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Lewiston unveils peace garden

Location off Center Street comes as nations celebrate 200 years of friendship.

By Nick Mattera nick.mattera@niagara-gazette.com Niagara Gazette

NIAGARA FALLS — LEWISTON — In what was called a celebration of friendship, volunteerism and 200 years of harmony between the United States and Canada, Village of Lewiston residents, along with local and international dignitaries, officially designated the Lewiston Binational Peace Garden.

The Lewiston peace garden is the first in a series of greenspaces across Western New York and Southern Ontario, that are being built to commemorate the bicentennial of the War of 1812.

The effort was started two years ago by Lewiston residents Claudia Marasco and Jacquie Lodico and has now turned a former municipal parking lot into a flowering oasis, which is typical of Lewiston residents, according to Marasco.



DAN CAPPELLAZZO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Lewiston - OPENING: Attendees enjoy the sites and sounds of the official grand opening of the Lewiston Council of the Arts Peace Garden behind the Little Yellow House on Center Street. The garden was officially named a peace garden by the War of 1812 binational committee.

DAN CAPPELLAZZO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Lewiston - SPEAKER: Neil Patterson Sr. of the Tuscarora Nation speaks during the grand opening.



“This village has been built on friendship and volunteerism, which is how this park was built and is what it truly symbolizes,” said Marasco following Saturday’s ceremony. “This space was not created for ourselves, it was done to bring that history, that peace and harmony to others who visit Lewiston.”

Lewiston was center stage during the War of 1812, with one half of the nation’s army located here in October

1812. Lewiston Historical Society President Lee Simonson said the nation's eyes will once again turn to Lewiston as it commemorates the bicentennial of the War of 1812.

"The first major battle of the War of 1812 happened right here," Simonson said. "And our nation's eyes are going to be upon us and we are going to show the nation, the U.S and Canada that Lewistonians, Niagara County people, can stand together and bring this historical event the justice that it deserves."

Village Mayor Terry Collesano opened Saturday's ceremony by singing the Canadian National Anthem and called the garden a beautiful addition.

"This is a most beautiful location for residents and visitors alike to enjoy. We are surrounded by history here at this site with the Frontier House to our right and the Little Yellow Chocolate House in front of us," Collesano said. "So many different people have come together to make this happen and the meaning behind it all 200 years of peace makes it all even better."

Marasco said she believes the park stands a good chance of receiving the status of an international peace garden later this year. In order for the garden — which is located behind the Little Yellow Chocolate House off Center Street — to receive international standing it must be approved by a committee and meet specific criteria including the planting of red tulips, the official peace garden flower. There must be convenient parking, well-maintained gardens, a local site coordinator and the garden must include an official peace garden stone.

"We have all that and more," Marasco said.

State Assemblywoman Francine DelMonte was on hand to present organizers with an official proclamation recognizing the garden.

"It's so appropriate this weekend that we recognize this peace garden, at the same time that we celebrate our country's birth," DelMonte said. "I think this garden speaks to the democracy that both these countries found their politics and their government on and it speaks to the good relations that we have enjoyed for so many years."

Information regarding the celebration of the War of 1812 bicentennial can be found at www.visit1812.com.

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