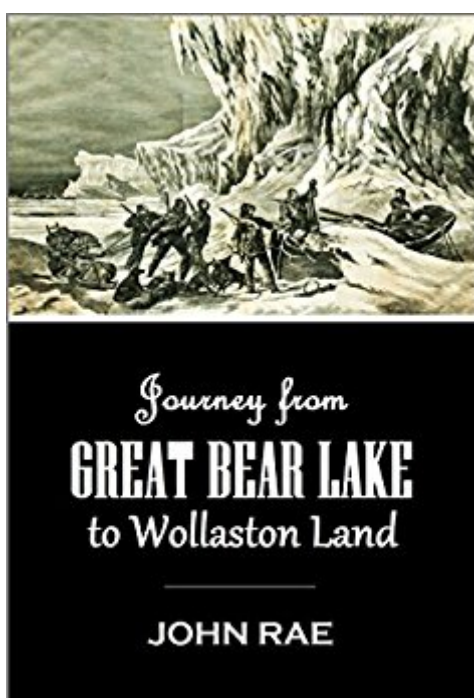


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Journey From Great Bear Lake To Wollaston Land And Recent Explorations Along The South And East Coast Of Victoria Land (1852)



Synopsis

John Rae (1813 – 1893) was a Scottish doctor who explored parts of Northern Canada, found the final portion of the Northwest Passage (Rae Strait, named after him) and reported the fate of the Franklin Expedition. In 1846 he explored the Gulf of Boothia northwest of Hudson Bay. In 1848 he explored the Arctic coast near Victoria Island. In 1854 he went from Boothia to the Arctic coast and learned the fate of Franklin. He was noted for physical stamina, skill at hunting and boat handling, use of native methods and the ability to travel long distances with little equipment while living off the land. In 1848 Rae made three journeys along the Arctic coast. The first took him from the Mackenzie River to the Coppermine River, which had been done before. On the second he tried to cross to Victoria Island and was blocked by ice. On the third he explored the whole south coast of Victoria Island. By 1848 it was clear that Sir John Franklin was lost in the Arctic. Three expeditions were sent to find him, one from the east, one through Bering Strait and the Richardson expedition overland to the Arctic coast. Most of the Arctic coast had been traced by Thomas Simpson (explorer). North of the coast were two coastlines called "Wollaston Land" and "Victoria Land". Franklin was thought to be somewhere in the unknown area north of that. The 61-year-old Richardson chose Rae as his second in command. This book covers the third trip: On 25 April 1851, he left the fort. On 2 May he crossed the frozen strait via Douglas Island to Cape Lady Franklin, the southernmost point on Victoria Island. Heading east he passed and named the Richardson Islands and passed what he thought was the westernmost point reached by Thomas Simpson on his return journey in 1839. He turned back somewhere near 68° 36' N 110° 00' W. Heading west he passed Cape Lady Franklin and followed the coast north and west around Simpson Bay, which he named. The coast swung north but it was getting late. He made a final push, the coast swung to the northeast and on 24 May he stopped at about 70° 11' N 116° 15' W. From here he could look north across Prince Albert Sound. Unknown to Rae, just 10 days before a sledge party from Robert McClure's expedition had been on the north side of the sound. He turned south, crossed Dolphin and Union Strait safely and on 5 June turned inland. The journey to camp on the Kendall River was the least pleasant part of the journey since he had to travel over melting snow and through melt water. By boat in summer: On 15 June 1851, two days after the boat arrived, he set off down the Kendall River and Coppermine River with 10 men. He waited several times for the ice to clear and in early July he started east along the south coast of Coronation Gulf. In late July he crossed the mouth of Bathurst Inlet and reached Cape Flinders at the western end of the Kent Peninsula. He reached Cape Alexander at its east end on 24

July and on 27 July crossed the strait to Victoria Island. He explored Cambridge Bay which he found to be a better harbour than Dease and Simpson had reported. He left the bay and went east along an unknown coast. The coast swung north and the weather got worse. By August he was in Albert Edward Bay. Blocked by ice, he went north on foot and reached his furthest on 13 August near 70° 03' N 100° 55' W. Returning, he left a cairn which was found by Richard Collinson's men two years later. He then made three unsuccessful attempts to cross Victoria Strait east to King William Island. (Victoria Strait is nearly always impassable.) On 21 August he found two pieces of wood that had clearly come from a European ship. (These were probably from Franklin's ship, but Rae chose not to guess.) On 29 August he reached Cape Lady Franklin and crossed to the mainland. He worked his way up the swollen Coppermine and reached Fort Confidence on 10 September. He had travelled 1,080 miles on land, 1,390 miles by boat, charted 630 miles of coast.

Book Information

File Size: 457 KB

Print Length: 32 pages

Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited

Publication Date: March 12, 2016

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B01CX2AVI8

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #1,547,130 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #70

in Books > Travel > Canada > Cities > Victoria #90 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks >

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