



EAGLE ISLAND JOURNAL

A Publication of the Friends of Peary's Eagle Island

"Inveniam viam aut faciam."
Find a way or make one.

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April 6, 2009

100 years ago today
Robert Edwin Peary, Matthew Henson,
Ooqueah, Ootah, Segloo, and Egingwah

reached the North Pole on April 6, 1909 after traveling 33 days over the Arctic Ocean Ice from Cape Columbia on Ellsemere Island. An expedition that still stands as an inspiration to young and old alike. An outstanding example of vision, courage, commitment, and teamwork. Peary described the expedition as follows:

(Transcribed from his recorded speech in 1910.)

“A little less than 400 years ago in 1527, England sent out the first recorded expedition in search of the North Pole. Eighty years later in 1607, Henry Hudson made his historic voyage. From that time on, for 275 years, Great Britain held the record, slowly pushing the reading up to 83 degrees, 20 minutes north latitude. Then in 1882 the lead came to the United States. Thirteen years later, Norway went to the front. And in 1900, a member of the Royal House of Italy, the Duke of the Abruzzi, grasped the blue ribbon. Six years later, the United States took the lead again with a record of 87 degrees, 6 minutes. So matters stood in the Spring of 1908 when the Peary Arctic Club of New York City was fitting out its last North Pole expedition. This club is an organization made up of men prominent in business and social circles, some of them of international reputation. Its president, the General Thomas H. Hubbard, its vice president Zenas Crane, and its secretary Herbert L. Bridgman. The avowed object which this club placed before itself was the attainment of the North Pole for prestige and honor of the United States of America.

The work divided itself into two parts. First, the driving of a specially constructed ship to a point within striking distance of the Pole. And then the projection of a sledge party from the

ship across the ice of the pole and seizing the Pole itself.

The key of the problem was the negotiation of the 413 miles of icy chaos extending from Cape Columbia, the northern-most point of all North American land to the Pole. The expedition left New York on the 6th of July in 1908 in the steamer *Roosevelt* built by the club and commanded by Captain Robert A. Bartlett; was reviewed by President Roosevelt; and steamed northward arriving at Cape York, North Greenland the 1st of August. Eskimos, dogs, furs, and so forth were obtained in the Eskimo country and on the 18th of August the *Roosevelt* steamed north through the narrow ice-encumbered channel forming the American gateway to the Pole.

Winter quarters at coast of Grant Land were reached September 5th. Here the expedition wintered, hunting, transporting supplies. The first division left the *Roosevelt* last division February 15th, 1909, the party left Cape Columbia heading due north



Cape Sheridan on the north 450 miles from the Pole September 5th. Here the expedition, making equipment, and westward to Cape Columbia February 15th, 1909, the party 22nd. The entire sledge

comprising 24 men, 19 dogs. Four successive supporting parties in Borup, Marvin, and intervals, last, in the 88th parallel. command, six men, pushed forward by itself where it arrived in 1909.

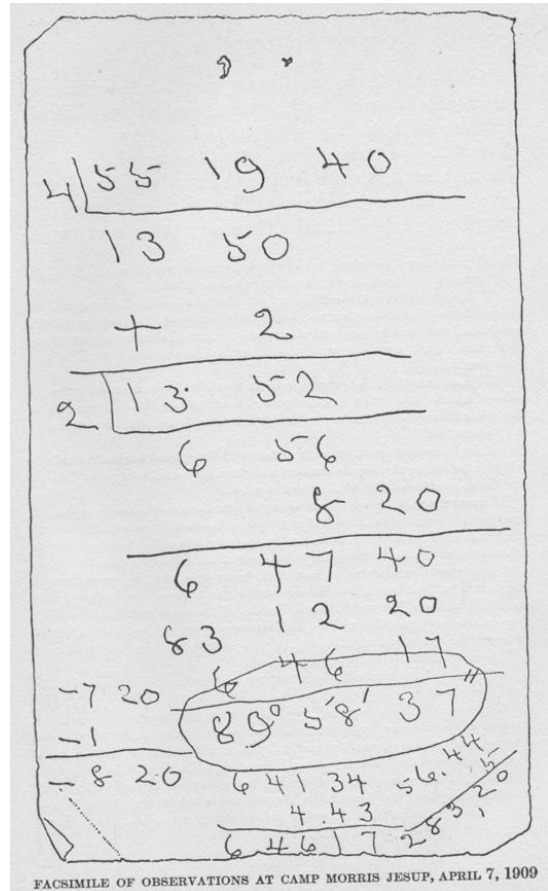
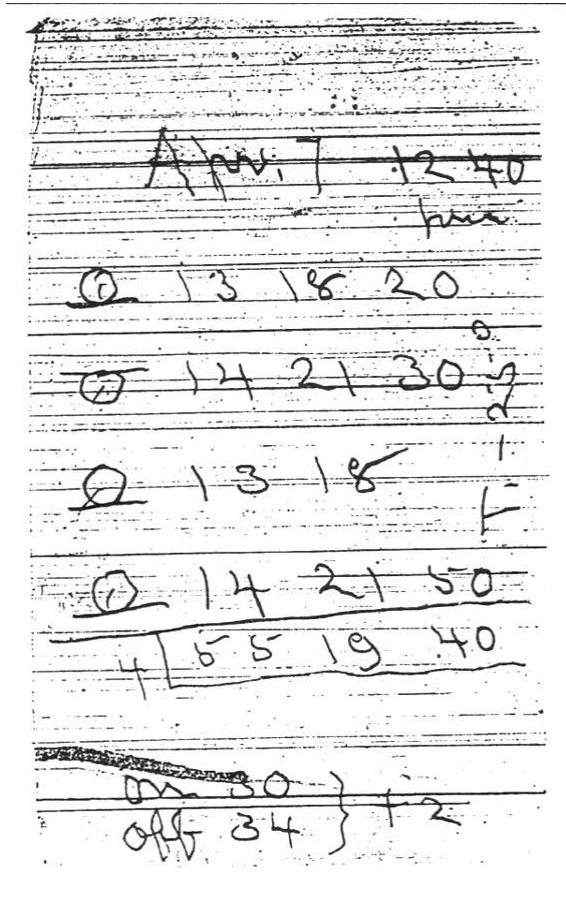
The expedition, sledges, and 133 supporting parties in Borup, Marvin, and intervals, last, in the 88th parallel. command, six men, pushed forward by itself where it arrived in 1909.

Here, in the midst of great fields of heavy ice covering an ocean two miles or more in depth with the sun circling around the sky day after day without setting, the stars and stripes were planted, and the record left with a piece of the flag. Returning, we left the Pole April 7th. And after a series of forced marches, regained Cape Columbia the 23rd of April and the *Roosevelt* the 27th. July 18th the *Roosevelt* started south and September 5th reached the wireless station at Indian Harbor, Labrador from where the message, "Stars and stripes nailed to the North Pole" was sent flashing over the world.

The discovery of the North Pole stands for the inevitable victory of courage, persistence, experience over all obstacles. In the discovery of the North Pole is written the final chapter of the last of the great geographical stories of the western hemisphere which began with the discovery of the New World by Columbus. Here is the cap and climax, the finish, the closing of the book on 400 years of history. The discovery of the North Pole on the 6th of April 1909 by the last expedition of the Peary Arctic Club means that the splendid frozen jewel of the north, for which through centuries men of every nation have struggled and suffered and died, is won at last and is to be worn forever by the stars and stripes."

A copy of two pages from Peary's diary setting forth his latitude calculations.

Dated April 7, 1909



Explanation by Lt. Col. William E. Mollett USAF (ret.)

13° 50' is the average plus 2' to compensate for the specific index error of his instrument

13° 52' 00" as corrected

6° 56' 00" one half the double altitude

-00° 08' 20" refraction index taken from the almanac

6° 47' 40" is observed altitude after all known corrections applied

83° 12' 20" co-altitude (90° minus 6 47 40)

6° 46' 17" declination

89° 58' 37" is the latitude of the observer (1 ½ miles from the North Pole)

One minute of latitude equals one nautical mile.

Admiral Robert E. Peary's address at The Rensselaer Polytechnic Commencement

June 14, 1911

I recognize that I am a very fortunate man. I have dreamed my dream, and working incessantly with all my strength, have done what is given to few men to accomplish fully. I have forced the realization of that dream.

Now though maimed, and with the ineffaceable memory of days of physical torture, and nights of agony of disappointment and hope deferred, such as I hope none of you may ever experience, I still have left some measure of life and strength with which to enjoy that realization.

Above and beyond everything else stands out for me two things.

I have the pride of feeling that my opportunity was neither thrust upon me nor came to me by luck, but that I made my opportunity and utilized it, in spite of every obstacle the Arctic regions could present.

The other is that throughout what span of life may be left to me, whether in a crowd or alone with myself, I can face myself, and know that I have stood the test, that I have won out, that I have made good.

When at times the raising of the necessary money for another expedition seemed hopeless, I hugged my dream to myself and said: "I shall find the money, I shall go north again."

In those blue hours when stopped by insuperable obstacles, short of the absolute goal for which I was striving, I have faced the stern necessity of turning back, returning home, and starting over again, with all the contingencies and uncertainties of an added year or two, I have hugged my dream to myself and said, "I shall come back and do it yet."

In the black moments of absolute hopeless obstacles, of supreme physical discomfort, of threatened catastrophe, I have hugged my dream to myself and said, "This is but for the moment. I shall win out yet."

Were I a ragged beggar in the streets today, without a friend in the world, I could hug my dream to myself and feed and warm and clothe myself with the thought, "I have made good." And when the end comes, I can knock at the gates on the other side, and with head erect, offer as my passport, "I have made good."

In conclusion, I wish you all good fortune in realization of your dreams and ideals, whether in business, or invention, or molding of the country's history, or other avenue that leads to progress and the good of mankind.



President's Message

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY. Can you believe it's been 100 years since Admiral Peary achieved his lifelong dream of being the first to reach the North Pole? How did he do it? The answer: Twenty-three years of meticulous planning and incredible determination. There probably is no better example in human history for young people to emulate than the life of Admiral Robert E. Peary. To perpetuate his remarkable legacy is a major goal of the Friends of Peary's Eagle Island. How are we going to do that?

"Invenium viam aut Facium" (We will find a way or make one)

Harry Rich

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Visit our web site - pearyeagleisland.org

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