

Colt House¹

1018 Ontario Avenue

Niagara Falls, New York

Niagara Falls City Council designated this as a local Landmark in May 2006.

Significance: The Colt family represents widespread local sympathy for enslaved people. They were founding members of the Congregational Church in Suspension Bridge, which was sympathetic to abolitionism, and in 1856, Leander Colt “and lady” attended a benefit concert in Lockport to raise money to buy George Goines’ brother and mother out of slavery.



niagarafallshistoricpreservation.org/node/17

Description: This house was built as a vernacular Greek Revival building in 1855, shortly after the village of Bellevue was incorporated as Niagara City and the new railway Suspension Bridge was constructed. It does not incorporate Greek Revival details, but it has the typical Greek Revival gable-and-wing form. Its main block has three bays, with a gable facing the street and a small three-bay wing. All eaves are unsoffited. As the Niagara Falls Preservation Commission noted in 2006, windows of this house were most likely originally six-over-six. The house was one of the several limestone structures built in the mid-1850s from stone quarried locally. Village trustee Marcus Adams owned the lot when the house was built. Either Isaac Colt, Jr., or his son Leander Colt constructed the house.

Discussion: Leander Colt was one of the most important developers of the area around Suspension Bridge. He and his brother went west to California during the Gold Rush, and he returned to build the Colt Block on Main Street, and he was closely associated with this house and most likely lived here.

In 1855, Leander Colt “and lady” attended a benefit concert in Lockport for George Goines, who had escaped from slavery and was raising money to buy freedom for his brother and mother.²

In 1860, Colt was listed in the census as age 35, born in New York, a shoe dealer, with real estate worth

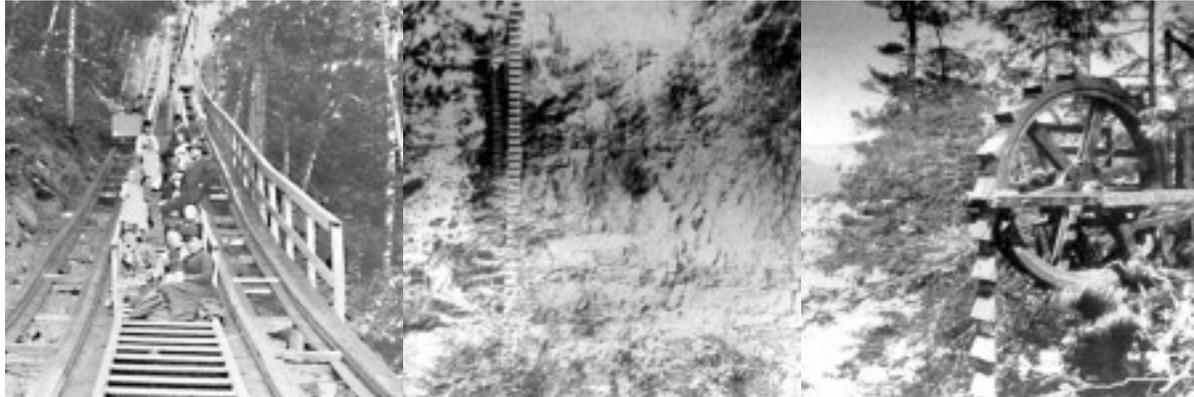
1 Site description from *Survey of Sites Relating to the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Niagara Falls and Surrounding Area, 1820-1880*, by Judith Wellman, Ph.D., April 2012, pp. 126-127. Prepared by New York Historical Research Associates for edr Companies and the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area Commission. The complete historic resources survey report is available at www.niagarafallsundergroundrailroad.org.

2 Artemus Comstock on July 24, 1856. He went to Lockport, he wrote, “accompanied by Miss Eliza Netzel and Leander Colt & lady to listen to a concert given for the benefit of a colored man by the name of George [Goines] to redeem his mother and brother from slavery. The amount necessary to be raised was \$1,000 AND \$1,100 was procured. The tickets sold for \$1.00 each. The concert was a good one.” Typescript Niagara County Historian’s Office.

\$15,000 and personal property worth \$5000. His wife Mary was 25, born in New York. They had two servants, Julia Sax, age 30, born in New York, and Juli Bove, age 25, born in Ireland. William Bovel, age 14, also lived with the family. Their neighborhood included a barber, lawyer, druggist, clerk, millwright, two women each listed as “lady,” and several servants and laborers. They were all European American, born in New York, Connecticut, Canada, England, or Ireland.

Leander Colt established a shoe store in the Colt Block and after the Civil War turned it into a hardware store. During the Civil War, he enlisted with the McClellan Dragoons of Illinois. He firmly supported the Republican Party and was appointed postmaster for Suspension Bridge under President Grant.

In 1869, he built an inclined railway across the river on the Canadian side.³



Leander Colt, Inclined Plane, 1869-1889

Chris Ennest, getoutniagara.ca/2010/09/colts-creek-falls-an-introduction/

³ “1018 Ontario Avenue, Colt House,” Prepared by Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission in conjunction with the City of Niagara Falls Planning Office and Ann & Hugh O’Hear, February 2006, niagarafallshistoricpreservation.org/node/17.