

# **Robert Peary's North Polar Narratives and the Making of an American Icon**

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In 1913, the Modern Historic Records Association of New York City published a copy of one of two records the explorer Robert Peary claimed to have left at the North Pole in 1909.<sup>1</sup> It was one of a growing number of manuscripts and narratives produced by the explorer, his supporters and agents to document one of the most famous reported occurrences in American history. Peary's presumed attainment of the North Pole capped the larger story of America's 50-year quest of this geographical milestone. After more than two decades of arduous effort and a dangerous sledging excursion over the polar ice pack in 1909, Peary bested other competing nations, as well as rivals from his own country, to claim the prize. By heroic efforts, placing himself in continual danger and unimaginable difficulties, he demonstrated not only the superiority of his methods, but also the courage, resourcefulness, and perseverance necessary to victory. The achievement was a triumph for both the explorer and the American nation-state, confirming the United States in the pantheon of discovering nations, while adding Peary to the elite honor roll of explorers such as Columbus and Magellan, who brought Spain to global greatness four hundred years before.

This, at least, summarizes Peary's version, which became the dominant account of the conclusion to the Race to the Pole, handed down in countless narratives and forms of media for nearly a century. Of course, as anyone familiar with the issue is aware, his triumph was initially disputed, and has again been

challenged recently by researchers, who have asserted that Peary's own evidence refutes his professed achievement, or that it defies logic. From the time of the North Pole controversy in 1909, a minority of observers, centered around the Frederick A. Cook Society, have given credence to his rival Frederick Cook's claim.<sup>2</sup> The sheer weight of discourse since 1909 has favored Peary, as most writers either supported his claim or accepted that he came far nearer his goal than his rival. The hotly-contested character of the Race to the Pole helps explain why the presentation of primary evidence was considered so important in this era, and why Peary, Cook, and their supporters felt obliged to publish numerous accounts and testimonials to buttress their respective claims.

The focus of this article is not the issue of whether Peary and Cook actually reached the North Pole, although the role of discourse in determining the issue remains to be explored. Other writers, such as John Edward Weems, Wally Herbert, Dennis Rawlins, and Robert Bryce, have delved into the scientific evidence in great detail and pronounced on its veracity and implications.<sup>3</sup> As well, Beau Riffenburgh examined the role of the press in sensationalizing the North Pole controversy and other exploration stories of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>4</sup> Recently, Michael F. Robinson considered such issues as moral character as they played out in the respective fortunes of Peary and Cook.<sup>5</sup> In stressing the empirical evidence, however, scholars have given little consideration to the role of narrative presentation and reception in the North Pole controversies. For this article, it may be pertinent to ask: how did the explorers package their evidence and structure their narratives to advance their claims? What do their writings reveal about gender and race in the polar quest and why did the North Pole become such a preoccupation for prominent male Anglo-Saxon Americans around 1900? How did the explorers' professed exploits connect to the aspirations of leading constituencies of this era? Why, despite the acrimonious debate over the North Pole, did Peary ultimately become a national icon, while Cook was marginalized?

Another issue of continuing relevance relates to current debates regarding the character of American expansionism in the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> The Race to the Pole provided one of the earliest allegories of American triumphalism in a period when the United States was increasing its influence overseas. While scholars generally acknowledge that the Spanish-American War made the young country a global power, they have paid less attention to activities such as exploration, which functioned as a cultural vanguard for the extension of American influence and trade. Revisiting the Race to the Pole affords an opportunity to explore some of the ideological issues embedded in American exploratory encounters with remote regions in this critical era.

This paper re-examines the Race to the North Pole in light of these questions. It places the discourse on the Race within ideological contexts of leading American constituencies around 1900, especially a core of Anglo-Saxon expansionists within the scientific and exploration communities. The explorers' primary accounts are analyzed to isolate the base story against which subsequent

narrativizations can be assessed. Next, the explorers' published accounts are examined along with an elaboration of the respective roles of authors, ghost-writers, publishers, and the reading public in producing meaning through the production and reception of polar narratives. The key role of media and public relations is also treated in terms of its impact on the outcome of the polar contest. Finally, the paper examines the role of actors within the business, scientific, and military elites in elevating Robert Peary to the status of a national icon symbolic of the United States' emergence as a global power.

In addressing these issues, I propose to examine such issues as narrative form, images, and the role of rhetoric in legitimizing the explorers' claims, especially that of the victor Robert Peary. An irony of the Race to the North Pole is that while debates over its conclusion turned on issues of evidence, the battle for both public and scientific acceptance owed much to the rhetorical power of fictional models and the effectiveness of public relations strategies. In the absence of conclusive proof, the two principal rivals drew heavily on the plots and wish-fulfillments of nineteenth-century literature in appealing to a broad cross-section of readers already receptive to these popular forms by the culmination of the Race in 1909.

Readers around the world have apparently inexhaustible fascination with the Race to the North Pole. In the early 1900s, Americans were particularly interested because the contest invoked national expansion which had characterized much of the American nineteenth-century. At the climax of the race, it became one of the most prominent news stories across North America and around the world. Between 1900 and 1913, the North Pole story received more column inches in the *New York Times* than any other single event.<sup>7</sup>

The origins of the Race to the North Pole can be pinpointed to the publication in the 1850s of three books by explorer Elisha Kent Kane following his service on two arctic expeditions in the 1850s. Kane's *Arctic Explorations* became a "better seller,"<sup>8</sup> appealing to a wide cross-section of armchair travellers. Drawing on romantic imagery and prose, it captured the imagination of Americans and sparked an international rivalry with Britain to become the first nation to reach the North Pole. In 1860, Isaac Israel Hayes, a member of Kane's party, staged his own expedition in search of the Pole. Like Kane's narratives, Hayes's *The Open Polar Sea* blended travel and adventure writing.<sup>9</sup> Twenty years later, the U.S. Lady Franklin Bay Expedition, commanded by Lieutenant Adolphus Greely, ended in disaster. Greely wrote his *Three Years of Arctic Service* (1886) in a dry, bureaucratic prose with little potential to inspire interest in the race.<sup>10</sup> The search for the North Pole, and a literary form equal to the aspirations of the explorers and their country, would have to await another generation.

The preconditions for an intensification of the Race to the Pole and the appearance of new models of narrative form to represent it can be found in the transformation of the United States into one of the world's major powers. The economic indicators were striking; by 1900 the United States surpassed Great Britain and Germany in industrial production and imports,<sup>11</sup> and led the world

in accumulated wealth.<sup>12</sup> Unprecedented economic growth accompanied major demographic changes. When Hayes sailed to the north in 1860, the country's population was 31 million. By 1900, due largely to immigration, its numbers had more than doubled to about 75 million, tripling to 100 million by 1915.<sup>13</sup> Having achieved economic and population preeminence among Western countries, the United States nevertheless lacked symbols of national attainment in the international arena. The Race to the North Pole, an international competition, including the global power Great Britain, seemed tailor-made for the United States to demonstrate its arrival.

Rapid population growth also brought growing cultural diversity to the United States, an unwelcome development to American elites of northern European heritage. In September 1905, the *National Geographic Magazine* reported that over the previous year the United States for the first time admitted more than one million "foreigners," nearly two-thirds from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Italy, or Russia.<sup>14</sup> The rapidly changing ethnocultural mix was a source of particular anxiety for old-stock Anglo-Saxon Americans,<sup>15</sup> particularly in New York City. In this context, prominent members of New York's wealthy, Anglo-Saxon elites viewed the Race to the Pole as a symbol on which to project their aspirations to cultural dominance. This group contributed most of the members of the Peary Arctic Club and the leaders of scientific institutions that were instrumental in supporting Peary's arctic forays and claims to polar supremacy.

For the scientific organizations, the United States' new prominence in international trade and commerce demanded the acquisition of extensive knowledge of the world and its potential markets for the emerging American dynamo. For expansionists, a key event was the founding of the National Geographic Society in 1888. When launching its famous magazine as a monthly in 1896, the Society stated its objectives: "It will be the aim of the *National Geographic Magazine* to be American rather than cosmopolitan, and in an especial degree to be National. . . . To possess a knowledge of the conditions and possibilities of one's own country is surely no small part of an enlightened patriotism. . . ."<sup>16</sup> Only two years later, spurred by the Spanish American War and a new editor, Gilbert Grosvenor, the journal's nationalistic focus was welded to expansionism.<sup>17</sup> A 1904 article by Charles D. Walcott, Director of the U.S. Geological Survey asserted: "we are, perhaps, especially and most directly concerned with the commercial aspects of the science."<sup>18</sup> In 1906, General A.W. Greely, the veteran arctic explorer and member of the magazine's board, also stressed the commercial potential of exploration in connecting it to economic growth and national development.<sup>19</sup>

For the leaders of the National Geographic Society, exploration transcended commercial supremacy; it validated the superiority of the dominant Anglo-Saxon group. Arguing a straightforward Social Darwinism,<sup>20</sup> Society vice-president WJ McGee asserted that Britain began the process of colonization with "the best of the leading races," and concluded that Americans of northern European background were the "strongest people in the world in body and brains," and

“picked men and women, impelled to adventure of body and mind through hereditary aptitude for vigorous activity.”<sup>21</sup> In its racial ramblings, McGee’s paper lacked scientific rigor but his text echoed the importance the *Geographic* fraternity placed on exploratory feats as a demonstration of northern European preeminence.

For this group, United States expansionism depended on cultivating “national character,” which they defined in terms of struggle and triumph over the environment or competing nations. McGee credited the country’s growth to “unequalled progress in territorial acquisition, in normal development of population, and, above all, in development of a national character in which individual enterprise and capacity are the most conspicuous traits.”<sup>22</sup> By this time, “national character” also assumed aggressive or militaristic overtones,<sup>23</sup> exemplified in the writings of Theodore Roosevelt, for whom the pitting of the individual against physical odds was a prerequisite to the health of the Anglo-Saxon “race” and American assertion of power overseas.<sup>24</sup> In a tribute to Robert Peary in 1907, Roosevelt observed: “. . . in the last analysis the safe basis of a successful national character must rest upon the great fighting virtues, and those great fighting virtues can be shown quite as well in peace as in war.”<sup>25</sup> For Roosevelt and many contemporaries, Peary embodied the qualities of “national character” required by the emerging American nation for greatness, that is, masculinity, courage, combativeness, tenaciousness, and dominance.<sup>26</sup>

Heightened notions of masculinity connected to the ideological aspirations of polar expeditions, themselves exclusively male. Historian Lisa Bloom explained that by the early 1900s, “an increasing number of Americans thought the survival of white masculinity depended upon contact with the wilderness and strenuous physical work.”<sup>27</sup> Regarding Peary, Roosevelt wrote of his “great physical hardihood and endurance, iron will, and unflinching courage,”<sup>28</sup> and lauded his “admirable work for America [by] setting an example to the young of our day which we need to have set amid the softening tendencies of our time.”<sup>29</sup> Cook also framed the Race to the Pole as a test of manhood, as he wrote: “The attaining of the North Pole meant at the time simply accomplishing a splendid, unprecedented feat—a feat of brain and muscle in which I should, if successful, signally surpass other men.”<sup>30</sup>

Peary well understood the importance of the mythical or ideological aspects of the polar quest, arguing “There is no higher, purer field of international rivalry than the struggle for the North Pole.”<sup>31</sup> In his polar quest, personal and national ambitions and aspirations converged. Writing in 1903 to the explorer, Charles H. Darling, Acting Secretary of the United States Navy, expressed the official federal government objectives in granting Peary a leave of absence to continue his polar explorations:

The attainment of the Pole should be your main object. Nothing short will suffice. The discovery of the poles is all that remains to complete the map of the world. That map should be

completed in our generation and by our countrymen. . . . Our national pride is involved in the undertaking. . . .<sup>32</sup>

In accepting the National Geographic Society's Hubbard Medal from President Roosevelt in 1907, Peary credited the North Pole quest with engaging the "best thought and interest of the best men of the most vigorous and enlightened nations of the world for more than three centuries." In a straightforward assertion of manifest destiny, he asserted: "For between these two great logical cosmic boundaries, Panama to the south and the North Pole to the north, lies the heritage and the future of that giant whose destinies you guide today, the United States of America."<sup>33</sup>

### **Race to the Pole: The Major Competing Claims**

Against this ideological backdrop, Cook and Peary made their fateful voyages of 1907-08 and 1908-09. Cook's voyage represented his only serious expedition in search of the North Pole. A physician, he had been born to the working class and raised, in his account, in "abject poverty."<sup>34</sup> He first came to the High Arctic while serving as surgeon on Peary's expedition of 1891-92 to northern Greenland. In 1906, he led a party that claimed to have ascended Mount McKinley in Alaska, establishing his reputation as a leading explorer.<sup>35</sup> In 1907, he turned his attention back to the Arctic and enlisted the patronage of John R. Bradley, owner of casinos in Florida, Louisiana, and Texas, who provided an expedition ship and supplies. Cook developed an itinerary to travel from Greenland, across the central part of Ellesmere Island to its west coast, from there to the northern tip of Axel Heiberg Island, and then across the ice pack to the Pole. By March 1908, Cook reached northern Axel Heiberg Island with five Inughuit, retaining only two guides, Ittukusuk and Aapilaq, for his foray over the ice pack. In the spring of 1909, he and his two companions returned to Greenland, Cook asserting that he had reached the pole a year earlier, on 21 April 1908.

Meanwhile, Peary embarked on his third and last expedition to reach the North Pole in July 1908. Previously, over a period of two decades, he staged several expeditions and wrote numerous publications which helped establish his reputation as an arctic explorer. Peary's *Northward over the "Great Ice"* documented his expeditions in the 1890s to northern Greenland, which preceded his attempts at the North Pole.<sup>36</sup> Much of the book's focus was ethnographic, as Peary provided numerous photographs of northern Greenland and its indigenous inhabitants, the Inughuit. *Nearest the Pole* was Peary's official account of his first two, unsuccessful North Pole expeditions in 1898-1902 and 1905-06.<sup>37</sup> Without the trophy to bring home, he devoted much of this book to discussing additional exploratory activities, including traverses of Ellesmere Island and Greenland, and his putative discovery of "Crocker Land," a phantom island Peary thought he saw northwest from Axel Heiberg Island but which later proved

to be a mirage. He also described in detail his methods of adopting Aboriginal techniques of hunting and travelling to survive in the High Arctic.<sup>38</sup>

A master of public relations, Peary also prepared the public to expect a polar victory through extensive public appearances and publications on his forthcoming expedition. As in 1905-06, Peary's plan in 1908 was to sail his steam ship the *Roosevelt* through the ice-congested waters of the Nares Strait and establish wintering quarters on the northern coast of Ellesmere Island. From there, he and his party would launch a series of relays over the pack ice towards the Pole. He subsequently claimed to have reached his goal on 6 April 1909.

Peary's professed achievement was initially thwarted by Cook's rival claim. On 1 September 1909, while en route to Denmark, Cook cabled the *New York Herald* from the Shetland Islands to assert he had reached the pole a year earlier, on 21 April 1908. The news caused a world-wide sensation but Peary, then returning from his polar voyage, launched an immediate attack. On 7 September 1909, in a telegram to the Associated Press from Labrador, Peary stated that, while in northern Greenland on his return voyage, his men had interviewed Cook's Inughuit companions, who had refuted his rival's story.<sup>39</sup> The Race now shifted from a contest on the ice to a battle for public and scientific acceptance.

### Questions of Evidence: The Primary Accounts

Owing to the intensely contested outcome of the Race to the Pole, the packaging of evidence by Peary and Cook assumed a critical role in advancing their arguments and determining the ultimate victor. Over the last century, much of the debate has turned on issues of scientific reliability of evidence brought back by the explorers, in terms of latitude readings, the positioning of the sun, ocean soundings, and other data. Since neither explorer provided definitive evidence, literary techniques of rhetoric and narrative form assumed a particular importance, even in the structuring of the diaries the explorers asserted had been written down in the field.

For Peary, I will limit the discussion to his respective treatments of Tuesday, 6 April 1909, the date on which he claimed to have reached the North Pole. The first document to be considered is Peary's Diary "No. 1," the explorer's handwritten notebook covering his sledge journey over the pack ice towards the North Pole and back to Cape Sheridan.<sup>40</sup> Largely a nondescript chronicle of sequential occurrences, it begins with a statement that the party was on the trail before midnight, 5 April, and concludes with several sentences about the wind and temperature. Consistent with an account by assistant Matthew Henson,<sup>41</sup> there is no latitude reading for 6 April. Suddenly, in a complete change of mood, the reader of the diary encounters an inserted page,<sup>42</sup> which states:

The Pole at Last!!! The prize of 3 centuries, my dream and ambition for 23 years. *Mine* at last. I cannot bring myself to realize it. It all seems so simple and common place, as Bartlett

said “just like every day.” I wish Jo [his wife Josephine] could be here to share my feelings. I have drunk [to] her health and that of the kids from the Benedictine flask she sent me.<sup>43</sup>

Following this loose sheet, the next two pages were filled with annotations unrelated to the sledge journey. The continuity was further broken by four pages after an empty entry for 7 April, followed by a blank entry for 8 April, before it resumed the form of a sequential diary chronicle with an entry for 9 April while in retreat toward the south.

The Peary papers also contain three typed versions of 1909 diaries for this journey, each differing from the others. They include two incomplete copies of a transcription of Diary “No. 1,” labelled “Peary diary typed 1909,”<sup>44</sup> another diary transcript, labelled “March 3, 1909 to April 7, 1909,”<sup>45</sup> and a shorter typed polar diary fragment representing only the climactic happenings of 6 and 7 April 1909.<sup>46</sup> Of these, the version entitled “Peary diary typed 1909” was the most faithful to the original handwritten text. The second typescript, “March 3, 1909 to April 7, 1909,” followed the text of Diary No. 1 up to the presumed discovery but then altered entries for the period at the pole. Here, the loose page “The Pole at Last” was incorporated into a simulated entry for Wednesday, 7 April 1909. Other changes included inserting a latitude reading of 89° 57' N. into a refashioned entry for 6 April and an explanation that Peary could not find a crack in the ice to take a sounding, redressing the absence of such details in the diary.

The third typed fragment, annotated as dating to 1911, presented yet another version for the 6 and 7 April 1909 but omitted the phrase “The Pole at Last.” Two references to latitude were given in a reformulated entry for 6 April 1909, including: “Just caught sun through clouds at 12.45 (89° 57’)” and “Drove on 10 miles with empty sledge & double team, 2 eskis. Obs. at 1 A.M. (89.50 on other side).” It had the great merit of providing two latitude readings at ninety degrees north on the critical date of 6 April, thus bringing the primary account in line with the published versions which were beginning to appear. If the explorer’s notes kept in the field left a good deal to be desired, his skills of documentation after the fact improved markedly following his return to the United States.

Who were the intended audiences for these various versions of Peary’s diary? The second 1909 transcript was apparently prepared for the sub-committee organized by the National Geographic Society in October 1909 to examine the records of contending claims about reaching the North Pole. On 26 October 1909, Rear Admiral Colby M. Chester, the dominant member of the sub-committee and a long-standing associate of Peary, wrote to Herbert Bridgman, Secretary of the Peary Arctic Club, regarding the evidence. Chester requested a memorandum from Peary and Captain Robert Bartlett regarding their “first view of the midnight sun” near the North Pole in 1909, adding: “The date & Latitude is all that is necessary but if it is in the form of a quotation from Note Books it



would be well.”<sup>47</sup> In testimony before the House committee, Henry Gannett confirmed that, when making its determination that Peary had reached the Pole in 1909, the National Geographic panel examined a copy of the explorer's diary rather than the original.<sup>48</sup> Regarding the 1911 diary fragment, the apparent audience was the Committee on Naval Affairs of the U.S. House of Representatives, which examined Peary's claim while considering a bill to retire him from the Navy at the rank of rear admiral. Here again, the inserted latitude readings played a critical role, as the congressional committee cited this evidence in concluding: “Robert E. Peary reached the North Pole on April 6, 1909.”<sup>49</sup> The explorer's succession of diary transcripts thereby provided the essential “proof” required to satisfy the arbiters of the Race to the Pole that he was the victor.

Cook's field notebooks offer interesting comparisons and contrasts with Peary's diaries. Only minimal documentation has survived concerning his asserted foray over the ice pack from the northern tip of Axel Heiberg Island towards the North Pole. The principal primary document is his fourth notebook, entitled “25 May [1907]-13 June 1909,” which actually records entries from 19 February to 4 September 1908.<sup>50</sup> The notebook includes the entries for Cook's trek over the pack ice from Cape Svartevoeg on the coast of Axel Heiberg Island. Cook introduced this notebook with the annotation “copied at Sparbo winter,” indicating that Cook copied this version months later at Cape Sparbo, on Devon Island, where he wintered while trying to get back to Greenland. Recently, historian Robert Bryce analyzed in detail this notebook and identified several discrepancies, including erased and rewritten passages, suggesting that Cook, too, was embellishing his story as he went along.<sup>51</sup> Missing from analysis were the instruments on which he based his observations. While in northern Greenland, Cook reportedly asked the big-game hunter Harry Whitney to carry his instruments and expedition flag back to the United States. Peary, however, refused permission to take these articles aboard the *Roosevelt*; Whitney was obliged to bury them in a cache and they were never recovered.<sup>52</sup> Peary submitted his own instruments to the National Geographic sub-committee that decided the issue, although in pronouncing in Peary's favor, the panel's members paid little attention to either the mechanics of the instruments or the scientific data reportedly derived from their use.<sup>53</sup>

### **Peary's and Cook's Published Accounts: The Battle of the Books**

Given the shortcomings of documentation in both claims, the resolution of the contest depended more on storytelling than science in convincing the general public. Winning over a skeptical public hinged on the capacity of the explorers—and their ghost writers—to integrate often sketchy details into rounded and credible narratives. The repeated republication of their accounts also afforded opportunities to respond to emerging criticism by improving their stories, adding

details formerly missing in the diaries or enhancing the presentation of evidence to make it more believable.

Cook published the first account of the climactic Race to the Pole in *The New York Herald* on 2 September 1909.<sup>54</sup> Cabled from the Shetland Islands, Cook's narrative recounted his itinerary to northern Axel Heiberg Island, including an arduous trek over the pack ice, attainment of the Pole on 21 April 1908, and the difficult return journey to northern Greenland the following spring. Other New York newspapers picked up the story.<sup>55</sup> Notwithstanding skeptics in the exploration community, a positive reception in the press and Cook's royal reception by the Danish king on 4 September briefly gave him the status of an international celebrity. Ominously, however, the reporter Philip Gibbs noted a series of inconsistencies in his account of the location of his polar records, for which Cook gave four different answers within a short period.<sup>56</sup>

Peary's first published account of his trek and arrival at the North Pole on 6 April 1909 appeared in *The New York Times*, its timing determined by the media's coverage of Cook's account. Peary scrambled to get his own story into print as quickly as possible, which may partly explain the careless presentation of certain details, at odds with his unpublished accounts. His story was published in the *Times* on 10-11 September and again in the Sunday edition on 12 September 1909. It generally followed the chronology in his Diary No. 1 although Peary took the occasion to insert dramatic details to enliven the chronology. He also added details missing in the diary, including a reading of 89° 57' N. lat. on 6 April 1909, placing him near the North Pole on the putative date of discovery. It was a rare case in which a published secondary source provided data for subsequent "primary" documents, as the *Times* story apparently predated the diary transcripts. Peary wrote that his party travelled 40 miles on its last march, rather than the 30 miles in the handwritten diary. There were also some enhancements to safeguard the explorer's public image. For example, in keeping with his abstemious public persona, there was no reference to drinking Benedictine at the North Pole in the newspaper version.<sup>57</sup>

Over the next year, Peary and surrogates produced two other published narratives of his polar excursions, each of which revised or added new details to the *Times* story and the unpublished accounts. "The Discovery of the North Pole," a serialized account of his last expedition published in *Hampton's Magazine* in 1910, was the first. *Hampton's* promoted the feature as Peary's story "in his own words" but it was actually ghost-written by the novelist and poet Elsa Barker in occasional collaboration with the explorer. A surviving manuscript and accompanying galleys of this narrative, bearing marginal annotations by Peary, publisher Benjamin Hampton, and other editors, affords a glimpse into the collective production of meaning through narrating the polar quest. The climactic episode of the series, featuring Peary's arrival at the North Pole, was to appear in the August 1910 issue of *Hampton's*. Sales had been disappointing<sup>58</sup> and in an effort to boost circulation while answering the skeptics, *Hampton's Magazine* promised that the August installment would provide

“Peary’s Proofs.” The problem was that Peary’s ghost writer could find no material in his diaries dealing with 6 and 7 April 1909 that could place him at the Pole. On 1 April 1910, Elsa Barker wrote to Peary to solicit evidence for the two days in question.<sup>59</sup> Within two weeks, some material apparently arrived from Peary, as Barker recalled stenographer Lillian Kiel to continue her dictation.<sup>60</sup> For the key date of 6 April, they retained the latitude reading of 89° 57' reported in the *New York Times* story while lopping off the 10 extra miles claimed by Peary in the *Times*, returning to the final 30-mile march reported in his handwritten diary.

At the same time, the *Hampton's* version opened up a fresh inconsistency in Peary’s statement in the August issue that, on arriving at the North Pole, he had “turned in for a few hours of absolutely fatigue-compelled sleep,” contrasting with his assertion in the *Times* that he “had many sensations that made sleep impossible for hours, despite my utter fatigue. . . .” and that after two or three hours, “a state of mental exaltation made further rest impossible.”<sup>61</sup> The existence of divergent accounts within the same narrative was a problem not resolved until the publication of Peary’s book *The North Pole*,<sup>62</sup> which removed all internal inconsistencies.

The story improved with each re-telling. For a sympathetic public, Peary and his ghost writers cobbled together a coherent narrative to substitute for the lack of primary evidence. It took several versions, but the Frederick Stokes book effectively smoothed over the inconsistencies relating to 6 April 1909 while adding new details. This account would be important to establishing a consensus in favor of his polar triumph, promoting it to a virtual fact. By the end of 1910, Peary had published three narratives, all placing him triumphantly at the North Pole. The book *The North Pole* had staying power, adorning library shelves and personal collections for the balance of the twentieth century.

Critics, including congressmen, argued that Peary had provided insufficient empirical evidence of his achievement. Accordingly, in 1910 *Hampton's Magazine*, with Peary’s participation, separately published excerpts from his North Pole diary.<sup>63</sup> These included photographic representations of the two records Peary asserted he had left at the North Pole on 6 April 1909, diary excerpts from his winter quarters at Cape Sheridan in 1908, and a copy of the explorer’s cryptic note sent to the Associated Press on his return to the United States in September 1909. The note read, simply: “Stars and Stripes nailed to the Pole.” An analyst in Germany noticed that Peary’s claim of being at the pole on 6 April 1909 contradicted his previous statement that he had hoisted the Stars and Stripes on the following day.<sup>64</sup> The pseudo-documentary record of attaining the North Pole was further supported by a flyer of the Peary Arctic Club announcing Peary’s New York’s 10 November 1909 lecture. It represented a photograph of the Stars and Stripes flying from an ice hummock with an annotation in Peary’s hand: “Stars and Stripes at the North Pole, Apr. 6 '09. R.E. Peary,”<sup>65</sup> repeating the error that the United States flag was flown at the pole on 6 April 1909.

Peary's success in turning the tide of public opinion in his favor also owed much to the narrative forms of his North Polar stories. Writers on the polar controversy have paid little attention to this issue. In his biography of Peary, J. Gordon Hayes devoted a chapter to critiquing Peary's narrative in *The North Pole*, but Hayes focused more on the scientific evidence than its literary qualities. He dismissed large parts of Peary's story as irrelevant: for example, his treatment of the lifeways of his Inughuit companions and observations of the natural physical environment.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, literary style was critical to establishing an aura of verisimilitude to these texts. In the absence of verifiable evidence regarding the North Pole, Peary and his ghost writers needed to construct a realistic picture of the arctic environment to reinforce the narrator's credibility.

The *Hampton's* narrative is a pastiche of adventure storytelling, reportage, and quasi-scientific explanation. Its patchwork forms probably represent compromises among author, ghost writer, and publisher. In 1910, his reputation and financial security at stake, Peary needed to get out a story that could consolidate his polar claim in the midst of controversy. Publisher Benjamin Hampton wanted a story with enough reader interest to generate sales or subscriptions. For her part, ghost-writer Elsa Barker wanted to produce a chivalric quest narrative equal to her hero-worship of the explorer.<sup>67</sup> The basic idea was already anticipated in Barker's poem "The Frozen Grail," penned by the future ghost-writer in 1908,<sup>68</sup> which Peary reportedly brought with him on his last expedition.<sup>69</sup>

In terms of genre, both explorers drew upon the adventure story variant of literary romance. In his study of formula genres in popular culture, John G. Cawelti defined the basic adventure template: "The central fantasy of the adventure story is that of the hero—individual or group—overcoming obstacles and dangers and accomplishing some important and moral mission."<sup>70</sup> The adventure story formula seemed ideally suited to a quest narrative in the tradition of wilderness or sea narratives that were so popular with nineteenth-century American audiences. Romance and adventure were two favored formulas of *Hampton's Magazine*, which, besides Peary, published Jack London's adventure stories.<sup>71</sup> As editor H.M. Lyon wrote to Peary, "we want your narrative right from the jump to be vivid and thrilling."<sup>72</sup> Yet, publisher Benjamin Hampton wanted not only a good but also a true story. His marginal comments on the galleys and correspondence with Peary document his concerns. For Hampton, representing real events required dramatizing daily life. He dismissed whole sections of Peary's diaries as lacking reader interest. On reading Peary's extended description of difficulty in lighting his primus stove, he wrote: "Same old stuff told over and over," and added: "All this is so unimportant that it makes me feel that Peary is a trifler dealing with picayune things when I thought he was doing something big." Elsewhere, Hampton wrote: "I would throw away hundreds of words of technical travel detail & get in some good, live description & explanation."<sup>73</sup>

Nevertheless, details of evidence were important when it came to the key issue of whether the explorer actually reached the North Pole. In an "open letter" to its readers, *Hampton's* trumpeted the veracity of the explorer's "proofs," which the editors had not seen, while the cover of the August issue bore the heading: "Peary's Proofs." Both publisher and explorer intended to rely on the *Hampton's* narrative to substantiate Peary's claim, especially after he refused to open his records to general scrutiny. Hampton's marginal comments dealing with Peary's sledging relays suggest what the publisher had in mind when he promised "proofs." He wrote: "Good idea to mention dates—each day in italics, before details. Idea is, here we begin piling up cold blooded proofs."<sup>74</sup> To Hampton, a tight narrative imitating a diary, not empirical evidence, constituted proof.

At *Hampton's*, the publisher and editors also prescribed repetition and didactic assertion to try to overcome the anticipated skepticism of readers. Hampton wrote to Peary:

What is needed just now is to hammer into people's minds this positive statement: 'Robert E. Peary, discoverer of the North Pole, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1909.' The whole problem in creating sentiment is to say a thing often enough, and forcibly enough, to drive it into the public mind. Our plan is to repeat and repeat this phrase millions upon millions of times in the various forms [of advertising] I have outlined in the foregoing. It means success.<sup>75</sup>

Accordingly, the editors repeatedly inserted summary statements asserting that Peary was the only explorer with the capacity to reach this difficult destination. One example was a marginal annotation on the galleys dealing with Peary's relay parties, which was then incorporated into the published article. An editor wrote: "Without this system it would be a physical impossibility for any man to reach the Pole and return to tell the tale."<sup>76</sup> *Hampton's* drove the point home in editorial notes accompanying the sixth installment in June 1910, including the statement: "This narrative shows how impossible it would be for anyone, without Peary's system of relay parties and a large number of assistants, ever to reach the Pole and return."<sup>77</sup> The "convincing proof" turned out to be a description of the explorer's relay system and repetitions of Peary's claims.

The lack of empirical evidence may also explain why *Hampton's* engaged the services of Barker, a poet and novelist, so that she could improve Peary's literary narrative. Benjamin Hampton wanted the excitement of an adventure story, a genre built around escape to the wilderness, but Barker also needed to show the protagonist taming nature so that its conquest could be carried back to civilization as a trophy. With triumphalism as the prescribed endpoint of the narrative, Barker relied largely on standard literary devices to guide readers to its preordained conclusion. The pivotal moment came in a dream Barker imagined Peary experienced when he fell asleep on 7 April 1909, the day after his arrival

at the North Pole. In narrating this fantasy, she projected onto the explorer the following thoughts and words: “But as soon as I closed my eyes, a pageant of thoughts and pictures began flitting across my exhausted brain, shadows of all the past years during which I had struggled and failed of that which I had now accomplished, and imaginary pictures of the future, when I should return to the world with the story of my long-delayed and final success.”<sup>78</sup> In this key sentence, the ghost writer employed three narrative devices—a flashback containing a prophecy of success; a flashforward envisioning a triumphal return; and a dream vouching for the veracity of his claim.

The need to prove a polar victory also drove the visual material presented in Peary’s *Hampton’s* installments and his book *The North Pole*. These narratives exploited new technologies of photography and printing that enabled “real-life” illustrations to reinforce the credibility of the written word. They employed the half-tone, the linotype, and Eastman’s Kodak camera, all in general use by the 1880s,<sup>79</sup> and which facilitated the mass production and circulation of photographic images in travel accounts. Previously, Peary experimented with the new technologies in various arctic publications.<sup>80</sup> For the *Hampton’s* articles, he relied on half-tones to reproduce what he asserted were measurements taken at the pole, as well as a record he claimed to have left at 90 degrees north.

Another example of the mutually-reinforcing use of images and text was the treatment of the famous “North Pole flag,” which Peary reportedly brought with him to the North Pole. As part of its promotion, *Hampton’s* planned to publish a separate leaflet featuring a photographic reproduction of this flag. Editor T. Everett Harré invited the explorer to write an accompanying story to be published in Peary’s own handwriting. “It is a thing that would arouse patriotism, which school children could read and which, so far as we are concerned, ought to help advertise our big feature in a splendidly popular way.” Harré asserted that the story would show “how American perseverance & courage planted the Stars and Stripes at the most northerly point reached on the planet.”<sup>81</sup> To reinforce the patriotic connections, *Hampton’s* published another poem by Elsa Barker as a prelude to the second article of the Peary series, entitled “The Song of the North Pole Flag.”<sup>82</sup>

Following the *Hampton’s* series, the editors at Frederick A. Stokes also sought a narrative approach for Peary’s book *The North Pole* that would resort to flag waving. Peary’s draft of nearing the North Pole seemed uncertain of his exact position. An editor wrote in the margins: “Did he not stop at some point & call it the Pole? If not check did he raise flags & bury things?”<sup>83</sup> The focus of the published version shifted from a discussion of attempted scientific observations to a story of raising ensigns, capped by the much-published photograph of the “North Pole flag,” ostensibly planted at 90 degrees north. (Figure 1) These images conveyed an illusion of certitude and triumph lacking in Peary’s diary and earlier book drafts.<sup>84</sup> To reinforce the patriotic associations, Peary revised the ghost writer’s text regarding the flag by substituting a phrase: “I carried it ~~with me~~ wrapped around my body [Peary’s deletion and insertion] on every one of my



**Figure 1:** Another image for this series, Peary's famous photograph of hoisting flags at the pole, including the North Pole flag. Courtesy U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, RG 401, photo no. NWDNS-401-XPS-17 (11).

expeditions northward. . . ."<sup>85</sup> As if to compensate for the lack of verifiable evidence in his narrative, the explorer literally wrapped himself in the Stars and Stripes.

Cook also published a series of articles in *Hampton's Magazine* as well as a book on his North Pole expedition. By this time, the battle for the North Pole

laurels was effectively over. Cook's *Hampton's* articles appeared between January and April 1911, a year after the commencement of Peary's serialized story and well after the physician's claim had been rejected by a panel of Danish scientists. As the public rejected his claim, he disappeared for a year. Following his re-emergence, *Hampton's Magazine* persuaded him to publish a series of articles but this time, the magazine's focus was his failure to reach the North Pole. Where Peary's account was one of success and triumph, Cook's articles comprised a rambling discussion of the explorer's wanderings following his repudiation in the media and by the Danish authorities. He wrote of leading an "aimless and futile" existence.<sup>86</sup> Publishing the articles under the damaging front-page title "MY CONFESSION," the editors at *Hampton's* implied that, in claiming to have reached the North Pole, Cook had knowingly perpetrated a fraud.<sup>87</sup> Cook had to endure the further humiliation of seeing the *Hampton's* "My Confession" articles mutate into newspaper headlines such as "DR. COOK MAKES PLEA OF INSANITY,"<sup>88</sup> and, in the *New York Times*, the sardonic headline: "DR. COOK CONFESSES HE DIDN'T CONFESS."<sup>89</sup>

Later that year, Cook published *My Attainment of the North Pole*, a final attempt to win favor with the public although the scientific elite had already dismissed his claim.<sup>90</sup> Peary effectively won that battle through the media war in the fall of 1909, culminating in the National Geographic Society's crowning him victor. By this time Cook's target audience was the general public, as he wrote in concluding his narrative: "I have, as I have said, absolute confidence in the good sense, spirit of fair play, and ability of reasoning judgment of my people."<sup>91</sup> Cook's book was also a hybrid—part testimonial and justification for his own claim, part critical analysis and polemical attack on his rival, and part exotic travelogue. Offering few verifiable details regarding the polar issue, it presented a rich, often florid description of the arctic environment, the Inughuit, game animals, and the explorer's travels. Cook's account of the group's retreat across the Queen Elizabeth Islands is a fascinating story of survival in extreme circumstances. The book contained many photographs, to impart verisimilitude, while maps and tables imbued it with a superficial aura of science, similar to Peary's rhetorical use of illustrative material.

There were also significant differences in form and content between the explorers' narratives. An intriguing dimension to the battle of the North Pole books was the factor of gender as it played out in the explorers' narratives. Both explorers engaged ghost-writers who, in different ways, played against gender type. In Peary's case, *Hampton's Magazine* hired Elsa Barker, a writer of occult novels, to work with him. The choice of a female writer was unusual in the male-oriented world of the popular press, but Barker had impressed publisher Benjamin Hampton. Peary initially favored the writer H. Merton Lyon, but Hampton warned that "it would take him two years to produce your story." "Mrs. Barker, on the other hand," he argued, "has worked on this thing until she is thoroughly steeped in it. She is a splendid writer, thoroughly in sympathy with your work."<sup>92</sup> Peary acquiesced to engaging Barker.



Barker willfully tried to assimilate the explorer's persona by infusing the book with a rugged, masculine style. She had the benefit of a 30,000 word transcript of editor H.M. Lyon's questions and Peary's answers, which gave her a feel for the explorer's vocabulary, syntax, and expressions. Nevertheless, *The North Pole* reads as a heavily didactic account, expressing the ghost-writer's attempt to express the toughness and fortitude that enabled Peary to overcome all obstacles. Even Barker's Herculean efforts to replicate his style failed to satisfy fully the explorer's virile expectations. When Peary subsequently signed a book contract with New York publisher Frederick A. Stokes for \$150,000, they discussed whom to engage as writer. Peary reportedly asked Stokes for a "first-class literary man," with "the big masculine literary instinct."<sup>93</sup> Stokes hired A.E. Thomas but much of the book's text was lifted from Barker's narrative for *Hampton's Magazine*.

For his book, Cook engaged as ghost-writer T. Everett Harry, or Harré, as he represented himself. Harré's role in the publishing battles surrounding Peary and Cook is both fascinating and problematic. In 1909, while an editor with *Hampton's*, he accompanied Elsa Barker to secure Peary's narrative; soon after, he was assigned to approach Cook to obtain his story as well. While working with Cook for *Hampton's*, Harré developed considerable sympathy for Peary's rival and soon left the magazine to work with him on his book *My Attainment of the Pole*. Apparently a gay man,<sup>94</sup> Harré seems to have identified with Cook as another marginalized person. Recoiling from Peary's aggressively masculine persona, he helped Cook write a book expressing his sympathies with the Inughuit, especially the women he felt had been oppressed by Peary. Contrasting with Peary's patriarchal portrayals of these women in his descriptions of so-called "pibloktoq" or arctic hysteria, the Cook/Harré book treated Aboriginal women with respect. Elsewhere, I have argued that "pibloktoq" was an ill-defined assortment of anxiety reactions precipitated by stresses induced by the explorers themselves, including reported sexual abuse of Inughuit women.<sup>95</sup> Interestingly, in this period Harré also published *The Eternal Maiden*, a novel based loosely on the polar quest, which he later described as "a sort of 'Madam Butterfly' of the Arctic."<sup>96</sup> In it, he presented a tall, blond European explorer as abusive towards the Inughuit, a depiction apparently based both on Cook's recountings and Harré's own experience of Peary.<sup>97</sup>

The Cook/Harré book expressed a very different ethos than the Barker/Peary text. Despite Cook's efforts to present himself as the victor of the Race, a sense of estrangement in its concluding sections imbued his narrative with ambivalence. Reviled by this time in the popular press in his own country, the narrator of *My Attainment of the Pole* seemed most at home in the exotic arctic environment. Rather than Barker/Peary's triumphal return, Cook/Harré's narrative suggested endless wandering and marginalization, more in keeping with exile literature than the swaggering prose of conquest. Its form might well have enlisted renewed sympathy for Cook as a person but did little to rehabilitate his reputation or his claim to have reached the North Pole.

By contrast, the Barker/Peary narrative was well designed to impress the reader with its sheer focus. Whatever shortcomings of evidence, Peary's account ultimately prevailed because it integrated both actual and invented details into a larger narrative of nationalism. Overlaying his narrative was the construction of the attainment of the North Pole as the singular achievement of a superior Euro-American male.<sup>98</sup> Peary's representation of himself as a conquering individualist presumably resonated with male Euro-American readers who were already feeling threatened by the growing cultural and gender diversity in American life.<sup>99</sup>

### **Newspaper Wars, Public Relations, and Medals**

Beyond narrative form and content, public relations strategies played a key role in determining the outcome of the Race to the North Pole. Peary astutely recognized the central importance of New York's publishing houses in shaping national opinion. In September 1909, *The New York Times* purchased Peary's story and devoted massive coverage to his presumed triumph, which helped to tip the scales in his battle with Cook.<sup>100</sup> Further, the *Times* sold rights to the story to *The Chicago Daily Tribune* and the *Times* of London. In October, *The New York Times* played an equally important role in discrediting Cook when it followed with extensive coverage of the Barrill affidavit and other damaging allegations planted in the media by Peary's associates. Cook proved to be no match in the public relations arena. Lacking both evidence and the backing of major constituencies, he possessed few resources with which to stage an effective counter-attack.

Within months, *Hampton's Magazine* consolidated Peary's position by bringing his detailed narrative to a vast readership, repackaging it to promote his polar claim, and coordinating the story's release with his public speaking engagements. In his pitch to sign Peary, Benjamin Hampton asserted that his magazine could help him gain the upper hand in the polar controversy. His aggressive strategy proposed a promotional article as prelude to the explorer's story: "Our idea is that this article should be practically a fighting document. . . ." <sup>101</sup> Hampton importuned the explorer to embark on a major speaking tour to get his story out, which would also promote magazine subscriptions and sales.<sup>102</sup>

In the battle for public opinion, Peary also drew on a network of some of the most powerful business, military, and scientific elites in the United States, particularly in New York City, the country's commercial and publishing centre.<sup>103</sup> The Peary Arctic Club, largely an organization of wealthy New York businessmen and lawyers formed to promote Peary's expeditions, played a key role. Through the club, Peary and his supporters raised money and forged key relationships with prominent scientific organizations and museums in New York and Washington, D.C., whose support was critical to turning public opinion in his favor. Executive members of the club included: General Thomas Hubbard, a

civil war veteran and wealthy Wall Street lawyer; Herbert Bridgman, the influential business manager of the *Standard Union* in Brooklyn; and the paper baron Zenas Crane of Dalton, Massachusetts.<sup>104</sup> Bridgman and Hubbard played the central roles, as they regularly corresponded with Peary by letter or cable to help the explorer plot his strategy in the critical weeks of September and October 1909 following his return to the United States.

For Peary, it was not enough to promote his own claim; it was also necessary to discredit his major rival. Collaborating with Bridgman and Hubbard, he led an aggressive attack on Cook, including intelligence gathering, carefully planned media strikes, and lobbying to isolate his competitor in the exploration and scientific communities.<sup>105</sup> A key tactic was to disseminate the so-called Edward Barrill affidavit, an assertion by a former associate of Cook that the explorer's prior claims to climbing Mount McKinley were fraudulent. In October 1909, Peary proposed to General Hubbard that, when published, Barrill's exposé should be sent "to every Geographical and Scientific organization at home, and to all principal ones abroad, for their information and for deposit in their archives."<sup>106</sup> Two days later, Hubbard replied to Peary that "I . . . am arranging so as to have it published and re-published and hammered in, if it turns out to be what I expect."<sup>107</sup>

Part of the public relations campaign required Peary to stay in the public eye and help get his story out. In September 1909, Peary's colleague Herbert Bridgman enjoined the explorer to abandon his "seclusion and reticence"<sup>108</sup> to appear at a series of public events, beginning with the sailing of his arctic ship *Roosevelt* in the Hudson-Fulton Celebration.<sup>109</sup> Peary followed with a series of lecture appearances across the United States, which gave him critical public exposure that fall. Also of importance to Peary's campaign was the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. While officially neutral, Museum president Henry Fairfield Osborn worked behind the scenes to advance Peary's claim.<sup>110</sup> A key step was the Museum's staging a celebratory exhibition prior to formal deliberations to determine a winner of the Race to the Pole.<sup>111</sup>

Also prominent in the circle of Peary partisans was Madison Grant, a wealthy lawyer, descendant of an old New York family, and President of the New York Zoological Park, and William T. Hornaday, the long-term Director of the Zoological Park, more commonly known as the Bronx Zoo.<sup>112</sup> In October 1909, Hornaday wrote Bridgman to express his frustration that Peary was not being assertive enough in claiming his prize. He proposed organizing a dinner to honor Peary, at which ten prominent scientific or recreational organizations should be well represented, including, among others: the American Geographical Society, the National Geographic Society, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Explorers' Club.<sup>113</sup> With the exception of the Washington-based National Geographic Society and American Geographical Society, all of these organizations were based in New York City, with close ties to Peary.

The other organization that would play a pivotal role in Peary's campaign was the National Geographic Society, a major financial backer of Peary's last

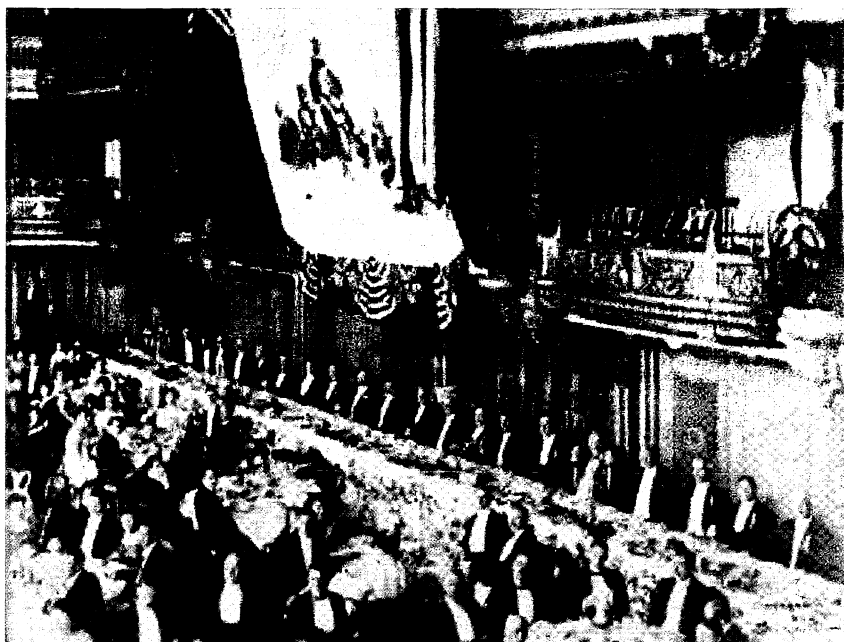
polar expedition.<sup>114</sup> On 5 October 1909, Society secretary Gilbert H. Grosvenor wrote Peary to reassure him that “the end is very near; greater honors and rewards than you would otherwise have experienced, I am confident will be showered upon you presently, from every quarter of the Globe.”<sup>115</sup> Ten days later, the Society appointed a three-member sub-committee to examine the merits of Peary’s claim, which pre-empted efforts to refer the matter to the National Academy of Sciences. The sub-committee’s examination has been treated by various analysts of the polar question and will not be discussed here.<sup>116</sup> It is sufficient to state that, following a perfunctory assessment, this group declared Peary the winner of the Race to the Pole, after which Rear Admiral Colby Chester, a member of the sub-committee, publicly denounced Cook as a “faker.”<sup>117</sup>

The announcement by the sub-committee proved crucial in determining the winner. Cook, reeling from the Barrill affidavit, responded to the National Geographic Society’s decision by turning his records over to the Danish authorities who had welcomed him warmly as the victor a few months before. Based on the material he submitted, the Danish scientists found the evidence inadequate and now rejected Cook’s claim as unproven.<sup>118</sup>

Peary’s party now moved to consolidate its victory by planning a triumphal event to anoint him the winner. Peary opted for the venue of the National Geographic Society’s annual dinner on 15 December 1909, enabling the credibility and full weight of that society to be thrown behind its favorite son. The featured event on the program was the society’s presentation of a special gold medal to Peary for the discovery of the North Pole. Among the individuals represented at the gala event were congressional leaders; high-ranking army and naval officers, including eight generals or rear admirals; representatives of elite scientific organizations and museums, and wealthy businessmen, including industrialist Andrew Carnegie. This event, too, had its own narrative structure, as its component speeches were orchestrated to first anoint and then celebrate a new national hero. Stage-managing the dinner as a piece of theatre for the hand-picked audience, the society then published the speeches in the *National Geographic Magazine* to further enshrine Peary as their approved victor (Figure 2).

The dinner heard congratulatory telegrams from former president Theodore Roosevelt; from Leonard Darwin, President of the Royal Geographical Society in London; and from Felix Wahnschaffe, President of the Geographical Society of Berlin. European diplomats followed with tributes.<sup>119</sup> Rear Admiral Colby Chester, member of the National Geographic Society’s panel that proclaimed Peary the victor, likened the explorer’s approach to that of an officer commanding troops in the field. In his speech, Joseph Cannon, Speaker of the House of Representatives, then drew a genetic link between the European cultures to which a progression of discoverers belonged, and the United States, which incorporated their genes in its ascendancy.

Peary followed Cannon. The explorer displayed a shrewd knowledge of his audience, as he justified his polar victory on the basis of his extensive arctic



**Figure 2:** A photograph of a similar dinner staged for Peary at the Hotel Astor in New York in March 1910. Courtesy Library of Congress.

experience and military code of honor. Flattering the assembled businessmen, scientists, and politicians, Peary likened the attainment of the North Pole to success in capitalist enterprise, the development of inventions, or the building of nations. Peary praised his asserted achievement as a crowning moment in the glory of the United States: “Here in this magnificent trophy of your great Society glitters the splendid frozen jewel of the north for which through centuries men of every nation have struggled and suffered and died—won at last and to be worn forever by the Stars and Stripes.”

Some of the most powerful individuals and institutions in the United States thereby closed ranks around their chosen winner. While the issue continued to be debated in Congress,<sup>120</sup> the media, and other venues, Peary and his circle struck the decisive blow in the fall of 1909 from which Cook never recovered. Initially an unpopular victor, due largely to his aggressive media assault on his rival, Peary reclaimed the public’s favor over time, and the controversy gradually faded from popular memory. The sheer weight of discourse became a factor as Peary’s circle, supported by powerful scientific and military interests, came to dominate the literature on the polar race. Their output included biographies, memoirs by expedition members, books elaborating the explorer’s methods, and Peary’s own book on arctic travel and survival strategies, all reinforcing his claim.<sup>121</sup> The United States military also helped elevate Peary, as the Navy

zealously promoted the claims of one of its members while the War Department pushed for the inclusion of Peary's asserted attainments in international atlases.<sup>122</sup> For their part, quasi-scientific publications such as *National Geographic* and *Scientific American* overlooked the contentious aspects of Peary's claim by publishing numerous articles in which his attainment of the North Pole was taken for granted.<sup>123</sup> Accepting the verdict of the National Geographic Society's sub-committee, a vast array of mass-circulation magazines reproduced aspects of the explorer's evidence and narrative in pronouncing in his favor.<sup>124</sup> While Cook's cause found occasional supporters, he remains up to the present a marginal figure in the discourse on the North Pole.

Historians have often viewed the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a pivotal period of American expansionism. They have focused on such events as the Spanish-American War and the United States' concurrent emergence as a world power.<sup>125</sup> However, in this era America's elites recognized that the key to global expansion resided not merely in military might and international trade but also in the production and dissemination of popular culture. In this regard, Matthew Frye Jacobson has suggested that the "barbarian virtues" prescribed by Theodore Roosevelt for American encounters with the world required the marginalization of racial and ethnocultural groups as well as the working class.<sup>126</sup> Earlier, Donna Haraway explored the relationships between the American Museum of Natural History and an American identity focussed on Anglo-Saxon manhood, and subordinate status for women and non-Anglo-Saxon peoples.<sup>127</sup> In their analysis of images and texts in *National Geographic*, Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins discerned the ambitions, anxieties, and obsessions of male middle-class readers seeking affirmation in the journal of their imagined leadership around the globe.<sup>128</sup> For both the Museum and the National Geographic Society, Peary proved a suitable vehicle through which to promote their leaders' assorted cultural agendas.

More generally, Peary's achievements in exploration provided sufficient material to serve as an allegory of national achievement at the point of the United States' emergence on the world stage. Peary was a pioneering celebrity in that his image was an iconic receptacle for whatever meanings his followers and admirers wished to pour into it. For many "old-stock" Americans, his example of fearless Anglo-Saxon masculinity demonstrated the presumed superiority of their lineage and values in the context of an advancing diversity of culture, gender, and "race" in this era.<sup>129</sup> For military leaders like Rear Admiral Chester, Peary's exploration methods echoed the strategic approaches that they believed would assure the United States military supremacy alongside its economic power. For their part, prominent businessmen viewed Peary's quest as an application of the attributes of national character that could assure American success in the emerging capitalist competition between nations.<sup>130</sup> Collectively, these assorted constituencies constructed around Peary the basis of a new national epic,<sup>131</sup> in which his "fighting virtues" and other attributes were prescribed as a model of American identity.

Peary's death in 1920 occasioned a state funeral and burial with full military honours in Arlington National Cemetery, a demonstration of official mourning on a scale rarely accorded non-political figures. Among numerous daily newspapers, the *New York Times* covered his death with a life-sized photograph of the bearded explorer's head in his caribou parka.<sup>132</sup> In 1922, in a ceremony attended by President Warren Harding, former president and Chief Justice of the United States William Howard Taft, and congressional and military leaders, the trustees of the National Geographic Society unveiled a monument at Peary's grave in the form of a stone globe, on which the North Pole was marked with a bronze star.<sup>133</sup> The process of memorialization has continued to the present through such gestures as the periodic issuance of commemorative stamps by the U.S. Post Office, and military wreath-laying ceremonies at Peary's grave in Arlington National Cemetery.<sup>134</sup>

Thus, the explorer's manifold narratives served their purpose by providing both the illusion of evidence and a sufficient description of his exploration methods to banish the doubts of many Americans. Since the 1970s, several specialists have seriously challenged Peary's claim, and in 1988, the *National Geographic Magazine* published a "cautiously skeptical report" on the issue by the eminent British explorer Wally Herbert.<sup>135</sup> Popular historical writing, however, continues generally to credit Peary with either attaining the Pole or coming very near it.<sup>136</sup> The continuing gulf between scholarly skepticism and journalistic credulity is illustrated in a recent issue of *U.S. News and World Report*, featuring a section on "History's Great Explorers." A grizzled Peary in his caribou parka appeared on the magazine's cover. Asserting he attained the North Pole in 1909, the journal repeated an apocryphal story of Peary's supposed remark following the loss of his frozen toes in 1899: "A few toes aren't too much to give [to achieve the Pole]."<sup>137</sup> However unsubstantiated, the invented dialogue continues to be a staple in popular North Pole literature as a demonstration of the indomitable spirit of the explorer.<sup>138</sup> Peary's genius was to discern in the currents of his own era a yearning by America's elites for international supremacy and he articulated a vision that could both crystallize and fulfill their dreams of triumph. He appeared on the scene at a time when mass-circulation publishing houses, new technologies, and a burgeoning readership established the preconditions for his remarkable public relations campaign. He was one of the first to discern in the technologies of photography and modern printing the potential of popular culture to shape the public's consciousness of the world beyond American borders and he successfully exploited these new technologies in advancing his claims. Endlessly retold in popular literature, the explorer's exploits provided ready material with which to inculcate generations of Americans in the virtues of courage, endurance, and determination, as well as the business ethos of competition. In the early twentieth century the United States required a victorious hero in international competition to represent its self-image as an emerging world power, and Peary obliged his

country's need by providing the appearance of a polar victory and a narrative to support it. In fulfilling the larger master narrative of his country's triumphal ascendancy, his influence may have been largely symbolic, but the symbolism of his North Pole conquest resonated long after this pivotal moment in the assertion of a particular concept of American national identity.

## Notes

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3. John Edward Weems, *Race for the Pole* (New York: Holt, 1960); John Edward Weems, *Peary: The Explorer and the Man* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967); Theon Wright, *The Big Nail: The Story of the Cook-Peary Feud* (New York: John Day Co., 1970); Dennis Rawlins, *Peary at the North Pole: Fact or Fiction?* (Washington, D.C.: R.B. Luce, 1973); William R. Hunt, *To Stand at the Pole: The Dr. Cook-Admiral Peary North Pole Controversy* (New York: Stein and Day, 1981); Wally Herbert, *The Noose of Laurels: The Discovery of the North Pole* (New York: Atheneum, 1989); and Robert M. Bryce, *Cook and Peary: The Polar Controversy, Resolved* (Mechanicsburg, Penn.: Stackpole Books, 1997).
4. Beau Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery* (New York: Belhaven, University of Cambridge, 1993), 172.
5. Michael F. Robinson, "The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture, 1850-1910." Ph.D dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2002.
6. The literature is vast. Some current contributions to this debate include: Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); and Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).
7. *The New York Times Index for the Published News of 1909* (New York: New York Times, 1975), "Arctic Regions," 14-18; and *The New York Times Index for the Published News of 1910* (New York: New York Times, 1976), "Arctic Regions," 22-24. For the coverage in Britain, see *The Annual Index to the Times 1909* (London: Times Publishing Co., 1909), 911-15, 999; and *The Annual Index to the Times 1910* (London: Times Publishing Co., 1910), 1013, 1080.
8. Elisha Kent Kane, *The United States Grinnell Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin: A Personal Narrative* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, and Co., 1857); and *Arctic Explorations: The Second Grinnell Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin, 1853, '54, '55*, vols. I and II (Philadelphia: Childs and Peterson, 1856); Mark Horst Sawin, "Raising Kane: The Making of a Hero, the Marketing of a Celebrity," M.A. Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1997. See in particular Section 8, "A Hero at Home." <<http://www.ekkane.org/sawin/sawin.htm>>. Kane's *Arctic Explorations* made the list of "better sellers," or runners-up to the best sellers of the nineteenth century. Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), Appendix B, "Better Sellers," 320.
9. Dr. I. I. Hayes, *The Open Polar Sea* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867).
10. Adolphus Greely, *Three Years of Arctic Service*, vols. I and II (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886).
11. *National Geographic Magazine* [hereafter, *NGM*] 16 (September 1905): 434.
12. WJ McGee, "The Growth of the United States," *NGM* 9 (September 1898): 383.
13. Donald Meinig, *The Shaping of America*, III, "Transcontinental America, 1850-1915" (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998), 265.



14. Chart: "Our Immigration in 1905," *NGM* 16 (September 1905): 435.
15. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (repr., New York: Atheneum, 1978, orig. 1955), 136-44.
16. "Introduction," *NGM* 7 (January 1896): 1-2.
17. Susan Schulten, "The Making of the *National Geographic*: Science, Culture, and Expansionism," *American Studies* 41 (Spring 2000): 5-29.
18. "Eighth International Geographic Congress," *NGM* 15 (October 1904): 413.
19. General A.W. Greeley, "Geographic Exploration: Its Moral and Material Results," *NGM* 17 (January 1906): 1, 4.
20. For a discussion of the relationship of Social Darwinist ideology to imperialism in this period, see Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), 170-200.
21. McGee, "National Growth and National Character," 88-89.
22. McGee, "The Growth of the United States," 386.
23. For example, in the essay "The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890s," John Higham identified a new strain of hypermasculinity and combativeness in the popular culture of that decade, evident in such phenomena as college yells and competitive athletics. John Higham, "The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890s," in *Hanging Together: Unity and Diversity in American Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 173-97. In an analysis of popular historical novels in the 1890s, Amy Kaplan connected the new concept of individual masculinity to a collective desire for imperial dominance over other national rivals. Amy Kaplan, "Romancing the Empire: The Embodiment of American Masculinity in the Popular Historical Novel of the 1890s," *American Literary History* 2 (Winter 1990): 659-90.
24. See the discussion in Tom Lutz, *American Nervousness 1903: An Anecdotal History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 77-82.
25. Address by President Roosevelt, in "Honors to Peary," *NGM* 18 (January 1907): 56-57.
26. See Theodore Roosevelt, "National Life and National Character" (1894), in *American Ideals and Other Essays, Social and Political* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1897), 271-302. The relationship of the cult of masculinity to fears of "overcivilization" is explored in Michael F. Robinson, "The Coldest Crucible," 177-221.
27. Lisa Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 32.
28. Theodore Roosevelt, "Introduction," in Robert E. Peary, *The North Pole: Its Discovery in 1909 under the Auspices of the Peary Arctic Club* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1910), vii.
29. Quoted in Nancy J. Fogelson, "Robert E. Peary and American Exploration in the Arctic, 1886-1910," *Fram: the Journal of Polar Studies* 2 (1985), 134.
30. Dr. Frederick A. Cook, *My Attainment of the Pole* (New York and London: Mitchell and Kennerley, 1911), 74.
31. "Address by Commander Robert E. Peary, United States Navy, President, Eighth International Geographic Congress," *NGM* 15 (October 1904): 387, 390.
32. Letter quoted in Herbert L. Bridgman, "Ten Years of the Peary Arctic Club," *NGM* 19 (September 1908): 665.
33. Response to the President by Commander Peary, in "Honors to Peary," *NGM* 18 (January 1907): 57-58.
34. Cook, *My Attainment of the Pole*, 27.
35. Wright, *The Big Nail*, 113.
36. Robert E. Peary, *Northward over the "Great Ice": A Narrative of Life and Work Along the Shores and upon the Interior Ice-Cap of Northern Greenland in the Years 1886 and 1891-1897*, vols. I and II (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1898).
37. Robert E. Peary, *Nearest the Pole: A Narrative of the Polar Expedition of the Peary Arctic Club in the SS Roosevelt, 1905-06* (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Co., 1907).
38. Robert E. Peary, "Living Off the Country," *Century Magazine*, 94 (October 1917), 907-19.
39. Hugh Eames, *Winner Lose All*, 121.
40. Diary "No. 1 Roosevelt to & Return, Feb. 22 to Apr. 27 1909" [signed R.E. Peary, USN], North Pole Diaries, 1909—Specially Protected Records, RG 401 (1) (A), Papers Relating to Arctic Expeditions, 1886-1909, Entry 1U, Robert E. Peary Papers, RG 401(1)(A), National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter, NARA) (Washington, D.C.).
41. Robert M. Bryce, "Introduction," Matthew Henson, *A Negro Explorer at the North Pole* (Reprint: New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001) (originally published 1912), xxix.
42. Various writers have speculated on the origins and nature of the inserted page. In *The Arctic Grail*, Pierre Berton asserted that this page was "of a different kind of paper" than the bound diary pages, but, as Arthur T. Anthony has pointed out, this is not the case. However, following a forensic analysis of the diary's pages and respective watermarks, Anthony concluded

that the page "The Pole at Last" did not originate in its present position in the diary. Pierre Berton, *The Arctic Grail: The Quest for the Northwest Passage and the North Pole, 1818-1909* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), 580-81; and Arthur T. Anthony, "90° North?—Examination of Robert E. Peary's Journal No. 1, 1909," *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 36 (September 1991): 1620; I would like to thank Mr. Robert Bryce of Monrovia, Maryland for sharing this reference with me.

43. Diary "No. 1 Roosevelt to & Return Feb. 22 to Apr. 27 1909."
44. Diary transcript dated March 2-April 23, 1909, Papers Relating to Arctic Expeditions, 1886-1909, North Polar, 1908-09, Box 20, typed transcripts, File: Peary Diaries, 1909; and "Diary (typed) 1898," Diary Transcripts, 1871-1900, Peary Papers, NARA [Note: this transcript was mis-labelled in cataloguing and is a copy of the last five pages of the longer transcript].
45. Diary transcript dated March to April 7, 1909, Papers Relating to Arctic Expeditions, 1886-1909, North Polar, 1908-09, box 20, Peary Papers, NARA.
46. Untitled diary fragment, labelled "[1911?]," Papers Relating to Peary Retirement Bills, 1909-20, Box 3, Peary Manuscript Reports and Notes, 1905-15, Folder entitled: "Peary Rebuttal Material, c. 1909-10," Peary Papers, NARA.
47. Rear Admiral C.M. Chester, Washington, D.C. to H.L. Bridgman, 26 October 1909, File 1.2.34, Records of the Peary Arctic Club, The Explorers Club Archives (hereafter, ECA) (New York City).
48. U.S. 61 Cong. 3 sess., *Report No. 1961* (Washington, D.C.: House of Representatives 1911), 421.
49. *Ibid.*, "Recognition of Robert E. Peary, The Arctic Explorer," 410.
50. Notebook: "25 May [1907] - 13 June 1909," Frederick Albert Cook Collection, Container no. 1, Diaries, 1893-1930, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.).
51. Bryce, *Cook and Peary*, 893-95.
52. *Ibid.*, 908-11.
53. *Ibid.*, 483-44.
54. "The North Pole is Discovered by Dr. Frederick Cook, Who Cables to the Herald An Exclusive Account of How He Set the American Flag on the World's Top," *The New York Herald*, Sept. 2, 1909, 1.
55. Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer*, 172.
56. *Ibid.*, 177.
57. Robert E. Peary, "The Conquest of the North Pole," *The New York Times*, 12 September 1909, Part 5, Magazine Section, 1.
58. "Memorandum in re[spect] to the Cook-Peary Polar Controversy and *Hampton's Magazine* . . ." by T. Everett Harré, n.d., 9, Frederick A. Cook Society Collection, RG 56.17, Box 29, Folder 27, The Ohio State University Archives (hereafter, OSUA), Byrd Polar Research Center Archival Program (Columbus, Ohio).
59. Elsa Barker to Robert E. Peary, April 1, 1910, box 28, folder 4, Frederick A. Cook Society Collection, OSUA.
60. Lilian E. Kiel, "The Faked 'Confession' or How a Magazine Made History!" Unpublished typescript, 25-27, Box 28, Folder 11, Frederick A. Cook Society Collection, OSUA.
61. Robert E. Peary, USN, "The Discovery of the North Pole," *Hampton's Magazine*, 24 (January 1910): 4.
62. Peary, *The North Pole*, 298.
63. "Extracts from Commander Peary's Personal Diary of his Trip to the North Pole," 1910, Pamphlets, 1880-1924, Box 2, Folder 13, Robert Edwin Peary Collection, M145.4, Bowdoin College Library, Department of Special Collections and Archives (Brunswick, Maine).
64. Document entitled "Peary's Proof," by Chief Engineer Ewald (1911), Papers Relating to Peary Retirement Bills, 1909-20, Box 3, Folder: "Peary Rebuttal Material, c. 1909-10," Peary Papers, NARA.
65. File: "Lecture Announcements," Manuscripts, Published Writings, and Lectures, 1886-1918, Box 18, "Announcements, Unarranged, 1886-1918," Peary Papers, NARA.
66. J. Gordon Hayes, *Robert Edwin Peary: A Record of his Explorations, 1886-1909* (London: Grant Richards and Humphrey Toulmin, 1929), 97-119.
67. Elsa Barker, "Peary: The Man and His Work," *Hampton's Magazine*, 13 (December 1909), typescript, Published Material Relating to Polar Exploration, 1888-1920, Peary Arctic Expeditions, 1888-1920, Box 1, Folder "1909," Peary Family Collection, RG 401(1), NARA.
68. Elsa Barker, "The Frozen Grail," in "Recent Poetry," *Current Literature* 45 (September 1908): 340-41. Barker republished this poem at the end of her article "Peary: The Man and His Work."
69. The term "grail has been applied by various writers on the Race to the Pole, including Berton in *The Arctic Grail*. The metaphor evokes notions of knightly chivalry, struggle, quest, and moral triumph typical of a romantic sub-genre popular in nineteenth-century American fiction. See John Fraser, *America and the Patterns of Chivalry* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

70. John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 39; see also Paul Zweig, *The Adventurer: The Fate of Adventure in the Western World* (Pleasantville, N.Y.: Akadine Press, 1999).

71. See, for example, Jack London, "Mauki," *Hampton's Magazine*, 23 (December 1909):752-60; and "The Strength of the Strong," *Hampton's Magazine*, 26 (March 1911): 309-18.

72. H.M. Lyon to Robert E. Peary, Nov. 12, 1909, Letters Received, 1909, Box 37, Folder: "Hampton's Mag. 1909," Peary Papers, NARA.

73. Benjamin Hampton's marginal comments adjacent to subheading: "At Last on the Road to the Pole," galley 8140—Hampton's—Peary—5; C10-31, Original, March 31 [1910], Robert E. Peary Papers, RG 56.18, (hereafter OSUA).

74. Benjamin Hampton's marginal comments adjacent to subheading: "We Overtake the Doctor." "The Discovery of the North Pole," typescript and galley proofs, Robert E. Peary Papers, OSUA.

75. Hampton to Peary, Sept. 30, 1909, Letters Received, 1909, Box 37, Folder: "Hampton's Mag. 1909," Peary Papers, NARA.

76. Marginal comments adjacent to subheading: "Our System of Marching," "The Discovery of the North Pole," typescript and galley proofs, March 31 [1910], Robert E. Peary Papers, OSUA.

77. Robert E. Peary, U.S.N., "The Discovery of the North Pole," Part 6, "The Sledge Journey Across the Polar Sea," *Hampton's Magazine*, 24 (June 1910): 773, 781, 788.

78. "The Discovery of the North Pole," typescript and galley proofs, Accession 19971, Part 8, Manuscript, 6, Robert E. Peary Papers, OSUA.

79. The Canadians William Leggo and Georges Desbarats first developed the half-tone for the *Canadian Illustrated News* in Montreal in 1869. David Reed, *The Popular Magazine in Britain and the United States, 1880-1960* (London: British Library, 1997), 30-31. George Eastman's Kodak camera was introduced in 1888. "George Eastman, the Man." <<http://www.kodak.com/US/en/corp/aboutKodak/kodakHistory/eastman.shtml>>. Ottmar Mergenthaler produced the first linestating machine in the USA in 1886. "The Linotype: What It Is" <<http://www.woodsidepress.com/linotype.html>>.

80. In 1893, Peary published a book sponsored by the Eastman Company of Rochester to promote its new hand-held camera technology. Robert E. Peary, *The Kodak at the North Pole* Rochester, New York: Eastman Press, 1893).

81. T. Everett Harré to Robert E. Peary, Dec. 20, 1909, Letters Received, 1909, Box 37, Folder: "Hampton's Mag. 1909," Peary Papers, NARA.

82. Elsa Barker, "The Song of the North Pole Flag," *Hampton's Magazine*, 24 (February 1910): 158.

83. Draft manuscript, commencing "About ten o'clock in the forenoon of April 6<sup>th</sup> . . . ." Manuscripts, Published Writings and Lectures, 1886-1909, Box 3, Folder entitled "Writings," Peary Papers, NARA.

84. Peary, *The North Pole*, 294-95.

85. "We Reach the Pole," 15, Manuscripts, Published Writings, and Lectures, 1886-1918, Box 3, Folder: "Writings: Type Manuscript of 1909 Trip to the North Pole (Early Draft)—Discovery of the North Pole," Chapter XXIII, Peary Papers, OSUA.

86. Frederick A. Cook, "Dr. Cook's Own Story—Fourth Article—A Year of Wandering, Pursued by Reporters—The Decision to Reappear and Tell Everything," *Hampton's Magazine*, 26 (January-April 1911), 500.

87. Bryce, *Cook and Peary*, 511.

88. Cook, *My Attainment of the Pole*, 555.

89. Quoted in Fergus Fleming, *Ninety Degrees North: The Quest for the North Pole* (London: Granta Books, 2001), 386.

90. Bryce, *Cook and Peary*, 917.

91. Cook, *My Attainment of the Pole*, 566.

92. Hampton to Peary, Nov. 16, 1909, Letters Received, 1909, Box 37, Folder: "Hampton's Mag. 1909," Peary Papers, NARA.

93. Quoted in Bryce, *Cook and Peary*, 482.

94. I have inferred Harré's sexual orientation from two documents. In the first, the stenographer Lilian Kiel, who took dictation from Harré for *Hampton's* cover story on Cook, provided a vivid, if rather homophobic description of him in 1910 from her perspective: "He smiled insipidly—tucked a perfumed lavender silk kerchief into his highest coat pocket, tilted back his chair, proudly displayed a brand new pair of purple socks, ran his effeminate fingers through his shock of perfumed hair, and tried to assume his most effective literary pose!" Lilian E. Kiel, "The Faked 'Confession' or How a Magazine Made History!" The second document is from Elsa Barker's Papers at the University of Delaware. Despite their service as rival ghost-writers, Harré and Barker remained friends for many years. In 1929 he wrote to her, indicating his intention to travel to the French Riviera to spend the winter with a male friend: "Reggie, who

is in New York for a brief visit, has a pet place, Bandol, where he wants me to winter." T. Everett Harré, Wrightsville, York County, Pennsylvania, to Elsa Barker, New York, 10 July 1929, Elsa Barker Papers, Morris Library, University of Delaware (Newark, Delaware).

95. See Lyle Dick, "'Pibloktoq' (Arctic Hysteria): A Construction of European-Inuit Relations?" *Arctic Anthropology*, 32 (1995): 1-42; and *Muskox Land: Ellesmere Island in the Age of Contact* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2001), 371-84.

96. T. Everett Harré, "Memorandum in re: to the Cook-Peary North Pole Controversy . . ." 17 May 1937. Unpublished typescript, Frederick A. Cook Society Collection, RG 56.17, box 29, folder 27, OSUA.

97. T. Everett Harré, *The Eternal Maiden* (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1913).

98. In her study of the racial and gender implications of the North Pole contest, Lisa Bloom has pointed out that Peary never accorded his four Inughuit guides the status of subjects in his narrative. Bloom, *Gender on Ice*, p. 6. The construction of Euro-American masculine identities in the North Pole race through marginalizing female and racial "others" has also been explored by Shari M. Huhndorf, "Nanook and His Contemporaries: Imagining Eskimos in American Culture, 1897-1922," *Critical Inquiry*, 27 (Autumn 2000), 122-48.

99. Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 170-215.

100. See the discussion in Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer*, 183-90.

101. Hampton to Peary, Oct. 22, 1909, Letters Received, 1909, Box 37, Folder: "Hampton's Mag. 1909," Peary Papers, NARA.

102. Hampton to Peary, Nov. 17, 1909, Letters Received, Box 37, "1909," Folder: Hampton's Mag. 1909," Peary Papers, NARA.

103. In a major study of New York's business elites in this era, historian Sven Beckert has described how a relatively small number of New Yorkers came to exercise unprecedented political, economic, and cultural influence by the 1890s. Beckert drew attention to the particular role of clubs, other social institutions, and informal networks in establishing connections among the economic, political, and cultural elites in this era. Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

104. Membership List, ca. 1909, Manuscript File 867, "Peary Arctic Club," The American Museum of Natural History Archives (New York City).

105. See the assorted correspondence in File 1.2.33/29 of the Records of the Peary Arctic Club, The Explorers Club Archives (New York City) (hereafter, ECA); and Manuscript File 867, Peary Arctic Club," American Museum of Natural History Archives (hereafter, AMNHA) (New York City).

106. R.E. Peary, South Harpswell, Maine, to General [Thomas Hubbard], 7 October 1909, File 1.2.33/7fff. Records of the Peary Arctic Club, ECA.

107. Hubbard to Peary, Oct. 9, 1909, Letters Received, 1909, Box 37, Folder: "L.R., Hubbard, March, April, July, Sept. 1909," Peary Papers, NARA.

108. Bridgman to Peary, Sept. 27, 1909, Letters Received, 1909, Box 36, "1909," Folder: "Bridgman, Sept. 1909," 'B', Peary Papers, NARA.

109. Mark Sullivan, *Our Times: The United States, 1900-1925*, vol. IV, "The War Begins, 1909-1914" (New York: Scribner, 1932), 548.

110. Bridgman to Osborn, Oct. 14, 1909, Oct. 19, 1909, and Nov. 17, 1909, Manuscript File 867, "Peary Arctic Club," AMNHA; and Osborn to Peary, Sept. 21, 1909, Sept. 24, 1909, Sept. 25, 1909, Oct. 12, 1909, Oct. 13, 1909, and Nov. 16, 1909. Letters Received, 1909, box 36, Peary Papers, NARA.

111. "Achievement in Polar Exploration: The Exhibit of the Peary Arctic Club," *The American Museum Journal*, 9 (November 1909): 199.

112. Madison Grant to Henry Fairfield Osborn, Nov. 5, 1917; Grant to Osborn, Jan. 11, 1918; and Osborn to Grant, Jan. 8, 1918, Manuscript File 867, AMNHA.

113. Hornaday to Bridgman, Oct. 9, 1909, File 1.2.33/29, Records of the Peary Arctic Club, ECA.

114. News Release: "75 Years of Great Adventures into the Unknown Recalled in Exhibition at Natural History Museum," Manuscript File 1209: "Robert E. Peary," AMNHA. The press release stated: ". . . in 1909 the young National Geographic Society reached deep into its treasury to help finance Peary's climactic polar expedition."

115. Gilbert H. Grosvenor to Robert Peary, 5 October 1909, Letters received 1909, Box no. 37, Folder: "Letters received 'G' 1909," Peary Papers, NARA.

116. See, for example, Wright, *The Big Nail*, 256-57; Weems, *Race for the Pole*, 161-62; and Rawlins, *Peary at the North Pole*, 169-82.

117. Bryce, *Cook and Peary*, 452.

118. *Ibid.*, 457-71.

119. "The Discovery of the North Pole," *NGM* 21 (January 1910): 64. All quoted excerpts from the dinner speeches are taken from this article, 65-77.

120. *Congressional Record*, 62 Cong., Part 3, 3 sess. (Washington, D.C.: House of Representatives, 1911), 2700-25; U.S. 61 Cong. 3 sess., *Report No. 1961* (Washington, D.C.: House of Representatives 1911), 410-31; and U.S. 64 Cong., Part 14 (Washington, D.C.: House of Representatives, 1916), Appendix, 268-327.

121. Fitzhugh Green, Peary, *The Man Who Refused to Fail* (New York and London: G. Putnam's Sons, 1926; William Henry Hobbs, Peary (New York: Macmillan, 1936); Marie Ahnighito Peary, *Discoverer of the North Pole: The Story of Robert E. Peary* (New York: William Morrow, 1959); George Borup, *A Tenderfoot With Peary* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1911); Matthew A. Henson, *A Negro Explorer at the Pole*; Robert A. Bartlett, *The Log of "Bob" Bartlett* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1928); Donald B. MacMillan, *How Peary Reached the Pole* (Boston: Blue Ribbon Books, 1934); Robert E. Peary, *Secrets of Polar Travel* (New York: Century Co., 1917).

122. *The Navy* (1911), cited in: "Rewards and Penalties of Polar Exploration," *Scientific American*, 104 (April 22, 1911): 398; Nancy Fogelson, *Arctic Exploration and International Relations, 1900-1932* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1992), 37.

123. See, for example: "Peary's Discovery of the North Pole," *Scientific American*, 101 (September 18, 1909): 196-97; "Commander Peary's Expedition to the North Pole," *Nature* 83 (May 5, 1910): 283-86; "Investigating Peary," *Scientific American* 104 (April 22, 1911): 404-405; "Rewards and Penalties of Polar Exploration," *Scientific American*, 104 (April 22, 1911): 398; "Honors to Amundsen and Peary," *National Geographic Magazine*, 24 (January 1913): 113-30.

124. See, for example: "Peary Reaches the Pole," *The Outlook*, 93 September 18, 1909, 79; Sturgis B. Rand, "Robert E. Peary," *McClure's Magazine*, 18 (1909): 354; Herbert L. Bridgman, "The Dash to the Pole," *The Independent*, 67 (September 9, 1909): 571-74; "Discovery of the North Pole: Peary's First Account," *World's Work*, 18 (October 1909): 12103; "Peary's Dash to the North Pole," *Current Literature*, 47 (October 1909): 352-358; George Kennan, "Commander Peary," *The Outlook*, 94 (January 1910): 220-222.

125. Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansionism, 1860-1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963); J. Rogers Hollingsworth, ed., *American Expansionism in the Late Nineteenth Century: Colonialist or Anticolonialist?* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968).

126. Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000).

127. See Donna Haraway's classic analysis of the African and Theodore Roosevelt halls of the American Museum of Natural History. Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936," in Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 237-91.

128. Catherine A. Lutz and Jane L. Collins, *Reading National Geographic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

129. Madison Grant's and Theodore Roosevelt's anxieties and obsessions regarding the status of the Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic "race" are discussed in Matthew Pratt Guterl, *The Color of Race in America, 1900-1940* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 14-67. On the historical background to ideologies of Anglo-Saxon expansionism and their racial content, see Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); and Paul A. Kramer, "Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910," *The Journal of American History*, 88 (2002): 315-53.

130. Peary's value as a role model for the market place was recognized by the National Institute of Efficiency, an organization founded in 1916 to promote "human efficiency" in "government, in business, and in the home." See: "National Institute of Efficiency" [flyer]; and Herbert W. Rice, Treasurer, to Robert E. Peary, Feb. 28, 1916, Letters Received 1910, Box 42, Folder: "N" 1910, Peary Papers (Washington, D.C.). As well, following Peary's death, the New York Chamber of Commerce commissioned an illuminated manuscript in which it asserted that Peary's "heroic efforts . . . are contributions not only to science and knowledge but are examples of what courage and consistency of purpose can accomplish against what appear to be almost insurmountable obstacles. . . ." Papers Relating to the Funeral and Memorials to Adm. Peary, 1920-59, Box 153, Memorials, 1920-53, Peary Papers, NARA.

131. Here, I am categorizing as "epic" the tradition of heroic narration on the Race to the Pole, consisting of the preponderance of work, ca. 1909-70, crediting Peary with victory and celebrating his achievements. In 1909, Elsa Barker explicitly sought to write an epic, as she revealed in writing to Peary: "It must be a great classic, for it will live forever. . . . It will be read as history—as we read the younger Pliny on the destruction of Herculaneum and Pompeii and as we read Caesar . . . . There is no labor too great, and no inconvenience too great, to have this book made perfect." Barker quoted in Bryce, *Cook and Peary*, 478. Portrayals of epic heroism were also exemplified in early biographies of Peary by Fitzhugh Green and William Herbert Hobbs, and reproduced in numerous books on polar exploration in the United States, all conforming to

the genre's emphasis on hero's deeds in battle, long, arduous journeys, or quests. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 318-24. Other characteristic features of the epic are that it is narrated in a formal, lofty style and "centred on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or the human race." M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 4th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1981), 50.

132. News Clippings: *The New York Times*, *New York Tribune*, *New York Sun*; *Baltimore Sun*; *Philadelphia Press*, *Boston Herald*; *Providence Bulletin*; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *Washington, D. C.*, *Star*, all dated Feb. 29, 1920, Papers Relating to the Funeral and Memorials to Adm. Peary, 1920-59, Box 153, "Memorials, 1920-53," Folder: "J.D.P. 1920," Peary Family Collection, NARA.

133. "Memorial to Peary: The National Geographic Society Dedicates Monument in Arlington National Cemetery to Discoverer of the North Pole," *NGM*, 41 (June 1922): 639.

134. L.M. Smith, Rear Admiral, CEC, Washington DC, to Robert H. Edwards, President, Bowdoin College, Apr. 28, 2000, Robert Edwin Peary Collection, Special Collections, Bowdoin College Library (Brunswick, Maine).

135. Smith, *American Empire*, 97-98.

136. See, for example, Daniel E. Harmon, *Robert Peary and the Quest for the North Pole* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2002); and Gordon Charleston, *Peary Reaches the North Pole* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1993).

137. "Did You Know?" *U.S. News and World Report*, 136 (February 23 - March 1, 2004), cover, and 85.

138. See "The Case of the Missing Toes" in Dick, *Muskox Land*, 231-33.