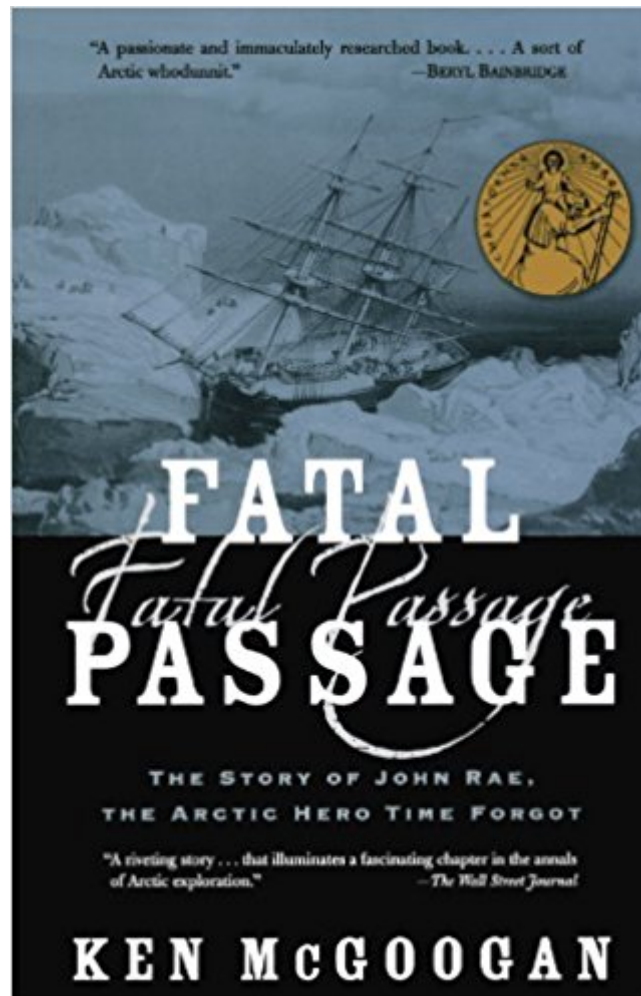




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Fatal Passage: The Story Of John Rae, The Arctic Hero Time Forgot



Synopsis

John Rae's accomplishments, surpassing all nineteenth-century Arctic explorers, were worthy of honors and international fame. No explorer even approached Rae's prolific record: 1,776 miles surveyed of uncharted territory; 6,555 miles hiked on snowshoes; and 6,700 miles navigated in small boats. Yet, he was denied fair recognition of his discoveries because he dared to utter the truth about the fate of Sir John Franklin and his crew, Rae's predecessors in the far north. Author Ken McGoogan vividly narrates the astonishing adventures of Rae, who found the last link to the Northwest Passage and uncovered the grisly truth about the cannibalism of Franklin and his crew. A bitter smear campaign by Franklin's supporters would deny Rae his knighthood and bury him in ignominy for over one hundred and fifty years. Ken McGoogan's passion to secure justice for a true North American hero in this revelatory book produces a completely original and compelling portrait that elevates Rae to his rightful place as one of history's greatest explorers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Rae...was hounded into obscurity, banished from the pantheon of approved Victorian Arctic explorers, and was the only important one not to be knighted." "Rae emerges from the shadows to take his place among the most intriguing of the 19th-century Arctic explorers. Delightful reading" "Ken McGoogan's passionate and immaculately researched book...is a sort of Arctic whodunit."

John Rae was obviously a true stud, mountain man, explorer, and overall very smart guy. The book is a great and interesting read. However, be aware that the author has added undocumented conversation and dialog between characters in the book that are not referenced to any sources. So, this book has some historical fiction attributes, which I was not expecting, and are not indicated in the information about the book. I read a lot of history books, and most that I read annotate quite often the info source for facts in the text. This book does not do that at all; it only provides a bibliography at the end of the book, so if a particular part of the book interests you with a desire for more reading, you don't know where that information is from. Also, it's very light on maps, and the maps that are provided are not a very good scale. I like to reference maps constantly when I'm reading about explorers and when geographical points and locations are mentioned on a regular basis. It's the only way the reader can truly appreciate the scope of the journey. Despite my criticisms, I enjoyed the book and the story.

Other reviewers that gave this book 4-5 stars have written good explanations of why they awarded such high praise, so I needn't repeat those words (I'll just silently agree with them). Instead, I'll make three statements:1. I immensely enjoy seeking out 'forgotten' history and true versions of historical events that school books and encyclopedias won't tell you. This book is an excellent example of one of those.2. This particular story shows clearly that while the term 'Politically Correct' is a recent invention, the acts of 'playing politics', downplaying others' accomplishments, taking undeserved credit for oneself, and attempting to destroy a man's reputation simply because one does not like the message he bears, are atrocious, despicable human acts that have existed probably since the beginning of man.3. Finally, I am not a son of the British Isles, hence I have always thought the idea of Britain's Royal family to be outdated and nonsensical in today's world. Nevertheless, I'll say this: if the Queen ever hears the tale of John Rae and fails to grant him a posthumous knighthood, while Sir Elton Rockstar and Sir Paul Rockstar can be knighted, then all knighthoods are meaningless and laughable.

I enjoy reading non-fictional accounts of exploration, and have found two geographic regions particularly interesting; ian and Arctic exploration. Perhaps this is because the issues faced by explorers of those regions are particularly challenging. This book is essentially a biography of Dr. John Rae, a longtime employee of the Hudson Bay Company, who spent much of his life on or North of the Arctic Circle. The author is an unabashed fan of Dr. Rae, and even points out in his preface that the purpose of the book is to elevate Dr. Rae to a position in the pantheon of Arctic

explorers, a position that the author firmly believes that Dr. Rae has been unjustly denied. As a result, the question arises as to whether the author presents an unbiased picture of Rae and his achievements. For the greatest part of the book, this is really not a factor. There is no dispute as to Rae's exploits, his discoveries, or the incredible feats of endurance and competence he displayed in his endeavors. However, the final quarter of the book, dealing with controversy concerning his report on the Franklin expedition and the long running feud between Rae and Lady Jane Franklin certainly have the potential to present a biased and perhaps overly complementary picture of Rae's actions. The final segment of the book, dealing with discovery of the Northwest Passage and the honors associated therewith, give the author a final opportunity to argue the poor treatment accorded Rae. While virtually every other explorer with a hand in charting the region was awarded knighthoods and cash rewards, Rae was excluded from official plaudits. Doubtless, this was a political decision as was the decision by many to credit Franklin with discovery of the Passage (which he most certainly did not). However, to simply label Rae as the discoverer of the Northwest Passage borders on hagiography. Charting the Northwest Passage was a collaborative undertaking and required the combined efforts of literally dozens of explorers over the course of decades. While it is true that Rae identified the final piece in the puzzle (though it is unlikely that he knew it at the time), to give him full credit ignores the 95% of the puzzle that was already in place. Despite its sometimes biased viewpoints, it cannot be argued that Rae was anything other than a fascinating individual and perhaps the most physically gifted Arctic explorer on record. I can recommend this book to anyone with an interest in exploration in general and Arctic exploration in particular.

There isn't much that I can add to the fine reviews here, other than to say that the author may be unduly harsh on Franklin's widow for not accepting Rae's account that the fate of her husband's expedition ended with some resorting to cannibalism. After all, who wouldn't resist accepting the news that the last days of their spouse might have included this unspeakable horror? Despite that, this is an excellent biography. I purchased my copy during a recent trip to Scotland which, fortunately, included a visit to Orkney, the birthplace of Rae. I was immediately intrigued when our driver explained some of the background of Rae as I knew about Franklin but not Rae. I purchased the book at a local bookshop in Stromness. Those who read this book will be gratified to know that efforts are underway in Orkney to restore and preserve Rae's birthplace, an empty home that is easily seen when coming into Stromness. Additionally, he is well remembered at St. Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall with a beautiful memorial. This book serves as a worthy monument in print.

The true tale of an unbelievable man and his unbelievable accomplishments in the truly harsh Arctic environment.

Everyone should read this book, wow. I have found a new hero, what a remarkable man. How come we never hear about him?

Little known Canadian Hero.....this needs wide distribution in Schools in North America.....this guy was truly a man for all seasons!

Fabulous book. Get to know John Rae, folks. A great hero in Canadian history and arctic exploration.

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