



Great Heart: The History of a Labrador Adventure

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In 1903 Leonidas Hubbard was commissioned by an outdoors magazine to explore Labrador by canoe. Joined by his best friend, Dillon Wallace, and a Scots-Cree guide, George Elson, Hubbard hoped to make a name for himself as an adventurer. But plagued by poor judgment and bad luck, his party turned back and Hubbard died of starvation just thirty miles from camp. Two years later, Hubbard's widow, Mina, and Wallace returned to Labrador, leading rival expeditions to complete the original trek and fix blame for the earlier failure. Their race made headlines from New York to Nova Scotia-and it makes fascinating reading today in this widely acclaimed reconstruction of the epic saga. The authors draw on contemporary accounts and their own journeys in Labrador to evoke the intense drama to men and women pushed beyond the limits of endurance in one of the great true adventures of our century.

Great Heart: The History of a Labrador Adventure Details

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From Reader Review Great Heart: The History of a Labrador Adventure for online ebook

Alec Hastings says

This is non-fiction, the story of Leonidas Hubbard, Dillon Wallace, George Elson, and Mina Hubbard. It's a story from the golden age of Arctic exploration, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when Teddy Roosevelt encouraged tests of manhood. Leonidas Hubbard, a starry-eyed romantic wants to undertake a great adventure, wants to be the first to cross the interior of Labrador. His aspirations are not matched by his skills, however, and after he and his companions take the wrong fork of the river, they struggle haplessly for months. Finally, they turn back, but Hubbard dies of starvation. Like Shackleton's unsuccessful attempt to cross Antarctica, the interest in the story lies in how the actors in the drama react to dire and desperate circumstances.

Lucy says

Very interesting book. In 1903 three men set out on an expedition in Labrador; only 2 came back. Two years later the dead explorer's widow decided to finish the task her husband started, taking one of the surviving expedition members with her. The other survivor launched a rival expedition. The authors used extensive research to recreate the stories of all three expeditions. Some readers might take issue with the way the book almost seems fictionalized, but I found it very readable.

Unwisely says

Ok, while not strictly an arctic book, this story that traces three expeditions to the interior of Labrador in 1903 and 1905 had a lot of the same tropes - inexperience, mistakes, starvation. This book drew heavily on diaries of several participants, contemporary newspaper clippings, and other research to document the whole fascinating story. There's the interplay of racial politics at the time, a woman trekking over rough ground and unknown country with mixed-race male guides (scandal!), a possible love story, oh, and people going through stuff that was not mapped. Highly, highly recommended.

Mike says

An interesting story of survival, heartache and redemption. The book opens with the story of an ill fated journey through the Labradorean wilderness and is continued when the wife of one of the explorers and his former partner race to show that the journey could be completed. Taking place during the early 1900's, Great Heart is a book that will endure time as a classic survival of the fittest story. Identifying the complexities of human nature and society, Rugge and Davidson have written a compelling humanistic story sure to entertain any reader.

Christine Davis Mantai says

Gripping survival story and a touch of the mystical. Truly inspirational. An unknown gem.

Carolanne says

Really sad and depressing. NOTE TO SELF: Once again, don't go out in to the arctic wilderness with no food and no way to catch more food.

I need to have another group: either a) books that Brandon has left behind at my house and I have read by default b) books that Brandon has so agonizingly slow been reading that I've picked it up just so someone has finished it.

Noreen says

Adventure Library

Michael says

The next time you're in the field and you whine about how your MSR stove doesn't work or that there's a hole in your gortex, read this book. You'll see what a wuss you really are.

Douglas Perry says

"Great Heart" is a dramatic, well-told story – especially once you get past the prologue, which ends on, um, page 169. That's when the intrepid Mina Hubbard rouses herself from mourning and sets off into the barren, uncharted Canadian wilds to finish the expedition that had killed her husband. At the same time, Dillon Wallace, the man Mina blames for her husband's death, takes up his own, rival expedition.

You can think of this intimate history as "The Lost City of Z" Lite. Exploring the Canadian interior at the beginning of the 20th century did not have the same difficulty factor as plunging into the Amazon, but it was still quite an undertaking. And the authors, James West Davidson and John Rugge, recreate the adventure with enthusiasm and grace.

Primary source material was so abundant that Davidson and Rugge felt compelled "to tell the story using techniques traditionally thought to belong to the province of fiction." That they do, and bully for them, as Mina's doomed mate, Leonidas Hubbard, might have said. But this will lead you to wonder now and again about the origin of certain flourishes.

Before Leonidas began his wilderness trek in 1903, for example, he lands in tiny Rigolet and that night hears the town's dogs go wild. "The yowling and snarling," the authors write, "was so ferocious it seemed as if the entire canine population had answered the summons." The result: The pack eats one of its own. "In the morning, only a few pieces of fur remained as evidence of the deed." But did this actually occur? In the notes, Davidson and Rugge say they "borrowed" from an episode that occurred in 1915, explaining this away by stating, "all these incidents were tragically similar to one another..." Hmmm. Having read that, I found myself wondering where the dialogue throughout the book came from. The source notes, again, are vague on the subject. Did the explorers write out extended conversations in their diaries? If so, we're talking about some heroic diary writing that deserves a wide readership of its own.

Jennifer White says

This was recommended to me by a prof about six or seven years ago. It was an amazing, heartbreaking read. Anyone who has ever been to Labrador will understand exactly what these people were up against, and anyone who hasn't been here will be amazed that there are still places in the world that are this remote (and even a century later, some places in this book are virtually unchanged).

Jessie says

My book group voted to read this book, and so I reread it. I enjoyed it very much the second time as well. It is a classic adventure story and is a book worth reading again and again. The authors did much research and stay true to the real events by using diaries, and newspaper articles, as well as interviews of relatives. They also explored the region and it shows in their descriptions of the area. ****stop here for spoilers**** Mr. Hubbard goes off to Labrador to explore where white men have never gone. He idolizes Perry, and wants to make a name for himself as well. He doesn't have the experience and he doesn't have good maps. They make some wrong choices and run out of food. They starve- and he dies. The two that were with him make it out. Mrs. Hubbard blames one of the companions for her husband's death. She mounts a party to prove that what her husband set out to do can be done. Wallace, the other person on the trip- mounts his own group and also goes to finish the exploration. She gets to the destination one month before Wallace. He runs into many difficulties. Both of them write books about it. Also the guide George writes a book as well. The authors used these books and newspaper articles to get their facts. Great story- a good read.

I read this book long ago, but it remains one of my favorites. Adventure- explorations, trials- this book has it. If you liked "Into Thin Air," or "Endurance," then you would like this book.

Mary says

A very well written account of a true exploration of Labrador, based on the diaries of those involved and retracing the routes they achieved. Highly recommended and makes you glad you were not enjoying the mosquitos and dinner caught (or not)!

Erneilson says

Tragic tale well told. Mrs. Hubbard was quite a lady!

Ann says

I read this book a couple of years ago but wanted to add it to my list because I liked this history so much. It is about exploring Labrador and how the wife of the explorer, who starved to death in Labrador (he took a rifle instead of a shotgun and couldn't kill birds for food), went on to finish the exploration with a native guide.

Chris says

I read Lure of the Labrador Wild and found the story so fascinating that I decided to read this book. The research conducted to write this book must have taken years...they manage to add some rich details to an already intriguing story!
