

kinds, often journeying long distances for the purpose. In the thunder of the Falls they believed they heard the voice of the Great Spirit. In the spray they believed they saw his habitation. To him they regularly and religiously contributed a portion of their crops and of the results of the chase, and exultingly offered human sacrifices and trophies on returning from such warlike expeditions as they were compelled to undertake. To him each warrior frequently made offerings of his personal adornments and weapons, and as an annual offering of good will from the tribe and a propitiation for continued neutrality, and therefore existence, they sacrificed each spring the fairest maiden of their tribe, sending her over the Falls in a white canoe, which was filled with fruits and flowers and guided solely by her own hand. The honour of being selected for this awful death was earnestly coveted by the maidens of that stoical race, and the clan to which the one selected belonged, held such choice to be a special honour to itself.

Tradition says that this annual sacrifice was abandoned, because, one year, the daughter of the great chief of the tribe was selected. Her father betrayed no emotion, but on the fateful day, as the white canoe, guided by his daughter's hand, entered the rapids, another canoe, propelled by a paddle in her father's hand, shot swiftly from the bank, followed the same channel and reached the brink and disappeared into the abyss but a moment after the one which bore his daughter. The tribe thought the loss of such a chief in such a way to be so serious a blow that the sacrifice was abandoned in order to prevent the possibility of a repetition. A more likely, but less poetic, reason for its abandonment lies in the belief that on the extermination of the Neuters, their conquerors, having no such inherent adoration for the Great Spirit of Niagara, and for many years not even occupying the lands of their victims, failed to continue the custom. The Neuter warriors also wanted to be buried beside their river, as many exhumed skeletons at various points along its

banks prove; and the nearer to the Falls, the greater the honour. Goat Island is said to have been the burying ground reserved for great chiefs and brave warriors, and the body of many an Indian brave lies in the soil of that beautiful spot.

Prior to 1678 France laid claim to a vast area, now embraced by Canada and the northern portion of the United States, east of the Mississippi, including the Niagara region, by reason of early explorations and discoveries by her seamen, traders and missionaries. From that date, when La Salle began his westward journeys of exploration, for eighty years, she was a paramount force in that region, though during the last few years of that period her prowess and supremacy were waning and were swept away in 1759 by the capture of Quebec and Fort Niagara, the latter being the last of the important posts that she held in the long line of fortifications which connected the great tract, known as Louisiana, with her eastern Canadian possessions. From 1759, by occupation, and from 1763, by treaty, England owned all this territory until 1776, when the Colonists demanded recognition as a separate nation. This England conceded in 1783, and thus relinquished all ownership of that portion of the Niagara region that lies east of the river, although it was not until after the ratification of Jay's treaty, in 1796, that England relinquished Fort Niagara; nor until the treaty of Ghent, in 1816, was it absolutely conceded that most of the islands in the Niagara river belonged to the United States.

On December 6, 1678, La Salle anchored his brigantine of ten tons in the Niagara river, just above its mouth. He saw the value, from a military standpoint, of the point of land at the mouth of the river and straightway built there a trading post. Proceeding up the river to where Lewiston now stands, he built there a fort of palisades, and carrying the anchors, cordage, etc., which he had brought with him for that purpose, up the mountain side and through the forest to the mouth of Cayuga creek, five miles above the Falls on