



NIAGARA  
FALLS  
NATIONAL  
HERITAGE  
AREA



**Best of 2019**





## Niagara Falls National Heritage Area | Best of 2019

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Photographs on pages 8,9,10,15 and the covers by Alana Adetola Fajemisin.



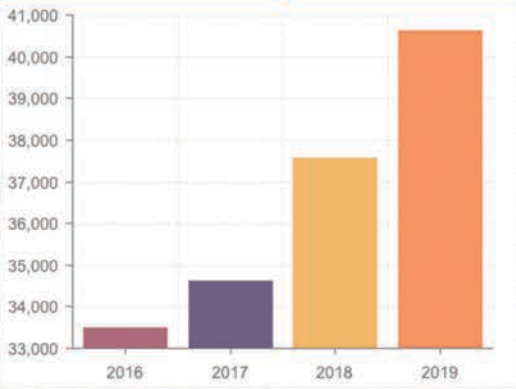
DISCOVER  
NIAGARA  
SHUTTLE

# 146,339

have hopped on a Discover Niagara Shuttle.



## Ridership





Our shuttle riders had a front row seat to our exciting mural project this year at our Niagara Falls Train Station / Underground Railroad Heritage Center Stop.

## Discover Niagara Shuttle Sponsorship Programs & Events

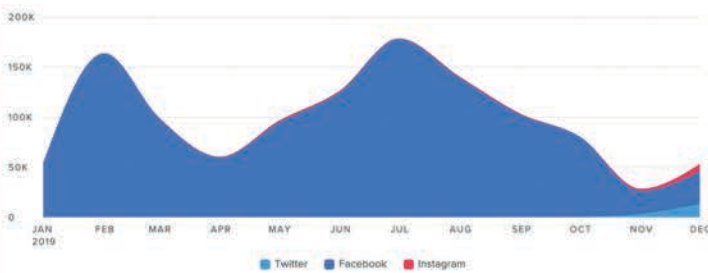
- Niagara Falls Jingle Falls
- Lewiston Holiday Tour of Homes
- Santa Con
- Peach Festival Parade
- Youngstown Labor Day Parade
- Niagara Falls Community Memorial Day Parade
- Educational Outreach Events
- Niagara University Spring Cleanup
- Niagara Falls Trunk or Treat Event



# SOCIAL MEDIA

## Group Impressions

### Impressions Per Month



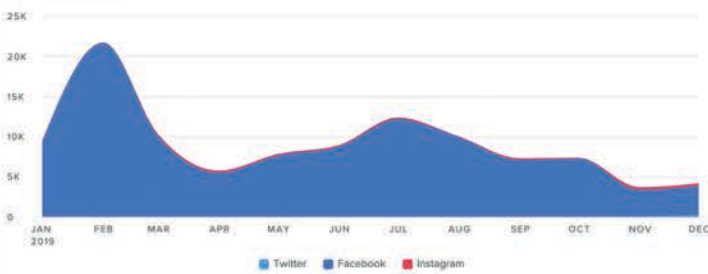
### Impressions Metrics

	Total	% Change
<b>Total Impressions</b>	<b>1,183,140</b>	<b>↑ 91.1%</b>
Twitter Impressions	16,305	↑
Facebook Impressions	1,151,092	↑ 87.8%
Instagram Impressions	15,743	↑ 148%

Total Impressions increased by  
**~91.1%**  
since previous date range

## Group Engagement

### Engagements Per Month



### Engagement Metrics

	Total	% Change
<b>Total Engagements</b>	<b>108,877</b>	<b>↑ 104%</b>
Twitter Engagements	274	↑
Facebook Engagements	106,451	↑ 100%
Instagram Engagements	2,152	↑ 2,265%

The number of engagements increased by  
**~104.4%**  
since previous date range

Message volume increased by

**~72.7%**

#discoverniagara  
#nfmurals

## Group Activity Overview

### Impressions

1.2m

### Engagements

108.9k

### Live Clips

21.9k

The social media assets of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area have continued to see growth in reach, engagement and impact.

# NIAGARA FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY

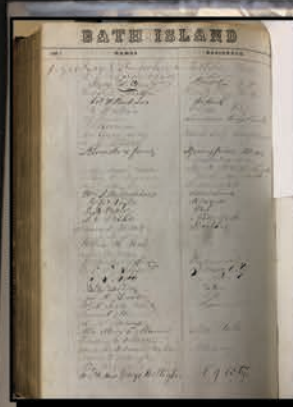
"In the end, our society will be defined not only by what we create but by what we refuse to destroy."

- John Sawhill

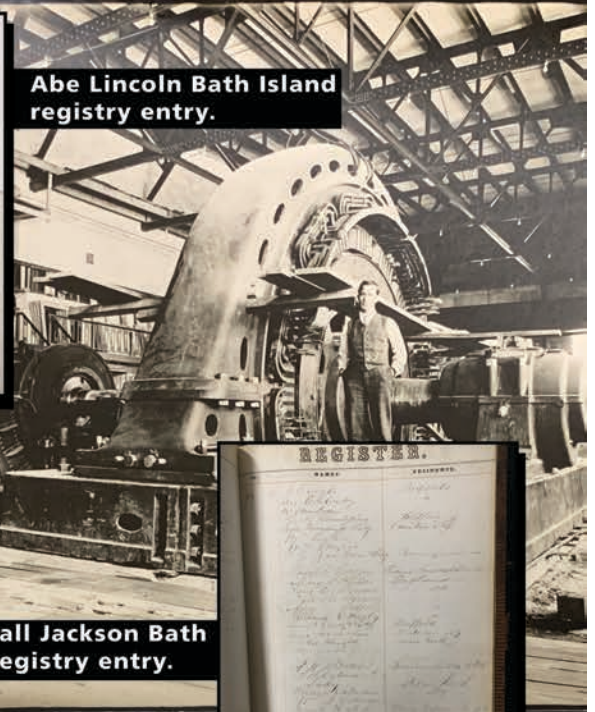
The Local History Collection at the Niagara Falls Public Library serves as a vital resource and portal to the history of Niagara Falls, Niagara County, and the greater Western New York region.

At this time, a comprehensive inventory record of this collection does not exist. Objects in this collection include the local hotel registries dating back to the mid 1800's, photographic images of the development of the hydroelectric power industry, the trial boards for Love Canal, amongst many other important primary documents. Due to many structural issues, including water leakage that has been ongoing since the building opened, the collection remains in a perilous position. To ensure the stability and security of the materials, experts have identified that a comprehensive inventory is the crucial next step in a multi-phased approach to save the collection.

In partnership with the Niagara Falls Public Library and the City of Niagara Falls, the National Heritage Area has been working toward developing a plan to seek funding to complete the inventory and preserve the collection. In 2019, the NFNHA provided \$10,000.00 toward a Needs Assessment Report and Plan by History Associates Incorporated that determined that at least 50% of the collection is either not processed or uncatalogued, leaving thousands of items undocumented.



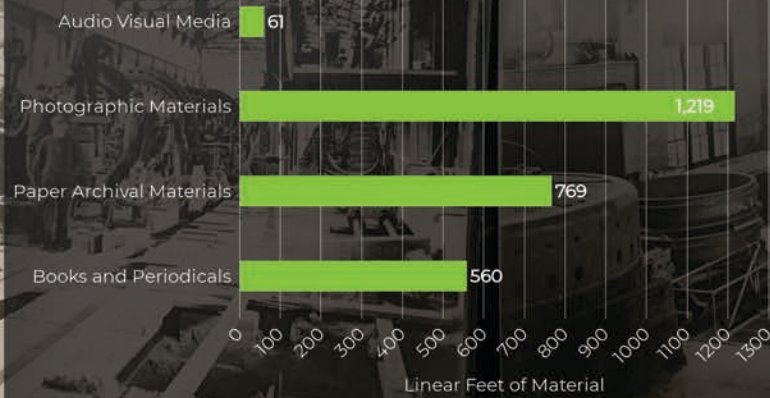
Abe Lincoln Bath Island registry entry.



Stonewall Jackson Bath Island registry entry.



The collection is currently comprised of 3,500 objects



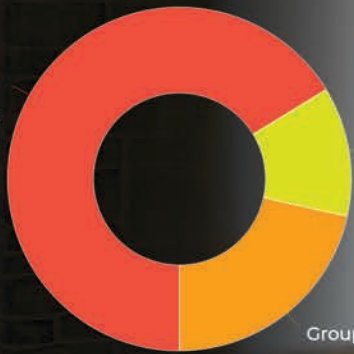
# NIAGARA FALLS UNDERGROUND RAILROAD HERITAGE CENTER

NIAGARA FALLS RAILROAD DEPOT

Appreciating difference and finding common ground

Attendance: 23,072

General Admission: 15292



Field Trips K-12: 2822

Group Tours: 4958

A Woman Planning Her Escape

Members: 831

Neighborhood: 756



Household: 35

Individual: 40





## Special Events / Programs

- Preview Evening
- Opening Night Celebration
- Grand Opening Gala
- Grand Opening Community Day
- Freedom Readers Book Club (x2)
- Building Bridges Program
- History & Hike (x3)
- Underground Railroad Then & Now
- Youth Story Hour & Craft (x3)
- Monday Mixer @The NACC
- Trick-or-Trunk
- Voter Registration Drive
- Increasing Diversity in the Museum Profession
- Off-site speaking engagements
- Freedom Seeker Speaker/Tony Cohen
- Freedom Seeker Speaker/Karolyn Smardz Frost
- Black History Celebration
- Juneteenth Buffalo
- Freedom Day/Juneteenth (Niagara Falls)

## Awards & Grants

**2019 Award of Excellence, American Association for State & Local History**  
Leadership in History for Exhibitions

**National Trust for Historic Preservation African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund**  
"Digging up the Underground Railroad in Niagara Falls: The Cataract House Archaeology Project." One of 52 out of 462 preliminary applications invited to submit a full grant application (11% acceptance rate); not awarded grant in final round

### M&T Bank

\$5,000 grant award for Black History Month programming

### Emerging Philanthropists of Color

\$2,500 grant award for school programming

### Niagara Falls Bridge Commission

\$2,000 grant award for general public programming equipment

### Institute of Museum and Library Services, National Medal Nomination

Nominated by Congressman Brian Higgins  
Full application submitted; not selected for award

### Niagara Area Foundation Grant

Grant application submitted to purchase community event tabling supplies; not awarded grant

## Professional Engagements

### First Wave, Of/By/For All

One of 20 out of 72 organizations worldwide selected to participate

Staff and board chair learned tools and strategies to strengthen ties to local communities

Team traveled to Santa Cruz, California for training with 20 other institutions from six nations across the world

### Second Wave, Of/By/For All

Focusing on strengthening relationships with the black teen audience in Niagara Falls

### Museum Education Consortium of Buffalo

Provided Docent Training, April 2019

Member organizations include: Albright Knox, The Buffalo History Museum, Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site, Darwin Martin House, Buffalo Science Museum, etc.

### American Alliance of Museums

Conference Presentations:

"Maximizing Social Impact: Involving Community, Facilitating Dialogue, and Shifting the Narrative at the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center," May 2019

"Stories from the Of/By/For All First Wave," May 2019

### American Association for State & Local History

Conference Presentations:

"Afrocentric History Museums – Shall We Start an Afrocentric Museum Movement?" Presenting alongside the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, August 2019

"What Are YOU Waiting For? A Lightning Session of Ideas and Inspiration."

### Walmart Northeast Region

Provided Diversity and Inclusion Training for Executives, May 2019

### Shaq Lawson (Buffalo Bills)

Youth Athlete Mentorship + Q&A, June, 2019

### History Where You Least Expect It, "Freedom Conversations: Connecting Past to Present with Facilitated Dialogue"

Book chapter, publication forthcoming 2020 from

### International Coalition of Sites of Conscience

Coalition member

### National Park Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom

Member application pending

# HERITAGE ARTS MURAL PROJECT

At the close of 2018, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area was awarded a \$159,874.00 grant from the New York State Health Foundation for the project, The Walk to Freedom: A Heritage Walking Trail for Niagara Falls. Through streetscape improvements, crosswalks, and murals this collaborative, community-driven project encourages Niagara Falls residents, especially those in the North End, to be physically active and connect to the stories and people who shaped their community. After gathering community input, artists portrayed eight murals of stories that depict freedom. Images include Doris Jones, Harriet Tubman, Spider Martin, a quotation by Martin Luther King, Jr., waiters of the Cataract House Hotel, amongst others.

Community volunteers assisted with cleaning up Main Street and caring for the approximately 400 perennial plants that had been planted nearby. As artist Muhammad Zaman captured in his mural featuring a quotation from Martin Luther King, Jr., "The time is always right to do right."





# EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING



## HIGHLIGHTS

Fall Frontier Days at Old Fort  
Niagara: 54 schools, 3,882 students

Black History Month at Niagara  
Falls Underground Railroad  
Heritage Center

Provided additional transportation  
fees as needed for schools to visit  
NFNHA partner sites like the  
Niagara Power Project





## A SONIC LOVE LETTER TO NINA SIMONE

A DREA D'NUR + ROOTSTOCK REPUBLIC COLLABORATION

**In commemoration of 400 years of resistance and resilience, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area presented Dear Nina: A Sonic Love Letter to Nina Simone on October 20, 2018 at the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center. Through song, the evening recognized the first Africans forced into slavery on North America 400 years ago and their descendants who resisted, refused to abide by inhumane laws and remained resilient in the face of oppression.**



# 2019 Network to Freedom Training



Niagara Falls, NY

September 11-14, 2019

In partnership with the National Park Service Network to Freedom program, Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State, Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center, Association of the Study of African American Life and History, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area welcomed participants from around the world to the Network to Freedom training in September of 2019.

# EVENT AND PROGRAM SPONSORSHIP



## Events Sponsored:

- Lewiston Tour of Homes
- Niagara Falls Jingle Falls
- Niagara Falls Community Memorial Day Parade
- Strawberry Moon Festival by Artpark & Co., Inc.
- Niagara Falls Smart Growth Series: Imagining a More Livable Niagara Falls
- Third Annual Walk the Falls: Create a Healthier Niagara Falls Collaborative
- Emerging Philanthropists of Color Event
- Live NF Maker's Market
- Lewiston Peach Festival Parade
- Youngstown Labor Day Parade

## Programs/Projects Sponsored:

- Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper Hike, Bike, & Paddle Tours
- "Guardians of Highland" Mural Project
- Restoration of the Town of Niagara WWII Service Cloth
- Pine Avenue Neighborhood Research Project
- "ArtsNiagara" Website Development: Cultural Alliance of Niagara
- Old Fort Niagara 300th Anniversary of Magazin Royal
- Lockport Heritage Locks District: Lock Tender Tribute Monument
- Art of Suffrage Exhibit: Lockport Public Arts Council
- Highland Community Asset Mapping Plan



### **Federal Level:**

- Federal Appropriations for the National Heritage Area program were full restored in December 2019 for fiscal year 2020.
- Representative Paul Tonko (NY) and Representative David McKinley (WV) introduced the National Heritage Area bill (H.R. 1049) which will ensure the continuation of all National Heritage Areas as an integral part of the National Park Service.
- The House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee held a hearing for H.R. 1049 in April of 2019. As Chairperson of the Alliance of National Heritage Areas, Sara Capen provided testimony in support of the National Heritage Area bill.

### **State Level:**

- Following unanimous resolutions by the City of Niagara Falls, City of Lockport, and the Niagara County legislative bodies, three bills to increase the occupancy tax by 1% to support the operations of the Discover Niagara Shuttle were introduced to the New York State Legislature by State Senator Robert Ortt, Assemblyman Angelo Morinello, and Assemblyman Michael Norris. The bills successfully passed both the State Assembly and State Senate in June of 2019 and were signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo in December of 2019.





Sara Capen | Executive Director  
Niagara Falls National Heritage Area

2019 was another stellar year for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area! As a catalyst in our community, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is instrumental in creating and implementing authentic heritage projects within the Niagara Region. Whether it is the fantastic mural project on Main Street or the expansion of the shuttle, the economic and community impact of the projects the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area has spearheaded cannot be overstated. Economically, through public-private partnership, the NFNHA returns \$7.69 in products and services for every \$1.00 it receives in federal funding. Less tangible, yet no less important, is the impact these projects have on the morale of our community. To see tangible progress in the Niagara Region after so many years of decline does wonders for the human spirit and embodies the democratic principles our nation was built on. National Heritage Areas are truly of the people, by the people, and for the people. This ideal is reflected in every project we undertake.

Looking at the volume of our work in 2019, I am proud of our accomplishments and inspired for the year ahead. In 2020, we will continue to focus on creating meaningful experiences for both tourists and residents that connect to our rich history, strong communities and incredible landscape.

Here's to 2020!

*Sara Capen*

# Board of Directors

Thomas Lowe  
*Chairperson*

Kate Broderick  
*Vice Chairperson*

Marge Gillies  
*Secretary*

Jeff Williams  
*Treasurer*

Lillan Willams

Margaret Ann Hansen

Robert Borghatti

Craig Touma

Thomas Chambers

Lynne Neveau

William Carroll

John Percy

## Staff

Sara Capen

Ally Spong

Christine Bacon

Hiking | Niagara Gorge





**Main St. Beautification**





NIAGARA  
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