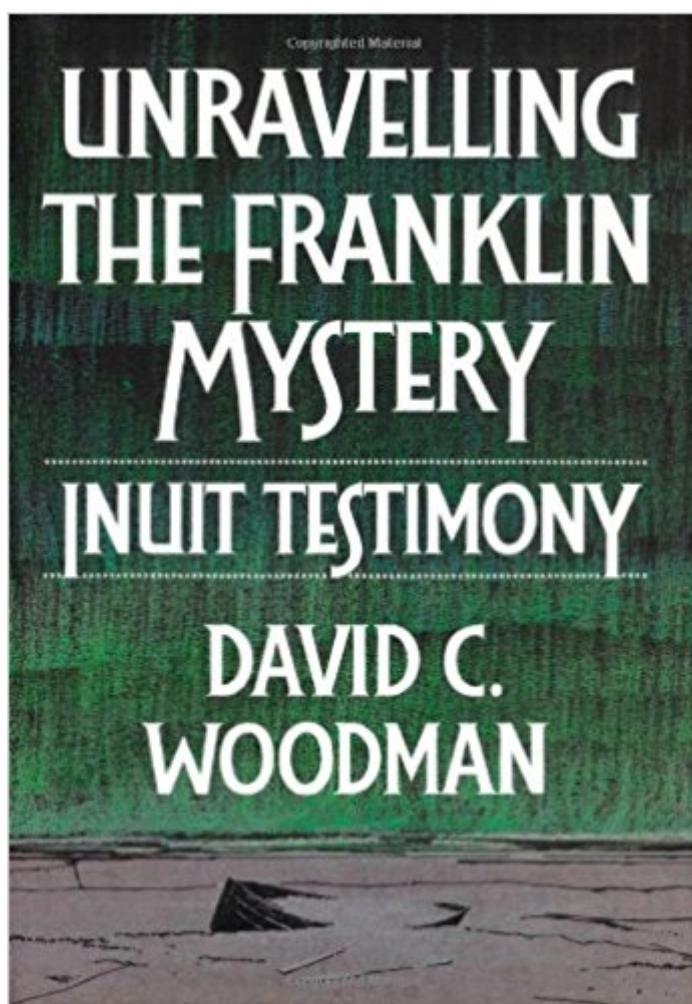


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# Unravelling The Franklin Mystery, First Edition: Inuit Testimony (McGill-Queen's Native And Northern Series)



## **Synopsis**

Woodman maintains that fewer than ten bodies were found at Starvation Cove and that the last survivors left the cove in 1851, three years after the standard account assumes them to be dead. Woodman also disputes the conclusion of Owen Beattie and John Geiger's book *Frozen in Time* that lead-poisoning was a major contributing cause of the disaster. Much of the Inuit testimony presented in *Unravelling the Franklin Mystery* has never before been published. The earliest Woodman quotes was recorded by Franklin searchers only nine years after the disappearance of the Franklin team. Inuit testimony provided Woodman with the pivotal clue in his re-construction of the puzzle of the Franklin disaster: I proceeded from the assumption that all Inuit stories concerning white men should have a discoverable factual basis ... [and] managed to discover a scenario which allowed use of all of the native recollections, solved some troubling discrepancies in the physical evidence, and led to some significant new conclusions as to the fate of the beleaguered sailors. Whether or not one agrees with Woodman's conclusions, his account is compelling and his analysis impressive.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"Undoubtedly the most authoritative, cool-headed and thrilling investigation so far." Jonathan Keates, London Observer. "Woodman has examined all the documentation on Inuit testimony with relentless thoroughness. He has made a vitally important, long overdue contribution ... It is a book anyone obsessed with Franklin will want to have." M.T. Kelly, Toronto Star. "Compelling reading ...

On a warm week at an Ontario lakefront cottage, I sat inside turning unwieldy page proofs ... and could not stop." Christopher Moore, Books in Canada. "Woodman is ... an indefatigable and creative researcher, and gifted in the ability to convey dauntless enthusiasm for the obscure hieroglyphs that Franklin's history left us in its wake." John Moss, Arctic Circle. "Woodman's book will be invaluable ... to those who can't get enough on the Franklin mystery." Ian Mayer, Montreal Gazette. "Brilliant ... a joy to read ... It unfolds slowly like a good detective story ... The time is ripe for a fresh, new, original book about John Franklin. This is it." C. Stuart Houston, Department of Medical Imaging, University of Saskatchewan. "Woodman has done an excellent job of gathering Inuit testimony and presents a new emphasis which allows new interpretations and conclusions with regard to the Franklin epic." Dorothy Harley Eber, author of *When the Whalers Were Up North*.

This is a great book for obsessed Franklin fanatics. It gives actual Inuit interviews of the time and then Mr. Goodman dies a dissection of the material explaining the truths and his hypothesis on them and leaves you the ability to do also. It is a slow read due to all the inuit names and places, so have a map and take notes. From the inuit testimony we have really the only way to piece together what happened to the Franklin Expedition and this book does give you almost a primary source as a look into the disaster that became the expedition. It is so very detailed and complete that I would surely have this as an absolute must read if you are a Franklin fan. To actually go deeper into inuit testimony you would have to find all of Hall's interviews and only Russel Potter has done so (as far as I know). Potter would be great source of info and he needs to write on this subject also. In conclusion - read this book after you read a more generalized Franklin book and you want more info. - Andrew Stella

This is an absolutely fascinating topic for Franklin buffs and Woodman has been admirably thorough in exhaustively analysing the Inuit testimony about the fate of the expedition. He has turned up some intriguing nuggets of information. For instance, one body was discovered bedecked with watch chains and jewelry, and a small scrap of paper, alluding to the crew's fate, was discovered in the clothing of another corpse. However, it tends to be very repetitively written and I also found the maps, although well drawn, were often misleading in the placement of names of physical features and insufficiently large - it was often hard to put the areas drawn into the context of a larger area, without constantly referring back to the overall map on page 4. The overwhelming impression I was left with after reading this book was the absolute impossibility of finding any written records, given that every Franklin site has been thoroughly investigated and 'looted' by nineteenth century Inuit in

search of usable materials, especially wood and metal.

David Woodman's research for this book is exciting to think about -- carefully turning the thousands of pages from journals written over a hundred years ago -- could he see the fear of frozen fingers (and more) in the marks of thick ink? Woodman's retelling of Sir Franklin's fascinating story is built upon an amazing act of pinning down the oral histories from another culture to the pages of ours. Above all, this book pays tribute to this wonderous art of the Inuit. And speaking of 'our' pages, my paper back edition has come unglued from its spine in just one month! Serious readers my wish to ante up for the hardcover.

This is a great book to read if you are interested in the Franklin expedition.

Having become gradually more and more obsessed with tales of Arctic and Antarctic Exploration - starting with tales of Shackleton, via Apsley Cherry-Garrard, Barrow's Boys and Jennifer Niven's wonderful pair of Arctic explorations - I discovered this book and immediately put in an order for the forthcoming second edition. I devoured every page. It is extremely unusual among histories of the Arctic, the Franklin Expedition, the North West passage and so on, in that here, the Inuit are not merely shadowy and mysterious figures around the edges of the narrative - they and their voices are CENTRAL. This provides fascinating perspectives and insights, not only to the general topic of Anglo/American Arctic explorations of the second half of the 19th Century, but more specifically, to the Franklin Tragedy. To pick a random example - many have criticized the planners of Franklin's expedition for not providing Inuit-style fur clothing (as used by other explorers like Rae, Hall and Peary), relying instead on wool and other fabrics. Woodman, in this book, points out that it takes 7 caribou skins to make one suit of winter clothing. So - to equip Franklin's crew of around 130 would have required the hunting over nearly 1000 caribou! If all the Inuit of the region joined forces with the crew to hunt, it would still have taken years. As a piece of original research, the book is quite densely argued, and takes its time to sift through the evidence, weighing up the value of various forms of testimony, and coming to conclusions that are always tentative. This adds to the authority of the conclusions that Woodman allows himself - as does the finding of HMS Erebus more or less where Woodman predicted. As well as rigorous historical analysis, there is room for poetry and mystery. The Inuit accounts of lost officers and crewmen staggering across the ice, meeting Inuit hunters, exchanging goods and food, and then disappearing into the mists - if you aren't moved by them, then your own heart must be frozen! Wonderful stuff, and Woodman has to be thanked for

giving so much of his time and energy to this book, which has become one of the keystones of research in this area.

This book is obviously very well researched and thought out. It's very interesting to read about all the theories concerning Inuit testimony and comparing them with my own views which are constantly changing with new information. Considering the location and the relative condition of the more recent Erebus and Terror finds, much of the testimony and related speculation seems not far off. The Terror Bay encampment looms!

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