



# Count Down to Lewiston's Bicentennial Celebration

From now until July, the Historical Association of Lewiston and Lewiston Bicentennial Committee will team with Niagara Frontier Publications to highlight news, events and features commemorating Lewiston's first 200 years. These exclusive pieces will count down to a grand celebration, scheduled to take place July 1-4, 2022.

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## Meet Lewiston's braze, bizarre sheriff



This is the former Lothrop Cooke home, prior to 1960, when it stood along Center Street.



This is the home as it looks today, along Cayuga Street.

### 715 Cayuga St.: Lothrop Cooke House

First thing this week, let me say I have received many comments about this series of articles and all have been very positive. We at the Historical Association and the bicentennial committee are happy to hear how many people enjoy learning about the most mature buildings in our township. Remember, as old as a 200-year-old structure is, and as much local history they have witnessed, their presence began long after the prehistoric visitation by natives, the appearance of the French and British, and everything else in between.

This edition is the penultimate (next to the last) [Editor's note: I do not get much chance to use that great word] of our series involving 15 structures, which were

built before the 1822 creation date of the village. The township even predates that.

Now, onto the house at 715 Cayuga St., which was home to one of the most unique characters in Lewiston's history, Lothrop Cooke. He is the son of Lemuel Cooke, a pioneer of Lewiston, who has his own historic home in the town. Surviving accounts of Lothrop describe him as tall with a powerful demeanor, but cheerful and hospitable when the occasion called for it. This showed in his actions.

When the War of 1812 began, Lothrop needed to escape Canada to avoid being forced to pledge allegiance to the British. He did so by crossing 40 miles of open water in a canoe with his wife and

small child aboard. During the War of 1812, his father, his siblings, and Lothrop were tasked with making sure soldiers could cross the river safely. Unfortunately, his leg was injured in the cold water and needed to be amputated. However, his attitude did not change with one less leg, and is what earned him the title of first deputy sheriff of Niagara County in 1802, and a Lewiston judge for over 30 years.

Even when he became an undersheriff just a year and a half afterward, he still showed his strength and cunning when a riot of 2,000 men broke out along the canal. Lothrop, with one leg, walked straight up to them and demanded the leader come with him. When they laughed in his face, Lothrop leaped at him and began to beat the leader into submission. This brave feat was characteristic of Lewiston's most bizarre sheriff.

The house he built in Lewiston was originally on Center Street, but it was moved to 715 Cayuga St., to make room for a plaza in the early '60s. While the house can't

hold the same energy as the man himself, it is a constant reminder of the vivid and unique history contained within Lewiston.

Bicentennial Weekend

As this issue comes to you on June 10, we are only three weeks away from the celebration. Many last-minute details are falling into place. Be sure to visit [www.Lewiston200.org](http://www.Lewiston200.org) to know everything you need to plan a great weekend

celebration.

Thanks to Ken Slaughenpout, Tom Collister and Austin Heinz for the article.

• Find all of the HAL articles online at [www.wnypapers.com](http://www.wnypapers.com).

## Lewiston Museum debuts new take on historic post office

The Historical Association of Lewiston has a brand-new exhibit at the Lewiston Museum – with a centerpiece thought to be lost to the village burning in December 1813.

At a ceremony Friday, museum curator Tom Collister introduced a recreation of the post office said to be operating out of Benjamin Barton's mansion more than 200 years ago. Barton was Lewiston's first postmaster.

Included with the stage display is:

- The almost 8-foot-tall Barton clock, which was built in 1806, transported to Lewiston in 1807, and buried – hidden – from 1812-1815, so as to keep it from invading British forces.

- Barton's Bible, which was purchased a month before the burning of Lewiston, and chronicles family histories – including the names of his 10 children.

- A hobnail safe, which was donated by current Barton Hill estate owners the Finkbeiner family.

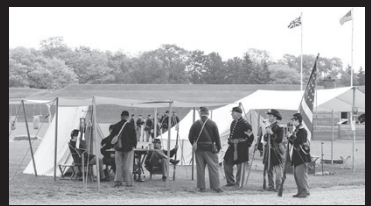
- A picture frame said to be made of the willow tree Barton's wife, Agnes, planted outside the family home.

Collister, board member Brian Beebe and President Ken Slaughenpout collected the pieces and assembled the exhibit.

Among those in attendance was 91-year-old Jim Barton, who allowed the clock to be put on display. It had been with his family for more than 80 years.

The museum is located on the corner of Cayuga and Niagara streets, kitty-corner to KeyBank's parking lot. It is open from 1-5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, June through September. Admission is free, but donations toward the maintenance of the facility and collections are gratefully accepted. Visit [www.historiclewiston.org](http://www.historiclewiston.org) for more information.

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