The Moravians started from scratch in Greenland, but with their self-sacrificing, dynamic energy they soon overtook the Danish mission in numbers of converts. For a long time, their self-sacrificing, dynamic energy they soon overtook the Danish mission. This division had a consequence: the Moravian mission, and the rest, living in closer contact with Greenlanders into two groups: those living around the original Moravian building for various uses. It served as part of Denmark was lost to Prussia.

Moravian Greenlanders lived a more traditional life, and it was among them that the so-called “Greenlandic soul” was to be found when the awakening of national, Romantic feelings be associated with the centres in Europe through regular letters and periodicals.

Interesting too is the 19th-century division of the Greenlanders into two groups: those living around the Moravian mission, and the rest, living in closer contact with the Danish mission. This division had a consequence: the Moravian Greenlanders lived a more traditional life, and it was among them that the so-called “Greenlandic soul” was to be found when the awakening of national, Romantic feelings in Greenland gave rise to collections of myths and sagas.

The authors follow the Moravians up to their departure from Greenland in the year 1900 and point out that a major reason for their departure was the Danish animosity to Germans after their defeat in the war of 1864, when a substantial part of Denmark was lost to Prussia.

The remaining part of the book describes alterations to the original Moravian building for various uses. It served as housing for teachers, missionaries, and travellers such as Knud Rasmussen, and for a long period it was home to the manager of a fox farm established in the surroundings. After World War II, it became the official residence of the first chief constable in Greenland. This chief constable promoted the
long-nurtured idea of establishing a museum in Nuuk. His plan bore fruit after he left, when the building became Greenland’s first museum. In 1978, the museum moved to its present location in the “Colony Harbour,” and after a thorough restoration, the Moravian building opened in 1987 as the University of Greenland.

This volume is not a textbook, but it is packed with knowledge and facts. It places the Greenland Moravians in an international framework and relates them to movements of the time like the Enlightenment, national Romanticism, and of course, religion. The book is highly recommended in itself for anyone who wants to know about these matters and as a gateway to further knowledge through the extensive, up-to-date bibliography.

The quality of the layout, print, and illustrations is good, but the size of the book (15 × 21 cm) makes some of the plans and maps, which were not printed in full-page size, difficult to read properly.

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BERING: THE RUSSIAN DISCOVERY OF AMERICA.

The Bering Sea and the Bering Strait between Alaska and Asia were named by the famous English explorer James Cook (1728–79) for Vitus Bering, the leader of major expeditions that explored and mapped eastern Siberia and the west coast of Alaska. Professor Orcutt Frost has written a fascinating biography of this great Danish explorer.

Vitus Bering was born in 1681 and entered the Russian Navy in 1703. He served the Russian Empire until his death, which occurred on Bering Island in the western Bering Sea during his return trip from Alaska in 1741. No other Dane has given his name to so large a part of the globe.

The first third of the book deals with Bering’s life and career during his first 59 years, but additionally gives some insight into the Admiralty, the Orthodox Church, and the regime of the Russian Tsar. This section describes Bering’s duties related to his appointment as commander of the First Kamchatka Expedition, an enormous logistical challenge, as well as the conflict between the attitudes of the officers, soldiers and craftsmen on one side and the academicians with their claims for their daily wine, etc., on the other. Bering’s difficult tasks were to organize the transport through unmapped mountainous areas and establish new quarters for the hundreds of men involved in the expedition, which included setting up a residence, barracks, warehouses, shops, guardhouses, clinics and even chapels. These tasks were additionally complicated by misleading or conflicting orders from the Russian bureaucracy and a lack of support from local administrators.

The geographic exploring and mapping of eastern Siberia were Bering’s first priorities, and he had little interest in ethnological and environmental conditions. Frost’s account of the expeditions through Siberia is somewhat confusing to follow and would have benefited from more and better maps and photos of higher quality.

Frost gives the reader quite new information about Bering’s private life and new facts about the two Russian Kamchatka Expeditions that have emerged as the result of geopolitical changes and the opening of Russian territories. For example, the Danish-Soviet Expedition found Bering’s grave on Bering Island in August 1991, 250 years after his death. And several letters written by Bering and his wife in 1740 have been uncovered in the archives of the Russian foreign ministry, to which scientists were granted access in 1996.

At an international workshop at the University of Copenhagen in December 1998, entitled “Recent Results and New Perspectives in the Study of Vitus Bering and the Two Russian Kamchatka Expeditions,” new information was discussed, including the private letters referred to in Frost’s sixth chapter, “Letters Home.” These letters were published in English for the first time in the proceedings of the workshop, edited by Peter Elf Møller and Natasha Okhotina Lind (2003).

The final two-thirds of Frost’s book deals with Bering’s last expedition from Kamchatka to North America, with St. Peter, under his own command, and St. Paul, under Aleksej Chirikov. Frost describes in detail the journey of the two ships and also comments on the problems encountered, basing his account on information from the vessels’ logbooks, final reports by senior officers, reports and publications by the biologist Georg Wilhelm Steller, and other journals compiled from diaries kept during the voyage.

After the departure from Kamchatka, Bering was back in his right element: at sea. He had spent years organizing the expedition, fighting not only the practical logistical problems, but also the conflicting orders from Moscow. One would have expected Bering to be relieved at finally being at sea on the St. Peter with 77 men on board; however, he was not only aloof, but remote. Bering took his responsibilities very seriously.

After two weeks, the two ships lost contact with each other. Independently, Chirikov on St. Paul observed islands in the Alexander Archipelago on 15 July, and Bering on St. Peter observed the St. Elias mountain range of Alaska on 16 July. On 20 July, St. Peter anchored off the shore of Kayak Island in the Gulf of Alaska, and crew from the ship visited the Island. Drawing from several reports, Frost describes and gives interesting comments on the conflict between the young, enthusiastic, impatient, and inexperienced academician, Steller, and the older, responsible (but also tired) commander, Bering.

Frost not only details the different landings on Alaskan Islands and the accounts of Steller’s investigations, but also judges his work on the basis of what we know today. Further-