

MARKLAND



In the Icelandic sagas, Markland is *the Forest Land* north of Vinland. So, when I found a Markland on the Newfoundland road map I began looking for a Vinland as well – without success. What I found out instead was that Markland is home to the *Rodrigues Cottage Winery*, known for their wines made from local berries. A winery in Markland instead of Vinland? What a curious coincidence. Or is it not? When I visited the winery I was warmly welcomed even without an appointment. I spoke to the founder and owner Dr. Hillary Rodrigues, who is a dentist in his first profession. He established the winery in the former Markland Cottage Hospital (which had intermittently also served as a courthouse) in the 1990's. I asked him right away whether it was a coincidence that his winery is located in Markland, and he said, “yes it is.” This could have been the end of the story. But then he remembered that not too long ago he had had a visitor from New Brunswick who wanted directions how to establish a winery. In New Brunswick he had seen very old, wild growing grapevines and he told Dr. Rodrigues that he believes those could be the grapevines the Norsemen had found and the reason they called the place Vinland. And so there was a relation to Vinland in Markland, although a completely unexpected and indirect one.

Dr. Rodrigues then took me for a tour through the high tech production and bottling departments of the winery. Enthusiastically he told me that they had recently also specialized in the production of dietary supplements made from Newfoundland berries and Himalayan chia seeds. He believes that these extracts cannot only prevent illness, but cure pretty much every disease, including cancer. He is still optimizing the production process and experimenting with new blends, as his aim is “to find the Holy Grail of wellness”. His statement made me think of Vinland again and its aura of a Promised Land.

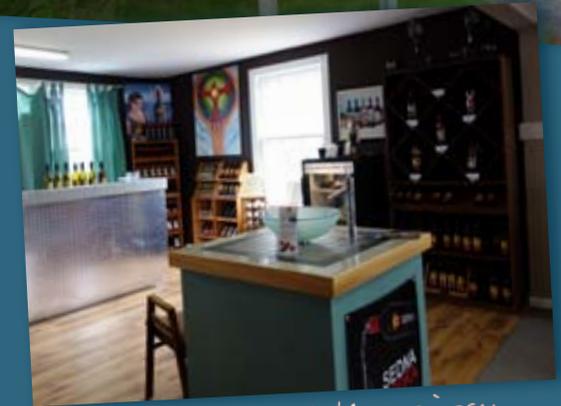
Markland is said to be the first inland farming settlement in Newfoundland. It was established in 1934 when stretches of the name-giving forest were cleared to make space for accommodations and fields to be cultivated by needy families. Originally there were indeed plans for a Vinland not far away. But after the forest had been cleared for Vinland during the winter of 1935 and the snow had melted, the ground turned out to be unsuitable for agriculture.* The families in question were settled elsewhere, and Vinland never became a reality...

*W. Gordon Hancock, *The Origin and Development of Commission of Government land settlements in Newfoundland 1934-1939*, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1970





The former Markland Cottage Hospital which now houses the offices and the showroom of the Markland Cottage Winery



Showroom of the winery



Machine for weighing and packaging the berry powders by VIKING MASEK



Dr. Hillary Rodrigues in the production spaces of the winery



Historic photos and selected medical equipment in the hallway of the winery refer to the former usage