

# True North [Cook or Peary's race to the North Pole]

by Bruce Henderson (2005)

Robert Peary [RP][6may1856-20feb1920] became a civil engineer & US Navy officer. 1886 took his first exploration into Greenland. The Navy would grant him paid leave for his trips & Matt Henson [MH] would go with each time.

Dr. Fred Cook [FC][10jun1865-5aug1940] became a doctor the same day his wife & daughter died.

1891 RP went back with his wife & FC. They would travel [about 3000 mi] as far north as a ship could go in the summer then setup winter camp. FC learned the ways of the Eskimos & hired some to help. In the spring they would travel 1000 miles with 13 dogs pulling 1000 lbs sleds for 3 months [14 mpd]. Then sailed back to NYC in the fall. Then they would go on speaking tours. RP would not let FC publish a book about the trip.

1893 RP went on another arctic expedition with his wife [who delivered a baby there]. The same year, FC took a wealthy man's son to explore Greenland & brought back 2 Eskimo kids as a cultural exchange. RP only got 128 miles that year due to storm storms. The ship return, but RP & MH stayed. 1895 he got 500 miles north after eating all but one dog. Morris Jesup [YMCA founder] paid for a ship to retrieve RP.

1894 FC took 50 wealthy passengers to see Greenland but had ship troubles & came home. 1896 RP took students & teachers to Greenland but not much exploration. 1897 FC went on an Antarctic coastal exploration & were trapped there for the winter. The 2 months of darkness were hard on the crew. Cook's new fiancé died while he was gone.

1898 RP went north again & not heard from so 1901 his wife went looking for him. He had an Eskimo mistress with child & lost 8 of his toes from frostbite. The furthest north he got was 343 miles from the North Pole. 1903 FC had a failed attempt to climb Mt McKinley but made it to the top in 1906.

1905 a new ship costing \$100,000 was launched to take Peary 300 miles further north. Steel covered the 30" thick hull. It was probably the 1<sup>st</sup> ice breaker. They came within 200 miles of the pole. The ice at the north pole rotates so they will be east of the food cache upon returning. The ship limped back into NYC beat up by the ice costing another \$75,000 in repairs.

1907 John Bradley hired FC to take him north for hunting leaving FC & Rudolph Franke [RF] for another attempt to the pole. They traveled light & fast using 55 lb sled of hickory [RP sleds weighed twice as much] & an Eskimos kayak. RF returned to protect their supplies while FC & 2 Eskimos continued north & reached the pole on 21apr1908. RF barely made it back to find RP had confiscated FC supplies. He left his sextant with Whitney who said he would take it home while FC set off for Upernavik then Copenhagen.

1908 RP set out north again. RP had to ride in the sled due to his feet. They traveled 13 miles per day. RP said he reached the pole 6apr1909 but didn't take any readings. RP returned to Etah but wouldn't allow any of FC possessions on his ship. RP was paid 3x for RF travel. 1910 Peary rec'd \$40,000 for the meteorites he brought back.

FC returned to NYC to find out he had been wiped out by 1907 panic. All of RP allies were attacking FC claims to the pole & without his sextant he had no proof. RP delivered no proof & his story didn't add up, but his allies accepted his word. RP pristine diary had blank pages & said nothing on 6apr1909. RP was given fame & was retired from the Navy with \$6000 annual pension.

FC went into oil exploration & in 1923 was arrested for fraud & spent 7 years in prison. While his accusers stole his oil field & made millions. Cook's details have been confirmed over the years while Peary's have been disproved. 1988 National Geographic published an article that Peary faked his claim to the North Pole.

When Eskimo men want to trade wives, if they don't consent, they wrestle & winner takes both. When Eskimo women go into labor, she is left alone in an igloo with 2 weeks of food & water [others come in when they hear the baby cry]. They baby nurses for 4 years when the mom has another baby. If parents die leaving a child under 3, they baby is killed. Eskimos don't get scurvy, but they only eat meat. They don't bathe, but rub their skin with a bird skin twice a month. One Eskimo dog could pull 100 lbs 20 miles a day.

Quotes: "I must have fame." (Peary)

Books: Artic Explorations (Elisha Kane); First Crossing of Greenland (Dr. Fridtjof Nansen); Through the First Antarctic Night & To the Top of the Continent (FC); Nearest the Pole; The North Pole (RP);

Notes: 1845 artic expedition men died while pulling 2000 lbs per sled. 1865 Ed Whymper was the 1<sup>st</sup> to scale the Matterhorn. 1881 Adolphus Greely led 23 soldiers on an Artic exploration that turned to cannibalism after resupplies did not arrive & winter trapped them [6 survived]. By measuring [with a sextant] the angle of the horizon to the noon sun, a navigator can determine the latitude. Westerly drift of the ice at the North Pole. More people have gone into space than have sledged to the North Pole.

American Geological Society gave RP their full support.

Definitions:

33- staves = side boards of a barrel

73- portend = foretell

79- indefatigable = untiring

143- homeopath = one who uses alternative medicine

187- chagrined = annoyed

189- munificent = generous

205- circuitous = indirect

276- repudiate = reject

290- calumny = slander

290- vituperation = attack