

Introduction

This book will present incontrovertible evidence that the Kensington Rune Stone is a genuine medieval document. It is very important for everyone to understand that the position of both authors is that the Kensington Rune Stone was *not* carved in the 19th Century and therefore Olof Ohman was *not* involved in a hoax. Our goal is to earn the reader's trust that we have been honest and objective as we pursued our investigation. Time and again we found researchers in the past who, in our opinion, were not. These biased attitudes inevitably led to flawed investigations that only further clouded the questions and perpetuated myths about the stone. There is a voluminous amount of information that we have sifted through attempting to make sense of it all. We think we have been successful in clearing away most of the cobwebs that have impeded the truth.

As we formulated our factual conclusions about the authenticity of the stone we were careful to steer clear of the word "believe" because it conjures a negative stereotype. We have heard people on both sides of the argument use this word and invariably get labeled "true believers" or "neigh-Sayers." They were generally not considered objective and consequently their impassioned arguments usually fall on deaf ears. The other problem with the word believe, is that it implies an almost spiritualistic "leap of faith" in the stone. Faith is fine in some arenas, but it only gets in the way of seeking answers to the many vexing questions about the Rune Stone.

The scope of our investigation covers history, geology, mathematics, linguistics, and runology. We have tried hard to build our multi-disciplined case by considering only the factual evidence and have tried to organize it in a logical way. We also found numerous signs on the Kensington Rune Stone that we thought were the unmistakable mark of the medieval Order the Teutonic Knights, an order active in the Baltic and Gotland from its sanction by the pope in 1199 to 1525 when the Order became secular. The Knights Templar (known also as the Brethren of the Sword) ~~then~~ amalgamated with the Teutonic Knights in the Baltic in 1237.

In October of 2003, the stone traveled to Stockholm, Sweden, for the first time to be evaluated by modern Scandinavian scholars. Perhaps the most important result of the associated publicity the stone received during this trip was the discovery of the Larsson Rune Rows (alphabet) documents purported to be from 1883 and 1885. These rune rows eliminated the old chestnut that *the Kensington Rune Stone must be a modern artifact since ~~the~~ six special runes had never been seen in Scandinavia and were invented by the carver.* Not surprisingly, neigh-Sayers immediately asserted the Larsson rune rows would prove to be the death-knell of the Kensington Rune Stone. However, the authors realized immediately the Larsson rune rows would help immensely in demonstrating that the Kensington Rune Stone was medieval. The exhibition and lectures at the Stockholm Historical Museum also led to the discovery of a trove of newly discovered letters written by Olof and Karin Ohman that most likely would not have happened if the stone had not caused such a stir of publicity in Sweden.

Sweden

As we compiled our data an entirely new and unexpected line of compelling evidence emerged that has added an exciting new dimension to the history of the Kensington Rune Stone. Over the Christmas holidays of 2004 the authors spent days pouring through the photo record of the Kensington Rune Stone taken and reported by author Wolter (2002).

Armed with this new knowledge, the mysterious punch marks we documented three years earlier in the Kensington Rune Stone inscription, started to make sense. We considered them to be clues and then began to try and decipher their meaning. In June of 2005, the authors were able to review the notes made by three prominent Scandinavian runologists, Helmer Gustavson, James Knirk and Henrik Williams together with author Richard Nielsen during a visual examination of the Kensington Rune Stone at Sweden's

Historical Museum in October of 2003. They identified ~~the~~ three dotted R's (Ṛ, Ṛ, Ṛ), ~~the~~ double rune R̥ for fp, ~~the~~ dotted L rune (Ḷ) and the previously unknown, shallowly dotted P̣ found in P̣ man (10 men). Their observations are important and complement our findings.

The story of the discovery of the stone has been told countless times. Each version has a little different spin depending on the agenda of the storyteller. We decided to use a little different approach by presenting the story in a couple of ways. The first is through a chronology of historical facts. We have put together a historical time-line that is divided into nine important blocks of time. Each block represents a period of time when a particular set of important events occurred. We thought the best place to begin the time-line was with the birth of the central character in the story, the Swedish American farmer Olof Ohman. Throughout the time-line we have reproduced all or portions of the original documents that illustrate an important event, statement or fact.

In addition to the time-line, the story is also told through a systematic presentation of new evidence. Each chapter represents an important part of the Kensington Rune Stone investigation where newly discovered evidence is presented. Much of this new evidence is truly startling and fits together in a consistent and cohesive way ~~that was never before thought possible~~. Our investigation even turned up an important letter written by an over-looked first-hand witness to the discovery. Willie Sarsland's written testimony provides important new facts that are presented here for the first time ~~ever~~. The implications of these facts cut the heart out of the credibility of a well-known Kensington Rune Stone detractor and his hoax theories.

To fully understand the controversy it is important to understand how investigations of the past got off track. In the chapter "Stumbles in Scholarship," we explain how the Kensington Rune Stone came to be so misunderstood by scholars who thought they had fully and completely solved the mystery of the inscription and then bragged about it. Throughout our investigation we uncovered many examples of researchers who lost their way. In some cases we found evidence where some investigators provided false information and even lied about the results of their research ~~or exhibited reprehensible conduct~~.

This book is also written to try to set the record straight about the man who has been the central figure in the story since he discovered the stone over 107 years ago: Olof Ohman. The Larsson rune-rows alone ~~itself~~ exonerate Ohman from the claim by ~~an~~ Scandinavian runologists that he invented ~~the~~ six special runes of the Kensington Rune Stone. The Ohman family has endured over 100 years of accusations, ridicule and scorn. Mr. Ohman denied any involvement in the creation of the inscription for the 37 years he lived after he found the Rune Stone. In spite of this he was still made the scapegoat by scholars and other disbelievers who labeled him a practical joker and a "prankster." What they failed to understand ~~was~~ they were really calling him a liar. The evidence presented here proves that Ohman was an honorable man who was telling the truth ~~the whole time.~~



The gravestone of Olof Ohman resides in the Solum Township cemetery one mile north of Kensington, Minnesota. (Photograph by Scott Wolter)

we There have also made several exciting discoveries of important new evidence that bear directly on the stone. One of the most important recent discoveries was made by the Ohman family in Minnesota in June of 2004. They located forgotten boxes of books, letters and hundreds of photographs that came from the Ohman Farm in Kensington. Going through those boxes with the family was like sorting through the jewels of a long lost treasure.

What has been the most rewarding part of this effort for us was to receive the complete support of the Ohman relatives in Sweden and the Ohman family here in America. They have embraced our efforts and provided important information that researchers in the past never had available to them. There have been many other people who have contributed helpful information in the pursuit of evidence and answers. We felt like the captains on a big team where everyone was working together with the "let the chips fall where they may" attitude ~~as the common goal~~. Without the help of these many people the amazing progress made would not have been possible.

The Kensington Rune Stone is an extremely complicated story that has taken many twists and turns over the years. It should come as no surprise that there is such a diversity of opinions because for decades the arguments have been clouded and incomplete. It has taken a monumental effort to sort it all out. After sifting through the vast quantity of information and drawing upon our own personal experiences we are pleased to have the opportunity to present our own view as to what it all means. As is so often the case, human fallibility has tripped up many who have attempted to solve the mystery. We have tried very hard not to suffer the same fate. We believe this is the first book about the Kensington Rune Stone that comprehensively addresses all aspects of the controversy. ?

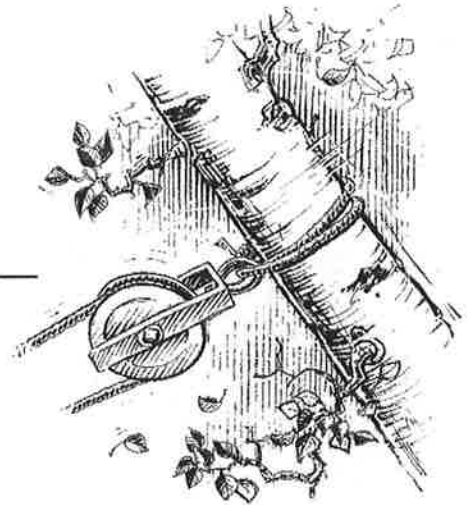
The past five years, beginning with the new geological investigation of the Kensington Rune Stone, have arguably been the most interesting period in the history of the stone. We thought it would help put many of the events that have occurred into proper perspective by adding a personal touch in the section called "My Experience with the Kensington Rune Stone" by author Wolter. It has been a wild and exciting ride chasing after the facts about this most interesting artifact. We hope that ~~everyone~~^{you} will enjoy reading about our discoveries and adventures with this amazing stone. Now let's

Start with Olaf.



Kensington is shown at the apex of three watersheds made up of the Mississippi system discharging southwards to the Gulf of Mexico, the Red River system emptying northwards to Hudson Bay and then the Great Lake system draining eastwards to the Atlantic. Easy ingress to Hudson Bay was demonstrated by the Dane Jens Munk in 1619. The likely finding place of the La Verendrye stone is shown on the Milk River in Canada. Little known Rockall, west of Scotland, likely explains the historians concern with an unknown island south of Iceland.

The Discovery



The story of the Kensington Rune Stone is complex and has taken a concerted effort to sort out. There are still questions about Norse explorers, the Templars, and other non-native peoples in North America prior to Columbus. However, the question of whether the Kensington Rune Stone is a 19th century hoax has been answered. We felt the best way to discuss the discovery was to let people who were there tell the story in their own words. *Where possible,*

In the fall of 1898 (See table, “When was the Kensington Rune Stone Discovered” on page 3), Olof Ohman was, “*engaged in grubbing upon a timbered elevation, surrounded by marshes, in the southwest corner of my land, about 500 feet west of my neighbor, Nils Flaaten’s house and in full sight thereof.*” (Ohman affidavit, July 20, 1909) “*The hill where the stone was found was without trees when the settlers first arrived some 20-30 years ago; but since that time a number of aspen trees have grown up there; it was an aspen that had grown over the stone, presumably 20 to 30 years ago. The man who found the stone has not lived on the land very long, but his honesty is not to be doubted.*” (E. E. Aaberg of Kensington, Minnesota, to the editor of the *Skandinaven*, February 23, 1899)

“*I can state that the stone in question was found under a poplar root. The stone was imbedded between these roots with the runes turned downward and the runes on the side turned toward the taproot. I cut off the outer root and also the taproot in the same place. Then the tree fell and the stone was revealed. I saw that the stone was thin. I simply put the grubbing hoe under it and turned the under side up so that the runes were exposed. My boy Edward was born in 1888. He was about 10 years old. He was the first to see that there was something inscribed on the stone. The boys believed they had found an Indian almanac. I myself also saw that there was something written. But to read was a mystery to me.*” (Ohman to Upham, December 9, 1909)

“*The finders of the stone were Ole Ohman and his sons, Ole E. and Edward Ohman.*” (*The Daily Inter-Ocean*, Chicago, February 21, 1899) One of the important previously unknown facts to come from these accounts is that the oldest son Olof Jr., was present at the time of the discovery along with his father Olof, and his younger brother Edward. This important point is confirmed by a letter he wrote in 1957 that was found in the Ohman

The Kensington Rune Stone: Compelling New Evidence

At my request Mr. Siverts of K[ensington] sent me a rough draft of the inscription which I deciphered and read substantially in the same way that it was afterwards read by runic experts in Norway. (Olaus J. Breda letter to Warren Upham, March 7, 1910)

Professor Olaus Breda translated the Siverts copy that appeared in *Ariel*, a weekly publication of the University of Minnesota, on January 14, 1899. Breda was not working with the Ohman copy because "with" is not translated. It appears that Breda requested the copy from Siverts, because a fellow Norwegian immigrant and someone he trusted, to check the copy made by Hedberg.

Swedes and Norwegians on a journey of discovery from Vinland west – we camped?? One day's journey north from this stone – we fished one day - after we came home we found men red with blood and dead – save from evil. Have men at the ocean to look after our ships. ? day's journey from this island. ? Year ? (Blegen 1968, page 20)

Breda sent a copy of the transcription to Professor Oluf Rygh in Oslo. Rygh had an article published in the *Morgenbladet* (The Morning News) in Oslo on March 12, 1899, that included his translation, made from the Siverts copy (it did *not* contain the word "with"), just as the translations were that appeared in both the *Chicago Tribune* of February 21, 1899, and the *Skandinaven* of February 24, 1899. (Wahlgren, 1958: Figs. 13, 15, 16) A telegram was then sent to the Minneapolis *Tribune* on April 16, 1899, from Rygh, Sophus Bugge, and Gustav Storm.

The manufacturer reveals himself to be a Swedish-American who has already become Americanized. Various English words have slipped in here or there. He has used several unusual runic symbols; where he has got these from is uncertain, but in any case they are evidence not for nor against the genuineness of the inscription. Perhaps he has made up some of these symbols himself. In some cases he has not used the same symbol for two sounds (such as <a> and <a> or <o> and <a>); a few times, he has used the wrong symbol carelessly.

Goths and 22 Norwegians on discovery journey from Vinland of west. We had camp 2 sleds one day's march North from this stone. We were to fish one day. After we came home found 5 men red from blood and dead. AVM Save from ???illge(?) Have 5 men by the sea to look after our ships 14 days journey from this island. Years 1462.

Since it is clear from their translation that Professor Breda and Rygh were not knowledgeable about pentadic numbers. How would a carver in Minnesota in 1898 know?

give a 7 explanation
pentadic numbers are 2

why would the reader know what

what?

incomplete sentence

The Stone Travels to Chicago

"...It took considerable writing and argument to induce the farmer to part with his treasures, but he finally consented and the tablet was to have arrived yesterday. S[am] Olson of Kensington, in a letter to the Professor, vouches for the sincerity of Mr. Ohman. Mr. Olson states that a further witness to the find was Flaaten, and says if it is a hoax Mr. Ohman is innocent." (*The Daily Inter-Ocean*, Chicago, February 21, 1899) Samuel Siverts (Ing. Siverts letter, June 25, 1964) and Sam Olson (Flom's report, 1910) crated up the Stone and sent it by rail in early February to Evanston, Illinois, for a scheduled arrival on February 25, 1899 at the home of Northwestern University Professor George O. Curme, but it arrived three days late on February 28, 1899. (*Chicago Tribune*, March 1, 1899)

Professor Curme spent the afternoon translating the inscription on the stone and found one or two places where the copy was wrong. He found a message for the inscription that was slightly different from the copy. His new translation was as follows:

Eight Goths from Sweden and twenty-two Norwegians, on an expedition of discovery from the Vinland of the West. We had camp **with** two boats a day's journey [north] from this stone. We went out fishing one day. After we came home we found a man red with blood and dead. Good-bye, rescue from evil. We have men at the ocean to look after our ship, fourteen day's journey from this island. Year 1362.

Once Curme saw the stone he could easily read the pentadic numbers, except for the 10 symbol. Unfortunately, some of his misunderstandings created the impression that there are some English words on the Kensington Rune Stone. The following table shows the words Curme mis-translated and their current knowledge: *poor work*

Kensington Rune Stone	Current knowledge	Curme's Mistranslation
Vinland of West	Vinland far to the West	The Vinland of the West
SkFar	Shelters? Hiding places? Ships?	boats
Blod og ded	blood and death	blood and dead
Havet	Either "the inland sea" or "ocean"	"the ocean" only
Opdagelse	taking up expedition	discovery expedition
Har - mans	There are 10 men	We have men
"From" is Old Swedish	from	from (Curme was correct here)

Kensington Rune Stone	Current knowledge	Curme's Mistranslation
Läger <i>women</i>	Either "burials" or perhaps even "fornications" (If in contact with Mandan Indians, in accordance with their custom, they would have offered their wives to the party?)	Camp (This meaning was first used for this word in 1452, from the German word "leger")

The time the Stone spent with Professor Curme was very important from a geological standpoint. He examined the Stone along with amateur geologist John F. Steward and made some comments that were reported to the newspaper, *Skandinaven*, and published on March 3, 1899. John Steward took the first known photographs of the Stone and likely offered valuable input to Professor Curme that were reflected in his comments about the weathering of the inscription. Even though the inscription had been scratched out shortly after its discovery, weathering was observed along the walls of the carved characters by both men.

"The letters of the inscription were evidently carved with a sharp instrument for they are clear and distinct in outline. But the fact that the upper edge of the incised line is rough and rounded as a result of the disintegration of the stone, while the bottom of the incisions is sharp and clear, shows plainly that many years must have elapsed since the inscription was cut." (Professor George O. Curme in the *Skandinaven*, March 3, 1899)

"The inscriptions are on the two cleavage surfaces of the stone, which have received no dressing. They are cut as with a 'diamond-pointed' tool. The grooves show no more newness than the natural surfaces of the rock; on the contrary all show age." (John F. Steward letter to Professor Ludwig F. A. Wimmer, October 15, 1899) Fortunately, Steward sent the photographs to the expert runologists Professor Ludwig Wimmer in Copenhagen, and Professor Adolf Noreen at Uppsala University in Sweden. The only photographs to survive are the four photos set sent to Wimmer.

8 göter ok 22 norrmen po opdagelsefärd (sic -fard) fro Vinland of west.
Vi hade läger ved 2 sljär (sic skjar) en dags rise (The Danish travel "rejse" with English spelling) norr fro deno sten. Vi var of fiske en dagh äptir. Vi kom hem, fan 10 man röde af blod og ded (The English dead "död") AVM fraelse (sic fräelse) af illy (The English ill "ondo").

Här 10 mans ve havet at se äptir vore skip, 14 dagh rise from deno öh, ahr 1362!

The Gran Tapes



Perhaps the best known myth about the Kensington Rune Stone is what's often referred to as the "Deathbed Confession." This story has been used as final proof that the Stone was a hoax since it first came to life in 1967, and has evolved to the point where a Swedish encyclopedia reports that the discoverer of the Stone, Olof Ohman, admitted carving the stone on his deathbed. This is a prime example of how disjointed the information has become about nearly every aspect of the Stone. We felt it was important to learn as much as we could about this alleged confession and try to sort it all out.

The "Gran Tapes" consist of two interviews, conducted in 1967 and 1970. The first interview was conducted by Dr. Paul Carson, Jr., an orthodontist in Edina, Minnesota, who recorded a conversation he had with his mother, Josephine Gran Carson, and his uncle, Frank Walter Gran, on August 13, 1967. During this interview Walter and Josephine alleged that their father, John Gran, said the Rune Stone was "false" and that he and Ohman carved the inscription.

Walter: He said, all the time, you know he always told me, you know the rune stone is false, well, like I should know... how would I know, I wasn't in on the deal makin' the darn thing... and he always said, you know that it is false... well, what more could I say, when my father tells me that, and when he could stand... or lay there in bed and then, tell me that the stone was false and that, you know how we made it and go and talk to Ohman and he will tell you,

Carson: Uh huh

When Dr. Paul Carson interviewed his uncle Walter Gran on August 13, 1967, Mr. Gran reported his father had said, "...the stone was false." (Minnesota Historical Society)

Here I set down on it and started to dig in the dirt with my hands as kids usually do and I suggested to Dad that we should take it home and use it for a door step.

Interviewer: Did you take it home then?

Mr. Ohman: No, not right then. The story goes that it was used for a doorstep but it never was. When I was sitting on the stone before

On page 1 of the transcript of Edward Ohman's 1949 interview with the Minnesota Historical Society he said that the stone was never used as a doorstep. (Minnesota Historical Society)

During the 1967 interview, Walter alleged his father told him[↑] about carving the stone with Ohman in 1926 or 1927 which is an interesting time in the history for the Kensington Rune Stone. In June of 1927, ~~the~~ rally at Fahlin's Point on Oscar Lake reportedly drew over 10,000 people and was the biggest event that area had ever seen. Long-time Kensington resident Einar Bakke knew both the Ohman and Gran families, and said the Grans resented the attention Ohman received over the Stone. The rally was held to raise money and awareness for a large monument to be built at the discovery site on the Ohman farm. People who didn't believe in the Stone surely would have frowned upon the huge out-pouring of positive attention. The timing of John Gran's alleged confession, as told by his son, seems rather curious. Because of his strong opinion against the Stone, Walter apparently was compelled to make sure that the world knew of it.

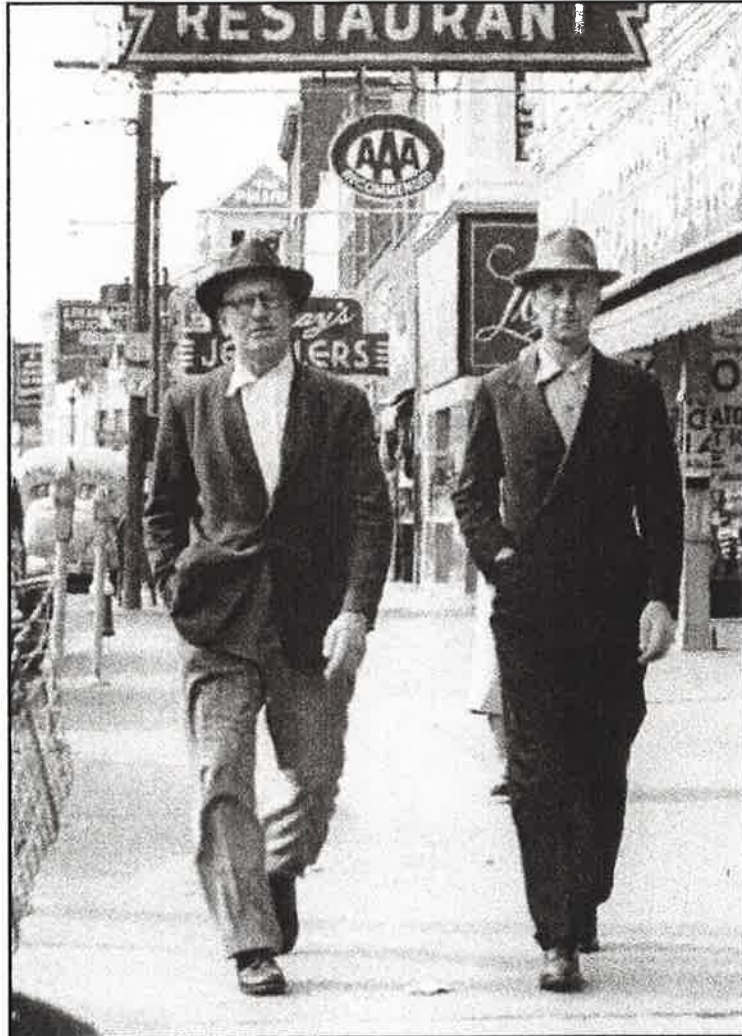
On May 20, 2004, Darwin Ohman and Tom Kolberg[↑] ^{were} direct descendants of Olof Ohman ^{and} who personally knew Walter Gran, ~~were interviewed by the same Russell Fridley, who had interviewed Walter.~~ They were questioned by Mr. Fridley ~~and Scott Wolter~~ about their memories of Walter and his testimonies made in 1967 and 1970. They described him as a friendly person who "liked to tell stories," and both recalled a particular story he told them at different times. They said Walter told them that when he hunted deer in Canada he would climb a tree and wait for a herd to come along. He reportedly then said, "I would pick out the biggest deer and jump on its back, and kill it with a knife."

Darwin and Tom were asked about a statement Walter made about the blacksmith shop at Ohman's farm where they made the chisels being, ^{as being} "way out in the woods." They both said the shop was in the open yard, about 75 feet from the house. This fact is not proof that Walter was lying, it only supports the argument that he tended to embellish his statements. Darwin said that many of the statements Walter made about his uncles John and Art were not true, and it appeared that Walter had an "axe to grind" against his uncle Art. Based on the tapes and from what he knew personally about the man, Darwin concluded that Walter was an unreliable person and that his testimony was not credible. The authors also found Walter not credible, because his recollections were often in conflict with known facts.

The Kensington Rune Stone: Compelling New Evidence

Arthur Ohman (left) and Walter Gran are pictured together in Hot Springs, Arkansas, in March, 1954. (Courtesy of the Ohman Family)

One has to wonder what would motivate an individual to discuss such a sensitive subject that they must have known would be so ~~hurtful~~ to such an apparently close friend. Walter said that he wanted to keep the interview quiet until Art's passing, but agreed shortly afterward to allow it to be made public. Ironically, Art outlived the younger ~~man~~ by several years. Arthur Ohman was deeply hurt when he heard about the interviews. In May of 2004, Einar Bakke, longtime Kensington resident and good friend of both men, said Art was



devastated by Walter's claims. Einar said Art couldn't understand why Walter would say such things, even if his father had made the statements. There are a couple of things Walter says in the 1970 interview that indicate he was angry at Art. It's odd that Walter would spend time at the end of the interview, agitatedly discussing the price Art wanted for selling the Ohman farm. Throughout the interview, although he tries hard to hide it, Walter comes across as vindictive for reasons that only he knew. If his motive was to get back at the Ohmans for some unknown reason, he was far more successful than even he could have imagined. For Art Ohman, it was another deeply disappointing event related to the Rune Stone in a series that had haunted the family since the Stone was found.

There is another possibility for a motive that has nothing to do with Walter Gran. In May of 2005, an Ohman relative named Arley Norlien came forward with information his parents, Christine Johnson and Arthur Norlien, had relayed to him. Christine's mother was Karin Ohman's sister, so she knew the Ohman family very well. Arley's parents also knew

Walter

The Gran Tapes

the Gran family, and said that John P. Gran had a “falling out” with Olof Ohman, and that he “resented the attention Ohman received over the Stone.” Jealousy is a powerful motivator, and it could have pushed John Gran to tell his son that he’d helped fake the Stone. There is even evidence that suggests what inspired Gran’s envy.

John Gran was a relatively wealthy man who owned several properties in Douglas County. Olof Ohman was not as well off, but he was certainly a well-known person. Gran may have resented what he perceived as Ohman’s unwarranted notoriety.

Ohman, Olof, Proprietor of The Rhunestone Farm, S. 14, T. Solem, P. O. Kensington. 1886. It was on the farm of Olof Ohman that the historical “Rhunestone” was discovered. Mr. Ohman found the stone in 1898 under the roots of a tree. The stone bears an inscription supposed to be of Norwegian origin, dated 1362. The inscription has been examined by experts both in Norway and the United States and has been translated in part, which supports the theory that the stone was placed by the Norsemen, who visited this country prior to the landing of Columbus.

Gran, J. P., Proprietor of The Highland Farm, S. 1, T. Solem, P. O. Kensington. 1866.

Pages 84-85 of the 1912 Standard Atlas of Douglas County are the patron’s reference directory. Ohman’s entry is much longer than Gran’s, and could have been point of irritation for Gran.

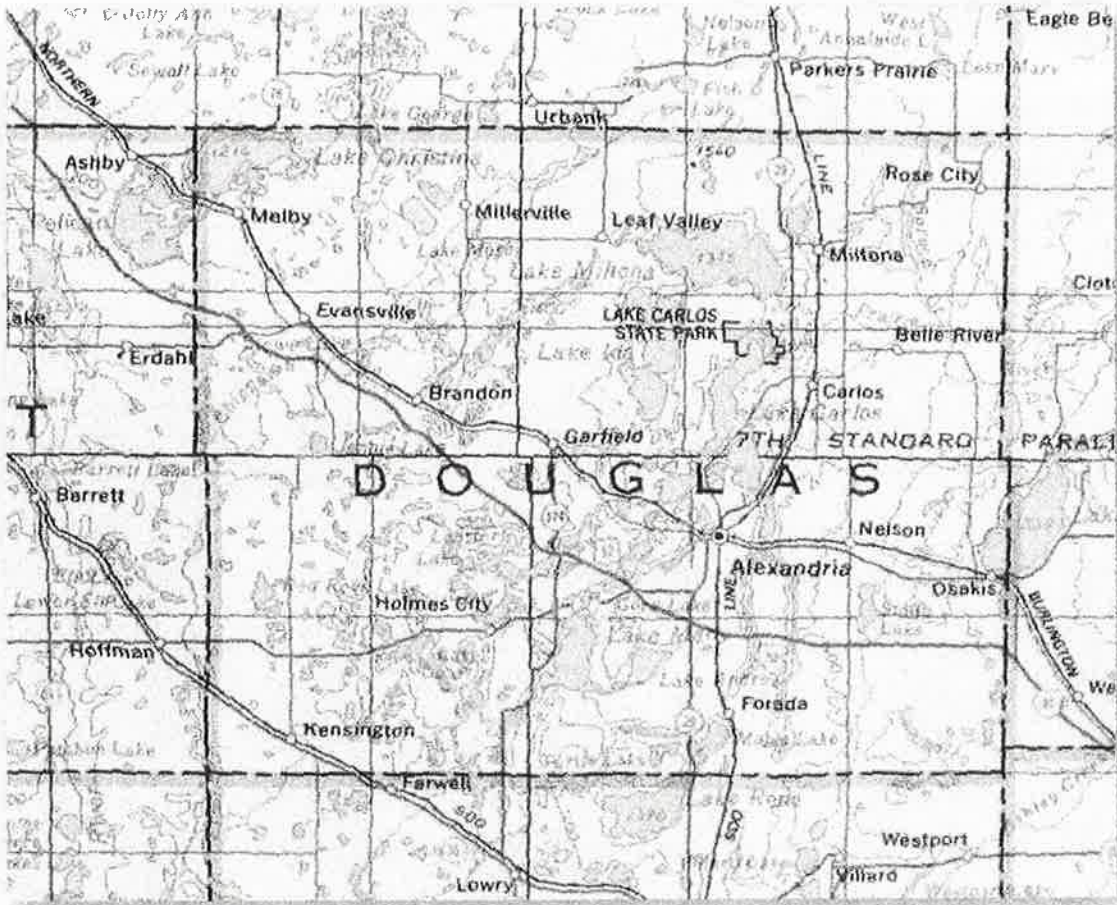
This story is second-hand hearsay, but it is no less credible than the second-hand hearsay of Walter Gran. Walter and his sisters may have simply been repeating what their father told them. It is possible that John is the one who made up the story as a way to get back at Ohman. Questions as to Gran’s motivation or the nature of what he told his children will never be answered definitively. Nevertheless, the geologic and runic evidence proves that someone in the Gran family was not telling the truth.

Walter Gran’s Credibility

The following table contains the names and recorded statements regarding Walter Gran’s credibility from people who knew him.

Witness	Age	Date	Statement	Reference
Dr. Paul Carson (Walter Gran’s Nephew)	55	3-8-1968	“He wanders off on various things, but when you bring him back to the subject at hand, it’s amazing how well he tells things.” “If I can believe Walter,...”	Telephone conversation with Russell Fridley MHS Archives (Blegen Files)
Clarence Larson	83	11-1-1980	“He was one of the biggest liars that was ever around here.”	Audiotaped interview with Ted Stoa

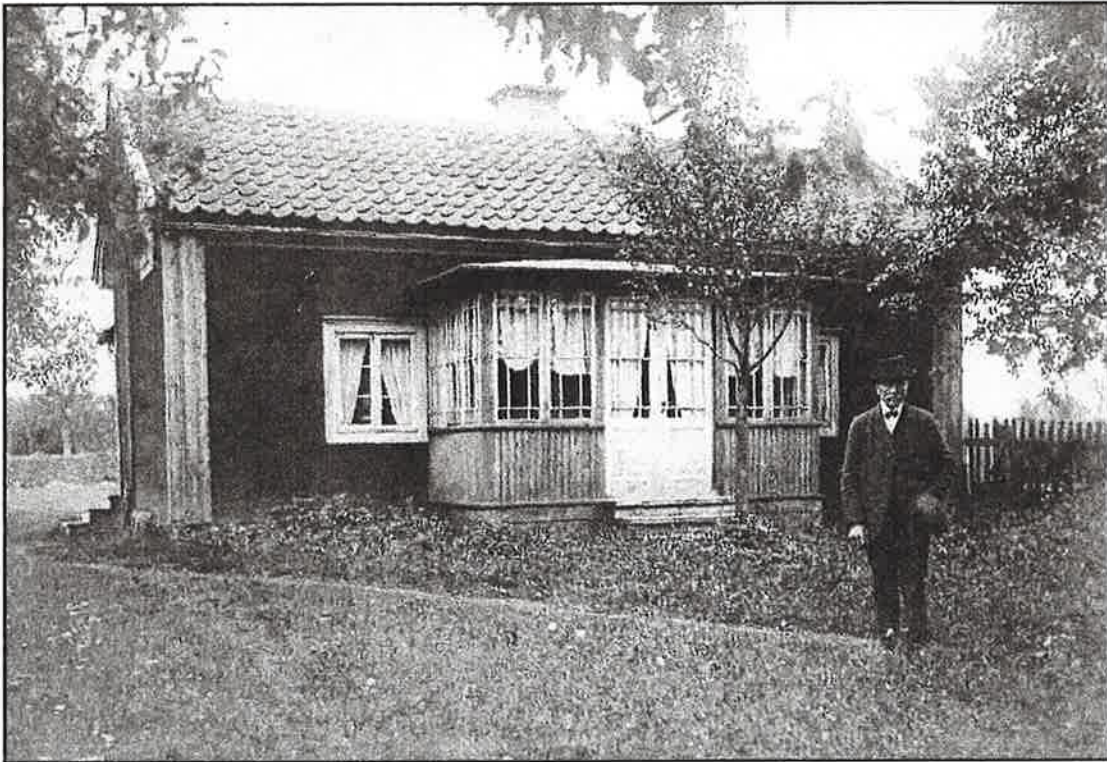
The Kensington Rune Stone: Compelling New Evidence



A Douglas County map shows the close proximity of the four towns, Evansville, Holmes City, Brandon, and Kensington, where the Ohman letters were written.

incomplete sentence → Another relative drought in letters of fifteen years between May 1895, and May 1920. This timespan includes the discovery of the Rune Stone and several important events that occurred in the years afterward. Only two letters are known from this period, ~~written on~~ *dated* July 22, 1906 and December 15, 1906. Surely there were many things that the Ohmans could have written to the relatives about ~~back in Sweden~~, especially concerning events surrounding the Rune Stone. On the other hand, since many of these events were frustrating and unpleasant, it could be deduced that they didn't want to burden the relatives with their troubles; reasoning that seems to be confirmed by the fact that only two letters referring to the Rune Stone have been found. They were written by a 73-year-old Olof, in April and December of 1927, and he discussed the rally for a Kensington Rune Stone monument at Fahlin's Point on Oscar Lake, Minnesota. Olof wrote glowingly about the event and was clearly pleased that the Stone was being regarded as a genuine artifact. He comes across as sincere and not like a person basking in the attention of a practical joke.

The letters also reveal a man who had a strong connection to his parents, two younger siblings as well as many other relatives and friends back in Sweden. In 1912, Olof made a trip to Sweden to visit his family, but his return trip was delayed until the summer of 1914 due to events that would lead up to the outbreak of World War I. He eventually returned to America on July 10th aboard the Lusitania, whose sinking by a German U-boat less than one year later would draw the United States into the war.



Olof Ohman stands in front of a house in Forsa Parish in Hälsingland, during his visit back to Sweden in 1912 to 1914. (Courtesy of the Ohman Relatives Association)

Olof wrote longingly about his homeland throughout the years, and often advised people thinking of coming to America not to come. He was keenly aware of national politics, and routinely talked about the plight of farmers during the Depression. He lamented the low prices for crops and livestock, and reported regularly about the many farmers who lost their land because they were unable to pay their mortgages and taxes. He often displayed empathy for those less fortunate, wondering how people survived in the cities without money or a way to feed themselves. Olof knew that as long as they had the farm, he could at least feed his family. In his later years the topic of discussion was usually the weather and reports of their relatively good health. Both he and Karin inquired often about the welfare of friends and relatives back in Sweden. The letters reveal a highly intelligent man who worked hard all his life.

181mg

who is she?

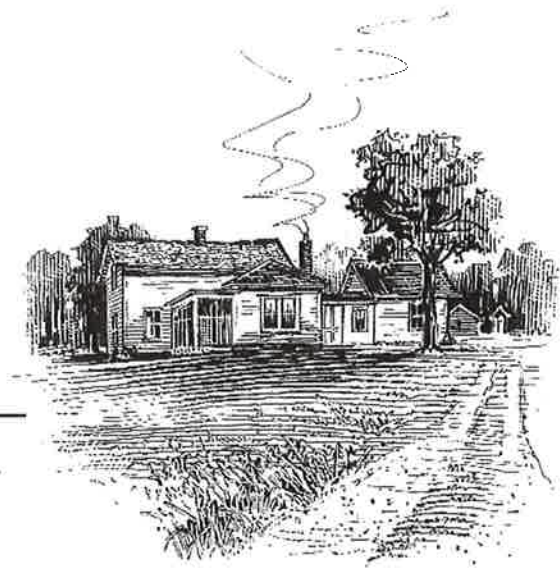
The Kensington Rune Stone: Compelling New Evidence

As if the discovery of almost forty letters was not enough, there turned out to be more. After returning home from Sweden in February 2004, I kept in almost daily contact with Britta Blank about the progress of the search for more letters. Sure enough, Britta wrote back telling me about relatives who found more letters from Olof and Karin. The whole process was very exciting and we talked about the idea of the relatives publishing a book about the letters. Britta said everyone she talked to seemed to like the idea. The enthusiasm about the letters prompted more relatives to look through their attics and basements to see what they could find. Britta herself found a couple more letters from Olof after rummaging through boxes of family belongings that spanned a time period from 1975 back to 1865.

In April of 2004, the relatives in Sweden formed a group called The Ohman Relatives Association. At the inaugural meeting they announced their plan to publish a book about the letters which would include photographs and translations into modern Swedish and English. This book will be a tremendous resource for historians and researchers. The letters reveal important insight into the lives of a Swedish immigrant family and into the mind of the central figure of the Kensington Rune Stone controversy.

You need a TP
about the family
tree !!

The Ohman Documents



Research in 2004 led to the discovery of five large plastic tubs of Ohman family documents. Inside the tubs were hundreds of photographs, personal letters, newspaper articles, legal documents, and books that were saved by the Ohman family for over 100 years. Many of the items bear Olof's signature. These important documents have never been examined by researchers before and offer a rare opportunity to learn about the life of the central figure in the Rune Stone story. Like the letters written to his relatives in Sweden, many of the letters found were written by Olof himself and several books contain his handwritten notes. After Olof and Karin died the documents ended up with Art Ohman, the last of their children to live on the farm. When Art passed away in 1984 the articles went to his sister Ida's son Lalard Kolberg. When Lalard died in March of 1997, his daughter Joanne (Kolberg) Streeter took possession of the five tubs of precious documents. No one in the family had ever carefully sorted through the documents and wouldn't have understood the significance of many of the articles even if they had.

The family located the documents in January 2004, after we asked them if they had any articles that might be useful in preparing this manuscript. It wasn't until June 30th that we were able to sit down and carefully go through the first two tubs of documents. Darwin Ohman, Joanne (Kolberg) Streeter, and Scott Wolter spent more than five hours sorting, reviewing and scanning the material we felt was important. The same group was joined by Russell Fridley on July 20, and spent five more hours going through the next two boxes. On August 4th, Darwin, Tom Kolberg, Joanne, and I went through the book collection for three more hours. Some ~~_____~~ were found that yielded important new evidence. What follows is an examination of the most relevant and important materials. ~~_____~~

one
or the
other

Legal Documents and Certificates

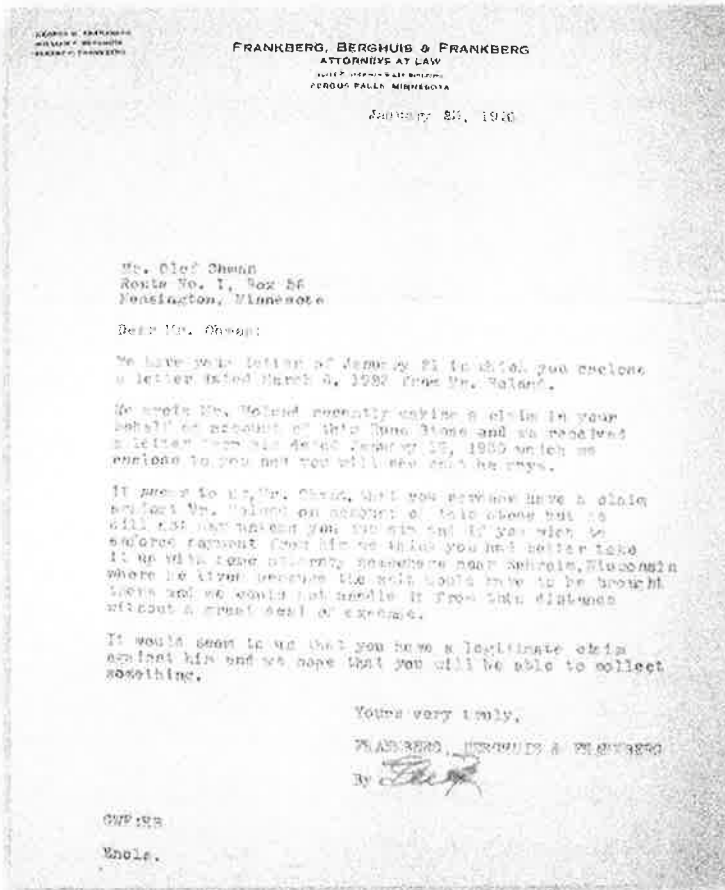
Olof and Karin held on to many of the important legal documents that most families save. These documents included mortgage deeds, stock certificates, birth and death

The Kensington Rune Stone: Compelling New Evidence

The letter written to Olof Ohman on January 23, 1930 by the law firm he hired in an attempt to pursue a claim against Hjalmar Holand. (Courtesy of the Ohman Family)

This sad episode in the Kensington Rune Stone story only added to the hardship that the Ohman family endured. It would seem that the ownership question was settled once and for all when Holand sold the Stone to the "Committee of Alexandria People." He had certainly convinced himself that it was his right to do so, but feeling righteous in his own mind, did not make him legally right. Since there has never been any docu-

mentation of a transfer of ownership from Ohman, it appears that the Stone was never Holand's personal property to sell, regardless of how much time and effort he put into "proving its authenticity." A very good moral case, possibly legal case, could be made that the Kensington Rune Stone still belongs to the Olof Ohman family.



about In January of 2005, a meeting was held at the Community Center in Kensington where area leaders met to discuss the idea of converting the Ohman Farm, which is presently a Douglas County Park, into a National Monument. Darwin addressed the 30-plus people in attendance ~~when~~ what the Ohman Family would like to see if the monument were to be realized. He said the family would be very pleased to have the farm be honored in such a way.

, which is currently housed in Alexandria,

When asked about the Rune Stone he said the family would like to see it return to the farm where it was discovered if a suitable facility were constructed, such as a state-of-the-art interpretative center. He said the family wanted to see Olof's wishes be granted by having the Stone placed where it could be properly displayed and studied. He also made it clear that the family had no intention of pursuing the stone as their personal property. He said, "The Stone doesn't belong to anyone, it belongs to everyone."

It is currently in Alexandria -

The Conclusion in a Nutshell

The language on the stone has been the major stumbling block to acceptance of authenticity because the evidence to fully evaluate the Kensington Rune Stone has only become available in the last few decades. Opinions based on this absence have been divided since the day it was found. However, many discoveries have been made in the intervening years that have provided important evidence making negative opinions about the inscription obsolete. The following points support the inscription's medieval origin.

Language and Runes

The analysis presented here shows compelling and irrefutable evidence that the Kensington Rune Stone is medieval.

1. The chief proof is the presence of the dotted R's for the Palatal R. The discovery of the Kensington Rune Stone predates the discovery of the two inscriptions in Sweden (Ukna, Sm-145 and the Lund Bone 4, Danish Rune Supplement 5) with dotted R's by forty years. In addition the palatal R was still in use in Gotland during the 1300s.
2. There are countless small points of runic usage that tie the Kensington Rune Stone runes to Gotlandic practice. These include the dotted L, double <r>, double <l>, a bind-rune in **hafpe** (had) for <fp> use of: <p = t> in initial position, <t> for <d> in initial position, and the Latin K for k.
3. The double dotted runes for ä (Ẍ), ö (Ö̈), ü (Ü) have been adopted from German manuscript practice, as also happened in Danish manuscripts in the later 1300s (Uldaler 1968: 142-5).
4. The hooked X seems to be an adaptation of the X like rune for a. The hook is found elsewhere to our knowledge in medieval records only on Columbus's signature (American Heritage Dictionary 1973: 69, autograph).
5. All the heretofore nagging traits on the Kensington Rune Stone: the word forms <g> in **og** (and), <a> in **farþ** (journey), <h> in **ahr** (year), **öhr** (island) and **här** (is), from (from), **hafpe** (had), and **wi waR** (we was) are explained by the runic practice of Gotland and its nearby coastal regions in the Baltic.
6. The continued presence of <p = ð> in medial and final position even after 1400, rather than <d> in Gotlandic inscriptions confirms the origin of the Kensington Rune Stone in Gotland almost on this point alone. These words on the Kensington Rune Stone are **farþ** (journey), **hafpe** (had), **veþ** (by), **röþe** (red), **bloþ** (blood) and **þeþ** (death) (See Lye Church inscription G-99)

7. The continued presence of <þ = t> in the initial position helps validate **optagelse** (taking up) and **teno** (this). In 1362 on Gotland **opþagelse** (taking up) could never be considered to be **opdagelse** (discovery) since <þ = t> in the late 1300s in Gotland (Snædal 2002: 208).
8. Moltke (1949) asserted that <þ = d> on the Kensington Rune Stone, but Moltke avoided explaining that **deno** (this) was not to be found in Scandinavia. This allowed him to claim that **opdagelse** (discovery) was proof of a modern forgery, since he claimed that **opdage** was not used until circa 1700. Actually Moltke's fellow Dane, Stautrup (1947: Vol 5 index), cites **opdage** (discover) in New Danish from the 1500's.
9. The use of the t-rune for <d> in the Kensington Rune Stone **þagh > tagh dagh** (day) in the Sandra Church G-182 with **tagr > dagr** (day).
10. The use of the t-rune for <d> in and in the KRS **þep > tep deth** (death) in the Guldrupe Church inscription G-128 with **to > do** (died).
11. The use of the <gh> digraph in **þagh = tagh dagh** (day) is found on two Gotlandic inscriptions (Othem Church G-283 and Lärbro Church G-294). These are the only three such runic usages on record.
12. The use of initial word divider after the first letter of the first word as in **g: öter** (Göteborgers) and two inscriptions (Othem Church, G-282 and G-283) in Gotland (Snædal 2002). These are the only three such runic usages on record.
13. The subject without verb phrase followed by its pronoun and verb is found in Gotland and on the KRS. This construction is found on the Kensington Rune Stone (Hall 1982: Appendix) and also then only on the Gotland inscriptions (Jansson and Wessén 1962).

On the Kensington Rune Stone we have:

“8 Goths and 22 Norwegians
on this taking up journey from Vinland far to the west,
we had camp by two ??? one day's march from this stone.”

An example of the Kensington Rune Stone form on the Näs Church inscription G-33:

“Rudvi,

from Rone, daughter to Hägvid in Hagnastäde.
she placed this stone over her husband Botolv and her son Olav”

här : 10 : mans : ve : havet : at : se :
 (det) är tio man vid havet för att se
 There are 10 men by the sea to look

11. ǷBTIR : ƿǿRt : 4XIB : ƿF : þXƿ* : Rl4t :
 ǣptir : vore : skip : 14 : þagh : rise :
 after våra skepp fjorton dag(ars) resa
 after our ships fourteen days journey

12. ƿRǿƿ : þt4t : Ǿ* : X*R : ƿƿƿ :
 from : þeno : öh : ahr : 1362 :
 från denna ö. År 1362.
 from this island. Year 1362.



The split side of the Kensington Rune Stone inscription that contains the last three lines of the inscription. (Photograph by Scott Wolter)

"There are 10 men by the sea to look after our ships fourteen days journey from this island. Year 1362."

One could argue that the context of the message indicates there are two inscriptions; one on the face and one on the side.

The Physical Aspects of the Kensington Rune Stone and the Weathering of the Inscription

The foundation of ~~the case~~ ^{authenticity} lies with the physical evidence. The first step was to document as many facts as possible about the physical aspects of the stone including the weathering of the inscription. The next step was to formulate interpretations that best fit the facts. The final opinion about the age of the inscription is based upon a consideration of all the interpreted facts (See The Geology of the Kensington Rune Stone,

that had completely weathered away. Since the stone has not been in a weathering environment since it was discovered, as evidenced by the lack of weathering of pyrite in the bottom of the scratched out runes, the pyrite crystals had already weathered away when Ohman pulled the stone from the ground. When we compare these pits with the still actively weathering pyrite crystals in the carved characters of the AVM Stone, it means **the pyrite in the KRS inscription, as of June, 2005, would have taken at least 20 years to weather away.** 20 years prior to the discovery of the rune stone Olof Ohman was still in Sweden (Ohman immigrated to the U.S. in 1879). This means Olof Ohman could not have been involved with carving the stone making a 19th Century hoax highly improbable. *by Ohman impossible.*

4. Mica Weathering

investigation
Based on comparison of the weathering rate of biotite mica in slate tombstones with the weathering of biotite in the KRS, **the inscription has been weathering for longer than about 200 years.** Our report has shown that the highly weathered biotite minerals on the 200 year-old slate tombstones had begun to fall off the surface. Since all the mica minerals on the original man-made surfaces (the entire split side, the contiguous flaked areas and the unscratched runes) have weathered away, the inscription must be at least 200 years old. This puts the origin of the inscription back to at least the late 17th Century

5. Points to Ponder

A thorough analysis of the KRS cannot be complete until a few important points are understood. There are reasons why the stone has been such a vexing mystery for over a century. Sitting in the 21st Century with the benefit of hindsight makes the analysis much easier. The first point is that since the rune stone was found there have been amazing **advances in research science and information technology.** By leaning more on the scientific evidence as opposed to opinion, the amount of subjectivity is reduced and the question is considered more on fact.

Another key problem has been the way that many investigators in the past have pursued their investigations. Our research into these investigations showed that those who found the rune stone to be a hoax, employed **improper method.** They started off with a conclusion and then went looking for evidence to support it. This approach evolved into nothing more than a self-fulfilling prophecy that has been repeated numerous times. The document search revealed that many investigators used a flawed approach, which is inherently biased and lead to unsupportable conclusions about the stone.

While the present writer has from the first time he saw the inscription never had any doubt upon this point, he

This statement on page 41 of Professor George T. Flom's April 1910 paper shows clearly that he formed an opinion about the stone prior to any investigation. This is the same flawed method employed by most researchers who concluded the inscription was a hoax.

What these investigators failed to do was employ ^athe scientific method. Scientific method dictates that facts are documented first, then a hypothesis or theory is formulated that best fits the facts. The next step is to test the theory, then retest it. If the results are consistent and repeatable, then the theory has validity. This is the process that was employed by Professor Newton Winchell in 1909-10, and then repeated in 2000 by Scott Wolter and other geologists. It should come as no surprise that their conclusions are consistent.

It is also important to note that the method of investigation is divided along the lines of discipline. Those who have concluded the stone is a hoax have been primarily linguists, runologists, historians and archaeologists, all fields that are loosely referred to as "soft science." These are the same fields that our research found where investigators employed improper method. For opinions to be as divided as they are there had to be a reason to explain it. This difference in method appears to be the answer.

The document search also uncovered another reason for the flawed investigations of the past. It seems that the controversy over the rune stone often brought out the worst in people. Many have exhibited **bias and personal pique** that motivated them to put down others who disagreed with them, rather than objectively perform their research. Time and again problems of the human condition got in the way and further clouded the controversy.

Olof Ohman

It is important to realize that standing at the center of the controversy is the credibility of the discoverer of the stone. Olof Ohman has been described by researchers, family and friends, as a serious and honest man. This is the same individual who emerges from the almost 50 known letters he wrote to family members in Sweden. Analysis of his library of over 50 books, magazines and plat maps indicates he was a highly intelligent and well-read man. There is no evidence that suggest Ohman was a prankster or practical joker. It is well documented that he repeatedly denied being involved in the creation of the inscription. In addition to the detailed notes made by Winchell from his conversations with Ohman, there are three documents where Ohman made important statements. Two of which were made in the form of written responses to inquiries by Winchell during his investigation in 1910.

The first statement was at the start of his letter to Newton Winchell on June 6, 1910. Ohman wrote a heated denial to the reported alleged statements of Andrew Anderson, by the linguist Rasmus Anderson. Ohman began the letter by stating why he had not made any comments previously with regard to the authenticity of the inscription (See time-line page ??).

Eastern Germany at Lieglitz. After this battle and another in Hungry, the Mongols turned back to Monoglia upon the death of the Khan. Except for Russia they never returned to Europe again.. Obviously, any number of mysterious items from the East could have been acquired during the 13th century from the Mongols. It must also be remembered that a trade route extended for centuries from Siberia across Alaska then down to the east of the Rockies and subsequently across the plains all the way to Alabama. If the stone's script is Tartaric, it could be just another trade item that for some reason was venerated by the Cree Indians living along the Milk River.

The Teutonic Knights also kept Mediterranean contacts to the East until they moved their base from Venice to Marienburg in Prussia, in 1309. This was only two years after the fall of their brother organization, the Knights Templar in France, on Friday, October 13th of 1307.

We postulate that the Kensington party, consisting of a party backed by Cistercian-Teutonic Knights, ^{carved} buried the Kensington Rune Stone as a land claim to provide future proof of discovery just as La Vérendrye's two sons did farther west roughly 380 years later. The confirmation code of the pentadic date within the inscription would have prevented any successful future alteration thereby protecting the 1362 date. The evidence that the Kensington Rune Stone was buried immediately after being carved is supported by the fact that the surface of the stone exhibits no physical evidence of being placed upright into the ground. The relatively fast weathering white triangular calcite on the lower left face side exhibits no evidence of differential weathering that would be present had it been upright for a prolonged period.

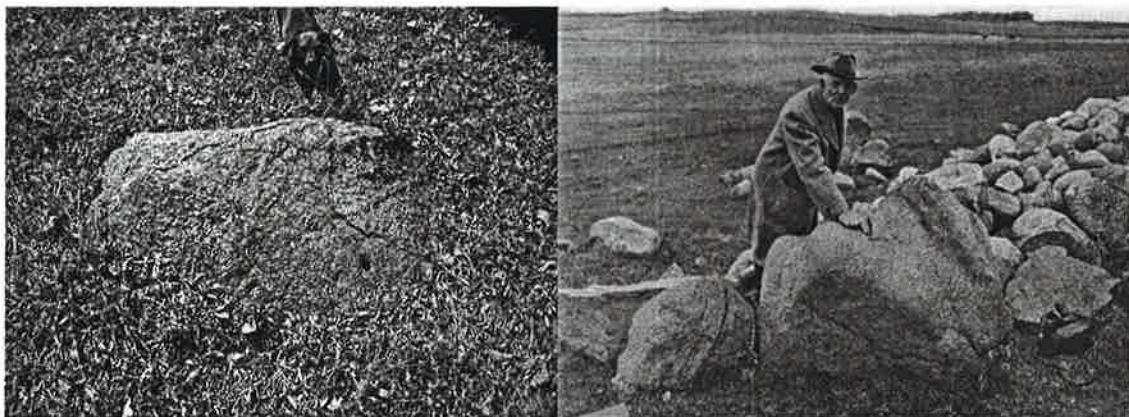


This Viking-age rune stone on exhibit in the Statens Historiska Museum in Stockholm, Sweden, (left) exhibits a clearly defined boundary below the inscription where the stone was in the ground. The Kensington Rune Stone (right) does *not* exhibit any obvious weathering profile or boundary line that would indicate it was set upright in the ground for a prolonged period of time.

thesis

Our land claim ~~scenario~~ might also provide a logical explanation for the numerous unexplained holes in large glacial boulders found in the vicinity of the Kensington Rune Stone discovery site. Hjalmar Holand believed these holes were used by Norse explorers to secure iron rings which were then used to moor their boats. The location of many of the holes are at elevations, both above and below past and present waterways making his “mooring stone” theory highly problematic. The practical and plausibility problems exposed Holand, and the Rune Stone, to intense criticism from opponents. However, the fact that many of the holes have been documented to predate the settlers leaves open the possibility of a connection to the Norse. We believe there is a more plausible possibility for the holes.

If the intention was indeed a land claim then there must have been a method for relocating the buried stone(s) at some point in the future. Perhaps the holes were cut into glacial boulders and bedrock found throughout the Midwest to provide a “bread crumb” trail for a returning party. Many of the holes reportedly follow waterways and would be logical routes for early explorers. To relocate the area of a buried land claim stone may have been as simple as a difference in the depths of the cut holes. Once an area was identified the other marker stones could then have been located to form a grid. The next step could have been to plot intersecting lines and find the previously buried stone. During a preliminary review by the authors of the known holes found in glacial boulders in the vicinity of the Kensington Rune Stone discovery site, a surprising discovery was made. Researchers Judi Rudebush and Bruce Kunze generated a map that plotted the location of several stones with triangular shaped holes in the vicinity of the Ohman Farm. We drew three lines between the stones that all intersected at the approximate spot where the Rune Stone was found. This is of course just a theory that needs to be developed by compiling and analyzing data from the hundreds of known holes in rocks found across the Midwest. Validation of this theory would be certain if another rune stone were found!



The triangular shaped hole cut into this large glacial boulder is located on “Skaeling Hill” at the Ohman farm near Kensington, Minnesota. In this 1941 photo, Hjalmar Holand points to another triangular hole in a boulder (Flaten 1) around which a rock pile was made on the Nils Flaaten farm. The location of both boulders was used along with other boulders with holes to plot lines that intersect at the approximate location of the Kensington Rune Stone discovery site.

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Kensington Rune Stone, and how we should consider the benefits of furthering a worthy cause. In other words, we should feel moved to perform as much gratis work as we could. I could appreciate his point.

The Geologic Dream Team

After Barry left I thought long and hard about the entire story. I made a point to ask several acquaintances and friends if they had heard of the Kensington Rune Stone and to my surprise, most of them had, and the general consensus was that it was a hoax. I wondered how I could not have caught a whiff of this story at some point in my life. After considering the situation and the potential ramifications I decided to bring in a little help. I picked up the phone and called the University of Minnesota-Duluth geology department to find my college advisor and geology mentor, Dr. Charles L. Matsch. I told Charlie about the project and asked if he would be interested seeing the Stone and offering a few suggestions. He had heard of the Stone and not only did he agree to come down, but suggested I invite some other geologists to review the Stone as well. We made a list that included two more of my former professors, Dr. John Green and Dr. Richard Ojakangas; two retired U of M professors, Dr. Paul Wieblen and Dr. Robert Johnson; and Ken Harris, a glacial geology expert at the Minnesota Geological Survey. Because of the Stone's high profile, I wanted to get as much input as I could from this highly accomplished group that I like to call the "Dream Team" of Minnesota geologists.

On July 14, 2000, the Kensington Rune Stone arrived at American Petrographic Services for the first time. I went to the lobby and Barry introduced me to meet the director of the Runestone Museum, LuAnn Patton. She had short blond hair, a warm friendly smile, and I would soon learn that we were the same age. LuAnn introduced me to a museum board member ~~named~~ Ken Anderson. Ken is a tall, friendly gentleman with a bushy beard who helped Barry and me load the heavy crate onto a two-wheeler so we could bring it up to the laboratory. Under LuAnn's watchful eye, Ken opened the crate and the three of us lifted the heavy stone onto a mobile table. I focused my gaze on the tabular-shaped stone for the first time. It reminded me of a crudely made tombstone. The inscription was very clear and I was struck by how fresh the carved characters appeared. In fact, my first impression was that the inscription did not appear to be very old. Whatever its age, it looked as though it had been skillfully carved by someone working with a hammer and chisel. Within a few minutes the lab phone rang; ~~my~~ three professors from Duluth had arrived.

It had been almost twenty years since I had last seen them all in the same room together; and I was thrilled that they had made the effort to come. After brief introductions they pulled out their hand-lenses and immediately began to pore over the Stone. The room got very quiet as they made their examinations and after a few minutes the phone rang

DR

DR

My Experience with the Kensington Rune Stone

again; Bob Johnson and Paul Wieblen had arrived. What happened next surprised me. When Paul entered the lab he was greeted by my former professors as though he was royalty. They obviously knew Paul and had great admiration for him. He is highly respected in the geologic community, and best known for being hired by NASA in the late 1960s to head up the research on the moon rocks that Apollo moon landings brought back. As they gathered around the Stone I was thrilled to have the input of such an accomplished group.



The Kensington Rune Stone was examined by a team of noted geologists at the American Petrographic Services Laboratory on July 14, 2000. L to R, Dr. Richard Ojakangas (kneeling), Dr. John Green, Ken Harris, Gerard Moulzolf, Scott Wolter, Dr. Charles Matsch, Barry Hanson, Robert Johnson and Dr. Paul Wieblen (kneeling). (Photograph taken by LuAnn Patton, used by permission)

The team spent more than three hours examining the Stone and bouncing ideas off each other. At one point we flipped the stone over to examine the back side. The most obvious feature we all noticed immediately was the pronounced glacial scratches, ~~called~~ striations, all ~~relatively~~ deep and aligned ~~nearly~~ parallel to the long dimension of the Stone. Since there were no striations on the other sides of the stone, and all but one side of the stone had the same weathered appearance, there must have been special circumstances at work. I threw out the idea to the group that the Stone was probably still part of the

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bedrock as the ice past over, creating the striations. The Stone must have been plucked out and carried within the glacial ice, where it was protected from further abrasion. When the ice eventually melted the Stone was left as an erratic (loose) boulder with the striations present only on the back side.

The other prominent feature on the glacial back side were two white, roughly parallel and undulating lineations across the Stone roughly perpendicular to the striations. ~~They looked like~~ ~~the~~ Paul Wieblen was the first to say something. He quietly pointed to the marks and said, "These features kind of look like roots." ~~It seemed unbelievable for a feature related to the Stone's discovery to have gone unmentioned. I ended up spending considerable time studying the marks and would eventually conclude that they were related to the tree under which the Stone was found.~~

I thanked each of the geologists before they left, and felt more confident about the work plan I had chosen to pursue. It wasn't until the following day that I could focus my full attention on the Stone. We had recently purchased an articulated arm for the microscope and it worked perfectly for examining this larger-than-normal sample. With LuAnn sitting nearby, and Barry poised across the Stone from me, I focused the microscope within the characters and was immediately bothered by what I saw. In several areas I could see pencil lead and ink from clumsy or careless observers of the past. It made me wonder if the consensus of negative opinion made people feel that it was unnecessary to exercise care. What disturbed me even more was that it was quite apparent that the entire inscription on the "face" side had been scratched out with a sharp instrument. This "retooling," as I like to call it, was also present on the side of the Stone even though the cuts appeared to have been applied with generally less force than the face side. Thankfully, approximately a dozen characters on the left side did not appear retooled at all.

While examining the unscratched or "original" characters I noticed that several contained reddish-brown iron oxide deposits. I pointed these out to Barry and he asked if they indicated significant age. Even though they looked like they had been there for a long period of time, I really wasn't all that impressed initially. Assuming these deposits were the by-product of decomposing pyrite crystals, I relayed to Barry how they could develop relatively quickly depending on the conditions that were present; perhaps in as little time as a year or two. The next thing I noticed made my brow furrow with disappointment. On the top line of the side was a character with heavy iron-oxide deposits that had been clearly and deeply cut through, and I assumed the grooves had been cut in the recent past. Eventually I would learn that this was not the case, and these retooled iron-oxide deposits would become an important piece of evidence.

The Kensington Rune Stone: Compelling New Evidence

After about ten minutes, the core barrel had penetrated the planned 2" depth, so Don turned off the water and core machine and slowly pulled the barrel out. Everything had gone perfectly. I offered Barry the honors of breaking off the sample, handed him a screwdriver and a crescent wrench to use as a hammer and showed him where to place the screwdriver. I told him to give it a firm whack, but he lightly tapped the top of the screwdriver; he was being a little too careful. I realized he was uncomfortable and asked him to let me do it. With one good, hard hit, the core broke off perfectly at the bottom and we pulled out a perfect core sample. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief and the relaxed, easy smile returned to LuAnn's face.



Barry Hanson lightly taps a screwdriver trying to break off the core sample drilled from the back side of the Kensington Rune Stone on October 3, 2000. (Photo by LuAnn Patton, used by permission)

In addition to identifying the mineralogy through thin section examination in our lab, I was able to gain an understanding of the freshly fractured and glacially weathered surfaces by traveling to the Materials Research Laboratory at Iowa State University and examining the core sample using their scanning electron microscope (SEM). Using this equipment I was able to learn the exact chemical composition of the minerals and how they were distributed throughout the stone. The mica minerals that looked so fresh and pristine on the broken surface at the bottom of the core had completely weathered away on the glacial surface. We needed to know the condition of the micas of the man-made surfaces, and the only way to do that was by taking another sample in the area made at the same time as the original inscription.

~~must have been a deliberate attempt to create a false history of the Stone. However, the motivation for this was not clear.~~

The conference was quite a learning experience. I had my first taste of the passion and the politics involved in this controversy, my first lesson on the complex issues surrounding this Stone. I was beginning to understand the differences between the scientific process that is my world as a geologist, and the way of doing business in the fields of archaeology, history, and language. There are not just subtle differences; the disciplines are often worlds apart in the way they approach things. To me, the physical aspects of the Stone, like the thousands of concrete and rock samples I've examined, contained the evidence that tells a straight forward, factual story. As far as I was concerned, all aspects of the Stone, including the language and the runes, took a back seat to the geology. I wasn't used to people not wholeheartedly accepting our test results, and it would be a while before I got my arms around what was really going on with the controversy.

With the conference over, all that was left to do was to complete the written report. The results of our testing breathed new life into the on going discussions of the Kensington Rune Stone's authenticity. The feedback from the conference was generally positive, and LuAnn Patton and the members of the Rune Stone Museum board of directors seemed pleased with our work as well. By New Year 2001, Barry had resigned as coordinator of the research and all my communication about the Rune Stone from that point on went through LuAnn and Dick. I decided at this point that I was no longer going to charge for my time for the work I did on the Stone. I had been drawn in by the controversy and wanted to continue to get to try to get to the bottom of the mystery. I felt I brought some unique skills and perspective to the problem and needed to stay involved. Besides, something was definitely wrong in this case, and I thought I might be able to help figure out what it was.

Before resigning, Barry did us all a favor by getting ^{Dr} Paul Weiblen to take an independent look at the core and chip samples from the stone. Although retired, Paul still had access to the geology department's electron microscope at the University of Minnesota. Paul performed some microprobe work on the samples and offered some ideas for additional work that might help us better understand the weathering rate of the minerals in the Stone. What I felt was most important was Paul's review of Newton Winchell's work with the stone more than ninety years earlier. Paul gave Winchell high marks for his intelligent and reasoned insight in developing his opinions; I would eventually come to the same conclusion about Winchell's work in the not too distant future.

After hanging up the phone I laughed at myself for being so silly and not being able to figure things out sooner. The problem was that I'd only considered two possibilities for the inscription's origin when there was a third possibility. In spite of this, I was proud of myself and everybody else involved for the way we handled the whole affair; we treated the stone as though it were a genuine artifact until it could be properly examined. The best news about the AVM Stone was that we now knew the age of the inscription, and this knowledge could be used as a control sample to create a weathering profile to compare with the Kensington Rune Stone inscription. I asked Arlen and Ruby if they would leave the stone outside so the inscription could continue to weather, and promised that I would visit periodically and see how both the pyrite and biotite were weathering. My first visit back to the stone was May, 2003, Arlen and Ruby had placed the stone in the middle of their flower garden. When I took out my hand-lens and inspected the inscription, I saw the pyrites were still actively weathering and the biotite looked fresh.

I visited again on June 19, 2004, and the pyrites were still going nineteen years after the stone was carved. This is significant because nineteen years prior to 1898, Olof Ohman was still in Sweden, he hadn't yet immigrated to Minnesota. The pyrite weathering proved that Ohman could not have been involved in a hoax. It is ironic that a practical joke by disbelievers of the Stone turned out to be extremely important evidence.

Kensington Rune Stone Forum

In February 2002, I received a call from a professor in the archaeology department at the University of Minnesota, ^{Pa.} named Guy Gibbon, who said he wanted to get together to talk about the Kensington Rune Stone. We met at my office and visited for about an hour. Guy is a warm, intelligent fellow who was easy to talk with. He explained that his position on the stone was neutral, and he thought there might be an opportunity with the renewed public interest. We talked about trying to assemble experts from various disciplines to discuss potential research, and it seemed like a great idea to get people together from different fields to talk about the Stone. We were excited by the idea, and agreed to put together a list of people to help plan some kind of event.

One of the things I've enjoyed most about this experience with the Kensington Rune Stone is the opportunity to meet new people and to learn new and interesting things. The planning committee we put together certainly was an aggregation. Guy suggested a former researcher at the University of Minnesota named Tom Trow who could help organize such an event. Tom is a very bright fellow who plays his cards close to the vest, sharp witted and not afraid to be confrontational. Normally I wouldn't get along with a guy like Tom, but I liked him right away even though we are two very different people. The first couple of meetings were at the home of Tom Reiersgord, a retired attorney, and the next few meetings were hosted by Bill Jacobson. Both Tom and Bill had a long-time interest in

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the Stone. Another member of the committee was Rhoda Gilman, a retired teacher and political activist who had worked at the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) for thirty-five years. She knew both Russell Fridley and Theodore Blegen, and held both in high regard. Rhoda was able to give me personal insight into Professor Blegen, who I had been researching at the Minnesota Historical Society. She understood the problem I had with the fact that Blegen used Winchell's field notes extensively in building his case against the Stone, but ignored all of Winchell's geologic work. Whether it was intentional or not, the good professor tried to have it both ways in his book. It seems that in the thirty-five years since the book was published, this problem had yet to be pointed out.

From the outset, we had people with opinions both pro and con about the Stone's authenticity and consequently, each time the committee met we spent at least half the time discussing various aspects of the Stone. In spite of the fact that we often disagreed we were able to organize a pretty good event. The conference was set for April 2, 2003. It took more than a year to get everything into place, but it was well worth the effort.

Tom Reiersgord

One of the real gentlemen I met throughout this whole Rune Stone experience was a retired attorney who lived in Edina, Minnesota, named Tom Reiersgord. I first met Tom at the Midwest Plains Archaeological Conference. He smiled widely as he introduced himself at the end of our presentations. A tall, thin man in his mid-seventies, Tom was a strong advocate for the Stone. We talked briefly among a small group and he said he had a book coming out soon which would detail his theory that the Stone spent considerable time with Native Americans after it was carved by the Norse. The most interesting thing to me was that he believed the Stone was carved at a different location, then moved, and buried where it was eventually found by Olof Ohman. I didn't pay much attention to the idea at the conference.

The next time I heard from Tom was shortly after the AVM Stone discovery was published in the newspaper. Tom called to ask how our testing was going, and he told me that if the AVM Stone turned out to be genuine, then just about everything he wrote in his book would be debunked. I told him I had no idea what the age of the inscription was because we still had a lot of work to do. I remember thinking for a guy who had just published a new book, *The Kensington Rune Stone: Its Place in History*, whose basic premise could be shot down not long after its release he was taking things pretty well ~~in stride~~. He even had a sense of humor about it. I told him it was premature to draw any conclusions about the stone, and it turned out to be good advice. During this conversation Tom told me he was battling cancer. He had been studying the Stone for many years, but it was finding out about his illness that prompted him to finish his book. Tom was one of the first people I thought of when I heard about the confession letter that was sent to the Minnesota Historical Society.

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I called their office and asked to speak with the president, the operator put me through to Willis Carto. I've always believed the direct approach was best, so I came right out and told Willis what I had heard. He laughed and said, "We get that kind of thing here all the time." He went on to explain that their organization's primary goal was the protection of First Amendment rights. He said, "Free speech is vitally important to this country and there are various entities in our government that try to limit what people say. Our organization works very hard to protect that right by giving people with different viewpoints an opportunity to have their say." He explained that many people get angry with them over who they allow to have a voice. "It goes along with what we are all about." He also assured me that they do not support Nazi supremacists. I appreciated Willis' openness and candor, and told him that I also believe in free speech. He told me the title of the conference was, *Bringing History into Accord with the Facts*, and said, "We feel your presentations are very appropriate and look forward to having both of you." A Kensington Rune Stone "loose cannon" later accused Dick and me of being anti-Semitic for attending the conference. This person might have thought twice about their comment had they known about the rabbis who also spoke at the conference.

Shortly after we arrived at the conference we realized that the attendees were indeed an interesting collection of people. We didn't hear many of the other presentations, but the few we did hear tended to get the crowd riled up. When it was our turn, Dick and I wanted to get into the spirit a little bit so we made our points with a little more verve. I even got a few people to yell in agreement, "Hear, hear!" Overall, we were treated very well and appreciated the opportunity to speak to such a spirited group. As enjoyable as the *Barnes Review* experience was, our main goal on the trip was to meet with the people at the Smithsonian Institution. Our appointment was set for Friday, June 14th at 10:00 a.m.



A banner hanging behind the speaker's podium displays the Barnes Review mission statement for their Third Annual Conference held in Washington, D.C. Dick and I each gave presentations about the Rune stone at the Conference on June 15, 2002. (Photo by Scott Wolter)

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My Experience with the Kensington Rune Stone

Dick, his oldest son Tom, LuAnn, and I met in the hotel restaurant for breakfast and then started our trek to Washington Square. Our nation's capitol is a special place, and walking along the boardwalk admiring the magnificent buildings gives even the most cynical a reason to be optimistic and proud. We walked in to the Natural History Museum with that same sense of pride and the feeling that we were doing the right thing. We waited in the lobby while Ms. Ward was paged; within a few minutes she appeared and graciously introduced herself. Elisabeth's warmth and professional demeanor made us feel welcome as she escorted us to the fourth floor of the museum where the staff offices, classrooms, and many artifacts not currently on display were housed. As we walked along the hallway I looked up at the high ceilings and noticed the busts of humans from ancient tribes sitting on top of what must have been at least ten-foot tall specimen cabinets. Walking through these halls reminded me of the final scene in the movie *Raiders of the Last Ark* where the Ark of the Covenant is wheeled into a huge storage room filled with endless rows of mysterious boxed-up artifacts.

Eventually Elisabeth led us into a classroom where we set up our computer and projector. A few minutes later, Dr. Ives Goddard, a linguist, Iris Hahn, a linguistics intern, and Dr. Sorena Sorenson, a geologist, arrived and introduced themselves. Dick knew Dr. Goddard and had explained earlier that he was a harsh critic of the Kensington Rune Stone inscription. I presented on the geological aspects of the Stone first, watching Dr. Sorenson to gauge her reaction to the points I made. As a geologist, hers was the opinion that mattered most to me. At one point I noticed Sorena was leaning forward in her chair with her elbows on the table, very engaged with my presentation. I took this as very positive body language. A moment later I happened to glance to the other end of the table and saw Elisabeth looking at Sorena with a somewhat puzzled look on her face. She saw that Sorena was engaged and seemed unsure how to react.

I spoke for close to an hour and a half, and then asked if there were any questions. Sorena's only question was whether Professor Winchell's report had ever been published in a scientific journal. I almost laughed thinking, "that's it." I assumed that if she had no other questions then she didn't have any major problems with my findings. I told her I would get back to her about Winchell's publication since I wasn't sure what the answer was. Then it was Dick's turn. He also presented an hour and a half, after which Dr. Goddard asked several questions in a caustic manner. In my opinion, he was quite arrogant and bordered on rude as he challenged various linguistic points. Dick is a gentleman who I have never seen "take the bait" and become combative in his argumentation. True to form, he remained calm and never lowered himself to the point of making derogatory or demeaning comments. He stuck to the facts and carried himself with confidence because he knew that he has done his homework.

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It was hard to say whether he made any headway with Dr. Goddard, but I think everyone in the room believed the time invested was worthwhile. Later that night over dinner and a beer, Dick, Tom, LuAnn, and I talked about our day at the museum. We agreed it would be some time before we'd realize what, if any, benefit our presentations would generate. If nothing else, we felt we successfully achieved good will that might pay off down the road.

LuAnn Patton, Elisabeth Ward, Richard Nielsen and linguistic intern Iris Hahn, pose for a photo at the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of Natural History in Washington, D. C., on June 14, 2002. (Photo by Scott Wolter)



Lars Westman's Visit

On September 3, 2002, a Swedish journalist by the name of Lars Westman paid a visit to my office to talk about our work on the Stone. Lars was very friendly and instantly likeable, with a warm and calm demeanor and a heavy Swedish accent. Dick had previously explained, that Lars was known as the "Walter Cronkite" of Sweden, and I wanted to help him any way I could. He asked me about our testing, and for the next three hours we looked at images on my computer while I told him the whole story. He was very interested, and even excited by our findings, and said he would write a favorable article and try to get the Stone to travel to Sweden.

Lars had never had barbeque before, so that night Lars enjoyed takeout barbeque dinner at our house. We got him ready for bed with a couple of margaritas, which he also enjoyed. Lars charmed everyone with stories about Sweden, saying some day we would come visit him there. It sure sounded like a good time to me!

The next morning Lars accompanied me to the office. Dick arrived from Texas at noon, and shortly after he and Lars set off for a trip to Alexandria to see the Stone. The two of them spent three days running around the area, and on their way back to Minneapolis they stopped by our house for a final visit. While sitting in our half-finished remodeled family room a package was delivered. Inside were three copies of Barry Hanson's two-volume work on the Kensington Rune Stone. The three of us went through the book and enjoyed the entertaining fictional trial of all the scholars who had opposed the Stone.

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There would have been more interesting and important documents to research had it not been for the fire that burned Mr. Holand's home to the ground in 1934. All of his records, letters, and photographs were destroyed. Nevertheless, his letters at the Minnesota Historical Society present a different perspective to the controversy that I felt was important in order to have a complete understanding of the complex issues and personalities involved.

The Tombstone Study

The idea to perform a tombstone study came to me as I tried to think of a way to determine how long it took for the mica minerals in the Kensington Rune Stone inscription to weather away. The concept is really pretty simple. Small chip samples could be taken from the polished or carved surfaces of tombstones of various ages. Death dates on the tombstone's provide an exact record of how long the exposed minerals have been weathering, and from these samples we could see how long it takes for the key minerals to weather away. Since the micas were completely weathered away in the original inscription of the Kensington Rune Stone they were the perfect minerals to focus the research on. Of the four mica minerals present in the Stone (biotite, cerrusite, chlorite, and muscovite), I chose biotite because it contained iron and weathered the fastest.

Now that I had a viable methodology I needed to think through the practical issues of actually performing the work. The first thing I wrote up a list of criteria. Important items included: finding tombstones that were in a similar weathering environment as the Kensington Rune Stone, making sure the grain size of the minerals were the same, collecting samples from both above and below grade, and obtaining permission to collect the samples. As I worked through the study in my mind, I realized that I needed to learn more about the monument business. For instance, I needed to know whether or not surface treatments are now, or ever were used to help preserve monuments.

I also thought long and hard about sampling the tombstones, and whether this research was in any way disrespectful to the deceased. I believe that most people would be excited to participate in a worthwhile experiment that might help solve an important question of history, and as fate would have it, the tombstone study got off to an unexpected, but terrific start.

In late October 2002, Dick and I met in Boston, Massachusetts, to spend a couple of days looking at other Rune Stones that have been found along the northeastern coast of the US. The tiny town of Bourne, Massachusetts is home to the Bourne Stone, reportedly brought to the Pilgrims by Native Americans to be used as a step for a church being built for the Natives in 1658. We found the stone at a small 250-year-old trading post in Aptuxet, Massachusetts, and were startled at how its size and shape are similar to the Kensington Rune Stone. The

Smithsonian Institution's "Vikings" exhibit that was currently at the Science Museum of Minnesota in St. Paul.

We made good time driving and decided to see if we could see the rune stones before the building closed at 4:30 p.m., but unfortunately, the doors were locked when we got there just after 4:00 p.m. While Dick tried to find a way to get in, I waited in the car thinking about my wife and kids back home, who were getting ready to go out trick or treating without me. I felt bad being away for Halloween, but it was the only time Dick and I could both get away. The sky was just beginning to darken as I scanned the area, and I suddenly realized that the local cemetery was right next to the building I was sitting in front of. A big smile spread across my face as I thought about what Dick and I could do for the next couple of hours on Halloween night.

When Dick returned he saw the rows of tombstones and was just as eager to start wandering around. As we entered the cemetery, I noticed a parked van with three teenagers in it, doing something next to the building. We had no reason to disturb them so we continued on. The cemetery was quite large so we had hundreds, if not thousands, of tombstones to look at. The tombstones nearest the annex building were the youngest, generally made of granite and gneiss, both hard and durable rocks. Older gravestones were mostly made of marble. In the growing darkness, we could easily see how the marble inscriptions were harder to read because they were weathering at a much faster rate than the granite stones. The marble tombstones dated from the 1930s back to about the 1850s. As we ventured further in, the geology of the tombstones changed once again. They became a dark gray to black color and were made of a rock type I am very familiar with. These tombstones were older than the marble tombstones and still had clearly legible inscriptions, in fact they looked as though they were carved yesterday even though many of them were over two hundred years old. These tombstones were made from

a metamorphic rock, called slate.

Dick began asking me questions about slate when it suddenly dawned on me that these were the perfect stones to collect samples from for the tombstone study. I excitedly began to tell Dick that they were comprised almost entirely of biotite, one of the key minerals of interest in the Kensington Rune Stone. Biotite is the fastest weathering of the micas in the Kensington Rune Stone, and these tombstones appeared to have a similar grain size; both factors were critical to the experiment. In addition, the oldest tombstones extended into the ground, which would allow for both above and below ground sampling; almost all of the younger monuments were set onto a small concrete pad at ground level. The more we talked about it the more it seemed that we had found the perfect place to obtain samples for the tombstone study.

ground

The Kensington Rune Stone: Compelling New Evidence

Dick and I thanked Dr. Bourque for allowing us to review the stones, and by 11:30 a.m. we were on our way. Driving back to Boston we talked about what a great trip we'd had. I was excited knowing I had a place to collect the samples for the tombstone study, so that as soon as I got back home I went to work getting things set up so I could go back to Hallowell. Tony Maschadri made arrangements with the other two trustees of the cemetery and I scheduled my visit back for the first week of March.

I flew into Augusta, Maine, on March 5th and found a nice old fashioned Swedish motel on the outskirts of town to stay in. The morning was clear and cold as I arrived at Tony and Linda's office, ready to go to work. We had a quick strategy session to make sure we had the proper tools, sample bags and where we needed to go to minimize our time in the cold. It was about 5 degrees with nearly a foot of snow on the ground. There obviously weren't going to be any below-grade samples collected that day. At 10:00 a.m. we headed out to the cemetery. *ground*

The top of the snow had crusted over enough so we could walk without breaking through. I had a general idea of where the older stones were from our two-hour visit on Halloween night. Tony knew the cemetery well and asked if I knew about the stone in the tree. As we made our way to northeast part of the cemetery, closest to the river, I asked him, "What stone in the tree?" He smiled and led me to a row of slate tombstones that ran along the top bank of a hill right next to the railroad tracks. He walked up to a huge maple tree and pointed to its base, where I was stunned to see that the tree had completely engulfed a tombstone and lifted it more than a foot out of the ground until the slate tombstone was resting at about a 30 degree angle from its former vertical position. I couldn't find a date on the stone because it was covered by the tree. The stones nearby were about 200 years old, so we assumed this one was about the same age.

Tony Maschadri stands next to large maple tree that completely engulfed a tombstone and lifted it out of the ground. Tony and I collected twenty-four chip samples from slate tombstones at the Hallowell Cemetery on March 6, 2002. (Photo by Scott Wolter)



My Experience with the Kensington Rune Stone

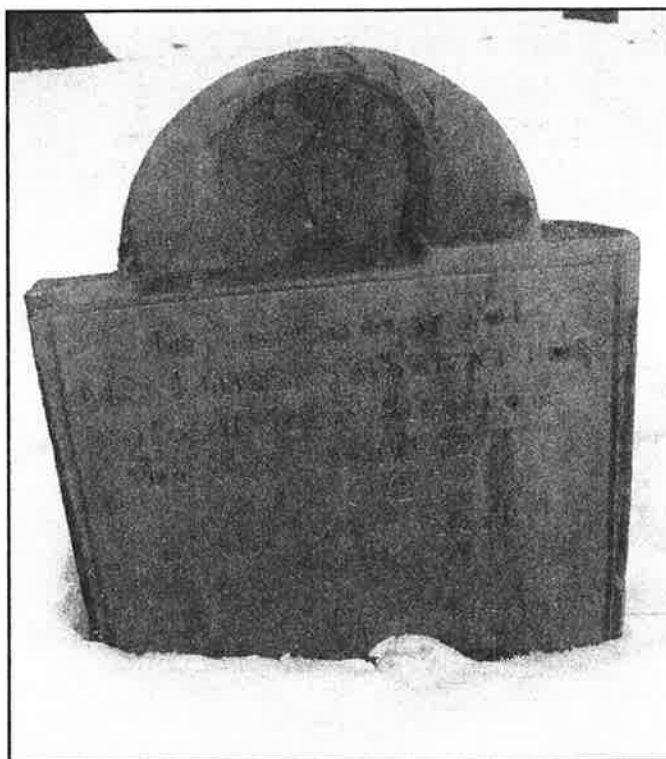
I couldn't help but think of the Kensington Rune Stone and how appropriate this scene was: an inscribed stone in the firm grip of a tree.

One of the first things I noticed after kneeling down next the first tombstone we sampled was how crisp and sharp the inscription was; it looked like it had been carved yesterday. As I gazed at the two-hundred-year-old stone I had a good feeling about using the biotite as my study mineral. The minerals appeared to be holding up like I thought they would, but the real answer about their condition wouldn't be known until we put the chip samples in the microscope. Most of the tombstones were ornately inscribed over the entire front side, which meant we could take our sample close to the edge and not deface the monument. When I set the chisel against the stone and lifted the hammer to strike I had a momentary twinge of anxiety. What if the whole stone split in half? I knew this wouldn't happen, but since I'd never done this before that fear of the unknown crept in a little bit. The hammer struck the chisel and a small black flake flew off. I examined the area the flake had come from and could barely see the mark. I smiled at Tony, who smiled back approvingly. I slipped the chip into a sample bag, and labeled the bag with the death date and name of the decedent. It seemed appropriate to give credit to the individuals who were participating in the research.

The Threasa Stratton tombstone exhibited little apparent weathering even after two hundred years. (Photo by Scott Wolter)

Tony and I spent more than three hours collecting twenty-four chip samples. By the time we got back in the car it was just after 1:00 p.m. and our fingers were so cold we could barely bend them.

Later that afternoon I made my way the History Museum in Augusta to give a presentation for Dr. Bourque and the historical society staff, among whom were two geologists, a husband and wife. I was hoping they would see the value of having the Spirit Pond rune stones undergo similar testing as we had done with the Kensington Rune Stone. Since the Spirit Pond stones are currently considered fakes I tried to make the point that there was nothing to lose and everything to gain.



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said that both Walter and Josephine were credible, and he saw no reason at the time to doubt them. He was impressed with the work we had done and said that no one had ever shown him any evidence like this before. My conspiracy theory about these interviews and Blegen's book now seemed pretty silly.

Russell Fridley and former long-time MHS staff member Alan Woolworth stand next to the Kensington Rune Stone at the Kensington Rune Stone forum held at Historic Fort Snelling in St. Paul, Minnesota on April 2, 2003. (Photo by Scott Wolter)



The Kensington Rune Stone Forum at Fort Snelling

The planning committee had everything ready leading up to the Kensington Rune Stone Forum on April 2, 2003. The list of invitees read like a who's who from the various disciplines related to the Kensington Rune Stone. We decided that the meeting would be closed to the public and the media, with the exception of Peg Meier, who promised to not write an article about the event at the time. Archaeologist Larry Zimmerman and his staff at Fort Snelling set up tables with a large screen for slides and Power Point presentations. Guy Gibbon was the moderator, and assured us that he was going to be firm about time limits to keep the schedule on track. LuAnn had made the necessary arrangements to have the Stone there, and it was nice touch. I was excited because I had just completed the SEM work on the tombstone samples, and this would be my first opportunity to present the findings. Both Elisabeth Ward and the new linguist intern, Iris Hahn, from the Smithsonian Institution were coming. The timing worked out well for Elisabeth, because the "Vikings" exhibition was in its final month at the Science Museum of Minnesota in St. Paul, which was the final stop on its three-year tour of the United States. Elisabeth had been hired by the Smithsonian to coordinate the exhibition and act as a liaison with the media. This was the perfect job for her because she is not shy about being in the spotlight. One of the perks of having her attend was that she volunteered to give a private tour of the exhibits to all interested attendees the night before the Forum.



Attendees enjoy dinner at the St. Paul Grill in St. Paul, Minnesota, after the Kensington Rune Stone Forum on April 2, 2003. L to R: Scott and Diana Ohman, Alice Kehoe, Dick Nielsen, and Richard Olson. (Photo by Scott Wolter)

Runo Löfvendahl

Lars Westman would occasionally send an e-mail about his progress getting the Stone to visit Sweden. The article about the Kensington Rune Stone that Lars had written in *Vi* Magazine the previous November had struck a chord with many people in Sweden, and prompted interest from the Historiska Museum in Stockholm. Lars also put me in contact with a geochemist named Runo Löfvendahl, who had an extensive background in studying the weathering of Viking era rune stones in Scandinavia. Lars asked if he could give my report to Runo to review and I agreed. I received my first email from Runo on January 7, 2003, and on January 14, Runo sent me a list of twelve questions regarding my report, which I quickly answered.

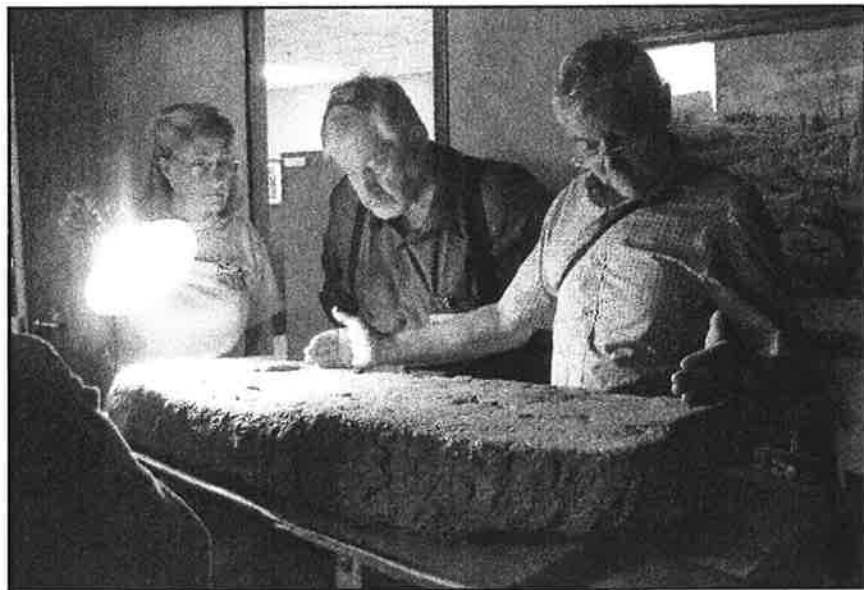
Runo hadn't seen the actual Stone, so he was taking much of what I said on faith, and while email communication is wonderful, it's no substitute for face-to-face communication. I could tell by his questions that he is an intelligent gentleman. Being a person of many words, I wanted to tell him every detail, and be sure that all of his questions were answered, but that would have to wait for another time. It was quite clear that Runo's opinion of our geologic work on the Stone was vital. If Runo agreed with the results of our work, it would be a strong statement for the age of the inscription. If he did not agree, it would be a huge setback. I wanted to meet Runo so I could gauge what kind of a man he was. I worried that he might be like so many people who had stumbled due to laziness or arrogance, though he didn't seem that way in his correspondence. Besides, with a geologic background I felt he had to be a pretty down-to-earth guy. I would have to wait several months to find out and fortunately, I would not be disappointed.

over, along with archaeologist Larry Zimmerman and one of his colleagues. Michael joined the group and they all carefully examined the inscription. Michael and Dick discussed the crudely cut lines along one edge of the stone, but couldn't figure out with any certainty what language it was. They said it could be a very old runic inscription, but the extensive weathering and wear made it impossible to say for sure.

Professor Barnes is one of the very few experts in his field who has taken the time to consider the Kensington Rune Stone inscription seriously. For years, Dick has been making linguistic points about the stone that have mostly fallen on deaf ears. Since Michael has taken time to consider Dick's points, he has seen that many of them have merit. He was intrigued enough to make the effort to see the stone and to learn more about the other evidence. After an hour or so with the Bourne Stone, I offered to share some information with him about the Kensington Rune Stone. We went into the training room, where I fired up my laptop and the projector and proceeded to fill over an hour with information that he calmly and quietly took in. I talked about both the physical testing and the document search, which was a lot to process, but I could almost hear the wheels turning in his head. The Professor gave me some helpful feedback about not getting too emotional when presenting the information, because it could take away from what he called very compelling evidence that supported the Stone.

I was impressed with the professor and could easily see why Dick thought so highly of him; not only is he extremely intelligent and knowledgeable, but he is also a very nice guy. Dick offered to escort Michael's party to see the Kensington Rune Stone and the Ohman farm. Dick smiled and winked at me as they left; I knew what he was thinking and I couldn't have agreed more. This was the kind of intelligent, thoughtful guy we wanted to consider the merits of the Kensington Rune Stone and I was sure that I would be seeing him again.

Professor Michael Barnes surveys the Bourne Stone Inscription at the American Petrographic Services laboratory on July 16, 2003. L to R: Janey Westin, Dick Nielsen, and Michael Barnes. (Photo by Scott Wolter)



The conference at the museum was scheduled to start at 2, and as the time approached a crowd of over two hundred people gathered. The moderator was an experienced Swedish journalist ~~named~~ Catherina Ingelman Sundberg, with Svenska Dagbladet, who set strict ground rules for the speakers and people in the crowd with questions. The first three speakers were Lars Westman, LuAnn Patton, and Professor Barnes. Lars gave an overview of the Kensington Rune Stone mystery and LuAnn did her usual professional job of representing the Rune Stone Museum. Michael Barnes talked about the need to exercise care when dating the age of inscriptions, and cited examples of various ages occurring at a site in England. After the coffee break, Dick, Helmer Gustafsson, and I each gave our talks. Dick discussed linguistic aspects of the Kensington Rune Stone and cited documentary sources to illustrate his points. I knew he was frustrated when Catherina asked him to stop; he had many more good examples that he just didn't have time for.

The conference started getting fun when the questions came after Dick's talk. The person who stood out the most was the Norwegian linguist, Professor James Knirk. I had heard him mentioned several times in the past few years and was able to witness him for myself. He is small in stature, with a rather serious tone. Obviously quite intelligent, he clearly believed the Stone was a 19th century artifact. He asked questions after Dick's presentation, or rather, made statements about aspects of the language. ~~_____~~

~~_____~~ Other people also had questions, but what I remember most was how Knirk ~~and~~ ^{he had} dominate the discussion by continually bringing up problems with the language and talking over people's heads. At one point he raised his hand and said, "I have to hurry and leave, but I have four remarks to make." Catherina warned him to keep it short, which he ignored. After taking a couple minutes to make his first point, he started in with his second remark, but Catherina cut him off. ~~_____~~ She then thanked the professor and moved on to the next question. ~~_____~~

Finally it was my turn to present, and I was eager to get started. I was a little bit worried because of the time limit, so I jumped right in. I made sure to keep calm. I looked out over the crowd and saw a few smiles form as I made my points about the Stone. The Power Point images projected onto the screen were sharp and clear, and when I was finished the enthusiastic applause seemed genuine. After the brief question and answer session was over, Katerina thanked everyone for their participation and the presentations were over. The crowd was energized and several people told me how much they appreciated the geologic information. If a poll had been taken after the presentations about the question of authenticity, I think the Stone would have done well.

After the crowd had cleared, Lars Westman took Dick, LuAnn, and me to the docks on the archipelago in Stockholm. Lars led us to a large boat where a party was being sponsored by *Vi* magazine. It was a beautiful affair and everyone was in great mood. Kristian

The Kensington Rune Stone: Compelling New Evidence

Viking Age rune stones from around 1000 A.D. are found throughout the countryside outside Stockholm. This beautiful stone stood only a few feet from the road we took during Lars Westman's rune stone tour. (Photo by Scott Wolter)

I awoke the next morning after another restless night, unable to quiet my mind. Everything I saw here was so new and interesting that I had a hard time getting to sleep almost every night. I went to the lobby where Lars was waiting with the bus. LuAnn, Jillian, Michael Barnes, Dick,



Lars, and I rode the 45 minutes out to tour Gripsholm Castle. As we walked outside the castle we stopped to examine two famous rune stones. Michael Barnes was especially interested in these rune stones and after everyone else moved on, I stayed with the professor to listen and ask questions. He was interested in the geologic input I had to offer as well, and I told him the inscriptions were carved into granite and red sandstone. Michael then translated both stones for me with great enthusiasm. I enjoyed seeing someone passionate about their work, and in spite of a biting wind with temperatures in the teens (Fahrenheit) we both fought the cold and thoroughly enjoyed these ancient inscriptions.

The Historical Time-Line for the Kensington Rune Stone



one of

The story of the Kensington Rune Stone has been told in print countless times. Each chronology is usually laced with inaccurate information as well as the writer's opinion of certain events. This has been ~~on~~ *one of* the basic problems with KRS story. How could anybody figure out what really occurred unless they had all of the right information? Before any fruitful analysis of the controversy can be performed, there needs to be an honest presentation of the documented facts of the story. To avoid any inaccuracies or miss-representation of important events, we have included photographs of the relevant document, article or place. In some cases we pulled a pertinent quote from a document that speaks to a particular fact. Many of the facts that follow represent new information for researchers. Examples include four never-before-seen letters written by Hjalmar Holand to Olof Ohman that yield new information about two of the most important individuals in the KRS story. This chronology of events is the most comprehensive to date and the story it tells speaks for itself.

The time-line spans 150 years and is divided into eight sections. Each section represents an important block of time when significant events occurred. The implications of these events will be discussed in subsequent chapters. What we felt was most important was to document the sequence of events as objectively and thoroughly as possible. This time-line should serve as a reference for the countless discussions and debates that are sure to follow. A logical starting point for a time-line for the modern history of the Kensington Rune Stone is with the birth of the central character.

Olof Ohman (1854 to 1898)

1854

October 10 - Olof Ohman was born in the town of Forsa, Hälsingland, Sweden.

Cracking the Code: The Kensington Rune Stone

1897

March 14 – Oscar Fredrick Ohman, the sixth child of Karin and Olof, was born in Kensington, Minnesota.

July 12 – Sven Fogelblad died at the home of Andrew Anderson located across the road from the Wenersberg Cemetery, in Solum County, at the age of 67.

1898

February 28 – Olof Ohman acquired via warranty deed another part of lot 2 from E. J. Moen for \$50. This transaction was recorded on March 10, 1898.

The Discovery (1898 to 1900)

The period from 1898 to 1900 began with the discovery of the stone by Olof Ohman. Mr. Ohman was using a hand powered winch to fell trees near the crest of a hill on the extreme eastern part of his land. In the ensuing months after the discovery the stone traveled to the home of Professor George O. Curme in Chicago, Illinois. Numerous newspaper articles were published between January and May of 1899 which provide important facts when reviewed carefully. The first of several translations were made during this time from copies of the inscription made by Ohman and Samuel Siverts. Confusion and claims that they were pre-inscription drafts by past investigators have haunted these copies for over 100 years.

1898

After September 5 – Olof Ohman unearthed the Kensington Rune Stone while “grubbing trees” on his newly acquired property ~~contiguous~~ to Nils Flaaten’s farm. Mr. Flaaten was also grubbing trees nearby when the stone was found.

next
Willie Sausland
was part of a 16 man firestone crew
harvesting when the stone was unearthed