

The Lure of Niagara

Highlights from the Charles Rand Penney
Historical Niagara Falls Print Collection



Arthur Lumley (Irish, 1837-1912), *Niagara Seen with Different Eyes* from *Harper's Weekly* (detail), 1873, wood engraving, 13½x20½ in.

CASTELLANI
ART MUSEUM
OF NIAGARA UNIVERSITY



Asa Smith (American), *View of the Meteoric Shower, as seen at Niagara Falls on the Night of the 12th and 13th of November, 1833* from *Smith's Illustrated Astronomy, Designed for the use of the Public or Common Schools in the United States*, 1863, wood engraving, 11¼ x 9½ in.



Robert Hancock (English, 1730-1817), *The Waterfall of Niagara—La Cascade de Niagara*, 1794, engraving with hand color, 9¼ x 15¼ in.



Frederic Edwin Church (American, 1826-1900), *The Great Fall—Niagara*, 1875, chromolithograph with hand color, 16¼ x 36 in.

Introduction

It is believed that more prints were made of Niagara Falls before the twentieth century than of any other specific place, and the Charles Rand Penney Collection of Historical Niagara Falls Prints is one of the largest collections of this genre. Viewing so many images of one subject together, we can gain new insights not only about the location itself, but also about the manner in which the scene has been depicted, emerging with a deeper understanding of the history of Niagara Falls.

Imagine coming upon Niagara Falls for the very first time in 1678, as the explorer Father Louis Hennepin (Belgian, 1626–1705) did. There were no paved paths, fences, bridges, or observation towers to separate Hennepin from the experience of what he described as “a thundering cataract which has no equal.” With the help of Native American guides, Hennepin was the first European known to have seen the Falls. His vivid written descriptions were later translated by an unknown artist into the first visual image of Niagara Falls—a print that was included in Hennepin’s 1697 book *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America*.

Widely circulated throughout Europe, this image inspired other artists to create their own representations of the Falls. Prior to the 1800s, people visited Niagara Falls mainly through printed images and their imaginations, since the Niagara Region was sparsely populated, and travel was difficult. As the nineteenth century progressed, images of the Falls enticed people to see them in person. Wealthy travelers participated in what became known as the “American Grand Tour”—a trip by horse-drawn coach from New York, up the Hudson River Valley to Saratoga Springs, and then westward to Niagara Falls. Following the War of 1812, a variety of businesses were established in Niagara Falls. The population grew, roads improved, and travel became less expensive. By the late 1820s, many people were earning a living by providing lodging and other amenities for the 12,000 to 15,000 tourists who visited annually.

The Charles Rand Penney Collection of Historical Niagara Falls Prints

The Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University acquired the Charles Rand Penney Collection of Historical Niagara Falls Prints in 2006. This collection, a generous donation from Dr. Charles Rand Penney, was partially funded by the Castellani Purchase Fund, with additional funding from Mr. and Mrs. Thomas A. Lytle. Penney felt, as did the staff of the Castellani Art Museum, that the collection, one of the largest and most significant of its kind, should be kept near the Falls so that visitors from around the world could see and appreciate it. Its more than nine hundred images reflect the historic and cultural changes that have taken place at Niagara Falls since the seventeenth century and illustrate the significance of Niagara Falls to American history.

Penney’s nephew, Christopher W. Lane, co-founder of The Philadelphia Print Shop, organized the collection into eight thematic categories.

Hennepin & Derivatives: The first Europeans to document a journey to Niagara Falls were led by Father Louis Hennepin in 1678. His account was subsequently published, accompanied by the first printed view of the cataract: an engraved print drawn by an unknown artist based upon Hennepin’s verbal description. It wasn’t until the 1760s that a different view, based on a firsthand drawing, was printed. Thus, for almost a century, the Hennepin view was the basis for every print made of Niagara.

A Variety of Depictions: Niagara Falls has always presented an interesting challenge for artists—how does one compose a view of the Falls that conveys their marvelous appearance when seen firsthand? There are two falls, and they are of such width that any image of both would depict the cataracts as looking quite small. Yet the awesome power and sublime magnificence visitors felt at the site presented an irresistible challenge to convey them through the printed image.

Niagara As a Symbol: As the first image of an American natural wonder available to Europeans, Hennepin’s view of Niagara Falls immediately became a ubiquitous symbol of the vastness and awesome nature of the New World. The instantly recognizable representation became a shorthand graphic icon for America, firmly establishing this extraordinary cataract as an emblem of the



The New Suspension Bridge, Niagara Falls—from the Canada Side, 1869, lithograph with hand color, 6 x 9½ in.



Isaac Weld (American, 1774-1856), *An Eye Sketch of the Falls of Niagara from Horatio A. Parsons's Guide to Travelers Visiting the Falls of Niagara* (second edition), 1798, engraving with hand color, 6½ x 9 in.



J. S. Puaite, *Save Niagara Falls from This from Puck*, 1906, chromolithograph, 17¾ x 11 in.



Alexander Wilson (British, 1766-1813), *White-Headed Eagle from American Ornithology; or, The Natural History of the Birds of the United States Illustrated by Plates Engraved and Colored from Original Drawings Taken from Nature by A. W.*, 1811, engraving with hand color, 10 x 13¼ in.

vast continent. Even after Niagara Falls became a well-documented natural site in the nineteenth century, losing some of its exotic allure, it still fulfilled this emblematic role. Niagara Falls appeared in prints in various ways. Commercial advertisers also utilized Niagara Falls as an iconic symbol. This instantly recognizable image appeared in countless advertisements in both Europe and the United States. Imagery of Niagara Falls was used by companies and factories (such as the Headley Chocolate Company, based in Baltimore) that were not physically located anywhere near the Falls or even New York State. The mighty Falls continue to have a significant presence in twenty-first-century advertising, as well as in countless movie cameos and location footage.

Popular Prints: In the nineteenth century, the wealthy could afford watercolors, paintings, and hand-colored lithographs; prints offered an affordable alternative to the general public. By the middle of the century, numerous printmaking firms had sprung up to produce hand-colored lithographs, providing appealing pictures that could be purchased and framed for a modest price. While the New York firm Currier & Ives was the largest and best known of these publishers, equally attractive prints were issued in Hartford, Buffalo, and other American cities.

Prints for the Wealthy: Prints were used for home decoration by the wealthier classes. While popular printmakers were issuing inexpensively produced lithographs, other print publishers aimed to create prints of such quality that they could be proudly displayed in the homes of the upper middle class or even those of the rich. These prints were issued in much smaller quantities than the popular prints, and the images were drawn by accomplished professional artists, with skilled craftsmen handling the elaborate processes.

Events, Spectacle and Tragedy: Niagara Falls has been the scene of many fascinating events over the years. From military exploits and notorious escapades to daredevil highwire walkers and personal tragedies, the public has always been fascinated by the goings-on at Niagara Falls—and printmakers have been ever-ready to capture them.

Maps: Images of Niagara Falls were the most common insets and

embellishments on early maps and atlases of North America. These maps were used by the military, adventurers, and tourists alike.

The immense size and fragility of the complete collection precludes presenting it in its entirety. *The Lure of Niagara: Highlights from the Charles Rand Penney Historical Niagara Falls Print Collection* features works representative of the larger holdings of the collection that are symbolic, commercially popular, historically relevant, and particularly unique.

Charles Rand Penney Biography

A native of Buffalo, New York, Dr. Charles Rand Penney (1923–2010) made his life and career in Western New York, working first as a lawyer and later pursuing a lifelong love of collecting and lecturing about art and antiques around the world. In 1995, he was honored with a Doctorate of Fine Arts from The State University of New York at Buffalo State for his contributions to the arts, especially in Western New York. In 1999, he received the Red Jacket Award from the Buffalo History Museum for his commitment to raising awareness of the shared heritage of Western New York. Penney was presented with a Doctorate of Fine Arts from Niagara University in 2006.

Whether traveling to Papua, New Guinea, or up the Niagara River to Olcott Beach, Penney built a collection that signified his approach to learning about new people and places, which eventually grew to include more than one hundred different themes. In the early 1990s, he donated a collection of Western New York art to the Burchfield Art Center at Buffalo State College, resulting in the renaming of the Center to the Burchfield Penney Art Center. In 2008, he donated his entire collection of Niagara County art, artifacts, and research materials to the History Center at the Niagara County Historical Society, located in Lockport, New York, resulting in the opening of the eponymous Penney Gallery. During his lifetime, his collections occupied an entire floor in the Bewley Building in Lockport. Penney regularly loaned works from his collections to institutions throughout Western New York and across the globe.

(Biographical information and Charles Rand Penney Trail information excerpts courtesy of *New York Heritage*)

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

All works are Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University Collection. Unless otherwise noted, works are a generous donation from Dr. Charles Rand Penney, partially funded by the Castellani Purchase Fund, with additional funding from Mr. and Mrs. Thomas A. Lytle, 2006.

Hennepin & Derivatives

After Louis Hennepin (Belgian, 1626-1705), *Untitled (Chute D'eau de Niagara)* from *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America*, 1698, second-state engraving, 5 x 6½ in.

Sébastien Leclerc (French, 1637-1714), *Chute de la Rivière de Niagara*, ca. 1700, etching, 6¼ x 10¼ in.

After Peter Kalm (Swedish, 1716-1779), *A View of the Fall of Niagara* from *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1751, engraving, 4 x 7¼ in.

After Louis Hennepin (Belgian, 1626-1705), *Wasserfall von Niagara* from *Abbe Prevost's Allgemeine histoire des reisen zu wasser und lande*, 1758, engraving, 7 x 10¼ in.

Robert Hancock (English, 1730-1817), *The Waterfall of Niagara—La Cascade de Niagara*, 1794, engraving with hand color, 9¼ x 15¼ in.

A Variety of Depictions

Richard Wilson (British, 1713 or 1714-1782), after Lt. William Pierie, *From a Drawing taken on the Spot by Lt. Pierie of the R.I. Artillery*, 1768, engraving, 16½ x 20½ in.

Jacques Gérard Milbert (French, 1766-1840), *Chute générale du Niagara, côte du Canada (General view of Niagara, from the Canada side)*, 1828-29, lithograph, 7¼ x 11¼ in.

Jacques Gérard Milbert (French, 1766-1840), *Chute du Niagara prise du côté américain (Niagara Falls from the American side)*, 1828-29, lithograph, 8¼ x 11¼ in.

H. M. Pettit (American, 1867-1941), *Our Famous Niagara Falls As It May Appear Shortly. How the Wonderful Cataract and Its Surroundings Will Soon Look Unless the Diversion of Water by Power Companies for Commercial Purposes Is Stopped* from *Leslie's Weekly*, March 1, 1906, relief halftone, 10¼ x 7 in.

J. S. Puaite, *Save Niagara Falls from This from Puck*, chromolithograph, 17¼ x 11 in.

Niagara As a Symbol

Arthur Lumley (Irish, 1837-1912), *Niagara Seen with Different Eyes* from *Harper's Weekly*, 1873, wood engraving, 13½ x 20½ in.

Alexander Wilson (British, 1766-1813), *White-Headed Eagle* from *American Ornithology; or, The Natural History of the Birds of the United States Illustrated by Plates Engraved and Colored from Original Drawings Taken from Nature by A. W.*, 1811, engraving with hand color, 10 x 13¼ in.

Max Beeger (French, active 1851-1853), *Les Amours Rêves. En Amerique Au Niagara (The Dreams of Love at Niagara in America)*, ca. 1851-53, two-tone lithograph, 13¼ x 18¼ in.

Frederic Edwin Church (American, 1826-1900), *The Great Fall—Niagara*, 1875, chromolithograph with hand color, 16¼ x 36 in.

Advertising Niagara

F. I. Swinton, *The Steamers Lady of the Lake, J. J. Taylor Master & Rochester, H. N. Throop Master. Will run during the Season between Lewiston & Ogdensburgh. Touching at intermediate American & Canadian Ports as follows*, 1845, lithograph with hand color, 14¼ x 23¼ in.

Unknown, *Niagara Falls American Scenery* (Headley Chocolate Company), early twentieth century, chromolithograph, 3¼ x 6¼ in.

Trade card for The Dingman Soap Company, ca. 1880s-90s, chromolithograph, 8¼ x 6¼ in.

Fredric Madan (American, 1885-1972), *Niagara Falls—Where the Great Lakes Leap to the Sea. Travel by Train*, early twentieth century, color printed screen print, 38½ x 25 in.

Popular Prints

Robert Havell, Jr. (British, 1793-1878), *Niagara Falls Painted from the Chinese Pagoda, Point View Gardens*, 1845, aquatint and etching, 18 x 27 in.

After a photograph by Charles Bierstadt (American, born Germany, 1819-1903), *The New Suspension Bridge, Niagara Falls—from the Canada Side*, 1869, lithograph with hand color, 6 x 9¼ in.

William James Bennett (British, 1787-1844), *Niagara Falls. Part of the British Fall, Taken from under Table Rock*, 1829, aquatint, and hand color, 20½ x 16¼ in.

William James Bennett (British, 1787-1844), *Niagara Falls. Part of the American Fall, from the foot of the Stair Case*, 1829, aquatint, 16¼ x 20¼ in.

Prints for the Wealthy

William James Bennett (British, 1787-1844), *Niagara Falls. To Thomas Dixon Esq. this View of the British Fall taken from Goat Island, is respectfully Inscribed by his Obedient Serv't. Henry J. Megarey*, 1830, aquatint with hand color, 16¼ x 20¼ in.

Henry Davis, *Sunset—From Goat Island*, 1848, chromolithograph, 17¼ x 23¼ in.

John Borner (American, active 1850-1855), *Niagara Falls, American Side*, 1855, lithograph with hand color, 23¼ x 36 in.

James Pattison (Patterson) Cockburn (Canadian, 1779-1857), *The Falls of Niagara. This General View above the English Ferry, Is by Special Permission, dedicated to Her Most Excellent Majesty Queen Victoria*, 1857, aquatint, 17¼ x 26¼ in.

Events—Spectacle and Tragedy

Richard George Augustus LeVing (American, 1811-1884), *The "43rd Light Infantry" As They "Turn Out" in Their Sleighs, At the "Falls of Niagara," 1839*, lithograph with hand color, 16¼ x 24¼ in.

Bernhard Gillam (American, born England, 1856-1896), *The Shaky Situation of the Political Blondin from Puck*, 1885, chromolithograph, 11¼ x 8¼ in.

Hoster, *Exercises on the Perilous Ladder*, ca. 1850-60, lithograph with hand color, 15 x 20¼ in.

Ilie Maresquier, *Le Pays De L'or. Pièce à Grand Spectacle en 3 actes et 14 tableaux*, ca. 1880, lithograph with hand color, 29½ x 21¼ in.

Evelyn Rumsey Cary (American, 1855-1924), *Spirit of Niagara/Pan-American Exposition: Buffalo*, 1901, chromolithograph, 48 x 25¼ in.

Asa Smith (American), *View of the Meteoric Shower, as seen at Niagara Falls on the Night of the 12th and 13th of November, 1833* from *Smith's Illustrated Astronomy, Designed for the use of the Public or Common Schools in the United States*, 1863, wood engraving, 11¼ x 9½ in. Museum Purchase Fund, 2008.

George H. Andrews (American, 1821-1885), *The Death of Captain Webb: The Whirlpool in the Lower Rapids, Niagara* from *The Illustrated London News*, 1883, wood engraving, 13¼ x 19¼ in.

Unknown, *Horse-Shoe Fall, Niagara*, 1844-45, lithograph, 10¼ x 15¼ in.

Maps

Isaac Weld (American, 1774-1856), *An Eye Sketch of the Falls of Niagara from Horatio A. Parsons's Guide to Travelers Visiting the Falls of Niagara* (second edition), 1798, engraving with hand color, 6½ x 9 in.

Joseph Bouchette (Canadian, 1774-1841), *Sketch of Niagara River between Queenston & Chippewa* from *The British Dominions in North America*, 1832, engraving with hand color, 7¼ x 9¼ in.

W. R. Callington (American), *A Bird's Eye View of the River Niagara from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario shewing the situation and extent of Navy Island, and the Towns and Villages on the banks of the river in Canada and the United States*, 1838, hand-colored lithograph, 11¼ x 8¼ in.

John Rapkin (British, 1815-1876), *Niagara—United States* from *A Comparative View of the Principal Waterfalls, Islands, Lakes, Rivers, and Mountains, in the Western Hemisphere*, 1851, engraving, 12¼ x 9¼ in.

J. Marchant, *North America from Maps from Montgomery Martin's The Illustrated Atlas, and Modern History of the World*, 1851, engraving with hand color, 13¼ x 9¼ in.

W. H. Bartlett (British, 1809-1854), *North America* from W. H. Bartlett's *The History of the United States of America*, 1856, engraving with hand color, 12¼ x 9¼ in.



The Lure of Niagara: Highlights from the Charles Rand Penney Historical Niagara Falls Print Collection is organized by Michael J. Beam, Curator of Exhibitions and Special Projects, Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University. This exhibition is organized and traveled by the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University. This publication was printed in an edition of 1,000 on the occasion of the inaugural exhibition at the Castellani Art Museum, February 18-September 9, 2018.

Additional information regarding the Charles Rand Penney collections can be found at New York Heritage Digital Collections—The Charles Rand Penney Trail at nyheritage.nynln.net/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16694coll2; the Archives & Special Collections: Charles Rand Penney Art Library & Papers [ca. 1900-present], housed at the E. H. Butler Library, New York State University at Buffalo, and available at library.buffalostate.edu/archives/penney; and The Philadelphia Print Shop, Ltd., online archive at philaprintshop.com/niagara.html.

The Lure of Niagara: Highlights from the Charles Rand Penney Historical Niagara Falls Print Collection is made possible, in part, by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. This exhibition is also supported, in part, through a Museums for America Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to the Niagara County Historical Society.

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