

**GLORIA
STEWART
FARLEY
(1916-2006)**



**VIKINGS IN
OKLAHOMA:
HEAVENER
RUNESTONE**

In a small, rocky hollow on Poteau Mountain near Heavener is a mystery etched into the face of a large slab of rock standing twelve feet tall, ten feet wide, and sixteen inches thick. In 1832, a Choctaw hunting party discovered the rock engraved with mystical symbols. White hunting parties dismissed it as an "Indian Rock". The earliest authenticated, eyewitness account came from Luther Capps in 1898.

Oklahoma school teacher Carl Kemmerer found it while hunting game in 1913. Ten years later, he wrote the Smithsonian Institute with a sketched representation of the symbols. He was told the symbols were a mix of Scandinavian and Gothic "runes" or letters.

In 1928, Gloria Stewart, who was born in October 1916 in Heavener, went with her friend Rosemary Kemmerer and her dad to see the monumental stone. She was impressed by the sheer massiveness of the upended stone resting under a U-shaped cliff. What captured her imagination were the eight mysterious symbols "pecked" into the face of the sandstone monolith.

Gloria, married to Reverend Ray Farley and living in Ohio in 1948, read about the Kensington Runestone, discovered on a Minnesota farm in 1898. The stone was covered with inscriptions many attributed to 14th-century Viking sailors. She sent a copy of the symbols to the Smithsonian Institute. The Curator of the department of archeology told her of Kemmerer's earlier communication and suggested the runes followed Scandinavian grammar.

A study of the fascinating Norse sagas revealed the efforts of the Norse inhabitants of Greenland to colonize the eastern coast of America from approximately 1002 until 1010 A.D. Would it have been impossible for them to reach Oklahoma via the Mississippi River?

When Farley moved back to Heavener in 1950, she found the runes untouched, although the stone platform at the base of the big stone was gone. She named the stone Heavener Runestone and began a 35-year effort to establish its authenticity by collecting oral histories from area old-timers.

In 1970, the Herbert Ward family donated 55 acres surrounding the stone to the state of Oklahoma to establish the Runestone State Park. Norway-born cryptanalyst Alf Monge said the letters represented the date of November 11, 1012, and speculated that ancient Vikings carved the letters into the rock. His theory was supported by the discovery of more runestones found near Poteau Mountain, near Cavanal Mountain and at Shawnee.

The Heavener Runestone was translated in 1985 by Richard Nielsen, who also authenticated the Kensington Runestone. He said the letters spelled G-L-O-M-E-D-A-L. "Glome," being an ancient name, and "Dal" meaning "valley", thus a land claim by a man named Glome.

Farley died in March 2006 at age 89 in Heavener. Her work started as a casual investigation into a local curiosity and turned into a quest which ended in the recognition of the Heavener Runestone as the work of ancient Viking travelers.

Today, some Oklahomans believe that Vikings came from Norway crossed the Atlantic, rounded the tip of Florida into the Gulf of Mexico, went up the Mississippi River, and sailed into its tributaries, the Arkansas and Poteau rivers.