

Museum Data and Research

Sowmya Movva: Scrum Master

March 1, 2023

Indigenous History

Native people have inhabited Niagara for over 11,000 years, long before European explorers “discovered” the Americas in the 15th century. These earliest inhabitants were nomadic hunters and gatherers. Over time, Native settlements became more permanent as the cultivation of crops became an increasingly important food source. Around 1300 AD, distinctive nations emerged, including the Neutral nation, which inhabited Niagara until they were overcome by the Iroquois around 1650. Following the Neutral demise, Seneca and Mississauga settled briefly in the Niagara region.



Powder horn 1790

Additional information

Early Fishing in Niagara

Indigenous People

The Attawandaron (neutral nation), Anishinaabe, and the Haudenosaunee have been fishing in the Niagara River and Lake Ontario using spears, nets, weirs, and hooks for thousands of years. Over millennia, they have engaged in subsistence fishing and built fisheries-based economies that involved trade with other Indigenous Nations and early European settlers. These Nations sustainably regulated and managed their fisheries by using selective fishing gear according to season, and imposed limits on when they could fish to ensure the continued existence of this resource for all.

When colonization happened, settlers and Indigenous Nations fished alongside each other. Over time tensions grew, which resulted in unfavourable outcomes for First Nations people.

Indigenous peoples' fishing methods and rights clashed with the settler commercial fishing industry that had developed on these waters. Indigenous subsistence fishing practices went from being self-determined to entirely state-controlled in order to support the growth and expansion of commercial fisheries.

Early Settler Fishing

Salmon, trout, sturgeon, whitefish, pike, and perch are just a few of the dozens of species of fish that once called the Niagara River and Lake Ontario home. Our town's early European settlers must have been amazed by the number of fish in our waters. They were plentiful, large, and vital to feeding a growing population.

In the journals of Elizabeth Simcoe, she mentions that residents were catching "100 sturgeon and 600 whitefish" a day in nets. By the 1840s, a fishing industry had established itself, resulting in dozens of locals becoming dependent on the fish pulled from the Lake and River to support their families.

Enormous catches were hauled, and locals were noted to bring in thousands of whitefish per day. Before the railway came into town, fish would have been sold by peddlers locally and in nearby cities like St. Catharines and Niagara Falls, or they were transported to Toronto via steamships.

European Contact

By the late 16th and early 17th centuries, the Neutral nation had some interaction with Europeans. This late date of contact is due in part to the actions of nations like the Huron, who protected their monopoly over the lucrative European trade by keeping the French and English traders out of the competitors' territories. The Neutral, like the other nations, became embroiled in a cycle of dependence on the Europeans, mainly for muskets. Alcohol and novelty items of European origin were also highly prized goods. *Picture depicts a Doll from 1800s but wearing indigenous clothing from 1750s.*

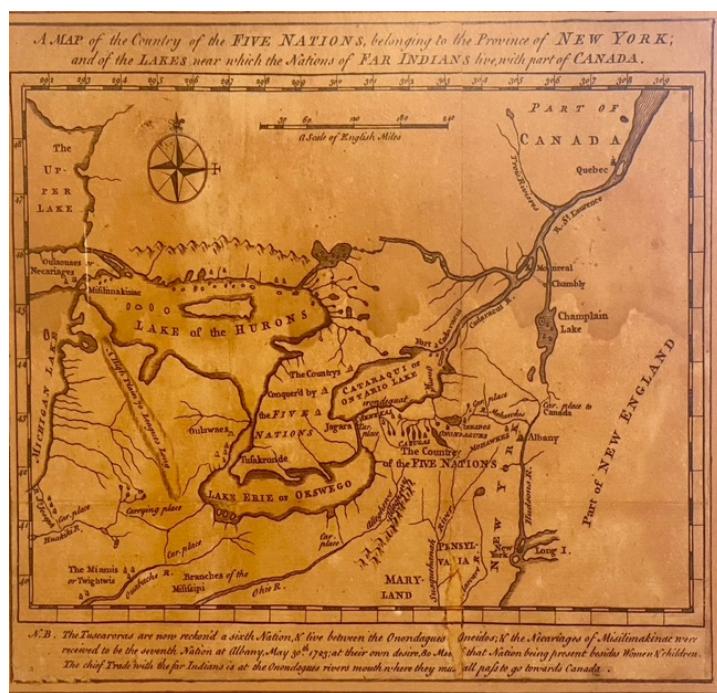


Dish With One Spoon (1749)

The Dish with One Spoon Wampum is a formal peace agreement Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples that settled in the Great Lakes region and along the St. Lawrence River. At its core, this agreement describes how the land, and its resources, will be shared for the benefit of all: Take only what we need, leave resources behind for others, and make sure that we do not pollute the land.

Even though this agreement was established before the arrival of settlers, it is expected that everyone who comes to this region will abide by these tenets. Instead, settlers conquered and took ownership of the land and its resources, aided in the collapse of entire species, dumped chemicals into the water supply, and destroyed natural habitats.

Today, a Dish with One Spoon allows us to confront the negative impacts we have had on the environment. It can also offer lessons on what actions we can take toward the sustainability of our natural resources.



First Lighthouse on Great Lakes

The first lighthouse on the Great Lakes was erected in 1804 at Mississauga Point, near the mouth of the Niagara River. Captain Nicholls was the engineer in charge of constructing the lighthouse. His instructions were to focus on utility rather than ornamental but make it substantial. The total cost was £196. The lighthouse stood until the early months of 1814 when it was demolished to make room for the construction of Fort Mississauga which still stands today.

Additional Info

Niagara River Range Lights

In 1904, the federal government built two lighthouses along the shore, one near the waterworks building (the "Pumphouse") and another at the entrance to the marina. This pair of range lights, which shows a red light on the lakeside, is used to guide mariners into the Niagara River. They still exist today.

Fog Signal

Fog bells, or horns, are used to warn ships of a navigational hazard, in foggy weather. The port of Niagara-on-the-Lake was once lively with steamships, so in 1886, a fog bell was installed at the mouth of the river on the northern rampart of the ruins of Fort Mississauga. The wooden structure was built by James Dorrity but was discontinued in 1889. In 1904, a foghorn was built by the federal government near the marina. It was discontinued in 1978 and the building is now used as a vacation rental.



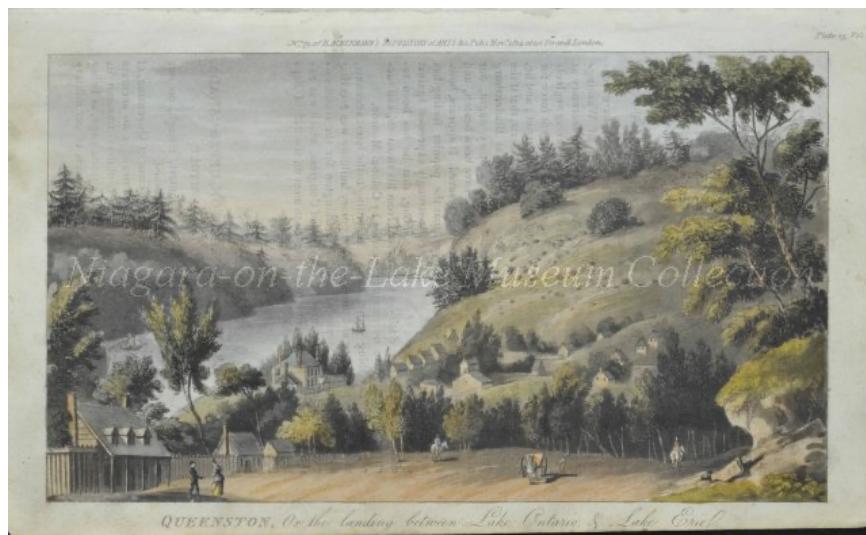
Fort Niagara

Under col. Mason Bolton with the help of col. Butler sought to expand the ranger companies, the Indian Department, Native warriors, and civilian refugees. Extra food and supplies were needed for almost 5,000 people. Col. Butler then facilitated the revival of Sir William Johnson's 1764 Treaty with the Senecas ceding four miles on the east and west bank of the Niagara River. This allowed for agricultural developments and the construction of a new mill.



Why Niagara (1790)

Newark was a central location for visiting the new colony's tiny, scattered communities. Additionally, the guns of Fort Niagara cross the river protected Newark. By treaty, Fort Niagara was to eventually be handed over to the new nation of the United States. This would leave Newark wide open to invasion in the event of war. A new capital needed to be found. York (now modern-day Toronto) was chosen because of its protected harbour.



The American Revolution

Some British American colonists resented:

1. Taxation without representation to pay for the Seven Years War that bought New France, Acadia, and Nova Scotia to Britain
2. The Quebec Act of 1774 which protected French Civil Law and religion.
3. The Fort Stanwix (New York) Treaty of 1769 which prevented westward expansion and provided Native peoples land to the west.

British regiments were requested to put down rebel riots in American colonies, but the riots soon escalated to a civil war.

The Commemoration of Laura Secord

In the late nineteenth-century, Laura Secord (1775 – 1868) became celebrated as an important heroine of the War 1812 – 14, known for her walk from Queenston in June 1813, to warn the British troops at Beaverdams of an impending American attack. Secord's commemorators included a number of women historians, such as Toronto's Sarah Curzon and St. Catharines' Emma Currie. Various groups have campaigned to have monuments erected in her memory at Lundy's Lane and Queenston Heights.

William Dickson

Originally born in Dumfries, Scotland in 1769, Dickson emigrated to Canada when he was 15. By 1790, Dickson had become a successful businessman and is credited with building the first brick house in Niagara. He was a member of the Niagara Library and the Niagara Agricultural Society, a trustee of the Niagara district grammar school, and a justice of peace. During the War of 1812, invading American forces arrested Dickson and held him as a prisoner in Albany. When Niagara burned in December 1813, Dickson lost a recently built house and a library containing 1,000 volumes. As the town began its process of rebuilding following the war, Dickson donated land to build the second Court House.



Burden Strap c.1800

The base fabric is finger woven with elm bark fibre, braided and overlaid in the center with wool yarn. The decoration is the typical of Six Nations design: red and white edged glass beads and woven with moose hair. The strap was used across the forehead and tied around the load to take some of the weight off the back when carrying packs.

➔ European Trade Goods

The advent of European-Native changed not only the types of items that were available, but also the nature of the Natives' entire trade network. Traditional trading relationships between different groups were undermined and the competition for European favour often resulted in violence. Initially, fur trade brought prosperity to the Iroquois, but over time they lost the riches they earned and the land they live on.

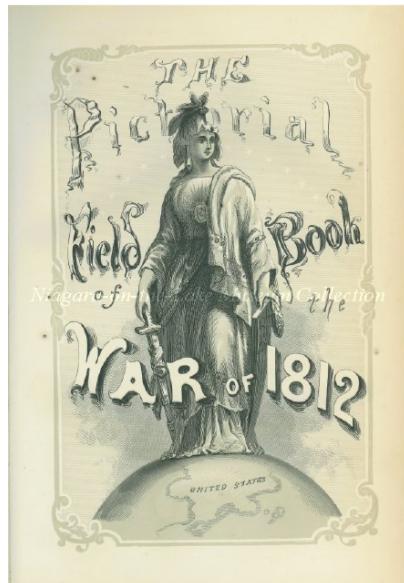
-the yellow jug with the tin handles, the brass pot and the axe are samples of some of the goods European trade brought to native groups.

William Riley

William Riley was born a slave in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

War of 1812

On June 18, 1812, the United States declared war on Great Britain. For three years, Niagara was a war zone, the scene of American invasions and bloody battles. The fate of the future country of Canada hung in the balance but in the end, Upper Canada was preserved. This battle lasted three years with Niagara as the front line of battle.



Causes of War

The war of 1812 was part of a global conflict. Britain and her allies were in a death-struggle with the French under Napoleon Bonaparte, trying to prevent the French from dominating Europe and the far-flung European colonies throughout the world. Britain's army was fully committed to stopping the French empire when the United States declared war.

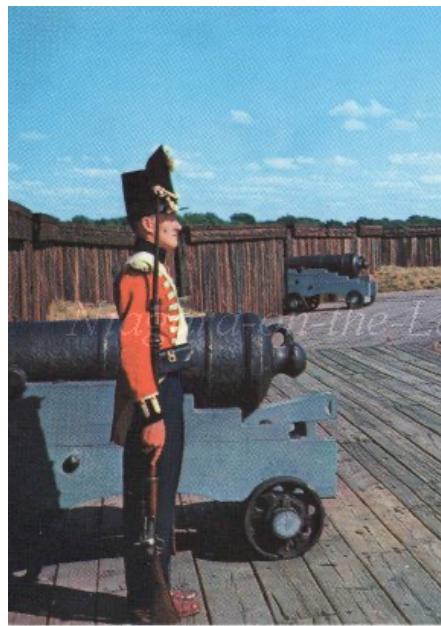


The British Army

The British regular army, volunteers often recruited from the lowest class of British society, were extremely well-trained and well led. Brock's soldiers were veterans who were able to stand against overwhelming odds and maintain the strict discipline in several bloody battles on the Niagara frontier.

U.S. Military

While the American army and state militia vastly outnumbered their British and Canadian counterparts at the beginning of the War, they were poorly led and not adequately trained. By the end of the War, the America army had component officers and professional, well-drilled soldiers.



African Canadian Defenders of Canada

At the outbreak of war, there were many people of African descent living in Upper Canada and when the call came, they volunteered for service in their militia units along with their European neighbours. Richard Pierpont, a man who had been enslaved in America but had gained freedom by serving with the British Army, was a soldier in Butler's Rangers in the American Revolution and received a Loyalist land grant in present day St. Catharines. On his suggestion, a special Black company militia was formed, albeit with white officers.



Essential Allies

Without the valuable assistance of Six Nations warriors who formed an alliance with the British, the Americans might have succeeded in capturing Upper Canada. Under war leaders, John Norton and John Brant, a relatively small band of Six Nations men from Grand River, from Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec and from the west served as effective skirmishers and scouts and tipped the balance against the Americans.



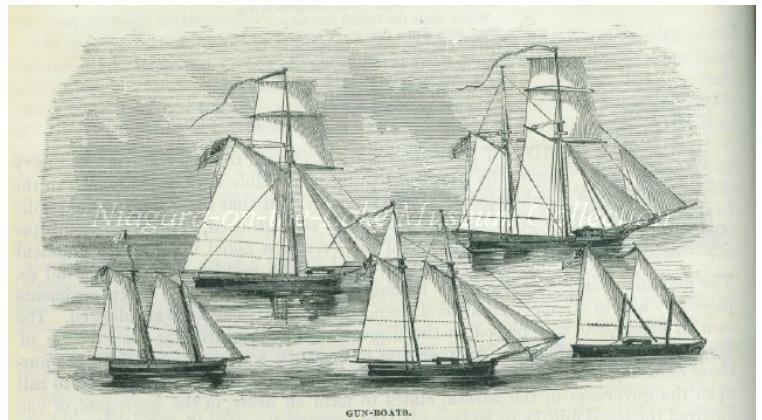
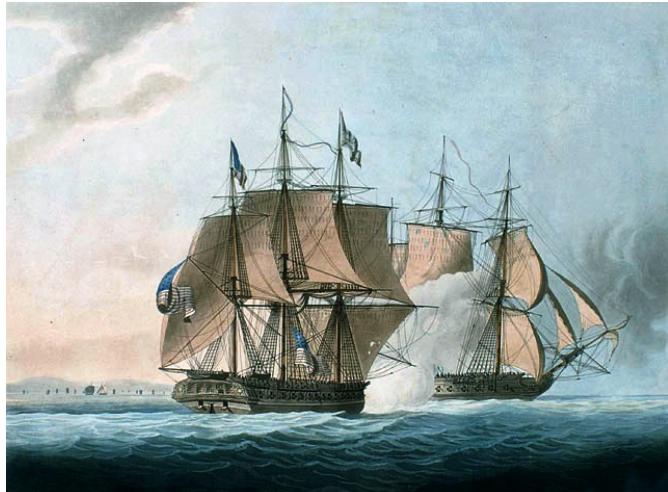
Militia

While every man between the ages of 16 and 60 served in the local militia, only a select number were called out for active duty. The five regiments of militia from Lincoln County each supplied two “flank” companies of 50 men to serve alongside the regular soldiers in the defence of the province. The men of the Lincoln militia served with the distinction at the capture of Detroit in August 1812, Queenston Heights in October and all subsequent battles in the Niagara Region.



Navy & Provincial Marine

At the beginning of the war, the only viable way to supply the far-flung British army posts was by ship. The Provincial Marines were colonial sailors recruited to man the schooners and other armed transport vessels. As the War progressed, the Royal Navy assumed command of these vessels. Throughout the War, the British and Americans operated fleets on Lake Ontario, with each attempting to gain control of the lake. (Photo from war of 1812 website)



Glengarry Light Infantry Fencible Regiment

Recruited in British North America, the “Fencibles” were trained as regular soldiers. The Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles, served as special light infantry soldiers, skilled in skirmishing, ambush and scouting operations on the Niagara Frontier. Their green uniforms served as camouflage. While conceived as a regiment of Scots from Glengarry County in eastern Ontario, Germans, Irish, and African Canadians from Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes served in the regiment. (Photo from war of 1812 website)



Battle of Queenston Heights

On October 13, 1812, an American army invaded at Queenston. Issac Brock rushed his forces to meet the invaders and in the subsequent Battle of Queenston Heights the invaders were defeated by a combined force of British regulars, Upper Canadian militia and Six Nation warriors. The battle was won but General Brock was killed.

Battle of Fort George

On May 27, 1813, the American army again invaded Niagara. Following a bombardment that had destroyed Fort George two days earlier, an amphibious force of more than 5000 overwhelmed the 1000-man garrison of Niagara. British and Canadian casualties were heavy. The Americans captured the town of Niagara and remained as an occupying force for the next seven months.

Occupation of Niagara and St. Davids

The Americans retreated from Niagara on December 10, 1813, after occupying the town for seven months. They burned Niagara when they left. In July 1814, an American Army invaded again, this time attacking at Fort Erie. Defeating a British army at the battle of Chippawa, they advanced towards Niagara, occupying the village of Queenston on the way. On July 18 1814, an American foraging party came under musket fire near St. Davids. The village was burned in reprisal.

Treaty of Ghent

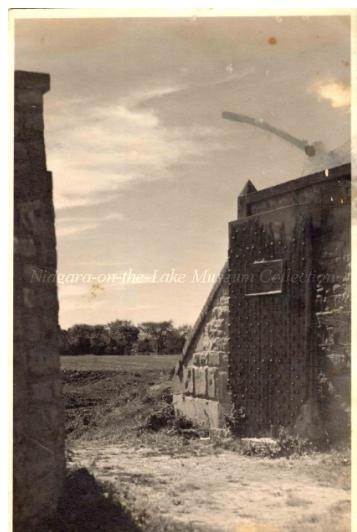
By the end of 1814, the American army that had been occupying Fort Erie since July, withdrew from Canadian soil. On Christmas Eve in Europe, the Treaty of Ghent was signed, ending the War. Upper Canada would remain under the British crown. The people of Niagara began to rebuild the ruins on the ruins of the town. Many of those early post-war buildings survive to this day.

Rebuilding Niagara

Fort Mississauga, (built on Mississauga Point) is located at the mouth of the Niagara River, and residing directly across from this is the American Fort Niagara. American forces destroyed Fort George in 1813. Following the destruction, the British strengthened Mississauga Point.

In 1815, the people of Niagara began to return home as word spread that the war had ended. Thus, started the years of rebuilding. The founding of the Niagara Harbour and Dock Company in 1831 further enhanced the town's prosperity.

Niagara during this period, became known as a place of refuge to escaped American slaves, to defeated Confederate officials and soldiers, and to orphans from England.



Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum Collection

Niagara: A Shipping Centre

The rebuilding of the town after 1814 included plans to establish a wharf and a sheltered port to dredge the marsh which bordered the river downstream from Navy Hall. The founding of The Niagara Dock Company in 1831 marked the growth of the town into a commercial, manufacturing and transportation hub.



Reconstruction (photo of courthouse building)

At the close of the war of 1812, the town of Niagara lay in ruins. officials made the decision to move the town further inland, away from the river and American territory on the opposite shore. The new Court House and Gaol were constructed well away from the pre-existing town centre. However, the rebuilding of homes and stores occurred on their former sites unlike the Court House, Butler's Barracks and the Indian Council House. The two churches also remained in their original locations.

Ferries

The Queenston-Lewiston Bridge has been an enduring fixture on the landscape of Queenston since the 1850s. Before its construction, ferries were established along the Niagara River, starting in 1792, to transport people, goods, and information between Canada and the United States, making it a vital link in the Portage Route.

Initially, ferries were rowed across the river, but horsepower eventually became the preferred method. A precursor to the steamship, the houseboat transported people and goods across the river using horses that would walk a treadmill connected to a paddle wheel.



Niagara Navigation Co.'s Ferry Boat between Queenston (Canada)
and Lewiston (U.S.A.)

Ferry boats have been used on and off in our community's history since they were first established. Even when the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge was constructed, the "Ongiara" steamboat ran between Queenston and Lewiston from 1888 until 1912, and the "Linda Lee" brought visitors from the U.S Coast Guard docks at Youngstown to Niagara-on-the-Lake between the 1940s and 1970s. In recent years, talks of a ferry service between Niagara-on-the-Lake and Toronto have been proposed.



NOTL (25 of 43 – image of Toronto central library)

From 1781 until 1862, Niagara was the legal centre for the county. There have been three buildings used as a Court House and Gaol. The first one was located near Prideaux and King Streets and was lost in the burning of the town in 1813. The second was located out of the range of cannon fire at the top of King Street. Lastly, in an effort to remain the legal centre of Canada, Niagara constructed the third Court House on Queen Street in 1847. However, this did not prevent the county from moving legal matters to St. Catharines in 1862. Niagara had lost its importance regionally, mostly due to the economic impact of the Welland Canal.



Maria Rye (1869) - people

Maria Rye, a social reformer from London, England arrived in Niagara in October of 1869 with a group of 75 girls. She purchased an abandoned second Court House and converted it to an institution called "Our Western Home". Her aim was to gather girls, usually aged 5 -12, either from workhouses or those abandoned in the streets, transport them to Canada, teach them with families either as foster children or apprentices. Some estimate 4,000 girls passed through under the tutelage of Miss Rye. However, her program came under criticism, as she did not continue to follow the girls after they left the Home and reports of poor condition and mistreatment came to light.



NIAGARA.—“OUR WESTERN HOME.” MISS RYE’S DISTRIBUTING HOME FOR IMMIGRANT CHILDREN.

Niagara as Refuge

Niagara served as a place of refuge for various social groups in the 19th century.

Coming of Age

By the early 1870s Niagara on the Lake had experienced a number of economic setbacks, with the removal of the company and military garrison in the 1860s. However, its residents found other ways sustaining Niagara. Tourism and commemoration of Niagara’s past became important features of the town.

Built in the 1869 as the Royal Niagara, the luxurious and elegant Queen’s Royal was known as one of the best hotels in North America. It was the site of many social gatherings for wealthy tourists. However, tourism’s decline in the 1920s led to the hotel’s demolition in 1930.

In 1901, anticipating a Royal visit,

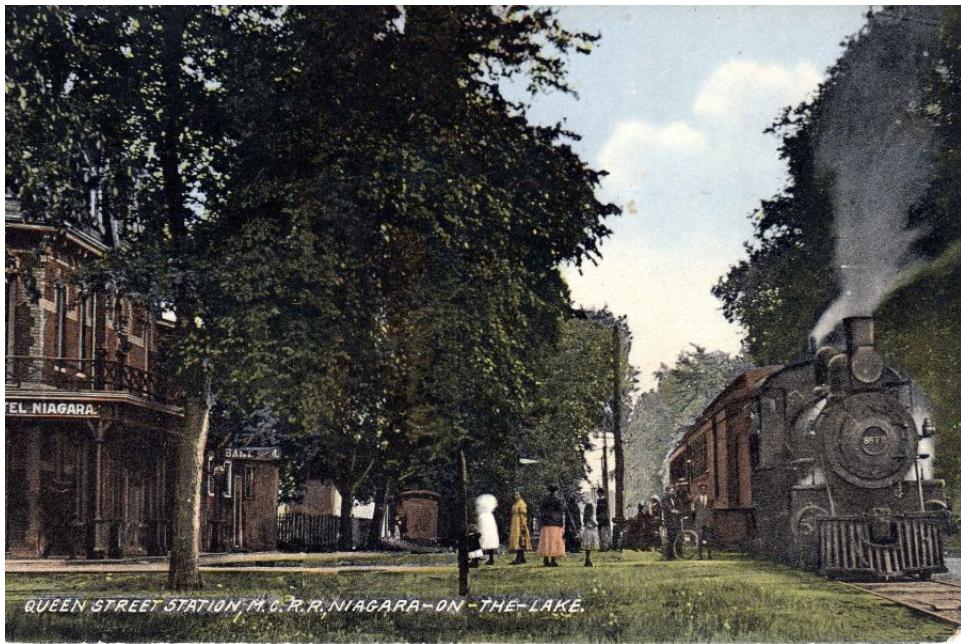
The Railways & Electric Trams of Niagara (Railway ad for the Erie and Ontario)

The need or efficient transportation over the Niagara Escarpment to Lake Erie and beyond led to the construction of a rail line from Queenston to Chippawa above the Falls on the Niagara River in 1839. The First rails replaced the old portage road with horse drawn carriages which met Toronto or Buffalo bound streamers at each end of the route.

(A Michigan Central Railway Advertisement)

Seasonal limitations led to its demise but in 1854, Samuel Zimmerman revived the railway using steam locomotives and extended the line as far as the Niagara Dock. The Niagara Mail enthusiastically observed that “Niagara will not remain set down in a corner by herself but will soon be in the thick of railway progress.” Extension of the line to Fort Erie and Buffalo in 1863 with connections at Niagara Falls for New York, Albany and Boston made Niagara a major transit point for international travellers. By the end of the century local electric trams linked St.

Catharines, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Queenston, Lewiston and Niagara Falls in a network used by local tourists alike.



Transportation

Tourists filled the streamers coming to Niagara and local fruit filled the ship on its way back. Thousands of baskets of fruit were transported to the Toronto Wholesale Fruit Market in high season. Farmers loaded their baskets onto fur-tiered wagons that were then wheeled across the gangplank to the lower deck. This 1908 photo shows the Niagara Wharf with people waiting for a steamship. Fort Niagara can be seen across the river.



Decline of Fisheries - Fishing (1870s)

The fisheries overseer for the area began to express his concerns about the effect of industrial pollutions on fish. Even the local fisherman knew that the sewage and pollution from the industrial plants along the Niagara River was affecting the health and taste of fish.

When pollutants such as chemicals, pesticides and heavy metals enter the water they can harm or kill the fish by reducing the amount of oxygen needed to survive. It also impairs their ability to find food or by destroying it outright.

- Overfishing was certainly a contributing factor to the decline of commercial fishing industry. But other Human activities had both direct and indirect effects on the declining.
 - Habitat Destruction: Fish need suitable places to live, feed, and reproduce, but when human activities affect their ability to do so, there is a risk of them becoming endangered. This is what happened in our waters.
 - The settlement of the our community involved the clearing of land and the construction of mills along creeks. These activities changed the flow of water, increased erosion and left behind environmental scars. This led to damaged spawning grounds, prevented fish from migration, and destroyed fish eggs and habitats.
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Royal Niagara

Built in 1869 as the Royal Niagara, the luxurious and elegant Queen's Royal was known as one of the best hotels in North America. It was the site of many social gatherings for wealthy tourists. However, there was a tourism decline in the 1920s which led to the hotel's demolition in 1930.

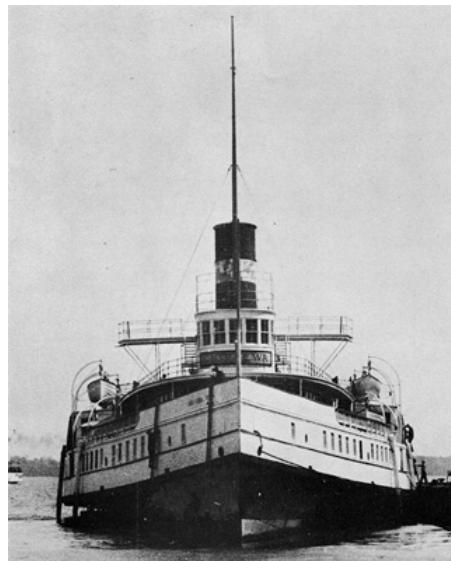


Fort George Golf Course (1877) Charles Hunter and J. Geale Dickson laid out the first golf course, the Fort George Course, in 1877. In 1878, they set out another one on the Fort Mississauga common, which is still used by the club today. The Fort George Course saw a number of competitions, including the yearly International Tournaments in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Although, both men and women belonged to the Golf Club, women tended to play at the Fort Mississauga course.



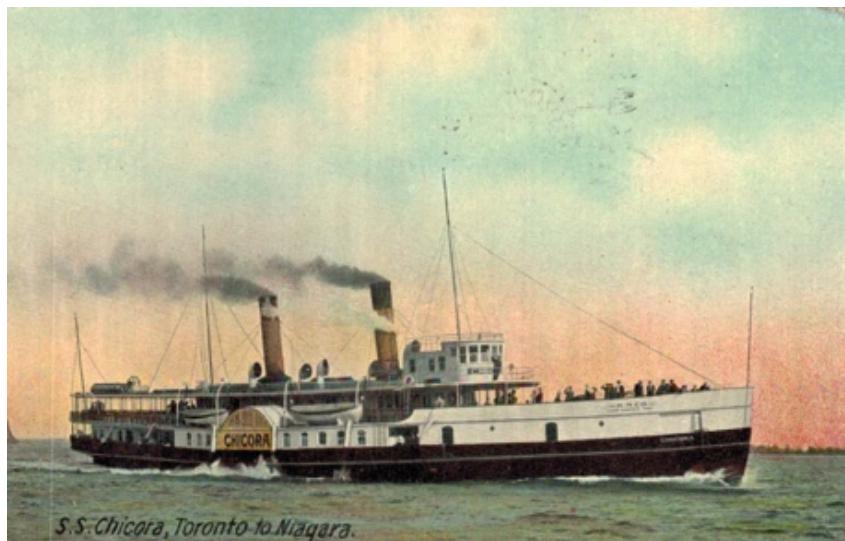
Chippewa (1893- 1939)

The paddle-wheel steamer was launched in 1893 and was said to be the finest boat built in Canada. It was measured 300 feet long, with an engine of 3,100 horsepower, and the ability to carry 2,000 passengers. When constructed, the steamer broke the record for the fastest travel time between Niagara and Toronto. It was also finished with stately parlours with wood finishes and was referred to as “floating palace.” The Chippewa was decommissioned in 1939.



Chicora (1864-1913)

The first vessel on the Niagara River Line was originally used as the confederate blockade runner, Let Her B, in South Carolina during the American Civil War. Purchased by NNC in 1877, this side-paddle wheeler was 210 feet long and was converted to hold passengers for day trips. It stayed with the fleet until 1913.



S.S. Cayuga (1906-1957)

The Cayuga was the longest serving ship in the fleet and was the most profitable. Built at a cost of \$266,137, this propeller-driven ship was 377 feet long, and could carry 2,500 people as well as horses, wagons, vehicles, fruits and supplies.



- The S.S. Cayuga was sometimes referred to as “The Ship of Romance” for all those who met their future husbands/ wives on its travels, and for the many proposals that happened during moonlight cruises and dances. Each summer on its first voyage of the season, children and parents from Niagara were invited for a free trip up the Niagara River to Queenston and back.



- After WWII, it was renovated and refitted, but its popularity diminished. CSL ceased its service, and after a short stint with its owner, the last voyage was in 1957. Low ticket sales and increased debt were responsible for the S.S. Cayuga's failure. In 1961, it was scraped. It is believed that more than 15 million people travelled on the ship during its lifetime.



Canada Steamship Lines (1913)

By 1913, Canada Steamship Lines (CSL) acquired the NNC. Throughout the First World War, the ships were instrumental in the movement of goods and soldiers who were arriving for training at Niagara Camp and then leaving for the front. In fact, our proximity to the water, the use of the ships for transport, made the Niagara Commons a very attractive spot for military training.

- With the Great Depression of the 1930s, passenger traffic decreased significantly, which resulted in most of the ships being decommissioned. The closure of rail lines and the growing accessibility of the family automobile were further blows to the business. The final ship left the port in 1957.



Boating (1968)

During 1950s, the marina was occupied by motorboats from the St. Catharines Boat Club. With George Hinterhoeller's talent for building sailboats, and his encouragement for locals to take up the hobby, a small fleet of sailboats emerged. The Niagara sailing club opened in 1968 and to this day they operate the marina complete with a fleet of Hinterhoeller's boats.



Information organization

The timeline will feature graphical elements made in figma using the data above. Additional Images with text taken from museum are in an apple iCloud folder which will also be used (approx. 40 images) which did not require further research and cross checking with the museum database.

The following categories will also be assigned to each event in the timeline which will allow for further interaction as viewers will be able to filter by groupings. The icons for each filter function are also provided below as well as signifiers for each category.

Data Categories

Indigenous History

European settlers

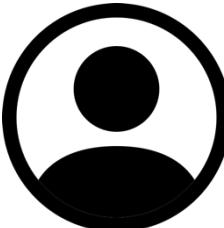
War

Transportation

Fishing

Historical Figures

Logos For Categories



Land Acknowledgement



Niagara on the Lake Museum acknowledges the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous peoples.

Filter Icons For Timeline to Organize Data

