

Francis Leopold McClintock, Sir Biography

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Biography

Sir Francis Leopold McClintock (1819-1907) was a British admiral and Arctic explorer. He mapped a great deal of hitherto-uncharted territory and made a number of geographical discoveries.

Leopold McClintock was born on July 8, 1819, in Dundalk, Ireland. At the age of 12 he went to sea as a first-class volunteer on a ship sailing in American coastal waters. Following 12 years of experience on various ships he was commissioned as acting lieutenant and soon started studies at the Royal Naval College.

One year later, in 1848, McClintock became second lieutenant under Sir James Clark Ross on the *Enterprise*. Their task was to make an Arctic voyage to look for Sir John Franklin and his lost party, who had gone north in search of a Northwest Passage. McClintock first learned about the Eskimo skill of hauling men and supplies by sledges while on his 500-mile land trip, and subsequently he experimented with sledge designing. On Arctic expeditions in 1850-1851 and 1852-1853 he made geographical discoveries on the coast of Prince Patrick Island and Melville Island.

In 1857 Lady Franklin selected McClintock to lead a private search expedition in the *Fox* for her husband's party. The ship held a total of 26 persons, including two Eskimos. Between 1857 and 1859 the *Fox* explored various coasts south of the areas covered by other search expeditions. Finally they discovered relics of the Franklin party with some Eskimos; and skeletons, a wrecked boat, and written notes were located on King William Island. In the papers McClintock found evidence that Franklin had, in fact, found the passage he was looking for. The fate of Franklin was thus resolved. During the 2-year voyage McClintock discovered the channel that bears his name.

Returning to England, McClintock was knighted and received the Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society and several honorary degrees. His book *Voyage of the Fox in the Arctic Seas* was published in London in 1859 and reprinted many times. McClintock's later ship commands involved deep-sea soundings near Iceland, Greenland, and Labrador and sailing in the Mediterranean and Caribbean. In 1865 he stood for Parliament and lost. Five years later he married Annette Elizabeth Dunlop and subsequently served in various Admiralty posts in England and the West Indies, attaining the rank of admiral. He died on Nov. 17, 1907, at the age of 88, a respected naval officer and renowned Arctic explorer.