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# The Niagara Movement Pamphlet

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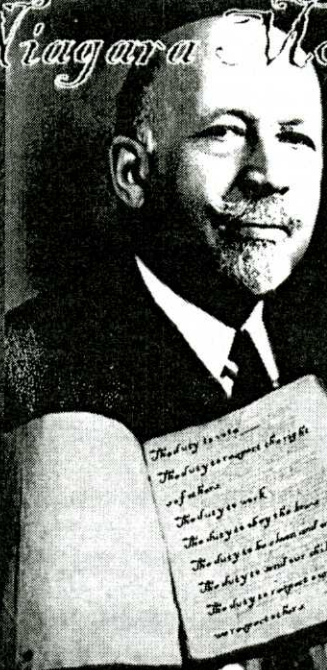
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# The Niagara Movement



The duty is vote  
The duty is respect the right  
of others  
The duty is work  
The duty is to be clean and orderly  
The duty is and our children to inherit  
The duty is respect our fellow men as  
we respect theirs



and we shall win...

*This booklet was created to commemorate outstanding people of African-American and African-Canadian decent. These people are being recognised for their outstanding leadership and dedication to the development of black people most notably in the regions of Hamilton, St. Catharines, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Lewiston, and Buffalo. Every individual being recognised in this booklet has uniquely added to black history in North America.*

**Cover Photo:**

*Large centre picture is W.E.B. DuBois, picture on bottom right are the Founders of The Niagara Movement, man sitting bottom left is Booker T. Washington, above to the right of Booker T. Washington is Nathaniel Dett, above to the left of Booker T. Washington is Governor Simcoe, above him is John Hope, above him is Harriet Tubman, above her is William Monroe Trotter, top right is Lincoln M. Alexander, below him is Reverend John C. Holland, and below him is Anthony Burns.)*

## The Niagara Movement

It can be argued that the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Civil Rights Movement began in Western New York and adjoining Fort Erie, Canada, in 1905. An African-American organization created here espoused for the first time a modern program of uncompromising protest and demand for change, and led the way for the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) five years later. (note: Here we are using 1910 as the official opening year of the NAACP, though there were preliminary meetings in 1909.)

Dubbed the “Niagara Movement” because of its place of origin, the group was composed of 59 leading African-American intellectuals, writers, newspapermen and activists, 29 of whom attended the organizational meeting in Buffalo.

The moving spirit of the group was W. E. B. Du Bois. Du Bois (1868-1963), the first African-American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard, was a professor at Atlanta University and the leading black intellectual of his time. It was he who predicted that the great issue of the coming century was the problem of “the color line.” He was also the foremost of those who rejected the philosophy of Tuskegee educator Booker T. Washington. Washington was the undisputed leader of black America in the eyes of white America, a position he assumed with his famous 1895 speech in Atlanta accepting (for the time being, at least) segregation, eschewing politics, and focusing on hard work, vocational education and black self-help.

The protesters came to Buffalo because it was the eighth largest city in America, with excellent rail connections, and because it was a place associated with the struggle for freedom from slavery. Western New York was remembered as a major crossing point on the Underground Railroad for runaways headed to safety in Canada.

Though Buffalo’s black population at that time was small – fewer than 2,000 souls – local people played an important role in the Niagara Movement. Buffalo’s Michigan Avenue Baptist Church, its pastor J. Edward Nash, and one of its leading parishioners, Mary B. Talbert, gave great assistance to the protesters. William Talbert, Mary’s husband, was a correspondent of Du Bois’s. Many accounts say the Niagarites met in the Talberts’ home (located next door to the church), though we know that the three days of business meetings (July 11-14, 1905) took place at the Erie Beach Hotel in Canada. It seems that the group did meet at least once at the Talberts’, however, probably before crossing the river. Later, in 1922, Mary Talbert became the first black woman to win the NAACP’s prestigious Spingarn Medal. Her medal is in the collection of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society.

Originally the group planned to meet at a hotel in Buffalo. This arrangement fell through, although whether because of racial discrimination (as some maintain) or because of the crush of a huge convention of Elks in town at the same moment, is not perfectly clear in the record. We don't know the name of the hotel. But for whatever reason, the group transferred to Fort Erie at the last minute.

At their meetings the Niagarites formed a network for communication and research and set out to make America aware of the shameful plight of its black citizens. Specifically, they condemned the rising tide of violence (between 50 and 100 lynchings of black men in a typical year), legal segregation (the Supreme Court approved the formula of "separate but equal" facilities in the 1896 case *Plessy vs. Ferguson*), and voter disenfranchisement. After being founded here, the Niagara Movement went on to hold annual meetings at sites representative of the struggle for freedom – Harpers Ferry, WV; Faneuil Hall, Boston, MA; Oberlin, OH. – and issued annual manifestoes detailing the sorry situation in civil rights. "We are men!" Du Bois thundered. "We want to be treated as men. And we shall win."

The Niagara Movement lasted only a few years, and never had more than about 200 active members, but its impact was tremendous. By sensitizing Americans to black discontent over worsening racial conditions in the nation, the Niagara Movement paved the way for the creation of the powerful, interracial NAACP in 1910. A murderous race riot in Springfield, Illinois, in 1908 – the year before the centennial of Lincoln's birth – galvanized liberal whites who had connections to the Niagara Movement, people like Mary White Ovington, whom Du Bois had invited to be the first white member of the group in 1908. The Niagarites were a prime component of the group invited to organize the NAACP. The key Niagarite, Du Bois, became the only black member of the founding Board of Directors of the NAACP, and their director of research and publicity.

And a footnote: Booker T. Washington, the powerful opponent of the Niagarites, their ideas and their tactics, sent a spy to report on the meetings in Buffalo. Clifford Plummer, an African American attorney from Boston, couldn't find them in Buffalo, and so concluded that the meeting must have fallen through. He did, however, visit the local offices of the Associated Press and the result was an almost complete blackout of news of the Niagarites in the white press. With Washington pressuring the black press, the protesters found publicity hard to come by - and future historians have found it hard to pin down some details of the organization of the Niagara Movement.

## NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

### Richard Pierpoint (1744 -1838ca.)

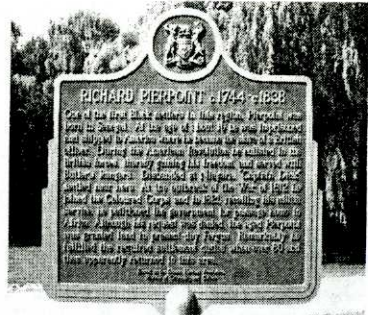


Richard Pierpoint was born in 1744 in the Bondou region of present day Senegal of Africa. His original name given to him at birth is unknown. While on a military raid at the age of 16, Richard Pierpoint was captured by slave traders and shipped across the Atlantic Ocean to be sold in North America. Young African males were often the targets of military Officers looking for servants to serve as aids and symbols of status and wealth. He will be known as an educated individual who petitioned the government in order to establish a fighting group known as the Coloured Corp.

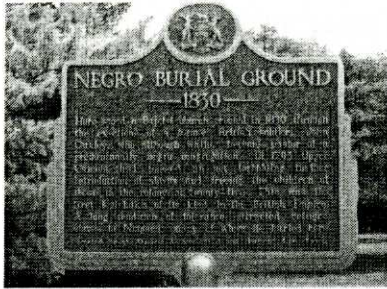
In 1760 the French-Indian War, part of the North American Seven Year War, was being fought. Richard Pierpoint would have been a perfect candidate to fight in such a War and it is believed that he may have been purchased as a slave to do so. It is alleged that during this period Pierpoint acquired his name from an influential family in Connecticut that was greatly involved in the colonial militia. At the close of the war Pierpoint was resold. It is understood that he remained in the northern colonies for some time, but eventually escaped captivity and fled to Canada.

At the beginning of the American Revolution, Pierpoint served as a member of *Butler's Rangers*, a company of the British military notorious for their deadly raids on northern American States. Pierpoint's involvement with *Butler's Rangers* is noteworthy considering few Blacks were permitted to join their ranks. After serving in the Revolutionary War Pierpoint was given a land grant in July of 1784 near Fort George in present day Niagara-on-the-Lake. It is believed that Richard Pierpoint never settled on this piece of land. Pierpoint also held land behind the St. Catharines General Hospital, in the Gratham area.

We now have information regarding where he was born since an established school system made it compulsory for all males to attend school until age 16.



## John Oakley



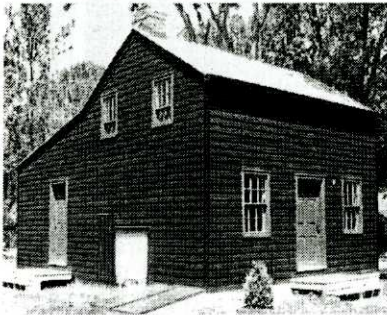
John Oakley was a British soldier who came to Fort George in 1814. The Baptist Colored Church was erected in 1829 thanks to his efforts, as was the adjoining Negro Burial Ground.. He became pastor of a predominantly Negro congregation. At one time several hundred escaped slaves found shelter under the British flag, and many Africans were buried

here. One white child was buried here in 1832, that of the above mentioned Rev. John Oakley, who was a teacher and preacher.

Here too is buried a hero whose name should not be forgotten. Hubert Holmes, was a teacher and exhorter, who organized a band of colored men of several hundreds to surround the jail and prevent the return of Solomon Moseby. Moseby was an escaped slave from Kentucky, who was by law ordered to be given up. The civil and military authorities were called out including soldiers, constables, and the sheriff. The Riot Act was also read. The prisoner escaped, but Hubert Holmes and Jacob Green were shot and lie buried here, having given their lives to save their brother from slavery.

## William Stewart Homestead

507 Butler St., Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario



This building remains one of the few surviving examples of housing built for Black settlers. Constructed for William Stewart, a Black teamster, it was recently acquired by the Niagara Foundation. The simple Neo-Classical vernacular style is a show-piece for interpreting Niagara's Black history.

This small house illustrates the variety of early buildings still to be found

in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Located at 507 Butler Street, the homestead was built in 1835 by William Stewart, a free black. Its vernacular architecture is typical of the style of construction of many of the homes of black and white residents alike. Today the house is furnished with Niagara Peninsula pieces of the 19th century and is in the process of restoration by the Niagara Foundation. Situated in the area of town once known as the "colored village," the homestead was built on land once owned by Andrew Butler, son of the

founder of Niagara, Colonel John Butler. The Butler homestead, the site of an extensive archeological dig, along with the Butler Family Cemetery and the Negro Burial Ground is just a short walk away. The Stewart Homestead is open to the public throughout the year by appointment.

## NIAGARA FALLS

### Nathaniel Dett (1882 - 1943)



"There was poured into the astonished and delighted ears of the world an indigenous music, sung by its own creators, a music as fresh as the morning, as intimate as the breath and as vital as the heartbeat."

Robert Nathaniel Dett was born in Drummondville, Ontario, on October 11th, 1882, in an area that later became part of the city of Niagara Falls. Both of his parents were talented musicians and they encouraged Nathaniel and his brothers to take music lessons as children. As a young student, Nathaniel Dett played organ for the Niagara Falls BME Church up until he graduated from Niagara Falls Collegiate in his teens.

Today the BME Church in Niagara Falls is called the The R. Nathaniel Dett Memorial Chapel in honour of Mr. Dett. The church also houses an important library of material about Black history in Canada.

## ST. CATHARINES

### Harriet Tubman (1820—1913)

Harriet Tubman was born into slavery near Bucktown, Maryland around 1820. Tubman laboured as a field slave on a plantation where she endured physically demanding working conditions and severe abuse. One summer night in 1849, Harriet Tubman escaped from Bucktown without her husband in search of freedom in the northern States. "I started with this idea in my head, *"There are two things I've got a right to . . . death or liberty."* To Her Biographer, Sarah H. Bradford (1868)



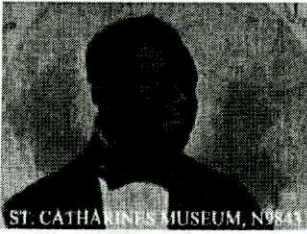
The American South was a dangerous place for escaped fugitive slaves on the run. Tubman passed unnoticed through armed patrols and bloodhounds, and she also avoided being identified by bounty hunters responding to runaway slave ads posted at every tavern and crossroads. Tubman's travels eventually led her to Philadelphia where she found employment as a cook and began to save money to



finance future trips to the South. Tubman's first return voyage south was in 1849 when she returned to rescue her sister and her parents. Tubman also met with members of the Canadian Abolitionist Society where it is said that she picked up funding for further trips South.

The city of St. Catharines is significant because Tubman resided here for a few years and it is the area where Tubman brought her fugitive slaves and family through the Underground Railroad.

### **Anthony Burns (1834 – 1862)**



Anthony Burns was born into slavery on a plantation in Virginia on May 31st, 1834. When his owner, John Suttle, died, his son Charles took over the maintenance of his father's slaves. Charles sold many of his father's slaves, but he kept Anthony and used him as rented labour. In 1854 Burns was given a job near the docks in Richmond and

he used the opportunity to escape by hiding aboard a ship bound for Boston, Massachusetts.

With the aid of a sailor who supplied Burns with food, Anthony spent three weeks in a cold, damp and dark hiding space that was not even wide enough to turn over in. Eventually the ship landed in Boston where Anthony disembarked and began his life as a free man. Unfortunately, his freedom was short lived when on arriving home from work one day he was arrested and led to the courthouse jail where his owner, Charles Suttle, was waiting for him.

Anthony Burns was the last person tried under the Fugitive Slave Act in Massachusetts. Once Burns was sent back to his owner, riots erupted in the city of Boston. Through time, the Twelfth Baptist Church in Boston purchased his freedom. While in Ohio, Burns studied to become a minister, and eventually became one at the Zion Baptist Church in St. Catharines. Sadly, in 1862 Reverend Burns passed away at the young age of 28. Today, the gravesite of Reverend Anthony Burns is also located in St. Catharines at the Victoria Lawn cemetery.

### **Governor Simcoe (1752 - 1806)**



John Graves Simcoe was born at Cotterstock, Northumberland in England in 1752. He joined the military at age 19 and served during the American Revolution (1777-1781) as commander of the *Queen's Rangers*. After a brief political career in Britain, he was appointed Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, the newly created province split from Quebec. He was sworn in on July 8th, 1792 in a small church

in Kingston, and he arrived in Newark (Niagara-On-The-Lake), with his wife Elizabeth, on July 26th, 1792.

The Government that John Graves Simcoe established in Upper Canada had an assembly elected by landowners. The first session of New Parliament began September 17th, 1792 at the Freemason's Hall in Newark. The first session lasted barely a month, but during that period Simcoe passed 8 acts including the right to trial by jury. During its second session, Simcoe pushed for the approval of a new anti-slavery law making Upper Canada the first English speaking colony to take steps towards abolishing the institution of slavery.

## **HAMILTON REGION**

### **Ray Lewis (1910-2003)**

Raymond Grey Lewis was born on October 8<sup>th</sup> 1910, in Hamilton, Ontario. Lewis was a track athlete who began his track and field career at Central Collegiate high school. After high school, Lewis attended Marquette University in Milwaukee, however his stay at the school was short lived, as he returned to Canada during the great depression, and joined the Canadian Pacific Railway as a porter. Lewis's passion for track didn't stop, and he continued to train by running back and forth between the trains as they stopped in the prairies.



Lewis became Canada's first black athlete to win an Olympic medal, after he earned a bronze medal in the 1,600m relay at the 1932 Olympic games in Los Angeles. In 1934, Lewis ran the 1,600m relay at the British Empire Games in London, England. Once he retired from competing, Lewis stayed in the sport by contributing his time as an official. Sadly, in 2003, Ray Lewis passed away, however he should not be forgotten as one of Canada's most significant athletes of all time.

### **Reverend John C. Holland (1882 - 1954)**



Reverend John Holland used faith, hope, and determination when preaching to those around him. Reverend Holland was born in Hamilton, in 1882. He was the son of a runaway slave, and grew up in a time when racial discrimination still ran deep in Canada. For 33 years he worked as a railway porter, which was one of the few fields open to black men during that time. Luckily enough, the hard working Reverend was promoted to head porter, and then eventually a second promotion led him to the prestigious position

of private car attendant. During his many years with the railway he became close friends with a number of regular passengers. In 1924, he became an ordained minister. Reverend Holland was the first African-Canadian to be honored as Hamilton's distinguished citizen of the year in 1953. Holland was also a civil rights crusader and was responsible for breaking down barriers of job discrimination. He also championed youth to gain respect in their community. Today, annually, during black history month in February, Hamilton's Black History Awards Dinner celebrates this man's life through naming the awards ceremony, The John C. Holland Gala Awards. These awards recognize achievements by members of the black community in the Hamilton region, and are recognized as role models for young blacks.

**Lincoln M. Alexander (Born 1922)**  
**Lieutenant Governor of Ontario (1985-1991)**



The honourable Lincoln M. Alexander was born in 1922 in Hamilton from parents who were immigrants from West India. Alexander served with the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War. He is a graduate of McMaster University, which is in Hamilton, and after graduation 1965 he was elected Queens Counsel and was a partner in a Hamilton law firm from 1963 to 1979. Alexander shall be remembered as the first black-Canadian elected into federal Parliament. In 1985, he was appointed to the position of Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, and was the first person

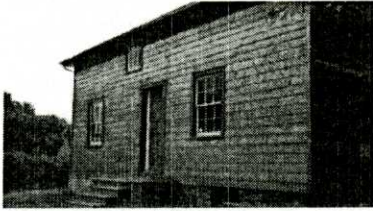
of a minority group to hold this position.

Since 1993, The Lincoln M. Alexander Award, an award that was created to recognise and remember the accomplishments of Alexander, has recognized young people who have demonstrated exemplary leadership in eliminating racial discrimination. Three young people, between the ages of 16 and 25, receive an award of \$5,000 each and a framed scroll. In 2004 became Chair of the Ontario Heritage Foundation.

**Sophia Pooley**

Sophia Pooley shall be remembered as a true hero for all Canadian black women. In 1778, Sophia arrived in the an area known as Queens Bush, which is North of Guelph, as a slave of Mohawk Chief Joseph Brant. She will be remembered for being among the first black woman in Southern Ontario. Pooley lived in this area for six years before any white settlers had arrived in the region.

## Enerals Griffin



Griffin house was owned by Enerals Griffin, who was one of the early black slaves, who made it to Canada through the Underground Railroad. Griffin was a native of Virginia, and came to the Niagara area by 1829. Griffin was a slave of a man named

Edward Lee. When Lee was on his deathbed, Griffin decided to take a chance, and write his own "letter of passage," in an attempt to garner his freedom. Griffin then began the long journey from Virginia to Canada, by horse. Once Griffin reached Pennsylvania, local officials interrogated him, and when he showed them his letter of passage, which they didn't believe was authentic, and they believed that he had indeed wrote it. The officials became even more suspicious when they confirmed that Griffin could read and write. In order to determine whether or not the letter was real or not, the official forced Griffin to copy out the letter himself. Somehow, Griffin was able to past this test, and proceeded on his journey.

Griffin met and married his wife Priscilla, once he arrived to Canada. Pricilla was a white woman, and in 1833, the couple had a son who was named James Griffin. James was born in Ancaster, Ontario, and in 1834, the family moved into a little house on the hill. The house is made up of four rooms total, including two rooms on the main floor and two bedrooms on the upper floor. The Griffins later on had two more children, named, George and Hazel, and were one of only a few black families in the area. Their house stood out in the region as one of the better properties, and despite their bi-racial family, the Griffins were accepted and well respected members of the local community. Mr. Griffin lived in his home until he died in 1878. Today in Ancaster at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church where the family attended church, two headstones represent the graves of Enerals Griffin and Priscilla Griffin, respectively.

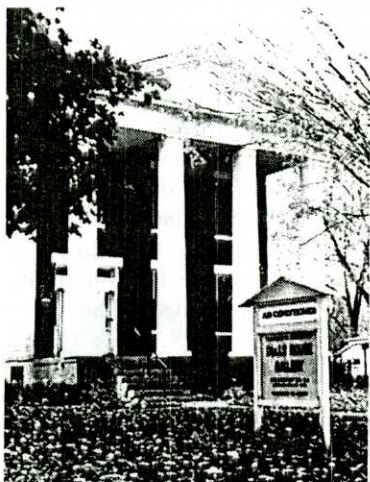
## The Workers Art and Heritage Centre

This centre was established in 1996 and is comprised of a museum and gallery, which serves the purpose of researching and displaying the history of Ontario workers and their unions. One of the centres latest exhibits is a multimedia display called "And Still I Rise: A History of African-Canadian workers in Ontario, from 1900 to present. This exhibit follows the history of escaped slaves and black people, who migrated to Canada during the American Revolution, The War of 1812, and through the Underground Railroad. Despite facing racism and other various restrictions, Canadians of African descent set down roots, established

communities, agitated the rest of society to be included in all aspects of the social order. African Canadian people were an important part of the development of human rights codes, which are enjoyed by all Canadians today.

## **FORT ERIE**

### **Mahoney Dolls House – 657 Niagara Blvd. Fort Erie, Ontario**



Constructed of brick hauled by horse and wagon teams from Hamilton, the rooms boast 12-foot ceilings, pine floors, and a 22-foot curved staircase. Bertie Hall, which was built in 1835, is home to the Mildred Mahoney Doll House Collection, which is the largest collection of its kind in the world. The exhibit has more than 140 dollhouses dating back to 1780. The site is also considered an important stop on the Underground Railroad. The basement of the house has a tunnel that was used for smuggling slaves escaping from the southern United States from 1828 to 1865.

## **BUFFALO**

### **Reverend J. Edwards Nash, Sr.**

From 1892 to 1953 Reverend J. Edwards Nash Sr. was the pastor of the Michigan Avenue Baptist Church. During the first 50 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Reverend Nash sustained a statewide reputation of being a legend among Buffalo's African American community. Reverend Nash was directly involved in bringing groups such as the Urban League (which works towards empowering African Americans to enter the economic and social mainstream), and the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). Reverend Nash was also the secretary of the Ministers Alliance of Buffalo for 32 years, and this group interracial and was one of the most influential religious groups in Buffalo. He was so respected by the white community in Buffalo, that he had relationships with the mayor and other local elected officials. Reverend Nash often used these relationships to try and gain benefits for the African-American population, or for individuals who were in need of help.

Reverend Nash hosted many African-American leaders, including Booker T. Washington at 36 Nash Street in Buffalo. This house is known today as The Nash House. At this house, many prestigious speeches, notes, and letters, which highlight Buffalo-Niagara's importance to the

civil rights movement have been preserved. The Michigan Street Preservation Corporation has launched a campaign to redevelop the historical neighborhood around The Nash House including the Michigan Street Baptist Church, which was originally built in 1845, the site of the former Little Harlem Supper Club, the Colored musicians club, and other components of the community.

### **Booker T. Washington (1856-1915)**



Booker T. Washington was born in Franklin County near Roanoke near Virginia in 1856. Born into slavery, Washington moved with his family to Malden, West Virginia after the Civil War. Washington will be remembered as a spokesman for African-American people, as well as having the ability to convince white-Americans to respect him when he spoke.

In 1881 Washington began working at the Tuskegee Institute in 1881. With his leadership, he developed the institute into a center for learning industrial and agricultural training. His reputation was so dominant amongst all American people, that he had the respect of both black and white Americans. For years he was an advisor to American presidents and dined at the White House. One of the goals of Tuskegee Institute was to improve the education of African-American people.

### **LEWISTON**

#### **Murphy Orchards – 2402 McClellan Rd., Burt New York**

This farm, now known as Murphy Orchards has been in continuous operation since the early 1800's. In 1850, Charles and Libby McClellan took over the surrounding land, the barn, and built a house as well. Between 1850 and 1861, this farm was a safe place for people who were attempting to escape from slavery. The farm was one of the last stops, if not, the last stop, before slaves made their way into Canada where they would be free.



“Niagara County, New York, was extremely active in the organized effort to guide and help people escaping from slavery out of the United States and into the protective boundaries of Canada, especially during the period from 1850 to 1861. A day's drive through this area offers a unique opportunity to step back in time and gain an appreciation for the extent of the humanitarian effort which was made to give freedom to enslaved

people, simply because those involved felt that it was morally right”

### **Lewiston First Presbyterian Church - Village of Lewiston**

The Lewiston First Presbyterian Church of was built in 1805. There has been a rumor that the churches former reverend, Josiah Tryon, once sheltered many slaves in a place called “Tryon’s Folly.” “Tryon’s Folly was built on top of the Niagara Gorge with four descending cellars leading towards the Niagara River, which provided an excellent hiding place and escape route for the slaves’ late-night crossing into Canada”

### **References**

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Mahoney Dolls House brochure

<http://www.buffalocvb.org/>

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[www.nps.gov/bowa/tuskin.html](http://www.nps.gov/bowa/tuskin.html)

[www.murphyorchards.com](http://www.murphyorchards.com)

## **Event Listing**

Fort Erie - August 1<sup>st</sup>

Emancipation Day, Griffin House (Ancaster) - August 1<sup>st</sup>

Labour Day, Griffin House - September 5<sup>th</sup>

Niagara Wine Festival BBQ, BME Salem Chapel, St. Catharines -  
September

Historical Centennial Celebration of the Niagara Movement – Niagara  
Falls, New York – October 8th

Thanksgiving Day, Griffin House (Ancaster) - October 10<sup>th</sup>

Bi-National Doors Open Niagara - October 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>

100th Anniversary of BME Salem Chapel (St. Catharines) -  
November 4<sup>th</sup>

Christmas Dinner, BME Salem Chapel - December 4<sup>th</sup>

For more details please contact:

**The Buffalo Convention Bureau:**  
**1-800-BUFFALO**  
**[www.visitbuffaloniagara.com](http://www.visitbuffaloniagara.com)**

**The Niagara Tourism & Convention Corporation:**  
**1-800-338-7890**  
**[www.niagara-usa.com](http://www.niagara-usa.com)**

**Niagara Falls Tourism:**  
**1-800-563-2557**  
**[www.discoverniagara.com](http://www.discoverniagara.com)**

**Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce:**  
**1-905-468-5012**  
**[www.niagaraonthelake.com](http://www.niagaraonthelake.com)**

**Mahoney Doll House:**  
**1-905-871-5833**

**St. Catharines Lock 3 Museum**  
**1-905-984-8931**  
**[www.stcatharines.ca](http://www.stcatharines.ca)**



