AMERICA 250

NIAGARA COUNTY

1776-2026

NIAGARA COUNTY TRAVELING ART EXHIBIT

TOWN OF PORTER

Ontario House aka the Stone Jug is in the heart of Youngstown at 358 Main Street. An historic inn and tavern serving the Niagara Frontier since 1842, it is an original "Watering Hole". Alexander Lane built the present structure on the site of the old Hathaway tavern, one of the earliest taverns to thrive on the frontier. Today the Ontario House serves the community as a bar, a music venue, and an Airbnb.

TOWN OF LEWISTON

Located at 460 Center Street, Lewiston, the Frontier House opened in 1826 as a hotel, tavern and stagecoach office. Prominent local businessmen, Benjamin and Samuel Baron and Joshua Fairbanks headed the building of the Tavern. It took 18 men in 18 months to build the structure out of stone from the Bay of Quinte at the Northeastern end of Lake Ontario. Some of the distinguished guests who stayed to the frontier house included NY Governor DeWitt Clinton, President William McKinley, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, Jenny Lind, and Charles Dickens. The building as been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1974. Three years later, the McDonald's Corporation leased the property for a fast-food franchise, closing in 2004. Full restoration of the project was begun in 2023. Today the building houses apartments, short term rentals, and a restaurant.

CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS

The city of Niagara Falls, is best known for Niagara Falls, a trio of water falls which straddle the American-Canadian border. Formed by the Niagara River linking Lake Erie to Lake Ontario, the features that became the Falls were formed by the Wisconsin glaciation about 10,000 years ago. By the mid-19th century, Niagara Falls was a popular tourist and honeymoon destination. The balance between recreational and industrial uses of the water power generated by Niagara Falls have been a challenge since the mid-19th century. In 1885, legislation created the Niagara Reservation, New York's first State Park, protecting the Falls from land developers and protecting the views and natural settings of the Falls.

TOWN OF NIAGARA

The Town of Niagara Water Tower is located behind the Town Hall at 7105 Lockport Road. The radial cone bottom elevated tank holds 1,000,000 gallons of water.The cost of construction was $176,500 with an additional expense of $20,199 paid in 1961 for a concrete foundation.In today's economy that amounts to a total of $2,000,000,

TOWN OF WHEATFIELD

Henry Thiele founded the dairy in the early 1900s on a farm in the Martinsville/Sawyer Creek area. It later expanded with locations on Payne Avenue, Oliver Street, Ward Road in North Tonawanda and Broad Street in Tonawanda. The dairy sold milk, ice cream, doughnuts and shakes among other items. Business grew into one of the largest of its kind in Western New York. It continued to expand in the 1966 when the bakery was added under Henry C. Thiele. The dairy and bakery went defunct in 1989 but the plant nursery/agricultural supply company, still exists.

CITY OF NORTH TONAWANDA

The Rudolph Wurlitzer Company was founded by Rudolph Wurlitzer, a German immigrant from Saxony. Initially founded in Cincinnati, Ohio, focusing on the manufacturing of various musical instruments, it moved to North Tonawanda in 1880. The company in 1908 bought out the North Tonawanda Barrel Organ Factory. Wurlitzer capitalized in the growing demand for automatic instruments including a wide range of player pianos, orchestrions, and juke boxes.The later became an iconic symbol of American pop culture in the 1940s and 50s. Production of Wurlitzer organs ceased in 1942. During World War II, the company helped in the development of the variable timing proximity fuse for the US Navy. The plant finally closed in 1973 but less than ten years later, investors turned the old plant into an industrial park.

TOWN OF CAMBIRA

The Cambria Town Hall is located at 4153 Lower Mountain Road. At the town meeting in April 1879, the town fathers asked for $1,500 to be raised by taxes, with the town board as a building committee to select a site "as near to the center of town as may be", draw up plans, advertise for bids and have the town hall built and finished by October 25, 1879. Mr. Lyman A. Dieddrich was the architect. The building was completed on schedule at a total cost of $1,572.18. Currently it is used as a museum and meeting room for the Cambria Historical Society. It was replaced by the current town hall in 1976.

TOWN OF WILSON

Located at 641 Lake St, Wilson the Railroad Station was built in 1897. It replaced the original 1876 Rome, Watertown and Ogdensburg Railroad Station [the Hojack Line] which had burned down. The New York Central and Hudson River Rail Road, which had taken over the rail line, built the present station in 1897. In 1912 -1913, the station was enlarged, becoming one of the largest and best equipped depots between Rochester and Niagara Falls. The station was not only the focal point for most of the business conducted around Wilson, but also a community gathering spot.Today it houses the Wilson Historical Society.

TOWN OF PENDLETON

Gertrude Warren and 4-H, [1884-1979] was born on a farm on Meyer Road in Pendleton. She is known as "the Mother of 4-H" for her national and international development of the 4-H Program, with its emphasis on improving head, heart, hands, and health.Under her guidance, she transformed loosely organized boys and girls' clubs into a structured organization emphasizing agriculture, home economics, and citizenship. The programs she started continue to influence youth today.

TOWN OF LOCKPORT

The large stone house on Chestnut Ridge now home to DeSales Catholic School, was first built by the Schuler family and called "Stonehurst." Herbert Harrison, of radiator fame, made this his home in 1912, with his family living there until 1946 when it was sold to the Diocese of Buffalo. The school was dedicated September 8, 1946.

CITY OF LOCKPORT

The Flight of Five in downtown Lockport was an engineering marvel when it was first completed in 1825. Five locks, in tandem side by side, raised and lowered canal boats over the Niagara Escarpment. When the canal was enlarged beginning in the 1830s, the original Flight of Five was destroyed to make room for the Enlarged Locks. In the fall of 1913, the newest set of locks, Locks 34 & 35 replaced the five locks on the south side of the canal. Today, the 1913 locks remain next to the 1840s Enlarged Flight of Five.

TOWN OF NEWFANE

James Van Horn, came to Newfane in 1817 with nine children. He built a gristmill and the first wool mill in Niagara County. Van Horn became one of four of Niagara County's first judges in 1821. In 1823, he built the brick Georgian-style Van Horn Mansion which was the first brick home in Newfane, located at 2159 Olcott Road in Burt. In 1939, the structure suffered a fire and eleven years later the Van Horn mansion was renovated, becoming the upscale restaurant, Green Acres. Later the building was converted into apartments but eventually was left for vandals. The Noury Chemical Company acquired the structure and then donated it to the Newfane Historical Society in 1987. Today it is on the National Register for Historic Places.

TOWN OF SOMERSET

Thirty Mile Point Light is a lighthouse on the south shore of Lake Ontario in Niagara County, New York. It is part of Golden Hill State Park, a New York State Park, located at 9691 Lower Lake Road Barker. It is named because it is situated 30 miles east of the Niagara River at the mouth of Golden Hill Creek. Built in 1875 of hand carved limestone brought from Chamont Bay near Watertown, NY. Of the $90,000 cost of construction, $15,000 went to the purchase of the 2-ton, six-sided Fresnel lens from France. The light from the lens was visible 18 miles out into Lake Ontario, protecting shipping from the great off-shore sandbar The US Coast Guard received ownership of the lighthouse in 1935, but with the erosion of the sandbar, it was decommissioned on Dec. 17, 1958. Currently the NY Sate Parks owns the restored lighthouse, which is open to the public.

In 1848, Jeptha W. Babcock built a two-storey Greek revival style house using cobblestone construction. NYSEG acquired the house and property in 1982 as part of the construction project for the electric generating station. Five years later, NYSEG reached an agreement with the Somerset Historical Society where the latter maintains the house as a museum and visitors' center. In 1999, AES purchased the property and extended the agreement.

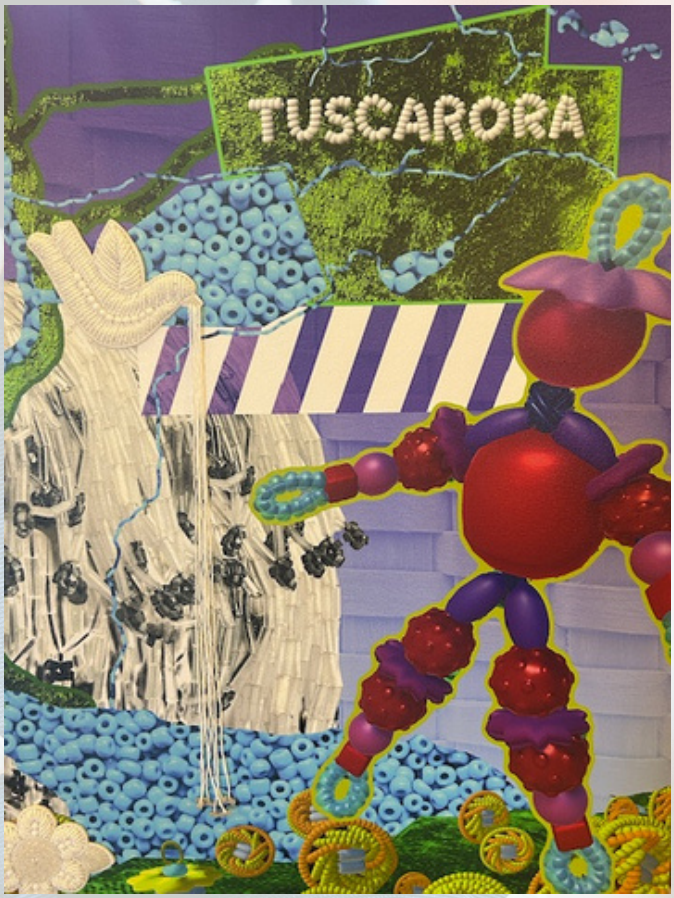
TOWN OF HARTLAND

In 2013, the Hartland Town Board applied to the United States Army Donation Program for the loan of a piece of military equipment to be used as a Veterans' Memorial Display. Ten years later, they were given a Vietnam-era "Huey" helicopter, tail number 15076. This aircraft had been flown in the final mission of CW2 Tommy G. Sandeful of Tulsa, Oklahoma on February 1, 1968. Sandeful was hit by hostile ground fire, suffering a fatal gunshot wound and was posthumously awarded the Silver Star.

The Niagara Orleans Board of Cooperative Education Services [BOCES], in Medina, NY agreed to refurbish the chopper, which included welding the weakened framework and supporting members, repairing the body of the craft, painting the aircraft and wiring the machine for lights and sound. Meanwhile the Veterans Memorial Committee began creating a memorial, housing the helicopter and to honor the sacrifices made by Hartland Veterans and their families. The Veteran Helicopter Memorial was dedicated on June 14, 2025 by Gasport American Legion Post 1253. It is located at 8945 Ridge Road, Gasport.

TOWN OF ROYALTON

Belva Ann Bennett was born in Royalton on October 24, 1830. When she was 19, she married Uriah McNall, a local farmer. Unfortunately, she was left widowed three years after her daughter was born. Seeking to support her family and with no education, she attended Gasport Academy and Genesse College, now part of Syracuse University. Belva taught school for many years, including the Lockport Union School. After the Civil War she moved to Washington D.C. where she met and married Ezekiel Lockwood. In 1872, Belva earned her law degree, becoming one of the first women in the US to do so. From 1874 to 1879, Lockwood lobbied Congress for an anti-discrimination bill which would allow qualified women attorneys to practice in any federal court. On March 3, 1879, Belva became the first woman to be admitted to the Supreme Court bar and a year later she became the first woman lawyer to argue a case before the United States Supreme Court. In 1884, and in 1888, she was a candidate of the National Equal Rights party, the second woman to run for President, but the first to appear on the ballot in a Presidential election. She practiced law until 1912 at the age of 82. Belva Lockwood died on May 19, 1917.



TUSCARORA NATION

This work considers the Tuscarora Nation's historic and ongoing relationships to land, waterways and airways; depicted through the merging of digital and traditional Tuscarora beadwork practices.Illustrated is a conceptual mapping of the Niagara River, Niagara Falls and Niagara Water Reservoir, with the highlighted sites of significant Tuscarora heritage. Embedded in a beaded bird and flower created in the iconic Tuscarora-Raised style of beadwork, continuing centuries-old legacies of Tuscarora women's interpretations of Haudenosaunee teachings and environments. Featured is a digital depiction of a beaded figure known as a Tuscarora "jitterbug" which represents our youth as core to our culture and futures, and is accompanied by the Tuscarora Returns wampum belt signifying the Tuscarora Nation's welcome home to our northern homelands amongst the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, with whom we continue to share these territories.

OLD FORT NIAGARA

The last painting in the exhibit is one of Niagara County's most historic sites. Old Fort Niagara is one of the oldest continuously occupied military sites in North America and played a crucial role in the struggle for control of the Great Lakes region. Built by the French in 1726 with the construction of the "French Castle," the fort served as a strategic trading post and military stronghold near the mouth of the Niagara River, connecting the Great Lakes to the Atlantic trade routes. During the French and Indian War, British forces captured the fort in 1759 after a lengthy siege, shifting control of the region. The British later used it as a base during the American Revolutionary War, supporting Loyalist forces against the American colonies. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the site continued to function as a U.S. military post before eventually becoming a historic landmark. Today, Old Fort Niagara preserves centuries of military architecture and history, offering visitors insight into the colonial conflicts that shaped North America.