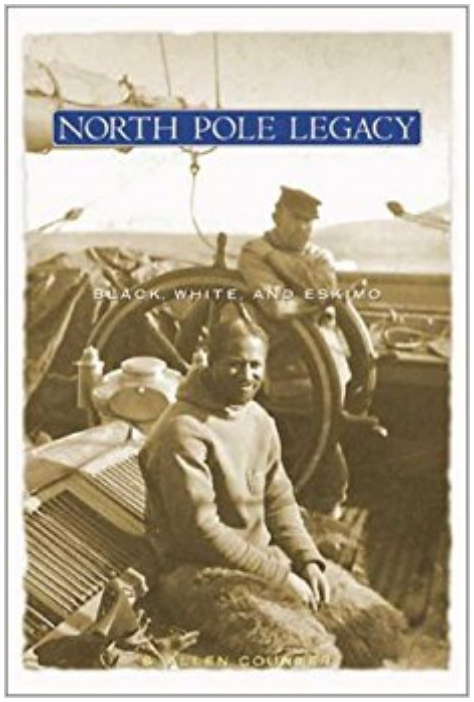
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North Pole Legacy: Black, White, And Eskimo



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Synopsis

Upon hearing rumors that the men who discovered the North Pole had fathered sons while on their expedition, S. Allen Counter arranged to visit the remote villages where Robert Peary, the credited discoverer, and Matthew Henson, the black man whose contributions to the expedition are widely ignored, stayed during their travels. This book recounts the astonishing story of CounterÃ¢â ¬â„¢s trips to Greenland and the relationships he develops with the Eskimo ancestors of the two men. At the same time, new evidence about PearyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s journey to the Pole is examined, and it comes to light that Henson, was the true hero.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In 1986 the author, a neuroscience professor at Harvard, went to northern Greenland to conduct a study of ear disease in Eskimos as well as to interview them about early American explorations in that area. And he had yet another goal: black himself, Counter had long admired black explorer Matthew Henson, who accompanied Robert Peary to the Pole. Familiar with rumors that each had fathered children in Greenland, the author traced "dark-skinned" Eskimos to two remote settlements, where he found Anaukaq Henson and Kali Peary, octogenarians who had never met their American relatives. Counter, who subsequently arranged a three-month trip to the U.S. for both men, here offers a charming account of their meetings with kinfolk in Massachusetts, New York and Maine, visits to their fathers' gravesites--Henson's in Brooklyn, N.Y., Peary's in Arlington, Va.--and tours of national monuments. The book, an intriguing postscript to polar exploration, also examines the Peary-Henson collaboration and supports the claim that they indeed reached the Pole. Photos.

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Counter, a Harvard professor, recounts how he located the half-Eskimo octogenarian sons of polar explorers Matthew Henson and Robert Peary and, after many difficulties, helped them to achieve their lifetime dream of visiting the United States to meet their American relatives and view their fathers' graves. Counter also tells how he succeeded in getting official recognition for fellow African American Henson's indispensable role in Peary's Arctic explorations. This is a fascinating, well-told story. Though the Peary saga has been recounted often, the human interest component added here will give the book an appeal beyond the usual polar adventure readership. This is recommended for public and academic libraries.- Jonathan F. Husband, Framing ham State Coll. Lib., Mass.Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Very good book and well written. I learned a lot about the subject that I had never known before.

This is an amzing current day historical account given by Dr Counter on his childhood hero Matthew Henson's and Robert Peary's North Pole discovery and the legacy they left.

I'm glad Professor Colter researched and published his findings. This is once again lost history that needs to be told. The product arrived on time and in excellent condition.

Not worth the effort - there are lots better books about the Arctic out there. Basically of interest to the people involved.

I am deeply saddened by the fact that there's only 5 reviews for this wonderful book (all editions). It recounts the wonderful story of Harvard Professor Allen Counter's attempts to both bring Henson & Peary's Greenland Inuit relatives to America and to bring some MUCH overdue recognition & respect to the man without whom Peary probably would never have made it to the pole, Matthew Alexander Henson. It does not go into great detail about P & H's polar journeys, because that is not what the book is about. If you want detailed accounts of the grueling realities of Polar Exploration, look elsewhere. But if you're interested in the grueling realities of a great African-American man who has been shamefully ignored, and extremely moving accounts of the huge difficulties of bringing a

large group of Greenland Inuit to the United States to visit their ancestors' graves and meet relatives, this is a wonderful book.I repeatedly encounter (in the few places that books on Arctic Exploration even mention Henson) statements to the effect that he couldn't read, couldn't write, couldn't navigate, along with offhand declarations that his book, "A [African-American] Explorer at the North Pole*," was ghostwritten (generally the authors don't even bother to explain this claim, apparently leaving it as obvious that Henson --an African American man-- couldn't possibly write a book, let alone a good one). Drives me nuts. Counter presents evidence to the contrary as well as arguments that these claims are products of pernicious racism, but I sort of wished he'd gone farther. Perhaps he got too depressed...goodness knows I couldn't blame him. I would dearly loved to have read more quotes from Henson's letters, diaries, and other papers Counter...encountered....more precise ammo against those who insist that Henson was just a dumb "manservant," for he certainly was not. Perhaps I'll have to make my own pilgrimage to Henson's papers & see them for myself.The copy I have of this edition did have one serious problem, but it wasn't with the writing. While mine is signed by Dr Counter (which is very cool, tho not to me, alas), it also contains a printer's error which results in duplication of a chunk of the book & some unknown amount of print left out. It's a great book incomplete; I can't wait to see how enjoyable it is entire. I was particularly excited when I first got it, to see there were TWO big sections of photos, but it turned out to be the same section twice. Ah well. I've already ordered another.Edit: received & read the complete version of the book, & am even more thrilled with it than when I'd read only most of it. The part of the book that was missing in my first edition contained considerable material refuting the claims of those who insist that Peary & Henson didn't get to the Pole. Dr Counter presents excellent and considerable evidence, from several sources, which prove unequivocally that P & H's detractors are wrong. My absolute favorite bit is when he shows the considerable scholarship & research done on the claims of one of the main detractors, Dennis Rawlins, who claimed to have cracked a "code" of Peary's wherein he hid the fact that he didn't make it to the Pole. Rawlins "discovered" secret "equations," which were in actuality Peary's jotted recording of the serial numbers of his navigational watches.Counter also goes to some length to refute the oft-repeated claims that P&H couldn't have made the distances that they claimed, by (among other things) pointing out that runners of the Iditarod routinely clock up far higher daily distances, many without the incredible decades & lifetimes of experience & skill of Henson & the Eskimos Ootah, Egingwah, Ooqueah, & Seegloo.Counter also, bless him, attempts to stamp out the notion that Henson, after a lifetime at sea and of exploration, couldn't navigate his way out of a paper bag. Sadly, I suspect that most of those who cling to this notion will continue to do so, in spite of any data or proof to the contrary, for the same

reason that it was widely claimed that Peary took Henson to the Pole in the first place or that Henson's book was ghostwritten; because he was an 'unreliable' & ignorant witness, because he could not possibly write...because, of course, Henson had dark skin. Because of pernicious racism which is immune to reason, facts, and evidence of all kinds. It cannot be untaught, I fear, it can only be outlived in the hope that further generations will have minds and eyes that are open and aware rather than closed, sealed, and vile.it just occurred to me that I'm going to have to get yet another copy, as this second one does not contain the chapter on the launching of the USS Matthew Henson, a picture & partial paragraph of which were in my first (tho printed later) copy. I'm going to end up with a whole shelf of this book. But it's worth it.*Bizarre; I had to rewrite this review 4 or 5 times before stopped rejecting it...not sure if they objected to the "E" word that used to be used for the Inuit, or the 2nd word in Matthew Henson's own book...which is why his book isn't properly titled here. Somewhat absurd, given that the book is sold here (though not nearly enough).

This is one of the best books I've ever read. It's endlessly fascinating. It's wonderfully open, inquisitive, unflinching, hilarious, and, above all, human. It's an exciting adventure, but at the same time an expertly researched work of scholarship. It mines fathoms into the human experience, what it means to be a human being, how race, family, and culture define or don't define us, and how prejudice destroys our humanity. I absolutely love this book and recommend it to anyone, unreservedly.

I just heard this book's author on the radio, and was so impressed by him. He's a Harvard professor who got interested in the story of Matthew Henson, a black man who explored the Arctic and discovered the North Pole along with Robert Peary. The professor, Dr. Counter, has gone to the Arctic several times now, and has befriended the sons and grandsons of both Henson and Peary. Before Dr. Counter, nobody in the US even knew that these explorers had fathered children up there. And Dr. Counter has done a lot to get Henson recognition here in the States, where institutionalized racism has minimized his role in history.

I've read a good number of books by and about Peary, Henson, Rasmussen, Freuchen, Ehrlich, and others, and this is the best of the lot. It's a fascinating story that recounts the Peary/Henson trek to the N Pole and bundles it with such topics as Eskimo culture, race relations a century ago, and race relations today. Throughout it all, Dr. Counter writes with great sensitivity and objectivity about controversial topics. That he was able to discover the modern relations of Matthew Henson and

bring them to the states for reunion and recognition is remarkable. If you are at all interested in history, the N Pole expeditions, or artic living, you'll really enjoy this book.

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