


SAMUEL J. ENTRIKIN AND THE PEARY
GREENLAND EXPEDITION OF 1893-1895:
GENDER, RACE, AND SOCIETY AT THE
NEW AMERICAN FRONTIER

Rob Lukens
Temple University

 On September 14, 1893, West Chester's *Daily Local News* published an account of the travels Samuel J. Entrikin. "We have been favored with the privilege of publishing the following letter from our well known and popular townsman Samuel J. Entrikin, in whom West Chester, PA, in fact the State, has a pride and interest," boasted the newspaper. The article continued, expounding on "his prominence in the group composing the men who are aboard the ship *Falcon* to explore the Frigid North—for a pole." Through a lengthy letter, Entrikin wove together the details of his journey from West Chester, outside of Philadelphia, to the northern reaches of Greenland. He and a crew led by Lieutenant Robert Peary secured dogs in Battle Harbor, Labrador and visited remote Moravian missions further north in Hopedale. Their ship, the *Falcon*, passed through "Hell's Gate" and for 60 miles "butted through the ice, the concussions knocking and rolling us about in our berths, until we were sore from the crowns of our heads to the soles of our feet." Entrikin wrote on of their arrival in Greenland,

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and relayed stories of walrus hunts, the mysterious Inuit, and dangerous travels by sledge and small boat.¹

Despite his geographical distance, the adventures of this “well known and popular townsman” were close to home. Entrikin carried along bundles of the *Daily Local News* to review his hometown happenings. He described how the sledge sent a year before by another West Cestrian, Dr. Joseph T. Rothrock, was well used by the natives. For those that visited the *Falcon* before it left Philadelphia, he painted a visual image of the ship’s current cargo and fit-out, complete with dogs, burros, bales of hay, barrels of coal oil, and various trunks and boxes.² In essence, those at home were there with him, experiencing the wonders of a different world through his words.

This snapshot provides a small glimpse of Samuel Entrikin’s trip above the Arctic Circle to Greenland in 1893, one of two such journeys he took in the 1890s. On the second of these two journeys this native Pennsylvanian spent over a year in the Arctic enduring harsh conditions, interacting with Inuit, leading hunting parties, and exploring new territories. The story of his journey to the Arctic has all of the makings of a blockbuster film—otherworldly beauty, disastrous storms, ferocious animals, brushes with death, and humans pushing themselves to their limits. But if one looks beyond the suspense, trials, and triumphs of Entrikin’s northern adventures, they provide a broad, incisive, and poignant gaze at the perceptions, anxieties, and desires of American society at the turn of the twentieth century.

To put things in perspective, Samuel Entrikin’s adventures were only a mere speck on the vast timeline of Arctic exploration. For centuries, explorers have been drawn to the far northern areas beyond the Arctic Circle. European seafarers searched for a northwest passage to the East as early as the sixteenth century. Driven by the desire for new markets, voyages of figures such as Henry Hudson and William Baffin accumulated a wealth of scientific and geographical information. These exploration efforts accelerated in the first half of the nineteenth century, dominated by the British navy. Sir John Franklin’s ill-fated voyage of 1845–1847 drew international interest in Arctic travel. Spurred by the will of Lady Franklin, over forty expeditions searched for his crew only to find that all members perished.

As explorers turned their attention to the North Pole, United States-led expeditions increasingly dominated the field, and often with disastrous results. The harsh Arctic elements killed 20 of George Washington DeLong’s 31 officers in his quest for the pole in 1879–1882. Wrapped up in controversy and melodramatic journalism, Adolphus Greely’s 1881–1884 expedition left

only seven survivors of the original twenty-five crewmembers. From this tradition of tragedy and sensationalism, naval Lieutenant Robert Peary began his Arctic adventures with his first of eight trips to the Arctic in 1886. The quest for the pole culminated in controversy when, in 1909, both Peary and his former colleague Frederick Cook claimed its discovery.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, these tales of the Arctic North have captured the imaginations of armchair travelers at home. Media such as travel literature, newspaper accounts, lectures, exhibitions, novels, and photographs allowed the American public to vicariously experience the "Arctic Sublime."³ This deeply entrenched tradition of sensationalistic storytelling inexorably influenced the evolution of Arctic exploration historiography. Twentieth-century histories evolved from autobiography and travel accounts into fantastic and celebratory works. Even today, little serious scholarship on Arctic exploration has surfaced from the discipline of history.⁴

A few historians have alluded to the potential for Arctic exploration to become a rich historical field by examining issues such as the influence of the press, scientific motivation, and Victorian visions of the Arctic.⁵ In recent years, a handful of works have looked more closely at the phenomenon of American Arctic exploration with a particular emphasis on gender. Lisa Bloom's 1993 study *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* contends that the act of Arctic exploration, as exemplified by Peary and promoted by the National Geographic Society advanced masculine cultural and political domination in the U.S. Michael Frederick Robinson's 2006 work, *The Coldest Crucible: Arctic Exploration and American Culture*, relies on travel accounts, newspapers, personal papers, magazines, and journals to argue that Arctic exploration both reflected and influenced the shifting ideals of manhood in America.⁶

The work of these scholars, especially Robinson, has set the stage for further research. But despite these inquiries, the field remains as vast and wide-open as the Arctic itself. More intensive ground-level research is needed to understand the dialectic between the Arctic frontier and home. The adventures of Samuel J. Entrikin present the perfect in-depth case study for understanding this nexus of attitudes, anxieties, and perceptions that dominated turn-of-the-century America.

The first step towards fully understanding Samuel Entrikin and U.S.-based polar exploration requires an examination of the American West. The idea of the frontier as a leveling device and character builder, first

postulated by Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893, has contributed greatly to the development of American self-perceptions. Historian Richard Slotkin has outlined the pervasiveness of the "Myth of the Frontier," the notion that the west was a place of prosperity and freedom. From playing cowboys and Indians to speaking metaphorically of "Custer's Last Stand," says Slotkin, the myth "still informs our political rhetoric of pioneering progress."⁷

If, then, the frontier myth in its various forms played so heavily in the minds of late nineteenth-century Americans, anxiety naturally arose from the prediction that the frontier would soon end. Coupled with a massive influx of immigrants, this uncertainty escalated fears to apocalyptic proportions. Fearing the end of the "great race," historians Theodore Lothrop Stoddard and Madison Grant augured the mongrelization of humanity.⁸ These questions about national character were inextricably connected to anxieties about manhood. Social critics and the press posited that the luxuries of modern life, the frontier's closing, and the rise of female influence had emasculated men, leaving them soft and powerless. Some feared that "overcivilization" had separated men from nature, making them too delicate to perform basic survival tasks. Sports, exercise, hiking, and the Boy Scouts all provided a means to reestablish a sense of lost manhood through, what Theodore Roosevelt called the "strenuous life." The mythical frontier, with its foreboding landscape, wild animals, and lack of female presence, became the ultimate source of this brand of masculinity.⁹

Thus, the journey of Samuel Entrikin took place in an era smothered in anxieties about the direction of modern man and American identity. If the frontier was closing, what would be the new source of masculinity and "American Exceptionalism?" The Arctic provided an arena for men to deal with and conquer these anxieties through the reestablishment of a masculine sense of Americanness. In the Arctic, conquering the environment itself offered a solution to this collective identity crisis.

This particular episode in American history took place on three distinct levels. First, an examination of Entrikin's journey underscores his self-perception as a rugged American man and shows how that perception was undermined by Josephine and Robert Peary. Second, interactions between white explorers and their native counterparts reveal the ambivalent and contradictory nature of how white explorers viewed the Inuit. Finally, through the press and more direct encounters with expeditions, the public in his hometown of West Chester and beyond both passively and actively participated in this program of reinvigoration.

This is a story about Samuel Entrikin's perspective and the media that surrounded his experiences. It is based primarily on his personal papers and supporting materials. The perspective of many other individuals and groups, such as Peary, other explorers, and the Inuit are absent to allow more intensive focus on Entrikin's experiences alone. But the portrayal of Entrikin's experiences, both by himself and the media, do reflect a broad slice of American society because the Arctic and Inuit were at the forefront of the media. Millions visited the 1893 World's Colombian Exposition that featured a full Eskimo village. Numerous fiction and non-fiction stories in *Harper's New Monthly*, *Scribner's Magazine*, *Century Magazine*, *Youth's Companion*, *St. Nicholas* and countless others introduced the Arctic to readers. The Arctic was everywhere and Entrikin's experiences present, in a local context, that interplay between explorer and the public. As Frederick Cook explained in 1894, "Arctic Fever" caught the American public at many points in the nineteenth century and the last decade was no different.¹⁰ In modern terms, it was akin to the excitement surrounding the space race of the Cold War. Therefore, for his contemporaries, Entrikin's story fit naturally into this already familiar context. Indeed, his story was not remarkable, but typical.

The Journey

Born in 1862 in Juniata County, central Pennsylvania, Samuel Entrikin spent most of his early life living with his aunt in West Chester, a borough on the eastern end of the state. After graduating from the public school system, he worked as a printer for six years. For a number of years both before his adventures and after, Entrikin taught at the Schofield Normal and Industrial School for African-American children in Aiken, South Carolina. During his early years in the South, Entrikin came to love the wilderness and later wrote a book about his treks into the mountainous regions of South Carolina.¹¹

Entrikin's first experiences with Robert Peary developed through Professor Angelo Heilprin of Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences. Heilprin served as leader of an 1892 relief expedition to bring supplies to Peary at his Greenland outpost. Entrikin's initial connection to Heilprin is unclear, but somehow Entrikin joined six others on the mission. The group departed in June 1892 and returned in October, having successfully completed their mission. Despite the brevity of this trip, Entrikin impressed Peary as a "man of great ingenuity and an indefatigable worker."¹² By December of that year,

as Entrikin settled back into teaching, he received a letter from Peary asking if he would like to “revisit the Arctic regions.” Entrikin accepted and spent the spring planning for the upcoming trip while Peary concluded a lecture tour. Named second in command by Peary, Entrikin’s charge was to secure all of the equipment for the trip, including boats, sledges, and supplies for building a house in northern Greenland.¹³

Peary never mentioned the North Pole in his letters to Entrikin. The Lieutenant’s self-proclaimed goals were mostly navigational and geographical in scope. But he later wrote that “in the event of favourable conditions, an attempt upon the Pole” would be made.¹⁴ Newspaper accounts relayed this mission to the public. As one article posited, if they happened to get close, they might reach for the pole but “no special effort will be made to attain that end.”¹⁵

Peary selected an eclectic group of eleven explorers to accompany him on his expedition. Norwegian Eivind Astrup was an experienced member of Peary’s 1891–1892 expedition. Matthew Henson, Peary’s African-American servant, later accompanied Peary in 1909 when Peary claimed to have reached the North Pole. Nashvillian Evelyn B. Baldwin served as the crew’s meteorologist. Among the rest of the men were: Indianan Dr. Edward Vincent, Philadelphia artist Frederick Stokes, Peary’s secretary Walter T. Swain, taxidermist George H. Clark of Brookline, Massachusetts, George W. Carr of Chicago, James S. Davidson of Minnesota, and Hugh Lee of Connecticut. Finally, two women accompanied the men: Peary’s wife Josephine and her maid, Mrs. Cross.¹⁶

With this group (not including the ship’s crew), the *Falcon* launched from New York City on July 1, 1893. Stopping in Boston and Portland on their way, the ship landed in St. Johns, Newfoundland on July 13. Their first Arctic experience came soon after crossing the Arctic Circle on July 26, when the group arrived at Holsteinborg in southwestern Greenland. After a solitary Inuit man guided them to port by kayak, they bought seventeen dogs, some sealskin, and dried fish. The group later joined the natives in their huts for some coffee and visited Hostenborg’s governor. As they continued north, Entrikin and the others traded for more supplies to prepare them for the unforgiving climate.¹⁷

On August 3, the *Falcon* arrived in Bowdoin Bay on the western edge of Greenland. They frantically spent the next few days building a house, later dubbed “Anniversary Lodge” by Peary. Through the rest of the summer and into the fall, Entrikin and the others kept busy securing foodstuffs for the coming winter. Official orders regularly came to Entrikin in letter

form from Peary, giving explicit instructions on where to hunt and the expected results of each trek.¹⁸

As the explorers endured “the awful stillness of the Arctic night” through the winter, Peary planned a major overland journey for the spring.¹⁹ With native assistance, the men set up an “ice cap” camp six miles north of Anniversary Lodge to act as a base for their journey. March 5, 1894, Entrikin wrote in his diary, was the “beginning of the long March” to the north. Eight crewmembers and five natives started out to reach the far edge of the ice cap. According to Peary’s plan, all of the natives returned to the lodge on March 11. By March 22, Astrup and Lee “were unable to go further” and retreated to the lodge. Those remaining, Peary, Entrikin, Baldwin, Clark, Davidson, and Vincent hunkered down in one small tent for days, as a violent storm had torn the other tent to pieces. As they trudged on, Davidson’s foot froze, necessitating his return with Dr. Vincent. Food became scarce and frostbite continually hindered the group’s progress. Sleds broke down, rendering them unusable. Finally, on April 11, the remaining four retreated, barely making it back to the lodge alive nine days later.²⁰

The group spent the next few months conducting business similar to the last fall—hunting expeditions, small-scale explorations, and souvenir-seeking. On July 31, 1894, the *Falcon* reappeared to bring supplies for the coming year. When the ship returned to the United States, Entrikin and eight others, all except for Peary, Henson, and Lee, returned with it. Despite their initial understanding that the expedition was to last another year, the men arrived in Philadelphia on the September 24, 1894.²¹ For Entrikin, the experience of exploring the Arctic was suddenly over.

The Arctic as Frontier

When Peary’s expedition arrived in St. John’s, Newfoundland in 1893, Entrikin “expected to have his last shave” until he returned from the Arctic.²² The next mention of him shaving came when he was preparing to return to the U.S. in August of 1894.²³ Entrikin clearly saw himself as part of something larger than hunting expeditions and dashes across vast expanses of ice. As he bore facial hair to transform himself into an outdoorsman, his writing consistently emphasized his interaction with the harshness of the Arctic. He reveled in extreme conditions and thrived under pressures that he depicted as life or death situations.

Entrikin's description of one journey clearly illustrates this tendency to focus on the triumph of man over nature. On August 29, 1893, Entrikin led a party that included Henson, Stokes, Clark, and two Inuit men in the steam launch *General Wistar* and two whaling boats, the *Mary Peary* and *Faith*. They set off for a walrus hunt, a dangerous endeavor that almost cost one of the natives his life.²⁴ By September 1, the group left the relative comfort of a village to continue on their hunting expedition. Seven miles from shore, a tangled towline seized the propeller and rendered the steamboat useless. Helplessly drifting, they tied the boat to an iceberg for stability and tried to free the propeller. The berg cracked, split and turned, and would have dragged them under if the line had been shorter. Unable to fix the *General Wistar's* engine, they manually towed the vessel behind the two whaling boats, using nothing but oars for propulsion. Hungry and sleep-deprived, they rowed through ice floes and bergs, the Inuit man Kessuh "even curling himself around his oar and taking a nap as it seemed between strokes." They rowed seventy miles and traveled for a total of 130 before finally arriving at Anniversary Lodge on September 3.²⁵

This passage and countless others reflect Entrikin's sense of purpose, how he relished the Arctic's extreme environment. Despite the walruses, ice floes, and mechanical failure, the explorers' rugged spirit conquered all as they simply did what had to be done—row themselves seventy miles home to survive. And not only did his narratives qualify their journeys, they quantified them too. In his diary, Entrikin regularly tallied days spent away from the lodge, miles traveled, and animals killed.

Beyond his narration, photographs also conveyed Entrikin's sense of bravado in the face of danger. Since the bulkiness of photographic equipment did not allow the explorers to capture the most harrowing moments, Entrikin relied on captions to prove his stalwartness. One such photograph (Figure 1) shows Entrikin on board the *Falcon* on August 1, 1894. Looking stern and dignified, the caption in his handwriting reads:

S. J. Entrikin as he looked on his arrival on board the *Falcon*...after traveling for eight hours without a stop, over rough and floating ice; a distance of 35 miles; stopping long enough to eat breakfast; and then returned over the same route, covering 70 miles in 23 1/2 hours.²⁶

Although the conditions he endured are absent from the photo, the viewer clearly sees the results of his journey—Entrikin prevailed over nature and reemerged from his ordeal as tough as ever.



FIGURE 1: Photograph by Henry G. Bryant, August 1, 1894, "Samuel J. Entrikin Collection," DN58. Courtesy of the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA.

Photographs also highlighted the triumph of man over beast. One image (Figure 2) depicts two dead walrus on the deck of a ship, presumably the *Kite*, the vessel that brought the relief expedition to Greenland in 1892. A small rifle, as an extension of man, rests against the feared walrus as a symbolic gesture of defeat. In the background, the ghostly figure of an Inuit man poses with a knife, ready to flense the beast. Thus, since the rifle (as white man) has done the glorious work of slaying the walrus, the ghostly Inuit man on the right performs the unsavory duty of dressing the animal.²⁷

In a final image (Figure 3) humans are entirely absent from a desolate landscape that features nothing but scattered rocks and an endless glacier that rises into the sky. Again, Entrikin's caption provides the details. As an arrow points to a position in the photograph, Entrikin's words state, "I walked and hobbled from here 5 miles, in 1894 with both feet frozen."²⁸ Most likely, he wrote this caption after the expedition to authenticate his experience for viewers.

Beyond photographs and tales of Entrikin's exploits, another peculiar creature was an obvious manifestation of the frontier myth in the Arctic. Brought from the Southwest, eight burros provided the means for hauling supplies across the northern landscape. Even the press recognized

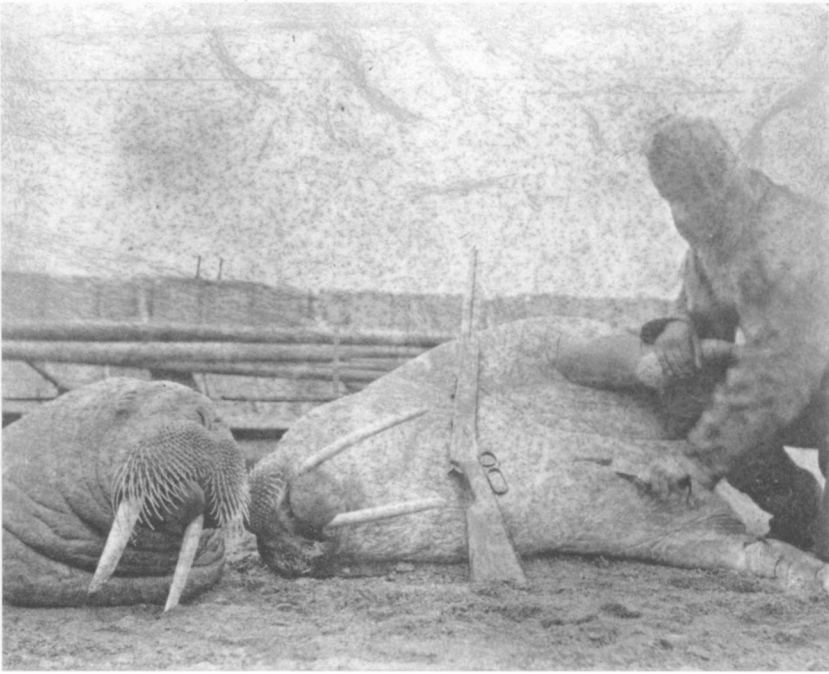


FIGURE 2: Photograph by Henry G. Bryant, 1892, "Samuel J. Entrikin Collection," DN58. Courtesy of the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA.

the oddity of the animals, as the "poor little fellows" stood "munching continuously on their hay" in the New York harbor.²⁹ Looking back years later, Peary admitted that the "ragged-coated, long-eared, pathetic-eyed burros" were a "somewhat novel experiment in Arctic methods."³⁰ Only four actually made it alive to Bowdoin Bay. Used for carrying supplies to the ice cap camp, the group shot the remaining burros during the first winter and fed them to the dogs.³¹

Entrikin's storybook narration and the burros allude to a shared ethos that these explorers brought with them to the Arctic and adhered to during their stay. This worldview, inherited from the "Myth of the West," is most visible when it broke down. The first breach of the frontier ethos surfaced before the trip even started with the inclusion of women. During their preparations for the journey, Peary felt obligated to let Entrikin know that Mrs. Peary might go along, in case, "it will make any difference in your desire to become a member of the expedition."³² Peary emphasized, however, that he was merely gathering opinions on the matter, as he considered it a "private affair" that concerned only him and Mrs. Peary.³³

THE PEARY GREENLAND EXPEDITION OF 1893-1895



FIGURE 3: Photograph by Henry G. Bryant, 1894, "Samuel J. Entrikin Collection," DN58.
Courtesy of the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA.

While Peary corresponded with Entrikin about his wife's involvement, another controversy brewed in Center City Philadelphia over the very same issue. The Geographical Society of Philadelphia nearly retracted their promise of financial support for Peary's expedition because of uncertainty over Mrs. Peary's plans to travel with her husband. The group, founded in 1891, regularly met at Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences to hear lectures, plan local excursions, encourage publications, and discuss the latest exploration news. After Peary approached the group for sponsorship and they agreed to raise \$5,000, society president Angelo Heilprin queried Peary about his wife's participation. Peary equivocated, saying that she may or may not go. Heilprin and others saw this as problematic, stating that "she would be out of place on such a trip" while another member was "decidedly opposed to the general principle of sanctioning feminine participation in Arctic Expeditions." Peary remained ambiguous about the issue and it eventually died down, but not before sparking this lively debate within the Society.³⁴

The women could have presented a way for crewmembers to demonstrate manly heroism by protecting them and thus bolstering the program of masculinity. But sources indicate that Josephine Peary, at least, was far from a helpless dame who needed protection. Mrs. Peary had already accompanied her husband on his 1891–1892 expedition, a choice that the Lieutenant recognized as her own. "Possessed of health, youth, energy, and enthusiastic interest in the work," Peary explained in his *Northward Over the "Great Ice,"* "she saw no reason why she could not endure conditions and environment similar to those in which Danish wives in Greenland pass years of their life."³⁵

In fact, Mrs. Peary was an explorer in her own right. She published three books on her journeys to northern regions, including her 1893 account of her first journey, *My Arctic Journal: A Year Among the Ice-Fields and Eskimos*.³⁶ As those books and the press relayed, Mrs. Peary displayed as much toughness as the men. She "became a huntress" and showed "that a woman bred in civilization can endure the rigors of the climate." The press also recognized her ethnographic accomplishments, as she documented the marital arrangements and living conditions of a people "with no thought beyond the present."³⁷ Not only did she endure the harsh environment, she fully domesticated it. During Christmas of 1892, she gave the "boys" cretonne curtains to adorn their bunks.³⁸ In 1894, Mrs. Peary decorated the "cottage" with, as she narrated, a "Brussels carpet on my parlor floor, several comfortable rocking chairs, portieres, a few pictures and the like."³⁹

Entrikin and others remained silent about the female presence before embarking on the expedition. But as Entrikin alludes to in his diary, there was some friction between Mrs. Peary and the men. In May of 1894, Entrikin prepared for a small hunting expedition. According to Entrikin, when he asked Mrs. Peary for a can of food for this trip, Mrs. Peary responded that "she did not care whether the men had anything to eat or not."⁴⁰

Upon returning home, members of the expedition freely expressed their sentiments about Mrs. Peary. When she publicly denied claims that food was scarce during the expedition, Peary's secretary Walter Swain exclaimed, "no Arctic expedition can ever succeed which takes a woman along to hamper it."⁴¹ Entrikin's diary similarly noted that "we would have all gotten along better if Mrs. Peary had not been along."⁴² As Norwegian Eivind Astrup also remarked, his countrymen agreed that "it was a mistake of him to bring Mrs. Peary and Mrs. Cross along."⁴³

As if the women's presence was not offensive enough to the explorers, Mrs. Peary proceeded to do the womanliest thing imaginable-she had a baby. Dubbed "The Snow Baby," Marie Ahnighito Peary arrived on September 12, 1893, less than three months after the expedition left New York. The press eagerly awaited birth of "the first white child born at this latitude" and later touted her as "a very remarkable baby," a child for all others to "emulate."⁴⁴ The presence of females clearly violated the frontier ethos that these explorers inherited-the frontier as a male world to foster robustness. Although sources do not indicate any resentment towards little Marie Peary, the existence of a baby girl must have denigrated their mission further. For, if a baby girl could endure the Arctic, then how rugged could these men truly be?

Historiographically, the story of Josephine and Marie Peary has never properly been put into this context. Lisa Bloom's *Gender on Ice* purports that Arctic and Antarctic exploration provided arenas for building up a dominant masculinity, for socially and culturally dominating females. As Bloom clearly states, Josephine Peary and other exploring women "did not publicly play a role in the Arctic outside traditionally female positions."⁴⁵ But in this case study of Samuel Entrikin's experiences, it appears that Josephine Peary's bold Arctic adventures not only pushed the limits of domesticity, but also ridiculed the crewmembers' sense of bravado and generally contradicted notions of Arctic expeditions as rugged masculine endeavors.

The only thing that offended some members of the expedition more than Mrs. Peary was the Lieutenant himself. Crewmembers felt that Robert Peary consistently breached the supposed democratic spirit of the frontier. As the

men toiled to build the house, Entrikin added to his diary that "Peary (was) impatient but doesn't lend a hand."⁴⁶ Entrikin and Astrup felt that their motivation was different than Peary's. Whereas they portrayed themselves as advancers of humanity, they thought that Peary "was not as unselfish as the commander of a scientific expedition ought to be."⁴⁷ The press filtered these sentiments to the public. As one article reported, members felt that "Peary was jealous, desiring all the honor and glory of the expedition himself."⁴⁸ Although Entrikin and Astrup did not comment on any specifics, some of Peary's actions clearly could have been viewed as vainglorious pursuits. Not only did he father "the first white child born at this latitude" and fixate on acquiring sacred Inuit meteorites, but he also had plans to ship Anniversary Lodge back to the United States for exhibition.⁴⁹

Of all of their grumblings, the expedition's abrupt end caused the greatest consternation among the crew members. The journey was supposed to last two years, but rumors began to circulate as soon as the *Falcon* arrived in the summer of 1893 that the ship would return next year to pick up most of the men. When the *Falcon* arrived in summer 1894, their suspicions were quickly confirmed. The exact nature of the events that led to the men's early return is open to debate. According to the diary of Henry Grier Bryant, member of the relief expedition who arrived with the *Falcon*, Peary called for volunteers. As Bryant penned, Peary "requested all the members of the party to inform him this evening as to whether or not they will volunteer to remain with him another year and make another effort to carry out the original plan of the expedition." Entrikin, Bryant relayed, was unsure at that point about whether he wished to stay or leave.⁵⁰ We do know from newspaper accounts following the *Falcon*'s September 1894 return that none were happy with their relations with Peary.⁵¹

Although the exact sequence of events is unclear, the sentiments of Entrikin and others is unambiguous. They felt tricked and taken advantage of. As a dismayed Evelyn Baldwin conveyed, "Peary and his two picked men remained behind in a comfortable lodge well stored with food and clothing for three, with an entire tribe of faithful servants to wait upon them, and safe from public attack" while the rest of them returned home. Entrikin, too, felt tricked. He wrote that Peary had broken his contract, did not call for volunteers to stay, and misrepresented facts about returning to the states.⁵²

When Peary completed his official account of the journey in *Northward over the "Great Ice,"* crewmembers' sentiments escalated from annoyance to

outright anger. In his book, Peary claimed that "Lee and Henson alone possessed the grit and loyalty to remain" in the Arctic for the second year and that other crewmembers returned home because they "discovered that Arctic work was not entirely the picnic they had imagined."⁵³ This final act, Peary's official account, emasculated the crewmembers and rendered their Arctic ruggedness a farce. When Peary's book hit the shelves, Evelyn Baldwin was shocked. Writing to Entrikin in 1898, Baldwin lambasted Peary for his comments about the crewmember's lack of rigor.⁵⁴ In later years, Entrikin defended the group, saying "as first officer, I state, his men served him well" knowing that they would "get little credit for their work."⁵⁵

The "Esquimaux"⁵⁶

After studying the failures of earlier Arctic expeditions, Peary believed that success depended upon the use of Inuit help, techniques, and materials.⁵⁷ But while the group recognized their dependence on the natives, Peary, Entrikin, and the rest of the explorers also lived in a time heavily laden with notions of racial difference. Burgeoning from Darwin's evolutionary scheme, theorists such as Herbert Spencer and Lewis Henry Morgan propounded broad systems of racial classification based on contemporary anthropological and biological "science." Notions of racial hierarchy and white-supremacy reached the general public through media such as popular literature, museums, and world's fairs.⁵⁸

But a nearly opposite, more romantic strain of racial theory also influenced popular thought in the late nineteenth century. As historian Matthew Frye Jacobson deftly illuminates, other theorists such as Thomas Wentworth Higginson recognized the danger of "racial suicide." Through "overcivilization," Higginson posited, white society could become too cerebral for its own perpetuation. Popular literature such as Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan of the Apes* (1914) conveyed the ambivalence of white middle-class attitudes towards ethnic minorities and foreigners. If native whites felt that they were inherently better than all aboriginal groups, they also had "the sneaking suspicion that barbarians somehow had it better."⁵⁹

It was within this complex and contradictory milieu that Peary's crew interacted with the natives of the Arctic. For the explorers, their relations with the Inuit generated the same ambivalence that Jacobson uncovers about "barbarians." If the crewmembers' goal was to master the environment, there was no

greater master of the Arctic than the natives. Thus, in many ways the explorers treated the Inuit as equals. They slept together, played together, and hunted together. Entrikin praised their work ethic and admired their use of echoes to determine topography. He learned their language, keeping a booklet called "Eskimo words collected on expedition," and regularly used native words in his diary.⁶⁰ Thus, in many ways, Entrikin and his comrades viewed the Inuit as a group to be learned from and used, not denigrated and dominated.

But since Entrikin and the other members lived in such a racially charged milieu, they asserted a sense of superiority over the natives.⁶¹ For Entrikin, one way that he highlighted his own sense of superiority was through a constant commentary on filthy Inuit living conditions, a common theme of previous and future Arctic exploration accounts: After one day of hunting, Entrikin stayed in the igloo of Nipsangua. Surrounded by meat, skins, and oil scattered about the igloo, he tried to sleep in "all of the filth that surrounded" him "and the vermin that crawled beneath." When he returned to Anniversary Lodge, he hung his clothes outside to kill any creatures he brought home with him.⁶² Their lack of hygiene later became a topic of his lectures, as he noted that "Eskimos are very dirty" and never wash.⁶³

In general, the negotiation of space best explains the explorers' attitudes towards the natives. Expedition members often visited with Inuit, stayed in their igloos, and intermingled with their families. Inuit women regularly fixed the explorers' clothing while they rested and ate. Sometimes, encounters escalated to extremes that would have been unacceptable at home. Inuit sexual mores included practices such as wife swapping, polygamy, and near naked living within their homes.⁶⁴ During one of Entrikin's stays in an igloo, "the women all stripped their clothing except the little breech cloth and lay down beside" them to sleep.⁶⁵

Although crewmembers flowed freely in and out of native space, Inuit presence in white space was much more restricted. On hunting trips, natives sometimes slept in boats, but tents were usually off-limits. During one such trip, Entrikin noted that they "allowed" the Inuit to sleep in the tent because of the weather. Entrikin and Clark, of course, slept in the middle of four natives for extra warmth.⁶⁶ Through the winter of 1893–94, natives sometimes slept on the floor of the house. But since dogs slept in the house through the winter's harshest days, it was clearly the exigencies of the Arctic environment that necessitated the opening of explorers' spaces to the Inuit.⁶⁷ Similar restrictions extended to Entrikin's possessions, as he noted how special it was to "allow the natives" to look at his knife, watch, and compass.⁶⁸

Beyond the issues of space and cleanliness, Peary's crew conveyed a general sense that the natives were their servants. On hunting trips, explorers often left their kills for natives to retrieve the next day.⁶⁹ Peary also restricted native hunting by not allowing the Inuit to keep their entire kill. The Lieutenant instructed Entrikin to take "the skin, hindquarters, tongue (and) liver" of a native-killed deer, leaving them only with the forequarters, neck, and head.⁷⁰ Later, in August of 1894, Peary reminded Entrikin that he was prohibited from trading or giving the natives any guns or ammunition for fear that the food supply for the explorers would run short.⁷¹ Clearly, Peary and his crewmembers saw their needs as paramount to those of the natives.

At Home

Entrikin's journey did not occur in a vacuum. He acted on behalf of armchair explorers at home who looked to Arctic exploration as a means of reinvigorating the nation. Books, articles, lectures, and other media provided ways for those at home to experience the sensation of polar exploration. Of the many avenues available for Entrikin and other crewmembers to reach the public, the most obvious method was the travelogue. But contracts signed prior to their journey forbade all crewmembers from publishing stories about the trip until one year after Peary published his official account.⁷²

The press provided the most readily available means to reach the public. When the opportunity arose, Entrikin wrote letters full of stories from the field to newspapers at home in Chester County, Pennsylvania. When writing general articles, newspapers eliminated some aspects of his journey while exaggerating others. The press, for instance, jumped on the "controversy" over Entrikin's early return. Scandalously, one newspaper reported the "men were compelled to eat walrus meat" while other provisions were readily available.⁷³ Years later, Entrikin's legacy grew through further articles. In 1909, West Chester's *Daily Local News* boasted that "but for a shifting of plans it might have been Samuel J. Entrikin of West Chester, who discovered the North Pole."⁷⁴ Even as late as 1926, the press told the story of his trip "to a point near the North Pole" with Peary.⁷⁵

Following both of his expeditions, Entrikin relayed his tales through a series of lectures to local and regional audiences. Complete with lantern slides and stereopticon views, he told his tale of dangerous walrus hunts (an "ugly customer to meet"), frigid temperatures that broke a thermometer, the eerie

otherworldliness of the Arctic night, and exotic natives who, although dirty, were “jolly” and “good natured.” At one point, he even dressed up in his sealskin suit to amuse his audience.⁷⁶

West Chester, Entrikin’s hometown, did not just read the press and hear his lectures—they actively participated in his expeditions. On the 1892 journey, he delivered “gifts of the West Chester people for the betterment of the Esquimaux.”⁷⁷ A year later, West Cestrian J. Howard Taylor presented his prize carrier pigeons, “Farmer Boy” and “Milk Maid,” to Mrs. Peary. As Lieut. Peary stated in his *Northward Over the “Great Ice,”* the pigeons “were to carry messages through the White North.”⁷⁸ This personal connection persisted even after the journey. When the *Falcon* sunk after dropping off Entrikin and others in September 1894, West Chester residents collected money and goods for the crestfallen families of the lost crew.⁷⁹

The most intense way for armchair travelers to experience the Arctic was to literally put themselves in the place of the explorers. On June 25, 1893, visitors had the chance to fulfill that dream by boarding the *Falcon* in Philadelphia. Crew members mesmerized visitors with stories of daring northern adventures. For twenty-five cents, children and adults alike joined the crew by touching the ropes, turning the wheel, and looking over the horizon. Newspapers portrayed the danger for these wannabe explorers as very real, not imaginary. Many went up onto the crow’s nest “at the imminent peril of becoming dizzy, losing their balance, and falling to the decks below.” The danger reached the rest of the wharf too, when one of the dogs broke loose and sent onlookers scrambling for cover.⁸⁰

In 1902, Entrikin attempted to visit the Arctic once again. This time, he joined the Baldwin-Ziegler mission to check on the progress of Evelyn Baldwin’s work in Franz Josefland. After reaching Hamburg, Germany, he became ill and had to abandon his hopes of moving any further north. Entrikin lost fourteen pounds as he crossed the Atlantic to return home. Upon his arrival, he traveled to a forest camp in western Pennsylvania to regain his strength. Over the next several months, local papers followed the progress of their fallen hero, noting every pound he gained towards his recovery.⁸¹

Samuel Entrikin’s Arctic experience did not die with this last attempt in 1902. His experiences forged lifetime bonds with men such as Evelyn Baldwin and Frederick Cook, the controversial explorer whose claim to the pole conflicted with Peary’s in 1909. Through his experiences, he joined a group of men that retained their solidarity through writing letters and visiting one another as they hashed and rehashed stories about their adventures.⁸²

Yet, Entrikin's papers reflect a hint of sadness about his youthful enterprise. Many of those who accompanied him on his journeys went on to gain national fame. In one letter, Matthew Henson tells of the \$100 that he made per lecture. Decades later, in 1939, Peary's daughter requested that Entrikin send her the original plans of Anniversary Lodge for the archives of the Peary-McMillan Arctic Museum.⁸³ Alas, Entrikin never attained the level of renown or riches that some of his companions had reached. But as historians search for clues to the times he lived through, he has cleverly, if not deliberately, provided us with the means to enter his world, as he saw it.

NOTES

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