

"FREE NIAGARA"

THE NIAGARA RESERVATION
STATE PARK

100 YEARS
1885 // 1985



Each year, millions of visitors from around the world visit Niagara Falls to marvel at the thundering majesty of more than 700,000 gallons of water per second plummeting to the rock 182 feet below the precipice. The view is not only magnificent, it's a real bargain. There is no admission fee to admire one of nature's most impressive creations.

Today's visitor has a great advantage over the tourist of 1885. In those days, the view of the Falls was obscured by factories, mills and other unsightly structures lining the gorge. Private concessionaires monopolized the cataracts, charging visitors a fee to glimpse the Falls behind the tall fences which hid them from view.

In the 1870s a dedicated group of concerned citizens, led by such nationally known figures as landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and artist Frederic Church, among others, embarked on a campaign to free Niagara from commercialism and restore it to its natural state.

Their efforts, known as the "Free Niagara" movement, culminated in legislation signed by New York Governor Grover Cleveland in April, 1883, authorizing the "location and appropriation of certain land in the Village of Niagara Falls for a State Reservation and to preserve the scenery of the Falls of Niagara." A key figure in the passage of the legislation was Thomas V. Welch, a young state assemblyman from Niagara Falls, who successfully guided the Reservation Bill through the Legislature. Two years later, \$1.5 million in public funds were allocated to acquire 200 acres of land. This was unprecedented in U.S. history. Public funds had never before been allocated for the sole purpose of preserving scenic beauty.

On July 15, 1885, the Niagara Reservation was dedicated, open free of charge as a natural preserve, forever. Over 75,000 people attended the ceremonies. It was a day to remember, with marching bands, military units, speeches and fireworks.

At long last, the way was cleared for Olmsted to fill in the outlines of the park he had so long envisioned. Resisting all pressures for frills and fancy ornamentation, he worked to restore the lovely natural character of the total setting. Thomas Welch, who had worked so hard to secure the enabling legislation, was appointed the Reservation's first superintendent, and faithfully served in that office until his death in 1903.

This year, the Niagara Reservation celebrates its 100th anniversary. To honor the formation of the park and the people who made it happen, the Niagara Reservation Centennial Commission has organized a months-long celebration, complete with fireworks and laser shows, cultural exhibitions and events, athletic competitions and more.

COME CELEBRATE

MAY 19-OCT.

CENTENNIAL TRAIL MEDAL PROGRAM

Up to 10,000 Boy Scouts explore the Reservation to earn a special bronzed Centennial Medal.

MAY 26-10 PM

***CONCERT IN THE SKY**

A spectacular fireworks display synchronized to music lights up the mist above the Falls.

JUNE 28-SEPT.

FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED AND THE NIAGARA RESERVATION

The Buscaglia-Castellani Art Gallery showcases the original plans and designs for the State Park. Wed.-Sat., 10-5; Sun., 1-5.

JUNE 29

***JR. OLYMPICS ROAD RACE CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Top finishers qualify for national competition. At the Niagara Reservation.

JULY 8-15

***CENTENNIAL LASER SHOW**

Nightly exhibition highlights the Falls, the mists above them and the walls of the Gorge.

JULY 13-JAN. '86

***HISTORICAL EXHIBITS**

Occidental Chemical Corporation hosts a commemorative exhibit depicting the history of Niagara Falls and the Reservation in the lobby of its Niagara Falls division headquarters.

Daily, 9-9.

JULY 13 - SEPT. 1

***"NIAGARA"**

Approximately 100 artworks, including Frederic Church's magnificent "Niagara Falls." Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo
Tues.-Sat., 11-5; Sun., 12-5

JULY 13-SEPT.

"SELLING NIAGARA: Twentieth Century Images of Niagara Falls in Advertising and Popular Culture" - A collector's treasure of Niagara Falls memorabilia. Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society. Small admission fee. Tues.-Sat., 10-5; Sun., 12-5.

JULY 13 - AUG. 18

***"NIAGARA FALLS: New Impressions"** - Purchase award Centennial Art Competition. Burchfield Art Center in Buffalo. Tues.-Fri., 10-5; Sun., 1-5. Closed Sundays in August.

JULY 13 - 9 AM

***NATIONAL 10K RACEWALK CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Competitors from around the world race for the finish line at Prospect Point.

JULY 13 - 11 AM

***CENTENNIAL FAIR**

Bring the whole family to an 1885 picnic on Goat Island. Feast on roast oxen, watch craftsmen at work on 19th Century wares, and enjoy continuous entertainment on three festival stages.

JULY 13 - 7 PM

***RAINBOW CENTRE DANCE**

The festivities continue at the Mall with music, dancing and more entertainment.

JULY 14 - 11 AM

***HERITAGE DAY**

Delight in traditional performances by colorful ethnic groups gathered to celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Western New York. Sample culinary delights from an international menu.

JULY 14 - 7 PM

CENTENNIAL CONCERT

Christopher Keene conducts the Buffalo Philharmonic in a special program at Artpark in Lewiston.

JULY 15

***REDEDICATION CEREMONIES**

Dignitaries from the U.S. and Canada participate in ceremonies to rededicate the Niagara Reservation State Park on its 100th Anniversary.

JULY 15

***AN OLMSTED SYMPOSIUM**

Guest speakers will discuss Olmsted and his contributions to the Niagara Reservation at the Greek Theatre in the Niagara Falls Convention Center.

AUG. 8 & 10

***EMPIRE STATE GAMES**

New York State athletes compete in racewalks on the Reservation.

*** Free Admission**

Further information on these and other Centennial events is available from the Niagara Frontier Region of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Prospect Park, Niagara Falls, NY 14303 (716) 278-1770.

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**NIAGARA RESERVATION
CENTENNIAL COMMISSION**

Co-Chairmen: Catherine C. Boericke
Paul A. Schoellkopf

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