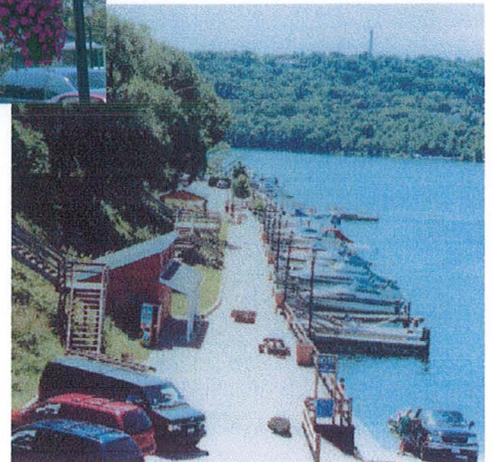


Master Plan

For the
Village of Lewiston
Niagara County, New York



Adopted
October 18, 2004



R&D ENGINEERING, INC.

A subsidiary of Conestoga-Rovers & Associates

MASTER PLAN

For the
VILLAGE OF LEWISTON
NIAGARA COUNTY, NEW YORK

ADOPTED
OCTOBER 18, 2004
REF. NO. 630212 (1)

Prepared by:
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1.0 BACKGROUND

In February 2004, the Village of Lewiston formed a Master Plan Committee charged with reviewing the development progress of the Village since the previous Master Planning efforts and creating a new Master Plan. The new Master Plan is to function as a guide for future responsible decision-making regarding development in the Village.

The Master Plan Committee met on a monthly basis from February through September 2004 and included the following members:

- William Geiben, Village Trustee and Committee Chair
- Terry Collesano, Village Trustee
- William Brodie, Zoning Officer
- Anne Welch, Clerk Treasurer
- Victor Eydt, Planning Chair
- Karl Terryberry, Planning Board Member
- John Ritter, Zoning Chair
- Marianne Gittermann, Recreation Director and Businessperson
- David Giusiana, Architect
- Jeffery Williams, Businessperson

The original Master Plan for the Village of Lewiston was adopted during 1970. This Plan emphasized the importance of maintaining the historical integrity of the Village while enhancing the Central Business District. Further, the plan introduced the concept of "Lewiston Landing" along the Niagara River waterfront.

Subsequently, in 1977 the Village updated the 1970 Master Plan. This Plan, building off of the goals of the original Master Plan, provided guidance for the revitalization of the Central Business District and better utilization of the Waterfront. This Plan also recommended provisions for multi-family expansion in the Village.



Using the concepts presented in the former Master Plans as a guide, the Village diligently sought out funding programs to help implement various improvements to the Central Business District, Lewiston Landing and other areas. As a result of these efforts, the Village has successfully obtained grants from various New York State departments. These funds combined with the efforts of Village

personnel, volunteer services, and private contributions have realized improvements including:

- Streetscape improvements along Center Street in the Central Business District.
- Construction of the Lewiston Plateau recreation area.
- Development of the Lewiston Courtyard.
- Construction of the Onondaga Trail.
- Pending demolition of the Water Street Village DPW garage and subsequent site beautification improvements.

During the development of this Plan, a public input meeting was held July 26, 2004. At the meeting, the Master Plan Committee discussed the previous Master Planning efforts and subsequent development and also explained the goals and objectives (see Section 2) of the committee. The balance of the meeting was used to solicit input from the community regarding the Vision for the Village for the next ten years and beyond.

Input from the public was incorporated into the committee meeting discussions and into the formulation of the new Master Plan. The guidance material developed in this Plan was presented to the Village Planning and Zoning Boards during their meetings in August 2004. Both Boards were in unanimous support of the concepts as presented.

2.0 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Master Plan Committee established the following goals and objectives at the initiation of the master planning process:

- 1) Acknowledge the goals and objectives of the previous Master Plans.
- 2) Assess the developments subsequent to the previous master planning efforts.
- 3) Maintain the Village as a cultural, economic and historical center.
- 4) Review existing zoning and land use relative to the previous Master Plan.
- 5) Assess the needs of the citizens of the Village.
- 6) Solicit public input and develop a Vision for the Village for the next ten years and beyond, considering sustainable development.
- 7) To develop a new Master Plan which will function as a guide for future responsible decision-making regarding development in the Village.

3.0 MASTER PLAN VISION CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 CURRENT LAND USE

As part of the initial meetings of the Master Plan Committee, members made a general survey of the land use in the Village relative to the existing zoning. The Village currently has 11 zoning classifications, which are defined in Appendix B of the Village Code. The boundaries of the current zoning districts are illustrated on Figure 1. It became clear during the survey of the land use that there were no "pure" districts in the Village and that each District was found to have non-conforming uses. Also, there is a need to address the transitional area on Center Street (west of Fourth Street) to the Waterfront. Further, there are few vacant developable parcels remaining in the Village.

Thus, during the development of the Vision for the Village, consideration was given to establishing a plan for the various districts which closely incorporates the character of the existing neighborhoods and potential acceptable development within those areas.

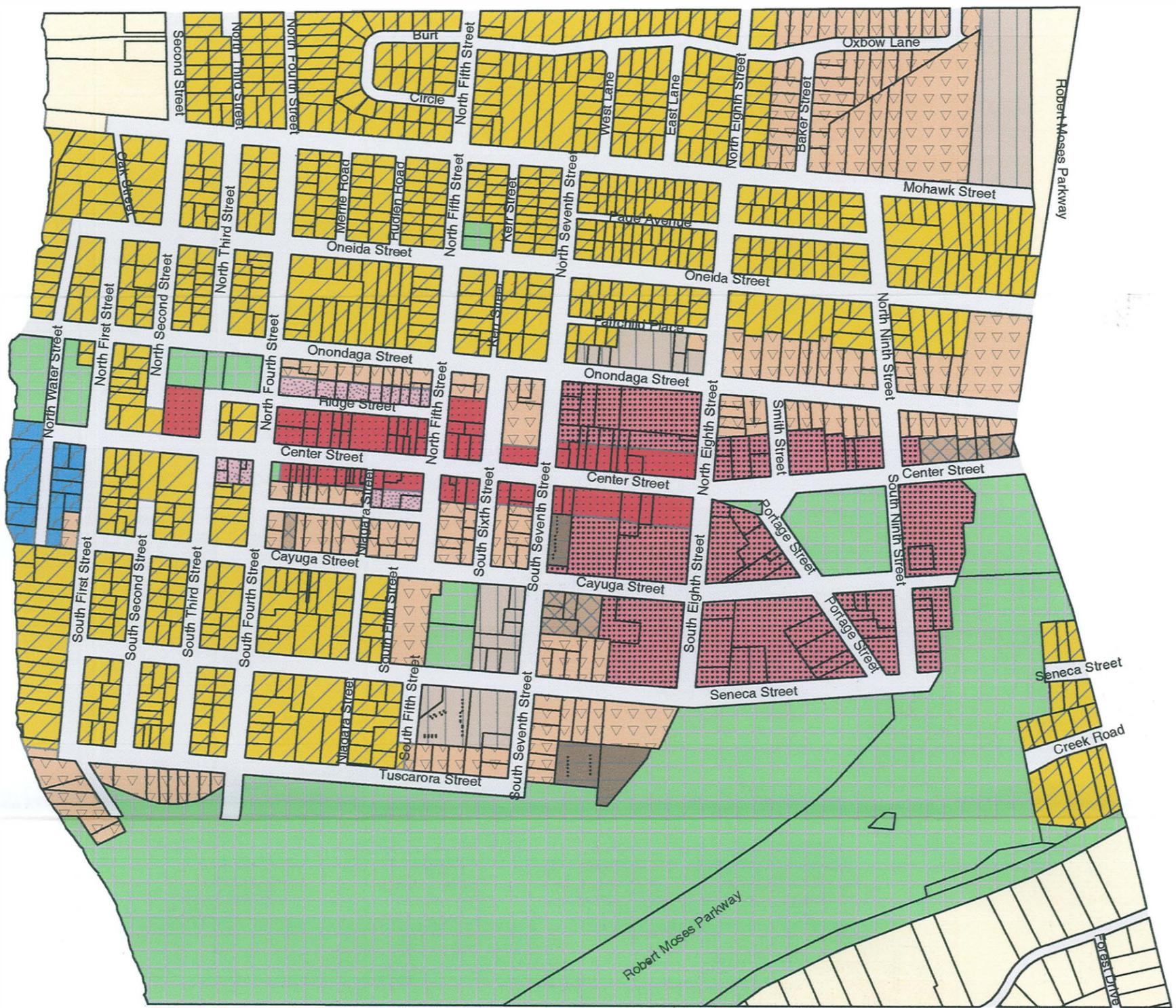
It is important to note that the Village has a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) in place to implement the New York State Coastal Management Program within the Village. It is envisioned that future waterfront enhancements will continue in accordance with the LWRP.

3.2 POPULATION

The 1977 Village of Lewiston Master Plan indicated that the 1970 census reported a Village population of 3,392. At that time, the population in the Village was forecasted to increase to approximately 4,137. However, review of the 1990 and 2000 census data indicate a trend in the opposite direction. In 1990, the Village population was 3,048 and as of 2000, the population had decreased to 2,781.

The population distribution of the Village by age is shown on Table 1 for the 1990 and 2000 census. As can be seen by the Table, the 45 to 54 year old age bracket has had the greatest increase by percentage of population. The median age of the Village has also increased from the 35 to 44 year old bracket to the 45 to 54 year old bracket from 1990 to 2000. The committee made considerations for the needs of all the Village population during the development of the Master Plan.

Figure 1
 Village of Lewiston
 Niagara County, New York



Current Zoning

Districts

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| R-1 Residential, Single Family, Low Density | R-5 Residential, Townhouse |
| R-1A Residential, Single Family Medium Density | R-B Restricted Business |
| R-2 Residential, Two Family | B-1 General Business |
| R-3 Residential, Multiple Family | R-B-2 Retail Business |
| R-4 Residential, Multiple Family Professional | W-D Waterfront Development District |
| | O-P Open Public Space |



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Table 1
1990 and 2000 Census Data

Age Bracket	2000		1990	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 5	125	4.5%	216	7.1%
5 to 9	129	4.6%	134	4.4%
10 to 14	138	5.0%	167	5.5%
15 to 19	145	5.2%	146	4.8%
20 to 24	158	5.7%	147	4.8%
25 to 34	284	10.2%	416	13.6%
35 to 44	376	13.5%	422	13.8%
45 to 54	400	14.4%	319	10.5%
55 to 59	164	5.9%	162	5.3%
60 to 64	131	4.7%	189	6.2%
65 to 74	284	10.2%	395	13.0%
75 to 84	298	10.7%	250	8.2%
85 and over	149	5.4%	85	2.8%
Total	2781	100.0%	3048	100.0%

3.3 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL

The combination of shops, historic architecture and small town atmosphere make the Village truly unique in the Niagara Frontier. Reference is made to the historic resources survey (attached as Appendix A) for a complete discussion of the historical development of the Village. The survey also identifies structures of historical significance, all of which continue to stand in the Village.

The help ensure the maintenance of the historic character in the Village, Local Law No. 1-1978, Village of Lewiston Historic Preservation Law, was adopted. The intent of this Law is to protect, enhance and perpetuate buildings, structures, sites or districts of a historic nature. Further, a Historic Preservation Commission was established to assist the Planning Board with review of developments of a historic nature as established by the Village Code.

It is recognized that it is of the utmost importance that the historic nature of the Village continues to be preserved and enhanced over time.

3.4 INFRASTRUCTURE

Roads

All of the roads within the Village are maintained by the Village DPW with the exception of Routes 104 / 18F (Center Street and North Fourth Street), which are maintained by New York State Department of Transportation. The Village annually prioritizes road improvement projects including drainage. Projects are completed as funds become available.

As future development is proposed, it is envisioned that impacts on roads and traffic continue to be reviewed as part of the development plan (see Section 3.5) process. As specific developments are proposed, traffic studies may be required prior to approval or road / drainage conditions improved as part of the project.

Sidewalks and Trails

Sidewalks are currently in place along Center Street in the Business District and to a limited extent throughout the Village. A Vision of this Plan is to improve the walkability of the Village. As part of future development plans, street lighting, sidewalk and curbs maintenance, improvement and expansion should be considered to potentially be included in the specific projects. Over time, it is envisioned that the sidewalks throughout the Village will be linked.



Using grant funds, the Village constructed the Onondaga Trail linking North Fourth to North First Street. In the future, consideration should be given to extending the trail to the Waterfront. Further, as of the drafting of this Plan, the Town of Lewiston was in the process of developing a trails plan. The Village should continue to work closely with the Town as this plan is developed so that the Village can be

appropriately incorporated into the plan.

Water and Sanitary Sewer

Virtually all parcels in the Village with road frontage have water and sanitary sewer service available. The Village DPW maintains both the water distribution system and sanitary sewer collection system. Water for the Village is supplied bulk from the Niagara County Water District. Sanitary sewage is treated at the Lewiston Water Pollution Control Center.

The original water distribution system and the sewage collection system are in excess of 50 years old. Village DPW staff conduct annual improvements to the systems as funds are available.

As future development is proposed, the demands on the water and sanitary sewer system will continue to be reviewed as part of the development plan process. As specific developments are proposed, improvements to the systems may be required to be completed as part of the project.

3.5 DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Section 10-R of the Village zoning regulations (Village Code Appendix B) details the procedures and requires for development plans. It shall continue to be the responsibility of the Planning Board to ensure that the procedures of this section are followed as applicable for future development. Section 10-R "is intended to permit regulation of the location of structures and improve circulation facilities and other site qualities..." Further, the 10-R is reviewed to determine that the "uses proposed will not be detrimental to present and potential surrounding uses..." and that "The proposed development is in conformance with the general intent of the comprehensive master plan..."

4.0 MASTER PLAN VISION

Based upon the goals and objectives of the Village of Lewiston 2004 Master Plan Committee with consideration given to the items identified in the preceding sections and public input, the following represents the Vision for the Village for the next ten years and beyond. This Vision represents a guide for future responsible decision-making regarding development in the Village.

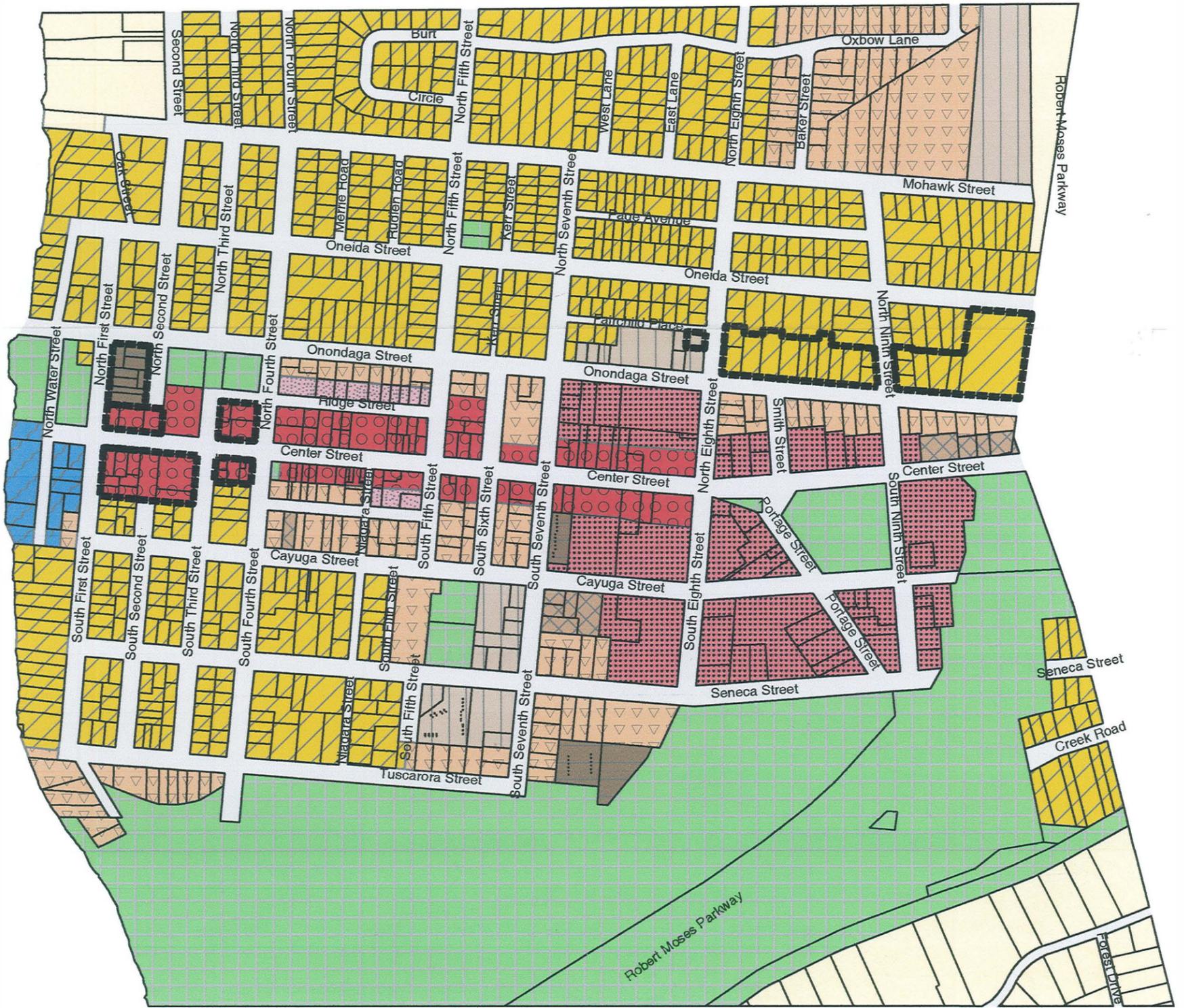
4.1 OVERALL VISION FOR THE VILLAGE

- Continue to develop the Village as a historic, cultural, and economic center.
- Continue to develop the Village of Lewiston as a "walkable" community. This includes connecting sidewalks and linking bike paths as appropriate.
- Maintain the current amount of green space in the Village.
- Continued enhancement of the streetscape, parks, and waterfront district.
- Diligent pursuit of grant funds to enhance the Village of Lewiston.
- Alignment of zoning ordinance with the Master Plan Vision.
- Enhancing the housing opportunities in the Village.

4.2 FUTURE (ZONING) DISTRICT VISION

Figure 2 illustrates the proposed Vision for future development (zoning) within the Village of Lewiston. It is envisioned that the current zoning designations will remain. However, as shown on Figure 2, the boundaries of the districts are proposed to be changed in some cases. Subsequent to adoption of this Master Plan, it is envisioned that the current zoning classification definitions will be thoroughly reviewed and updated in accordance with this Plan.

Figure 2
 Village of Lewiston
 Niagara County, New York



Proposed Master Plan

Districts

- | | |
|---|--|
|  R-1 Residential, Single Family, Low Density |  R-5 Residential, Townhouse |
|  R-1A Residential, Single Family Medium Density |  R-B Restricted Business, Townhouse |
|  R-2 Residential, Two Family, Townhouse |  B-1 General Business, Multiple Family, Townhouse |
|  R-3 Residential, Multiple Family, Townhouse |  R-B-2 Retail Business |
|  R-4 Residential, Multiple Family, Professional, Townhouse |  W-D Waterfront Development District |
| |  O-P Open Public Space |
| |  Proposed Zoning Modifications |



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Preservation of Single Family Districts

The residential neighborhoods are a key contributor to the quaintness of the Village. It is envisioned that the existed R-1 areas will remain as such and that the R-1A district will be expanded. As shown on Figure 2, the Vision includes incorporating the parcels on Onondaga Street from North Eighth east to the Village line into the R-1A district.

Addressing the Housing Needs of the Aging Population

As previously discussed in Section 3.2, the average age of the resident of the Village is increasing. Based upon input from the public, there has been increasing demand by long-time residents to increase the availability of lower maintenance housing to meet the needs of the aging population.

To address this, it is envisioned that the townhouse definition is expanded to be an allowable use in the R-2, R-3, R-4, R-B and B-1 zoned districts. The Vision is that the future townhouses be owner occupied. It is also envisioned that the area on North First Street south of Onondaga Street be zoned to R-5.

As previously discussed, the zoning classifications for R-2, R-3, R-4, R-B and B-1 should be revised to include townhouse development at which time special considerations for townhouses in each district may be established. Further, the 10-R development plan must be used in conjunction with public input to ensure any new development fits with the character of the surrounding neighborhood.

Extending the Business District

Expanding upon the existing retail business theme as one travels along Center Street, it is envisioned that the RB-2 District be expanded along Center Street to include the area between Fourth Street and First Street as illustrated on Figure 2. This area is currently predominately occupied by businesses (non-conforming uses). This will also help to link the Waterfront District to the Business District.

As the retail business area expands, and with the continually expanding attractions of the Village, the Vision also includes the development of visitor accommodations in the Village. The future accommodations should be located in the RB-2 or B-1 districts. Future zoning modifications should include specific acceptable provisions for development of these accommodations.

Waterfront District

It is envisioned that the Waterfront District will maintain its current boundaries for the foreseeable future. However, consideration should be given to establishing the Waterfront District and the balance of First Street and Water Street as a view corridor. As part of the view corridor, it would be expected that any development in this area should not obstruct the view of the Niagara Gorge currently enjoyed by existing developed parcels.

Open and Public Space

The residents of the Village of Lewiston currently have access to nine open public recreational spaces within the Village limits, as shown on Figure 2. While no further expansion of Open and Public recreation is envisioned, the continued maintenance and enhancement of the existing areas is encouraged.



5.0 MOVING FORWARD

This document will serve as guidance to those responsible for development decision-making now and in the future of the Village of Lewiston. This Master Plan is not a commitment to a definite course of future decisions. However, in order to help ensure that the Vision of this Plan is carried forward, it is recommended that the current Village zoning ordinance is reviewed and updated in the near future and ultimately modified to be in harmony with this Master Plan.

It is important to note that as the Village moves forward with its vision, the provisions of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) must be complied with as future actions are taken. SEQRA requirements shall be completed prior to the adoption of this 2004 Village of Lewiston Master Plan. However, it should be noted that completion of the SEQRA requirements for adoption of this Plan is not intended to cover all future actions taken based upon the guidance of this Plan. Further, the appropriate SEQRA process should be followed as required prior to taking action on any zoning modifications. Finally, as development is proposed in the future, the appropriate SEQRA process must be followed to assess the impacts of the specific actions proposed at that time.

Once the necessary zoning modifications have been made, the use of the 10-R development plan along with public input will be the key to driving the best utilization of the remaining and developable areas while maintaining the character of the Village of Lewiston.

APPENDIX A
HISTORICAL RESOURCES SURVEY

COMPILED BY:

HERBERT H. SMITH ASSOCIATES
1970

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The Indians: to 1720

Archaeological findings in the Lewiston vicinity indicate that Indians occupied this area as early as 3,000 B. C. Many of these tribes lived for hundreds of years in and along the escarpment and ridge which extends east of the Village. When the French came to the area in the early seventeenth century, both sides of the Niagara River were occupied by a peaceful tribe called the Neuters; one of their villages was called Ongiara, and was located near the site of the old Lewiston-Queenston Bridge. At some point in the mid-seventeenth century, this Neutral Nation was destroyed by the Iroquois, who then began their occupation of the region.

The Iroquois Nation, or Confederacy, was composed of six tribes: The Mohawks, Senecas, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Tuscaroras. The Tuscaroras were, however, relative newcomers to the area, having become the sixth nation of the Iroquois Confederacy in 1715.

The French Period: 1720-1759

The coming of the French to the Niagara Frontier actually began much earlier than 1720, but it was not until around this time that French settlement and intensive exploration in the area commenced.

The earliest indication of French exploration of the area reveals that Stephen Brulé, the interpreter and messenger of the French explorer Champlain, spent part of the winter of 1615 in the area, and may have visited the Neuters at their village of Ongiara. The next white man to come to Ongiara was Robert Cavalier de la Salle, who arrived in

1678, along with Father Louis Hennepin; in all likelihood LaSalle's party traversed the portage (an old Indian trail leading from the lower river to the upper river) in order to construct a small fort at the mouth of Cayuga Creek.

In 1607, a French trader, Chubert Joncaire, was captured and tortured by the Senecas; Joncaire so impressed the Senecas by his bravery that he was released. He stayed among the tribe, marrying a squaw, and in 1720 obtained permission from the Senecas to build a trading post at Ongiara. The trading post was given the name "Magazin Royal," or "King's Store." After the construction of Fort Niagara, the old trading post at Ongiara was used as a depot to collect and store furs.

During this time of French Supremacy in the Niagara Frontier, the British became increasingly resentful of this power, and continually harassed the French, with the assistance of most of the Iroquois Confederacy.

"In 1754 the British decided that the French control of the fur trade must be broken at all costs, and there was considerable fighting over the possession of the posts between Lake Erie and the Ohio River. The year 1755 saw Fort Niagara threatened by British forces approaching from the east. The British came no closer than Oswego, but the French, worried for fear they might really be attacked the next time, hastily reconstructed a part of the Fort in order to strengthen that place."¹

War was declared between England and France in 1756, although not until 1759 did a British force threaten Fort Niagara. The French surrendered the Fort to the British on July 25, 1759, and the power of France in the Niagara Frontier was broken.

The British Period: 1759-1796

After the British gained control of Fort Niagara, improvements were begun on the portage around the falls. The Indian path was widened and "paved" with logs so that wheeled carts could be transported. The British changed the route of the portage at the Lower Landing (Lewiston); instead of going up the three steep mountains of the French portage, the British used a route which turned northeast from the gully at the Niagara, would up through what is now the Village, but eventually turned south again and wound up the escarpment.

In 1764 Captain John Montrossor designed and supervised construction of a tram railway to haul goods up to the side of the mountain; this was the first railway on the American continent. The exact location of this tramway is not known, but it is surmised that it was located somewhere in the vicinity of the Old Chateau Gay Winery.

From the time of their occupation until the beginning of the American Revolution, the British continued to take land from the Indians in the area and give it to settlers, although the land of the Mohawks was preserved. Because of British cultivation of the Mohawks, this tribe remained loyal to the British during the revolution. The British retained control of the Niagara Frontier and the crucial Portage throughout the Revolution.

For thirteen years after the end of the revolution, the British retained control of Fort Niagara and the Portage. They justified this hold-over on the grounds that the Americans had agreed to pay British subjects in the area war reparations, and had failed to do so. It was not until

the signing of Jay's Treaty in 1796 that the British finally conceded control of the Fort and withdrew from the American side of the river.

¹Robson, *Under the Mountain*; Henry Stewart Inc., Buffalo, 1958; p. 33.

The Early Frontier: 1796-1813

The lower Landing remained primarily an Indian settlement up until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Early settlers included merchants, traders, and cattle "drovers."

With the need for funds for the newly-formed state treasuries, the opening of land for sale to settlers was one of the best means of revenue. Robert Morris, a New York State banker, bought 3,000,000 acres of land west of the Genesee River, and then sold nearly all of it to the Holland Land Company. In turn, the Holland Company started selling land to settlers, much of which was in the vicinity of present-day Lewiston.

"In 1798 the State Legislature order the State Surveyor to survey and. . . establish a village one mile square opposite Queenston, Ontario. . . The Village was. . . given the name of Lewiston, in honor of Governor Lewis."²

According to one early writer, "The Village has been described as it appeared in 1807, when it contained two small frame and five or six log houses. The ground on Main street (now Center) was cleared and fenced in and corn and other grain grown upon it."³

Lewiston became a major frontier port, since it was located at the head of navigation on the lower Niagara River, and in 1811 the port of entry for the Niagara Customs District was moved to Lewiston from Fort Niagara.

Meanwhile, as Lewiston continued to grow and prosper, relations between the United States and Great Britain steadily deteriorated, and war was declared on June 18, 1812. In the following October, a major battle occurred between American forces in Lewiston, and British forces in Queenston Heights. The Americans crossed the Niagara, held the Heights for a time, but were forced back across the River by the British. For more than a year following, little of importance in the war occurred in Lewiston. In December, 1813, however, the Americans, fearing an attack on Fort Niagara, burned the Village of Newark (now Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario). In reprisal, the British and their Indian allies immediately captured Fort Niagara, and burned all the settlements on the lower river, including Lewiston. With one or two exceptions, the Village was completely leveled.

²Ibid, p. 62.

³Nearly all books dealing with the early days in Lewiston have used this quotation, but none has given its source.

Prosperity: 1815-1825

By 1815 many of the former residents of the Village had returned and begun to rebuild their homes. Stores were constructed, and as transportation facilities improved, inns and taverns were built to accommodate the large number of travelers who came through the area.

One of the more prominent of Lewiston's early settlers was Benjamin Barton, who, prior to the burning of the Village, had built a substantial home on a hill at the foot of Center Street overlooking the river. In 1815 the home was rebuilt, and along with the Fairbanks' home across the street, was the center of social life for many years. Something of an entrepreneur, Barton and others established a thriving portage business. Traffic came into the docks on the river, and the Porter, Barton, and Company provided transportation from the docks to the top of the escarpment. The first steamboat to arrive in Lewiston made the first trip in April of 1817; these steamers ran from Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River ports to Lewiston.

In addition to his portage business, in 1823 Barton and his brother built a spacious stone hotel on Center Street; this lodge, named the Frontier House, was officially opened in 1824.

The golden days of Lewiston came to a rather abrupt end, however, with the opening of the Erie Canal; since the canal furnished a much more accessible line of transportation between the East and the Niagara Frontier, the canal towns began to flourish and the great boon to Lewiston's development was gone. A further blow to commerce was the opening of the first Welland Canal in Ontario, which permitted Great Lakes traffic to bypass the entire Niagara River.

A Back Number Town: 1825-1900

"If you would find pleasure in wandering in quiet reflection through those grass grown streets which were once

full of life, drawing out the story of early days from sundry old citizens wherever you meet them, and, hearing from their lips of the business activity of a village now dead, come up with me through the cut (we may as well take the road; there are no sidewalks to speak of in Lewiston), and see a town which is said to have had a population of six thousand when Buffalo had only as many as a hundred; a town which was the transfer point in its day, that Buffalo is in ours."

Frank Rosseel, 1891

To speak of Lewiston as "a village now dead" was perhaps an exaggeration, but to be certain Lewiston's golden days as a flourishing port were now gone. With the portage now of minor importance, many of the docks at Lewiston became idle. Steamers and packets ran for several years thereafter, although finally the only boats to call at Lewiston were the passenger steamboats carrying tourists.

Fire took its toll in Lewiston throughout the years. Although volunteer fire departments existed intermittently, fires frequently burned out several blocks at a time. For many years hotels existed at the foot of Center Street on the river banks, but they were continually destroyed by fire. One of the more spectacular fires occurred in 1895, when the steamboat *Cibola*, anchored at the Lewiston dock, burned; the proprietor of the adjacent American Hotel tried frantically to cut the steamer loose from its moorings, but failed, and the American burned to the ground. Eventually the hotel was rebuilt as the Cornell, but it too suffered the scourge of fire.

During the latter parts of the Nineteenth Century, Lewiston was able to capitalize on the popularity of Niagara Falls

as a tourist resort. In 1852 the Niagara Falls and Lake Ontario Railroad Company began construction of a line which extended from the Falls to Youngstown, further downstream on the Niagara River than Lewiston, but shortly thereafter the tracks from Lewiston to Youngstown were removed, so that the Lake Ontario steamers brought the tourists into Lewiston, where they transferred to train for the trip to the Falls.

Lewiston also played an important, though relatively undocumented part during the War Between the States as a final station on the Underground Railroad; once runaway slaves reached Lewiston, they were protected, and then assisted in crossing the river to sanctuary in Canada.

Modern Lewiston: Since 1900

As Lewiston entered the Twentieth Century, commerce became more active; this activity came from two sources — the tourist trade, and the fruit-growing industry in the plains east of the Village. In 1895, an electric railway, the Great Gorge Route, was opened from Niagara Falls to Lewiston; this scenic line entered the gorge slightly below the American Falls and descended the gorge gradually until it was nearly at water level by the time it reached Lewiston. The trains ran frequently around the year, and passengers arrived at the docks in Lewiston on the Lake steamers, where they transferred for this trip. Cold storage facilities for the fruit grown nearby were opened, as was a winery.

Hard times hit the Village again, however, with the coming of the First World War, and shortly thereafter, the great Depression. In the 1930's the Great Gorge Route was dis-

REMNANTS OF THE PAST - 1970

Lewiston is more fortunate, however, than may other villages of comparable age, in that much visible evidence of its rich historical origins remains. Certain areas of the Village appear to have changed little during the last century, while other sections apparently have similar origins although embellishments of twentieth-century civilization have rendered them all but unrecognizable.

In the summer of 1969, members of the consultant's staff made visits to Lewiston, where they talked with local citizens and merchants, researched in the libraries, and photographed many of the Village's structures. The following pages contain photographs and limited descriptions of those buildings which, in the consultant's opinion, appear to have been of primary historical significance or, in some cases, serve only as powerful visual reminders of the earlier days.



FRONTIER HOUSE (1824)

This colorful hostelry was opened in 1824 by Benjamin Barton, one of Lewiston's earlier and more prominent citizens. In its time it was known as the finest hotel west of Albany, and catered to overnight travelers on the stages from the East, and is probably more closely associated with Lewiston's past than any other building still standing.

Among its famous guests have been Washington Irving, Dewitt Clinton, Edward-Prince of Wales, James Fenimore Cooper, President McKinley and Henry Clay.

Restored in 1964, the hotel contains museum rooms and a restaurant.

continued, and all service, both passenger and freight, on the New York Central Railroad was discontinued. A disastrous ice jam destroyed the Lewiston docks in 1938, so that the Great Lakes steamers no longer called at Lewiston.

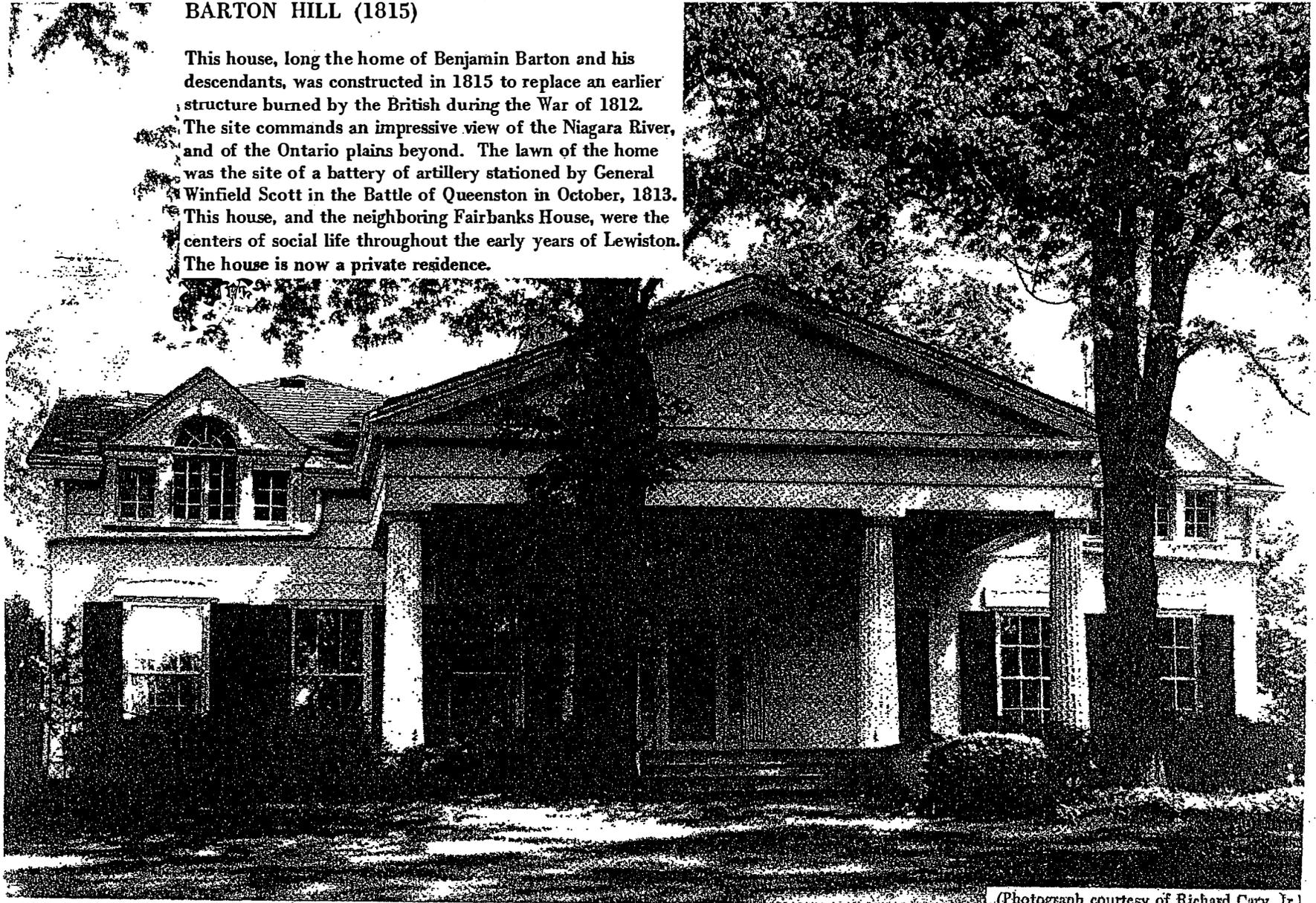
During the Second World War, the great numbers of military-related industries in the Buffalo metropolitan area employed many Lewistonians; since the labor supply was short, many people from outside the region moved in and new housing was built throughout the Village.

Recent years have seen Lewiston drawn into the continuing urbanization of the Niagara Frontier. Many of the old buildings lined with the Village's unique past have either been destroyed or converted to more contemporary uses.



BARTON HILL (1815)

This house, long the home of Benjamin Barton and his descendants, was constructed in 1815 to replace an earlier structure burned by the British during the War of 1812. The site commands an impressive view of the Niagara River, and of the Ontario plains beyond. The lawn of the home was the site of a battery of artillery stationed by General Winfield Scott in the Battle of Queenston in October, 1813. This house, and the neighboring Fairbanks House, were the centers of social life throughout the early years of Lewiston. The house is now a private residence.

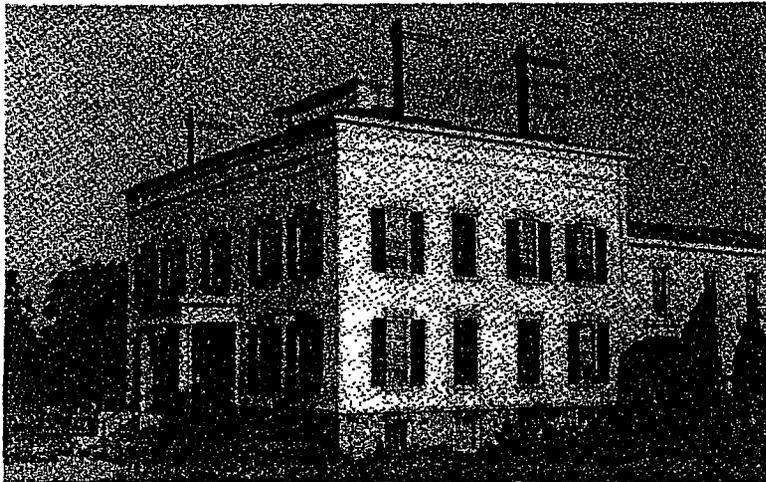


(Photograph courtesy of Richard Cary, Jr.)



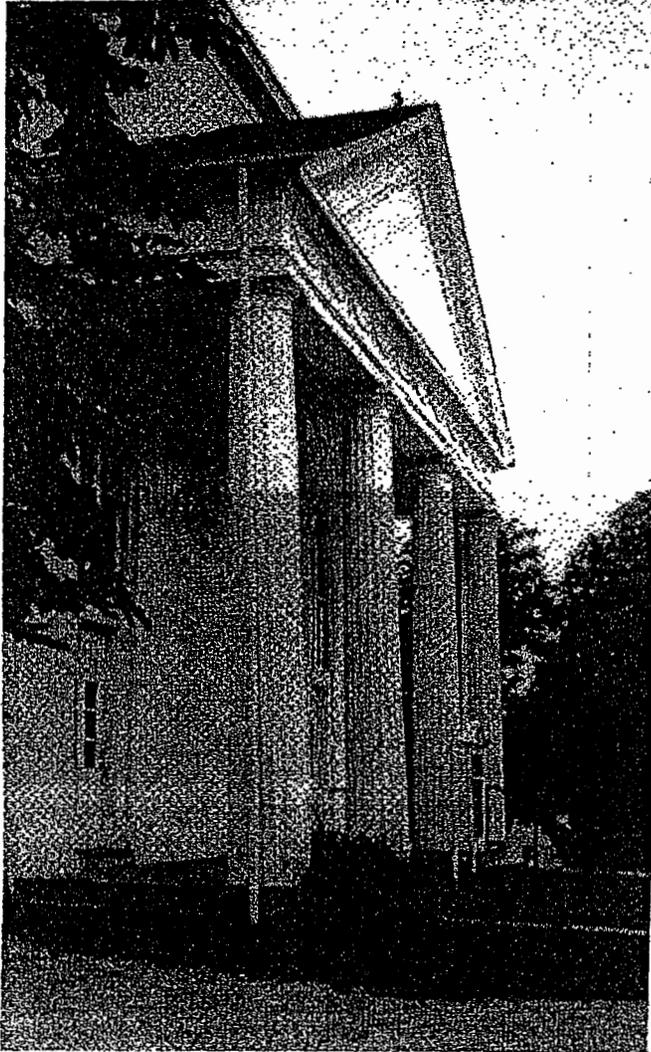
FAIRBANKS HOUSE (c. 1815)

Joshua Fairbanks and his wife first arrived in Lewiston from Massachusetts in 1793. At various times he was a merchant in Lewiston and a tavern-keeper in Queenston. This home was built around 1815, and now contains apartments. Fairbanks, along with Benjamin Barton, was one of the builders of the Frontier House.



HENNEPIN HALL (c. 1840)

Originally the home of Sherbourne Piper, an instructor at the Lewiston Academy, this building has been the home of many prominent Lewiston families. Later this home became the St. Elmo Hotel, and is now a home for the sisters who teach at adjacent St. Peter's School. It is named for Father Louis Hennepin, a Catholic priest who accompanied LaSalle on his early explorations of the area.



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND CEMETERY (c. 1826)

This building was constructed in or around 1826 by the First Religious Society of Lewiston, and has been a village landmark since that time. This church is the oldest in Niagara County. The old cemetery was organized in 1817, and contains the remains of early frontier settlers, as well as those of soldiers from all wars since 1776.



HOTCHKISS BUILDINGS (c. 1820)

These three buildings were constructed by William Hotchkiss, who arrived in Lewiston in 1815. The large house was his residence, and the small building adjacent to it was his law office. The building next door was a store which was operated by a cousin of Hotchkiss. Known locally as the Long and the Short House, the Lewiston Free Public Library is housed in the Long House, while the Short House and the store building are privately occupied.



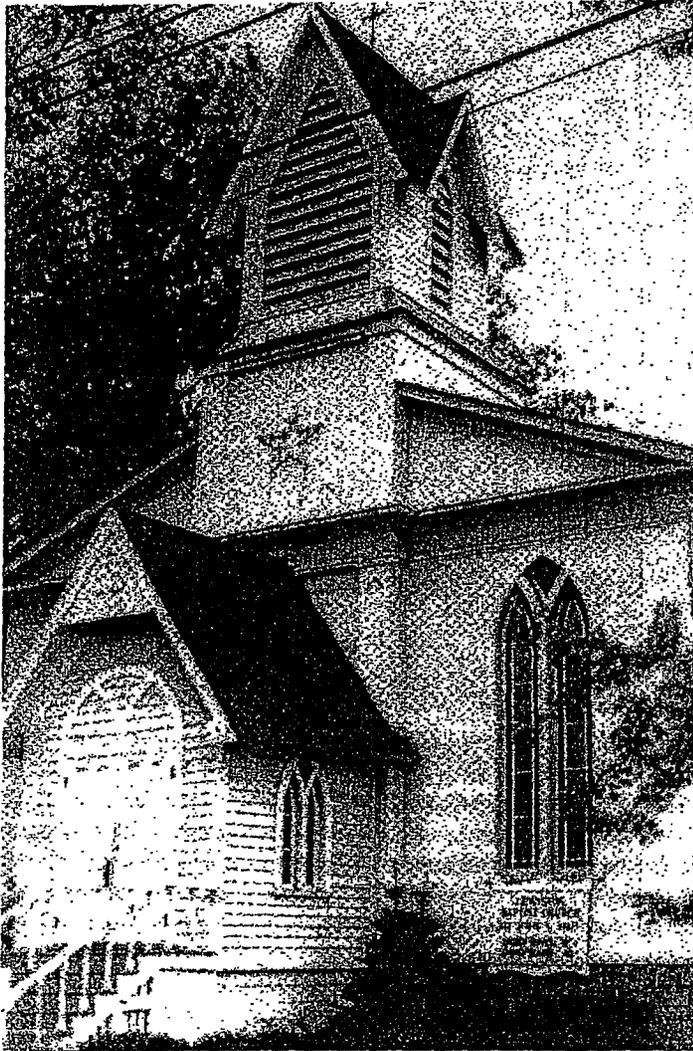
FIRST AND LAST CHANCE TAVERN (C. 1820)

This structure was erected by an early settler of Lewiston, Bates Cooke, as his law office. Later the place became a saloon of rather questionable repute, and became known as the "First and Last Chance." The building is one of the most attractively restored in the Village, and is now used as an art gallery.

KELSEY'S TAVERN (c. 1820)

At the time of its construction, this was the largest and most fashionable of the several taverns in Lewiston. On June 5, 1825, the Village was honored with a visit by the Marquis de LaFayette; he lodged at this tavern, and a reception was held there in his honor. At times competition was considerable between the Kelsey Tavern and the Frontier House, but both flourished. It is rumored that the remains of a French soldier are buried in the basement.





LEWISTON BAPTIST CHURCH (1835)

Originally there was a single, non-denominational church which served the Village. As the Village grew, however, individual denominations desired their own structures. This building was erected around 1835 as an Episcopal Church, and served as such for over a hundred years. In the mid-1950's the Episcopalians built a new structure, and this building was sold to the Lutheran Church. A few years later, the Lutherans built a new church, and in turn, sold it to the congregation of Lewiston Baptist Church.



OTHER BUILDINGS

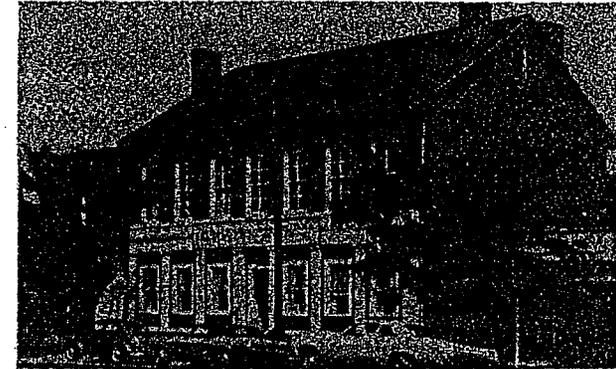
There are several other buildings, or groups of buildings, which, while not of major historical significance, nevertheless contribute much to the feeling of Nineteenth Century Lewiston. Again, this listing of buildings does not purport to the all-inclusive, but are probably among the more prominent or attractive buildings.

PLAIN STREET — Plain Street is one of the most pleasant residential streets in the Village; the old homes are in an excellent state of preservation, and add much to the charm of the Village. This quiet, shaded street seems very much unchanged from perhaps a hundred years ago, and it is on this street that the intrusions of modern technology are least evident.



LEWISTON OPERA HOUSE

This building, currently housing offices, was originally known as Old Moss Hall, and was the scene of much of Lewiston's social activity around the turn of the century. It was not until the early Twentieth Century that the building became known as the Opera Hall. At one point, the building was used as a Mission for bringing the Gospel to waterfront workers.



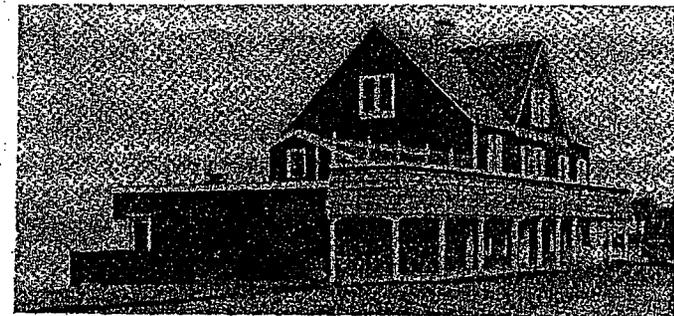
TIFFANY SHOP (c. 1840)

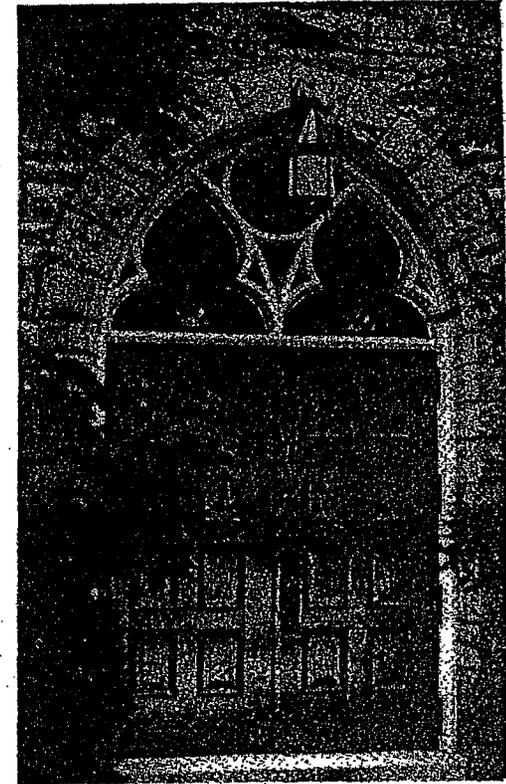
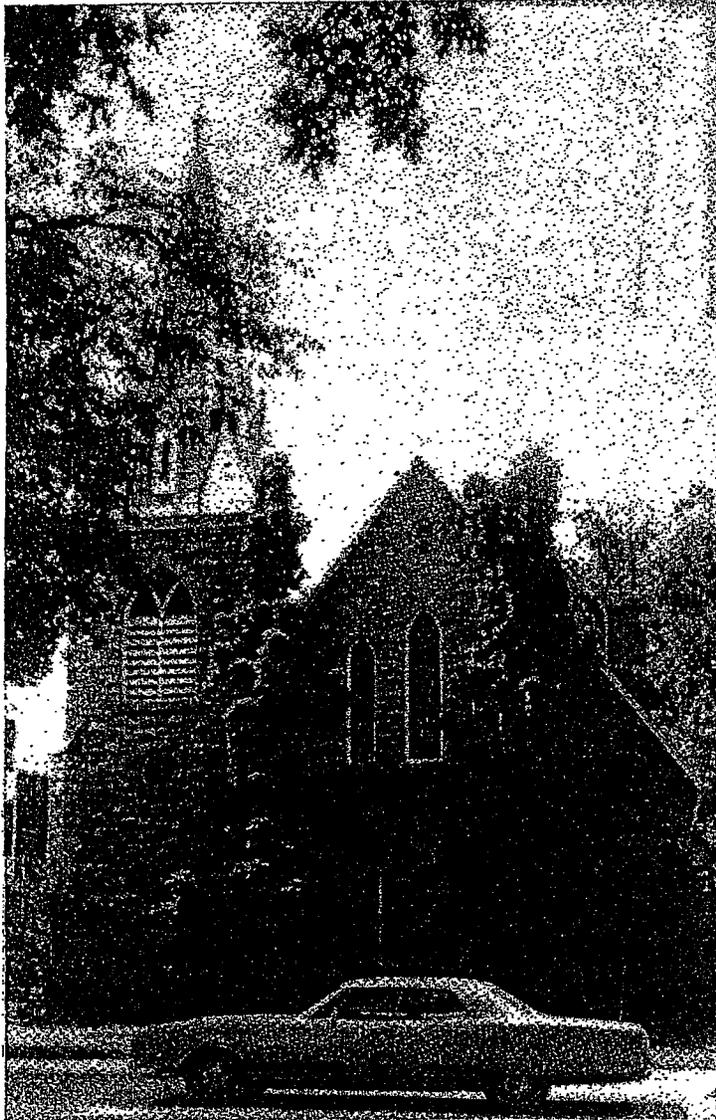
This handsome structure is typical of Lewiston's 19th Century architecture; its most distinguishing feature is the cupola which crowns the roof. The building was originally a private residence, but now houses gift and specialty shops.



ANGLER'S RETREAT (c. 1870)

This building is located almost at the foot of Center Street, and is perched on the banks of the river. Originally one of several waterfront hotels, the Angler's Retreat was one headquarters of the many fishing enthusiasts who came to Lewiston. The building now houses one of the Village's several fine restaurants.





ST. PETER'S CHURCH (1901)

While neither a particularly old nor historically significant structure, this Roman Catholic Church, with its attractive landscaping, adds much to the overall appeal and intimacy of Plain Street.