



A VIKING in New York



The Kensington Runestone at the 1964–1965 World's Fair

Adam Hjorthén

The Kensington Runestone, discovered in west-central Minnesota's Douglas County in 1898, is arguably the world's most famous runestone. Runes are an ancient form of writing in Germanic languages, commonly preserved as stone carvings. Though the vast majority of such stones are found in Scandinavia, the one from Swedish immigrant Olof Ohman's farm has undoubtedly received the most popular attention.

For more than a century, museums, historical institutions, and a heterogeneous group of people have emphasized the Kensington stone's potential importance as a fourteenth-century artifact, interpreting its inscription as an authentic record of the story of Scandinavians on a journey into the American continent in 1362. At the same time, academic experts have maintained that the runestone was carved in the nineteenth century, most likely by Scandinavians claiming a stake in the American "melting pot." The stone has been on exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution and, in 2004, at the National Museum for Antiquities in Stockholm, Sweden, where it attracted large audiences and was described as the museum's greatest success in years.¹ A Google search on

"Kensington Runestone" and variant terms results in around 250,000 hits, whereas the Rök Runestone, Scandinavia's most famous carving, returns 45,000. As these examples indicate, the Kensington Runestone is something of a phenomenon.²

Many writers have dealt with the much-debated question of the stone's authenticity, but fewer have focused on its cultural meanings. The Kensington Runestone has defied the experts, largely because of the mystery surrounding it, combined with the histories and identities it has been taken to represent. Mysteries always attract attention, and so it is not surprising that the stone eventually came to be used for commercial purposes. This usage was not always the case. An important turning point in the history of the Kensington Runestone, one that shaped the popular perception common today, was its exhibition at the 1964–65 New York World's Fair. It was there that the Minnesota Pavilion enraged scholars by introducing the Viking in the runestone story.³

Adam Hjorthén, a PhD student in history at Stockholm University, Sweden, researched uses of the Kensington Runestone for his master's thesis. He is currently writing his dissertation on twentieth-century Swedish American commemorations.

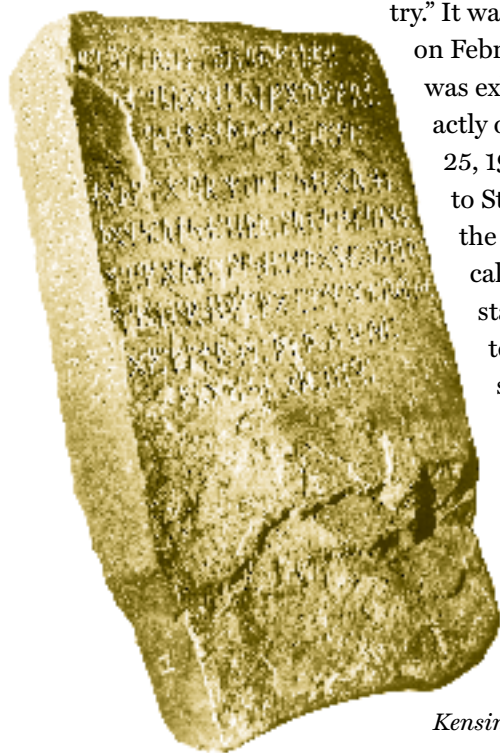
FACING: Crowds surge around the Minnesota pavilion's 28-foot Viking and snack bars, New York World's Fair, 1965

Discussions about the stone changed drastically between the Smithsonian exhibition in the 1940s and the New York World's Fair in the 1960s.

Understanding the stone's twentieth-century history helps us grasp its full meaning today. For decades after its discovery, the artifact was kept at local venues. Shortly after Ohman unearthed the stone, it was displayed in the window of a Kensington bank. Ohman then kept it until 1907, when he handed it over to nonacademic historian Hjalmar R. Holand. Holand's research on the Kensington Runestone would go on for 56 years and result in six books and numerous articles. In 1928 Holand turned the stone over to a group of Alexandria businessmen who displayed it in the offices of the town's Chamber of Commerce. The details of these transactions are somewhat unclear: Did Holand own the stone? Did he loan, sell, or give it to Alexandria? These uncertainties have had great impact on the artifact's later history.⁴

The stone's breakthrough came in the late 1940s. In December 1947, the president of the Smithsonian Institution, Alexander W. Wetmore, announced that it would be displayed in Washington, D.C. According to Wetmore, the Smithsonian considered the stone to be of "scientific interest . . . with regard to the early Norse discoveries and . . . to the history of exploration in our country." It was sent to Washington

on February 17, 1948, and was exhibited for almost exactly one year. On February 25, 1949, it was shipped to St. Paul for display at the Minnesota Historical Society during the state's territorial centennial. The Smithsonian regarded the return as temporary. Behind the scenes, a tug-of-war developed over the future of the Kensington Runestone.⁵



Kensington Runestone, 1950s

When the stone was sent to Washington, the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) expressed regret that it had not previously secured possession of it. During the spring of 1948, however, the MHS learned that no final written agreement had been made with the Smithsonian concerning the artifact's future. This information led the MHS to announce its interest in buying the Kensington Runestone. The only problem was: from whom? Who actually owned the stone? Was it the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, the family of the late Olof Ohman, or, perhaps, Hjalmar Holand?⁶

This uncertainty triggered a conflict that most likely prevented either of the institutions from taking possession of the artifact. In the early 1950s it was reported that the stone was not on display at all but was kept in the basement of the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce building.⁷ It stayed in town and in 1958 became the centerpiece of Alexandria's new Runestone Museum. If the ownership had been clear, it is possible that the stone would be in St. Paul or Washington today. Smithsonian documents point toward this conclusion. In a 1948 press release, the institution declared: "Even if it cannot be indisputably authenticated, the confirming evidence that the stone constitutes a genuine record is so strong that this relic is regarded by Smithsonian archeologists as one of the most significant historical objects ever found in the New World."⁸

The Kensington Runestone was displayed at the Smithsonian as a genuine, fourteenth-century artifact. A sign in its showcase—centrally placed in the museum's foyer—described its significance as recording "the presence of an expedition of Swedes and Norwegians, and the massacre of ten members of the party, in what is now west central Minnesota, in the year 1362." This exhibition gave the stone legitimization from which it, to some degree, still benefits. Authors and exhibitors alike refer to the Smithsonian showing as an important event in the stone's history.⁹

It was not long before academic experts countered the claim of the stone's medieval origin. As early as 1949 renowned runologist Sven B. F. Jansson from Sweden's Uppsala University published an article (in Swedish) in

which he had concluded that “the inscription on the Kensington Runestone is a hoax.” Jansson’s article was followed by several additional scholarly publications, the most influential being Erik Wahlgren’s 1958 book with the telling subtitle, *A Mystery Solved*.¹⁰

As a result, discussions about the stone changed drastically between the Smithsonian exhibition in the 1940s and the New York World’s Fair in the 1960s, moving from virtual academic indifference to a heated debate between scholarly experts, on one hand, and nonacademics and scholars in disciplines irrelevant to studies of runic writings on the other. Both sides took extreme positions, resulting in a polarization of attitudes that is still noticeable in recent publications. This polarization shaped the discourse about the Kensington Runestone during the 1960s and strongly affected its display at the World’s Fair.¹¹

The fair’s managers expected it to attract between 70 and 100 million visitors over its two seasons (April to October each year). Even though this goal was never reached, some 52 million people did visit the park in Flushing Meadows before the exposition closed in 1965. The fair has been remembered as something of an anomaly, effectively distancing itself from contemporary politics and pop-cultural progressivism. With apparent indifference to the civil rights movement and the murders of John F. Kennedy and Malcolm X, the World’s Fair adopted the slogan “Peace through Understanding.” It was characterized by kitschy, conservative commercialism.¹²

In 1963 Minnesota decided to participate and erect its own pavilion. This building was located among the other American states and international participants, with the Vatican State as its closest neighbor. Minnesota’s pavilion—a futuristic “polyhedron” comprising several six-sided structures in a beehive pattern—was largely the product of state-and-business cooperation. This partnership was congruent with the rest of the fair; according to scholars Robert Rydell, John Findling, and Kimberley Pelle, the exposition was not only “rambling” and



Governor Karl Rolvaag opening the Minnesota exhibit, 1964

“unfocused” but also “more than ever” oriented toward promoting corporations. When the pavilion opened its doors in April 1964, it was mainly a showcase for Minnesota businesses, shaped by the perhaps-not-too-exciting slogan, “Minnesota Brainpower Builds Profits.” The state’s Participation Exploratory Committee estimated that the pavilion would attract at least 2 percent of the expected 70 million fair visitors—approximately 1.4 million people over the two-year run.¹³

After the first season, it was evident that the projected number of visitors was too low for solvency. According to the North Star World’s Fair Corporation, the nonprofit organization responsible for all aspects of the pavilion, visitors had numbered about 1 million, surpassing the annual projection by 300,000 people. Yet this was not enough. If revenue did not increase, bankruptcy was inevitable.¹⁴ The financial situation was an imminent threat that needed a quick solution.

Furthermore, the quality of the pavilion’s exhibits was harshly criticized, in particular by the Twin Cities press. The *Minneapolis Tribune* headlined its front page on June 4, 1964, “Fair Pavilion Embarrasses Minnesotans,” and went on to describe the exhibit as “inadequate, inappropriate, chaotic, cheap, filthy and . . . embarrassing.” Out of the pavilion’s 18 booths and 40-some companies, only five or six could, according to the newspaper, be described as “creative or even interesting.”¹⁵

Later that month, the North Star World’s Fair Corpo-



Postcard view of the pavilion early in its first season

ration joined the criticism in a report that described the decaying state of the pavilion, including its leaking roof and several booths lacking electricity. The report continued: “Visitors ascend the ramp, view the general outside untidiness, pass by the . . . haphazardly maintained interior, then discover themselves in 93 degrees, still, and somewhat unpleasantly odored air in the unfinished sales area.” This, clearly, was not good for business. Though failure appeared to be near, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reassured readers that the pavilion could be saved: “There is nothing wrong with Minnesota’s exhibit at the World’s Fair in New York that a bag of money and some bright ideas will not cure.”¹⁶

It is likely that Minnesota’s display, in relation to other fair exhibits—whether General Electric’s consumerist Carousel of Progress or the wonder of Michelangelo’s *Pietà* at the neighboring Vatican—seemed quite boring. If it were to survive the 1965 season, it needed a major change. The threat of bankruptcy was temporarily relieved in June 1964 when Structural Plastics Corporation, the pavilion’s general contractors, took over day-to-day management, but the poor quality of the exhibition remained. Twin Cities newspapers and state government had all identified the main problem as the lack of an appealing, overarching theme. Finding one was now given first priority.¹⁷

In September 1964, marketing consultant Stuart

Widdess traveled from Minnesota to New York to inspect the pavilion. His report proposed restructuring it according to a new theme: Minnesota—Birthplace of a Nation. The North Star World’s Fair Corporation, still in charge of the overall endeavor, accepted the proposition,

seemingly without any uncertainty or hesitation. The inspiration for this theme was the Kensington Runestone.¹⁸

Widdess wrote that a theme based on the “Viking Story . . . stands way out in front of all the others.” The story to which he referred echoed the writings of Hjalmar Holand who, by this time, had become the prime Kensington Runestone advocate. As several researchers have pointed out, the large amount of literature he produced ensured that all subsequent discussions about the

stone would, in some way or other, reference his writings. Holand maintained that the stone was carved in 1362 and regarded it as “the oldest native document of American history written by white men.” Widdess’ report was based on Holand’s ideas but also alluded to the counter-claims of academic experts. It advocated using the polemic stirred up by the Smithsonian exhibition to bolster attendance.¹⁹

The fact that the Vikings reached North America 130 years before Columbus has terrific publicity shock value. The fact that this may be controversial adds to the publicity significance. . . . I think immediately of a setting with the Runestone as the center interest. . . . [The] exterior exhibit would dramatize the theme “Minnesota—Birthplace of a Nation” so that it could be seen by the crowds at the Vatican Pavilion; so that they would be intrigued by the Viking Story. . . . The fact that the Runestone is controversial is all to the good as I see it. Scholars throughout the country would try to get in the act with published interviews pro and con.²⁰

James Kaufman, director of the North Star corporation, agreed with Widdess’ proposal: “The main point would be to question who really discovered America, with the possibility of starting an interesting controversy.” The new theme, in other words, was meant to attract more visitors and publicity to the extant showcase of Minnesota businesses.²¹

In January 1965 it was announced that the Kensington Runestone would travel to New York inside a replica Viking ship loaded on a flatbed truck. The ship departed Alexandria on April 7, which the town’s mayor proclaimed to be “Runestone Day.” According to the

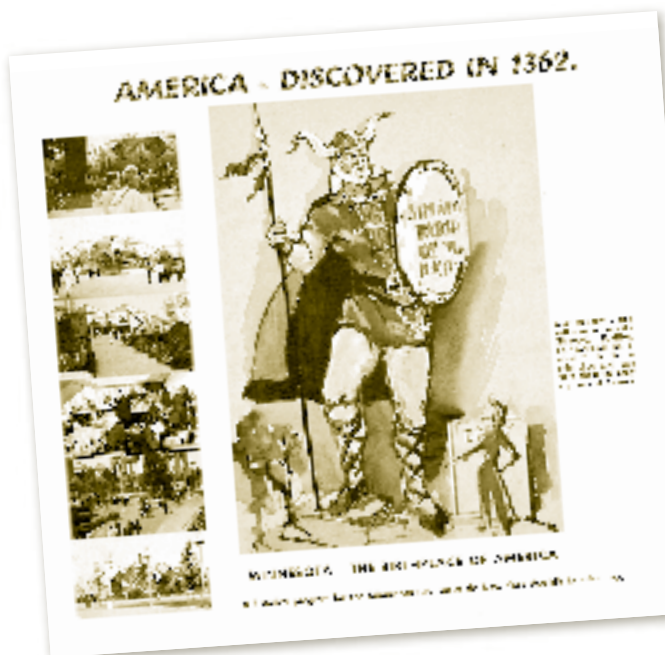
"The fact that the Vikings reached North America 130 years before Columbus has terrific publicity shock value."

local *Park Region Echo*, the stone would travel "cozily ensconced in a display case mounted in the bow of the fiberglass Viking ship." During the two-week journey to New York, the truck stopped in cities such as Milwaukee, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia, where visitors could step into the ship and take a closer look at the stone. The North Star World's Fair Corporation and the truck driver, respectively, estimated the number of visitors as 100,000 and 400,000. Even though they should not be taken at face value, these figures indicate significant public interest.²²

When it reopened on April 21, 1965, the pavilion had changed drastically. The dull business-centered appearance had been exchanged for Viking kitsch. Just outside the entrance, snack bars were built in the form of Viking ships, which James Stuebner, president of Structural Plastics Corporation, declared to be "extremely attractive." They had "two 30 foot masts with blue and white Viking sails, authentic Viking shields along the side and authentic Viking heads." Inside were "several snack bars featuring pizza, Belgian waffles, Chinese specialties, and the usual snacks of hamburgers, hot dogs, soft drinks, etc."²³

Pictures preserved from the pavilion clearly show the Viking ships, their bows decorated with dragon heads. The most striking, as well as startling, feature was a 28-foot-high Viking statue, sporting a blond beard and wing-ornamented helmet, carrying a spear, and facing the Vatican pavilion. His shield announced, "Minnesota—Birthplace of America?" the question mark undoubtedly intended to stimulate controversy and attract visitors. (The slogan was changed from "Birthplace of a Nation" as a result of objections from the Runestone Museum.) Plans existed to mount "a loud speaking system in the Viking . . . so that he may be able to talk about the State of Minnesota and the Runestone," but it is not certain that this feature was added.²⁴

Another idea that probably was not realized concerned the pavilion's interior. According to the plan, the story of the Viking journey to Minnesota would be represented in a "Viking tableau" with mechanized, life-sized figures depicting the carving of the runestone, "just as it happened in 1362." A promotional pamphlet explained: "One Viking would be carrying a deer; another carving the Runestone; a scale replica of a Viking ship



Color sketches illustrating "a historical program for the Minnesota Pavilion," part of the refurbishing plans



Viking and ship-shaped snack bars, 1965

would be rocking in the background. An audio system, with musical background, would tell the history of the Runestone.”²⁵

One of the pavilion’s original polyhedrons contained the Kensington Runestone exhibit. The walls of this room were covered with long, red velvet drapes. A map indicating the alleged route of the Vikings from Norway to Minnesota hung on one wall. The stone rested below the map on an elevated podium. Early in the planning process, the idea had circulated to have the Minnesota National Guard, appropriately named the Viking Division, as honor guard during the exhibit. This feature, too, was never realized, most likely because the request was sent to Gov. Karl Rolvaag just one week before the stone departed Alexandria.²⁶

Exhibit visitors learned the Viking story from female tour guides “without New York accents.” The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reported in May about the lack of good source materials supplied to these guides. One of the few sources, according to the newspaper, was “a booklet, in the form of a comic book, which tells the basic story of the 30 adventurers who came to Minnesota, where 10

were massacred, presumably by Indians—if the story is true.” The booklet was, most likely, the comic book *Mystery of the Runestone*, which, together with Hjalmar Holand’s *A Holy Mission to Minnesota 600 Years Ago*, were the only publications sent from Alexandria to the pavilion in New York.²⁷

Since there is neither published nor archival evidence that the pavilion organizers consulted other research on the stone, it is fair to assume that the Runestone Museum was the sole provider of information. The two books it sent, both published in Alexandria, were based on the same presumptions and arguments and narrated the same history about the founding of America: a group of Christian Scandinavians ventured on a westward crusade-like expedition, discovered America before Columbus, were brutally attacked and some of them killed by Indians, and carved the Kensington Runestone as a memory of the event. In its social and political context, staged at a World’s Fair open to a multitude of cultures and nations, this narrative could—and should—be interpreted as provocative.

The pavilion’s second season, in the words of North

Star director Kaufman, had a “tremendous start”—15,000 visitors on the first day and 17,000 the next. The pavilion was honored with a visit from Vice President Hubert Humphrey on opening day. Kaufman and the North Star World’s Fair Corporation calculated that the number of visitors would increase four- or five-fold compared to the 1964 season, upping attendance to four or five million. Even though exact numbers are not available, the pavilion seems to have done considerably better during the spring and early summer of 1965 than it had in 1964.²⁸

The expenses for refurbishing the pavilion were intended to be covered by funding from the State of Minnesota as well as donations from local businesses. But the North Star corporation failed to collect enough money, and on July 1, Stuebner announced that the organization was bankrupt and would be closing the exhibits. The decision was implemented the following day. The World’s Fair, itself, is said to have attracted “far more attention for its perpetual financial woes than for anything it had to offer visitors.” Although the same cannot, in the end, be said for the Minnesota pavilion, its fate echoed the fair’s problem.²⁹

Despite economic setbacks, the Viking theme and the Kensington Runestone received praise. A letter from the Minnesota Economic Development Department to the Runestone Museum, written on behalf of Governor Rolvaag, expressed regrets at the pavilion’s early closure. The attached memorandum, directed to the governor, stated that “the Runestone accounted for a great share, if not all, of the increased Minnesota Pavilion attendance.”³⁰ The State of Minnesota wanted the 1965 exhibit to be remembered in a positive spirit, but representatives of the academic community did not concur.

While the pavilion’s organizers used the Kensington Runestone and “Birthplace of America?” to provoke debate and, thereby, increase attendance, their goal does not imply that they regarded the story they provided as incorrect. On the contrary, there is nothing that indicates any hesitation among the involved organizations concerning the credibility of the Vikings’ medieval expedition to America.

Criticism of the pavilion was, however, voiced by scholars—even before the 1965 season opened. One such person was Einar Haugen, professor of Scandinavian languages at Harvard University. According to Haugen, there was only one expert on the subject in the United States—runologist Erik Moltke—and he had “unequivo-



Comic book-style history, published in Alexandria in 1962 and sent to the pavilion in New York

cally condemned the stone.” If Minnesota wanted to display the Kensington Runestone, it should feel free to do so, but it would not get “a single runic or linguistic expert, living or dead, in America or Europe to support its claim.”³¹

Other criticism focused on the choice of staging this history and its setting. Shortly after the new theme was announced in January 1965, Russell Fridley, director of the Minnesota Historical Society, warned one and all in the *Minneapolis Star* that “mixing history and commercialization can cause problems . . . if claims are made which exceed evidence supporting them.” Further, the newspaper reported that the theme, Birthplace of America, “bothered him. . . . It applies neither to the nation nor its first inhabitants.” Here, Fridley referred to a crucial component of the history-writing surrounding the Kensington Runestone: its meaning and implications in relation to American Indian history. When native people are depicted or described in connection to the stone, as on the cover of *Mystery of Runestone* or in Holand’s writings, they are presented as insidious, bloodthirsty



The scholars' critiques suggest that the use of history in the Minnesota pavilion was, instead, an abuse of history.

“savages.” This portrayal, among other things, positions the white, Christian male in the center of the history of America. By connecting the Kensington Runestone to the founding of the nation, Holand, the Minnesota pavilion’s organizers, and others legitimized their national sovereignty and privilege.³²

The scholars’ critiques suggest that the use of history in the Minnesota pavilion was, instead, an *abuse* of history. Historian Antoon De Baets has argued that “the abuse of history is its use with intent to deceive”; the crucial component of misuse is the question of intentionality. Misuses of history always harm someone or something, be it persons, groups, or even historical writing itself. As historian Margaret MacMillan has pointed out, history is important because we use it to understand both ourselves and others. Hence, uses of history are linked to issues of morality. In the words of De Baets, everyone has a moral duty to “search honestly and methodically for the historical truth.” This assertion highlights the significance of Haugen’s scientific and Fridley’s more ideological criticisms.³³

The Minnesota exhibit at the World’s Fair introduced imagery that has since become closely connected to the Kensington Runestone. Even though images of Vikings had accompanied some publications about the stone in the late 1950s, it was the Viking in New York that made the lasting impact. Adding him to the historical narrative further encouraged scholars *not* to take the Kensington Runestone seriously, as the period known as the Viking Age ended with the christianizing of Scandinavia in the eleventh century. Connecting the Kensington Runestone—claimed to date from 1362—to the Vikings three centuries after the end of that era raised serious issues of accuracy parallel to the much-debated question of the stone’s authenticity.

Images of Vikings have been popular in the United States since at least the 1950s. As a symbol and an icon, the Viking made its way into literature, comic books, and movies. Minnesota’s professional football team was named in 1960. Moreover, a tradition of building colos-

sal, kitschy statues has flourished in Minnesota since the 1930s, starting with Bemidji’s Paul Bunyan and Babe, the Blue Ox (1937). Ethnic symbols like the Viking in New York should be seen in this American context.³⁴

Current debates about the Kensington Runestone build upon its earlier uses and controversies; in other words, the debates are shaped by the collective memory surrounding the stone. The exhibit at the World’s Fair was an important part of this phenomenon, as it functioned as a resonance box, extending memory of the stone farther into the future. The exhibit also had lasting effects on the fashion in which the stone could be used, and it forwarded and intensified the controversy surrounding the artifact. Without this exhibit and others, the popularity of the Kensington Runestone might not have endured.³⁵

As the statements of Widdess and Kaufman show, the Minnesota pavilion organizers’ intentions were to question the established history of the early Americas. They were not interested in representing the different opinions that existed on the question of authenticity but, rather, sought to promote the most controversial history that went against the grain of scholarly research. The Kensington Runestone was not displayed at the New York World’s Fair in spite of its controversiality but because of it.

In Alexandria, the statue made for the New York World’s Fair can still be seen. It is now called Big Ole, and its sign reads “Alexandria—Birthplace of America” (no question mark). Symbols such as this represent what historian Odd Lovoll has termed “chamber of commerce ethnicity.” It is not a coincidence that Alexandria, a tourist destination, prides itself with having “the largest Viking in the land.”³⁶ The statue and the Kensington Runestone are symbols that can unite and promote the community, regardless of residents’ ethnic affiliation.

If the scholarly turning point for the Kensington Runestone was the legitimizing exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution, the commercial turning point was the New York World’s Fair. Both exhibitions also made the stone more widely known and popular. Over time, it has

been transformed from an object that turn-of-the-century Scandinavian Americans could use to assert their importance in North American history into an artifact with potential relevance to several identities—and a disputed document of the nation's early history. This transformation does not necessarily mean that more people have begun to regard the stone as authentic. But as the controversies have developed and the historiography has grown, so has the public's fascination. Without these controversies and mysteries, it is unlikely that the Kensington Runestone would be in the public eye today.³⁷

As the stone's post-discovery history unfolded throughout the 1900s, the mystery concerning its authenticity merged with the enigma of what history the artifact could actually tell us. To people grappling with these riddles, it did not matter that experts, upset by Minnesota's claimed abuse of history, came to the defense of scholarship. It is not scholarly questions that have shaped the public perception of the Kensington Runestone but issues of commercialism and identity and—most important—sheer mystique. □

Notes

1. "Report of co-operation between The National Museum of Antiquities and The United States of America," Dec. 20, 2004, Kensingtonstenen 2003/04, Antikvarisk Topografiska Arkivet, Stockholm, Sweden. This article distinguishes between experts and nonacademic researchers or scholars in fields irrelevant to studies of runic writings. Only professional runologists—with academic degrees in the philology of Scandinavian languages and geology—whose work adheres to academic standards can be termed experts. For an insightful analysis of the controversy between amateurs and experts, see Larry J. Zimmerman, "Unusual or 'Extreme' Beliefs about the Past, Community, Identity, and Dealing with the Fringe," in *Collaboration in Archaeological Practice: Engaging Descendant Communities*, ed. Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh and T. J. Ferguson (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2008), 55–86.

2. The search was performed January 11, 2012, on "Kensington Rune Stone," "Kensington Runestone," "Rök Rune Stone" and "Rök Runestone." These numbers should be regarded as indicators, not factual evidence.

3. On exhibitions and the organization of meaningfulness, see Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995), 6–7.

4. Several versions exist of how these transactions and displays took place. See, for example, Theodore Blegen, *The Kensington Rune Stone: New Light on an Old Riddle* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1968), 6–11, 19–53; Richard Nielsen and Scott F. Wolter, *The Kensington Rune Stone: Compelling New Evidence* (Minneapolis: Lake Superior Agate Publishing, 2006), 237–48.

5. "Runestone May Be Displayed In U.S. National Museum," *Park Region Echo*, Dec. 16, 1947, Runestone Articles, Douglas Co. Historical Society, Alexandria (hereinafter DCHS); Wetmore to Ralph S. Thornton, Feb. 15, 1949, Aug. 15, 1949, in Subject File

1935–1964, Records of Dept. of Anthropology, National Museum of History, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (hereinafter Anthropological Archives); Thornton to Wetmore, Feb. 17, 1949, copy, attached to B. Richards to Julius Nolte, box 8, Minnesota Territorial Centennial Committee Files (hereinafter Centennial files), Minnesota Historical Society (MHS).

6. Correspondence between Carlton C. Qualey and Ralph Thornton, Feb. 11, 24, 25, Mar. 12, 1948 (box 120), and "Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee," Mar. 10, 1948 (box 119), both in General Correspondence Files, MHS Institutional Archives.

7. "Holand Testimony On Runestone Relic Obtained By Court," *Park Region Echo*, Oct. 9, 1951, DCHS; "Interview with Gordon Duenow concerning the beginning of the Runestone Museum," July 24, 1980, and "The History of the Museum," Aug. 6, 1980, Runestone Museum, Alexandria, MN; Erik Wahlgren, *The Kensington Stone: A Mystery Solved* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958), viii.

8. "From the Smithsonian Institution: For Release Friday morning, March 12, 1948," Anthropological Archives. On permanently securing the runestone, see Wetmore to Thornton, Feb. 15, 1949, Aug. 15, 1949, Anthropological Archives; Thornton to Wetmore, Feb. 17, 1949, Centennial files, MHS.

9. "The Kensington Rune Stone," exhibit label, Anthropological Archives. On later references to the exhibit, see for example, Blegen, *Rune Stone*, 15; Nielsen and Wolter, *Compelling New Evidence*, 435–49.

10. Sven B. F. Jansson, "'Runstenen' från Kensington i Minnesota," *Nordisk Tidskrift* 25 (1949), author's translation. See also Erik Moltke, "The Ghost of the Kensington Stone," *Scandinavian Studies* 25 (1953): 1–14.

11. Answers to the experts are found in O. G. Landsverk, *The Kensington Rune-*

stone: A Reappraisal of the Circumstances under which the Stone was Discovered (Glendale, CA: Church Press, 1961), 12–15; Hjalmar R. Holand, *A Pre-Columbian Crusade to America* (New York: Twayne, 1962), 48–94, 120–49. The polarization is also present in Rolf M. Nilsestuen, *The Kens-*



Big Ole, his shield revised to suit his new home in Alexandria

ington Runestone Vindicated (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 15, 37–38, 113; Robert A. Hall Jr., *The Kensington Rune-Stone: Authentic and Important* (Lake Bluff, IL: Jupiter Press, 1994), 110; Barry J. Hanson, *Kensington Runestone: A Defense of Olof Ohman the Accused Forger* (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing, 2002), 1: 60.

12. Lawrence R. Samuel, *The End of Innocence: The 1964–1965 New York World's Fair* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007), xiv–xx, 9–13, 20–21, 26–28, 93–112, 199; Morris Dickstein, “From the Thirties to the Sixties: The New York World's Fair in its own Time,” in *Remembering the Future: The New York World's Fair from 1939 to 1964*, ed. Rosemarie Haag Bletter et al. (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 26–28, 34–36.

13. Robert W. Rydell, John E. Findling, and Kimberley D. Pelle, *Fair America: World's Fairs in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2000), 105–07. World's Fair Exploratory Committee to Gov. Elmer L. Andersen, Jan. 29, 1963, and Robert W. Fischer, chair, to Members of NY World's Fair Participation Exploratory Committee, Aug. 6, 1962, both in Minnesota Dept. of Economic Development, Records Relating to Minnesota's Participation in the New York World's Fair, State Archives, MHS (hereinafter participation records).

14. James Kaufman to Dear Minnesotans, Jan. 7, 1964 (other documentation indicates it should be 1965), and Kaufman to Board of Directors, “Special Report, September, 1964,” Oct. 16, 1964, participation records.

15. *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, June 4, 1964, p. 1.

16. Minnesota Concessions to North Star World's Fair Corporation (NSWFC), “Environmental conditions of the Minnesota Exhibit,” June 29, 1964, participation records; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 5, 1964, p. 8.

17. “Restaurant Keeps State at N.Y. Fair,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, Jan. 30, 1965; Jack Kerr to Clayton G. Rein, June 10, 1964; James Steubner to Karl Rolvaag, Dec. 17, 1964—all participation records. According to Steubner, North Star had “exhausted all funds” and owed his company money.

18. NSWFC Executive Board, minutes of the regular meeting, Sept. 8, 1964, participation records. It is unclear whether Widess originated the idea of displaying the stone, as the topic was discussed earlier; see Harvey Hammergren (Alexandria Chamber of Commerce) to Gov. Karl Rolvaag, Sept. 4, 1964, Runestone Museum.

19. On Holand's position, see Wahlgren, *Kensington Stone*, 10–15; Blegen, *Rune Stone*, 12. For Holand's own narrative, see, for example, his *Westward From Vinland: An Account of Norse Discoveries and Explorations in America, 982–1362* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1940), 261–62.

20. Consolidated Management Report, State Image, Minnesota Pavilion, 2–4, attached to Dept. of Business Development Intra-Departmental Correspondence, Oct. 20, 1964, participation records.

21. Kaufman, “Special Report, September, 1964,” participation records.

22. “Ship Arriving, Runestone Set For World's Fair Trip,” *Park Region Echo*, Apr. 6, 1965, Runestone Museum; “Runestone Leaves Alex For World's Fair Trip,” *Park Region Echo*, Apr. 8, 1965, DCHS; Kaufman to State Capitol, Apr. 8, 1965, participation records. On estimated attendance, see NSWFC to Minnesota Legislature, May 3, 1965, and James Stuebner to NSWFC Board of Directors, May 19, 1965, both Runestone Museum.

23. Stuebner to Board of Directors, May 19, 1965.

24. Harvey Hammergren to Clifford Lofgren, Apr. 27, 1965, and *Minnesota Polyhedron News*, Jan. 8, 1965, participation records. On the name change, see Kaufman to Board of Directors, “Summary of Trip to Alexandria, Minnesota,” Oct. 21, 1964, Runestone Museum. No reason has been found for these objections.

25. Brochure attached to Kaufman to the Exhibitors, Dec. 28, 1964, and “Facts about the Minnesota Pavilion at the New York World's Fair,” Jan. 25, 1965, participation records; “Tableau, 24-Foot Viking Display Planned,” undated, Runestone Museum. The actual statute measured 28 feet tall.

26. Structural Plastics Corp., blueprint, Apr. 6, 1965, and Stuebner to Board of Directors, May 19, 1965, Runestone Museum. On the Viking Division, see Kaufman to Board of Directors, Oct. 23, 1964, and Stuebner to Rolvaag, Apr. 1, 1965, participation records.

27. *Minneapolis Star*, May 31, 1965, p. 1; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 16, 1965, second sec., p. 8; Alexandria Chamber of Commerce to NSWFC, Apr. 16, 1965, Runestone Museum; Hjalmar R. Holand, *A Holy Mission to Minnesota 600 Years Ago* (Alexandria: Park Region Publishing, 1959); Margaret Leuthner, *Mystery of the Runestone* (Alexandria: Park Region Publishing, 1962).

28. Kaufman to State Capitol, Apr. 23, 1965; *Minnesota Polyhedron News*, Jan. 8, 1965; William B. Farrell, Suggested letter to Harvey Hammergren . . . from Gov. Rolvaag, July 14, 1965—all participation records.

29. Kaufman to Dear Minnesotans, Jan. 7, 1964; Stuebner to Exhibitors, July 1, 1965, and Suggested Statement to the Press by Wm. B. Farrell as of July 2, 1965, participation records; Rydell, Findling, and Pelle, *Fair America*, 106.

30. Farrell, Suggested letter to Hammergren, July 14, 1965, participation records.

31. *Minneapolis Star*, Feb. 19, 1965, participation records.

32. *Minneapolis Star*, Jan. 8, 1965, p. 1. For an example of how Indians have been

marginalized in local histories, see Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

33. Antoon De Baets, *Responsible History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 14–17; Margaret MacMillan, *Dangerous Games: The Uses and Abuses of History* (New York: Modern Library, 2009), ix–x.

34. William W. Fitzhugh and Elisabeth I. Ward, “Introduction: Celebrating the Viking Past,” and Ward, “Reflections on an Icon: Vikings in American Culture,” in *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga*, ed. Fitzhugh and Ward (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2000). For Bunyan statue, see Karal Ann Marling, *Colossus of Roads* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 2–3.

35. Studies on collective memory generally spring from Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (1941; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). For an updated, nuanced discussion, see Aleida Assman, “Memory, Individual and Collective,” in *Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, ed. Robert E. Gooding and Charles Tilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 210–24.

36. Odd Lovoll, “In Pursuit of the Norwegian American: A Contemporary History Project,” in *Scandinavians in Old and New Lands: Essays in Honor of H. Arnold Barton*, ed. Dag Blanck, Byron J. Nordstrom, and Philip J. Anderson (Chicago: Swedish-American Historical Society, 2004), 270–71. “The largest Viking in the land” appears on a sign next to Big Ole.

37. On the importance of the runestone to Alexandria, see Chris Susag and Peter Susag, “Scandinavian Group Identity: The Kensington Runestone and the Ole Oppe Festival,” *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* 51 (Jan. 2000): 49–50. For an expert discussing identity and belonging, see Iver Kjær, “Runes and Immigrants in America: The Kensington Stone, The World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and Nordic Identity,” *Nordic Roundtable Papers* 17 (Minneapolis: Center for Nordic Studies, 1994), 27.

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