

Lewiston History Mysteries

Fort Niagara Flag is Crown Jewel of Area's Rich History

There is a huge U.S. flag on display at the new Fort Niagara Visitor's Center that is one of the most valued historical artifacts in the nation. The War of 1812 Ft. Niagara flag is one of only 20 known surviving examples of the "Stars and Stripes" that were produced prior to 1815. It is the earliest extant flag to have flown in Western New York, and the second oldest to have flown in New York State.

Delivered to Fort Niagara in 1809, the flag is older than the Star Spangled Banner which flew over Ft. McHenry in Baltimore.

As seen in its display case, it dwarfs visitors with its gigantic dimensions of 22 feet high and 28 feet wide. There is some speculation that the flag could have originally been 36 feet wide. It has 15 stars and 15 stripes, much different than today's flag which has 50 stars and 13 stripes.

It was purchased 1993 from Mrs. Cherry Drummond, great-great-grand-niece of Gen. Gordon Drummond who kept the flag in his Scottish castle and where it was kept by his family for generations.

The flag is on display at the Ft. Niagara Visitor Center from 9am-4:30pm any day except New Years, Christmas and Thanksgiving. Summer hours are 9am-6:30pm.



British General Gordon Drummond took the flag back to his Scottish castle as a war souvenir in 1814. It remained there for over 180 years before it was returned to Ft. Niagara in 1994.

TIMELINE The War of 1812 Ft. Niagara Flag

June 1809: Ft. Niagara receives a new flag that conforms with the 1795 Congressional act that provides for 15 stars and 15 stripes – one for each state. It is not known where or when it was constructed. (There were actually 17 states in 1809.)

December 19, 1813: British troops capture the flag during a battle of the War of 1812 and take it to Quebec.

May 18, 1814: The flag is sent to London to be "laid at the feet of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent." Later, the flag was given as a souvenir to Sir Gordon Drummond, commander of the British forces in Ontario. Drummond put it in his home, Megginch Castle in Scotland.



The flag's existence was unknown to Americans for over 170 years, until it was discovered at Megginch Castle in Scotland.

1969: The Castle catches on fire and the flag, while damaged, is rescued by the Drummond family.

1984: The existence of the flag in Scotland becomes known by Canadians.

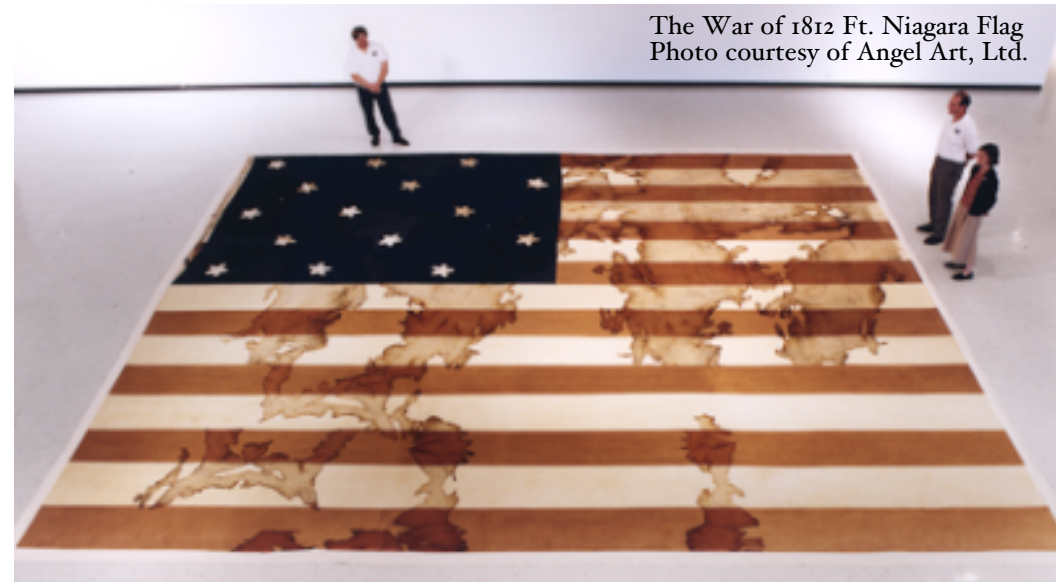
December 16, 1993: The Old Ft. Niagara Association verifies the authenticity of the flag and agrees to purchase it for \$150,000.

March 16, 1994: The flag is returned to its original home at Fort Niagara, courtesy of British Airways and USAir.

1994-1996: The flag undergoes extensive restoration at NY's Peebles Island Resource Center.

June 23, 2006: Ft. Niagara opens its new \$5 million Visitor Center, including a special climate controlled and secured case for the flag where tens of thousands of appreciative visitors every year are awed by its size, beauty and historical significance.

The War of 1812 Ft. Niagara Flag
Photo courtesy of Angel Art, Ltd.



Flag at Fort Niagara has 15-Stars / 15 Stripes: is an Older Sister to the Star Spangled Banner

There is a fascinating connection between the Ft. Niagara flag and the flag that inspired our national anthem, The Star Spangled Banner.

Major George Armistead, from Virginia, was stationed at Ft. Niagara in 1813. Major Armistead loved BIG flags but he didn't like the cold weather here, so he asked for a transfer.

On June 27, 1813, Major Armistead was happily reassigned to command Ft. McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland, where he ordered "a flag so large that the British would have no difficulty in seeing it from a distance." It was this 42' x 30' 15-star, 15-stripe flag, that gave inspiration to the defenders of Baltimore and inspired a new national song. Ever since, the former Ft. Niagara officer has been known as the "Guardian of the Star-Spangled Banner" which is now on display at the Smithsonian Institution.



Major George
Armistead



Welcome to Lewiston, NY

www.HistoricLewiston.org

Phone: 716-754-4214

The Historical Association of Lewiston hopes you enjoy your visit to our historic and quaint village. Mark your calendar for our next spectacular Historic Home Tour on Dec. 5 & 6, 2009.

To get the latest news and monthly program notes, join our free email list by sending an email to: join@HistoricLewiston.org You can also see and download our past placemats at our website:

HistoricLewiston.org

Historic Lewiston placemats written and designed by Association volunteer, Lee Simonson



Reading All-Stars

This after-school reading program for 2nd and 3rd graders in Niagara Falls is designed to build knowledge in science, music and social studies. Your support of monetary donations, books and supplies is very appreciated!

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