



Leif Eriksson Statue on Commonwealth Avenue, c. 1892

Eriksson stands above a dragon-headed boat which would have been the basin for a fountain. Source: Boston Public Library, Boston Pictorial Archive Collection—Mouton Photograph Company.

PHOTO ESSAY

Vikings on the Charles:
Leif Eriksson, Eben Horsford, and the
Quest for Norumbega

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Editor's Introduction: *This colorful and intriguing photo essay traces how and why a statue of Norse explorer Leif Eriksson came to occupy a prominent place on Boston's Commonwealth Avenue in 1877. A group of amateur archaeologists, scholars, and artists, all members of the Boston elite, fostered a growing interest in the theory that Leif Eriksson was the first European to reach North American shores hundreds of years before Columbus. Chemist Eben Horsford invented double-acting baking powder, a lucrative business venture which funded his obsessive interest in proving that Leif Eriksson played a much larger role in the establishment of European settlement on the continent. This photo essay follows his passionate, often misleading, and ultimately discredited contribution to the history of North America. Dr. Gloria Polizzotti Greis is the Executive Director of the Needham History Center and Museum. This is a slightly revised and expanded version of material that was first published on the museum's website.¹*

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At the far western end of Boston's Commonwealth Avenue promenade, Leif Eriksson stands shading his eyes with his hand, surveying the Charlesgate flyover. He used to have a better view. When Leif was put there in 1887, he could actually see the Charles River and, beyond it, the New World. But why Leif Eriksson, and why there? The Commonwealth Avenue boulevard was the bastion of upper-class Boston respectability. The statues along its path were the establishment pantheon—soldiers, statesmen, and clergymen—whose public service the city gratefully immortalized along one of its most fashionable and affluent avenues. Leif, in contrast, facing away and standing with his back to his fellows, bore no close relation to Brahmin society—or did he?²

The idea of placing a statue of Leif Eriksson on Commonwealth Avenue was first suggested in 1877. The inspiration seems to have come from Ole Bull, the great Norwegian violinist and purveyor of Norse culture. Bull was an immensely popular performer with good connections among the Boston elite, among them Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Bull was also a proponent of the theory, first put forward by Danish scholar Carl Christian Rafn, that the legendary Vinland of the Viking sagas was in New England, and that the first European to reach our shores was Leif Eriksson in 1000 AD. Longfellow was also a believer in Rafn's theory, about which he wrote the poem "The Skeleton in Armor."³

Bull visited Boston in 1870 and stayed in Longfellow's Cambridge home. Bull, Longfellow, and Longfellow's brother-in-law, Thomas Gold Appleton, made a plan for erecting the statue over dinner one night. Appleton, a cultural philanthropist, amateur painter, and sometime poet, gathered a committee of fifty-two prominent Boston citizens, including the Reverend Edward Everett



**Norwegian Violinist Ole Bull
(1810–1880)**

Bull was famous for his style of playing, which combined speed and precision with influences from Norwegian folk styles. He was also a supporter of the Norwegian nationalist movement, advocating for both the political and cultural independence of Norway.



Longfellow Family and Friends, 1852

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is standing at back, with the stovepipe hat. His wife, Fanny Appleton Longfellow, is sitting at center, and her brother, Thomas Gold Appleton, is standing at left, looking toward the camera. Although Fanny died in a tragic accident in 1861, Longfellow and his brother-in-law Appleton remained life-long friends.

Hale (grandnephew of Nathan Hale and the author of “The Man Without a Country”), the poet James Russell Lowell, Harvard President Charles Eliot, publisher James Fields (Ticknor and Fields), and Needham’s own William Emerson Baker.⁴ The commission to create the statue was originally given to John Quincy Adams Ward of New York, the most prominent sculptor in America at the time.

The Appleton committee knew exactly what it wanted and furnished Ward with full instructions, describing the figure and dress in excruciating detail, and even providing a picture of a bearskin-draped warrior taken from the frontispiece of one of Appleton’s own volumes of poetry as a guide. Ward completed a model for his sculpture, a rugged Viking warrior in the heroic mold, in accordance with Appleton’s description. But the statue was never made, apparently because of opposition from the Massachusetts Horticultural



Appleton's Vision

An illustration of a Viking warrior from Thomas Gold Appleton's book of poetry, *Faded Leaves* (1872). John Quincy Adams Ward used this illustration when designing his model (right) of the proposed Leif statue.

Society, which felt that there was insufficient evidence to support the claim of the Norse discovery of America. Then, with the deaths of Appleton, Bull, and Longfellow, all in the following few years, the project rapidly lost steam.⁵

EBEN HORSFORD'S DOUBLE-ACTING BAKING POWDER

The project was revived a few years later by Eben Horsford, a chemist—specifically the Rumford Professor of the Application of Science to the Useful Arts at Harvard University. Horsford was also the inventor of Double-Acting Baking Powder. Along with a man named George Wilson, Horsford had co-founded the Rumford Chemical Works in Providence, RI, where they

**Eben Norton Horsford (1818–1893)**

Horsford taught chemistry at the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard for sixteen years and was the founder/owner of the Rumford Chemical Works. His specialty was food chemistry. He was also a generous philanthropist.

produced several chemical products which they marketed under the trade name Rumford.

What does “double-acting” baking powder mean? Old baking powder (single-acting baking powder) fizzes in the presence of liquid. Housewives generally made it themselves out of baking soda and cream of tartar. It fizzed out rapidly, mostly during the mixing stage, and thus had to be used very quickly. Since dampness and humidity affected it, it had a very short shelf life and had to be mixed up every time. However, each time it was mixed it was different and therefore unreliable. Double-acting baking powder was baking soda with the addition of calcium biphosphate, which only fizzed in the presence of heat. It had better leavening action because it was

twice as fizzy. It was shelf-stable because any damage caused by dampness was recovered when the batter was heated. Plus, Rumford packaged it in a convenient red can, so all you had to do was spoon it out.

Why, you may wonder, was this important? First and foremost, Rumford baking powder was a convenience product—one of the first. It was more reliable and it saved people time. The mid-19th century was a very mobile period in American history. A lot of people were moving west by both railroad and wagon, and they had to carry everything with them. A convenient and reliable leavening agent saved them from thousands of miles of eating hardtack. Rumford Double-Acting Baking Powder was also used by the army during the Civil War and while patrolling the Western Territories. An army, as no less an authority than Napoleon reminds us, marches on its stomach. Much of Horsford’s research during the Civil War years focused on ways to improve the freshness, efficiency, and nutritional value of marching rations for the army. Then, as now, military contracts were a lucrative business. Rumford Double-Acting



An advertising card for Rumford Baking Powder showing the Rumford Chemical Works in Providence, Rhode Island, c. 1910.

Baking Powder was an immensely successful product, and Horsford became indecently rich on the proceeds.⁶

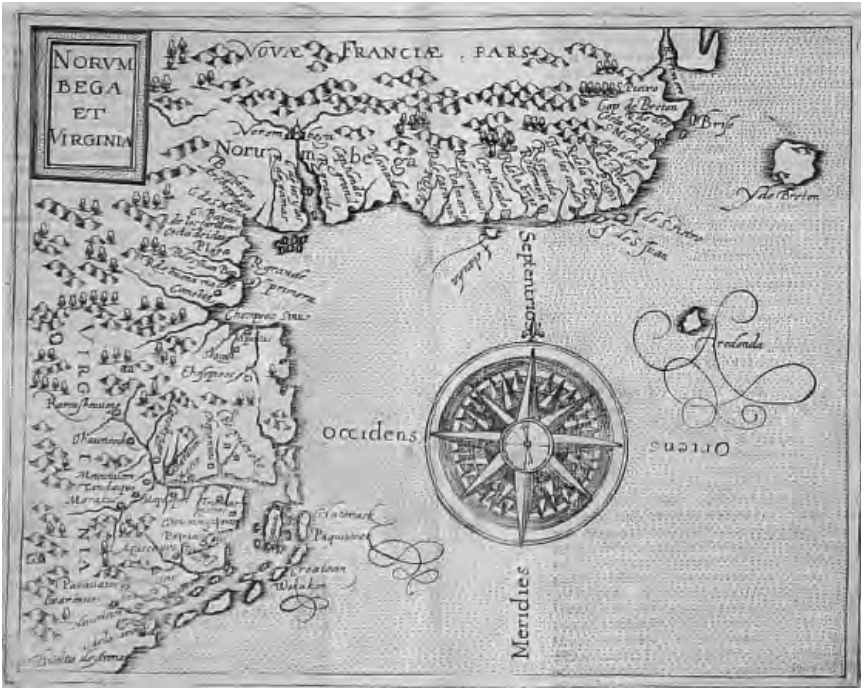
Back to Leif Eriksson. How did Horsford become involved with this project? Horsford lived on Brattle Street in Cambridge, a neighbor in fact of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. At Longfellow's house he had met the violinist Ole Bull, and through him Horsford became interested in Rafn's Leif Eriksson theory. He became one of the members of Appleton's committee to promote the erection of the Leif Eriksson statue. Also, by the 1870s Horsford had left Harvard and had sold off his share in Rumford to his business partner, leaving him with unlimited time and unlimited funds to support his pet projects.

THE LOST CITY OF NORUMBEGA

Horsford became obsessed with finding the legendary lost city of Norumbega, which had been identified on European maps of North America at least as early as 1520. Giovanni da Verrazano tried to locate it in 1524 in the vicinity of the Hudson River; Samuel de Champlain searched for it in the Penobscot River region in Maine in 1610. Circulating around Europe in the

late sixteenth century was the tale of an English sailor named David Ingram, who claimed to have seen Norumbega near what we now know as Boston Harbor. He wrote that:

He saw kings decorated with rubies six inches long; and they were borne on chairs of silver and crystal, adorned with precious stones. He saw pearls as common as pebbles, and the natives were laden down by their ornaments of gold and silver. The city of Bega was three-quarters of a mile long and had many streets wider than those of London. Some houses had massive pillars of crystal and silver.⁷



“Norumbega et Virginie” Map by Flemish Cartographer Cornelius van Wytfliet, 1597

The coastline is labeled “Norumbega” and the city itself is shown near the mouth of the river, just above the R and the U. This is one of the earliest printed maps of the eastern seaboard of North America. More extensive exploration of this region by the Dutch, French, and English over the next 30 years would add substantially more accuracy to the geographic knowledge of this region. Map by Flemish cartographer Cornelius van Wytfliet.

Studying these old maps and tales, Horsford became convinced that Norumbega and Vinland were the same, and that Ingram was correct when he located it in Boston. The name Norumbega, Horsford explained, was a Native American corruption of Norvege, Norway. As Horsford envisioned it, nearly 10,000 Norsemen eventually settled along the lower reaches of the Charles River, building cities, wharves, forts, canals, and churches. They stayed for 350 years, mostly producing goods they could trade back home—fish, furs, agricultural produce, and especially something he called “masur-wood,” oak burls that could be carved into bowls.

Horsford conducted small excavations near his home in Cambridge in an attempt to locate the original dwelling place of Leif Eriksson. He did succeed in finding some stone house foundations, but the only artifacts in them were of the American colonial period. Rather than taking this for proof that the houses were in fact colonial, he dismissed the artifacts as trash from a later period and declared that he had found Leif’s house. He then marked the site with a granite plaque. The site of the plaque lies alongside Mt. Auburn Street



Norumbega Tower in Weston

Horsford had the Tower built in the 1890s to mark the location that he identified on his maps as the site of Norumbega. The large plaque on the side outlines his theories of the Viking settlement. Source: Gloria Greis.

(at its junction with Fresh Pond Parkway to the right and Gerry's Landing Road to the left) on the grounds of the Mt. Auburn Hospital.⁸

In 1889 Horsford claimed that he found Norumbega itself on the banks of the Charles near Weston. Horsford described finding the fort of Norumbega:

When I had eliminated every doubt of the locality that I could find, I drove with a friend through a region I had never visited, of a topography of which I knew nothing, nine miles away, directly to the remains of the fort . . . *I had predicted the finding of Fort Norumbega at a particular spot. I went to the spot and found it.* No test of the genuineness of scientific deduction is regarded as superior to this.⁹

What Horsford in fact found was a thin scatter of rocks in a fairly rocky terrain. There was no proof—no artifacts or the remains of buildings or wharves or any of the tons of debris that an archaeologist would expect to find from a city of 10,000. Nevertheless, Horsford declared himself vindicated and built the Norumbega Tower on the site, inseting a large plaque that summarized his theories of the Viking occupation.

Norumbega Tower lent its name to the famous attraction, Norumbega Park.¹⁰ The park was right across the river from the Tower on the Auburndale side, built around 1897. Norumbega Park was the brainchild of the Commonwealth Avenue Street Railway Company; like Revere Beach, it was built at the end of the line to encourage people to use the trolley. The park was hugely popular—hundreds of thousands of people came out every summer for canoeing, picnics, the penny arcade, the carousel, restaurants, and other attractions. In its heyday, it was claimed to be the most heavily canoed stretch of water on earth. The increase in car ownership caused its decline after WWII, and it finally closed in 1964. The city of Newton now maintains a parcel as the Norumbega Park Conservation Lands, but the rest is now the site of the Newton Marriot.

DIGHTON ROCK

Horsford was also involved with another spurious Viking artifact. Through Ole Bull's intervention, he also became interested in Dighton Rock—a large, flat-sided boulder in the Taunton River near Fall River.¹¹ One side of the rock is inscribed with pictographs.

The unusual images on Dighton Rock have attracted attention since the first English settlers came to this area. The first copy of the inscription

dates to about 1680, and numerous copies were made in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Prevailing opinion among the learned was that the inscription was very old and no doubt had something to do with the Indians. The Sewall copy was even shown to George Washington, who remarked that it looked a great deal like the Indian markings that he used to see as a young man surveying in Virginia. Not until Carl Christian Rafn came along with his Vinland theory was the Dighton Rock inscription associated with Vikings. Rafn translated the inscription to read: “Thorfinn and his 151 companions took possession of this land.”¹²

The violinist Ole Bull, a strong proponent of Rafn’s Vinland theory, convinced a Norwegian businessman in Fall River named Neils Arnsen to buy the Dighton Rock and the land it sat on. Arnsen did so and later gave it to the Royal Society of Antiquarians in Copenhagen. The Royal Society quickly deeded it back as a gift to the Taunton Historical Society, assigning its care to a group of six trustees, among whom were Eben Horsford, Thomas



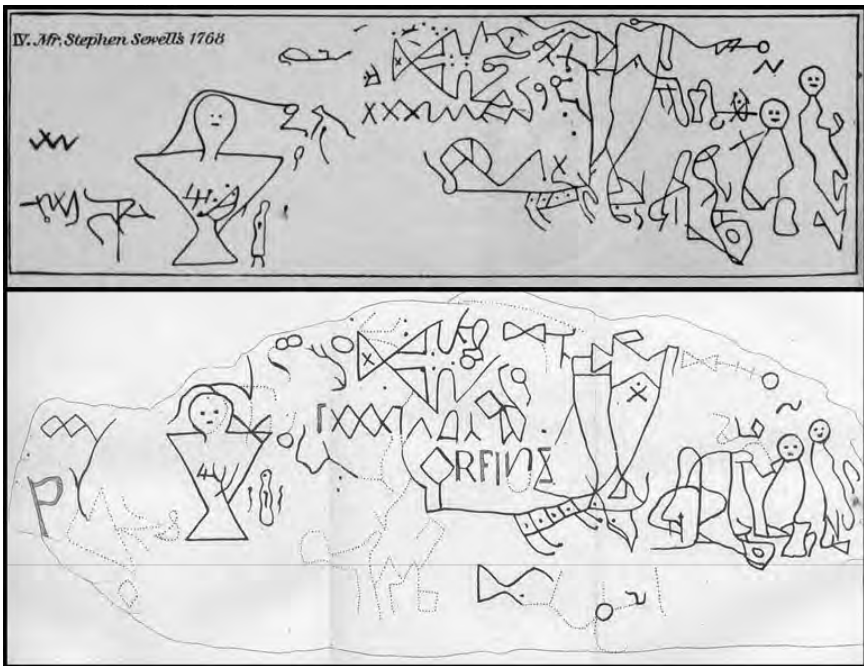
Seth Eastman at Dighton Rock, 1853

Eastman (1808–1875) was an army officer and skilled artist. The markings were filled with chalk to make them more visible in the daguerreotype.

Gold Appleton, the Reverend Edward Everett Hale, and William Emerson Baker.

Some readers may recognize Baker in Needham as the owner of the Baker Estate, but Needham was Baker's summer home, and his townhouse was on Commonwealth Avenue. Baker was also a member, as mentioned, of Appleton's Eriksson statue committee. In his *Guide to the Ridge Hill Farms*, Baker wrote:

It is now well-established that the Norsemen visited our American continent long before the time of Columbus . . . and that our good OLD commonwealth of Massachusetts has the honor of having received the first imprints of European civilization. It is



Dighton Rock Inscriptions, 1768 and 1830

Top: Stephen Sewell's tracing of the Dighton Rock inscription, 1768. This is one of the earliest copies known. It is generally considered to be accurate when compared to the Eastman photograph. Bottom: Carl Christian Rafn's sketch of the inscription, 1830. Note how the lines above the "deer" figure (lower center) have been altered to read "...orfin...", a fragment of the name "Thorfinn." Note also that this purported inscription is in Roman letters and not Viking runes. Source: Edmund Delabarre's volumes on Dighton Rock, 1916–1919.

therefore our DUTY that we of Massachusetts should take the initiatory step towards the erection of a memorial monument to these hardy voyageurs.¹³

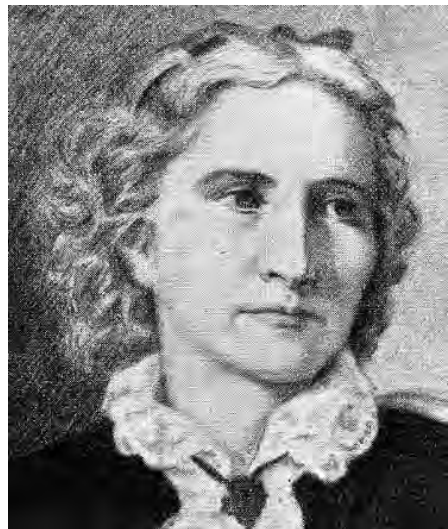
As for Dighton Rock itself, both Baker and Horsford were willing to be skeptical—even to partisan eyes, the inscription does not look very runic—but believed that it should be preserved. The rock now resides in the Dighton Rock Museum in Berkeley, MA, living its latest incarnation as a relic of alleged Portuguese exploration.

Back to Norumbega. Horsford published his Norumbega findings in seven lavishly illustrated books and numerous articles between 1886 and 1893—and this time the idea caught fire. Supported by Horsford's money and the growing popularity of the Vinland theory, the Leif Eriksson statue project was again revived. The new commission went to Boston sculptor Anne Whitney (1821–1915). Whitney was also known for her public sculptures, among them the statue of Samuel Adams that stands in front of Faneuil Hall and the statue of Charles Sumner in Harvard Square. It portrays a regal, seated Sumner holding a book and staring resolutely into the distance, capturing the great statesman and abolitionist's thoughtful disposition. However, in 1875 when the selection committee discovered that the winning design had been submitted by a female, they rejected it, partly on the grounds that it was indecent for a woman to model a man's legs. In 1902 Whitney's statue was finally erected through an anonymous donation.¹⁴

Anne Whitney (1821–1915)

UNVEILING THE STATUE

The statue was completed in early 1887 and dedicated in the fall of that year. It stands on a pedestal of red sandstone. On the face is carved in runes: "LEIF the LUCKY, SON of ERIK;" on the back in English, "Leif the Discoverer, Son of Erik, who sailed from Iceland and landed on this continent, AD 1000." On the left and right sides are cast reliefs of the journey, and the base of the pedestal is modeled as a ship. The whole is surrounded by a boat-shaped granite basin,





**Charles Sumner Statue,
Harvard Square**

which in the summer is planted with flowers, but was originally the basin of a fountain.

The dedication consisted of a parade from the Common to Faneuil Hall organized by several Scandinavian fraternal organizations, and of course a great deal of speechifying by Horsford and Edward Everett Hale. Horsford praised Whitney's statue as "vividly her own conception," asserting that it was exactly as Appleton and Longfellow would have wanted it.¹⁵ Hale elaborated on the close ties forged by Eriksson between the old Norse world and New England, asserting that Eriksson was the first to set eyes on the three hills of Boston. The speeches were followed

by singing of the Leif Eriksson Chorus, and then the whole procession marched down Commonwealth Avenue, where Whitney pulled the cord to unveil the statue.

Despite Horsford's speech, the statue was far different from Appleton's original idea (and ideal) of a rugged adventurer. Leif is shown as a beardless young man. He strikes a casual, almost contemplative pose. There is a complete absence of bearskins, shields, spears, and other warlike impedimenta; there is a spiked helmet, but so small and so placed among his flowing locks as to be virtually invisible to the viewer.

The critics raved, praising the emphasis on the "classical ideal" over the more typically warlike and barbaric depiction of Vikings. Art critic James Jackson Jarves characterized him as:

a Norseman Apollo . . . a handsome vigorous fellow, whose well-modeled limbs, spirited Characteristic pose, figure-displaying armor are all calculated to win women's hearts and men's admiration . . . It is agreeable to believe that such a man as Leif was the first European to leave the impress of his footsteps on our rugged shores.



Postcard View, c. 1910



Detail of Helmet

Source: Gloria Greis.

A *Harper's Weekly* reporter observed:

the knit brow and noble bearing of Leif tell not only of the firm resolve and daring of the explorer, but also that he was a worthy forerunner of the Pilgrims . . . Miss Whitney deserves the thanks of Americans for having chosen as the type of the Northmen ancestors, not the Berserk warrior, but the Iceland merchant, explorer and Christian, as *Leif Eriksson truly was*.

Only the Boston *Sunday Herald's* critic questioned “if there is not in the limbs of her statue something of a feminine contour, a trifle too little of masculine severity and hardiness,” but happily concluded that “[this impression] was dissipated almost entirely upon a longer inspection.”¹⁶ In other words, for Brahmin society Leif was no longer to be portrayed as a plunderer and pillager, a son of bloody Erik the Red, but as a good Christian explorer and merchant—not so very unlike their good selves. This image took hold, and all along the corridors of power in the 1890s and early 1900s the Viking motif crops up on commercial and civic architecture in Boston.

ERIKSSON VS. COLUMBUS

So, Boston's elite in their well-heeled gathering places began to identify themselves with, of all people, Leif Eriksson. Why? Because of Christopher Columbus. He personified the growing political and social power of Boston's Catholic immigrants. Consider the following events: Prior to the 1840s, Irish immigration into Boston numbered in the range of only 4,000–5,000 annually. During the famine years (1845–1850), that number rose tenfold to around 40,000 annually. Around 1900, in part because of the political instability of the unification, there was a corresponding influx of Italian Catholics into Boston. The Italian population of Boston was estimated at 5,000 in 1890 and 30,000 in 1910. In 1884 Boston elected Hugh O'Brien as the first Irish Catholic Mayor of Boston; this was a watershed in the balance of local political power between the traditional Protestant establishment and the growing immigrant Catholic population. The Knights of Columbus was founded in 1882 and by the 400th Columbian anniversary in 1892, there was a strong movement among American Catholics to make Columbus a saint as the bringer of Christianity to the New World.¹⁷

For the Protestant elite of Boston, Leif Eriksson was the anti-Columbus. They saw him as fair and Nordic, whereas Columbus was Italian. Columbus brought (in their minds) superstition and slavery to the New World, whereas



Details from the Pedestal

Left to right: One of the two runic inscription panels (“Leif the Lucky, son of Erik”); one of the two bronze reliefs, showing the Norse landing (note Leif at the top, in characteristic pose); and the base of the pedestal modeled like the prow of a Viking ship. Source: Gloria Greis.

Eriksson brought progress and commerce. If the concept had existed, Eriksson was the kind of man who would have been, well, Protestant—like them. And if Horsford and Bull and Rafn were to be believed, *Leif Eriksson got here first*. And if he got here first, then Leif Eriksson and not Columbus was the first European to set foot in the New World; and it was Leif Eriksson and not Columbus who first brought Christianity to these shores. If you had Leif Eriksson, you didn’t need Columbus.

Well, did he get here first? The answer, in fact, is yes—but Vinland was not the Norumbega of Horsford’s imagination. Until the 1960s there was no evidence at all of Norse settlement any farther west than Greenland, which had two Viking settlements—the east settlement (at the southern tip) and the west settlement on the west coast. The Norsemen who went there, however, were not looking for trade goods or “masur-wood.” Leif’s father, Erik Thorwaldsson, was called Erik the Red both for his red hair and his red hands. Erik’s own father was exiled from Norway for murder around 970 AD and went to live in the Norse settlements in Iceland. Like father, like son—Erik was exiled from Iceland for murder in 986, heading out to the known but not settled lands to the west. Erik called the land “Greenland” for two reasons—first, the name Iceland was already taken; and second, he was something of a con artist and figured that a pleasant-sounding name would attract more settlers. Nevertheless, life in Greenland was harsh, leading the



Leif Eriksson Statue

Source: Gloria Greis.



Prows of Viking Ships

Some examples of the many prows of Viking ships used as architectural ornaments in the Boston area. Left to right: the Board of Trade Building on Broad Street, 1902; the main piers of the Longfellow Bridge at the waterline, 1906; and Harvard's Weld Boathouse on Memorial Drive, 1906.

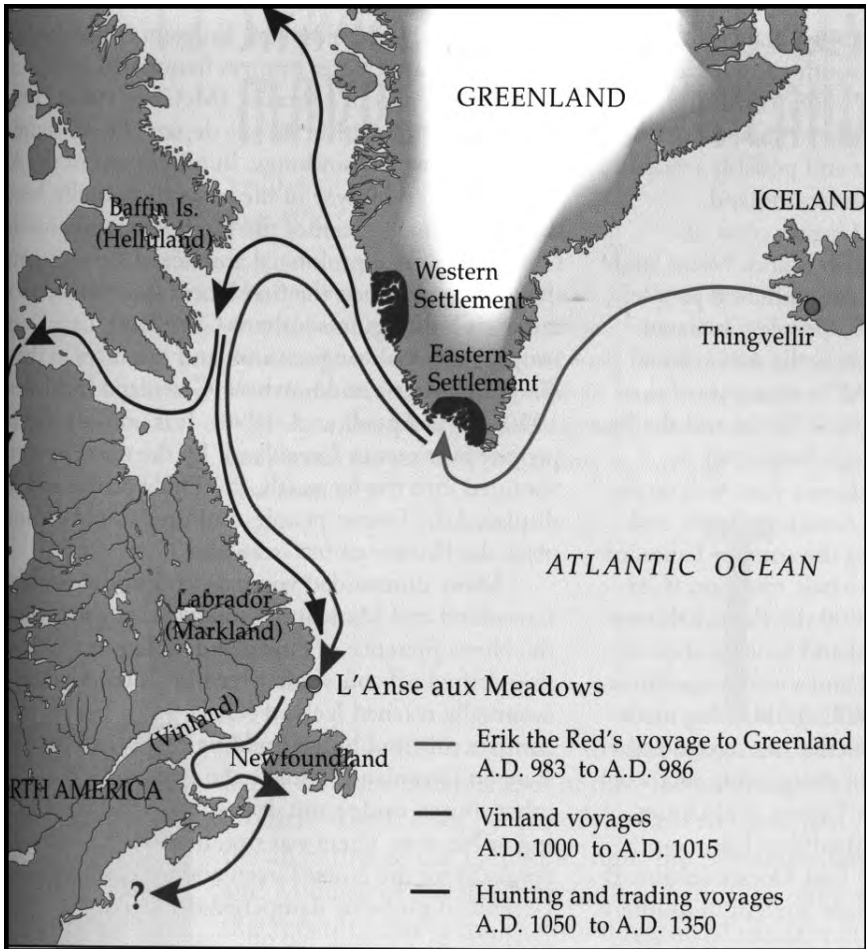
settlers to explore the surrounding regions in search of greener pastures. The two documents of these voyages, the *Greenland Saga* and *Erik's Saga*, describe a soft western land of meadows and grapevines called Vinland.

THE SEARCH FOR VINLAND

Similar to the search for Norumbega, the search for Vinland had gone on for many centuries, up and down the east coast of North America. In 1960 a Norwegian historian named Helge Ingstad was told by a Newfoundland fisherman about mounds along the coast near his village of L'anse aux Meadows.¹⁸ The fisherman believed that the mounds were Indian burials, but Ingstad thought that the layout looked like settlements of the Viking period that he had seen in Norway. Ingstad came back the following year with his wife, the archaeologist Anne-Stine Ingstad. In the years following, they excavated a settlement of longhouses, a smithy, a carpenter's shop, and a boat-repair shop—all of which could be identified by the trash and tools found in the deposits.

The most important discovery was that the artifacts—and there were a lot of them—were consistent with the style and form of equivalent types of artifacts found in Norway and dated to Viking times. There were women's tools as well, for weaving and cooking, etc., indicating that this was a full-

fledged settlement and not just a fishing camp. Even so, the settlement was small and probably short-lived, several years only, before the settlers retreated again to Greenland. However, there was a great bulk of material left behind—tools, food bones, building timbers, burned patches in the soil from hearths and smithy fires—and compare this to the complete lack of such finds at purported sites like Horsford's Norumbega. When people live somewhere, they leave garbage. The find of an isolated object, even one as interesting as



Proposed Routes of the Vinland Voyages

Courtesy: William Fitzhugh and Elizabeth Ward, *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga* (Washington, DC. Smithsonian Institution / National Museum of Natural History, 2000).

Dighton Rock, is not sufficient to prove that there was contact. The object must reside within a context of deposits appropriate to the activity.

L'anse aux Meadows was the first (and still the only) significant evidence of a Norse presence in North America. It is now a Canadian national park and a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site.

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So, in the end, Longfellow, Ole Bull, and Eben Horsford got their wish: in Boston Leif Eriksson was recognized and honored as the first European to set foot on these shores. But even so, Mayor Hugh O'Brien and the good Catholics of Boston got the last laugh. There is no evidence that the Norse settlement of Vinland ever totaled more than a few families, much less tens of thousands. Leif came, and then he went, and even in Norway no one remembered. Columbus came five hundred years later and changed the world. Nevertheless, the brief ascendancy of Leif Eriksson lives on in the fabric of Boston (if you know where to look), reminding us of a time when New England was a wilder place, and Vikings sailed the Charles.¹⁹

But lest I leave you with the impression that Horsford was nothing more than a crank, it should be noted that he was a respected and distinguished chemist whose contributions to the science of food chemistry benefit us to this day. He also used his great wealth to further such causes as public health/nutrition, public education, and especially higher education for women. He was the donor of the Shelter Island (NY) Public Library. He was a benefactor and President of the Board of Visitors of Wellesley College. Norumbega Hall (now gone) was so named in his honor.²⁰ Horsford continued to act as a patron of the sculptor Anne Whitney, and she made a bust of Horsford for Wellesley College. In 2006 the American Chemical Society designated Rumford Double-Acting Baking Powder as a National Historic Chemical and as a "seminal achievement" in the history of chemistry.

HJM

Notes

1. Gloria Polizzotti Greis, "Vikings on the Charles OR, The Strange Saga of Norumbega, Dighton Rock, and Rumford Double-Acting Baking Powder," originally published in 2004 at <https://needhamhistory.org/features/articles/vikings/>.

2. For the discussion of the Leif Eriksson statue in the context of the cultural and ethnic politics of Boston, I am greatly indebted to Janet A. Headly, “Anne Whitney’s Leif Eriksson: A Brahmin Response to Christopher Columbus,” *American Art*, 17, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 40–59. An inventory of Leif Eriksson monuments worldwide, including the Eriksson statue, Horsford’s plaque locating Leif’s house, and the Norumbega Tower, was compiled by Peter van der Krogt; see <http://leiferiksson.vanderkrogt.net>, accessed Oct. 10, 2020. Editor’s Note: For nearly a century scholars have sought to analyze nineteenth-century Bostonians’ fascination with Leif Eriksson and the Vikings. See Oscar J. Falnes, “New England Interest in Scandinavian Culture and the Norsemen,” *The New England Quarterly*, 10, no. 2 (June 1937): 211–242. For more recent references see Torgrim Sneve Guttormsen, “Valuing Immigrant Memories as Common Heritage: The Leif Erikson Monument in Boston,” *History & Memory*, 30, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2018): 7–15. For a broader, transnational perspective, see Dag Blanck, “The Transnational Viking: The Role of the Viking in Sweden, the United States, and Swedish America,” *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, 7, no. 1 (2016): 1–19.

3. Headley, 6–7. Note: Headley’s article contains extensive primary source quotes from letters and writings of those involved in the Appleton committee.

4. Although it is ostensibly a guidebook to the public attractions on his estate, William Emerson Baker used his 150-page, awkwardly titled book, *Guide to the Ridge Hill Farms, Wellesley, MA, and Social Science Reform* (Boston: Getchell Brothers, 1877), as a forum to articulate his personal, social, and political opinions on a broad range of issues—among them, the Viking discovery of North America.

5. Headley, 9. For firsthand accounts of the statue’s conception, see Rasmus Björn Anderson, *The Life Story of Rasmus B. Anderson*, (Madison, WI: 1915), 208–12 and Arthur Middleton Reeves, *The Norse Discovery of America* (London, Norrœna Society, 1907).

6. Reznick, Samuel, “The European Education of an American Chemist, and Its Influence in 19th-Century America: Eben Norton Horsford,” *Technology and Culture*, 11, no. 3 (1970): 366–388. For more on the history of baking powder, including teachers’ lesson plans, see: American Chemical Society, “Development of Baking Powder: National Historic Chemical Landmark,” at www.acs.org, accessed Oct. 10, 2020.

7. Andy Woodruff, “Norumbega, New England’s Lost City of Riches and Vikings,” posted May 24, 2010 at www.cartogrammar.com/blog/norumbega-new-englands-lost-city-of-riches-and-vikings/, accessed Oct. 10, 2020. David Ingram was a young seaman who joined a crew heading for the Caribbean in 1568. After alleged capture by pirates and later Native Americans, he finally made his way to what is now Maine to hitch a ride back to England aboard a European fishing vessel off the Banks. In the course of this journey, he claims he encountered Norumbega. His tale became popular in England and was written down by Richard Hakluyt, a clergyman and author who was promoting English exploration. Hakluyt published an account of

Ingram's journey called *The Relations of David Ingram* in 1582, which is the original source of the quotes.

8. Eben Horsford wrote extensively on the topic of the Norse settlement of New England. His major works include *The Problem of the Northmen* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin 1890), *The Discovery of the Ancient City of Norumbega* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1890), *The Defenses of Norumbega* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1891), and *The Landfall of Leif Erikson, A.D. 1000, and the Site of his Houses in Vineland* (Boston: Damrell and Upham, 1892).

9. Eben Norton Horsford, *The Problem of the Northmen: A Letter to Judge Daly, The President of the American Geographical Society on the opinion of Justin Winsor, that "Though Scandinavians may have reached the shores of Labrador, the soil of the United States has not one vestige of their presence."* (Cambridge, MA: John Wilson and Son, 1889), 12 (emphasis in original). Editor's note: This publication was Horsford's 45-page retort to trained archaeologist Justin Winsor, with photographs and maps of alleged Viking sites. At the time, mainstream historians and archaeologists were dubious over claims of a Viking discovery of America. Several, including Justin Winsor, were ready to accept the possibility that Norse explorers had come to America, but few accepted that there was any evidence of it. After his death Horsford's daughter continued his quixotic campaign and his crusade to persuade academic archaeologists. See Brian Regal, "Cornelia Horsford and the Adventures of Leif Erikson: Viking Settlements in the Bay State," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, no. 2 (Summer 2020): 37–59.

10. For a brief history of Norumbega Park, see Robert Pollack, "Norumbega Park" (1999) at www.defunctparks.com/parks/MA/norumbega/norumbegapark.htm. An excellent array of old postcards of Norumbega Park in its heyday can be viewed on the Historic Newton's website exhibit, "Canoeing the Charles," at www.newtonma.gov/gov/historic/events/past/canoeing/default.asp, accessed Oct. 10, 2020.

11. For an exhaustive summary of research and the interpretations of Dighton Rock in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, see Edmund Delabarre, *Early Interest in Dighton Rock* (Cambridge, MA: John Wilson and Sons, 1916); *The Middle Period of Dighton Rock History* (Cambridge, MA: John Wilson and Sons, 1917), and *The Recent History of Dighton Rock* (Cambridge, MA: John Wilson and Sons, 1919).

12. Quote from Carl Christian Rafn (*Antiquitates Americanae*, 1837) quoted in Delabarre, *The Recent History of Dighton Rock*, 309.

13. Baker, *Guide to Ridge Hill Farms*, 36–38.

14. Some committee members were also concerned that Whitney was a comparatively inexperienced sculptor. Thomas Ball's second-choice design was commissioned instead and unveiled in 1878. It is located in Boston's Public Garden. See Eleanor Tufts, "An American Victorian Dilemma, 1875: Should a Woman Be Allowed to Sculpt a Man?," *Art Journal*, 51, no. 1(1992): 5–56. For more on Anne Whitney, see Charlotte Streifer Rubenstein, *American Women Sculptors* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Company, 1990).

15. Eben Norton Horsford, *Discovery of America by Northmen. Address at the Unveiling of the Statue of Leif Eriksen, delivered in Faneuil Hall Oct. 29, 1887* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1888), 60.

16. James Jackson Jarves, quoted in "The Statue of Leif Ericson," *Boston Evening Transcript*, Dec. 4, 1886, 8; "The Norse Discoverer of America," *Harper's Weekly*, Nov. 5, 1887, 6; "Fine Arts: Miss Whitney's Statue to the Norseman," *Sunday Herald*, March 28, 1886, 13. All are quoted in Janet A. Headley, 40–59.

17. Headley, 20.

18. In addition to L'anse aux Meadows, the existence of one or more Norse settlements or camps in Newfoundland has been suggested by satellite images of the southern part of the island. Excavations begun at Point Rosee in 2016 have found possible traces of iron smelting, which raises the possibility of more widespread Norse activity in the area. See Mark Strauss, "Discovery Could Rewrite History of Vikings in New World," *National Geographic*, March 31, 2016.

19. For a modern discussion of Viking exploration and discoveries in North America, see William Fitzhugh and Elizabeth Ward, eds., *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga* (Smithsonian Institution/National Museum of Natural History, 2000).

20. The site of Norumbega Hall lies under the current Jewett Arts Center on the Wellesley College campus. The hill where the Jewett Arts Center and also the Davis Museum and Greene Hall are located was known (at least through the 1950s) as Norumbega Hill, but the hall itself is now gone.



Christmas Card

“The Norwegian who first discovered America,” date unknown.



Statue Adorned with Scandinavian Flags, 1919

Source: Boston Public Library, Leslie Jones Collection.