

Kensington Rune Stone Decoded: Vikings, Templars & Goths in America in 1362?

WHEN A SIMPLE IMMIGRANT FARMER discovered what seemed to be an ancient stone with “Viking-style” runes inscribed on it in Minnesota, people said he was crazy or lying. But more than 100 years later, additional discoveries have proved the stele was indeed the real McCoy, although left there by Knights Templar of the Middle Ages rather than Thor-worshipping Norsemen.

BY FRANK JOSEPH

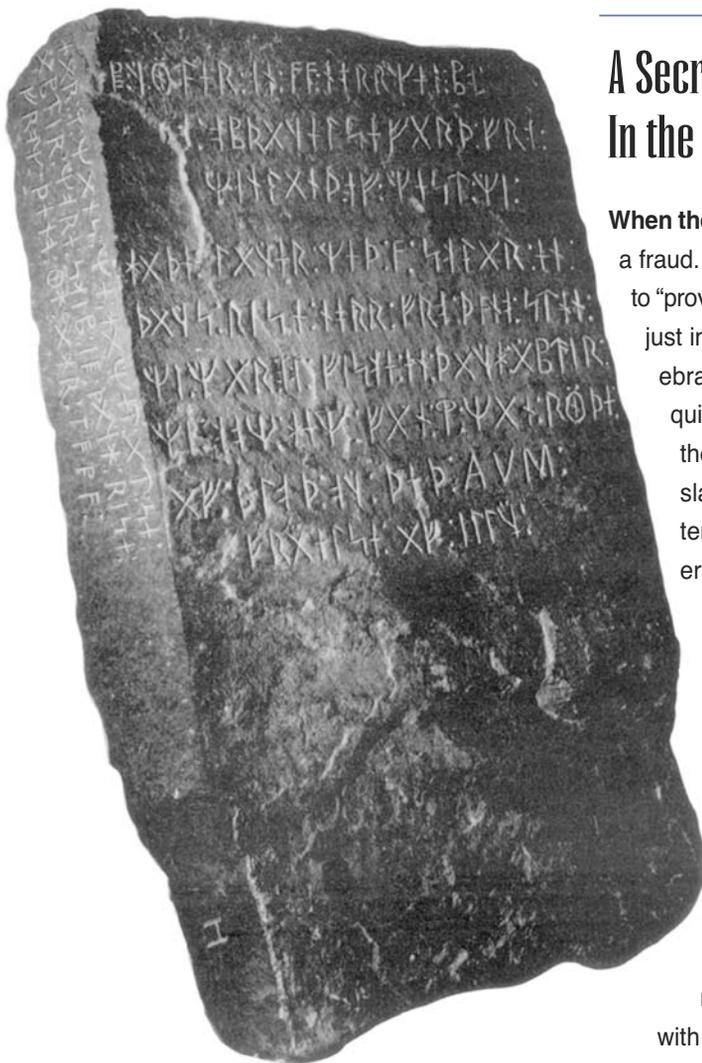
Very few books are truly capable of rewriting history, but *The Hooked X: Key to the Secret History of North America*, by Scott F. Wolter, is certainly one of them. Although the author of this new Revisionist book, who is well known to longtime readers of TBR, is a professional geologist and not a historian, the discoveries made by Wolter in recent years and described in *Hooked X* are powerful enough to compel a fundamental rethinking of our view of the American past. The centerpiece of his revelations is that controversial, even contentious artifact known as the Kensington Rune Stone [see TBR, March/April 2002—Ed.].

For those who are unfamiliar with it, this is a 200-pound greywacke sandstone stele found by Swedish immigrant farmer, Olof Ohman, while clearing his land in the largely rural township of Solem, Douglas County, Minnesota, during September 1898. Lying face down and entwined in the roots of a stunted, 30-year-old aspen, the 30-by-16-by-six-inch slab was covered on its face and one side with some sort of runic writing. Ohman brought it to the nearest town, Kensington, where his find was displayed at the local bank.

A badly flawed copy of the inscription was forwarded to the University of Minnesota, where a translation was attempted by Olaus J. Breda. It would take more than another 100 years for scholars, correcting for the imperfect copy, to properly translate the text. The front face reads, “Eight Gotlanders and 22 Norwegians on (this) reclaiming/acquisition journey far west from Vinland. We had a camp by two (shel-



In 1898, Swedish immigrant farmer Olof Ohman discovered a 202-lb. tablet engraved with runes while working the fields on his Douglas County, Minnesota, property. Ohman believed the stone was proof that Vikings were in America before Christopher Columbus, but was quickly ruled to be a fraudster. He suffered greatly from the smears, but now has been vindicated.



A Secret Templar Code Embedded In the Kensington Rune Stone?

When the **Kensington Rune Stone** was first discovered, it was quickly labeled a fraud. Critics claimed the founder, Olof Ohman, had carved the rune stone to “prove” Scandinavians had made it to America first, and with perfect timing, just in time for a coming “Christopher Columbus discovered America” celebration by Italian-Americans. More scientific critics later claimed the quirky runic characters were too “modern” and that other characters on the stone were of a form not known in any existing examples. Some had slashes through them; others had odd “punch” marks inside the counters of the letters. After much research, geologist Scott Wolter and others found characters very much like those on the Kensington Rune Stone in Templar churches in Gotland. This makes sense as the stone said Goths (Gotlanders) were along on the voyage. Further, four characters had slash marks. The “slashed” characters, according to Scott Wolter, seemed to be saying “look at me.” When he did, he found that, when deciphered with a “key” called the Easter Dating Table, a secret, “verification date” appeared: 1362—the same date written on the side of the stone in more conventional characters. Important inscriptions were evidently “double dated” in this way by the Templars to ensure that if a stone were found by a rival, and the stone was, for instance, a land claim marker, any nefarious modifications to the stone’s original date could be detected with the secret dating method.

ters?) one day’s journey north from this stone. We were fishing one day. After we came home we found 10 men red with blood and death. *Ave Maria*. Save from evil.” Inscribed on the side of the stone are the words, “There are 10 men by the sea to look after our ships 14 days journey from this island. Year 1362.”

PROFESSIONALS JUMP TO DEBUNK ARTIFACT

Although a professor of Scandinavian languages and literature, Breda’s runic knowledge was limited. He hastily proclaimed Ohman’s discovery a transparent hoax. Breda was supported by Norway’s leading archeologist of the late 19th century, Oluf Rygh, and his colleagues at Northwestern University, in Evanston, Illinois. Their unanimous dismissal of the rune stone was based entirely on its error-ridden facsimile, and ruined Ohman’s life in an era when a man’s word was truly his bond. He never tried to make money off the rune stone; he often cursed the day he found it; and swore he told the whole truth about its discovery unto the hour of his death.

With the family reputation ruined, he was shunned and mocked by society to the extent that one of his daughters committed suicide.

While mainstream archeologists and linguists continued to insist that the Kensington Rune Stone was fraudulent, a geologist at the Minnesota Historical Society, Newton Horace Winchell, undertook a detailed physical analysis of the object for the first time. His tests underscored Ohman’s version of events, as particularly confirmed by weathering of the stone, which indicated its inscription was about 500 years old.

“There was strong support for an authentic rune stone date of 1362,” Winchell concluded, “and little reason to suspect fraud.”

But his 1910 report fell into obscurity beneath the louder denunciations of skeptics, who convinced most of the outside world that the Kensington Rune Stone was a ludicrous forgery. A few amateur researchers had their doubts, however, and wondered if other local evidence might support the rune stone’s pre-Columbian authenticity. For examples, they cited

the inscribed text for internal evidence. It describes the location of the rune stone as on an “island,” even though the object had been found on a farm nowhere near water. Not until 1937, when hydrological surveys were conducted for the state of Minnesota, did investigators learn that the area of discovery was virtually flooded with streams and lakes during the 14th century and for at least 500 years before.

Increasingly dry conditions beginning in the 16th century transfigured the regional landscape into swamps and marsh, until it became the rich pasture Olof Ohman settled in the late 1800s. The hill on which he found the rune stone was indeed an island, although neither he nor anyone else at the time knew it was surrounded by water back in 1362, the inscribed date.

Researchers also pointed out several triangular holes cut into boulders, apparently very long ago, observed along riverways leading toward Ohman’s farm; 14th-century Norse seafarers were known to favor triangular mooring holes.

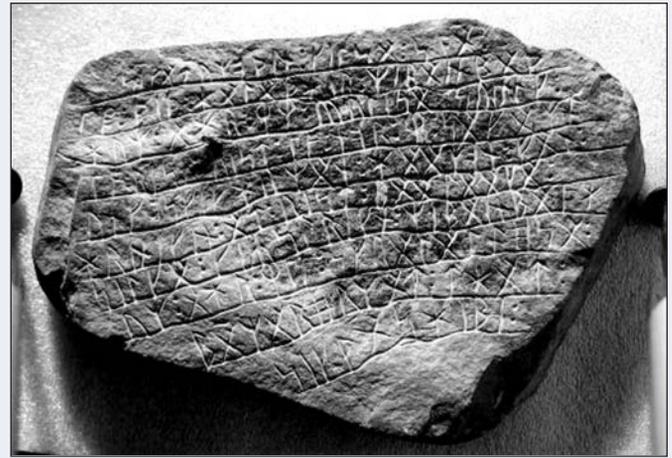
ADDITIONAL FINDS

Not far north and 27 years before the Kensington Rune Stone was discovered, an old fire-steel identical to medieval Norse specimens at Oslo’s University Museum emerged from deep beneath the bank of the Red River near Climax, Minnesota.

Compelling considerations such as these prompted investigators to seek out professional help of their own in 2000. They contacted the St. Paul-based American Petrographic Services, a firm specializing in the analysis of construction materials to determine suitability, conformance to specifications, or causes of failure. It was and is owned and headed by Scott F. Wolter, a university-trained, certified geologist, who had never even heard of the Kensington Rune Stone. He would conduct its first detailed physical analysis since Winchell’s investigation, 90 years before.

With no preconceived notions and indifferent to the outcome of his research, Wolter began using photography with a reflected light microscope, core sampling and examination via a scanning electron microscope. In November, he presented his preliminary findings: the alleged artifact exhibited unmistakable signs of a sub-surface erosional process requiring a minimum of 200 years. In other words, the Kensington Rune Stone was buried for at least a century before Olof Ohman excavated it.

Wolter’s conclusion was based on the complete breakdown of mica crystals on the inscribed surface of the stone, compared to his collected samples of slate gravestones from



The Hooked X, the Narragansett Stone and the Spirit Pond Rune Stones

There are other American stones with scripts and quirky characters quite similar to the Kensington Rune Stone (including “hooked Xs,” punch marks and slashes), all of which rarely if ever appeared in old futhark-based Viking scripts. Obviously, these stones are not of Viking origin. Now, in light of the discoveries of geologist Scott Wolter, scholars are taking a second look at several other controversial ancient American artifacts including the Spirit Pond (Maine) rune stones (one of the three known Spirit Pond stones shown at top), the 300-lb. Westford (Massachusetts) Boat Stone (shown right) and the Narragansett (Rhode Island) Stone (bottom). Found in Rhode Island’s Narragansett Bay, this runic inscription is only visible for 20 minutes a day, at low tide. (Carbon-

dating of the floorboards of a nearby long house yielded a date of 1405.) A “hooked X” is clearly visible on nearly every line of the Spirit Pond stone shown. At bottom is a photo of the Narragansett Stone with a “hooked X.” At left (inset) is shown one of many “hooked Xs” from the Kensington Rune Stone. As far as the Westford Boat Stone, weathering patterns of the carving seem consistent with that of a 600-year-old artifact and the carving resembles a 14th-century knarr. Incidentally, experts now say secret dates were embedded on the Spirit Pond Rune Stones, verifying Easter Table dates of 1401 (once) and 1402 (three times).



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Maine; these showed that biotite mica began to mechanically flake off their surfaces after 197 years, plus or minus five years. Skeptics endeavored to fault his determination by arguing that standards for mica degradation do not exist.

“It is true,” he responded to an e-mail inquiry, “that there is no standard for the mica degradation work I performed on the Kensington Rune Stone. The reason is, to my knowledge, I am the first to perform this type of relative-age dating study. Because the biotite mica began to weather off the manmade surfaces of the slate tombstones after approximately 200 years, the Kensington Rune Stone inscription must be older than 200 years (prior to 1898, when it was pulled from the ground), since all the mica had weathered away from the manmade surfaces.”

Intrigued, he went on to examine each individual rune through a scanning electron microscope, which revealed some remarkable characteristics. Also noticed was a hitherto-unseen series of dots engraved inside three R-runes. This discovery was highly significant, because such dotted runes occur only on the headstones of 14th-century graves in church cemeteries on the island of Gotland off the coast of Sweden. The Kensington Rune Stone’s text dates itself to the same century and mentions eight crewmen from Gotland.

SMOKING GUN

Wolter then studied and replicated the rune stone’s first, long-neglected geologic report, released in 1910. Early 21st-century technology confirmed Prof. Winchell’s conclusion that the artifact was authentically pre-Columbian. But the proverbial “smoking gun” was the discovery of a single runic letter.

As Wolter explains, “The rare, medieval rune called ‘the dotted R’ was not known to modern scholars until 1935, yet it is found on the Kensington Rune Stone found in 1898. Interpretation: The presence of ‘the dotted R’ indicates the Kensington Rune Stone inscription could only have been carved during medieval times.”

Unequivocal verification of the Kensington Rune Stone’s

Finding the Stone Again

If the Kensington Rune Stone were in fact a land claim marker, one would want to be able to find it again. Scott Wolter has taken the known position of “mooring holes” carved into boulders in the Kensington, Minn., area and used them to triangulate three bearing lines which he has found intersect over the exact spot the Kensington Rune Stone was found. Researchers had until recently believed these holes were used to moor small Viking boats, a stake being placed in the hole in the rock and a rope from the boat then being attached to that. However, author Frank Joseph points out that the area was in fact flooded with streams and lakes at the time the stone was carved, thus making the claim that it was buried on an “island,” as the inscription says, more plausible. And if, again, the Kensington Rune Stone was a land claim marker, what better place to bury it than at the headwaters of the Mississippi River? Did the Templars lay the first claim to what would later become (more or less) the Louisiana Purchase?

14th-century identity was a true scientific triumph, establishing beyond doubt that Scandinavian seafarers arrived in the heartland of North America 130 years before Christopher Columbus left Spain in search of the New World.

But Wolter expanded his research to reveal much more. He discovered that the Kensington Rune Stone was not just some pre-Columbian anomaly proving only that the Norse beat the Spaniards to America. He competently defines it as a land-claim marker. In other words, the men who set it up did so to declare what later became west central Minnesota for themselves. The inscription’s date of 1362, Wolter demonstrates, was additionally encoded in the runic text itself, because its Arabic numerals were vulnerable to alteration by interlopers.

After carving, the Kensington Rune Stone was deliberately buried, and triangular-shaped holes were drilled into glacial boulders not far away; these were used to triangulate and relocate the precise position of the buried rune stone. The directional marker holes are

no speculation, but were recently found, and do indeed still indicate the original location of the Kensington Rune Stone’s discovery by Olof Ohman.

Wolter goes still further in his quest for information about the artifact to discover the identity of the man who carved its inscription: a Cistercian monk from Gotland, the same Swedish island cited in the runic text. The Cistercians were monastic, Gnostic Christians, founders of the Knights Templar, who survived the latter’s immolation during the early 14th century by migrating from France to other parts of Europe, including Gotland. Templars were still residents of the island at the time the Kensington Rune Stone was carved in 1362. According to Wolter, its inscription “includes information related to who the party was, where their location was, when they were there and why.”

THE HOOKED X

The key unlocking this information is the mysterious “hooked X,” which not only appears on the Kensington Rune Stone, but among several other runic texts in Europe and pre-

Columbian North America. As Wolter explains, “the hooked X symbol is an important coded runic symbol likely created by Cistercian monks. The ‘X’ is symbolic of the allegorical representation of the duality and balance of man and woman, and heaven and earth. The ‘hook’ in the X is symbolic of the child or offspring, representative of the continuation and perpetuation of the ‘Goddess’ ideology through common bloodlines and thought.” His interpretation is substantiated by medieval scholars long aware of the proto-Templar Cistercians’ unusual theology.

Appropriately, “the hooked X appears on dated inscriptions from two exploration parties during a 40-year period,” inclusive of the Kensington Rune Stone text’s creation. This peculiar glyph is especially helpful in authenticating a runic inscription, because it is highly unlikely to have been known to a hoaxer, appears on few artifacts, and has been competently dated to the late Middle Ages, thereby helping to establish not only the authenticity, but the time parameters of a particular object.

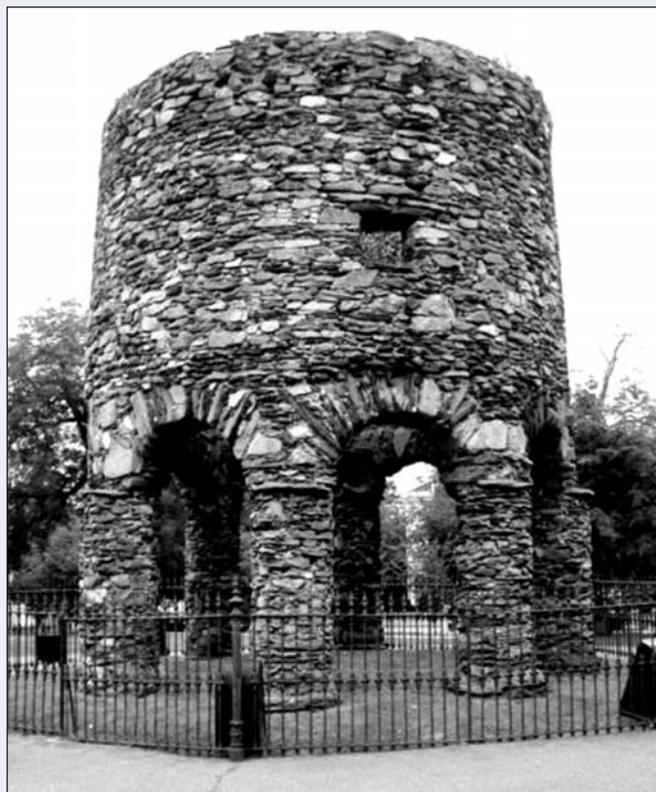
Accordingly, Wolter gives us the Kensington Rune Stone in the context of other, related finds. Among the best known is Rhode Island’s Newport Tower. Ordained by mainstream archeologists as nothing more than the ruin of an 17th-century mill supposedly owned by the family of none other than Benedict Arnold, Wolter instead demonstrates that the stone structure in Touro Park “was built using architecture that is not consistent with pre-Colonial construction practices before the first known recording in Benedict Arnold’s will in 1677 [this was an ancestor of the more famous Benedict Arnold]. . . . Since the standard unit of measurement used in construction throughout New England in the 17th century was the English foot, the Newport Tower [which was laid out in the Norwegian short *alen*] was not built by 17th-century Colonists.”

MYSTERIOUS TOWER EXPLAINED

He cites dating procedures applied in 1997 to the structure by Danish professor Andre J. Bethune, whose carbon-14 analysis indicated that, in Bethune’s words, “the Newport Tower was standing in the years 1440 to 1480.” Wolter shows that its close resemblance to sacred buildings in medieval Europe and the Near East—such as Scotland’s mid-12th-century Eynhallow Church in Orkney or Jerusalem’s *Templum Domini*—defines the Newport Tower as a baptistery additionally employed for navigational purposes.

Wolter quotes a prominent researcher, the late James Whittall, who pointed out that “the tool marks created in the dressing out of the stonework (on the Newport Tower) can di-

The Newport Tower Re-Examined In Light of Wolter’s Discoveries



Working from the premise that Prince Henry Sinclair was involved in the construction of the Newport Tower, it stands to reason that the architecture of the tower should have similarities to that of northern Scotland, where Prince Henry ruled. Other researchers have offered possible units of measurement used to build the tower: the Scottish ell or the Norwegian alen. Various researchers note that the tower’s double flue system in the fireplace is consistent with medieval Scottish architecture. The below image of ruins of a Cistercian church at Eynhallow in the Orkney Islands (left), side-by-side with a tower archway (right), is another illustration of the possible Scottish origin for the Newport Tower architects. To make the connection to Prince Henry and the Sinclair clan stronger, the abbot in charge of Eynhallow in the mid-12th-century was Abbot Lawrence, previously known as Henry Sinclair of Rye.



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rectly be related to tools before 1400. These marks are unique and unknown when compared to tool marks noted in Colonial stonework. . . . The single and double-splay windows have prototypes in medieval Europe and in the northern isles of Scotland in the 1300s in churches and the bishop's palace in Orkney. . . . The walls were covered with a plaster stucco finish, both interior and exterior. Stucco finishing started in the 1200s and is a feature known in Orkney and Shetland. . . . There is no archeological parallel in Colonial New England for the Newport Tower and its specific architectural features."

These and numerous other supporting details leave no doubt about the tower's pre-Columbian provenance.

Wolter goes to describe several other pieces of evidence for the medieval European impact on this continent, and for the presentation alone of these otherwise little-known artifacts, his book is especially valuable. To him, they are all fragments of an interrelating mosaic, the final image of which tends to reveal a post-Templar interest in North America. Traces of this shadowy presence are scattered throughout a diverse collection of stone inscriptions and archeological sites from Minnesota's Kensington Rune Stone to similar texts and engraved illustrations in New England.

HOAX UNLIKELY

Among the least known, yet most convincing discoveries of its kind is a one-line, lithic inscription found near Pojac Point in Narragansett Bay, an estuary on the north side of Rhode Island Sound. The mostly submerged, two-ton, glacial boulder's difficult accessibility some 60 feet from shore in often rough water says much for the pre-Columbian credibility of the runes etched into its top, which just protrudes above the surface of the sea and is continuously washed by wave action. These conditions argue strongly against the probability of a hoax.

Wolter found that each of the nine glyphs was approximately two inches long and cut one-half inch deep. The first rune he was able to identify was a version of H dated to the late Middle Ages. This suspected period was confirmed when he located a telltale "hooked X" on the Narragansett Stone. Its location in New England's largest estuary, which functions as an expansive natural harbor, tends to support the probability of visiting seafarers who used this location as a perfect headquarters from which to navigate the interior. The Sakonnet River, Mount Hope Bay and the southern tidal part of the Taunton River are all part of Narragansett Bay.

Other "hooked X" specimens were uncovered far from the Narragansett Stone in 1971. They were found shallowly buried along the shores of Spirit Pond near Popham Beach, not far from the Maine coast. Like other accidental discoveries unfortunate enough to have been made by unaccredited persons, the three Spirit Pond stones were automatically deemed fraudulent by mainstream opinion, and tossed into the Maine State Museum at Hallowell, where Wolter took some 1,700 photographs of them from 2006 to 2007. His examination showed that one of the stones, apparently illustrated with a map, was strangely oriented with east at the top and north to the left, something a forger would have been unlikely to do. Yet, until 1500, medieval maps were identically oriented to place Jerusalem, in the east, at the top.

His colleague, amateur linguist Richard Nielsen, had already determined an internal date of "1401" from the Maine artifacts' runic texts. Only later, just 300 yards from Spirit Pond, did archeologists uncover the remains of a Norse-style sod building, and radiocarbon-dated its floorboards to circa A.D. 1405.

Wolter was likewise impressed by the convincing antiquity of a very large granite boulder illustrated with the outlines of surrounding topography, and located in a town near the Merrimac River, as it flows through the northwest section of Middlesex County, Massachusetts. Known as the Tyngsboro Map Stone, it is an amazingly accurate representation of the local

Merrimac River-Lake Winnepesaukee watershed.

"I was struck by the advanced stage of weathering of the manmade lines," Wolter recalls. "I peeled back some of the lichen, and there was virtually no difference between the cut lines and the glacial surfaces. The weathering actually surprised me. Whoever carved this did it long ago."

THE WESTFORD KNIGHT

Not far from the Tyngsboro Map Stone, in the same county, a better-known Massachusetts site he investigated is the Westford Knight allegedly illustrated on glacially striated, mica-schist bedrock. The image had been familiar to generations of Westford residents, but was only professionally photographed for the first time immediately following World War II. The findings were published shortly thereafter in *The Ruins of Greater Ireland and New England* by W.B. Goodwin (Meador Press, Boston, 1946). To protect the site, Goodwin never revealed its precise whereabouts. Some years after his death, however, a determined reader, Frank Glynn, eventually

"Just 300 yards from Spirit Pond, archeologists uncovered the remains of a Norse-style sod building, and radiocarbon-dated its floorboards to circa A.D. 1405."

found the image, which had been created by punch-holes made with a hammer. The unorthodox illustration supposedly portrayed a helmeted knight-at-arms, complete with sword and shield.

By the time Wolter examined it in 2006, he was unable to make out anything resembling a human figure, perhaps because it eroded away in the decades of exposure to the elements after moss covering the illustration was removed. In any case, he did clearly discern the pecked outline of a broadsword, which according to Fitchburg, Massachusetts historian Michael Kaulback “was identified by British antiquarians as a large ‘hand-and-a-half wheel pommel blade’ of the 13th or 14th century” (*Discovering the Mysteries of Ancient America*, New Page Books, NJ 2006). This would make the image contemporaneous with Minnesota’s Kensington Rune Stone.

A short walking distance from the Westford Knight, the J.V. Fletcher Library displays a 300-pound glacial granite boulder depicting a sailing vessel in the company of an arrow and three glyphs.

“All had been made using a pecking technique similar to the Westford Sword,” Wolter writes. “The stone had been found only a couple of miles from the library in 1932 by a landowner named William Wyman. He moved the ‘boat stone’ into a shed and kept it in his possession until one of his descendants gave it to the library in the early 1960s. The fact that the pecking technique was similar to the Westford Knight didn’t mean the carver was the same person, but it could be an indication of the particular period when they were made. I was certain the weathering of both the Westford Boat Stone and the Westford Knight were not made in the past several decades, and could very well be many hundreds of years old.”

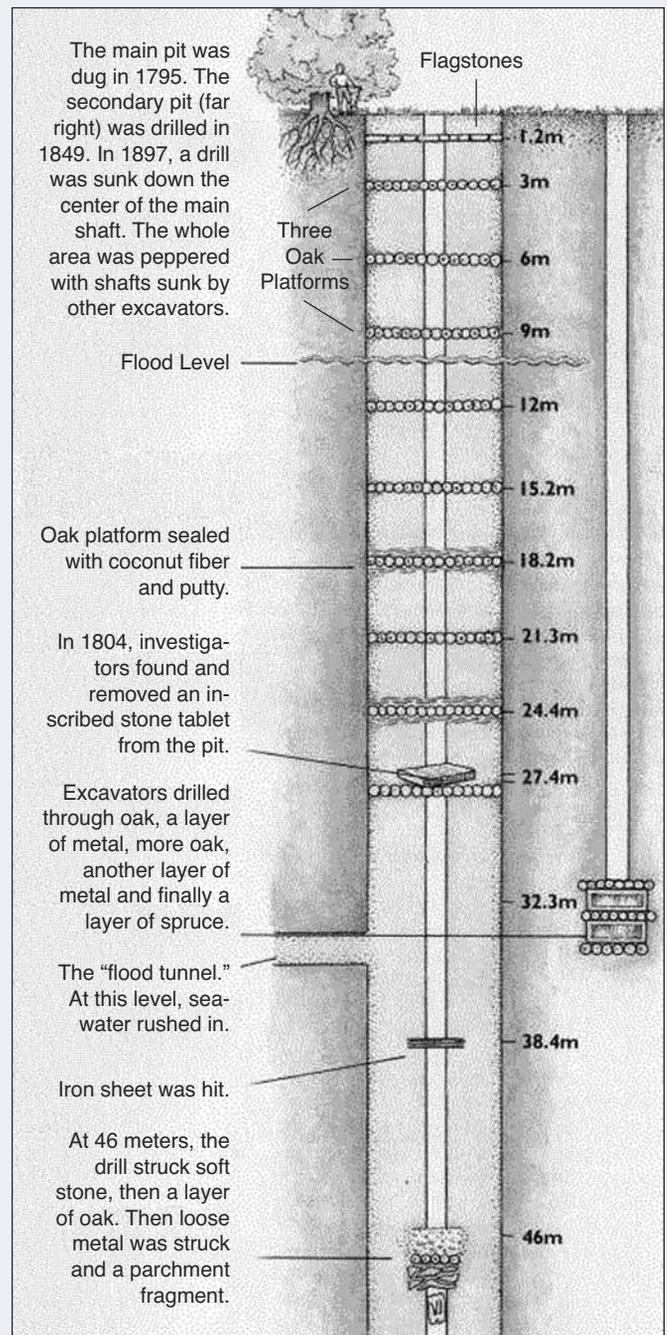
These artifacts have become invaluable for the validation of their pre-Columbian authenticity, thanks to an accredited scientist, a professional geologist. As such, he has removed them from the uncertain speculation of amateur theorists. More importantly, Scott Wolter shows that they are pieces of a puzzle far greater than its individual parts. The bigger picture emerging with breathtaking credibility from his research reveals the surprising extent and depth of Norse impact on our continent long before Christopher Columbus was born.

VINLAND MAP AUTHENTIC

Significantly, as the first copies of *The Hooked X* were rolling off the press, every word the author wrote was being powerfully underscored by Rene Larsen, rector of the School of Conservation at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. Last July, he and his colleagues—all world-class authorities in their respective fields—announced during Copenhagen’s

Oak Island Pit Still Confounds

Oak Island is a 140-acre island off Nova Scotia. The tree-covered island is located in Mahone Bay. Oak Island is the location of the so-called “Money Pit,” a site of numerous excavations to recover treasure believed by some to be buried there. Is the Oak Island pit a Templar structure? A pirate’s creation? A natural phenomenon? A hoax? Were oak timbers actually found as often as reported? And the disappearance of the inscription stone that was allegedly found in the pit has further muddied the issue. Several documented treasure recovery attempts ended in collapsed excavations and flooding. This illustration depicts salvage attempts and what several early excavators allege to have found. [TBR, May/June 2002.—Ed.]



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Vinland Map Is No Viking Map—But Norsemen Knew About ‘America’



Controversy has swirled around the Vinland Map since it came to light in the 1950s, many scholars suspecting it was a hoax meant to prove that Vikings were the first Europeans to land in North America—a claim confirmed by a 1960 archeological find. Doubts about the map linger even after the use of carbon dating as a way of establishing the age of an object. “All the tests that we have done over the past five years—on the materials and other aspects—do not show any signs of forgery,” Rene Larsen, rector of the School of Conservation under the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, said in an interview. U.S. researchers have carbon dated the map to about 1440. Scholars believe it was produced for a church council at Basel, Switzerland, the same year. The Vinland Map is not a “Viking map” but, if it is genuine, it shows that the New World was known not only to Norsemen but also to other Europeans at the very least half a century before Columbus’s voyage.

International Conference on the History of Cartography that the so-called “Vinland Map” was authentic. Their five-year investigation established that this document, long contested by conventional scholars, was a compilation of Norse voyages to and exploration of North America beginning after A.D. 1000.

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The map’s portrayed land-mass, identified as *Vinlandia Insula*, encompasses an area from Maine in the north to the Carolinas in the south; from the Atlantic seaboard to the Susquehanna River in central Pennsylvania. The Danes’ contemporary announcement was a timely vindication of Wolter’s conclusions.

The first line in his book, opening a foreword by Niven Sinclair, proclaims, “History needs to be rewritten.” And so it has been, in *The Hooked X*. ♦

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