Handbook on Iceland.
Prepared By First Army T I & E Section

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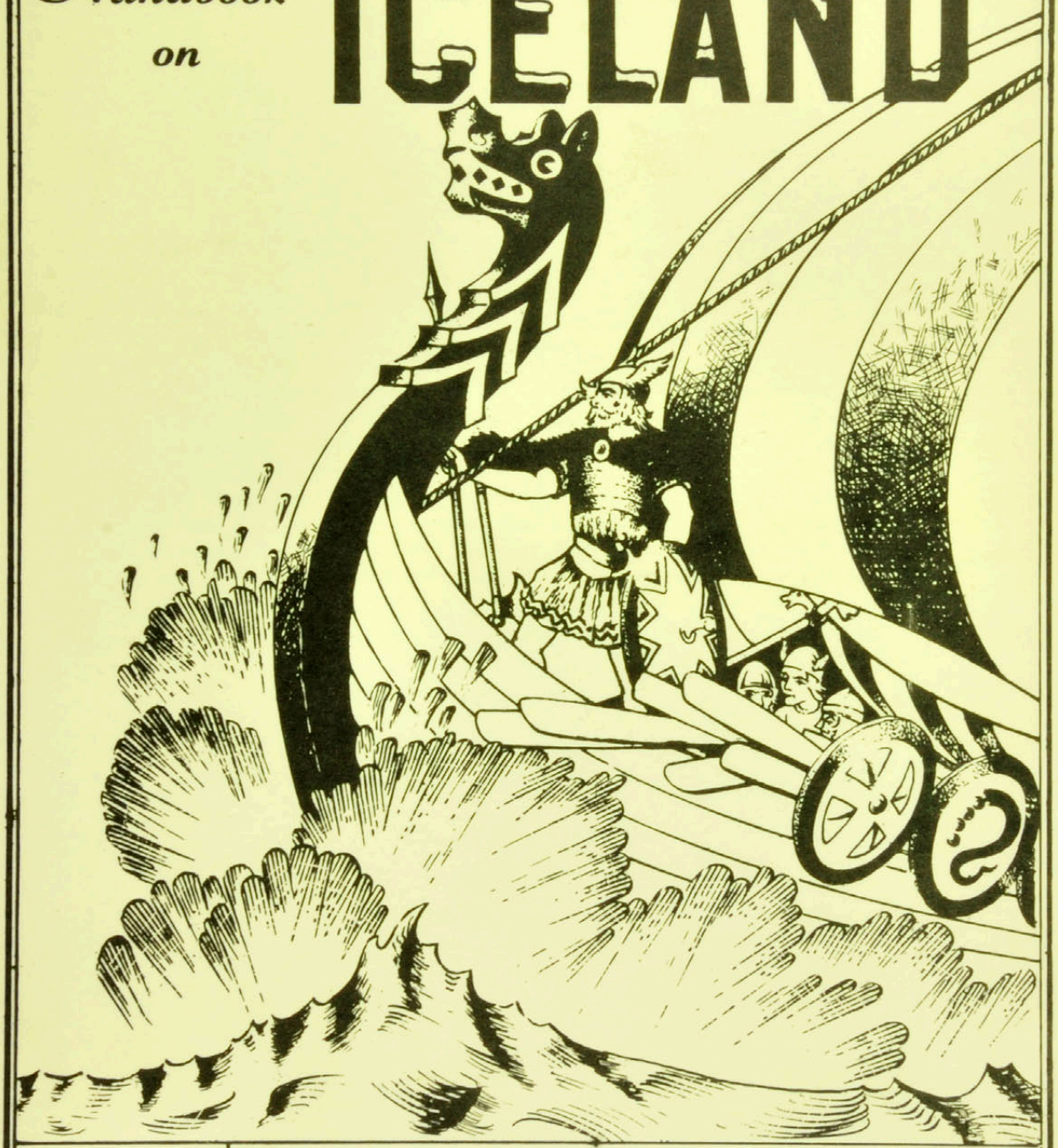
Handbook on ICELAND



PREPARED BY

FIRST ARMY T I & E SECTION

1951

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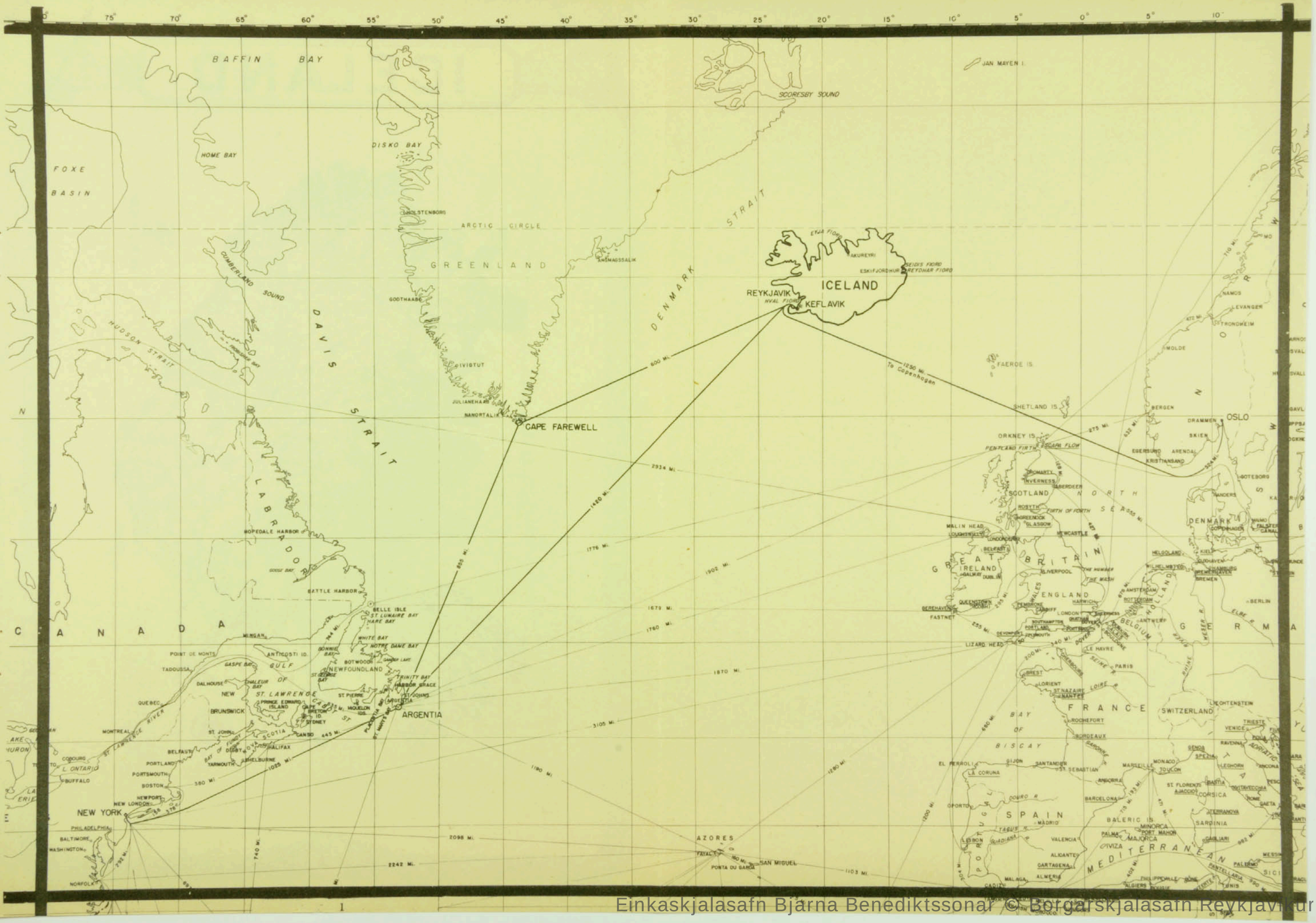
FOREWORD

This booklet has been prepared by the First Army TI&E Section for use by Army personnel ordered to, or already on, duty in Iceland.

The purpose of the publication is to give to members of the United States Armed Forces in Iceland, in brief palatable form, a picture of the history, culture, government, politics, and attitude of the inhabitants of Iceland, and of the geography of that country. It was written to supplement overseas orientation given troops prior to their departure from the United States, and particularly to give individual members of our forces enough knowledge of the Icelander to enable them to live in friendly proximity with the native.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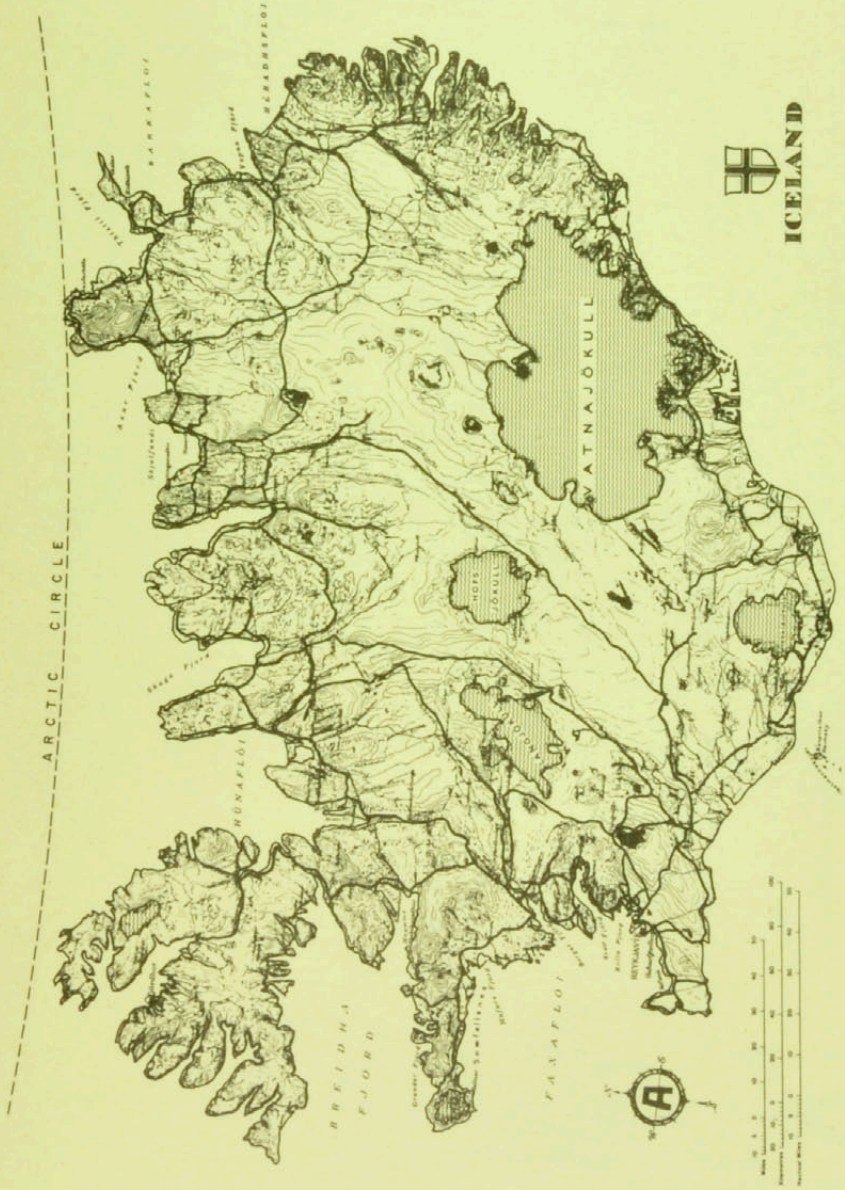

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FIRST DEMOCRACY IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

WHY THIS BRIEFING

The Army's purpose in briefing you on Iceland is not to retread you as a walking encyclopedia. It is not to cram you so full of knowledge that you will impress the Icelanders, who have been operating a democracy seven centuries longer than we Americans any way you want to figure it. They know we spend more money on public education than any other nation, but probably expect they can teach you more about themselves than we can. Our obligation to you is simply to see that you have a chance to absorb a smattering of background information. Whether you do or not is up to the individual as always, but acting a little smarter in strange surroundings never does any harm, and ought to do some good. The more you know the more you can learn; the more you learn the better job you can do; and the better job you do the happier you are. After all, if you were paying for a visit abroad, your travel bureau would break its neck to see that you had a crack at all interesting information on your ports of call, so that you would have a better time enjoying the trip. In this case, the Army is your personal Overseas Information Bureau, so here in capsule form is a brief travelogue.

THE PIONEER SPIRIT

Few countries anywhere have the romance of Iceland. It is not a land that beckoned to those in search of "the life of Riley"; it is for hardy men and women who believe in Teddy Roosevelt's philosophy of "the strenuous life."

A good reason for heeding the advice "Go West, young man" is to look for a more promising gravy train. The history of our own country demonstrates this. In the early days pioneers arrived willing to face danger and hardship for the sake of freedom and opportunity, but the picture changed when the U. S. A. went wealthy. No longer did the New World stand for wilderness and do-without; our country's symbols became the full dinner pail and the two-car garage. The cartoons began to show Uncle Sam with dollar signs on his stovepipe hat. Some immigrants who "never had it so good" glowingly urged their friends in the old country to come on over and make hay while the sun shone.

We're glad so many accepted Miss Liberty's invitation. They have become magnificent Americans, enriching their adopted country by countless contributions. Basically, however, and quite naturally, they have been coming in modern times because they felt they could live higher on the hog over here. And what Yank doesn't hope that his homeland always will be able to put out a better deal?

WAY BACK WHEN

In Iceland this has never been the case. Her first settlers were Irish, deeply religious folk seeking some let-up from the yakety-yak of brawls and the thumpety-thump of shillelaghs in Old Erin. Since there are no snakes in Iceland either, perhaps we can

assume that some of these had mastered the magic of St. Patrick — Ireland's patron saint (who was born in Wales to a British mother and a Roman father, and was carried across the Irish Sea as a pirates' prisoner).

This might be a good place to insert the point that back in those Dark Ages their maps — if they had any — were changing so fast that Rand & McNally could have done a land-office business. The Latin name for the Irish, Hiberni, was changed to Scotti, which means Raiders, so what our atlas would show as Ireland appeared on their maps as Scotland. Confusing, isn't it? But then the Raiders went on a permanent tear around Glasgow and took the name Scotland with them, so things straightened out. At the same time other and wilder raiders were on the prowl, the fierce Vikings from Scandinavia. They took over the islands around Scotland in 795, and fifty years later had captured and fortified Dublin. They were the most resourceful and reckless fighters of their time. Once they sailed a navy from the north of Scotland straight down Loch Ness — looking for the fabulous "monster," maybe — hand-carried their ships across land to Loch Lomond, and suddenly surprised the Scots with a full-scale army right in the heart of the country as though it had been air-dropped. Pretty tough to lick a crew like that! Fact is, they held onto parts of Scotland for six hundred years, and the only way the Scots' king could get the last of it back was to marry the Danish princess and settle for the Orkney Islands as a dowry. How that must have rankled his thrifty soul!

The Irish did a little better in absorbing the conquering Norwegian invaders. Perhaps it was the poteens (private pots of bootleg whiskey), maybe it was the colleens, most likely it was the famous Hibernian political slogan "If you can't lick 'em, jine (join) 'em." The upshot was that in 850 A. D. they (the Norse and Irish) organized an allied force and took over Iceland without opposition from the earlier monkish settlers. What the percentage of Irish was nobody knows or cares today, but a good guess is two to one in favor of the Vikings.

LAND, HO!

To Iceland they came because they were adventurous, and because they thrived on hard work. Many of those who came directly from Norway were rebels too proud to put up with what they considered political tyranny at home. Remind you of anything in American history? Not one of them was a free-loader with some silly notion that Iceland was an Eldorado with gold nuggets lying around loose, or a New Jerusalem overflowing with milk and honey. It wasn't and it isn't.

They were a tough breed, those hardy old Norse pioneers. Sea rovers by tradition and profession, it was they who first struck west. The next move was to colonize Greenland — named on the same principle that the real estate man uses when he changes the neighborhood label of Agony Alley to Honeysuckle Heights. From Greenland they established several beachheads on continental North America.

Today we sail the seven seas in air-conditioned liners, floating hotels where a week-old bambino can have his pablum strained every hour on the hour. The Independence boasts three super-duper cocktail lounges and a complete hospital that can whisk out your appendix or plump you under an oxygen tent. But the dragon prows that

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made port in Reykjavik a thousand years ago were something else again; tiny open boats powered by a square sail and plenty of elbow grease on the oars. The bearded jarls who manned them, "nor hail, nor rain, nor gloom of night" fellows, were drenched by spray, frozen by snow, and scorched by sun. Compared to their voyages, the Pilgrims' jaunt was equivalent to a moonlight excursion down the Potomac. Skoal to the Viking vanguards of democratic living! They could and did take it; they could and did dish it out. Not a creampuff in a carload!

Most of the present-day inhabitants of Iceland are direct descendants of these hardy old salts, so their virtues and strength remain trademarks of the Icelandic character. Remember that the Icelander is surrounded by equals. He does not have to reckon with any marked class distinctions, never has, and plans not to in the future.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, RIPLEY

When you get to Iceland, be sure your slip isn't showing. No sense boasting to Hjalmar Bjornson that your ancestors came to Jamestown with John Smith, because he or his neighbors can trace their family tree through ten centuries or better, so it would startle him a little to have you bring up something with which he wouldn't bother. Go easy on the story of how Queen Isabella pawned her jewels so that Columbus could sail the ocean blue in fourteen ninety-two. Hjalmar may know the jewel story is a fake, and he certainly knows that Leif Ericson, his countryman, explored America in the year one thousand. If you try to palm off Peregrine White or Virginia Dare as the first child of European parents born on this continent, you'll have a rough time when he hauls out a 1003 birth certificate for Snorri, son of Karlsefini, who earned the honor. Now don't blow your stack and ask, "If your blankety-blank pirate ancestors were so all-fired smart, why don't they own America now?" He'll have an answer for that too. A very simple answer: "We gave it back to the Indians."

Actually the fact that their expeditionary force had brought along too few women had as much to do with their quitting as too many Indians. But don't press the point. Of the 25,000 Icelanders who have migrated to this continent recently, four out of five pick central Canada instead of "the States."

Watch out for Mr. Bjornson's cousin, Thorsteinn Gjerset: he's a sharpie too. If he tells you that Columbus had to go to Iceland first to get directions on how to discover America, remember Damon Runyon's famous advice from "Guys and Dolls": "Son, some day a man will come to you with a brand new pack of cards, shiny seal all unbroken, and offer to bet you that the jack of clubs will jump out of that deck and squirt your ear full of cider. Never bet on such a proposition, Son, because the day you do will be the day you get an ear full of cider!" Now Columbus did sail to and beyond Iceland in 1477 and he picked up many nautical pointers on westward voyages while in Reykjavik, without which the old "Sail On!" spirit might have wilted.

WANDERLUST

What we must try to grasp, we who think that airplanes put the word "globe-trotter" in Webster's, is that the old-timers in Iceland certainly knew their way around.

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Between us Yanks, Brother Ericson discovered America only because he was in a hurry and got lost in a fog while trying out a new short-cut to Greenland. But give the guy credit: he'd pop over to Norway for the week-end to show off his outsize canoe!

Remember Saladin, the Saracen general who slugged it out with Richard the Lion-Hearted and never had a glove laid on him? Well, his heart-throb hobby was falconry, as much the rage then as baseball was with us before Dizzy Dean took to announcing it. Some smart promoter from Iceland convinced Saladin that the only hawks worthy of true falconry were white ones, and the only white falcons were in Iceland... except for the Greenland concession, which he had in the bag. Reminds you of the grocer who was stuck with some crates of slow-selling canned white salmon until an ad man pasted a little label on the can which announced "the salmon in this tin is guaranteed not to turn pink." Of course, the good old U. S. A. has seen some native hoss tradin' David Harums of its own, but the Thingvellir farmer from a Christian country in the Western Hemisphere who went to the Middle East in the middle of the Crusades to sell a white falcon to the Commanding General of the Moslem side must have had what it takes.

No stick-in-the-muds, these Rover Boys from Reykjavik. A hundred and fifty years before Chaucer made Thomas a Becket's shrine famous, one of them named Hrafn racked up the long-distance record as about the very first to make the pilgrimage to Canterbury, and set the style. Hrafn was a combination general-admiral-senator-doctor-poet-carpenter, and a success at everything. Probably he would have explained it with a shrug, "Oh well, you know the competition is pretty stiff in my home town."

Occasionally itchy feet wind up planted. The king in the grave next to Macbeth is an Icelander named Hallfred. Then there was Erik Bloodaxe, who left home to help his Saxon pal King Athelstane. Helped him so well that Athelstane wound up with the moniker "Victorious," but Bloodaxe wound up under a cairn of field rocks.

Back in 1300 French literature hadn't yet lived down its sultry reputation for spice. So when the king of Norway needed a good translator to do a rewrite job that would bring out the full flavor, he knew just where to send. You guessed it, Iceland. Always had good solid scholars up there. They were freely printing the Bible in their own language when Englishmen were being imprisoned for it. They had trial by jury three centuries ahead of the English, too. An Icelandic law forbade dueling just 798 years before our Alexander Hamilton took a one-way rowboat trip across the Hudson.

Sticking with our date for the Norse-Irish settlements, A. D. 850, let's bring ourselves up-to-date in Icelandic history very quickly. Within sixty years four thousand homesteads had been set up and by 1100 the population was up to fifty thousand. (It is just short of three times that now.) The drive to make the country wholly Christian came direct from Norway about the year one thousand.

— ARE CREATED EQUAL

The nature of the simple life, plus the fact that it was then as now the most sparsely populated country in Europe, completely modified the feudal system as we know it elsewhere. Although there were two classes of men, free and unfree, this made little difference socially. Master and servant ate the same food, spoke the same language,

differed little in clothing or habits, and lived pretty much the same close-to-the-belt lives. The thrall had a house of his own and strict protection in his legal rights. Life was turbulent, but free and varied. It produced leaders, developed bravery, promoted adventure and progress. In all these respects we find many parallels to our own colonial history.

INVENTING DEMOCRACY

The Althing, forerunner and counterpart of our own Congress, met annually every midsummer from A. D. 930 on. Much later, when after some three and a half centuries of independence a political union with Scandinavia was formed, this earliest of national Town Meetings continued to manage local affairs. Later still, when power-grabbing monarchs, both Norwegian and Danish, showed signs of disregarding Icelandic interests, the "embattled farmers" kindled a patriotism that brought full independence back by snowballing steps.

After a thirty-year struggle a separate constitution in 1874 was granted by Denmark (separated from Norway in 1814), and in another thirty years liberalized and expanded by a clause that required the Danes to ship over a resident minister able to speak Icelandic. The next step was recognition as a separate kingdom, with unlimited sovereignty but with the king of Denmark recognized as jointly the king of Iceland for twenty-five years. At the end of this time it was agreed that the whole set-up would be reconsidered, and although during this period Dano-Icelandic relations were never better, the island folk repeatedly voiced their determination to speak up for complete separation. When this treaty did come up for review, Denmark was in the throes of Nazi occupation and its king practically a prisoner in Copenhagen. In a referendum, the Icelanders were asked:

(1) Do you favor cutting all ties with the Danish crown?

(2) Do you favor a republican constitution?

Both proposals scored a landslide with 98 per cent of the electorate voting. On the first, only 370 voted Nay; on the second, a scant thousand were opposed. So on 17 June 1944, the Republic of Iceland was formally proclaimed. Its flag, a red cross with white borders on a blue field, now flies with other United Nations emblems (joined United Nations in 1946). Sveinn Bjornson was elected first president by the Althing for a term of one year, and he has since been twice reelected to four-year terms.

HOW THE GOVERNMENT WORKS

Because the Althing is 335 years older than the English Parliament, the model of our own Congress, it is interesting to note a few features of its framework. First, the whole people elect its fifty-two members directly. And when we say "whole people," we can humbly reflect that the United States never staged a national election in which 98 per cent of its voters took the trouble to go to the polls. The second oldest democracy in the Western world, Switzerland, had an election in mid-'51 in which 46 per cent voted, and this is a country where women have no vote. Even the politically minded Irish at that time had only 70 per cent voting. Then the Althing as a whole selects one-third of its members to belong to the upper house, and the rest make up the lower house. Contrary to our own system, legislation may be introduced in either house

except for budget matters, which must come before both the upper and the lower body. If one house does not go along with the other on some measure, the Althing sits as a whole and a two-thirds' majority is required to give the bill a green light — *except* in matters having to do with the budget again, where a simple majority vote in the joint session will do the trick. Farmers are universally noted for caution in money matters, and this exception seems a prudent provision to prevent a minority bloc from heaving a monkey wrench into the wheels of democracy.

Executive power is exercised under the President by a ministry divided into six departments, but each minister wears two hats so that the Republic gets two jobs done for the price of one. Thus, the Prime Minister is also the Minister for Social Affairs; the Minister of Foreign Affairs doubles in brass as Minister of Justice; the Minister of Commerce serves also as Minister of Communications; the Minister of Finance supervises the leading cash crop in his dual post as Minister of Fisheries; the Minister of Agriculture is also chief for Industries; and the Minister of Education bears also the title of Air Communication. All the ministers are members of the Althing and have free access to both houses, but may vote only in the one to which elected. All citizens may vote at age 21. There is freedom of speech, press, and religion, with the prevailing religion being Lutheran as in other Scandinavian countries.

POLITICS

There are four political parties: (1) Independence, which is conservative and receives support from the merchants and fishing concerns, (2) Agrarian, representing farmers and cooperative societies, (3) Social Democrat, with town workers behind it, and (4) Socialists, who are urban Communists. In the 1949 election, the Althing membership was distributed as follows:

Independence	— 19
Agrarians (Progressives)	— 17
Social Democrats (Labor)	— 7
Socialists (Communists)	— 9

Not very good reading for Moscow.

Perhaps you noticed that none of the ministries was assigned to national defense. This is because Iceland has no armed forces of any sort, nor any fortifications. Yet during World War II this plucky little country, with a population of only one person per square kilometer, suffered from war-connected causes a higher proportion of casualties than did the United States. And this in spite of the fact that she was unarmed and neutral.

CAME THE WAR

Iceland deserves sympathy for the problems thrust upon her by the last war. Her thousand-year tradition of isolation was suddenly shattered. One month after the Nazis overran Denmark and Norway, the English occupied the country. As was her right, neutral Iceland lodged a formal protest, but the British promised to respect the Althing's government and to withdraw after the war. A year later the same promises were repeated in a treaty between Iceland and the United States when we took over patrol of the North Atlantic. Yanks landed in Iceland 7 July 1941.

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Accustomed to peace and seclusion, the islanders now had a British garrison of between sixty and eighty thousand on their hands, as well as something like fifty thousand American troops. Think for a moment how small the country is: total population — 135,000; capital and largest city — 50,000; only nine other municipal centers organized, and two of these with a census of under a thousand. Geographically, it is the size of Virginia, of Ohio, of Pennsylvania, or of Mississippi, whichever you prefer to think of. There are in all 330 post offices, less than ten thousand automobiles, and no railroads whatever. Suppose for instance that eight million Icelandic troops seized Manhattan and set themselves up for an indefinite stay. Do you imagine this would create any problems along Broadway? Do you suppose that the City Council would heave a sigh of relief when the occupation was over and the uninvited visitors shoved off?

After the war, the United States felt that its interests required the keeping of air and naval bases in Iceland, but the Althing was quite understandably reluctant to go along with this. A compromise was reached in September 1946, by which we would withdraw our armed forces, but keep civilian experts at Keflavik to handle the airport. The terms of the agreement allowed special privileges for six and a half years to USAF planes en route to Europe.

The impact of the occupation on the island's economy was terrific. Of course there was an enormous war boom. But what Iceland gained was partly lost through inflation. Taking the year 1939 as 100, the index was up in 1945 to 274, and in 1947 to 310. Ever hear of the rising cost of living after a war?

Speaking of money, 100 aurar equals 1 krona; 16.32 kronur equals one dollar. The metric system of weights and measures is in force.

MAP READING

Now for some geography. In 1950 a Buffalo reporter was invited quite unofficially by some British airmen in northern Scotland to be a passenger while they tested a new supersonic jet plane. In an hour he saw some land and casually asked what it was. Answer — Iceland. The Yank nearly collapsed in surprise. To him Iceland was an Arctic country midway between the Old and New Worlds, and somehow Niagara University hadn't prepared him to believe that Iceland is only six hundred miles or so north of Scotland, practically as close as Norway.

A check with the map, preferably a globe, will show what the truth is. The northernmost tip of Iceland just barely manages to stretch up to graze the Arctic Circle; but Norway got the name "Land of the Midnight Sun" because one third of it actually lies above the Arctic Circle. As to whether Iceland is an American or European republic, there is evidence to support both sides of the argument. The fact is that the line conventionally used to separate the Eastern from the Western Hemisphere cuts through the island. Better to think of it as a stepping stone between the New World and the Old. Better also to show good judgment in your conduct, so that the friendship of the people there — which Americans before you worked so hard to gain — will never be hurt by thoughtlessness.

The island is roughly three hundred miles long, two hundred wide. But because the northwest peninsula is broken by a large number of fjords, the total length of the

coast line is 3,730 miles. The average elevation of the peninsula is two thousand feet; the fjords and glens which cut into it are walled in by steep cliffs of basalt. Here and there great straggling snowfields sprawl. So the people live along shores of the fjords, where grass will support sheep, but most of the population live by fishing.

GEOLOGY

Iceland is a tableland built up of volcanic rocks. In the center is a series of snow-capped plateaus, some over six thousand feet above sea level. Compared with the tableland, the lowlands form only one-fourteenth of the whole, yet these are almost the only parts where people live. At best, only a quarter of the country is inhabitable; the rest is high elevated deserts, lava streams, and glaciers.

In the Ice Age the whole terrain was covered by a solid sheet nearly a thousand yards thick. Today thirteen per cent is covered with glaciers and snowfields caused by the relatively raw climate combined with heavy rainfall (about fifty inches in the south, up to seventy around interior mountains) and low summer temperature. It's no vacation spot for sissies. However, the warm current of the Gulf Stream usually encircles the land so that in the capital the average temperature in the coldest month (January) is two degrees above freezing, and 52 degrees in the warmest month (July).

There are about a hundred volcanoes whose lava flow dates largely to prehistoric times. None of them is constantly active, and the last troublesome eruption occurred at the end of the American Revolution. Generally there are long intervals between outbreaks so don't get your hopes up of having a ringside seat at a spouting Vesuvius. Many of the volcanoes are one-night-stand affairs that speak once and forever hold their peace. Sometimes there have been outbreaks under the sea, creating islands which shot up and then disappeared just as suddenly. Hot springs are found everywhere with sulphur springs and boiling mud lakes common in volcanic areas. The name of the capital city, Reykjavik, means literally "Bay of Smokes," because the vapor rising from the many surrounding hot springs looks like smoke to those not in the know.

BOOSTERS CLUB

With such spectacular natural attractions the land is a tourists' paradise whose features would make an American Chamber of Commerce publicity crowd smack their lips. Reindeer were imported two centuries ago and live in a wild state inland. Polar bears occasionally hitchhike from Greenland on drift-ice. Foxes, both white and blue, are native and plentiful. The walrus is rare now, but there are several kinds of seals, and whales are everywhere. (Whale steak tastes like beefsteak, and is luckily unrationed in England at present.) The whistling swan and assorted species of ducks, particularly the eider, mean extra cash. Salmon and trout fill the lakes and streams so take along your favorite jock scot or silver doctor.

Iceland's cod fisheries are among the world's most important. Herring and halibut frequent the coast. The country's per capita fish catch is the highest in the world and is the backbone of the economy. It is a land of limited resources, so few have too much, but on the other hand few have too little. Education is free and compulsory between

the ages of seven and fourteen. There is a university and a national theatre whose productions have been hits in Winnipeg and Copenhagen — although when you title a play "The Mother-in-Law" you're pretty sure of an audience anywhere.

PARLEZ-VOUS?

Perhaps you didn't know it, but you speak some Icelandic already. English-speaking peoples use the word "geyser," which to Americans means something in Yellowstone Park, and to the British means a hot-water heater in the bathroom. In Iceland it's a place on the map with natural hot springs. The Icelandic language is Old Norse and has the same Teutonic origin as our own. Compare our English word *sayer* with the Dutch *segger* and the Icelandic *saga,* which we have now adopted in the sense of "adventure story."

The literature of Iceland is world famous, especially the two Eddas. There is the older Poetic Edda, which is a collection of heroic legendary songs, and the younger Prose Edda, a sort of guide book for minstrels dealing with Norse mythology. Their thirteenth century historian, Snorri Sturluson, is one of the all-time greats. Americans, English, Germans, and Scandinavians all have to rely on him to fill in missing links of their own histories, and his accounts of Barbary pirates and Constantinople markets prove that he truly had a global outlook.

SO WHAT?

Having skimmed the surface here, we now leave to your own curiosity the task of piecing out this very general picture with more specific information as you have the on-the-spot opportunity. We have tried to let you see that the Icelander has the oldest democratic way of life in the world and has had over a thousand years to develop folkways that suit him. Remember that your mission during your short stay as his guest is not to make over his culture in the image of your own. "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" is a smart tip.

Once there was a Princeton professor who went to Oxford and marvelled at the perfect lawns. Thinking that he would be a hero back home if he could bring back the knack of growing them that way, he dangled fifty dollars in front of the head gardener as a bribe to give out with his grass secrets. The gardener agreed and for half an hour gave the American a painstaking list of directions winding up with "and Sir, you'll be sure to have a lawn every bit as fine as this — in about three hundred years."

So don't give your hosts a chance to set you back on your heels by suggesting that they will be more interested in Yankee criticisms when they hear that the U. S. A. has eliminated strikes (Icelanders own their own industries through cooperatives), slums, unemployment, gangsterism, and mass murder on superhighways. "A word to the wise is sufficient." Or is it?

ICELAND

A THUMBNAIL SKETCH OF ICELAND

DESCRIPTION: The Republic of Iceland is an island of volcanic origin, situated some 600 miles north of Scotland, close to the Arctic Circle in the North Atlantic. The area of the country is 39,709 square miles (about the same size as our own state of Virginia), with a population estimated in 1947 as 134,000.

Iceland is a land of geographical contrasts with smoking volcanoes and glaciers, hot springs and snow fields. In spite of its name Iceland is not an Arctic country, for its climate is tempered by the Gulf Stream. Winters there are no more severe than on the northeast coast of the United States.

The capital of Iceland is Reykjavik with a population of 50,000.

RESOURCES AND INDUSTRY: Due to the rugged terrain only about 40 per cent of the land is productive and little of the productive land is under cultivation. The most important industry is fishing, with huge amounts of cod and herring caught each year. The principal exports in order of their value are fish, herring, oil and meat, canned goods, skins and wools.

HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT: Iceland was first settled by the Irish in the 9th century. After the Irish came Norwegian "raiders." Iceland was an independent republic (930-1263) when it joined with Norway. The two came under Danish rule in 1380. When Norway separated from Denmark in 1814, Iceland remained under Denmark. In 1918 Denmark acknowledged Iceland as a sovereign state. On 17 June 1944, by popular vote, the Republic of Iceland was proclaimed. Iceland joined the United Nations in 1946.

In 1940, after Denmark had fallen to Germany, English troops occupied Iceland. In July 1941 American troops landed in Iceland. By 1946 all occupation troops had left Iceland. A few American civilians remained behind to service USAF planes, permitted by treaty to use Iceland as a stopover en route to Europe.

American troops, under provision of the North Atlantic Treaty, came back to Iceland in May 1951.

Iceland has a representative government. The executive function is vested in a president chosen by popular vote. The president governs with a ministry headed by a prime minister. The legislative power is vested in the president and the Althing, a parliament of two houses, whose 52 members are chosen directly by the people. The judiciary consists of a supreme court and a number of local magistrates. The country has freedom of speech, press, and religion; there is neither an army nor navy. The president of Iceland is Sveinn Bjornson.

EDUCATION AND RELIGION: The Icelandic language has maintained its purity for a thousand years. Danish is also widely spoken. There is no illiteracy for elementary education is compulsory. The national church is Evangelical Lutheran.

CURRENCY: The unit of currency is the krona.

SUGGESTED BOOKS ON ICELAND

If you have time to read a few books on Iceland, here are some good ones:

Iceland by Vilhajalmar Stefanson
Iceland's History by Snorri Sturluson
Iceland and the Icelanders by Helgi P. Briem
Iceland, a Land of Contrasts by Hjalmar Lindroth
Iceland, Past and Present by Bjorn Thorderson
A History of Iceland by Olive M. Chapman
Tramping Through Iceland by D. M. Ramsden