

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Niagara Reservation

AND/OR COMMON

Niagara Reservation

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Niagara Reservation

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Niagara Falls

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_ VICINITY OF

36

STATE

New York

CODE

36

COUNTY

Niagara

CODE

63

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

State of New York, administered by the Niagara State Park Commission

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Niagara Falls

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Niagara County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Lockport

STATE

New York

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_ STATE \_\_ COUNTY \_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Niagara Reservation consists of a narrow strip of land along the eastern shore of the Niagara River, centered at the site of the American Falls, and extending for short distances both above and below the falls, as well as the cluster of islands situated in and between the falls. The largest island, Goat Island is connected to the eastern shore by two bridges, and is connected by bridge to the Three Sisters Islands off its southern shore as well. The other, smaller islands include Robinson Island, Bird Island, Brother Island and Green Island.

Upon the signing of the bill which created the reservation, the commissioners assigned to select the lands and manage the reservation, followed the guidelines which had been suggested in a report made in 1879 by Frederick Law Olmsted, the landscape architect, and James T. Gardiner, the head of the State-appointed survey. This report directed that the islands above the falls, and a strip of land alongside the falls be included, and that only such arrangements as were necessary to preserve the natural scene should be made. Little or no construction, except that to facilitate visitors' appreciation of the site, was to be made. In 1887, Olmsted and his associate Calvert Vaux implemented this plan. The eastern shore and the islands were cleared and the eastern boundary of the shore land was planted so as to screen out the city of Niagara Falls to the east.

In 1900, the administration building and visitors' comfort facilities were built both on the shore and on Goat Island. The administration building, located on the shore to the east of Prospect Point, is still in use. Many of the comfort facilities have been replaced or modernized.

Sightseeing roads have been laid out around the perimeter of Goat Island, and a new restaurant has recently been constructed on its western shore.

The greatest intrusion in the reservation since its creation is the Robert Moses Parkway, completed in 1960, which is a four lane, divided highway which runs parallel to the eastern shore, through the middle of the reservation.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1885

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Today's visitor can enjoy the beauty and might of Niagara Falls due to the far-sighted action of the state of New York which in 1885 established the Niagara Reservation. In creating the reservation and subsequently eliminating the numerous eyesores that had sprung up along the shore line near the Falls. New York became the first state to use its power of eminent domain to acquire land for esthetic purposes. This precedent has been followed in principle by state after state since 1885.

Now surrounded by the bustling town of Niagara Falls, the initial 418 acre Reservation has increased to 435 acres. Aside from the construction of the Robert Moses Parkway along the eastern boundary of the Reservation, and the modernization of visitors' facilities, the park presents the same appearance as it has for almost 100 years.

### History

As early as 1834 it was suggested that the land near Niagara Falls be cleared of the factories, hotels, and signs in order that the Falls might be viewed in a natural setting. But for many years this idea received no support. In 1870's many prominent citizens joined those who complained about conditions around the Falls; these included Frederick Law Olmsted, the landscape architect; Henry James, the famous novelist; Charles Eliot Norton, the influential editor of the Nation and Frederic Edwin Church, the painter of the monumental Niagara Falls.

By the end of the decade, the movement began to take effect. New York's governor suggested action concerning the falls in his annual message to the legislature in 1879; and a survey of the situation around the Falls was authorized. The report recommended that the state purchase the lands around the Falls so that visitors could view the scene from a proper setting. A memorial signed by the Vice President of the United States, the Governor General of Canada and other important personages supported the report, but a new state administration proved unsympathetic.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- S. Sydney Bradford, "Niagara Reservation," National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings form 10-317, 2/5/63.  
 Hans Huth, Nature and the American (Berkeley, California, 1957).  
 Charles Dow, The State Reservation at Niagara (Albany, 1914).  
 Alexander Flick (ed.), History of the State of New York, 10 vols. (New York, 1933-7), vol. x

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 435 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	17	6590000	4773000	B	17	6590000	4770000
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	17	6560000	4770000	D	17	6560000	4773000
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Niagara Reservation national historic landmark boundaries are coterminus with the present boundaries of the State Reservation, as indicated on the enclosed United States Geological Survey map 7.5' series, Niagara Falls Quadrangle, dated 1965.

The Robert Moses Parkway does not contribute to the national significance of the landmark.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1/16/76

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11/2/83

ATTEST

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

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Stymied, but not defeated, the adherents of the Niagara Falls movement redoubled their attempts in behalf of their cause. A flood of articles and speeches poured forth, all of them being intended to galvanize public support. In 1883, the proponents of a park at the cataract formed a Niagara Falls Association, which quickly attracted members and created additional pressure upon the state government. Indeed, a bill sponsored by the Association was presented to the legislature in the same year, and by the end of April it had been passed and signed by Governor Grover Cleveland. The act created a commission to choose the lands that should be preserved near the falls; in a relatively short time the commission had selected a narrow strip of land along the northeastern shore. Final success for the defenders of the falls came in 1885, when in April a bond issue of \$1,000,000 was authorized to pay for the land. On July 15, the state dedicated the Niagara Reservation.

The formation of the Niagara Reservation stands as a tremendous victory in the struggle to save grand aspects of our natural scenery. Once the park had been created, the state removed about 150 buildings and eradicated all raceways and flumes from the area, certainly tangible proof of the triumph of public interest over private property. No one can doubt the value of New York's landmark action concerning Niagara Falls, or the worth of subsequent similar moves by other states.