

SOLD AMERICAN: THE STORY OF ALASKA NATIVES AND THEIR LAND, 1867–1959. THE ARMY TO STATEHOOD. By DONALD CRAIG MITCHELL. Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1997. Dartmouth College, Arctic Visions Series. ISBN 0-87451-748-6. 476 p., 3 maps, 36 b&w illus., endnotes, bib., index. Softbound. US\$24.95.

Sold American is the first of a two-volume history of Alaska from 1867 to the present. Douglas C. Mitchell, former attorney for the Alaska Federation of Natives, wrote *Sold American* because he realized that Congress had lost its “institutional memory” of the decades of debate regarding the Native peoples of Alaska and their lands. Yet Congress regularly considers legislation which can have a major impact on the people of our state, especially the First Alaskans. Through this history of the Alaskan land controversy, Mitchell hopes to remind Congress of earlier disputes and, at the same time, dispel some of the widespread ignorance on the part of many Americans surrounding the Great Land.

The first four chapters trace the early years of territorial administration through the lives of the appointed officials and missionaries who shaped government policies and practices. Their earlier experiences with Indians, personal beliefs, and ambitions greatly influenced many of their relationships with the Native people. Pervasive ethnocentrism, as well as blatant racism, colored government policy up to statehood. The Native people were portrayed as “primitive,” or “simple,” and inferior to whites. For the most part, the newcomers simply ignored the rights of Eskimos and Indians in order to take their lands and resources and turn them over to their friends and political supporters. Mitchell vividly describes several cases of brazen injustice and discrimination under the early military administrations.

The second half of *Sold American* begins with the response by the Alaska Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood, including the biography of one of their most controversial leaders, William Paul. Hampered by prejudice and discrimination, the Natives had an uphill fight against the powerful fishing, mining, and timber industries. The First Alaskans were denied full citizenship until 1924, and by that time, large tracts of land, as well as portions of the coastline, had been appropriated for fish traps, canneries, missions, and timber and mining claims. The Natives were treated as second-class citizens for a hundred years. Even Native children had been spirited off to mission schools to be “civilized” in the ways of American capitalism and the Protestant ethic. The teachers punished children for speaking their Native languages and ridiculed their families and culture. This first volume closes with the lengthy debates over reservations and statehood.

Although the book is well-written, it is difficult reading because of the labyrinthine intrigues involved. Several characters resurface in succeeding chapters with some new plot to take the lands and resources from the Natives. The author shows with lengthy documentation that many of these men, including some famous Alaskans, were simply liars and swindlers. At times, I felt that his comments were somewhat

contentious, inflammatory, and acerbic, but the documents he quotes tend to justify many of his statements. Personally, I was amazed at the lies, deceits, and outright dishonesty by representatives on both sides.

Meanwhile, in Congress and the territorial legislature, proposals to take away Native lands surfaced repeatedly, disguised under new names and titles. Mitchell often refers to certain legislation simply by its House or Senate number, while the reader is expected to remember both the legislation and its earlier forms. After 130 years of countless schemes and conspiracies to steal their lands, I’m surprised that the Indians and Eskimos have fared as well as they have.

Fifty pages of endnotes and ten pages of “Works Cited” persuaded me that the author of *Sold American* had done an enormous amount of research. Extensive quotations supplement factual data gleaned from a wide variety of sources. Readers may not always agree with Mitchell and his writing style, but he has certainly woven an incredible amount of information into a story that makes sense.

In my opinion, *Sold American* is a “must read” for any anthropologist, politician, political scientist, attorney, teacher, student, or lay person who hopes to understand Alaskan issues today. For instance, the questions of subsistence rights, “Indian country,” and sovereignty can only be understood in light of their historical origins and development. The book also provides a broad basis for comparative studies of government policies and their impact on indigenous peoples.

The second volume, from statehood to the present, promises to be equally informative and probably more controversial. When it is published, this two-volume set will make a fine, thought-provoking textbook for a variety of college courses in anthropology, history, and political science.

Douglas Mitchell took on a monumental task and has, in my opinion, put together the best history of Alaskan Natives and their lands that I have seen so far. Highly recommended.

Wallace M. Olson
Professor of Anthropology, Emeritus
University of Alaska Southeast
11120 Glacier Highway
Juneau, Alaska, U.S.A.
99801

SIR JOHN FRANKLIN’S LAST ARCTIC EXPEDITION: A CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF THE ROYAL NAVY. By RICHARD J. CYRIAX. West Midlands, United Kingdom: The Arctic Press, 1997. (Available from The Arctic Press, 60 Sunnybank Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B73 5RJ, U.K.: Fax: 44 121 3861251.) xvii + 222 p., 4 maps, 2 appendices, index (bib. as footnotes, list of principal authorities cited, list of abbreviations). Hardbound. £25/US\$42.00.

Sir John Franklin’s final attempt to find a Northwest Passage through the Canadian Arctic and the subsequent expeditions sent out in search of him and his men have been the subject

of numerous articles and books. Rarely has so much been written based on so little solid evidence. Inuit stories of encounters with sick and starving white men west of Boothia Peninsula, recorded by John Rae, James Anderson, Francis M'Clintock, Charles Hall, Frederick Schwatka, Knud Rasmussen, and others, have been scrutinized to the smallest details and have served as the basis for continuing speculation and theorizing to this day. The fact that Cyriax's book has been reissued is glowing testimony to the continuing faith publishers have in the public's appetite for anything dealing with the final Franklin expedition.

When first published by Methuen & Co. of London in 1939, this book represented one of the first comprehensive narratives about Franklin taken from published and unpublished sources. It is divided into three parts, each dealing with an important segment of the total story: Part I (chapters 1 to 5) covers the activities leading up to the departure of the Franklin expedition from England and its last contact with whaling ships in Baffin Bay in late July 1845. Part II (chapters 6 and 7) describes the many unsuccessful search expeditions leading up to M'Clintock's and William Hobson's discovery of the only expedition records found to date. Part III (chapters 8 to 13) contains the largest body of material: Cyriax's version of what might have happened to Franklin, his men, and his two ships, the *Erebus* and the *Terror*.

In Part I, Cyriax provides an excellent account of the many players involved in the search for a Northwest Passage, that followed Sir John Barrow's persistent arguments for the British Admiralty to get involved in Arctic exploration. The Napoleonic wars had ended, leaving men and ships with little to do and promotions difficult to come by. Franklin's involvement was immediate. While John Ross and Edward Parry retraced Baffin's 1616 route to northern Baffin Bay and Smith Sound, Franklin, Frederick Beechey, and David Buchan headed into the icy waters beyond Spitsbergen in 1818. The following year, Parry tarred John Ross's reputation by sailing westward "through" Ross's nonexistent Croker's Mountains in Lancaster Sound, eventually reaching the south coast of Melville Island and reaping the £5000 reward for crossing the 110th meridian. That same year Franklin set out on the first of his two overland expeditions, accompanied by John Richardson and midshipman George Back, who had served with Buchan in 1818. The men explored the Arctic coast as far east as Cape Turnagain before returning from a trip marred by great suffering and the death of several expedition members. On Franklin's second overland expedition in 1826, he and Back headed westward along the Arctic coast in an unsuccessful attempt to meet up with Captain Beechey, who had sailed around Cape Horn and up through Bering Strait.

Following completion of his second overland expedition in 1827, Franklin stepped out of the Arctic exploration picture for nearly two decades. While he served for six years as Lieutenant Governor in Tasmania, the quest for the Northwest Passage was carried out by others. Seeking vindication for his 1818 pronouncement of a blocked Lancaster Sound, John Ross set out in 1829 on an expedition that was privately sponsored by the "gin baron" Felix Booth. Accompanied by

his nephew, James Clark Ross, who had participated in the 1818 expedition and the 1819 Parry expedition, John Ross steered his paddle-driven *Victory* down the east coast of Somerset Island. He passed Fury Beach, where Parry in 1824 had left behind a large depot as well as the wrecked *Fury*, and continued southward into the Gulf of Boothia. The *Victory* was also destined to remain in the Arctic. Unable to extricate her from the ice, John Ross and his party retreated to Fury Beach and eventually reached the whaling grounds of Lancaster Sound in several small boats in 1833. They were picked up by the crew of the *Isabella*, coincidentally the same ship John Ross had used on his 1818 expedition. Aside from surviving in the Arctic as many years as they had, expedition members accomplished several important tasks, particularly under the guidance of James Ross who, in 1831, located the Magnetic North Pole. James Ross had earlier reached the western shore of King William Island where he erected a cairn at Victory Point. He did not then realize that King William Land was in fact an island and that he had just crossed the waters through which Roald Amundsen in 1903 would guide the *Gjoa*, the first ship to sail through the Northwest Passage. Neither could James Ross envision that the coast below his cairn would be the stage for one of the worst maritime disasters in the history of Arctic exploration.

Concern for the "lost" John Ross expedition set in motion another exploration party under George Back, who in 1834, after the safe return of Ross, reached the mouth of the Great Fish River (now the Back River). In 1836, Back, with Robert M'Clure, attempted to bring the *Terror* to Repulse Bay for a wintering and subsequent exploration of Boothia Peninsula. The expedition never reached its destination and barely made it back to England.

In 1837, the Hudson's Bay Company decided to engage itself in further exploration of the Arctic coast. Between 1837 and 1839, George Simpson and Peter Dease managed to link the discoveries of Franklin, Beechey, Back, and Richardson. Exploring westward and eastward, they charted the coastline between Alaska and the Back River. A prominent cairn was erected at Cape Herschel on King William Island, only about 115 km (as the raven flies) south of James Ross's cairn at Victory Point. It was a relatively short stretch of coastline, but one that would prove insurmountable for most of the remaining 105 men of the Franklin expedition who, in the spring of 1848, struggled southward towards the Back River in a desperate attempt to escape death.

In England there had been no news of the Franklin Expedition for two years. By late fall of 1847, enough concern had been raised to warrant serious planning for search parties to be sent to the Arctic the following summer. Part II of Cyriax's book deals with the numerous attempts to make contact with the Franklin expedition, an increasingly desperate undertaking as the probability of finding anyone alive decreased rapidly between 1847 and 1849. It is one of the many captivating elements of the Franklin story that two expeditions could have reached at least some survivors. Perhaps the closest was the exploration party led by the extraordinarily hardy Dr. Rae, Chief Factor for the Hudson's Bay Company,

in the area between Repulse Bay and Lord Mayor Bay between 1846 and 1847. Unfortunately for Franklin and his men, Dr. Rae was unaware that there was any need to look for them. The first Franklin search expedition, led by James Ross between 1848 and 1849, came ever so close. Man-hauling sleds with such later search veterans as M'Clintock and M'Clure, the party headed southward along the west coast of Somerset Island, closing in on the trapped *Erebus* and *Terror*. With most of his men utterly exhausted and suffering from the initial ravages of scurvy, James Ross discontinued the march about 80 km north of the yet-to-be-discovered Bellot Strait and about 270 km from Victory Point, where he had erected his cairn in 1830. Had he been able to continue, he probably could have saved at least a few of the Franklin men. Looking out over the strait, James Ross decided that no ships could have been forced through the heavy ice pack, which stretched southward as far as he could see. It was a fatal decision for any possible survivors, as it determined the direction future search expeditions would take.

In 1851, Dr. Rae searched the southeast coast of Victoria Island, again tantalizingly close (80 km) to the scene of disaster on King William Island. Although he discovered two pieces of wood that were clearly derived from a naval vessel, no connection to Franklin's ships was made. When Dr. Rae finally returned to England in 1854, he brought not only Inuit accounts of meetings with white people along the west coast of King William Island, but also convincing relics from the Franklin expedition obtained from the Natives. For his efforts he received £8000, while his men shared £2000. A final, private expedition was launched by Lady Franklin under the leadership of M'Clintock. In 1857, he and Hobson finally reached King William Island, where they located two Franklin expedition records on the west coast. The first message was found in a cairn not far from the one built by James Ross. The record, originally deposited a few kilometres farther north in 1847 by then Commander Graham Gore (promoted in November 1846), had been brought to Victory Point and, with the addition of a few sentences scribbled in the margins, redeposited by Crozier in 1848. The second record, found farther south along the coast, was a copy of the 1847 message with no further additions. Although the prize of discovery had already been paid out to Dr. Rae, M'Clintock and his men were given a second reward of £5000.

Part III is a fairly detailed analysis of the information Cyriax extracted from his sources. Somewhat repetitive in its presentation, this section examines in some detail the questions of quantity of supplies, the possible contamination of the tinned food, the extent of use and usefulness of lemon juice for the prevention of scurvy, and the surprising lack of messages, which usually would have been deposited along the way. In particular, one would have expected a report concerning the state of the expedition and its future plans to have been deposited on Beechey Island, the 1845–46 wintering place of the expedition.

Chapters 9 to 12 provide the reader with a well-thought-out theory about the fate of the ships and the men from the moment of final besetment on 12 September 1846 to the

(initial) abandonment on 22 April 1848, nearly a year after Franklin's death on 11 June 1847. Cyriax provides convincing arguments for the possibility that Franklin ordered Lieutenant Gore to march south along the shores of King William Island to Simpson Strait in the spring of 1847, in order to establish the final link of the Northwest Passage, and that Gore had returned to the ships before Franklin died. It would be up to Crozier, close friend and second in command of James Ross's Antarctic expedition in the *Erebus* and *Terror*, to see the expedition to its conclusion, one way or another. By the spring of 1848, surviving men and officers were in a poor state of health. Abandonment was essential. There followed a desperate attempt to reach fresh supplies of food and help to the south. Crozier's decision to take his party to the Back River and beyond has puzzled many and received a good deal of armchair criticism. Cyriax makes a good case in support of Crozier's decision not to head for Fury Beach and supplies left there by Parry. An equally convincing case is made for the return of a small party to one of the ships following the abandonment in April. It is thought that at least five men returned to one of the ships, initially to get more provisions for the sick and starving men scattered along the shores of King William Island. Lacking strength to return to shore, the men remained on board for the following winter, while the ship drifted farther south. By the spring of 1849, it reached the vicinity of O'Reilly Island, where it was discovered by a group of Inuit hunters. The ship had been housed over with awnings and carried five boats. A gangway led down to the ice. One body was found on the deck, and footprints on the adjacent shore indicated that four men and a dog had left the ship. Their fate, along with so many other twists of the Franklin story, remains a mystery.

For the well-read connoisseur of Arctic exploration lore, this book obviously presents nothing new. However, for the novice who wants to delve into the more esoteric details of the Franklin story, the book is a worthwhile acquisition and highly recommended.

Peter Schledermann
Senior Research Associate
The Arctic Institute of North America
University of Calgary
2500 University Drive N.W.
Calgary, Alberta, Canada
T2N 1N4

ARCTIC AND ANTARCTIC: THE WILL AND THE WAY OF JOHN RIDDOCH RYMILL. By JOHN BÉCHERVAISE. Huntingdon, United Kingdom: Bluntisham Books, 1995. x + 230 p., 4 maps, b&w illus., notes, bib., index. Softbound. £14; US\$22.00.

When I first visited the Antarctic in the late 1960s, my office and laboratory at the Australian station Mawson were in a hut named *Rymill*. Other buildings named *Shackleton*, *Ross*, *Balleny*, *Wilkins*, etc. had obvious Antarctic connections, but