

11. VIKING MARKERS IN S.E. NEWFOUNDLAND.

Traces of old Norse settlement are now being sought in Newfoundland. An Icelandic map of 1572 shows the northern tip of Newfoundland as "Wineland." And there archæologists are trying to locate the "Booths-of-Leif" described in old records.

Meanwhile in my address to the Historical Society at St John's I stated that the Norsemen often chose an *isthmus between bays* for settlement; and I showed maps and views of such spots (and finds) in Scandinavia.

Members of the Society volunteered to take me to the one outstanding isthmus in Newfoundland—the *isthmus of Avalon* in the south-east part. It is only three miles wide and lies between two bays, one extending north into the Polar Stream and one south into the Gulf Stream. There is no other such isthmus on Newfoundland.

It was on this isthmus at a remote point called Belle-view on the northern bay, but only a few miles from the southern bay, that two stones were seen, fashioned and placed like the Viking markers on similar sites in Scotland, Denmark, and Scandinavia.

The two stones lie flat on a broad, high, sandy beach. We had to reach the spot by row-boat, because of tides. A fisherman, probably of French extraction, rowed us over. Our guide, Frank Pinsent, said the slabs were known as "ancient burial stones," but how ancient no one knew. No similar stones of Eskimo, Indian, or of early French or British settler are known. High tides (he thought) had washed them down from some higher spot. The stones are heavy, but tides and currents from the Polar Stream are strong in Trinity Bay.

After careful examination I found these slabs very like *bauta-sten*, the memorial stones known to archæologists of the north. I have examined many such stones—with expert guidance—on *isthmuses between bays* in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden.

Such memorial stones were customarily set up by North-men of the eleventh (and earlier) centuries, overlooking some water-way where they might be seen by passing sailors. (From a similar site the standing-stones at Lundin look over Largo Bay.)

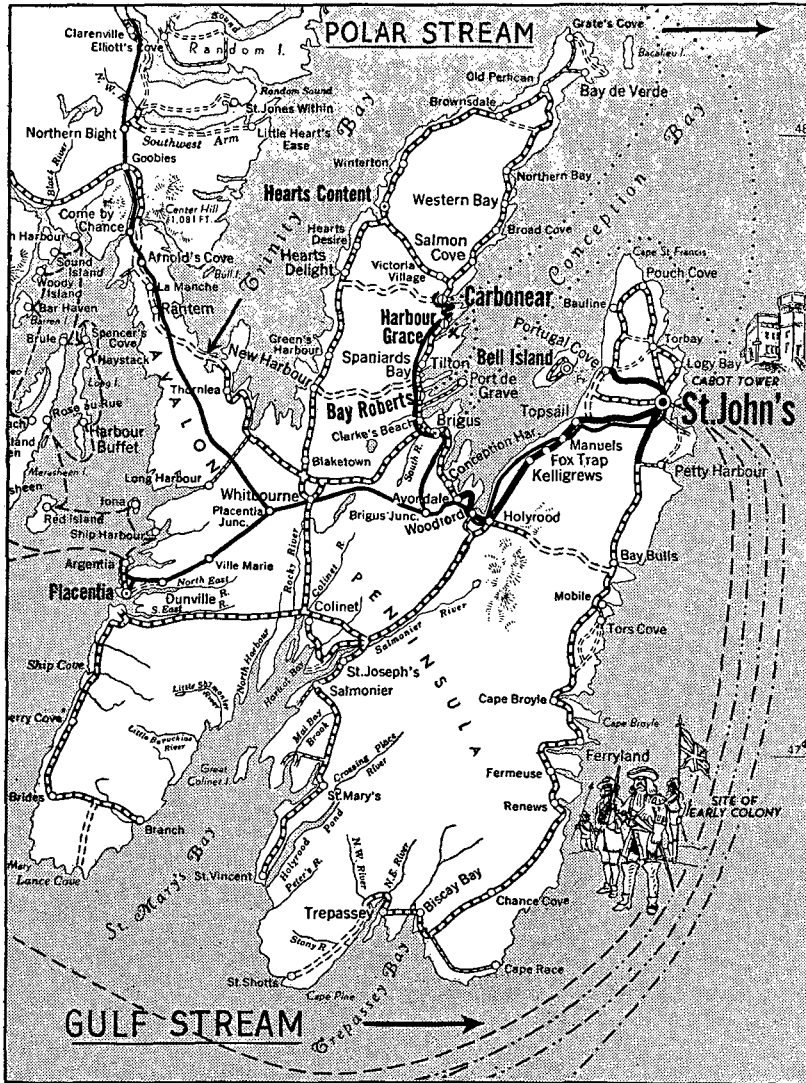
In my article on Scotland in the *National Geographic Magazine* for April 1936 attention is called to other standing-stones that may be of Norse origin. But the Avalon slabs resemble rather two standing-stones in Argyll, described in *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxxvii. p. 41.

The Argyll stones are "each about 2 feet wide and, respectively, 3 feet and 3 feet 9 inches high." The Avalon stones (as shown on Pl. XXIII) are slightly smaller, but the cut bases are concealed 3 inches deep in the sand.

The stones are held for photograph by Frank Pinsent: 1, with rough-hewn faces towards the light; 2, set as they probably once stood, facing the north bay.

The other bay (Placentia) is only about three miles south-west.

The Vikings often chose building sites whence they might easily sail out in one direction or the opposite. The advantages of Avalon are evident. New settlers could land here, sailing down from Greenland with the swift Polar Stream. The



Map of Avalon Peninsula, Newfoundland.

nearness of the southern bay (and Gulf Stream) makes the climate milder than at any other spot on the northern coast; milder even than New England (where the Gulf Stream is further out to sea). Wild animals from the north, I learned, were wont to cross the isthmus for winter forage. Records of the "Greenland-men," as the settlers were called, stress the fact that at the Booths-of-Leif "cattle might

feed out all winter." They also stress the heavy dews. The dew-fall on the isthmus of Avalon is *very* heavy, because of the closeness of the Gulf to the Polar Stream.

No other such conditions obtain on any other isthmus of the island. Other recorded data—the abundance of "wine-berries," the wild wheat, the high tides, the strong current, the length of the mid-winter day—apply to other sites as well.

A copy of the Icelandic map is submitted (Pl. XXII, 3), because experts seem more and more inclined to regard it as fairly accurate in locating not only Wineland, but the two spots in Labrador where settlers from Greenland usually stopped over. The Greenland men skirted the coast in their fishing (or trading) boats. These craft seem to have been about 75 feet in length, 15 feet in width. With favourable weather they followed the swift-flowing current from Greenland waters to northern Labrador in two days; then to southern Labrador in two days and to Wineland in two days more. They seem to have come quite easily from Greenland to Newfoundland—with stop-overs—in a week's time.

To come further south (if they had wanted to) was another story. For the Gulf Stream, as well as the prevailing wind, is from west to east. Their records tell of two boats, one bound for Wineland, one for Greenland, that were carried out by wind and wave—to Ireland.

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