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For I Never Would Have Surrendered: The 1866 Fenian Invasion of Canada

by *C. Douglas Kohler*

After fighting to preserve the Union in the American Civil War, hundreds of Irish immigrants were eager to win their homeland's freedom from the United Kingdom. Although the Fenian Brotherhood failed in its mission to capture Canada, the cross-border raids would have a lasting impact.



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Buffalo Hotels and the Niagara Movement: New Evidence Refutes an Old Legend

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The widely-accepted story of W.E.B. DuBois' venue choice for the inaugural meeting of the Niagara Movement cites racial discrimination as the cause. Recent research by local scholars, however, suggests that this was not the case at all.



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From a Cambria Farm to National Fame and Back Again: The Seven Sutherland Sisters

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Exploding out of Western New York and into the hearts, minds and medicine cabinets of fans nationwide, the seven Sutherland sisters made and lost a fortune as singers, models and spokeswomen. Brandon Stickney shines light on "the greatest and best drawing card ever known."



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Sometimes Conservation is a "Piece of Cake"

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Recently, Buffalo State College graduate student Emily Hamilton was part of a team which undertook a unique conservation challenge. Their work on a piece of Grover Cleveland's wedding cake and two associated boxes provides an interesting look into this unsung art.



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History Written with Jazz: The Colored Musicians Club of Buffalo

by *Joel Rudewicz with Chris Root*

For more than 75 years, Buffalo's Colored Musicians Club has offered members a place to practice, perform and listen to the music they love. It is the only club of its kind continually operating to this day, drawing visitors from across the world.

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40 Old Photo Album

The Fenton History Center provides a series of images from the early-1900s showing Winter life in Jamestown and Chautauqua County.

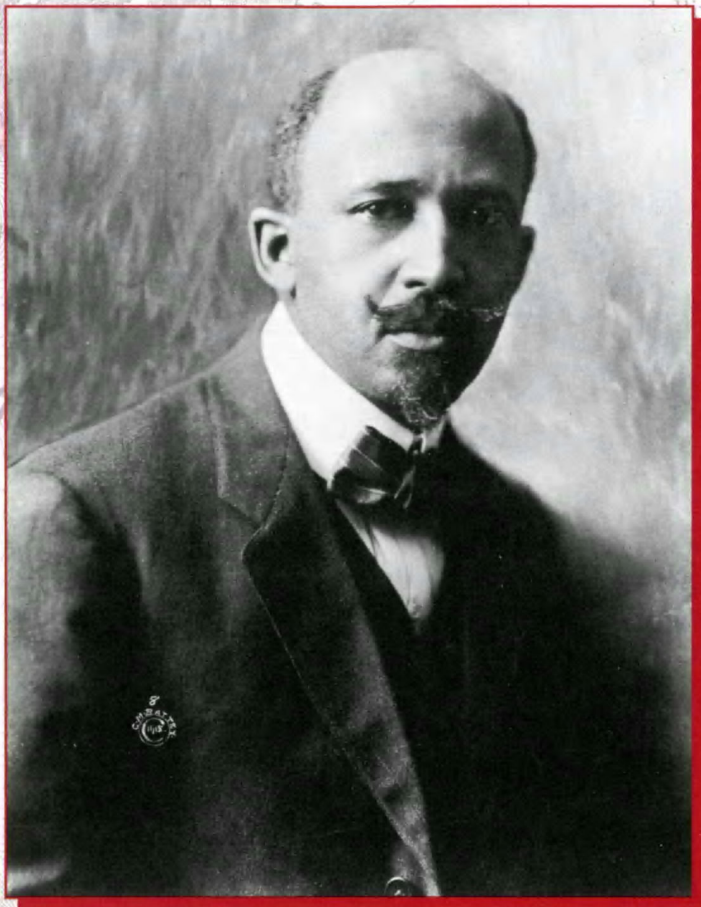
64 Another Look: "Building 88": The Barracks at Fort Niagara State Park

This 1939 Army barracks bore witness to much of Fort Niagara's colorful 20th century history. Now proposed plans may once again breathe life into this local treasure of military architecture.

ON THE COVER



Ruins of Fort Erie and City of Buffalo,
c. 1839, by John Philip Bainbrigge
(1817-1881), watercolor over pencil
on wove paper, 24 cm x 16.5 cm,
Courtesy Library and Archives Canada.



Most Buffalo history buffs know the basic outlines of the Niagara Movement story, repeated here for those who are unfamiliar with it. In 1905, author, sociologist and activist William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868-1963), better known as W.E.B. Du Bois, plotted a course of action to achieve full civil rights for African-Americans. At the time, Du Bois, the first African-American to earn a Ph.D from Harvard University, was Professor of Economics and History at Atlanta University and had just published his landmark meditation on race and racism in America, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868-1963) LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Buffalo Hotels and the Niagara Movement: New Evidence Refutes an Old Legend

by Cynthia Van Ness

The Original Twenty-Nine. This "class photo" contains images of 27 of the 29 attendees of the Niagara Movement meeting at Fort Erie in 1905. Missing from the photo are E.B. Jourdain of Massachusetts and George W. Mitchell of Pennsylvania. W.E.B. Du Bois is pictured at center.

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS



J. C. R. Diggs, Va.



H. L. Baily, D.C.



W. Justin Carter, Pa.



W. H. Scott, Mass.



S. F. Bradley, Kan.



A. F. Herndon, Ga.



W. H. Richards, D.C.



B. S. Smith, Kan.



P. C. McChes, Minn.



W. M. Trotter, Mass.



C. N. Waller, Md.



H. A. Thompson, N.Y.

"The Original Twenty-nine."



W. H. Hart, D.C.



L. M. Hershaw, D.C.



W. E. B. DuBois, Ga.



C. E. Bentley, Jr.



C. C. Morgan, Mass.



F. M. Murray, Va.



A. War Barber, Ill.



Geo. Frazier Miller, N. Y.



C. H. Woodson, Jr.



S. L. Madden, Ill.



H. C. Smith, O.



E. T. Morris, Mass.



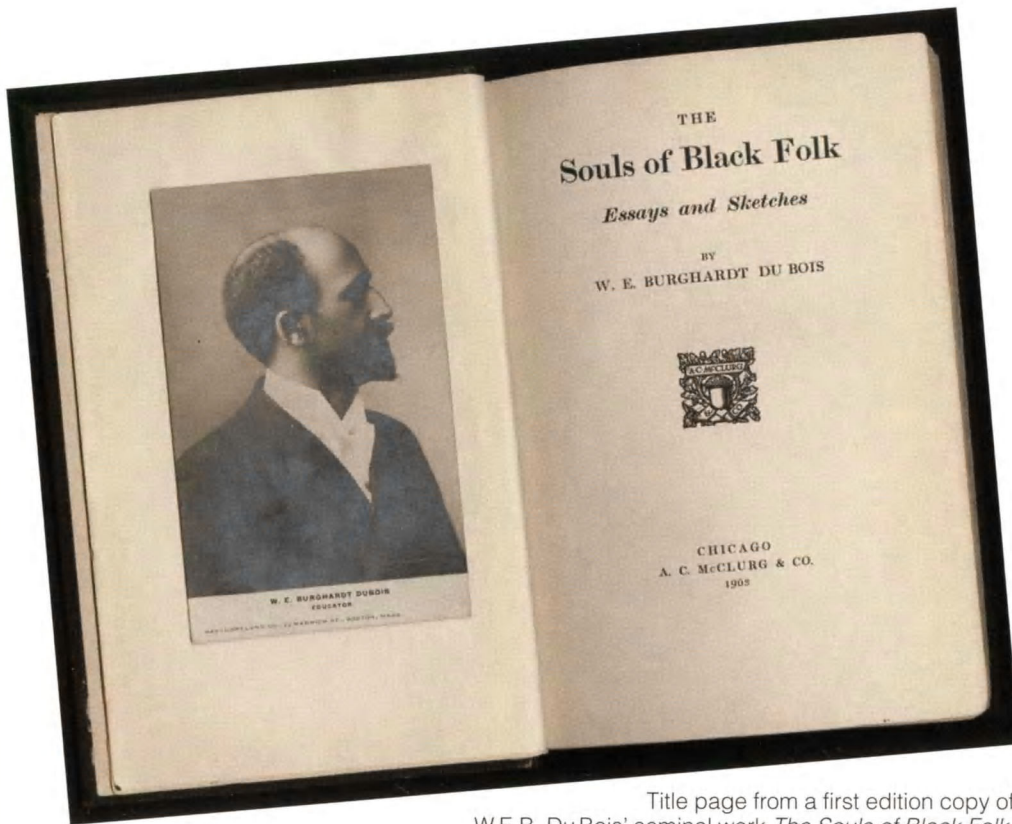
Richard Hill, Tenn.



Robt. Bonner, Mass.



Byron Gunner, S.C.



Title page from a first edition copy of W.E.B. Du Bois' seminal work *The Souls of Black Folk*. UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

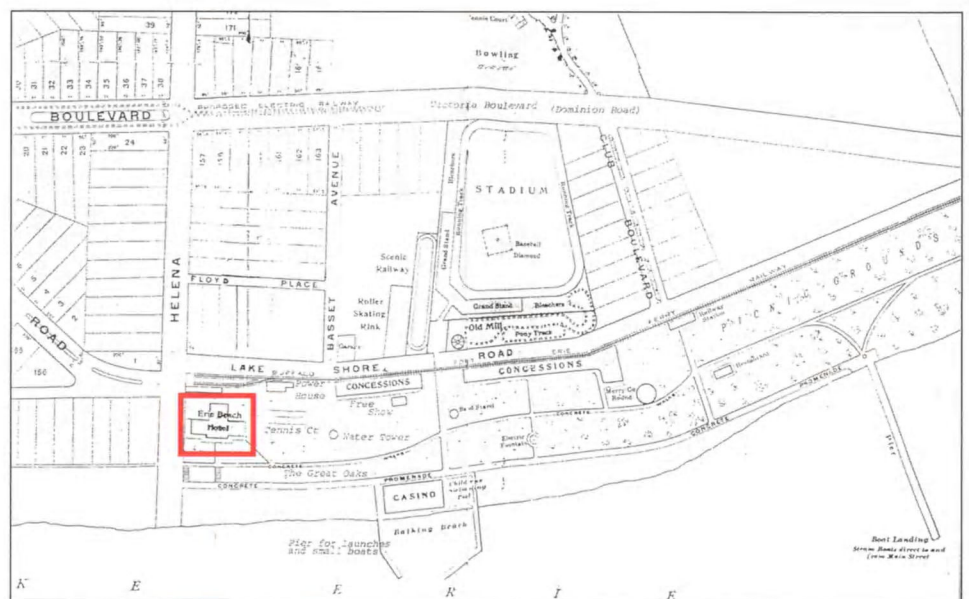
Marshall Rose (University of Minnesota Press, 1949, p. 32). This author has subsequently found it in over 70 publications, including standardized high school social studies graduation tests for several states. A selection of the titles that repeat it include:

- ❑ *Jim Crow Encyclopedia* (2008)
- ❑ *Black City Politics* (1974)
- ❑ *Leadership in American Society: a Case Study of Black Leadership* (1969)
- ❑ *Encyclopedia of African-American History* (2010)
- ❑ *The second Greatest Disappointment: Honeymooning and Tourism at Niagara Falls* (1999)
- ❑ *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance* (2004)
- ❑ *Inventing Niagara: Beauty, Power, and Lies* (2009)
- ❑ *The Voices of Negro Protest in America* (1963)
- ❑ *Martin Luther King, Jr: Rhetorician of Revolt* (1964)
- ❑ *Reconsidering the Souls of Black Folk* (2003)
- ❑ *Encyclopedia of Canadian Social Work* (2005)
- ❑ *Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet* (1985)

Rejecting the conciliatory, accommodationist approach of his bitter rival, Tuskegee Institute founder Booker T. Washington (1856-1915), Du Bois invited 59 men to attend the inaugural meeting of the Niagara Movement and to draft a Declaration of Principles that eventually set the agenda for nearly all subsequent American civil rights activism. The meeting took place at the Erie Beach Hotel in Fort Erie, Ontario, across the Niagara River from Buffalo. Of the 59 invitees, 29 attended.

The drafted declaration called for full civil liberties, equal suffrage, equal economic and educational opportunities, decent housing and neighborhoods, the integration of labor unions, equal treatment in the courts and an end to discrimination in public accommodations. During its brief history, the Niagara Movement attracted over 100 members and established chapters in 29 states, but faltered due to funding and organizational issues. Undaunted, Du Bois and other Niagara Movement leaders then founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which celebrated its centennial in 2009.

Sometime in the mid 20th century, historians began asserting that the Niagara Movement was forced to hold its first meeting in Fort Erie because the group encountered racial discrimination when trying to reserve rooms at Buffalo hotels. The earliest known incidence of this legend appears in *The Negro's Morale: Group Identification and Protest* by Arnold



Map of Erie Beach Park, showing the Erie Beach Hotel at lower left. A quick look at the other features of the park suggests the park fit Du Bois' demands for location and recreational amenities as well as a place to "hold conferences." WESTERN NEW YORK HERITAGE PRESS

Notable websites which repeat the legend include:

- ❑ *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow* at PBS.org
- ❑ Harpers Ferry National Historic Park at NPS.gov
- ❑ *Niagara Movement* at Answers.com
- ❑ History News Network, August 2006, at HNN.us

Oddly, none of these writers cite a primary or period source account for the hotel discrimination story. Who approached the hotels? If it was William Talbert (the Buffalonian husband of Mary Burnett Talbert), no letters or papers from him are known to survive, so his version of events is lost to history. Which hotels were approached, what exactly took place, and how did the organizers decide to deal with it? No one cites any contemporary accounts. Du Bois, who would have had every reason to expose and protest any racism he encountered, mentions no Buffalo hotel discrimination when recounting the beginning of the Niagara Movement in his autobiography. Instead, he writes:

I sent out from Atlanta in June 1905 a call to a few selected persons 'for organized determination and aggressive action on the part of men who believe in Negro freedom and growth.' I proposed a conference during the summer 'to oppose firmly present methods of strangling honest criticism; to organize intelligent and honest Negroes; and to support organs of news and public opinion.

Fifty-nine colored men from 17 different states eventually signed a call for a meeting near Buffalo, New York, during the week of July 9, 1905. I went to Buffalo and hired a little hotel on the Canadian side of the river at Fort Erie.

It is worth noting that the 1905 Buffalo city directory lists over 50 hotels and about 250 boarding houses. Proponents of the Buffalo hotel discrimination legend would have us believe that Talbert or Du Bois encountered discrimination at 100% of them, and that no boarding houses, several of which were certainly Black-owned, would rent to them, either.

The *Buffalo Enquirer* was the only local newspaper to cover the Niagara Movement, and its articles on July 12 and 13, 1905 omit any mention of the hotel discrimination. Scanty local coverage of the meeting was probably the work of Booker T. Washington's agents, who convinced the major newspapers not to cover it.

Those familiar with the Niagara Movement will recall that it coincided with a national Elks convention held in Buffalo in July, 1905, so a lesser-known legend is that Du Bois was turned away because the Elks had booked all available rooms. The problem with this claim is that Du Bois' papers reveal that he knew in advance about the Elks convention and had hoped that it would enable his guests to get discounted hotel rates. This writer is therefore greatly indebted to Dr. Barbara Seals Nevergold and Dr. Peggy Brooks-Bertram, founders of the Uncrowned Community Builders Project, for studying W.E.B. Du Bois' own papers and uncovering the true origins of the 1905 meeting's location.



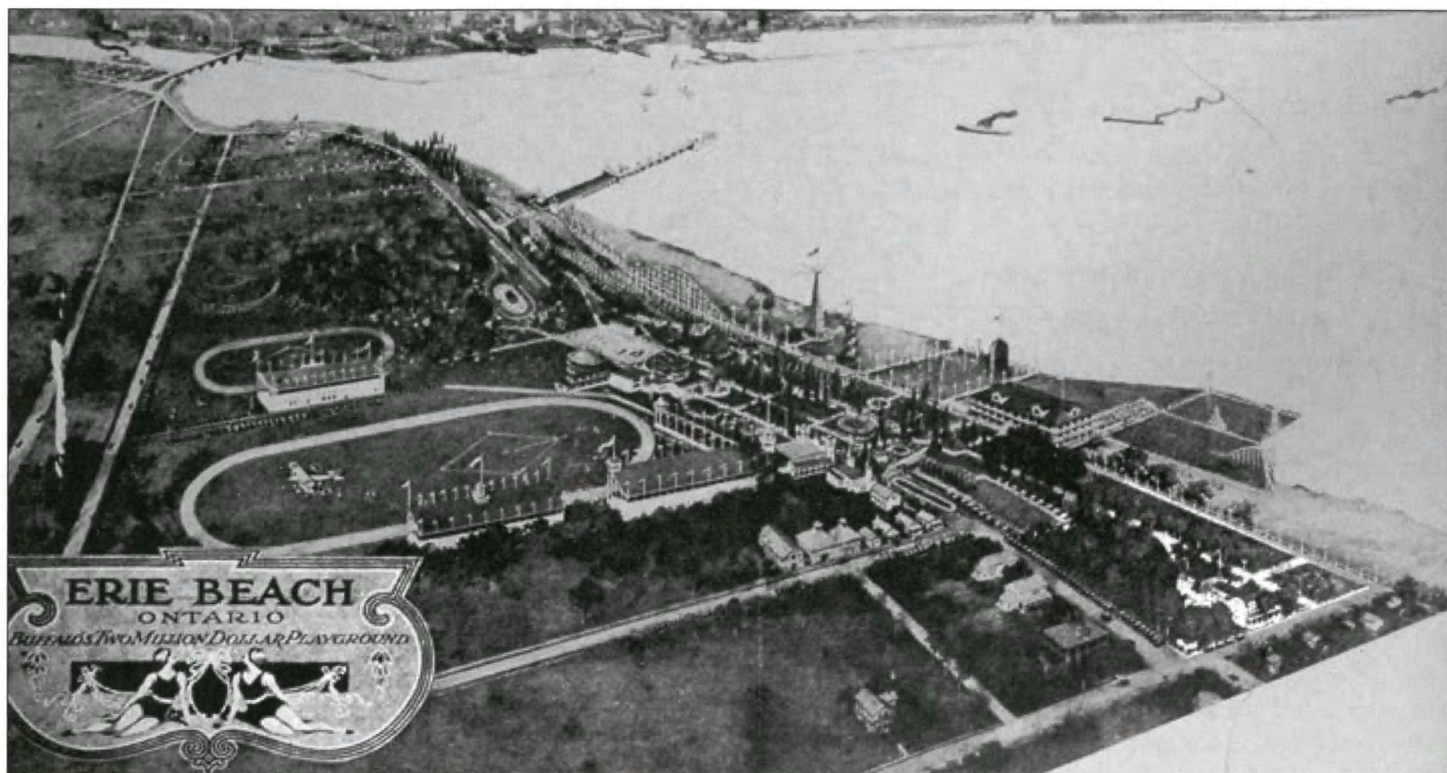
National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium
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Museum of disABILITY
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An aerial view of Erie Beach Park, c. 1920. The hotel is located at the bottom right extreme of the photograph.
WESTERN NEW YORK HERITAGE PRESS

Buffalo's role in the inaugural Niagara Movement meeting hinged on the participation of William and Mary Burnett Talbert, who were prominent members of the Michigan Street Baptist Church and civil rights leaders in their own right. Mary Talbert is remembered today as the first woman to win the Spingarn medal from the NAACP, its highest honor, and has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, N.Y. In June on 1905, Du Bois wrote to William Talbert with a special request:

"...we want a quiet place outside the city near the water where we can be to ourselves, hold conferences together and at the same time have bathing, croquet, tennis and fishing for recreation... A camp near the lake or a farm home would fill the bill. The charge must be moderate and the accommodations first class but not extravagant. No liquors are needed."

Part of the reason for a private country retreat was to throw Booker T. Washington's agents off their trail. By 1905, Washington and Du Bois advocated

opposing strategies for African-American advancement. Washington sought economic opportunity in exchange for political acquiescence, whereas Du Bois championed legal equality and political protest. The two leaders became irreconcilable enemies, devoting extensive energy to undermining each other's efforts. Anticipating interference or infiltration from the Washington faction, Du Bois screened his guest list carefully and insisted on secrecy for the meeting. The Erie Beach Hotel met Du Bois' requirements. The meeting took place without disruptions from the Booker T. Washington camp and the pioneering Niagara Movement made history as America's first Black protest movement of the 20th century.

Since Drs. Nevergold and Brooks-Bertram's discovery, new evidence has surfaced that casts additional doubt on the Buffalo hotel discrimination legend. While browsing the online archives of the *New York Times*, the author discovered a tantalizing article, entitled *Testing the New Color Law*, which describes African-Americans successfully patron-

izing Buffalo hotels in 1895. What was this "New Color Law" that was being tested in 1895, ten years before the founding of the Niagara Movement? Called the "Malby Law" after its author, Republican assemblyman George Malby (1857-1912), this New York State law



Booker T. Washington, bitter rival of W.E.B. Du Bois.
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Testing the New Color Law.

BUFFALO, June 25.—The first test in this city of the law providing a penalty for discriminating against the colored race was made to-day, and the sons of Africa won without a struggle. Early this afternoon two fashionably dressed colored men entered one of the leading hotels, marched up to the clerk's desk, and asked for the registry book. The clerk, who had suspected their purpose when they entered, and had held a hurried conference with the proprietor, acceded to their request without objection. They signed the book as C. E. Hall of Chicago and W. K. Deitz of New-York, and then asked for two luncheon tickets. These were also promptly forthcoming, and they repaired to the dining hall, where they were served with eatables, after which they left the hotel and made a tour of fashionable saloons, in all of which they were served without question. Mr. Deitz admitted that their purpose was to test the law, and so far they had not met with refusals.

An article which appeared in the *New York Times* on June 26, 1895 provides a documented example of African-Americans being accommodated at Buffalo hotels, a full ten years prior to the meeting of the Niagara Movement. THE NEW YORK TIMES

imposed a \$500 fine on hotel proprietors who refused to accommodate African-Americans. It extended to all citizens:

"full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of inns, restaurants, hotels, eating houses, bathhouses, barber shops, theaters, music halls, public conveyances on land and water, and all other places of public accommodation or amusement."

The hotel lobby strongly opposed the Malby Law, arguing that black clients would repel white clients, destroy their businesses and bring them to financial ruin. After its passage, however, the *Buffalo Morning Express*, June 24, 1895, reported some surprising news. Hotel owners had, grudgingly perhaps, decided to comply with the law:

It is more to their credit that, upon second thought, the hotelmen of the state will make no effort to set aside the Malby Law prohibiting discrimination against negroes. The alleged raising of funds for the purpose is denied by William J Fanning, counsel to the Hotelman's Association. Negroes will be

given the same attention as other guests. They will be interfered with only when they violate the general hotel laws, the same as other guests.

Indeed, the very next day, the *New York Times* reported on the successful test of the law in Buffalo hotels and saloons by C.E. Hall and W.K. Deitz.

Between 1895 and 1905, Buffalo hotel owners had a decade to get used to integrated public accommodations. After their initial opposition, perhaps they discovered that it did not harm their business. The existence of the Malby Law, of which Du Bois

must have known, would have provided him and his associates with legal remedy had hotel discrimination actually occurred.

Combined with the evidence in Du Bois' own writings, as uncovered by Drs. Nevergold and Brooks-Bertram, the fact that such a law was on the books – and had been successfully tested in Buffalo – a decade prior to the Niagara Movement's meeting all but shatters the popular, but unsubstantiated, legend of Buffalo hotel discrimination. In fact, it may have even disposed Du Bois to pursue a venue in New York to begin with. ¶



Cynthia Van Ness is the founder of BuffaloResearch.com and the Director of Library and Archives at the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society. The Niagara Movement is a personal research project for Ms. Van Ness.

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