



# Cataract House: Restaurant brings Niagara Falls Underground Railroad history to life

Grand opening of Cataract House Restaurant & Academy will pay homage to historic hotel, heroic waiters who helped freedom seekers escape to Canada

The Cataract House Restaurant & Academy, at 310 Rainbow Blvd., may be celebrating its grand opening on Friday, Feb. 18, but the new space has deep roots in some of Niagara Falls' most proud and prominent history.

A new restaurant will be a contemporary nod to a historic legacy that uses visuals, art and space to connect people to the stories of the waiters of the historic Cataract House.

The grand opening of the Cataract House Restaurant & Academy

and micro art gallery will be held from 6-9 p.m., and is free with preregistration. Those interested in attending can sign up for a designated arrival time online.

Established in 1825 along the banks of the Niagara River, the historic Cataract House was a world-renowned luxury hotel that became one of the most important Underground Railroad locations in the nation. Under the leadership of head waiter John Morrison, its African American wait staff led double lives as secret Underground Railroad agents, helping countless freedom seekers escape to safety in Canada.

These heroic tales inspired a partnership between local restaurateur and chef Bobby Anderson – of “Hell’s Kitchen” fame – and the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area (NFNHA) to bring this vision to life. Anderson will run the restaurant through his F-Bites organization. The new Cataract House will directly connect visitors to the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center, where they can learn more.

“The history happened right here, and we have to tell it in as many places to as many people as we can,” said Ally Spogr, the NFNHA’s director of public art. “That’s a vision we all share.”

Anderson curated a menu that pays homage to the decadent dishes served at the historic Cataract House, but has added a modern twist.

“We’re doing a remix on all the food they served,” he said. “We’ll have roasted pheasant tacos, oxtail gumbo and red snapper al-



A new vision for the Cataract House begins Feb. 18 in Niagara Falls. (Images courtesy of Insight International USA)

mondine. We’re modernizing, but staying true to what they served.”

The Cataract House Restaurant & Academy will also serve as a micro gallery, and the first featured artist will be Tyshaun Tyson, whose works will be on display at the grand opening.

As part of this collaborative project, the Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Society donated a menu from the historic Cataract House to the Heritage Center.

There will be seating for about 12 to 16 people inside the Cataract House, and food is available for high-end takeout experience.

The Cataract House Restaurant & Academy will be open weekends moving forward after the grand opening.

This event is part of the Heritage Center’s celebration of Black History Month, supported by M&T Bank with special support from the NFNHA. For more information or to register for the event, visit the event page.

*The mission of the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center is to reveal authentic stories of Underground Railroad freedom seekers and abolitionists in Niagara Falls, to inspire visitors to recognize modern injustices that stem from slavery, and to take action toward an equitable society. The Heritage Center is an experiential museum operating every Thursday through Sunday during the winter season. It offers self-guided tours, facilitated guided tours, school field trips, and numerous public programs throughout the year. Through meaningful interpretive experiences, engaging public programs, services and events, it expands visitors’ understanding of and appreciation for the Underground Railroad in Niagara Falls and the enduring impact of slavery in the U.S.*

*F-Bites, founded in 2009 by Anderson, is an organization that started as an afterschool program in the Niagara Falls City School District. It has since expanded to over 60 institutions around Erie, Niagara and Monroe counties – including schools, community centers, city programs, detention centers and the Niagara County Jail. F-Bites’ mission is to empower youth and adults to be contributing members of society, inspiring them to plan a successful future through the execution and development of workforce skills, soft skills, hard skills, and exposure to culinary art training. The organization’s long-term goal is to have a tangible change in the employment rates, employment opportunities, and the poverty rate of young people.*



## Niagara Wheatfield Central School District Pre-Kindergarten Program

Accepting Pre-K Applications  
February 1 - March 11, 2022

The Niagara Wheatfield Central School District is now accepting Pre-Kindergarten applications with completed registration packets for September 2022 for all Niagara Wheatfield children whose dates of birth fall between December 2, 2017 and December 1, 2018 (must be age 4 on or before 12/1/22). Niagara Wheatfield School District Pre-Kindergarten program is located at Bunny Bunch Daycare at two of their locations, 2578 Niagara Falls Blvd., Niagara Falls, NY 14304 and 7181 Ward Rd North Tonawanda, NY 14120. The Pre-Kindergarten program is contingent upon the availability of New York State Pre-Kindergarten grant funds.

- Pre-Kindergarten students attend a full day of school: Monday through Friday, from 9:00am to 2:00pm.
- There is no charge to enroll your child in this program.
- Parents are responsible for transportation to and from the site.
- Options are available for before and after school care from Bunny Bunch for a fee.
- Applications and registration packets must be received by 3:00pm on Friday, March 11, 2022 at Niagara Wheatfield District Office for consideration of Fall enrollment.
- Applications and registration packets are available on the District Website at [www.nwcsd.org](http://www.nwcsd.org) and in the main offices of all Niagara Wheatfield School Buildings.
- If applications exceed maximum enrollment, a public lottery will be conducted on March 11, 2022 at 4pm.
- Completed Pre-Kindergarten applications and registration packets should be forwarded to: Niagara Wheatfield Central School District Office, PO Box 309, Sanborn, NY 14132 or brought directly to the District Office at 5700 West Street.
- Please be aware that the formal registration form requires proof of residency and documentation of physicals, immunizations, and dental visits within the last year.
- If you have questions regarding the application/registration process, please call Nora O’Bryan, Principal for Pre-K at 215-3244.

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