

Niagara Falls Begins in Lewiston 12,000 Years Ago After Last Ice Age

Swift Water Erodes 7 Miles of Rock to Present Location

When Abraham Lincoln visited Niagara Falls in 1848, he was left wondering, "Where does all that water come from?" People have been asking the same question for thousands of years. Niagara Falls was born at the end of the last Ice Age, near where Artpark stands today. The Niagara River begins at the Peace Bridge in Buffalo, and drops 315 feet over its 38-mile course to the mouth of the river at Old Fort Niagara. Close to 185 feet of that drop occurs at Niagara Falls.

Welcome to Historic Lewiston, NY

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The Historical Association of Lewiston hopes you enjoy your visit to our historic and quaint village.

Get our free email newsletters 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 volunteer, Lee Simonson.

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The Falls Looked Much Different to Fr. Hennepin in 1678 Than It Looks Today

Louis Hennepin, a priest and early French explorer, saw the Falls in 1678. Many years later, Europeans read his accounts and were fascinated by this new discovery. Etienne Brule (1592-1633), a young 23-year-old aide to French explorer, Samuel de Champlain, is believed to be the first white person to see the Falls in 1615. Of course, Native Americans had been well familiar with the Falls for thousands of years. This illustration shows where the Falls was in 1678 and how it has eroded over the past 337 years into its current "Horseshoe" shape.

Interesting Facts about the Niagara River

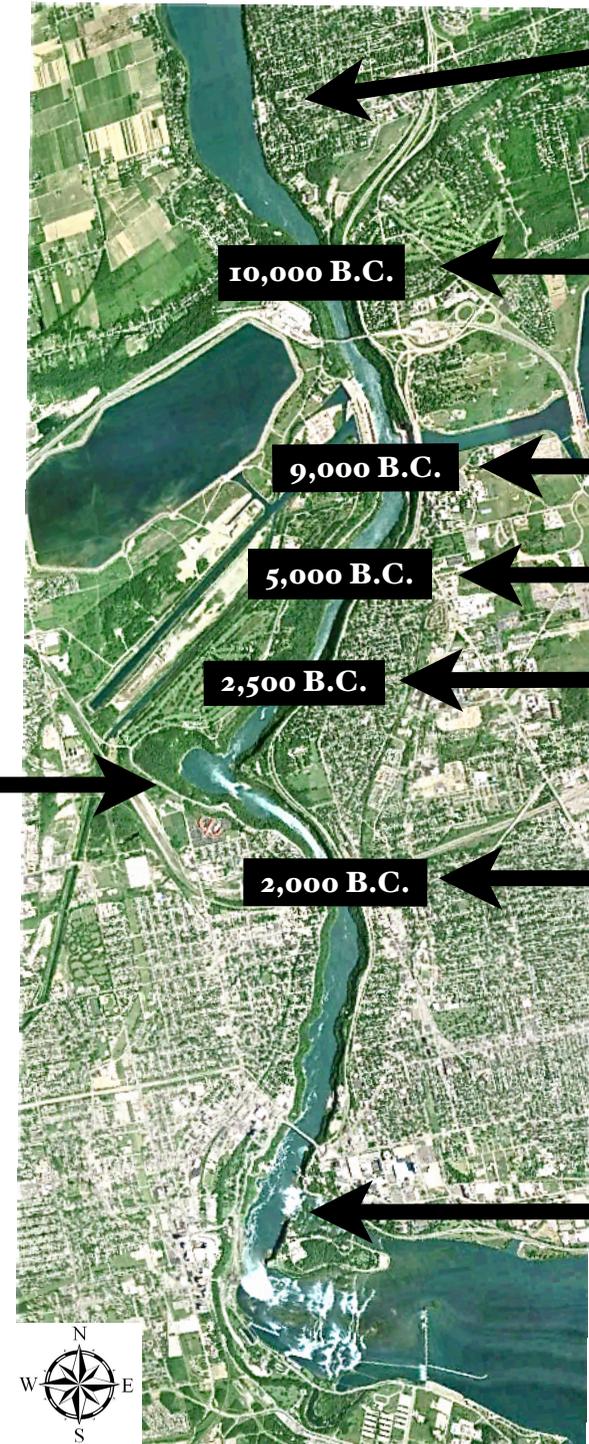
Based on the volume of water it carries per mile, the Niagara River is the largest river in the world.

You could call it the drainage ditch for four of the Great Lakes -- the largest supply of fresh water in the world. There is a popular misconception that the water that goes over the Falls flows into the Great Lakes. The opposite is true -- the water is flowing north, out of the Great Lakes, and eventually empties into the Atlantic Ocean.

While the river has taken thousands of years to cut through miles of solid rock, the large whirlpool section was washed away in a few days, over 4000 years ago. The whirlpool was composed of soft sediment from an ancient river and there was no resistance. The river immediately turned 90 degrees.

When you view the Falls today, you are only looking at half of the natural flow of water -- the other half is being diverted to produce hydro-electricity.

Niagara Falls Time Line: How the Falls has moved from Lewiston to its present location over 12,000 years.



You are here in the Village of Lewiston.

10,000 BC: Niagara Falls began in Lewiston near Artpark and was only 35 feet high. The Ice Age ends and the Woolly Mammoth and the American Lion become extinct.

9,000 BC: The Falls was located where the Robert Moses Power Plant is today. First stone structures at Jericho are built (today's West Bank in the Middle East.)

5,000 BC: First evidence of human activity in Lewiston area.

2,500 BC: Beginning of the bronze age. The Great Pyramid of Cheops and Stonehenge are built.

2,000 BC: Four thousand years ago, the Falls was located where the Whirlpool Bridge is today. It was at its most narrow point and would have produced a tremendous noise heard for miles around -- twice the water you see today, and less than 1/4 of today's width. The water at the brink would have been 25 feet deep compared to today's 1-2 feet.

Today: The Falls continues to erode eastward. Scientists predict that by the time it gets to Grand Island, the falls will cease to exist and will morph into a series of powerful and descending rapids.