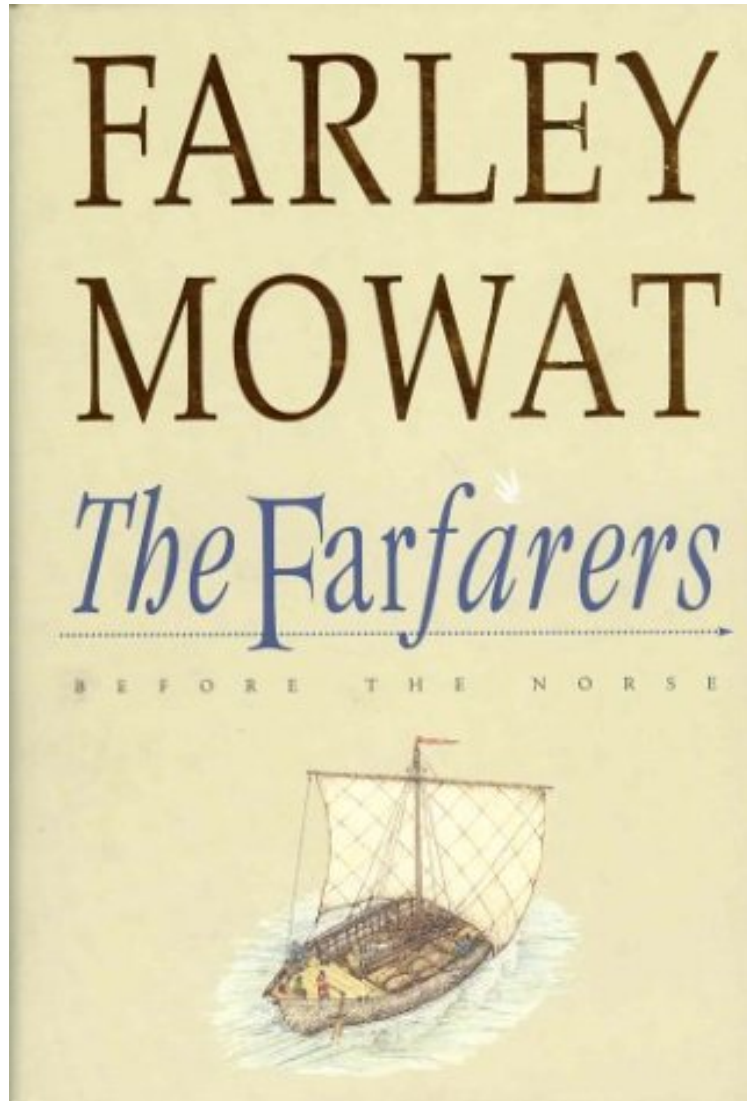


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## The Farfarers

*Farley Mowat*

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**Farley Mowat : The Farfarers** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Farfarers:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating but Highly SpeculativeBy John A Lee IIIMany people are aware of the notion of pre-Columbian contact with America by the Norse. What many are not aware of is that there are also many other theories and legends of pre-Columbian contact by other culture. This book addresses on such possibility but does so in a different manner than most. Instead of positing a one or a few trip by isolated explorers it looks at the presence of an entire European culture.This is not as far fetched as it may seem at first. Much of the story

takes place in Europe with known, albeit barely known, people. The author calls these people the Albans since we do not know what they called themselves. They are a pre-Celtic people who inhabited the eastern seaboard and survived as crofters and fishermen. Over time they were driven to the British Isles by the Celts. From there, they were driven on to Iceland by the Norse. For this much, there exists historical documentation. From there the speculation takes over but it is not wild or completely unsupported. As the Norse people move westward, so too did the Albans in an attempt to stay ahead of their enemies. They went to Greenland and then to North America. They maintained trade links with Europe trading products such as walrus ivory and marine mammal oil. Eventually they settled in Newfoundland where they were eventually assimilated by the local peoples or wiped out by the still advancing Norse. Such, anyhow, is the author's theory. As presented, these theories are well reasoned, make use of existing anomalies in the archeological and historical records and are non-fantastic in that they do not involve UFOs. They fly in the face of much academic wisdom but these same academics have often shown themselves to be suspect. In the end, however, these remain just theories. The proof is lacking or never existed. Farley Mowat does a wonderful job of telling the story. He clearly distinguishes between his own theories, those of others and makes a good effort to present what evidence does exist. That which is speculation is clearly labeled as such. This is a serious academic effort that is hampered only by the paucity of evidence and entrenched academic interests. Mostly though, it is an enjoyable read. 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Mystery People By Steve Geller As usual, Farley Mowat tells a great story. The Farfarers are a mysterious seafaring people called "Albans". If Mowat is right, the Albans were not Celt, not Goth, but a much more ancient people inhabiting Europe, like the Basque. Mowat connects Albans on the northwest coast of Europe to the Picts of Scotland and to the Jakatars of Newfoundland. The Albans were driven out of Europe by the Romans, north into the Hebrides, then west to North America by Viking raids. In this book, the Vikings are the bad guys. There's a lot of speculation here, but it makes sense. Ancient cairns in northern Canada may well be markers left by the real first European discoverers of America. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Two works shuffled together. By Stanford Mommaerts-Brown The pace was choppy. Would have preferred scholarly and fictional parts to have been presented separately.

After years of research, sparked by his discovery of roofless ruins in Hudson Bay, Farley Mowat presents a speculative history of the first Europeans in North America, and a challenge to the presently held notion that the Vikings were the first to inhabit northern Canada. During the sixties, on a windblown shore off Hudson Bay, Farley Mowat observed ruins that could not have been left by the Inuit, the only known first inhabitants of the region. Carbon dating placed these ruins hundreds of years before the Vikings landed in Newfoundland, but conventional, accepted historical theory could offer no explanation for them. Mowat's search led him to Scotland and the Northern Isles where he discovered ruins that resembled those he had seen on the other side of the Atlantic. He painstakingly researched early historical accounts from Roman and pre-Roman times for answers, and was able to reconstruct the story of a forgotten people. Fictional accounts of the Albans in their skin-covered boats, venturing ever farther from known shores, in search of the massive walrus herds that were their livelihood, and a place of safety from the warlike Celts and Romans, are woven skilfully into the re-construction. Provocative and controversial, *The Farfarers* is a beautifully wrought literary adventure that is sure to excite lively debate. It is a book that challenges perceptions and forces the reader to re-think the origins of the North American continent. (1998)

.com Farley Mowat's niggling doubts began in the summer of 1966, while he was tooling around the Canadian Arctic aboard a single-engine Otter float plane. The previous year, he had published the influential *Westviking*, a book that presaged the now widely held opinion that the Norse arrived in North America some 500 years before Columbus. But what Mowat found that summer of '66--troubling evidence that would be buttressed by determined research and field work over the next 30-odd years--convinced him that he had gotten it all wrong. Another group of Europeans, whom Mowat calls the "Albans," beat the Norsemen to the punch by a few hundred years, arriving in North America as they were both fleeing the rapacious Vikings and pursuing precious walrus ivory. A professional scientist but an amateur anthropologist, Mowat likes to stir the pot--and he does it well, with a combination of scientific rigor, good-natured wit, and old-fashioned storytelling. (It's easy to imagine Mowat as an ideal companion out on the monotonous tundra, spinning endless stories over wine and cigarettes.) Interspersed among discussions of the Albans' culture, ethnography, and use of technology, Mowat's speculations on their trips and travails in fictional "vignettes" fill in the "immense lacunae" in the historical record. But his reasoning is always so sound--and his narrative so captivating--that you'll find it hard not to join Mowat's speculative journey with the Farfarers. --Paul Hughes From Publishers Weekly A veteran investigator of early European voyages to North America, Mowat (*Westviking*) has conjured up a vision of pre-Viking settlement by a people he calls the Albans. Originating in what is now Scotland, Mowat's Albans were displaced in stages between about 700 and 1000 A.D., first to Iceland and Greenland, and finally to the western coast of Newfoundland. The author sees the Albans as driven westward by two forces: the search for valuables such as sealskin and walrus tusk, and the remorseless pressure of Viking raiders. To support his thesis, Mowat presents what scant evidence exists--mainly, stone constructions, like tower beacons and foundations for shelters, which Mowat believes

cannot be attributed to the Norse or to native inhabitants of Greenland or Atlantic Canada, and which resemble stonework found in the Orkney Islands. On this basis, Mowat accepts that the Albans existed and sets out to imagine what their migrations were like. Scattered throughout the book in italicized passages are stories set in that era, telling how the Albans might have explored their new surroundings and survived, even prospered, in the Arctic. The Albans lost their separate identity, Mowat believes, by merging into the aboriginal population of Newfoundland. This account rests on informed speculation, as Mowat explicitly acknowledges, and is not intended as a formal exposition of all the evidence for and against the author's thesis. The book is best enjoyed as a richly detailed and imaginative reconstruction of how a long-vanished European people may have been the first of their kind to venture into the New World. Illus. (Feb.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal

Mowat's 1960's book, *Westviking: The Ancient Norse Vikings in Greenland and North America*, first advanced the now-widely held belief that the Norse visited North America five centuries before Columbus and had settlements for a time on the northern tip of Newfoundland. Now Mowat returns to argue that before the Norse got to North America, and as early as the 700s, a pre-Indo-European people whom he calls "the Albans" had already been there. They fled their settlements in Scotland, he argues, to escape Viking slave-raiders--but they also went in search of walrus ivory tusks which were then highly prized in Europe. He supports his thesis with bits of Norse sagas, the chronicles of Irish monks, and his own archaeological finds. Some archaeologists dismiss Mowat's Alban theory as lacking in evidence--but whether he's correct or not, large academic libraries will want to have a copy of this controversial text. -Harry Frummerman, formerly with Hunter Coll., CUNY Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.