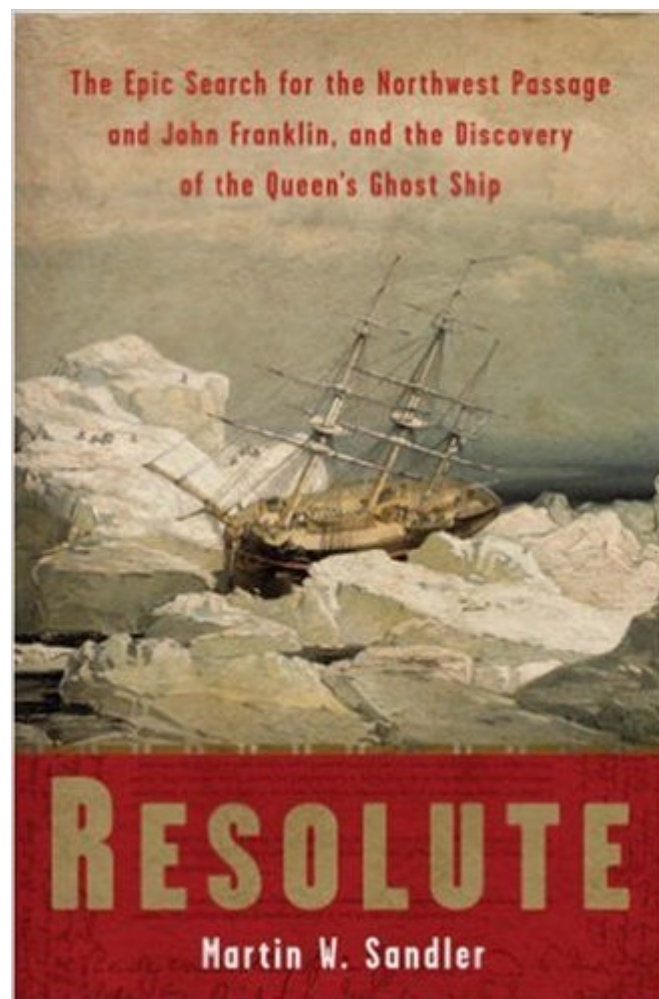


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Resolute: The Epic Search For The Northwest Passage And John Franklin, And The Discovery Of The Queen's Ghost Ship



Synopsis

Almost everyone knows the photo of John F. Kennedy, Jr., as a young boy, peering out from under his father's desk in the Oval Office. But few realize that the desk itself plays a part in one of the world's most extraordinary mysteries—a dramatic tale that has never before been told in its full scope. Acclaimed historian Martin Sandler, a two-time Pulitzer Prize nominee, winner of seven Emmy® Awards, and author of more than 50 books, finally brings the entire story to light. This amazing high-seas adventure encompasses the search for the Northwest Passage in the early 1800s; a renowned explorer and his crew of 128 men who vanish during an 1845 expedition; 39 incredible, heroic attempted rescue missions; a ghost ship that drifts for more than 1,200 miles; a queen's gratitude; and that famous desk. Fascinating rare photographs, paintings, engravings, and maps illustrate the book throughout. It all began when, in one of the biggest news stories of the 19th century, Sir John Franklin and his ships the Erebus and the Terror disappeared while attempting to locate the fabled Northwest Passage. At the request of Franklin's wife, Lady Jane, the first mission set out from England in hopes of finding him; many others followed in its wake, none successful. Among these was the Resolute, the finest vessel in Queen Victoria's Navy. But in 1854 it became locked in Arctic ice and was abandoned by its captain. A year later, a Connecticut whaler discovered it 1,200 miles away drifting and deserted, a 600-ton ghost ship. He and his small crew boarded the Resolute, and steered it through a ferocious hurricane back to New London, Connecticut. The United States government then reoutfitted the ship and returned it to the thankful Queen. In 1879, when the Resolute was finally retired, she had the best timbers made into a desk for then-President Rutherford B. Hayes. It is still used by U.S. presidents today...one of the most celebrated pieces of furniture in the White House.

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Customer Reviews

"Resolute" by Martin W. Sandler begins as a very intriguing story of a ghost ship discovered by the whaling ship "George Henry" in 1855. Items were laid out on the HMS "Resolute" as if the crew of the British ship had just stepped out. But, as a previous reviewer has pointed out, the "Resolute" is not the main subject of this work; in fact, there turns out to be not a lot to her story. Her abandonment was not mysterious and her future after being found not as significant as one might gather from the first chapter. Later in the book, it is described how, through the daring and expert command of Captain James Buddington, the "Resolute" was brought to port in New London, Connecticut. From there, the "Resolute" became more a symbol of U.S./English relations, but, ultimately, not in the form of a ship. She would be scrapped and made into desks. The book is mainly about the search for the Northwest Passage and the missing Franklin Expedition. These subjects definitely make the book worthwhile, particularly the latter. "The longest and most expensive search and rescue mission ever undertaken" lasted twelve years, involved scores of ships and thousands of officers and men and saw its share of the good (Lady Franklin and Capt. Henry Kellet), the bad (Sir Edward Belcher), and the ugly (Lt. Robert McClure) along the way. McClure is painted in "Resolute" as possibly a worse villain than Stephan Goldner, the man who provided tainted canned goods to the Franklin crew, is in the book "Ice Blink" by Scott Cookman. The findings of John Rae, Charles Francis Hall, and Frederick Schwatka, all of whom lived among and interviewed the Inuit about the fate of the Franklin Expedition, are described in depth.

It is exceptionally rare for a work of non-fiction to transport the reader to a landscape so alien that it defies the imagination, to meet characters whose particular combination of courage, determination, ingenuity, and vision drive them to feats beyond all experience. Resolute is such a story and were it not for Martin Sandler's scholarly writing, his copious end notes, appendices, and biographic epilogue, the reader might be forgiven for thinking it just so much fiction. But the images of skeletons languishing in open boats, of message cairns against bleak snowswept horizons, and the thought of hundreds of men cowering in the cold and dark for month after mind-numbing month awaiting the spring to break up the ice seizing their ships, cannot help but shock the modern reader. Sandler's scholarly history of the search for (and discovery of) the Northwest Passage, and of the

search for the men who disappeared there both thrills and haunts us. It is extraordinary how much treasure, planning, and hope went into England's quest for a commercially viable route over the northern boundary of North America, but it is equally remarkable how large a role was played by wanton ignorance. The gentlemen (nearly all were eventually knighted), who took this stage, very rarely consulted the people who knew most about the geography and the terrain, that is, the whalers and the Inuit natives. And the disregard for fundamental science is startling. How could Second Secretary of the Admiralty, John Barrow, whose orders sent so many men into those icy seas, ever have imagined that the ice that blocked the sea at lower latitudes would somehow vanish as the pole was approached? And sending those men out with what amounted to experimental food canning technology amounted to negligent homicide.

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