

With locations in Lockport, Wheatfield and

North Tonawanda

www.niagaraschoice.org



Your funds are insured for up to \$250,000
by the National Credit Union Administration



Serving you since 1953