Canada Iceland Foundation Inc.

An organization funded by Canadians of Icelandic Descent, dedicated to the preservation of their Cultural Heritage.

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Cover: ***A Nordic Saga,*** *an original work of art by B.C. artist, Patricia Guttormson Peacock.*

THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN

North America's quarterly magazine in celebration of the Icelandic Heritage published by Canadian Icelandic Heritage, Inc., Winnipeg, Canada.

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On the Cover

Canadians of Nordic descent
Heritage Day 1996

This Heritage Day, February 19, 1996, we celebrate the gifts given to us by Canadians of Nordic descent. To tell their story, we have commissioned an original artwork. This artwork is made into a poster and it, and accompanying teaching material, will be distributed to teachers and leaders of children throughout Canada.

A Nordic Saga is the creation of B.C. artist, Patricia (Guttormson) Peacock. Pat is Icelandic Canadian, born and raised in Gimli, Manitoba. As Pat Peacock worked on *A Nordic Saga*, she thought of her ancestors coming to Canada with their hearts full of promise for a better tomorrow. It is her hope, and that of Heritage Canada, that the painting will inspire children, whatever their heritage might be, to look to their roots and so that they will know themselves better.

What does *A Nordic Saga* mean? The word "Nordic" represents people from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. "Saga", an ancient Norse word, means "story". The 1996 Heritage Day image tells the story of 800,000 Nordic-Canadians who have immigrated to Canada.

What is heritage? A simple way to define heritage is to say that it's anything you treasure that you wish to hand down to the next generation. It can be a story told to a child, the streetscape where you live,the language you speak or a favourite family recipe, a threadbare teddy bear or a cherished family photograph. It can be your roots buried in a Northern forest or embedded in the rocks of a mine or in the fishing or farming legacy of your family. All these things form part of Canada. All are part of our collective Canadian heritage.

Heritage Canada is a national, membership-based registered charity and non-profit organization founded in 1973. Heritage Canada's mission, as adopted by its Board of Governors, is to provide leadership by promoting, preserving and celebrating our heritage as a nation of diverse peoples, and to enlist the largest number of Canadians in taking charge of their heritage.

The printing and distribution of the Heritage Day materials would not have been possible without the generous support of our many sponsors: The Canada Iceland Foundation, Canada Post Corporation, The CRB Foundation, the Embassy of Finland, the Embassy of Iceland, the Embassy of Sweden, Ericsson Communications Inc., the Iceland Tourist Board, Icelandair, The Icelandic National League, the Royal Danish Embassy and the Royal Norwegian Embassy.

Editorial

Heritage Day 1996: Celebrating Canadians of Nordic Descent

by Hélène Ann Fortin

A few months ago, I was reviewing books in The Icelandic Collection at the library at the University of Manitoba. I had come to undertake research on Icelandic Canadians for Heritage Day 1996. It was late, near closing time. It had been a long day and I was tired. Suddenly I smelt pipe tobacco. I got up from my chair, looked around, saw no-one and finally determined I was alone. But the smell of that tobacco didn't go away, in fact it grew stronger.

I looked down at the book in front of me. It was one from the Stephan G. Stephansson collection. I felt that there, in the library with me, was the spirit of something powerful from the past, the spirit of this great author.

My mind wandered back to a discussion held months earlier with a shaman friend, Wes Fine Day, who told me that we knew everything, we just forgot a lot. Wes said this in the context of my comment to him about the native sacred site I was visiting. I had just finished telling him that I found the rocks and trees very powerful at Waneskawin, this sacred site located on the outskirts of Saskatoon.

He, with his gentle way of teaching, reminded me that not only were the rocks and trees sacred and needed to be honoured, but that all things were sacred: the weeds that grew under my feet, the animals, birds, people and spirits that grace our place or space.

Reflecting on these words in the library, I was being reminded of the need to honour the sacredness of the things and spirits from the past. Stephan G. Stephansson was there in the library, smoking his pipe and, if I listened carefully, I would hear his voice within and without his books. That was the beginning of my research for Heritage Day 1996.

Heritage Day is a national, educational programme of The Heritage Canada Foundation. As a charitable organization, our mandate is to celebrate the heritage of all Canadians.

Heritage Day falls on the third Monday in February. Each Heritage Day a particular theme is selected and, in 1996, we are celebrating Canadians of Nordic Descent.

Through this research, I was welcomed into many homes and offices of Canadians of Danish, Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian and Icelandic descent. Each, in their own way, taught me about their heritage.

At times I felt like an imposter (being non-Nordic and attempting to capture the essence of such beautiful and complex peoples in the words that I wrote). But their kindness and patience shaped my base of knowledge, my love of their roots and, from that, and Pat Peacock's *A Nordic Saga*, the 160,500 Heritage Day products were produced, i.e., 80,000 copies of a bilingual full-colour poster; 80,000 copies of a 16-page bilingual Leaders' and Teachers' Guide; as well as 500 24-page Teacher's Manuals, available in English or French and sold at a cost of $7.00 each.

Although the primary target audiences for the Heritage Day products were teachers and youth leaders, the general public, and, especially, Nordic Canadians, quickly got caught up in the spell of Heritage Day and activities were organized throughout Canada.

In fact, the Nordic Canadian community is extending its celebrations well beyond Heritage Day planning celebrations throughout 1996. Teachers and leaders of children seem to be doing likewise as we are still receiving requests for this pedagogical material.

Nearly 500 newspaper clippings reflected the multitude of events in and around Heritage Day and Heritage Canada's offices received hundreds of calls and requests for Heritage Day kits.

As Heritage Canada is a charitable, membership-based organization with limited funding, we looked to sponsors to help defray the printing costs of the Heritage Day materials.

The Nordic community was quick to respond and donated $32,000. Groups such as the Canada Iceland Foundation; the Embassy of Iceland; Icelandair; the Icelandic National League and the Iceland Tourist Board played a major role in this sponsorship providing Heritage Canada with in excess of $5,000 in donations.

Other sponsorships were received from the Embassy of Sweden; Ericsson Communications; the Finnish Language Teachers' Association via the Embassy of Finland; the Royal Danish Embassy and the Royal Norwegian Embassy.

In addition, The Canada Post Corporation and the CRB Foundation provided in-kind sponsorships valued at $60,000 which helped distribute the Heritage Day materials to schools. To each of these sponsors, we owe our sincere thanks.

As you can see, Heritage Day is a partnership of many people and groups coming together and working for the good of all. One of the most important individuals who contributed to the project was, of course, Patricia Guttormson Peacock, the 1996 Heritage Day artist. It was her work, *A Nordic Saga*, that was the driving force behind Heritage Day 1996.

Patricia's artwork was selected hands down by an advisory panel which reviewed portfolios from a number of Nordic Canadian artists. Pat proved to be a stalwart ally in this project. Her vision, professionalism and love of her heritage made her a powerful ally as the project evolved.

Just like Pat Peacock, each one of us is a guardian of tradition. We take on this role

inherently even though our heritage is often the commonplace things around us—sometimes, even, the things we take for granted. It's the songs we sing, the language we speak, the stories we tell, the crafts that busy our hands and hearts, the streetscapes and buildings that surround us, our literary tradition and our art. It is in reality the essence of who we are as a people.

And it is this sense of people working together for the good of all that is the power that drives Heritage Day. This concept is reflected in the first editorial written for *The Icelandic Canadian* by the wise hand of Laura Goodman Salverson:

"We believe that our first duty is to Canada and to the world of tomorrow. In that new world, ethnic differences must not prevail as they have hitherto prevailed. Our divergent cultures must be freely spent in building a co-ordinated and greater civilization sincerely and sanely devoted to the common good of this country."

Her words ring ever more true today, fifty-four years after they were originally written. That's really the essence of Heritage Day. It is a day for all Canadians to celebrate who they are as a people. A day when we remind ourselves of the importance of the past because by knowing the past, by being connected to our roots, we are better connected to ourselves. This not only provides us with a stronger and better base to move out into the world, but by sharing each other's heritage we can dispel the prejudice that sometimes rears its ugly head in our society.

This is why I think it is so important for organizations such as Heritage Canada to keep reaching out to children, especially in this time of change and disconnectedness. All the government, educational, economic and, in some cases, family safety nets we have come to rely upon are shifting, drifting or disappearing.

Hopefully by doing our small part to help young people connect with their roots, their heritage, we can at least provide them with a basis for feeling proud of their origins. With that comes a greater sense of self-confidence, and, from this, perhaps, the beginning of a sense of compassion and understanding for other people's heritage. That is the essence of the Heritage Day movement.

On behalf of The Heritage Canada Foundation, I thank each and everyone I met while working on this project for their tremendous help. I also extend my thanks to those wise spirits from the past as they guided my research, my work and my hand as I worked on Heritage Day 1996.

The Icelandic - American Emigration Centre at Hofsós, Iceland

by Áslaug Jónsdóttir
with contribution from Salvör Jónsdóttir

On July 7th, 1996 an information centre and an exhibition from Skagafjörður Folk Museum on emigration from Iceland to North America, opens at Hofsós, Northern Iceland. This is the first centre and exhibition of its kind in Iceland and its opening will be celebrated with a display of the history of the Icelandic emigration to North America.

Routes to the roots

In the last few years, eleven European nations, including Iceland, have participated in a joint project called "Routes to the roots." One of their tasks is to inform the descendants of European immigrants in North America about their ancestral land and history. Most of the participants in the project are museums, universities and institutes that specialize in the emigration era. Moreover, representatives from the tourist industry participate in the project.

Unlike the other participating nations, Iceland had no institution or museum that specialized in the emigration to North America. Currently, guests from North America looking for their ancestors in Iceland have no designated place to visit as do the Scandinavian nations, that have the Nordic House in Reykjavík. Iceland and Icelanders welcome all visitors, although "relatives" from overseas have a special place in the nation's heart.

Among immigrants to North America, the Icelandic population is relatively small, and the Icelanders did not emigrate until late in the immigration period (apart from, Leifur Eiríksson and Þorfinnur Karlsefni and their families). However, from an Icelander's point of view, the emigrants to North America were numerous. In the period from 1870-1914 about 16,000 people left Iceland for America. When the emigration decreased, around 1890, the population in Iceland was about 70,000, and had not grown for 30 years. The story of the emigration is an exciting and important part of Icelandic history and deserves attention. At the same time Icelanders would like

to strengthen the "family-ties" with their relatives in America.

When the Icelandic representatives in the "Routes to the roots" project were looking for interesting places in Iceland to be a part of the project a small town in northern Iceland, Hofsós, caught their attention. In this town, just a stone's-throw away from where the ocean's waves lap against the shore, stood an old, yet stately, house. This building once housed a retail store and was being saved from demolition. When the idea of establishing an information centre and a genealogical research centre came up, its destiny was determined. The old house by the harbour is to be devoted to the emigrants who left their motherland for a long journey to a new world. A relatively big group of people left from northern Iceland, and their feelings and thoughts can be recollected in this house down by the small harbour of Hofsós.

The Icelandic-American Emigration Centre.

During the last year, the old store has been renovated for its new role. A new addition, including a conference room, a library, an information and a genealogical centre is now replacing the workrooms and bait-cabins that stood next to the store. The main building will house an exhibit on the emigration as well as a giftshop. The exhibit comes from the Skagafjörður Folk Museum which collects objects and information about the emigration from Iceland to America and is being prepared by the staff at the museum, with assistance from the staff of the Akureyri Museum. The President of Iceland, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, is expected to open the centre to the public on July 7th.

The Icelandic-American Emigration Centre is owned by a small, yet growing, company, Snorri Þorfinnsson, Inc.. The name of the company has a strong connection both to North America and to Skagafjörður. Snorri Þorfinnsson was the first European child known to be born in America. His parents, Þorfinnur Karlsefni from Þórðarhöfði (only a few miles from Hofsós) and Guðrún Þorbjarnardóttir travelled to Vinland and spent the winter there early in the 11th century. Later on Snorri Þorfinnson settled down at Glaumbær in Skagafjörður, where today there is the Skagafjörður Folk Museum, that includes traditional Icelandic farm buildings.

Snorri Þorfinnsson Inc. specializes in tourism and cultural relations with North America. Its activities can be divided into the following five main categories:

1. The Exhibition. The exhibit will illustrate the circumstances in Iceland late in the 19th century and show some of the reasons for the emigration as well as some of the belongings of the emigrants. Icelanders like to think of the emigrants as people who were escaping poverty and a hard life in Iceland. However, many who were well off also left as did those searching for adventure. The exhibition will illustrate the expectations of the emigrants as well as the atmosphere on board ship to the new world and the reality awaiting them in America.

2. The Genealogical Centre. The genealogical centre is intended to serve the descendants of the emigrants to America as well as Icelanders. People of Icelandic ancestry should be able to come to the centre to have their family trees traced and to obtain information about their relatives. The University of Akureyri in northern Iceland will be responsible for the professional management of the centre.

3. The Library. The library will include resources on genealogy as well as the history of Icelanders in America. Literature on the subject already exists in numerous publications, both in Iceland and North America.

4. The Conference Room. The centre will contain good facilities for presentations and showings. The centre will provide an educational program, linked to school visits and special courses. As well, the centre will be an ideal meeting place and conference centre for scholars whatever their area of interest.

5. The Shop. The building's original role will be respected by restoring the old retail store, in a style keeping with the turn of the century.

The foregoing, is only that which is already underway at the emigration centre, but there are further plans to strengthen the cultural relations between Iceland and descendants of the emigrants to North America. The centre will also house a small gallery and facilities for scholars and artists who would like to spend some time at Hofsós. Additionally, groups and individuals alike, will be offered special services upon request. The ideas behind the emigration centre are still evolving which allows for flexibility. Members of Snorri Þorfinnsson, Inc. have been involved in the tourist industry for years and are known for accommodating guests in a very pleasant and personal way. Hofsós and its surroundings have many things to offer and a visit there should please everyone.

Hofsós: a tiny village with a great history.

Hofsós is inhabited by only about 250 people. The village is a typical Icelandic coastal village, where the catch from the sea has dictated the lives of people throughout the centuries. However, Hofsós has also had other functions and is considered among the oldest trading posts in Iceland. During the 16th century Hofsós became the main centre of trading in Skagafjörður, at a time when trading and authority were closely related. An old warehouse, once owned by the Danish Royal Trading Company in the 18th century is preserved at Hofsós, and now houses a collection of artifacts related to fishing and bird catching on the historic Drangey island in the middle of Skagafjörður.

The economy at Hofsós is dependent upon the fishing industry, some manufacturing and servicing with the surrounding agricultural areas. A small sewing workshop at Hofsós specializes in making the Icelandic national banner. The tourist industry plays an ever increasing role in the village's economy.

Older homes lie near the mouth of the Hofsós River and form the core of the old village. Many of the houses have been restored and some are rented out as guest-houses or summer homes. An old, blue painted, wood house is currently a cafe in the summer. The old warehouse, a preferred visiting place, stands at the mouth of the harbour. In its attic, visitors can sit and rest on bails of hay, listen to local musicians play the accordion and sing, while they taste Icelandic specialties such as cured shark. From the old warehouse, a short walk across the bridge over the Hofsós River, takes you to the emigration centre. This environment together with the calls of the seagulls and the scent of seaweed, takes one back in time. This special atmosphere helps tell the story of the life of the Icelanders through the centuries.

Hofsós is well located in Skagafjörður, an area rich in Icelandic history, and is only

about 130 km (80 miles) from Akureyri, the "capital" of northern Iceland. Some of the attractions visitors come to see include the old farm Glaumbær - a turf and stone construction; the bishopric of the North at Hólar; a tiny turf house at Gröf - one of the oldest chapels in Iceland; and the Stephan G. Stephansson memorial. Those who wish to follow the footsteps of Grettir the Strong can take a bath in the stone-constructed pool at Reykir, where Grettir bathed after his heroic swim from Drangey - or visit Drangey island itself. Drangey is interesting from a geological, ecological and historical viewpoint. Moreover, the island is the scene of much folklore. The saga of Grettir took place early in the 11th century, and at the same time that Snorri Þorfinnsson lived in Glaumbær, Grettir lived the last years of his life as an outlaw on Drangey. The island's nature is spectacular with an exceptional bird life.

The hiking trails in Skagafjörður are numerous, and the region is known for its horse breeding. When travelling in Skagafjörður, one can expect to see as many horses as cars on the road. Everyone should be able to find something of interest while visiting Skagafjörður.

The preparation of the exhibit at the emigration centre is well underway; yet the search for artifacts that are related to the history of the emigrants will continue for years to come. Those who would like to contribute some information or wish to learn more about the centre are invited to contact the following institutions:

Byggðasafn Skagfirðinga
Skagafjörður Folk Museum
Glaumbær, 560 Varmahlíð
Museum Curator: Sigríður Sigurðardóttir
tel.: 354-453-6173, fax: 354-453-8873

The Icelandic-American
Emigration Center / Snorri
Þorfinnsson ehf.
Suðurbraut 8, 565 Hofsós
Manager: Valgeir Þorvaldsson
tel.: 354-453-7930, 354-453-7310
fax: 354-453-7936

Seattle's Nordic Heritage Museum and Iceland Room

by Theodore R. Beck

The Nordic Heritage Museum main entrance

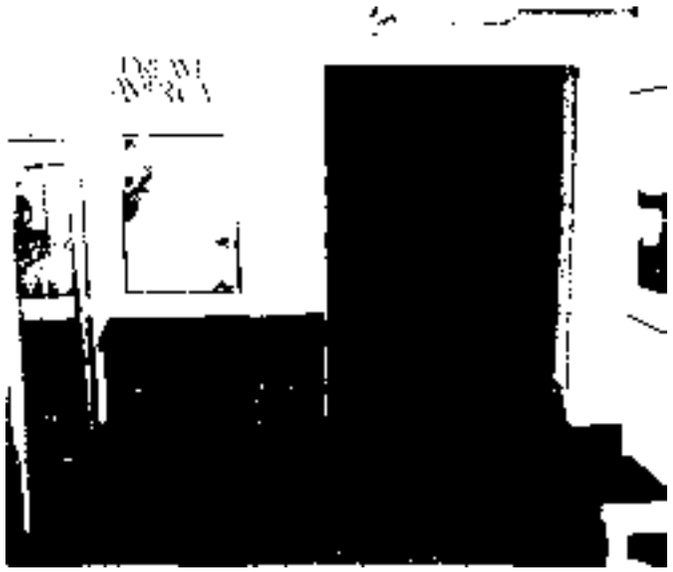
Visits to the Nordic Heritage Museum are genuine treats. Established in 1980 in the former Webster Elementary School in the traditionally Scandinavian Ballard area of Seattle, it has blossomed into the Northwest's largest ethnic museum. This world class museum is the only one in North America to represent all of the five Scandinavian countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. Largely the creation of it's energetic and visionary Director, Marianne Forssblad, the Museum's special programs and exhibits throughout the year and it's marvelous permanent displays draw over 50,000 visitors a year.

Of special interest to the Icelandic community in 1995 was the exhibition of the artistry of Sigrún Jónsdóttir, October 21 - December 31. A cross section of Sigrún's works included woven textiles inspired by the Icelandic landscape, church vestments and batik creations showing the artist's innermost feelings. In addition were her works in stone, glass and embroidery. A preview on October 21 by the artist was followed by a festive Icelandic banquet and entertainment.

"The Dream of America" the immigrant experience 1840-1920 greets you as you come into the Museum at the lower, entrance level. "The Dream" is a dramatic and imaginative exhibit focusing on Scandinavian immigration to the United States, serving at the same time to give a vivid picture of the challenges faced in their long journeys to America. Now installed as a permanent exhibit, "The Dream" was originally created by the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen and the Moesgaard Museum in Aarhus, Denmark, where it broke all attendance records in 1984 and 1985.

This exhibit depicts the plight of the predominantly rural Scandinavians who had no land, no work and little hope of owning something of their own. It follows them as industrialization develops, to the cities where they

were underpaid, rootless, anonymous, and away from familiar social structures. It chronicles their fervent hope for a better life in America and what they endured to achieve their dream - the arduous ship journeys, the Ellis Island experience, the dismal reception in cities yet awaiting social reforms, the rigors



The entrance to the "Dream of America"

of moving further inland and then, finally, the long trek across the continent to the Pacific Northwest. The Museum has augmented the original exhibit with settings representing aspects of Ballard life in those early days.

"The Promise of the Northwest," on the main floor, includes two large galleries focusing on the fishing and logging industries, to which the immigrants brought previously-developed skills. Also, on this floor are two "Heritage Rooms" displaying the costumes, textiles, tools, and other belongings carried by the settlers from their former homes. A constant flow of thematic displays from both Scandinavia and the United States enlivens spacious galleries on the main level. These range from presentations of special historical interest to exhibits of contemporary arts and crafts. A gift shop is also here. The Museum also houses an auditorium, a reference library, the Gordon Tracie folk music collection, and a Scandinavian language school.

"Nordic Heritage Northwest" on the third level is a series of five, 1000-square-foot, Ethnic Rooms, one for each of the Nordic countries, completed in 1989. Settings here illustrate both the differences and the common bonds of the Scandinavian people, as well as their varied traditions and achievements.

I will now take you on an imaginary tour of the Iceland Room. As you enter, to the right is a guest book and a photograph of Iceland's President, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir. Vigdís dedicated this room on her visit to Seattle, May 1, 1990. The vignettes in the glass case to the right symbolize links to Iceland, a woman's national costume, fishing gear, volcanic rocks, and birds. Pictured on the wall is an American farm family before leaving the homeland: Þorlákur Jónsson, his wife Lovísa Nilsdóttir and their children, among whom is Páll Thorlaksson, "Father" of the Pembina County Icelandic settlement, centred in Mountain, North Dakota.

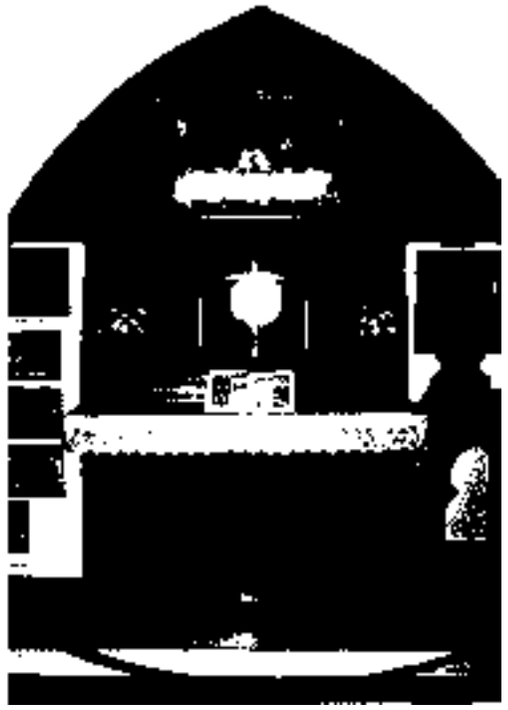
Continuing, you see to your right a large wall picture of our beloved poet, Jakobina Johnson, born in Iceland but spending most of her adult life in the Ballard community. Included is a portion of her library. Following, are pictures of other poets and writers of the Pacific Northwest, symbolizing the paramount place of literature in the Icelandic heritage and psyche. Also shown are other examples of cultural pursuits: handwork, art, drama, and music.

At the end of the room is a gothic arch leading to an alcove that represents the place of religion to the Icelandic pioneers who built churches as soon as they settled into their new world. The altar and other furnishings are from the old Calvary Lutheran Church in Ballard, which housed "Hallgrims Congregation." Photographs to the left are of confirmation classes.

Continuing counter clockwise, you see the gem of the Iceland Room, a replica of a

baðstofa in a torfbær. The old Icelandic family farm home was the heart and centre of life that was Iceland until the turn of the 20th century. The baðstofa was where they ate and slept and provided schooling for this very literate society. This was the community centre for communication and creativity.

At your back in the centre of the room is an exhibit of old tools and farm implements that were used by the early pioneer Icelandic-American farmers. Continuing counter clockwise, you see a glass case with changing displays and a bronze bust of our famous explorer ancestor, Leifur Eiríksson. Next is a large display of Icelandic wool, spinning, knitting, and some finished sweaters and garments. Then we have a case used for Christmas and other seasonal displays. Completing the circle, you see a picture of Vigdís with the Icelandic Male Chorus of Seattle. It was taken in the official Presidential residence, Bessastaðir, near Reykjavík, when the chorus was on concert tour in Iceland in the summer of 1983.



The church alcove

The Iceland Room is the product of thousands of hours by dedicated members and friends of The Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle. The following brief history was pieced together with snippets from the Club history written by Anna Bjornson and from The Club Newsletter.

1986: Nordic Heritage Museum plans Iceland Room

The Museum has designated a room for a permanent Icelandic exhibit, and the Icelandic Club has appointed a committee to collect artifacts for this display. Members of the Procurement Committee are Sigrid Bjornson, Ethel Sigmar and Didda Wilson. They are seeking items which depict the story of the Icelandic immigration from early years to the present day and which are representative of the Icelandic heritage and culture. Committees were formed to represent the various displays:

INTRODUCTION AND TIME LINE
- Gene Juel Chairperson
- K. Simundson

ART AND LITERATURE
- Thorun Robel Chairperson
- Bill Kristjanson
- Sig Johnson
- Ingolf Johnson
- Anna Bjornson

MUSIC AND RELIGION
- Tani Bjornson Chairperson
- Sigrid Bjornson
- Dr. Edward Palmason
- Harold Sigmar
- Ethel Sigmar
- Ray Olason

BADSTOFA (bunks and mannequins)
- Gene Juel Chairperson
- Maja Yankasky
- Helga Lawrence

FARMING AND WORK
- Stony Herman Chairperson
- Lloyd Olason
- Valdy Kristjanson

ICELAND TODAY
- Didda Wilson Chairperson
- Richard Wilson

Hjordis Gudmundson
TRANSLATIONS AND LIBRARY
Anna Bjornson Chairperson
Sig Johnson
Inge Johnson
NEWSLETTER (Icelandic Club)
Inge Johnson Chairperson
ICELAND ROOM (co-chairman)
Helgi Thordarson

Emigrants at home port

Icelandic Room Notes

K. Simundson proposed two new ideas with sketches to change the Iceland Room decor. One of the sketches incorporated wall displays, the second sketch added islands to the center of the room. Jan K. Kiaer, a prominent architect and member of the Nordic Heritage Museum Board of Directors, was contacted and agreed to design and make the plans to completely renovate the room and display areas. Jan Kiaer donated his labor to the Iceland Room, for which we are truly grateful.

Jerry Esser was hired to rough in all of the structures. We were very fortunate that Jerry was able to acquire an old barn on Whidby Island which we dismantled and hauled to Seattle. The lumber was used to build the Baðstofa and other structures in the Iceland Room. The floor in the Baðstofa is used lumber donated by the Ballard Oil Co. The lumber was salvaged from the deck of a ship named Stormy Sea. Flagstone paving in front of the baðstofa was made from a slate blackboard from Webster school.

Room preparation and most of the finishing work was accomplished by the 3 Musketeers. Stony-Lloyd-Helgi. Bill Kristjanson and Jason Calhoon also worked in preparing the room.

1988: Iceland Room Taking Shape at the Nordic Heritage Museum

During the summer of 1988, Charlotte and Helgi Thordarson visited Iceland. Helgi is a major force in the development of the Nordic Heritage Museum's Iceland Room. He was particularly pleased to have the opportunity to meet and visit with Elsa Guðjónsson, curator of textiles at Iceland's National Museum. He had the chance to see examples of items that could be included in the Iceland Room.

The diligent efforts of voluntary workers - led by Stony Herman, Helgi Thordarson and Lloyd Olason - have created an authentic "baðstofa," a turn of the century Icelandic house complete with turf roof. Inside the house are two sets of bunk beds and other Icelandic artifacts, including an antique spinning wheel donated by Ione Jones of Seattle. The spinning wheel had belonged to Ione's mother, Margaret Einarson, who brought it with her in 1900.

1989: Preliminary Showing of the Iceland Room

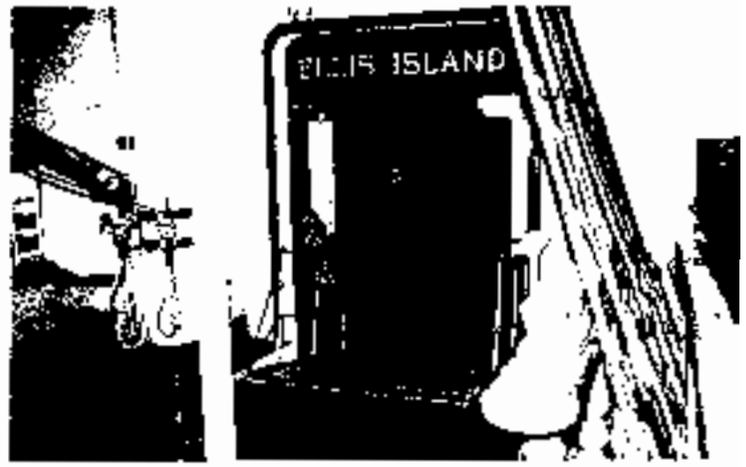
On Saturday afternoon, June the 17th, 1989, a group of guests was present at the preliminary showing of the Iceland Room at the Nordic Heritage Museum. Club President, Dr. Ed Palmason, opened the ceremonies and then called upon Helgi Thordarson, head of the building project, who gave an account of work done to this point.

Marianne Forssblad, Director of the Museum, was introduced. After telling of the dedicated work done by Helgi Thordarson, Stony Herman, and Lloyd Olason who have given countless hours to the building of the Baðstofa and other display units, she reminded those present that there was much more to complete before the opening of the five rooms on November 4th. A toast to the Iceland Room was drunk before Icelandic Princess Krista Palmason cut the ribbon. The guests then viewed the room and it's artifacts.

Coffee and cake, decorated in honor of the occasion, were served by Charlotte Thordarson and Maja Yanasky. Champagne was poured by Bill Kristjanson. A special guest was Valgerður Hafstað, reporter for *Morgunblaðið*, a Reykjavík newspaper.

Work on the Iceland Room continues to this day. A dedicated group of Icelanders meets every Tuesday morning at the Museum to discuss and carry out further improvements to the room and to record Icelandic books donated to the Museum for it's library. I have been appointed archivist by the group, to collect and preserve, in the annex to the Icelandic Room, historical documents relating to the Club and to Icelanders in the Pacific Northwest. Club member and Past President Sig Johnson makes periodic trips to Iceland and brings back more artifacts. Interviews with him on the Icelandic State Radio Station have helped solicit valuable gifts from Iceland.

- The material in this article was put together from Museum and Iceland Room brochures, Anna Bjornson's Icelandic Club history, and the Club Newsletters.



Boat arrives at Ellis Island

Interior of the Baðstofa

Photograph of Jakobina Johnson in her library

Interview with Keri-Lynn Wilson: Associate Conductor of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra

by Helga Malis

This conversation took place in December 1995, at the home of Keri-Lynn Wilson's father, a day before her concert with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra.

Helga: What I'd like to do is have you tell me about yourself - whatever comes to mind; just share it. That way, we can all get to know you. Tell us something about your childhood, thoughts on your Icelandic culture, musical influences and things like that. How did you come to be where you are?

Keri-Lynn: Well, I grew up in Winnipeg in a very musical family, of Icelandic origin on my father's side. My great-great-grandmother came from Iceland at the beginning of the century under the name of Torfason. I remember certain things distinctly when I was growing up, like getting Icelandic sweaters and blankets as gifts from my grandmother, who travelled to Iceland so often. Also "Íslendingadagurinn", which in fact I didn't get to attend because I was away at summer music festivals, but I was always fascinated to hear about it.

Helga: Were there certain things that pointed you early to a career in music?

Keri-Lynn: As a child, I was exposed to music probably even before food. My family, on my father's side, are actually in the *Canadian Dictionary of Music* under "Wilson" because the Wilson family has contributed a lot to the Canadian music scene. My grandparents, a pianist and an opera singer, had four children. One of them was my father, who is a violinist and a conductor. His brother is a fine, fine flute player who is now a professor of music at UBC. Their sister is a pianist. Anyway, it goes on and on and I am one of the many, many musical grandchildren. So, I was exposed to music at such an early age, and began piano lessons with my grandmother when I was four, and violin with my father when I was five. I finally chose the flute at eight. That's not to say that I didn't have cravings for all the other instruments, such as bassoon one week and french horn the next, before I settled on the flute. So already there was a certain feeling of being a conductor, because I was just so fascinated by all the instruments. Considering the environment I lived in, it wasn't such a far reach because everything was there. So it was pretty natural that since I loved music, it would be my career choice. There was never really any question although I had little fantasies for other things, but music was the most obvious answer to fulfill my passion for it.

Helga: You didn't need to be coaxed or wheedled into practising?

Keri-Lynn: Not at all, although I remember sometimes being lazy as a kid. I had a certain talent for learning things quickly, so an hour before a lesson I would be cramming to learn everything. I went through stages where I would really, really practice intensely for a couple of weeks when I was learning something, but then I'd like to get out and do gymnastics. So, although I was not a kid who practised eight hours a day, I was always doing music . It came easily to me. As a child, I was performing at an early age on several instruments, but as a teenager I finally selected the flute, because I was most gifted on it. However, I played equally on flute and piano in competitions and concerts until I was eighteen when I went to Julliard for college. Even at thirteen I had been travelling alone and going to master classes and festivals in

Canada, so this was a big, big part of my childhood. The other big influence was playing in my dad's orchestra, the Winnipeg Youth Orchestra. I began playing with it when I was ten, sitting right under his nose playing the flute. That was probably my greatest experience around conducting. I know I had a desire, because sometimes when he'd leave the room, I'd step up on to the podium and say, "Okay, you guys, let's go." However, I did think I'd establish myself as a flutist.

Helga: So you weren't thinking along the lines of being a conductor?

Keri-Lynn: Well, only in the back of my mind. My teenage years were very successful. I got to travel quite a bit doing concerts and competitions. At eighteen I went to Julliard, which had been my dream, as my uncle had gone there. I fell in love with New York and the big city. During my first month of being in school I was playing flute under Bernstein, so that was a real experience early on. Over those five years I was doing very well on the flute, and gave my concert debut at Carnegie Hall when I was 21. I did a Bachelor and Master of Flute at Julliard. In my final year of flute, I decided one day to audition for the conducting program, which is an extremely competitive process. I studied for a year to prepare for the audition.

Helga: What kinds of things did you have to study in the way of the music, the instruments? How, in fact, did you prepare?

Keri-Lynn: I had to have a lot of knowledge, all the repertoire, a lot of music history, general musical information, as well as knowledge of orchestra and the instruments - just everything, absolutely everything! Then there were ear tests and things like that. The hardest part was the actual audition when I was in front of the orchestra for the first time and I had to conduct many different works. I was very excited when I found I had been successful. The teacher of the program, with whom I had worked before, was a flutist. He knew me as a musician, had faith in me and could see my potential. So, he took me under his wing and I was in the conducting program at Julliard for four years. Over that time things went very quickly. First of all, the opportunities there are so rich and so abundant - like performing at the Lincoln Centre, being

exposed to the audiences and the critics of the New York Philharmonic. Lots of high pressure situations, but very rewarding. As well, I worked with the Julliard orchestra and the Youth orchestra in Connecticut. Other outside opportunities included assistant conductor work with an opera company in New York and in Europe.

Helga: What kind of work did you do in Europe?

Keri-Lynn: In 1992, I was fortunate enough to spend time with Claudio Abado and the Vienna Philharmonic. I have worked each New Year's Eve since as a liaison between the music and the production staffs for the special televised concerts of the Berlin Philharmonic on New Year's Eve. So that was my European connection while I was still a student.

Helga: Those four years in school sound like they were very, very busy. What thrilling experiences for a young musician! Now, how did you come to be in Dallas, Texas?

Keri -Lynn: Well, when there were still two months before graduating from conducting, I received a call from the management of the Dallas Symphony. They were looking for an assistant conductor and their Music Director had just heard of me. So I sent them my videos, and so on. Four of us were given the chance to audition and they selected me. So, on leaving school, I already had a job and knew my salary, and I knew I was very fortunate. It was luck and a bit of talent combined. But it certainly was an easy step for me. This is my second season in Dallas and I've been promoted to associate conductor, so they are happy with my work there. They even gave me the honour of opening this season with their Gala concert, so that was a tremendous pat on the back. I've had quite a heavy load of concerts so the past year and a half has been very rich in terms of always having opportunities to try different repertoire with one of the best orchestras in North America.

Helga: Do you expect to stay in Dallas for a long time?

Keri-Lynn: I'm very happy to be there for a few more years. They have given me a lot of time outside of my work load to do guest conducting. That's why I'm here in Winnipeg.

Helga: You mentioned to me earlier that you had been in Iceland recently. Can you tell us about that?

Keri-Lynn: Yes, as a matter of fact I was in Iceland just last week conducting the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra. Actually it was by word of mouth that they heard of me, because I have an uncle who married an Icelandic woman and settled there. So, my Uncle Mark had given my materials to the Concert Mistress, who then remembered my other uncle from when they were both students at Julliard. She passed the material on to the management who said, "Absolutely. Let's get her!" Anyway, it turned out to be one of the warmest and greatest experiences I've ever had guest-conducting, because they were so, so wonderful to work with. First of all, it is a great orchestra. They were so concentrated and really the results that we got after just this one week and hardly knowing each other were remarkable. And that's always the question - how are you going to get along with the orchestra? But it went brilliantly, and at the end they were so sweet. After the concert, while I was taking my bows, one of the cellists came up and presented me with a dozen red roses and said, "We love you." They had all contributed from their own pockets to buy flowers and they all signed a card that said, "Enjoyed working with you and hope to see you soon." This was really heart-warming for me. The Concert Mistress told me that she couldn't remember them feeling so strongly about anyone ever before!

Helga: Since they knew you were of Icelandic descent, they must have felt like you had come home, that you were one of them.

Keri-Lynn: Probably. I know they really made me feel special.

Helga: What other impressions did you come away with from Iceland?

Keri-Lynn: I was really fascinated by the country . I've been all over the world, but Iceland is really unique - all the lava, the

volcanic countryside and the feeling of the country being very quaint, yet the people extremely sophisticated! I loved it!

Helga: The whole experience must have been very exciting for you. Are you hoping to go back there?

Keri-Lynn: Absolutely! At the dinner after the concert, the manager invited me back, not for next year unfortunately, as they are all booked, but certainly for the 1997/98 season. It really is exciting and they almost feel like family. Actually, I called the manager the other day and she said, "We miss you."

Helga: You are certainly breaking new ground. There are not very many female conductors around.

Keri-Lynn: That's true - I was only the second woman ever to conduct the Icelandic Symphony. And now I am in Winnipeg, and that's another warm experience because there are so many of the orchestra here that I knew as a kid. Some of them used to be my professors, so at first it was a little edgy. I did some youth concerts here in October and that really warmed us up and the orchestra got to know me a bit. So that has made it nice for when I came back for a more "serious" concert. The working rapport has been really, really good.

Helga: You must do something special to get a good rapport so quickly given that you come back to direct, not your peers, but a generation older than you and, in some cases, people you've known in a different context.

Keri-Lynn: Yes, it's very strange. They all have their own ideas and all of a sudden, here I am in the authoritative position. I can imagine from the other side it must seem strange as well. But, in the end, if you forget about all that and just talk about the music and say, "let's accomplish this and this and this," everybody will forget about that stuff. And that's how I feel about being a woman, and young. First impressions will always be there, you can't take that away - this is what I look like, this is how old I am. But after two minutes of music, you start talking about what should be done - either you are good or you are not, either you are going to get along with them or not and it's nothing to do with physical features anymore.

Helga: You don't find any bias or circumstances you have to overcome because of your age or gender?

Keri-Lynn: No, I certainly do not. I think that is for those who are narrow-minded. I've only had wonderful responses . Perhaps I do read some negative things, but we all do as conductors. So you just have to build up a very hard shell, not always easy to do. But you learn quickly when to take it personally and 99% of the time you do not take it personally. It's just all about believing in yourself, respecting yourself and the music, and just doing the job.

Helga: Do you have your ideas of how you are going to do the music when you start to work with an orchestra?

Keri-Lynn: Absolutely!

Helga: And are you ever challenged on that?

Keri-Lynn: Yes, oh yes. Making a hundred people do exactly what I want is a big task.

Helga: That could be quite something to do.

Keri-Lynn: It sure is, it's a lifetime of challenge, knowing how do go about it.

Helga: But it is teamwork, too, isn't it?

Keri-Lynn: It certainly is. It's all give and take and if something doesn't work, you have to feel what people are capable of doing or what they do best. It depends on the music as well. If it is romantic music you have so much liberty and you have to be convinced of what you are going to do with it. Whereas, if it is Beethoven or Mozart, you are concerned about the style and that it is really Beethoven and not "Wilson" and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. It's Beethoven, and let's play it closest to how he would want it. So there isn't as much liberty I could take with that. But, with something like Viennese music, it's tough because there is so much liberty possible within it. As a guest conductor when you don't know how the musicians will respond, you have to try different things. I notice that in Dallas now that I know the orchestra and they know me, I'm feeling good, because I know what will and won't work.

Helga: Do you enjoy guest conducting?

Keri-Lynn: Yes I love it, but it is very different - a different house, different acoustics, different levels and sounds. It's very interesting . The more I do guest conducting, the more I'll learn what I am capable of doing no matter if it is in Winnipeg or in Iceland.

Helga: Can you tell us what you wear on stage for concerts?

Keri-Lynn: I wear suits; I refuse to wear a skirt because this is a very physical thing we are doing up there. I wear very feminine suits, tailored, nothing bulky or manly looking, just very nice. I wear black unless it is a Pops concert, when I wear white.

Helga: I would think that wearing suits would help you to be taken more seriously.

Keri-Lynn: Absolutely. It is more businesslike, more professional. I had someone tell me two years ago in New York that now I could wear my hair down, because I had become good enough! I thought not. Maybe in 10 years, when nobody has any question whatsoever about my talent, I'll wear my hair long. Until then I'll wear a chignon.

Helga: How do you keep your eyes on everything and everyone all the time?

Keri-Lynn: Basically, the musicians' eyes are on me. I don't have to keep an eye on everything - I can cue or encourage them with my eyes, but that is not the important thing.

Helga: Who is your favourite composer?

Keri-Lynn: I have a real affinity for Beethoven, Brahms and Mahler. I feel the closest spiritually to those. I feel those are the most meaningful for me. I enjoy everything else - Mozart, Stravinsky . . .

Helga: Are you interested in 20th century music, new music as it is called today?

Keri-Lynn: Very much - I like the challenge of the new works very much.

Helga: Winnipeg mounts quite a large New Music festival each year.

Keri-Lynn: Yes and I applaud what is happening here. Especially as in this day and age it just doesn't sell, and concert halls are being manipulated by the box office, in terms of what can be programmed and what cannot. It's very difficult to do with the Dallas orchestra - quite conservative tastes. But there is a wonderful new music group called "Voices of Change" who have just appointed me as their first official conductor. They do new works as well as older 20th century stuff and I am very excited about that.

Helga: So that is a very creative outlet for you.

Keri-Lynn: Yes, very, because I can't do it in the symphony. The audiences wouldn't like it.

Helga: It takes some educating and exposure to like new music - I'm learning to be more open to it and thus enjoy it more.

Keri-Lynn: Yes, and that's why I think it should be done - but managements are reluctant to chance it. If I were music director I'd make sure that they knew that I was going to be encouraging them to listen. I'd love to do things in the community to get people to be open minded about lots of things.

Helga: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Keri-Lynn: I have one brother and one sister. My sister is in England studying voice and my brother is in New York in his last year of University. He's more pop-oriented in his music, producing electronic music and things like that.

Helga: Where did you go to school in Winnipeg?

Keri-Lynn: I went to River Heights Junior High, and Kelvin High School. However, I was born in the United States, as my father was studying at the University of Wisconsin at the time. Fortunately so, because now I have dual citizenship. Otherwise it would have been a nightmare to get work permits and so on.

Helga: So what kind of things do you like to do for amusement or recreation?

Keri-Lynn: Swim! Number one! Whatever city I'm in, I find the pools and of course in Iceland I was in heaven. Every morning I went off swimming. I swim every day - I love the escape. And I began flying this past summer, to get my pilot's licence. So that was very cool! I had two weeks where I had no work whatsoever, so I just focused on several books on flying. It seemed like I have to have more knowledge to be a licenced pilot than I did to become a conductor. That's an exaggeration of course, but there is a lot to learn. I flew for 10 hours, but I have had no time since, so I'll have to get back to it in the summer. What else? Oh, I get to travel and I like that. But basically it is music, music, because conducting is such a challenge! We have to know so much that there is little time for anything else. I want to know everything about music, but I have to be patient.

Helga: It's a good thing you love music so much then.

Keri-Lynn: Yes, no kidding! I'm looking forward to being less edgy about it, really knowing it all so I can pick up a score and be ready in two days, and that will make it very easy to rehearse.

Helga: You know every note of each instrument being played, and when and where they need to come in? It boggles my mind!

Keri-Lynn: Yes, I do. And yet I look at someone working on a computer and I wonder how it is done. I guess anything becomes second nature when you know how.

Helga: Are you able to hear a note in your head when you see it on paper?

Keri-Lynn: Yes. I have perfect pitch so I can do that. It's a good gift, it makes things go a lot quicker. If you didn't have perfect pitch the study process would be a lot harder - you would have to sit at the piano.

Helga: When I spoke with Valdine Anderson she told me she had perfect pitch too.

Keri-Lynn: You know it is because of Valdine that I chose the flute! She was my baby-sitter and she brought her instrument over one day and I fell in love with the flute.

Helga: What are your immediate and long range goals?

Keri-Lynn: I'd like to stay in Dallas for a couple of years. I definitely want to have my own orchestra, do a lot of opera and be a guest conductor everywhere! It will take a few years but I would go anywhere in North America or Europe. Conductors have to be open to opportunity.

Helga: Are you worried that in this very technological age people will forget how to listen to classical music?

Keri-Lynn: That has been a danger for several decades, as classical music seems to have less importance in our culture. We are learning from experience at the box office that the tickets are not selling. It's all about marketing and education. We have to really be thinking of the future and doing everything possible to get diverse communities to be exposed. We need to fight the clichés that classical music is boring. So being young and maybe being a spokesperson for classical music, in some sense I can make it HIP, do something that is going to get the kids to think it is cool!

Helga: I think it is great that you are a young conductor. You can be a role model and educator for so many young people.

Keri-Lynn: Yes, that's absolutely true. The fan mail I get from kids is so inspirational. After all youth concerts I get picture and letters. I like being someone kids can look up to. And I'd like to appeal to my peers, my own age group, by helping them enjoy listening to classical music as part of their lifestyle. So I'm doing some of that with Dallasites, getting them to the concerts and sure enough it does work!

Helga: Keri-Lynn, I want to thank you for this very relaxed and comfortable chat we've had, and wish you the very best in your future endeavors.

Keri-Lynn with her father Carlisle Wilson

The Icelandic Chair, Department and Icelandic Collection, Libraries at the University of Manitoba

by Richard A. Johnson

On the evening of December 11, 1995 a meeting was convened of individuals from the Icelandic community and the University to discuss the future of the Icelandic "presence" at the University of Manitoba. Those present were Helgi Austmann, Neil Bardal, Larry Johnson, John Matthiasson, Albert Kristjansson, Tom Olesen, Kristine Perlmutter and Timothy Samson from outside of, and Kirsten Wolf, Bob O'Kell (Associate Dean of Arts) and Dick Johnson (Vice Provost) from within the University. The focus of the discussions was on how best to assure that continuing presence and enhance it.

The perceptive reader may note that use of the term "presence" seems to avoid any specific reference to a Department or Chair, and perhaps may fear that some definite plan is in hand to change one or the other. Such is not the case; there is no "plan" or strategy that proposes such a change. The only relevant reference has been to the possible advantages that some other arrangement might have. Furthermore that "presence" includes the important Icelandic Collection in the Library which is, this year, 1996, celebrating its 60th anniversary.

(The distinction between Department and Chair may not be easily recalled. A **Department** is the organizational unit created by the University to carry out the administrative functions associated with teaching, research and service, internal and external, by all the staff in a distinct academic discipline - in this case Icelandic Language and Literature. Its chief operating officer is its **Head**. The term **Chair** is used in universities to refer to a single position (and its incumbent) that has been created for some special purpose and provided by funding from sources other than the institution's operating funds. In the case of Icelandic, the department for many years has had only one full-time academic appointee who was simultaneously the Head and the Chair.)

But this is getting ahead of the main message that has emerged from the committee's discussion, namely the facts of the case that we must all face as we work together to preserve and enhance that important presence.

What are the salient "facts"?

The root of our common problem is that there are not enough resources available to provide all that is expected of the Icelandic Department, Chair and Library Collection. These expectations are very broad indeed, ranging through delivery of credit courses, research and scholarship, service to and liaison with the many parts of the community, promotion of interest in Icelandic language and literature, enhancement of the Icelandic Collection and its support of instruction and research in Icelandic and other disciplines, arranging of cultural exchanges with Iceland, provision of undergraduate and graduate scholarships and support of conferences. References to these are found in most of the founding and subsequent documents.

In summary for the Department, while a single academic staff member could provide some of these, to address all to some satisfactory degree would be beyond the capacity of any one person. The general consensus is that it would take two full-time academic staff to do so, along with additional support for the activities of both the Department and the Collection.

What resources are currently provided or available?

In 1994-95, the total direct funding of the Department amounted to about $156,200. Of that $96,500 came from the operating moneys of the University and the rest from the proceeds of endowment funds: $17,800 from the original (1952) Trust Fund, $16,800 from the Icelandic Language and Literature Fund, and $25,100 from the Federal Multicultural Fund. In addition the University budget provides all personnel and most of the acquisitions and service costs of the Icelandic Collection as well as all the infrastructure for both the department's and collection's activities - from heating, cooling and maintaining of space to administrative costs.

In that same year, students registered for 150 credit hours of Icelandic courses (in, of course, a wide variety of offerings) which, when one remembers that a student's full year load is typically 30 credit hours, represents the equivalent of five full time students.

Some details on the above are useful reminders.

• The original Trust Deed acknowledged that the University was **not** obligated to "make any expenditure or incur any liabilities in excess of the income" of the fund.

• Despite this, the University through successive budgets has assumed a greater and greater share of the base costs of both the Department and Collection. For the Department alone that now exceeds 61% of the total expenditures as noted above. If the costs of the Collection are factored in ($88,500 from the University, $14,000 of value in monographs and periodicals provided from the Government of Iceland), this percentage rises to 71.5%.

• None of the **capital** in any of the three trust and endowment funds may be allocated for expenditures. For the original fund, **all** the income was used every year with nothing being reinvested to sustain its buying power. As a result, while at first there was sufficient income to sustain all the costs of the Department and contribute some support to the Icelandic Collection as well, it now contributes less than a fifth of the University's operating allocation to the Department.

For the other two funds, each year a portion of the earnings is reinvested to sustain the buying power, while the remainder is available for allocation against expenses. In all three cases, the earned income is dependent on investment market conditions during that year.

• The use of the income from the Multiculturalism Fund (the result of a grant from the Secretary of State) is clearly tied to the continuing provision of activities in the field of Icelandic-Canadian studies. The use of the net proceeds of the Icelandic Language and Literature Fund is directed by the Chair following consultation with the Fund Committee (on which the "presiding officer of the Canada-Iceland Foundation" serves). Use is permitted for a wide range of purposes for both the Department and the Collection.

• It is estimated that the average cost of the Department alone per full-time student is about three times the average of that for the Faculty of Arts and, when indirect costs are included, exceeds two-and-one-half times the average for the entire University (which average, remember, includes "expensive" faculties like Medicine and Dentistry). The cause, of course, is the small denominator in this calculation, namely the small numbers of students.

So where does this leave us?

The group assembled on December 11th agreed that we all shared a common goal: to sustain the Icelandic presence at the University of Manitoba in the best possible way. The University formally confirms that; we hope that the community shares that goal. There is, of course, a catch in this resolve. The resources available in any year, or which can be counted on to sustain ongoing commitments, limit our options. The strategy that the group suggests that we collectively pursue is as follows.

As to funding, we need to identify all of what we want the Department and Collection to provide, estimate the annual costs of delivering all of these, and determine the level of trust/endowment funding that would be necessary to provide those annual disposable amounts. Remember that currently every $1,000 in disposable annual income requires about $15,000 in endowment. So how many scholarships do we want? How many added volumes to the collection? How many exchanges with Iceland? How many courses?

And conferences and public lectures?

The University can easily estimate the cost of maintaining a second position in the Department. But, the very low enrollment in Icelandic courses and the very high cost per student that already exist in the Department make it extremely difficult for the University to sustain, let alone enhance, its current contribution to the whole. Could the University do more to attract greater enrollments in Icelandic courses? Yes. But to yield significant increases in numbers, be they "traditional" students or others from the community interested in some aspect of Icelandic studies, requires a significant recruiting effort by the community. The feeder pump of pre-university studies in Icelandic language and culture must be well primed if the numbers of students through university courses is to change from a trickle to significant and regular stream.

Furthermore, it is the community that must determine what all it expects from the Department and Collection - and then through its creation of a committee, to determine its fund raising goals to provide for those expectations. We must also agree on how best the use of all monies should be coordinated and provide more information to the community at large on what all is being attempted and accomplished. Nothing would better ensure the continuation and enhancement of all aspects of the Icelandic presence at the University of Manitoba than a successful conclusion to such a strategy.

Let us all see to it!

Helgi Stefánsson and Þuríður Jónsdóttir

from the chapter

"About My Parents" by Sigurbjörg Stefánsson in the book entitled *Minningarit um Helga Stefánsson frá Arnarvatni og Þuríði Jónsdóttur Stefánsson frá Gautlöndum*

translated by Borga Jakobson

My father, Helgi Stefánsson, was born on June 8, 1865 at Arnarvatn (Eagle Lake) in the Mývatn district of northern Iceland, better known as Mývatnssveit. When he was three years old he lost his father, Stefán Helgason. Stefán drowned in Lake Mývatn along with his brother-in-law, Guðni Jónsson. This was an unbelievably strange accident because it occurred on a calm, bright day. My grandmother, Sigurbjörg Jónsdóttir, was left a poor widow with three young children and her seventeen year old stepson, Jón Stefánsson. (Jón later became well-known for his writings under the pen-name Þorgils Gjallandi.) I know little about my father's early years except from hearsay because he did not like to talk about himself. My earliest memory of him is of a tall man, about 6 ft. 1 in., with curly hair and striking blue eyes. He was not handsome but he had strong masculine features. Many said that he looked like Abraham Lincoln. His friend, Ólafur G. Peterson, on his death-bed asked that his new-born son be named Helgi Lincoln.

From what I have been told, my father was "well-rounded." He excelled both intellectually and physically. He performed well in all sports that were popular at the time. His friend, Hjálmur Stefánsson (from Vagnabrekka) told me that my father had been an excellent swimmer and that once he had dived into Lake Mývatn and come up with a watch which had fallen into the water. He had never mentioned to me that he knew how to swim. In later years, he constructed skis for himself and traveled around on those despite the fact that, by then, he had a damaged leg.

From various sources I have gathered that he took an active part in young people's community affairs in Mývatnssveit. He is named as one of the editors of the district newspaper *Undiralda* (Groundswell), a member of Huldufjelag and chairman of a young people's group which was formed in 1885. He spent one winter as a student in Akureyri and another winter in Reykjavík, where he took the entrance examinations for the "Latin School." Lack of funds prevented him from further education and, for that reason, he was tempted by hopes of prosperity in America. Letters indicate that he had arrived in America before April, 1890.

My father went first to Canada and spent some time in Ontario. It was common for immigrants to take jobs there to earn their fare to Western Canada. One of his first jobs was working on a railroad. He spoke of a good-natured French foreman who often said "bon" to his crew.

After that my father spent some time in the north part of New Iceland (Interlake district) and there he met the editor Gunnsteinn Eyólfsson. Later he found some work in the Winnipeg area. The only available picture of him as a young man was taken in Winnipeg. The only jobs available for immigrants were road-building, ditch- digging, railroads, lumbering, farm labour or harvesting. My father undertook to do any of these jobs as they became available. Wages were so low that it was difficult to make any savings. All communication was slow, if not impossible. Records show that it took two months or longer for a letter from America to reach Iceland.

My parents were engaged to be married when my father left Iceland. My mother, Þuríður (called Þura) was born July 10, 1865, the daughter of Jón Sigurðsson of Gautlönd and his wife, Solveig. She was considered to be one of the most beautiful women of her area. She was of medium height, well-built, with thick chesnut-coloured hair, fine white skin, even " Grecian" features and large wide-set hazel eyes. Once I overheard two men talking about her. "Wasn't Þuríður the most beautiful woman you ever saw?" asked one. "Yes," said the other, but added, "Well, I have

Helgi Stefánsson

Puríður Jónsdóttir Stefánsson

seen others who were as beautiful, but there was no one like her. She was a lady." I have concluded that her father was very indulgent towards her. Through the years she kept the cloth that had been laid over his face while he lay in his coffin. Perhaps she received special consideration because she lost her hearing to a large extent as a result of a bout with typhoid fever when she was nine years old. No doubt it was in hope of some remedy for her deafness that her father sent her to Denmark in care of Halldóra Þorsteinsdóttir and Tryggvi Gunnarsson.

My mother was fluent in Danish and spoke often of Denmark. She often used Danish expressions and recalled Danish sayings. She did not find any help for her deafness in Denmark but she learned many things during her stay there. Among those was tailoring.

It seems that she often felt stifled by the "over-protection" that she received on account of her deafness, though of course it was well-meant.

In 1885, she traveled to Reykjavík by ship and enjoyed that in spite of being seasick all the way. In Reykjavík, she spent her first two days at the home of Magnús Stephensen, then Chief Justice, and from there she went to stay with her brother, Kristján Jónsson , and his wife, Anna, who was the daughter of the pastor Þórarin á Garði. Between my mother and Anna grew a friendship that lasted throughout their lives. My mother also stayed at Bessastaðir with Grímur Thomsen and his wife, Jakobína, who was her mother's sister. She enjoyed their company and felt that they gave her much good advice. While she was in Reykjavík she devoted one month to trying a cure for deafness, but all in vain.

After that, my mother returned to Mývatnssveit for a few years. It seems that she kept very busy there, both with helping with various projects at Gautlönd and also sewing for other households in the district. Letters indicate that she spent much time working with wool. Leisure time was usually taken up with reading. One of her favourite authors at that time was Ibsen. Letters also show that she loved horses and she went on a few riding expeditions.

Both her parents died in 1889. Somewhere around that time her fiancé, my father, left for America. In April, 1890, she had prepared for her own trip to America and she bade farewell to Gautlönd. First she went to see her brother, Sigurður, at Vestdalseyri. The relatives tried their best to dissuade her from going to an unknown country where my father's fortunes were quite uncertain. When it was clear that she was determined to go, her brother finally agreed. He went so far as to write to a well-known doctor in America, Dr. J. Nicholson, in hope that he could give her some help in regard to her hearing problems. Apparently my mother felt that destiny played a part here. In letters to her friend, Guðbjörg Stefánsdóttir á Garði , she wrote:

I am destined this route, I think. . ."

"this way is set out for me, so you should not feel sorry for me..",

In another letter, she wrote, *"I have heard that I now have a little namesake at Garði. When I heard about this little Þura, it occurred to me that she is supposed to make up for my transgressions, at least I hope she can do so."* (These transgressions likely refer to her failure to follow advice with regard to her departure for America.) From this letter, it seems clear that the authoress Þura á Garði was named for my mother.

My mother arranged to travel to America with a ship which was scheduled to leave on June 15, 1891. She expected to meet my father on her arrival in Canada and she expected to be married then. Either their letters crossed or he was not able to get to the appointed place to meet the passengers. She did not feel that she could remain behind all alone so she continued on with people she knew to Duluth, U.S.A. In Duluth, she found work in a tailor shop run by a Jewish family who proved very helpful to her. Always ever after, she had good feelings towards Jewish people. At the tailor shop, she was called upon to do art mending. Long afterwards, she recalled her experiences there. The proprietor often met poverty-stricken Jewish people who had escaped death from "pogroms" in Russia under the czarist rule. The proprietor would try to find essentials for these refugees and, eventually, jobs.

Once there was an emergency when a gas iron in the tailor shop caught fire. My mother was in

behind the rack which held the iron. A young Jewish man rushed in behind and pulled her away from the flames.

In Duluth, Mother also became acquainted with black Americans. She spoke of some stunningly beautiful girls of mixed blood whom she had met in the sewing room. She visited the home of a black preacher and his wife. She described their tiny son, who lay in his cradle under mosquito netting, as "black as coal".

In Duluth, Mother shared a room with Rósa Johnson, a relative of Jónas Hallgrímsson from Hriflu. (Rósa later married Jón Kr. Halldórsson.) Among those who visited them there was Halldóra Olsson, aunt of the author Laura Goodman Salverson. Halldóra was a midwife and she had "birthing rooms" in Duluth. She was well- known in the city for her work and for her help to girls who found themselves in trouble. *"Hallóra always needed strong coffee,"* said my mother.

Several Icelandic families had settled in Duluth at the time. My mother particularly mentioned a few people whom she visited while she was there. One family was Kristján Borgfjörd and his wife. He looked after a cemetery there. Another was Sigfús Magnússon from Grenjaðarstað and his family. At a gathering in Duluth, she saw for the first time the poet Káin and also Sigurð Sigvaldason. Sigurð was one of the first Icelanders in America to graduate with a university degree. He had also won an award for English poetry and this was considered a remarkable achievement for an immigrant. Obviously, there was a good community spirit among the Icelanders in Duluth.

Around this time, once again, my mother sought help for her hearing difficulties. During the "treatment," the left eardrum was punctured and this resulted in a complete loss of hearing in that ear. This dashed all hopes that in America help would be found.

Finally, my father heard in a round-about way that Þura had gone to the United States. He set off, likely from Winnipeg, for Mountain, N.D. to find Kristján Jónsson, his mother's brother, his wife, Sesselja, and their family. Kristján's son, Sigurður Johnson, recorded some of the happenings and he had some things to say about my father: *"Helgi came on foot from Canada. Hermann Hjálmarsson saw him as he was setting out and asked him whether he needed money. Helgi said no because he was going to walk. He walked all by himself through Pembina and came here to my father (i.e. to Kristján Jónsson). He started working at hard labour. He was a good workman, sometimes a little slow to start, but he did the work of two once he got going."* Sigurður continued, *"Helgi took part in a debating club and other community groups. He was a good debater, not eloquent but he could think on his feet ... He hating swearing and foul language and criticized that sort of thing when he was working on threshing gangs and elsewhere. He had a gift with words and could be witty."* Sigurður could have added that my father disliked drinking. He never touched liquor. His only luxuries were to smoke his pipe and to read books. At last, my father got word from my mother. Sigurður describes it this way: *Helgi was clearing bush when a letter came from Þura... he dropped his tools, went to Duluth and was married there. The day was July 22, 1895."*

My parents planned to settle near Mountain, N.D. but they lived in several different places in that area, depending on circumstances. I was born in that district on November 13, 1897 and I was their only child. My father took any work that became available, for example hauling freight for Elis Thorwaldson, merchant, harvesting and clearing bush. I remember him blasting huge stumps with dynamite. He also tried farming but he had to give up on that because, by this time, the only farms to be had were high-priced. There seemed to be no future unless you had money to start with. But homestead farms could be had in Canada. Pioneers could have farms of 160 acres for $10.00, provided that they lived on the acreage for three consecutive years and did some clearing and ploughing each year. Somewhere around 1904, my father and Jóhannes Stefánsson (brother of Vilhjálmur Stefansson) went to Manitoba to look for lands.

The trip was quite an adventure but the conclusion was that where lands were still available there was dissension among the residents. In fact, it was suspected that, in some cases, people were setting fire to each other's properties. Then they themselves narrowly escaped the dangers of a prairie fire. Finally, the decision was made to choose a previously unsettled area in Assiniboia where plenty of land was offered. (The new provinces Saskatchewan and Alberta were formed in the following year.) The Canadian government sent out advertisements explaining the opportunities and claiming that there was no longer any problem with Indians. The following entry comes from a diary belonging to one of the Johnsons: *"On May 22, 1905, many people left the district (i.e. Mountain, N.D.) to move to Canada, taking with them their animals, equipment and furniture. They plan to make their new homes near Quill Lake, Assiniboia."* A few people had moved the year before and had lost all their horses on the difficult journey. Therefore, my father left his horses behind initially and went back for them later. Instead, he used a pair of oxen to pull our wagon. I remember well how they struggled to get down the hillside from Mountain, a distance of about one mile. The wagon tossed from side to side but my father continued to hold on to the reins and finally managed to get control of the team. Altogether, it was quite a journey. We had to travel a great distance and everything was moved on wagons or carts loaded down with household equipment, tools and supplies and with the people sitting on the loaded boxes.

Once the parties arrived in Canada, loads were transferred to the railway and moved that way as far as the railroads went. Then the loads were taken again by wagon where there were no roads. A few men herded the cattle. I remember at least one night when we slept out in the open with *"only the starry sky above us."* My parents' farm was 2 1/2 miles southwest of the present townsite of Wynyard, Saskatchewan. Our nearest neighbour, arrived the year before, was Ólafur Stephanson from Skagafirði. For the first few months, we lived in a tent near Ólaf's home. Our food consisted mainly of prairie chicken and rabbits which my father shot. In this way, he supplied meat for our needs, especially during the winters. My parents carefully explored the 160 acres of their homestead land and they chose as the site of their home a hill which offered a good view of the district and also had a bluff nearby. Then my father cut trees and built a log cabin which was dug into the hill on one side. The cabin had a wood floor and a roof made from railings, straw and clay, with moss in place of mortar.

The next job was to put up some hay for the cattle and my father used a mower to cut the grass. One day when he was cutting, my mother and I brought some coffee out to the meadow and we called to him. He turned to look at us and inadvertently stepped with one foot over the cutting blade. At once the blade ran through the calf muscle and halfway through the bone. My mother ran half a mile over to Ólaf's place for help but my father sat down on the mower and drove home. Meanwhile, he tried to keep pressure on the wound as best he could. Stefán Hafliðason, Ólaf's father, recalled that in Iceland wounds were packed to stop excessive bleeding and he remembered that sometimes these packs were made from wormwood[1] which had been sprinkled with sugar. This method was tried for my father as a first aid measure. Then our friends sought out the only man in the district who had any experience in looking after wounds. He was several miles away. He was Jón Jónsson from Múnkaþverá. Jón cleaned the wound as well as he could and then used a needle and grey silk thread, which had been boiled, to sew up the cut. He had nothing else to work with. My father never winced except for one deep groan when the bone was touched. In the middle of the floor were pools of blood.

That fall and winter, several young men took turns staying at our place and helping us through the hardest times. They were also very pleasant company. The Axdal brothers, for example, were excellent actors and mimics. They could bring the activities of the whole district into our home!

The wound was tended as well as any country doctor could have managed under the circumstances. However, slivers of bone remained inside and caused damage. Several years later, a wound opened at my father's heel and the final result was that an amputation was done above the site of the original injury. After that, my father walked with a wooden leg. In spite of this misfortune, my father tended to his work as soon as possible, earned his homestead rights in three years and continued to cultivate more and more acres. Immediately after the accident, several of our neighbours, including Jón Kr. Halldórsson and the Vestdals, combined forces and built a turf barn in one day.

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[1] *Wormwood belongs to a plant family said to have medicinal qualities. Other members of that family are yarrow and sagebrush. The Icelandic word "malurt" was used in the original article.*

They also caulked the walls of our cabin. Later on, my father built a timber addition to our house. He also built quite a good barn of stone and timber. He kept a good-sized vegetable garden and looked after a small herd of cattle. He studied farm journals so he could choose the most suitable varieties of grain and so on.

Six years after the accident, my father's health failed. He rented the farm out to his good neighbour, Ólafur Peterson, but continued to work as much as his strength allowed. In 1914, he was operated on for abdominal cancer and, on April 27, 1916, he died as a result of that disease. His last undertaking in the line of physical work was to clear a piece of bush on the southern part of the homestead. He was not able to stand for any length of time but he worked on his knees.

My mother undertook all work, both in the house and outside, like any other farm wife of those times. She was an excellent homemaker. She had been schooled in handwork and in cooking both in Iceland and in Denmark.

Our days were filled with work of all kinds but the evenings, at least in winter, were set aside for intellectual and spiritual pursuits. My parents were both very fond of reading and they subscribed to various newspapers and journals in Icelandic and English and even to one Norwegian paper. They availed themselves of any good books they could get hold of, both Icelandic and English. There was always a celebration in our house when the library books came from Iceland. They would stay at our house for a few days until they were lent out. My mother's favourite books were *Úrania* by the French author Flammarion and Nýall, written by the Icelandic author Helgi Péturss. My father often borrowed books for me - the Icelandic sagas and many others. His religious beliefs, strongly based on free-thinking and humanitarianism, were demonstrated by the fact that he once gave me a book on world religions and said to me, *"Read this and choose what suits you best."* I am grateful to him for allowing me this freedom of thought.

Our home was in an out-of-the-way location but, nevertheless, we had many visitors. Sometimes we even had groups of visitors. We often had lively discussions about religion, politics, global issues and literature. But the largest group I remember came when a prairie fire surrounded our home and all the men from the neighbourhood came to help us fight the flames. When the fire had been put out and the danger was past, my mother served coffee for everyone and we celebrated. We noticed that our nearest neighbour, Ólafur Stephanson, had singed eyebrows and his face was black from soot. He just laughed about that.

Some of the happiest times that I recall were the times when Friðgeir Berg stayed at our home. Sometimes he stayed for weeks at a time, especially one winter when my father took seriously ill at Christmas time and we had to seek help. My father and Friðgeir became friends from the outset. Although they were not at all alike, their minds seemed to connect. It was a coincidence that, although they were years apart in age, they had the same birthday and they had both suffered leg injuries. While Friðgeir was with us on winter evenings, he often composed short verses or poems which he shared with us. I would write them down for him. He had extra-sensory perception and seemed to be very aware, whether awake or asleep. He once dreamed an episode in a book which had just arrived at our house and which none of us had had a chance to examine. Another time he dreamed about a grim-faced man in old-fashioned clothes who spoke to him in verse.

Þegar ilmrík anga kvöld
Og akurs blikar reinin
Hvíla grænu grasi föld
Gömlu víkings beinin.

Then the man disappeared and Friðgeir woke up. In rough translation, the verse might be:

While the fragrant fields
Lie gleaming in the evening light
Old Viking bones are resting
Under green grass, out of sight.

Friðgeir returned to Iceland shortly before my father died and he continued to live there from then on.

My father did not let difficulties deter him from taking part in community life. In cooperation with others, he worked to establish an elementary school which was named Nordra School (Norðri Skóli). Although this was a public school run by the government, Icelandic was taught during the last period as allowed by law at that time. The first teacher was Baldur, son of Jón Jónsson from Múri in Bárðardal and the second teacher was Jón, son of Pastor Árni of Skútastöðum. Jón later became a doctor in Seattle.

My father also helped to begin a debating club which was enjoyed by the young men of the Wynyard district. This offered them good exercise in public speaking. One of my father's greatest interests was the founding of the library. I believe he did the ordering for the library because the books always arrived at our house first. When interest in the library seemed to wane, he traveled through the neighbourhood to rekindle enthusiasm. These were his last trips, for at that time his health was broken.

During the pioneer era, there was a good deal of unruliness among the young men. My father was saddened to see promising young men put their future at risk because of this. He was among those who established a temperance society, the Wynyard chapter of the I.O.G.T. (International Order of Good Templars). This group became quite strong and they erected their own building which also served as a church and a place for public meetings for many years. My father was also instrumental in beginning the tradition of annual Íslendingadagar, or Icelandic Celebrations, in the area. He was often a committee member and served at least one year as chairman. The poet Stephan G. Stephansson was the guest speaker at one of these celebrations and thus began a long friendship between him and my father. They exchanged letters, after that. When the people of Wynyard asked Stephan to write a piece for my father after he died, the reply was *"I had intended to do just that."* He wrote the poem, *Helga-Erfi (Elegy for Helgi)* which was published in the *Memorial Issue "Helgi Stefansson"* produced by the Wynyard chapter I.O.G.T. in 1920.

In the first years of the settlement, people of different religions all attended services held by Rev. Rúnólfur Fjeldsted and these were well appreciated. However, in 1911, Rúnólfur was replaced by a young minister from the Lutheran church. It may have been youthful over-enthusiasm that led him to insist upon strict observance of all religious rites and conventions. All were expected to produce certificates of confirmation, attend communion, and so on. At this point, church-goers broke into two groups - one that followed the Lutheran minister and the other group who founded a "free" church and brought their ministers from Iceland. Some of these men were university graduates (Kandidatar) but some were ordained ministers. Amongst them were Jakob Lárusson, Ásmundur Guðmundsson, Jakob Kristinnsson, Friðrik A. Friðriksson and Jakob Jónsson. My father was one of those who helped to start the new congregation. I never knew exactly what part my father took in this group because he never said *"I did this or that"* but rather *"We did this or that"*. Perhaps that was why so many people seemed to follow his approach. However, all was not well. Of all of his endeavours, it was only in the area of religion that my father met with serious difficulties. When the residents split into two groups, religious issues were debated throughout the settlement and in the homes and schools. This created a furor which was not quelled until years later when Friðrik Friðriksson and Rev. Haraldur Sigmar, Sr. headed the two groups and managed to replace hatred with friendship and cooperation. But, on account of this controversy, my father endured scathing personal attacks.

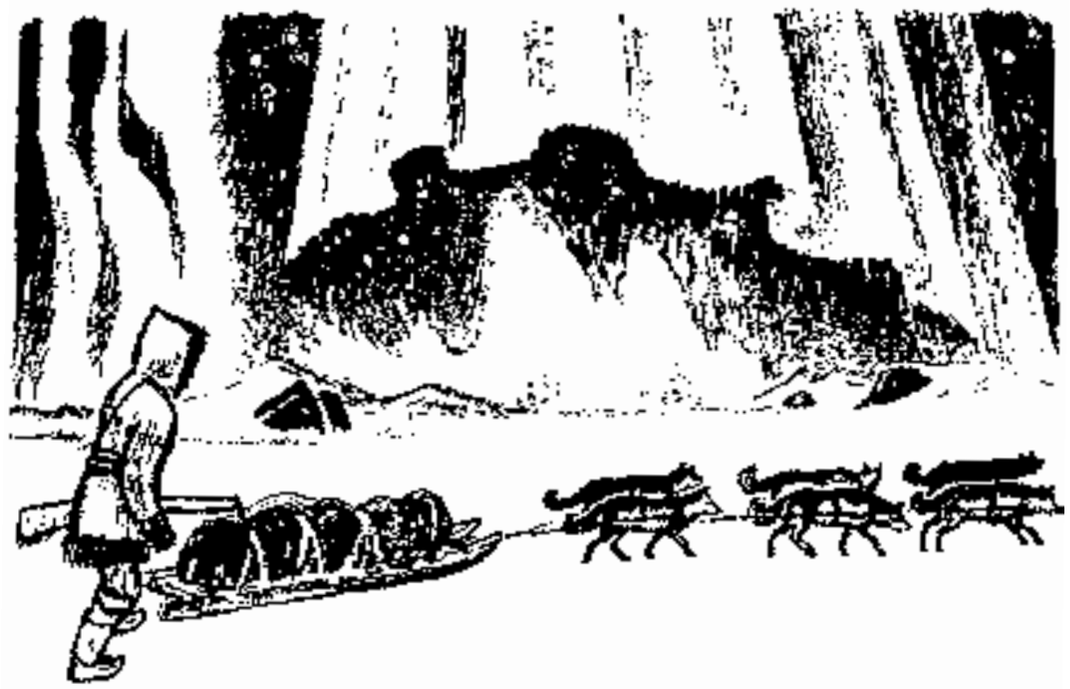
Three years later, after my father underwent surgery for the last time, the man who had been most persistent in the argument came to our house. He walked straight to my father's bedside and said,*"Viltu fyrirgefa mér?" ("Will you forgive me?") "Já,"* said my father, and offered his hand. That was all that was said about the matter. Now I can appreciate what this man did but at the time I was so over-emotional that I said to my father, *"How could you forgive him?" "One should always forgive,"* was his answer. This was characteristic of his lifestyle. He showed humanity and kindness to man and beast. He was completely against capital punishment and warfare. In this, my mother agreed with him wholeheartedly. She could not tolerate human suffering and was a great animal lover.

After my father's death, my mother and I were always together, whether I was studying or

teaching in Winnipeg, Carrick, Lundar or Gimli. We always had a base with her wonderful sister, Sigríður Bjerring and her husband, S.O. Bjerring, of Winnipeg. My mother died in Gimli in 1925 from heart failure, after a long illness at home. Dr. Sigurður Júlíus Jóhannesson wrote a tribute in her memory and also a poem in her honour.

I took ownership of my parents' homestead farm. I have rented it out to members of the Peterson family throughout the years. The friendship of the Petersons and other neighbours was of inestimable help to us.

Now, as I reflect on the past, it occurs to me that, even during the most difficult times, I never saw my parents feeling sorry for themselves, or crying, or seriously complaining about anything. Neither of them spoke of homesickness. The rule was to bear things well. My father did say that, if he had had the means, he would have liked to go to Iceland to live, but my mother never spoke of that. After my father took his last breath and the peace of death spread over his face, my mother turned to me and said, "Now he is in Iceland."



In the Red River Valley

Part III, Chapter Five
by Jóhann Magnús Bjarnason
translated by Thelma Guðrun Whale

The last letter of Hálfdan Arnórsson Berg,
St. Alban's Abbey,
Minnesota, the United States
April 8th, 1870

My dear sister!

In a short letter I wrote you three days ago, I told you I had been brought here, very near the end, the night before Ambrose's Mass and I asked you to make certain that he whom you send west stops here on his way to Fort Garry to learn of my fate, for here I will stay for good, and the moment when I take my last breath will soon be here. I asked a young man, Godson by name, and to my mind an honest man, to get my writing on its way. At the same time I asked this young man to take charge of one longer letter which I had written before I left Fort Garry. I am sure that he took both these letters to the post office in St. Paul as soon as he arrived there. I hope the address is correct because if it should be that you have moved away from Öld at Seyðisfjörður, then everyone in those parts would know where you have gone, and everyone would know your husband, Sigmund Jón Sturluson, to whom I have addressed all my writings to you.

Now I must tell you, before it is too late, that the chief of the rebels in the Red River Valley sent two gentlemen to me late in February to find out about my health and my plans. They greatly encouraged me to meet their leader and they told me that he would, without question, befriend me if I asked for protection and told him all about my plight. They said that if he set eyes on me, he would most certainly have me moved south without delay, to the town of St. Paul in Minnesota, so that I could get medical help

and be admitted to hospital. But they stressed that by no means should I tell anyone at the inn where I was staying that I wanted to meet the leader of the rebels. And these gentlemen thought it best that I take the opportunity to leave home in the dark of night and try to get to a small log house which stood about two hundred fathoms away, and the man who lived there would drive me by sleigh to the leader.

So, because I had become very tired of the turmoil and disturbances at the inn - and also because the money I had taken in trust was almost gone - and because, now and again arose the hope that I might perhaps find a cure for my illness if I could get to a learned doctor, - I decided, though reluctantly, to follow the advice of these two gentlemen who were sent to me. The night after their visit I intended to start off, but did not trust myself when the time came. But the next day there came a sudden snowstorm with periods of complete darkness. I dressed myself as best I could, took with me a small writing book I had had for a long time and the sermons of Jón Vídalín, and I left the inn about noon, without being noticed, and with the greatest difficulty managed to get to the log cabin to the south. I felt very badly about leaving the inn in secret without saying goodbye to that honest woman, Madeleine Vanda, from whom I had received such sisterly nursing care and solicitude. On the other hand, I did not owe the landlord anything, for I had paid my board and room for the whole week.

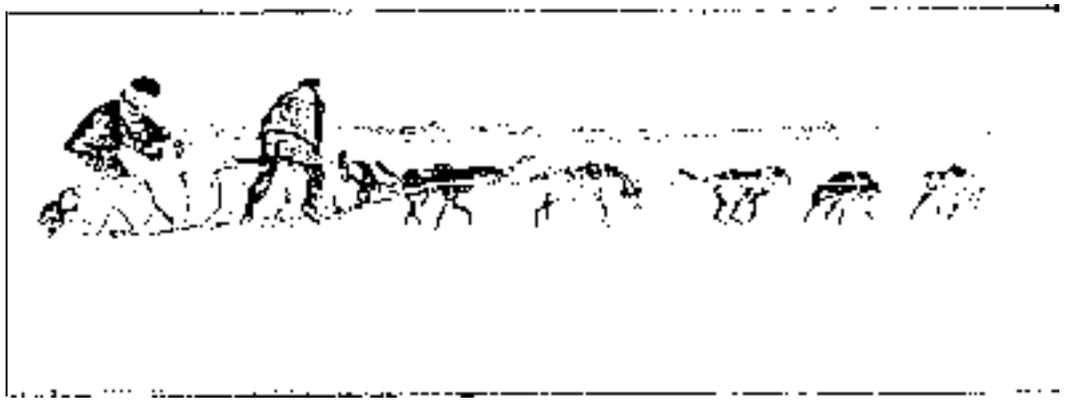
There was one old Métis at the log cabin when I got there. He welcomed me cordially, as if I were his special friend, and he said he had orders to bring me as quickly as possible to his leader who was waiting impatiently for me in the fort. This elderly Métis lost no time getting started, taking great care to make me comfortable on a kind of sled drawn by six dogs. He wrapped a buffalo hide and a bear skin around me. We reached the fort in about fifteen minutes and I was immediately taken to where the leader of the rebels had his headquarters.

The leader was in his best years, rather handsome and attractive. His father was said to be white and his mother Indian on the maternal side. His hair was quite dark but his eyes were a heavenly blue and somewhat peculiar. An irresistable magic seemed to flow from them. I think that all Métis who have come in contact with him lose their independence, listen to him blindly and act like men who are sleep-walking. He was very articulate - I will say abnormally eloquent - but his voice sounded strange. However, he carried himself like a man destined for greatness and on occasion he put on a pious air. But still, one could clearly see by his behaviour and bearing that he was smitten with intractable, insatiable ambition and blind self-conceit. And behind all that, it seemed to me that madness lay dormant and could awaken when least expected, and rage forth in ecstasy. As I thought of this, terror came over me because of the white men he held as prisoners. I especially pitied a fine man, in the prime of life, who had been taken prisoner the fall before and had to lose his life because the rebel leader bore a personal grudge against him. I cannot keep back the tears when I think of it and I do not wish to say any more about it.

The leader greeted me cordially and sounded as if his heart rejoiced that I had at last come under his protection. He warmed my hands with his and made me sit in the one comfortable armchair, and piled cushions all around me. Then he ordered his servant to bring me a large glass of brandy. But I declined because all my life I have had a strong aversion to alcoholic beverages. I felt the leader was not pleased when I would not accept his wine. He looked at me with a sharp, questioning eye for a moment, but I met his gaze with the calmness and composure of a man whose conscience is clear. Then all at once he began to question me about my nationality, my journey, my financial curcumstances and health. Some of his questions

were almost petty, especially those that dealt with my journey from York Factory to Fort Garry. For a long time, I felt that he did not believe I was a castaway and that he wanted to imply that I was a spy for the Canadian government. But I pretended not to notice that implication. However, all doubts likely disappeared from his mind when I sent word to the man in charge of the Hudson Bay store in Fort Garry and asked him to bear witness that I had been a sailor aboard the Galahad which sank in Hudson Bay, and had a right to claim that the company had been willing to help me get to New York as quickly as possible. I knew that a statement to that effect had been sent from the company's agent in York Factory to the agent in Fort Garry the fall before. The agent in Fort Garry proved to be my best supporter for he was strong and steadfast and the finest of gentlemen. He willingly affirmed everything I had said about the shipwreck and my situation concerning the company. He said he knew I had lived here in the vicinity of the fort, but for good reasons, had never been able to talk to me or assist me in any way. He showed the leader that, as I was in no way a party to the dispute in the Red River Valley and was a poor castaway, a foreigner in a foreign land, and that as my health was almost gone and death's scythe was over my head, it would make a very bad impression if I were not taken quickly to St. Paul where I could be admitted to hospital. This man pleaded my cause with great zeal and I much admired his frankness and courage because it is worth noting that he was not on the side of the rebels but one of their prisoners. For awhile it seemed doubtful that the leader would take into consideration what the agent said, for he often lowered his eyebrows and pressed his lips together. But in the end, he ordered that I be transported in a good sleigh south to St. Paul and that I should be made as comfortable as possible. Two young men were chosen to move me. One was named Godson, whom I have mentioned before and the other was called Villon. They were to have two sleighs, each drawn by six dogs. At the same time they were to take an important letter from the rebel leader to his friends in the United States.

We did not start immediately. I had to wait a full three weeks inside the walls of Fort Garry. I do not know the cause of the delay. I was told an attempt was made to get me a bed in the hospital of the St. Boniface Monestery which stands not far from the fort, but it was so crowded that there was no possibility of finding me a place there. I was put in a small room upstairs in the building being used as a prison for the captives. There were very stout bars on the windows. One of the prisoners was put in the room with me. He was a young man, fair overall, with a noble bearing. He had been taken prisoner in the fall, only because he refused to join the rebels. I soon found out that he had an honest and decent heart and that he was the most courageous of men. He seemed very glad to know I was an Icelander and said he and I were cousins because he was born in the Orkneys and could trace his ancestry to the Scandinavians. He was very knowledgeable about Norse mythology and some of the Icelandic sagas. He told me about an Irish lord who had gone to Iceland in 1856. The lord had written a long



book about that journey and highly praised the Icelandic people. This young prisoner had spent a long time at school, a good part of it studying medicine. He gave me good advice about my illness which he seemed to know well. And he greatly regretted not having any medicine to give me. He could speak Danish well and we sometimes talked together in that tongue, and he was more proficient than I, for I have always had problems speaking Danish although I understand it pretty well. He asked me many questions about Jón Vídalín's house sermons and I often translated long chapters out of that good book. He listened to me, delighted, and sometimes allowed himself to remark that this was how clerics ought to preach. - Once he asked in a low voice, with a smile, what I thought his forefathers would have done in his shoes. I answered that they would have pulled the iron bars out of the window, gone out that way and headed for the bush. He looked to the window and smiled but did not speak of it further. I hope he has now escaped from prison. I feel it cannot be denied that he is destined to have a long and rich life, for a more gifted young man I have never set eyes on. And I have often times remembered him in my prayers since I left him.

All the time I was in the fort, my landlord at the inn never once asked about me. Or if he or someone else did ask about me, I was never told. However, it seems to me most odd that honest Madeleine Vanda never asked about me or started a search going. On the other hand, I am absolutely sure that my poor fellow traveller and workmate, Daniel Wilde, would not worry if he never heard any news of me. Anyway, he was not at the inn when I left, for he had gone elk hunting with two Métis whom he had just met.

At last I set off with Godson and Villon for the town of St. Paul, Minnesota. The rebel leader ordered that I be made comfortable on one of the sleighs which was very skilfully made, with thin oak runners, and I was as comfortable as could be expected. At the same time I was given new woollen underwear, an old, but warm buffalo coat and other things which I needed for the trip. I also received the gift of a fine leather suitcase, though old, and I appreciated that. I said goodbye to all those I had come to know within the fort and thanked them for all the good things they had done for me. But it distresses me very much, when I think of it, that an educated and talented man like the leader should go astray for the sake of empty ambition and pride. About him I will say again, I felt he was gifted in all ways, but was impetuous. And his attitude towards me proves that there were sensitive strands in his heart.

It was early morning when we left Fort Garry and the weather was quite nice. But as the day wore on, it suddenly changed to heavy frost and snow and we had difficulty reaching the dwelling-place of two white hunters about seventy miles south of Fort Garry. We were weatherbound there for three days. On the fourth day, we again embarked but travelled in fits and starts because of the drifting snow and impassable trail. I suffered a great deal on this trip, and I became worse from day to day, until at last I could not bear any movement in silence. We finally reached this abbey the night before Ambrose's Mass. I was suffering so much that I did not trust myself to keep on, and asked the good Christian monks who live here to allow me to stay for the little time I had left to live. I was received with open arms and true humanity and hospitality. I have been nursed by one of the brothers, Bernard by

name. May I say of him that he strives to be a true lover of mankind and was brought up in the discipline and teachings of his Master. Of my two fellow travellers, I can say they continued on to St. Paul after resting at the abbey for two days. I entrusted the young Godson with two letters to you, as was mentioned before in my writings.

- - -

My dear sister.

When I last wrote to you, I explained that when I left Fort Garry, I had not taken with me the money my friend William asked me, on his dying day, to deliver. It is still in the place where I buried it last fall. I have thought long about this money and mentioned it in every single letter to you. In the last letter I asked you to emphasize to your son, or whatever man you send west, to stop by at this abbey on the way to Fort Garry to get news of me. I have asked Brother Bernard to keep these pages and pass them on to the man who comes from Iceland to find out about my last days. And now, once again, I will describe where I buried the money.

The inn where I lived is called The Buffalo and is situated on the bank of the Red River on Point Douglas, about a mile and a half from the walls of Fort Garry. The owner of the inn is McLean, a tall man of Scottish ancestry, with a scar on his right eyebrow. About thirty-two fathoms north-west of the inn stands a huge oak tree. Exactly five yards in a straight line east of the aforementioned tree, I buried a tin box containing William Trent's money and my bank book, and it is sixteen yards from there east to the river or to where the grass roots are first seen on the bank. There is one little inlet in the bank and exactly opposite it - but on the other side of the river - stands an old log house in a small poplar grove.

But should it happen that the aforementioned oak has disappeared before your son arrives there, he must walk thirty-two fathoms, or sixty-four English yards, in a straight line to the north-west from the middle of the north gable of the house. Then he must turn east and head straight towards the aforementioned log house which stands on the other side of the river. And then when he has gone five English yards in that direction, he must stop and dig down three feet. But before he

begins digging, he must be sure that he is exactly sixteen yards from the river or from where the grass roots on the bank first begin. And he must be sure the above-mentoned little inlet, or cut, in the bank is in a straight line with him and the log house, but in such a way that the log house is midway between east and north-east from him. - If your son bears all this in mind and does not deviate from it in any way, then he must find the hidden treasure as long as he digs three feet into the earth in the place I have described.

As I have very often touched upon in my letters, the tin box contains the 20 five hundred dollar notes which my honest friend William Trent entrusted me with on his dying day, and also my bank book which shows that I have two thousand six hundred American dollars in a New York bank. Likewise I have declared in the said letters, that Henry A.S. Trent or his heirs be given the banknotes. But of my money, one hundred fifty dollars go to Henry Trent or his heirs in return for the English gold coins which William Trent gave me, because I used them for my own needs after I came to Fort Garry and had spent all my pocket money. Next, I want two hundred dollars of my money to go to that honest woman, Madeleine Vanda, as a small token for the sisterly care she showed me while I lived at the inn called The Buffalo where she was a servant. But the rest of my money, along with the interest, I give to your son or the man you send here to look for this money. And he must see to it that my wishes are carried out in every respect. I have talked about this plainly in my letters to you and do not need to add more here. Still, I must emphasize once again that I make this arrangement in my right mind and of my free will and without having consulted anyone about it. And this is my last will and testament.

Most important of all, I ask your son to have clear in his mind that he must find the honest woman, Madeleine Vanda, as soon as he gets to Fort Garry and ask her to direct him to the inn where I lived. She will remember Berg the castaway, the name I used there.

Madeleine Vanda is now in her twenty-third year and her parents live two miles from the fort called Fort Garry. Her father is white, (either French or Swiss), and her mother is of Cree Indian descent. It is most urgent that your son allows this honest young woman to show him the inn so that he will be in no doubt about where to look for the money. Otherwise the search will be long and difficult. I hope Madeleine Vanda is still alive when your son comes, if it is within a few years. It may come to pass that the inn has burned down or is no longer an inn or has another name and the owner is someone else altogether. And by this you will know how urgent it is that your son, or anyone you send west, make his first task to look up the oft-mentioned Madeleine Vanda.

Now my strength is exhausted, my dearly beloved sister, and I cannot write anything without the greatest pain. My fingers are so numb that I can scarcely hold the pen. I have written this in two days, sitting up in my bed with a cushion behind my shoulders. And I find I now have little time left.

Book Reviews

Icelandic Essays: Explorations in the Anthropology of Modern Life

by E. Paul Durrenberger
Iowa City: Rudi Publishing, 1995.
Pp. 157.
Reviewed by John S. Matthiasson

Iceland watchers have been around for centuries, and many of them have reported on their observations. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries they have often been travel writers who visited Iceland for varying periods of time, and in doing so often succumbed to what one of them, Richard Burton, termed a state of "Iceland on the brain." These were Iceland watchers, who often idealized a people and its history, even though their observations were often made during a low time when most Icelanders, suffering under the yoke of Danish colonialism, were living in what was virtually abject poverty. Many of them were impressed with the generous hospitality accorded them by the Icelanders, in spite of having little largess.

More recently, anthropologists have discovered Iceland, and today a rapidly growing number of them - both native and foreign, but almost all foreign-trained - are churning out ethnographic reports which claim to be more objective than those of the travel writers. E. Paul Durrenberger, a professor of anthropology at the University of Iowa, is one of these, and he seems to have fallen victim to the condition of "Iceland on the brain." It is, in my opinion, a good thing for both anthropology and Icelandic studies that he has acquired this non-threatening cognitive malady, for he is a prolific field worker and scholar and has written extensively and made important contributions to the two disciplines. Personally, I do not agree with everything he writes about Iceland, but there is room within anthropology for divergent points of view, even though we claim that what we do is to a certain extent scientific.

Perhaps the main reason for our disagreements is that we start from different theoretical perspectives. Durrenberger is a materialist and something of a neo-Marxist in that he looks for economic and political explanations of social and cultural phenomena. For my part, I take a more idealistic and humanistic approach, and seek answers more in terms of ideas. The materialism of Durrenberger is far more popular among the anthropologists who are looking at Iceland than is idealism, and so I have to recognize that my way is something of a minority position. Readers should be aware of this fundamental difference in reading this review.

Twice over the past decade Durrenberger and his colleague, Gisli Palsson at the University of Iceland), have organized major symposia on the anthropology of Iceland, and Durrenberger was instrumental in establishing a student and faculty exchange program between the University of Iowa and Iceland. The two conferences resulted in book form publication of the proceedings. Ile has had published several articles on his Icelandic research, many in major journals, and a number of reviews of works by other anthropolog-

ical Iceland watchers. In *Icelandic Essays* he writes in a reminescent way of his own research, both before and after he joined the ranks of those with Iceland on the brain. In many ways, it consists of a series of personal essays, and in reading it we become familiar with the writer himself, as well as his work. Much of it is anecdotal, and that makes for interesting reading, for he is a good story teller. At the same time, he grounds much of his discussion in references to anthropological theory.

Before beginning his Icelandic research, (much of which was done in collaboration with Palsson and Durrenberger's wife, Dorothy), he did extensive field work among the Lisu, a tribal people of the highlands of Thailand, and he makes many comparisons - comparison being one of the basic hall-marks of anthropological writing - between the Lisu and Icelanders. He also compares the latter with the contemporary United States, of which he is critical, yet finds redeeming virtues. Durrenberger and Palsson's Icelandic research is probably best known for their study of the 'skipper effect', which is a belief commonly held by Icelandic fisherpersons that a good catch is dependent on having a good skipper, and a chapter is devoted to it here. Using quantitative empirical evidence, they attempted to disprove or demystify the belief. Their evidence is compelling, but I wonder how many fisherpersons rejected the belief in the skipper effect in favor of it. Here we have an example of much of the anthropological research on Iceland - it often challenges folk beliefs and what the researchers consider to be myths.

Like Icelanders themselves, Durrenberger is fascinated with the Icelandic language, and the place it holds in the order of things most valued among the people. Palsson has claimed that the use of language in contemporary Iceland has become a way of reinforcing class distinctions, in that persons who speak less then perfect Icelandic are denied access to privileged positions in the society. Durrenberger accepts Palsson's conclusions, and discusses them at length in the book. Personally, I disagree with their efforts to find real social classes in Iceland, prefering instead to see efforts made by the Icelanders to perpetuate a form of, admittedly less than perfect, egalitarianism. Still, their argument is one that cannot easily be dismissed.

A book on Iceland would be incomplete wthout some reference to the beliefs in elves, trolls and other supernatural beings thought to inhabit the landscape. Kisten Hastrup, a Danish anthropologist who has studied Iceland extensively, gives some credence to these beliefs, but Durrenberger is more skeptical, although his anecdotes about meeting people who did believe in the mysterious beings is charming to read. There are also the mandatory references to the Sagas, and one chapter is devoted to them. Like Victor Turner, the first anthropologist to write about them, Durrenberger finds much of anthropological value in these greatest of all medieval writings.

There is some 'pop anthropology' here, with, for example, brief references to ways in which Icelanders greet one another and outsiders, and general impressions Durrenberger gleaned of Icelanders and Iceland. These add to the personal quality of the book. For one period Durrenberger and his wife worked on a farm in Iceland, and at another time he taught at the University of Iceland. These experiences are recounted with warmth and affection for the farm people and his students.

The final chapter deals with the sometimes harsh reality of change in contemporary Iceland. His example of 'modernization' is an attempt by an Icelandic farmer to transform his pasture land into a golf course - a stark and perhaps foreboding shift in the use of the countryside which Icelanders hold so dear. In this chapter and a brief epilogue, though, he concludes that in the face of change, Icelanders will continue to preserve some continuity with their unique history and basic social and cultural values.

I recommend *Icelandic Essays* to our readers. It is a 'good read,' although the non-anthropologist may sometimes bog down in the theoretical references to postmodernism and Levi-Strauss. As well, it is a good introduction for those who know little about the small island out in the Atlantic Ocean, and offers a different perspective to those who already are Iceland watchers and have Iceland on the brain.

Sarah and the People of Sand River

by W.D. Valgardson
Illustrated by Ian Wallace
Toronto: Groundwood Books / Douglas & McIntyre, 1996.
Reviewed by Kristine Perlmutter

The fictional story of 12 year old Sarah, who is sent to Winnipeg from her home in New Iceland on the Lake Winnipeg shore, is based on true events and people, particularly on a story told to author W.D. Valgardson by his great-grandmother about her early days. In order to learn English and to learn "to be a lady," Sarah must go to live with an English family and leave her peaceful existence close to nature with her father and their animal friends the dog Baldur, the horse Hjortur and the raven Loki. What awaits Sarah in the city is a Cinderella-like existence far from what her father had intended for her. She survives because of the help of a raven similar to the one she left behind and a mysterious native man and woman - her legacy as a result of long ago interdependence between her grandparents and the native people of Sand River.

Well-known Icelandic-Canadian author W.D. Valgardson has given us what will undoubtedly become a classic for people of all ages. It is a history lesson and a morality tale with a fairy tale quality. It is at once poignant and delightful.

The entrancing illustrations by award-winning Canadian illustrator Ian Wallace, rendered in pencil, watercolor and gouache, complete the magic. The story and the illustrations each provide the perfect accompaniment for the other.

This book is recommended reading for all but families of Icelandic- Canadian or native background will find it particularly valuable as a historical recounting and a description of the important relationships between the two groups.

Writings by Western Icelandic Women

Edited and translated by Kirsten Wolf
Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1996. Pp. 209.
Reviewed by Gudrun Gudsteins

The University of Manitoba Press has brought out a second volume of Western Icelandic literature in translation, *Writings by Western Icelandic Women.* The feature of ice crystals is tastefully carried over from the cover design of the first book, *Western Icelandic Short Stories*, to suggest the continuity of a series. But certain differences set the books apart: an old photo of a young girl in a row-boat against a background of pink and white for the women authors, instead of a painting of the settlers' arrival at Willow Point against a blue background for the short story collection, mostly representing male authors. The first book was jointly edited and translated by Professor Kirsten Wolf, Chair of the Department of Icelandic at the University of Manitoba, and Árný Hjaltadóttir, but Professor Wolf was solely in charge of *Writings by Western Icelandic Women.*

Wolf's selection gives an overview of almost a century of writing in Icelandic and English, from 1873 to the 1960's, unfolding the transition from Western Icelandic to Icelandic Canadian literature. There are poems, in Wolf's translation, by Undína (Helga S. Baldvinsdóttir), Júlíana Jónsdóttir, and Jakobína Johnson, as well as short stories and sketches by Torfhildur Þ. Holm, Margrjet J. Benedictsson, Guðrún H. Finnsdóttir, Arnrún from Fell (Guðrún Tómasdóttir), and Rannveig K. G. Sigbjörnsson. Finally there are poems by Helen Sveinbjörnsson and short stories by Laura G. Salverson, all originally written in English.

Wolf's introduction to *Writings by Western Icelandic Women* is excellent. Like that of the first book, the introduction briefly outlines the history of Icelandic settlement in North America, but here in greater depth and historical detail. In addition Wolf gives a fine overview of the accomplishments of Western Icelandic women in cultural, social, and political affairs, through a variety of organizations, stressing in particular their part in bringing about the emancipation of women in Manitoba. She observes: "Yet, while the efforts of the Western Icelandic women have been acknowledged on many fronts, their work as literary artists has remained in the shadows, despite their surprisingly voluminous output in all genres and in both Icelandic and English" (10-11).

Wolf's literary historical overview of the emergence of a women's tradition in Western Icelandic letters and its development into Icelandic Canadian literature fills the glaring gap that she perceives in previous presentations. "The Western Icelandic literary canon is commonly associated with the works of those writers included in Einar H. Kvaran and Guðmundur Finnbogason's anthology entitled *Vestan um haf*, published . . . in 1930," says Wolf, and points out that out of the 36 writers represented only three were women (11). She notes similar neglect of women authors in the literary surveys of Stefán Einarsson and Richard Beck. Indeed the tendency of editors of anthologies which include Western Icelandic literature in English translations to select only one woman, as in Richard Beck's *Icelandic Lyrics* (1930), Watson Kirkconnell's *Canadian Overtones* (1935), Paul Bjarnason's *Odes and Echoes* (1952), and Jakobina Johnson's *Northern Lights* (1959).

As Wolf explains, "there was no real tradition of women's writing in Iceland, and it was not until late in the eighteenth century that women began to make their appearance on the literary scene" (12). She discusses other obstacles to women's writing, not the least being their own lack of self-confidence, and suggests that the pioneer experience prompted women's redefinition of self and society, giving them enough confidence to seek publication. Male ridicule put an end to the first attempts to establish a forum for "Women's Affairs" in *Heimskringla* in 1890, but another opened up in *Freyja* (1898-1910), edited by Sigfus and Margrjet Benedictsson, and later in *Árdís* (1933-1966), published by the Lutheran Women's League of the Icelandic synod. In addition women contributed to the numerous West Icelandic newspapers and journals, most of which came out of Manitoba.

Most of the authors represented in *Writings by Western Icelandic Women* "have to their credit a substantial body of work," says Wolf, but "writers whose work is of historical, sociological or cultural significance" are also included (36). These authors were truly pioneers. Júlíana Jónsdóttir was the first Icelandic woman to publish a book of poetry and have a play produced, Torfhildur Þ. Holm was the first Icelandic woman novelist, Margrjet J. Benedictsson co-edited *Freyja*, the only women's suffrage paper published in Canada at the turn of the century, and Laura G. Salverson broke new ground in her portrayal of the immigrant experience from the ethnic point of view in her best selling novel *The Viking Heart*, being also the first Canadian to win the Governor General's Literary Award in two different divisions.

However, Wolf's decision to limit her selection to works by women is justified by more than her desire to have these and other women authors acknowledged for their contribution to Icelandic and Canadian letters. Above all the book has thematic cohesiveness that was somehow lacking in *Western Icelandic Short Stores.* One main theme is the immigrant experience, largely absent from the earlier book which primarily drew upon narratives included in *Vestan um haf.* The stories by Guðrún Finnsdóttir, especially, as well as Arnrún's "In Old Haunts", give a particularly good insight into the dilemmas of emigration. In the poems the immigrant experience ties in with a theme of the power of imagination and of memory to travel across borders and recuperate shared and treasured moments in poetry. Another main theme, directly related to the immigrant experience, is the ideal of social equality and justice, which pervades the stories in particular, and arises from hopes of a more humane society in the New World. In Laura G. Saverson's stories this theme unites with her celebration of the power of the imagination which overcomes obstacles through insights of the heart.

Some of the works in *Writings by Western Icelandic Women* have been previously published in English, such as Margrjet Benedictsson's "The Messenger of Peace" translated by Árný Hjaltadóttir, (*The Icelandic Canadian,* vol. LIII, No. 2, Winter 1994), Rannveig K.G. Sigbjörnsson's "In the Morning of Life," translated by the author, and here edited by Wolf; and Sigbjörnsson's "Hávamál at Vöð," translated by Johanna F. Sigbjörnsson under the title of "The Sage at the Old Farm." The last story departs most noticeably from Wolf's translation policy by using English names for the Icelandic, so that Vöð becomes Ford, Sesselja becomes Cecelia, and Gestur becomes Guest. Wolf, on the other hand keeps Icelandic names and spelling. On the whole she also remains faithful to the originals, but as is to be expected, with less success in the poetry than in the stories, where she captures the traces of parable, folktale and fairy tale evident in the stories by Holm, Benedictsson, and Sigbjörnsson; the crisplightness of Arnrún's style; as well as Finnsdóttir's more contemplative style and occasional use of extended metaphor.

In the poems, however, Wolf strives to maintain the end-rhyme, meanwhile admitting that "on occasion" it causes "slight" departures "from the original" (36). Rhyme can be a hard task master in English transla-

tions of Icelandic verse, often requiring that the graces of rhythmic cadences, as well as the subtleties of meaning and imagery be sacrificed. In Undína's poems the controlled but seemingly effortless flow of rhythm is lost, as are the intricacies of internal rhyme in her "Departure from Iceland 1873." Likewise, the main thrust of Júlíana Jónsdóttir's "Counsel for the Heart" is considerably altered when her admonition that *you must love most dearly those who hate you the most* becomes: "Those who hate you body and soul, / Are those for whom you most dearly yearn." In Júlíana's tribute "To Iceland" an image celebrating memory's capacity to swiftly soar on *silent* wings (*þytlausum* vængjum), beyond time and place, back to the old home country, turns into its opposite when translated as "On clipped wings our minds fly home apace" and thereby it clashes with the image of "unchained spirits" a few lines later. The flowing development of ideas, images, and meters in Helen Sveinbjörnsson's original English poems underscores the shortcomings of the poetry translations. Prose translations next to the originals in Icelandic might perhaps have been a better solution because as Wolf points out, Icelandic women's literature has its origins in poetry, and the poems she selects contribute significantly to the thematic depth and unity of the anthology.

In all, Kirsten Wolf's *Writings by Western Icelandic Women* is a welcome and successful addition to the collective effort to recover the literary contributions of the generations of authors whose works have for long been inaccessible to Canadian readers. Those who want to become better acquainted with the subject can make good use of her bibliography. Of special interest are Sigrid Johnson's "The Icelandic Women in Manitoba and the Struggle for Women's Suffrage," in *Lögberg-Heimskringla* 19 June 1981: 6-8, and Wolf's own "Western Icelandic Women Writers: Their Contribution to the Literary Canon," in *Scandinavian Studies* 66 (1994): 154-203, which gives the main sections of the introduction in her book but also goes beyond its scope by covering more recent authors. And those who simply want something interesting to read will find a number of pieces to enjoy in *Writings by Western Icelandic Women*.

Contributors

THEODORE R. BECK is a native of Seattle with a PhD in Chemical Engineering from the University of Washington. He is now partly retired from a career in electrochemical engineering research and development. His mother was Icelandic and father Danish. He has made over a dozen trips to visit relatives in Iceland, is developing a family genealogy, and has in recent years become active on the Board of the Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle and with the Icelandic Room group at the Nordic Heritage Museum.

HÉLÈNE ANN FORTIN is Director of Youth Services at Heritage Canada in Ottawa, Ontario, a charitable organization whose mandate is to celebrate the heritage of all Canadians.

GUDRUN GUDSTEINS was born and raised in Iceland, but received much of her university education in Canada. She earned M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Alberta in Edmonton, and now teaches Canadian literature (including Icelandic Canadian literature) at the University of Iceland in Reykjavík.

BORGA JAKOBSON has been involved in a variety of activities in the Icelandic community, including several years as secretary of the Canada-Iceland Foundation. She grew up in the Geysir district in Manitoba nd lived for many years in Neepawa, Manitoba with her late husband, Dr. Bjarki Jakobson, and their eight children.

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ÁSLAUG JÓNSDÓTTIR is an artist, writer of children's books and a graphic designer. She lives in Hofsós, Iceland. Her sister, **SALVÖR JÓNSDÓTTIR** is a geographer and planner. She lives in Portage, Wisconsin. Their great-great-grandparents, Jón Jónsson and Sigurbjörg Steingrímsdóttir emigrated to Canada in 1899 along with several of their children.

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1950's photograph of the Stephan G. Stephansson Library, desk and mementos located in The Icelandic Collection, Elizabeth Dafoe Library, University of Manitoba. Although the desk and mementos have been returned to the Stephansson House at Markerville, Alberta, the library remains in The Collection.

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