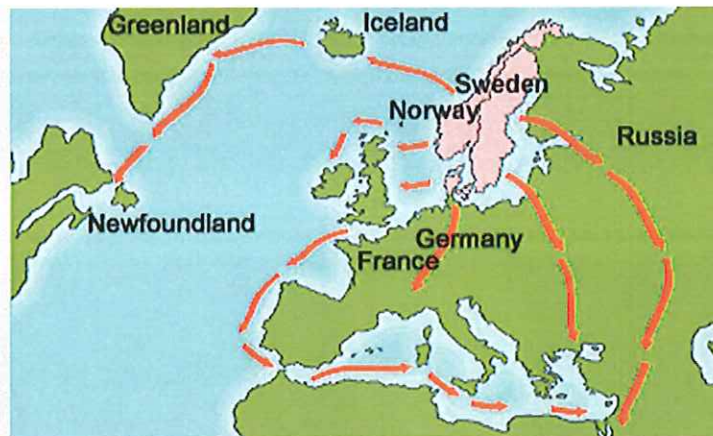


Erik the Red and Leif Erikson

Erik the Red (Erik Thorvaldsson) was born in Norway in about 950 CE, towards the end of the Viking Age (8th-11th centuries). His son was Leif Erikson, the explorer who explored the eastern coast of the New World 500 years before Columbus set eyes on the Bahamas in 1492.

NOTE: The names *Thorvaldsson* and *Erikson* are **patronymics**. That means they are names formed from the father's name. Erik's father was named Thorvald.

Theirs were violent times. Erik's family emigrated from Norway to Iceland because of a charge of manslaughter against Thorvald. When Erik grew up, he became involved in a feud that caused him to be exiled from Iceland for three years as punishment for murder. He spent the time exploring, chiefly the area now known as Greenland.



Lands known to Leif Erikson in the 11th century

Erik the Red gave Greenland its name and established the first permanent Norse settlement there. He chose the name "Greenland" for PR purposes. He didn't want a name as off-putting to potential settlers as "Iceland." Life on Greenland was hard, but Erik's colony succeeded in drawing immigrants from Iceland. Norse occupation of Greenland endured for about 500 years, until climate change and other factors led to the end of European settlement.

Leif Erikson was born in Iceland around 970 CE. His main claim to fame is his early exploration of Baffin Island, Labrador, and Newfoundland. He named one of the areas he explored "Vinland" because of grapes he found growing there.

Both father and son had nicknames. Erik the Red's nickname probably came from the color of his hair. Leif became known as "Leif the Lucky" because of something that happened on his return from Vinland. On the return voyage, Leif rescued a ship's crew from Iceland. The captain's cargo was still intact and Leif acquired it in return for the rescue.

On one of his trips to Norway, Leif Erikson became a Christian, and later brought a priest and teacher to introduce the new religion into Iceland. Erik the Red was not too enthusiastic about this particular move. He suggested that the nickname “Lucky” was not so appropriate:

