



Winter Solstice/Vetrarsólstöður Newsletter

FESTIVALS of LIGHT

We celebrate the darkest days of the year by seeking light, in our surroundings, in our hearts and thoughts and in our actions. Most of us are truly blessed and we have light to share.

I'm calling this the GIFT ISSUE. There are ways and ways of shedding light on our path. Let us count a few of the ways.



studioquirk.com

December 13 is St. Lucia's Day, a Christian feast day which is celebrated to honour Saint Lucia who is a third-century martyr. Lucia was considered an evil spirit before she was canonized. In northern Europe the only two churches dedicated to her were in Iceland. After the Reformation, however, her reputation changed to "candle-crowned, fair and kind". Lucy, though not before 1954 when Swedish-educated Icelanders saw the light.

According to a book about **Icelandic Feasts and Holidays** (published in 1980) on the morning of St. Lucia's Day, the oldest daughter in the family dons the white robe, red sash and Lucia crown. She sings the "Lucia Song" and serves the family a breakfast of saffron-flavored Lucia buns and gingersnaps. Do you believe that? I Googled the Lucia crown and found that you can buy or make one equipped with real candles but look out for wax dripping on your hair.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Stefan Jonasson

"I thrive best on solitude," Henry David Thoreau confided to his journal on a December day in 1856. "If I have had a companion only one day in a week, unless it were one or two I could name, I find that the value of the week to me has been seriously affected. It dissipates my days, and often it takes me another week to get over it."

Thoreau is one of the great introverts of human history. He prized his solitude and undoubtedly would have thrived during the pandemic that has so seriously affected *our* lives in ways Thoreau couldn't possibly understand. Being alone did not provoke loneliness in his soul, for he was content to avoid society and commune with nature. For those of us who love to socialize, at least from time to time, these past two years have been hard to bear. We've missed the company of family and friends, and while we've adapted to the circumstances that prevail, members of Icelandic clubs in Canada and the U.S. have missed the annual round of events our clubs offered, not to mention our various festivals and annual convention. Online gatherings just aren't the same. Like the old telephone company commercials, we want to "reach out and touch someone."

Despite interruptions and setbacks, our clubs seem to be taking tentative steps towards resuming in-person activities, although people are naturally being cautious. Some have already enjoyed smaller-scale gatherings, taking care to observe health regulations. When I met online with chapter presidents in late November, a few reported that they've held some face-to-face or hybrid events while others reported plans to resume gathering in the flesh beginning sometime over the next few months, ranging from December to March. Some clubs will hold Christmas events of one sort or another, although normal activities for children aren't likely to return until sometime in 2022. "Online meeting takes a toll on the club," reported one chapter president. It's clear that people are longing to get together again. Nevertheless, some of our clubs *have* done very well in developing online programming, such as Toronto's *Saga Connections* series and Winnipeg's movie nights. We've been resilient and adaptable.

I had the pleasure of joining members of the Selkirk Brúin Chapter when they met for dinner at the end of October. Everyone arrived wearing masks, but the masks came off – both literally and figuratively – when we sat down at the tables, and a delightful evening ensued, which included presenting INLNA awards that had been on hold since last year to two local recipients. We partied like it was still 2019.

Plans are well underway for the INLNA convention at the Lakeview Resort in Gimli, Manitoba, from April 28 to 30, 2022. The convention committee will soon publish program details for this much anticipated event in the heart of historic New Iceland. (The annual general meeting, where we conduct INLNA business, will be a hybrid event, so that all chapters' delegates are able to participate.) We're confident that the convention will be an engaging and safe experience for everyone, and I would like to encourage those planning on attending to register early. After our very successful centennial convention in Winnipeg in 2019, we've all been on a pandemic-induced hiatus, but Gimli in 2022 promises to be where INLNA will launch its second century in earnest.

In his classic book *Walden*, Thoreau wrote: "I had three chairs in my house; one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society." As we look ahead to 2022, let's hope it's the year when we need to dust off our "third chairs" so that we can welcome society into our homes and clubs!

ICELANDIC ROOTS - CELEBRATES 8 YEARS

Sunna Furstenau

Icelandic Roots has experienced phenomenal growth and success over the past 8 years. We are thankful for all our volunteers and our All-Access Members who support the important IR Mission. We instituted Team Leaders in October of 2020 and it has been remarkable.

We value 7 Board Members, 9 Team Leaders, 68 Volunteers, 695 Members, and over 15,000 followers of our blogs, newsletters, and social media.

OUR TEAM



Make sure you subscribe to all our social media channels, the event calendar, blogs and newsletters, and more. Come and join us as a member and see all the fun and varied activities, events, seminars, webinars, and more. We hope you enjoy all that IR offers from the All-Volunteer Team! Thanks for being here to celebrate 8 years of Icelandic Roots!

Links to various channels, blogs, newsletters: [Icelandic Roots | Genealogy Ancestry](#)

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

In the absence of face-to-face physical meetings, we try to round up news from the clubs, chapters, associations and even from our huldufolk (maverick members who don't live close enough to belong to a club, chapter or association) who are welcome in our midst. We want to know what's going on with everyone in these parlous times and to share any ideas you may have to find ways to cement our relationships.

SELKIRIK BRUIN CHAPTER

Maria Bear



The Selkirk Bruin Chapter is pleased to contribute \$1,500 towards the INLNA Interlake Convention in Gimli MB, April 28th - 30th, 2021 raised at a *Bud, Spud & Steak* event including a 50/50 draw and silent auction, early in 2020. **Everyone please keep your fingers crossed that we will meet in-person!**

October 30th 2021, the Bruin Club hosted a very exciting in-person evening at the Selkirk Golf Club with supper followed by presentations of 2020 INLNA awards. Maria Bear presided over the event and presented to Joan Inga Eyolfson Cadham Award to Ruth Christie and an Honorary Lifetime Membership to Brad Hirst. Stefan Jonasson, INLNA President, offered an impromptu speech at the end of the presentations.





SAGA CONNECTIONS

Gwen Morgan, President ICCT

Story-telling is deeply embedded in Icelandic culture. We can imagine families huddled around the hearth on a cold winter evening enraptured by the escapades of Thor and Loki. But our stories weren't all about gods and folklore, Icelandic people also told stories of everyday courage and hope, weaving them into a rich cultural tapestry of poetry, literature, art and music. Every generation added to this tapestry. Our Icelandic ancestors brought this rich cultural heritage to this wild land, and over the past 146 years have added colourful threads, unique and emblematic, of being Icelandic-Canadians. We have Saga Connections.



The ICCT decided to host a series of seminars to learn about and to celebrate our Icelandic-Canadian heritage. There are two directions we wish to explore: one is to have seminar presentation from writers, artists and other professionals on topics of interest in our shared Icelandic heritage and history. We have some amazingly talented Icelandic-Canadian artists, writers, film-makers, musicians, designers and community leaders who are shaping the stories of today.

Our first event was on December 3, 2020 and featured the saga of the first Icelanders who came to settle in Ontario in 1874. The *Kinmount Experiment in Settlement* involved hardship, tragedy and endurance. It's a thought-provoking story and it was a great introduction to our *Saga Connections* seminars.

We all have a story to tell. The other thread in our series is to collect and share our personal family memories and stories of settlement. We invite you to do some historical digging. Talk to your parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles and see what you can find out about your ancestors. Where did they come from? How did they live? Maybe you can find an old photo or heirloom. These stories could be about where and how they homesteaded. It could be about their involvement in the community and celebrations, or stories of everyday kindness.

While we are going through this challenging time of pandemic, we remember that our ancestors met with tough times too. It can be helpful to remember our families' stories of courage, fortitude and resilience. Connect with your family's saga and share it with us. Telling our stories is a way for us to connect our history to the present and our future, and to celebrate our Icelandic heritage.

ICCT Saga Connections seminars are recorded and are available to view through video streaming for a limited time <https://www.icct.info/saga>

HÓTEL HOLT: A “MUST-SEE” ON ANY VISIT TO REYKJAVÍK

John Haldor Hofteig

Reykjavík has newer, larger, glitzier, and more expensive hotels but none compares to Hótel Holt for elegance, old-world charm, and Icelandic art treasures which abound throughout all of its public and private spaces.

I first became familiar with Hótel Holt in June, 1999, while taking photographs in the Botanical Gardens, when I heard a familiar voice from the past walking up behind me. Gunnar Mathíasson, a Lutheran priest in Reykjavík, and his wife, Arnfríður Guðmundsdóttir, also a Lutheran priest. Gunnar had served as a translator for President Reagan’s party and as a courier between the American Embassy and Hótel Holt during the Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Reykjavík. For security reasons, it was supposed to be a secret that his delegation stayed there but everybody knew that Hótel Holt, Reykjavík’s most elegant hotel, had to be the president’s residence.



holt.is

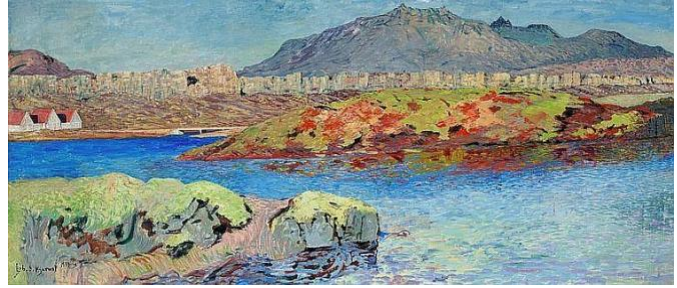
Subsequently, in 2000 and 2001, I was a luncheon guest at Hótel Holt but was only briefly in its dining room. In March, 2002, I became much more familiar with this gem in the historic þingholt district at Bergstaðastræti 37, a few blocks down the hill from Hallgrímskirkja and a few blocks from the building shared by the Embassies of the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany.

I had offered to host my oldest Aunt Margaret and an Icelandic friend of hers. The only nearby restaurant open on Sunday was the hotel’s dining room. On this visit, we spent considerable time exploring all of the public spaces. Practically every square inch of all the public and private spaces, including the lobby, lounge, bar, dining room, meeting rooms, hallways and guest rooms is adorned by Iceland’s largest private collection of over five hundred examples of original artwork by well-known Icelandic artists, a legacy preserved by the hotel’s founders, Þorvaldur Guðmundsson and Ingibjörg Guðmundsdóttir, in 1965. Hótel Holt is now managed by their daughter, Geirlaug Þorvaldsdóttir. The legacy of priceless original Icelandic artwork was the result of Þorvaldur having befriended once-fledgling Icelandic artists and purchasing their artwork long before they became world-famous.

In 2002, many restaurants and hotels in Reykjavík still permitted smoking in public spaces. Following our self-directed tour, my aunt told a family friend, a geothermal engineer living in Reykjavík, that she was mortified that smoking was permitted in the presence of such priceless artwork. His response: “Not to worry!” Earlier on, he had learned from the hotel’s building engineer that when the original founder contracted for a new HVAC-system he had only three instructions: The system had to protect his art collection; the system had to be quiet so as not to disturb his guests; and cost was no object: Just do everything right!

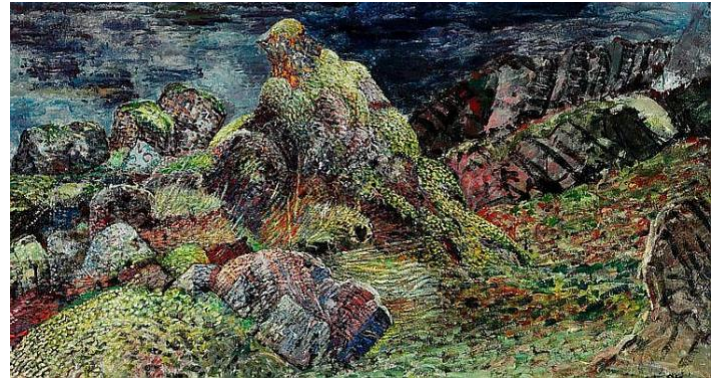
Editor's note: The guest rooms are pricey but when I learned about the artwork, I managed a drink in the hotel bar in which the chief attraction is the work of **Kjarval**

Jóhannes Sveinsson *Kjarval* (15 October 1885 – 13 April 1972) was an Icelandic painter. He is by many considered one of the most important artists of Iceland.



<https://www.invaluable.com>

- In Reykjavík, one of three buildings belonging to the Reykjavík Art Museum is called *Kjarvalsstaðir* and presents Kjarval's works alongside temporary exhibitions.
- He is depicted on the Icelandic 2000 króna banknote.
- The 1977 Debut Album Björk by Björk, includes an instrumental flute-tribute (Jóhannes Kjarval) written and performed by Björk.



<https://www.invaluable.com>

PILOT PROJECT - EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITY OF SELLING NOTE CARDS

John Haldor Hofteig



BACK OF NOTE CARDS: Greetings from Majestic Reykjavík Stationary, © the Icelandic National League of North America (INLNA).

www.INlofNA.org INL@mymts.net

Adapted from the December illustration for the INLNA 2022 Calendar.

A description of the photograph.

Photo Credit: Kent Björnsson



Net proceeds benefit the INLNA's support of Snorri-West and INLNA Member-Clubs which provide stipend/scholarship assistance to Registrants in Snorri and Snorri-Plus.

COST: There is a pending inquiry to INLNA's printer in Winnipeg which will inform the "wholesale" price to INLNA Members and Clubs and the suggested "retail" price, much like dual-pricing for the Calendars.

A GIFT CATALOGUE?

During this season of light, we feel it is a good thing to shed light on other's paths, which are really our own. We offer a few ideas for rays of light you might want to explore or donate to.

NEW ICELAND HERITAGE MUSEUM



Fewer visitors have come through the museum's doors this year. Admissions, tours, room rentals, and gift shop sales are all down.

Your gift can help see the museum through this challenging time.

Just click the NIHM Logo to donate or go to the website <https://nihm.ca>

Phone: (204) 642-4001

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ICELANDIC CONNECTION MAGAZINE



Formerly named Icelandic Canadian, **Icelandic Connection** <https://icecon.ca> is a quarterly magazine celebrating the cultural heritage of people of Icelandic descent in North America. The mission of the Icelandic Connection is to support Canadians and Americans of Icelandic descent and their communities in disseminating their stories worldwide through the provision of a North American based, not-for-profit literary journal. The journal publishes histories, narratives, fiction and poetry by and/or about Canadians and Americans from or relating to the Icelandic-North American cultural community.

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NOTICE: This Newsletter is published April, July, September & December
Submission Deadline: The 20th of the previous month

Please send stories or inquiries to bettyjanewylie@gmail.com