

A HISTORY OF PAPERMAKING AROUND NIAGARA FALLS

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Paper production around the Niagara River region began in the early 1800s. Plants were situated on various local rivers, whose hydraulic energy was needed to grind and process the rags into paper. The regions around Niagara Falls were prime locations to set up these mills.

A critical element in production process was the conversion of raw materials, from rags and straw to wood fiber. Over time, straw became exponentially more abundant and far cheaper even than rags. Technological changes and other factors revolutionized the manufacture of paper over the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Complementary developments in the fields of generating and transmitting hydroelectric power allowed the industry to harness far greater quantities of energy. At the same time, the growth in the number and size of newspapers created an immense demand for newsprint. These forces all contributed to a dramatic increase in the number and productive capacity of paper mills in the Niagara Region, both on the Canadian and the American sides of the Niagara River.