

1984 - 1993

The End of an Era

The news on March 5, 1992, was, as Mayor Wayne Thomson commented, “devastating.” Cyanamid was closing its Niagara plant, throwing 243 people out of work. The job losses were bad enough but the news was also a psychological blow to the city. To most residents it was inconceivable that the once mighty Cyanamid plant could be permanently closed. The operation was founded in 1907, only three years after Niagara Falls had become a city. It had grown to the point where, at one time, Cyanamid employed more people than any other manufacturing industry here and was the city’s biggest taxpayer. In short, for most of the century it had been the chief symbol of Niagara Falls’ industrial might. Cyanamid’s closing, however, was part of a trend that had actually started in the 1960s – a trend that saw a number of large, long-established Niagara Falls industries close, move elsewhere, or downsize. The result brought about both a reduction in the property tax base and fewer employment opportunities.

During the mid-1980s another decline within the city had also become quite evident. Fewer people were shopping downtown, a situation that accelerated as the decade progressed. This was a problem that many communities were facing as regional malls and shopping plazas drew people away from the traditional downtown core.

For Niagara Falls’ Queen Street, 1988 brought particularly bad news when it was announced in the fall of that year that Rosbergs department store, the street’s main anchor, would be closing in December. For many people it was like a body blow since for much of the century this downtown landmark had been an intrinsic part of the city’s life. The family-owned business was founded by Jacob Rosberg and Gertrude Rosberg Carrel in 1919, in what had been the old Market Hotel at the corner of Queen Street and Erie Avenue. There was one department (men’s clothing) and one employee. As the city grew so did Rosbergs, with various expansions

eventually resulting in a 5,574 square metres (60,000 square feet) building housing 14 departments. As *The Niagara Falls Review* noted at the time the door was locked for the final time, “At some time in their lives, there is hardly a person in Niagara Falls and over a much wider area who has not shopped at Rosberg’s. The store, operated by three generations of Rosbergs, will be sorely missed by generations of families who made the trip downtown to buy everything they needed.”

On a happier note, the decade also saw a significant anniversary. The Niagara Parks Commission celebrated its centennial in 1985 and marked the occasion in grand style. On June 21 the commission held a gigantic one hundredth birthday party at Queenston Heights Park. Approximately half of the 10,000 people on hand had previously purchased tickets which entitled them to a picnic lunch, with proceeds going to the United Way. There was also a mammoth birthday cake. Weighing in at 454 kilograms (1,000 pounds), it was big enough for 6,000 people to have a piece. The birthday bash also included a display by the Old Fort Henry Guard Drill Team and a concert by the Spitfire Band. A fireworks display capped off the day. It was a party to remember.

By the early 1990s Niagara Falls was struggling through a recession. Not only had many of the old manufacturing industries disappeared, but tourism was also experiencing a decline. Some hotels were unable to keep up with their property tax payments and unemployment was high.

With new manufacturing very difficult to attract, many Niagara Falls business people, labour leaders, Mayor Wayne Thomson, and most aldermen decided it was time to look in a new direction. They became convinced that a casino would give the city the economic boost it needed. The next decade would show how right they were.

1984

- the population of Niagara Falls was 71,036
- local grocers charged:
 - \$1.69-\$2.29/lb for butter
 - .99¢-\$3.29/lb for beef
 - \$1.49-\$2.99/10 lbs for potatoes
 - .89¢-\$1.44/dozen for eggs
 - .79¢-\$1.44/2kg bag for sugar
- there were 3,904,706 passenger automobiles registered in Ontario
- bread cost between 39 and 99¢/loaf according to size and variety
- the now-familiar 4L package of three bags of milk cost \$1.79 to \$1.99
- the new Fitness International gym on Lundy's Lane charged its members \$88.00/year
- boys' sweaters were between \$10.00 and \$17.99, and girls' corduroy or denim pants \$10.50 to \$28.99 at Robinson's department store in the Niagara Square shopping mall
- six-piece bedroom suites ran for \$1,195.00 to \$2,274.00 at Plaza Furniture, located at the corner of Dunn Street and Drummond Road
- King Optical charged \$39.95 for a complete pair of glasses with a one year guarantee
- \$8.50 would allow you to buy a 22cm T-Fal frying pan at Towers
- Canadian Tire offered whipper-snippers for \$17.99, and Workmate-400 workbenches for \$79.99

1989

- computer classes offered at A.N. Meyer, Westlane, and NFCVI cost \$40.00 to \$50.00 to learn the DOS operating system or the latest in word processing programs, Word Perfect 4.2
- at Shoppers Drug Mart, the Canadian Mecca of cosmetics, prescriptions, and toiletry needs,

1,000 Niagara Tory supporters trade pledges with leader here

The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), January 3, 1984



Photo by and courtesy George Bailey

FEDERAL CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADER, later Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney and his wife Mila visited Niagara Falls in May 1984. They were the guests of honour at a Progressive Conservative fundraising dinner at the Skylon Tower and stayed overnight at the Old Stone Inn. The Mulroneys also participated in the Blossom Festival Parade.



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), January 3, 1984



Photo by Ron Roels, The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

IN AN EFFORT TO REVITALIZE THE DOWNTOWN AREA, a facelift for the core of the city was undertaken in the mid-1980s. In this shot Mayor Bill Smeaton cuts the ribbon to officially open the new Queen Street gateway from River Road on September 18, 1985. Front row, left to right: Marg Germano (representing Member of Provincial Parliament Vince Kerrio), Mayor Smeaton, Alderman Judy Orr, Gabriel Mallouk (chairman of the Downtown Board of Management), and Eugene Nickel (owner of the Mayflower Restaurant on Queen Street). Back row: Alderman Robert Keighan, Alderman Norm Puttick, Alderman Brian Merrett.



Photo by Ron Kitchen, Niagara Falls Heritage Foundation Collection, Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)

THE DAREDEVILS EXHIBIT IN 1985. Originally situated along the Great Gorge Walk, now called the Whitewater Board Walk, the exhibit displayed many contraptions used by stunters brave enough to challenge the Horseshoe Falls. Most of these pieces are now housed in the IMAX Theatre building. George Seibel, official city historian of the time, stands at right.



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), June 3, 1989



Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)

NIAGARA FALLS' "STREET OF FUN," Clifton Hill, is seen here in this nighttime shot taken in 1984. The Sheraton Foxhead Hotel is left of centre at the top of the photo.

1989 *cont'd*

- Garfield children's vitamins cost \$4.99/90 chewable pills, extra strength Roloids were \$2.79/80, and Maybelline pressed powder or liquid foundation cost \$2.99 each
- the local Zellers outlet charged \$8.99 for popular cassette tapes by recording artists like Fleetwood Mac, George Michael, the Bangles, Tiffany, and Guns N'Roses
- return fare to Toronto on the daily VIA train took \$21.00 out of your pocket
- Consumers Distributing charged \$98.88 for the latest in communications technology, a 46 MHZ General Electric cordless phone, \$22.99 for the summer water toy Slip n'Slide, and between \$78.88 and \$159.99 for the galvanized steel backyard swing sets so popular with suburban families of the 1980s
- swimming lessons offered by the city in partnership with the Lions Club and Canadian Red Cross Society ran \$20.00/child
- Uncle Ben's converted rice cost \$3.69/2kg, and Laura Secord Magic Moments pudding \$1.99 at Valdi Discount Foods grocery store on Dunn Street

SOURCES:

Ontario Ministry of Transportation

Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)

The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), January 3, 1984; January 4, 1984; January 6, 1984; January 11, 1984; January 18, 1984; January 25, 1984; June 2, 1984; June 6, 1984; June 13, 1984; January 9, 1989; January 10, 1989; June 3, 1989; June 5, 1989; June 7, 1989; June 8, 1989.



Photo by Russell Harbottle, Harbottle Collection, Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)

THE NIAGARA FALLS ART GALLERY AND CHILDREN'S MUSEUM in 1985.

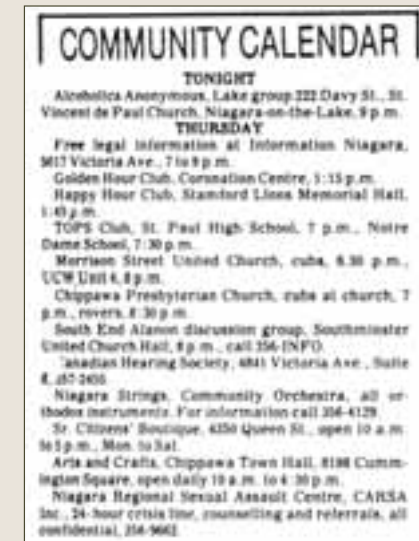
Originally a privately owned gallery, the institution now features extensive children's educational programming as well as a gallery exhibit. Now owned and operated by a board of directors, the cultural centre first opened in July 1971 and adopted its current format in 1990.



Photo by Russell Harbottle, Harbottle Collection, Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)

SACRED HEART ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, 1985.

Located at 3882 Main Street, the church was built over the course of 1923 and 1924. Before the construction of this house of worship local Carmelite fathers gave mass in various places within the Village of Chippawa.



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), June 13, 1984



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), January 6, 1989

MOUNT CARMEL CIRCA 1985. *The Carmelites came to Niagara Falls in 1875, ministering to the communities of Clifton, New Germany, Black Creek, and Netherby. In 1894 construction began on their landmark building. Having also taken over the management of Our Lady of Peace Church, the Carmelites strove to achieve their other major goal: the creation of a hospice and spiritual retreat at Fallsview. This venture was not successful in the earlier part of the century, and by 1920 the Mount Carmel complex had become a seminary college and high school. In 1965 the secondary school portion of Carmel's educational facilities was removed to Hamilton, Massachusetts, and the collegiate department was granted the right to bestow Bachelor of Arts degrees on its students. Two years later a fire devastated the north wing of the complex, which was not rebuilt. The institution is now known as the Mount Carmel Spiritual Centre and provides day programs, workshops, and space to hold retreats for all religious denominations. Grey Gables School and the Niagara Falls Gymnastics Society currently lease the educational and gymnasium facilities on site.*



Francis J. Petrie Collection, Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)

THE HOPE FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH CHILDREN'S CHOIR around 1985. *In 1977 the two local Baptist congregations, Hope Baptist and Trinity Baptist, amalgamated. They purchased 0.8 hectares (two acres) of land on Kalar Road, halfway between Lundy's Lane and Thorold Stone Road, on which to build their new church. The structure was dedicated in 1980.*



Photo by Russell Harbottle, Harbottle Collection, Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)

MAPLE LEAF VILLAGE began its operations amongst great hype, hope, and interest as a dining and shopping establishment. Over the years the attraction developed more entertainment-based roots, as this photo from July 1985 of a popular photo booth can attest. Despite the efforts of entertainment venues like the Elvis Museum, the Nightmares “haunted” maze, numerous souvenir shops, and the Village’s midway, by the end of the 1980s the appeal of the property had declined significantly. By the mid-1990s many of the commercial spaces in the Village were empty, and in early January 1996 it closed its doors for good. In December 1996, after significant alteration and remodelling, the Village became Casino Niagara. Sushi Gardens, one of the original Village restaurants, is still with us today, now located on Lewis Avenue.



Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)

MAPLE LEAF VILLAGE opened in June 1979 on the former site of Oneida Limited’s operations. This view circa 1984 shows the attraction during the annual Winter Festival of Lights. At left is the Sheraton Foxhead Hotel, and at right is the Sheraton Brock Hotel. The Village boasted shopping facilities, entertainment attractions, a midway, and one of the largest ferris wheels in the world.



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), June 2, 1984



Photo by Russell Harbottle, Harbottle Collection, Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)

THE KINGDOM HALL of Jehovah's Witnesses in May 1985. Opened in 1956, the Hall, located in the "v"-shaped site between Portage and Drummond Roads, was purchased from the Moose Lodge. In August 1982 the congregation relocated to the former St. Monica's Church on Caledonia Street. This building then became the home of St. Luke's Community Church, part of the Liberal Catholic Parish of Niagara.



Photo by Russell Harbottle, Harbottle Collection, Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)

THIS LANDMARK BUILDING in Chippawa, at the corner of Portage Road and Front Street, housed McKenzie's China and Gift Shop for many years. It also served as a bank, drug store, funeral home, and cabinet maker's over the past two centuries. In 1996 this site became a Tim Hortons coffee shop.



Photo by Russell Harbottle, Harbottle Collection, Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), January 3, 1984

THE GERBER BABY FOODS PLANT on Stanley Avenue in 1985. Many Niagara Falls motorists will recall seeing the Gerber baby as they travelled along this main thoroughfare. Bought from the D'Arcy Cropp Company in 1950, the factory remained in operation until 1990 when Gerber moved its production facilities to Michigan.

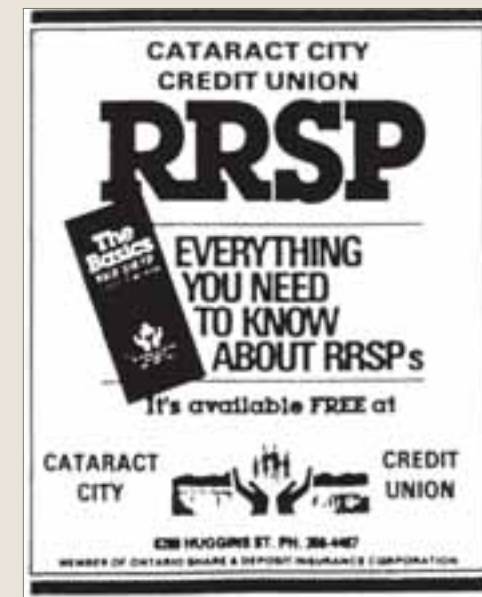


Photo by Ron Reels, The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

THE NIAGARA FALLS CLUB in April 1986. Originally built by wealthy Buffalo eye, ear, nose, and throat specialist Dr. Harry Grant in 1900, this lovely home, known as Victoria Place, overlooked Queen Victoria Park. While owned by Dr. Grant, the property saw many distinguished guests. The Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII, dined here in October 1919. In 1951, it became the home of the Niagara Falls Club, three years after the establishment of this organization. In 1986 the club lost its lease on Victoria Place and relocated to Reese's Country Inn, at the junction of Montrose and Thorold Stone Roads, in December 1987. Vacant for some years after, Victoria Place was later severely damaged by fire, following which the remaining structure was removed.



Francis J. Peirce Collection, Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), January 3, 1974

THE NIAGARA FALLS CLUB LIBRARY
in Victoria Place circa 1984.



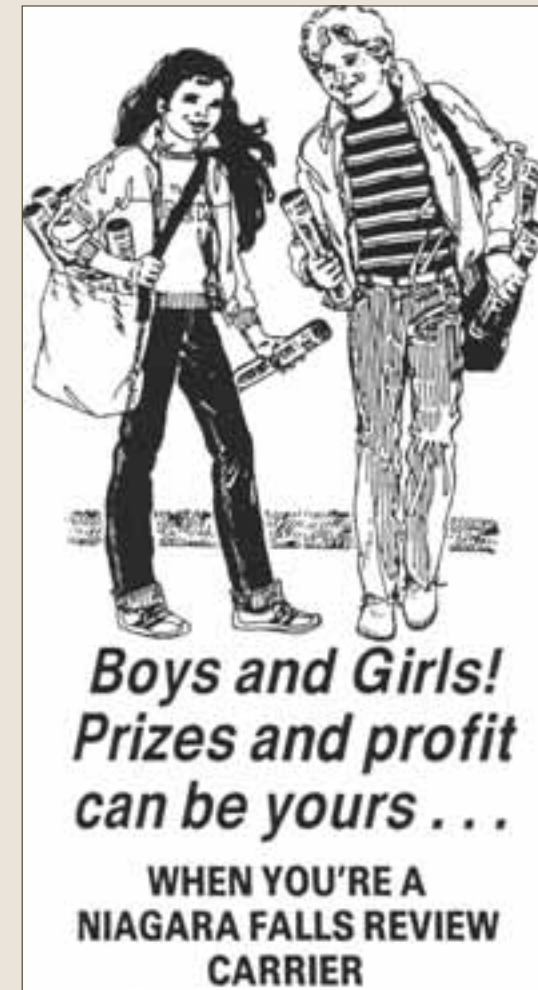
The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

DAVID SUZUKI AT THE WHIRLPOOL, *summer 1986.* Suzuki, host of the CBC's popular environmental and scientific television show "The Nature of Things," was in the Falls to film scenes of the Niagara River and Maid of the Mist docking area. "The Nature of Things" was launched in 1960 and continues to be aired today.



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

THE LATEST AND GREATEST of summertime entertainment trends to develop over the 1970s and 80s was the water park. Niagara Falls jumped on the bandwagon with the opening of the Whitewater water park on Lundy's Lane in 1982. This photo of the attraction was taken during the summer of 1986. This is now the site of the Canada One Factory Outlet Mall.



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), June 13, 1984



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), January 7, 1984



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

SOME OF THE MEMBERS of the Niagara Falls Fire Department pose with their new truck outside the Morrison Street Fire Hall in 1986.



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

JAKE'S CHIP WAGON, seen here in March 1987, has been a Niagara Falls institution for many years. Despite a fire that gutted the wagon that same year, it still takes its place daily on St. Clair Avenue, between Queen and Park Streets, under the management of Jake Hiebert.



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), June 3, 1989



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

PARAPLEGIC RICK HANSEN took on the monumental task of travelling across Canada in his wheelchair in 1986 and 1987 in order to raise awareness of and collect funds for spinal cord injury research. During a visit to Niagara Falls on November 15, 1986 he was presented with a cheque for \$18,000 from Carl DeMol on behalf of McDonald's restaurants. Mayor Bill Smeaton looks on.



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

LINCOLN ALEXANDER, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, meets with members of the Niagara Regional Police Pipe and Drum Band on an official visit to Niagara Falls in October 1986. Alexander served as Lieutenant Governor from 1985 to 1991, and was the first black person to hold this prestigious office.

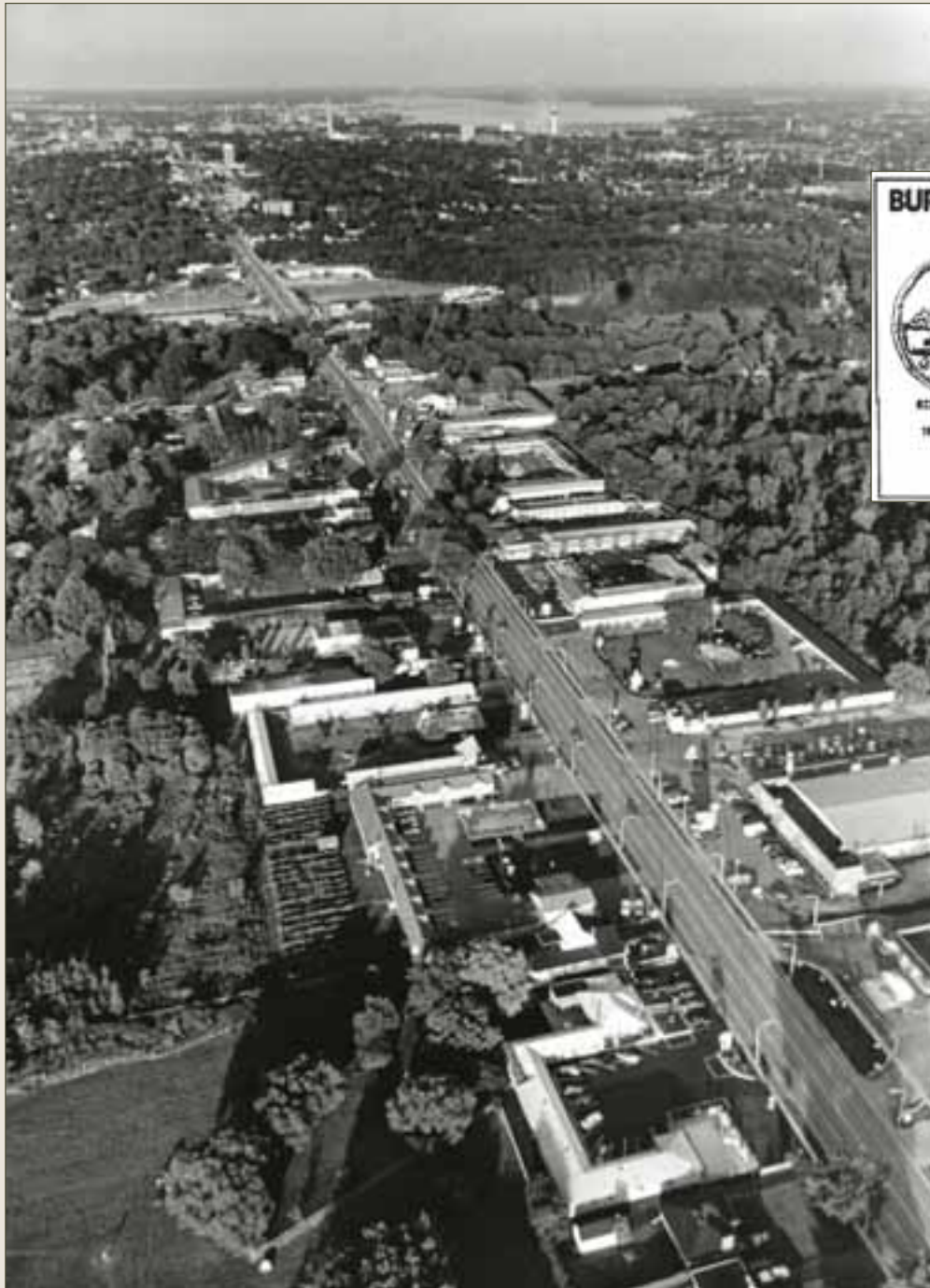


Photo by Ron Roels, The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), January 5, 1989



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), January 3, 1984

LUNDY'S LANE, looking east towards the Niagara River, in 1986. Note the many motel complexes along this busy and traditionally tourist-oriented thoroughfare.

THE NIAGARA FALLS GIRLS' RINGETTE TEAM OF 1985-86. Ringette began in the city in 1983. These young players of the sport are, front row, left to right: Karen Kranjac, Cheryl Daniel, Colleen Taylor, Leslie McMillan, Sonia Burritt, Andrea Bain, Andrea Waters. Back row: Jim Waters (coach), Tricia Long, Becki Whitwell, Kelly Shafley, Linda Morandin, Chuck Shafley (coach).



Tricia Dumas



Ed Desson

THE NIAGARA FALLS MARINERS BASEBALL TEAM OF 1987. A major inter-county team, the Mariners are, front row, left to right: Ron Zanini, Charley Ogilvie, Rick Herkimer, Dave Snyder, Tim Clutterbuck, Mickey Vescio. Back row: Chris Black, Greg Shannon, John Gill, Don Bogar, Mike Long. Absent: Jim Baldin, Jamie Bray, Wayne Bendo, Rick Gallo, Rick Guzzola, Bill Jenkins, Mike Lavelle.



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), January 9, 1989

Andrew and Fergie zip through Niagara

The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), July 20, 1987



Photo by Ron Roels. F.H. Leslie Collection. Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)

ON JULY 18, 1987, the Duke and Duchess of York, Andrew Windsor and Sarah Ferguson, visited Niagara Falls. Over the course of their two hour stop they toured the Skylon Tower, Table Rock Restaurant, the Scenic Tunnels, and the Maid of the Mist. Pictured here are, left to right, Pamela Walker (then chair of The Niagara Parks Commission), a member of the Royal entourage, George Bailey (The Niagara Parks Commission's public relations director), and the Royals. Mayor Bill Smeaton presented the couple with an official Niagara Falls Honeymoon Certificate during the group's reception at the Skylon.



Inge Saczkowski

MARIA SACZKOWSKI AND HER GRANDSON PETER sell peaches at the Sylvia Place Farmers Market in the summer of 1987. Operated for many years in partnership with her late husband Michael, Maria continues to run the family fruit farm and stand on Mountain Road. She is affectionately known locally as the "Strawberry Lady."



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

LINING UP for New Kids On The Block concert tickets around 1990, outside Sam the Record Man on Queen Street. The NKOTB heralded in a decade of wildly popular pop music and paved the way for boy bands like the Backstreet Boys and N'Sync.



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

CONCERT-GOERS patiently wait to purchase tickets for alternative rock group Depeche Mode in April 1988.



Pat and Rosa Simon

THE TUG OF WAR between Niagara Falls, Ontario and Niagara Falls, New York police has been a tradition since 1966. Held annually on the Rainbow Bridge, this particular match took place around 1990.



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

MEMBERS OF THE ST. JOHN AMBULANCE WATER PATROL pose for this shot on Chippawa Creek in June 1988. St. John Ambulance has been a service club in Niagara Falls since 1972 and provides first aid courses, boating safety, and first aid treatment at community events.



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), June 2, 1984

PORTAGE ROAD, seen here in the summer of 1990, presents a lush, peaceful scene. Despite the immense development Niagara Falls has undergone over the past century, many pockets of pastoral sanctuary still remain in the city.



Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

THE NIAGARA FALLS INTER-CITY BUS TERMINAL, just prior to its opening in the spring of 1988. Before moving to this site that same year, the terminal was located at Fallsvue. The new setting was chosen by city council because of its desire to create a transit hub for the city, something easily achieved at this site on Erie Avenue due to its close proximity to VIA Rail Canada Inc.'s Bridge Street station, slightly visible at right.



Photo by George Bailey, Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)

THE CARILLON TOWER was built over 1941 and 1942 as part of the Rainbow Bridge complex. The melody of its bells has been heard throughout the summer and on special occasions each year since June 1948. This view of the impressive structure was taken in 1990.

THE BELLS OF THE CARILLON TOWER are adjusted in this 1990 photo. Crafted in England by John Taylor & Sons Company Bellfounders, the carillon is made of 55 bells and cost \$48,000.



Photo by George Bailey, Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)



Photo by George Bailey, Niagara Falls Public Library (Ontario)

CAROLLEUR GLORIA WERBLOW

of Williamsville, New York is ready to play in 1990. By striking the claviers' specialized keyboard and row of pedals, wires attached to each bell's clapper are activated and cause the carillon to sound.



Photo by Raly, Ontario Film Development Corporation

DIRECTOR MICHAEL MOORE filmed parts of his movie “Canadian Bacon” in Niagara Falls during the fall of 1993. A satire of Canadian-American political relations, the film used many local residents as extras. In this photo, left to right, John Candy, Michael Moore, and Rhea Perlman discuss a shot while at the Maid of the Mist dock. Wes Hill, son of local riverman William “Red” Hill Sr., helped with the film’s boating scenes.



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), October 28, 1991



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), January 9, 1989



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

TAKING PART IN EVENTS celebrating Black History Week, this trio of ladies poses in the Nathaniel Dett Memorial Chapel of the BME Church in February 1991.

THE ROYAL WATCH

The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario),
October 28, 1991



Photo by and courtesy George Bailey

PRINCESS DIANA AND HER SONS, Prince William and Prince Harry, on board the *Maid of the Mist* during their October 26, 1991 visit to Niagara Falls. This was the young Royals' first official engagement abroad. Stops at Table Rock, the Scenic Tunnels, and the Victoria Park Restaurant were also made by the entourage.

A royal welcome

*William, Harry love The Falls
despite clouds and heavy mist*

The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), October 28, 1991



Photo by and courtesy George Bailey



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

AN EDUCATIONAL EXHIBIT FOR EARTH DAY in April 1991. Each April 22, local schools and interest groups raise public consciousness of environmental issues through displays and community service.



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), October 28, 1991



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario), June 11, 1984



Photo by Mike DiBattista, The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

HAZARDOUS WASTE DISPOSAL, September 1990. By the 1980s most Canadians were much more aware than in the past of the importance of protecting the environment. In 1987, measures were put in place for the safe disposal of household hazardous waste in Niagara Falls.

VIGNETTES OF LIFE IN NIAGARA FALLS

~Photos: The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)



Photo by Ron Roels



Photo by Mike DiBattista



Photo by Mike DiBattista



Photo by Mike DiBattista



SPORTS ACTION IN NIAGARA FALLS



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

A SPIRITED HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL GAME in December 1990.



Photo by Mike DiBattista, courtesy Pat and Rosa Simon

CURLING in Niagara Falls, 1990.



The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

A RUGBY SCRUM in 1990.



Photo by Mike DiBattista, The Review (Niagara Falls, Ontario)

NIAGARA FALLS THUNDER hockey game, 1991.