



What did the rivalry entail between Robert Peary and Frederick Cook?

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Introduction

Exploration is and always will be human nature. Across many centuries humans discovered many unfamiliar places and many new things. This also included rivalry between the explorers in their achievements. A good example of this rivalry was between Robert Peary and Frederick Cook in their race to the top of the world– to the Arctic.

Who were the explorers?

Robert Peary

Robert Peary was born on May 6th, 1856, in Pennsylvania. He was an Arctic explorer. He joined the U.S. NAVY in 1881 and pursued a naval career (Britannica). He led multiple expeditions to reach the north pole with each getting closer and closer to the top of the world. He had a crew of which the majority was Inuit. On his expeditions, he got closer and closer every time. Thanks to this he gained valuable knowledge and experience, he started to look and how the natives survive the extreme conditions and the freezing temperatures.



Frederick Cook

Frederick Albert Cook was born on the 10th of June, 1865, in Hortonville, New York. He was a physician and an explorer (Britannica). He sailed with Robert Peary for He claimed to be the first to summit Denali (also known as Mount McKinley) and the first to reach the north pole. Both of his claims then turned out to be fake, later discovered that his photo of him on Denali was staged and on a different peak twenty miles away and 4552m lower. The peak he really summited was later called the “Fake Peak” or “Cook’s Fake Peak” (Mark Horrell). After this Cook was discovered to be a liar, he lied about all his expeditions and how successful he was (Johnny Harris).



How did their rivalry start?

Firstly, they once sailed together. On one of their first expeditions to reach the north pole, Robert Peary broke his leg in Greenland. Frederick Cook was a doctor and helped him heal. In the 6 months that they were stuck there, Frederick Cook learned how to survive in the arctic weather, and he learned how to communicate in the Inuit language. When they returned Peary wanted Cook to sail with him. Cook replied that he does not want to sail under someone and not get any fame and said that he will beat Peary in being the first to reach the north pole– and the race had begun (Johnny Harris). After this they became rivals.

Who was there first?

Frederick Cook was the first to claim to reach the north pole. This claim was later ruled out since he did not provide any records of his achievements and the rest of the crew said that they did not reach it (National Geographic). Five days after Cook arrived, Peary arrives with the claim that he was the first to reach the north pole. After he heard the news that Cook was five days earlier Peary ruled out that Cook never reached the north pole. Peary had more favorable evidence that he reached the north pole and more favorable records. We do not know for sure, but based on the evidence it is more likely to be Robert Peary (Johnny Harris). In reality, the first person to set foot on the north pole was an African American traveling with Robert Peary (Guinness World Records). The first person to reach the north pole by flying over it was Roald Amundsen (Brittanica).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Robert Peary and Frederick Cook were rivals and it was about who reached the north pole first. Both claimed to reach the north pole, but neither provided perfect evidence. However, Robert Peary had more reliable journal entries than Frederick Cook. Robert Peary had better sketches and more accurate navigation points and it was quite improbable that Frederick Cook with only a few arctic expeditions would reach it. Therefore, the first person to probably reach the north pole was Robert Peary, although we will never know for sure.

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