

## MAID OF THE MIST INCLINE

In 1894, the Niagara Park and River Railway Company built an incline railway down the bank at the bottom of the Ferry Road (present day Clifton Hill). There was an incline station at the top of the gorge which housed the incline machinery, a ticket office and a souvenir store. At the foot of the incline was a new dock built by the Maid of the Mist Company to receive tourists who would be using the incline railway. In 1895, the incline railway and station building were leased by the Clifton Hotel, which was located at the top of the incline, at the present day location of the Oakes Garden Theatre. As a result, the incline came to be known as the "Clifton Incline." In 1901, the Niagara Park and River Railway was purchased by the International Railway Company and became its Park and River Division.

In 1932, the International Railway Company chose to discontinue its operation of the incline and surrendered its franchise on September 12. As this point, the incline came under the control of the Niagara Parks Commission. In 1937, the building at the top of the incline was removed, and from then until 1976, the incline operated from what had been the basement of the old building.

The original incline was slow and could only carry 12 passengers each way. As the number of people using the incline to access the Maid of the Mist dock increased, the old incline was proving to be inadequate. The Niagara Parks Commission decided to build a new incline system in 1976. Work began on the incline on October 18, 1976, and it was completed in time for the summer opening of the Maid of the Mist in May, 1977. This incline system was designed and built by Von Roll of Switzerland at a total cost of \$858,000. It had two cars, weighing 13,200 pounds each, which were pulled by a 7/8" steel cable over a common rail. There was a fail safe by-pass point at the centre of the incline. When the cars reached this point, each car would automatically be directed to one side of the by-pass to avoid the oncoming car, and both would then rejoin the main rail. The total length of the rail was 318 feet, and the system was inclined at 31 degrees. Each car had a capacity of 24 passengers and took 45 seconds to traverse the incline.

To facilitate the loading and unloading of passengers, side doors were installed on the cars in 1983, and during the same year, the incline was renamed the "Maid of the Mist Incline." The Maid of the Mist Company continued to grow, attracting more and more tourists. As the Maid of the Mist expanded their fleet of boats, the demand soon surpassed the transportation capabilities of the incline, and as a result, the Maid of the Mist Incline was closed in 1991 and replaced with four high speed elevators.