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### **The History of Greenland**

In 1759, David Crantz (or Cranz) was sent to Greenland for a year by the Moravian Church. Writing in German, Crantz (1723–77) published in 1765 his detailed observations on the country, its people and their way of life, including a history of the Moravian mission there. This English translation appeared in two volumes in 1820, prepared by staff at the Fulneck School in West Yorkshire, where a Moravian community existed. The text is illustrated with several engravings that depict landscapes as well as kayaks, weapons and tools used by the Greenlanders, providing a valuable visual record of eighteenth-century life among the native population. Volume 1 is primarily concerned with the geography of Greenland, the local weather patterns, and flora and fauna, as well as the attitudes, traditions, social habits and hierarchies of the people of Greenland.

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# The History of Greenland

*Including an Account of the Mission  
Carried on by the United Brethren in that Country*

VOLUME 1

DAVID CRANTZ



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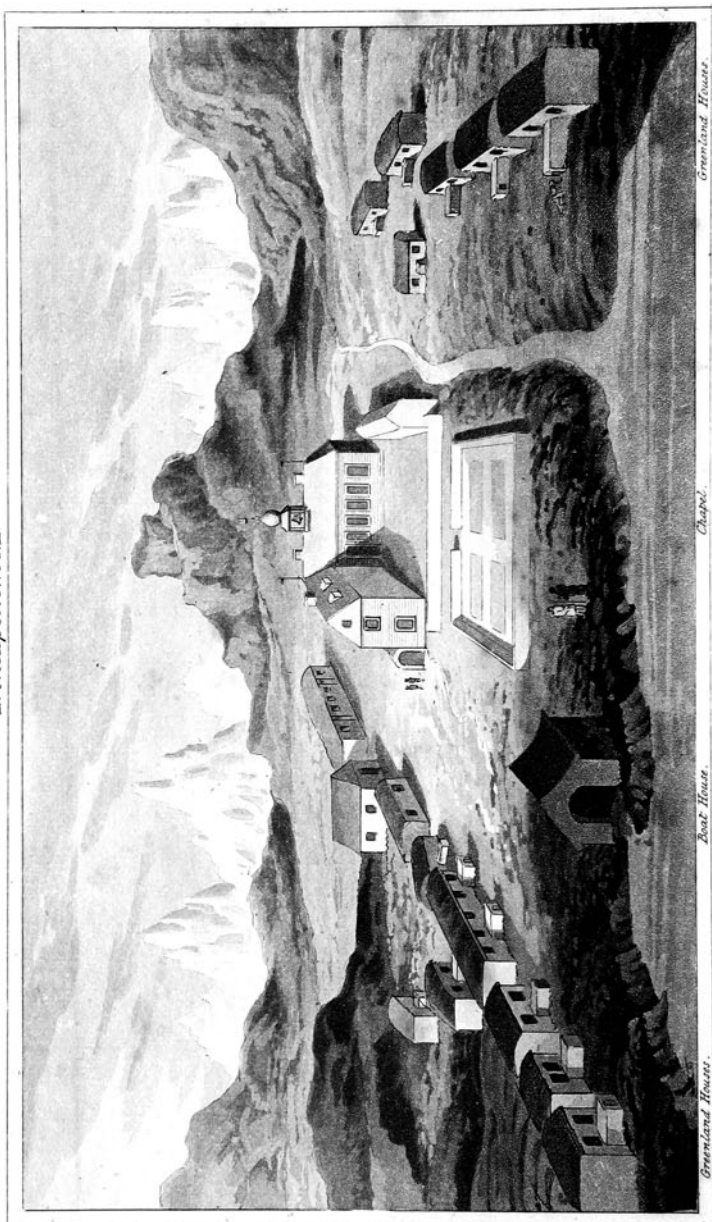
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*Frontispiece, Vol. I.*



*View of New Herrnhuth*

*London, Published by Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, Oct: 20, 1800.*

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THE  
**HISTORY OF GREENLAND:**

INCLUDING  
 AN ACCOUNT OF THE MISSION

CARRIED ON BY THE  
*UNITED BRETHERN*  
 IN THAT COUNTRY.

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FROM THE GERMAN OF DAVID CRANTZ.

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WITH  
*A CONTINUATION TO THE PRESENT TIME;*  
 ILLUSTRATIVE NOTES;  
 AND AN APPENDIX, CONTAINING A SKETCH OF THE MISSION  
 OF THE BRETHERN IN LABRADOR.

---

Where the North Pole, in moody solitude,  
 Spreads her huge tracts and frozen wastes around ;  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 \* \* \* \* \* where never sound  
 Startled dull Silence's ear, save when, profound,  
 The smok-frost muttered : there drear Cold for age  
 Thrones him ; and, fixed on his primæval mound,  
 Ruin, the giant, sits ; while stern Dismay  
 Stalks like some woe-struck man along the desert way.  
 In that drear spot, grim Desolation's lair,  
 No sweet remain of life encheers the sight :  
 The dancing heart's blood in an instant there  
 Would freeze to marble. Mingling day and night  
 (Sweet interchange which makes our labours light,  
 Are there unknown ; while in the summer skies  
 The sun rolls ceaseless round his heavenly height,  
 Nor ever sets till from the scene he flies,  
 And leaves the long bleak night of half the year to rise.

HENRY KIRKE WHITE.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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## PREFACE.

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IN bringing forward a new edition of Crantz's History of Greenland to the notice of the Public, the Editors have laboured under peculiar difficulties. While it seemed derogatory from the reputation of Crantz, as a writer of much genuine merit, and some celebrity among his countrymen, to metamorphose his work by alterations and curtailments, it was evident that the many minute details of trivial circumstances, the fatiguing mass of heavy narrative, and the numerous repetitions of the original publication, would tend to exhaust the attention of the reader, and obscure the real excellencies of the work. The style also of the original German, required considerable alteration, to adapt it to the more perspicuous and refined model of modern composition. We are hereby far from insinuating, that the language of our Author is destitute of merit. It is in general simple, manly, correct, and energetic; and above all, possesses that fascinating charm, which sound judgment, united with veracity and integrity of purpose, can give to the production of a writer, though he be comparatively unskilled in the technicalities of composition. We may add, that Crantz's style will appear still more meritorious, when it is recollected, that as he wrote his book before the literature of Germany was ennobled, and its language refined, by the labours of a Schiller, a Wieland, or a Göthe, the works of his cotemporaries were chiefly remarkable for a certain clumsy strength, and could boast of very little beauty, or even propriety of diction. Contrasted with these, the language of the History of

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Greenland will appear not only appropriate, but often elegant. Yet with all its merits, the phraseology of Crantz savours too much of the age and country in which he wrote to suit the taste of an English reader in the present dispensation of literature. The intrusion of a literal version of his history among the other publications of the day, would have much the same effect as the appearance of a person dressed in the costume fashionable at the beginning of the last century, in one of the emporia of modern gentility.

The former, almost verbal translation of 1767, retained all the defects of method, along with a style, far inferior to that of the original in comparative excellence; yet, it likewise preserved some portion of that homely strength and manliness which characterises its diction, and which may perhaps be missed by some readers of the present edition. The Editors trust, however, that in paring off the redundancies, and modernising the uncouth dress of the original, they have not wantonly departed from their text, and lost sight of a due regard to fidelity. Without suffering themselves to be cramped by an adherence to the old version, they have compared it throughout with the German, and sometimes made use of its rendering in such parts of it as seemed best executed.

In the first part of the work, delineating the face of the country, and the manners, superstitions, and traditions of its inhabitants, the alterations and omissions are few and unimportant; as it was not deemed necessary to suppress even those recitals of monsters and prodigies, which, though they seem to indicate a degree of credulity when admitted into the domain of sober prose, still found some quarter, and perhaps credence, with a man of our author's sound judgment. The chief improvements, if we may thus designate them, have been made in investing the subjects of natural history with the convenient nomenclature of modern science. And if this has been accomplished only in a very imperfect degree, the reader is requested to bear in mind that the scientific distinctions both of species

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and genera are frequently wanting in the descriptions of Crantz. A few changes were also necessary to render the history conformable to the present circumstances of the country.

Far greater liberties have been taken with the remaining portion of the work, which contains the annals of the mission of the United Brethren in Greenland. Discarding the excessive prolixity with which the journals of the missionaries are abstracted, the Editors conceived that they would best attain their object by large and frequent omissions of such subordinate details as were not essential to the continuity of the narrative, while they gave at large only the more prominent and interesting parts.

In addition to Crantz's own continuation of several years of the narration, which has not appeared in English, the sources resorted to for the sequel of the history, have been the continuations of the History of the Brethren, in German, and the Periodical Accounts. Nor should we omit to mention the able and judicious "*Historical Sketches of the Brethren's Missions*," by the Rev. J. Holmes, to which the Editors have considerable obligations in this part of their labours. With respect to the Notes, it may be sufficient to observe, that they have been added, either to explain what appeared imperfect and unsatisfactory in the original, or to illustrate various interesting subjects. The insertion of such notes as touch upon debateable ground, will, it is hoped, be construed charitably, as they are not intended for the purpose of controversy, but of illustration.

For a favourable reception from the Public, the Editors mainly rely upon the intrinsic value of the work itself. It has long been a standard one in all that relates to Greenland, a distinction which the Author has deservedly gained by his industry and discrimination in collecting materials during his residence of a year in the country, and in collating the accounts of previous writers; together with his well known integrity in all that he advances upon his

A. S

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own authority, and his scrupulous care to refer to the sources of his information for whatever did not fall within the sphere of his observation. Few of his opinions, even on matters of conjecture, have been improved by the discoveries or theories which have been brought out by the rapid progress of science; and the general utility of his work is proved by the numerous writers on subjects connected with Greenland, who have gladly availed themselves of his labours. Nor can we avoid indulging the hope, that at a time when almost all the divisions of the Church of Christ are strenuously exerting themselves to spread his kingdom over the whole habitable globe, it may be gratifying to many to peruse the history of one of the earliest and most successful efforts towards the accomplishment of this object.

Without laying much stress upon the incident ourselves, or expecting our readers so to do, we cannot dismiss the subject without adverting to the opinion of one whose authority once stood high in the world of letters. We have it from a very respectable quarter, that when the old translation of the work was shown to the late Dr. Johnson, he declared that very few books had ever affected him so deeply, and that though the style was quaint and rugged, the man who did not relish the first part was no philosopher, and he who could not enjoy the second no Christian.

*Fulneck School,  
March 20, 1820.*

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