

found with its simple memorial of parental affection: VIGDIS M[AGNVS] D[OTTIR] HVILIR HER GLEEZ GVTH SAL HENAR, i.e., *Vigdis, Magnus' daughter, rests here; n. y God gladden her soul.*

With such literate and architectural remains of the Greenland colonists of the tenth century still extant, it was not unnatural for New England antiquaries to turn with renewed vigour to the search for corresponding remains in the supposed Vinland of the same early voyagers, when the ancient manuscripts edited for the *Antiquitates Americanæ* had established the discovery of the continent of America by Norsemen of the tenth century. Among those, the members of the Rhode Island Society took a foremost part. They had already furnished materials for illustrating the venerable manuscripts edited in that imposing quarto, which seemed to its sanguine editors to place their dreams of a Norse Columbus of the Tenth Century beyond all dispute. The Assonet, or Dighton Rock, on the east bank of the Taunton river, which yielded to its antiquarian transcribers the long desiderated traces of runic epigraphy, has attracted the attention of New England scholars for nearly two centuries. Its history is alike curious and amusing, but need not be detailed here.\* It is a detached rock, partly covered at high water, the exposed surface of which is covered with Indian devices rudely graven, and greatly defaced by time. So early as 1680 Dr. Danforth executed a careful copy of it; and since then it has been again and again retraced, engraved, and made the theme of learned commentaries by New England, British, French, and Danish scholars; each striving in turn to enlist it in proof of the favoured theory of the hour; and to make out from its rude scratchings: Phœnician, Punic, Siberian, or Old Norse characters, graven by ante-Columbian voyagers in the infancy of the world. The triumphs of the antiquarian seers culminated in the year 1837, when the *Antiquitates Americanæ* issued from the Danish press, with elaborate engravings of this Dighton rock, from one of which—contributed by a Commission appointed by the Rhode Island Historical Society—its ingenious editor was able to furnish the interpretation of a “runic inscription” suddenly brought to light among the rude devices of the Wabenakies’ picture-writing. The inscription was only too apt a re-echo of the Saga manuscripts; and indeed is now affirmed to have been the deliberate imposition of a foreigner resident at the time in New-

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\* Vide *Prehistoric Man*, Vol. II. p. 172.