

ICELANDIC CONNECTION



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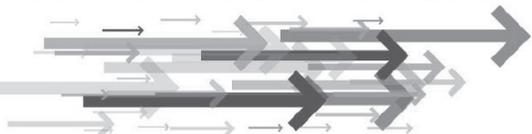
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FUNDRAISING APPEAL



ICELANDIC CONNECTION

VOLUME 73, NO 1 (2023) • WINNIPEG, CANADA

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ICELANDIC CONNECTION



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

GUEST EDITOR Sharron Arksey
CORPORATE SECRETARY Heather McIntosh
DESIGN & TYPOGRAPHY Catherine McConnell

SENIOR EDITORS

FAMILIAR ESSAYS Elva Simundsson
FICTION Avery Simundsson
REVIEWS Lorna Tergesen
SCHOLARLY ESSAYS Elin Thordarson
CONTRIBUTORS Sharron Arksey
Stefan Jonasson

REGIONAL EDITORS

SEATTLE Rob Olason

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

BUSINESS MANAGER—TREASURER Rick Loftson
ADVERTISING & PROMOTION Allison Holm

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PHOTO: ELVA SIMUNDSSON

The *Icelandic Connection* board, 2020. (L - R) Avery Simundsson, Lorna Tergesen, Elin Thordarson, Sharron Arksey, Stefan Jonasson, Rick Loftson.
Not shown: Elva Simundsson, Heather McIntosh, Wendy Johnson.

ON THE COVER



PHOTOS: SHARRON ARKSEY, 2006

The UNESCO World Heritage Site at L'Anse Aux Meadows
in north-eastern Newfoundland

First Word

This is the final issue of the *Icelandic Connection* journal in its current form.

When the magazine was envisioned in 1942 by the Icelandic Canadian Club of Winnipeg, it was decided that the future of Icelandic heritage preservation in North America did not lie with publications in the Icelandic language. *The Icelandic Canadian* magazine was launched to fill the need for a literary publication in English to bridge this gap. In 2010, the name was changed to Icelandic Connection to appeal to a wider audience.

But times have changed. In recent years, it has been difficult to keep generating new material for four issues yearly and the editorial staff and board members faced challenges keeping the literary publication going. Subscribers dwindled and the published magazine began to feel less relevant as people turned to digital content for snippets or bites of material on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, or the like.

After much debate and reflection, a decision was made to look for ways to dissolve the journal in its present form and yet honour the wealth of archived material by making it freely available to anyone wanting to access it. The new home for the magazine will be at the Icelandic Collection at the University of Manitoba. The Icelandic Collection will provide the institutional support and infrastructure necessary to

sustain the archived print materials and pictures as well as providing a portal for the digital issues of the publication. Library staff members Katrín Nielsdóttir and Ryan Johnson were excited about the possibility of continuing to publish an issue yearly as well as look at other ways to extend the material digitally.

We are grateful for the commitment and hard work of our editors and board members both past and present. Of note, Lorna Tergesen, who did an outstanding job editing the magazine for more than 30 years, and Elin Thordarson, who brought us the wonderful issues of the last few years.

We are also indebted to the many people who sent in material for us to publish.

Last but not least, we are deeply grateful to all the subscribers over the years who often threw in a few extra dollars to support the magazine. Those of us with an Icelandic heritage are a proud bunch!

Although bittersweet, moving the *Icelandic Connection* journal to the University of Manitoba made sense. With that move, we hope that we will all continue to enjoy this literary heritage treasure trove that our forefathers created so many years ago.

Submitted by Wendy Johnson and Elva Simundsson on behalf of the Editorial Board of the Icelandic Connection.

“Maybe there is a Heaven, and maybe there isn’t, but
I’d rather be in Gimli.”

Rev. Wayne B Arnason.

Quote found in Volume 55, No. 4 (2000.)

The Magazine is Launched

by Holmfridur Danielson

Reprinted from *The Icelandic Canadian*, Autumn, 1981

This is the first issue of the fortieth year of *The Icelandic Canadian* magazine and the editor, Axel Vopnfjord, has asked me to write a short résumé of how the magazine got started and its progress during the first few years. Hopefully, in the near future we will be able to take a breather to recount the whole story of the magazine, the story of the many dedicated people who have given so generously of their time and talents to make the magazine the success it is today. In the meantime part of this story will unavoidably be a somewhat personal document, dealing mainly with the period with which I am most familiar – that is – the period when Hjalmur and I were more or less solely responsible for the welfare of the publication.

Fortunately I do not have to rely entirely on my memory in trying to tell the story of the launching of the magazine as Hjalmur had the foresight to copy and keep the minutes of the Executive – and general – meetings of the Icelandic Canadian Club dealing with this period and this project.

Not long after the Danielsons moved to Winnipeg in 1939, I was approached to serve on the Executive of the Icelandic Canadian Club. We had not as yet formally become members of the Club but had attended some meetings at one of which I gave a humorous talk on my recent trip to Iceland, which was later published in *Heimskringla*. I was already involved in a variety of cultural and community organizations and I felt I could not take on any more at the time. So

I suggested that they ask Hjalmur instead. Was this fate taking a hand in the affairs of the Club? Who knows? At any rate it led to the establishment of *The Icelandic Canadian* magazine, the most prestigious project launched by the Club.

Hjalmur F. Danielson was elected to the executive of the Icelandic Canadian Club Jan. 12, 1941. The minutes during 1941 and 1942 give a detailed account of the step-by-step developments as the Club was struggling with this matter – the idea of a Club paper.

For some time there had been under discussion at meetings the idea of starting some sort of paper for the Club – perhaps a mimeographed news letter. Starting with the executive minutes of March 9, 1941, the minutes give a precise account of the progress of this idea. Hjalmur, who since his youth had been an active participant in cultural and community activities, became the driving force in getting this project launched. He was always selflessly devoted to good causes and progressive issues, and plunged wholeheartedly into the fray.

There were many members who were forward looking and sincerely *wanted* to do something. But WHAT? There were others who were more pessimistic doubting Thomases. From the minutes of March 9, “Hjalmur again brought up the subject of a Club paper and suggested we try to secure space in the Icelandic weeklies for contributions in English by club members

and others interested." This would serve our purpose to start with. After the general meeting where this idea met with favour a committee was struck, headed by Hjalmur, to deal with the papers. He had already approached the papers and found them doubtful. Mrs. Laura G. Salverson said that "as it was evident that we could not forever preserve the Icelandic heritage through the Icelandic language alone, it was imperative that the younger generation be given this opportunity to do something constructive."

At the general meeting, May 18, Hjalmur reported "no definite reply had come from the papers. Further developments therefore had to be laid over until in the fall."

At meeting after meeting Hjalmur gave reports showing progress or non-progress with the Icelandic papers ("the impossible takes a little longer!" seemed to be his motto). Finally on October 11, he reported that *Heimskringla* was prepared to allot two – three columns for our purposes (later *Lögberg* agreed reluctantly to participate.) The Club would be responsible for filling these columns and editing them. This would encourage club members and others to exercise their literary talents – if any. The committee was to rotate monthly with Hjalmur as chairman throughout. Mrs. Salverson had to be away for a time and Helen Sigurdson (Mrs. L.A. S.) was appointed in her place; also Sigrun Lindal (Mrs. Hannes L.).

The first column appeared Nov. 12, 1941. Hjalmur having written to several capable people outside the city, some good articles were sent in. On the appearance of the columns the "committee was given a hearty vote of thanks, for getting the project off the ground, hampered as they had been by lack of enthusiasm from some members."

At the meeting April 5, Hjalmur reported that the English sections in the papers were not very satisfactory as the editors had not shown great enthusiasm (they were worried

that people would complain about too much in English in the papers). Hjalmur suggested that the Club start a paper of its own – either a mimeographed news letter or a quarterly magazine (to be sold for 25 cents a copy – the balance of the cost to be covered by advertising). At the next meeting he showed samples of publications for consideration. At subsequent meetings discussions proceeded pro and con. At one point the president said flatly, "We are not going into the publishing business!" Mrs. Salverson looked at Hjalmur, and shook her head as if to say "What's the use!" But Hjalmur had great tenacity of purpose and did not give in easily. He reminded them that the destitute Icelandic pioneers had immediately started a news letter which was carried around the community by hand and a little later started the paper *Framfari* in the midst of a terrible epidemic, in New Iceland. "Why should we not venture forth in this courageous spirit even if there were no funds on hand to finance the project?"

So progress was made. A committee was struck to look further into this matter: H. F. Danielson, Sigrun Lindal, Helen Sigurdson, Mrs. Bjorn Petursson. At the general meeting, May 31, 1942, Dr. Sigurdson asked for an amendment to the minutes as follows: "That the reasons for the renewed efforts to publish a paper of our own and discontinue the English sections in the Icelandic papers are not only that the papers are not widely read by members (as stated before at meetings); but also that the editors of the papers had failed to co-operate fully with the committee on the English sections."

Hjalmur brought estimates of cost from a few firms, for a 32-page mimeographed magazine, at \$125.00 for 600 copies – printing the magazine would be more; and a cover in two colours would be \$116.35; additional copies would cost extra. Estimated cost from Viking Press for a similar printing job (but 500 copies)

would be \$125.00 tax included. Some of the committee had already secured some promises of advertisements, which would be sold at \$20.00 a page. The magazine would be sold for 25 cents a copy. There should be a demand for it in the Icelandic settlements in Canada and the U.S.A. Hjalmur moved that the Club discontinue the English sections in the papers and establish our own magazine. The motion was carried.

Mrs. Laura G. Salverson was elected Editor in Chief; Grace Reykdal, Business manager; Hjalmur Danielson, Circulation manager. Others chosen for the magazine board were: W. J. Lindal, Helen Sigurdson, Sigrun Lindal, Stanley Tallman, and Stefan Hansen.

The president and members were very happy and voted hearty congratulations to the original committee for thus bringing to fruition the long, long dreams of the Club.

Hjalmur asked the members to give lists of prospective agents in various places who might distribute the first issue and solicit subscribers. Later he wrote to all these people and asked for their co-operation which was willingly given.

At the meeting of October 12, 1942 Mrs. L. G. Salverson gave a report on the first issue of the magazine which had just come off the press (the Autumn issue), at the end of September, and it was brought to the meeting. She said the members might be proud of the magazine, its quality and style, and asked members to gather news and other items for the Winter issue, and to work hard at getting subscribers. Hjalmur reported that a hundred copies had been sent overseas to our fighting forces, under the auspices of the Jon Sigurdsson Chapter, IODE, and 600 copies sent out all over America. \$174.00 had come in for subscriptions, already. A hearty vote of thanks was given to the magazine staff for its fine work.

W. J. Lindal had prepared an outline of a policy for the magazine which was voted

to appear in the next issue (see *Icelandic Canadian*, December, 1942).

January 4, 1943, Dr. Sigurdson moved a vote of thanks to the circulation department which had been excellent, he said. April 11, Hjalmur reported "we are doing well financially; all bills had been paid and about \$200.00 on deposit; there would be sufficient funds for the next issue before it goes to press" – a good beginning! At the September meeting Grace reported total received for four issues, \$1,437.31; disbursements \$1,116.83; on hand \$329.46.

The first issue of the *Icelandic Canadian*, September, 1942, was forty pages: the subscription rate was \$1.00 a year (It is now \$10.00, such is inflation!). The Spring issue, 1981, was 48 pages. At its largest the magazine had 72 pages but that was only for one or two issues.

The list on the masthead read: Editor-in-chief, Laura Goodman Salverson; associate editor, Stefan Hansen; literary editor, Helen Sigurdson; business manager, Grace Reykdal; circulation manager, Hjalmur F. Danielson; editorial advisor, Judge W. J. Lindal. It contained among other things: a snappy greeting – "Hello" – a poem by S. Jul Johannesson; a splendid editorial by Laura Goodman Salverson, in which she said in part:

"We owe our ancestors not worship *but work*." Besides some fine articles, there were several pages (with pictures) on our War Service Personnel. From then on this War Effort Record continued, usually from 8 -10 pages until such time as that material was exhausted. The magazine contains the record of some 1200 persons who served in World War II.

There were no loud hosannas heard from some of the older people on the advent of the *Icelandic Canadian Magazine*. The older men who had been struggling so long and so hard to preserve here the Icelandic culture and the language were skeptical of success.

They gloomily predicted that the magazine would last at the most three years! *

In the second issue of the magazine there is a comment from the *Winnipeg Tribune*, and later greetings from the well known author, Nellie L. McLung. There were also nice letters from people in various parts of Canada and the U.S.A., who had lost all contact with the Icelandic matters, and were happy to be “brought back into the fold,” you might say.

In 1944 Mrs. Salverson retired from the Board and W. J. Lindal became Editor-in-Chief. Three years later, at the January annual meeting, 1947, Holmfridur Danielson was elected Editor.

Perhaps readers would be interested in knowing what it entailed to be Business and Circulation Manager for the *Icelandic Canadian* magazine (H. F. Danielson took on the extra job of Business manager after a few years).

After an issue of the magazine had been put in the mail, the round of duties started all over again. Hjalmur collected from the printers all the articles that had been published, all the pictures and other material that had to go back to the contributors, and sent to the main contributors extra copies of the magazine. Then he collected all the cuts and stored them alphabetically in a special cabinet bought for that purpose. (The cuts of the soldiers' pictures were stored in big boxes in the basement – there were so many of them!) Then he gradually entered all the

business transactions in two ledgers – one for the advertising. Continually he renewed and revised the circulation lists. He ordered and stored all supplies; right away he started to address the envelopes for the next issue, slipping such notices as were needed under the flaps of each envelope, and filed all in separate boxes according to destination.

The contract for printing the magazine had been awarded to the Viking Press. For the attractive appearance of the magazine full credit must be given to John V. Samson, foreman of the plant, and his able assistant, Sveinn Oddson (compositor), who undertook from the start to design and execute the format and lay-out of the magazine, which they did with artistic talent and efficient dispatch. These good people, with the addition of Eddie Goodmundson, who came into the picture after his service in the Armed Forces, were delightful to work with: congenial, efficient, and helpful in every way. And they became our jolly good friends, as well. Johnny and Eddie bought out the Viking Press in 1949, and it was re-named the Viking Printers, still continuing to print the Icelandic weekly, *Heimskringla*. Fortunately for us the printing shop was located a stone's throw from us, on the corner of Sargent and Banning, until they moved in 1957. While the magazine was at the printers there was endless running back and forth, with copy, with galley-proofs, with page-proofs, with this and that and everything. At the last moment after the

* A similar attitude of gloom and doom prevailed two years later when I was trying to establish the Icelandic Canadian Evening School. When I was enthusiastically “talking it up” at the Icelandic National League Convention one old lady popped up and said: “A nu ad fara ad kenna Islenzku a ensku?” (Are they now going to start teaching Icelandic

in English?) *Surprisingly this venture, too, became a great success, and the resulting book, Iceland's Thousand Years, has been sold all over the world to libraries and universities. Since the Advent of the Chair in Icelandic at the University of Manitoba (and the lesson helps sponsored by the Icelandic National League in 1975, it has become the norm “to teach Icelandic in English.”*

pages had been set, Hjalmur hurried to make the index for the advertisers, and so the magazine was finally “put to bed.”

When the big day arrived for delivery of the next issue we really went to work for the better part of a day, filling the envelopes and then packing them in carefully labelled mail bags. For the first few years Hjalmur hauled these heavy mail bags to the post office in his care to save money for the magazine. Unfortunately, it often happened that when the magazine came off the press I had to be away owing to other commitments, so Hjalmur had to do this work alone. Until he retired from his position with the Federal Government, which entailed a great deal of travelling, his work for the magazine had to be done mostly on the weekends.

Hjalmur worked very closely with the advertising solicitor, and many were the errands and trips he made on that score. I remember many pleasant moments, over a cup of coffee with Bjorg Einarson who solicited advertising for many years, while we pondered and discussed the best courses of action.

After each two years were finished Hjalmur collected the eight issues, made a completed index from them and had them handsomely bound. In one more year we will have twenty volumes of bound *Icelandic Canadian*.

In his spare time Hjalmur worked at sorting all past issues, packing them up into parcels, and labelling them as to volume number. He built nice shelves for these packages and before the magazine was finally removed from 869 Garfield Street in 1977, one whole wall of our basement was occupied with marked parcels of magazines.

This work was very valuable as people were always asking for back issues. It was especially good for me after I was left alone, and had to spend many dusty hours down there looking for magazines – sometimes a long list of back issues.

After I became Editor-in-Chief, the work of soliciting, collecting and coordinating the material for the magazine was on-going at all times. The correspondence was quite extensive, much research had to be done to amplify the items sent in – verify facts and figures. In his work Hjalmur was invaluable – he could unearth the most unlikely bits and pieces of information. We had a very fine library of old and new Icelandic history and literature and stacks of magazines (though, unfortunately few whole sets), Saga, Freyja, Brautin, Skirnir, Eimreidin, O. S. Thorgeirsson Almanac, Timarit, Perlur, and many more. Hjalmur had a remarkable memory, and as he had perused these tomes all of his life, he could very often put his finger on pertinent information we were looking for. As always, when I was plunged into excessive efforts in the field of any endeavor, he was my helper – my right hand – but now he was more. He was also my mentor, my guide, and my conscience. He did all the research for my main articles, as well as for his own. The people at the William Avenue library knew him so well, that when he was doing his thorough and scholarly research for his article on “The Ancient Schools of Iceland” they borrowed a book for him – a very rare book – from the United States Library of Congress, which he was allowed to read and study at the library – but he could not take it out.

Hjalmur was methodical and patient – I was inclined to procrastinate and put off till tomorrow the work that had to be done. When I was slow getting started on my writing Hjalmur pushed me and prodded me. It has been said that he who procrastinates does his work fifty times before he gets started; but perhaps my sleepless nights and endless note-taking paid off occasionally, for when I finally buckled down and got going on the writing, the material had, through gradual osmosis, and mulling over, become

somewhat polished and I could proceed without too much painful revision.

That the magazine has been widely read and appreciated may be shown by the many reprints that have been made from it by other papers and magazines. As examples I might cite: the Vopni article on the Swan River Pioneers was reprinted by the Tribune; the Thordarson article (and many others) was translated, in part and published in "Lesbok," Morgunbladsins in Iceland. I was quite intrigued for I had translated from Icelandic to English, a letter from one of the pioneers, and in "Lesbok" it had been translated back to Icelandic. I would have given much to have had in my hands the original letter to compare how it fared in the process.

To me, the most interesting use made of material from the magazine was when the comic strip magazine Superman published a two-page story – "Boys Who Never Give Up" in their June – July issue, 1950, taken from my article on Joseph Olafson, "The Enchanted Coach." I don't remember who sent me a copy of Superman, and I don't know how they got the story but I was "tickled pink" as they say.

The members of the Club used to refer to the Icelandic Canadian as "Hjalmur's Baby." Perhaps I may be forgiven if I fancy myself as a sort of Foster Mother who lent a helping hand in nurturing this sturdy infant in its formative years.

After twenty-six years of service Hjalmur gave up his work with the magazine in the fall of 1968. Johnny Samson of Viking Printers took on the job of Business Manager and his very capable secretary, Mildred Storsater, did the bookkeeping, looked after subscriptions, addressed the envelopes, etc. She has been an efficient worker and since Viking

Printers closed up their operation, she has handled this part of the work at her home, doing all the banking as well.

The magazine has become a veritable treasure trove of historical and literary material and will be invaluable to future generations who would like to delve into their past.

Practically all the work for the magazine has been voluntary (naturally the advertising solicitors receive a regular fee); and the legion of fine contributors have given their services as well. We owe much to all these people, but we feel sure that in giving so generously to others they have also GAINED much – they have grown in mental stature and gained wider horizons. Their ever-increasing mental exercises have expanded the mind, stimulated it and developed talents – perhaps hidden before. They have tasted the pure draughts of the mythical Mimis brunnur ** that perpetually renewed itself the more it was used.

And the good work continues: our present business manager, Harold Johnson, affable and efficient; the business secretary, Mildred, is tireless in doing her best for us; our Editor-in-Chief, since 1978, Axel Vopnfjord, works with an excellent staff and under his intelligent and artistic guidance the magazine is flourishing.

Among the many who have given such long and able service two men must be mentioned particularly, W. J. Lindal and W. Kristjanson, who respectively, have given the longest service as Editors-in Chief. Just this spring Arilius Isfeld retired after serving twenty-six years on the Magazine Board, the last few years as assistant editor. His "Good-bye" words were: "I loved every minute of it!"

As I ponder on the good work which has been done I like to think of the

** The mythical Fountain of Mimir.

wonderful legend of Draupnir, the magic ring of Odin, which every nine days dripped little droplets of gold, to be formed into new and more precious rings. What fine and sound ideas are to be found in our own Norse Mythology!

The legend of the Ring of Odin symbolizes the fertility of the mind – the evolution of one thought from another, as drop falls from drop. Ideas do not cling fast to their parents, but live an independent life from the time they are born, and the idea or thought, when once awakened, does not slumber but continues to grow and develop from moment to moment, from man to man, from generation to generation, evolving constantly new ideas until it has grown into a unique system of thought. If we, as our ancestors did, make this gold ring typify the historical connection between times and events, a ring constantly multiplying and increasing, with ring interlinked with ring in time's onward march, what a beautiful golden chain there has been formed from life's morning until now!

The efforts of those gone before will surely inspire us and spur us on to greater deeds in the future. Many more wonderful people will come forward to continue the work. May the *Icelandic Canadian* continue to flourish and shine ever more brightly in the firmament of our cultural activities!

**PERSONNEL OF THE MAGAZINE
BOARD OF THE ICELANDIC
CANADIAN
1942-1981**

Compiled by Sigrid Johnson

EDITORS:

1. LAURA GOODMAN SALVERSON
(Editor-in-Chief)
Volume 1, No. 1 to Volume 2, No. 2
October, 1942 to December, 1943

2. JUDGE W. J. LINDAL
(Chairman)
Volume 2, No. 3 to Volume 5, No. 4
March, 1944 to Summer, 1947

3. HOLMFRIDUR DANIELSON
(Chairman)
Volume 6, No. 1 to Volume 11, No. 4
Autumn, 1947 to Summer, 1953

4. AXEL VOPNFJORD
(Chairman)
Volume 12, No. 1 to Volume 13, No. 4
Autumn, 1953 to Summer, 1955

5. JUDGE W. J. LINDAL
(Chairman)
Volume 14, No. 1 to Volume 28, No. 4
Autumn, 1955 to Summer, 1970
(Editor-in-Chief and Chairman of the Board)
Volume 20, No. 1 to Volume 28, No. 4
Autumn, 1961 to Summer, 1970
(Editor-in-Chief Emeritus)
Volume 29, No. 1 to Volume 37, No. 3
Autumn, 1970 to Spring, 1979

6. WILHELM KRISTJANSON
(Editor-in-Chief and Chairman of the Board)
Volume 29, No. 1 to Volume 37, No. 3
Autumn, 1970 to Spring, 1979

7. AXEL VOPNFJORD
(Editor-in-Chief and Chairman of the Board)
Volume 37, No. 4 to present
Summer, 1979 to present

**MEMBERS OF THE BOARD,
1942 – 1951**

Laura Goodman Salverson, Stefan Hansen, Helen Sigurdson, Judge Walter J. Lindal, J. G. Johannsson, Sigrun Lindal, G. F. Finnbogason, Gissur Eliasson, Steina J. Sommerville, B. E. Johnson,

Holmfridur Danielson, H. F. Skaptason, Axel Vopnfjord, Stefania Eydal, Mattie Halldorson, Professor T. J. Oleson, Heimir Thorgrimson, Caroline Gunnarson, Halldor J. Stefansson, Jon K. Laxdal, Margaret Petursson, Hjalmur F. Danielson, Grace Reykdal Thorsteinson, Olavia Finnbogason.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD, 1952-1961

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Eggertsson (Representative in Iceland), J. E. Sigurjonsson, Axel Vopnfjord, Wilhelm Kristjanson.

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Volume 12, No. 4 to Volume 33, No. 4
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4. KRISTINE PERLMUTTER
Volume 34, No. 1 to Volume 38, No. 2
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Spring, 1980 to present

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(Business and Advertising Manager)
Volume 37, No. 3 to Volume 39, No. 1
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(*Business Secretary*)
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Volume 20, No. 1 to Volume 25, No. 3
Autumn, 1961 to Spring, 1967.
4. H. J. STEFANSSON
Volume 25, No. 4 to Volume 28, No. 1
Summer, 1967 to Autumn, 1969
5. J. E. SIGURJONSSON
Volume 28, No. 2 to Volume 30, No. 2
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6. P. V. REYKDAL
Volume 30, No. 3 to Volume 33, No. 1
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7. TED AXFORD
Volume 33, No. 2 to Volume 35, No. 1
Winter, 1975 to Autumn, 1976
8. MRS. JEAN REYKDAL
Volume 35, No. 2 to Volume 37, No. 2
Winter, 1976 to Winter, 1978
9. HAROLD JOHNSON
Volume 37, No. 3 to Volume 39, No. 1
Spring, 1979 to Autumn, 1980
10. ERIC JONASSON
Volume 39, No. 2 to present Winter,
1980 to present

In Iceland, you can see the contours of the mountains wherever you go, and the swell of the hills, and always beyond that the horizon. And there's this strange thing: you're never sort of hidden; you always feel exposed in that landscape.

But it makes it very beautiful as well.

Hannah Kent, author of *Burial Rites*

Thoughts on being the Editor of a Literary Journal

by Lorna Tergesen

When asked to write a few comments on my term as editor of the magazine, I really had no idea where to start. What would be interesting to readers, did it need to have content that told the story of all the people who worked for the magazine over the years, what would make the article worth reading.

To be very honest, I had enjoyed working with the editorial committee since the early '80s, first as a secretary, and then many various positions. I so enjoyed the people who were dedicated to producing an important magazine for the Icelandic/Canadian/American community.

Over the years I have observed the number of students and aspiring writers who have enjoyed doing their research work on various topics, using our back issues as references, or writing an article for the journal on some passion of interest to us all. I too, learned a great deal of the history of our shared community and how it was continuously evolving. Over the years in my different positions on the board, the story of the strong volunteerism became so clear and something to be emulated. Working with Axel Vopnfjord who was the editor from Autumn 1953 to the Spring issue in 1992 was inspiring. He was our longest serving editor. His technique was to always have assistant editors and as such, worked with so many talented people that he introduced to the board.

Throughout all this time, no one received remuneration for their work apart from the layout or desktop person. Even that was minimal too.

Changes came rapidly in my tenure. Submissions came in almost always typed and well prepared. Digitized photos were sent by scans to us, a very different system to what it was in earlier days. We had a long process of getting photos or rather pleading for them. Everything came by snail-mail and then had to be returned by mail as well.

The first colour cover was a big decision. It was hotly debated and finally voted on as it was so expensive. These days in the more recent issues, it has been just a foregone conclusion that it would be done. The font size for the page was increased because of our more senior subscribers. A very important part of the work was always done by our cadre of proof readers for which I am ever thankful. I am not a proof reader so I need a strong backup in that department.

Many past issues proved to be very popular. To name a few were our two issues on the Falcon hockey team, the Snow White issue, all the special editions to celebrate our 40th, 50th anniversary editions and President Vigdis's visit to Canada. Personality issues, focusing on individuals such as the poet K.N. Julius, Dr. Ken Thorlakson, and Neil Bardal just to

name a few were also well received.

Over the years the production of the magazine was managed by many different businesses. Currently and recently past companies that we dealt with both packaged and delivered the mail to Canada Post. In the past, these tasks were all done by volunteers. I must not forget to mention the wonderful work done by those who managed the subscribers lists and fees. Their work was always stellar and well appreciated. Another recent and significant addition came when we found a web master to maintain our files and the online subscriptions. This allowed us to digitize all the volumes, which are now full-text available through the web and to which anyone can have access.

Members of the Board 1992- 2002

Editors: Axel Vopnfjord, 1953 -1992, Kirsten Wolf and Sigrid Johnson, 1993 – 2003 (57vol1) Lorna Tergesen and Helga Malis, 2003 (57vol2) - 2021, Elin Thordarson 2021 – 2023.

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Members of the Board 2003 -2023

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Sigurveig Birgisdottir, Raelene Johnson, Valerie Hoshizaki Nordin, Wendy Johnson, Kristinn Magnusson, Brian Gudmundson, Erla Anderson, Andrea Holm, Allison Holm, Karen Emilson, Signy Syms, Moyra Benediktson, Susan Claire Johnson, Avery Simundsson, Heida Simundsson, Norma Guttormsson, Elva Simundsson, Rob Olason, Darrell Gudmundson, Valdine Bjornsson, Sharron Arksey, Dave and Donna Solmundson, Hannes Tomasson, Barbara Gislason, Catherine McConnell, Heather McIntosh.

A few women were included in the Þorfinn Karlsefni expedition to Vinland (America) about the year 1000 A.D. Specifically mentioned by name were Thorfinn's wife Guðriður, and Freydis a daughter of Eric the Red and sister of Leifr (Leif the Lucky).

Spun Threads

by Sharron Arksey

Going through old issues of *Icelandic Canadian/Connection* is like pulling the threads in a woolen garment, finding patterns woven into the lives of Western Icelanders both past and present.

Effusive welcomes

Canada's Prime Minister W.L. Mackenzie King was one of the first to congratulate the editorial board of the *Icelandic Canadian* when the new journal first appeared in October 1942.

Granted, he was doing a little politicking. He found himself in agreement with an editorial written by Laura Goodman Salverson because it echoed sentiments he had himself voiced in a recent speech in Montreal at the opening of the current Victory Loan campaign. He even attached a copy of his speech for her reading pleasure.

The prime minister concluded his letter by saying, "Will you be kind enough, on my behalf, to extend to your fellow members of the editorial board of the *Icelandic Canadian*, my congratulations and best of wishes for this new venture in enriching Canadian citizenship. Sincerely yours, W. L. Mackenzie King. Ottawa, 29th Oct. 1942."

Writer and women's activist Nellie L. McLung wrote:

"Greetings and congratulations to *The Icelandic Canadian*. Here is an able beginning, every word of which throbs with sincerity, and an able purpose. No people have fitted more easily into Canadian life than the people from Iceland. They brought to us a love of learning, artistic gifts, and a gallant spirit that made light of difficulties.

They came to Canada expecting to like us and settled into our way of life in glad fellowship, yet not forsaking their own."

And an article in the *Winnipeg Tribune* (October 23, 1942) was almost lyrical in its support for the new magazine.

"Canadians of Icelandic descent are justly proud of their cultural background and have been markedly successful in keeping bright the flame of that heritage. But they have also been markedly successful in their adaptation to the Canadian environment. There is a paradox here which may prove baffling to those who have not pondered the parable of the talents, and it presents a frontier not lacking in the challenge to pioneers. This challenge has been taken up by a new quarterly magazine, *The Icelandic Canadian*, which made its initial bow in Winnipeg this week This is pioneering work of the utmost value to Canada, a worthy task which we may hope will prove as fruitful as the heroic efforts of an earlier generation. *The Tribune* bespeaks a long and honoured career for *The Icelandic Canadian*.

The sombre tones of global conflict

World War II was in full swing when *The Icelandic Canadian* began publication. The journal's pages were therefore full of the war's impact on Western Icelandic families. Because it would have taken so much space to print pictures and bio information on every soldier of Icelandic descent, only those families with three or more members in service were included. Still the space needed was large and the thought of families sending multiple members overseas

at the same time is a sobering one.

Sometimes it was necessary to include a death notice, or a short article to the effect that someone's child had been listed as Missing in Action or as a Prisoner of War.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHARRON ARKSEY

Sharron Arksey inherited this Icelandic spinning wheel from her Amma Guðrun (Magnusson) Wild. Numerous attempts have been made over the years to get the spinning wheel back into working condition, so far with no success. Sharron loves the spinning wheel whether it works or not.

Scholarship

Scholarship can mean academic study or achievement, or it can mean a grant or payment made to support a student's education, usually based on academic standing. Icelanders are big on scholarship, whichever meaning you choose.

For years, the journal listed graduating students of Icelandic descent at various universities, as well as naming students of Icelandic descent who had won scholarships and awards.

Scholarship was also advanced by the journal's content – papers written by well-known scholars of Icelandic descent were often featured. Historical articles on various settlements throughout the continent could be found.

Whenever someone of Icelandic descent found themselves in the news, that news would be reprinted in *The Icelandic Canadian / Icelandic Connection*.

And never to be forgotten was the poetry – poetry in the Icelandic language translated into English, poetry in English by Western Icelandic poets.

Just a minute...

The Icelandic Canadian was the brainchild of the Icelandic Canadian Club of Winnipeg. It makes sense then that the club would figure prominently in early issues. Meeting minutes, reports on organization events and promotion of coming events and writing competitions were often found.

Winnipeg was not the only club represented in the journal's pages; you could read reports from clubs across the country as well as from such American locations as North Dakota, Minnesota, Washington, and California.

An advertising who's who

At one time, one page of each issue was dedicated to an index of advertisers in that issue. A full page was needed; there were that many.

Each index reads like a Who's Who of Manitoba corporate life at the time. In 1953, for example, the list included such businesses as *Free Press Weekly*, Silverwoods Dairy Products, Manitoba Telephone System, United Grain Growers, International Harvester Company of Canada Limited, Booth Fisheries, Dr. P.H.T. Thorlakson (Winnipeg Clinic), and Grey Goose Bus Lines.

Current advertisers include names that are familiar to many – Tergesen's, for example, and Neil Bardal – but an index of advertisers would no longer fill a page.

As the Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, "Change is the only constant in life." That hasn't changed.

The Eaton connection

As early as the second issue, the T. Eaton Company had reserved its right to the back cover advertisement.

When Signy Stefansson married John David Eaton in 1933, the stage was set for a long and harmonious relationship between Canada's T. Eaton Company and the country's Icelandic community.

In 1967, when Canada celebrated its Centennial, Signy Eaton was selected as the Fjallkona for Gimli's Íslendingadagurinn event. Coverage of the Centennial events and a visit by Iceland's president Asgeir Asgeirsson made for a larger than usual issue.

The Eaton's back page advertisement would continue until 1979. The T. Eaton Company declared bankruptcy in 1999.

Memories

by W.D. Valgardson

When I was an undergraduate at United College, I stumbled on a poster that said Creative Club Meeting, All Welcome. I read it, then left, then came back to look at it again. I overcame my shyness enough to return when it said the club was meeting and managed to get myself through the door.

Unlike David Arnason who said he grew up with the sagas, I grew up with *Winnipeg Free Press* cartoons, comic books, and the *Hardy Boys*. And *The Black Arrow*, *Robin Hood*, the Books of Knowledge, books borrowed from relatives and friends.

In the writing club, we mostly wrote poetry. Poems are short. I used to write them on the bus ride to and from the college. However, some of us, inspired by our English professors, started writing short stories.

The problem, of course, for beginning writers, is how and where do you get published? How do you learn about submitting manuscripts? How do you learn all the things you need to know?

I don't remember quite how it happened but I became a student representative on the board of *The Icelandic Canadian*.

In those days there was still a large, cohesive Icelandic community in Winnipeg. At these board meetings, not only did I learn about publishing but I got to meet Judge Walter Lindal, Will Kristjanson, and Caroline Gunnarson. They were all published authors. Lindal and Kristjanson had published books. Caroline was an editor with the *Winnipeg Free Press*. At these meetings, I got to eat vínarterta and kleinur

and pönnukökur to my stomach's content.

I learned about publishing and board decision making. I learned how people involved in producing a magazine on a regular basis thought, what their concerns were, how important subscribers were, how much effort had to go into budgeting.

Eventually, Caroline published an article of mine in the *Free Press Prairie Farmer* and I got paid a regular writer's fee. I then had a short story published in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Yes, in those days, newspapers published fiction. It was all a beginning.

The Icelandic Canadian also provided me with information about the Icelandic community, both in Iceland and in North America. It opened up a world beyond Gimli and beyond my grandparent's neighbourhood in Winnipeg.

This didn't happen in isolation. It happened in Icelandic society and culture in Winnipeg.

I had items published in *The Icelandic Canadian*. It is impossible to emphasize this too much. When someone is starting out, learning to write at a publishable level is a big challenge but having it published is an even bigger challenge. There is lots of competition. Just as in sports, we usually start out competing at a local level. No one starts out in the NFL or the NHL. There are local teams and farm teams. Everyone has to start somewhere.

One of the tragedies of local, ethnic, religious publications disappearing is that there are fewer opportunities for people who are learning to write but also fewer opportunities for people to learn to edit, to design, to publish, to distribute. There is no opportunity to meet and learn from knowledgeable people who can give you practical advice on how to achieve your goals.

The Icelandic Canadian (Connection) has provided those opportunities for generations.

Magazines like the IC also can reach a small, targeted audience. To be effective it

doesn't have to reach an audience that cares about the role of some major power. It can provide recognition for people in a small community, whether that is a small town or a cultural group. No one in New York or even Toronto publishing cares about our triumphs or tragedies.

The New Yorker turned down my short story, "Bloodflowers." Mind you, the editor sent a hand written rejection slip. However, I'd learned to be persistent. I kept sending it out and it was published in *The Tamarack Review*. It then was named one of the Best American Short Stories and won the President's Medal for Fiction. That can be traced directly back to the influence of *The Icelandic Canadian*.

The *Icelandic Canadian*, *Lögberg-Heimskringla*, the Icelandic Celebration, the INL, the various local clubs in both Canada and the USA have provided support for me and for many other writers.

It is a shame that the *Icelandic Connection* is shutting down. Lorna Tergesen and all the others who have provided all the services that a magazine needs to stay alive, have done an amazing job.

This has all been done by volunteers. God Bless Them!

In the future, the magazine will be read by people who search for it in libraries and archives. However, a real understanding of the magazine will be in the names of the people on the board, in the list of the subscribers and the donors, and most of all in the names of all the people whose writing it published.

W.D. Valgardson is an internationally known and award-winning author, whose most recent novel was In Valhalla's Shadows (2018). Retired and living in Victoria, B.C., he is a regular contributor to Lögberg-Heimskringla, Icelandic Roots and Icelandic Connection.

Lament for the North American Icelandic Descendent

by Rob Olason

As someone who has spent a couple of decades kicking around organizations that celebrate the North American Icelandic community, it has always been clear to me that the landscape was ever changing.

The first generations to arrive were busy building a new life, learning new languages and adapting skills to new tasks. At the same time, they also erected Icelandic community outposts complete with Icelandic language-based newspapers, schools, and churches.

The children of these pioneers grew up in that transplanted Icelandic community. But they also grew up in a parallel English language culture. And each subsequent generation became more embedded in the North American culture as the Icelandic cultural roots diminished. This persistent cultural tug drove church services, printed communications, and daily life from their familiar Icelandic language origins into the English language present.

The Icelandic Canadian magazine staked a position in this English based world as a recognition of the linguistic reality of the North American Icelandic descendants. The magazine published articles that kept the Icelandic heritage alive even when the Icelandic language was no longer understood by the majority of descendants.

Upon learning that the *Icelandic Connection* (renamed in hopes of broadening its appeal) could no longer continue even as an all-volunteer organization, I feel yet another voice that can remind the present-day Icelandic descendants of their own familial past has been lost. As the cultural

landscape continues to evolve through the newest generations of descendants, those cultural mileposts erected by previous generations have nearly all been replaced by the dominant North American culture. We've replaced our folded paper road maps with the precision of smart phone mapping. While it is an improvement for navigating our present world, it also represents the loss of a way of knowing the world as it once was.

I was saddened to hear the news that the *Icelandic Connection* would cease to exist in the future, because its demise is a symptom of the shrinking presence of all things Icelandic in the hearts and minds of the North American Icelandic descendant community. Local Icelandic clubs, national organizations, other Icelandic publications are all feeling this shrinking interest in our shared past. And this shrinking continues unabated in our shared present.

I feel more than a little guilt for my own part in seeing the *Icelandic Connection* reach its end. On the plus side, I am glad I subscribed for a while. On the *other* side, I'm not so glad that when life got in the way, I let my subscription lapse.

On the plus side, I'm glad that a decade ago I worked beating the local bushes for stories to create an issue focused on the Icelandic west coast to coincide with the Seattle INLNA convention in 2013.

On the plus side, I'm thankful that *Icelandic Connection* editor, Lorna Tergesen, tolerated this perhaps crazy *way*-western Icelander and gave me permission to potentially jeopardize the good name of

Icelandic Connection for an edition that focused on the Pacific coast for *an entire edition of the magazine*.

To me at the time, my vision for that edition (Vol. 65 #2 (2013)) was a “master stroke” that “connected” two pillars of the western Icelandic community: the INLNA and the *Icelandic Connection* and further connected both to the west coast western Icelanders.

It was a lofty vision on my part, or so I thought, and Lorna was willing to allow me to cobble together writers and stories of west coast Icelanders into an entire issue of the magazine. Perhaps it was only a case of an inmate running the asylum. But having guided years of issues of the magazine, I imagine Lorna was willing to take the risk because there was a decent chance based on my unflinching optimism and zeal, that I could really pull it off.

And Vol. 65 #2 (2013) proved that Lorna’s vision was spot-on, and that wacky way-western Icelander *was* able to pull it off.

I’m deeply grateful that she gave me that opportunity.

I’m also grateful that I didn’t flub it up leaving us both looking foolish.

However, I also imagine as a seasoned editor with more than enough experience working with western Icelanders, Lorna had a viable backup plan and was ready to step into the breach if I failed: she could grab a few reprint articles from the archives, look in the recent submissions file to find some new pieces ready to go, and at the eleventh hour, cobble together a respectable issue just in case that guy on the west coast actually face-planted.

Being such a

seasoned pro, Lorna could probably enact this “save” in her sleep.

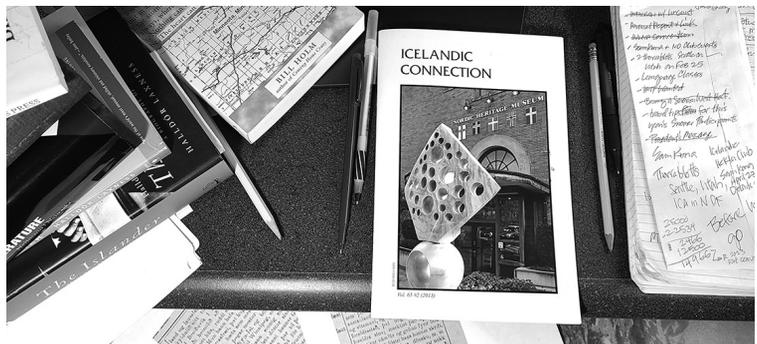
As a young teenager, I found back issues of the *Icelandic Canadian* at my grandparents’ homes and read them hungrily. I often asked to borrow issues to finish reading the articles because they opened up a new reality in that young person’s search for cultural identity.

The request to take an issue of *The Icelandic Canadian* home to finish reading articles came from a young person who was not always eager (ok, I was unwilling) to return those issues and to this day in his old age, harbors just a bit of guilt about that.

But despite the guilt, I am forever grateful that my second-generation North American Icelandic descendent grandparents said *yes*.

They had an eye to the future, just like their parents before them.

Rob Olason grew up on a dairy farm in Blaine, Washington. As a child, he thought the average American was from a large family where older relatives all spoke Icelandic, and had moved to the west coast from North Dakota. And their ancestors emigrated from a magical place called Iceland. As an adult, he knew this was a quaintly unique background not shared by many after all, but still savors the magical aspects of such an origin story.



Rob Olason’s research, writing and editing skills were showcased in Volume 65 No. 2 of *Icelandic Connection*, 2013.

Icelandic Settlements in North America

by Eric Jonasson

The following transcript contains excerpts from the author's publication *Tracing Your Icelandic Family Tree* which was reviewed by Nelson Gerrard in the autumn issue 1979 of *The Icelandic Canadian*. It is published with the permission of the author.

An example of the detailed account of each settlement reads as follows:

1. Spanish Forks, Utah. 1850. 2. Brazil. 1863. 3. Washington Island, Wisconsin. 1870. 4. Milwaukee, Wisconsin. 1872. 5. Muskoka, Ontario. 1873. 6. Shawano County, Wisconsin. (Ljosvatn). 1874. 7. Nebraska. 1875. 8. Kinmount, Ontario. 1875. 9. Markland, Nova Scotia. 1875. 10. Minneota, Minnesota. 1875. 11. New Iceland (Nyja Island). 1875. 12. Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1877. 13. Pembina County, North Dakota. 1878. 14. Argyle, Manitoba. 1880. 15. Brandon, Manitoba. 1882. 16. Victoria, B.C. 1883. 17. Selkirk, Manitoba. 1880-85. 18. Churchbridge, Saskatchewan (Thingvalla). 1885. 19. Mouse River, North Dakota. 1886. 20. Keewatin, Ontario. 1886. 21. Swan Lake, Manitoba (Alptavatnsnylenda). 1887. 22. Tantallon, Saskatchewan (Holar and Vallarbygd). 1887. 23. Markerville, Alberta. 1888. 24. Blaine, Washington, 1888. 25. The Narrows, Manitoba, 1889. 26. Calder, Saskatchewan. 1890. 27. Shoal Lake, Manitoba. 1889 (Grunnavatnsbygd). 28. Pipestone, Manitoba. 1892. (Logberg) 29. Lakes Settlement, Saskatchewan (Vatnabygd). (a) Foam Lake, Saskatchewan. 1892. (b) Kristnes. 1903. (c) Leslie. 1903. (d) Mount Hecla. 1904. (e) Hola. 1905. (f) Elfros. 1903. (g) Mozart. 1903. (h) Wynyard. 1904. (i) Kandahar and Dafoe. 1905. 30. Big Point, Manitoba. 1893. 31.

Roseau County, Minnesota. 1893. 32. Point Roberts, Washington, 1893. 33. Vancouver, British Columbia. 1895. 34. Winnipegosis, Manitoba. 1897. 35. Piney, Manitoba. 1897. 36. Swan River, Manitoba. 1898. 37. Brown. Manitoba. 1899. 38. Big Grass, Manitoba. 1900. (Marshland). 39. Northwest coast of Lake Manitoba. Manitoba. (Leifur, Reykjavik) 1900. 40. Osland Island, British Columbia. 1913. 41. Hunter Island, British Columbia. 1915.

The following settlements, while by no means insignificant, were of lesser importance than those mentioned previously, primarily because the Icelandic people were greatly outnumbered by people of other ethnic groups.

42. Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1876. 43. Chicago, Illinois, 1876. 44. New York, New York, 1876. 45. Duluth, Minnesota, 1881. 46. Grafton, North Dakota, 1882. 47. Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1885. 48. Sayreville, New Jersey, 1886. 49. Grand Forks, North Dakota. 1887. 50. Bellingham, Washington. 1888. 51. Okanagan, British Columbia. 1890. 52. Vernon, British Columbia, 1890. 53. Warrenton, Oregon. 1890. 54. Sheridan. Oregon, 1890. 55. Portland, Oregon. 1890. 56. Seattle, Washington, 1893. 57. Los Angeles, California. circa 1900. 58. San Francisco, California, circa 1900. 59. San Diego, California, circa 1900. 60. Maidstone, Saskatchewan, 1907.

Poetry

NORTHERN LIGHTS

By Stephan G. Stephansson

Gleaming through the gloaming
 Geysers weird arising
 Tips the rocks with tapers,
 Twos and more affusing.
 Lambent rays illumine.
 Living bows aquiver.
 Rainbows lined with lanterns
 Light the way so brightly,
 Round the summits running
 Rills of golden spillings.
 Winter's hand in hundreds
 Heaves the flares at even.
 Icy cones, like candles,
 Quicken till they flicker.
 Spangles thrown asprinkle
 Spray the night with daylight.
 Glossy reaches glisten,
 Glasslike to the flashes
 Of the fireworks' fury
 Far beyond the Arctic.

Stephan G. Stephansson is one of the best known and respected Western Icelandic poets; his homestead at Markerville, AB is a provincial historic site. This poem appeared in Volume 2 Number 3 issue of The Icelandic Canadian (March 1944).

WILLOW ROOTS

by Donna L. Skardal

Oarsmen battling angry waves,
 an urgent race with darkening sky,
 thrust the York boat toward sheltered sand,
 in tow flotsam from distant isle.
 Ah-h no ordinary flotsam they,
 Iceland prepared her children well.

Strong determination carried koffort* ashore
 for refuge 'neath gnarled wind-torn willows.
 "We will build a colony" they said.
 "We will build a church and a school."
 When darkness fell, midst crash of wave,
 voices whispered, "God keep us safe."
 They slept and, in the morn, there was frost inshore;
 in the lee of a white rock a son was born,
 its cry hushed at the sound of his mother's croon.
 Heads bowed in grateful thanksgiving then took up tools,
 their station surveying,
 for haste must be made before winter's storm,
 and the sun shone on their labour.
 My feet sink deep in this warm sand,
 deep, deep as the willow roots.

* koffort — Icelandic trunk, wooden box

Donna L. Skardal (1934-2007) lived at Baldur, MB. This poem appeared in Volume 55 Number 4 (2000).

THE CANADIAN IN ME

by Gus Sigurdson

Said the man from Manitoba: I was born between the lakes
 In a lovely bushland country Yet my heart it often aches
 For the wide and open prairies, Stretching out towards the west.
 Where the grain farms and the dairies Have survived and won the test.
 Said the man from Manitoba: I have travelled near and far
 East and west across the world But no matter where you are.
 There is nothing more appealing Than horizons on our plains.
 With that Manitoba feeling Deep imbedded in our veins.
 Said the man from Manitoba: When the eyes are free to scan
 All the wide and open spaces Made fair by God and man:
 There is nothing more enchanting, There is nothing more sublime,
 And no better seed for planting Into true poetic rhyme.
 Said the man from Manitoba: I have lived upon the coast,
 I have drunk eternal beauty. But the taste I long for most
 Is the touch of prairie breezes

On the trail from Calgary to Winnipeg – It pleases
The Canadian ... in me.

Gus Sigurdson (1915–1994) has been described as a “poet for the Everyman” whose poetry followed a traditional style. His work appeared in both Lögberg-Heimskringla and The Icelandic Canadian.

THE BLACKBIRD PASSES BY

by Laura Goodman Salverson

A flash of black against an autumn sky
A fluted cry, exultant, shrill and high,
The red-winged black-bird, singing, passes by.

Across the meadow tightly fenced around,
As if to keep its freedom safely bound,
He darts and dips toward the golden ground.

Upon a post he pauses just to see
The sun-bathed grasses stirring sombrely,
And flaps his wings with joy to be so free.

Out on the wire he sang, a coal black king,
And flaunts the scarlet of his wondrous wing.
The seal of God who gave him voice to sing.

A flash of black against a crimson sky.
Into the sunset merging with his cry.
The redwinged blackbird, singing, passes by.

Laura Goodman Salverson (From the Yearbook of Verse) The Icelandic Canadian Volume 1, Number 1 1942.

Laura Goodman Salverson (1890–1970) was the first editor of The Icelandic Canadian. She wrote poetry, fiction and non-fiction and two of her books The Dark Weaver (1937) and Confessions of an Immigrant Daughter (1939) won Governor-General Awards.

DID YOU KNOW?

L'Anse aux Meadows is a French-English name which translates into Grassland Bay.



PHOTO: DUSTIN GEERAERT / COURTESY OF LH

Goodman Writer's Grant Awarded

by Elin Thordarson and Dustin Geeraert

The 2022 Goodman Writer's Grant Competition entries included academic studies, works of fiction, and historical narratives. Entries were well-received by the volunteer judges with high-quality submissions. We are pleased to announce this year's grant recipient as Dustin Geeraert for his submission 'Loki is My God: Ragnarok in the Digital Dark Age.' Dustin will be awarded the \$4000 prize to support publication of this work.

Dustin Geeraert is an Instructor in the Department of Icelandic Language and Literature at the University of Manitoba. When asked about his motivation to write the winning piece, he shared a long history of increasing interest in Norse Mythology and how it has led him to his current position teaching classes on Norse Mythology at the University of Manitoba and organizing related events, projects and publications:

I was born in Saskatoon in 1983, and I now divide my time between the West Kootenay region of British Columbia, and Winnipeg, Manitoba, where I teach classes on mythology and literature. My family is from Western Canada, with family members living in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Ever since I could read I was always interested in old myths and legends, which I encountered early on in retellings like *The Enchanted World* series by Time Life Books (1985). In 1997 I discovered Kevin Crossley-Holland's *The Penguin Book of Norse Myths: Gods of the Vikings* (first published in 1980), which offers an accessible, unified account of the whole mythic cycle. I was especially struck by Chapter 30, *Loki's Flying*, based on the Old Norse poem *Lokasenna* from *The Poetic Edda*. I first studied Old Norse Mythology at the university level under Professor Richard Harris at the University of Saskatchewan in the summer of 2002, when I attempted to capture my fascination in an essay called "Loki:

Potency of Chaos.” Professor Harris’s classes on Old Norse literature were my favourite classes from my time as an undergraduate (2001-2006). Later in graduate school at the University of Manitoba (2007-2010), it was wonderful to be able to study Old Norse literature under Birna Bjarnadóttir and Icelandic Language under P.J. Buchan, at the U of M’s Department of Icelandic Language and Literature. Attending the 2010 Icelandic Field School they organized, which included the Art in Translation Conference in Reykjavík and an extended stay in the Westfjords, was a life-changing experience.

My PhD in English Literature (2010-2016) focused on medievalism, examining how nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers, mainly in Iceland, the British Isles, Europe and North America, rewrote medieval legends as a way of attempting to come to grips with the shocks and upheavals of modernity. While finishing my PhD I organized three *Medieval and Modern* research symposiums (2015, 2016, and 2017), and these ultimately led to postdoctoral projects such as *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies* Volume 26 (2019) and *Cultural Legacies of Old Norse Literature* (2022). I returned to Iceland in 2018 for the first symposium of *The Creative Power of the Westfjords* project, which will be the basis of an upcoming book, and in 2019 for *Migration: The 9th Partnership Conference of the University of Iceland and University of Manitoba*. It has been an honour to teach mythology and literature classes for the Icelandic Department since 2018; this has made everything else possible, and I am especially grateful to P.J. Buchan and Catari M. Gauthier.

My research on Loki has been “on the back burner” for some time now, and I am very grateful to the Goodman Writer’s Grant for making it possible to finally write this book. For years I have been slowly and steadily preparing to write a book about Loki

and his recent “international career” as one of the best-known figures of Norse Mythology during the last 50 years. In nineteenth-century poems, translations, and retellings, Loki was often vilified, while his blood-brother and rival Odin was acclaimed as the founder of nations. In the twentieth century, however, and especially since the 1960s, many authors have been more sympathetic to Loki and have cast him in the role of creative patron or muse, persecuted prophet, jaded anti-hero, defiant outlaw, or even martyr for truth, a figure of worship and veneration; while the other gods of Asgard, and especially Odin, have more often been vilified. Our religious, cultural, and indeed mythical, circumstances, now seem quite changed; but what does belief mean in an age of constant upheaval and unprecedented change? My title comes from Icelandic poet Guðbergur Bergsson’s 1974 poem *Flatey-Freyr*. In this poem, later published in a trilingual edition by Birna Bjarnadóttir through Kind Publishing in Winnipeg, Guðbergur wrote what I (and surely countless others) often thought growing up and have long held as a personal guiding concept: “Loki Is My God.”

Examining one of the most crucial, controversial, and inspiring figures from a body of literature which was written in Iceland and later communicated to the world, going on to inspire authors in numerous countries, will result in a unique book that will appeal to anyone interested in Norse myth, Icelandic literature, Scandinavian cultural heritage around the world, medievalism, folklore, and the living history of religion and culture, topics now enjoying a renaissance of interest online even in the “digital dark age” of the twenty-first century. While interpretations of Loki’s story from around the world will be discussed, there will be particular consideration of the transplanting of Old Norse Mythology into Western Canada. Some of the books that inspired this project include Guðbergur Bergsson’s

Flatey-Freyr (1974), Birna Bjarnadóttir's *a book of fragments* (2010), and Lewis Hyde's *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art* (2001). All three have an aspect of travelogue, touching on topics like history, literature, geography, art, religion, and the migration of cultures. Particularly important topics in my discussion of Loki's story include kinship, foster-relationships (such as blood brotherhood), marriage, adultery and betrayal, as well as secrecy or the control and weaponization of information. The book *Loki Is My God* will conclude by discussing Loki's definitive role in Ragnarok. This dire catastrophe tests the bonds of the world as Loki escapes from his bonds. Events push every being to the breaking point and beyond as time itself starts to end, priorities change, civilizations fall, and long-prophesied confrontations occur. I will argue that this cataclysmic myth of collapse, confusion and destruction holds an especially poignant meaning for

us all today.

Dustin hopes to have this work published in both print and digital forms by the end of 2023.

The Goodman Writer's grant of \$4,000 is available to assist an emerging writer, administered by the Canada Iceland Foundation. Subject of the work must be about the Icelandic-Connection presence, its history or otherwise be related to the author's connection to an Icelandic and/or Icelandic-North American theme. This grant will be awarded to a new recipient in each of the five years, 2021 to 2025. Further details and required forms can be found on the Canada Iceland Foundation website <https://canadaicelandfoundation.ca/scholarships-grants/goodman-writer-s-grant>

For submission forms or for further information, email grants@canadaicelandfoundation.ca

This grant would not be possible without the generous support of Dr Ron Goodman.

Excerpt from *Peanut Butter and Pandemonium*

by Anita Daher

(*Peanut Butter and Pandemonium* (Great Plains Publications, April 2023) is the second in a three-part series "The Mythic Adventures of Samuel Templeton".) Part One "Peanut Butter and Chaos" came out in 2022.)

As Sam flipped open the ancient-looking book with the mysterious

Icelandic rune-stave etched on its cover, a bright light filled his bedroom and everything began to spin. A wind came out of nowhere with a deafening roar.

"Dad!" he cried, but his voice was lost in the pandemonium – books and blankets flew, lights swirled. He heard a strange and distant scree, as if someone had cranked

something old and rusty, something that did not want to move. He flew backward and his room was gone.

He found himself in blackness, but not in dark. Everywhere, there were pinpricks of golden light. And it was quiet. Absolute quiet, as if his ears were plugged with clay.

Sam blinked, and his surroundings changed again. Now he was in a misty meadow with bees and other flying insects flitting between blossoms. From far off came the cry of a bird of prey.

There was a man sitting on a rock with his back to Sam. He had neatly trimmed white-blond hair and wore a mint green suit with what looked like daisy epaulets on the shoulders. He was hunched over what appeared to be a stone tablet with a screen.

"H-hello," Sam said.

The man twisted to see him. A sliver of an Icelandic pattern sweater was visible underneath his suit jacket.

"You're not supposed to be here," the man said. He tapped his stone tablet, and the meadow disappeared. Again, Sam was plunged into darkness and tiny lights, and then the lights began to swirl.

"Aaaahhhh!" he cried, and then "Woah!"

Within the swirl, he saw vague shapes move and shift. One looked like a face. Or a dog. No – a mix of a wolf and a man. It was very like the hairy face picture he'd seen on the Icelandic Roots database where he'd learned about his ancestors.

A gravelly voice sounded inside his head. *Give it back*, it said.

Sam's blood turned to ice. It came from the wolf-man image, he was sure of it, though the lips had not moved. Give what back?

The shape disappeared.

The lights swirled again, and he felt himself spin. He closed his eyes, but that made his stomach lurch. A sour taste rose in the back of his mouth.

The darkness retreated with a *poof!* and

he looked up at a sky like he'd never seen. Instead of blue, it was a shade of green that reminded him of celery.

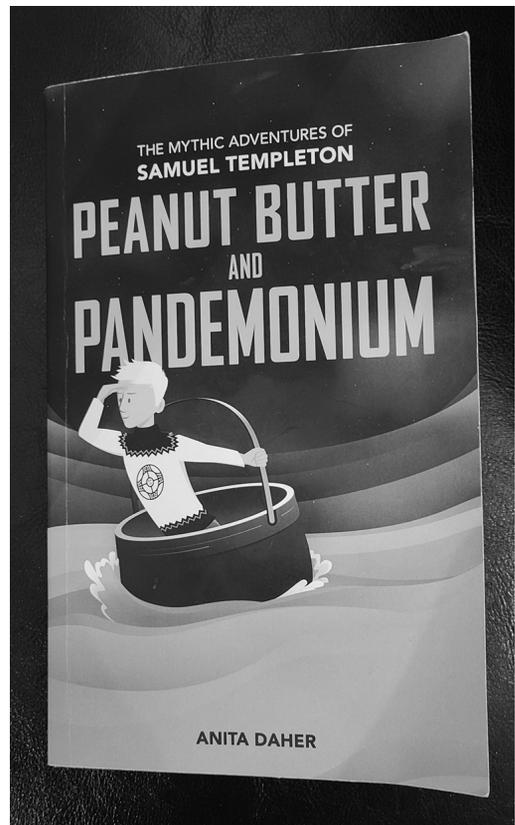
Sam's breath came in shallow gasps as he tried to make sense of what he saw.

The mysterious man in the suit said he hadn't belonged in that meadow. Sam didn't belong *here* either.

"Wait!" he called out to nobody. "You made a mistake!"

It was the book. It must have been magical! He glanced about but didn't see it.

Was that what the wolf-man had wanted? He rubbed his eyes. His breathing slowed as he assured himself that he'd only imagined that face. In the weirdness that his life had become, his brain had simply latched onto the scariest thing he'd recently read about.



“Wrong answer, brain. But nice try.”

Everything had been fine and normal before he'd picked up that book. Not normal as in eat breakfast, go to school, and hang out with friends, but normal as possible for a boy who had just learned he has magical powers and is destined to fight a great evil.

He was a *Son of the Solstice*, his long-lost mother had said through a hologram. A mother who had abandoned him at birth to keep an evil sorcerer from finding him and

was now hanging out on an alternate world with his new Osbornian pal, Flum.

Anita Daher is a Winnipeg-based author, screenwriter, producer and actor. She writes for middle grade and teen readers. While doing research for the Samuel Templeton series, she discovered that Loftur Þhorsteinsson (Loftur the Sorcerer) was her half-cousin, ten times removed.

Iceland – A Land of Storytelling

by Brian Borgford

“Egill went berserk when he lost the game,” Steini laboured with his English.

“And then four-year old Egill took an axe,” Olof interrupted, with the animated enthusiasm of an Icelandic horse trotting to the feed barn, “and split the boy’s skull down the middle.” I recoiled in horror at the Saga of one of my ancestors.

The septuagenarian siblings, like children in front of a winter fireplace, streamed a continuous barrage of paraphrased Icelandic Sagas, each completing the other’s sentences between gulps of air, reminiscent of an oscillating tug-of-war contest. Tale after tale, back and forth, dramatic as Shakespearean actors, they teamed to deliver as many Sagas as they could before our first day together closed.

As one Saga concluded, a new epic commenced.

“...and then the sun broke, and the troll

turned to stone, creating the mountain you see in the distance.”

Steini broadcast from the front seat of his Jeep, which he piloted across a crude trail traversing Icelandic lava fields, with the skill of the Viking sailors of which he spoke, his sister Olof at his side. I sat behind, scanning the desolate beauty of a harsh valley, while absorbing the Sagas, on my voyage to the land of Vikings. The sunlight faded behind icy forms that were once mountain trolls, according to legend.

“I sat in that room,” Olof reminisced when we visited the ruined shell of her childhood home by the sea, “on my father’s lap, looking out toward the fjord, while he recited our ancestor’s Sagas, as his father had done, and as I do with my grandchildren.” My newfound cousins ensured I absorbed as much of our shared history as possible during my maiden visit. I had come to write stories of my family – instead, I listened to

stories of my ancestors.

Those of us with Icelandic blood can trace our lineage back to the era of Norse Gods and enduring Sagas of pagan times. Icelandic families who remained on the island while their relatives sought friendlier lands, are elated to continue the stories for the benefit of descendants who come to discover the source of their existence, generations after their ancestors settled in new worlds.

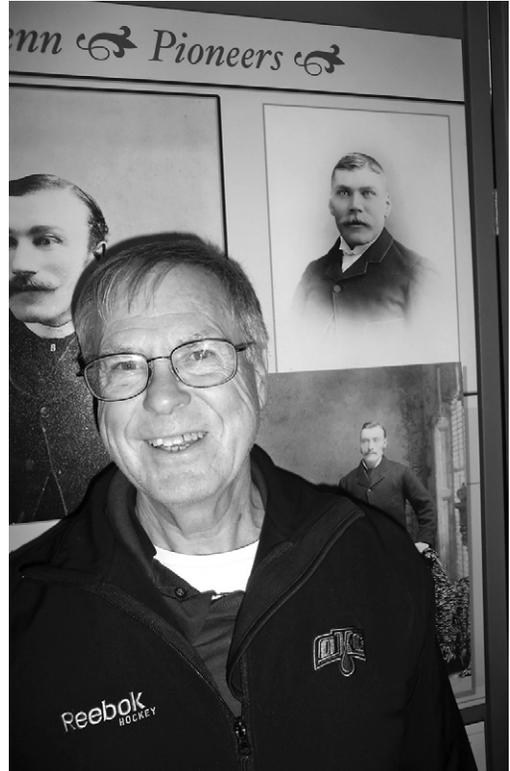
Thus, my introduction to the land of my forefathers. No hour passed, without someone referring to one of the many Sagas that formed the basis for modern day Iceland and its proud inhabitants. Every natural site in this spectacular country has a story behind it and a willing storyteller bursting to educate a receptive visitor.

Drivers, tour guides, store clerks, coffee shop baristas, and even residents walking the narrow sidewalks, carry with them the Sagas and how to inject them into any context or conversation.

Returning to my roots, as many have done before and more will reprise in the future, the Sagas will live with me forever – to pass to my children and grandchildren. Is it the stories that beckon our return? I am Icelandic and Iceland is a land of storytelling.

Brian Borgford lives in Calgary. He has written several books for various age categories and his current work-in-progress is Helga's Saga, a fictionalized account of his great-

grandmother's life. Readers can access more information on the 2015 trip he took with his wife to Iceland at: <https://www.amazon.com/Digging-Roots-Travels-Brian-Borgford-ebook/dp/B07K5W76YD/>



Brian Borgford at Hofsos, 2015. The photograph in the upper right shows his great-uncle Jon Sæmundsson, first son of Sæmunder Jónsson, Brian's great-grandfather. The family surname was changed to Borgford upon immigration to Canada. Later the 'j' was dropped to become Borgford.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1942, the cost of an annual subscription to *Icelandic Canadian* was \$1. The cost of an annual subscription to *Icelandic Connection* in 2023 was \$40, \$46 if it was being mailed to the U.S.

I Grew Up with the Pioneers From Modern Sagas; The Stories of the Icelanders in North America

Excerpt from the introductory chapter called "I Grew Up With The Pioneers"

by Thorstina Walters

My first fond memories of North Dakota are of the second house that my father built on his homestead on the Tongue River, Akra Township, Pembina County. The pioneer cabin with its sod roof was now abandoned. It had presented many problems to my mother. For instance: when it leaked, the only dry spot in the room was under the table, so she placed a box with me in it there for safekeeping. But this second house was of sturdy, hand hewn oak logs with a red roof, the doors and window casings painted green. Inside and out the walls were always a gleaming white through frequent and liberal applications of whitewash. There was a lean-to of lumber that served as a kitchen. I have a mental picture of the large living room that formed the principal part of the house downstairs. There were two windows facing east, one on each side of the door, one window on the west wall and one on the south end, a most important window, for under it stood the family table with its gay oilcloth. Through the window one saw two mighty oaks; between them mother had stretched her clothes line. These oaks were also mother's sun-dial, more reliable, in her opinion, than the clock for there was no mistaking the length of the shadows.

I remember too, that the floor was scrubbed snow-white and there were cheery, ruffled curtains on the windows, but most exciting of all was a pantry at the north end, made of one-quarter inch boards painted green. This was a place I was told to stay out of at all times, but I often explored it when I thought no one was looking. Upstairs, the dormer window facing east was one that I cherished especially, for through it, on a cold winter morning when the sun was shining brightly, one sometimes saw a mirage, the neighboring towns, some of which were quite far away as one measured distance in those days. There, as if in a magic mirror, were Cavalier, Hensel, Crystal, Glaston, St. Thomas and Hamilton.

I also found the outside of our home most interesting. Toward the west was the barn and the corral where the cows were milked in the summer. Near the corral were the serviceberry bushes; there the berries grew to wondrous size due to the abundant, rich fertilizer. To the southeast was the granary much used in summer by my grandfather when he cut the hops from the vines and spread them out to dry. Later these were sold at twenty-five cents a pound. I never ceased wondering how bulky and seemingly endless these vines



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Glumbaer, 1955, oil on canvas by Emile Walters. Gift of the artist in 1959 to the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

were when my grandfather dragged them in from the nearby woods, but what little room a pound of hops took and how many green hops had to be dried to make up the precious pound. But the greatest interest in summer centered around my mother's milkhouse, north of the house. There were several, well-made steps down to the door leading to it. One entered a cool, boarded room, with a small window above the door, a scrupulously clean floor and broad white shelves on which the milkpans stood in imposing array with the thick cream on top, kept sweet for as long as three days in this subterranean wonder house. There were other things on these shelves that had a

way of whetting the appetite, such as thick rounds of butter, covered with cheesecloth, delectable cheeses, including the *mysuost* made from whey, crocks with cheesecloth around the top through which the delicious *skyr* (cultured milk) was draining.

Sometimes on a hot afternoon my mother served coffee in the coolness of the milkhouse when one or another of her women friends in the neighborhood came to call. There they lingered over the delicious coffee and *pönnukökur* (Icelandic pancakes) exchanging news and opinions. Sometimes the topic was not fully discussed over the coffee cups and when the visitor announced that she would have to go, my

mother would accompany her part way. Then when she felt she must turn back the kind neighbor turned around with her, deep in the midst of the subject under discussion, each busily knitting, the needles registering, more or less, the emotion aroused by the conversation. This zig-zag would continue back and forth while I trailed along, a much interested spectator. My father, watching the proceedings from the fields, would begin to wonder whether this interlude in the day's activities would have any effect on the evening meal.

My first excursions into the world away from home were on father's faithful oxen, Bill and Brown, who proceeded on their path of duty to the call of gee and haw. Now and then they would show a desire to follow their own inclinations and stop stock still at the foot of a hill. They were persuaded to continue only when father, seizing a wisp of hay from the rear of the wagon, would walk ahead, tempting them with a promise of a mouthful of the sweet-smelling fodder, something that always prompted them to make the necessary effort.

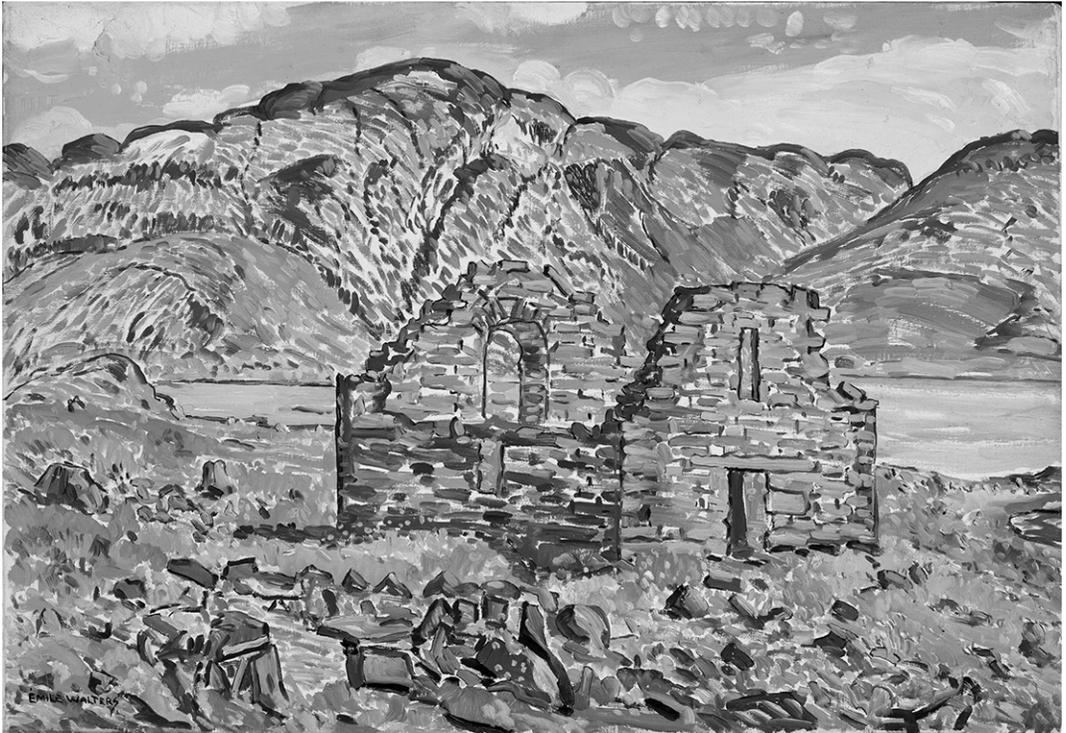
As a girl, my mother, Guðrún Jónsdóttir, had trained as a midwife in Iceland under a well-known doctor, Fritz Zeuthen, stationed on the east coast of the island. She had a certain natural gift when it came to helping a patient and she not only lent assistance to the mothers of the new born Americans, but attended with a skilled touch to anything from fractures to infected sores. My earliest reaction to this outside work of my mother's was one of rebellion. Why did she not stay home like other mothers? At times when she was on the point of answering a call I registered my disapproval so vehemently that my father and grandfather objected strenuously to taking care of me at home. Most of these calls for my mother came at night, so, if the night was cold I summarily wrapped up snugly in one or another of the Icelandic feather ticks that were around the

house, and off I went with my mother on her errand of mercy wherever it might be. I was an only child, two older sisters having died in the same week from an epidemic of scarlet fever. There was no question that I had certain privileges and my childish tantrums were often overlooked.

During these hurried, impromptu trips with my mother, I was confused by many things. For example, she told me, in the Icelandic manner of explaining such mysteries, that babies came from God. But one day some children of non-Icelandic extraction, told me that my mother brought the babies in her black bag, a statement that puzzled me very much. If her black bag was full of babies, why did she not leave one or two at our house for me to play with, since I was the only child in the home? I felt that some exploring was in order, so one day I entered the forbidden pantry, climbed with great difficulty upon the shelf where the black bag was kept, opened it, but, unfortunately slipped just then, dragging down the bag, finding no babies, leaving terrifying fumes of ammonia and carbolic acid behind me.

[...]

After mother had been ministering to the needs of her patients for several years, traveling either on foot, by means of slow moving oxen, or, at best, on heavy farm horses, she acquired a second-hand buggy and a small pony named Mollie. In her youth, Mollie had gavotted on a Montana ranch, but by the time she came into mother's possession she had left all such frivolities behind her and just ambled sleepily down the dusty North Dakota dirt roads. Now and then shining cover-buggies, then becoming common among the well to do in the settlement, shot past us. They were a dazzling splash of color with their red, rubber-tired wheels and the gayly decorated whip waving majestically in an ornate holder on the right side of the dashboard.



COURTESY OF AMERICANART.SI.EDU

Church at Hvalsejar Fjord, 1956, oil on canvas by Emile Walters. Gift of the artist in 1959 to the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

The whip aroused my admiration and envy particularly and I thought that just such a one would be a good prompter for Mollie, but mother had other ideas on the subject. Hidden under the seat was a short willow twig that she pulled out reluctantly when Mollie appeared to be falling asleep on the road, telling me to grip the seat as she gave the pony a gentle tap, warning me just in case Mollie should become too gay. No such thing happened, however, for Mollie responded to this gentle reminder only by giving a few spasmodic jerks as if she were going to break into a trot, but not feeling equal to any such effort she soon fell again into her leisurely gait.

In spite of Mollie's disinclination to hurry, we covered in the course of months quite a territory, visiting mother's cases. A new baby in an Icelandic home, although a common occurrence, was generally looked

upon as quite an event. The neighbors came calling to welcome the new arrival, bringing little presents, such as homemade wearing apparel for the newcomer, perhaps crocheted jackets, embroidered bibs. They also brought something for the mother, possibly a nice cup and saucer, a white tablecloth for the family table to be used on special occasions, such as for the little one's baptism; pillow cases with crocheted edges, or, maybe, what all Icelandic women coveted in the way of adornment for their homes: pillow shams made of heavy white cotton, gaily embroidered in red with a deep, hemstitched edge. These pillow shams went so nicely with the new white bedspread that the proud father had given his wife. There were also presents of victuals that would appeal to any gourmet: cakes, golden brown rusks, pancakes, doughnuts. But mother used to worry, during the celebration, that

her patient would exert herself too much for her limited strength and she always issued an ultimatum that positively no guests could be admitted until the fourth day after the baby's arrival.

There were many moments of excitement in our house arising from mother's work on the outside. There was, for instance, the time when one of the farmers rode twenty miles on horseback with his little boy in front of him. The child had fractured his arm and mother was to set it. During the ride the arm had swollen, but mother rose to the occasion, and all was well. Then there was the commotion when the man was brought in who had cut a deep gash in his leg on the binder and the wound was festering; or the agitation when one of the men working in threshing had pierced his forearm with a fork, neglecting the injury until the arm had become black and blue.

At one time, when I accompanied my mother, she was called in to relieve a pain from which the neighborhood strong man, a giant of six feet four inches, stout and muscular, was suffering as a result of a free-for-all fight in the border town of Pembina. In the fight, someone had placed a heavily shod foot squarely on his chest. This Icelandic troll, transplanted to North Dakota, was lying flat on his back, moaning audibly. Thinking to relieve his suffering, mother proceeded to count some drops of spirits of camphor into a small glass of water when suddenly the patient rose saying, "I am not accustomed to have it counted in drops for me." Snatching the bottle from her he took a real sip, only to stagger forward gasping, "Oh, my God." As far as I recall, however, he had no ill effects from the indulgence.

Many things went wrong on the home front during mother's frequent absences so it was fortunate that she was blessed with a sense of humor and could turn a dire

domestic catastrophe into a joke. Once when the cows were not giving much milk, she had been carefully saving cream for churning and had almost filled a large crock when she was suddenly called away for two days. Upon her return she discovered that the precious cream that was to be turned into golden butter had been fed to the pigs. Another time, my grandfather and I were going to surprise her by having the churning done when she came back. Inadvertently we had the old churn too full; when we went zealously to work with the dasher, the cream expanded until the lid blew off and mother's clean kitchen floor was a river of frothy, white foam. As luck would have it, she walked in just as that moment.

Looking back, I realize that mother could repair damage and restore order out of disorder in an incredibly short time. But there were times in the midst of restoring order out of chaos when she had to realize that she was tired. She would then call me, if the weather was mild, and we would go outside, wander among the trees, admire the flowers and listen to the birds. Or, if it was cold, we would go upstairs; she would seat herself in her upholstered rocker by the dormer window, and set the spinning-wheel in motion. Watching her gracefully manipulate the soft wool and seeing it change into yarn was fascinating. After some time mother would feel relaxed enough to continue her interrupted household tasks.

A number of Icelandic homes which mother visited possessed some relics from the homeland. The most valued of these, only to be found in a few homes, was the Bible translated by Bishop Guðbrandur Thorláksson, first published in 1584. The writer does not know whether the pioneers brought any of the first edition to North Dakota, but certainly they had some of the early ones. It was an awe-inspiring old Bible, bound in the finest leather, with a silver clasp, its parchment pages apparently

untouched by time itself. The print was the beautiful Gothic type and the ornate capitals were done from carvings made by Bishop Guðbrandur himself.

Well remembered also is a corner shelf in some of the homes on which stood a handsomely carved wooden bowl, *askur*, as the Icelanders called it. In America, it had become an ornament, but in Iceland its one and only purpose had been utility, for out of it some member of the family partook of his meals.

Some of the pioneer women owned beautiful jewelry of Icelandic craftsmanship, fashioned of gold and silver filigree work, handmade with great skill. There were brooches, belts, ornaments for fastening the bodices of the national costume, to mention only a few.

Now and then a pioneer home would treasure a small iron lamp, shaped like a boat, usually six inches in length, suspended from a chain or an iron hook. In days gone by, such a lamp was filled with cod liver or whale oil and in it floated a wick.

Carved shelves were the cherished possessions of some homes. I recall one such that I was told had been carved from a design on an old bedstead. There was a border of small letters spelling out a line from one of the Passion Hymns of Iceland. Down the center ran large ornate capital letters completing the words *Faðir Vor* (Our Father). A few carved horn spoons had found their way across the Atlantic; these were adorned with runic characters, often the name of the original owner.

Unfortunately many of these mementos from the native land did not receive the care they should have. At times they were relegated to attics or outhouses to make room for the mission furniture that entered the pioneer homes with the new century. This was especially the fate of many of the fine objects carved from wood, either brought from Iceland or made by the skilled

hand of the old timers. My grandfather, for example, made his own bed. His initials, as well as some decorative sea-weed designs, graced the footboard. The bed was very short for a six-footer such as he was, but he explained that that was the way beds were made in Iceland and he preferred that kind. It was covered by a woven counterpane from the homeland, red and black, always kept smooth and unwrinkled. In the corner of the bed nearest the wall was a wooden tray, also carved by grandfather, with designs of boats and fish. On this tray were his tobacco pouch and *neftóbakshorn* (snuff horn) carved with great skill, brightly polished and adorned. One of its outstanding ornaments was a silver stopper, secured with a very fine silver chain. Grandfather told me that this snuff horn had been in the family for a long time. His father gave it to him because he was the oldest son.

Very early in my development I became aware that there was another land that was not America, but Iceland. There it was, far off and mysterious, its language, Icelandic, generally used in my childhood home. Father had good command of written and spoken English and mother could make herself understood to a limited degree. Pretty soon I was being told many things in connection with the two countries. Grandfather, *afi*, related how he braved the turbulent ocean in small rowboats, loading them with precious fish. He managed to describe the ocean and its moods in such a telling way that the child of the prairie acquired a picture of it. Now and then he sketched the mountains, sometimes gleaming in colors that were vibrant and gay in the rarified northern air, at other times dark and brooding, giving rise to tales of trolls and hidden-folks, ghosts and other mystic beings, belonging only to Iceland, certainly not at home on the plains of North Dakota. Grandfather enjoyed telling me about the fire that was always at work beneath the Icelandic soil.

He described the Great Geyser, the famous hot spring of Iceland, which sends up a column of hot water rising to a height of 150 to 200 feet, each eruption lasting as long as twenty minutes. Grandfather went to a great deal of trouble explaining the phenomenon to me, not forgetting to tell me that all great hot springs in the world were named after the Icelandic *Geysir*, the grandest of them all. Then there were the great volcanoes such as Mt. Hekla, with its terrifying eruptions again and again darkening the sky all over Iceland, sending a flood of burning lava down its slopes, destroying the countryside. Sometimes, he said, Mt. Hekla was in a peaceful mood, a mountain of great beauty, towering over the south of Iceland. Every effort was made by grandfather to render the strange behavior of nature comprehensible to my childish mind: the mud running on a rainy day down the hillside south of our house was something like Mt. Hekla's molten lava, although much less destructive. The steam rising from the spout of the boiling kettle was Great Geyser in miniature.

I was especially fond of grandfather's story of the majestic mountain, *Hólmaffall*, on the east coast of Iceland just at the entrance to Eskifjord. This mountain of mystery was the home of a mighty giant, who, as the story goes, had kidnapped the most beautiful maiden of the neighborhood. Ever since that fateful event, when the midnight sun illumines the landscape during a peaceful summer night, if one listens carefully, a mournful singing is heard within the mountain, the sad refrain of the lovely girl who was forced to become the wife of the wicked troll.

Among grandfather's stories were those of mid-summer excursions into the interior to gather the famous *fallgrös* (Iceland moss). These outings were particularly enjoyed by the young people, tenting out on the heaths, whiling away the

bright summer evenings in songs, games and dances. Of course they did not forget to bring home quantities of the far-famed *fallagrös*, a sort of cure-all for bronchial troubles.

One of grandfather's treasures was a good luck omen, a piece of *silfurberg* (Iceland spar) about eight inches square. He related that not far from his childhood home was a brook known as *Silfurlækur* (Silver Brook) and in its bed was a vein or hollow in which this strange mineral was embedded. Now it was here for me to admire – a colorless, transparent crystal.

I never grew tired of listening to grandfather's descriptions of fantastically shaped lava rocks of Iceland, nor to the ways in which Icelandic folklore explained why they were there. It seemed that they were *natt-tröll* (trolls of the night), who, if found outside at daybreak, were turned into stone. These rocks showed signs of life in the dead of night, going into all manner of contortions, as if they believed that they were still trolls instead of Icelandic lava rocks. Grandfather explained that it was understandable that they became tired of being mere stones century after century instead of active and moving trolls.

No matter what grandfather was relating, in his conclusion he always seemed to revert back to the sea, with some reference to the mighty ocean that washed Iceland's shores. He was always ready to draw word pictures of his struggle against the unruly and powerful waves:

*The skerry away in the fjord,
So deep in the sea's unrest,
In silence endures forever
The foam that beats on its breast.*

*Mean is the man who is weaker
Than senseless rock in the strife,
And yields to the clash of the billows,
The countering currents of life.*

– Bjarni Thorarensen, translated by Elizabeth Jane Oswald (from: *A Pilgrimage to the Saga-Steeds of Iceland* by W. G. Collingwood and Jón Stefánsson, 1899).

Possibly the most entertaining of grandfather's stories, the ones he enjoyed telling more than any others were connected with his boyhood days when he herded sheep followed by his faithful dog. He was constantly losing his flock in the fog that sneaked upon the shepherd before he was aware of its coming, so dark and impenetrable that even the dog seemed to lose his bearings. Grandfather went on to say that the general belief where he came from in Iceland was that fog on the East Coast of the island was a Princess of wondrous beauty who was under a magic spell. Her only hope of release was through a youth who was a shepherd for seventeen years and never said anything against the fog. According to grandfather, no such patient shepherd had been found when he left Iceland, thus the poor Princess remained a dark brooding fog over the landscape.

Very dear childhood memories are also associated with grandfather's sister, *afasystir*, as I called her, who lived in a little house of two scrupulously clean rooms where there were to be seen colorful chests and other interesting objects from the far off homeland. She could recite what seemed to be an endless number of ballads on many and varied subjects. There were, for example, the characters of the Nibelungenlied, Sigurd, Gudrun, the Dragon Fafnir, Brynhild, the immortal lovers Tristram and Isolde, etc. I recall her sparkling blue eyes as she warmed to her subject, sometimes reciting sometimes singing the ballads, her trim little figure rocking back and forth, nodding her head with its shiny crop of silvery curls cut

short, softly framing her delicate, alert face.

My father's library contained two large volumes of Icelandic folk tales, thrilling accounts of outlaws, hidden folks, ghosts and goblins, fascinating legends that dipped deep into the mystic lore of Iceland. My mother objected to my reading of the ghost stories for she had noticed that when the lengthening shadows caught up with me outside of the house I suddenly ran in out of breath, acting as if something were chasing me. However, the temptation to read the ghost stories was such that I always turned to them first, reading avidly, but the pay-off came later when I had to run some errands after dark, for then supernatural characters of the folk tales seemed to be lurking everywhere.

Among the ghost stories were those of the *fylgjur* (followers), miraculous beings who seemed to arrive out of nowhere, to announce the arrival of guests, unexpected events in the family and other such matters. If the family were at all prominent in Iceland it most certainly had a follower, sometimes a shadowy little girl, called *skotta*, or at other times a sprightly boy known as *Móri*. Talking this over with me, my grandfather told me his family had a follower, too, a tiny *skotta* who was distinguished from others of that ilk by the addition of the name of the family homestead Kelduskóga and thus became known as *Kelduskóga-skotta*. Grandfather emphasized, however, that *Kelduskóga-skotta* took one look at the outward bound vessel on which the family left for America and decided to remain in Iceland, something that applied to all other followers of the Icelandic immigrant families. For, when it came to putting up with immigrant quarters in the steerage and becoming used to the new land, they just "could not take it."

[...]

On the boat, from Icelandic to America mother had spent much of her time trying to absorb a book entitled *A Hundred Lessons in English*. Like most books in that category, it fell far short of bridging the language gulf that faced the immigrant girl.

My father Thorleifur Jóakimsson (father anglicized his name to Jackson), came several years earlier than mother, in 1876, landing in Quebec, then proceeding on to the Icelandic settlement on the shores of Lake Winnipeg. One incident en route from Quebec to Manitoba that he often told about was the stop they made in Kingston, Ontario, where they had been told that they were to dine at the expense of the Canadian government. They entered a spacious, well-appointed dining room, only to discover after they had partaken of the meal, that they and not the Dominion government, were to pay for it. The immigrants rushed out as fast as they could, until only the interpreter was left inside to argue with the innkeeper, his wife and servants, who then shut the door. Such action looked suspicious to one of the Icelandic immigrants, a man of prodigious strength. He voiced his protest, saying, "They shall not get away with killing Halldór in there while I am around." He gave the door a push, making it fold up like paper, overthrowing the fat innkeeper who had his back to it. His wife made dire predictions as to the future of the Icelanders in America, and there the matter rested.

Life in the settlement on Lake Winnipeg, with its epidemic of smallpox and other trials, did not have much to offer my father and other young, unmarried men. They left the colony after a few months and sought work in the more settled communities. My father's first employer was a Scotchman who was very kind to him, but rather addicted to overindulgence

in the spirits for which his native land is famous. He was in the habit of walking to the nearby town, and, on the way back, partaking in the contents of a bottle until it was empty. Unfortunately, he also parted with certain personal effects at the same time, including his artificial teeth. Upon returning home the thrifty Scotchman sent the young immigrant from Iceland to look for the missing articles, generally found near the empty bottle.

This initial employment of my father's was followed by various kinds of work, including construction on the Canadian Pacific, then being laid from East to West across Canada. He also took a turn at carrying the sod in the growing city of Winnipeg. Father frequently recalled a number of Canadians of British extraction who showed interest in him during those early years of adjustment. He corresponded regularly with an Irish-Canadian family from 1878 to the time of his death in 1923. At first this family, an ardent Catholic one, engaged in religious discussions with the young Lutheran from Iceland, but when no common ground was discovered, these arguments were discontinued. Some Scotch-Canadians in Winnipeg were ready to assist my father to enter college, but Cupid interfered with those plans. He married an Icelandic girl who died two years later. After her death my father joined the Icelandic group immigrating to the Dakota Territory, arriving there in 1881, taking up a homestead, subsequently meeting and marrying my mother.

Thorstina Walters (1887-1959) was an author and lecturer of Icelandic descent. The book from which this excerpt is taken was published in 1953. Her husband, the painter Emile Walters, was an IBM (Icelander by Marriage).

The Extraordinary Women of Laxdæla Saga – Sprakkar is thy name

by Alfreda Erickson Duffy

The term "Sprakkar" was introduced by an extraordinary woman herself, Eliza Reid, First Lady of Iceland, and author of Secrets of the Sprakkar: Iceland's Extraordinary Women and how they are Changing the World.

The three strong-willed women introduced in the Laxdæla Saga have their own unique stories that occurred over a thousand years ago. What surprised me after reading it for the second time, the first time was back in 1972, was that their stories are just as relevant today as they were during the saga age. Their tales of love, desires, ambitions, revenge, even forgiveness invoked a hidden desire in me to write about them. But how would I retell them and at the same time make them my own? Olaf the Peacock, a young man with a strange nickname whose mother, Melkorka, a young Irish princess kidnapped by Vikings begged to be told first. I was sure my granddaughters would love to read about them. Their story began to "brew in my belly" urging me on, so I wrote one. A short story. I asked a friend to read it before I decided what to do with it. What astonished me was that she knew nothing about the sagas but loved the characters to a degree that inspired me to keep going. This convinced me that others, besides my granddaughters, needed to know about these stories. Before I knew it, I was writing a novel.

Melkorka evolved and became this

petite person in my head, with thick black curly hair flowing down her back. Just like young people today she was determined to go on her own adventure without thinking of the consequences. Her son, Olaf the Peacock, a nickname given him by his own father, loved colourful clothing and thankfully his mother was a master seamstress. As a child to avoid being hurt by his peer's teasing him about his mother being a slave, he would simply strut away from them as if showing off his brightly coloured clothing, nose in the air, looking like a beautiful peacock. An obsession with their story often kept me awake at night trying to expand the four characters from the saga version as well as trying to invent others, which took months, several years in fact, to sort out all their narratives, the settings, then linking everyone together. Being kidnapped drove Melkorka into a kind of traumatized muteness for several years. After giving birth, her son brings her back to life and she begins to move forward. Combined with her eventual freedom and having her own farm gives her a self determination with a goal to send her son on his own journey.

Through writing Aud's story I began to feel her strength and power as her character evolved. Like Melkorka, she too was a remarkable woman, but quite different. Competitive, ambitious, and a tad obsessive came to mind for her. Since all the stories are set in the Viking Age, I tried to envision

son, Thorstein the Red. This drive to seek a kingdom for him helps her move forward.

According to Laxdæla Saga Gudrun, my third protagonist, was an outstanding woman, in looks as well as being articulate. How can a child grow up knowing she is the most beautiful in the area without becoming a self centered, spoiled brat? It made me think of Scarlett O'Hara from 'Gone with the Wind'. Although for Gudrun I could not visualize someone like Vivian Leigh who portrayed Scarlett as a fashionable socialite, instead a willful redhead came to mind. A young girl who lives on an isolated farm on a remote northern island and loves it there. But for children seclusion does not breed easy friendships, their family is all they really have. The few times Gudrun gets to see other people her reputation of outstanding looks holds the other females at arms length, meanwhile the boisterous males surround her, first teasing her about her red hair, then later because they are enamoured with her beauty and quick wit. How does she cope? Like Scarlett O'Hara, of course, she flirts and devours the limelight, but all the time hurting inside because unlike her Gudrun desperately wants a female friend to call her own, to confide in. She wants to be loved for who she is. Does this turmoil spark her dreams or is it just another way to grab attention? As the dreams predicted, she has four husbands which complicates her life, but each loss shapes her into becoming a stronger, kinder, a more giving person. Her mantra "more power to the woman who has herself in her own power" helps her move forward.

All my protagonists were different, but at the same time they had things in common. They all had incredible blue eyes. Scandinavians do not hold the cultural rights to blue eyes. The Celts were known to be fair-haired with eyes

of blue as well. Also, there is a kinship. Each woman's family tree can be traced back to Ketil Flatnose, either through his son Bjorn the Easterner or Aud the Deep-minded. Finally, they are all extraordinary, true sprakkars, with lives that were truly remarkable. Their stories need to be told repeatedly, and hopefully they will last for another thousand years.

Alfreda Erickson Duffy has written three books of historical fiction: Melkorka: The Thrall Princess's Saga (2019), A Viking Queen's Legacy (2020) and Prophetic Dreams (2022). All three are written under the patronymic Alfreða Jónsdóttir. More information can be found on her website <https://www.alfredajonsdottir.com>



7 Reasons to Fall in Love With Icelandic Folklore

by Natalie Guttormsson

There are ample reasons to adore Iceland and Icelandic culture. From the breathtaking landscapes to the relaxing hot springs to the rich culture and heritage, there is something about the country that can appeal to almost everyone. While many people are familiar with the Icelandic sagas, contemporary music, arts, and history, the rich world of folklore is another aspect of Icelandic culture to discover and enjoy. I've got seven reasons for you to explore and fall in love with folktales from Iceland.

1. Realistic Punishments

If you heard the tale of Rumpelstiltskin (Germany) or Whoopitie Stoorie (Scotland) and thought the price of giving up your firstborn to be too steep, you'll find Icelandic folk tales to be refreshingly straightforward. The story of Gilitrutt finds a hard-working ogress promising to spin a lazy farm woman's wool for her. In payment, Gilitrutt will eat the woman if she cannot guess her name in three attempts by the end of the summer. It's a fair exchange for making a deal with an ogress. No children need to be harmed by one woman's laziness.

2. Unexpected Humour

Not all folktales are serious or ominous. Some Icelandic tales will make you laugh out loud. In one particular tale, a fisherman catches a merman and brings him home. Along the way, the fisherman has three encounters, to which the merman laughs each time. When asked why he is laughing,

the merman refuses to say. The third time around, the fisherman demands to know why and agrees to set the merman free if he tells the truth. The answer reveals that whenever the man was angered by something, there was value and riches to be had, and yet when he was pleased and feeling good about himself, he was actually being lied to. Thanks to the merman, the fisherman can turn his life around.

3. The Connection to Place

A primary characteristic of folklore is that stories are often cast against landscapes that exist in our reality. While fairy tales often begin with "A long time ago, in a land far away..." folk tales usually name a particular place, land formation, or even a particular farm. This makes the stories more believable and relatable, even if the contents of the tale are rather far-fetched for a modern audience.

One example of a folk tale firmly grounded in place is the Heathen Cliff of Drangey. Long after the events of Grettis Saga took place, bird hunters encountered an evil, hairy beast on the cliffs of Drangey island in the middle of Skagafjörður, North Iceland. The bishop responded by visiting the island to cleanse the cliffs one by one. When there was one remaining cliff, the monster pleaded for mercy – leave at least one space for the evil to dwell. And thus, the final "heathen" cliff was spared. Drangey is not the only location in Iceland with a heathen cliff. These places tend to

have accidents associated with them or ominous impressions on the rock.

4. Give You Goosebumps

The Deacon of Myrká is a Christmas-themed ghost tale of unfulfilled love that will send a chill down your spine and raise goosebumps up your arms. I love this tale so much that I wrote my own version and recorded an audio performance for The Folklore Forum podcast. While I don't want to ruin the plot or conclusion for you before you read it, I will share that this story is firmly rooted in place. You can visit the church and farms at Myrká, where these events occurred. Next time you drive between Siglufjörður and Akureyri, plan a stop at Myrká and read or listen to this tale before you go.

5. Strong Women

Even in the darkest of folk tales, there are strong female characters. Heroines who defy temptation ignore the persuasion of supernatural beings and survive attempts on their life by thwarted lovers. The terrifying tale of the young woman who stays home from church to tend the fire and food on Christmas Eve is a prime example of a strong woman character, committed to her values, sharp with her instinct, and unselfish. You can also hear this tale discussed on the 2022 Christmas episode of the Folklore Forum podcast.

6. Fantastic Beasts

For fans of Nessie or Ogopogo (both infamous lake monsters), you'll enjoy learning about the Lagarfljót worm – a beast that lives on the bottom of the Lagarfljót River running through the town of Eglisstaðir in the East of Iceland. Unlike tales of other lake monsters, this Icelandic folk tale gives the origin story of the monster and explains why it is rarely seen today except under certain circumstances.

7. Intelligent Messengers

Ravens play significant roles in Nordic lore and myth. In a much-loved tale from the Northwest of Iceland (various versions note different farms), a loyal raven saves a young girl from an avalanche that destroys her farm. When the young girl feeds the raven daily for weeks in a row, she is alarmed when the raven suddenly won't eat but keeps hopping away from her. In her pursuit of the bird, she is led to safety before the avalanche hits her farm.

How to Find Your Favourite Folktale

Read a collection of Icelandic folktales, download an audiobook, or spend some time at folkloreforum.org, where I share and discuss various folktales from Iceland and other countries in Northern Europe. When you discover your favourite, let me know. I'd love to hear all about it.

Natalie Guttormsson is a copywriter, fiction author, and host of The Folklore Forum podcast. She resides in Alberta, Canada, with her husband and son. You can learn more about her writings and work on her website: www.folkloreforum.org



The Saga of The Golden Curse

by Ainsley Bloomer

As Odin sat on Hlidskjalf, he noticed something he had never seen before, and that convinced him to enter an area between Midgard and Svartalfheim. He saw a sprawling green forest sprinkled with sparkles of gold, into which he could not see through. Not even a peek! This was unusual because normally, on any given day, he could see into every nook and cranny of every area of every realm from Hlidskjalf. Not being able to see into this area made him curious.

Every morning his loyal ravens, Hugin and Munin, flew throughout each of the nine great dimensions and gathered news of the current happenings of the day. On this morning, before they set out, Odin asked them to investigate the mysterious forest. He thought to himself, *Where did this forest come from and why can I not see into it? If this is magic, I want to know what kind and to whom it belongs.*

When his sleek black ravens returned, Odin asked, "What is the news of the mysterious forest?"

Hugin crooned, "There was an old shack in the middle of the forest."

Munin cawed, "There were three gnarly and twisted dwarves living there."

Odin was surprised. "Is that all there is within the forest?"

"Yes, yes," squawked Munin and Hugin in harmony.

Odin pondered, "What is the rest of the news of the day?"

The ravens told Odin their news and he was satisfied. Yet he was still curious about the mysterious forest. He surveyed the area from Hlidskjalf and still could not

see through the forest. He needed to know more, so he decided to pay a visit to the dwarf family.

Two of his companions, Haenir and Loki sojourned with him. Odin loved to travel through the grandness of the nine worlds and this journey was no exception. The three walked from Asgard to the Bifrost Bridge where they met with Heimdall, the guardian of the brilliant blue, radiant red, and sunny yellow rainbow bridge. Once past Bifrost, they entered the realm of Midgard, the land of the humans. There they sojourned through to its edges and on to Svartalfheim. A ways in, they came to a vast, mysterious green forest that concealed everything.

They walked through the magical forest a while, and when they came upon a wondrous waterfall, they stopped, listened, and watched. All of a sudden, out splashed a big black otter who perched sleepily on a nearby rock in front of the sparkling waterfall. He had a long, slim body with relatively short limbs. As he sat on the rock, he wiggled and waggled his webbed feet. He then suddenly swooped up a salmon from the water and clutched it in his claws. He sat and slowly observed his catch.

Since the three sojourners had been traveling a while, the thought of supper came into all their minds, and they looked at one another. Loki took it upon himself to catch both the salmon and the otter. Instinctively and without hesitation, he threw a large rock onto the head of the otter. It instantly fell. Loki swooped up the otter and the salmon. The three companions were pleased with the catch and continued

their journey. They came to the old house the ravens had mentioned. Upon knocking, a strange-looking gentleman opened the creaky door. He appeared to be half human and half twisted dwarf. Odin looked at the man and thought to himself, *Now this is the creature whom I could not see from Hlidskjalf, but where are the others?*

He heartily greeted the dwarf, "Greetings my fine fellow, we have journeyed along this pathway before, but I do not recall seeing this forest or your house, but here you are. We ask you for a night's lodgings, and we can repay you with enough food for everyone in your household."

The strange looking dwarf was named Hreidmar. He was the master of the household and skilled in a special kind of magic. Before Hreidmar offered them entrance he commanded, "Leave your spear and your shoes at the door."

The three entered into the home of Hreidmar and they visited awhile.

Hreidmar explained, "For some reason unknown to us, we were chosen by an unruly and unreasonable norn, who decided to place a curse on all of us. We begged her to undo the curse and leave us alone, but she would not and now we are here."

As evening enveloped the farm and the forest, Odin, Haenir, and Loki became hungry.

Odin said, "Hreidmar,

here is our catch from this afternoon. We offer supper to your family."

Odin brought out the otter and the salmon. Hreidmar recognized the catch and let out horrifying screams that startled Odin, Haenir, and Loki, as his sons barrelled into the room.

"Fafnir, Regin! Your brother, Ottar, has been killed and these are the men who have killed him!"

With lightning speed, the dwarf men

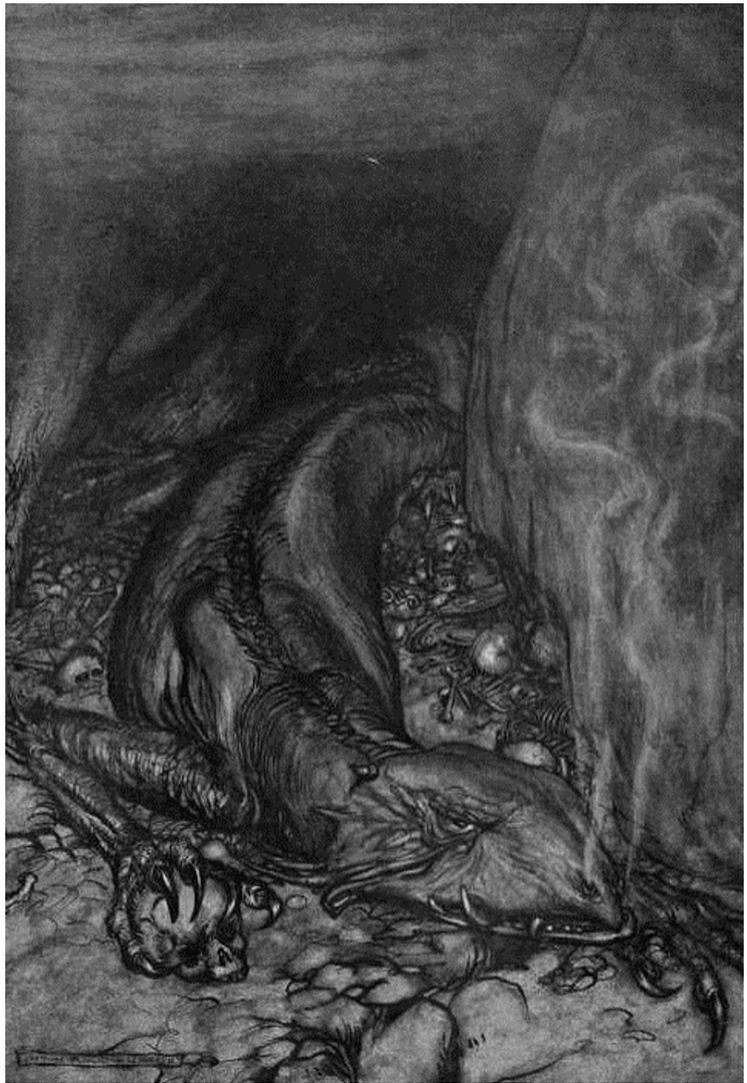


IMAGE: PUBLIC DOMAIN

The Dragon Fafnir by Arthur Rackham

bound Odin, Loki, and Haenir with an extraordinary magic unknown to Odin. They snatched Odin's spear and Loki's shoes, because they knew these belongings had special enchanting qualities. Odin, Haenir, and Loki were completely taken off guard, shocked and surprised that they could be wrestled down so quickly and bound so easily. What had happened? This had never happened to them before in any of their journeys, and they did not understand the nature of any of this or any wrongdoing. The shocked look on their faces stirred Regin to tell the bewildered and baffled trio the story of his brother.

"Ottar is our middle brother, and as you can see, we are ugly and deformed dwarf men, because we have been cursed by a nasty norn. But Ottar's curse was a little different. He looked and acted like a real otter. He is, or was a great swimmer, fisherman, and hunter, which helped us immensely, by supplying us with a plentiful amount of food from his catches. We used to live in the village, but after we were cursed, some villagers were terrified of us. Some beat us, or threw stones, garbage, or anything at us. Some yelled at us to get out of the village, as they did not want us there. Soon, we left and found our way here. It is peaceful here, and we have lived in peace and under the protection of the forest our father created for us with his special magic. We know the three of you are some kind of immortal beings because you never would have gotten this far into the forest if you were not. We thought we would be safe from any harm with the marquee of our magical forest. But, as you can see, you have come and you have killed our brother, Ottar."

Hreidmar stepped in and said, "I welcomed you into our home, I placed trust in you, and I was thoroughly unaware of the death of my son. The penalty for his killing is death, death for you all!" Hreidmar had turned a white grey colour, and his facial

expression emanated an icy dread, spiked with clear and cold thoughts of a vicious vengeance.

Odin pleaded, "Dear Hreidmar, we had no idea the otter was your son. If we knew, we would have left him alone. We are truly sorry for our miserable mistake. We wish no harm or ill will to you or your family. We offer any amount of wealth to you for compensation for your son, if you spare our lives and return our objects."

Hreidmar and his sons looked at the three figures, constrained by magic, then looked to each other. They went into another room and took counsel. When they returned, they agreed with Odin's plea. An agreement was made and oaths were sworn. Odin, Haenir, and Loki would give Hreidmar whatever he wanted and once received, their lives would be spared and their objects returned.

Hreidmar carefully flayed his otter son and made a bag from his carcass. Once he had finished, he placed the bag in the middle of the room. He looked at Odin, Haenir, and Loki and commanded, "This bag of Ottar shall be completely filled on the inside with red gold and completely covered on the outside with yellow gold. These are the terms of the compensation."

Odin agreed, "We have the means to fulfill your request, but how are we to fulfill these terms if we are all bound?"

Hreidmar thought a moment and said, "I will let one of you get the gold. When you return with the gold and the terms of the agreement are fulfilled, then you will be free to leave."

Odin, Haenir, and Loki spoke amongst themselves and decided that Loki would get the gold. Hreidmar released Loki from his binding magic.

Odin instructed him, "Loki, go deeper into this realm of Svartalfheim, and find the dwarf called Andvari. He will be swimming in his falls, Andvara Falls. He too has been

cursed by a norn, and will most likely be in the form of a fish known to many as a pike. He is the guardian of the dwarves' gold. Do whatever you need to do to get the gold from him, and bring it here as fast as you can."

Loki responded, "I will be able to complete this task quicker, if I have my running shoes."

Hreidmar agreed and Loki slipped on his special running shoes and sped off. He raced to the sea and called out for Ran, the goddess of the sea.

"Oh, radiant Ran, please rise."

Ran heard Loki and rose from the sea. She queried in her soft yet clear bubbly voice, "What brings you to the sea, Loki?"

"Radiant Ran, I have come on behalf of the AllFather, Odin and our friend Haenir, as they have been captured and bound, and I have a plan to free them. But I need to borrow one of your nets."

Ran replied, "I can honour your request and be of assistance to Odin and Haenir. Take this net of many knots and gnarls."

And with that she offered Loki one of her rare and enchanted nets.

Loki thanked her and sped off further into Svartalfheim. He first heard the falls, and following the sound he found Andvara Falls. He spread the mystical net over the falls and waited. In a matter of moments, Andvari found himself caught up in Ran's magical net of knots and gnarls.

Once Andvari was caught, Loki bargained with him. He offered Andvari his life for all of the gold in his possession. Loki said, "Do you know who is the fish that swims these waters, and does not know how to protect himself? Ha ha, that is you, Andvari! Now give me the fire of the well, or I will eat you for my supper."

"It is true, I am Andvari and a son of Odin. In ancient times a norn turned me into this pike that you see before you. I want my life, so I will bring the gold to you."

As Loki pulled him out, he shouted,

"Andvari, if you value your life, you better hand over all your gold because I have a delirious desire to eat pike, my friend, and you look delicious."

There was no bargaining with Loki and the agitated Andvari brought all the gold to him. Andvari struggled to conceal one golden ring, but Loki saw him do this and demanded what Andvari was concealing. "You are holding out on me, Andvari, give it here."

Andvari confided, "You have all of the gold and I will be left with nothing for all my work, unless this one ring remains in my possession. With this one ring I will be able to make more gold for myself." And with that, Andvari showed the ring to Loki.

When Loki saw the ring, he snatched it and began preparing to leave with all the gold. Andvari pleaded to keep the ring but Loki refused and continued preparing. As he was about to leave, the devastated dwarf sourly snarled at him, "Since the ring and all my gold will not be with me, I put a curse on it. All the gold you carry will bring misfortune and death to whomever possesses it, and will be of no use to anyone."

Loki was more concerned with returning to Odin and Haenir with the gold, to free them from the dwarf's magic, than to heed the words of Andvari that spouted a curse on the gold.

Loki raced back to the house of Hreidmar where Haenir and Odin were still bound. When Odin saw the gold and the ring, he was elated. He hoped to be finally free of the binds. Hreidmar ordered Odin, Haenir, and Loki to fill the bag of Ottar with the red gold. He unbound Odin and Haenir for this purpose. Somehow, Odin managed to slip the ring Loki had into his pocket. The three did as Hreidmar commanded. The empty bag of Ottar was filled on the inside with the red gold and covered completely on the outside with yellow gold. When they were finished filling and covering the bag of

Ottar, Hreidmar walked around inspecting it. He said, "One whisker is uncovered. If it is not covered, there is no agreement."

Odin felt the ring in his pocket. With a reluctance that pulled at him that he did not fully comprehend, he took the ring out of his pocket and placed it on the whisker of the otter. The otter was completely covered. Hreidmar made another check around the otter and this time he was satisfied. "You are free to go. Odin, take your spear. But if you or any of your kind set foot on my land again, you will feel the full force of my wrath."

Odin, Haenir, and Loki gratefully agreed to never return. They were free to go and free of the Ottar's ransom. Odin took his spear and as they were about to leave Loki recounted the words of Andvari: "All the red gold inside and all the yellow gold outside of Ottar and the ring that covers his whisker, were cursed by the distraught dwarf, Andvari. He said the gold will be the death of anyone who owns it and it will be of no use to anyone."

Hreidmar smirked and although Odin was curious about the curse, he really wanted to learn the knowledge and the mystical magic of Hreidmar. But from the gruesome looks of the gnarled dwarf, Odin turned with Loki and Haenir and they fled as fast as they could.

Hreidmar smiled and gloated over the gold. He obsessed over it. Fafnir finally confronted him, "Father, it is time for you to give us our share of the gold in compensation for our brother, Ottar."

Hreidmar growled, "I am not sharing any of my gold with you or anyone else. It is all mine!"

Fafnir argued, "We are in our rights to have our portion of the compensation. Ottar was our brother as well as your son."

Hreidmar was angry and they fought a heated battle, until Fafnir drew out his father's sword Hrotti and slew him with it. Next, Fafnir went and found his father's

helmet called Aegis-Helm (meaning the Helm of Dread). The helmet was so terrifying that it brought fear into all living creations who placed their eyes on it. He placed it on his own head. He then went and stood beside Ottar, who was filled with gold inside and outside. The grimmest of grins lurked over his face and a strange sensation spread throughout his gnarled body as he gleamed and gloated over the gold.

Regin suggested, "Brother, let us share the gold amongst ourselves and with our sisters, Lyngheid and Lofnheid, and our mother, Runa, as now we do not have to live with only this meagre existence. We can all live a better life. Let us share one fifth of the gold, as we do not have to divide it into sevenths, since Ottar and father are both gone."

Fafnir snarled and growled and laughed and said a blunt, "No!"

Regin went and found his sister Lyngheid and told her what had happened. He then asked her, "How can we get Fafnir to share the gold?"

Lyngheid suggested to Regin, "Well, go and ask him nicely."

Regin went back to his home and asked Fafnir as nicely as he could, but Fafnir sneered and jeered him. "If you think there is any hope of my sharing the gold with you, when I have killed father for it, then you are mistaken. I will never share this gold with you or with anyone else. Begone from here!" He let out a gruesome growl. "Or feel the bite of the bloody blade of Hrotti like father did!"

Regin pleaded, "Fafnir, how can you say this? I am your brother!"

Fafnir rose Hrotti high in the air and was about to plunge the sword down upon the head of Regin when Regin ran. As he fled the house, he snatched his sword called Refill that rested by the door. Running on fear, he raced and stumbled through the night and fell into the realm of King

Hjalprek in Thjod. He had no idea where he was. He humbly came before the king and pleaded for a place in his service.

“What skills do you offer?” the king asked.

Regin showed him all he owned, his sword, and said, “I am a smith and a craftsman.”

King Hjalprek closely inspected the sword, Refill, and he liked what he saw. He offered Regin the position of the craftsman. Regin was grateful to be accepted and have a new home and a new place in which to work. He diligently fulfilled all of King Hjalprek’s work orders.

Meanwhile, Fafnir drooled all day and all night over what once was his brother, Ottar. His form filled on the inside with red gold and yellow gold on the outside was still standing in the middle of the room where Hreidmar had left it. The ring on the whisker produced more gold, as Andvari had said it would. Fafnir became obsessed with the gold and desired to hide and hoard the gold all for himself. He went to an area called Gnita-Heath, and dug himself out a huge cave. He made doors and fastenings cleverly cast in a strong iron. They were securely attached to the front opening of his lair. All the posts in the cave were also cast of iron and were sunk deep into the earth. He built his lair long and huge. He gradually placed all the gold there and when he was finished, he lay on the glittering gold. Day

after day he sat on the gold and obsessed. As he sat, he began changing. He slowly grew one hundred times larger and scales evolved on his outer skin. He growled and spit venomous flames if anyone came near. He changed into a huge and fearsome dragon. People knew of him and his story, as he came to be known as the dreadful dragon, Fafnir.

Ainsley lives in Winnipeg with her husband, Vaughan. She has two adult sons, Jamie and Brett. She is the daughter of Sigurstein Aleck Thorarinson from Gimli, whose parents were Metusalem Jonsson Thorarinson from Langavatn in Reykjavferfi, and Sigríður Katrín Siguróss Thorarinson (nee Davíðson) from Reykjavík. Ainsley's mother was Steinunn Emily (Terry) Thorarinson (nee) Isleifson from Glenboro, whose parents were Ósk Sigurbjörg Bjarnadóttir, known in Canada as Sarah Isleifson, born in Landlyst, Sandgerði, and Thorstein Albert Isleifson, born in Túngukot in Viðidalstunga Parish.



“The Icelanders are the most intelligent race on earth, because they discovered America and never told anyone.”

Oscar Wilde

LAST WORD

We have attempted in this last print issue of *Icelandic Connection* to balance old and new, history and the future, prose connected by poetry, truth told in different ways.

When the first issue of *The Icelandic Canadian* came out in 1942, home fires burned for the young men and women serving in World War Two action. Eighty-one years later, the World Health Organization has declared an end to the international COVID emergency and geopolitical situations around the world are worrisome. The changes realized in more than three-quarters of a century have been reflected in the pages of *The Icelandic Canadian* and *Icelandic Connection*. Nowadays Western Icelanders are a far-flung and diverse group.

But there is evidence that interest in the land we came from – and our cousins across the ocean – is on the increase. It is easier now to visit Iceland than it was for our parents or grandparents. Programs such as Snorri and Snorri Plus have introduced Western Icelanders to their past. The rising

popularity of memoir writing can be seen in more stories about our ancestors. And the technology that can challenge the old way of doing things has introduced our children and grandchildren to Icelandic culture in new and vibrant ways. Think *Game of Thrones*. Think Loki and Ragnarok.

How many of us say “I wish I had listened more closely when Amma told her stories? Or written them down before I forgot them?” I’m not sure that we will ever get the young to listen to our stories with the attention we would like. Youth is not a time for reflection or retrospection. Still it is important that these stories be preserved and *The Icelandic Canadian / Icelandic Connection* has done just that, leaving a treasure trove of documentation for those who come behind. We pay tribute to the talent, time, and volunteer spirit of hundreds of people over those years who made this possible.

While scrolling through old issues of this journal, I found a poem that originally appeared in Bill Holm’s *The Music of Failure* (Marshall, Minnesota: Plains Press, 1985).

*Someone dancing inside us has learned only a few steps:
the “Do-Your-Work” in 4/4 time, the “What-Do-You-Expect” Waltz.
He hasn’t noticed yet the woman standing away from the lamp,
the one with black eyes who knows the rumba,
and strange steps in jumpy rhythms from the mountains of Bulgaria.
If they dance together, something unexpected will happen;
if they don’t, the next world will be a lot like this one.*

The poet’s words remind us that change occurs if we dare to switch things up a bit. Icelanders have long shown courage and a spirit of adventure; their arrival in North America was a proactive expression of faith in a future based on change. I have no doubt that the ending of this chapter is but the beginning of a new one. Let’s get on with writing it. – SA



2023

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A grant of \$4,000 is available to assist an emerging writer, administered by the Canada Iceland Foundation.

Subject of the work must be about the Icelandic-Canadian presence, its history or otherwise be related to the author's connection to an Icelandic and/or Icelandic-North American theme.

This grant will be awarded to a new recipient in each of the five years, 2021 to 2025.

The award committee will be accepting submissions until October 1 at 4 PM CT, with the award recipient notified by December 1st.

Please fill out the application form provided on the Canada Iceland Foundation website.

canadaicelandfoundation.ca/grants/goodman-writer-s-grant

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