

**RESOLUTE: THE EPIC SEARCH FOR THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE AND JOHN FRANKLIN, AND THE DISCOVERY OF THE QUEEN'S GHOST SHIP.** By MARTIN W. SANDLER. New York: Sterling Publishing Co. Inc., 2006. ISBN-13: 978-1-4027-4085-5. xix + 299 p., maps, b&w and colour illus., bib., index. Hardbound. US\$24.95; Can\$29.95.

Martin Sandler has attempted a general history of the search for the Northwest Passage and for the missing Franklin expedition in what is now the Canadian Arctic over the period 1818–80. The inclusion of the word “Resolute” in the title indicates a particular focus on HMS *Resolute*, one of the Royal Navy ships involved in the Franklin search. *Resolute* was abandoned by Captain Henry Kellett (on orders from Captain Sir Edward Belcher) in the spring of 1854 while beset in the ice off Cape Cockburn, the southwestern tip of Bathurst Island. Still beset in the ice, the derelict drifted east to Baffin Bay then south to Davis Strait. Captain James Buddington recovered her off Cape Mercy, Baffin Island, in September 1855 and sailed her to his home port of New London, Connecticut. The United States Government purchased the vessel and then, as a gesture of goodwill, donated the ship to Queen Victoria. After the vessel was broken up, a desk made from her timbers was presented to President Rutherford Hayes in November 1880. It is now in daily use in the Oval Office at the White House.

Particularly in view of Sandler's reputation as winner of seven Emmy Awards and author of the Library of Congress American History Series, this reviewer anticipated reading an accurate, well-researched study. Unfortunately, this expectation was not fulfilled. One gains the impression that the work began as a more restricted study of the recovery of HMS *Resolute* and its aftermath, which was subsequently expanded, possibly very hurriedly, to meet a tight deadline. Although the narrative reads well, it is riddled with careless and obvious errors that display a pitifully weak grasp of the subject, combined with a staggering ignorance of the geography of the Arctic. In that the major parallel themes of Sandler's book are probably familiar to most readers of this review, I will focus on the book's flaws, rather than on those themes.

On p. 25, we read that Captain John Ross encountered Netsilingmiut at Kap York, Northwest Greenland, in 1818; they were, in fact, Inughuit. Kap York lies some 1250 km away from the Netsilingmiut core area of King William Island and southern Boothia Peninsula! On p. 28 (and several times thereafter), the mountains that John Ross reported as blocking Lancaster Sound are referred to as the “Crocker Mountains.” The correct name is the “Crocker Mountains,” named after John Wilson Croker, First Lord of the Admiralty. One assumes that Sandler was confusing the name with “Crocker Land,” the non-existent landmass that Robert Peary reported seeing from the northern tip of Axel Heiberg Island in 1906.

Perhaps one of the worst errors can be found on p. 40, where we are told that the most easterly point reached by Franklin in 1821, Turnagain Point on Kent Peninsula, was discovered by Captain James Cook and named by Captain George Vancouver! One can only surmise that Sandler was confusing this point with Turnagain Arm, near Anchorage, Alaska. Cook never penetrated even as far as Point Barrow, while Vancouver did not even reach Bering Strait.

On p. 69, and frequently thereafter in discussing the search for Franklin, Sandler refers to the “Arctic Council” as if it were some formal, decision-making body, functioning in parallel with the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. As Ross (2004:140) has definitively stated, “no formal advisory body called the Arctic Council existed during the Franklin search.” The confusion has arisen from the title that artist Stephen Pearce gave in 1851 to his composite portrait of the major figures involved in the Franklin search.

In 1847, Dr. John Rae was exploring Melville Peninsula, not Melville Island (p. 82); the two features lie about 1000 km apart! On the map on p. 112, the site where *Resolute* and *Intrepid* were abandoned by Captain Kellett in 1854 is indicated as Dealy Island, whereas they were abandoned, as mentioned earlier, off Cape Cockburn, Bathurst Island. This is not simply a cartographer's error; Sandler states in his text (p. 127) that the ships wintered twice at Dealy Island.

By Sandler's count (p. 162) more than 10 ships were lost during the Franklin Search. Even if one includes Elisha Kent Kane's USS *Advance*, for which searching for Franklin was only one objective, and HMS *Resolute*, which was recovered as Sandler describes, the tally of ships lost is only seven, namely *Breadalbane*, *Investigator*, *Resolute*, *Pioneer*, *Assistance*, *Intrepid*, and *Advance*.

On p. 199, Sandler identifies *Tigress*, the vessel that rescued one group of survivors of Hall's Polaris expedition from its ice floe in 1873, as Canadian; she was from Newfoundland, which did not become part of Canada until 1949. The other group of survivors was landed at Dundee, Scotland, not in England.

It is stated on p. 226–227 that Dr. Owen Beattie found evidence of cannibalism on human bones found at Beechey Island; he discovered this evidence on King William Island in 1981, not on Beechey Island in 1984.

This selection of examples, out of a total of 30 that this reviewer was able to identify, clearly demonstrates that Sandler's “research” was extremely careless. What is particularly disturbing is that the publisher clearly did not submit the manuscript to a reviewer with any knowledge of the topic.

On the positive side, Sandler has included a good selection of relevant illustrations, including some striking contemporary paintings in colour. With the exception of a couple of flaws (one of which has been cited), the maps are very informative and indeed represent elegant examples of the cartographer's art. And Sandler has made a useful

contribution in bringing the story of HMS *Resolute*, familiar to most readers with a serious interest in the history of the Arctic, to the notice of a wider readership. But as a work of history, this is an extremely shoddy creation. This reviewer cannot recommend it. In its place, of the many existing books on the topic, that by Pierre Berton (1988) and especially that by Ann Savours (1999) are recommended as being accurate and readable treatments.

#### REFERENCES

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**NIPISAT – A SAQQAQ CULTURE SITE IN SISIMIUT, CENTRAL WEST GREENLAND.** By ANNE BIRGITTE GOTFREDSEN and TINA MØBJERG. Copenhagen: Danish Polar Center, 2004. ISBN 887-90369-73-4. Meddelelser om Grønland, Man & Society 31. 243 p., maps, b&w and colour illus., appendices, bib. Hardbound. DKK298.

This book by Anne Gotfredsen and Tina Møbjerg offers a comprehensive description and analysis of a Saqqaq culture site from archaeological investigations undertaken at the Nipisat site in Central West Greenland from 1989 to 1994. Excellent faunal preservation, numerous radiocarbon results, preserved architectural features, and an extensive artifact assemblage are used to explore a continuous occupation that began about 2000 BC and spanned approximately 1500 years.

Only a handful of comprehensive works so meticulously document an Arctic archaeological site and place it in a large-scale cultural context. In essence, Gotfredsen and Møbjerg incorporate a detailed site description with a faunal analysis to investigate three chronological phases of Saqqaq culture. In doing so, they reveal subsistence and seasonality patterns, define previously unknown aspects of late Saqqaq material culture, and explore cultural affiliations between Saqqaq and Dorset cultures.

The absence of dwelling structures with a well-defined box hearth, the introduction of soapstone vessels, and the abandonment of the bow and arrow by the site's occupants at Nipisat during the latest phase of the occupation are

convincingly cited as evidence for cultural affinities with the succeeding Dorset culture in Central West Greenland. While there are few examples of this late Saqqaq phase in Greenland, the authors suggest that they could represent connections to the western Canadian Arctic. Likewise, there are demonstrable similarities between the earliest phases of the Nipisat site and the preceding Arctic Small Tool tradition cultures throughout the Arctic.

Chapters 1 and 2 describe the culture history, archaeological background, and natural setting of the Sisimiut district. Within these chapters, the authors set the Nipisat site in chronological context, relating it to both the known cultural sequence and the climatic sequence. Thus they establish the long-lived and changing nature of this Saqqaq culture, which is useful for comparison with and interpretation of other, short-term Saqqaq occupations.

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the geographic setting of Nipisat and discusses the changing nature of the site over time. Sections on radiocarbon dating, stratigraphy, and architectural features provide the reader with a good basis for understanding the three chronological phases of occupation at Nipisat. The detailed stratigraphic profiles are well employed in an important discussion of site formation processes and the radiocarbon results. This chapter is nicely documented and provides sufficient technical detail for independent verification of results and subsequent re-analysis.

Chapter 4 includes numerous illustrations, photographs, and descriptions of the site's many lithic and organic artifacts, including their relative distributions. The artifact assemblage from Nipisat contains a wide variety of objects and materials. In particular, it is noted that the early phase of the site contains tools used in hide working, tool production, and flint knapping that are comparable to those found at other large Greenlandic sites, such as Qeqertasussuk and Qajaa. However, the eventual abandonment of the bow and arrow in favor of heavy harpoon or lance heads and the introduction of beveled and polished knife blades and soapstone lamps during the later occupation of Nipisat represent a marked departure from this earlier occupation and provide provoking evidence for cultural connections with Dorset populations.

Chapter 5 introduces the faunal evidence from Nipisat and outlines the methods of collection, quantification techniques, and seasonal indicators employed in the analysis of this impressive faunal assemblage. Chapters 6 through 8 provide detailed presentation, analysis, and discussion of the numerous fish, bird, and mammal species present and identifiable at the Nipisat site. The discussions of site seasonality, site function, and hunting techniques for each of the three chronological phases of the site's occupation represent the main focus and strength of this book. These analyses provide an important benchmark for further study and comparison of Palaeoeskimo subsistence strategies in this region and throughout the eastern Arctic.

This monograph is well documented and contains over 200 figures, which are beautifully reproduced. In addition