

‡3 Cook as Non-Navigator, Inept Liar, Thief of Glory

by

Dennis Rawlins 1995/7/17⁰

A Unreconstructing Cook

A1 Frederick Cook is generally viewed as either an unjustly persecuted hero or a gentlemanly hoaxer. I regard him as a justly persecuted hoaxer. He is also sometimes portrayed as a loner-outsider.¹ Actually, he was — up until his 1909 fall — an amiable, charming insider, e.g., 2nd President of the eminent Explorers Club of New York [and 1st explorer to winter in both polar regions: Rawlins *loc cit*]. Even some who disbelieve Cook regard him as a harmless jester. But, in truth, hoaxers [distort science and not only (obviously) steal hard-earned glory from genuine achievers (like ‡5 §A1) but embarrass and harm innocent peripheral individuals² as well. Rawlins 1973 p.93: “In 1909, explorer Greely predicted, ‘If Cook lies, a terrible retribution awaits him and his children.’ ”]

A2 The 1993 Cook Symposium is attempting to rewrite history, massively — a quest I much sympathize with (having myself occasionally engaged in it, in other³ arenas). But some history doesn’t need essential rewriting, and Cook’s current classification as a grand-scale exaggerator is a good example. [a] In 1906, he claimed (see his 1908 book, *To the Top of the Continent*) to have climbed the tallest mountain in N.America, though (§C2) he had never previously summited a {serious mountain, though his fearlessness & durability occasionally impressed even his then-severest critic R.Dunn}. [b] In 1908, he reported (see his 1911 book, *My Attainment of the Pole*) reaching the North Pole, after an alleged dog-sledge journey that included roughly 1200 nmi⁴ of sea-ice⁵ travel, though his previous⁶ sea-ice experience (on the 1897-1899 *Belgique* expedition, without dogs) was ordmag 1 percent of such a distance. No self-sustained dog-sledge sea-ice journey before or since has matched [the alleged trip]. Or ever will.

A3 There’s no need for me to review Cook’s early career, which has been well covered by other contributors to this symposium. Let’s get right on to the fun parts of Cook’s career: his alleged 1906 ascent of Mt. McKinley & his alleged 1908 attainment of the North Pole.

⁰Post-1995 edits appear in normal brackets, except for those corrected through the expertise of Bob Bryce, which are repaired in {curly brackets}.

¹E.g., Who Eames 1973 p.186: Cook was “not one of the boys.” Contra this, see Rawlins 1973 pp.79-80, Hunt 1981 pp.228-230.

²In 1978, I interviewed [in Copenhagen] astronomer Bengt Strömrgren (1908-1987), illustrious son of Elis Strömrgren, the wellknown astronomer whose overswift 1909/9/5 interview-certification of Cook had led the Danes into national embarrassment (Rawlins 1973 p.85). B.Strömrgren told me that his father never permitted family discussion of the affair, because he felt ashamed for the rest of his life that he had been responsible for disgracing the king. [Leading to international currency of the joke-reply to any ridiculous story: “Tell it to the King of Denmark.”] There is an oft-cited 2nd-hand report (*NYTimes* 1909/9/7:5:3) that E.Strömrgren had “put an exhaustive series of mathematical, technical, natural, and scientific questions to Dr.Cook”. (Incomplete text at Andrew Freeman’s invaluable *The Case for Doctor Cook* 1961 p.150; copied by Eames 1973 p.119, though p.319 cites it to *NYT* not Freeman. [Similar “research” at ‡1 §§D3&§§L3-L4.]) In response to my suspicion as to whether his father was comfortable with English, B.Strömrgren emphatically confirmed that he was not.

³My own historical revisionisms have involved such figures as, e.g., Aristarchos of Samos [‡7 §A3&§C2 and ‡9 §§B1&B2], Aristyllos, Eratosthenes, Hipparchos, Ptolemy, Tycho, Lemonnier, Leverrier-Adams, Cook-Peary, Byrd, Amundsen-Ellsworth-Nobile, Schmidt-Papanin, Plaisted, Herbert.

⁴We use “nmi” throughout for nautical mile, which is 1’ (1/60th of a degree) on the Earth’s surface. One nmi is slightly more than 15% larger than the familiar statute mile.

⁵Most polar sea-ice is a buckled, fissured horror for travelers. The accounts of Peary, Plaisted, & Herbert are unanimous on that point.

⁶Rawlins 1973 p.92.

A4 The controversy over Cook's 1906 expedition has generally centered on whether he did or didn't get to McKinley's top. Actually, the more serious [1906] question is: did Cook ever get to Mt. McKinley's bottom?

A5 Likewise for the controversy over whether Cook got to the North Pole. The real question ought rather to be [§C1]: did he ever in his life get within 500 nmi of the N.Pole?

A6 The first explorer of a territory must: [a] find his way along, and [b] map his discoveries. For long-distance sea-ice travel in Cook's day, both tasks required use of navigational math (spherical trig) & instruments (sextant or theodolite). However, in the entire Cook Papers (US Library of Congress), there is not a scrap of navigational spherical trig in Cook's hand.⁷ Note: the records of Cook's arch-rival, Robert Peary, are brimming with competent sph trig-log calculations. (See the Peary Papers, US National Archives. Note also the coincidence that, for Peary's highly suspect Arctic Ocean trips, 1906 & 1909, no sph trig calculations exist in the Peary Papers. See⁸ *DIO* 1 ‡4 and *DIO* 2 ‡5 & ‡8 §B. Also *Washington Post* 1993/6/1 p.3, *Science* 260:1587, 1993/6/11 [& *NYTimes* 2009/9/8].)

B Mt.McKinley: Getting to the Bottom of It

B1 Cook's 1906 trip was his 2nd venture into the McKinley region. His 1st McKinley expedition occurred in 1903. His companion then, Rob't Dunn, later wrote brutally (Dunn 1907 p.93) that Cook "hasn't the least idea of Alaskan travel" and (1903/3/17 entry) "... just packs and unpacks his instruments.⁹ I wonder if he can use a theodolite after all." Since a key element in the standard defense of Cook is the suggestion (§§B8&D4) that criticisms of him were inspired by Peary Arctic Club influence, Dunn's testimony is of particular significance: [a] It occurred before the Cook-Peary fracas. [b] It is confirmed by the entire lack of [celestial sextant or] theodolite observations in the newly-opened Cook Papers.

B2 The maps appearing in Cook's two published accounts of his McKinley trip (Cook 1907 p.826 & Cook 1908 pp.152-153) are nearly the same, though (contra the inaccurate implication of Rawlins 1973 p.80) Cook attempted to draw his route upon the 1907 version (not the later 1908 one, curiously [that omits his 1907-alleged route entirely!]), which shows him coming in (toward McKinley's peak) from the northeast, through a long nonglacial valley — a valley which is in fact the Harper Glacier. The actual path up Mt.McKinley's NE slope, Harper Glacier (which his chart shows him not taking) is instead mapped by Cook as angling past McKinley, missing it by several miles to the south. The fact that the Harper-Muldraw Glacier splits along this route (right where the Cook 1907 map puts him) — dividing around Karstens Ridge — is nowhere indicated on the Cook map.¹⁰ (Note that

⁷ My certainty §C9 regarding Cook's inability to navigate is such that I have not wasted time searching the Cook Papers for his nonexistent sph trig navigational calculations. (Others' searches [including Bryce's incomparable sifts] have, naturally, found none.)

⁸ *DIO* (and its occasional supplement, *The Journal for Hysterical Astronomy*) is available from: *DIO*, Box 19935, Baltimore, MD 21211-0935 (phone 410-889-1414; answering machine always on).

⁹ Cook's pretense of using instruments did not cease following 1903. Barrill describes Cook "using instruments for the purpose of taking . . . elevations, and the like." See Washburn 1989 p.119.

¹⁰ Belmore Browne reports on one of his post-expedition encounters with Cook (Expl.Club minutes 1909/10/15 p.17): "anyone having made an ascent of a peak is thoroughly familiar with the topographical features of that peak . . . indelibly imprinted . . . [however, even] with [his own] photographs . . . before him, Dr.Cook was unable to draw an accurate map of his route over the glaciers to the top of the Northeastern ridge in response to a question from me." I thank Janet Baldwin, archivist of the Explorers Club of New York, for transmitting (1993/10/4) copies of the Club's 1909/10/15 & 10/17 minutes, H.Wack's 1909/10/15 Statement, & the Club's 1909/12/24 "Conclusions" against Cook. (Note: 1909/12/24 is the date on which Cook was dropped from Expl.Club membership: Freeman 1961 p.205. See also below at fn 30.) These four records were made during the 1909/10/12-12/24 Explorers Club investigation of the McKinley matter, carried out by a special committee of the Club. (It is plain from the minutes that some of the committee's members were initially friendly towards Cook, who had recently {1906 December} been elected President of the Club, on the crest of his McKinley fame: Freeman 1961 p.92.) It should be noted that the semipopular Explorers Club and

[1st genuine McKinley-conqueror Hudson] Stuck's 1913 map of his route up McKinley, published in his 1914 book, is correct on all these points.)

B3 During¹¹ the Cook-Peary controversy, another witness to Cook's 1906 difficulties with navigation was the expedition's co-leader, Columbia University's Prof Herschel Parker (*NYTimes* 1909/12/10:4:2): "In all the time I was with Dr.Cook, I never knew him to take an observation to determine our [geographical position]. . . . he was evidently . . . little interested in [such . . . Cook] is not a scientific man at all and knows nothing about the requirements that scientific men look for in records." (See below at §§C10-C18.)

B4 Expedition-members Parker and Belmore Browne gave detailed testimony on this point to the Explorers Club, as recorded in the [long-suppressed] minutes of the 1909/10/15 session of the Club's special committee for investigation of the McKinley controversy. Browne (p.14): "I never, on the whole McKinley trip, saw Dr.Cook make an aneroid reading, either of his own instrument or Dr.Parker's." Parker (pp.18&20): "To the best of my knowledge [Cook] would be unable to make an accurate [hypsometer] reading, as it requires practice and great delicacy of observation . . . he never watched me [taking such readings], and I believe that he did not take any interest in observations. I may also add that he took no interest whatever in mountain equipment. . . . [ere the 1906 try], Dr.Cook asked a few questions concerning hypsometers, which leads me to believe that he was not familiar with their use prior to the expedition of 1906." [And see Rawlins 1973 p.86.]

B5 Having failed to climb McKinley during the 1906 midsummer, Cook then learned¹² (upon his return to Tyonek, Alaska) that his prime backer, Henry Disston, had unexpectedly pulled out, leaving Cook drowning in red ink.

B6 Though the prime season for climbing had passed, Cook suddenly departed his group, heading towards McKinley on 1906/9/9 accompanied only by a single guide, Edward Barrill. Before setting out, Cook told his people (Expl.Club minutes 1909/10/15 pp.6-8) that he merely intended to reconnoitre. (As properly noted in the Explorers Club 1909/12/24 report on the McKinley matter, item 6: "Dr.Cook's action in attempting the ascent . . . immediately upon the departure of the rest of the party, after entering into an agreement with them that no further attempt should be made for the [1906] season, was unfair to his associates.") But he slyly stuffed a (large) silk US flag¹³ into his rucksack — a flag which next appears in his "Top" photograph (Cook 1908 opp. p.227), evidently¹⁴ shot on 1906/9/12.

B7 Cook & Barrill reappeared¹⁵ about ten days later, and Cook claimed success — to the incredulity of {some of} the rest of the party, especially after Barrill {was only fitfully

National Geographic were the only US societies that had the decency to officially condemn either of Cook's false claims (though see Rawlins 1973 p.291) — while the purely academic US societies said nothing whatever on the record. The University of Copenhagen eventually rejected Cook, but it is: [a] not a geographical society (a point explicitly noted at the Peary Hearings), and [b] foreign.

¹¹ But see Freeman 1961 p.91-93, Rawlins 1973 pp.81&291. And the Explorers Club 1909/12/24 report's item 12 states: "the so-called Cook controversy of the present year would not have arisen had Prof.Parker and Mr.Browne presented to the Board of Governors of the Club in 1907 the same evidence which they have recently presented to this committee. These gentlemen preferred, however, to await the appearance of Dr.Cook's book." (By which time, Cook had departed civilization, to launch his trip north to Cape Thos. Hubbard.) Freeman 1961 p.183 quotes item 12 (from *NYT* 1909/12/25:3:1), except for the last sentence.

¹² See Cook 1908 pp.180-181, Expl.Club minutes 1909/10/15 pp.8&15, Cook 1911 p.523, Freeman 1961 p.89, Rawlins 1973 p.80.

¹³ Rawlins *loc cit*. H.Parker reported (Expl.Club Minutes 1909/10/15 p.6) that Cook was challenged (from the audience) at one of his lectures: why take along a flag if he (according to his own story, e.g., Cook 1907 p.824, Cook 1908 p.181) merely intended to reconnoitre? Cook replied that the flag was packed by accident.

¹⁴ See Washburn 1989 pp.118-119.

¹⁵ B.Browne notes the absence (in Cook's accounts) of dates on the climb & return: Expl.Club minutes 1909/10/15 p.15. According to Barrill, he & Cook left their boat 1906/9/8, and were alone from 1906/9/9 to 9/19. See Washburn 1989 pp.118-120.

steady in his support of the claim}, under the immediate private questioning¹⁶ of Belmore Browne. (It was added in later testimony that Cook — while not overlooking to take along his flag— seems not to have taken climbing rope, axes, or hypsometer.)¹⁷ Barrill later confessed in detail¹⁸ that he & Cook never got close even to the base of Mt.McKinley.

B8 By a very generous interpretation, Cook had amazingly bad luck in choosing his exploring companions. All 3 of those persons, Barrill 1906 and Eskimos Etukashuk & Ahwelah 1908, who accompanied him during the (equally generous) suspect portions of his two contended trips, later claimed that he had invented those portions. Cook & his Occam-defying believers have traditionally attributed this simple circumstance to a complex web of bribery & conspiracy¹⁹ by the Peary Arctic Club. (Danish Admiral de Richeleau to Cook 1909/9/10: “Green-eyed envy and jealousy is doing its envenomed work, but we in Denmark believe in you absolutely.”)²⁰ But the Peary-power-clique issue (interesting though it is, relative to [a] Peary’s putting his own N.Pole hoax over on the public, and [b] stifling dissent, including Cook’s frequently accurate criticisms²¹ of Peary’s claims) becomes irrelevant to Cook’s claims if the witnesses against Cook are independently verified. And they are.

B9 Barrill testified that, instead of proceeding straight north, up Ruth Glacier towards McKinley, he & Cook turned eastward (more than 10 nmi short of McKinley, which is over 20,000 ft high) — and then climbed a nearby minor peak [only 5,338 ft high], a little over 15 nmi {16.9} from McKinley’s top. (A detailed B.Washburn photo²² permits one to follow Cook’s movements.) There the flag was unfurled, and Barrill was photographed holding it. Then, returning to Ruth Glacier, they went north a little again, into the Great Gorge — soon stopping (after Cook carefully examined McKinley’s slopes), 1906/9/15, “on account of falling through crevasses”.²³ These Barrill statements were publicly made in 1909, well before anyone had actually checked the matter by returning to the geographical region itself. But, next summer (1910), Browne & others went back and — following Barrill’s directions & map (again: openly published in 1909)²⁴ — {eventually} located & photographed the Fake Peak. Over 40 years later, veteran mountaineer Bradford Washburn (longtime head of the Boston Science Museum) took Cook’s 1908 book, *To the Top of the*

¹⁶Rawlins 1973 p.81. [D.Roberts *Great Exploration Hoaxes* 1982 p.108 vs C&P p.280.]

¹⁷See §B4 & 1909/10/15 Explorers Club minutes pp.9-10, 12, 17-20. See also items 4&9 of the Club’s 1909/12/24 negative “Conclusions” on Cook’s 1906 claim. Cook (e.g., 1907 pp.832&836) speaks of using ice-axes, though Parker certifies that Cook & Barrill had none during their 1906/9 foray. {Bryce notes: Cook’s 1907 article bears photos of Barrill with an ice-axe sometime on the trip.}

¹⁸Affidavit 1909/10/4, published *NYGlobe* 1909/10/14 (diary 10/15). (Summary at Freeman 1961 p.179.) See affidavit text’s reprinting in Washburn 1989. I am grateful for Janet Baldwin’s transmission (1993/10/4) of a photocopy of this article, as well as of the testimony of E.Barrill’s daughter, Marjorie (Barrill 1988).

¹⁹ See §D4 (also §C9), and, e.g., Eames 1973 pp.67, 176f, & 229f (well evaluated at Hunt 1981 p.227). The \$350,000 Peary Arctic Club war-chest (*ibid* pp.177&283), allegedly devoted to “see [Peary] through” the Cook Controversy, is a fantasy based upon the oral recollection of octagenarian Cook-believer Clark Brown. (Cited *ibid* p.321 n.3.) This vision of vast sums subscribed to ruin Cook is merely a misunderstanding of the \$350,000 the Club put up *before* 1909 to see Peary through to the Pole. (See *NYTimes* 1909/9/15:2.1. And note the common sense remarks at Hunt 1981 pp.227-228.) As Ted Heckathorn has found, the prime party that was hellbent on destroying Cook was not the Club but Peary himself (through Peary’s well-paid personal lobbyist, L.Alexander: Rawlins 1973 p.248) — who was understandably anxious to divert attention from his own exploration-claims’ shortcomings, taking every possible opportunity to spotlight Cook’s instead.

²⁰As quoted by Eames 1973 p.132. Incompletely quoted by Rawlins 1973 p.90.

²¹See *DIO I.1* ‡4 §B4.

²²See Barrill 1988 p.81, where the Fake Peak is clearly marked with an arrow. Arrow also [at www.dioi.org/vols/w73.pdf, Fig.1] & at Washburn 1989 p.112. And see map of route at *ibid* p.117.

²³Washburn 1989 p.116 map in Barrill’s hand. (See also p.120.)

²⁴Barrill’s hand-drawn sketch map locating Fake Peak (right where it was later found & photographed by Browne, Washburn, & Carter: fn 29) was published in the 1909/10/15 *New York Globe*. This page of the *Globe* is photographically reproduced at Washburn 1989 p.116.

Continent, into this region and identified²⁵ the location of every single vista photograph in the book.²⁶ (Washburn rightly regards Cook as a first-rate alpine photographer.) All were taken (contra Cook’s lofty captions) at low altitudes (below 6000 ft) and more than 10 miles from McKinley’s top. This finding is consistent with Barrill’s account, not Cook’s. Washburn’s approach was the ideal way to test Cook’s 1906 claim. His achievement should have ended the McKinley controversy.

B10 And, there is an elementary question which requires no detailed investigation: what was Cook doing near and on²⁷ this side peak in the first place? — climbing up to and photographing an insignificant point, with no relevance to his alleged goal.

B11 In passing, note the curious fact that Cook’s accounts include no photo of the unique vista visible from the top of McKinley, which would be impossible to fake. By contrast, the first actual climber, Hudson Stuck (1913), includes just such a photo opp. p.102 of his 1914 book, *The Ascent of Denali*, looking towards Mt.Foraker (“Denali’s Wife”).

B12 Some pro-Cook accounts, e.g., H.Eames’ *Winner Lose All* (Little-Brown 1973, on the *NYTimes*’ exclusive “New & Recommended” list for 3 weeks), accept that Cook’s “Top” photo was taken on Fake Peak — but insist that this “slight slip” (p.67) doesn’t prove Cook didn’t climb Mt.McKinley. If one believes in Cook’s innocence, one must eventually adopt logical positions of this type.

B13 The fraudulence of Cook’s McKinley “Top” photo (Cook 1908 opp. p.227) is obvious, due to a fortunate bit of Cook carelessness: the peak of another (distant) mountain is visible in the lower righthand corner (contra Cook’s reported intent).²⁸ And one is clearly looking upward at it — which naturally isn’t possible for a photograph taken from the highest mountain in N.America. . . . Moreover, this peak may be identified from another photo, opp. p.239: it’s the same 8450 ft peak which is labelled “Mt.Grosvenor” in the photo opp. p.192 of Cook 1908. The top of Mt.Grosvenor²⁹ in the photo opp. p.239 matches the lower-righthand-corner peak in the infamous “Top” photo. Note: [a] This side of Mt.Grosvenor does not face Mt.McKinley. [b] It does face Fake Peak. A number of scholars, myself included, have discovered this independently. But the credit for first noting it should go to 1906 expedition-members Herschel Parker & Belmore Browne. It’s all in their private 1909/10/17 testimony (pp.17-19) before the Explorers Club’s committee investigating the McKinley affair. Browne added (Expl.Club minutes 1909/10/17 p.19) a revealing (and [as of 1993] hitherto-unpublished) item: he had personally seen the full detailed original of

²⁵The interested scholar is urged to consult Washburn’s full, highly detailed unpublished ms (which is buttressed by numerous charts & photos), copies of which are preserved at the American Alpine Club (NYC) and at the University of Alaska.

²⁶No photo found in the newly opened Cook Papers has altered the situation. [Note added 1995: my wife Barbara & I happened to be meeting Brad and Barbara Washburn for the first time on 1995/7/16 (at their Belmont home), when an Alaska phonecall at 11:15 AM from Brian Okonek brought the news that the only previously unidentified Cook photo had just been located. Its location was, like all the others, over 10 miles from the McKinley summit.]

²⁷The photo opposite p.239 of Cook 1908 was taken from Fake Peak, which proves positively that Cook was there. [Original 1994 error here corrected by DR 1995/7/17. Independently detected by Bryce: ‡2 §G1.]

²⁸From Barrill’s affidavit at Washburn 1989 p.119 (which also reports at p.118 that Cook ordered Barrill to forge his diary entries for 1906/9/12-18), “I made the remark [to Cook] that the eight peaks [including Mt.Grosvenor] on the other side of this point where I had been photographed [“Top” photo] would probably show in the picture, and he said that he had taken the picture at such an angle that those peaks would not show.” (Note that, according to Cook’s two 1908 Eskimos, he was looking out to avoid telltale background topography when faking his Arctic photos, too: Rawlins 1973 p.90.) The version of the “Top” photo published in Cook 1907 was cropped. (For similar case, see §C6.) But the 1908 version inadvertently got published with the summit of Mt.Grosvenor showing at the lower-right corner of the picture.

²⁹Hunt 1981 pp.142b-c reproduces various photos of Fake Peak: Cook 1906, Browne 1910, Washburn 1956, Adams Carter 1957.

the “Top” photo and recalled seeing Mt.Grosvenor more clearly there than in the published version. Therefore, on 1909/10/17 (minutes pp.19-20, 23), Cook was formally requested (by the Explorers Club special committee) to produce³⁰ the original photo or negative. Cook promised (Expl.Club 1909/10/17 minutes pp.2, 12, 14, &15) to “come back in a few days and take the matter up” and additionally to do everything in his power to assist the Club’s investigation within a month. Instead, after the month had elapsed, Cook abruptly disappeared for a year. [This very ploy has been replicated (1997-to-date: Rawlins 2018 fn 47) by the archon now since 2013 atop the history-of-astronomy community — which lacks the Explorers Club’s integrity.] His choice to flee — instead of producing requested evidence — has been excused by the pressure he was under from detractors. (See, e.g., Freeman 1961 pp.197-201.) But it is circular to excuse Cook’s nonproduction of evidence by complaining that scientists & press were so churlish as to push him for evidence. . . .

B14 Cook’s sudden {1909/11/24} exit was during not just his alpine controversy. By then, he’d added to his notoriety by claiming yet another remarkable First: the North Pole.

C Frederick the Navigator

C1 Cook went north to Greenland in 1907 on the yacht of gambler John Bradley. In early 1908, Cook & a few companions dog-sledged west across Ellesmere Land. The sole other non-Eskimo of the party, R.Franke, returned before the Polar Sea was reached. So Cook was without literate companionship well before he reached [his farthest] point at about 81° 1/2 N latitude [see his companion-Eskimos’ map of their trip at Rawlins 1973 p.94 or Bryce 1997 p.424 (which differ in label-lettering size), hereinafter referred to as the “Eskimo map”], roughly a dozen nmi north[west] of {Cape Thos. Hubbard} (81° 22’ N, 94° W), the north tip of Axel Heiberg Land ([Cape T.Hubbard being] the last northward position³¹ which all scholars agree Cook reached). This was the takeoff point for an alleged 500 nmi sea-ice trip, with two young Eskimo companions, north to the Pole — where he reportedly arrived on 1908/4/21. However, according³² to those of Peary’s men who in 1909 interviewed these two Eskimos [creating above-cited Eskimo map], the three-man 1908 party instead went from this point (the beginning of rough³³ sea-ice north of C.Hubbard) more nearly southward, past the Ringnes Islands. [Where the Eskimo-map put him east of these islands while Cook (1911 p.285 map) claims to have gone between them, though (while calling the Hassel Sound between them “wide”: Cook 1911 p.329) not noticing in his map that (as V.Stefansson points out) Sverdrup had greatly underestimated the width of the channel.] So Cook’s account claims he went 500 nmi north of land, while his Eskimos [told Henson he (wisely: §C9) never left sight of land (‡2 §E1)] — and actually traveled only about 12 nmi

³⁰ Hunt 1981 p.111. (Date at p.271 is a misprint, perhaps for 1909/12/29?)

³¹ Cook calls C.Hubbard by Sverdrup’s name, Svartevoeg. See Cook 1911 pp.200-201n, which suggests (since he found no Peary cache) that Peary did not reach C.Hubbard in 1906. Actually, Peary, not Sverdrup reached the north tip of Axel Heiberg Land. (The reason Cook found no record is that Peary’s published reports of his 1906 western journey do not guide the searcher to such. For why, see §C3 and Rawlins 1973 p.75.)

³² On 1972/11/6, I phoned RCMP explorer Harry Stallworthy (not a member of the Peary clique), and learned that he had long ago heard the same account directly from Cook’s two 1908 Eskimos.

³³ [Rev. 2021/5/31.] I suspect photos opp. Cook 1911 pp.172&332 were taken here. No sea-ice photos in Cook 1911 (opp. pp.204&205, 236&237, 268) show sledges *going up&over pressure-ridges*, or crossing open-water leads. Barrill said all 1906 camps were on level ice (Washburn 1989 p.122), consistent with 1908 Cook not getting past the level 10 nmi-wide ice-foot, as shown on his 2 Eskimos’ 1909 map (§C1): [a] the 10 nmi distance **AND** [b] ceasing northing at the 1st rough-ice-encounter. Compare to Peary’s hardfought 1909 drive north: reality backed by Peary 1910 photos opp. pp.216, 224, 240, 306, 308, 309. {DR earlier said here Cook’s fan-harness differed from Peary’s, a truly dumb error (given dogs-equidistance’s whip-advantage) which Bryce thankfully corrected 2021/5/30.} And Cook’s relevant photos show him sledging only over flat&smooth not rough ice. Contrary picture at Bryce 2013 p.339 (*C&P* p.882): not a Cook photo {but an excellent 1912 drawing by W.R.Leigh}. Both sides of the issue of Cook’s farthest north are provided at the end of this issue: ‡10

north[west of it (Rawlins *loc cit*) **until meeting rough sea ice**. In 1914 MacMillan met it at 14 mi (*Bull.AMNH* 16:390), *yet another confirmation of the Eskimo Map’s accuracy*, along with 1916 rediscovery of the map’s accurately placed Meighen Island. Traveling with D.MacMillan in 1914 NW from C.Hubbard, Etukishuk told MacMillan (W.Herbert 1989 p.316, Bryce 2013 p.339) that, at 25 mi out, they’d already passed Cook’s farthest point, and he later told Stallworthy it was a modest distance “within sight of land”. The 2 Eskimos said (Herbert 1989 pp.278&316) after Cook pruned the group to them&himself, they were soon blocked by rough ice (fn 33) & open water, & so slept 1^d-2^d, returned to Cape Hubbard & headed south. (See Bryce 2013 pp.343-345 & 1997 {pp.423-424} & 969-975 for why he rejects these small distances.) Since Bryce 2013 p.340 notes “the rough ice thrown up against the shore” it’s reasonable to conclude Cook stopped at the end of the smooth land-ice, whose boundary is drawn on the Eskimo-map. From Earth’s curvature & the unalpine heights of Axel Heiberg’s Cape Hubbard & Garfield Coast’s Cape Colgate (heights 1600’ & 2000’, resp), Cook’s party couldn’t see these peaks when over 50 nmi from them; to see them from 100 nmi out (2/3 as far as navigators DonMacM&Green got!), they’d have to be c.4 times higher than reality. Sea-horizon-distance in naut.mi from height *h* in meters is $2.1\sqrt{h}$ (S.Newcomb 1906 p.199.) [Foregoing bracket added 2017, rev 2021.]

C2 Questions in passing (§A2): what was Cook’s previous experience in long-range sea-ice dog-sledging? The same as his pre-McKinley experience in climbing {tall} mountains. None. He had never climbed [such] a mountain — before suddenly claiming conquest of the tallest mountain in N.America (in one of the roughest mountain terrains anywhere). And, before 1908, Cook had never dog-sledged on sea-ice (a particularly hellish kind of traveling surface: high “pressure-ridge” ice-walls and wide open-water “leads”) — before announcing in 1909 that he had in 1908 sped over nearly 1200 (beeline) nmi of sea-ice to the Pole and back. (He allegedly went over 500 nmi from C.Hubbard to the Pole and returned by a route that took him more than 650 nmi further, before he struck land at the Ringnes Islands. [One would expect Cook to leave a cairn-record at the spot of his salvation, after 1200 alleged miles over floating ice. But he uniquely **left no record anywhere throughout his journey** (Rawlins 1973 p.83, Bryce 1997 p.857): keeping his timetable options open.]

C3 Mystery: why did Cook start by going west (across) rather than north on Ellesmere — thus necessitating so much more sea-ice distance than R.Peary’s intended route? By contrast, Peary’s 1909 near-miss of the North Pole was launched from the north tip of Ellesmere, 413 nmi from his object. (Note: sea-ice-veteran Peary genuinely tried to reach the Pole in 1909, going out roughly 350 nmi from land, to within ordmag 100 nmi of the N.Pole — & back: in all, the longest self-sustained sea-ice journey [as of 1995].) Possible³⁴ solution: was Cook initially³⁵ hoping to be the first to reach Peary’s “Crocker Land” [see also Bryce 2013 pp.16-17], an attainment which would not only bring glory (since it might turn out to be the most northern land-mass on Earth) but could also permit Cook to head for the Pole *by land*, not sea-ice — a reasonably nonsuicidal idea, since [a] Cook was not a navigator (§§A6, B3, & C7-C18), and [b] he could replenish food-supplies from the game presumed to inhabit Crocker Land (better than trying to live off the relatively barren Polar Sea). Against this theory: Cook couldn’t survey; so, had there been a Crocker Land, he could have hunted & traveled north on it but couldn’t map it. (Note: Peary’s nonexistent Crocker Land — first reported by him in his 1907 publications — was long regarded as an innocent error. This writer has found that his diary entry of the alleged discovery date,

³⁴ Cook said he hoped to travel poleward along a nonexistent “magnetic meridian”. (T.Hall 1917 pp.243, 389, 451-454; diagrams pp.244-245 & §C10.) This still does not explain why when [fn 38] short of food throughout the return trip, he didn’t (upon leaving the Pole) veer to the east of his outward track, aiming to come down upon north Ellesmere Land’s game (and relatively smooth ice-foot). [Cook’s entire trip (*real&faked*) after C.Hubbard is **weirdly far-west obviously to duck other explorers.**]

³⁵ However, he had been warned, by the Eskimos who had accompanied Peary at the time of Peary’s fraudulent “Crocker Land” sightings, that there was no such land: *DIO* 1.1 ‡4 §B4. [To verify existence: why not just climb Cape Hubbard’s peak (for its view) rather than supposedly fighting ice for weeks?]

1906/6/24, states: “No land visible”. Thus, Crocker Land constitutes the clumsiest of Peary’s several exploration hoaxes: www.dioi.org/cot.htm#cair & *DIO 1.1* ‡4 §B2, 1991.)

C4 Cook’s eventual story has him passing by Crocker Land (at speeds which, though occasionally rather high, are more reasonable³⁶ than some of Peary’s ludicrous 1906 & 1909 claims in this regard)³⁷ and then discovering his own nonexistent land, “Bradley Land”, farther north. Another mystery: since sledging along a land’s ice-foot is much speedier and less wearing than sea-ice travel, and since land may have game,³⁸ why did Cook — by his own account & map (Cook 1911 pp.244, 246, 285) — travel for scores of miles parallel to this alleged land while never going on board it? Some Cookites regard his report of the direction of ice-drift north of Axel Heiberg Land as evidence for his attainment of the Pole. But such information is not astonishingly specific — and Cook could have seen this drift from Cape Hubbard’s ice-foot. Let us compare the alleged vindication of Cook by drift to his definite nonvindication by Bradley Land.

C5 Cook’s 1911 book describes Bradley Land (pp.243-247) and even displays a photograph of it (opp. p.236) [‡1 §I1]. And his “Field Notes” (Cook 1911 p.571) report that it has a table of 1000 ft, with height up to 1800 ft. Had such land later been found, Cook would be confirmed to this point in his story. But no such land exists. Question: if it is said that Cook is vindicated because he reported a rough direction for drift (and, e.g., he correctly said that N.Pole ice can look purplish),³⁹ then why isn’t he disconfirmed when he reports in detail — *and photographs* — a wholly mythical land? As a measure of verifiability, this is as solid as can be. Most researchers, when encountering such a black&white crucial-experiment, correctly gauge the value of the Cook claim — and then move⁴⁰ on to other, more fruitful fields of endeavor. Using a double-standard for positive & negative evidence is not science but advocacy. (A believer will accept an ice-drift report as happy pro-Cook evidence; but, then, when faced with the Bradley Land disaster, will resort to supposing that Cook must have seen an ice island — though, no ice island is anything like 1800 ft high.) Again: a neutral investigator will not [a] treat vague alleged positive evidences as vindicating Cook, while [b] treating all negative evidences as mere Problems or Paradoxes that prove nothing but the need for increased effort at dedicated Re-explaining.

C6 The next Discovery on Cook’s imaginary journey was his alleged “land ice” at 87°-88°N. He stated in the *NYHerald* (1909/9/2 p.1, Cook 1909 10/3 p.4) and in his book (Cook 1911 p.265) that there was no elevation to the land ice, yet his photo of it (Cook 1911 opp. p.236) shows a dramatic rise in altitude as one approaches it. Moreover, Cook describes it as like a glacial surface and says at *NYH 9/2* p.1 that he found “no positive sign of land or sea.” (See also Cook 1909 10/3 p.4 & Cook 1911 p.266.) Yet, Wally Herbert (1989 p.319) made the remarkable discovery that {a lantern slide} of Cook’s “land ice” photo survives — and examination of the whole photo (made public for the first time at p.288b of Herbert 1989) shows that, when publishing the picture, Cook had simply (like fn 28) cropped off an inconvenient feature: a substantial hunk of land (near the photo’s right edge), in order to make the scene *look like the pure ice he reported it as*.

³⁶See just irony at Freeman 1961 p.138.

³⁷See, e.g., Rawlins 1973 pp.144-145, and Herbert 1989 pp.184&261f.

³⁸Cook 1911 p.244 (emph added): “delay was jeopardous, and, moreover, *our food supply* did not permit our taking time to inspect the new land.” Cook continues later in a footnote on the same page: “Whether animal life existed there, I do not know, for the impetus of my quest left us no time to investigate. I passed the last game at Heiberg Land.”

³⁹Cook 1911 p.598, Hunt 1981 pp.164&225.

⁴⁰After my own dreadful 1988 error on Peary’s Betelgeux Document (*DIO 1.1* ‡1 §C3, 1991), I am not pretending to omniscience. But, when mounting evidence goes against one’s theories, one should openly & frankly alter one’s opinion to accord with new data. (See *ibid* fn 14.) This is not only the decent thing to do — unwillingness to face one’s errors dooms one to a lifetime of ducking and-or alibiing evidential challenges. (Anyone supposing that such behavior does not occur at the heights of academe is advised to examine the sad behavior pattern discussed at *DIO 1.2* §D4. [Or *DIO 16* ‡1 §§A1-A2; *DIO 22* ‡3 §B.])

C7 Finally, Cook’s story arrives at the Pole. His first alleged sextant observation appears at p.292 of Cook 1911. Its computation of refraction contains an oddity discovered by the present writer (designer of the first accurate compact zenith-to-horizon refraction-correction format).⁴¹ For the alleged 1908/4/21 noon solar altitude, 12°, the correct⁴² refraction (at the reported temperature & atmospheric pressure) would have been 5′ — but Cook 1911 (pp.292&302) instead plagiarized⁴³ a refraction of 9′ from the observation reproduced in Peary’s 1910 book *The North Pole* at p.362 (allegedly 1909/4/6 noon), for solar altitude 7°. (Cook obviously didn’t even know that refraction is a function of altitude, and thus that a value which is valid for one altitude isn’t apt to a different altitude).⁴⁴ Moreover, Cook (1911 p.302) claims that he applied the same 9′ refraction-correction to 7 pairs of such sextant observations (fn 53) spread over 36 hours, from noon of 1908/4/21 to midnight of 4/22-23. Thus, all 7 of the “Pole” observation-pairs, correctly computed (using the appropriate 5′ instead of 9′ for refraction-correction), actually placed him 4 nmi off the N.Pole, towards the Sun. As noted at p.86 of Rawlins 1973 (*Peary at the North Pole, Fact or Fiction?*), a passage quoted from an earlier Oslo University paper (Rawlins 1972 p.135), these 14 data “demand that [Cook] must have hovered for [over 24 hours straight] four miles⁴⁵ sunward of the Pole, while the Earth spun just beneath his feet. The indication that Cook was riding a flying saucer is not to be taken lightly — e.g., his only [published] doublelimb solar altitudes (April 8 and 14) make the Sun’s apparent diameter 1/4 degree (not 1/2 degree, as it appears from the Earth), thus placing him about two astronomical units from the Sun, presumably on the planet Vesta!” The 1908/4/8&14 alleged observational data (both double-limb double-altitudes by sextant) appear in Fig.1 here, photocopied from pp.257&274 of Cook 1911. And 1912. And 1913. In the original 1911 edition, the upper-limb record is 1/2 degree higher than the lower-limb. However, since these are altitudes supposedly taken with an artificial horizon,⁴⁶ the differences ought to be [just over] a full degree. (Rawlins 1973 p.87: “No one who had ever used a sextant and artificial horizon *once* — anywhere — could have made the [blunder] responsible for this.”)⁴⁷

C8 In his book’s later editions, Cook “corrected” this slip (fn 53 here & Fig.1) *but without ever telling readers of his error or its patchup*. [Same dishonest ploy by today’s toppe history-of-astronomy politician-editor: Rawlins 2018C fn 11.] Indeed, in the 1912 edition, at p.274, *BOTH* (necessarily contradictory) versions of the 1908/4/14 data (before AND

⁴¹Now found in most of the world’s navigational manuals, this simple format, for computing refraction r as a function of altitude h , is: $r = a \cot[h + b/(h + c)]$. It was first published by Rawlins *Publ Astr Soc Pacific* 94:359 (1982/4) p.363 eq.8a. New professional-level Rawlins formulae for refraction (including corrections for temperature & pressure) recently published at *DIO 2.1* (1992) ‡4 fn 17 [subsequently refined by the late Keith Pickering].

⁴²By the 1992 Rawlins refraction formulae cited at fn 41, refraction $r = 5'.4$.

⁴³Note that Cook 1911 p.292 [photo opp.p.364] & p.245 also copies Peary’s [ultra-]minor error (1910 p.362) of applying refraction-correction after (not before) semidiameter-correction.

⁴⁴As pseudo-explained at Cook 1911 p.246n, he applied 9′ of refraction not only to his 7 “Pole” sextant shots (Cook 1911 pp.292&302) but to all the others (Cook 1911 pp.245, 257, 274): 10 observations in all. The 9′ refraction-figure used by Cook was wrong in every case: 10 for 10.

⁴⁵Cook may have been warned of this error. Cook 1911 (pp.289, 296, 302, 573) says he moved camp 4 nmi “magnetic south” between the 2nd & 3rd pair of observations. However, since the last 5 observation-pairs were all allegedly taken at the same spot, the hovering-saucer hypothesis is solid for the 24 hr period over which these 5 observations were allegedly taken.

⁴⁶Cook’s sextant was later recovered (& publicly displayed in Copenhagen), without artificial horizon.

⁴⁷The discovery of this Cook slip was made by Rep. Henry Helgesen. (See his astute analysis in the *Congressional Record* 54 Appendix p.56, 1916. [Bryce found (‡2 §G1) that the actual author was Ernest C.Rost {Cook’s lobbyist posing as Helgesen’s secretary} (who in 1916 sued Cook for nonpayment of lobbying fees: Rawlins 1973 pp.247-248), one of a vast array of new revelations in Bryce’s definitive 1997 book. The refraction error (§C7) was Rawlins’ find, as was the 1912 double-printing (§C8) of 1908/4/14 data.] {The artistic 1913 drawing of a sledge dog’s face at Cook 1911 p.567 was by Rost’s son, a gifted etcher.}

<pre> 0.....21°-49'-30" 0.....21-18-20 9 43-7-50 21-33-55 +2 9 21-35-50 10-47-55 9 10-38-55 90- 79-21-5 7-15-23 86-36-28 </pre>	<pre> 0.....21°-59'-30" 0.....21-08-20 9 43-7-50 21-33-55 +2 9 21-35-50 10-47-55 9 10-38-55 90- 79-21-5 7-15-23 86-36-28 </pre>	<pre> 0.....21°-59'-30" 0.....21-08-20 9 43-7-50 21-33-55 +2 9 21-35-50 10-47-55 9 10-38-55 90- 79-21-5 7-15-23 86-36-28 </pre>
<pre> Noon 0.....22-12-5 0.....22-46-20 9 41-58-25 22-29-12 +2 9 22-31-13 11-15-36 9 11-6-36 90 78-53-24 9-27-41 88-21-5 </pre>	<pre> Noon 0.....22-12-5=22-02-05 0.....22-46-20=22-56-20 9 44-58-25 22-29-12 +2 9 22-31-12 11-15-36 9 11-6-36 90 78-53-24 9-27-41 88-21-5 </pre>	<pre> Noon 0.....=22-02-05 0.....=22-56-20 9 44-58-25 22-29-12 +2 9 22-31-12 11-15-36 9 11-6-36 90 78-53-24 9-27-41 88-21-5 </pre>

Figure 1: Successive 1911&1912&1913 editions of 2 badly faked 1908 double-limb solar double-altitudes. Top row 1908/4/8. Bottom row 1908/4/14. Vestal Versions (§C7) on left. Final Fudged Versions (§C8) on right. From Cook's *My Attainment of the Pole* pp.257&274.

after doctoring) are included and (the ultimate oddity) equated: “22° 12' 05'' = 22° 02' 05'''” and “22° 46' 20'' = 22° 56' 20'''”. (The appearance of this amazing 1912 simultaneous double-version was probably caused by a printer's misunderstanding of orders scribbled by Cook on the galleys, indicating replacement of the former data by the latter.) By the time the 1913 edition appeared, he had completely suppressed the original version, having enhanced both upper limb values by 10' while shaving 10' off both lower limb values — which keeps both pairs' critical averages the same as before (necessary for holding-fixed the already-published latitudes “deduced” from the data), but simultaneously requires the believer to accept that Cook was the victim of two misprints which *perfectly* cancelled. Twice. (I.e., 4 misprints in all.) See Fig.1's comparative photocopies, of all 3 editions for both dates. (Final upper-vs-lower differences, 51' 10'' & 54' 15'', are poor approximations to correct 64'; but patching up more exactly would require accepting 8 misprinted digits.)

C9 To a scientist, it has always been obvious (Rawlins 1973, e.g., p.89) that Cook was not a navigator. (And he said he wasn't: §C17.) Returning to the question (§C1) of whether Cook's 1908 trip was c.12 nmi (Eskimos) or 500 nmi (Cook) north of land, we find that we need not debate whether (fn 19) the Eskimos were coerced or bribed or misunderstood when they testified that Cook went only about 12 nmi north[west] — because we have (as in the case of Barrill's testimony) independent confirmation of the witnesses: if Cook couldn't navigate, it would have been suicide for him to go *out of sight of land*. (The Eskimos testified⁴⁸ that the party never left sight of land at any time on the trip. [Consistent with mere land-ice photographs: fn 33. Tho MacMillan said he saw land from 85 nmi out in 1914.] Further Cook navigational oddities follow.

⁴⁸[Fn 33, §C1, & ‡2 §§E1&§E2. See also] Cook 1911 p.206n, Freeman 1961 pp.105, 157-158, Rawlins 1973 p.89, Hunt 1981 p.142o (reproduction of 1909/9/8 NY *Evening Telegram* p.1.)]

C10 At several places in his 1911 book, Cook assumes that, at the N.Pole, the compass pointed to the N.Magnetic Pole. Since the Earth is not a simple magnet, this assumption was wrong by about 30°. (See Cook 1911 pp.288-292, 573; also Rawlins 1973 pp.91&234.) According to August Loose, Cook privately claimed⁴⁹ that the key to his alleged 1908 navigation was steering compass-south along the 95°W meridian from land to the Pole — a method squarely based upon the same naïve simple-magnet assumption (*NYTimes* 1909/12/9 p.3 col.4). Such a mistake could not be made by a genuine attainer of the Pole.

C11 Cook frequently gives longitudes precisely to the arcminute even while closely approaching the Pole, though all navigators know the folly of this.⁵⁰ E.g., at latitude 89° 31'N, Cook says (1911 p.279, contra the dead-reckoning claim of p.573) that his longitude calculations (performed *before* the noon latitude, a feat that will further astonish navigators) gave 95° 03'W. However, just 29 nmi from the Pole, an arcminute of longitude is (in great-circle angle) less than an arcsecond: a distance of just 16 meters. Dead-reckoning (Cook 1911 p.573) to such precision after many miles of compass-course marching is superhuman. Nothing like it in the history of exploration (except Peary's pole-in-one 1909 alleged aiming: Rawlins 1973 p.145). Only someone completely unversed in the relevant math would make such errors. (For an equally astonishing similar slip by a prominent [former] prof in the University of Chicago's Astronomy Dep't, see *DIO* 2.3 ‡8 fn 31.)

C12 In his first account (*NYHerald* 1909/9/2:1:4), Cook reports his arrival at the Pole, “On April 21 the first correct altitude of the sun gave 89 deg. 59 min. 46 sec. The pole therefore was in sight. We advanced the fourteen seconds”. His next account (Cook 1909 10/5:4:1) is, “The observation gave latitude 89 deg. 59 min. 45 sec. . . . We advanced the fifteen seconds”. By 1911, Cook had been informed by amused scientists that such precision is meaningless, so the Pole-arrival account at Cook 1911 pp.288-289 was substantially rewritten: “Several sextant observations gave a latitude a few seconds below 90°, which, because of unknown refraction and uncertain accuracy of time,⁵¹ was placed at 90°.”

C13 Cook 1911 p.580 equates 1 timemin with 1 nautical mile. Since the latter equals 1 arcmin (fn 4), this is just a confusion of timemin with arcmin, a distinction which ranks as chapter-one navigational material. No one familiar with navigation makes such mistakes.

C14 Where are the data for Cook's alleged 1908 steering and longitudes? (See fn 53.) A common excuse is the claim that Peary's people stole⁵² the data. (Contra this, see Rawlins 1973 p.87.) However, we recall that Cook claimed he took a “round of [theodolite] angles” atop Mt.McKinley in 1906 — and these data are (as I predicted long ago to Cook's daughter, e.g., 1974/1/19; see also Rawlins 1973 p.80, years before the Cook Papers' unsealing) no more to be found than Cook's alleged N.Pole navigational⁵³ data. Nowhere in the Cook Papers or in the scientific materials of Cook's several expeditions (1892, 1894, 1897, 1903, 1906, 1908) are there records showing that Cook had ability with a sextant — or had the ability to compute geographical position from sextant data.

⁴⁹See above at fn 34.

⁵⁰Cook 1911 p.502 says this was just due to automatic computational routine. However, no other polar explorer exhibits such naïvete about longitude.

⁵¹Nonetheless, when allegedly only a quarter of a nmi from the Pole, he estimates his longitude as 97°W (Cook 1911 p.292; “ORIGINAL” data sheet photo opp. p.364) — i.e., an implicit longitude precision of ±4 meters (±1°/2)!

⁵²See below at fn 63. Conversely, the *NYHerald* (1909/9/23 p.5 col.3) reports a theft of documents on Peary's ship, shortly after his return from the North.

⁵³The sextant data Cook (eventually) published have no relation to steering, being merely latitude-sight arithmetic. (There exist no Cook observations for longitude, real or fake: Rawlins 1973 p.87, [Bryce 1997 p.463].) H.Abramson sent (1988/12/13) photocopies of these meridian-arithmetic Cook “original observations” (Cook Papers, Library of Congress) for 1908/3/30, 4/8, 4/14, & 4/21-23, the same figures appearing at Cook 1911 pp.245, 257, 274, 292, & 302. The data sheets are conveniently smudged at the suspect (§§C7-C8) spots. Nonetheless, the 1908/4/8 first sight is unambiguously discernable as 21° 49' 30'', not 21° 59' 30'' (as later “corrected” in the 1912 & 1913 editions of Cook 1911).

C15 This matter goes to the heart of the Cook claim, and it ought to be faced by his defenders. I quoted Dunn & Parker earlier (§§B3&B4) on Cook’s navigational disabilities. Let us now turn to the testimony of the man who offered to act as Cook’s secret navigational double: ship’s captain August Loose, a figure unknown⁵⁴ to Cook’s friends (including even his lawyer, Henry Wellington Wack, who saw Cook frequently at this time). Loose reported in a 1909/12/7 affidavit — gleefully page-one-displayed by the *NYTimes* (1909/12/9) — that he was hired by Cook to manufacture celestial data proving navigation of a 500 nmi trip to the N.Pole, data computed indoors (in {Bronxville}) for the specific places&dates Cook had already published. From Loose’s story, “How to Discover the North Pole without Leaving New York” (*NYTimes* 1909/12/9 p.3 col.3, partially quoted in Rawlins 1973 p.86):

It took me only about three minutes on my first acquaintance with Dr.Cook to get the idea into my head that he had never found the north pole. I found that he was entirely ignorant on many points of the method of taking observations. It amazed me that a man who needed so much enlightenment would have the nerve to come out and say he had discovered the north pole. . . . He could not answer simple questions on matters that he should have been intimately familiar with Of course, I have no way of knowing that the doctor did actually copy my “observations” and send them in [to the Univ Copenhagen scientists preparing to judge Cook, but] . . . if he used the stuff he had before I started in to help him, he would never convince those Danish scientists.

Cook did not⁵⁵ send Loose’s fakes to his Copenhagen judges. And he didn’t convince them. **C16** As previously, when we must choose which party to believe (Cook vs. one of the succession of witnesses against him), we may look for independent confirmation. In this case, consultation of the several giveaway slips (§§C10-C13) of his trip is powerfully consistent with Loose’s often-hilarious account of Cook as a non-navigator.⁵⁶ (To a navigationally-trained reader, Loose’s account is that of one conversant with the math & practice of navigation. Cook’s account is not.) When Loose’s credibility was attacked in 1909, he countered by publicly challenging Cook to demonstrate that he could use a sextant. (See Rawlins 1973 p.86.) Cook did not pick up the challenge.

C17 Cook couldn’t deny his meetings with Loose, since the *NYTimes* of 1909/12/9 had page-one-published a facsimile of his 1909/11/4 handwritten note to Loose, describing his needs: “Svartevæg [*sic*], start March 17-18. Strong wind — Haze. March 30 — obs. Lat & Long. daily observations to April 23.” Though the incident is highly suspicious⁵⁷ — no

⁵⁴ As first uncovered in 1935 by grammarian C. Henshaw Ward, Peary also got clandestine navigational advice from an expert, Hudson B. Hastings (Bowdoin College), who secretly stayed at Peary’s home during the crucial weeks before the belated 1909/11/1 presentation of Peary’s N.Pole “data” to his friendly National Geographic judges. Full details at Rawlins 1973 pp.285-290.

⁵⁵ Cook 1911 p.502, Freeman 1961 p.206, & Eames 1973 p.235 all understandably have some fun with this point.

⁵⁶ Three more navigational peculiarities: [a] Cook mimics Peary’s habit of shooting the Sun only at quarter-day intervals — which renders faking the data a matter of mere arithmetic. (Rawlins 1970 p.35; or Rawlins 1973 p.154.) [b] Why deal with solar semidiameter if using observation-pairs? (Actually, Cook 1911 p.289 says he took “Several” — not two — observations on arrival at the Pole.) After all, if one merely pairs upper & lower limbs, as Cook states he usually did, then the semidiameter will virtually cancel out of the math; though, see fn 43. [c] If, as claimed at Cook 1911 p.302, all the “Pole” observations were doubled, then how did the single-limb observation of Cook 1911 p.292 agree to 2’’ with the mean cited at Cook 1911 p.302?

⁵⁷ Hunt 1981 p.116 cuts past details to the main point (which also applies to Peary’s needlessly long-secret dealings with Hastings, fn 54): “Cook knew where to go for reputable verification of his data if that was really all he wished to have done. Among his acquaintances at the Explorers Club and Arctic Club, there were several men whom he might have contacted, including Captain Lewis Nixon. He could have asked the help of respectable academic or government scientists skilled in navigation; instead, he allowed the approach of two dishonest men.”

matter what the precise details — Cook tried to pass it off as just a misunderstanding (Cook 1911 pp.537-538):

he [Loose] made the audacious suggestion that I let him go over my material. I flatly refused.

He pointed out, what I myself had been thinking about, that all observations were subject to extreme inaccuracy. He suggested his working mine out backward to verify them. As I regarded him as an experienced navigator, I thought this of interest. I was not a navigator [!], and, moreover, had had no chance of checking my figures. So, desiring an independent view, and thinking that another man’s method might satisfy any doubts, I told him to go ahead, using the figures published in my story in the New York *Herald*.

C18 Comments: [i] If one isn’t a navigator (which Cook admits [§C17]), then one can’t find the N.Pole, especially when traveling over moving ice-floes. [ii] Working “backward” (from geographical position to data, not vice-versa as for real navigation) equals faking data. (Mathematically, faking celestial altitudes is easier than using real data to find position. See Rawlins 1973 p.154, which also adds the little-known item that: the easiest places on Earth to fake such data for are the N.Pole & S.Pole.) [iii] What about observations after April 23? Cook, not returning on his outward sledge-track, would have had to navigate back to land, just as he allegedly navigated to the Pole. [iv] When Cook claims he asked Loose to work “backward” (fake data) from his newspaper account, he reveals more than he knows. The hitherto-unnoted blunder here: the detailed *Herald* accounts⁵⁸ provide *no times for the longitude observations*, so there is no basis for computing anything (forwards or backwards) — and, needless to add, one must have longitudes [and Cook asked Loose to do longitudes: §C17] in order to steer. (See Rawlins 1973 p.87; also, Ted Heckathorn’s & Wm.Rawlins’ recovery of the longlost longitude observations of Roald Amundsen’s legendary 1911 trip to the South Pole: D.Rawlins 1992, *Wash Post* 1993/6/1, and *Science* 1993/6/11.) [**Bottom line: Cook never in his life celestially mapped a single geographical feature.**]

D Journey Ends. Controversy Doesn’t. [Until . . .]

D1 After disappearing in early 1908, Cook reappeared in Greenland over a year later. To explain his nonproduction of celestial observations, he usually said he’d preserved at least some (but see fn 60) of his original records in a box which, as Pearyite Prof.Hobbs temperately puts it,⁵⁹ Cook had left “in the keeping of a wandering sportsman [H.Whitney] in Greenland” — whom Cook expected (Rawlins 1973 p.166) back in civilization no earlier than mid-October (about the end of Cook’s highly lucrative whirlwind lecture series). When Whitney instead returned at virtually the moment of Cook’s first US lecture (Carnegie Hall) without any knowledge of such records [*idem*; Freeman 1961 p.171; questioned by *C&P* p.910], Cook (Rawlins *loc cit*) “thereupon said that he wasn’t sure he’d told Whitney the papers were in the box; besides, he reassured believers, he’d kept copies with him all along.” (For the evolution⁶⁰ of Cook’s story regarding what data he allegedly left with Whitney, see Rawlins 1973 p.87 and corresponding citations in notes at p.298.)

D2 As Peary rightly noted,⁶¹ such records add but a “featherweight” to one’s burden. Is it not slightly nery to come out of the Arctic, claiming one of the greatest exploring triumphs in history (and asking thousands of dollars for the story: Freeman 1961 p.137) — while simultaneously treating the crucial supporting data-records as of little import? (See Cook 1911 pp.244-245n & Rawlins 1973 p.83.)

⁵⁸ *NYH* 1909/9/2, Cook 1909.

⁵⁹ W.Hobbs *Peary* 1936 p.372, quoted Rawlins 1973 p.85.

⁶⁰ In one early version of Cook’s gelatinous account of the disposition of his records, he told Danish astronomer E.Strömngren that he had left all of his original “data” & diaries with Whitney. (See P.Gibbs *NYT* 1909/9/7:5:1-2; Freeman 1961 p.150.)

⁶¹ Freeman 1961 p.171. Confirmed (evidently inadvertently) at Cook 1911 p.499.

D3 Cook claims⁶² Peary caused the burial of some of his data, but this alibi avoids the key issue: why did Cook ever let such data out of his possession? (Peary noted that he himself never did; explorer G.deLong froze to death in north Siberia with his records in his hands.) Had Cook done so, there would be no Cook Controversy. Thus, the responsibility for his inability to prove his claim is his own. We must not forget that, in science, the burden of proof is on the claimant, not the skeptic. That is why, though it's certain that the Controversy will never die [though, see ‡4 §K1], there is another, equally-solid Never: the Cook claim will not & cannot be accepted in scientific circles.

D4 Applying normal philosophy of science to the options here (innocence or guilt), we ask the Occam's-Razor question: which theory is simpler? The classic astronomical-history comparison (for the planets' motion) is geocentrism vs. heliocentrism: the former requires a complex, neatly-rigged set of epicycles. (See Rawlins 1987 p.238. Or see *DIO 1.1* ‡7 "Figleaf Salad".) By contrast, the latter is spare & simple. In the Cook case, we have on the one side the believers' theory: [a] Cook innocently left his precious original records in the Arctic. [b] Peary hid, destroyed, or stole them.⁶³ [c] All Cook's companions (1906 & 1908) were intimidated, misquoted, or bribed⁶⁴ by Peary money to testify that Cook never went anywhere near the top of Mt.McKinley or the N.Pole. [d] Peary forces bribed Loose to lie. Etc, etc. [A jungle of] epicycles.

D5 But there is a much simpler theory which easily explains an otherwise ultracomplex⁶⁵ saga. This elementary theory is that: Cook was a liar — even though Peary said he was.

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⁶²Cook 1911 pp.244-245n, pp.499-500.

⁶³ See §D1, Freeman 1961 pp.168, 170-173.

⁶⁴ See §B8, Cook 1911 p.528, Eames 1973 p.67. A difficulty with this theory is that Barrill (& Parker) had, years before Cook's fight with Peary, claimed that Cook never climbed McKinley. See, e.g., Expl.Club minutes 1909/10/15 p.16 (also pp.1-2), Freeman 1961 pp.177-178, Rawlins 1973 p.89, Hunt 1981 p.30.

⁶⁵ See above at §§B8&D4.