

PSYCHOLOGY

Studies Possible Motives Behind Curious Inscription

Leif Eriksson May Not Have Carved His Own Name On The Rock in Noman's Land, But Who Did Then?

WHO carved Leif Eriksson's name in runic letters and the date MI in Roman on a rock of Lonely Noman's Land?

Not Leif Eriksson, anyway, is the view of Prof. E. B. Delabarre, professor emeritus of psychology at Brown University. (*Scientific Monthly*, November)

Prof. Delabarre has studied for many years the various inscriptions and pictures scrawled on New England rocks. He has listened to strange, eager theories: "Egyptian priests must have carved Dighton Rock." Egypt's wise men by a Massachusetts River! He has deliberated whether long-departed redskins or modern sunburned vacationists set their mark Indian fashion on boulders of some Maine beach.

The Leif Eriksson inscription came to light in 1926 on Noman's Land, small island south of Martha's Vineyard. Nine years is no long time for an argument over a petroglyph—a rock writing—to flourish. So the question of whether Leif the Viking actually left a signature in America, about five hundred years before Columbus, is nowhere near talked out.

Prof. Delabarre says:

"The writer's own opinion is that it was the work of some one within the present century. But other writers have expressed different beliefs. One attributes it to Leif himself or his Norse followers, and another to some later explorer of our coasts at some time within the sixteenth century."

Leif's name and date found on this rocky isle unfortunately does not seem to be an authentic record of Viking discovery. But, on the other hand, it does not seem to be a scientific hoax, or practical joke. So Prof. Delabarre concludes.

He finds that many people look at an ancient-appearing inscription and see only two possibilities. Either the thing is historic, important, and real, or it is a deliberate fake. That is too simple a way of disposing of motives, the psychologist declares.

Being a psychologist, Prof. Delabarre has set to work to analyze the motives

that might have caused some unknown person, or persons, to write an inscription like this. He finds no less than 14 possible motives.

Number 1 is "desire on the part of an explorer to leave his signature, executed by himself or under his direction, as a record of first discovery."

Number 14 is "the urge to erect memorials to great events and heroes of the past."

Prof. Delabarre thinks it probable that motive 14 combined with motive 11—idle amusement—was responsible for the Eriksson inscription. Some one who genuinely admired the Viking hero wrote in an idle moment the name and date as a sort of private memorial, with

no thought of deceiving any one. Scientific reasons for pinning the case to these motives Prof. Delabarre has announced in a separate report.

Science News Letter, December 28, 1935

PHOTOGRAPHY-ENGINEERING

Mural Portrays Error In Machine Shop Practice

ALTHOUGH no one has questioned the photographed beauty of the mural made by the Experimenters' Club of the DeWitt Clinton High School, New York City, and reproduced on the cover of the *SCIENCE NEWS LETTER*, November 9, 1935, readers have pointed out an error in machine shop practice when the tool holder was placed upside down.

Was it an experiment on the part of the Experimenters? Perhaps, but one suspects a practical joke on the part of someone who assumed that the members of the club were better photographers than machinists.

Science News Letter, December 28, 1935

A kangaroo may cover as much as 30 yards in a single leap.



3,500 LAMAS GREET AMERICANS

When the Cutting-Vernay American Museum Expedition visited Tibet's second city, Shigatse, they were greeted by a gathering of 3,500 lamas at a great lamasery. The party succeeded—after five years negotiations—in attaining its special aim of entering the sacred city of Lhasa to collect anthropological and botanical specimens. Mr. Suydam Cutting has returned with reports of scientific success and with fine photographic studies made by the expedition. The cover picture shows strolling players photographed in Lhasa. These men actors and dancers sometimes give performances lasting three days, the expedition found.