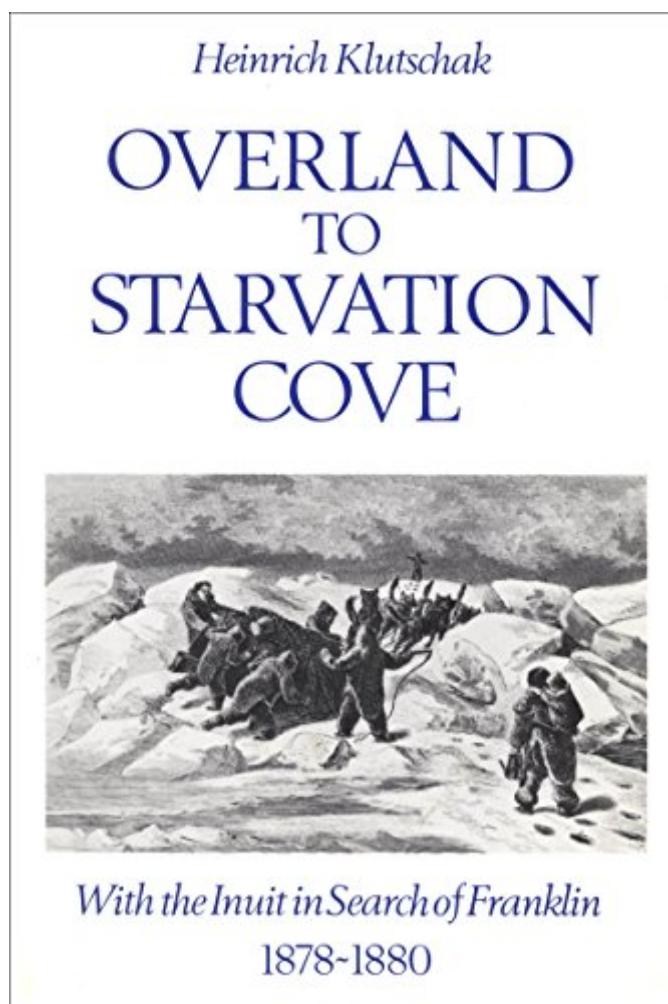


The book was found

Overland To Starvation Cove: With The Inuit In Search Of Franklin, 1878-1880 (Heritage)



Synopsis

In May 1845 Sir John Franklin sailed westward from England in search of the Northwest Passage and was never seen again. Some thirty-five years later, Heinrich Klutschak of Prague, artist and surveyor on a small expedition led by Lieutenant Frederick Schwatka of the 3rd US Cavalry Regiment, stumbled upon the grisly remains at Starvation Cove of the last survivors among Franklin's men. Overland to Starvation Cove is the first English translation of Klutschak's account. A significant contribution to Canadian exploration history, it is also an important anthropological document, providing some of the earliest reliable descriptions of the Aivilingmiut, the Utkuhikhalingmiut, and the Netsilingmiut. But above all, it is a fascinating story of arctic adventure.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a review of the hardback 1993 version, that I ordered from a Yellowknife bookseller -- long before even existed! As a Franklin Expedition researcher, I've scoured the books, historical documents and newspaper clippings for more info about one of the greatest search missions of all times. This book is one of the most complete descriptions of the King William Island [Kekertak]

region and it's people in print, even today. A lot of Franklin material, both past and present tend to push self-serving points of view of the adventurers; or theories about the Fate of Franklin. This book is a refreshing change, as it reads more like an geography and cultural anthropology book, that tells more about the environment and what Inuit bands lived in the area in the 1880s, than about the author himself or anything he's trying to promote. I've learned more about the Inuit in the region in this book than from any other Franklin source, especially of the smaller bands (often overlooked, yet could've seen the last Franklin Expedition survivors along Back's [Great Fish] River). One particular band that lived at the mouth of said river even brought me to tears, as the author described their horrid life, which was no better than what the Franklin Expedition survivors suffered. They wore the poorest clothes even for Inuit (they didn't wear fur, and used skins instead, which is reminiscent of the Ainu); ate maggot filled fish they stored in rock cairns in summer; and suffered starvation almost yearly as a fact than a chance encounter. This backdrop is not mentioned at all in the romanticized Franklin story, and the serious lack of this factual information, paints a very different outcome of how and why the Franklin Expedition survivors faced their fate (especially in regards to the more survivable band that may have encountered Franklin's crew along SW King William Island, that hunted seal and caribou). The very natives the survivors were hoping to help them live to return home could not even themselves stay alive (even in the book in the 1880s, it's claimed that was the last history has seen of that band, which probably died out). Southwest King William Island and the mouth of the Back's River are desolute limestone and sand filled atolls, that support almost no life for 40 people to exist upon, even near a prime Arctic Char fishing ground. Any more mouths to feed, was a sure death sentence, even if the Franklin Expedition survivors "went native" (a politically correct notion in Franklin research today -- "only if these White men went native, they'd be alive today" -- and one that hurts more than helps, as the facts don't support that notion. The facts are the land itself couldn't even support a band of 40 natives). Translation is smooth, and reads much better than other accounts. The narrative is written by a scientist, so details about the landscape and people are high (not a glancing over with a common man distain of that period of "savages"). Details are so much, there's even a lithograph of Irving's grave (to clue researchers/searchers of how such a "in the field" tomb would even look like to find). Recommend highly this book for any Franklin researcher, cultural anthropologist, let alone any serious Franklin Expedition reader.

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