Basic History of Niagara Falls

Contents

Quick Facts about the Falls

American Falls

Height.....190 ft. (58m)

Width .....1060 ft. (320m)

Volume of flow .....10% of total

Horseshoe (or "Canadian") Falls

Height.....185 ft. (56m)

Width .....2200 ft. (675m)

Volume of flow .....90% of total

Total Minimum Flow Over the Falls

April 1 – September 15 8:00am – 10:00pm: 100,000 ft^3

September 16 – October 31 8:00am – 8:00pm: 100,000 ft^3

All other times: 50,000 ft^3/sec. 1415 m^3/sec.

Total Average Flow of Niagara River (before diversion for electricity)

202,000 ft^3/sec. (5720 m^3/sec.)

2022 Falls Illumination Schedule

January 1 to 31	4:30pm	1:00am
February 1 to 28	5:15pm	1:00am
March 1 to 11	5:30pm	1:00am
March 12 to 31*	6:30pm	1:00am
April 1 to 30	7:00pm	1:00am
May 1 to 14	8:00pm	2:00am
May 15 to 31	8:15pm	2:00am
June 1 to July 22	8:45pm	2:00am
July 23 to 31	8:30pm	2:00am
August 1 to 15	8:15pm	2:00am
August 16 to 31	7:45pm	2:00am
September 1 to 19	7:15pm	2:00am
September 20 to 30	6:45pm	2:00am
October 1 to 15	6:30pm	1:00am
October 16 to November 4	5:00pm	1:00am
November 5 to December 30	4:30pm	2:00am
December 31	4:30pm	2:00am

*In recognition of Earth Hour (March 26, 2022), the Falls will remain dark from 8:30pm to 9:30pm

Acknowledgements provided to us during the preparation of this booklet:

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The Niagara Gorge Discovery Center

The Native American Center for the Living Arts

The Niagara Frontier State Parks and Recreation Commission

The New York Power Authority

Websites used to provide information:

Maid of the Mist – http://www.niagarafrontier.com/maidmist.html

The Erie Canal – HTTP://WWW.NYSCANALS.GOV/CCULTURE/HISTORY/

Niagara Falls Daredevils - http://www.niagarafrontier.com/devil_frame.html

(Daredevil photos courtesy of Niagara Falls Public Library, Ont.)

Readers who are interested in obtaining more information about Niagara Falls USA may contact Destination Niagara USA or the following organizations:

Aquarium of Niagara Falls, NY

Native American Center for the Living Arts

New York Power Authority

Niagara Falls Public Library

Niagara Frontier State Parks Commission

Old Fort Niagara Association

Niagara Gorge Discovery Center

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THE GREAT LAKES SYSTEM

The Niagara River is actually a straight that connects Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. These two lakes are part of an even larger mass of water, the Great Lakes System. The Great Lakes contain one fifth of all the world's "free" fresh water (water not frozen into the polar ice caps). The main source of the lakes is the water table of the surrounding portion of North America.

The water in the Great Lakes system travels from west to east and makes a total drop of 602 ft. (183 m) before reaching sea level. Water flows from Lake Superior, Michigan and Huron through Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River into western Lake Erie. From the eastern end of Lake Erie the water flows north through the 35 miles (56km) of the Niagara River, which empties into Lake Ontario. Lake Ontario, in turn, drains northward through the St. Lawrence River into the Atlantic Ocean.

Lake Superior is both the largest (in surface area) and the deepest of the five Great Lakes. Lake Ontario is the smallest and Lake Erie is the shallowest. The largest difference in water level between the two lakes is the 326-foot drop between Erie and Ontario. Superior is twenty-two feet higher than Michigan and Huron, which are eight feet higher then Erie.

The huge mass of water that makes up the Great Lakes system determines both the environment and the economy of the Niagara region. The moisture that evaporates from the lakes tends to inhabit cloud formation in the summer and to moderate air temperature in the winter, thus producing a remarkably temperate climate. Niagara is usually warmer in the winter then surrounding portions of North America and has more days of sunshine per year than many cities.

Great Lakes water is also the economic lifeblood of the area. The force of water flowing downhill provides huge amounts of renewable energy; energy that is used to power industry, commerce and regional districts. Water transportation systems fan out from Niagara to many parts of the continent and agriculture flourishes on readily available water. The Falls at Niagara draw millions of tourists to the region each year as well.

The fact that Niagara is both a part and a product of the Great Lakes is often impressed on visitors when they hear the cry of the "sea gulls." These water birds (actually fresh water gull and terns) flourish in and around the Great Lakes – the inland seas that give Niagara its special character and identity.

THE FORMATION OF THE FALLS

Although the Falls at Niagara are about 12,000 years old, the story of their formation can be traced hundreds of millions of years into the past.

Five hundred million years ago the Earth was very different from the way it is today. Its climate was mostly tropical and the land masses that would one day become North America and Eurasia were still separating from one another.

Most of the western and central portions of what would become North America (including the Niagara region) lay underneath shallow tropical seas and brackish ponds. The eastern part of this future continent was dominated by the Taconic Mountains a range that was taller than the still unformed Rockies.
The Taconics no longer exist in our world. Five hundred million years of erosion have reduced them to the Appalachian, Allegheny and Catskill Mountains that we know today. The silt and minerals worn away from the Taconics, however, provided the materials that formed the Niagara region and much later the Niagara Falls. Water runoff from the Taconics carried sediment down to the west where it settled to the bottom of tropical seas and ponds. Later, deposits built up on top of earlier ones compressing them into layers of rock. Over time, different mineral solutions washed down to the sea bottoms resulting in the formation of different types of rock. The lowest layers deposited in the Niagara region were the "red beds", the soft, iron-bearing Queenston shales. These were laid down under very shallow, brackish water. The next several layers to be formed in Niagara were sandstones and shales mostly soft interspersed with harder layers of limestone. The last layers of rock to be deposited were composed of hard magnesium-bearing limestone known as Lockport dolomite (often called dolostone). The dolomite layers were formed under a true tropical sea. By then, sea level was higher than when the red beds had formed. Now it contains many marine fossils. The outer edge of the dolomite deposits formed a huge semi-circle that is now the edge of the Niagara Escarpment and a 600-mile ridge that sweeps west and north from Rochester, NY into Canada.

About two hundred million years ago, the rock strata of the Niagara region was more or less in the form they hold today. No great changes occurred in the ocean beds of Niagara until fairly "recent" times. Then, about twenty million years ago, the Earth's climate began to change.

The planet grew gradually cooler and the polar ice caps began slowly to expand. As more and more water was frozen into the ice caps, the sea levels began to drop. Two million years ago, the climate change began to affect the Niagara region. The ocean beds were uncovered by the retreating sea and the growing northern glaciers crept southward into what later became the Great Lakes region. Four major glaciations occurred during the next two million years. The greatest advance of the glaciers took

place during the last half-million years. It was during this glaciation that the ice masses gouged out the Great Lakes basins.

The last glaciers melted away from the Niagara area about 12,000 years ago. Huge torrents of water released from the upper Great Lakes by the melting ice channeled along what became the Niagara River and poured over the edge of the Niagara Escarpment (the dolomite-capped cliff) at what is now Lewiston, New York. This was the beginning of the Niagara Falls.

The water of the newly formed Falls began to cut very slowly into the cliff over which it poured. The highest underground layer of rock, the layer at the top of the cliff, was and is the Lockport dolomite, a very hard erosion resistant material. The underlying layers of rock, those that support the dolomite, however, were mostly soft. Water from the river above the Falls seeped down through cracks in the dolomite layer and into the layers of softer rock below. The pressure of the water caused the soft under-layers to be pushed out from the face of the cliff behind the Falls. These soft layers sheared off, thus removing the dolomite's support.

With nothing left underneath to hold up the top edge of the cliff, the dolomite layer collapsed under its own weight and fell to the base of the Falls. The water pouring over the Falls pounded down onto the rubble and slowly wore it away. The soft under-layers of the cliff continued to shear away behind the Falls, the dolomite at the brink of the Falls continued to collapse as its support was removed and the Falls began to move slowly upstream.
Today, 12,000 years later, the Falls have moved more than seven miles (eleven kilometers) upstream from their original location. In the process of moving, they carved out the Niagara Gorge-a seven-mile canyon.

Almost 6,000 years ago, when the Falls were roughly half way to their present location, they reached a sharp bend in the river. At the outer edge of the bend was the end of an older river gorge, a gorge that had been filled in with rubble by the last glaciation. The Falls wore their way around the bend, scoured out the end of the filled-in gorge and produced the Whirlpool Basin (the site of the present-day Niagara Whirlpool).

The Falls then continued to move slowly upstream-a process that goes on today.
The present rate of erosion has been slowed by the diversion of water upstream for the generation of electricity. The shape of today's Niagara Falls is now maintained by the regulation of water flow over specific portions of the cliff, but these human-caused effects will not be permanent. The Falls of Niagara are constantly changing, providing a living example of the geologic processes that formed them.

POWER FROM NIAGARA

Even before the advent of electricity, local residents were able to draw from the Niagara River by using water wheels and turbines. It took the development of electricity,

however, for the enormous power potential of Niagara to be realized. Today, hydroelectricity is one of Niagara's most important products.

Some milestones in the development of Niagara's hydropower:

1895 - The Edward Dean Adams generating station opens in Niagara Falls, NY. It is the world's first commercial-scale generation of alternating current electricity a radical new technology that makes it practical to transmit power over long distances.

1903 - Construction of the Schoellkopf generating station is begun at the bottom of the Gorge near the Falls to produce much larger quantities of electricity at Niagara than ever before.

1950 - The U.S. and Canada sign a treaty to regulate the amount of water that can be diverted from the river above the Falls for the production of electricity. During daylight hours from April 1st to October 31st (the primary tourism season), at least 100,000 cubic feet per second must flow over the Falls. (The average river flow before diversion is 202,000 cubic feet per second). At other times, the flow over the Falls must be at least 50,000 cubic feet per second.

The International Joint Commission, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Ontario Hydro began work on a control structure that will regulate water flow over the Falls and will provide a pool upstream for the Ontario Hydro to draw from.

1956 - the Schoellkopf station collapses in a rockslide. Two-thirds of the station are destroyed and generating capacity is severely reduced. The economy of the Niagara area suffers from the loss of available power for industry.

1961 - The Power Authority of the State of New York opens its massive new Niagara Power Project. Generating capacity of the new facility is 2,400 megawatts.

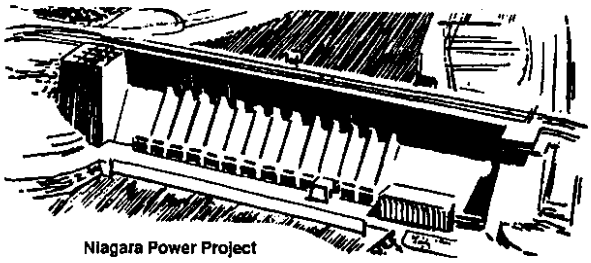
Water for power generation is diverted from the Niagara River above the Falls in both the U.S. and Canada. On the New York side of the river, the intakes are located two and one-half miles above the Falls. Water is pumped through two conduits, each 46 ft. wide and 66 ft. high that run north underneath the City of Niagara Falls to Lewiston, NY. There, water may be stored in a 1900-acre (770 hectare) reservoir or diverted into the generating station on the edge of the Niagara Gorge.

The design of the Power Authority's Niagara Project is specially adapted to preserve the beauty of the Falls according to the 1950 treaty. Peak demand for electricity comes during daylight hours, but extra water to produce extra electricity cannot be drawn away from the Falls during the daytime in the tourist season.

To solve this dilemma, both the Niagara Power Project and the Adam Beck generating station in Niagara Falls, Ontario (which follows a similar plan) draw extra water during peak electric demand periods the following day. In this way, water flow over the Falls is reduced only when doing so will not interfere with the enjoyment of their natural beauty and yet as much electricity is produced as possible.

BRIEF HISTORY OF NIAGARA

While it is not certain how long there have been people living in the Niagara area, estimates usually range between 5,000 and 8,000 years. Little is known about the earliest inhabitants of the region, but later residents have left a rich and exciting history.


Niagara Power Project

By the 1st century A. D., ancestors of the present-day "Iroquoian" peoples were firmly established in the area. Approximately 1500 years later their descendants reached a major turning point in their history when they took part in the formation of the "Great League of Peace".

The League, also known to us today as the Iroquois Confederacy, was a joining of five nations whose territories stretched across what is now New York State. The Five Nations (Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida and Mohawk) called themselves "Ho-de-no-saunee" (People of the Extended House) and were a major influence in the Northeast for the next two centuries. The Niagara region was under the stewardship of the Seneca, who were called "Keepers of the Western Door".

A series of events that would have far-reaching consequences for Niagara took place in the 1600s. Europeans, who had been busily colonizing other parts of North America, began to explore the interior of the continent.

The first of these explorers to pass through the Niagara area were the French and among them was Father Louis Hennepin, a Recollect Priest. Father Hennepin visited the region in December 1678 and was overwhelmed by the size and magnificence of the Falls.

Father Hennepin later returned to France and there, in 1683, published an account of his travels. This work was translated into a number of European languages and brought the existence of Niagara Falls to the attention of the "Old World" for the first time.

At the same time that they were exploring North America, the Europeans were also taking control of the continent. The French gradually occupied the middle of the continent from northeastern Canada to the Gulf of Mexico.

The Niagara River, which joins Lake Ontario to Lake Erie, quickly became an important link in the French water transport systems. Soldiers and supplies could be carried by boat along most of the river's length with only one portage (around the Falls and rapids).
In order to maintain control over the river, the French found it necessary to establish a permanent presence in Niagara. In 1679 they built a crude log fort at the mouth of the Niagara River where it joins Lake Ontario. It was soon abandoned. Another wooden fort was built in 1687, but it, too, was abandoned.

By the early 1700s, however, it became apparent that the British (another colonial power in North America) had designs on New France. Accordingly, in 1726 the French began the construction of the present Fort Niagara on the site of the previous forts. This time, they built for permanence.

The first building the French erected at Fort Niagara, built in 1726, was a heavily fortified stone chateau, which remains today and is called the "French Castle." It was a self-contained fort in and of itself.

The French later expanded Fort Niagara, adding other buildings and massive earthworks, but these efforts did them little good in the end. During the so-called "French and Indian Wars" of the 1750s a series of bloody battles fought in many parts of the Northeast. The British managed to wrest control of much of the continent away from France. Britain gained control of the Niagara region in 1759, when the French surrendered Fort Niagara after a two-week siege.

The Five Nations, meanwhile, had become the Six Nations when, in the early 1720s, the Tuscarora nation was driven out of their native Carolinas by European set tiers. They had migrated to the Niagara area where they became the "little brothers" of the League of Peace. Although the British occupied Fort Niagara, the Iroquois were still a major power in the region.

The British remained at Fort Niagara and by the time the American Revolution ended they had gained total control over the region. The Six Nations were divided over the Revolution and those who had sided with the British were devastated by a vengeful U.S. government. The power of the League was shattered.

During the Revolutionary War, the British had used Fort Niagara as a base for military raids into the rebelling colonies. The Niagara area remained entirely in the possession of the British Crown until 1796. In that year, in accordance with the Jay Treaty, the new U.S. government took possession of the eastern shores of the Niagara River while the British crossed over to remain in control of the western shores.

A few small communities existed on both sides of the river by the end of the American Revolution, but their growth was slow. Few persons came to Niagara.

The War of 1812 had a disastrous effect on the region. Battle after battle raged across the Niagara frontier. Villages and settlements on both sides of the border were burned to the ground. The war was particularly cruel to the residents of the region because many of them had relatives and friends on both sides of the border.

When the war ended in 1815, settlements and villages were re-established and began to grow. Niagara was (and is) a fertile land, with a temperate climate suitable for the cultivation of many food crops. Farms sprang up across the region.

By that time, some persons had begun to see the potential of Niagara Falls as an attraction. A number of artists had sketched and painted the Falls and copies of their works appeared in homes and public buildings throughout North America and

Europe. Niagara became increasingly famous and the number of visitors to the area rose each year.

Two marvels of engineering made Niagara accessible to the world during the second quarter of the 19th century. The first was the Erie Canal (completed in 1825) which connected the Hudson River with Lake Erie. It quickly became part of a heavily traveled water transportation route between the Atlantic Ocean and the Midwest.

The second engineering marvel was the Roebling Suspension Bridge over the Niagara Gorge, which was opened in 1855. Superseding a light carriage bridge that had been built in 1848, the Roebling Bridge (named for the family of engineers who later built the Brooklyn Bridge) was a massive structure that carried traffic on two levels-rail traffic above and carriages below. The railroad level of the bridge connected the East Coast and the growing western cities of Detroit and Chicago by the shortest possible route.

The Niagara region became a busy center for shipping and commerce. By water and by rail, the flow of goods moving through the area increased year by year. Niagara's new accessibility also encouraged a growing tourist trade-travelers that came to visit for the specific purpose of seeing the Falls. Hotels and tourist attractions sprang up.

The American Civil War put a damper on tourism. Niagara was untouched by the battles that desolated many American communities, but the region was not unaffected by the war and the issues surrounding it. Many local men died on the battlefields.

Even before the Civil War, the Niagara frontier had been involved in the bitter dispute over the existence of slavery in the United States. The region was a northern terminus of the Underground Railway. By night, the Niagara River was a dangerous place where professional slave catchers patrolled the waters trying to snare locals who smuggled escaped slaves to freedom in Canada. Many of the old houses along the lower Niagara River still have the secret cellars and tunnels that were used to hide slaves until it was safe to move them.

When the Civil War ended the pattern of tourism and commerce was gradually restored. More people came to visit Niagara than ever before.

The last quarter of the 19th century also saw the rapid growth of a new sector of the local economy manufacturing.

The Niagara River was the source of power for this new industry. As early as 1850 a hydraulic canal had been blasted through the village of Niagara Falls to provide water to turn the wheels of local mills and factories. By the late 1880s the number of factories in Niagara had grown dramatically, as many companies sought to tap into Niagara's abundant and inexpensive waterpower. Industrial growth would continue for the next several decades.

During the 1880s and 1890s, Niagara's growth in population, tourism and industry was reflected in three events that would have important consequences for the Niagara area, for the United States and for the world.

One of these events took place in 1892, when the villages of Niagara Falls and Suspension Bridge were incorporated to form the City of Niagara Falls. The city continued to grow in area and population for several decades, eventually incorporating several other villages.

A more important event occurred in 1885. Thoughtful persons had long feared that the area around the famous waterfalls at Niagara would be spoiled by overbuilding and commercialization. In 1885, the New York State Legislature created the Niagara Reservation parks system in order to preserve the beauty of the Falls and guarantee that the public would always have free access to them. The Reservation, the first of New York's many state parks, is now the oldest state park in the nation. Its creation and design inspired other state parks throughout the U.S.

Perhaps the most consequential event of all took place ten years later. In 1895 the Edward Dean Adams hydroelectric generating station was opened at Niagara Falls. Before then, widespread generation and use of electricity had not been practical because the generating facilities of the time produced direct current, which is difficult to transmit over distances of more than a few miles.

The Adams Station was the world's first commercial scale producer of alternating current electricity, which can be transmitted over great distances. In 1896, only a year after the station's opening, the world was astounded when electricity generated at Niagara Falls was transmitted to Buffalo, twenty-five miles away.

Electricity, which had been more or less of a novelty with limited applications, could now become an easily obtained, dependable source of power for humanity. The world would never be the same.

The arch that formed the front entrance of the Adams Station was moved to Goat Island State Park (in the middle of the Falls) in 1966. Ten years later a large bronze statue of Nikola Tesla, the inventor of the AC induction motor that altered the future of the world, was placed in front of the arch.
During the first half of the 20th century, Niagara's pattern of population, industrial and tourism growth continued more or less unchanged (except for temporary fluctuations in tourism during both World Wars). The second half of the century, however, has seen great changes in the region.

Manufacturing has gradually assumed a lesser role in the local economy, while the hospitality industry has taken an increasingly larger one. Ambitious building and development programs have reshaped the face of the Niagara area, while preservation and renovation have served to highlight the region's past. Still one of the world's most popular tourist destinations, Niagara is also becoming known as a major convention site.

The remainder of the 21st century cannot be foreseen, but it is likely that certain characteristics of the Niagara region will affect its future. The Falls of Niagara will continue to draw millions of visitors each year. Niagara's water and energy resources will become increasingly valuable. The area's temperate environment will remain attractive to those who must deal with the climatic extremes found elsewhere in North

America and the people of the Niagara region will prove to be an important asset in the growth of their community.

HISTORY OF THE MAID OF THE MIST

As early as 1834, small boats were utilized to transport people across the Niagara River. This would remain the only method available until 1848 when the first International Suspension Bridge was completed. It was between 1834 and 1848 that the Maid of the Mist I was launched to take up the service of ferrying people across the river in a much larger boat to the satisfaction of the people who had serious reservations about the safety of using the much smaller boats.

The Maid of the Mist I was launched on May 27, 1846. this boats ferry service was short lived when the first International Bridge was completed. Following completion of the bridge, most people transited the Niagara River by was of the bridge instead of the ferry. The Maid of the Mist had to take up the role as a tourist sightseeing service to remain viable.

On July 14, 1854, the Maid of the Mist II was launched. It was much larger than the first. This boat was a steam propelled paddle wheeler with a single smoke stack.

In 1861, because of a financial crisis and the coming American Civil War, the Maid of the Mist was sold at action to a Canadian firm on the condition that it be delivered to Lake Ontario. There was only one way to get there and that meant taking the boat downstream through the Great Gorge Whirlpool Rapids and the Whirlpool. This trip was undertaken by Captain Joel Robinson and two crew members on June 6, 1881. To read more about the exploits of Captain Robinson refer to the Daredevils Hall of Fame section.

The Maid of the Mist III was launched in June of 1885. It was 70-feet long and much more elegant.

The Maid of the Mist IV was launched in 1892 on the American side of the Niagara River.

On April 22, 1955, a fire of unknown sources caused two Maid of the Mist boats to burn at the Canadian docks.

On July 28, 1955 a new Maid of the Mist boat was launched to replace those boats destroyed by fire. This boat was christened "Maid of the Mist V." It was built entirely of steel.

In June of 1956, the sixth boat in the Maid of the Mist fleet was launched. It was christened Maid of the Mist II.

On June 9, 1960, the Maid of the Mist II was instrumental in the rescue of seven-year-old Roger Woodward who had accidentally gone over the Horseshoe Falls. In 1983, the Maid of the Mist II was sold. Today it continues service as a Missionary ship on the Amazon River. Refer to Daredevils Hall of Fame section to learn more of Woodward's accident and the subsequent rescue.

In 1971, the Maid of the Mist Corporation was purchased by James Glynn of Lewiston, New York.

In 1976, Maid of the Mist IV was launched. This boat could carry 200 passengers. The Maid of the Mist IV is 72 feet (22m) long and has a beam of 24 feet (7m).

On June 6, 1983, the Maid of the Mist V was launched into service. It was built of steel construction and could carry 300 passengers. This boat became the ninth boat launched during the history of the Maid of the Mist Company.

In 1990, the Maid of the Mist VI was launched into service. The all steel double deck boat is capable of carrying 600 passengers at a time.

On Friday May 30, 1997, the first section of the new Maid of the Mist VII arrived on a flatbed trailer to the Maid of the Mist docks. The first piece of the hull measuring 31 feet long by 12 feet wide by 13.3 feet high weighed 27,730 pounds. Over the following weeks the new boat was delivered in 14 separate pieces including 8 additional pieces of the hull. When assembled and welded together the new Maid of the Mist VII was 80 feet long, weighing 145 tons and will capable of carrying 582 passengers. The Maid of the Mist VII replaced the smaller Maid of the Mist III which is being used only on a standby basis.

The new Maid of the Mist VII was officially launched into service on Friday July 11, 1997. This vessel was originally built at Cartier Construction in Belleville, Ontario.

The dock is currently located at the bottom of the former Schoellkopf Power Station 3 complex. During the off season, the Maid of the Mist boats are taken out of the water via a 157-ton crane.

Information provided by: http://www.niagarafrontier.com/maidmist.html

THE NIAGARA RESERVATION: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

“Free Niagara!”

Spurred on by that rallying of 19th century Americans liberated Niagara Falls from the clutches of vulgar commercialism and returned it to a natural state.

Little more than a hundred years ago, the land surrounding Niagara Falls belonged to private owners who charged visitors a fee to see the mighty waterfalls. People actually had to pay to be allowed to look through holes in a fence in order to see Niagara.

Through the efforts of such Americans as landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and artist Frederick Church, however, the "Free Niagara" movement returned the area around the Falls to its natural state and to the people of the world.

The most surprising thing about the fight to save Niagara is that it needed to be waged at all. When disputes over land in western New York State were resolved after the American Revolution, the State of New York remained with clear title to a strip of land one-mile wide along the Niagara River. This strip included all the land on the American side of the great waterfall and all of the islands in the river overlooking it. The State quickly dispersed this property to private buyers.

Why did New York fail to reserve its title to this priceless portion of land? Few people at the time would have asked such a question. Theirs was an age that saw little, if anything, sublime in raw and untamed nature. To 18th and 19th century Americans, an uncut forest was a challenge-cleared land was the sign of civilization. It was wrong not to develop land, not to make it "productive".

Most people who dealt with the Falls saw them either as an obstacle along the way west or as a matchless resource just waiting to be tapped. The big debate among early State officials was not whether the Falls should be kept in public hands, but rather to which of the competing groups of private citizens the titles to the surrounding lands should be transferred.

It was Augustus Porter who took title to the largest of the islands in the Niagara River and some of the key lots overlooking the Falls. In time, he would build a freight transfer business, erect mills to be powered by Niagara's water and carry out plans to turn his island property into a privately owned tourist attraction. Although today there is a temptation to cast Porter and the industrialists who followed him as villains, it should be noted that his views were shared by large numbers of his contemporaries. Others took a different view, however. In the first half of the 19th century there had been a movement among artists to capture the sublime aspects of nature. Frederick Church, of the Hudson River School, was part of the movement. Hundreds of thousands of persons are reported to have stood in line for a glimpse of Church's "spiritually uplifting" masterpiece depicting the Falls of Niagara.

In the 1870s, a small group of Eastern intellectuals claimed that there was something sacred at Niagara, that all the land surrounding the Falls should be repurchased by the State and that all structures upon them should be removed at government expense.

It was Frederick Law Olmsted who eventually articulated the case for saving the Falls in their natural state. In 1869, he and a group of politically prominent citizens made suggestions concerning the establishment of a park on some of the islands above the Falls. At the urging of Frederick Church and others, Lord Dufferin, the governor-general of Canada, in 1878 came out in favor of preserving the Falls in their natural state. (The Canadian side of the Falls had also become commercialized).

Lucius Robinson, the Governor of New York, then surprised many observers by endorsing Lord Dufferin's proposal. Olmsted lost little time in taking advantage of this support.

In the face of massive political opposition from those concerned about the State's potential to impose on private property (and from taxpayers who objected to the great cost of restoring the Falls), Olmsted devoted a tremendous amount of thought and energy to the Free Niagara movement. Although the initial plans for an international park were eventually abandoned, Olmsted's ideas concerning the State's part in developing Niagara were basically the ones incorporated into the successful Niagara legislation.

In order to persuade State officials to take over the Falls, Olmsted circulated a paper in favor of the project. It went to Albany endorsed by more than 600 of the world's most respected figures, leaders in the arts, science, religion and government.

Olmsted and his friends lined up writers to prepare a series of articles for distribution to local newspapers, dramatizing the critical situation at the Falls. They organized a pressure group, the Niagara Falls Association, which distributed pamphlets, conducted public meetings and circulated petitions aimed at convincing officials that the voters wanted the Falls returned to a natural state.

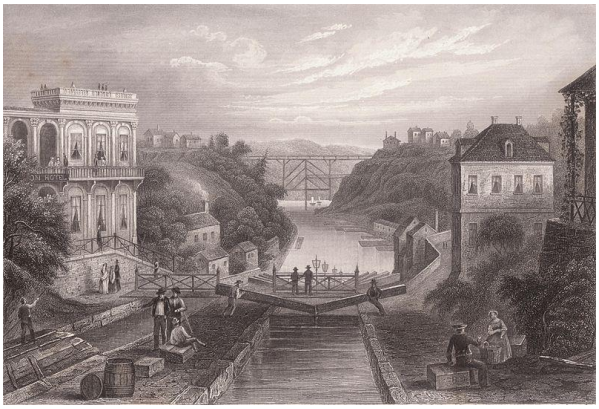
The battle over the establishment of a reservation at Niagara continued until 1885. In the end, it involved four incumbent governors and almost every other prominent political figure in the State of New York. The crucial Niagara appropriations bill of 1885 was signed at the last possible moment by a very hesitant Governor David B. Hill, who was deeply concerned about his chances in the upcoming election. His signature marked the beginning not just of a state park, but of a state park system as well. (A park was established on the Canadian side of the Niagara River shortly thereafter). The way had been cleared for Olmsted to fill in the outline of the park he had envisioned for so long. He resisted all pressures for frills and ornamentation (very popular in his day), sought to keep all essential facilities from appearing harshly intrusive and worked to restore the natural character of the total setting of the Falls.

He recognized that the waterfalls' spray and mist, which continue even in the driest seasons, encourage trees to their fullest growth and support a great variety of beautiful plant life. Olmsted took full advantage of this and other assets of the Falls' surroundings and designed a landscape that was softly natural, simple and yet intricate and a perfect complement to the magnificent waterfalls themselves.

When, in the aftermath of the Niagara controversy, New York found itself with a growing collection of forests, scenic gorges and other natural sites, Olmsted's concept of the Niagara Reservation provided a plan that would be copied many times over.

Now the oldest State Park in the United States, the Niagara Reservation plays host to millions of visitors each year. The Falls at Niagara, preserved by far-seeing visionaries more than one hundred years ago, remain free and open to the people of the world.

THE ERIE CANAL: A BRIEF HISTORY



Opened in 1825, the Erie Canal was the engineering marvel of the 19th Century. When the planning for what many derided as “Clinton's Folly” began, there was not a single school of engineering in the United States. With the exception of a few places where black powder was used to blast through rock formations, all 363 miles were built by the muscle power of men and horses.

The Erie Canal proved to be the key that unlocked an enormous series of social and economic changes in the young nation. The Canal spurred the first great westward movement of American settlers, gave access to the rich land and resources west of the Appalachians and made New York the preeminent commercial city in the United States. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Allegheny Mountains were the Western Frontier. The Northwest Territories that would later become Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio were rich in timber, minerals, and fertile land for farming. It took weeks to reach these precious resources. Travelers were faced with rutted turnpike roads that baked to hardness in the summer sun. In the winter, the roads dissolved in a sea of mud.

Then - New York Governor DeWitt Clinton envisioned a better way: a Canal from Buffalo on the eastern shore of Lake Erie to Albany on the upper Hudson River, a distance of almost 400 miles.

“The city will, in the course of time, become the granary of the world, the emporium of commerce, the seat of manufactures, the focus of great moneyed operations,” said Clinton. “And before the revolution of a century, the whole island of Manhattan, covered with inhabitants and replenished with a dense population, will constitute one vast city.”

In 1817, Clinton convinced the State legislature to authorize $7 million for construction of a Canal 363 miles long, 40 feet wide and four feet deep.

In 1825, Governor Dewitt Clinton officially opened the Erie Canal as he sailed the packet boat Seneca Chief along the Canal from Buffalo to Albany. After traveling from the mouth of the Erie to New York City, he emptied two casks of water from Lake Erie into the Atlantic Ocean, celebrating the first connection of waters from East to West in the ceremonial "Marriage of the Waters".

The effect of the Canal was immediate and dramatic and settlers poured west. The explosion of trade prophesied by Governor Clinton began, spurred by freight rates from Buffalo to New York of $10 per ton by Canal, compared with $100 per ton by road. In 1829, there were 3,640 bushels of wheat transported down the Canal from

Buffalo. By 1837 this figure had increased to 500,000 bushels; four years later it reached one million. In nine years, Canal tolls more than recouped the entire cost of construction.

Within 15 years of the Canal's opening, New York was the busiest port in America, moving tonnages greater than Boston, Baltimore and New Orleans combined.

The impact on the rest of the State can be seen by looking at a modern map. With the exception of Binghamton and Elmira, every major city in New York falls along the trade route established by the Erie Canal, from New York City to Albany, through Schenectady, Utica and Syracuse, to Rochester and Buffalo. Nearly 80% of upstate New York's population lives within a 25 miles of the Erie Canal.

The Erie Canal's success was part of a Canal-building boom in New York in the 1820s. Between 1823 and 1828, several lateral Canals opened including the Champlain, the Oswego and the Cayuga-Seneca.

Between 1835 and the turn of the century, this network of Canals was enlarged twice to accommodate heavier traffic. Between 1905 and 1918, the Canals were enlarged again. This time, in order to accommodate much larger barges, the engineers decided to abandon much of the original man-made channel and use new techniques to "Canalize" the rivers that the canal had been constructed to avoid the Mohawk, Oswego, Seneca, Clyde and Oneida Lake. A uniform channel was dredged; dams were built to create long, navigable pools, and locks were built adjacent to the dams to allow the barges to pass from one pool to the next. When it opened in 1918, the whole system was renamed the New York State Barge Canal.

With growing competition from railroads and highways, and the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959, commercial traffic on the Canal System declined dramatically in the latter part of the 20th century.

Today, the waterway network has been renamed again. As the New York State Canal System, it is enjoying a rebirth as a recreational and historic resource. The Erie Canal played an integral role in the transformation of New York City into the nation's leading port, a national identity that continues to be reflected in many songs, legends and artwork today.

In 2001, designated as the nation's 23rd National Heritage Corridor, the New York State Canal System joined the ranks of America's most treasured historical resources. Comprised of four Canals, the Canal System is historically significant for the many contributions it has made to establish New York State as an international center of commerce and finance.

For more information about the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, please visit their website, http://www.eriecanalway.gov

THIS INFORMATION PROVIDED
BY:HTTP://WWW.NYSCANALS.GOV/CCULTURE/HISTORY/

THE NIAGARA RESERVATION TODAY

(Now known as Niagara Falls State Park)

More than 100 years after the formation of the Niagara Reservation, the influence of the brilliant 19th century architect Frederick Law Olmsted continues to be felt. Although the parks have had to adapt to conditions that Olmsted could never have foreseen, the concept of preserving the Falls natural surroundings is still the guiding principle.

Today the Niagara Reservation now known as the Niagara Falls State Park receives nearly ten million visitors a year, almost all of who arrive by motor vehicle. In order to provide all of these visitors with easy access to the Falls, several adjustments have been made. Roads, bridges and parking lots have been constructed to accommodate the driving public. Visitors now can drive to within a short distance of each major viewing area, Prospect Pointe, Terrapin Point and Three Sisters Island. (The Three Sisters Island consists of Asenath, Angeline and Celinda Eliza)

In keeping with Olmsted's ideas, however, the roads and parking lots were designed and placed in such a way that they don't detract from the appearance of the Falls and rapids. Instead, they keep motor traffic separate from pedestrians and natural areas. A highway through Prospect Park, a misguided project of the 1960s, was removed during redevelopment for the Reservation's Centennial and the park was re-landscaped according to Olmsted's concepts.
A visitor center was added to the park in 1987. It features displays and exhibits that help visitors understand and interpret the Niagara Falls State Park, the Falls and the history of their relationship with humans. It also includes a wide-screen Show Scan theater that provides a thrilling introduction to the Falls, high-tech fountains, restrooms, a snack bar and a gift shop. The facility was designed to blend with its surroundings to enhance, rather than detract from, the magnificent park.

In front of the visitor center lie the Great Lakes Gardens. These beautifully landscaped gardens include large-scale models of the Great Lakes System done entirely in living plants. The formal gardens serve as a transition between the downtown area and Olmsted's more natural areas.

Adjacent to the Falls is the New York State Observation Tower; another facility designed to help accommodate millions of visitors every year. The tower's observation platform, 200-feet above the base of the Niagara Gorge, provides a spectacular view of all three Falls. Glass-walled elevators carry visitors high above the Falls or down to the base, providing access to the waterfall and the world-famous Maid of the Mist Boat Tour.

The Niagara Falls State Park includes several island parks right in the middle of the Falls and rapids. Bridges lead to many of these beautiful parks, which feature spectacular scenic views. Goat Island, the largest of the island parks, also features parking, picnic facilities, a restaurant overlooking the Falls, snack bars, gift shops, rest rooms and the popular Cave of the Winds Trip. The Niagara Gorge Discovery Center, a short distance down river, provides visitors with an understanding of the geology and geologic history of the Falls.

All areas within the Niagara Falls State Park are accessible to pedestrians and motor traffic. During the busier months, the Niagara Scenic Trolley circulates throughout the park as well. This trolley runs continuously, permitting tourists to disembark and rejoin the circuit at many points of interest. Even with all the improvements, the Olmsted ideal is still pursued. A special committee works constantly to insure that the areas surrounding the Falls remain as natural and as close to the original design as possible.

The Niagara Falls State Park is one of North America's most popular tourist destinations. Open year-round, constant concern for the needs of its visitors and a continued commitment to providing free access to the Niagara Falls in their natural state, mean that Niagara's gift to the world will be enjoyed for generations to come.

A HISTORY OF NIAGARA'S DAREDEVILS

Daredevils can be best summarized as persons who wish to take conscious risks with their lives with the emphasis on survival. However, some risks are so great that the chances of survival based upon a balance of probabilities become so little that they become suicidal in nature. It may be a thin line of definition but a line none the less. Now days, the art of being a daredevil has become so sophisticated that chances of survival are almost predictable.

Most of the contraptions that the daredevils used usually had a nickname or had a statement printed on it (such as something political, a charity, and a sponsor or of course their own name). The numbers never really were an issue. Weight, balance, ballast and of course the odds of survival were the only true numbers the daredevils cared much for. Most importantly they pursued fame and fortune or notoriety. None have ever become rich and/or lastingly famous....yet.

If you weren't the very first, remarkably the members of the public didn't care beyond perhaps watching the event. Spectators came not watching for a successful conclusion but rather the deadly consequences of failure.

Daredevils of today can't compare to those of forty years ago because of changing water conditions and technological innovations. Niagara Falls has 12-15 suicides each year. This number has been fairly constant for the past century. The difference between the two types of persons is that by pure luck...someone may survive. If they do survive, they are considered a daredevil.

It wasn't until some years after the bitter fighting along the shores of the Niagara River during the War of 1812, that Niagara started to come into its own as a tourist attraction.

By the 1820s there were three hotels catering to the visitors of Niagara Falls. The hotel owners were responsible for the first stunt over the Falls in order to attract attention of members of the public and to boost the tourist trade.

The hotel owners acquired a condemned Lake Erie schooner named the "Michigan". The hotel owners then advertised in advance that they would send the schooner over the Horseshoe Falls on September 8, 1827.

Most of the animals placed aboard were able to safely escape before the ship broke apart on the shoals and was swept over the Horseshoe Falls.

This daredevil event took place as advertised before an estimated crowd of 10,000 people. This heralded the beginning of 170 years of recorded history of men and women challenging the Niagara River and the Falls in face of death for fame and fortune. Like a giant roulette wheel, they came willingly and gambled with their very lives.

NIAGARA'S MOST FAMOUS DAREDEVILS:

ANNIE EDSON TAYLOR - 1901 (Survived)

Photo courtesy of the Niagara Falls (Ontario) Public Library

Mrs. Annie Edson Taylor became the first woman to challenge Niagara Falls in a barrel. Mrs. Taylor was born on October 24, 1855 in Auburn, New York. She was married at the age of 17 years and when she was 20 years old, Annie Taylor gave birth to a son, who sadly died several days after birth.

On October 24, 1901, on her 63rd birthday, Taylor rode her barrel over Niagara Falls. She was a widow and a school teacher in Bay City, Michigan. She weighed 160 pounds. Annie had no previous experience when she came to Niagara Falls seeking fame and fortune.

Her barrel was built with white Kentucky oak held together by seven iron hoops. It was 22 inches in diameter at the head, 34 inches in diameter in the middle and 15 inches in diameter at the foot. The barrel was four and a half feet long and weighed 160 pounds. For balance an anvil weighing between 100 and 200lbs was placed in the barrel's bottom.

She began her trip from the north side of Little Grass Island situated just off of the American side of the Niagara River upstream of Goat Island. She was dressed in a long black dress and a flowery hat. About 600 feet from shore Mrs. Taylor climbed into her barrel so that she was standing on the anvil. The barrel was packed with padding and a small mattress and the lid was then screwed into place.

At 4:05 p.m., when released, the barrel flowed toward the Canadian side and over the Horseshoe Falls. Mrs. Taylor successfully endured the trip without any major injuries

(slight cuts and bruises only). It wasn't until 4:40 p.m. that rescuers could get close enough to Taylor's barrel along the Canadian shore to let her out. The top of Taylor's barrel had to be cut away. When released from the barrel Mrs. Taylor said "nobody ought ever do that again".

Annie Edson Taylor was famous for a short time but the fortune she sought eluded her. Following her record feat, Taylor managed a meagre living by posing for photographs. Taylor died on April 29, 1921 at the Niagara County Infirmary in Lockport, New York. She is buried in the 'stunters' section of Oakwood Cemetery in Niagara Falls, New York.

THE GREAT BLONDIN (AKA: Jean Francois Gravelot) - 1859 (Survived)

Photo courtesy of the Niagara Falls (Ontario) Public Library

The most famous of Niagara's daredevils was Jean Francois Gravelot, better known as "The Great Blondin." He was born February 28, 1824 in St. Omer, Pas de Calais in Northern France.

Blondin first came to Niagara in early 1858. He became obsessed with crossing the Niagara River on a tightrope. On June 30, 1859, Blondin successfully walked across the river on a tight rope. For this crossing , Blondin utilized a 1,100 foot long - 3 inch diameter manila rope stretched from what is now Prospect Park in Niagara Falls, New York to what is now Oakes Garden in Niagara Falls, Ontario. He began his first walk from the American side and completed his crossing in 20 minutes. Blondin used a thirty (30) foot (9m) long balancing pole that weighed 40 pounds.

During the summer of 1859, Blondin completed eight more crossing times. His most difficult crossing occurred on August 14th when he carried his manager Harry Colcord on his back. During the summer of 1860, Blondin returned to Niagara for a second successful year of tight rope walking across the Niagara River for hundreds of thousands of sightseers. One of his acts included pushing a wheelbarrow along as he crossed.

On September 8, 1860, Blondin completed his final tight rope crossing of the Niagara River. In 1860, Signor Guillermo Antonio Farini (aka: William Hunt) of Lockport, New York was Blondin's formidable rival. Others followed in the absence of Blondin but none was more daring or famous.

Blondin died in 1897 at the age of 73 years.

ROGER WOODWARD -1960 (Survived)

Roger Woodward being rescued
by the crew of the Maid of the Mist
Photo courtesy of the Niagara Falls (Ontario) Public Library

Special Note:

Roger Woodward was a victim of a tragic set of circumstances that resulted in the death of Mr. James Honeycutt. Roger Woodward and his older sister Deanne narrowly escaped with their lives.

Roger Woodward was not a daredevil or a stunt man. The fact that he was swept over the Horseshoe Falls was not his choice by design or otherwise.

The story of this tragic accident is listed under this section not because Roger Woodward was a daredevil, but rather his survival was nothing less than a miracle.

On July 9, 1960, a seven-year-old boy named Roger Woodward became the first person to survive a plunge over the Falls without a barrel.

Woodward and his 17-year-old sister Deanne, both of Niagara Falls, New York set out that day on a harmless boat ride on the upper Niagara River with family friend James Honeycutt. Honeycutt, age 40 years, of Raleigh, North Carolina, was a contractor at the Niagara Parks Commission hydro project. He had often taken the Woodward children out for a boat ride on his fourteen foot long aluminum boat with a seven and a half horsepower outboard motor. Mr. & Mrs. Frank Woodward trusted Honeycutt completely.

Honeycutt and the Woodward children began the boat ride about five miles upstream of the Falls where Honeycutt was living in a house trailer at the Lynch Trailer camp along the American shoreline.

Approximately one mile upstream of the Horseshoe Falls, Honeycutt began to turn the boat in the opposite direction when the boat motor malfunctioned and quit running. Upon examining the engine, Honeycutt discovered that the propeller pin had sheared off. Honeycutt began rowing frantically towards the shore, but the current was carrying the boat ever so quickly towards the Falls. Honeycutt ordered the Woodward children to put on their life-preservers. Honeycutt was too busy rowing to have time to put his life-preserver on.

Near the Falls the waves capsized the boat separating Deanne from her brother Roger and Mr. Honeycutt. Deanne held onto the side of the boat until a wave forced her under water. When she surfaced, she saw two men standing on the shore. John Hayes, age 44 years, a truck driver from Vauxhall, New Jersey was visiting Terrapin Point on Goat Island when he saw Deanne in the water. Hayes grabbed Deanne by her fingers

and called for help. John Quattrochi, age 39 years, a tourist from Penns Grove, New Jersey came to help Hayes. Both men successfully pulled Deanne from the water.

Roger Woodward was in Honeycutt's arms as they approached the Horseshoe Falls. The raging water pulled them apart as they rode over the crest of the Falls. Roger Woodward was wearing swimming trunks and a pair of running shoes. The shoes were ripped from his feet on his way down the cascade. Woodward was forced into the 180-foot-deep water at the base of the Falls, but was quickly freed where he floated to the surface.

It was 12:55 p.m., when the crew of the Maid of the Mist spotted tiny Roger Woodward bobbing up and down in the water. Captain Clifford Keech was at the wheel of the 270-foot-long Maid of the Mist II. It took eight minutes and three approaches to rescue Roger Woodward by using a life ring.

Roger Woodward was taken to the Greater Niagara General Hospital in Niagara Falls, Ontario. He sustained only minor cuts and bruises. Deanne Woodward was taken to Memorial Hospital in Niagara Falls, New York suffering from nothing more than shock James Honeycutt was battered and drowned.

ROBERT OVERACKER -1995 (Died)

Robert Overacker going over the Horseshoe Falls to his death
Photo courtesy of the Niagara Falls (Ontario) Public Library

Robert Overacker, a 39-year-old man from Camarillo, California challenged the Niagara River and the mighty Horseshoe Falls at 12:35 p.m. on October 1st 1995. Riding on a single jet ski, Overacker launched himself into the Niagara River upstream of the Falls from the area of the Canadian Niagara Power Plant . Robert Overacker rode his jet ski directly at the brink of the Horseshoe Falls.

At the brink of the Falls, Overacker ignited a rocket propelled parachute that was strapped to his back. His plan was that the rocket would quickly deploy the parachute allowing him to safely land in to river below the Horseshoe Falls where he could be rescued. Overacker did ignite the rocket which deployed the parachute as planned. Unfortunately as the parachute deployed it fell away from Overacker to the ground below. Unknown to Overacker the parachute was not tethered to his body. The parachute was not packed by Overacker prior to the stunt and he was unaware of this fatal error. His step-brother and a friend witnessed this unfolding tragedy as Overacker fell to his death to the water below the Falls.

Robert Overacker was married and had no children. Overacker became the fifteenth person since 1901 to challenge the Falls. Robert Overacker challenged the Niagara River and paid with his life. His body was recovered by staff at the Maid of the Mist.

NIK WALLENDA -2012 (Survived)

Nik Wallenda making his way across Niagara Falls
(courtesy of Frank Gunn/Canadian Press)

115 years after the last tightrope crossing over Niagara Falls, Nik Wallenda made history and joined the ranks of Niagara's legendary daredevils. Wallenda is seventh generation of the legendary Great Wallendas, and it was his is lifetime goal to tightrope walk across Niagara Falls.

Stunting in Niagara Falls State Park has been banned for decades; New York State and Canada allowed this one-time daredevil act to take place. On June 15, 2012, with an audience of over 13 million people, Wallenda's walk on the high wire was broadcasted all over the world. Nik Wallenda battled the heavy winds and mist and successfully crossed from Niagara Falls to Canada in 25 minutes.

Information provided by:

http://www.niagarafrontier.com/devil_frame.html