



# PÓSTURINN

The Icelandic-American Community of Minnesota Newsletter

## **LEIFUR EIRÍKSSON CELEBRATION** **Saturday, October 3, 2009**

You are invited to attend the spectacular  
Annual  
Leifur Eiríksson Celebration Dinner  
Saturday, October 3, 2009  
5:30 pm Social Hour, 6:30 pm Dinner

**ZUHRAH SHRINE CENTER**  
**2540 Park Avenue**  
(Across the street from the American Swedish Institute)  
**Minneapolis, MN**

*Governor Pawlenty Proclaims October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009 to be  
“Leif Eriksson Day” in the State of Minnesota!*

Icelanders of Minnesota  
**CELEBRATE**  
Leif Eriksson

Learn more about Leifur Eiríksson  
ENJOY Icelandic music.

**Reservations are required! Deadline is September 22nd!**  
Complete information is on page 7.

## Update on Iceland's financial crisis

by

Örn Böðvarsson

(Board member, Icelandic American Association of Minnesota)

Since the last issue, there have been two significant developments related to the aftermath of Iceland's financial crisis. First, Iceland has taken the first step in attempting to join the European Union. Following six days of grueling deliberations, parliament voted on July 16, 2009, to prepare and submit an application for membership in what is now the largest political/economic bloc in the World. The measure passed 33-28 with two abstentions, with legislators debating the pros and cons of EU membership with respect to farms, fish and the financial industry. Of greatest concern to many skeptical legislators was the implications of EU membership from having to adopt EU quota and catch rules; the consensus within the fishing industry is that revenues would be adversely affected by EU membership. The legislation which passed on July 16 was a major victory for Prime Minister Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, who had made joining the EU a major campaign priority. The majority vote was made possible by a coalition of affirmative votes from her center-left party, the usually euro-skeptic left-wing coalition partner and a handful of smaller parties. Many legislators from the right-wing Independence Party voted against the legislation. Foreign Minister Össur Skarpheðinsson submitted Iceland's application to the current EU President, Sweden, in Stockholm during the week subsequent to the vote. Perhaps the most significant change that would be seen with EU membership is that Iceland would adopt the Euro, the bloc's common currency, and cede much control over monetary policy to the ECB in Brussels. However, adoption of the Euro will very likely bring much-needed stability to the Króna, which has experienced significant gyrations and has lost much of its value since last Fall.

A second development, announced on July 20, is that the government will recapitalize banks with a \$2.1 billion government-bond issue, setting the stage for future stipulation with creditors to settled outstanding debts, restart the financial system and take the first steps towards re-privatization. The government will offer bonds for sale in mid-August, the proceeds of which will be allocated to the two banks that emerged from last Fall's nationalization program – New Kaupþing and New Landsbánci. The funds will be used to pay off debts and will allow them to re-enter capital markets. The government will be left with only a 13% stake in New Kaupþing; New Landsbánci will revert to full private ownership.

## MINNEOTA PUBLIC LIBRARY! BILL HOLM MATCHING GRANT!

Information Coming!

### The PÓSTURINN,

is the newsletter of the Icelandic American Association of Minnesota

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*The IAAM welcomes volunteers! Share your special strength so that the tasks are small. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Maria Hermanson at Email: [IcelandMN@gmail.com](mailto:IcelandMN@gmail.com)*

**Cathy Josephson, a Minneota native, residing in Vopnafjordur Iceland, returns with an article regarding the Immigration of Icelanders to North America. This is Part Two and will continue in future Posturinn.**

## **Leaving - and Returning**

### ***Our Iceland – 1835-1875 Part Two***

**Jökuldalsheiði** Permission to develop arable land in the highlands had long been denied. Finally, under great pressure, the authorities relented and, in East Iceland, an area known as Jökuldalsheiði, or highlands, was opened for settlement. The first settlers began to move into the area in 1841, and within a few years there were 16 new farms sprinkled across a wide, grassy expanse.

The farmers at two old, long-established farms – Möðrudalur and Hákonarstaðir – had already (illegally) granted permission to some poor farmers to carve out small farms on land which they owned. One of these poor couples was Andrés Andrésón and Una Jensdóttir, who were at Gestreiðarstaðir in 1860 with their seven children and one worker. Among their neighbors were Oddur Eiríksson and Elín Sigurðardóttir at Ármótasel; Jónas Bergsson and his family at Grunnvatn; G. A. Dalmann was born at Fagrakinn – though by 1860 he was already a young orphan in foster care; and Sigfús Jósefsson, father of Árni, was at Melur with his wife and five children. Björn Gíslason was a widower with two children at Veturhús – which, by the way, became the farm “Summerhouse” in Halldór Laxness’ Independent People. Laxness spent some time visiting at the next farm, Sænautasel.

That year, 1860, there were 117 people on the highland farms; in 1880, five years after the eruption, 37 people were on seven farms; and ten years later, in 1890, there were 60 people on just eight farms.

The settlement of the highlands ended in 1946, when the last farmers at Sænautasel moved away – because of loneliness, according to the two brothers who were there as young boys and now visit during the summer. Sænautasel has been rebuilt, and is popular with tourists.

Weather conditions continued to fluctuate, with some years building hopes and others dashing them. Poor weather affected farming directly and drastically; though sometimes settlers in the highlands actually bragged that the distance from the cold sea meant better and more hay during years of sea-ice. Still, most farmhouses throughout the country were full of people needing to work for shelter and food, and more farmland was needed. By 1860 the country’s population was over 60,000, and many were convinced this was far too many people for farming conditions then in practice. A few began leaving Iceland, most bound for Utah, and some to Brazil.

All in all, most people had few prospects. After decades of snow and ice, of chancy weather and an unreliable hay harvest, of working with little or no hope of better times, of mothers and fathers too poor to keep their children with them, came 1875, the firey explosion at Askja, ashes from the skies, and word from America of free land and hope.

Some ash fell in the northeast, but east Iceland bore the brunt of the disaster. The highland farms, buried in ash, emptied completely, and many farms in Jökuldalur as well, for a few years. One young man wrote of a ruined back from raking the ash from the hayfields - piles and piles of it. Some farmers never returned. One reason is that they took their families to America; for those who stayed, there were farms opening up in the lower valleys because the previous occupants had emigrated.

*To be continued in the next issue of the PÓSTURINN.*

### **MINNESOTA ICELANDERS MEET IN MINNEOTA & DULUTH**

Duluth’s Second Annual Icelandic was held on August 8<sup>th</sup>. This was a well attended meeting by Icelanders, Western Icelanders, along with people interested in Iceland. Patricia Allred, Minnesota’s Genealogist, was available to speak with anyone that had a question regarding their genealogy. The travelers to Iceland on the Heritage Tour and the UMD Tour, were in attendance and spoke about their perceptions of Iceland, the genealogy, and relationship between Minnesota and Iceland. A long discussion was held regarding the current financial times in Iceland and the Icelandic will and determination to move through a crisis and do well in the end.

#### **BOXELDER BUG DAYS**

**Minneota, Minnesota September 11, 12, 13**

Minneota’s Second Annual Icelandic Meeting will be held during Box Elder Bug Days in September. Watch for specific information. During the weekend we will be sharing information related to Iceland and the Minnesota activities. **Join The Icelandic Community at BOXELDER BUG DAYS [www.boxelderbugdays.com](http://www.boxelderbugdays.com)**

**SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO BILL HOLM! Many friends will gather in Minneota in tribute to Bill! Join the tribute on Saturday, October 12<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm.**

## The Heritage Tour

Submitted by Dianne O’Konski

On June 3, 2009, over 80 people from all areas of North America left for Iceland for the first Heritage Tour led by Jónas Thór. Two buses were waiting for us at the Keflavik airport and we began our ten-day journey of amazing sights and welcoming people. I will highlight just a couple of the events in this article.

### Hofsós

Valgier Thorvaldsson and Helgi Agustsson, board member, welcomed us at the edge of town to the first Heritage Day Celebration at Hofsós. The buses were led into town by an honor guard of five Icelandic horses and riders waving the Icelandic, American, and Canadian flags. Our little parade proceeded down the hill to the Emigration Center where a children’s choir from Kopavogur sang several songs for us. We also had welcomes from Valgier, Helgi, the Canadian Ambassador to Iceland, the US Embassy Chargé d’Affaires to Iceland, and local officials. The welcome was overwhelming and many of us shed a tear or two.

The Emigration Center is a cluster of three buildings each with a different theme. One building described the situation in Iceland and the various factors that led the Icelanders to make the life-changing decision to leave their homeland for a new start. A second building concentrated on the settlements in the New Iceland area of Canada and areas in North Dakota. The stories are fascinating and personal, drawn from letters and diaries of the settlers. The third building held an exhibit by Nelson Gerrard called “Silent Flashes”. Hundreds of photographs document the people and families as they settled in their new lands. One of the first panels in the exhibit is a map that shows the main areas of settlement in North America. Representing Minneota, Minnesota is a picture of the Guðjon (Thorsteinson) Stone family, my great-grandparents. My grandfather is a baby lying on his mother’s lap.

Bill Holm summered in Hofsós. His house, Brimnes, is next door to the Emigration Center. It is very near the water’s edge and has a beautiful view of the fjord and mountains across the water.

We next visited the flag factory: all Icelandic flags sold in the country are made in Hofsós. The seamstresses were very talented and focused. The tour also visited the farm Baer. It is located north of Hofsós on a beautiful piece of land. The owners have a state-of-the-art horse facility as well as an artists program. More information can be found on [www.baer.is](http://www.baer.is). The townspeople and the Canadian Embassy provided a wonderful meal and program in the evening. The children’s choir and Gunnar Eyjolfsson, a well-known actor, told us of the stories and mythologies in Iceland.

The Emigration Center has announced that Heritage Day will be an annual event, celebrated the fourth Saturday of June.

### Vopnafjörður

Cathy Josephson moved from Minneota to Vopnafjörður fourteen years ago and has been a primary mover to the establishment of the emigration center in Vopnafjörður. Many of the families that settled in Minneota left from there in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. Because of this, Cathy had lined up drivers or relatives to take us to our family farms. The Thorsteinson’s lived at Grimsstaður, a farm about 70 miles northwest of Vopnafjörður. Marge Busch from Mentor, MN, her daughter Karen from Duluth, and I left the buses and met our guide Helgi. The first part of Grimsstaður we visited was the ferry where a stone house stands. Inside, the wall between the two rooms are covered with signatures of those who have visited. Mine’s now there, too.

Next we started out for the farm. The original Grimsstaður is gone, but a newer farm, Grimsstaður I, was built in the mid-1900’s and includes a guesthouse and cafe. After stopping for pictures, Helgi drove us out to the original location of the farm. The only parts left are the sod roofs of the house and barn and some stones that outline what was probably a fence next to the barn. Over-grazing by sheep, the mountains to the south, and the eruption of Askja have all contributed to making this part of Iceland a desert. The only living plant I could find was a small piece of moss with tiny pink flowers. The government has planted grass to reduce the erosion, but it didn’t seem to be very successful. It was very sobering to think that families actually tried to be successful farmers here.

Back to Marge and Karen. Marge had information that her grandmother had been taken in by a family in Grimsstaður after her mother had died. We compared our family trees back a few generations and discovered that my great-great-

grandfather's family was the one that took in Marge's grandmother and raised her as part of the family. We've adopted each other into our families.

We met up with the buses at the farm Bustarfell before they got to Vopnafjörður. The family has farmed there and lived in the sod houses for over 500 years.

Vopnafjörður is a small, quaint town of a couple hundred people. We were given a tour of the area by a young farmer who told us the Saga of Vopnafjörður as we drove through the valley. We also had some time to visit the emigration office where I was able to get a copy of the page of the emigration log showing my great-grandfather's name. The town put on a delicious meal in the evening and Cathy talked about some relations that she uncovered while doing research for our visit, including that she and I are cousins—more family!

There are many more events and stories that could be told. The tour was very well planned and the days were filled with history, nature, incredible scenery, wonderful people and great food. It was a marvelous way to see the island.

### **Icelandair – End of the Flying Season**

Icelandair will be ending their season flying out of Minneapolis, St. Paul at the end of October. It is time for us to once again communicate with Icelandair! Our community is grateful for these flights! There continues to be concern regarding the Winter months Icelandair is not flying out of Minnesota. Many people, those with relatives in Iceland as well as those liking to travel in the winter and enjoying the good prices, have been very disappointed that travel was not available. The concern continues with the suggestion that it would be helpful to have a flight once a week or periodically during this period; particularly at holiday times. Our website for continues! This provides us with an avenue to speak to Icelandair regarding the results. It is a way to speak to Icelandair. You are encouraged to visit this site. We hope that everyone will comment. Please visit <http://wesupporticeland.com/>

### **AMERICAN SCANDINAVIAN FOUNDATION NORDIC LIGHTS FILM FEST NOVEMBER NORDIC FILMS!**

The American Scandinavian Foundation has returned to Minnesota! The board represents heritage from Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland. The NORDIC LIGHTS FILM FEST is a Scandinavian Film Festival being held in November 2009. Currently fund raising and selection of films is in progress. Watch for the Schedule and the films that will be shown. It looks to be an exciting opportunity for everyone. Mark your calendars for Friday, Nov. 21, Saturday, Nov. 22 and Sunday, Nov. 23. A website is available [www.scandinavianfilmfest.com/twincities](http://www.scandinavianfilmfest.com/twincities) with current information.

**SNORRI AND SNORRI PLUS!** An excellent opportunity! Just ask Chris and Ceal Byron, Jake Guttormsson, or Lyle Hillman. This is an excellent opportunity for youth 16 to 26, and adults 26 on up, to spend 6 weeks in Iceland learning about the culture, meeting relatives and making new friends as well as for adults. This year is a good time for us due to the economy. For more information go to: [www.snorri.is](http://www.snorri.is) for the youth program and for those over age 26 [www.snorri.is/snorri-plus.htm](http://www.snorri.is/snorri-plus.htm) or email Asta Sol, [info@snorri.is](mailto:info@snorri.is) for both programs.

As a new school year begins, students are preparing for the year ahead. Graduating seniors need to think about Icelandic Heritage as they look for scholarships. Also, the Icelandic government has an excellent scholarship for those with a Bachelors degree to study Icelandic language at the University of Iceland. The University of Minnesota has the Val Bjornson scholarship. For younger people, consider attending the Icelandic camp held every summer in Manitoba. Lyle Hillman attended as a counselor and really enjoyed it. Ask him about it.

**SEARCH ONGOING:** *The Icelandic Community in Minnesota has a number of volunteer positions! The positions include the PÓSTURINN looking for reporters, people that would like to write for the paper; someone willing to assist in maintaining our data; mailing preparation, publicity, and someone to assist Harvey and Holly with our website. Contact Dianne or Claire for more information. They can be found at: [IcelandMN@gmail.com](mailto:IcelandMN@gmail.com)*

**WEB SITE:**[www.inlofna](http://www.inlofna) Be sure to vist! It includes the Minnesota web page as well as information about Iceland and Iceland related information in North America.

**The Icelandic American Association  
of Minnesota**

**The Icelandic American Association in Minnesota  
continues to celebrate Icelandic Heritage and  
interest in Iceland.**

We begin the week long Leif Eriksson celebration with the dinner on Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup>, and end on October 11<sup>th</sup> at Mindekirchen with an Icelandic church service with our own Eyglo Bjarnadottir presiding. The service will be followed by lunch and a concert and Icelandic goodies afterwards.

Watch your emails for POSTURINN UPDATES!  
Information is shared as we receive it.

**Icelandic Hekla Club News**

Icelandic Hekla Club 2009-2010 year starts in September. This women's club will begin its 84<sup>th</sup> year with the first meeting on September 19, 10:30 AM at St. Therese S.W., 1011 Fetl Court, Hopkins, MN. The club officers are Dianne O'Konski – President, Dorrie Johnson, Vice-President, and Kristin Ode, Treasurer. Icelandic Hekla Club September Yearly dues continue to be \$10.00 per member. Meetings are held the third Saturday of every month. Members receive reminders of events by phone or by email. If you have any questions, please contact Dianne O'Konski: [deokonski@charter.net](mailto:deokonski@charter.net) or 952.898.0611.

**ICELANDERS IN MINNESOTA**

*This column shares information pertinent to the Icelanders in our area. Our hope is that you will share information. A beginning would be births, marriages, anniversaries, deaths, and other pertinent information.*

**GREETING NEW ARRIVALS to our Community: WELCOME OTTO VINCENT GUTTORMSSON!** Born on August 25<sup>th</sup>, at seven pounds, eleven ounces! Proud father, Jake Guttormsson, was in the first SNORRI Program. Grandparents **Steve and Rosemary Guttormsson** are delighted, as is Steve Guttormsson, the great grandfather (retired bishop).

We have yet to hear of other arrivals. Please keep us posted!

Steve and Jill Hoag are excited to have their grandchildren arrive from New York for a visit in Minnesota.

**SENDING “GET WELL GREETINGS** to those of you that need encouragement. Our grapevine needs to improve. Diane Hillman broke her arm. We hope it is healing nicely.

**CELEBRATION TRAVELERS:** August brings Icelandic celebrations in North Dakota, “The Deuce of August” and Gimli, “Islendingadagurinn”. This year Dianne O'Konski, Steve Guttormsson, and Claire Eckley attended celebrations, enjoying the festivities and finding friends and relatives. North Dakota found us joined by others from the Twin Cities: Lyle Hillman, Chris and Cecelia Byron, Stony and Glenna Steinolfson, Carol and Mike Anderson, and Ann and Howard Hobbs. Ann's family actually had a family reunion with their uncle being the Grand Marshall of the parade. Dianne and I appreciated meeting Iceland's Ambassador to the US, Hjalmar Hannesson, along with Almar Grimsson, at both events..

**WE REMEMBER:** The Icelandic Community wishes to extend their condolences to the family of **Marie “Kitty” Johnson**, who was the wife of Willard “Bill” Johnson who grew up in Minneota. Kitty became an Icelander by osmosis, and an honorary member of The Icelandic American Association of Minnesota. She appreciated Iceland, its heritage, and customs, so much so, that she eloquently preserved them within her family and with her friends. Coffee was always on at Kitty's along with some good home baking. An always learning Kitty, became an avid pianist in her later years. She lived a very active, 99 years, acknowledging and supporting everyone around her. We know that family, friends, and the Icelandic Community will miss Kitty.

**Icelandic National League of North America** held its first board meeting of the 2009-2010 year, in July. It is always amazing to have attendance from across Canada and the United States. This is an important way for all of us to maintain communication and have input into the workings of the organization. Orn Bodvarsson, Gerri MacDonald, Almar Grimsson and I have been working on the needs of the Icelanders and trying to define if there are ways to assist Icelanders in need. Orn did a wonderful job researching possibilities in Iceland which were applauded by Almar for being so thorough and outstanding. The INLNA is taking this information into consideration and watching the scene to identify where those of us in North America can be of the most help. Last year, donations were sent at Christmas which was very much appreciated. Chris Byron works with all the US groups in the Midwest and reports on their activities. We miss Lyle and his thoughtful contributions and ideas. Dianne attended her first board meeting and is providing excellent ideas and thoughts about projects discussed. Currently, the International Visits Program is working on updating its application and process and is planning a North America tour in 2010. Watch for additional information. Next year, the convention will be at the end of April and will be held in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. It sounds like the Toronto group is giving this convention much thought and has some interesting ideas forming. Of course, they will include a tour to Kinmount and to Hekla where the first immigrants settled. Information and photos regarding the last convention can be found on the web site: [www.inlofna.org](http://www.inlofna.org). Plan to visit the INLNA website where there is a variety of information and as well as Iceland Radio for your listening pleasure.

**MEMBERSHIP: Remember to send your Membership so that you continue to receive all mailings!  
Join the Icelandic American Association of Minnesota!**

Mission:

- ❖ To promote Icelandic culture, past and present
- ❖ To support events that celebrate Icelandic culture
- ❖ To provide an organization for anyone interested in Iceland

Benefits of Membership:

- Assist in promoting Icelandic Culture
- An opportunity to learn more about Icelandic Culture
- An opportunity to meet Icelanders visiting from Iceland and other parts of North America
- Celebrate Icelandic Culture
- Keep current on what is happening in Minnesota
- Communication through Posturinn, email, and web site INLofNA.org

**Icelandic American Association of Minnesota  
Application Form**

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership \$15.00 Family and Single Person      Names of Family Members: \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in volunteering. \_\_\_\_\_

Send form with \$15.00 to: Anders Ericsson, Membership Director,  
1955 West Old Shakopee Road #220. Bloomington, MN 55431

**2009 LEIFUR EIRIKSSON Reservations**

Name/Names \_\_\_\_\_

Address and Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Reservations (\$35.00@) \_\_\_\_\_ Total Dinner Payment \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Membership \$15.00 per year per family \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donation to Icelandic American Association of Minnesota \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Checks payable to IAAM.**      TOTAL Payment \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail 2009 Leif Eriksson Reservations to:  
Leif Eriksson 2009**

Anders Ericsson  
1955 West Old Shakopee Road #220  
Bloomington, MN 55431

**RESERVATION DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 22, 2009.  
SEE YOU AT LEIF ERIKSSON CELEBRATION!**

**2009/2010 DATES TO REMEMBER:**

September 11, 12, 13: Boxelder Bug Days, Minneota,  
September 19: 10:30 am Hekla Club Meeting  
October 3: 5:30 pm Leif Eriksson Celebration  
October 6: Krauka Concert at Mindekirken  
October 8: Krauka\* Concert at Cedar Cultural Arts Center  
October 11: 11:00 am Icelandic Church Service – Mindekirken  
1:30 pm Icelandic Concert at Mindekirken with  
Kristin Jonina Taylor and James Reilly, Icelandic treats following  
October 17: 10:30 am Hekla Club Meeting  
November 21: 10:30 am Hekla Club Meeting  
December 13: 1:00 pm Jolabarnaball  
December 20: 4:00 pm Icelandic Church Service  
January 16: 10:30 am Hekla Club Meeting  
February 27, 2010: 5:30 pm Thorraþlot

\*Krauka is a Scandinavian music group who uses instruments based on ancient design.

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Icelandic American Association of Minnesota  
7646 E Borman Way  
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