

Icelandic Roots is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-political charitable organization with a mission to educate, preserve, and promote the Icelandic Heritage and Culture and to strengthen the links between Icelanders and those of Icelandic descent in North America. We provide an online interactive genealogy and history database, a newsletter, translation services, and social media sites. Our team of volunteers work on the very unique and fun Cousins Across the Ocean project. We provide scholarships for young people attending the Snorri Programs and Icelandic Language studies in addition to assisting with many historical sites, events, and educational programs.

www.icelandicroots.com



Self-Drive Guide Book
designed by Icelandic Roots

Self-Drive Guidebook

Hvað er svo glatt sem goðra vina fundur?



What is as joyful as a gathering of good friends?



Icelandic Settlement
of Northeast North Dakota

Icelandic Settlement in Northeast North Dakota

Historical writings tell of a Red River boat captain who brought Reverend Páll Þorláksson from Fisher's Landing in Minnesota to Gimli, Manitoba in the fall of 1876. He suggested to Séra Páll that the Icelanders living in Canada should come down to settle in Dakota Territory. He said they seemed like desirable citizens for America.

In the spring of 1878, the first Icelanders left Canada for Dakota, led by their pastor, Páll Þorláksson. Séra Páll is known as the "Father of the Icelandic Dakota Settlement." His homestead was in "Vik", which is now called Mountain. One of the first explorers with Pastor Páll was Jóhann Pétur Hallson. He and his son, Gunnar, built the first Icelandic home in the settlement.

By the fall of 1879, about 50 families had moved to the Pembina Hills area. Most of them were destitute. Séra Páll was living permanently in Vik by this time, but he was seriously ill with tuberculosis. Knowing that his health was failing, he strongly recommended his cousin, Séra Hans Þorgrimsen, be called as the next pastor in Dakota.

A great settlement boom occurred in northern North Dakota between 1879 and 1886.



Pembina Icelandic Church and Cemetery - are located on the east end of the city. The church was sold to the Ukrainians. They placed the silver dome on the steeple.

Pembina State Museum and Observation Tower- are just outside of the city of Pembina.



LODGING AND CAMPING

Mountain

Mountain Legion Campsites / RV Parking
post227@polarcomm.com

One Majestic Place.....701-402-2148
Cavalier

Icelandic State Park.....701-265-4561

Cedar Inn701-265-8341

Walhalla

Forestwood Inn701-549-2651

Hill View Lodge701-549-3000

Riverside Park - Camping . 701-549-3289

Sanctuary Guest House..... 701-549-3116

Langdon

Moose Creek Lodge701-256-5066

Cobblestone Inn888-693-8262

Park River

Alexander House701-284-7141

Grafton

Select Inn.....701-352-0888

Americ Inn.....701-352-2788



Stephanson Homestead and Monument

This is the homestead of Stephan G. Stephansson, a famous poet, when he lived in Dakota Territory. He was born in 1853 on a small farm in Skagafjörður in northern Iceland. In 1873, his family emigrated, along with many others.

They first settled in Wisconsin where they spent seven years. In 1880, the entire Icelandic colony moved to Dakota Territory.

The original homestead contained almost 160 acres of land. The farm buildings were located just a few feet beyond the monument.

Stephan's father, Guðmundur, and Stephan's son, Jon, are buried in the Gardar Cemetery. In 1889 the family moved to Alberta, Canada, where Stephan remained until his death at the age of 73 in 1927.

Peters

The Peters congregation was first organized in 1893 and a church built in 1897. The new church was rebuilt in 1949. There are two cemeteries, the old Peters and the newer Peters Cemetery.

Andvari

The Andvari Cemetery is a beautiful and peaceful location north of the corner of #32 and #5 down a picturesque gravel road. There is no church building there and those buried here mostly went to surrounding churches.

Fjalla

The Fjalla pioneers mostly came from the Egilsstaðir area of northeastern Iceland. They organized a congregation in 1886 and started to build their church in 1894. It has been closed since 1967 with special services being held each summer during the Deuce of August celebration and other special times during the year such as Christmas and special events.

Yes, the cross is crooked on purpose. It is to signify that Jesus carried his cross and died on it for our sins. There is a monument to the Icelandic pioneers at Fjalla. This church is located in Cavalier County.



Icelandic State Park

Located on the north shore of Lake Renwick, Icelandic State Park offers visitors not only a wide array of recreational opportunities, but also glimpses of North Dakota's homesteading heritage and its natural beauty.

Boating, swimming and fishing are popular activities. The campgrounds offer full amenities, including electrical hookups, modern comfort stations with showers and sewage dump station. Three sleeping cabins are also available from mid-May through the end of September.

A 3/4 mile self-guided interpretive trail begins at the Gunlogson Homestead site and loops along the south side of the Tongue River. Other trails continue throughout the 200 acre Gunlogson Nature Preserve and natural wooded area along the river. Foot bridges provide easy crossing of the Tongue River and the area's many natural springs on this 3-mile trail system that is also open in the winter for cross-country skiing.

In 1954, G.B. Gunlogson and his sister, Loa, donated a 200-acre tract to the park.

The purpose was to establishing a sanctuary for birds, plants and animals. The original Gunlogson homestead is now a museum.

Icelandic State Park: 701-265-4561

Hallson

The Hallson Church was built in 1897. The land was donated by Jóhann Pétur Hallson, along with the church bell, pastor's chair, altar and financial help. In 1899, the Icelandic Lutheran convention was held at Hallson and the church was dedicated at this time. Jóhann died shortly before the dedication and he was buried the same day as the dedication of his church. The unique church with its beautiful stained glass windows is located at the Icelandic State Park.

Hallson Cemetery is located just west of the Icelandic State Park. This church was moved to the Icelandic State Park in 1994.

Vidalin

Located to the south of the Icelandic State Park. The church was built in 1888 and is well preserved



Northeast North Dakota Heritage Association

The Northeastern North Dakota Heritage Association was formed in June 1986. It is housed within the Icelandic State Park. They have built the Pioneer Heritage Center with interpretive exhibits that tell the Settlement Era Story from 1870-1920 of northeastern North Dakota. They have restored community buildings, educational and research information, genealogy and settlement era history, a library, souvenirs, and the museum. Icelandic State Park: 701-265-4561

Pembina County Historical Museum

Preserving the past and the present for future generations with an emphasis on agriculture. Featured at the museum grounds are 11 buildings to tour, including the historic St. Anthony's Church, an 1882 homestead, 1930s barn, blacksmith shop, granary, engine building, restored Great Northern depot, 3 buildings of restored farm equipment and the main museum building with exhibits, many Icelandic books, and a research library.

Pembina County Historical Museum: 701-265-4941.



Gardar

The first two pioneers settled in the Gardar area in 1879. Gardar Township was first known as Park. Gardar township was established July 29, 1886 by dividing Thingvalla Township, which had been created as a double township in 1881. A large number of Icelandic settlers arrived in the summer of 1880. One large group arrived June 30 after a month long journey by wagon from southwestern Minnesota. They had spent the past three years in Wisconsin after having been in Wisconsin for almost four years before. Others arrived a little later from Shawano County, Wisconsin and from the Gimli area (New Iceland) of Manitoba, and the settlement grew.

In 1880, there was a huge flood in the settlement of New Iceland. Between the controversies with their religious beliefs, various other disagreements between the settlers, the ravage of illness in New Iceland, and the other natural disasters, eventually only 50 of the original 200 families stayed at the New Iceland settlement.

On November 24, 1880, they organized a church congregation called Park, which is the name of the township and this area river running through the settlement. Religious services were first held in private homes and later in a school house.

This was the first Icelandic congregation to be organized in Dakota Territory. Reverend Páll Þorláksson was called to be the first pastor. Prior to 1885, a second congregation was organized and named Gardar congregation. This name was retained when the two congregations merged on August 2nd, 1885.

The Gardar Pioneer Church building was erected in 1888. The building is now maintained as a memorial. It is used occasionally for funerals, weddings, and one or two regular services during the summer. The Luther's Church was built in 1910 during a religious controversy that split the congregations. They all reunited in 1925.

A monument to the Gardar School District #26 is located on the northwest corner of the Gardar Luther's Church in town. The school district was formed in 1882 and was disbanded in 1961. At this time, the school became part of the Edinburg School District. The Gardar school was finally closed in 1971. The school was located one block east of the church on the north side of the Main Street. The monument was erected in 1976.

Gardar residents continue to maintain and preserve the buildings at Gardar.

From Gardar hails Magnus "Mike" Olafson (1920-2015). He was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Icelandic Order of the Falcon for his efforts to preserve the Icelandic heritage in North Dakota.

Eyford Thingvalla

The Eyford congregation was formed in 1889. Thingvalla Township was named after the Icelandic homeland of Þingvellir. The original church structure was 26' x 40' with a 52-foot bell tower. The construction cost was about \$2500. The land was donated by Jón Ásmundsson, from Kolfreyjustaður. The church was dedicated on August 9, 1893.

The Eyford community draws its name from Jakob Sigurðsson Eyford, (1827-1921). He emigrated in 1873 from Kristnes. He donated land for the post office, store, and the community center. They were located where an old oxcart trail crossed one branch of the Park River. None of these buildings remain.



A large monument dedicated to K.N. Júlíus was originally built in 1936 and was reconstructed in 1999. Kristján Níels Jónsson Júlíus (1859-1936), a satirical poet, was born in Akureyri, Iceland. Many of the graves in the Thingvalla Cemetery had been dug by him and he was the last grave digger in the Thingvalla community. He was a unique poet and humorist. Some of his poems became published in two books. There is a replica of this monument in Akureyri.

03 June 2003, the Thingvalla Lutheran Church was destroyed because of an accidental fire, which started during preservation construction work.

03 Aug 2007, the Christus statue and storyboard panels were dedicated at a ceremony. The foundation of the church is planted with prairie grasses to represent the unbroken prairie grasslands that the settlers found when they arrived in North Dakota. Interpretive panels tell the story of the church, community, and cemetery. The Christus statue is a Bertel Thorvaldsen replica just like the statue that graced the church altar.

Mountain, North Dakota

The biggest event is the Deuce of August (2nd of August) Icelandic Heritage Celebration. "The Day of the Icelanders" event is the oldest ethnic festival in North Dakota and the largest Icelandic ethnic event in the United States. It is a fun-filled weekend with events for young and old with a variety of interests. It is always held during the weekend before the first Monday in August.

The Mountain Community Center ground breaking was held 21 Oct 2009. The government of Iceland donated \$75,000. Many people throughout North America and in Iceland donated to this project and now many activities are held in this building. The ICA also hosts a Þorrablót (Viking Feast).

Mountain Cemetery - located south & west of town at the end of Main Street. This is the cemetery used since 1911.

The Vikur Church Society works to preserve the oldest Icelandic Church in North America. Donations are very appreciated.

Vikur Church Society
PO Box 204
Mountain, ND 58262.

The website for the Deuce and Þorrablót celebration and for community is

www.thedeuce.org

On Main Street in Mountain is the historic Vikur Cemetery and Church. Vikur is on the official list of the National Register of Historic Places.

Vikur was built in 1884 on Reverend Páll Þorláksson's homestead. He is known as the Father of the Icelandic Dakota Settlement. The oak-beamed church was 46' x 28' and was completed under the leadership of Reverend Hans Thorgrimson.



Vikur Church

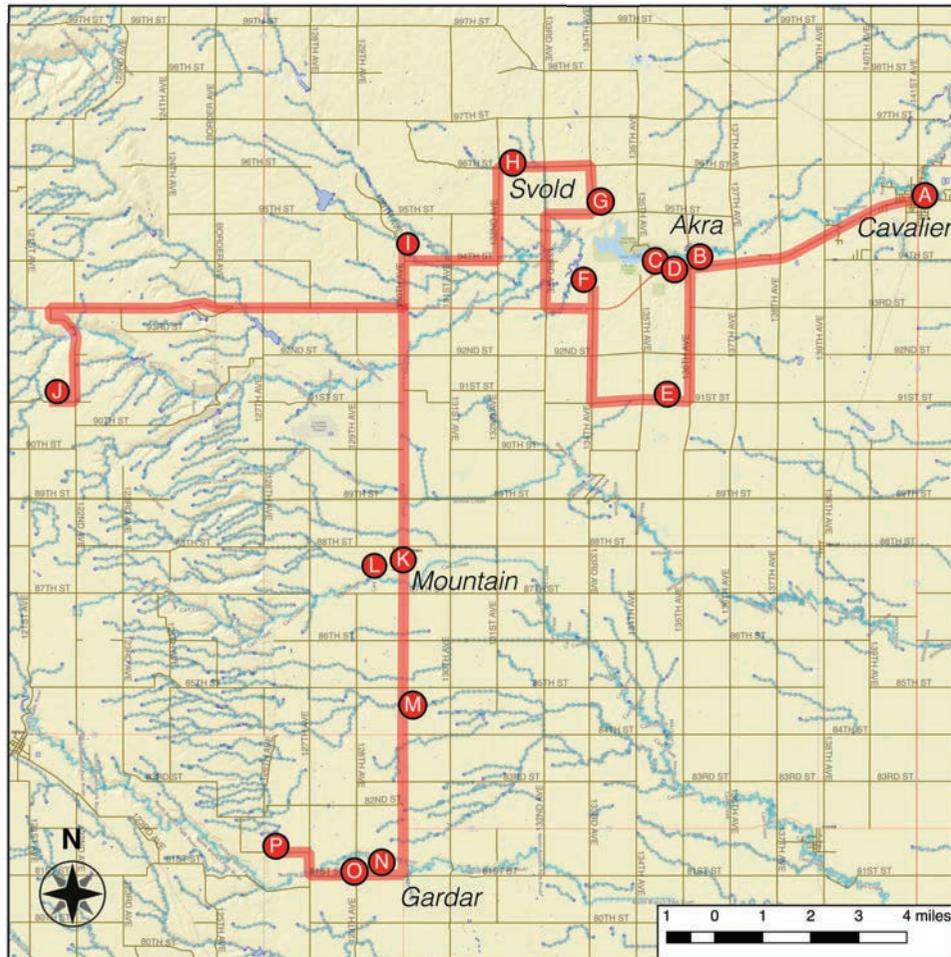
In 1947, the church was moved to a new parcel of land donated by Silvia Johnson, the first Icelandic woman to become a County Superintendent of Schools.

South of the Vikur church is a monument and a cement outline, which preserves the original church location, which was a log cabin.

At least 129 people buried here including Reverend Páll Þorláksson, Jóhann Stefánsson – the father of Arctic explorer, Vilhjalmar Stefánsson, and Björn Pétursson – the first Unitarian Minister along with over 45 infants, children, and teenagers. The last burial was in 1914.

Icelandic Settlement Area of Northeast North Dakota

Driving Tour Directions



Pembina Icelandic Church and Cemetery (not shown) – Located off exit 215 of I-29 south of the Canadian border.

A) Cavalier – 18 miles west of exit 203 off I-29.

B) Akra – 5 miles west of Cavalier. No facilities.

C) Icelandic State Park – 5.4 miles west of Cavalier on north side of Hwy 5.

D) Pembina County Historical Museum – 5.4 miles west of Cavalier on south side of Hwy 5.

E) Vidalin Church and Cemetery – From Akra go south 2.9 miles from Hwy 5 and then turn right and go west 0.7 mile to Church.

F) Hallson Cemetery – 2.9 miles west of Icelandic State Park, north 0.5 mile, and west 0.3 mile.

G) Peter's Cemetery – 2.3 miles west of Icelandic State Park, north 2 miles, east 1 mile, and north 0.2 mile.

H) Old Peter's Cemetery - 2.3 miles west of Icelandic State Park, north 2 miles, west 0.8 mile, on south side.

I) Andvari Cemetery – 1.3 miles north of the intersection of Hwy 5 and Hwy 32 north of Mountain. East side of road.

J) Fjalla Church, Cemetery and Monument – From the Senator Young turn off 18 miles west of Cavalier or 15.5 Miles east of Langdon on Hwy 5, go south 2.2 miles and 0.5 mile west.

K) Mountain – 5 miles south of intersection of Hwy 5 and Hwy 32.

L) Mountain Cemetery – 0.5 miles west of southern edge of Mountain.

M) Eyford/Thingvalla Lutheran Church Memorial and Cemetery – 3.5 miles south of Mountain.

N) Gardar Luther's Church – 7 miles south of Mountain, 0.5 mile west, 0.1 mile north, and 0.1 mile west in Gardar.

O) Gardar Church and Cemetery – 7 miles south of Mountain and 0.9 mile west.

P) Stephan G Stephansson Homestead and Monument – 7 miles south of Mountain on Hwy 32, west 2 miles, 1 mile north, and 1 mile west.

Note: The Icelandic Settlement area in North Dakota also included Walsh County with many Icelanders settling near Grafton, Little Salt, Park River, and other rural areas along the route. There were also many Icelanders in North central North Dakota at the Mouse River Valley, which includes the place names of Minot, Bottineau, Mouse River, and Upham.