A DIO Commentary:

Unfalsifiability-Summit, Flub-Summit, Barometer-Bomb

A If you missed the truth, the movie’s just as good

A1 Fake Peak, in spite of its geographical insignificance (see Fig.28) — no contour surrounds it on even the largest-scale USGS topographic map — has played a famous role in the history of US alpine exploration. In light of Bob Bryce’s epochal recovery and analysis of Cook’s uncropped ‘Summit’ photo (§7), it’s worthwhile to review some of the more recent arguments put forth by Cook supporters, regarding the importance of this photograph. (Throughout the following appraisal, we will use the abbreviation “CTC” for the Cook Society’s 1996 reprint-plus-commentary of Cook’s 1908 To the Top of the Continent.)

A2 In his biography of Cook, Hugh Eames conceded (§7 §E1) that the ‘Summit’ photo really showed Fake Peak, but he excused the fraud (see §7 §E1) with this argument: Cook needed to raise money by lecturing, lecturing was a form of show business, and in show business everyone lies. Therefore, reasoned Eames, it’s okay for Cook to lie, too. In Eames’ end-justifies-the-means view, the fake photo was nothing more than an early form of Special Effects, then as now a device for bringing in the crowds. And their funds.

A3 Eames had seen Adams Carter’s photo of Fake Peak (reproduced here as Fig.5), but was unaware of the existence of Cook’s diary. Thus, although Eames concluded that the ‘Summit’ photo was taken as a backup in case of camera failure, he also believed (1973 p.65) that it was taken on the way down the mountain. But Cook’s diary p.59 shows (§8 §B Sept.10) that the excursion into Fake Peak amphitheater was made on the way up the mountain. Taking a spare on the way up cannot be easily explained, except in the context of deliberate fakery. Not only was this before Cook could have known whether his climb would be successful or not (see §7 §H4, fn 49), but also any ‘backup photo’ excuse must now suppose that Cook knew ahead of time that his camera (or film) was going to fail on the way to the top. So the ‘backup photo’ argument casts Cook not just in the role of a cautious man, but less plausibly in the role of an honest psychic.

1 Fake Peak (5338 ft) is located at 62°54’16”N, 150°30’21”W (Michael Schoder, AEROMAP, 907-272-4495). The South Peak of Mt. McKinley (20320 ft) is at 63°04’09”N, 151°00’23”W (Jeffrey Yates, DAT/EM, 907-522-3681); the slightly lower North Peak (19470 ft) is at approximately 63°06’N, 151°00’W. [DIO thanks Bradford Washburn for expert information on locating Fake Peak, and for much other advice on McKinley and Cook, as well as providing crucial photos from his vast and unique Mt. McKinley collection.]

2 Winner Lose All, Little, Brown, & Co., 1973 (pp.64f), a book published, ironically, on the same day (1973/6/29) as DR’s Peary at the North Pole: Fact or Fiction?, which (at chapters 6 & 19) provides a much less glowing review of Cook’s career as hoaxer. Could Eames (writing at the high-Watergate period of US history) have been influenced by various defenses of presidential “corner-cutting”? — such alibis as, e.g., if Johnson earlier got away with Nixonian crimes, then Nixon must be innocent.

3 To take Eames’ reasoning a step further: if Cook hadn’t lied about the “summit” photo, he wouldn’t have had enough money to try for the North Pole prize. So if, as Eames seems to believe, it’s acceptable to fake for money, why would he object to Cook’s lying about making it to McKinley’s summit? Since Cook’s motive in that was also to raise money for exploration. [See fn 28.]

4 Note that Cook’s 1906 diary was entered into a register with preprinted-pagination. Since such a choice makes fakery harder, this provides some evidence in favor of the theory that Cook originally intended to climb McKinley. He probably also intended in 1908 to reach the North Pole — presumably via Crocker Land (thus explaining his odd westerly detour across Heiberg Land), which then turned out not to exist. DIO 1.1 §a §B1-B2.

5 See Cook & Peary p.820 for an eyewitness account of an embarrassing slipup by Cook in this connection soon after his 1906 return.
B Similarities, Faking the Wrong Summit, & Legal Blindness

B1 According to Eames, “Cook chose the ‘fake peak’ to photograph because its tip resembled the tip of McKinley. The similarities between [them] are evidence that Cook’s memory of the scene as he struggled up the last hundred yards was very keen.”

B2 But, even if one accepts this similarity (and other alleged ones), this is evidence only for the undisputed facts that: [a] Cook had eyes, and [b] McKinley (and some eastern ridges around it) are visible from the Gateway. (Note that, when he has to map the allegedly-explored area which is not visible from the Gateway, Cook’s putative ultra-keen memory fails horribly: see §§D4-D5.) However, this whole (already sufficiently ridiculous) line of argument ends up backfiring with high justice and higher comedy, due to a simple reality: the true, unshaped summit of McKinley is NOT seen as the highest point for an observer at Fake Peak or the Gateway: rather, narrow Carter Horn — 100 feet below and 1/5 mi east & south of the summit — seems angularly higher and intervenes;’ and pointed Carter Horn is in truth the sharp “Gun Sight” (Fig.27) that Cook, from his Ruth Glacier viewing position, mistook for the actual summit (which is not sharp: Fig.34). Therefore, by choosing acute Fake Peak specifically for this similarity (see §7(G7), Cook again bombs — and convicts himself of not arriving at the summit, where the actual situation’ would be obvious.

B3 The defensive notion that “similarity” is as important as hard reality may also be found in an especially weird Cookite passage, in which Washburn’s lock-in 1956 photographic match (our Fig.29) to the topography of Cook’s “15,400 ft” scene (our Fig.28) is passed off as not establishing anything much, because Walter Gonnason (who has drawn Cook-clique funding for decades) had a vision. CTC pp.251-252 (emp: added): “Washburn believes that he found a spot on the lower Ruth Glacier where Dr. Cook took the [15,400 ft] cliff photo. Gonnason believes that he has seen a similar cliff near the Thayer Basin, which would be at the 15,000 foot level.” [Photo not included.] (Analogous fill at CTC p.252-253, regarding the summit.) Any society that can broadcast such stuff should put in a disability claim for blindness. Mental or whatever.

B4 The front cover of CTC is a photo of McKinley from azimuth c.120° (virtually the Carter Horn azimuth — what a coincidence! — as well as Cook’s azimuth at the Gateway: fn 7), deliberately11 presenting a sharp-looking “summit” to the unwary reader, who will not know that it’s actually Carter Horn. Thus, one of Cook’s funniest giveaway blunders is repeated and perpetuated.

---

\[\text{THE COOK SOCIETY IS NOT CONVINCED OF THE MATCH}\]
C1 I'll know it when I see it, unless I don't

A more convoluted argument on the Summit photo can be found in a tract authored by (lawyer) Sheldon Cook-Dorough (no family relation to F. Cook) in *Polar Priorities 14*. It is so gloriously bizarre that it deserves to be quoted here at length. (Bear in mind that Cook-Dorough was the last person known to have seen the sharp, clear print of the uncropped Summit photo. That print was last seen in early summer 1994 [§7 fn 12], just a few months before the article quoted here was published.) Cook-Dorough’s reasoning:

The primary item of evidence which is presented by Cook’s adversaries as supposed proof that he did not reach the summit of Mt. McKinley in 1906 is their allegation that the photograph which is displayed in Cook’s book, *To the Top of the Continent*, as the summit of Mt. McKinley is in fact a much lower and indeed insignificant peak in the foothills of Mt. McKinley located off the lower reaches of Ruth Glacier having and [sic] elevations [sic] of only 5,500 feet.

C2 At the outset, the controlling point should be clearly [sic] stated and that is simply this: Even if the peak depicted in Cook’s summit photograph is not the true summit but is a peak at a much lower elevation, this fact would not prove that Cook did not reach the summit. At most, it would raise a question as to whether or not Cook had in reality attained the top. In order to make a determination whether or not Cook actually reached the summit, it is necessary to examine and weigh all the evidence pertaining to his climb, the entire body of the evidence, including the photograph in question. If there is other evidence, evidence which is extensive and significant and supports Cook’s assertion that he reached the top, as there is, then such a photograph, though not of the true summit, would almost certainly have an explanation which is consistent with his having scaled Mt. McKinley to the top of its ultimate peak. [See Lewis source cited at fn 16. — ed.] If the evidence as a whole strongly indicates that Cook accomplished the ascent, as it does, then it is quite probable that he did, and that the photograph was used for purposes of illustration because he was unable to make a satisfactory photograph at the summit and the highest elevations; that Cook was compelled to use a photograph of a peak other than a true summit for a reason other than his failure to reach the top.

C3 But the second point is equally interesting and may be dispositive of the assertions of Cook’s enemies during the last 80 years, that the peak depicted in Cook’s summit photograph is, in fact, an unimportant peak located in the foothills of Mt. McKinley off Ruth Glacier between 14 and 20 miles southeast of the summit and having an elevation of only approximately 5,500 feet. Cook’s adversaries have referred to this peak as “Fake Peak” in derivation of Cook’s assertion that he reached the summit of Mt. McKinley in September 1906. The second point to be made is this: While Parker, Browne, and Washburn maintain that “Fake Peak” is the peak depicted in Cook’s photograph of the summit of Mt. McKinley, three careful and thoroughgoing students of the question during the last 80 years have concluded that the peak depicted in Cook’s summit photograph and “Fake Peak” cannot be the same; that the peak in Cook’s summit photograph is not “Fake Peak.”

E C. E. Rost also studied the question whether Browne and Parker’s “Fake Peak” as shown in their 1910 photograph is the peak depicted in Cook’s summit photograph. Rost examined the question independently of Edwin Swift Balch but during the same period, 1912-1914. Rost came to the same conclusion which was reached by Edwin Swift Balch: the peak in Cook’s summit photograph and “Fake Peak” captured by the camera of Browne and Parker in 1910 are not the same peak, the dissimilarities between the two peaks are clear. Thus, the peak depicted in Cook’s summit photograph is not “Fake Peak” and cannot be “Fake Peak.” Rost’s conclusions are set forth in his monograph, *Mount McKinley and Its Bearing Upon the Polar Controversy*, 1914.

C5 Hans Cornelius Waale made an exhaustive study of this question in the 1970s and 1980s and concluded that the peak in Cook’s summit photograph and “Fake Peak” are different peaks. He found marked dissimilarities between them, although like Rost and Edwin Swift Balch, he discovered some resemblance between the two peaks. But the pronounced differences between the two, in his view, make it impossible that they are the same. Waale concluded that whether or not Cook’s summit photograph depicts the true culminating peak of Mt. McKinley, there is no question that Cook’s summit is not “Fake Peak.”

C6 Bradford Washburn contends that Parker and Browne were correct and that “Fake Peak” is the peak depicted in Cook’s summit photograph. [American Alpine Journal 11.1, 1958] Neither explains satisfactorily how “Fake Peak” and Cook’s Peak can be the same peak yet display certain marked dissimilarities. It seems most unlikely that the peak captured in Cook’s summit photograph is “Fake Peak.”

C7 To conclude with a reference to the first point made in this discussion: Even if it were shown that Cook’s Peak is “Fake Peak,” this would not prove that Cook did not reach the top of Mt. McKinley. The question whether or not Cook scaled Mt. McKinley to its summit must be resolved on the basis of all the evidence pertaining to his climb of the mountain in September 1906, the entire body of the evidence, including this photograph, and if the evidence as a whole supports the reality of his ascent, then it must be concluded that Cook probably, indeed almost certainly, reached the top and that the photograph has an explanation consistent with the reality of his achievement. The evidence as a whole very strongly supports Cook’s claim to the first ascent of Mt. McKinley and renders it highly probable that he accomplished the feat.14

C8 Cook-Dorough starts by saying that if the summit photo shows Fake Peak, that would not prove that Cook didn’t climb McKinley. In this way, lawyer Cook-Dorough tries to shift the burden of proof off Cook, in effect saying that Cook doesn’t have to prove he reached the summit, rather his critics must prove he didn’t. (Not the first time the legal profession

12 Rost was Cook’s often-acute paid Washington lobbyist, who later sued Cook for non-payment of wages. (The accurate title of his [atypically bad] monograph is *Mount McKinley, its bearing on the Polar Controversy.* See Rawlins *Peary . . . Fiction* pp.247-248 and Bryce Cook & Peary, pp.599-601.

13 This argument tries to exploit nature’s alteration of Fake Peak (including collapse of its right side). The reasoning is about on a level with disputing a coroner’s identification, of a corpse whose right hand is missing, by protesting that the left hand’s perfect fingerprint-match proves nothing without the other hand. If we add-in suspicion of forgery (§G), the parallel would be to suppose that the coroner could fabricate the corpse’s left hand — but was stumped (if you will) by the task of faking the right hand.

14 *Polar Priorities 14* (October 1994) pp.14-15, note 2. Cook-Dorough (name now legally changed to Sheldon Shackelford Randolph Cook) can be reached in care of the Frederick A. Cook Society, Sullivan County Museum, P.O. Box 247, Hurleyville, NY 12747 (telephone 914-434-8044), which also handles membership-subscriptions ($10/yr). Submissions to *Polar Priorities* go to editor Russell W. Gibbons, P.O. Box 11421, Pittsburgh, PA 15238; telephone 412-782-0171, fax 412-784-8801.
has turned sensible philosophy-of-science upside-down.) 15 Then he rolls out an attempt at appealing to Authority, quoting experts who state flatly (and incorrectly) that “there is no question that Cook’s summit photo is not Fake Peak.” Then he reverses course again and says that, oh-by-the-way, just in case the summit photo really is Fake Peak, we must look at (all the other) evidence. (Of course, Cook-Dorough had seen the uncrpped Summit photo — §7 fn 10 — and therefore must have known that his cited experts’ opinions were false.) Particularly precious is Cook-Dorough’s insistence that the Summit photo, even if fake, must have some perfectly innocent16 explanation. (Fn 17. Similar slipknot-thinking at fn 28.)

C9 Those who run out of hard evidence are prone to ask for a Larger View — appealing to the whole-of-the-evidence (§§C2&C7), or CTC p.253: whether-or-not-Cook’s-summit-shot-is-faked-is-secondary, because, “The real resolution to this dispute is to examine Dr. Cook’s complete route along the East Ridge to the summit.” (Which rather takes for granted that the route was completed. Or even started. After all, the more serious controversy here isn’t: did Cook get to Mt. McKinley’s top? It’s rather: did he even get to McKinley’s bottom?) There are several lawyeresque advantages of this wholistic approach: [a] No possibility of a crucial experiment is permitted — the prime condition for maintenance of an unfalsiable mentality. [b] No matter the weight of evidence, the controversy’s loser can avoid admitting the embarrassing truth by eternally generating nit-picks and alibis.17 [c] Indisputable hard evidences are less important than our Expert Team’s superior understanding of the Whole Situation.18

C10 The trouble with item [c] is that it tends away from logic and towards personal attacks, an effect which may help explain the Cook Society’s peculiar venom towards the world’s leading Mt. McKinley expert, Bradford Washburn (longtime head of Boston’s Museum of Science),19 whose overwhelming conclusivity 1950s photographic investigations would have ended the Cook-McKinley controversy forever among persons of balanced judgement. A likely purpose of the recent Cook Society expedition to the McKinley area was the establishment of we’ve-been-up-there Expertise. None of which will impress scientists who observe the society’s diary-p.52 four-way-disaster (see §F) or its mangling of the mere printing of basic surveying equations.21

15 E.g., the discovery-rule and the Mirandization of suspects are both flagrantly contrary to creating conditions in which competing theories’ credibility & fruitfulness can be tested by incoming evidence. 16 By golly, there must be some logical reason why the unimpeachable evidence does not fit the sacred theory. Cook-Dorough could of we’ve-been-up-there conditions, Readers with the wit to solve this riddle may also wish to help S. Lewis out of his equally self-imposed animal-pain dilemma: see DIO 4.3 :15 §13, fn 42. Suggestions that either sacred theory might possibly be wrong will be received with predictable-invincible deafness. 17 A gem, by Cook-Dorough, from Polar Priorities 15: The reasons for Cook possibly not having a photograph could of we’ve-been-up-there conditions, snow, haze, extreme cold. Conditions are so poor on some days, particularly at the highest locations, that no good, clear photographs can be made. Thus a substitute photograph of similar features found at lower elevations might be used for purposes of illustration.” As Washburn notes, a poor-visibility excuse is pretty odd for an explorer who claimed (CTC p.260) that he could see distant volcanoes from the summit! So CTC p.260 turns around — in a master-display of swivel-hipped zigzag-unfalsiability — offers that Cook’s very claim of seeing the volcanoes is evidence in his favor regardless of whether it’s dead wrong (which it positively is: DSS). Without any climate data, it looks highly unlikely [that he] would provide the tiny upland observations. [He] might easily claim that it was too cloudy to get a photo or see distant peaks.” This is typical (see also §D6) of the Cook Society’s evasion (noncitation) of Washburn’s demonstration that higher & nearer mountains are in a direct line with (and so make impossible) two of Cook’s reported observations of volcanoes. 18 Eminent professors are not immune to such delusions: see DIO 1.2 fn 668.100. 19 Science Park, Boston, MA 02114-1099, telephone 617-589-0229, fax 589-0363. 20 The sheer beauty of Washburn’s pictures is assisted by use of large negatives. Cook made the same wise choice. 21 Compare CTC p.302 to the original Russell Porter rendering at p.41 of A. Brooks, “Mount McKinley Region, Alaska”, Dep’t Interior, USGeolSurv, Professional Paper 70 (Wash, DC, 1911). 22 Definitely deliberate: when virtually the same map was published in To the Top of the Continent (1908 pp.152,153), Cook’s route was omitted. Odd behavior for an allegedly honest man. 23 The serpentine glacier of Fig.31 is evidently just a speculative extrapolation by R.Porter (an early skeptic) out of Cook's diary p.164, CTC p.291, linking two parallel dotted-line semi-conjunctual glaciers. For the evolution of this mapping, see the 1906-data-based maps (XV vs. II) in A. Brookes 1911 (cited in fn 21). (Bryce has wondered whether the serpentine glacier is ultimately based upon a huge Cook exaggeration-misplacement of the Ruth Glacier’s West Fork.) 24 §To the Top of the Continent, p.232. (See Washburn 1958 p.12.) 25 Same defense for Cook’s lack of McKinley summit compass data (§E) and for his “North Pole” fantasy’s navigational howlers. The Cook Society contains no navigators, and for decades the Society has been unable (despite DR’s urging) to find — or even to ask publicly for — navigational experts who will vouch for the non-farcicality of Cook’s purported 1908 sextant “data”: “For which planet these alleged data put Cook on, see Rawlins Peary . . . Ficton 1973 pp.86-87.”
The foregoing highlights a recurring theme in all of the evidence from the 1906 non-climb: absolutely everything can be verified below the point that Barrill said Cook & he turned back, and absolutely nothing can be verified beyond that point. Below the point Barrill said they turned back, we have:

- A complete photographic record, including many striking & beautiful photos;
- Several sketches in Cook’s diary of views from the lower Ruth Glacier;
- Two sets of compass bearings on visible peaks from the lower Ruth Glacier;
- Two sketch-maps in Cook’s diary of the lower Ruth Glacier;
- A fine, accurate map representing the lower Ruth Glacier, published in Harper’s.

And above the point Barrill said they turned back:

- Not one photograph;
- Not one diary sketch that is a credible match to real terrain;
- Not one compass bearing;
- Not one diary sketch-map (the contrast to §D7 was suppressed in CTC: §F);
- A suspiciously incomplete map of the region north of the Gateway, published in Harper’s.

Final score on the hard evidence (see also §7 §H2): Cook is five-for-five in providing evidence below the point where Barrill said they turned back, as against zero-for-five in providing evidence beyond that point. And this score is charitable, since the published cartography is not merely lack of evidence but positive evidence for fraud. (Washburn notes: the map appeared 2 months before Cook left the US, for his polar hoax.) So if Cook reached the summit, not only did he stop taking photos at the precise point Barrill said they turned back, he also: stopped making sketches, stopped taking compass bearings, stopped making maps (did he lose his compass and his map-sense to the same gremlin who stole his films?), and began to falsify the topography of the region. All at the same critical point.

---

26 First recognized as such by Ted Heckathorn. See Cook diary pages 50 & 56, reproduced here as Figs.20&30 (also at pages 283&285 of Heckathorn’s afterword to CTC). DIO’s analyses of these two bearing sets put Cook on the Ruth Glacier at 62° 47’N, 150° 38’W (diary p.50), and 62° 52’N, 150° 56’W (diary p.56). Both points (accurate to about a mile) are well south of where Barrill said Cook & he turned back. Most of the compass data on diary p.51, CTC p.283, are nothing but p.50 data offset by 1° 1/2. (The same mountain [perhaps the 11550 ft peak at 62° 57’N, 150° 59’W] is called “Mt. Hunter” [§7 fn 38] on p.50, “McK.” on p.51.) So, the site was likely that of p.50. As for the 1° 1/2 differential: its steadiness is a credit to Cook’s vision, but its size shows poor accounting for compass deviation.)

27 In spite of Cook’s claim that he took “a round of angles with the prismatic compass” from the top of Mt. McKinley (To the Top of the Continent, p.233), his own diary contains no compass data except from Ruth Glacier (fn 26). Explaining-away this glaring omission requires an extra-epicyclic alibi entirely separate from the other baseless excuse (film-going-bad) — and so we have the proto-makings of a burgeoning-out-of-control disconnected-alibi goulash, which obviously isn’t going to make the Occam’s-Razor cut. See §D9 & DIO 4.3 §15 §E5. (Also DIO 1.1 §7 §D1, DIO 1.2 §F4, fn 103&209, 2.3 §C20 & fn 46, 11 fn 47.)

28 [See §7 fn 49, where unshakable faith in Cook leads to the transformation of a desperately-conjured-up wispy speculation — that Cook’s film suddenly went bad at the Gateway — into a concrete-positive conviction of this. No matter that Cook never publicly said so. Instead, he palmed off low-altitude photos as high-altitude. Which proves him a liar. OK, OK, so he lied about the film — but not the summit opportunity to be sure of this improbable improbability. Notice the disproportionately fine-distinction is what makes a Cookie. See fn 3. Also R.Newton at Q. J. Roy. Astr. Soc. 20:390 [1979], & 21:390 [1980], and DIO 1.2 §H3.) The sole, entire basis of the bad-film alibi is need: Cook-lovers crave a closing-episode escape-hatch, some way — any way — of continuing to insist that being on the wrong side of 100% of the photographic evidence proves nothing. Nothing. (See also fn 16.) Certainly, this overwhelming evidential situation cannot prove that Cook-junkies have for decades — i.e., for most of their research-lives — been wrong. Utterly & spectacularly wrong. Ironically-aside-down wrong. Consciously-exploded, by the clumsiest hoax-explode hoaxers of exploration history. No, not for all those years — during which devotees increasingly insulted the intelligence, integrity, and motives of those who have now been proven absolutely correct on THE key photo of the case.)

29 Another type of hard evidence runs out at the Gateway: remains of Cook’s camps have been found by both Washburn (see Fig.29 caption & AAJ 11.1 [1958] p.14) and Okonek (1993/1/3 letter to Bryce). But no traces of Cook’s 1906 trip have been found closer to McKinley than the Gateway.
D10  Cook’s 1906 farthest north is also obvious from a glance at Fig.12 (diary p.44), where his own marks of activity — and the lack of a sketch-map farther north — show that he never even approached any of the four peaks he numbers #9-#12, which he merely saw (at the Gateway) from the south, in the distance.31  Friendly Peak was probably peak #11 of the four. As Bryce correctly remarks (§7 §G6), the Cook Society photo of Friendly Peak (Fig.26, same as CTC Plate 2/7) does not especially resemble Cook’s “Gun Sight peak” sketch (bottom drawing at Fig.15), though the Society claims it does. This despite the neat assisting ploy of shooting this photo from a point less than 7000 ft above sea-level, more than 3000 ft lower than Traleika Col, from which the Society states.33  Cook drew Friendly Peak, and from which the Society claims (fn 53) its 1994 expedition safely glimpsed Friendly Peak as a match to the drawing. However, neither Polar Priorities 14 nor CTC includes a photo of Friendly Peak taken at Traleika Col — from which point it in fact does not look like the lone peak depicted in Fig.15 or Fig.26: [a] it cannot there be seen against the sky (since it’s much lower than Traleika Col); and [b] it merely looks like the front peak of a bunch of in-line peaks, Cook’s #11-#9 (#10 peeking up from behind, on the left) — and anyone drawing it would obviously have had that situation.34

D11  Unsurprisingly, Cook stopped just where the going got tough (also as in his try for the N.Pole). The Gateway is only 12 mi from McKinley’s summit horizontally, but nearly 3 mi vertically, a huge 25% mean grade. Indeed, the entire McKinley massif is noted among alpinists for some of the steepest grades in the world. The East Buttress route currently favored by Cookites is particularly difficult. Cook at the Gateway was staring at a grade of over 100% (much tougher than what stopped him in 1903) just to get on to the East Ridge. If he could have had to travel up the East Ridge, he would have had to travel from a position as far north as the Society states as “Hairy Ridge” (Fig.33), which is so horrible that Gonnason and others three gave up their try after just 100 feet. In 1994, S.Fischer reached Hairy Ridge’s start but didn’t bite, obviously realizing35  Cook couldn’t have finished it without special equipment he lacked.36

30  Fig.12 & Top p.197 suggest probable (though not certain) identification of the four peaks #9-#12 which line up (both in reality and on Fig.12) with peaks #1-#8 (see Fig.1 & §7 fn 33). Heights of #9-#12 (S-to-N): 7272 ft, 7400+ ft, 8425 ft (Friendly Peak), and 9150 ft. The Cook Society 1994 expedition attempted (CTC p.245) to photograph the whole line of twelve, but the result is not in CTC.

31  There is an unexplained “26 mi” written near Glacier Point on Fig.13 (rule [10]). It seems to refer to the total distance travelled since leaving the boat. The same “26” appears on Fig.12 (rule [11]), just south of Glacier Point (scraped out at rule [8]). We also find purely-northward distances given: in rule [13], “15 miles from boat”; and at rule [12], “16.” So, the nearby “26” may reflect the addition of a leg up&back, perhaps into the Fake Peak amphitheatre (though, in Fig.12, “26” is a bit far south for that interpretation), perhaps to the Gateway. In any case, what is glaringly missing from Cook’s diary is: sketch-map distance-data for his claimed travel beyond the Gateway.

32  Friendly Peak’s location is accurately provided at CTC Plate 2/2. The Society’s Friendly Peak photo (Plate 2/7, reproduced here at §7 Fig.26) was taken [also PolPri 14 p.7 photo] from very near the center of CTC Plate 2/13, itself an aerial photo (with Friendly Peak stretching upward&rightward of center). Both of these CTC photos of Friendly Peak have their CTC cover, inside cover, p.8; CTC pp.248, 249, 253. Also here at fn 44 & §7 G3.

33  CTC Plate 2/2 caption. (Also PolPri & Polar Priorities 14 p.7.) The E.Ridge viewing-site is probably not accidental. Without it, the drawings’ order is odd: how should Cook draw Friendly Peak (which he encountered first) at the bottom of diary p.52 (Fig.16), and then later draw Pegasus Peak at the top of the same page? (So the Traleika Col site recommends itself to Cookites because it is the lowest point on the ridge from which Pegasus & Friendly peaks can be both seen.)

34  One fails to see what a data-bare cult hopes to accomplish — other than soaking up tens of thousands of Cook Society dollars (which might be more profitably spent in glorifying Cook’s genuinely heroic role on the Belgica expedition of 1897-1899) — by flying and climbing around the McKinley area, looking in all directions to try vindicating an isolated rough drawing by finding a sharp peak. As if that’s a shockingly unusual sight in such a geologically new region.

35  CTC p.262 counters with a (verbal) quote from a (deceased) guide (Cook Society-funded): “It was a doable peak… partly by a ‘typo’" [see] and "and a ‘handicap shears and hunch’" [see]. [The] determined Believer eventually becomes as comic as Joe E. Brown in Some Like It Hot’s final scene.

36  Hairy Ridge is still unconquered by any human being. One can only hope that no misguided Cookite will be killed or injured on it, attempting [note Bryce 1997 p.731] a vain rescue of the lost Cook myth. [Recent close calls warn us of McKinley’s mortal threat to real climbers (91 dead since 1932); Newsweek 1998/7/6 p.40. They also remind us of the dangers skillfully overcome by genuine summit-attainers, such as Brad Washburn — and his wife Barbara, the 1st woman ever atop McKinley.]

E  Charge of the Slight Brigade — into the Valley of Eternal Reruns

When Cook’s papers were finally opened a decade ago, his shrinking circle of loyalists jumped eagerly into them, nakedly hopeful of finding, e.g., the compass-data Cook claimed (fn 27) to have taken from the summit. Polar Priorities 14 p.5 (similarly at CTC pp.239-240), bright with initial optimism upon the finding of his compass data, reported: “This new evidence warranted further investigation.” But when this very investigation proved that all these compass data place Cook in the lower Ruth Glacier (fn 26), the Society neither learns anything nor informs its members. (See fn 16.) When every hope for hard-data vindication came up utterly dry, no then-sympathizer for Cook (except Bryce) was all-there — and, when evidence gets overwhelmingly one-sided, the determined Believer eventually becomes as comic as Joe E. Brown in Some Like It Hot’s final scene.

F  Self-Destruct Bombs on Diary Page 52

F1  It is an appalling measure of the barrenness of Cookism’s evidential cupboard that, in pathetic apposition to the 5 hard-data blanks,38 the only document in Cook’s hand that the Society attempts39 to call undeniable, startlingly specific proof40 (that Cook passed much beyond the Gateway) is p.52 of the diary, i.e., the muddled sketches of Fig.15.

F2  The very idea of fighting perfectly & very-multiply-consistent photographic proof by adding an isolated ([§7 §G16], discordant41 page of sketches (by an untalented and questionably honest artist) is wild, right on its face. But, as well, this “evidence” itself (Fig.15) cries out42 in Cook’s hand with so many fatal contradictions of the very cult-theories it is supposed to confirm, that it may represent history’s 1st known case of serial-suicide:

[a] The page is explicitly labelled “McK”, which clearly backs the Okonek-Washburn-Bryce theory ([§7 §G5]) that McKinley (not Pegasus-Friendly) is the subject of the drawings. The Cook cult simply ignores “McK” and claims that the upper p.52 drawing is of irrelevant Pegasus Peak, a view implicitly accepting that Cook was so smitten with Pegasus (unmentioned in his public or private writings) that he drew a closeup picture of it (and of minor Friendly Peak) — but none of his expedition’s goal, Mt. McKinley.

[b] The Society’s insistence, that p.52’s upper drawing was made on the east ridge, has another unsubtle difficulty, namely, this drawing’s distant foreground is labelled “east ridge”, (See Fig.15.) How could a ridge at the drawer’s feet also be part of the horizontal-vista-drawing? (See [§7 §G9].)

[c] The lower drawing is labelled as being from “gl. opp. peak 7”, which is not anywhere near the east ridge. (See §7 §G7.) However, this contradiction would mean nothing to CTC.
readers, since CTC pp.281-282 fails to reproduce (or even provide the texts of) Cook diary pp.44&46 (Figs.12&13), both of which place peak 7 just short of the Gateway. (See also Bryce’s comments at ¶7 fn 25.) Incidentally, as to the larger question of why Cook has sketch-maps south of the Gateway (but not north): the ¶D7-vs.-¶D8 contrast is also lost on CTC readers, again because the Cook Society has never published the sketch-maps.

But the p.52 datum that definitively torpedoes the whole east-ridge-Pegasus-Peak crock is the briefest entry on the page, “Bar 24” (right side of Fig.16) — Cook’s barometer reading of 24 inches. This corresponds43 to about 6000 ft; while, for 11,000 ft (the altitude the Cook Society has broadcast44 for these drawings), the correct barometric reading would be 20 inches. (As to the likelihood of a 4 inch error: none of Cook’s other real barometer readings vary from mean expectations [fn 43] by more than about 1 1/2 inches.) So, say goodbye to the Cook Society’s prime new McKinley-data exhibit, by far the most-advertised evidence from its 1994 expedition, which drained the Society’s coffers by roughly $40,000.

F3 As the Cook Society falsely accuses (fn 46) others of forging material, even while the Society itself juggles (and repeatedly ignores inconvenient or even glaringly contrary parts of) its own sinner of self-proclaimed new-vindication p.52-evidence, it’s time to reflect upon the psychological definition of “projection”.

G Aposipty, Apotheosis, & Apology

G1 Returning to crucial-experiment-finality: the significance of the unscraped “Summit” photo is twofold: First, it shows indisputably that Cook lied in his display of the most important physical evidence from the climb. Cook’s veracity is of central import when the only evidence in favor of his claim is his own unsupported word. Second, it shows that Belmore Browne, Herschel Parker, and Brad Washburn were not satanic deflectors of The One True Explorer, but were legitimately attempting to determine the truth in their now completely vindicated investigations of Fake Peak. Past defenders of Cook (inspired by Cook himself)45 have imputed various dishonest motives to these men [Polar Priorities 15 pp.32&35], and their charges are still faithfully cited by Cookites today.46  

43 A convenient expression for the mean relation of height $z$ (in statute miles above sea-level) to barometric pressure $P$ (in inches of Hg) is: $z = 12 \cdot \log_{10}[30/P]$. That Cook’s barometer was not seriously defective is acknowledged at CTC pp.269-270, and is obvious from the barometer data in the diary (CTC pp.283f.). At diary pp.59&65, the barometer twice indicated $P$ close to 24.6 inches (CTC p.286) for Glacier Point (“Cerac Pt.”: ¶7 fn 19). Evidently working (accurately) from a table based on the above formula, Cook (diary p.59, CTC p.286) placed Glacier Point at about 5500 ft (5280-12 log[30/24.6]), though it is actually only 3753 ft above sea-level. The error could be from slight instrumental miscalibration or local atmospheric pressure-variation or both. Correcting for the effect, we can estimate that 24 inches on Cook’s barometer at this time corresponded to almost 5000 ft, which is about consistent with his actual altitude in the Fake Peak-Gateway area, where he drew the p.52 sketches.

44 E.Ridge 11000 ft altitude: Polar Priorities I inside cover, p.8; CTC pp.245-248. And see fn 40.
45 FCook My Attainment of the Pole 1913 ed. p.534, on Peary, Parker, & Browne: “bribery, conspiracy, and perjury.” He continues (with unwitting irony, given his own later term in Leavenworth for mail fraud): “That such men can escape the doom of prison cells is a parody upon human decency.”

See §§C3-C5, CTC pp.252-253. Attacks summarized in Bryce’s Cook & Peary pp.816f. Ted Leitell’s claim that Browne’s photo was doctored (a charge spread by Cook himself: My Attainment of the Pole 1913 ed. p.531) is published in Polar Priorities 14 (1994) p.17. (Browne is an odd target of attack for fraud since he on 1912/6/29 got within a few hundred feet of McKinley’s summit — all the way to Farthing Horn [fn 7] — yet honestly admitted he’d ‘shorted’ a ‘short’ of the summit, entirely unlike the big-hands of those who keep denigrating him.) A more current CIG attack on Browne’s claims (CTC p.261) that he temporarily mis-located Fake Peak on a map. Comments: [a] Since Browne was eventually the first post-1906 explorer to locate Fake Peak (demonstrably correctly — his written claim is found on the spot) Washburn AAJ 11.11 [1958] p.21 & fig.5, why obfuscate with such an obsolete nit-pick? [b] The Cook Society’s own map (CTC Plate 2/12) mislocates its false summit, “Pegasus Peak”, placing the 12200-ft & 12060-ft peaks in its photo (Fig.14) north instead of south of West Fork Traleika Glacier. (To prevent any unfair conclusion: the mapper in this case, Ted Heckathorn, is not ignorant of where these peaks are; i.e., this is just a meaningless slip. But if one generates a nit-contest, this is the sort of thing that can get unmercifully blown out of proportion and slug back at one. I.e., it’s best if all sides simply stick to basic issues & logic.)

46 More projection (¶F3)? After evidence proves them wrong in a controversy, some openly acknowledge the fact (see, e.g., DIO 1 [1993] ¶9 fn 7, DIO 6 [¶SF2], while others (the bad losers) can never forgive the bearer of that evidence — and find compensatory satisfaction in launching attacks upon him forever after. (See, e.g., DIO 2.2 fn 14, and DIO 2.1 fn 32. Or the stilted tongue behavior of Keystone-CSICOPs-archon P.Klass — the goons’ goon — towards Tom McIver [tel. 216-252-5715].)

In as full & detailed a fashion as fn 14 & fn 30, which here inform our readers: how to contact all the central Cook loyalists, how to obtain Polar Priorities 14 & other issues, and how to subscribe and-or contribute to the Cookites’ house journal.

47 See disappearances: ¶7 fn 9-12, fn 25, ¶E2. (Also: Skeptic Inquirer 2.1 [1997] pp.73-74.)

48 On [1998/7/29], Washburn got new precise data on key controversy sites. Adopted here.]
Figure 31: A detail of Cook’s map from p.826 of Harper’s Monthly Magazine, May 1907 (enlarged so scale equals that of Fig.32). N-S solid line is longitude 151°W; E-W solid line is latitude 63°N, just north of the point Barrill said they turned back. The dash-dot line is the route Cook claimed he took to the summit. This path (like §7 §A1) is dramatically different from the Cook Society’s proposed (E-to-W) East-Buttress route: CTC Plate 2/12. No path at all was provided on the map appearing in Top (1908 pp.152-153 or CTC Plate 1/5).

Figure 32: A simplified map of Ruth Glacier & the approaches to Mt. McKinley as they really are. Boundaries of glaciers in their upper reaches are approximate. The small glacier just northwest of Karstens Ridge is Harper Glacier. Scale: 2 1/2 statute miles per centimeter, same as for Fig.31.
Figure 33: Hairy Ridge, looking roughly northwest, at a little over 11,000 feet. (Location: just east of last “s” in “East Buttress” on Fig.32.) The Cook Society’s East Buttress Route supposes Cook went along the top of this serrated knife-edge from right to left, then straight up the icy cliff beyond. The opposite side of the Hairy Ridge is nearly as forbidding as the face shown. Photo courtesy of Bradford Washburn.

Figure 34: The summit of Mt. McKinley as it really is, looking due south. Terris Moore & Bob Bates, July 1942. Comparing to Figs.2, 3, & 18, it’s impossible to see any similarity. Photo by & courtesy of Brad Washburn.