



Smithsonian

*National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center*

## Guide to the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission Records, 1848-1946, bulk 1890-1929

NMAH.AC.1060

Nicole Kenney, (intern); supervised by John Fleckner, archivist.

2006-2007

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
<b>Title:</b>	Niagara Falls Bridge Commission Records
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAH.AC.1060
<b>Date:</b>	1848-1946 (bulk 1890-1929)
<b>Creator:</b>	Niagara Falls International Bridge Company and Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Company (Creator)
<b>Extent:</b>	8 Cubic feet (22 boxes, 1 oversize folder)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	Correspondence, bridge construction and condition reports, financial records, and other materials created by or concerning the Niagara Falls International Bridge Company and the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Company (NFSB). The main focus of the collection is company administration and the daily operation of a series of bridges connecting the U.S. and Canada over the Niagara Gorge.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Unknown.

### Provenance

Collection transferred to the Archives Center from the Division of Work and Industry (formerly known as the Division of Mechanical and Civil Engineering) in 2007.

### Processing Information

Processed by Nicole Kenney, (intern), July/August 2006 and July 2007; supervised by John Fleckner, archivist.

### Preferred Citation

Niagara Falls Bridge Commission Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

### Restrictions

Collection is open for research. Unprotected photograph must be handled with gloves.

### Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

## Accruals

Additional materials were added to the collection.

Five volumes (business records relating to the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission) were purchased from Dunacan McLaren, in May 2013.

Four volumes of letterpress copybooks of the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission were purchased from Margaret Dobrzensky in June 2014.

One cash book of the Niagra Railway Arch Bridge Company was purchased in May 2015 from Margaret Dobrzensky.

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## Biographical / Historical

[1] In 1846 the Niagara Falls International Bridge Company and the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Company were formed to construct, maintain, and manage the affairs of a bridge connecting the United States and Canada over the Niagara Gorge. The Niagara Falls International Bridge Company formed the American component of the joint venture, and the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Company formed the Canadian component. The companies were governed by a joint board and managed by elected presidents. A superintendent was employed for daily activities such as cash accounting, employee interaction, and bridge supervision. The first suspension bridge was built in 1848, but less than ten years later a stronger bridge was needed due to heavy traffic. John A. Roebling designed and oversaw construction of the Railway Suspension Bridge. The new bridge officially opened in 1855 and supported pedestrian, carriage, and train traffic. Increasing use and heavier loads warranted the construction of a bridge with higher load capacity. The Third Suspension Bridge was completed in 1885, under the direction of engineer Leffert L. Buck. The demand for a bridge capable of accommodating increasingly heavier loads and traffic led to the construction of the Lower Arch Bridge (sometimes referred to as the Steel Arch Bridge and renamed the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge in 1939). Once again, Leffert L. Buck designed and managed construction of the bridge, which was completed in 1897. The Lower Arch Bridge was built around the skeleton of the Third Suspension Bridge, without disrupting travel. The Lower Arch Bridge supported pedestrian and carriage traffic. A separate level carried train traffic, and the bridge companies maintained contractual relationships with various rail carriers, including the Grand Trunk Railway, Michigan Central Railroad, and the Canadian National Railway. This bridge is still in use today. George L. Burrows (1836-1921) was president of the Niagara Falls International Bridge Company from 1885 until his death, and was supported by Superintendent Thomas Reynolds for the majority of his tenure. During a portion of the time covered by this collection Charles Riordan was president of the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Company, with J.H. Ingersoll acting as Secretary-Treasurer (and later president). The Niagara Falls Bridge Commission was created in 1938, and bought the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge in 1959. The Board of Commissioners consists of citizens of both the United States and Canada, and the main function of the organization is to oversee the management of the Whirlpool Rapids, Rainbow, and Lewiston-Queenston Bridges.

[1] In addition to sources from within the collection, historical information on the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission, the Niagara Falls International Bridge Company and the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Company was taken from:

Berketa, Rick. 2006. Bridges over Niagara Falls. Niagara Falls Thunder Alley. <http://www.niagarafontier.com/index.html> (accessed 27 July 2006).

Niagara Falls Bridge Commission. 2006. Niagara Falls Bridge Commission. <http://www.niagarafallsbridges.com/index.php3> (accessed 27 July 2006).

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## Scope and Contents

This collection is comprised of paper-based documents, created from 1848 to 1946 (with the majority created between 1890 and 1929), that relate to the business affairs of the Niagara Falls International Bridge Company and the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Company. The bulk of the collection was created by or addressed to the Niagara Falls International Bridge Company, but as the two companies are interconnected, there are documents created by or for the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Company. This collection provides data on topics such as business administration; bridge development, construction, and maintenance; and the early careers of two important engineers—John A. Roebling and Leffert L. Buck. John A. Roebling designed several famous bridges, most notably the Brooklyn Bridge in New York City. Leffert L. Buck co-engineered the Williamsburg Bridge, also in New York City. At the time of its completion, the Williamsburg Bridge was the longest bridge in the world.[1] The collection has been divided into series based on a reconstruction of the original order, which appears to have been based on subject. In cases where the original order has been lost, subject divisions have been created. Most series and subseries are arranged chronologically, although there are some departures from this arrangement. The collection is divided into five series: Series 1, Company Governance, 1848-1926; Series 2, Bridge Construction and Maintenance, 1851-1946; Series 3, General Correspondence, 1885-1946; Series 4, Financial Records, 1848-1941; and Series 5, Miscellaneous Published Materials, 1892-1920s.

[1] Wikipedia. 2007. Leffert L. Buck. 20 June 2007. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leffert\\_L.\\_Buck](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leffert_L._Buck) (accessed 23 July 2007).

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged into five series.

Series 1, Company Governance, 1848-1926

Series 2, Bridge Construction and Maintenance, 1851-1946

Series 3, General Correspondence, 1885-1946

Series 4, Financial Records, 1848-1941

Series 5, Miscellaneous Published Materials, 1892-1920s

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Arch bridges
- Bridge maintenance
- Bridges -- New York (N.Y.)
- Suspension bridges

Types of Materials:

- Blueprints
- Contracts
- Correspondence
- Drawings
- Ledgers (account books)
- Photographs -- Black-and-white negatives -- Glass

Names:

Buck, Leffert L.  
Burrows, George L.  
Niagara Falls Arch Bridge Commission  
Niagara Falls International Bridge Company  
Reynolds, Thomas  
Roebing, John Augustus, 1806-1869

Places:

Niagara Falls (N.Y. and Ont.)

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Company Governance, 1848-1926

Scope and Contents: this series includes documents pertaining to the creation and administration of the bridge companies, and is separated into four subseries: Articles of Incorporation and Amendments, Meeting Minutes, Stockholder Information, and Legal Records. Materials within subseries are arranged chronologically.

#### Subseries 1.1: Articles of Incorporation and Amendments, 1849-1900

Box 1, Folder 1	"Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation", 1849
Box 1, Folder 2	Charter, Acts, and Amendments, 1900 - 1900, 1884 - 1884

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#### Subseries 1.2: Meeting Minutes, 1891-1926

Box 1, Folder 3	Extractions, 1891-1896
Box 1, Folder 4	1903, 1922, 1920
Box 1, Folder 5	1906-1926
Box 1, Folder 6	Board Report on CE Fowler Account, 1920

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#### Subseries 1.3: Stockholder Information, 1850-1926

Box 2	Stockholder Ledger, 1850-1879
Box 20, Item 2	Niagara Falls Bridge Commission Stock Ledger, 1877 - 1919
Box 1, Folder 7	Corporation Stockbook, 1872-1926
Box 1, Folder 8	Commendation for George L. Burrows, 1899

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#### Subseries 1.4: Legal Records, 1853-1923

Box 1, Folder 9	Grand Trunk Railway, 1853-1891
Box 1, Folder 10	Grand Trunk Railway, 1894-1896
Box 1, Folder 11	Grand Trunk Railway, 1902-1922
Box 1, Folder 12	McNally Lawsuit, 1898

Box 3, Folder 1	Opinion, 1899
Box 3, Folder 1	Fraser v. Ingersoll, 1900
Box 3, Folder 1	Public No. 118, 1921
Box 3, Folder 1	Tariff Act, 1922
Box 4, Folder 1	Land Ownership Blueprints, circa 1911
Box 3, Folder 2	Michigan Central Railway, 1922-1923

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## Series 2: Bridge Construction and Maintenance, 1851-1946

**Scope and Contents:** This series is comprised of reports, shipping invoices, blueprints, and correspondence created by bridge company employees and engineers concerning bridge construction and maintenance. It is divided into three subseries based on the three bridges that the collection documents: the Railway Suspension Bridge, the Third Suspension Bridge, and the Lower Arch Bridge. Due to the span of dates and range of materials associated with the Lower Arch Bridge, this subseries is further separated into three sub-subseries: Construction, Condition and Maintenance, and the Pennsylvania Steel Company. The Construction subseries contains materials directly related to building the Lower Arch Bridge. Condition and Maintenance contains publications, reports, and other documents pertaining to the condition of the bridge after its completion. The third subseries documents the supply of bridge materials for the Lower Arch Bridge by the Pennsylvania Steel Company and includes shipping invoices and blueprints.

### Subseries 2.1: Railway Suspension Bridge, 1851-1877

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Box 3, Folder 3 | "Report of Trains", 1851-1874            |
| Box 3, Folder 4 | "Final Report of John A. Roebling", 1855 |
| Box 3, Folder 5 | "A Reply to Criticism..." , 1877 - 1877  |
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### Subseries 2.2: Third Suspension Bridge, 1880

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Box 3, Folder 6 | "Report on the Renewal..." , 1880 - 1880 |
|-----------------|--|
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### Subseries 2.3: Lower Arch Bridge, 1890s-1946

#### Subseries 2.3.1: Construction, 1890s-1924

- |                  |                                      |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Box 5, Folder 1  | Construction Measurements, 1890s     |
| Box 3, Folder 7  | Specifications, 1895-1896            |
| Box 3, Folder 8  | "Report on the Construction..." 1899 |
| Box 3, Folder 9  | Toll Building Bids, 1924             |
| Box 3, Folder 10 | Toll Building, 1924                  |
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#### Subseries 2.3.2: Condition and Maintenance, 1906-1946

- |                  |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Box 3, Folder 11 | Street Paving, 1906-1907 |
| Box 3, Folder 12 | Improvements, 1918       |

Box 3, Folder 13	Temperature Graphs, 1918
Map-folder 1	Details of Revision Blueprints, 1919
Box 6, Folder 3	Inspection Reports, 1930, 1919, 1937, 1932-1934, 1946, 1941
Box 6, Folder 1	"Revision of the Niagara Railway Arch Bridge", 1920
Box 6, Folder 2	Contract for Improvements, 1924
Box 6, Folder 4	"Rivet Inspection Report", 1926

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### Subseries 2.3.3: Pennsylvania Steel Company, 1896-1897

Box 7, Folder 1	Contract 460 Shipping Invoices, 1896-1897
Box 7, Folder 2	Contract 461 Shipping Invoices, 1896-1897
Box 7, Folder 3	Contract 462 Shipping Invoices, 1896-1897
Box 7, Folder 4	Contract 463 Shipping Invoices, 1896-1897
Box 7, Folder 5	Contract 464, Shipping Invoices, 1897
Box 7, Folder 6	Extra Work, 1897
Box 7, Folder 7	Correspondence, 1897
Box 4, Folder 2	Contract 460 Blueprints, 1896
Box 5, Folder 2	Contract 460 Blueprints, 1896-1897
Box 5, Folder 3	Blueprints, 1896-1897
Box 5	Contract 461
Box 5	Contract 462
Box 5	Contract 464
Box 5, Folder 4	Contract 463 Blueprints, 1896-1897

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## Series 3: General Correspondence, 1885-1946

**Scope and Contents:** This series contains loose correspondence that relates to the everyday business matters of the Niagara Falls International Bridge Company and the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Company. Some of the main creators and recipients include George L. Burrows, Charles and Carl Riordan, Thomas Reynolds, J.H. Ingersoll, Leffert L. Buck, and Charles E. Fowler. A sample of topics covered are meeting dates and times, requests for annual bridge passes from community members, and demands for pay increases for both bridge employees and contract engineers. Because many of the materials in this series are products of internal correspondence, some are without identified authors or dates. This series, as much as possible, is arranged chronologically except for specific subject files found in the original order of the collection.

Box 18, Item 1	1855-1894	
	Notes:	Letterpress copy book contains correspondence of Mr. Fisher, W.G. Swann, and Thomas Reynolds.
Box 7, Folder 8	1885-1892	
Box 7, Folder 9	1893	
Box 7, Folder 10	1894	
Box 7, Folder 11	1895	
Box 18, Item 2	1895-1897	
	Notes:	Letterpress copy book contains correspondence of Thomas Reynolds, Superintendent.
Box 8, Folder 1	1896	
Box 8, Folder 2	1897	
Box 8, Folder 3	1900-1918	
Box 19, Item 1	1901-1907	
	Notes:	Letterpress copy book contains correspondence of Thomas Reynolds, Superintendent.
Box 19, Item 2	1908-1915	
	Notes:	Letterpress copy book contains correspondence of Thomas Reynolds, Superintendent.
Box 8, Folder 4	1919	
Box 8, Folder 5	Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Company (NFSB), General, 1920-1922	
Box 8, Folder 6	Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Company (NFSB), General, 1923-1924	
Box 8, Folder 7	Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Company (NFSB), General, 1925-1926	

Box 8, Folder 8	1927-1930
Box 8, Folder 9	Thomas Reynolds Collected Correspondence, 1896-1897
Box 9, Folder 9	Thomas Reynolds Letterpress, 1897-1901
Box 9, Folder 1	"Memorial of Judge Burrows", 1897
Box 9, Folder 2	Franchise Tax, 1900
Box 9, Folder 3	Grand Trunk Railway, 1900-1901
Box 9, Folder 4	Accident Insurance, 1907-1910
Box 9, Folder 5	Accident Insurance, 1911
Box 9, Folder 6	Woodford Mill, 1911
Box 9, Folder 7	Canadian National Railways, 1924
Box 9, Folder 8	"Charles Riordan Estate", 1936-1938, 1946

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## Series 4: Financial Records, 1848-1941

**Scope and Contents:** This series consists of a variety of documents pertaining to the financial aspects of company administration. Included are annual statements, cash accounting ledgers, bills/vouchers, insurance certificates, and an unidentified index that holds names of individuals and companies. This series is divided into five subseries: Statements and Reports, Ledgers and Toll Books, Bills/Vouchers, Insurance Certificates, and Unidentified Index, which are arranged chronologically.

### Subseries 4.1: Statements and Reports, 1902-1929

Box 20, Item 3	Niagara Railway Arch Bridge yearly statements, 1872 - 1906
Box 10, Folder 1	1902 (two copies)
Box 10, Folder 2	Ten Year Summary, 1913-1923
Box 10, Folder 11	Ten year Summary, 1914-1924
Box 10, Folder 12	1924-1926, 1929

### Subseries 4.2: Ledgers and Toll Books, 1848-1927

Box 11, Folder 1	Toll Account, 1848-1893
Box 11, Folder 2	East Gate, 1852 June to 1854 January
Box 11, Folder 3	East and West Gates, 1854 February to 1859 March
Box 11, Folder 4	West Gate, 1854 June to 1858 January
Box 11, Folder 5	Toll Book both gates, 1855 January 1 to 1862 January
Box 11, Folder 6	East Gate Toll Book, 1855 April to 1856 May
Box 11, Folder 7	East Gate, 1856 June 1 to 1859 July 1
Box 11, Folder 8	West Gate, 1858 January to 1861 March
Box 11, Folder 9	East Gate, 1859 July to 1862 May
Box 11, Folder 10	East Gate , 1860 July 1 to 1869 July 31
Box 20, Item 1	East Gate, 1869-08 - 1873-01
Box 12	Toll Book, 1862 January to 1881 January

Box 11, Folder 11	East Gate , 1897 November to 1903 June
Box 10, Folder 3	"Cash", 1894-1921
Box 13	Niagara Railway Suspension Bridge Cash Book, 1896-1897
Box 10, Folder 4	Imperial Bank of Canada Ledger, 1896-1900
Box 4, Folder 3	Niagara Railway Arch Bridge Received Cash, 1925-1927
Box 21	Niagara Railway Arch Bridge Company Cash Book , 1919 - 1924
Box 22, Item 1	Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Journal No. 5, directory
Box 22, Item 2	Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge Journal No. 5, 1852 - 1855

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#### Subseries 4.3: Bills/Vouchers, 1894-1941

Box 14	1894, 1896-1897
Box 15	1902-1903
Box 16	1907-1908
Box 17	Returned Checks , 1913 - 1915
Box 17	Dividend Vouchers , 1941 - 1941

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#### Subseries 4.4: Insurance Certificates, 1895-1905

Box 10, Folder 5	1895-1897, 1904-1905, 1902
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#### Subseries 4.5: Unidentified Index, undated

Box 10, Folder 13	Unidentified Index, undated
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## Series 6: Miscellaneous Published Materials, 1892-1920s

Scope and Contents: This series is comprised of newspaper articles, vendor pamphlets, and other publications collected by the bridge companies. This series has been arranged chronologically where possible.

Box 10, Folder 6 "Statutory Revision of Laws..." , 1892 - 1892

Box 10, Folder 7 Articles of Incorporation, Niagara Frontier Bridge Company, 1906

Box 10, Folder 8 Newspaper Articles, circa 1920s

Box 10, Folder 9 Lehigh Valley Railroad Publication, undated

Box 10, Folder 10 Stickney Engines Publication, undated

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