

Word Search

Arctic	Henson
Anaukkaq	Inughuit
North Pole	Peary
Miy Paluk	Inuktun
Seaman	Sledge

A N A U K K A Q K X
Y H S I N U K T U N
P E A R Y Q I H L O
L N R N B M N E A R
F S A B Z N U N P T
T O X R A T G D Y H
L N H M C F H I I P
O D A G Q T U W M O
G E Y L X Y I J U L
S L E D G E T C C E



(Left to right) Ukkujaaq, Odaq, Henson, Iggianguaq, and Sigluk at the North Pole.

Books to Read

A Journey for the Ages (Republication of *A Negro Explorer at the North Pole*) by Matthew A. Henson (Skyhorse Publishing, 2016).

I, Matthew Henson: Polar Explorer by Carole Boston Weatherford (Walker & Company, 2008).

Keep On!: The Story of Matthew Henson, Co-Discoverer of the North Pole by Deborah Hopkinson (Peachtree Publishers, 2009).

Onward: A Photobiography of African-American Polar Explorer Matthew Henson by Dolores Johnson (National Geographic Society, 2005).

Did you know that...?

The sledges built by Henson and Inughuit were based on traditional Inuit design. The wood is held together with hide lashings to make the sledges more flexible and easier to repair.

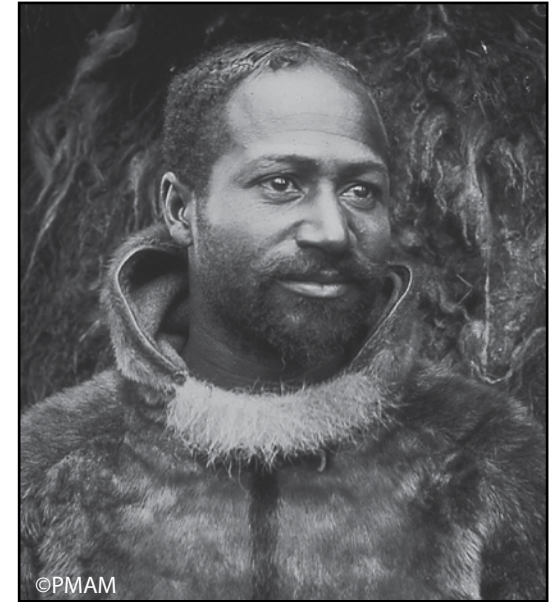


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Matthew Alexander Henson



Who was Matthew Henson?
Why was he so important?
What did he do after exploring the Arctic?



The Peary-MacMillan
Arctic Museum
& Arctic Studies Center

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Matthew Alexander Henson

was born August 8, 1866 in Charles County, Maryland. His parents died when he was young. At the age of 8 years he was living with his uncle and attending school in Washington, D.C.

At age 12, Henson moved to Baltimore and worked on the SS *Katie Hines* under Captain Childs. Henson travelled around the world as an able-bodied seaman. In 1883 Childs died and Henson did odd jobs on land and sea. In 1887, while working at a shop in Washington, D.C., he met Robert E. Peary, who hired him as an assistant for a surveying expedition in Nicaragua.



“The Best Field Man Aboard Ship”

Between 1891 and 1909 Henson traveled to the Arctic with Peary on seven expeditions as an “assistant.” Henson quickly became an expert hunter, sledge maker, and dog driver. He was intelligent, courageous, and persistently good-natured. His indispensable

skills earned him a place in Peary’s North Pole sledge party, a team of two Americans and four Inughuit. Peary noted, “I can’t get along without Henson.”

Henson was fluent in Inuktun and well liked by the Inughuit he met, who called him Miy Paluk, meaning “kind Matt.” Henson and Aqattanguaq, an Inughuit woman, had a son named Anaukkaq in 1906. After Henson left the Arctic in 1909, he never saw either of them again.

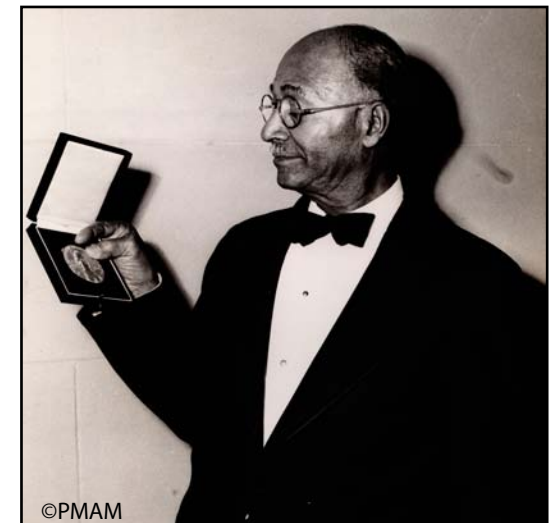


Life After Arctic Exploration

Matt Henson married Lucy Jane Ross in September 1907. After reaching the North Pole in 1909, he published his account of the expedition, *A Negro Explorer at the North Pole*, in 1912. In 1913, Henson was hired as a messenger at the U.S. Customs House in New York City by an executive order from President Taft. He died March 9, 1955, at the age of 88. Today he and Lucy are buried next to Josephine and Robert Peary in Arlington National Cemetery.

Even though he was one of only two Americans to reach the North Pole in 1909, Matthew Henson was not immune to American racism. Upon the return of the expedition, the white expedition members were honored and celebrated, but Henson was largely overlooked. In the 1930s, Henson began to receive increased recognition for his Arctic work. The honors he received include:

- 1909 Gold watch from the Colored Citizens of New York.
- 1937 Invitation to join the Explorers Club.
- 1945 Peary Polar Expedition Medal.
- 1948 Awarded rank of Honorary Member in the Explorers Club.
- 1948 Gold medal from the Geographic Society of Chicago.
- 2000 Hubbard Medal (posthumous) from the National Geographic Society.



Matthew Henson with his medal from the Geographic Society of Chicago, 1948.