

It was later that day that we were set upon by a great storm that sorely tossed our ship about, the timbers groaning in such a manner as to make one think they would come apart.

The Captain pulled the ship about and sure that we were lost if we did not, struck for the coast of Vinland to the north. Pitched high by the waves, we soon came within sight of shore, looming cold and forbidden, great walls of ice and snow rising out of the dark sea. Making for a narrow channel between two of the great ice-walls and avoiding a huge piece of floating ice (I'm certain that had we collided, it would have sent us to the bottom) we anchored in a protected cove and spent the night in relative peace.

The following morning, a sailor, from his vantage point atop one of the masts, spied a dark object in the snow on the other side of the bay in which we had chosen to rest. The Captain ordered one of the longboats put over the side and, accompanied by a group of ten sailors, made the short passage across the now quiet waters. Reaching the other side, the men leaped ashore and, after securing the small boat, made their way to where the dark object lay in the snow.

From my distant position on the gently rolling ship I could make out little of what my companions were doing, but I could see them kneel beside the object and when they turned it over it looked like nothing other than a small log, somehow washed ashore on this treeless place.

The sailors then began examining the snow around the object and some gestured to a small pass that led out of sight between two of the smaller ice-walls. They then struck out in this direction and were soon lost from view. Moments later the whole ship was roused to its feet by the distant shouting that carried across the ice and water to where we waited. We could hear the hoarse shouts of the men, a loud cry, followed by a terrible shriek, the like of which I hope to never hear again, and will spend the rest of my life trying to forget. It was the dying shriek of an animal, like that of a swine when the butcher's hand is unsteady and the first stroke of his knife has missed its mark.

The shriek was the last we heard. As the echoes slowly fell into silence we waited quietly, knowing not what to do next. At the time it seemed much longer, but it was only moments later that the crew returned from the narrow pass and we could see that all of the men were present, though one, obviously bloodied, was being helped to the boat by his companions. Two of the men were carrying small objects wrapped in blankets and while they boarded the longboat, two other men stooped to lift the stiff, wood-like object from the snow and began to carry it also toward the waiting craft. As it was lifted clear of the ground, the light snow fell away and it could be clearly seen to be the body of a man, frozen stiff as a log. We waited anxiously as the boat pulled toward the ship.

After the men had boarded, I, the Captain, and the two bundled objects carried by the two sailors retired to a cabin below. Here the bundles were unwrapped and to my great surprise discovered two beautiful children, a boy and a girl, squirming and healthy. Bewildered, I questioned the Captain and he told me that they were found in a nearby cave where the men had discovered them being threatened by a wild beast of an unknown type. He described this beast as covered with a thick orange hair and resembling a bear, or perhaps, a kind of ape. The men dispatched the animal, which died with a horrible shriek (the one we had heard while we waited aboard ship) but not before she (the animal discovered to be a female) has injured the head of one of the men with a swipe of her paw. The children were then rescued, and the crew decided to leave the body of the beast where it lay.

The frozen body discovered on shore turned out to be a Norseman, probably a member of the rumored Viking settlements began here hundreds of years ago (though how humans could possibly live in this land, I don't know) and we think that he was probably the father of the two children, the red hair they all shared seeming an unmistakable means of identification. I myself examined the body and it would appear that he died from some ravaging disease brought on by the harsh clime of this land. The absence of the children's mother seemed odd and, after committing the man's body to the sea, the captain remained anchored in the bay for two more days, a watch always on duty for any sign of the children's mother. Finally deciding that the woman was probably an unfortunate victim of the same disease or harsh conditions that killed her husband, we once again set sail, leaving the frozen coastline behind us.

The two orphans are now my responsibility and I must admit the two bring a joy to my heart and are the source of much pleasure for the sailors aboard ship. They are just learning to crawl and I have taught the girl a few simple words and she has shown herself to be a quick learner. The two have become so dear to my heart that I'm sure it will be difficult to part with them when the time comes. The Captain has decided the voyage is concluding and we should be home in a fortnight. I have already decided upon a couple who I think will take the children and raise them as their own. They are childless, having lost their own son and daughter to a sudden plague of illness. I will miss the two, but I know I must return to the sea.

As for the beast that was killed in the cave, I have no idea what it might have been and I feel that once I return home and consult texts on the subject, I will not find them to be any more enlightening. I requested the Captain to have some of the men fetch the body to the ship, but he refused. Neither would he let me, or any other person set ashore for that purpose and would not explain his reasons. I suppose that it shall remain a mystery, but I will always remember the sound of that dying scream; its piercing quality and the way the wind twisted it through the ice pass making it sound so strange, as though someone screamed "Harald!"

The Greenland Papers 2:

The Lost Saga of Erik the Red - Section 1

On his first voyage to Vinland, Erik spent three years sailing up and down the coasts, exploring the deep fjords.

In the second year, while exploring up the east coast, they sighted a small band of Skraeling men along the shore. They seemed to be following the progress of the ships, but when Eric's men camped upon the shore, no trace of them was found.

Later that year, the Skraeling were again seen along the shores. The Vikings put into shore and camped, but the Skraeling did not appear. The next morning the body of Magnus, one of Erik's chiefs, was found a few hundred feet from camp, the back of his skull brutally caved in. The Vikings attempted to track the Skraeling into the mountains, but lost the trail after a short time and gave up the chase.

When Erik the Red set out again for Vinland, this time with his colonists, he left Iceland with 25 ships. The first day out to sea, the sky turned black and the small galleys were battered by a great storm and scattered about by the raging winds, losing sight of each other as the great storm continued to drive them further apart. The ships regrouped the next day but it was found to the dismay of the colonists that only 14 of the ships remained, the other 11 presumed to have gone to the bottom of the sea. One of the men of Erik's ship, who had sat in the pitching stern of the ship all night, peering into the darkness in hope of catching a glimpse of some of his comrade's ships, claimed to have seen something else.

He spoke of great black ropes that rose up from the foaming waves and, grasping a ship, pulled it beneath the water as though it were a straw. The man raved and drooled as he told his story to Erik and the crew.

As the day wore on, the man's ravings became insistent and finally, his madness weaving a spell of fear over the crew of the ship, was picked bodily up off his feet and pitched over the side by Erik.

The Greenland Papers 2:

The Lost Saga of Erik the Red - Section 2

Colonies were established, but within the year, attacks by the Skraeling occurred. When two women were murdered while gathering water at a nearby spring, the Vikings once again set into the mountains in pursuit of the mysterious people.

This time they cornered the Skraeling in their crude mountain village and slew nearly the entire population saving only one, a young girl, who was taken prisoner by one of the Vikings.

This young girl became first the slave and then the wife of the Viking who had captured her and, after learning to speak some of his language, told him many stories about her people.

She claimed her tribe to be one of the last of a once-great race that lived in a warm land to the north called Mutuland.

She also told the man that her people worshiped a god called Kulu, but as the world kept growing colder, their god answered them less and less. After a while they rarely prayed or offered sacrifices to him. The last big ceremony was held over a year ago, just before the Vikings arrived.

She says that her tribe had a legend that a long time ago, some of her people had built ships, like the Vikings, and sailed south to where it was thought to be warmer and they could worship their god Kulu.

The Greenland Papers 2:

The Lost Saga of Erik the Red - Section 3

These people found their place, and dwelling on the shore of the sea, near a great city of gold called Yonnith Lei, built by other followers of Kulu, those of the sea who had dwelt there forever. Although they once visited Hyperborea often, these people have not returned for a long time.

Told of a city of gold, Erik laid plans to set sail for the south to discover this "land of the Skraeling" and to make this gold his own.

First sailing east, this land was soon discovered and Erik's ships sailed for many miles down the coast in search of the fabulous city.

Finally, after many days at sea, the ships, carefully negotiating a dangerous reef, were put ashore, camps were made, and the gathering of provisions begun.

Within the hour, Skraeling in great numbers suddenly poured out from the nearby forest and set upon the Vikings.

Erik's men fought with great courage, but the overwhelming, almost desperate ferocity of the Skraeling threatened to overcome them.

It was at this time that a large band of black-haired men numbering more than the Skraeling and Vikings combined, emerged from the same forest and with frightening shrieks, charged into the battle.

It became quickly obvious to the Vikings that the newcomers were intent on killing only Skraeling as, in their rampage, they seemed to completely ignore the Viking warriors.

The Skraeling were soon destroyed and Erik tried to speak with the one who appeared to be the leader of the black-hairs. He asked of Yonnith Lei.

The leader of the black-hairs would only answer with a single word, and point out towards the sea, in the direction of the reef.

Soon after, an argument broke out between some of the Vikings and the black-hairs over treasure found on the Skraelings and Erik had to order his men to quickly push the ships out to sea.

Erik decided that the city of gold must be a lie and returned home to Vinland, this, his latest voyage, lasting over a year.

The Sasquatch Papers 1:

Article from the Vancouver Daily Province.

Vancouver Daily Province

POINT GREY, B.C.—A spokesman for the University of Vancouver announced today that a specimen brought here from the Caribou Mountains may indicate that an unknown species of primate may inhabit the unexplored wilderness of northern British Columbia.

Dr. Harvey Lantilla, head of the zoology department, said the specimen, an ape-like foot severed a few inches above the ankle, was purchased by him from a trapper who claims to have found the frozen appendage near the foothills of the mountains. Although the specimen is not ready for public viewing, Dr.

Lantilla describes the foot as human-sized, but with distinct structural differences that eliminate the possibility that it is of human origin. The foot is partially covered with coarse, orange hair.

According to Lantilla, extensive examination and dissection of the specimen is due to commence soon. It will most likely be shown to belong to an orangutan or chimpanzee, possibly escaped from a traveling circus or carnival and now living in the wilds of the mountains.

No plans have as yet been made for the final disposition of the specimen.

The Sasquatch Papers 2:

Article from the Vancouver Daily Province, found in the Vancouver Public Library.

Vancouver Daily Province

YALE, B.C.—July 3, 1884. In the immediate vicinity of No. 4 tunnel, situated some twenty miles above the village, are bluffs of rock which have hitherto been insurmountable, but on Monday morning last were successfully scaled by Mr. Onderdonk's employees on the regular train from Lytton.

Assisted by Mr. Costeron, the British Columbia Express Company's messenger, a number of gentlemen from Lytton and points east of that place, after considerable trouble and perilous climbing captured a creature who may truly be called half-man and half-beast. "Jacko," as the creature has been called by its captors, is something of the gorilla type standing about 4 feet 7 inches in height and weighing 127 po-

unds. He has long coarse orange hair and resembles a human being with one exception, nearly his entire body, excepting his hands (or paws) and feet are covered with glossy hair about one inch long. His forearm is much longer than a man's forearm and possesses extraordinary strength, as he will take hold of a stick and break it by wrenching or twisting it, which no man living could break in the same way. Since his capture he is very reticent, only occasionally uttering a noise which is half bark and half growl. He is, however, becoming daily more attached to his keeper, Mr. George Telbury, of this place, who proposes shortly starting for London, England, to exhibit him. His favorite food so far is berries and he drinks fresh milk with relish.

The Sasquatch Papers 3:

Article from the Vancouver Daily Province, found in the Vancouver Public Library.

Vancouver Daily Province

VANCOUVER, B.C.—March 12, 1898. A frozen body, discovered twenty miles north of Vancouver, has been tentatively identified today.

The body, found last week by two local Indians, appears to be that of Father Jacque DeCasque, a Jesuit priest who spent most of his life converting the Indians of British Columbia to Christianity during the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Father DeCasque disappeared during the winter of 1814 while living among a primitive band of Indians in the Caribou Mountains and was never heard of again.

The discovery of the body, found frozen solid and thrust headfirst up to the waist into a sand bank, throws little light upon the priest's fate. The Indians, who travel this hunting path often claim that the body

was not there the month before but was dropped from the sky by a "spirit." No marks of violence were found on the body but portions of the anatomy were injured by severe frostbite before the man died.

It is difficult to understand how the body was so completely frozen and well-preserved. The examining physician stated that if it were not for the positive identification made, he would guess that the man died not more than a few days before his body was discovered. Why, over a period of nearly 85 years, the body did not naturally decompose, remains a mystery. The earthly remains of Father DeCasque will be interred in the churchyard at Our Mother of Grace Church here in Vancouver.

The Sasquatch Papers 4:

Article from the Vancouver Daily Province, found in the Vancouver Public Library.

Vancouver Daily Province

KAMLOOPS, B.C.—September 16, 19--. An official announcement from RCMP district headquarters here has confirmed the disappearance and possible deaths of three people on a camping trip south of the Caribou Mountains.

Thomas Berringer, his wife, Dora, and a local guide, Douglas Makelhenny are all believed to have been killed when their campsite was suddenly attacked by renegade Indians. The sole survivor of the attack, William Paragent, was severely wounded but escaped into a nearby pine forest and eluded his pursuers. Paragent showed up in the small town of Dogfork only three days after the campers had left, suffering from loss of blood and severe exposure.

Delirious, he was rushed, by rail, to the hospital in Kamloops where, after regaining consciousness, related the story of the savage attack to the RCMP.

Captain Swainson, head of the local district office, has announced plans for a search of the area but hold little hope for the missing members of the party. The Athepaskan Indian band believed responsible for the attack is a small group who, shunning contact with all white men and other Indians, have pursued a primitive existence in and around this part of the mountain range. They are considered extremely dangerous. However, these are the first murders actually attributed to the band.

1. Our lucky day! Last night, after dark, Morris and I were awakened by the most terrible howling coming from the direction of the woods. We recognized the voice immediately and knew it to be one of the beasts that had finally blundered into one of our traps. Grabbing our rifles we hurried out with lanterns and rifles only to discover that our capture was gone, apparently chewing off its own leg to escape. We followed the bloody trail for a short distance but then, sure that we could hear the sound of more beasts than the one that had found our trap, we lost courage and returned to the cabin with our trophy.

2. Morris is a fool. He wants to take this foot and sell it to the professors in Vancouver. Says we need the money. I told him that if we let the rest of the world know what we've found here, the place will be overrun with folk out to make a quick buck and cheat us out of all the work we've put in. I insisted that we keep the foot here and not tell anybody until we can capture a live one, then we'll make a lot of money. I woke up this morning to find that fool gone. Left me a note saying he had taken the foot to Vancouver and that he would be back in two weeks. That fool! I'll be waiting for him.

3. Morris came home today, or almost. It must of been just after noon when I looked out the window and saw him walking across the field of snow toward the cabin. I was ready for him. When he opened the door with that big grin, I let him have it, both barrels right in the chest. I don't think he ever knew what hit him 'cause when I got outside he was laying on his back in the snow, deader than a doornail. I buried him down on the west side of the lake where no one will ever find him. If anyone asks, I'll tell them that Morris came back all right but then left on a trip to the mountains. When he doesn't come back, everybody'll blame it on the Indians. I found \$200 in his pocket. Probably what he sold our foot for.

4. A stranger visited today. Just the type of thing I was afraid of. He said his name was Berringer and that he and his wife were on a camping trip. They had Paragent and Makelhenny with them as guides. I could tell right off that this fellow was lying and I was sure that he was looking for sasquatch just like I told Morris would happen. I was pretty careful and pretended not to know too much about the things. Told him I've seen tracks a couple of times but didn't know much and think about it even less. He asked me where I'd seen these tracks so I told him to the west and sent him in the direction of the Indians. I thought Paragent or Mak would maybe know this and tell Berringer, but apparently they didn't know that's where the Indians are camped now. Neither one of them gets out of Dogfork often enough I guess. With any luck, the Indians will kill them or at least drive them out of this area.

5. I'm surrounded. I looked out the window early this evening and I could see them, at least a half-dozen of them, hiding behind the blocks of ice down near the lake. I don't know what they want.

6. Later. It's terrible. Berringer, the stranger, is with them. I looked out the window and I could see him standing there, nearly naked in the cold wind. Then he spoke to me. Told me come out of the cabin without any weapons and I wouldn't be harmed. Said he only wanted to talk. Fat chance. He was an easy shot, but I was nervous and think I jerked the trigger. Anyway, he ducked down real fast and I couldn't be sure if I hit him or not. He's not hurt bad at any rate cause I could hear him ordering the beasts around, though I couldn't make out what he was saying.

7. 10:30 pm. I can see a good-sized fire burning down by the shore of the lake. It's too far away for me to tell what's going on but I can see the beasts every once in awhile throwing more wood on the blaze. They must be very near where I buried Morris. Would they dig him up and eat him?

8. Midnight. God help me. The fire finally burned down and went out and even with the moonlight I could not see what was taking place. It was only late that I happened to notice one of the beasts climbing the tall pine tree to the west of the lake. If not for the bright moon behind the tree I would not have noticed him at all, but with that light I could perceive that the beast was carrying some large object with him, slung under one arm. It was only when the beast reached near the peak of the tree that I could see that it was carrying Morris's frozen body, unearthed by the monsters after they had thawed the grave with that fire. The beast left Morris hanging in the top branches of the tree and then climbed down. They're all assembled now down near the lake somewhere and I can hear them singing and chanting, and above all of it I can hear the voice of Berringer, leading them on with a screaming voice. Even now this sound is being drowned out by the whistling of a great wind and in the distance I can hear a tremendous storm coming. I have latched the shutters and door tightly, but the wind blows through them anyway. The temperature is dropping so quickly my fingers are numb and it is hard to write. That terrible screaming of the wind! The whole cabin is rocking...

I, Terrence Bhule, in light of the discoveries recently made by me and others while on expedition in Greenland, and in light of recent events, have come to some kind of understanding of myself. I have discussed this issue with Donna and she agrees with me in all details. At first frightening, the information contained in the diary found in Greenland seems to confirm by long-growing suspicion that my ancestry is not strictly human. It is my belief that if either Donna's or my family tree were traced, we would find in our lineage the two orphans rescued from Greenland by the Dutch whalers. These children were the offspring of a Viking father and a pre-human mother. I would guess that her genes were recessive and the children manifested none of their mother's characteristics, but this is only conjecture. Through chance, these genes have been reinforced in both Donna and I, and while at first this discovery seemed horrible, it came to assume a feeling of relief for the both of us, a sudden realization of who we really were. With the discovery recently made in British Columbia, Donna and I have decided to seek out our other people and perhaps we shall choose to live with them, I don't know.

The rest of the journal was written after Bhule was taken to the sasquatch dens.

I'm feeling well enough to write now, and bring things up to date. Donna is dead as a result of the injuries inflicted upon her by the Indians. It has been explained to me that they were only attempting to defend the territory belonging to the sasquatch (they call themselves Oh-man), the Indians holding them in some kind of reverence. I have already made plans to inter her in a cave some few miles away from here. In the meantime, my hosts have treated me well, almost in a manner reserved for respected guests. Although the loss of Donna is saddening, I feel a warmth and gladness that abounds here despite what hardships these beasts may suffer.

Donna has been buried beneath a cairn of stones in the chosen cave. I shall visit her from time to time. In the meantime, my new family and I have come to learn many things from each other. Their language is quite primitive, but they learn English fast enough, almost seeming starved for the kind of abstract words that they need to describe what they feel and perceive. They also show themselves to be quite mechanically minded—good tool makers—and although they seem to have little use for it, they quickly learned the principles of building a fire. I think that it would be a grave mistake to consider the intelligence of these creatures too lightly.

continuation on the next page

A discovery. One of the Oh-man took me up to the small cave above and in the back. After squeezing through a narrow opening, I discovered a shrine, placed here by the Oh-man thousands of years ago. In the small cavern I found a mummified body of one of the Oh-man, dressed in a similar fashion to the mummy found in Greenland. The walls were written with a prayer to Adukwa, but most interesting were the two stone tablets that flank the body. Contained on the stones is the story of how the Oh-man came to this place after being driven from their homeland. I now often meditate in this cave and the Oh-man claim I am the recipient of visions. I would not like to think this myself, but I do know that I and my people cannot remain here much longer. Man comes and when man comes the Oh-man must leave or die. This is how it is. I intend to lead an exodus to the north. Somewhere we will discover a place untouched yet by humans where the Oh-man can live in peace.

We are keeping watch on our possible enemies, those that fear us without knowing us. Paragent I am unsure of. It seems that he remembers nothing of the Oh-man, but I am inclined to think that he knows more than he is telling anyone. If we should discover otherwise, he will have to be eliminated as a potential hazard.

As for Handelman, I don't hold a lot of hope. Knowing the man as I do, I doubt that he will consider the offer to come and live with us. If he doesn't, he dies. I will do what I must to ensure the survival of my people.

The Sasquatch Papers 7:

The Tablets in the Cave:

I am Knaarri, the last of the priests of Adukwa, and I die in the temple to my god. This is what I write:

Long ago, my people, driven from their homeland in the north, came here with their master Adukwa and were told that they should follow his cold winds south and that he would, in turn, follow them with his winds. His people did this and they are here. Still my heart questions: why bring us here where there is nothing? Why does our god's very being, his great cold, hurt and kill his people? These are the questions that my heart has asked me and I have answered my heart as only I could. I will be the last priest of the god Adukwa. I have trained no youngsters to perform his ceremonies or to call his prayers. For this Adukwa has promised to feed on my soul, but I know he no longer feeds on my people. No longer do my people kill their own to place on high for Adukwa. I have shown them how to sacrifice animals to appease him and he must be satisfied with these. He cares not anyway for any but blood and flesh and I will not teach his prayers to my people. Though these be inscribed here on the wall of the temple, they will soon be forgotten.

On the day of my death,
Knaarri

The Van Laaden Papers 1:

Article from The Grand Rapids Herald dated 1878

Grand Rapids Herald

1878

An accident yesterday, at the site of an archaeological excavation north of Grand Rapids, has left one man seriously injured and two others suffering from minor cuts and bruises.

Bertrand Hancock, who is credited with the discovery of the Indian mound being excavated, is resting in Grand Rapids Hospital recovering from multiple injuries and broken bones stemming from the accident. Apparently, a large iron tripod, used to support a heavy block and tackle, slipped down the side of the earthen mound, toppled over and trapped the unfortunate Mr. Hancock beneath it. Workers at

the site can give no explanation for the accident but a spokesman for the University of Michigan, which is in charge of the dig, has announced that despite the accident, work will continue as scheduled.

Mr. Hancock, a business graduate of the University, is married to Deborah Van Laaden, daughter of local Civil War hero Aaron Van Laaden and presently resides on the Van Laaden property where he first discovered the mound. Doctors have not released details regarding his injuries, but he is listed in fair condition and expected to recover.

The Van Laaden Papers 2:

Article from The Grand Rapids Herald dated 1898

Grand Rapids Herald

1898

It was announced today that Beatrice Van Laaden, wife of the late Aaron Van Laaden, died yesterday as the result of a fall in her home. Her daughter Virginia Van Laaden said the older woman had been in poor health for the last few years and was kept confined to the house. She apparently stumbled and fell while descending the staircase in the family home.

The Van Laaden name is well known in Grand Rapids. Earlier members of the family were instrumental in the incorporation of the city, and the name Van Laaden can be found on many public buildings including the library and art museum.

Mrs. Van Laaden is survived not only by her daughter Virginia, but by a grandson, Maurice, and another daughter, Deborah, now residing in Grosse Pointe, Mich. Private services are scheduled for tomorrow and the body will be interred in the family plot located on the Van Laaden property.

THE KENT CLARION

1863

Allen Van Laaden, of the Grand Rapids Van Laadens, died yesterday in his home, the result of an accidental, self-inflicted gunshot wound to the stomach. The accident was reported by Captain Aaron Van Laaden, a cousin of Allen presently home on leave from the Union Army.

According to the report, Mr. Van Laaden was cleaning the pistol in an upstairs room of the Van Laaden mansion when the weapon accidentally discharged, striking him full in the stomach. He expired before a doctor could be summoned. Graveside services will be held at the family home.

THE KENT CLARION

1866

It was learned today that Captain Aaron Van Laaden is dead. His body was found late yesterday evening in the woods near his home, apparently the victim of a freak hunting accident. Having left the home earlier in the day, the family became worried when he did not return in time for dinner. A gunshot had been heard earlier in the afternoon, but was thought that Mr. Van Laaden had been firing on game. The grim discovery made later showed that Van Laaden, while stepping through a tangle of briars, had apparently fallen, causing his rifle to discharge, and killing him instantly.

Aaron Van Laaden, besides being well known for his military exploits in defense of the Union, is also well-remembered for his intensive efforts to incorporate the city of Grand Rapids and his unfailing devotion to public causes. These include helping to establish the city's first library and its first art museum.

Captain Van Laaden's widow was unavailable for comment. Funeral arrangements have not yet been made.

Introduction: This is written by Henry Wordsworth Van Laaden in tribute to his younger brother, "a hale and hearty man who could never resist a challenge," and, among other things, tells of Brandon's sudden death in 1847. It mentions that the book was incomplete at the time of Brandon's death and that a limited edition of fifty copies will be printed and distributed to friends, family, and public institutions.

Foreward: From here on, the book is written by Brandon, and in this section describes how he was "commissioned" by his brother to travel to Europe and beyond in search of antique furnishings, works of art, fine woods and carpets, tapestries, and anything else that would add to the value and prestige of the family home. At the same time, he hoped to find time to do some exploring and hunting.

Chapter 1: This chapter describes the trans-Atlantic voyage by clipper ship. Brandon tells of a gigantic waterspout seen by the crew and passengers on the third day of the voyage.

Chapter 2: Arrival in London. The early parts of the chapter are concerned with the time spent at auctions of art and furniture while in the city. Later in the chapter he describes some of the finer dining establishments to be found in the city.

Chapter 3: Leaving London, Brandon writes of a short trip to the north of Scotland where he investigates an ancient oval enclosure built of granite rocks. It is presumed to have been built by a Celtic tribe, the mystery being its vitrified interior. Inside, the granite has been melted by intense heat into a glass-like glaze. This would require temperatures in excess of 1300 degrees C. No normal fire could possibly produce this effect. While returning through the south, Brandon stops near Dumfries where he selects a huge European oak from a stand of trees about two miles west of town. This lumber will be used to refurbish portions of the house.

Chapter 4: Sailing across the English Channel, Brandon arrives in Paris. Here he chances to meet a rare book dealer he describes as a "very mysterious fellow." Brandon purchases an unnamed volume from the man and makes an appointment to meet him the following evening to view some other rare volumes. The next morning, the book dealer's shop is discovered open and looted, and the old man's body later found floating on the Seine.

Chapter 5: This chapter contains a lengthy description of Brandon's travels through central and eastern Europe on his way to the Near East. While in Transylvania, he receives an opportunity to visit a mysterious castle high in the mountains, but at the last minute is forced to decline due to time-considerations.

Chapter 6: While in Beirut, Brandon meets an old Muslim who tells him the legend of a nameless city constructed long before people walked the earth, and now forgotten to mankind. The old man claims to know its location and Brandon briefly considers mounting an expedition before dismissing the idea. Brandon spends several weeks in and around Syria and Palestine, collecting carpets, tapestries, imported woods, and many other items for the household of the Van Laadens.

Chapter 7: While in Cairo, Egypt, Brandon visits the Sphinx and experiences a vision. He does not describe what he saw but does mention that the night before he had taken the opportunity to sample a small bit of hashish purchased from his hired guide. From a dealer in Cairo, Brandon purchases a shipment of exotic woods brought from the interior of the continent. Among these pieces is large blocks of dense, black wood called ebony. Brandon also tells of the purchase, from this same dealer, of a fetish, stolen from one of the tribes of the interior. Brandon describes it as being about a foot tall, carved of wood, and studded with metal nails. It is in the likeness of an ugly, squat demon.

Chapter 8: In this chapter, Brandon describes the first portion of a safari to equatorial Africa in search of big game. He is particularly interested in reports of a strange, purple-brown, deer-like animal said to be known to the tribes of the interior.

It was at this point in the writing of the book that Brandon was stricken by his fatal illness and his story ends rather abruptly while halfway through the hunting expedition.

The Van Laaden Papers 6:

Letter dated June, 1844, addressed to Henry Van Laaden, from the foreman at one of the family 's sawmills.

*James Leski, Foreman
Blake River Mill No. 1
June, 1844*

Dear Mr. Van Laaden,

In regards to the delay surrounding the milling and cutting of the lumber recently received in the shipment from overseas, I regret to inform you that the delay has increased. When I last wrote you in May, I had expected the work to be finished before the end of the following month and explained the delay then to the fact that the saws would have to be frequently reset to make all the different cuts that you required. Since that time, another problem has occurred that will, I fear, increase the delay again. The main saw, used to make the initial cuts on the larger pieces has been accidentally damaged. I personally oversaw the operation and the man operating the saw is our most skilled employee. Nonetheless, the main blade has fractured and will need to be replaced. The manufacturer, located in New York, has assured me that shipment will take no longer than four weeks at which time we will be able to proceed with the job. In the meantime, I would recommend specifically against trying to cut these large pieces at another of the mills. All of their saws are less accurate than the one here and I believe that the problem stems from the operator's initial unfamiliarity with the strange and exotic woods that you would use. Therefore, I would suggest that the added delay of waiting for the shipment of the new blade, to be followed by the cutting, here, of the rest of the shipment would be rewarded.

*Humbly yours,
James Leski*

The Van Laaden Papers 7:

A copy of a letter sent by Henry Van Laaden to an employee permanently injured while helping to carry in the large block of oak that was used as a mantle over the east fireplace.

To Peter Cartwright:

I and my family were very sorry to learn of the permanence of the injuries you received while in our employ. The fact that it happened in our home grieves us even more.

While by no means can I or the company accept responsibility for the accident (I, myself, had told the foreman that more men would be needed for the job; that the large blocks of wood were very heavy and maneuvering them through the doorway would be difficult and dangerous work), we would not wish your family (my foreman tells me you have a wife and four children) to suffer unduly from your further inability to earn a proper living. Please accept the enclosed draft for \$250, the least our family can do for yours in gratitude for the years of service you have given.

*Sincerely yours,
Henry W. Van Laaden*

June 12, 1853

A strange event took place last evening. About eight o'clock, as I sat reading Gibbons in the living room, I was aroused by a weak, but seemingly urgent knocking upon the front door. Quickly marking my place, I hurried to the foyer and pulled open the door to find a man, of dark skin and obviously foreign birth, dressed in a dark cloak, huddled against the driving rain. I invited the poor wretch in and as he stepped across the sill, he was set with a wracking cough so dreadful, I was compelled to take him by the arm, for without support, I am sure that he would have fallen to the floor.

At this same moment, Beatrice appeared, and seeing the poor man's condition, insisted that he be taken upstairs immediately and put to bed in one of the guest rooms. Despite his weakened condition, it was necessary that he climb the stairs all the way to the third floor, all the rooms on the lower floors presently being occupied, and as I helped the man, I tried to talk with him only to discover that he knew not a word of English. I could not begin to guess what strange, Asiatic tongue he used, but I'm sure it was an expression of sincere thanks that he gave to us that evening before his passing. Refusing all and any offers of food, we left him to rest and the wracking cough soon came to a stop and we assumed that he was sleeping peacefully. It was this morning that it was discovered he was dead, passing away some time quietly during the night, God rest his soul.

Allen has been sent to town to bring the doctor but not until after I was forced to listen to his raging about the "bringing of foreigners into our home," although this time I would have to admit that he may have been the wiser last night when, upon learning of the stranger's presence, protested loudly and vehemently, the wisdom of my decision. I must admit I am at a loss to explain the man's mysterious illness and upon checking the pockets of clothing, I find that he carried almost no money and absolutely nothing that would identify him. As for the disposal of the body, I have already talked this matter over with Beatrice, and we have decided that if it proves impossible to identify the man, we will have him given a proper Christian burial in the family plot. I am sure that Allen will protest the decision, but it has been decided that it is the only proper thing to do.

The Van Laaden Papers 9:

The suicide letter of Elizabeth Van Laaden

My dearest Mother and Father,

Please try to understand what I am about to do and remember me in your prayers. I know God has written that it is wrong, but I have been assured by a voice from another world that death in this world will be followed by rebirth in another, more glorious and beautiful than can be imagined. I have made the decision to join this voice in the other world.

I have never told anyone about this voice for fear that the family would think me mad, but I have been "talking" with it since I was but a little girl. I first heard the voice while in the sitting room and it came to me all of a sudden and I was scared at first. But later I heard it again, calling my name, and this time I answered; not with my voice, but somehow just by thinking what I wanted to say. This voice has told me many things over the time I have spent in its company and he has now invited me to join him. The time has come for me to leave this mundane existence.

Tell Aaron I am sorry I won't see him for a while and give my love to the rest of the family.

*Your loving daughter,
Elizabeth Van Laaden*

The Van Laaden Papers 10:

The log of the "Tanager."

1. June 21, 1817: Left Samoa today. Intend to sail north. A ship was spotted near the horizon, the watch identified it as possibly the 'Columby' out of Innsmouth. It would be captained by Obed Marsh if it is. Winds are fair and we will set course for the Solomons.

2. January 8, 1818: Saw Marsh's ship again today, headed easterly. He must be coming out of the Caroline Islands, he has been doing a lot of trading in that area the last few years and I think that it is somehow connected with the family's seemingly replenished financial resources. The 'Hetty' and the 'Sumatry Queen' both have made voyages there. I would not mind learning the source of their new-found wealth myself.

3. February 12, 1818: A stroke of luck today. One of the crew, while ashore, discovered in a tavern one of Obed Marsh's men. This sailor apparently jumped ship while the 'Columby' was here in port and is of the lowest type, addle-headed and addicted to rum. Nonetheless, he knew the port in which old Obed has been trading, a primitive native village located not far from the island of Ponape. It cost me but little money to persuade him to indicate the tiny island's position on the chart, but no amount of persuasion could get him to agree to accompanying us. For this reason I distrust the man, thinking that he has purposely sold me bad information. But if that is so, why would he sell it for the price of a few bottles of rum? I also had to promise not to reveal his existence to anyone for he fears reprisals from Captain Marsh, so again, I doubt his reason to do me wrong. I have decided to set sail in the morning.

4. March 14, 1818: Have left the Carolines today, God help us all. We have discovered the source of Obed's wealth and have paid with some of our lives and souls. I pray for those of us left and ask a merciful God to cast down his wrath upon the accursed Marsh and those things with which he consorts. I have lost six men, some to the blasphemous thing that rose out of the sea, and some to the madness that beset most of my crew afterward. Mate Hannigan, I must say, deserves as much praise for saving us as any. Without his able help I don't believe that I could have brought the 'Tanager' out alone. I fear now for his soul. He has grown increasingly quieter and now refuses to speak at all. Perhaps that madness has beset him now that it has left most of the crew. Heaven help provide a safe passage home for us. I would return home, if I might, and there make arrangements to move my family. Move them somewhere far from the sea and the things that I have discovered living there. God save us all.

The Van Laaden Papers 11:

The diary of Virginia.

The first information found is the general chronicling of the steadily increasing insanity of Beatrice. Besides revealing the old woman's tendencies toward somnambulism, there is also an attempt to phonetically spell the strange mouthings and mutterings of the sleep-walking woman. A successful Linguist roll reveals the words to be old Gaelic.

The second revelation contained is the identity of Maurice's father as Harvey Rawson, a young man who Virginia employed for a few months as a handy man. A little investigation around town will turn up Harvey, now a skid-row wino with half a mind. He never knew Virginia had a child and upon learning he has a son will seek out Maurice to be "re-united with his family." Maurice's reaction will be similar and the investigators can expect to be the recipients of some kind of consideration from Maurice.



The Van Laaden Papers 12:

Letter to Bertrand Hancock from the University of Michigan



Dear Bertrand,

How kind of you to write. Of course I remember you, you were one of my favorite students and I still think that you should have followed your instincts and pursued a career in archaeology. I think that it would have suited you far better than the business education you choose.

But enough of that. In answer to your questions, yes, your discovery sounds authentic. As you describe it, it would sound like a mound as sometimes built by the Ottawa tribe, but there are some rather odd details you mentioned that I would like to see for myself before making a final judgement. As for the chances of undertaking an excavation this summer, I would say that if the mound proves authentic, that chances are good. It would require little funding from the University as I would choose to use some of my students who, although untrained in some aspects, are willing and able workers. Of course I am willing to accept your offer of aid in the project and in light of the general inexperience of the students I would be using, even your admittedly limited experience should prove valuable.

Sincerely yours,

Professor R. Pendergast

August 28, 1875: Last night, while standing at the back door, my attention was attracted by a sizzling, rushing sound that seemed to come from above and behind me. Looking over my shoulder I was just in time to see a large ball of fire, sparks trailing in its wake, arc across the heavens over the roof of our house. I did not see it travel far before it seemed to explode with the sound of a far distant cannon, pieces streaking off in all directions from the sudden demolition. Most of these pieces seemed to burn up and disappear but one, apparently larger than the rest, survived the explosion and as it fell into the woods north of the house I could hear the sound of breaking branches. My attempts to locate it by lamplight last night were unsuccessful but this morning, by the light of day, I was fortunate enough to locate the object, laying in a deep furrow in the earth, still warm from its passage across the heavens. It was not as large as I had thought, measuring only eight or ten inches across, but its glazed surface spoke of the high temperatures that it had endured. Time has not allowed me full and proper study of the object, but in the meantime I have placed the celestial remnant on the mantle in the living room where it adds a touch that the room otherwise lacks.

March 25, 1878: A day of discovery! While walking through the north woods today I discovered what all evidence leads me to believe is a mound, perhaps a gravesite, left here by Indians. It is odd that I never before took notice of the oddly circular hill in the woods, but it is covered with a quite dense growth of trees and I probably wouldn't have noticed it if it had not been for the melting snows. It was so obvious as I passed through, the bare, circular mound surrounded by snow-covered ground all around. I will write Professor Pendergast at once and hope that I can interest him in verifying and excavating the find.

July 5, 1878: The major part of the excavation of the mound begins tomorrow. Initial digging is completed and the students have erected a large tripod, fitted with a block and tackle, to lift the huge flat stones that seem to roof the anticipated chambers below. Although we have as yet to discover anything of real significance, our finds being limited to a few arrowheads and unidentifiable clay shards, the high spirits of the students does not fail to lend an air of excitement to the whole undertaking. I find myself barely able to wait until tomorrow.

1853: Allen excitedly writes of his anticipation of the delivery of a volume of fiction he has ordered from a New York publishing firm. It apparently is a book of short stories by an author named Edgar Allan Poe.

1854: More references to the writer named Poe. Allen pays particular attention to a couple of stories. One is "The Black Cat," and the other is "The Cask of Amontillado."

1854: Allen is upset. It seems that he overheard Henry and Aaron discussing plans in the third floor study to remodel the house—apparently, the convenience of the family is not the only thing they have in mind. Allen believes that they are intending to use the house to help smuggle escaping slaves north to Canada; an idea that he disapproves of intensely.

1857: Allen has had a serious argument with his cousin. He has confronted Aaron with the fact that he knows what he has been doing in regards to the smuggling of escaped slaves. Apparently, Aaron told Allen that if he tried to expose the activities of the family, he would kill him.

1859: Allen has discovered a book that once belonged to his father. It is a book of dark secrets and strange tales that was originally purchased by Brandon Van Laaden while traveling in Europe. Somehow David came into possession of the mysterious volume, for he signed his name on the inside cover, beneath a number of other, unknown signatures. Allen writes that, after reading it, he has likewise decided to sign the book.

1861: Aaron has enlisted in the Union forces and gone to war. Allen feels that due to the weakened condition of Henry, he is now in charge of the household. It is obvious that Allen is in a vengeful frame of mind and will begin by winning the senile Henry's confidence and then offering to help him in the smuggling of the slaves.

1862: After terrorizing the family with threats and curses for the last year, Allen has finally committed his heinous plan, sealing four escaping slaves in the secret room of the basement and leaving them to die. In the meantime, he has assured Henry that they escaped during the night and that he had to seal off the room and destroy any evidence of their presence due to suspicions being raised by certain, unsympathetic, circles in town.

1863: Triumph! In a drunken rage, Allen has confronted Henry with his dark deed, causing the old man to be stricken with a fatal heart attack. Allen gloats after the old man's death.

1863: One of the last entries, Allen tells how Beatrice must have overheard his last conversation with the old man and written to Aaron. Aaron will be arriving home soon. Allen is very fearful of what Aaron may do.

The Van Laaden Papers 15:
The Secret Book



The Van Laaden Papers 16:
The letters of Aaron Van Laaden



The Van Laaden Papers 17:
The diary of Beatrice Van Laaden



In a very early entry Aaron describes how his cousin died. Aaron is obviously remorseful, wishing that he had waited and figured a way to turn the matter over to the authorities. He also describes how he covered the death to make it look like Allen had accidentally shot himself in the stomach.

Aaron describes making arrangements with a clergyman from a church in Grand Rapids to secretly perform religious rites upon the sealed room wherein the bodies of the slaves lay.

Sometime in 1864, Aaron makes note of his wife's increasing emotional instability. He writes that she is restless at night, tossing and turning, and mumbling strange words. Aaron says that sometimes it almost sounds like old Gaelic, but not always.

The last entry. Aaron has decided to end it all. He is preparing to go hunting but writes that he does not intend to return. The last thing he writes is "God help us all."

The Van Laaden Papers 19::

A letter to Mary Gottler

My Dearest Mary,

Please try to find it in your heart to forgive my actions on the day of your wedding to David. You must understand that it was only a mother's love for her only daughter that made me say the things I said. Your wedding day should have been happy and I am sorry if I have upset the Van Laadens and hope that they will also be able to forgive me someday.

I hope you will come to visit your father and I soon, for we both miss you very much. Perhaps you could make plans to spend a day or two at home with us again. Please say you will. It has been almost three months since your wedding and we have not heard from you. Please write and say you forgive me.

Your father made me promise not to bring up the issue again, but if you will come to see me, even for an hour, I can show you proof of my accusations. It is a fact that the Van Laaden family was forced to come to America after being accused of heresy by the Church. They are without God, Mary, and you risk your very soul by associating with them. Say you will renounce your marriage and come home to a family that loves you and will help you turn back to your salvation. Living with these people will condemn your soul to hell!

*Your loving mother,
Katherine Gottler*

The Van Laaden Papers 20:

*Letter addressed to Aaron found with the coroner's report
on the death of the stranger in the Van Laaden home in 1853*

Dear Mr. Van Laaden,

In regard to the unfortunate demise of the unidentified Asian in your home I would recommend the following precautions be taken in light of the unknown nature of his fatal disease: The room should be thoroughly aired before anything else. After proper airing remove and wash all bedclothes before cleaning and white-washing the room. As an extra precaution I would advise avoiding inhabiting the room for the next six months if at all possible. This would apply in particular to children, older people, or the chronically ill. I am sorry if I am unable to shed any further light on your particular problem.

*Respectfully,
Lucas Bradshaw, M.D.,
Coroner, Kent County*