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# The Icelandic Canadian

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**GUEST EDITORIAL**

## Then and Now

Jonas Th. Jonasson

The recent Icelandic Festival at Gimli brought to mind other Icelandic Festivals we have attended through the years. My first was at Grund in Argyle, June 17th, at the turn of the century. The admission was a ribbon on which was lettered, "Íslendingar Viljum Vér Allir Vera". Literally, "We, All of us, wish to be Icelanders". This may be interpreted as, "We wish to be true to our Icelandic Heritage". An editorial in the last issue of The Icelandic Canadian explains what may be implied by "The Icelandic Heritage". Those who sponsored that festival and those who attended had become naturalized citizens of this country, willing to accept full responsibilities as well as the privileges of citizenship.

ferent points in Canada. There were, also, a great many floats from business organizations and various non-Icelandic groups in Manitoba. First in the parade came the Fjallkona, then came the President of Iceland. Further back came the Reykjavik Band, then a group from the National Theatre of Iceland, then a large contingent of Icelandic women, in stately, hand-embroidered national costumes, marching like soldiers on parade, singing with the Theatre Group, Icelandic songs played by the Band. The presence of these visitors from Iceland in the parade thrilled the throngs that crowded the sidewalks and brought to mind Scott's immortal lines:

Breathes there the man with soul  
 so dead,  
 Who never to himself hath said,  
 This is my own, my native land".

The three-day Icelandic Festival at Gimli saw the largest gathering of people of Icelandic origin ever assembled on this continent. It was honored by the presence of His Excellency Kristján Eldjárn, President of Iceland, who gave the Toast to Canada at the formal program. There were, also, many hundreds of visitors from Iceland. A feature of the celebrations was the parade. This was the largest ever seen at Gimli — it took fifty minutes to pass a given point. In the parade, were floats representing Icelandic organizations from dif-

Special mention must be made of the presence of The Reykjavik Band and the Group from the National Theatre of Iceland. The band was generous with its offerings during the three days. It played martial music, tender love songs and soothing lullabies — all with equal skill. The Theatre Group gave offerings, performed at the Industrial Park, Gimli. They also visited the Betel Homes at

Gimli and Selkirk. They played scenes from different Icelandic plays, interspersed with choral singing. This was live theatre at its best — it brought tears and laughter from the audience. The singing was by trained singers. The theatre group proceeded to points in Western Canada and the U.S.A.

This centennial year began with a visit by the Prime Minister of Iceland in January. Now came the President of Iceland, with gifts for various institutions and organizations. There were also members of the Cabinet, who announced donations by the Icelandic government to organizations and institutions.

In the past century many thousands of Icelanders have emigrated to Amer-

ica to make their homes here. This year some 1400 Icelanders will visit Canada. This is the largest group to leave Iceland for America in any one year. They come — not as emigrants — but as friends to visit their kinfolk in America. Their presence is tangible evidence of the transformation that has come over Iceland in the last 35 years. Their firm handclaps are proof of their warm friendship of all of Icelandic descent, even though there is no direct blood-relationship. Their visit gives us a better understanding of Iceland and the meaning of the "Icelandic Heritage". We, most sincerely, thank these Ambassadors of Good Will".

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# Toast to Canada

Address delivered by His Excellency Dr. Kristján Eldjárn, at the Icelandic Festival at Gimli, Manitoba, August 4, 1975

Since I have the honour and privilege to be allowed to present a toast to Canada, I think it benefits the occasion that I say what I would like to say in the language which I know you all will understand, although many of you also faithfully preserve the mother tongue of the countries your ancestors came from.

Canada. Before I came to this great land I thought I knew something about it. Now I feel how little it was. One thing is to read in good books about a far-away country. To experience it first-hand with your own senses is another thing. But I have the feeling that I have already learnt a good deal during my short stay. I have felt the enormous expanse and vastness of your land, which indeed makes a strange impression on the islander, who is used to the presence of a restrictive shoreline all around him. I have become aware of the variety of the landscape, which is as great as the country is vast. A phrase from an ancient saga comes to mind, a phrase attributed to one of the settlers of Iceland, 1100 years ago. When he first saw the new country, with the eyes of the newcomer, he happened to remark, laconically: "Þetta mun vera mikið land, er vér höfum fundið, hér eru vatnsföll stór". "This must be a big country we have found; the rivers are big here."

That was Iceland. What then might the descendants of this Viking age

man have thought on their arrival to this country a thousand years later, also in search of new land to settle, when they sighted for the first time the lakes and rivers, the forests, the plains, the mountains? "This must indeed be a big country we have found".

The words country and people are two terms inseparable. Your country is full of variety and so is the people. The guest who comes here from a country where all are of the same ethnic and cultural group, where it can be said that everyone is of one and the same family, cannot help being struck by this fact and wonder at it in his own mind. But above the variety is one common denominator of the utmost importance: This great and diverse nation is joined together in one union, which is Canada, with its way of life, its form of government, which could serve as an example for a great many nations of the world, its liberal atmosphere, so characteristic of human relations in this country. In my mind the name of Canada and the concept of liberty are, in some very particular way, linked together. This feeling, I am sure, is shared by many of my countrymen, and its roots may very well go back to the age of the so-called Canada voyages during the past century, is the movement of immigration, which, by the way, is the very reason for our foregrounding here to-day. People came to these shores seeking liberty, freedom, in a broad sense.

With open arms, Canada welcomed many who had nowhere to turn, who could see no future in old, tired and disillusioned Europe in the nineteenth century. I cannot in this context refrain from alluding to the history of my own homeland, which, like so many others, forced its children to come out this way in search of a new life. In one particular way we Icelanders, more than others, are bound to remember Canada. Our ancestors, and those of many of my listeners today, left their homes in Norway in remote times and created for themselves a future in Iceland, a future which was denied them in their old native country. Quite early the new Icelandic nation sensed, somehow, that further to the west extensive and fertile lands were waiting. Here is where the dream of the Western World began, and brave men sailed onward on voyages of new discoveries. The first among Europeans, they discovered the continent of North America and explored the eastern shores of the land which today is Canada. They did not have means to settle these new-found lands, but the dream was kept alive, abiding its time. Finally it turned into reality although not with any great splendour. We Icelanders have every reason to be proud of the life and achievements of our forefathers, but one cannot conceal the fact that our beloved northerly country was often heavy-handed towards its people. In the year 1870-80 there were bad times in Iceland, and it would seem that the country would barely feed all its children. It was then that the west opened up for the Icelanders as so many others. The ancient dream once more came alive with new vigour. The western hemisphere, and in this instance, Canada, offered freedom from oppression and underdeveloped economies, freedom from the yoke of poverty. A new land held out

real hope for the future for those who saw none in the old country.

You all know this story, there is no need for me to recount it. Your ancestors travelled out here to the west by the thousands, just as did the ancient settlers who moved to Iceland from Norway 1100 years ago. The history of the settlement had repeated itself. But it was not a continuous march to victory and triumph. You know better than I do the difficulties of the pioneer years. But they were overcome, and the story ended in victory, it ended as the history of triumph of the group of Icelanders living in Canada. The Icelandic Canadians of today serve as the clearest and most tangible evidence of this: happy and respected citizens of this new land, but at the same time mindful of their Icelandic ancestry, to their own joy and fullness of life, and to the honour of their homeland. We allow ourselves to believe that the Icelandic inheritance has endured well and stood them in good stead among the numerous nationalities here in Canada. But we do not want to overlook the role played by the country they moved to, their adoptive homeland, their native country, Canada, the country of which the Icelandic immigrants from the very outset placed a major emphasis on proving loyal subjects. Thinking of Canada I am once more tempted to quote an ancient saga passage describing the settlers first impression of Iceland: — "Þeir fundu landakosti góða að grös-um og skógum; var fagurt um að litast, lyfti þá mjög brúnum manna". "They found fertile lands with grass and forests; it was a lovely sight to look at; their faces lit up not a little". This may be a true description of Iceland, but certainly it sounds like a vision of Canada. No doubt many of my kinsmen, when they came here, have thought or said something similar: This is a lovely sight to look at.

But it was, indeed, much more. Here the Icelandic immigrants found what they were looking for: land, freedom, the opportunity for growth and improvement, a humanitarian society, a promising future. For this reason the Icelanders at home carry a warmer feeling in their hearts towards Canada than to most other countries, for this reason I would like to declare my admiration and pay tribute to this blessed land. Iceland need not complain, even though a part of its children moved out here to the plains of Canada. Even if no one had gone out west we in Iceland would hardly be much larger in number than we are today. Iceland, therefore, did not shrink as a result of the emigration, on the contrary, it grew larger. Its cultural domain stretched far and wide across this great land, and this in turn has enriched my own country and people. This is becoming more and more evident as a result of on-going research and recording of the history of the Canadian Icelanders. It is true, what has been said by many, that the soul of Iceland resides in part here in Canada. In recognition of this I should like to add a few more words in the old language which so many of you still share with us in Iceland.

\* \* \*

The part spoken in Icelandic is here omitted. In part, he said:

Many of my countrymen who have visited the Icelandic settlements in America have said that these visits have been an unforgettable adventure. I and my fellow-travellers have now

lived this adventure. We have seen the settlements which enshrine the memories that are truly a part of the saga of Iceland.

\* \* \*

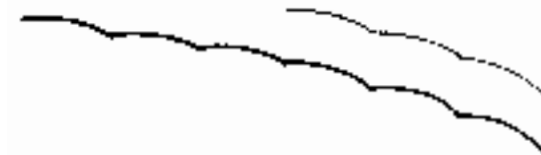
Ladies and Gentlemen:

This your Canada, with its devotion to the principles of liberty and democratic government — this diverse and yet harmonious nation, has in the international field made a contribution towards peace and cooperation between nations that commands respect of the world, a contribution far beyond the nation's size or military might.

Within the United Nations and other international organizations, Iceland has been proud to cooperate with Canada in our common effort to strive for world peace and better living conditions for all mankind. In Iceland's pursuit of issues of vital importance for her national and foreign policy, Canada has been a good ally to rely on for consultation and cooperation.

When I and my companions visited Ottawa last week, on our way to this celebration here in Manitoba, we were greeted and received by the Governor-General of Canada in a grand and generous manner that touched us deeply. The warm and kind hospitality shown us on that occasion was a tangible proof of the esteem in which Canada's government holds the Icelandic-Canadian community.

The same generous hospitality has been shown us by the government of Manitoba.



THE CANADA PRESS CLUB OF WINNIPEG

## A Bus Tour Through The Manitoba North

The Department of Tourism, Recreation and Cultural Affairs of the Manitoba Government sponsored last June a five-day bus tour of Northern Manitoba for some 20 members of the Canada (Ethnic) Press Club of Winnipeg. Nineteen ethnic publications were represented; also the two Winnipeg daily papers. A guest member was Mr. Jain, of the United News of Delhi, India. Mr. Cory Kilvert was the tour conductor.

We travelled 1534 miles by bus and I don't know how many more on foot, to Hecla Island, Grand Rapids, Thompson, Flin Flon, The Pas, and the Riding Mountain National Park; with several intermediate stops.

What were my chief impressions of the Manitoba North country? The magnitude of the North, its vast extent, its scenic qualities, the wealth of its natural resources, what has been done to develop these resources, and the courage and enterprise of the people who are developing the north.

Surveyed from an aeroplane, the North would seem to be an almost unbroken extent of nature, mostly evergreen forest, broken here and there by dead pencil-like stubs of trees, relics of forest fires, lakes and streams, with

### The Inco Mine at Thompson, Man.

Headframe in foreground; chimney, partly blocked from view by old headframe in background.

COURTESY DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, MANITOBA GOVERNMENT

here and there pin-points of man's operations and the ribbons of road connecting these. But when travelling on the ground by bus, each pinpoint becomes magnified in size, revealing impressive developments.

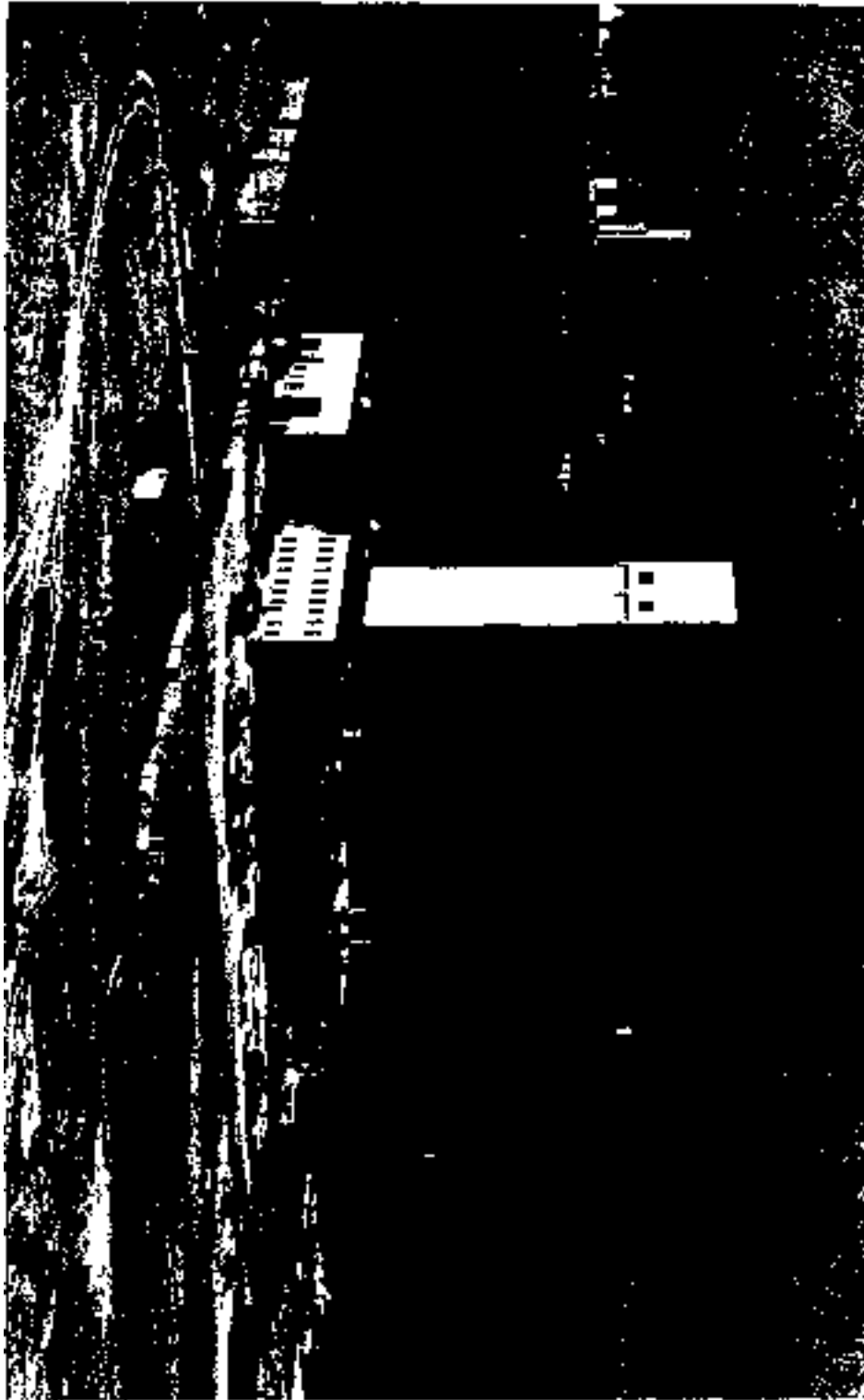
It was befitting that at Arnes we stopped at the memorial to Vilhjálmur Stefansson, the scientific Arctic explorer and prophet of the North who travelled 22,000 miles on foot behind his dog sled in the course of his Arctic explorations, 1906-1918.

Before that, at the Gimli Museum we saw in its museum setting a Lake Winnipeg fishing boat, perhaps over thirty feet long, symbolic of 100 years of fishing by Icelanders on Lake Winnipeg.

On Hecla Island there were two main impressions. Vacant, eyeless houses bespoke the close of a hundred years of Icelandic settlement on the Island, with its vital community life, and the new golf course and the fourteen cabins peeking out of the woods nearby, a minute indication of a two and one-half million dollar tourist development under way — a new order on Hecla Island.

Nearly fifteen miles above Grand Rapids a left turn onto a new gravelled roadway that cuts a gash through the wilderness forest, leads to Cross Bay and Moak Lodge. Cross Lake is a Manitoba Hydro-made lake.

At Moak Lodge a 26 lb. 7 oz. Northern Pike is mounted and framed on one wall and a Moose hide is spread out on another wall. A slogan reads:



"Nothing can beat the fabulous fighting fish of Northern Manitoba".

Grand Rapids, once a prominent historic fur trade centre (Fort Bourbon was built in 1745), is now a Manitoba Hydro station, a present day engineering marvel of massive smoothly rotating machinery, and a community of 8,500 people. Power is generated here to light at the flip of a switch city and country homes, churches, hotels, stores, and to operate machines, hundreds of miles away.

On the way to Wabowden, travel is at first on black top. Rising out of the forest, microwave pylons tell of television in the North.

In Wabowden, a town of 1,000, very much alive and one of the development centres in the North, simple wooden crosses in the cemetery mark the graves of the pioneers of yesterday who built the first houses here.

At Thompson, the 1250-foot Inco mine chimney dominates the approach, symbolic of the importance of the mining industry in the North.

Thompson is geographically the centre of Manitoba, east-west and north-south. With a population of 1300 in 1961, when the mine commenced commercial production, it is now a city of 22,000 persons, a community of modern houses, highrise apartments, hotels and motels, and shopping centres.

The Inco building, simple on the outside and cavernous inside, is a marvellous complex. It is a labyrinth of moving machinery crushing, grinding, fluxing, roasting, smelting, and refining the massive ore-body hoisted from the drilling below. The heart of the operation is the red-glowing firepot.

The nickel industry is important. Nickel is used in knives, forks and spoons, in cars and watch-springs, in

ship propellers, turbines, jet engines and moon rockets. It gives strength to 3,000 alloys. Of the free world production in 1970, Canada provided 638 million pounds and all others, 47 million pounds.

Material welfare in Thompson is based on the Inco mine. It makes possible the homes, schools, churches, hotels, banks, stores, taverns, Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. and the Royal Canadian Legion hall, and the International Centre. It may be said that the fine streets of Thompson are paved with nickel. The city of Thompson is based on nickel.

Indian names abound in the North, testifying to the time when Indians were the people of the Manitoba North. There is Cree Road in Thompson and there are Ospawagan Lake, Lake Wekusko, Lake Athapapuskow, Lake Manistikwan, and others.

The North is rich in scenic places, including lakes, rivers, and waterfalls. At Piseu Falls, near Wabowden black and yellowish waters cascade between rock abutments into a froth-boiling pit below.

Pioneering in the North is an ongoing process. Moak Lodge is new and last June Steve and Dorothy Samu, after a year-long pioneering effort, opened their attractive Sasaqui Rapids Lodge, 50 miles south of Thompson.

"When we started out, the place was nothing — mud and jungle", said the Hungarian-born Steve Samu. "Only our stubbornness kept us going most of the time." Prior to his northern enterprise, Mr. Samu had been town engineer in Selkirk, Manitoba.

The statue of Flintabbatey Flonatin, a fabled character from whom Flin Flon derives its name, standing high on its pedestal, welcomes visitors to Flin Flon, that city of 14,000 on a bare hard rock foundation and cornerstone

section of Manitoba's mining industry. The 800-foot chimney of the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company plant is another early-seen landmark. The main shaft bellow is 5,000 feet deep. Copper, zinc, gold, silver and cadmium are mined.

We were hospitably conducted by the editor of the local paper on a bus tour around town.

Rock based as the city is, all the soil for yards and gardens has to be brought in from the outside; also the sand in the artificial beach of Phantom Lake. Watermains which at one time exposed on top of the rocks have now disappeared from view. The rock-terrain is uneven in places; the United Church has a one-storey front and a three-storey back.

Tourist attraction entails heavy capital investment. Our new Kelsey Trail Motel cost \$1.25 million dollars to build.

On the northern approach to the Pas is the Churchill Forest Industries Complex, with its 1500-1800 employees, a new development. Old and new is The Indian Reserve across the broad Saskatchewan River, with its large village and its ambitious shopping centre.

The Pas has history. Kelsey travelled through in 1691. A Christ Church, Anglican congregation was formed in 1840. The original church, the pews of which are preserved in the present 1896 building, was erected in 1845-47.

The cylindrical council chambers of glass is ultra-modern. The architects were Gaboury and Sigurdson, of Winnipeg.

Mr. Waller's Museum has a fascinating collection, old and new, including a Geneva Bible, printed in 1610 A.D., and brought to America in 1620; also a copy of The Origin of Species, which Darwin presented to a friend, with his autograph.

Flin Flon has its Trout Festival, the Pas has its Trappers' Festival, with its world championship dog race. General Chairman of the Trappers' Festival, Mr. George Takashima, honored us with his presence at lunch.

The Pas with a population of over 8500 is an impressive growing Northern centre. The Keewatin Community College attracts attention, here are numerous motels, and there is Lamb's Air Service.

The beautiful and well-developed Riding Mountain National Park is in a geographical sense a centre of Canada. Three zones meet here, the Eastern deciduous woodlands, the Northern coniferous forest, and the Western grasslands. One attraction of many is a herd of thirty shaggy coated buffalo, one of the remnants of the 75 million that once grazed on the western plains of North America.

On this 5-day tour the members of the Canada Press Club of Winnipeg, of some twenty different racial origins had come to know each other as they would not have done otherwise and had learned much about the wonders of the Manitoba North.

—W. Kristjanson



Mattie Halldorson

## ICELANDIC CANADIAN CLUB PRESIDENTS

The Icelandic Canadian Club was founded at a convention of The Icelandic National League, (Þjóðræknisfélag Íslendinga í Vesturheimi) held in 1938, for the purpose of perpetuating Icelandic culture and promoting good fellowship. The Presidents of the Club have been as follows:

### 1938 BJORN EDVALD OLSON

He had a position with the Department of Indian Affairs, and later with the Department of Northern Affairs with the Federal Government.

### 1939 MRS. LARA B. SIGURDSON.

Served as acting President. She was a charter member and a very active member of the Club and was made Honorary Life member in 1966.

### 1941 OLAFUR BJORN PETURSSON.

He had a B.Sc. degree in Bacteriology and his long-term appointment was with the Federal Government, Department of Health, Food and Drug Division.

### 1942-43 ARNI EGGERTSON

He was a successful lawyer and was appointed K.C. He was honored with the Commander Cross of the Icelandic Order of the Falcon.

In his time the name of the Club was changed to the Icelandic Canadian Club.

### 1944-45 MRS. HOLMFRIDUR DANIELSON

Mrs. Holmfridur Danielson was the fifth President. The Icelandic Canadian Evening School was launched with good success. Thirteen lectures given at the school were published in book form under the title of "Iceland's Thousand Years", under the auspices of The Icelandic Canadian Club and The Icelandic National League.

### 1946 CARL HALLSON

Miss Snjolaug Sigurdson was awarded a Travelling Scholarship of \$1,200., sponsored by the Club, to further her musical studies in New York. Icelandic organizations participated. On November 27, 1945 a fund called "The Icelandic Canadian Club Scholarship Fund" was established.

### 1947 AXEL VOPNFJORD

He was a teacher by profession, and was on the staff of the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

A very interesting concert, May 10, 1948, presented selections from the works of Icelandic Canadian and American composers, collected by Mrs. Louise Gudmunds.

### 1949-51 DR. WILHELM KRISTJANSON

Dr. Wilhelm Kristjanson was the 8th President. In February 1950 a successful banquet and dance was held, which has been an annual affair since.

In 1949 The Icelandic Canadian Club became one of the founders of The Chair in Icelandic Language and Literature at the University of Manitoba. In 1951 The Icelandic Canadian Club was presented with a cheque for an Icelandic Canadian Cultural Fund. Mr. S. K. Hall, noted organist and composer, was made Honorary Life Member of the Club.

### 1952 JON LAXDAL

He was school principal in Gimli for 12 years. In 1947 he was appointed Science Master at Manitoba Normal School (Teachers' College). Mr. Laxdal was on the editorial staff of The Icelandic Canadian magazine for seven years.

### 1953-54 JUDGE WALTER LINDAL Q.C., L.L.D.

In 1952 Judge Lindal promoted the formation of the Leif Eiriksson Club for the purpose of bringing together young Icelandic students in Winnipeg.

Judge Lindal was County Court Judge in Manitoba; he served on several Federal Government Commissions and Committees; he is the author of several historical works, and has been honored by the University of Winnipeg with an Honorary L.L.D.

### 1955 JOHANN T. BECK

Johann Beck was manager of Columbia Press, and manager of Columbia Printers (Wallingford Press), in Winnipeg. He has always been keenly interested in music and has been a member of the First Lutheran Church Choir, in Winnipeg, and has been President. He has been auditor for the Icelandic Canadian Club and the Icelandic Canadian for many years.

### 1956 MATTHILDUR (Mattie) HALLDORSON

She has always taken a keen interest in music and sports. She has been Secretary and Treasurer of the Club, Secretary of The Icelandic Canadian, and Secretary of The Icelandic Festival of Manitoba, "Íslendingadagurinn". In 1974 she was awarded an Honorary Life Membership in the Club.

### 1957 DR. GESTUR KRISTJANSON

In 1952, he was President of the Leif Eiriksson Club, an organization aimed to promote a common bond of fellowship among young Canadians of Icelandic descent and to stimulate interest in Icelandic culture and language. He is a medical doctor, a member of The Westbrook Medical Centre, in Winnipeg.

### 1958-59 MISS CAROLINE GUNNARSSON

She has been Women's Editor and Magazine Editor with the Free Press Weekly. She is now Editor of Lögberg-Heimskringla and is a member of the Editorial Board of the Icelandic Canadian.

### 1960-61 GUNNAR EGGERTSON

He is a lawyer by profession, in Vancouver. An innovation at the annual banquet and dance in 1960 was a "Toast to the Hangikjot" by Dr. Philip M. Petursson, with two ladies in national dress in attendance.

### 1962 A. R. (Bob) SWANSON

He is now a financial consultant in Vancouver, British Columbia. His interests include photography and drama and is very active in the Heart Fund organization.

**1963 WILLIAM VALGARDSON**

On April 22, 1963, an ethnic display of arts and crafts was staged at the Parish Hall of The First Lutheran Church. He is an author and writes prose and poetry. He is with the Department of Creative Writing of the University of Victoria, British Columbia.

**1964 WILLMAR (Bill) FINNBOGASON**

In 1964 an interesting museum display was shown at the Icelandic Celebration (Íslendingadagurinn). Senior citizens were entertained at the First Lutheran Church in the Parish Hall at Christmas time, a practice that has been maintained since.

**1965 JOHN ARNASON**

In The Icelandic Canadian, Summer issue of 1966 he wrote the editorial, "Our Future in a Changing Society". He said, "the preservation of our heritage through our homes and home life is the key. Ethnic organizations should sponsor functions for the purpose of bringing together our children, establish a junior league for the under twenty-five group, establish a far greater number of scholarships, encourage short courses in speaking and reading Icelandic."

Mr. Arnason is General Manager of Corporate Operations, Manitoba Hydro.

**1966-67 LEIFUR HALLGRIMSON**

He is a lawyer by profession and has received the honor of Q.C. He was appointed by the Manitoba Government as Receiver in charge of the Churchill Forest Industries, at The Pas, Man., and is now President and Chairman

of the Manitoba Forestry Resources, a Provincial Crown Corporation, at The Pas.

**1968-69 PROFESSOR GISSUR ELIASSON**

On May 16, 1969, the Icelandic Canadian Club served refreshments at the Citizenship Council of Manitoba. The books in the Icelandic Canadian Club library were listed in the summer issue of The Icelandic Canadian: prose, 20; Saga translations, 4; fiction, 8; Drama, 1; and Poetry, 2.

Professor Eliasson is Assistant Professor and Registrar at the School of Arts, University of Manitoba. He designed the Viking statue at Gimli.

**1970-71 TIMOTHY SAMSON**

The Club became one of the sponsors of the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba (Íslendingadagurinn). A committee was formed to seek a multicultural grant from Ottawa for the publication of an anthology of prose and poetry in the English language, by or about Icelanders in Canada. A sum of \$2000.00 was hypothecated for the publishing of an English translation of Grágás, the laws of the Old Icelandic Republic.

**1972-73 DR. JOHN S. MATTHIAS-SON**

The Club revived its former practice of monthly meetings. The Club was invited to appoint a member to the new Board of Directors of the Canada-Iceland Foundation.

In 1963, Dr. Matthiasson was awarded a \$7,000.00 Social Science Research, of New York, grant for a years field work on his doctorate, with the Eskimos of Pond Inlet, Baffin Island. He is

Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Manitoba.

**1974-75 HALLDOR J. STEFANSSON**

He has actively proposed the amalgamation of the Icelandic Canadian Club and Frón Chapter of the National League.

He was high school principal in rural towns in Manitoba for many years. He then accepted a position with the Great West Life Assurance Company of Winnipeg.

He has been an active member of the Club for many years, serving as an officer.

Mattie Halldorson

**EDITORS-IN-CHIEF of the Icelandic Canadian**

In 1942 The Icelandic Canadian Club launched the project of publishing The Icelandic Canadian Magazine. The first issue was dated October, 1942. Mrs. Laura Goodman Salverson, the eminent writer, was the editor-in-chief. In her editorial she wrote: "We have our Golden Age, our ancient classics, our pride in our ancestors who loved freedom above lands and possessions. We like to glorify these hardy Norsemen who pioneered in Iceland, established there a remarkable Republic and instituted the first government patterned upon democratic principles". In the second issue the policies of the magazine were clearly defined. In essence it was the policy to reach people of Icelandic extraction to become better acquainted with each other and to stimulate greater effort by making known the contributions of Icelandic Canadians to the highest and best type of citizenship.

Following is the list of Editors-in-Chief:

**1942-43 MRS. LAURA GOODMAN SALVERSON**

Mr. Arni Eggertson president of The Icelandic Canadian Club, wrote in the first issue of the magazine: "Our organization has long felt the need of a

publication to broadcast its aims and objectives, and to which members could send original contributions. We believe that this new publication will play a leading role in promoting the aims and objects of the society, both cultural and social.

On July 4, 1942, an All Nations Parade was held. The Icelandic Canadian Club contingent took part. Hazel Reykdal, Grace Reykdal, Mrs. Thomas Finnbogason, Mattie Halldorson, Mrs. Kristin Peterson, Dora Goodman, and Mrs. Ingi Johannesson paraded in the National Icelandic dress. From 1942 through 1951 pictures and commentary of the young men and women who served in the Armed Forces were contained in the special section "Our War Effort", including an "In Memoriam" for those who gave their lives.

The subscription rate of the magazine was set at \$1.00 per year.

**1944-47 JUDGE W. J. LINDAL****1947-53 HOLMFRIDUR DANIELSSON****1953-1955 AXEL VOPNFJORD****1955-69 JUDGE W. J. LINDAL****1969— DR. WILHELM KRISTJANSSON**

### THE CANADA ICELAND FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP

The Canada Iceland Foundation offers or processes scholarships to students of Icelandic or part Icelandic descent:

1. High School graduates proceeding to a Canadian university or the University of Iceland.
2. University students studying towards a degree in any Canadian university.

Scholarship awards shall be deter-

mined by academic standing, leadership qualities, and financial need.

Candidates are hereby invited to send their applications together with a statement of their examination results by December 1, 1975, to:

**Dr. W. Kristjanson,**  
1117 Wolseley Avenue,  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3G 1G9

### ICELANDIC CANADIAN CLUB SCHOLARSHIP

The Icelandic Canadian Club of Winnipeg is offering a scholarship of \$100 for the academic year of 1975-76, to a student of Icelandic or part Icelandic descent who has completed grade XII in Manitoba and is proceeding to studies at one of the three universities in Manitoba.

Qualifications will be based primarily on Departmental or Board examination results, but consideration will be given to qualities of leadership and community service and need for financial assistance.

Candidates are hereby invited to send their applications together with a statement of examination results and testimonials from two leaders in the community by November 1, 1975, to the Club Secretary:

**Mr. H. J. Stefansson,**  
Suite 419  
60 Whellams Lane,  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R2G 0V8

### THE ICELANDIC FESTIVAL SCHOLARSHIP

The Icelandic Festival of Manitoba is offering two scholarships to students who have already studied a year at a university, one for \$125.00 and one for \$75.00. They are tenable at any one of the three universities in Manitoba.

The following is the basis for selection:

- Icelandic or part Icelandic descent.
- A first class "A" academic standing is desirable; a "B" standing is the minimum.
- Participation in extra-curricular or

community activities, in school or in the general community.

Applications for these scholarships with relevant supporting information, including age, the name of the college or university attended, and a transcript of marks, are to be forwarded by November 15, to the Executive Secretary of the Festival Committee:

**Miss Mattie Halldorson,**  
Suite 3, 568 Agnes St.,  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3G 1N6

## Glimpses of the 1975 Centennial Icelandic Festival of Manitoba

The centennial version of the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba has come and gone, leaving behind a host of pleasant memories.

The Icelandic Festival Committee had a monumental task in preparing for the elaborate and varied 3-day program.

Our guests from Iceland, over 1400 strong, made a splendid contribution to the Festival, by their numbers and by their outstanding, varied contribution to the program.

Guest of honor, specially invited, was the President of Iceland, Dr. Kristján Eldjárn, who was accompanied by his wife, frú Halldóra Eldjárn. In the presidential party were Einar Ágústsson, Minister of Foreign Affairs,

and his wife Þórunn Sigurðardóttir; the President's Secretary, Birgir Möller, and his wife Gunnhildur Möller, and the Ambassador of Iceland to the United States and Canada, Haraldur Kröyer, and his wife frú Unni Kröyer.

The Icelandic National Theatre Company performance at the Gimli Industrial Park was superb; it shed lustre on the Festival. Their program commenced with three numbers by the National Theatre Opera Choir, whose "voices were strong and clear and you were thrilled at the depth of their melodies", (Lake Centre News). Bishop Jón Arnason (the play by Mattias Jochumsson), the last Catholic bishop in Iceland, steadfast in his faith in the face of execution for his religion, was excellently portrayed.



President of Iceland, Dr. Kristján Eldjárn and frú Halldóra Eldjárn

The Icelandic Folk Dancing Society of Reykjavik presented, in appropriate period costumes, lively and entertaining folk dances portraying Icelandic

life in former times.

The Glima group from Iceland demonstrated how skill and agility is the essence of Icelandic wrestling.



Raising the Icelandic flag that was raised at Þingvellir, Iceland, at the celebration of the 1100th anniversary of settlement, 1974

On one occasion the old Icelandic chanting (að kveða) could be heard from the Park stage. Walter Hirst used to call that the devil's song. All those brought up on that heady brew would be delighted to hear it.

On Sunday morning the record for the Icelandic Festival 10-mile open series 10-mile road race was lowered by Chris McCubbins to 48 minutes, 21 seconds. This is near the Canadian record of over 46 minutes.

Arald Krist, 50, won the Icelandic Festival 10-mile event and Norman Neilson, 51 years of age, won the masters event.

Ecumenical Service Sunday forenoon was held in the Gimli Park, with four denominations represented. Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Greek Catholic. A combined choir included some visitors from Seattle.

Vice-Bishop Pétur Sigurgeirsson, of the Northern Diocese in Iceland, brought greetings from Iceland. Pastor Erlendur Isfeld was liturgist and sang beautifully. Symbolic was one of the sermons: "In Christ there is no East nor West". Dr. Valdimar J. Eylands, now of North Dakota, in his impressive sermon "Providence and the Pioneers" compared the settlement of New Iceland one hundred years ago with the migration of Abraham and his people in Biblical times. "We stand on the shoulders of these pioneers (the pioneers) who built on a solid foundation". — said Dr. Eylands.

A 26-foot model of a Viking ship, a replica of the Godstad Viking ship found in Norway one hundred years ago, was formally presented by the Richardson Bros. of Winnipeg to the Icelandic Festival and the Icelandic



Icelandic women in their national dress take part in the parade

people of Manitoba at a barbecue Sunday evening, at Husavick. The presentation was made by Mr. George Richardson, President of James Richardson and Sons, and the champagne bottle was broken on the prow by Mrs. Richardson.

The "Vikingur" was built in Winnipeg at the cost of some \$15,000.00

The parade on Monday morning, varied and colorful, was the largest yet. There were over fifty entries. The Shriners, with three bands, motorcycles, and Komediants, were in full force. The Training Command Band from the Canadian Forces Base in Winnipeg, the R.C.M.P. band, and the Pine Falls Band were included. Hundreds of Icelandic visitors in National costumes were prominent

In the Commercial category, which included several fine floats, the little horse and buggy from the Johnson store at Eddystone, on the North-West shore of Lake Manitoba, won first prize.

The Icelandic Canadian contribution to the Festival program was important, but apart from the Monday program, too varied to describe in detail. The New Iceland Drama Society presented Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of being Earnest"; the New Iceland Music and Poetry Society presented a comprehensive program of music, poetry and speech; the New Iceland Folk Fest featured Canadian and Icelandic folk songs, and the Fine Arts Display brought into prominence a wealth of talent.



The Khantum Temple Shrine Contingent was prominent in the parade.

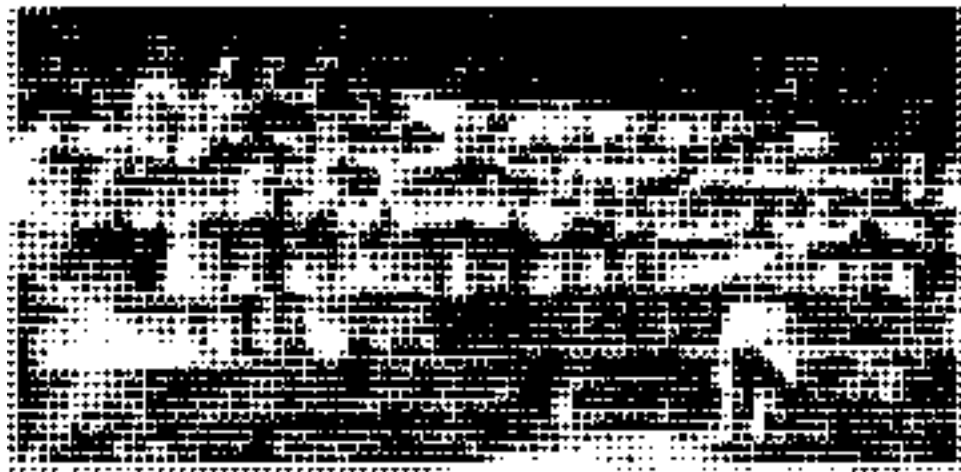


"The Prairie Dog Express", puffs to a stop at Gimli bringing back a flood of memories and more people to the Festival

The traditional Monday afternoon program in the Gimli Park featured the Chairman's Remarks, by Mr. T. K. Arnason, Festival President; the Address of the Fjallkona, Mrs. Violet Einarson, Mayor of Gimli; a Toast to the 1875 Pioneers, by Mr. Gregory Dowae, University of Manitoba student and twice winner of a Festival University scholarship; the Icelandic Centennial Children's Choir, conducted by Mrs. Elma Gislason; a Toast to Canada, by President Dr. Kristján Eldjárn (the main part of which is included in this issue). The Edmonton Saga Singers, conducted by Della Roland, and A Toast to Iceland, by Dr. Helgi Austman, Assistant Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Manitoba Government. The Saga Singers and the Children's Choir made a notable contribution with their beautiful singing. Dr. Austman paid tribute to the Ice-

landic cultural heritage in language, literature and music, and expressed his opinion that the cultural ties between the people of Iceland and the people of Icelandic descent in America may be getting stronger rather than weaker.

Hon. Einar Ágústsson announced generous contributions from the Government of Iceland: the doubling of the subsidy to the Icelandic language weekly *Lögberg-Heimskringla*, in recognition of the maintenance of the bond between Icelanders East and West; the allotment of extra funds so that the University of Manitoba will receive a steady supply of published works from Iceland, and funds to the University of Iceland to complete a record of all Icelanders who emigrated to North America during the last century and the early years of the present century.



Icelandic Centennial Children's Choir

Greetings were brought by Premier E. Schreyer, of Manitoba; Mayor Bjarni Einarsson, of Akureyri, Iceland, sister city of Gimli; Reverend Ólafur Skúlason, President of the Icelandic National League of Reykjavik, and Deputy Mayor of Gimli, D. R. Hambly.

Visitors from afar were in evidence, besides the Icelandic contingent, including an Icelandic lady from Holland and others from Florida, (Mike Goodman, of Falcon Hockey fame), Minnesota, North Dakota, California, and Washington State, in the United States, and from Vancouver, Edmon-

ton, Calgary, Saskatoon, Toronto, and many more towns and villages across Canada.

The last vivid impression of the vast concourses at the Festival was the scene at the community singing Monday evening (led by Oli Narfason, with Mrs. Hedy Bjarnason at the piano), was a sea of faces extending far back into the evening dusk as far as the eye could see.

It was a memorable Centennial Festival!

W. Kristjansson

#### CORRECTIONS — CENTENNIAL ISSUE:

Page 22 — Willow Point poem: First stanza—add line: Arriving at the promised land

Third stanza, line 3: for trails, read trials.

Pictorial Section, page 6 — For Sigtryggur, read Steingrímur, under both pictures.

Julian Thorsteinson:—

## The Icelandic Church at Grund, Man.



Grund Church

Built in 1889, the Frelsis Church at Grund is the oldest standing Icelandic Church in Canada. It stands as a monument to the faith, the courage and the community spirit of the Icelandic settlers who pioneered in the Argyle district. For the church was not only a place of worship for these pioneers — it was the heart of the community. And so, this is not only the history of a church, but the history of the people

who built it, who came there to pray in times both of privation and of plenty, who transformed the beautiful virgin wilderness into the prosperous farmland of Argyle.

The settlers who came to Argyle in the 1880's were not pioneering in new land for the first time, but for the second or even third. Many of them had left Iceland as early as 1872, and had broken land in Wisconsin, or in

Ontario, some had ventured a settlement in Nova Scotia, others had dreamed of an Icelandic settlement in Alaska. And, almost to a man, they had devoted several years to homesteads in New Iceland, the Icelandic reserve in the Gimli district of Manitoba. All their attempts to build a better life in the new world were met with hardship and frustration, and yet it was with the courage to try again that the Icelanders first broke the soil.

The reason for leaving Iceland had been primarily economic. Conditions had always been harsh for this island people, and they were accustomed to the struggle for survival in a beautiful but barren land, where sheep farmers and fishermen lived in isolation, often held prisoner in their turf cottages by inclement weather. It almost seemed that nature conspired against the little nation, for a series of natural disasters just prior to the emigration brought hunger and despair to many. In the years 1856-1860, an

epidemic carried off about 200,000 sheep, which was a severe blow to both the economy and the diet of the Icelanders. Then, a series of unusually severe winters made the northern coasts inaccessible, and hardships and privation were intensified by this isolation, for until the age of the airplane, overland communication between the north and the south of the island was virtually impossible and had to be carried out by ships on coastal routes. Arctic ice caused winter conditions to prevail in summer on more than one occasion in the north. And the disastrous volcanic eruption in 1875 spread volcanic ash over an immense territory; a country with so little arable land could ill afford this devastation. Moreover, natural hardships were intensified by political frustrations for Iceland was at that time a colony of Denmark, exploited by Danish trade monopolies and administered by Danish functionaries in Danish interests. It is not surprising that the Canadian immigration



Grund, Sigurdur Christopherson's home

agents, who came to Iceland with glowing accounts of Canadian opportunities, found many interested listeners. The emigrants saw Canada as a land of political liberty as well as economic prosperity. Significantly, almost all emigration was from the northern part of Iceland, where conditions had been most severe.

Between 1863 and 1873, some forty people left Iceland for a settlement in Brazil. In 1870, letters written by a Dane describing conditions in America were published by an Icelandic newspaper, and, in response four people left for Washington Island in Lake Michigan. Six more joined them in 1871. Their letters home were published, which stimulated further emigration. In 1872, twenty-two people left, most of them going to the settlement in Wisconsin. One of them, however, came to Canada and became a government agent; his name was Sigtryggur Jónasson, the man who was later to be called the father of New Iceland.

In 1873, 165 people sailed to Quebec, a voyage of twenty days. Fifty of these went to join their compatriots in Wisconsin, but 115 of them decided to stay in Canada and settle in the Muskoka district of Ontario. The following year, 365 immigrants from Iceland joined them at Kinmount. Their journey to the settlement site was rough, and the hot train had to be shared with a shipment of livestock. Twenty people died en route, most of them children suffering from stomach disorders.

However, the settlers were dissatisfied with the site, for the land was poor and the Icelanders had no knowledge or experience of farming under these new conditions. They had never had to clear land before, for Iceland

is denuded of trees. Moreover, they had never grown crops, and did not know how to cultivate land, which proved for the most part to be rocky and wooded. Induced by an Icelandic agent of the Nova Scotia government to settle there, some of the group left Kinmount for a disastrous attempt to farm in a district called "Markland", named after the wooded coasts their ancestors had discovered almost a thousand years earlier. But once again, the site had not been judiciously chosen, and the land could not support the colony.

In search of a more suitable site, Sigtryggur Jónasson and John Taylor, an Englishman who proved to be a life-long friend to the Icelanders, set out west to Manitoba in the company of three settlers: Skapti Arason, Kristján Jónsson, and Sigurður Christopherson. (These three settlers were the vanguards not only of the original New Iceland settlement, but, some five years later, were to be the first to explore the new land in the Argyle district). In the choice of a settlement site, the criteria were good land, a lake stocked with fish, adequate employment, forests, and exclusive settlement rights in an area large enough to enable continued immigration from Iceland in later years. The Manitoba Interlake region seemed most suitable. The party had arrived in Winnipeg to see a countryside devastated by a grasshopper plague, but there were hardly any grasshoppers to be seen in the Interlake, and the lake, the forests, and the soil seemed promising for a people accustomed to a mixed livelihood of fishing and livestock farming. They returned with optimistic reports on the site. Sigtryggur Jónasson returned to Iceland to encourage further



Sigurdur Christopherson, wife Caroline (nee Taylor) and Family

migration to the new site, while John Taylor guided the Ontario group.

The 275 people who left Kinmount in 1875 were joined by thirteen from Wisconsin, and the group made its slow progress by steamer, train and flatboats, accompanied on the Red River by the Hudson's Bay Company steamer "Colville". A child was born on one of the flatboats under what must have been dreadful circumstances. At last, the group landed at Willow Point, near the present-day town of Gimli, on October 21, 1875. No preparations had been made for their arrival, and it was late in the season. There was not even time to build enough log cabins for the winter, and the settlers had neither livestock nor provisions. Many spent the first winter living in Hudson Bay Company tents on the flatboats, which were frozen in the ice. The thirty log cabins which had been hastily erected were

about twelve feet by sixteen, and housed two or three families each. They were built of unpeeled logs, plastered with mud; few had windows, and, in a misguided attempt at insulation, some had double walls packed with clay.

A \$5,000 loan was advanced by the federal government for the purchase of winter supplies. Fishing was attempted with little success, because the Icelanders did not know how to fish under the ice, and the nets they had brought with them were not the right mesh for the lake fish. Scurvy broke out in March, but conditions improved in the spring with the arrival of twenty-two cows, donated by the government. But the people were heartsick after one of the coldest winters on record.

Still, the settlers tried to make the best of things. A provisional local government was already in operation

in January, 1876, and several issues of a handwritten newspaper were circulated during the winter. A school, taught by Caroline Taylor, (the niece of John Taylor), was held the first winter and religious services were held by John Taylor, with a simultaneous translation into Icelandic by Fridjon Friðriksson. Farming operations began in a primitive way that spring. However, with no horses, no oxen, no implements except the pick axe and hoe, and no experience these "farmers" faced the disappointment of seeing much of their first crop fail in ground that had not been adequately prepared. To make matters worse, the summer of 76 brought snow in July.

That same summer, about 1,200 Icelandic immigrants arrived, most of them destitute. In the fall, the first case of smallpox appeared in the settlement. The disease reached epidemic proportions, being contracted by almost half the population. Poor facilities and malnutrition lowered resistance to the disease. Three doctors came from Winnipeg, and a provisional hospital was set up in the store house. A quarantine was imposed on the settlement in November, and although the epidemic was over by April, the quarantine was not lifted until July 20. Only people who had had the disease were allowed to leave the settlement, and were given a complete change of clothing when they left, but once in Winnipeg they were feared and avoided, and could not obtain any employment. By the end of January, supplies had run out, and fish was the only food available. Products such as knitting could not be sold outside the settlement, and incoming supplies were delayed. As a result, planting had to be delayed that summer. Mail was interrupted, and all

letters leaving the settlement were dipped in carbolic acid. On July 20, the settlers marched to the quarantine line in a peaceful demonstration to protest the unnecessary prolongation of these hardships.

One might have hoped that such difficulties would pull the community together, but instead, almost every aspect of community life was marked by faction. Ironically, the split in the community was delineated along religious lines, for the two religious leaders in the settlement, Jon Bjarnason and Pall Thorlaksson, represented opposing stands on almost every issue, be it political or religious. Thus, the people were divided into two camps, the "Jónsmenn" and the "Pálsmenn", according to their loyalties. Jon was a Lutheran clergyman who had received his training in Iceland, and his teachings followed the liberal tendencies of the Icelandic state church. Pall, on the other hand, had been ordained by the Norwegian Synod in Missouri, and he was not only of a much more fundamentalist bent than Jon, but he also advocated affiliation with the Norwegian church. By 1878, the split had become so severe that Pall induced many of his followers to leave New Iceland and settle in North Dakota, a move which was deeply resented by those who stayed. New hardships awaited those who remained. The fall of 1879 brought some flooding, and the winter which followed was terribly severe. The summer of 1880 was cold, and summer frost destroyed much of the crop. Hay was so scarce that cattle had to be driven elsewhere for winter feeding. Then, in November 1880, came the "Great Flood", which rose to the bed of a woman in childbirth, and elsewhere there was extensive damage. Even the most dogged pioneer



must have lost heart to see his hard-won progress the plaything of such bad fortune.

Another factor which discouraged the settlers was their isolation. When the New Iceland site was chosen, it was in the faith that before long the railroad would reach the nearby town of Crossing, the present site of Selkirk. However, by 1880, those plans had changed, and it was clear that the nearest railway line would be Winnipeg for many years to come.

In August 1880 Sigurdur Christopherson and Kristjan Jonsson two of the first men to explore the New Iceland district, set out to explore land in the Tiger Hills district, now the municipality of Argyle. They had received a letter from Everett Parsonage, who had been in New Iceland and had since homesteaded at Pilot Mound. He wrote enthusiastically about land in the south-west, and the Icelanders were encouraged to consider a move. One advantage of relocation in this district was that they would not be leaving Canada, a country to which the Icelanders had already come to feel loyalty and gratitude.

Sigurdur and Kristjan travelled by rowboat to Winnipeg, by steamer to Emerson, and then walked for three days to Pilot Mound, where they met Parsonage, who guided them north to explore the country. There were as yet no settlers in the area, except for two men, A. A. Esplin and G. J. Parry, who were living in a tent. The visitors were impressed by the land, and when Parsonage rode to the crest of a hill overlooking the land near the present site of Grund Church, he galloped back and cried, "I have found Paradise."

At the Nelsonville land office, Sigurdur Christopherson filed the first homestead entry in the Icelandic set-

tlement of Argyle. He called his farm "Grund", which means grassy plain. This farm was to be for many years the centre of community life. Here, Sigurdur ran a small store in the very early years, and the post office at Grund for many years. He and his wife, Caroline (nee Taylor), who had been married by a minister standing across the quarantine line at Netley Creek during the smallpox epidemic in New Iceland, built a fine house at Grund which was renowned for its hospitality. The Grund farm was also the site of the picnic grounds and community hall, called Skjaldbreið. But this bright future would cost Sigurdur years of hard work, and he set himself to the task that very first summer. After filing his claim, he returned to the site and began his preparations for the move the next spring. In return for his help in building a log cabin, he enlisted the help of Esplin and Parry in putting up hay for the next spring, and then he returned to New Iceland.

Meanwhile, Skafti Arason and William Taylor (Sigurdur's father-in-law) made the journey to Argyle to select homesteads for themselves and their friends, filing at the newly opened land office in Souris. Two other Icelanders, Halldor Anderson and Fridbjorn Frederickson, had driven a head of cattle from New Iceland all the way to Parsonage's for winter feeding, due to the scarcity of fodder in New Iceland. These new arrivals persuaded Arason to show them the settlement site, and afterwards, they also filed claims.

The next spring, in March 1881 the first party set out from Gimli to their new home in Argyle. These first five settlers were Sigurdur Christopherson, Gudmundur Nordman, Skuli Anderson, with his wife and three children, Skafti Arason, with his wife and two

children, and Bjorn Jonsson, with his wife and five children. This two hundred mile journey was made mostly on foot, travelling on the snow and ice, and lasted sixteen days. They had five oxen to pull sleds, and on two of the sleds were constructed rough shelters, each with a stove, in which the travellers huddled for warmth at night. On April 1, they reached Christopherson's homestead site and the hay supply he had wisely put up the summer before. By the winter of '81-'82, there were eight families in the settlement, and by the next year, there were seventeen families.

Although pioneering in Argyle had its share of difficulties — prairie fires, hail, flood and drought—the site had many advantages over the New Iceland settlement. There were no heavy woods to clear, and there was good haying. By this time, the Icelanders themselves had acquired some farming experience, and as time went by they were fortunate in acquiring some very good Ontario farmers as neighbors, whose help was invaluable.

A factor of enormous importance in the development of the community was the early arrival of the railroad, which came to Glenboro in 1886 and to Baldur in 1889, bringing prosperity, the convenience of nearby markets, and new settlers and supplies. Before the arrival of the railroad, the farmers would have had to take their wheat to Carberry, a distance of about forty miles, or to Manitou or Brandon, fifty miles away. This meant a three or four day trek, travelling in a kind of caravan of several men, their wagons, and their oxen.

The first decade saw a steady flow of settlers, some from New Iceland, some directly from Iceland, and others from non-Icelandic settlements in Ontario. Within ten years, all the district

was settled. Sigurdur Christopherson was very influential in stimulating immigration directly from Iceland, and he made several trips as a Canadian immigration agent, encouraging his compatriots to come to the land which he loved and in which he had so much faith. Many immigrants took his advice, but that is not to say that he was welcome in Iceland. On more than one occasion he was almost thrown into jail by Icelandic authorities who resented his attempts to lure the Icelandic people from their mother country. But many followed him, and by 1890 there were about 700 Icelanders in the Argyle district. Some of these who were neighbours in Argyle had been neighbours in New Iceland as well, for both moves were made from the areas in which conditions had been the most difficult.

At last, their efforts were rewarded, for the settlement in Argyle prospered. As early as 1884, Skafti Arason was able to report on behalf of the settlement:

"We have 650 cultivated acres. 260 head of cattle, 62 oxen, 70 pigs, 60 sheep, 9 work horses, 2 ponies, 2 colts, 6 mowers, 6 harnesses, 3 reapers, 2 binders, 1 threshing machine, 13 wagons, 23 ploughs, and 12 harrows.

The settlers wasted no time in organizing community life. There were six schools in operation before 1900. In 1885, a Ladies' Aid was organized, which was very successful in fund raising for the church. In 1893, a lending library was established. As early as 1884, a club had been formed for the moral uplift of the community. The rules of this club were abstention from alcohol and profane language, as well as abstention from smoking for all those who had not already acquired



The Argyle Brass Band, Albert Oliver, Band Master

the habit before joining the club.

Picnics and community festivals were held at the community hall, in which there was a fine raised stage, complete with a trap door in the floor, on which Icelandic plays were performed. And the Argyle Brass Band, led by the band master, Albert Oliver, played at many a dance and social event. The people of Argyle still reminisce about one of these celebrations — the twenty-fifth anniversary of the settlement. On June 17, the Icelandic national holiday, a special train brought visitors from Winnipeg to join in the festivities. Some old timers, who were children then, remember the horse drawn carriages and democrats lined up at the station to meet the guests, and a race which ensued from the station back to the community hall. After the visitors had caught their breath, a tug of war was fought between the Argyle Icelanders and the visiting Icelanders. The Winnipeg group had to their advantage a huge, burly man who stood at the end of

their line as anchor. But the Argyle team matched him with an equally powerful man, an Irishman by the name of Joe Cobb. Joe was not only a good friend of the Icelanders, but he had mastered their language. So when the strong man from Winnipeg looked down the ranks of the Argyle team, he asked suspiciously, "Eru allir Íslendingar?" (Are all of you Icelandic?), for it was a breach of the rule to enlist "foreign" help, and Joe answered with the fluent Icelandic profanity, "Haltu kjafki, bölváður kjaftaskúma!" (Hold your tongue, big mouth.)

This was not the only time Joe Cobb stood behind his Icelandic friends, and the distinctions between different ethnic groups were lost in a spirit of community co-operation. Another story is still told about Joe Cobb's helpfulness toward the Icelanders. In the early years, before some of the Icelanders had learned fluent English, travelling salesmen would come to take advantage of them. When one such fraud got the signature of an unsuspecting Ice-

lander for an outrageous deal on some pots and pans, Joe caught up with the fellow and told him to tear up the contract. The salesman refused, until Joe picked him up by the collar and repeated, "Now tear it up". Needless to say, the contract was torn up.

But community life in the settlement was really synonymous with church life. In the earliest days, religious services and scriptural readings were held each evening in every Icelandic home, as was the custom in Iceland. But when the population had become fairly large, a meeting was held to organize a congregation, and on January 1, 1881, the Frikirkja (Free Church) congregation was established. The Argyle settlers were all supporters of Rev. Jon Bergman, so there was no division between "Jonsmenn" and "Pálsmenn" as there had been in New Iceland. Nevertheless a split did eventually occur, perhaps in some ways due to misunderstandings, but mainly as a result of the large area which the one congregation served. As a result, the mother congregation remained to serve the eastern part of the settlement, while the new "Frelsis" (Liberty) congregation was organized in the west. Both congregations were served by periodic visits from Rev. Jon Bjarnason, and services were held in the school house. But the need for a resident pastor and a church building became more acute as the years went by, and meetings were held to discuss these issues. At first, there was considerable disagreement about having one church and one minister to serve both congregations, but eventually a compromise was reached. Ninety dollars was collected and sent to Hafsteinn Pjetarsson in Iceland, who came in

1889 and was ordained in Winnipeg. He served the district until 1893, for a salary of five hundred dollars a year.

Funds were collected toward the church building, and two acres of land were bought for five dollars an acre. The talented carpenters, Bæring Hallgrímsson and Arni Sveinsson, set to work with volunteer labour, and the Grund Church was completed in 1889. The porch and the bellfry were built several years later and its 500 pound copper bell could be heard for five miles. The pulpit was hand carved by Bæring at home in his kitchen. The chandeliers were donated, and the beautiful organ, a 1911 "Doherty", still in good-playing condition, was purchased. This simple but stately edifice became the heart of the community, and served the Frelsis congregation for eighty-five years.

Built only eight years after the first five families struggled through a March snowstorm to their unbroken homesteads, the church at Grund reveals to us not only the rapid progress of the community, but also the priorities of the little community, which felt the need for a church even before many members of the congregation had been able to move from their log cabins into more comfortable homes. The Icelandic people of Argyle have a loving attachment to the church. Built by their parents and grandparents in a spirit of optimism and thanksgiving, it has served them through the years of growth, years dimmed by war, depression and war again, but leading all the same to the prosperity of the present. And this present is the future of which those ambitious pioneers dared to dream.

## History of the Twin City Hekla Club

1925 — 1975

Frances Gunlaugson

The Twin Cities Hekla Club is an Icelandic women's organization which has been active for fifty years. Since 1925 the women who have been members have perpetuated their Icelandic heritage through their varied activities.

The first recorded minutes of the Hekla Club were written in 1925 covering a meeting held in the home of Mrs. Swen Magnus, at which time the first officers were elected. It is known that there were meetings of Icelandic women in 1923, but no minutes are available for these meetings. However, we know that an organization of young women of Icelandic ancestry called The Aurora Club was in existence some years before the Hekla Club. That organization disbanded in May, 1927, and turned their funds, in the amount of \$30.68, over to the Hekla Club.

The minutes of the meeting held on January 30, 1925 at the home of Mrs. Magnus tell us that the meetings would be social, held the last Friday of each month in the various homes, and that each member would pay 10 cents per meeting as dues. Seventeen women were present, and all of them became members.

Because Icelandic is a language rich in picturesque names, the following were considered as a name for the club: Soley, Freyja, Hekla, Geysir and Fjallkonan. All were given due consideration. However, Hekla was the name selected for the organization, being favored by the majority, since Hekla

is the renowned name of Iceland's unpredictable volcano.

Any women of Icelandic ancestry or wife of an Icelander or one who has shown genuine interest in Icelandic culture, is eligible for membership in this group. The principal aims the Hekla Club have been:

1. To promote fellowship among the members.
2. To provide means of reaching those of our nationality within the Twin Cities (Minneapolis and St. Paul) and surrounding area.
3. To give cheer and help to the sick, aged and needy of Icelandic origin.
4. To make our members, as well as other people, aware of our cultural heritage.

For a number of years the meetings were opened by the singing of some favorite Icelandic song. The following seemed to be the most popular:

Hvað er svo glatt.

Eld gamla Ísafold.

Fóstur landsins freyja.

O Guð vors lands.

Through the years, members have been faithful in helping needy Icelandic families with clothing, food and

money. Contributions have been made to many Icelandic organizations such as The Thor Thors Fund, The Jon Bjarnason Academy of Winnipeg, to Borg, the Home for the aged in Mountain, North Dakota, to Hallveiganstadir, Reykjavík and to educational institutions: The Department of Scandinavian Studies, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, The Icelandic Chair, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, and to Luther College, Decorah, Iowa. Many donations have been made to the American Red Cross, Cancer Society and Heart Association, to name a few. Gifts and cards to shut-ins have brought cheer and solace to Club members and their families, as well as to Icelandic friends.

Over the years, Club dues have been raised to the point where the current dues are \$2.00 per year. In addition to this, various means have been used to raise money. For instance, a piece-quilt was made by Club members and raffled off at the April 1934 Samkoma, bringing in \$37.27. Card parties were quite popular during the 1930's as a means of acquiring funds.

Annual Samkomas have been held throughout the 50 years to provide an opportunity for fellowship among Icelanders. These have been very successful social gatherings with an average attendance of about 135 people. The Club's efforts in serving dinner or lunch at the Samkoma have also served to enrich the treasury at times.

In reviewing the minutes of the meetings kept over the fifty years, much interesting information was found concerning some very fine and unusual programs and activities which have been either sponsored by the Hekla Club in its entirety, or which have been planned by individual members, all in the interests of our Iceland-

ic heritage. Following are a few of these events.

At the regular meeting in July 1927 Miss Thorstina Jackson, the Icelandic poetess spoke of her work and travels in Iceland.

A most interesting program was one which featured Miss Halldóra Bjarnadóttir, Editor of "Hlín", the magazine of the National Federation of Women's Clubs in Iceland. She had a display of women's handicraft. In her lecture she discussed the accomplishment of the women of Iceland.

In about 1938, an Icelandic Ladies Chorus was formed under the direction of Mr. Harry Larusson. Several of our Hekla Club members sang in this organization, participating in concerts as well as singing for their own enjoyment.

The Icelandic people, together with other nationalities, paid tribute to crown Prince Frederick and Crown Princess Ingrid of Denmark at the time of their visit to Minneapolis in April of 1939. The Icelandic Ladies Chorus joined in the singing of the Icelandic National Anthem to the royal Danish visitors.

On two occasions the Hekla Club has had the opportunity to entertain the members of Iceland's Karlakór. These were in 1946 at the University of Minnesota, and again on October 16, 1960, at the Walker Art Center. On the former occasion, the Hekla Club was presented with a flag of Iceland on a very decorative standard.

At the time of the Lutheran World Federation Assembly in August, 1957, the Hekla Club entertained at a buffet dinner the Bishop of Iceland, Ásmundur Guðmundsson, and other Icelandic delegates to the Assembly. A gift presented by Bishop Guðmundsson

to the Club was a New Testament in Icelandic.

Another exceptionally memorable occasion was the visit of Hon. Thor Thors, Icelandic Ambassador to the United States, who came to Minneapolis in May, 1958, specifically to represent the country of Iceland in the observance of Minnesota's Centennial. A large group of Icelanders was in attendance that year at the Samkoma held in connection with the Centennial and were indeed privileged to hear a very fine program presented at that time.

The 35th Samkoma was held in 1960 at the Walker Art Centre.

In recent years, the Hekla Club has entertained the Reykjavik Municipal Band, teachers from Iceland, who have been attending the Institute in American Studies at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, and Lúðrasveit Reykjavíkur, a talented group of Icelandic musicians.

It is interesting to remember the active part taken by our members in the Festival of Nations celebrations which have been held regularly in St. Paul. Our members (wearing their Icelandic costumes) have faithfully baked kleinur and vinarterta to be sold in the Icelandic booth, along with arranging displays of Icelandic jewelry, woolens, wood carvings, paintings and other arts and crafts. They have served as officers and committee members on various occasions. Through this most gratifying endeavour, we have been able to keep Iceland before the general public.

Since one of the aims of the Hekla Club is to make people aware of our Icelandic heritage, it has been the practice to share with others and the community at large knowledge of our cultural background. This has been ac-

complished in a variety of ways. Members have participated in arranging Icelandic exhibits at Scandinavian meetings and community art fairs.

Gift subscriptions to the magazine, Iceland Review, have been given to the Minneapolis and St. Paul Public Libraries and the University of Minnesota Library for a number of years.

A Special Projects Committee was appointed to select suitable recordings representative of Iceland. Vocal, instrumental, orchestral, band and choral music performed by Icelandic musicians was selected. The 31 recordings were purchased in Iceland by the Club. These were presented to Professor Nils Hasselmo of the Department of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Minnesota at the 1970 Samkoma. The 1970 Samkoma dinner was a gourmet delight as the food was flown from Iceland.

In 1972 some 20 books in the Fortnite Series were presented to the Department of Scandinavian Studies, University of Minnesota.

Through concerted effort of members of the Twin Cities Hekla Club and their friends, \$4,050 was collected for the Icelandic Volcano Relief Fund for the victims of the volcanic eruption on Heimaey Island in 1973.

The highlight of the 1974 Samkoma was the presentation of the Iceland play *The Golden Gate* (in English). The play was produced by students in Speech and Theater Arts Department and played in The Experimental Theater of the Rarig Center at the University of Minnesota. A \$200 gift from the Hekla Club was made to the University Theater Arts Department after the presentation.

In September 1974, the Hekla Club members visited in the community of Minneota, Minnesota and the River-

side Farm, where the first Icelanders settled in Minnesota, July 4, 1875. The members were served a delicious luncheon by the Lutheran Church Women of St. Paul's Lutheran Church (Icelandic). Following the luncheon, there was a walking tour of "Little Reykjavik," a bus tour to the Icelandic Cemetery and a program in the church highlighting the activities of the Icelanders in this Minnesota Community and church.

On December 20, 1974, 285 children's books in the original Icelandic and others translated from other languages into Icelandic, arrived at the Walter Library, University of Minnesota, to be added to the Kerlan Collection, having been donated by The Hekla Club. The Kerlan Collection is an extensive research library of children's books and manuscripts. Through the generosity of publishers in Iceland these 285 books were packed, insured and transported by ship free to Norfolk, Virginia with the Hekla Club taking over the transportation expense from that point in the amount of \$84.50. Before these books, valued at \$1,625 became a part of the Kerlan Collection, there was only one Icelandic children's book in the collection. This project illustrates a joint cooperative effort between Hekla Club members, interested Icelanders in Iceland, Icelandic publishers and shipping company — a truly international gesture of friendship.

Not many western Icelanders have celebrated "Christmas", as it is observed in Iceland. Such a Christmas

Party was held for the Hekla Club at the Christmas season in 1974 at the International Institute. Traditional Christmas songs were sung as adults and children joined hands and walked around the Christmas tree. The children had a visit from Helga Kardal (Santa) who distributed candy to them. Hekla Club members, young women from Iceland and their friends prepared and served traditional Icelandic food.

Attaining the fiftieth year of its continuous existence in 1975, the Hekla Club marked this milestone by dedicating the meeting on January 18, 1975, to a review of the 50 year history of the Club and to recognition being given to members of long standing.

On April 19, 1975, the 50th yearly-Samkoma was held at Augsburg College, Minneapolis. Some 127 people were in attendance, representative of the various Icelandic communities from which Hekla Club members have come: Minneapolis, St. Paul and Minneota, Minnesota, North Dakota, Wisconsin, Canada and Iceland.

On the many large occasions and times, on lesser occasions, such as the observance of special birthdays of our member, the Hekla Club members have been inspired to do their share in keeping alive the aims of those women who started this Club. These 50th anniversaries stimulate us to renew again our efforts to carry on the traditions of our heritage through various activities of the Hekla Club.

## Place-Names of Breiðuvík District – Hnausa

Kristiana Magnusson

“**BAKKI**”, the homestead of Johann Geir Johannson, means a bank on the water's edge so it is very aptly named as Bakki is a strip of land along Lake Winnipeg. Later it became the home of Sigurbjorn Jonasson, brother of Baldvin of Kirkjubær. Today this strip is owned by Solli Sigurdson and Ragnar Kristjanson, who have summer homes there.

“**EYRARBAKKI**”, named after a place in Iceland, means a sandy bank or sandy spit after “eyrar” extending out into the water.

This place was very aptly named by the first settler, Pétur Metúsalem Bjarnason (1875-80) as this strip along the lake has a beautiful sandy beach. Eyrarbakki has had several owners, and at one time Kristjón Finnson had a saw-mill and store there. Today it is owned by Pall Palsson and his wife Sigurros.

Gudrun Finnson of Gimli spent the first summer of her life at Eyrarbakki. The two shanties, one the home and the other the store, stood there for a number of years.

“**BJARKARSTAÐIR**”, which means “Birchstead”, was the homestead of Einar Bjarnason (1876-80), who named the homestead Bjarkarstaðir, because of a stand of birch trees all around. The first church services in Breiðuvík were held at this home. In 1880 Einar Bjarnason moved to North Dakota and the fine log house at Bjarkarstaðir

later became the home of Séra Magnús Skaptason.

“**HNAUSAR**”, formerly the Bjarkarstaðir homestead, was renamed by Séra Magnús Skaptason after his ancestral home in Iceland. Hnausar is the plural of “Hnaus”, a sod or turf. It received its name from the mounds of turf on the old Bjarkarstaðir farm, which reminded Séra Magnús of the “hnausar” in Iceland. This was the site of the first parsonage in North New-Iceland and was also the site of the first post office, in 1889.

“**HÖFN**”, which means harbor or “haven” was a familiar landmark of the past. It was originally called **BRÆÐRAHÖFN** when Johannes and Stefan Sigurdson lived there. After Johannes left and Stefan and Valgerdur Sigurdson lived there it was usually referred to as Höfn. The large and beautiful home at Höfn, with turrets, large bay windows, sundeck and pillars, had steam heating and full plumbing, which was indeed a rarity in this area in the early 1900's. Höfn which faced the lake, across from where the pier now stands, was a busy commercial centre as the Sigurdsons were active in the fishing and freighting business as well as in the operation of a general store.

“**VELLIR**”, which means Plains, was for many years, the homestead of Jonas Jonasson and his sons, Eggert and Jo-

stein. This homestead was later owned by Valdi Vidal, and the south-east corner was the site of the home of Gisli and Olla Sigmundson. In the south-west corner the Sigurdson-Thorvaldson Store and Post Office was located.

“**GISLASTAÐIR**”, meaning Gisli's stead or place, received its name from the original settler, Gisli Gudmundson. This later became the home of Jon Gudmundson and his wife Steinunn, and their children Thorunn Page, Malla Einarson and Einar Johnson. Today the Hnausa Hall is located on the old Gislastaðir homestead.

“**FINNMÖRK**”, comes from the word “mörk” in the Old Icelandic and means forest. The expression að riðja mörkina, means to clear the forest. Since Finnur Bjarnason was the first homesteader this could literally mean “Finn's Forest”. Today this homestead, now the home of Joe and Mabel Einarson, is still often referred to as Finnmörk. Also there may be a play on words as Finnmörk, the Forest or (land) of the Finns is featured in the Icelandic sagas.

“**LUNDUR**”, the homestead of Liður and Helga Jonsson, derived its name from the Icelandic place name meaning “grove” or “trees”. It has been for many years, and still is the home of Villi and Gerda Finnsson. This home has often hummed with the laughter of happy children at play, musical song-fests and happy family gatherings.

“**LJÓSALAND**”, which means “land of light” received its name from the homestead's sunny exposure. The first settler at Ljósaland was Stefan Thor-

steinson, who lived there from 1876 to 1881. This later became the childhood home of Einar Einarson, Gunnar Einarson, and Joe Einarson, who still lives there.

“**REYKHÓLAR**”, was named by the first settler at this homestead, Thor-kell Bessason, who lived there from 1876 to 1881. He and his wife had lost three children in the smallpox epidemic in New Iceland in 1876. In Iceland Reykir means steamy hot springs. It is assumed that this homestead received its name from fire, which set in low spots and filled with peat moss, created smoky hills. This place was later, for many years, the home of Eiki and Gauja Einarson. Today it is the home of Herb Briem and family.

“**HÓLALAND**”, which means “hilly land” was the homestead of Gunnar and Malla Einarson. This homestead was actually located in the Geysir district but the large Einarson family attended school and participated in all community affairs in the Breiðuvík District. Today the farm is owned by Barney and Beverly Einarson.

“**AÐALBÓL**”, which has a very pleasing connotation, means “abode”, hence “a special place”. This was the homestead of Sveinn and Thorgerdur Arnason, and later became the home of Jón and Jónína Thordarson. Today Jónína still lives at Aðalból with her son Albert.

“**ÁSGARÐAR**”, this name was derived from the Norse mythology and means “The residence of the Norse gods”. Ásgarðar in Breiðuvík District was homesteaded by Stefan Thorarinson,

and later owned by Jón Stefanson, another district pioneer.

**"GARÐAR"**, in the ancient Icelandic Constantinople was called "Mikli Gardur". Gardur was a place where fortifications were erected like Nýji garður — Newcastle". In the modern sense it could literally mean "a garden". Gardar was the homestead of Guðmundur Martin, father of Laugi and Einar Martin.

**"LITLI GARÐUR"**, which means "small garden" or "small enclosure", was homesteaded by Einar and Sigrún Martin. The large and lovely home they built was surrounded by beautifully kept grounds, well suited to the name "Little Garden". This home, too, abounded in hospitality, musical talent

and many happy community gatherings. The Martin family have all moved from the district and most of the family members now live in British Columbia.

**"LAUGALAND"**, in Iceland Laugar, of religious origin, meant washing and fasting, hence Laugardagur — bath day. The name "Laugaland" was derived from a place-name in Iceland, and was the homestead of Laugi and Sigridur Martin, who built a large home on a slight rise of property. This place was often lively with the sound of music and fellowship and dancing. The Martin family were all endowed with musical ability and the grandchildren of the original homesteaders have won numerous musical awards. Laugaland also means Laugi's land.



Laugaland, home of Laugi and Sigrún Martin,  
● often resounded with music and song



Breiðuvík church, located in the southeast corner of Kirkiubæ

**"BJARMALAND"**, in Icelandic this was the land of the "Bjarmar", and ancient tribe now called "Perms", a tribe within the Russian Empire, therefore Permland". The early settlers may have thought of Bjarmar as "Radiant Land", and therefore a happy place to live in. Bjarmaland was originally settled by Oddur Akranes. This location later became the site of a Municipal Park, which was named "ÞA-

VELLIR" from the Norse mythology. As a municipal park it was the site of the annual "Íslendingadagurinn", as well as Field Days for surrounding school areas. Today it is a government park with camping facilities, a fine beach and peaceful surroundings, "far from the madding crowds".

**"LANDAMÓT"**, means dividing place or boundary. The original Landamót was somewhere near or else at the place where Sumarliði Kardal lived. The home of Einar Jonsson, Laugi Johnson's father, was referred to as the home of Einar from Landamótum, so it is most likely that Laugi Johnson took the name of his boyhood home. Today the large home, where Valla Johnson, widow of Laugi Johnson, now lives, is one of the old familiar landmarks of Hnausa.

**"NÝJIBÆR"**, (Newby or Newstead) means "new place". This was the homestead of Sigursteinn Halldorson and his family, who later settled at Sóstaðir, in the Geysir district Nýjibær later became the home of Tryggvi



Íslendingadagurinn at the Hnausa Park (Íðavelli) with a "Pioneer Float"

and Runa Snifeld, who lived there for many years.

"**EYÓLFSSTAÐIR**", which means "Eyólf's stead or place", was first homesteaded by Eyjólfur Benediktson, who lived there from 1876 to 1881. Later this became the homestead of Magnus and Ingibjörg Magnusson, and their large family. Their imposing home, built with a sundeck facing the lake, was a home of warm hospitality, extended to all who entered its doors. Eyólfstaðir was also for many years, the heart and centre of the fishing industry in the area. Later, one of the grandsons, Albert Magnusson, who had a grocery store there for a few years, named his store "Magnusville General Store", because of the many Magnussons who lived there. Since then, the name "Magnusville" has remained and a road sign on the highway signifies the Magnusville location.

"**TEIGUR**", which means "a strip of field" or "meadow land", was homesteaded by Kristjón and Björg Snifeld. Kristjón's sons, Tryggvi and Halldór, farmed in the district for many years. Björg Snifeld reached the ripe old age of 100 years and is well remembered today for her lively spirit and spry step, as she used to walk long distances, years ago, visiting friends and relatives.

"**MÝRAR**", which means "marsh" was the homestead of Sigurdur Pjetursson, who lived there from 1876 to 1881. Mýrar received its name from the marshy land all around there. Later it became the home of Sigurgeir Gunnarsson and his wife, grandparents of Stefan, Gladys and John Stefan.

"**BREIÐAMÝRI**", which means "broad marsh", was the homestead of Jón Snifeld and his wife and children, Soffía Gíslason, and Marí.

son of Gimli. Numi Snifeld lived there for many years and was often referred to as Numi of Breiðarmýri.

"**HJALLA**", was the place-name of the homestead of Olafur Kristjon Olafson and his wife Herdis. The name Hjalla, was derived from the name of their ancestral home in Iceland. Today, one of the sons, Hjalti Olafson, and his sister Anna, live on the farm.

"Hjalli" means a shelf or a ledge on a mountainside. The locative is (at) Hjalla.

"**FINNBOGASTÖÐUM**", which means "Finnbogi's stead or place", was the homestead of Finnbogi Finnbogason and his family. This old homestead is now the site of the Orzech Bros. store and Lumber Yard. This area is now called FINNS, which is signified by a road sign on the Highway.

"**BRENNISTAÐUR**", which means "a place of wood for fuel", and "**FLUGUSTÖÐUM**" which means Flystead, was the homestead of Einar and Soffía Gíslason. "**FLUGUMÝRAR BRENNANA**", in Icelandic literature, is a tragic story from the Sagas of the

Sturlunga Age.

"**VÍÐIRHÓLL**", means "willow hill or height", was homesteaded by Bjarni Pjetursson from 1876 to 1881, and received its name from the stand of silver willows on the property. The Markusson Brothers, Ogmundur and Marcus, lived there for many years, and Marcus is still living there.

"**FAGURHÓLL**", the homestead of Gudmundur Markusson, is derived from the Icelandic word "fagur" meaning "fair", and hóll" meaning "hill". Later this place was often called **GRJÓTHÓLL**, because after the trees were cleared, many rocky hillocks revealed themselves on the farm. Today this place is the site of the homes of Sveinn Markusson and Finnur and Gudrun Markusson.

"**HORNI**", which means "corner" was the name given to the early homestead of Thordur Palson and his large family. Today this farm is owned by Thordur's son, Gunnar Palson and his wife Anna and their son Gunnar.

Horni is the locative form of horn (corner), i.e. at horn.

Place-names in the Breiðuvík District of New Iceland served a very useful purpose in bygone days. Often place-names, rather than family names, were referred to in speaking of the early settlers and their homesteads. They were a tradition brought over from Iceland, as many names were taken from place-names in Iceland where

similarities of land terrain occurred, or else because of the name of beloved ancestral homes. Very often place-names gave a clue as to the type of land settled on. Other place-names were associated with the dreams and aspirations of the settlers starting out on a new life in a strange and unknown land.

When the Breiðuvík District was absorbed into the Municipality with other areas, the Municipality was named "BIFROST". This name is retained today, and it is interesting to note that the name "BIFROST" is derived from the Old Norse mythology, and it is the poetic name of the rainbow which supposedly formed a bridge, means of which the gods passed

between Heaven and Earth.

Valhöll lives on in New Iceland!

★

The author of this article, Kristiana Magnusson, says in her letter "The sources for this article have come from my husband who lived there for forty-five years prior to moving out here (White Rock, British Columbia) as well as from Gudrun Finnson and Miss Stefansson of Gimli. —Editor.



### ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ICELANDIC ICELANDIC CANADIAN CLUB OF WINNIPEG

The Icelandic Canadian Club of Winnipeg held its annual meeting on June 25th, last.

Long-time Treasurer John Johannson reported a healthy financial situation of the general fund, the scholarship fund, and the publishing fund.

The meeting authorized financial support as follows: to the Islendinga-*lagur* at Gimli, \$50.00; to the Icelandic language camp at Gimli, \$50.00; and \$50.00 toward a presentation gift to the President of Iceland, on his visit to Canada this summer.

President Dori Stefansson reported that the executive had held four formal meetings. Four public functions were sponsored, including the well-

patronized Christmas Party for Senior Citizens, at the First Lutheran Church, and the annual dinner-dance at the Fort Garry Hotel.

At this annual meeting the main item on the agenda was the important question of amalgamation with Frón Chapter of the Icelandic National League. A resolution was passed unanimously favoring such amalgamation in principle, but there was not full agreement on the speed at which this should be put into effect. The executive was instructed to form a committee to prepare a report on this matter in the fall.

The current executive was re-elected with Miss Kristin Olson as Secretary.

PROFESSORS continued

## *Professors and Lecturers of Icelandic Descent in Manitoba Universities*

by Kristine Perlmutter

**WILHELMINA MABB, Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics, University of Winnipeg.**

Professor Mabb was born at Gimli, Manitoba. Her parents, both deceased, were Gisli and Thora Jonsson.

Professor Mabb received her B.A. degree from the University of Manitoba and her M.A. degree from the University of Minnesota. She is also the holder of a permanent professional teaching certificate. She is currently taking a course in Computer programming and also holds office in several university committees, and is an active member of the Canadian Association of University Teachers.

Professor Mabb is married to John Mabb.

**RICHARD OGMUNDSON, Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of Manitoba.**

Professor Ogmundson was born in Dauphin, Manitoba. His parents are Herman H. and Bernice (nee Schaldermose) Ogmundson. He grew up in Port Alberni, British Columbia, and was educated at the University of Vic-

toria and the University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor. He teaches courses in Introductory Sociology, Canadian Society, and Political Sociology.

**BJORN PETURSON, Researcher and Teaching Professor, University of Manitoba. (Retired, 1963).**

Dr. Peturson was born in Winnipeg, but grew up at Gimli, Manitoba. His parents were Petur Gudmundson and his wife, Ingibjorg Bjornsdottir. They were born in Iceland, but came to Canada in 1890.

Dr. Peturson received his higher education at the University of Manitoba, in agriculture, and the University of Minnesota. He had a distinguished career as a pathologist at the Research Station, Canada Department of Agriculture, Winnipeg Branch, on the University of Manitoba Campus. He received his appointment with the University of Manitoba in 1960.

Dr. Peturson was active in community affairs and in his younger years he took an active part in athletics. He won the Hanson trophy as three-times Individual Champion in the Icelandic celebration sports.



Dr. Peturson is married to Gudny Kristin, formerly Markusson.

**HAROLD KEITH SIGMUNDSON**, Assistant Professor of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry, University of Manitoba.

Dr. Sigmundson's parents are Marino and Margaret (formerly Olafson) Sigmundson, of Gimli, Manitoba.

Dr. Sigmundson grew up at Gimli. He received his higher education at the University of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba. He teaches undergraduate and post-graduate courses in Child Psychiatry.

He is married to the former Fiona Margaret Wilkie.

**LARUS ARTHUR SIGURDSON**, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Manitoba, (retired).

Dr. Sigurdson is the son of the late Johannes and the late Thorbjorg (nee Jonsson), Sigurdson, of Gimli, Manitoba. He received his higher education at the Medical College, University of Manitoba, and at Stanford, California, (M.A. degree). At present, Dr. Sigurdson is retired from teaching, but not from his medical practice.

He has actively supported the Icelandic-language weekly *Logberg-Heimskringla* for many years and is presently vice-president. He has taken movie pictures of the Fjallkonas at the Icelandic Festival over a period of many years.

His wife is the former Helen Page.

**WILFRED FRANKLIN SIGURDSON**, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of Manitoba.

Born in Oak Point, Manitoba. His parents are Franklin and Halldora (nee Gislason) Sigurdson. Dr. Sigurdson received his higher education at United College (now the University of Winnipeg) and the Medical College, University of Manitoba.

He is involved in clinical supervision with the Department of Psychiatry at the Health Sciences Centre and he lectures to Medical students, psychiatric residents and occupational therapy students.

Dr. Sigurdson is married to the former Elaine Shelford.

**DANIEL P. SNIDAL**, Professor and Head of Continuing Medical Education and Associate Professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of Manitoba.

Dr. Snidal was born in Winnipeg. His parents were the late Dr. Jon Gunnlaugur Snidal and his wife Anna (formerly Hannesson). He was educated at the University of Manitoba. He presently teaches courses in Chest Medicine and Continuing Medical Education, but is heavily involved as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, and as Director of Continuing Medical Education.

Dr. Snidal is married to the former Carmen Frederickson.

**GENE DAVID SOLMUNDSON**, Demonstrator and Lecturer with the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Manitoba.

Dr. Solmundson was born in Winnipeg. His parents are Solmundur and Ingunn (formerly Nordal) Solmundson. He teaches courses in periodontics. He is also Clinic Chairman of the Winnipeg Dental Society Executive, and Chairman of the Continuing Education Committee of the Manitoba Dental Association.

Dr. Solmundson is married to the former Pat Ryan.

**BALDUR ROSMUND STEFANSSON**, Associate Professor, Department of Plant Sciences, University of Manitoba.

Dr. Stefansson is the son of the late Gudmundur and the late Sigrídur Jonína Stefansson, of Vestfold (Shoal Lake, Manitoba Interlake). He is a graduate of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Manitoba.

He is presently teaching a course in Topics in Plant Breeding at the graduate level. His main work has been in plant breeding and related research in rapeseed. The Faculty of Agriculture "Spotlight" magazine (Spring 1974) says of him: "Dr. Stefansson's recent accomplishment in developing Tower rape is the latest in a succession of plant breeding achievements to his credit." The \$50,000 Royal Bank award to Dr. Stefansson and Dr. R. Keith Downey was featured in the *Canadian* issue.

Dr. Stefansson is married to Sigrídur, daughter of Paul J. and Helga Westdal.

**BARNEY THORDARSON**, Professor of English, Brandon University.

Professor Thordarson's death following so soon on his retirement in 1971 was a source of sorrow to all who knew him.

Professor Thordarson's parents were the late John and the late Gudfinna Thordarson, of Langruth, Manitoba, where Professor Thordarson was born.

Professor Thordarson attended the Universities of Manitoba and Minnesota.

He was President of the Icelandic Canadian Club of Western Manitoba at the time of his death.

He is survived by his wife, the former Kathleen McNaught.

**PAUL HENRICK THORBJORN THORLAKSON**, formerly Professor of Surgery in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Manitoba and now Professor Emeritus of Surgery.

Dr. Thorlakson was born in Park River, North Dakota. His parents were the late Reverend Niels Steingrímur and the late Erika (formerly Rynning) of Selkirk, Manitoba, where Dr. Thorlakson grew up.

Dr. Thorlakson was educated at Gustavus Adolphus College, in St. Peter, Minnesota, and at the University of Manitoba. He did post-graduate work in London, Paris, and Vienna.

Dr. Thorlakson has been keenly interested in medical education and research. In 1938 he was appointed to the first associate committee on medical research of the National Research Council of Canada. He was the co-founder of the Winnipeg Clinic and is the Director.

Dr. Thorlakson has been outstanding in community work in the field of the Icelandic cultural heritage in North America. He was active in promoting the establishment of the Chair of Icelandic at the University of Manitoba and he is Past President of the Canada-Iceland Foundation.

He is Chancellor of the University of Winnipeg and has been awarded several honors, including an Honorary L.L.D. from the University of Manitoba.

Dr. Thorlakson is married to Gladys, formerly Henry.

**ROBERT HENRY THORLAKSON**  
Assistant Professor in Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, University of Manitoba.

Dr. Thorlakson was born in Winnipeg, the son of Dr. and Mrs. P. H. T. Thorlakson.

Dr. Thorlakson is a graduate of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Manitoba and he pursued five years of post-graduate study in England. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, England (F.R.C.S.) and F.R.C.S. (Canada) and Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, F.A.C.S.

Dr. Thorlakson is a surgeon with

the Winnipeg Clinic and is also an active community worker, as the following position testify.

Chairman, Provincial Advisory Committee, American College of Surgeons, Provincial Commissioner, St. John Ambulance (Manitoba), Commander, Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knight of the Order of St. Lazarus, Chairman, Manitoba Opera Association, Lieutenant-Commander, Royal Canadian Navy (Reserve).

Dr. Thorlakson is married to the former Frances Corinne Howe.

**THORBURN KENNETH THORLAKSON**, Assistant Professor in Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, University of Manitoba.

Dr. Thorlakson was born in Winnipeg. He is the son of Dr. and Mrs. P. H. T. Thorlakson.

Dr. Thorlakson is a graduate of Medicine, University of Manitoba and he pursued five years of post-graduate study in England. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons (England) and F.R.C.S. (Canada) and a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons (F.A.C.S.). Dr. Thorlakson is a surgeon with the Winnipeg Clinic.

Dr. Thorlakson participates in undergraduate teaching and graduate training in surgery at the Health Sciences Centre, Winnipeg.

Dr. Thorlakson is an active community worker and holds the following positions.

Honorary Counsellor, Board of Governors, St. John's-Ravencourt School,

Honorary Counsellor, Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Member, Board of Directors, The Betel Home Foundation, Member, Executive Committee, Rainbow Stage.

Dr. Thorlakson is married to the former Lorna Marian, nee Olson.

**ASGEIR JONAS THORSTEINSON**, Professor of Entomology, University of Manitoba.

Dr. Thorsteinson was born in Winnipeg. His parents were the late Sigurdur and Halldora Thorsteinson.

He graduated from the University of Manitoba with a gold medal and a B.S.A. degree. On a British Council Scholarship he pursued post-graduate study at the University of London, where he received his Ph.D. degree in Entomology. He is noted for his research in mosquito control.

Dr. Thorsteinson is married to Mildred, daughter of the late Gudmundur and Matthildur Anderson.

**HARALDUR VICTOR VIDAL**, Professor of Latin and English, Brandon University.

Professor Vidal was born at Fram-

nes, near Arborg, Manitoba. His parents were the late Sigvald and Sigrídur Gudrun (Jonsdóttir) Vidal.

Professor Vidal received his B.A., M.A., B.Ed., and M.S. degrees at the University of Manitoba.

**PAUL HAROLD WESTDAL**, Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Manitoba.

Professor Westdal was born in Wynyard, Saskatchewan. His parents were Paul J. and Helga Westdal. He is a graduate of the University of Manitoba. He teaches graduate courses in Entomology, supervises graduate students, and is heavily involved in research.

Professor Westdal is a member of Frón Chapter, Icelandic National League, and has supported or belonged to other organizations such as the Icelandic Canadian Club, and the Icelandic Male Voice Choir.

Professor Westdal is married to the former Mae Gillis.



## THE SAGA SINGERS FROM EDMONTON



The Saga Singers is a mixed group from Edmonton. Many of the members are of Icelandic origin, while some are married to Western Icelanders. The group has been singing together for about seven years, and has as its purpose the retention of part of the Icelandic cultural heritage, the songs from the past and present. This summer the Saga Singers had two major engagements in addition to the performances it regularly gives in Edmonton area and its annual presentation at Markerville, Alberta. July 18-20 it participated in Festival Canada in Ottawa, a series of multi-cultural concerts arranged by the Canadian Folk Arts Council under contract with the Secretary of State. The concerts were held on all the week-ends in July, utilizing ethnic talent from across Canada. On the August long week-end, the choir travelled by bus to Gimli, Manitoba, to sing at Íslendingadagurinn, the 100th anniversary of Icelandic settlement in Manitoba.

The Alberta Folk Arts Council was responsible for selecting three groups

to represent Alberta in the Festival Canada concerts. The Saga Singers were pleased to be chosen on the basis of a tape submitted. They were flown to Ottawa and housed at Carleton University. The concerts were held on an open air stage in Confederation Park, beside the National Arts Centre. There were two concerts Friday and Saturday evenings, with audiences of up to 5,000 at the late evening concerts. The Sunday afternoon concert was held at Camp Fortune in the Gatineau Hills at the CBC open air stage. The CBC taped these shows for radio and television. The program in which the Saga Singers performed will be broadcast August 30th at 9:00 a.m. The television tape will be aired this fall.

The week-end the Saga Singers were in Ottawa, they shared the stage with a Lebanese dance group from Charlottetown; a Chinese instrumental and dancing group from Calgary; a French-Canadian folk dance group from Granby; P.Q.; a Haitian dance and drum group from Montreal; a German ladies' choir from Ottawa; two Acadian folk

singers from Nova Scotia and five folk singers from Moncton, New Brunswick. It was a very international presentation, professionally staged by the Canadian Folk Arts Council staff.

The trip to Gimli was a thrilling and memorable occasion for the Saga Singers. They were honored to be invited to participate in the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of settlement, and the enthusiastic response of the audiences was gratifying. They performed in the park on both Saturday and Sunday, and participated in the official program on Monday. In addition to these engagements, they sang at Betel in Selkirk and Gimli. The Icelandic television crew taped them for inclusion in a documentary on the Western Icelanders' festival.

Margaret Decosse was the choir's soloist during the concerts. Director and accompanist is Della Roland.

At the presentation of the prize for the winning song composed this year, the choir sang "Fair Canada". The words were written by Skapti Thorvaldson; the music was composed by Thordis M. Samis; and the choral arrangement as done by Elma Gislason.

It was especially exciting for the choir to perform at Íslendingadagurinn because many of the choir members are ex-Manitobans. They come from towns in the Interlake like Gimli, Riverton, Arborg, Husavick, Oak Point, Lundar, Clarkleigh, Oakview, Selkirk, and Hecla Island.

—Lillian MacPherson



## ICELANDIC CANADIAN

by Gus Sigurdson

Lovingly the English language  
Lingers smooth upon the tongue.  
It has played majestic music,  
Melodious, since we were young,  
In our ears, in every travel,  
Everywhere throughout our land —  
On our lips, these words unravel:  
Canada . . . we understand.

Again to us there is another  
Ancient language we uphold,  
Tempered of both frost and fire  
Fabled in the days of old —  
Crystal clear with flaming flashes

Flowing like a mountain stream  
That dances on in splendor, splashes  
Sparkle into each our dream.

Thus our heritage most hardy  
Heralds in it's skaldic way:  
Here where many bloods keep  
blending

Blessings pour upon this day!  
Now when ethnic groups employ  
Each their cultures to create  
One for all, that all enjoy  
A cultured Canada, and . . . Great.

## The Pioneers of Icelandic River meet the Indians—including John Ramsay

by Grimur Stadfeld

When the first boatload of Icelandic immigrants, 7 or 8 in number, came rowing up White Mud River in the spring of 1876 to begin building log cabins on the riverbanks (that was the original name of the river when the Hudson's Bay Co. Post was located there—it was not until the advent of the Icelanders that the name was changed to Icelandic River) the Indians there had already heard of this continuing encroachment on their lands and native haunts by the white man and had decided to resist any such settlement along this peaceful little river. So just as this boat slid up to the embankment, several of them were ready on the spot and immediately pushed it back into the river. The newcomers were somewhat surprised at first but soon rowed onto the bank again but then the same thing happened except that the boat was pushed with much more force than at first.

After a brief conference out in mid-stream the boatmen decided to rush the defenders. They rowed onto the bank with full force for the third time and just as the boat touched shore all the crew leaped out at once—charging the defenders with their oars and whatever clubs they could get their hands on. Now the surprise turned in reverse—the Indians had obviously not been prepared nor expecting such a determined effort, and hastily retreat-

ed to a safe distance away, but still in a hostile mood, and the situation appeared anything but peaceful for a while as neither side understood the other—and the natives kept increasing in numbers. But suddenly there came a hush—the boatmen saw a runner swiftly disappear into the forest. Then after some considerable time, the runner returned and with him a stately elderly man who walked straight over to the boatmen and addressed them. In spite of being a full-blooded Indian he spoke English quite well—as did the leader of the Icelanders.

After some consultation between the two—this dignified man turned to his natives explaining to them in firm tones that they had been in the wrong. That those Icelandic immigrants had received full authority from the Canadian government, sanctioned by the Great White Queen beyond the Seas, to settle here and build their future homes on those riverbanks. So well did the natives take to his interpretations that they had a complete change of heart and became friends of the Icelanders from then on. In fact there is no record of any friction between the two races after that.

This historic landing took place on the west bank between Osi Creek and the present government docks. The foreman on the rowboat was Olafur from Espihóli, an outstanding leader

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amongst the pioneers. He first settled in Gimli but later moved on. Another of the boatmen was Kristoferson, who later settled in Argyle, and a third crewman was Fridsteinn Sigurdson, who settled permanently at Icelandic River, now Riverton. One of his grandsons is Clarence Mayo, the local postmaster and inspector of postal services out along the lake.

That noble Indian peacemaker who actually saved the day at that pioneer landing was the one and only John Ramsay that faithful friend and later benefactor to that early immigrant colony.

In the early years when fish would sometimes become a very monotonous diet, being an expert hunter John Ramsay would provide supplies of wild meat for a much needed and appreciated change.

For his services he was generally rewarded with abundance of woolen socks and mitts which he in turn could trade in at the Hudson's Bay Co. Posts further north for any and all of his own store necessities, as well as of his dependents and friends. Typically he was an apostle of good faith and co-existence between the newcomers and the natives of the land.

★ ★ ★

Postscript — The Mystery Dream —

It happened about 1908 when John Ramsay, who had died some years before, came to Trausti Vigfusson, a carpenter at Geysir, in a dream asking that something be done to reconstruct the enclosure around his beloved wife's grave—and explained that he came to him because nobody else would hear him. The carpenter of Geysir was still somewhat confused about the situation and just where the grave would be located—but he was so concerned that he finally consulted Gunnsteinn Eyolfsson, an eminent scholarly leader of the early Icelandic River era—who explained to him that John Ramsay's wife Betsy had died with all but one of their children in the tragic smallpox epidemic of 1877, and that Ramsay had been so overcome with grief that he had been known to stay by her grave weeping and lamenting for days and nights at a time. He also informed him that her grave could be found at the southern edge of that long since abandoned ghost townsite of Sandy Bar.

The carpenter of Geysir soon made good his promise and rebuilt the woodwork around the grave,

Lake Centre News

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## IN THE NEWS

### PHILIP ERIC TETLOCK WINS GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S MEDAL



Philip Eric Tetlock

Philip Eric Tetlock, Bachelor of Arts graduate from the University of British Columbia, has been awarded the Governor-General's Medal. He had an average of 97 in his fourth year studies and won a Gold Medal in his major subject, Psychology. The University of British Columbia has also awarded him a \$4,000 scholarship.

Philip is the son of Harold and Avril Tetlock of Vancouver. His mother, Avril, is the daughter of Gudrun and the late Gunnlaugur Eyrikson, of Winnipeg, Man., and granddaughter of Sigurjon and Kristrun Eyrikson and Hallgrimur and Bjorg Axdal, pioneers in Wynyard, Saskatchewan district.

### RICHARD ALISTER COLLINS AWARDED A NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL SCHOLARSHIP



Richard Alister Collins

Richard Alister Collins, B.Sc. Biology graduate of the University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus, has been awarded a National Research Council of Canada post-graduate scholarship. He is enrolled for his Master's degree.

In other years Richard has won a Saskatchewan Government University entrance scholarship and two general proficiency scholarships.

Richard is the son of Norman and Dora Collins, of Regina, Saskatchewan. His grandparents on his mother's side are Baldwin and Sigrun Sigurdson. His great grandparents hailed from North Dakota and Wynyard, Saskatchewan.

### RECIPIENT OF ENTRANCE SCHOLARSHIP

Recipient of a \$500.00 Entrance Scholarship Plan Award from the University of Winnipeg is **Wade Sigurdson**, of Lundar, Manitoba.

★

### SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

At the concert of the Icelandic Canadian Club of Winnipeg, last February 8th, the club's annual scholarship was awarded to **CAROL WESTDAL**, a First Year Arts student at the University of Manitoba and a member of Professor Bessason's Icelandic class.

Carol came highly recommended by the Vincent Massey Collegiate, where she had proved herself a fine student and where she took a leading part in

all musical activities. On graduation she was given a Special Award "in recognition of outstanding contribution to Vincent Massey".

Carol is the daughter of Harold and Mae Westdal of Winnipeg.

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Harold M. Moore, Arnes, Manitoba,  
painting — "Beyond the Prairie".

#### Purchase Award:

Blaka Jónsdóttir, Reykjavik and  
Paris.  
painting: "Falcon at Dawn"  
Soren Tergesen, Winnipeg, Man.,  
ceramic: Vase.

#### Honorable Mention:

R. G. Pollock, Winnipeg,  
painting: "Arborg Highway".  
Ione Thorkelsson, Winnipeg,  
glass work: Round Vase.

### Song Writing Contest

#### Winners:

Mr. S. O. Thorvaldson, Winnipeg,  
and Mrs. M. Samis, Vancouver.  
for "Fair Canada" sung at the Fest-  
ival by the Saga Singers of Edmon-  
ton with assistance from Elma Gislason

#### Poetry Contest:

##### First:

Mrs. Shirley P. Forkin, Vancouver,  
"Pantheist".

##### Second:

Donald Norberg, Winnipeg, Man.,  
"Woodsmen".

##### Third:

Ruby Lovina Davidson, Toronto,  
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Mr. A. O. Olson, was appointed Sup-  
erintendent of the Evergreen School  
Division at the turn of the year.

He was Principal of the Killarney  
High School for the past six years.  
Prior to that, he spent five years in  
Africa, teaching in one of the few high  
schools in Nigeria for most of the time  
and or two years in Uganda.

★

Asta Eggertson, former Assistant Di-  
rector of the Department of Social

★

Work at the Health Sciences Centre  
in Winnipeg has been appointed head  
of the Department.

Miss Eggertson is a graduate of the  
University of Manitoba in Arts and  
Social Work, and holds a Master's  
degree from the School of Social Ser-  
vices Administration, University of  
Chicago.

Her experience includes work with  
the Provincial Welfare Department,  
Family Court, Children's Aid Society,  
and the Canadian Red Cross Society.

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**BRETT ARNASON OMES TO THE FORE AS TRAINER**

Brett Arnason had the satisfaction last August at Assiniboia Downs of seeing two horses he had conditioned win races.

Dance Again and Crupper's Dream are owned by the Arnason Farms of Winnipeg, head of which is the father, Frank Arnason.

★

At the Scandinavian pavilion of the 1975 Folklorama in Winnipeg the folk dance group from Reykjavik, Iceland were featured prominently on the program.

The Ladies Aid of the Winnipeg Unitarian Church held a luncheon in honor of the Reverend and Mrs. Friðrik Friðriksson, former minister of the Unitarian church of Wynyard, Saskatchewan, at the Winnipeg Winter Club, July 31, last. Reverend and Mrs. Friðriksson were among the numerous visitors from Iceland at the time of the Centennial Icelandic Festival at Gimli.

★

Mrs. Thelma Wilson, of Winnipeg, was elected president of the Canadian Federation of Music Teachers' Association at the 20th Biennial Convention held in Banff, Alberta, July 1-4. The occasion also marked the 40th anniversary of the C.F.M.T.A. and a record attendance from coast to coast featured the celebration

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**BOOK REVIEWS**

By Tom Oleson:

**THE CONCERN IS LAW  
A HISTORY OF THE OLD ICE-  
LANDIC COMMONWEALTH:**

by Jon Johanneson, translated by Haraldur Bessason, University of Manitoba Press, \$14.00

Law and order seems likely to become a major issue again in North America. Crime, in the United States at least, is rampant and soaring and the Americans seem powerless to hold it back. The president who in 1968 promised to crush crime and restore order now stands accused of flagrant abuses of those laws he pledged to enforce so vigorously. Many of his cabinet minister's aides stand accused or convicted, the country's most powerful men condemned as outlaws.

Pledged to restore the common weal, Richard Nixon almost destroyed the commonwealth. He sowed disorder and undermined the faith of the people in their republic to the point that here is common doubt about the future of democracy there, hints of military action, outlines of coup possibilities from

the left or right: in short, fears that the greatest republic might go the way of the first republic.

It is ironic that, as children proclaim history to be irrelevant, their leaders are busy repeating it. It is almost a thousand years since the Icelandic saga hero Njal Porgeirsson pronounced the course and fate of his country: Through law shall our land flourish, through unlaw shall it perish. It is on the observance of this maxim that the success of men who wish to govern themselves rests.

Iceland is an obscure little nation. We read about it today only when the Icelanders give vent to their dislike for the Americans on the NATO base or on the occasions of the cod wars with Britain. The parallel between events in this tiny nation hundreds of years ago and the current state of not only the United States but many of the Western democracies may seem tenuous but is nevertheless real. The common factor and the focus of concern is law.

In Britain, the economy staggers and people are confused and unsure. The trade unions openly defy the law with

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impunity and drag the country further toward chaos. On the fringe, semi-secret groups of plotters plan for the day when the country will be shut down and they will move to restore "order". In the United States the law is in disrepute, violated on the highest and lowest levels. The faith of the people in the law, a faith which is vital to the survival of a free government, has been seriously undermined.

The war of law against wrong, obscurity, misunderstanding and forgetfulness is an old one, and as current events show, it continues today. In *A History of the Old Icelandic Commonwealth* we have the opportunity to relive an older, ultimately, unsuccessful battle. The book is a translation of *Íslendinga Saga*, by Jón Jóhannesson, one of Iceland's greatest historians. It recounts the period from the settlement of Iceland in 870 to the year 1262 when the Icelandic Commonwealth, in effect a republic in a world of kings, finally was subjected to the authority of the Norwegian kings. Although the main importance of the book is academic — it is the major work on this period and will be invaluable to scholars — it has also a wider interest.

Even though history is no longer the most fashionable of pursuits, it has lost none of its value. The historian Nicholas Berdeyaev has pointed out that "throughout all modern history European man has lived on what he gained in his medieval schooling. We tend to regard the Middle Ages as a dark and monkish era, but if we would take the trouble to learn we would see that much of what we regard as best in our institutions was nourished in that period.

The concept of law has changed a great deal since the time of Njal, but his concept that law sustains and un-

law poisons is still true. He saw the law as sovereign over everything, in keeping with the medieval concept, and if we could keep a finer understanding of this today we might be in less trouble.

Iceland is perhaps the finest expression of this concept of the sovereignty of the law. It was settled by men fleeing the authority of a new, self-proclaimed king and seeking a better life. Unusual in their time, they established on their island a republic instead of a kingdom.

The Icelanders set up an Althing — a gathering of the people — that performed the judicial and legislative functions, but they set up no executive. Every man was in effect an executive officer of the state and bound to carry out and enforce the law. A man who broke the law and was condemned was considered to have put himself outside its protection and it then became the responsibility of the citizens to carry out the judgement.

The system worked well until the middle of the twelfth century, when some of the Icelandic families began to gather power into their own hands and the law became a tool in power-struggles that wracked the nation with feuds and bloodshed. The chaos — the prevalence of unlaw — gave the Norwegian king an opportunity to step in and bring Iceland under his dominion.

It was a sad end. The translator of this volume, Haraldur Bessason of the University of Manitoba, points out that the Icelandic Commonwealth "was an event of major significance in the history of the old Germanic world. It gave clear promise of previously unparalleled progress in the development of political theory and legal institutions. The prudence of the founders

failed to provide for lasting safeguards against disunity from within and disruption from without the Icelandic nation. For these reasons, the Icelandic Commonwealth period became known in history not only as a period of intellectual achievement but also as an era of social conflict persistent enough to put an end to Iceland's political autonomy."

The Icelandic experiment was unusual, but not much more unusual than the modern experiment with democracy. In a new era of unlaw and uncertainty, its fate can serve as a lesson. Democracy, like the Icelandic Republic, is an aberration. Authoritarianism is the rule rather than the exception in history.

*A History of the Old Icelandic Commonwealth* is unlikely to make the best-seller lists, but it is a valuable and interesting book in spite of that. It is an excellent example of the kind

of works that should be published by a university press, and the University of Manitoba Press is to be commended not only for this book but for its proposed series in Icelandic Studies.

The university is ideally suited to publish such a series. It has the only department of Icelandic in North America and, in Professor Bessason, an editor who is not only fluent in both Icelandic and English but also a stylist in both languages, as this translation demonstrates.

The University of Manitoba Press is not likely to become as big a publishing house as Oxford, or even the Toronto, but in a time when too many academics seem to be engaged in student popularity contests and the quest for a temporary and artificial relevance, it is heartening to find that the institutions themselves can still produce works of importance such as this book. —Winnipeg Free Press

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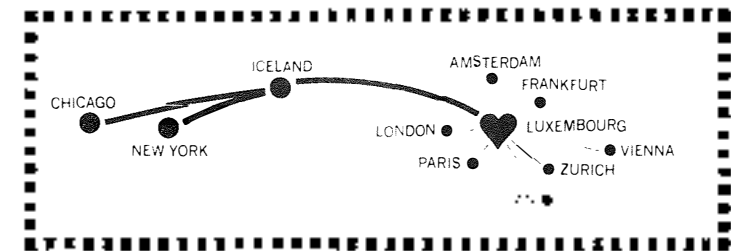
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