

Fun Facts:

1. Peary made 7 trips to the Arctic before finally reaching the North Pole on his 8th.
2. Blue eyes are more sensitive to snow blindness than brown eyes.
3. Matthew Henson's ability to communicate with the Inuit in their language was essential to Peary's success.
4. Peary discovered that Greenland was indeed an island.
5. On the 1909 expedition there were 24 men, 133 dogs, and 19 sledges.

The Roosevelt

The *Roosevelt* was designed by Peary and naval architect W. E. Winant, and built by the McKay and Dix shipyard in Verona, Maine. The ship was designed specifically to sail in the heavy ice of northern waters. The hull was rounded so it would rise when under pressure from pack ice, rather than being crushed or becoming stuck. The bow was designed to break up ice that was in the ship's way. The *Roosevelt* was launched in March 1905 and made only two trips to the Arctic with Peary, once in 1905-06 and again in 1908-09. The ship took the crew as far as Ellesmere Island and the rest of the travel was done by dog sledge.



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BOOKS TO READ

The Story of Admiral Peary at the North Pole by Zachary Kent (Chicago: Childrens Press, 1988). Grades 3 through 5.

Peary and His Promised Land: The Story of a Love Affair Between a Man and an Island by Edward P. Stafford (Friends of Peary's Eagle Island, 1998).

Peary the Explorer and the Man by John Edward Weems (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967).

Guide to Eagle Island Nature Trails by Friends of Peary's Eagle Island (Maine: 1998).

Q: If you are standing at the North Pole which direction are you facing?



A: South, every direction is south from the North Pole.

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Robert Edwin Peary



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Who was Robert E. Peary?
Who discovered the North Pole?
How did explorers get there?



The Peary-MacMillan
Arctic Museum
& Arctic Studies Center

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Who was Robert E. Peary?



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Robert Edwin Peary was born on May 6, 1856 in Cresson, Pennsylvania. At the age of three, after his father's death, he moved to Maine where his mother had relatives. Peary went to

Bowdoin College and studied civil engineering. He graduated in 1877. In 1881 he joined the US Navy Civil Engineers Corps. In 1884 Peary began his career of exploration as chief assistant on an expedition to Nicaragua to survey a route for the planned alternative to the Panama Canal. While shopping for a sun helmet for his trip to Nicaragua, Peary met Matthew Henson. Henson became a valuable assistant and went with Peary on his Arctic expeditions. After many years of Arctic travel Peary retired to Eagle Island off the coast of Maine. Robert E. Peary died in Washington, D.C. on February 20, 1920.

Arctic Exploration

Peary had dreamed of exploring the Arctic since he was a small child. In 1885 he began planning an expedition to investigate the Greenland Ice Cap. Soon he focused on the North Pole. Peary is best known for his 1908-09 trip, when he, Matthew Hen-

son, and four Inuit reached the North Pole. While they did raise a flag at the Pole, it was planted on sea ice, not land, and drifted away.

Peary learned how to survive in the Arctic by watching and working with the Inuit.

Making it to the North Pole

They showed Peary how to make clothing from animal skins, use dog sleds for transportation, and make igloos for shelter. There was only a brief period when there was both sufficient light and ice strong enough for safe traveling over the sea ice. If the teams took too long they risked running out of food or being trapped on the melting ice.

On earlier expeditions, Peary perfected his plan to reach the North Pole. The group was divided into five teams. The first would go out, make a trail, and set up a camp, and store supplies. A few days later another group would go out a bit farther on the trail, build some igloos, and then head back for supplies left at previous camps. Peary's team was the last group and would go all the way to the Pole, using the camps set up by others to help save time and picked up stored supplies. He, Matthew Henson, and four Inuit—Ootah, Egingwah, Ooqueah, and Seegloo—reached the North Pole on April 6, 1909.

Peary's Motto:
Find a way or make one.

Arctic Adventure

You are going to the North Pole.

- * What will you take with you?
- * How will you get there?
- * How will you dress?
- * How will you travel when you get there?

Map out your course to the North Pole using a map, then make a list of the food, clothing, and equipment you will need.

