

Ten years later, La Salle returned to Lake Ontario, and, on a small vessel of ten tons, sailed into the mouth of the big river, called by the natives Niah-gaah. Such orthography was changed to Niagara by the French, in 1688. History does not record that white men entered the Niagara River prior to La Salle.

The little vessel ascended the river for seven miles, unto the lower rapids, where her progress was interrupted. At the foot of the rapids, on the east bank of the river, La Salle constructed a cabin surrounded by a palisade, a store house — his base of supplies for his projected expedition to explore the great inland waters beyond. La Salle's structure was erected where is now Lewiston Landing, and the locality has the distinction of being the first foothold of white men on the borders of the Niagara.

With La Salle was Father Hennepin, who made an exploration of the river unto Lake Erie, and gave to history the first description of the great cataract thereon. The river is believed to have been traversed by Jesuit missionaries as early as 1640, though no account thereof was made known to history.

Five miles above the cataract La Salle constructed a larger vessel, the historic *Griffon*, with which he and Hennepin, on August 7, 1679, sailed into Lake Erie; the first vessel, other than canoes, and, perhaps, the batteaux of the missionaries, to float on the great waters above the Falls of Niagara.