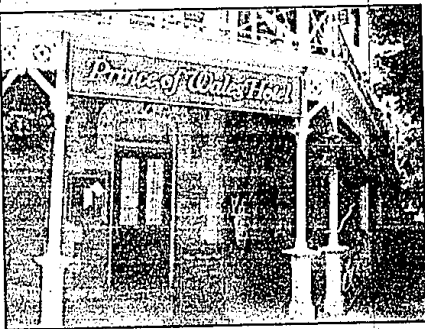


**TRAVEL**



Charming town: The Prince of Wales Hotel in the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake offer luxury accommodations in a quaint small town setting.

**Bicycle trail overlooks great Niagara views**

BY HUGH GALLAGHER  
STAFF WRITER

Observer & Eccentric readers who have never been to Niagara-on-the-Lake will have a *deja vu* experience.

This small town on a tip of land where the Niagara River meets Lake Ontario will remind you of Charlevoix, Petoskey and Mackinac Island. There is a long street of craft and tourist shops, restaurants, bakeries, ice cream parlors and, yes, a fudge shop. There are dramatic views across the seemingly endless expanse of Great Lakes water. Sailboats and cruisers fill the harbor.

There are charming Victorian homes with lush gardens. There is even a fort, Fort George, similar to the two forts in the Mackinac area.

But there are differences, too. The churches with their faded gravestones date to the middle 1700s. The main street, fashionable, well kept, has several fine hotels, including the luxurious Prince of Wales, right at street level. There is also a luxury hotel, the Queen's Landing, overlooking the lake and a spa hotel, the Pillar and Post, away from the constant stream of downtown tourists.

But the biggest difference is that Niagara-on-the-Lake is home to professional repertory theater, the Shaw Festival, and draws both the summer recreation crowd and theater lovers.

And, despite the lake and wide river, boating isn't the only outdoor recreation.

An asphalt bicycle trail connects Niagara-on-the-Lake to Fort Erie, 35 miles to the south. We took the trail half way, to Niagara Falls, and found interesting stops and great views all along the way.

The Niagara River Recreation Trail, developed in 1986, begins at Fort George, an exact recreation from the 1930s of the fort that played a key role during the War of 1812. It is a Canadian National Historic Site. The trail rolls along the Niagara River and the Niagara River Parkway, once described by Winston Churchill as the most beautiful "Sunday drive" in the world.

You bicycle close to the river, but above it along the Niagara Escarpment. The trail winds through park land, over picturesque wooden bridges, past

historic and beautiful, homes, wineries and orchards and into one of the world's great tourist attractions.

At Queenston, the trail breaks off and you must pedal through the small town on a steep uphill road. But going or coming you should stop in Queenston to visit the Mackenzie Heritage Printery Museum. Of course, as a newspaper reporter and editor I have a special interest in printing and newspapers, but this is a special treat. A young woman provided a knowledgeable tour of historic presses and Linotype and Ludlow machines, explaining their operation and allowing for some hands-on work. During the summer, the museum is open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

As you cross the Niagara Parkway just out of Queenston, you are back on the trail and still climbing.

After a bracing climb the ride begins to level out as you ride high above the river. Then the trail crosses the road again at the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens and School of Horticulture. The gardens here are spectacular and the admission is free. This is also the site of the Butterfly Conservatory. For a small admission fee, you can walk among more than 2,000 butterflies, representing more than 40 species. It is a wonderful experience to have several of them land on you. The Conservatory is educational as well as colorful.

The river and the falls are the big event for the rest of the ride. The trail offers fantastic views over whirlpools and rapids. Of course, this is the place that invented tourism, so there are any number of ways to explore the river for a price, including "Spanish Aero Cars," "Water Bowslows" and, at the falls, the famous "Maid of the Mist" boats that take you up close and personal.

You leave the trail again as you come into Niagara Falls and drive along the road. The first sight of the American Falls from a bicycle is spectacular. The park along the Canadian side is spotlessly clean but always crowded. The views all along are great.

For more information on the Niagara area, contact the Niagara Parks Commission at 905-366-2241.

**Shaw celebrates American spirit**

BY HUGH GALLAGHER  
STAFF WRITER

The Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, was founded in 1962, dedicated to presenting the plays of George Bernard Shaw and his contemporaries.

Shaw lived from 1856 to 1950, so the Festival is able to consider a wide range of modern theater from Shaw's serious comedies to the development of the murder mystery to lightweight musicals.

This year the festival takes a look at cockeyed American optimism with a "new" musical by the Gershwins and a rollicking production of Kaufman and Hart's "You Can't Take It With You."

**Foggy Day**  
Imagine discovering a new musical by George and Ira Gershwin just in time for George's centennial.

Nice work, if you could get it. But that's not exactly how this "new" musical came about.

Apparently, George was taken by F.G. Woodhouse's novel "A Dance in Distress," about an American songwriter who falls in love with an English girl at first sight, and began work on turning it into a musical. But Hollywood called and RKO lured Gershwin, and his new songs, by buying rights to the Woodhouse book.

Of course, the studio altered the story for its Fred Astaire movie.

New Norm Foster and John Mueller have gone back to the original to create a bit of slap-happy fit to surround those wonderful Gershwin songs and a few more at the Royal George Theatre.

If you attended the Michigan Opera Theatre production of "Porgy and Bess," you know about the serious side of the Gershwins. "Foggy Day," under the direction of Kelly Robinson and musical direction of Christopher Donison, is Gershwin light, bright and happy.

A successful American songwriter arrives in foggy London town searching for "a dame in distress" to rescue and love. A young woman happens by who just fits the bill. And, it turns out, she is the daughter of Lord Marshmorten.

Around and through this silliness we are treated to high comedy expertly executed and a great Gershwin score, expertly sung. The songs include "Nice Work If You Can Get It," "A Foggy Day," "Love Is Here to Stay," "He Loves and She Loves," "I Can't Be Bothered Now," "Love Walked In" and more.

Of course, this is a celebration of the easy American style (or Canadian style) opposed to the stiff English. Though a group of manipulative servants and a randy Lord have a liveliness all their own.

Jerry Denman's resemblance to Astaire is not unintentional. As American Steve, he sings brightly and dances with finesse and is altogether winning. Stephanie McNamara as the object of his affection plays Lady Jessica as level-headed but spirited, and she sings beautifully.

But it is the broader comic roles that are most effective. Nora McLellan is a hoot as a brash "Canadian" showgirl who



Eccentric: The wacky Sycamore family and friends create a constant swirling circus in Kaufman and Hart's "You Can't Take It With You."

**Shaw Festival**

**At the Festival Theatre**  
George Bernard Shaw's "Major Barbara," through Nov. 1  
Kaufman and Hart's "You Can't Take It With You," through Nov. 1  
Oscar Wilde's "Lady Windermere's Fan," through Oct. 31

**At the Court House Theatre**  
Christopher Fry's "The Lady's Not for Burning," through Sept. 27

George Bernard Shaw's "John Bull's Other Island," July 10 to Sept. 26  
John Galsworthy's "Joy," through Sept. 27

**At the Royal George Theatre**  
George and Ira Gershwin (words and music) "A Foggy Day," through Nov. 1  
Edward Percy's "The Shop at Sly Corner," through Oct. 31

For ticket information or to receive the 1998 season brochure, call 1-800-511-SHAW (7429) or (905)468-2172 or visit the Shaw Festival internet site at [shawfest.sympatico.ca](http://shawfest.sympatico.ca).



Gershwin fun: Gabrielle Jones, Patty Jamieson and Richard Farrell find their properly English lives disrupted by Americans in "Foggy Day."

helps Steve in his "quest." She sings, bellows and looks like Ethel Merman, a singer who became a star on Gershwin music. Her love object is Lord Marshmorten, played with sweet befuddlement by Richard Farrell.

Todd Waite's Reggie is all loose-limbed and witty as the rich boy with a good heart. Karen Wood as the conniving Alberta is hilarious in the tradition of plucky working class Brits.

Nice work, indeed.

**You Can't Take It With You**

This is theater perfection. This beloved George Kaufman-Moss Hart comedy, at the Festival Theatre, is a swirl of hilarious activity that celebrates freedom, eccentricity and, even, a lit-

tle madness.

Director Neil Munro has "choreographed" this constantly moving human circus brilliantly, every actor in sync, every theatrical bit producing a roaring laugh and all of the giddy humor hanging on the essential humanity and goodness underneath.

The time is the 1930s, the Depression still hanging around. But Martin Vanderhof has voluntarily abandoned his Wall Street job to live life freely with his oddball family.

Daughter Penny is writing plays because someone left a typewriter a few years back. So she gave up painting and took up writing (a war play, a sex play etc.). Son-in-law Paul Sycamore is in the basement with Mr. De Pinna, who smokes, concocting the world's best fireworks. Granddaughter Essie is in constant, clumsy motion in her futile desire to be a ballerina. While her husband, Ed, is obsessed with printing - menus, Communist manifestos, whatever. Add to this a crazy dance teacher, a maid and her cheery boyfriend and a drunk duchess.

Granddaughter Alice is the sane one. She works and falls in love with the boss' son, Tony,

and reluctantly brings him home to meet the family. This leads to the meeting with Tony's uptight, Wall Street parents and the "explosive" results.

The fine cast is uniformly perfect. Mary Haez's Penny is sweet, over optimistic and happy. Jenny Wright is a master at pratfall and deadpan as the "Eveready Bunny" Essie. Lewis Gordon is quiet authority as the grandfather.

Especially appealing are William Vickers as the always slightly, oddly dignified, sweetly demure Mr. De Pinna and Norman Browning as the grumbling Mr. Kirby, who learns to loosen up.

The beautiful Columbe Demers and Mike Shana make a charming couple as Alice and Tony.

The house setting by Sue LePage is a visual feast of the slightly off-kilter.

Kaufman provided the bite and Hart the humanity, and it all blends perfectly in this "Fourth of July" celebration of weird America.

Thursday, "Major Barbara" and "The Shop at Sly Corner."

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