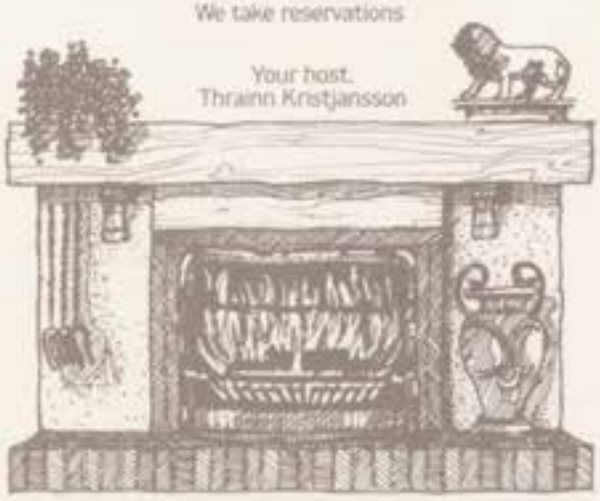

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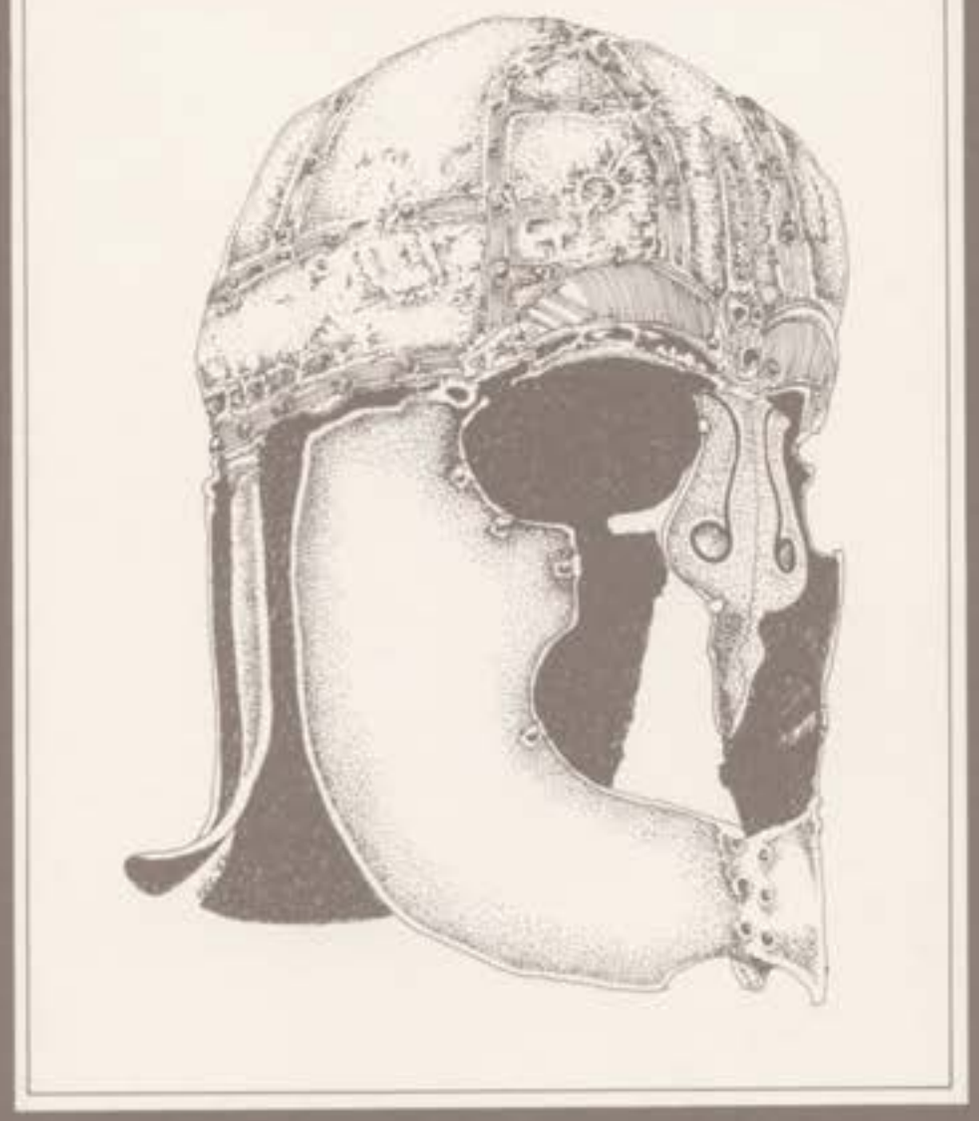
AUTUMN (SEPTEMBER), 1982

THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN



Seventh Century pre-Viking Vendel helmet. Cap and cheek guards of iron; repousé panels, eye-brow and nose guards of ornate bronze.

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The Icelandic Canadian

Volume XLI, No. 1 **Winnipeg, Canada** **AUTUMN, 1982**

THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

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EDITORIAL

OUR ICELANDIC HERITAGE IN NORTH AMERICA WILL CONTINUE TO ABIDE

by Eric Jonasson

"When the Long Ships of the Norsemen turned their prows into unknown seas, their eyes trained upon far and strange horizons, they left by that act alone an imperishable challenge to their descendants and to all men of vision everywhere. Not the known but the unknown was their quest; not the past but the future was their abiding obsession. With a zest and a hunger for a richer way of life those incorrigible adventurers braved a thousand dangers and by their daring broke forever the traditional mold of the past. The kingdoms they carved for themselves were not patterned on preconceived concepts, they were evolved in accordance with the growing stream of human consciousness; an organism that was fed by new ideas drawn from innumerable strange sources; but the sustaining soil was the Norse heart, the Norse nature."

Laura Goodman Salverson used these words to launch *The Icelandic Canadian* magazine on its uncertain course in 1942. Although her editorial recognized and emphasized the importance of tradition to the Icelander in North America, it also perceived the need for an innovative approach to the preservation of this cultural heritage. At that time, *The Icelandic Canadian* was certainly innovative, if not completely iconoclastic, in its approach to Icelandic cultural survival. Stubborn insistence that English alone would be the linguistic medium through which Icelandic heritage would survive into the future left the magazine open to severe criticism by many traditionalists for deserting the language of its ancestors. By abandoning the Icelandic language, it was said, the magazine was certainly doomed to an early death.

By skillfully manoeuvering itself through forty years of publication high and lows and, with this particular issue, entering its fifth decade of publication, its existence alone testifies to the far-sightedness of its founders and serves as a memorial to their enterprise. However, the success of *The Icelandic Canadian* has been greatly affected by the failures in the other areas of Icelandic cultural preservation. As the use of the Icelandic language has decreased and the intermarriage of Icelanders with other ethnic groups in North America has increased, the general character of the Icelandic-Canadian and Icelandic-American has changed considerably. No longer are they North Americans with a purely Icelandic heritage and with the Icelandic language as a first or second tongue as they were a century ago! Instead, they are now unilingual-English "Canadians" and "Americans" with only a part of their ancestral heritage rooted in Iceland. In many respects, they have become part of the cultural "melting pot" of North America. These changes have resulted in the decline of the traditional Icelandic language institutions in North America and have led to the rise of such organizations as *The Icelandic Canadian* Magazine Board. The continuing decline of the Icelandic language and the increase in intermarriage will undoubtedly exert sufficient pressure on the English language "Icelandic" organizations in the future to force them to change significantly from their present stance.

In 1942, *The Icelandic Canadian* represented a major departure from the normal or typical Icelandic cultural organization. It was the upstart — the new generation of cultural institutions in North America. Although its parents were the traditional Icelandic language associations — *The Icelandic Canadian* was more the teenage son or daughter who rejected and bucked parental authority, preferring to throw off the yoke of tradition and to establish its own rules for the future. Now, four decades later, it has ceased to be the rebel and, instead, has become part of the establishment it once fought so strenuously. As it has matured, it has acquired its own traditionalists who now stubbornly insist that the traditions it has evolved for itself should be upheld and maintained — forever! This is a dangerous view to hold and uphold, and could cost the Icelandic community dearly if left unchallenged.

The Icelandic Canadian magazine has been successful because it was prepared to examine and evaluate the future *before* the future occurred — and then has adapted itself accordingly. It has succeeded so far because it has been innovative — because it has been prepared to alter its "traditions" to suit the changing circumstances surrounding its existence. It has not been content merely to react to changes after they have occurred, but has attempted to set the tone which other Icelandic organizations must emulate. Its success in the future rests entirely on the continuance of its progressive attitudes and policies. To descend to the level of supporting tradition for tradition's sake — without any innovative approach to ensure the continuance of the magazine in the future — will rob my children and your children of a rich part of their cultural heritage. Let us hope that we can remain as progressive in the future as the founders of *The Icelandic Canadian* were in the past.

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AT THE EDITOR'S DESK

DEDICATION

This issue of The Icelandic Canadian is dedicated to Icelandic literature: that of the Icelandic Canadian — and American — poet laureate, Stephan G. Stephansson: other literary giants of the last two or three centuries: the classic literature of mediaeval Iceland.

* * *

INCREASE IN OUR RATES

The continuing increases in the cost of printing and the mail service have created a serious financial problem for our Magazine Board. Insofar as we, the members of the Board, serve *gratis*, it is impossible for us to reduce overhead.

Accordingly, at a meeting of the Board on May 25, 1982, we had little choice but to make the following changes in our subscription rates: annual rate from $10 to $12: single copies from $2.50 to $3.50 (includes postage and handling): two or more gift subscriptions from $8 to $10 *(Perhaps some of our subscribers might consider giving subscriptions as Christmas presents):* subscriptions, if paid two years in advance, $22.

We hope that our subscribers understand that this moderate increase in our rates is absolutely necessary to maintain the solvency of our publication.

* * *

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EUROPE

Denmark, England, Finland, Holland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, West Germany.

ASIA

Thailand

AFRICA

South Africa.

* * *

REGARDING THE ISLENDINGADUGURINN AT GIMLI, 1982

It has been the custom in the past to publish the addresses delivered on this occasion in the autumn issue of *The Icelandic Canadian*. However, due to a surfeit of articles available for this issue — some of them having been postponed three times — it is necessary to postpone the publication of these addresses until our winter issue.

Incidentally, the title FJALLKONA has generally been translated THE MAID OF THE MOUNTAINS. In the opinion of a number of people, a better translation would be THE LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS.

* * *

COVER PICTURE, SUMMER ISSUE, 1982

Comments by Dr. George Houser

The stunning wood carvings depicted on the cover of the June, 1982 issue of *The Icelandic Canadian* constitute one of Norway's major artistic treasures. Another of the panels portrays Gunnar in the snake pit, his hands bound behind his back, playing the harp with his toes.

Readers should be gratified to learn that although for several hundred years these carvings were open to the weather, on the

door pillars of the church at Hylestad in Setesdal, they were removed some years ago and are now preserved with all due care in the University Museum of Antiquities in Oslo.

* * *

THE COVER ILLUSTRATION

Vendel Period helmet from Uppland, Sweden. Repousé panels, although badly eroded, included processions of warriors. Drawn from Magnus Magnusson's *Viking Hammer of the North* (page 20) by Eric Crone.

The Magazine Board is, indeed, grateful to Eric Crone for the meticulous work he is doing for our journal.

* * *

In a letter
from ARNETTA MONCRIEF
Dewitt, Arkansas
(Re: article "A Young Pioneer")

In the process of getting the article retyped for the final printing, some errors were made, e.g. my father owned property in what is now the heart of the business districts of both Edmonton and Calgary. Land was very cheap then.

Also, my parents — not my grandparents — cut pictures from the Icelandic weeklies about poets and authors. They pasted them on cardboard; had them framed.

The community gave a party and presented my parents — not my grandparents with a beautiful Chippendale clock, when they had completed their new home.

My four brothers are anxious to pass on an accurate history to their children and grandchildren about their grandfather. He was *barely fifteen* when he arrived in North America. He and his brothers coped remarkably with an alien environment. The main reason I mentioned my father's childhood playmate, Thomas Halldorson, was the fact that he has children still living — and grandchildren in the Mountain, North Dakota, area.

The editor apologizes to Mrs. Moncrief for these regrettable errors.

PEOPLE

APPOINTED PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS

Bob Rutford

Dr. Robert H. Rutford, a veteran of higher education management who also has strong experience in polar research and the management of that field, has been appointed President of The University of Texas at Dallas.

Previous to his appointment Bob had been Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Studies at The University of Nebraska's main campus at Lincoln. Rutford, 49, also served from 1980-81 as interim Chancellor there.

Before joining UNL, he was Director of the National Science Foundation's Division of Polar Programs from 1975 to 1977. The division is charged with total responsibility for the conduct of all U.S. activities in Antarctica. As its director, Rutford was responsible for carrying out the Division's programs, ensuring compliance with the Antarctic Treaty and ensuring the safety of all personnel involved. He was directly involved in negotiation of agreements between the U.S. and several foreign countries (among them the U.S.S.R., Argentina, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Japan and Denmark) for joint activities in Antarctica and New Zealand. He also prepared annual plans and the budget presentation to both houses of Congress and was involved with the visits of various members of Congress and cabinet officers to Antarctica.

Bob and his wife, Margie, have a son and two daughters: Gregory, 24; Kristian, 22; and Barbara, 20.

"Rutford" is an anglicized version of "*Hrutfjörd*".

* * *

A LIFE OF SERVICE TO HUMANITY

Nancy Rutherford Sodeman

Nancy Rutherford Sodeman, Ph.D., is a communications consultant who has taught at the college level. She has been a volunteer lay chaplain in the Dallas County Jail and a volunteer counselor at the Seagoville Federal Prison.

Nancy, a resident of Richardson, Texas, has taught for many years, led a radio station for the blind, and has been a cultural

director of a Scandinavian organization. She avows, "In the future I shall keep busy with my writing, my prison work, and taking care of my ailing husband."

**Some of the Hrutfjörds anglicized their name to "Rutford", others to "Rutherford".*

* * *

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

Mildred Olson

Miss Mildred E. Olson, born and reared in the Icelandic settlement near Minneota in southwestern Minnesota, has had a rewarding career at her state's University on the staff of its medical school. It hasn't been merely the attainment of high professional standing as a scientist in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Retiring a year in advance of the school's fixed 68-year mark, her more recent rewards have been in listening to and reading lavish tributes paid to her by longtime colleagues.

"I want to thank you most especially for your many years of dedicated service and contributions to the University of Minnesota and our state." That's just a sample sentence from the letter sent her by C. Peter Magrath, the University's President. From Ellis S. Benson, M.D., professor and head of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology at the medical school, came this tribute: "We are certainly proud of your accomplishments as Medical Technologist and are happy to join others in acknowledging with gratitude our debt to you." Other equally satisfying words of praise came from professional colleagues at a retirement party held just at the close of 1981, the date of Miss Olson's retirement.

Mildred has stayed on the job in a voluntary role, just to organize research files accumulated during 34 years in her position. Actually, Mildred can count 45 years in all as a public servant. Though 34 years were spent in research laboratories at the University, she made a still earlier start after graduating from Minneota High School. She finished teacher training and then spent seven years as a school teacher; first, in one-room rural schools in southwestern Minnesota and then on the teaching staff in Bird Island. Working her way through the University, where she graduated as a Medical Technologist, she spent four years in three different assignments, in

Food Service, in the Laboratory of Physiological Hygiene and in the Department of Physiology.

Scanning records of Mildred's numerous projects over the years is like going through a medical textbook, with all its Latin-derived language and polysyllabic complexity, e.g., cardiac rehabilitation programs for those suffering myocardial infractions, experiments establishing the best types of cushions and pads for those suffering spinal cord injuries, and establishing baseline values for the total osmotic activity of synovial fluid in normal human beings. Just for good measure, when using a hair-spray pressure-can, she demonstrated to the satisfaction of the scientifically minded that "there is a double jeopardy in the use of chlorofluorocarbons as propellants in spray cans."

Friends outside the laboratory attest that Mildred can speak plain English too, with a dash of Swedish from her father's ancestry and a more generous sprinkling of Icelandic from her mother's family. Mildred's father and mother died years ago. Her father, Elmer Olson, was of Swedish immigrant background, descended from rural mill operators in western Sweden. Her mother, Jona Sigridur, was the daughter of Sigurbjörn Kristjansson from Thorbrandsstadir in Vopnafjördur in northeastern Iceland. Sigurbjörn's two sons, Kristjan and Sigurbjörn, took the family name Askdal on coming to America.

Mildred's career of public service hasn't been confined to the University campus. She served for five and a half years on the Human Services Occupations Advisory Council for the state of Minnesota, appointed by the Governor. She has contributed numerous articles to professional publications, has testified before legislative committees on the shaping of laws involving her field, and has delivered lectures to a variety of groups.

Routine assignments came to her early in her long affiliation with the Hekla Club, an organization of Icelandic women in the Twin Cities. When she was President a few years ago, she arranged a chartered bus tour to her old home community at Minneota, providing maps and summary highlights for visitors gaining their first view of an Icelandic settlement that began in 1875. Mildred Olson has never married, has lived for years near the University at 2101 East River Terrace in Minneapolis, and has beaten the fixed 68-year-old retirement mark at the University by surrendering her many assignments, to the extent she has, at the age of 67.

Another recognized leader of Icelandic background, Gary Athelstan, has worked in the same area as Mildred, in the post of Counseling Psychologist at the University's Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Gary was in Iceland, delivering six lectures last September and October during the International Year of

Disabled Persons. Morgunbladid's Sunday supplement, Lesbok, in Reykjavik, carried a two-page interview with Gary at that time. He is a son of Arnold Athelstan, whose parents have been well known among Icelanders for years — the late Gunnlaugur Tryggvi Adalsteinsson from Akureyri, in insect and rodent extermination, in Minneapolis for years, and Svanhvit Johannsdottir, his wife, from Seydisfjördur, still living in Minneapolis, having reached the age of 91 on the 30th of March, this year.

—V.B.

* * *

We regret to announce that Mildred Olson passed away after this tribute was written.

* * *

OLAFSON'S DREAM COMES TRUE

Dr. James Olafur Olafson X-rays dogs . . "people will always spend money on their animals".

B.C.'s newest hospital opened recently and — guess what? — it doesn't expect to be a victim of government cutbacks.

That's because this ultra-modern $1.4 million facility is for pets, not people.

While governments bicker over what people are willing to pay for in the way of health care, Dr. James Olafson, owner of the South Surrey Veterinary Hospital, is convinced people will continue to give their pets the utmost in health care.

"People will always spend money on their animals, even during recessions and depressions," says Olafson.

"Animals are an integral part of the family. People like to treat their pets as members of the family."

That's also the guiding philosophy behind the hospital.

"We treat animals as if they are humans," says Olafson. "We designed the hospital so as to meet every conceivable need an animal might have."

The hospital's facilities — "the most modern available," says Olafson — would put some cutback-depleted people-hospitals to shame.

They range from indoor exercise areas with customized disinfectant and flush systems and heated terrazzo floors and walls, to an intensive-care unit with its own heating, drying and oxygen capabilities.

Olafson, who graduated from the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph in 1968 and has been practising in the Vancouver area since, says one of the most progressive features the hospital offers is an entirely self-contained isolation ward.

That's where animals with contagious or infectious diseases are kept and treated in quarantine. A separate ventilation and heating system, along with a separate entrance, ensures that other animals will not be affected.

The hospital has three veterinarians and four health technicians (comparable to RNs) on staff.

All this is housed in a futuristic, semi-underground structure, designed by Vancouver architect Bruce Hinds with energy conservation in mind.

The roof is topped with a 45-centimetre layer of dirt that keeps the building warm during winter, and cool during summer.

Jim is a son of the late Albert Olafson and Jean Olafson (nee Henry) of Surrey, B.C. (formerly of Selkirk, Manitoba). His grandparents: the late Olafur and Arndis Olafson of Selkirk (formerly of Piney, Manitoba).

* * *

A DEDICATED PROPONENT OF THE ICELANDIC HERITAGE IN NORTH AMERICA

Jane McCracken

Jane is of Scottish descent, but she has taken an interest and has played a prominent part in the preservation of the Icelandic heritage in North America. It may be that her interest and involvement in the Stephan G. Stephansson project in Markerville, Alberta is due to the fact that she may be a descendant of the Viking rulers of northern Scotland at the time when Thorsteinn the Red was king there more than a thousand years ago.

Jane received an Honors B.A. (History) at the University of Waterloo, 1970, and an M.A. (Western Canadian History) at the University of Regina, 1972. In 1975 she moved to Edmonton. In 1976 she joined the Alberta Historical Sites Service as Project Historian. On January 1, 1978 she was assigned to the Stephansson House Project to research and write a biographical sketch of Stephan G. Stephansson (published at the time of the 7th of August opening, 1982 — approximately 280 pages). She was team captain for the furnishing of the Stephansson House. She co-ordinated the Stephansson Committee's booklet of translated poems (published for August, 1982).

* * *

PROFESSOR BESSASON HONOURED

Two academic staff members, one from the Faculty of Medicine and the other from the Faculty of Arts, have been selected the

Haraldur Bessason

first winners of the Dr. and Mrs. Ralph Campbell Outreach Award.

They are:

Dr. Charles A. Ferguson, Department of Pediatrics, and

Prof. Haraldur Bessason, Department of Icelandic Language and Literature.

Prof. Bessason is described as a person who, more or less singlehandedly, has made the presence of the University of Manitoba felt both in Iceland and wherever there are Icelanders in North America. Although he is the only member of the Icelandic Department, he manages to maintain a varied program of visiting speakers that appeals to audiences comprised of people from inside and outside the University community. He established the Icelandic Series, a translation and publishing program of rare, but significant, works, that has brought to him and the University international acclaim.

Those nominating Prof. Bessason were impressed with his ability to maintain both his scholarly and community interests, as well as his ability to deal patiently and graciously with a wide range of people from students to visitors of international stature. They also observed that his personal qualities and his willingness to work with people in both academic and community settings has made the university a positive institution for those whom he has met.

Prof. Bessason has been on staff for the past 26 years, coming to Manitoba from Iceland where he graduated from the University of Iceland with bachelor's and master's level degrees.

* * *

A WATCHDOG ON DOWNTOWN WINNIPEG

Magnus Eliason

Winnipeg councillor, Magnus Eliason, is concerned with the deterioration of downtown Winnipeg. He advocates action to forestall the urban plight that has bedevilled the heart of so many North American cities.

In his opinion, the downtown area of any city should be a thriving, bustling place with many things to do and places to see. In order to attain this objective, he recommends that people should be required to park their cars outside the downtown area and take a special transit that will bring them downtown in a matter of minutes. He is in favour of extending Central Park to Portage Avenue, provided that residential development is planned at the same time, particularly for elderly couples, singles, and downtown workers, in order to provide a base for a solid, viable downtown community.

He comments, "The most important factor in any program is that people be encouraged to take pride in their environment, and to continue to improve it".

* * *

AWARDED LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

The Icelandic Canadian Club of British Columbia honoured three members of the Icelandic community earlier this year.

Awarded life memberships in the club were Gunnthor and Verna Henrikson and Gudrun Bjerring, all long-time members of the club and active workers for the First Lutheran Church of Christ, Forty-first and Cambie, in Vancouver.

The Henriksons, both born in Manitoba, went to B.C. in 1945 and raised their four children there. Their daughter, Janice, was Icelandic Club Princess in 1969.

Awards ceremony participants (left to right): Gunnthor and Verna Henrikson, Club Princess Kristine Jobin, Nina Jobin, Gudrun Bjerring and Oskar Howardson.

Gunnthor, an electrical engineer, retired from B.C. Hydro in 1972 and spent two years as a consultant in Brazil. He was president of the church council for many years. Verna has been active in the Women's Auxiliary since her children have grown up.

Gudrun Bjerring is the widow of Sigtryggur O. Bjerring. She was a teacher and later a registered nurse in Saskatchewan and Manitoba and went to B.C. with her husband in 1965. Mrs. Bjerring has been a member and supporter of the Lutheran Church since her childhood in Winnipeg.

—Courtesy of the Newsletter of The Icelandic Canadian Club of British Columbia

* * *

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

Thora Asgeirson DuBois

Thora, a pianist and teacher, performed on July 31 at the Gimli Composite High School. She was brought up in Winnipeg. Her parents were Oddny and Jon Asgeirsson whom she describes as follows: "They were the salt of the earth — hard-working and honest citizens".

She has acquired many degrees, and is presently working on her doctorate at the University of Oklahoma. Her husband, Ron, is a Professor of Art at the Oklahoma State University.

Her brothers, Asgeir (Archie) and George, her sisters Edna (Hrefna) Borgford and Joan Parr are in exuberant spirits because of her decision to perform once again within the confines of her native habitat.

HORNED VIKING HELMETS: FACT OR FICTION

by Dr. E. Leigh Syms
Curator of Archaeology
Manitoba Museum of Man & Nature
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Long before I became involved with the Icelanders of Manitoba, I, like many others, was excited by pictures and models of Viking long ships. Associated with these long ships were hardy sailors with great horned helmets! It seemed that every rural Manitoba community that contained a Scandinavian group had a billboard or store

Table 1: A Brief Chronology of Northwestern Europe with Special Reference to Scandinavia.

1200			
800		**Viking Age**	Scandinavian expansion; widespread trade and colonization.
400	IRON AGE PERIOD	**German Age**	'Age of Gold' for Sweden (known locally as Vendel Period) — opulence through trade; market towns develop. Suiones (Sviar) of eastern Sweden become dominant Scandinavian force. Germanic tribes expanded.
200			
A.D. 0		**Roman Age**	Romans made reconnaissance to Jutland but never attempted to conquer Scandinavia.
B.C.			Increased trade when Romans conquered Celts.
200		**Celtic Age**	Celts expand over Europe with war chariots and tools of iron. Scandinavia cut off from trade routes.
400			
800	BRONZE AGE PERIOD		Distinctly Germanic. Ruling 'warrior-caste'. New wealth and prosperity. Art emphasis — stylized warriors wielding axes and spears, men dancing and plowing, phallic ceremonies.
1200			
1600	BATTLE AXE PERIOD		Invasion of Scandinavia by warrior groups.
2000	LATE NEOLITHIC PERIOD		Agriculture introduced ca. 3000 B.C.
2400			
2800			
3200			

sign with a horned Viking helmet. Gimli, a focus of Canadian Icelandic heritage, surpassed all others with its great horned fibreglass statue and drawings everywhere.

In later years, when I started to read about the Icelandic heritage, including the Viking Age, I found no evidence of horns. Surviving art work such as the great Bayeux Tapestry that portrayed in great detail the Norman invasion of England in 1066 showed no horns. Carvings on stone and wood of the Viking Age showed no horns. And no horned helmets were reported in the archaeological reports!

This contradiction between the public image and the scholarly record leads to three issues: Did the Vikings have horned helmets? If they did not have horned helmets, how did this erroneous stereotype develop? Does it matter whether North American Icelanders perpetrate an erroneous stereotype?

The answer to the first question is straightforward, although it requires considerable discussion. The Vikings appeared to have rarely used helmets of metal and there is *no* evidence that horns were ever attached to their helmets. Much earlier forms of helmets with ''horned appendages'' have been found but even these are not animal horns in the sense of the modern stereotype.

In order to understand how the museum figures with appendages protruding from the helmets relate to Vikings, it is necessary to review briefly a portion of northern European history and prehistory (Table 1). Figurines with horn-like appendages on the head (Fig. 1) do appear in the Bronze Age ca. 1000-500 B.C. (Jensen et al, 1978). These figurines and a few bronze helmets have large curving appendages that expand at the tips; their curvature and shape bear strong resemblance to the *lurs* which have been found in religious ceremonial caches in bogs of the same period. Lurs are large trumpet-like horns which tend to occur in pairs that are tuned to the same pitch; they can play only natural tones of the harmonic series of a quality something like a modern trombone (Jensen et al, 1978:39). These helmets are rare and are often found in contexts that indicate religious ceremonies including sacrificial acts.

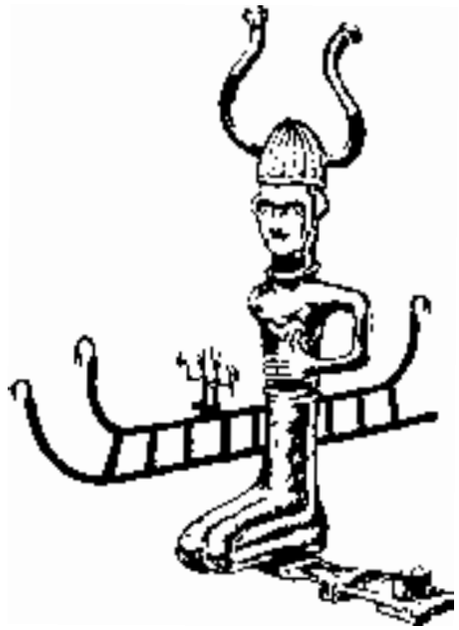

Figure 1. Bronze Age horned deity with lur ''horns''. One of a pair of axe-wielding statuettes found associated with a symbolic cult boat at Grevens Vaeng in Zealand. (Drawing by Allan Ryan.)

There is a considerable historic gap of almost a thousand years between these earlier Bronze Age images and later helmets. With the coming of the Iron Age, Scandinavia underwent a marked decline. During the Celtic Iron Age, 500 B.C. - O, a series of aristocratic Celtic warrior societies swept across much of Europe and into Scythia and Asia Minor with their war chariots and iron weapons; the Scandinavians were left unconquered but isolated, poor, and facing colder, more adverse climate. During the Roman Iron Age, 0-A.D.400, the Scandinavians, particularly the Suiones, re-established trade networks

and started to accumulate Roman and other foreign wealth.

However, it is during the German Iron Age, A.D. 400-800, that we find helmets appearing. The Germanic tribes expanded in many directions and trade networks expanded. In Sweden, where it is known as the Vendel Period, it was the ''Age of Gold''. Local opulence was marked by hoards of gold and silver, ornate craftsmanship, and foreign items. Market towns appeared.

The Germanic Age derives its name from the Germanic people, including the Scandinavians, who initiated most of the major cultural developments in Europe in the 400 years after the Roman Empire collapsed (Roesdahl, 1980, p. 146.). At this time, Scandinavia was divided into a number of kingdoms and chiefdoms.

A few helmets have been excavated from the graves of Swedish kings or chiefs at Vendland and Volsgärde in Uppland. A similar form was found in the Sutton Hoo ship burial off the southeastern part of England, which may well be the cenotaph of the East Anglian King, Aethelhere, who died in 655 A.D. (Meighan, 1966). Some of the Sutton Hoo treasures also exhibited a distinctively Scandinavian craftsmanship. The Germanic Iron Age, then, is represented by a few widely scattered ornate helmets belonging to wealthy rulers. They are extremely rare in number compared with the wealth of wood, metal and glass items found in graves. They are rare in comparison even to other metal items of war such as swords and lances. They appear to be rare items of conspicuous prestige of the very wealthy — items of exquisite workmanship lacking any evidence of horns.

The Vendel Period helmets (cover, Fig. 2) are evidence that reality is often stranger or more exciting than fiction and fantasy. Despite the fact that they pre-date the Viking Period (i.e., before A.D. 800), these helmets are both works of art and highly skilled craftsmanship. The helmet portion consists of iron which was generally decorated with small ornate bronze repousé panels held firmly with metal strips. A bronze ridge terminated in a nose

guard which contained an elaborate figure. Ornate bronze eyebrow ridges protected the eyebrows and eyes. The side of the face and back of the head were protected by metal strips, sections, or in one case, chain mail.

Figure 2. Ornate Vendel Period iron helmet with a bronze ridge crest ending in a head and bronze brow ridges.

Despite the fact that considerable portions of even the iron part of the helmets were preserved and the more perishable skeletal materials were preserved, there is no evidence of horns nor places where horns would have been attached. It seems ludicrous, even almost sacrilegious, that these great works of craftsmanship would later be portrayed in barbaric fashion with animal horns attached.

What evidence is there of ''horns'' for this Vendel Period? Some of the repousé panels and metalworker's dies for making these panels exhibit men with a horned helmet or helmets with animal crests on them. These figures and a similar figurine are ritualist scenes in which the men are taking part in a weapon dance for Odin (Graham-Campbell, 1980:178-179). The horns are huge in proportion to the figures, i.e. as large or larger than the upper torso of the figures, curled to have the ends meeting, and terminating in spheroids or birds' heads; these obviously bear no relationship to horns of wild animals.

As we turn to the Viking Period, A.D. 800-1200, in our search for horns, the evidence becomes even clearer. Depictions of Vikings are numerous and are found in many media — ornate wood carvings in burials such as the Oseberg wagon, rare silver, stone and elk horn figurines, ornate scenes on harnesses, tapestries (including the detailed Bayeux Tapestry depicting the Norman invasion of 1066), religious and domestic scenes on rune-stones, stone carvings, wood carving graffiti, impressed gold foil scenes, and elaborate wood carvings in churches such as the 12th century Story of Sigurd the Dragon-Slayer carved in a series of roundels (see cover of Summer 1982 issue of *The Icelandic Canadian* for a portion of these scenes). (Wilson, 1980; Graham-Campbell, 1980; Magnusson, 1980). Despite the phenomenal number of depictions, I was not able to locate any that had horns; helmets were clearly pointed and others appeared rounded; nose guards appeared to be common; they lack the ornamentation of the earlier Vendel Period.

Also, despite the excavation of a considerable number of burials accompanied by numerous items of a variety of materials, only one helmet has been reported (Graham-Campbell and Kidd, 1980:45). It would appear likely to me that the helmets, if common, were of a more perishable material such as leather. No horns of any form were found.

The entire Viking and pre-Viking record is represented by only a few helmets, none of which bore animal horns. The earliest appendages were involved with rituals and later depictions of ''horns'' also appeared to be involved with ceremonies.

When and why did the stereotype of the horned helmet gain popularity? The horned Viking helmet, as well as the winged version (an imitation of the one worn by the Roman god, Mercury), are late 18th century and 19th century figments of European imagination. They were at least in part the outgrowths of a romantic revival of the early legends and histories and the rise of nationalism (Mjöberg, 1980). Mjöberg argues that there was a shift away from the concern of classical Christian culture shared by all cultures to an emphasis upon the national background of individual nations. There was also the shift from the urbanity and logic of the Age of Reason to a delight in fantasizing about the ancients. (Note that this is not unlike the current shift from science to occultism.)

Also, while the Viking image was used by northern Europeans to romanticize their heritage, the same image was used negatively to emphasize the barbaric atrocities from the English historical perspective. Magnus Magnusson has argued that the horned helmets augmented the image of pagan devilishness of the Vikings as portrayed by the hysterical and bitter monks who were not only the main victims but also the recording agents in Great Britain.

This 18th and 19th century portrayal became the stereotype for English-speaking Europe and their colonies. When I recently scanned three Grade VII/Viii texts and one Grade IV teacher's reference in Winnipeg schools, all Vikings were illustrated with helmets having animal horns or bird wings protruding from the sides.

The American media and manufacturers have capitalized on the ''barbaric'' stereotype. In the late 1950's, a mediocre Hollywood movie, ''The Vikings'', starring Kirk Douglas, was made. American toy manufacturers produce Viking boat models with horned warriors. Comic strips, T-shirts and other memorabilia perpetuated the stereotype. Viking craftsmanship, settlement and entrepreneurship were either not mentioned or given inadequate coverage.

As guilty, or perhaps more guilty, in perpetrating the erroneous image of horns are the Western Icelanders and other Scandinavians of North America. In the 1960's, a large Viking statue with horns was designed by the noted artist, the late Gissur Eliasson and set up at Gimli, Manitoba. In Duluth, Minnesota, the local Norwegian group set up a Viking with a winged helmet. Many Scandinavian communities have been selling a variety of tourist items depicting horned helmets. Even educational institutions such as the Gimli Museum sell illustrations of horned Vikings. A recent CBC TV vignette on Vikings coming to North America that protrayed a horned Viking had been researched by a person of Danish extraction. All of these incidents give an illusion of authenticity to the image of horned Vikings and their supposed barbaric nature.

Recently, the symbolism has been carried to further extremes. The popular comic strip, ''Hagar the Horrible'' portrays a decidedly slow-witted, oafish impression (Fig. 3) that bears no resemblance to the more realistic portrayals (Fig. 4). The ''Viking clowns'' that accompany the pseudo-Viking ship at Gimli, Manitoba's annual Islendingadagurinn approximate more closely the Hagar image with their wool-covered metal pots adorned with cows' horns and their toy pirate weapons flaying in the air.

Figure 3. Comic-strip Viking character, Hagar the Horrible, portraying the worst of stereotypes. (Drawn by Allan Ryan)

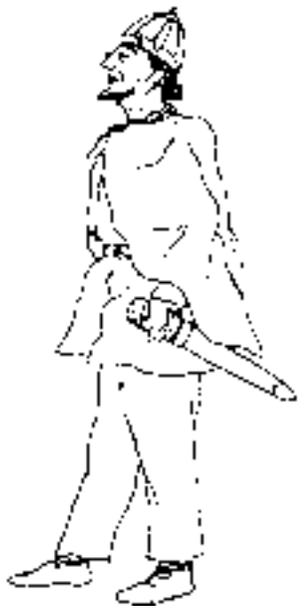

Figure 4. Realistic portrayal of Viking warrior (with the exception of some detail on the helmet). (Drawn from Almgren (1972) by Allan Ryan)

What symbols do Icelanders and other Scandinavian people want of their heritage? Do they want the great accomplishments of skilled resourceful settlers and traders, or do they want the oafish, barbaric symbol of Hagar the Horrible? Are the Icelanders interested in any semblance of realism or are they satisfied with sheer buffoonery and fantasy? The horned helmets are but one symbol — but they personify the entire trend in the misuse and abuse of Viking heritage. To the degree that this symbol is allowed to persist and is encouraged, the Icelanders are allowing the media and history books to revile and distort their heritage. Are the Icelanders who have long taken pride in their rich legacy of literary heritage willing to stand by indifferently and to allow either brutal, barbaric or oafish images to be perpetrated? Will they allow their Viking heritage as a whole to be distorted negatively and to be stripped of its intellectual, commercial, historical, and technological brilliance and richness?

What should be done to improve the Viking image of Scandinavian heritage? The task must lie mainly with Western Icelanders. Firstly, they must stop ridiculing their own Viking heritage: this will require the correction of existing images, e.g. the Gimli statue and a variety of examples in American parks, the clownish and inaccurate portrayals of Vikings at Icelandic festivals such as Gimli's annual Islendingadagurinn, the almost ubiquitious misrepresentation in logos and advertisements by Icelandic Canadian and American business people, and the numerous tourist items that portray these same negative images. There is also the need to make North American Scandinavians, in fact all people, aware of the authentic and outstanding qualities of Viking heritage. Since teachers and school programs often have a profound impact, people should make teachers aware of the largely erroneous symbols and information on Viking heritage that exists in textbooks and library books. There will be the need by both individuals and Icelandic groups to inform and lobby indifferent businessmen, publishers, toy manufacturers, media people, etc. to present authentic and more positive images.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Mr. Allan Ryan and Mr. Eric Crone for the artistic work on the cover and in the figures. Mr. Bill Little of the Design Department at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature provided the PMT of Figure 2. Ann Wheatly of the Human History Division of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature typed the manuscript. Mrs. Shirley Syms and Mr. Halldor Bjarnason proofread the manuscript. All of their efforts improved the article.

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OUR ICELANDIC HERO-POET

by John Sheppard

Beloved there, he was a troublemaker here

You say I act as if living is for naught
And I search for not gold but filth
Believing that life is like a pitch black night
and aimlessly onward drift.

—From "Pessimism"
by Stephan G. Stephansson

* * *

Icelanders hold two things dear: poets and heroes. The heroes are the Vikings whose descendants the Icelanders are. The poets are the ancient balladeers who keep the memory of those fierce warriors alive, and the moderns who keep their ancient language fresh. Odd it is then that one of Iceland's most revered poets was a pacifist farmer who wrote his works in far-off Alberta and died here in relative obscurity.

On August 7, fifty years after his death, the memory of Stephan Gudmundsson Stephansson will sparkle in his adopted homeland when Alberta Culture opens his restored homestead as a historic site near Markerville, 20 miles southwest of Red Deer.

Born on a farm in Kirkjuholl, Iceland in 1853, Stephansson was taught to read by his parents and tutored briefly in English by his Unitarian minister. Cold weather and volcanic eruptions forced the family to move to Wisconsin. In 1878 he married his first cousin, Helga Jonsdottir, and two years later settled in North Dakota's Red River Valley.

Throughout his life, Stephansson was driven by a number of constants: he was an insatiable reader of fine books, an inveterate prober and social critic, a lover of nature, a hater of war and a religious freethinker. It was the latter that eventually persuaded him to move to the tiny Icelandic community at Markerville with the wrath of the local Lutheran church and North Dakota dust storms raining down on his head.

"He never struck me as a man who was good with his hands or a lover of physical labours," says his grandson, Stephen J. Stephenson, now 74 and living in Calgary. When he was a teenager, Mr. Stephenson (his father changed the spelling of the surname to avoid confusion at the post office) spent most of his summer on his grandfather's farm. "He told me never to be a lawyer, because lawyers were liars. And he insisted I get an education. That was important to him." While his father's gentleness did little to impress a young teenager, the older Mr. Stephenson is now attempting to read his grandfather's poems in the original Icelandic. "Much of what he said to me then only now makes sense."

What has kept poet Stephansson obscure in Canada was that he wrote almost exclusively in Icelandic, one of the most difficult languages in the world to translate. The introduction of his work to the English language was left to a handful of scholars such as the Winnipeg Unitarian minister Rögnvaldur Petursson. Stephansson was an outspoken man who loved to incite argument and take unpopular stands. As a socialist he campaigned actively for the United Farmers of Alberta, but it was his pacifism that earned him the antipathy of many of his neighbours and prompted some of his most graphic works, such as the damning "In Wartime."

In Europe's reeking slaughter-pen
They mince the flesh of murdered men,
While swinish merchants, snout in trough
Drink all the bloody profits off.

"It was a tragedy to him for any nation to go to war," recalls his youngest daughter, now 81 and living in Red Deer. "He couldn't understand it, no matter what arguments he heard in favour of the war." Mrs. Rosa Benediktson remembers her five-foot eight-inch father as a slight man who liked to talk and hated to dance.

Active in the community (he set up the first school and creamery and served on the town council), he considered his labours to be interruptions. "He worked just enough to get by," his grandson says. "He didn't care about his personal possessions or keeping the home neat and clean."

Stephansson was an insomniac who was constantly plagued by stomach trouble. After dinner, he would retire to his small study and work steadily by the light of an oil lamp until he at last fell asleep for an hour or two. This would continue for weeks until, finally physically and mentally exhausted, he would be bedridden for a few days, only to recover and begin the routine again.

It was a stroke in December of 1926 that finally slowed him down. Though he continued to write a little, most of his time was concerned with learning to walk again. On Aug. 10, 1927, a second stroke ended it all. "He was a changed man after the first stroke, very frustrated," says Mrs. Benediktson. "He was never a man to display his emotions, which made it difficult for anyone, even me, to know him — even when he was sick at the end and failing."

Learning much about Stephan G. Stephansson today is a challenge, says Jane W. McCracken, the research officer at Alberta Culture in charge of researching the poet's life: "He was a student of ancient myths and he used very traditional symbols and rhythms. That is why much of his work, even today, remains fairly difficult to understand." But perhaps the summation of his life and beliefs, the constant turmoil of poor health, unpopular ideals and philosophies, is best left to the poet:

Eventually problems shall be solved
By sober thought and judgment of the wise.
Blessed ever be the mind that so resolved
To shed a flicker of light on twilight times.

—Courtesy of Alberta Report
March 15, 1982

AD ABBENDON

by Stephan G. Stephansson, translated by Paul A. Sigurdson

Angel of death and ruin, hear my cheering!
In blood our madcap world will soon be steering!
Into your arms the hoard to slaughter races,
More swift than foolishness fills up their spaces.
So cheers! Fool after fool is quickly disappearing!

* * *

WHEN CHRIST WAS A CHAPLAIN

In holy writ it seems I can remember,
That Christ was once a chaplain and commander.
His sermon then — few could be shorter, neater,
Was given thus: "Put down your sword now, Peter!
For he who lifts the sword will end by falling,
By sword as well." Now daily from His calling
Deserters swell, God's newest banner seeing.
As if the hirelings from the wolves be fleeing.

* * *

GOD UNDER A MAGNIFYING GLASS

I quite expect that very soon
I'll weary of this fussing,
How holy men are splitting hairs
When God they keep discussing.

* * *

EXILE

Somehow it has come upon me,
I've no fatherland;
Though my heart with love is bounded
With a lasting band
To my native soil that blessed me,
As a growing boy,
When the world, its shining glory,
Gave me hope and joy.

Never could my foster mother
Take my mother's place;
Always there was something lacking
She could not replace.
I have yet to know the meaning
Of her legacy.
Always there's an awkward feeling
Twixt herself and me.

Valleys, inlets, mountains never
Equal those I knew;
Cities, coastlines, sloping landslips,
Folk half foreign too.
Would you hold these friends and kinsmen
Every bit as dear?
Can you feel the family spirit
Half as deeply here?

Even here the ling'ring twilight
Warms the meadows green;
Even here the streams meander,
Rolling hills between;
Here the waves in lyric singing
Break along the strand;
Yet somehow it has come upon me,
I've no fatherland.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE TRADITIONAL PROGRAM OF THE ICELANDIC FESTIVAL (Islendingadagurinn) at Gimli, Manitoba, 1982

MAIDS OF HONOR

Roxanne Nordal. Born August 6, 1966 in Arborg. She is the daughter of Richard and Jona Nordal.

Marlene Sigurdson. Born November 19, 1964. She is the daughter of Ray and Alma Sigurdson.

* * *

THE FJALLKONA (Mountain Lady)

Each year the Festival committee selects a woman, who has made a notable contribution to the community, to fill the venerable role of the FJALLKONA. In so doing it showed good judgment in selecting a lady who trod with distinction in the footsteps of many distinguished predecessors.

The FJALLKONA is a representative of countless, unrecorded Icelandic women whose strength and rock-like endurance have been a major factor in sustaining the

Lilja Martin

morale of the nation throughout centuries of trials and tribulations.

Mrs. Martin, daughter of the late Una Jonsson and Jon Palsson, was born at Geysir, Manitoba and has for years played a prominent part in the activities of Interlake and Brandon Icelandic communities. Having organized and directed several choirs she along with her brother, Johannes Palsson, provided entertainment at many Icelandic Festivals at Gimli.

* * *

THE TOAST TO ICELAND

This address was delivered by a native-born Manitoban who is a living example of the strength of the Icelandic character. Paul Sigurdson, writer, poet and educator, re-

Paul Sigurdson

sides with his wife, Ivadell, and their five children in their beautiful home in the scenic Pembina Valley near Morden, Manitoba. Various publications throughout Canada and the United States have published his poems and short stories. Audiences at the Icelandic Festival at Gimli have heard his readings for the past twelve years. He has served in the capacity of editorial advisor and regular contributor for THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN.

* * *

THE TOAST TO CANADA

Helgi Pétursson

This address was delivered by Helgi Pétursson who in 1979 became the editor-in-chief of Iceland's largest weekly general magazine, VIKAN. He is currently employed as Iceland's only correspondent in the United States and is based in Washington, D.C.

PRESIDENT OF THE ICELANDIC FESTIVAL

Maurice Evolfson

Born at Riverton in 1927. Parents: Fridrik and Arnheidur Eyolfson. Paternal grandparents: Thorsteinn and Lilja Eyolfson. Maternal grandparents: the master poet Guttormur J. and Jensina Guttormsson.

Maurice is the Assistant Deputy Minister, Industrial Relations Division of the Department of Labour and Manpower, Manitoba Government.

POEM RECALLS WORLD WAR I

The Rose of No Man's Land

There is a rose that grows on No Man's Land
And it's wonderful to see
Though it's sprayed with tears.
It will live for years.
In my garden of memory
It's the one red rose the soldier knows
It's the work of the Master's hand
Through the war's great curse stands the Red Cross Nurse
She the Rose of No Man's Land.

THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN FRON EXECUTIVE 1982-83

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TO ALL ICELANDIC ORGANIZATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA

The **Icelandic-Canadian** would like to publish a list sof the names and addresses of **all** Icelandic organizations and publications in North America, including:

- Icelandic-Canadian Clubs
- Icelandic-American Clubs
- Icelandic-oriented publications
- Icelandic-oriented organizations

If you are an officer or a member of any Icelandic-oriented association, or if you know of one, we would be very grateful if you could forward its name and current address to: Eric Jonasson, Icelandic-Canadian, Box 205, St. James P.O. Winniepg, Manitoba R3J 3R4

names and addresses received will be published in a forthcoming issue of the **Icelandic-Canadian** for the benefit of all subscribers, and we shall endeavour to include lists of this nature in at least one issue of the magazine each year.

I REMEMBER MAMA

by Agnes (Bardal) Comack

(Continued from the spring issue, 1982)

Due to an oversight, the last part of Mrs. Comack's article was omitted.

Mama had suddenly found the big house lonely and depressing. She seemed relieved to move into town to an apartment above the Funeral Home. She kept busy catering to my father's needs, working for the church, corresponding with all the family and crocheting tablecloths, bedspreads and edges for pillow cases.

In 1950 my parents celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary. Almost all the family came for the event and 182 guests attended the reception. It seemed a very fitting climax to a wonderful marriage. My father died the following year. He was 85. I never saw Mama cry until then.

For 9 years she insisted on keeping her independence and stayed alone in her apartment. Once she slipped on ice on Sherbrook Street and broke her wrist. Instead of making a scene, Mama simply walked to Casualty at the Winnipeg General Hospital and had an x-ray and cast applied.

Mama developed a heart problem but her doctor complained that he could never find out her symptoms. She took up most of her visiting time questioning him about the state of his health and that of his family.

Just before her 80th birthday Mama had a severe heart attack and was taken to the hospital. My husband, Hugh, and I went to visit her. She propped herself up on her elbow to greet us in her usual affectionate manner and then in her delirium she said to me, "Agnes, Hugh is here. Put the coffee on". She died the following day — the gracious hostess to the end.

STRONG IS THE BOND OF KINSHIP — II

Written by Christina Oddleifson
for her husband, Peter Oddleifson, Rochester, N.Y.
January 1982

It has been a long time since a 9-year old boy left Blönduos in 1902. He went to Canada with his father and new stepmother to join all his father's family in Winnipeg and north of Winnipeg near Arborg. His uncles and even his grandfather had long since preceded him. His own mother had died when he was two.

August Oddleifson grew up, worked hard, served his adopted country in World War I, graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, and went to work for the Eastman Kodak Company in Rochester, N.Y. There he married and fathered two sons. He died soon after, and the ties to his paternal family in New Iceland and to his maternal kin in Iceland became dormant.

August Oddleifson was my father. I was in my 30's when I met my first Oddleifson relative — a half-uncle. Not until I was a father of a 13-year old boy myself did I realize the extent of the family in Winnipeg and begin to become familiar with the history of the early times there.*

It took me another decade to realize my wish to see my father's homeland. Finally, upon the occasion of our 25th wedding anniversary, the summer of 1981 saw my wife and myself winging to Keflavik on Icelandair. But not without much correspondence with the Icelandic Tourist Bureaus both in New York City and Reykjavik.

Both agencies had taken a keen interest in my roots. Not only had they located August Oddleifson's birthplace (Hvoll in Vesturhop), but they had arranged a date for our visit there. For information on my grandparents, they had obtained a copy of the paternal family history from the National Archives (one with which we were already familiar). However, they did not find any information on the maternal side. Long distance, and even transatlantic, telephone calls informed us of each new step for our two-week vacation and "roots" journey.

The first week was spent on a beautiful bus camping tour arranged by the Ulfar Jacobsen Tourist Bureau and led by an excellent guide from the Iceland Travel Guides' Association (félag Leids–ogumanna). The magnificence of the country and the geological wonder should be seen by everyone, especially anyone with a drop of Icelandic blood. The week gave us a little idea of the scope of the history, literary tradition, folklore and culture as well as an insight into the character of the people. That four Icelanders were among the tour group (numbering 24 from 9 different countries of the world) was proof that this was indeed an "authentic" tour.

The second week began as we flew into Akureyri, the biggest town on the northern coast. We rented a Lada (a Soviet automobile) for the three-hour ride to Blönduos, being very careful to avoid the myriad of sheep along the road.

It was a strange sensation to walk the Blönduos streets that my father had walked as a little boy. Not expecting to find anything new, we timidly asked the local postmaster if he had ever heard of my

The story of how I re-established contact with the Oddleifsons in Winnipeg through our hockey player cousin, Chris Oddleifson, has already been told by Wilhelm Kristjanson in the Spring 1972 issue of* **The Icelandic-Canadian.

Note: Mr. and Mrs. Oddleifson reside in Rochester, New York.

grandparents' names; Sigurdur Oddleifson and Margrét Gisladottir. In painful English (and we were grateful for that), he told us to go to the local government official. We did. Immediately, the telephone rang. Much talk followed between the official and the postmaster who had pondered those old names for awhile. It seemed that the latter had recognized Margrét's name from the local history book.* He would go home for lunch and look it up. As Margrét Gisladottir is not an uncommon name, we did not think too much would come of this.

We spent the rest of the day out at the farm where my father was born. The present owners and various family members were exceedingly cordial to us. We all became experts at hand language.

Upon our return to Blönduos, the local official dumbfounded us with photocopies of pages from that aforementioned book. There were photographs of Margrét Gisladottir, her sister Gudrun and her half-sister Sigurbjörg. Margrét's picture was identical to the only one that we own of her. All were in native dress. Details of their family farm, whom they married, etc. were described in the narrative.

"What did you say, Mr. Government Official? You think that the farm is still in the family?" Another telephone call — this time out to the farm, Hunstadir, five kilometers away. After verifying the family history, he said, "you have some relatives from America here". Silence. "Oh, please tell them to come immediately".

We did and thereupon embarked on such a satisfying series of encounters with second cousins, more second cousins, and more second cousins. Greta Björnsdottir met us at the door. She and I share a great grandfather, Gisli Jonsson, though she is descended from his second wife. It was an emotional experience to find, so suddenly and unexpectedly, a part of my family which had been totally unknown to me until now. Greta and her husband run the family farm. We found out later that my father, August, had spent much time there and had even been counted there as a visitor in the 1901 census. Unfortunately, those who would have remembered him have died.

Greta's good English helped give us much genealogical information. Ready to depart, we became quiet as we took in the landscape on the River Laxa. This time it was my grandmother's birthplace.

The simi (thread — telephone) spread the news for us once again. Back at Akureyri, Greta's brother and his family came to our hotel room at 10:15 p.m. "Come on, let's go sightseeing". Well, why not, there was still plenty of light. Again we were the fortunate recipients of Icelandic and familial hospitality.

All Icelanders know their genealogy. It is easy compared to ours because of the limited size of the population and the geographical area; but the patronymic system would defy most of us. Both Greta and her brother, Jon, referred us to the master genealogist of the family in Reykjavik.

We had the privilege of meeting Sigurdur Sigurdsson, there. His older sister had been one of August's playmates before August had left for Canada. He arranged a coffee (with cakes and Icelandic pancakes, to be sure) to meet his daughter, granddaughters and my "whole" second cousin — a granddaughter of Margrét's full sister, Gudrun. She showed us a picture of August Oddleifson taken at his high school graduation in Winnipeg. He had sent it to his aunt (her grandmother) back in the old country.

Many of these cousins had been to the United States: Sigurdur received honors for his work on tuberculosis (he had been the physician-general for Iceland) and the others for study. Sigurdur's daughter had spent a whole year in Washington, D.C. And to think that we could have made her acquaintance long ago.

But now we have, and now not only do we intend to reciprocate all my cousins' gracious hospitality but we hope to visit them again.

Almost 80 years have gone by since the immigration of that little boy back in 1902. His first phrase in English was "give me back my cap". Our first phrase in Icelandic is "thank you".

The following genealogical table will be of interest to people who are related to Peter Oddleifson:

(1) Gisli Jonsson (1821-1896). Farm: Hunstadir, Iceland. M. Sigurbjörg.

(2) Their daughter: Margrét Gisladottir (1865-1895). M. Sigurdur Oddleifson.

(3) Their son: August Oddleifson (1893-1936). Came to Canada in 1902.

(4) His son: Peter Oddleifson (1932-). Rochester, New York.

* *Kolka, Pall G.*, **Föðurtún,** *Reykjavik, 1950.*

ARTIFACTS LINKED TO NORSE CIVILIZATION

by Mark Hume

Astonishing finds of Viking artifacts may point to an ancient Norse presence in the High Arctic.

In recent summers, a growing amount of evidence — including chain mail, iron knife blades, and a Norse trader's balance — has been unearthed by Canadian archeologists investigating an Inuit culture that spread across the Arctic about 1,000 years ago.

In prehistoric Inuit ruins and hunting camps abandoned centuries ago on the forbidding Arctic coast, researchers have been increasingly stumbling across the path of ancient Vikings. Norse artifacts have been found in locations from Hudson Bay, to the islands in the Central Arctic, and even near the North Pole on distant Ellesmere Island.

Many believe the artifacts were left by Inuit from the Thule culture who traded with Viking settlements in Greenland. But as the number of finds increases, archeologists are wondering if the Norsemen really stopped in Greenland, or if they sailed on, deep into the Arctic.

Some of the most amazing finds to date have been made by Peter Schledermann, of the Calgary-based Arctic Institute of North America. In addition to pieces of armor, weapons and ship parts, he's also located a strip of woven cloth dated at 1250 A.D. and parts of a wooden box more than 500 years old.

In the last three summers, Mr. Schledermann has unearthed "the most massive amount of Norse material that's come out in the New World so far."

In the summer of 1978, Mr. Schledermann was working in the Bache Peninsula region, high on the east coast of Ellesmere Island, when his careful probings inside the ruins of a Thule culture winter house turned up an incredible find — a piece of Norse armor that may have come from the crusades.

"All of a sudden I found this heavy lump of material," he recalled in an interview, "and realized it was chain mail. A little while after that we found some boat rivets (from a Viking ship) . . . and on and on."

Until them, Mr. Schledermann and his assistants had given no thought to the possibility of finding Norse artifacts in the ancient Inuit village.

"A lot of the Norse material stems from the period between 1300 and 1350," he

said. "And I feel very strongly the material from that period . . . pertains to an actual voyage of the Norse people."

Mr. Schledermann said scientific tests date the chain mail to around 1300.

"Chain mail is a very unusual item in Greenland Norse history. I don't think it has ever been found there in fact. They were farmers, not warriors."

Mr. Schledermann said one explanation is that the armor came from a Norse expedition sent out to collect money from the Greenland settlements.

"If it is from 1350, as we believe, then the crusades were going on in the East. The church was financing the crusades and had a strong foothold in Greenland. The Norse were forced to pay tribute to the church and the crusades. The chain mail could have belonged initially to someone who had been to the crusades and was collecting tribute which would have been an incredible voyage.

Mr. Schledermann, like all scientific researchers, hates to speculate — but in archeology there is often no other choice.

The Norse presence in Greenland is well established, but a scholarly controversy has raged over whether the ancient men of the long ships actually pushed into the area that's now known as the Canadian Arctic Islands.

The evidence found in the last few years, while not conclusive, indicates that Norse hunting and exploring parties did travel far and wide in the Arctic, and may have done so for hundreds of years.

Last summer Mr. Schledermann's party found Norse material dating back to between 1100 and 1150.

One find was a carved face that is almost 800 years old. Small carvings are common to the Thule culture but this one has European features.

Looking at that rare carving, archeologists can't help wondering what inspired the long-dead Inuit artist.

Had he come face to face with a pale skinned, blue-eyed explorer on the shores of an ancient polar sea?

Mr. Schledermann doesn't want to guess, but he says it's clear the mystery of Norse presence in the Arctic is just beginning to unravel.

And Mr. Schledermann predicts that the finds have just begun.

—Courtesy of Lögberg-Heimskringla

Time is nature's way of making sure everything doesn't happen at the same time.

THE ICELANDIC-CANADIAN COMMUNITY AND ITS LITERATURE

by Prof. W. D. Valgardson

One of Canada's major problems is that its population is not homogeneous. As a result, the identities, goals and dreams of segments of the population do not coincide. This situation is a result, at least partially, of the constant and often simultaneous immigration into Canada of ethnic groups whose backgrounds are often disparate. If any one thing joins these groups, it is their hope for a better life in a new land. If, finally, they are to weld themselves into a group which has an identity and yet retains its diversity, then they must do so by sharing their experiences and dreams through literature. In this important national task, the Icelandic-Canadian has a unique opportunity to provide leadership.

Some immigrants come to Canada seeking political freedom; others come seeking opportunities in education, but nearly all come seeking to improve their standard of living. Most immigrants, to at least a reasonable degree, satisfy these desires. There is, however, another expectation in which they always have been and always will be disappointed. This expectation is that by enforcing various types of isolation — physical, social, religious — the group will retain its original identity.

So great is this need for identity that its retention will often affect all other aspects of the ethnic group's life. A clear example of the overriding importance of group identity can be seen in the actions of the Icelanders who came to Canada in the 1870's.

The *Gimli Saga* recounts that "in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the emigrants left, conditions there were extremely difficult. The country was under the rule of Denmark, not an independent republic as it became in 1944. Poverty was extreme, and natural disasters, such as volcanic eruptions and blocking of harbours by polar ice created discouraging hardships."

And, yet, one of the immigrant's major preoccupations was with the need to create the conditions which would allow the group to retain its ethnic identity. The Rev. Pall Thorlaksson, in his letters to Iceland, stressed that "the Icelandic people could maintain their identity in America, as the Norwegians had done, if they had their own teachers and ministers and their own publications." In a detailed report that was drawn up by the delegates for the Icelandic settlers recommending the Gimli area for settlement, it was pointed out that "There was ample room for an Icelandic colony."

The attempt to stay physically close for any immigrant group is based on practical considerations. This way, those who know English can act as translators. As a group, it is easier to obtain or produce food which is similar to that the immigrants are used to. They can support each other in the physical process of settlement. However, what is of at least of as much importance, is that this cohesion allows them to give each other emotional, moral and spiritual support. By being cohesive, they spread the trauma of drastic change over a longer period of time and made it possible for the group to adjust more easily. How difficult that transition is for the emotional side of our personalities can be seen in how long such a transition takes. Compared to our ability to adjust to technological change, our ability to adjust to emotional change seems painfully slow.

How impractical such a desire to retain an unchanging past identity is can be seen in the case of the Icelanders. They were,

Kristjanson tells us, ''a people unfamiliar with grain-farming, industrial life, mining, and lumbering. They were not accustomed to machinery, for their haying implements were a scythe and hand-rake. They were unused to war, and military life, for there was not a soldier in the land; unused to regimentation of any kind.''

All this would have to change.

The first priority of such a group is to ensure its survival, that is, to find food and shelter. Then, it must amass capital and produce not just enough for its own needs but a surplus. The Icelanders, when they came to America were highly literate. Even during the times of survival behaviour and the amassing of capital, they did what few other groups did — they gave literature a high priority. Their literature sustained them in the face of incredible hardship. It provided cohesion, a code of behaviour and an identity.

The monetary support for literature was, out of necessity, minimal. What little money was available went to the establishment of an ethnic newspaper. Kristjanson writes that ''The Icelandic immigrants in America were from the first concerned about the preservation of their language and nationality.'' The paper, *Framfari,* was founded less than two years after the arrival of the first settlers, ''in a community of some fifteen hundred people, the majority of whom were destitute, and in the year of a devastating epidemic.''

During the period of materialistic consolidation an important cultural change was taking place. English was not just being learned at a rudimentary level but, at least at the verbal level, was being mastered. The language of business was more and more English and, gradually, the social and artistic language was turning toward English, particularly for the new generation.

In the third stage, which encompasses the present, the majority of the individuals have English as their first language. Writing produced by this group is in English and the audience is English speaking. Not only that, it has a Canadian attitude and point of view, although the subject matter may be grounded in the ethnic community. Ethnic bonds have loosened. Self-protection no longer seems necessasry as it once did. The ethnic relationship is kept up more out of a sense of nostalgia or because of a sense of history. Movements back toward the original culture have become formalized and deliberate. Clubs have been formed, language classes offered and charter flights arranged.

This shift has been neither good nor bad but merely necessary.

Yet, in spite of these changes, the Icelanders have not been overwhelmed by the other ethnic populations of Canada. Their survival as a distinctive but integrated group within the Canadian social fabric has much to do with the attitude toward literature which helped them survive their first difficult years.

As the community has adapted to life in Canada, Icelandic-Canadian newsletters, magazines and papers have been printed in part or totally in English. At the same time, the community sense of pride in literary accomplishment has remained. This has allowed the group to exist not just for the sake of a nostalgia about the past but to take pride in its identity in the present.

In the immediate future, if Canada is to survive and prosper, the various ethnic groups must, while retaining their integrity, share with all the other groups, their history, their culture, their dreams. This is best done through two different kinds of writing: 1. the presentation, in readable form, of the history of its immigrant experience; 2. the translation of that experience into poetry, drama and fiction. The Icelandic-Canadians with their unique relationship to the written word are ideally suited for the task of providing the model for this type of literary leadership.

THE NARROWS — SIGLUNES SETTLEMENT

by William Friesen

The western part of the Municipality of Siglunes is commonly known as The Narrows-Siglunes District. It derives the first part of its name, ''The Narrows'', from its northern end where Lake Manitoba narrows to little more than half a mile. The second part refers to a point the Icelandic settlers called ''Siglunes'' after the name of a cape in Iceland given that name in the early history of the homeland. The word means ''mast point'' or ''spar point''.

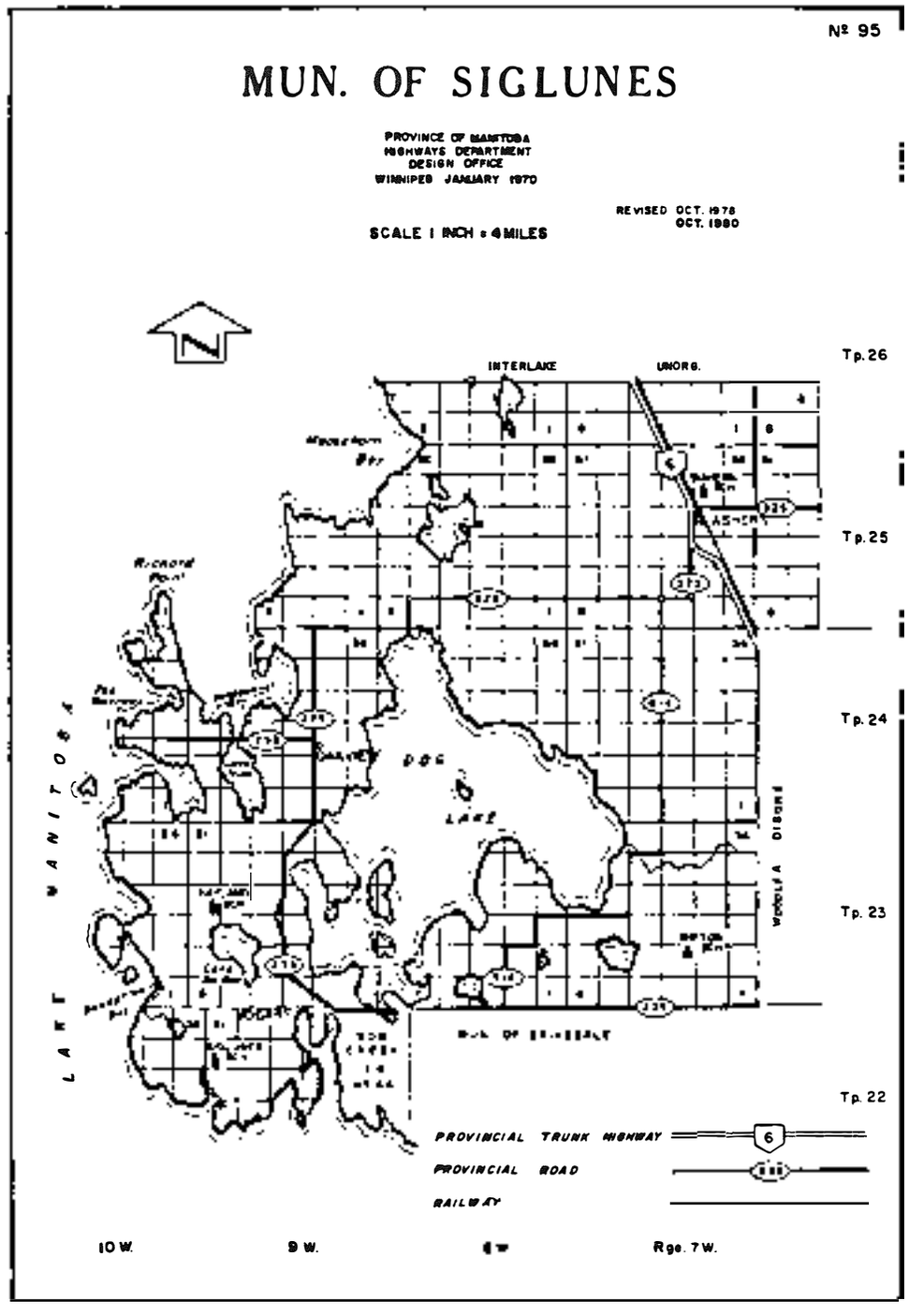
The Narrows-Siglunes district comprises a body of land roughly rectangular in shape that is almost completely surrounded by water. It is bounded on the north, west, and south by the irregular shore line of Lake Manitoba, and on the east by Dog Lake. It is roughly 16 miles long and 8 miles wide. It can be entered from the north by a land surface of about two and a half miles wide and from the south east between Dog Lake and an inlet of Lake Manitoba separated by a land surface a mile across. The roads leading east and southeast pass through the Dog Creek Indian reserve, which is adjacent to the southern end of the Siglunes part of the district.

At its peak in population the settlement was divided into five school districts — Siglunes, Hayland, Darwin, The Narrows, and Dog Creek. Situated in each district in the early days was a post office. The Darwin post office was Oakview, all the rest bore the name of the district.

My first four years as Inspector of Schools were spent in the West Interlake. The area I had to cover was known as School Division No. 23. It extended from St. Laurent to Gypsumville on both sides of Highway Six and from Poplarfield north to Hodgson. In addition there were the Indian Reserves. The Division was large geographically but rather sparsely populated. Over the years many settlers had moved out and there were many closed schools. It was the duty of the inspector to visit all of the classrooms at least twice a year. About 25 were visited a third time. Each of the closed schools were to be checked once a year. At this time there was a serious shortage of qualified teachers in Manitoba, especially in the more remote rural districts. In the Division as a whole only about 50% of the teachers were qualified. Some had grade XI or XII with six weeks of professional training; some had only XI or XII; and some had only a part of XI or XII. There was no high school in the Division that taught beyond grade XI, and this reduced the source of local teachers. The situation in The Narrows-Siglunes area paralleled that of the rest of the Division.

Despite these apparently deplorable statistics, the situation was not as bad as it might appear. In many of the school districts there was actually a strong interest in education. Where they could, the parents helped the children at home. Former teachers who had married into the district helped the teachers with Christmas concerts and 4-H clubs. One should mention also that many of the permit teachers, themselves, did remarkably well considering their lack of training and experience. There were quite a few students scattered through the Division who took grade IX and even X by correspondence and made it. This was especially true in the Siglunes area.

On one occasion I was discussing the situation with Dave Eggertson, secretary-treasurer of the Siglunes school District. I asked him why his Board, in view of the fact that the district was well off, did not hire qualified teachers. He replied that as secretary of the Board and a parent he cer-



tainly wanted qualified teachers, but that as a member of the Municipal Council, he felt that it was his duty to keep taxes as low as possible.

After Siglunes had employed permit teachers for several years, Miss Gudrun Eggertson, a local girl who had a good teaching position in Vancouver, came back to her home community to teach a year in Siglunes. When I visited the school that year I found a remarkable change in the educational progress. It exceeded that of all rural schools in the Division but one. She had pupils from Grade I or II to Grade X. All were doing well and appeared to be enjoying themselves. I was really impressed by the reading and arithmetic level attained by the primary grades. The lesson was not lost on the community. Although Miss Eggertson went back to Vancouver next year, the district, to my knowledge, did not again hire a permit teacher.

There was a strong interest in sport in the west Interlake, especially in hockey and baseball. The Narrows-Siglunes area fielded an excellent baseball team known at this time as The Siglunes Seals. My attention was first drawn to this fact by the showing of this team at the annual baseball tournaments held in Eriksdale. The men were striking in their immaculately laundered white uniforms, and their performance was just as impressive.

In 1976 The Municipality of Siglunes compiled and published a history of the town of Ashern and all the other school districts of the municipality. They entitled it **Taming the Wilderness.** It is an excellent work in terms of its thorough coverage of the community and the quality of the material. This is true also of the part dealing with the school districts of The Narrows-Siglunes area. Most of the rest of this article is based on material found in this part. The pioneers I have chosen were not necessarily the most outstanding but they were representative. Four of the contributors from whose well prepared material I have gleaned much of what follows were Ole Johnson, Kae Kernested, Emma Sigurdson and Mrs. Wm (Edith) Seal. Mrs. Seal, in addition to writing on various aspects of the community life in general, dealt specifically with a number of Metis personalities. This is valuable material and interesting, but I have made little reference to it because my purpose is to deal mainly with the Icelandic settlers of this community.

Before the Winnipeg Gypsumville railway was built the only way to reach the West Interlake overland was by a long and difficult trail through Stonewall across to Oak Point and Clarkleigh and then by what came to be known as the Colonization Road to what is now the Lundar district, and from there across to Siglunes and The Narrows. In summer it could also be reached by boat from Westbourne on Lake Manitoba, and in winter by sled and team over the ice.

Although difficult to reach at this time, The Narrows-Siglunes district had much to offer the prospective settler, provided, of course, that he was willing to work and willing to endure the hardships and dangers involved. There was usually an abundance of fish in the lakes and the land surface was an expanse of meadow and woodland suitable for hay and pasture. Near the southern end there were some excellent stands of poplar suitable for lumber. At first there was also an abundance of wild game. A settler could build a temporary shelter of logs for the first year or two, get a herd started and fish on the lakes for food and some extra much needed cash. With meat from his sheep and cattle, with milk and butter from his cows, and wool from his sheep, a large part of his basic needs could be met.

(Continued in a subsequent issue)

BOOK REVIEW

by Gustaf Kristjanson

Reflections by the Quills (Lillian Thorlacius, editor) is published by the Quill Historical Society, Wynyard, Saskatchewan S0A 4T0. $35 plus $2 shipping fees.

* * *

Western Canada must be coming of age. Perhaps it is all of the centennials and other special anniversary observances, but whatever the cause, we are seeing more and more local histories making their appearance, describing the origins and experiences of the people who settled the community being chronicled. These hold, of course, a special interest for those who have been associated with that community in one way or another.

Last winter saw the publication of another such local history. This one is so distinguished in its format and content that I could well imagine it holding an interest for almost everyone, and certainly not just those who live in the area to the south of the Quill Lakes in east central Saskatchewan. The book bears the intriguing title "Reflections by the Quills", and is published by the Quill Historical Society of Wynyard, Sask.

As with other pioneer communities, written records for the area are scanty. Apart from the aboriginal inhabitants who lived here, this was relatively unknown territory in the nineteenth century. A few visits were recorded by exploration parties, naturalists, surveyors, and the like. Actual settlement did not begin, however, until the early years of the present century. Within a very few years, homesteads were all snapped up and the Quill Plains had become a thriving agricultural community. As pointed out in the introductory chapter, man has lived in areas of Saskatchewan for thousands of years. All we have to assist us in speculating about their existence here are a few stone artifacts — arrow and spear tips, scrapers and other tools, nothing about their hopes and dreams or their personal tragedies. Yet here, within the pages of the book being reviewed, is encapsulated the experience of a society that has lived in the area for a few generations only. Such is the power of the written record.

This book is of more than passing interest to readers of *The Icelandic Canadian*, since a large proportion of the pioneer settlers were of Icelandic origin. One would venture to say that few would not have relatives, friends, or acquaintances mentioned somewhere in these pages. As a matter of fact, a look at any survey map of homesteads occupied in the earliest years of settlement shows that most of them were settled by people with Icelandic names. The ethnic composition of the community has altered, of course, with the passage of years, but even so, roughly forty percent of all the family histories recorded in this volume deal with families of Icelandic origin. Not many of them were immigrants directly from Iceland, however. They came from Manitoba and other parts of Canada, and a very considerable number came from Icelandic districts in North Dakota. Many of the schools established in the Quill Plains area were given Icelandic names — Grandy, Sleipnir, Nordra, Mimer.

As explained in the preface, this whole effort evolved from the idea of writing a small local history of the Mountain School District (named, incidentally, after Mountain, N.D., whence most of the settlers came), which is located a few miles west of the town of Wynyard. As public interest increased, the project expanded by degrees until it included no less than fourteen

school districts lying adjacent to the south shores of the Quill Lakes or nearby. Understandably then, the organization of the book is largely along these lines, with a chapter devoted to each school district. There are also introductory chapters on the geography of the area and on early adventures and explorers of the region, as well as chapters on a diversity of topics such as growth of co-operatives, health care, culture, special days, etc.

The major portion of the book is devoted to family histories, each one written by someone with a close knowledge of that particular family (usually an immediate descendant or other relative). Some of these accounts are quite brief, consisting of little more than the family chronicle of births, deaths, and marriages; while others are much more elaborate in dealing with pioneer experiences, achievements, and recollections of the community in which they lived. Despite the private and individual nature of each of these write-ups, the combined effect of them is to give a certain sense of *community* experience, possibly because there are a number of common elements running through all of the accounts. We have here a social record of what these people went through in the early years of the century: descriptions of ploughing with teams of oxen, of spending the first winter in a sod shack, of enduring natural disasters such as blizzards, hailstorms, and prairie fires. These, along with happier events — picnics, school dances, and the like. To one who grew up in the community, the reading of these accounts becomes almost an exercise in nostalgia. Names that had become distant memories — almost forgotten, in fact — return again to jog one's memory. Faces that have long since passed from the scene peer out from the photographs that are scattered profusely throughout the book.

The volume — almost encyclopedic in size — is over seven hundred pages in length and very attractively bound. A complete index of all the family histories is included for ready reference, and a topical index as well.

Inevitably there are some omissions and some minor errors. How could it be otherwise in a work of this size and complexity, especially where much of the material is dependent on the interest, resourcefulness, and reliability, of all those who contributed? As the editors have explained in the preface, it "was shaped by the response of our extensive requests for contributions." Naturally, these responses varied greatly from one contributor to another. Hence the final text became largely "a direct reflection of what the families and groups chose to offer us, of their responses to our efforts, of their desire to be part of this book."

The amount of work required of the editorial board in soliciting contributions, organizing the material, and setting it up in its present form must have been prodigious. Special credit must go, of course, to the editor of this beautiful book, Mrs. Lillian Thorlacius of Wynyard. Mrs. Thorlacius is the daughter of Peter and Elizabeth Thorsteinson, who farmed for many years in the Mountain School District on a stretch of land overlooking Big Quill Lake. She herself is the wife of a farmer as well as being a teacher on the staff of the Wynyard High School.

The whole effort is to be very much commended: so much so that one might hope that the Quill Historical Society is sufficiently encouraged by the success of this project to consider bringing out another book at some future date, updating and adding to the material in this one. Could we call it "More Reflections by the Quills"? Also, if such a project has not already been undertaken, could we not have a similar survey and historical record of the *eastern* half of the Lakes Settlement — that area

stretching from Mozart to Foam Lake? This would be most welcome.

To conclude, let us quote from the introduction to "Reflections by the Quills": "This history is written to honour the pioners who played their role in helping to build this part of Saskatchewan. It is also for their descendants for our youth and those yet to come, so that they will understand their beginnings and hopefully will find a broader footing for their places in the world." In this the book has surely succeeded.

BOOK REVIEW

AUD/UNN THE DEEP MINDED

by Elizabeth Hoisington Stewart

Some few months ago the editor of this magazine received a copy — typed and bound — of a booklet on Aud the Deep Minded, one of the more memorable characters mentioned in such works as the Icelandic **Book of Settlements** (Landnamabok) and the Laxdaela Saga. The author of the booklet, about 24 pages in length, is Mrs. Elizabeth H. Stewart of Rochester, N.Y. who is herself a direct descendant of Aud (or Unn) the Deep Minded, as she is sometimes called). Her interest in the topic is, therefore, most understandable. As she explains in her introcduction: "The name 'Aud the Deep Minded' tugged at my imagination. I decided to see what I could find out about her life and times and as I have become more and more impressed with what a remarkable woman she was." Incidentally, in this view she would be very much supported by the view expressed in an article which appeared in this magazine last year ("Four Famous Women of Iceland's Saga Age") wherein Dr. V. J. Eylands paid tribute to the qualities of this most unique pioneer of settlement in Iceland during the Middle Ages.

Whatever the motivation, Mrs. Stewart is to be commended not only for her clear and expressive writing but for her scholarship and diligence in organizing pretty much all of the known information about this classic figure of Iceland's Saga Age into a coherent account that includes biographical incidents, social and historical background, and commentary where relevant by various scholars and authorities. Strictly speaking, however, it isn't really a biography of Aud. There simply isn't sufficient known about here to make it possible to assemble a life story. What it is, rather, is an assembly of facts, commentary, and historical background to give us some idea of the life and times in which she lived. As she points out in her introduction, she has used translations of the Icelandic sagas by various scholars as well as material from modern historians. She has also designed an attractive cover for the booklet using a calligraphy style called "Uncial" which, we are informed, "was used by Irish and other early clerics. The interlacing border is similar to those used by Scandinavians and Celts."

Mrs. Stewart begins her account as follows:

> Eleven and a half centuries ago a little girl, Audr or Unnr Kettilsdottir, was born in Norway. She has been remembered and recorded as not only the daughter, wife, and mother of famous vikings, but as a chieftain in her own right and the embodiment of all that was respected in the pagan Viking Age. Paradoxically, she also came to represent in folk memory the christianity which eventually overcame the old Scandinavian religion.

To those of our readers who are not familiar with the story of Aud, as told in the Icelandic sagas, she was the daughter of a Norse chieftain known as Ketil Flatnose who, reputedly, was forced to leave Norway because he was on the outs with Harald Fair Hair, the King. Ketil's sons (and a daughter, who married at about this time) migrated to Iceland as part of the wave of settlement to that country, but he himself settled in Scotland with the rest of his family. Aud was married to a man called Olaf the White, who conquered Dublin in Ireland. They had one son who became known as Thorstein the Red. This Thorstein was a most warlike viking, ultimately making himself ruler of a portion of northern Scotland and holding this position until his subjects rebelled. In the rebellion he was slain, leaving a half dozen daughters and a son to mourn him, as well as his mother, Aud.

As Mrs. Stewart expresses it: "Aud was now in a difficult and dangerous situation. She was a middle-aged woman with seven grandchildren to look after and without father, husband, or son to defend her, in the midst of enemies in a hostile land. "Neither she nor these same grandchildren would have made their imprint in the Icelandic sagas had she not met this challenge as she did. She had a ship built for herself in the forest, and had it fitted out and loaded with cargo. Then, with her remaining kinfolk and retinue, she departed for Iceland, making stops en route in the Orkneys and also in the Faroe Islands, marrying off a couple of her granddaughters in the process. Incidentally, it is to this Orkney line that Mrs. Stewart has been able to trace her own ancestry.

The booklet goes on to discuss the way in which Aud established a new domain for herself and her followers in the west of Iceland. "As the years went by, Aud the Deep Minded reared and found appropriate spouses for the rest of her grandchildren, established a prosperous farm, ruled her followers, and managed her chieftaincy." The author also includes descriptions of life in those days, complete with diagrams and sketches of such matters of interest as the Viking Age farmhouse and a modern man of Hvammsfjord, where Aud and her followers settled. Generous quotations of passages from the Laxdaela Saga, dealing with some of the more dramatic incidents in her life, are likewise given.

Those desirous of reading this interesting account in greater detail should contact the author direct at her home in Rochester, N.Y. and arrange to procure a copy from her. She is a staunch supporter of **The Icelandic Canadian** and has a lively interst in the maintaining of Icelandic culture in North America.

We appreciate having had the opportunity to read the account and feel that the closing she used to complete the account is an appropriate way to end this review:

> Aud's story has been used to symbolize the struggle between the old faith and the new; to dramatize the values of the viking culture and the ideal of viking womanhood; to demonstrate the explosion of people from Scandinavia; to illustrate the Celtic influence in Iceland; to hold up a heroine for the nation she helped found; and to be an inspiration for her many descendants in the Old World and the New.

Copies of this most interesting and informative booklet are availabel by contacting Mrs. Elizabeth H. Stewart, 143 Pelham Road, Rochester, New York, U.S.A. 14610 at $4.80 Canadian or $4.00 U.S., including packing and postage.

BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by W. D. Valgardson

Wake-Pick Poems by Kristjana Gunnars. House of Ananis, Toronto, Ontario. $6.95 paper.

A wake-pick is a sliver of wood used in old Iceland to keep the eyelids open during nights of knitting. Wake-Pick Poems is a collection of poetry in which the Scandinavian temperament is explored by an original Icelandic-Canadian talent.

* * *

In *Wake-Pick Poems* Kristjana Gunnars confirms the talent which was apparent in her first books. These poems, often brooding and dark, are carved from the hardest wood, the darkest stone. Yet, the overall effect is not of darkness for these word sculptures are suffused with colour and life.

Wake-Pick Poems is divided into three sections: ''changeling poems,'' ''monkshood poems,'' and ''wake-pick poems.'' Each section has a speaker who tells her story in the first person. The result is the gradual revelation of each speaker. Thus, while any one poem works in and of itself, the sections are far more powerful than all the poems singly.

Both ''changeling poems'' and ''monkshood poems'' begin with journeys. In ''changeling 1'', the speaker says

i said we survived the fire of jupiter
we survived the flood of atlantis
so they send me away
to mosfallssveit

and with that the reader begins a journey into the otherness that many people feel peripherally but poets, those strange beings who live on the very shores of the unconscious, know directly. On the surface, this section of poems leads the reader into superstition — a world of trolls, elves, fear, magical protection — but below the surface, it leads him into a world where nothing is quite what it seems, where the concrete provable world fades, where aloneness and difference are supreme.

In ''monkshood 1'' the speaker both protests and explains that

it's not a trip i'm taking
from reykjavik to kobenhavn
on my uncle's steam trawler

it's not a trip
it's another life i'm taking.

As concrete a statement as that, though, draws the reader not on a touristy trip of surfaces but down into an inner world where the speaker refuses Hemingway's false answer (an answer that led eventually to his suicide) in ''Big Two-Hearted River I and II'' to the question of man's dark side. Challenged by the threat of her inner world, she speaks for all of us when she says she'd like

to get rid of the trolls
want to hang them from a slime-
thread
from a tree
drop them on the rocks
sail them out the fjord
on a deep keel, on pale water

The troll inside us is always there and must, each day, be dealt with. Many turn away from this knowledge of what they are capable (how many good, solid, respectable Canadians could be murderers, torturers, thieves) but the speaker does not flinch. With great courage she looks directly into life. She recognizes that even in the most innocent and beautiful of places

on jytte's manor there are rosewook
tables in the park
covered with white lace
splattered with red roses

there is life-threatening danger. Among the ''crystal whipped cream strawberries'' there is

early spring toxin
little girls in the cowbane marsh
small white cups on the water hemlock
& sudden death

The joy of these poems comes not just from their honesty but from the precision of their language. So concrete are the details

in the death-enclosure
ear tongs hang from the loft
they put them on the pig's head
one prong on each side

that the picture presented and implied could be painted. Such precise use of language allows the poet to close the gap between her imagination and knowledge and the reader's lack of knowledge.

The joy of these poems is also in the deft joining of the everyday

grandpa drains his day at the grocers
sits behind the counter
chews copenhagen snuff

with the superstitious, exotic, inner world

don't let a distaff
touch my head
don't cut my hair with scissors
use a knife when i eat

Many modern poems are written too easily, read too easily, are all surface and no content. That charge cannot be laid against any of Gunnars' poems, not even the simplest. Not only did these poems send me scurring to my reference shelves for a more complete explanation of such things as changelings and trolls, but words and images kept catching my eye, pulling it back to look again, to see anew. Since that first reading, I have found myself picking up *Wake-Pick Poems* to reread individual poems. These poems are demanding. They require that the reader use his intelligence and imagination but they are well worth the effort.

BOOK REVIEW

by Sigrid Johnson

The Icelanders edited by David Arnason and Michael Olito, with a commentary by David Arnason. Published in Winnipeg by Turnstone Press, 1981. 129 pp.

* * *

A handsome volume, with full-page photographs in a coffee-table book vein, *The Icelanders*, according to the editors, ''is not a history. It is a journey into memory and myth, a collage of photos, remembrances, poems, statements and fragments. It's about the Icelanders who settled in Manitoba in 1875 on the shore of Lake Winnipeg, and it's about the time when they were a separate group, before they became simply Canadians with a special set of memories. So this book is personal. It is not representative or fair or complete.'' According to Arnason, the book ''attempts to give a less informational and more impressionistic account of the Icelandic settlement in the Interlake through the use of diary selections, old letters, tape-recorded interviews and photographs.'' All photographs are courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

The first page of text consists of an excerpt from a letter written by Eirikr Magnusson which appeared in the *London Times*, May 20, 1875. Therein one of the

reasons for the emigrations from Iceland to Canada — the volcanic eruptions in the Dyngjufjöll with its concomitant dust-gloom and fall of ashes — is described. Opposite the text is a photograph of Sigtryggur Jonasson, "the Father of New Iceland". On the next page is a description of the arrival of the first group of Icelanders to Winnipeg as it appeared in the *Manitoba Free Press* on October 12, 1875. This is followed by diary, letter and newspaper accounts of the day-to-day trials and tribulations of the Icelandic settlers, interspersed with photographs of prominent members of the Icelandic community.

Well represented in the book are scenes and accounts of the two principal occupations of the new settlers — fishing and farming. Fishing quickly became a year-round occupation as they acquired the technique of ice-fishing. Sheep farmers from Iceland learned to raise cattle in New Iceland.

When they weren't catching fish or haying for their cattle, the Icelanders found time for recreation. Sailing, baseball games, glima, dances and, of course, the Islendingadagurinn all provided the much needed distraction from their daily hardships.

For those interested in acquiring a new perspective on the story of these Icelandic pioneers of a century ago replete with overtones of romantic nostalgia which so often accompanies works on the subject, $14.95 is a small price to pay. Unfortunately, the soft-cover format does not guarantee a lifespan of more than one generation.

SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED

CANADA ICELAND FOUNDATION

We invite students of Icelandic or part-Icelandic descent to apply for the following scholarships which are offered or processed by The Canada Iceland Foundation.

Emilia Palmason Student Aid Fund

Two awards of $500.00 each to be given in 1982. The recipients must be of good moral character, Icelandic descent, college calibre and primarily in need of help to continue their studies in high school, college or at University level. They are asked to sign a pledge that "somewhere along the highway of life" they will try to provide comparable help to another needy student. Closing date for applications **June 30th.**

Thorvaldson Scholarship

One scholarship of $500.00 to be awarded in 1982. This annual scholarship will be awarded to a student in University or proceeding into a University in Canada or the United States. The recipient must demonstrate financial need and high scholastic ability. Closing date for applications **September 15.**

Einar Pall and Ingibjorg Jonsson Memorial Scholarship

One scholarship of $500.00 to be awarded in 1982. Award to be determined by academic standing and leadership qualities. To be offered to a High School graduate proceeding to a Canadian University or the University of Iceland. Closing date for applications **September 15.**

The Canadian Iceland Foundation Scholarship

One scholarship of $500.00 to be awarded in 1982. Award to be determined by academic standing and leadership qualities. To be offered to a University student studying towards a degree in any Canadian University. Closing date for applications **September 15.**

Students wishing to apply are asked to submit applications with supporting documents indicating which scholarship they wish to apply for. Information and application forms are available by telephoning 475-8064 or contacting:

Canadian Icelandic Foundation
c/o M. Westdal, Secretary
40 Garnet Bay, Winnipeg Manitoba
R3T 0L6

IN THE NEWS

From the Newsletter of THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN CLUB OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Icelandic Books Donated by Höfn

Fifteen Icelandic books, once part of the library at Hofn, the Icelandic-Canadian home in Vancouver, are on their way to Alberta.

They are to take their places on the bookshelves of the restored farm home of Icelandic Canadian poet Stephan G. Stephansson.

That is a fitting place for the books because they are among an estimated 240 books at the Icelandic Home that came from the old Markerville area library that Stephansson was active in starting and maintaining.

The story of the return of the books began when Oskar Howardson, a member of the board of the home, saw an advertisement in *The Icelandic Canadian* magazine. The ad, placed by historian Jane McCracken, who was in charge of the restoration of the old Stephansson house, listed books that research indicated may have been on Stephansson's bookshelves.

Oskar took up the matter with the Höfn board and was asked to survey the home's collection for books on the list prepared by the Alberta Historic Sites Branch.

With the help of club member Gudrun Hallson, Howardson separated all the books stamped Idunn, the name of the Alberta library. The two were aided by club president Hrafnhildur Esmail, who is also a member of the board of the home.

WINNIPEGERS TO PERFORM

Three Winnipeg performers are among 10 Canadians selected by the Canadian Folk Arts Council to represent Canada in a cultural and arts festival associated with the Commonwealth Games in Australia this month.

Dancers *Gaile Petursson-Hiley* and Robert Jayne of Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers and accordionist Ted Komar were chosen by the council to appear at the festival in Brisbane.

The dance duo will perform Diary, an intimate and touching music and dance portrayal of bittersweet memories in an artist's search for growth. *Petursson-Hiley was a 1979 winner in the Du Maurier search for the stars and has performed with Pacific Ballet Theatre, Rainbow Stage and CBC-TV.*

Jayne has performed with the Richmond Theatre collection, Jacob's Pillow Dancers, and in the film Gala, filmed at the National Arts Centre.

Komar, a well-known music personality on Winnipeg TV productions, has been a music director of various regional and national folk art festivals.

The 10 performers from Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, assembled as the Kanata Ensemble, will be lead by artistic supervisor Leon Kossar, director-general of the Canadian Folk Arts Council.

The Winnipeg Free Press
September 23, 1982

A Photograph of Mrs. Petursson-Hiley will appear in our Winter Issue, 1982.

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