

**Finding Aid for the Martha's Vineyard Museum  
Record Unit 219**

**Viking Explorers, the Vinland Controversy, and Martha's Vineyard**

By Barbara Murphy

**Descriptive Summary:**

**Repository:** Martha's Vineyard Museum

**Call No.**

**Title:** Viking and the Vinland Collection

**Quantity:** .5 cubic feet

**Abstract:** Viking Explorers, the Vinland Controversy, and Martha's Vineyard document the research, correspondence and writings of many diverse authorities regarding the possibility of Viking explorers traveling to Martha's Vineyard and Cape Cod.

**Administrative Information:**

**Acquisition Information:** The Viking Explorers, the Vinland Controversy, and Martha's Vineyard was acquired by the Martha's Vineyard Museum by many donors throughout the twentieth century.

**Processing Information:** Barbara Murphy

**Access Restrictions:** none

**Use Restrictions:** none

**Preferred Citation for Publication:** Martha's Vineyard Museum, Viking Explorers, the Vinland Controversy, and Martha's Vineyard, Record Unit 219.

**Index Terms:**

--Viking ships

--Cromlechs

--Dr. Delabarre

--W. Channing Nevin

--Vinland map

**Series Arrangement:**

Series I: Viking Runes and Relics

Series II: Fiction, Nonfiction, and Correspondence regarding the Vikings

Series III: Theories of Viking Presence in New England

Series IV: Vinland Map

**Historical Note:**

Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a popular theory was developed that argued that Norse explorers traveled to Martha's Vineyard. Indeed, the theory argued that the Norse reference

to the “Vinland” was a reference to the island off Cape Cod that has many wild grape vines. The theory has drawn strong opinions both for and against the possibility. Many articles, books and correspondence have been written using archaeological, linguistic, and historic arguments to prove the presence of the Vikings on and around Martha’s Vineyard – or to disprove it. Some theories purport that Martha’s Vineyard was a camp site for Leif Ericson and his men, and that Vinland referred to Martha’s Vineyard specifically. Others feel that Noman’s Land was the actual landing spot for the Vikings and that a rune on that island is in fact from Leif Ericson’s time.

### **Scope and Content Note:**

The Viking and Vinland Collection Finding Aid consist mainly of newspaper clippings, popular articles, and pamphlets discussing the possibility of a Norse landing.

### **Series Description**

#### **Series I: Viking Runes and Relics**

Box 1 of 1

Folder 1: Two booklets: “The Viking Ship found at Oseberg”, 1905; “Norsemen in North America Before Columbus” Smithsonian, 1954

Folder 2: Three pamphlets: “A Petroglyphic Study of Human Motives”, Dr. Delabarre, Nov. 1935; “The Runic Rock on Noman’s Land, MA”, Dr. Brown, 1935; “Norse Inscriptions on American Stones”, Olaf Strandwold, 1948; VG article: “Claypit Relic Poses a Riddle”, 1966

Folder 3: Letters relating to cromlechs on Martha’s Vineyard and Noman’s Land, 1931-1992, three undated.

#### **Series II: Fiction, Nonfiction and Correspondence**

Box 1 of 1

Folder 4: Pamphlets: “The Norseman and the Vineyard Maid”, W. Channing Nevin, no date; “The Track of the Norseman”, Jos. Story Fay, 1876, one copy, 1882

Folder 5: Copies of letters re articles by Mr. Hyndman, Mr. Sheppard; Copies of handwritten

#### **Series III: Theories of Viking Presence on Martha’s Vineyard**

Box 1 of 1

Folder 6: Various articles, 1931-1954, two undated re Viking presence on Noman’s Land.

Folder 7: Viking Presence on Martha’s Vineyard: copies of articles, 1931 in Vineyard Gazette; 1949 article in Scandinavian Studies; two undated letters in VG.

Folder 8: Possibility of Vikings in New England, 1926-1997, three undated.

Folder 9: Woods Hole vs. Woods Holl?: typewritten copy of article for Republican Standard, 1876; one letter undated, one article, 1934.

**Series IV: Vinland Map Controversy**

Box 1 of 1

Folder 10: Articles re Vinland Map: debate over authenticity, 1965-1987.