

WESTFORD KNIGHT HISTORY

(The following information is taken from the brochure "The Remarkable Prince Henry Sinclair". The brochure itself is based on an article entitled Was Glooscap a Scot? reprinted as Yours Aye, August 1988, giving credit to Atlantic Insight of June 1983.)

Born in Scotland in about 1345 A.D. Henry Sinclair became Earl of Rosslyn and the surrounding lands as well as Prince of Orkney, Duke of Oldenburg (Denmark), and Premier Earl of Norway. In 1398 he led an expedition to explore Nova Scotia and Massachusetts. This was 90 years before Columbus "discovered America"!

Prince Henry Sinclair was the subject of historian Frederick J. Pohl's Atlantic Crossings Before Columbus, which was published in 1961. Not all historians agreed with Pohl, but he made a highly convincing case that this blond, sea-going Scot, born at Rosslyn Castle near Edinburgh in 1345, not only wandered about mainland Nova Scotia in 1398, but also lived among the Micmacs long enough to be remembered through centuries as the man-god "Glooscap". Henry Sinclair's ancestry was a mixture of Norman, French, Norwegian, and Scottish. The first Sinclair known in what is now the United Kingdom had arrived with William the Conqueror in 1066. Sinclair's grand-father, a friend of Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland, died fighting the Saracens in Spain in 1330. His father, Sir William Sinclair, also died in battle while fighting the Lithuanians from a base in Prussia in 1358. Henry was 13 at the time. He was trained in martial exercises with sword, spear, bow and arrow. He spoke Latin and French, and became a knight at the age of 21 years. His first wife, who died young, was the great-grand-daughter of King Magnus of Sweden and Norway. His second wife, Janet Holyburton of Direton Castle, bore him four children.

Sinclair was installed as the Earl of Orkney and Lord of Shetland when he was only 24, and held his appointment at the pleasure of King Hakon VI of Norway. As "jarl", he was next to royalty. He had authority to stamp coins, to make laws, remit crimes, wear a crown, and have a sword carried before him. He had already been rewarded by King David of Scotland for a successful raid into England, with the title of Lord Sinclair and the position of Lord Chief Justice of Scotland. Sinclair excelled in a furious time.

Sinclair happened to be in the Faeroe Islands, which were part of his earldom in 1390, when he heard that a ship had been wrecked and, since shipwrecks were fair game for pillage at the time, the local fishermen were attacking the crew. Sinclair rescued the mariners, and discovered they were Venetians. Their commander, Nicolo Zeno, was a brother of the most famous admiral of the time, Carlo Zeno. Sinclair hoped to dominate the northern seas, and promptly appointed Nicolo commander of his fleet. After Nicolo's death, Sinclair appointed another Zeno brother, Antonio, as fleet commander. Nicolo and Antonio used to write to Carlo "The Lion" in Venice, and this correspondence was published in 1558 by a great-great-grandson of Antonio. Historians call it the *Zeno Narrative*, and it is a basic source for Pohl's intriguing account.

This *Zeno Narrative* told about a survey to make a map of Greenland in about 1393; it was conducted by Nicolo Zeno, and later by Prince Henry's ships. This Zeno Map of the North proved to be the most accurate map in existence for the next 150 years!

Not only did the Zeno Map chart the sea with uncanny precision, it also showed certain landmarks. For example, it illustrated two cities in Estotiland (Nova Scotia), possibly founded by Sinclair at Louisburg Harbor and St. Peter's. A castle or fortification was shown. There is speculation that Zeno based his map upon a much more ancient map, coming from the Templars in the Middle East, carried in secrecy by them for safekeeping in Rosslyn Castle, until Prince Henry commissioned its update by Zeno. The *Zeno Narrative* reported that as far back as 1371, four fishing boats (the fishermen were Sinclair's subjects) were blown so far out to sea that they eventually came ashore on land that was probably Newfoundland. They spent more than twenty years on the island, and apparently on the lands to the south, and then one

of them made contact with some European fishermen and managed to return to the Faeroes. Sinclair decided to explore these new lands and set sail around April 1, 1398. His fleet consisted of 13 little vessels, two of them driven by oars. The Zeno Document suggests he tried to land at Newfoundland but was driven off by natives, and then sailed into Chedabucto Bay. It is believed he dropped anchor on the first of June in Guysborough Harbor.

Sinclair then sent 100 soldiers to explore the source of smoke they saw swirling above a distant hill. The soldiers reported back that the smoke was a natural thing proceeding from a great fire in the bottom of a hill, where a spring, from which issued a certain substance like pitch, ran into the sea. Thereabouts dwelt a great many people, half-wild, and living in caves. They were of small stature and very timid. Geographical detective work, archaeology, modern science and various documents have pinpointed the burning hill as the asphalt area at Stellarton, about 50 miles direct from the head of Guysborough Harbor.

The Scots liked the soil, the rivers, even the air, and wanted to establish a settlement. A portion of his party returned home, but he kept some men with him together with two oar-powered boats, which were good for exploring rivers and coasts. He took them through the Strait of Canso to meet the Indians at Pictou.

Apparently he persuaded the Micmacs to act as guides in his exploration. Sinclair may have travelled to Annapolis Basin and across the Micmac canoe route to Liverpool. By October, he was back on Green Hill, southwest of Pictou harbor, to attend a gathering of the Micmacs. " 'Twas the time for holding the great and yearly feast with dancing and merry games" His winter campsite was on the high promontory of Cap d'Or, overlooking Advocate Harbor. During the winter, the expedition built a ship and, when spring arrived, Sinclair sailed away from Nova Scotia.

They travelled southward, perhaps carried by a northeaster, to the New England Coast, just north of Boston. The party landed and spent the winter, living peacefully with the Indians. To the west they could see a hilltop from which the Indians frequently sent smoke signals. Accompanied by his 100 men, Henry marched inland to the summit of this hill, now called Prospect Hill, located in Westford, Massachusetts. It is 465 feet in altitude and afforded a good view in all directions.

While at this area, one of Prince Henry's loyal attendants by the name of Sir James Gunn, also from Scotland, died. In memory of the lost companion, the party carved a marker on the face of a stone ledge. It consisted of various sizes of punched holes, which depicted a Scottish knight, with a 39 inch long sword and shield bearing the Gunn Clan insignia. The punch-hole method of carving involved making a series of small impressions with a sharp tool, driven by a mallet. Where glacial scratches or rock colorations existed, they were incorporated into the man-made design. Some holes were larger and deeper than others, probably due to the dulling of the carver's tool and centuries of weathering. In the words of Frederick Pohl, "the following are undeniably man-made workings: the pommel, handle, and guard of the sword; below the guard the break across the blade that is indicative of the death of the sword's owner; the crest above the pommel; a few holes at the sword's point; the punched-hole jess lines attached to the legs of the falcon; the bell-shaped hollows; the corner of the shield touching the pommel; the crescent on the shield; and the holes that form a decorative pattern on the pommel." Now weatherworn and faint, one can see just enough of the carving to visualize the rest of it.

Of course, there have been many investigations to verify the authenticity of this carving. There remains little doubt that this memorial is not a hoax, nor some Indian marking, but rather, the true monument created by Prince Henry Sinclair, nearly 600 years ago!

WESTFORD KNIGHT UPDATE

Several things have been done to improve and stabilize the site of the Westford Knight Stone in Westford, MA.

A new information sign has been installed. It is a town historic sign with pictures and a timeline of discovery of the stone. The old granite memorial is back at the site, in a new place. Crushed rock has been added for walkways. The chain is again in place. A metal frame was created to hold the glass which will be used to cover the rock. A bronze statue of the Knight has been created and is now in place.

On June 13, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. an unveiling of the statue took place. The Knight is located near Abbott School, 25 Depot Street, Westford, MA. The school is the closest parking.