

‡5 Resistance of Resolution

FACS vs the “Washburn-Rawlins-Bryce Troika.”

by Robert M. Bryce

A Defending Against *DIO*

A1 No sooner had I finished editorial work on the various FACS criticisms of my book, when a whole new set arrived in the form of its annual publication *Polar Priorities* for 1998. Fortunately, although the issue is 65 pages long, it will not require anything near that much in rebuttal, since there is little new in it that needs addressing, and because FACS continues to avoid all discussion of substantive issues. The strategy remains: undermine the opposition’s credibility with innuendo, cite positive opinion and personal fantasy as favorable evidence, divert attention from embarrassing facts, and just ignore or deny everything else.

A2 Three articles, one each by our now-familiar stalwarts, and various editorial comments by Russell Gibbons that appear in this issue use these tactics to try to counter the devastating double issue of *DIO* that restates and expands the documentary case originally presented in *Cook & Peary, the Polar Controversy, Resolved*, and which further demolishes Cook’s credibility in regard to his claim to have ascended Mount McKinley to its summit in 1906.

B “*DIO*’s Denali Derision,” by Russell Gibbons

B1 As usual, Russell Gibbons leads off with a few of his conspiratorial imaginings, alleging that my and Dennis Rawlins’s joint appearance on the nationally syndicated “Diane Rehm Show” in February 1997 amounted to “two would-be debunkers join[ing] forces to front for a third party who has made his lifelong obsession the denial of Cook on the summit of Mt. McKinley.” The “third party” being, of course, Bradford Washburn, director emeritus of the Boston Museum of Science. He goes on to say, “thus did Bradford Washburn . . . find two converts in his grand crusade.”

B2 These are amusing fantasies, but what are the facts? Ms. Rehm’s producer, Darcy Bacon, independently made the selection of her guests, which also included Will Steger, taking the pro-Peary side. Ms. Rehm had previously interviewed Dennis Rawlins in connection with Peary’s claim, and he lives in the reasonable proximity of WAMU, where the show originates. Perhaps these factors led to his invitation as the anti-Peary guest. Apparently, the National Geographic Society suggested Steger. When asked, I suggested that she invite a pro-Cook person to participate. But at the time Ms. Rehm had not read my book, and probably did not know as much about Cook. Perhaps this is why my suggestion was not taken up. However, both Russ Gibbons and Ted Heckathorn phoned in during the broadcast, and I said on the air that I was glad to hear from them, as the book was more about Cook than Peary. So, although Gibbons now tries to link the whole process to Bradford Washburn, he had nothing to do with it, nor had I had any contact with Dr. Washburn in well over a year at the time of the show’s airing. Furthermore, although Gibbons now contends this was the watershed event of my “entente” with Washburn, Mount McKinley was not taken up in any detail during the whole broadcast hour on WAMU.¹

¹A tape of the broadcast of February 25, 1997, is available for purchase from WAMU. Call: 1-800-433-8850 during business hours, Eastern Time.

B3 Dr. Washburn did not “convert” me to anything, though he tried. I actually had very little contact with Washburn during the writing of *Cook & Peary*, and my portrayal of him in the book is not always flattering, nor was it of Dennis Rawlins. In fact, Dr. Washburn regarded me as a “Cookite” until after my book was published.²

B4 According to a contact within the American Alpine Club, I was under such suspicion there that even after publication, my book was being discounted as a silly defense of Cook’s Alaskan claims. Perhaps this is what led to the incredibly embarrassing review of my book that appeared in the club’s journal under the signature of Jonathan Waterman.³

B5 Dennis Rawlins can speak for himself, but I knew that he had dismissed Cook’s McKinley claim more than 25 years ago in his book, *Peary at the North Pole: Fact or Fiction?* Although I had heard him speak on the Polar Controversy previously on two occasions, and had read his various writings on the subject, it was only when we met in the WAMU studios that I had my first extended conversation with him. I had no contact with him during the writing of my book at all, however.⁴ My contributions to his journal, *DIO*, arose out of the 1997 *Belgica* Centennial Symposium held at Ohio State University.

B6 After my debate there with Sheldon S.R. Cook, I offered to show the original of Cook’s summit photo to anyone who wanted to stay. Only Randall Oscezewski and Dennis Rawlins remained to see it, and both were immediately struck by the conclusive evidence of Cook’s fakery it contained. No one from FACS, including the three critics who are the subject of this response, cared to see it. Out of this grew the invitation to write the articles for *DIO*. I had no contact whatever with Bradford Washburn at any time during the writing of these articles, and it was only after the proofs were ready that Dennis Rawlins sent a copy to Dr. Washburn, asking his permission to use the photographs they contained that are his intellectual property. After reading the proofs, Dr. Washburn made various comments and provided additional relevant photos; some of these photos were included in my finished articles and *DIO* 7.3 ‡9’s commentary.

B7 As for Dennis Rawlins’s writing, Russell Gibbons characterizes it as “infantile terminology” and “nasty rhetoric.” [Also hate-filled: ‡6 fn 46. Hmmm. *DIO* recalls a letter in which this paragon of mature humor & anti-hate asked DR to join him at Cresson “in the Peary park and write graffiti on the statue.”] I am already on record in my book as saying that I think Rawlins’s style often interferes with the acceptance of the substance of his message. In fact, in reviewing the *DIO* proofs, I asked him to remove specific statements of his that, because of their positioning, might possibly have been mistaken for something I had written, which he did. My contributions were strictly confined to the two articles under my signature. Having said that, I will also say that I do agree with the substance of his arguments [actually joint KP-DR] in the *DIO* editorial at the issue’s end, if not always with the rhetoric. In fact, I was unable to detect any substantive errors in the facts presented there.

B8 One final implication by Gibbons that should be clarified appears in the box on page 39 of the 1998 issue of *Polar Priorities*. Yes, I did receive \$750 from FACS on September

²Unlike FACS, Washburn got no advance summary of my book’s conclusions. This regard came from my refusal to accept Cook’s claim as a hoax, *prima facie*, as he thought I should. I only did so after a careful scholarly review of the primary documents in the case, as set forth in Chapter 28 of *Cook & Peary*, many of which no one, not even Dr. Washburn, was aware of until my book was published.

³*American Alpine Journal*, [1998], pp.379-81. His review said the book is full of “absurd pro-Cook theories” and that it treats Cook’s climb as substantial truth. Not even Ted Heckathorn could find such “useful facts” [for FACS’s working definition of “useful facts” see §D18] among my writings. No doubt FACS will be quoting Waterman’s review in Cook’s favor for all time. The AAC printed a lame “apology” (*AAJ* 1999 p.452). According to *AAJ*’s editor, Waterman “stands by his review” [see ‡6 fn 57], despite what the journal itself creditably acknowledges was a “misrepresentation”. Editor Christian Beckwith to RMB, Oct. 17, 2000.

⁴I did write him a letter in 1990, but I never got a reply. [*DIO* note. DR does not recall such a letter — but has no doubt that it was sent. The temporary breach thus evidently created should have closed the first time RB met DR, at the Byrd Center symposium on Cook (1993/10/22) and asked about the DR contribution’s contention [‡4 fn 101] that there was no “magnetic meridian”.]

6, 1997, in the form of an honorarium for my paper presented at the *Belgica* Centennial Symposium (as did every other person who read a paper there). I was invited to present by Russell Gibbons before my book was published and at a time when FACS had convinced itself that my book was going to vindicate Cook⁵ I also received reimbursement for my travel expenses. After my book was published, Gibbons suggested a debate between myself and Sheldon S.R. Cook be an added feature of the symposium, which, although it required far more in time and preparation of materials than did my symposium paper, I agreed to at no added expense to FACS.

B9 Gibbons doesn't mention the money I received from FACS in 1994. He, himself, hired me to review the FACS collection, then housed at Hurleyville, New York, to make a preliminary survey of its contents and to make recommendations as to how it might be preserved.⁶ I was asked to do this on the strength of FACS's regard for me at the time as the greatest living authority on Dr. Frederick A. Cook. If the correspondence I received from FACS's officers is any indication, this regard was maintained up until February 12, 1997, a few days before my book's release, when I informed Warren B. Cook, Sr., Dr. Cook's grandnephew and president of FACS, that the conclusions of my book were that Cook had neither ascended McKinley nor reached the Pole.⁷ Less than a month before, President Cook had written to me: "The Society is very appreciative of your meticulous and unparalleled research of Dr. Cook's life and achievements. . . . You know more about him than does his Grandnephew."⁸ Oh, but what a difference a conclusion can make! In the last piece of correspondence I got from Russ Gibbons in reply to my rejection of his "no editorial guarantees, whatsoever" terms for publishing my response, he said: "The condensation [*sic*] and arrogance expressed in your last letter is only an extension of that within your book. Again, you offer a case more for a psychologist than the historian — dismissing any view contrary to your own as but 'empty arguments and falsehoods' and as part of a denial syndrome and a 'discredited cause.'"⁹

B10 In return for 24 actual hours of work in this collection in October 1994, I received \$900, including expenses. Of this Mr. Cook said: "We have just concluded a consultative visit to the Museum by Bob Bryce, whose qualifications as Historian, Librarian, Archivist and Author are highly respected, and Russ is sending us a report of his findings."¹⁰

B11 As a result of this visit I produced a 33-page report for FACS at no additional charge.¹¹ When he received it, Warren Cook seemed pleased: "I have never seen anything to equal the depth, the accuracy and the logical guideline steps . . . depicted in Bob's

⁵Gibbons to RMB, November 13, 1996, possession of author. When I informed FACS of the book's final title, Sheldon wrote to me: "Your book should resolve the Cook-Pearcy Controversy and the new title is an excellent one. . . . I believe, that the title of the landmark biography of Dr. Cook should specifically allude to the all-important fact that the Controversy is resolved. For Cook!" [S.S.R. Cook to RMB, December 18, 1996, possession of author.] When the book was published and the resolution did not favor Cook, Gibbons wrote in his review in *Arctic*: "What may be the most troubling for those interested in history is the subtitle, which asserts that this book has somehow "resolved" the controversy." (v.50, no.4, December 1997, p.370). "You'll never get a final word in any historical debate like this." (*NYT*, February 17, 1997.)

⁶Gibbons to RMB, August 16, 1994.

⁷Before that, Sheldon Cook-Dorough had said: "The seriousness of your purpose, the depth and thoroughness of your research and the sincerity of your intentions would have enlisted for you [Helene and Janet Vetter's (Cook's daughter and granddaughter)] full support and co-operation had they lived to know you and to become familiar with your standards of scholarship, honesty and fairness." Cook-Dorough to RMB, November 16, 1996, possession of author.

⁸Dedication in my copy of FACS's reprint of *To the Top of the Continent*, 1996, January 14, 1997.

⁹Gibbons, to RMB, March 2, 1998, possession of author. [*DIO* note. FACS letter to *Anchorage Daily News*, quoted in 1998 Dec *Memb. News* 5.3 p.7: "It is incredulous [*sic*] that Washburn. . . ."]

¹⁰W.B. Cook, Sr. to William Smith, November 7, 1994, copy possession of author.

¹¹*The Collection of the Frederick A. Cook Society housed at The Sullivan County Historical Museum, Art and Cultural Center, Hurleyville, New York: A Report*, 1994.

report."¹² And Dr. Ralph Myerson, FACS vice-president, commented: "I was truly amazed ('impressed' is not strong enough) by Bob Bryce's analysis and recommendations concerning the Cook archives. His thoroughness and his accurate assessment of the state of the collection and our needs completely satisfied the mandate given him."¹³

B12 To make this financial disclosure complete, I will also state that I returned \$136.58 in expenses paid me by FACS to attend the symposium at Ohio State in 1993 as a "resource scholar," specifying that it be used toward the organization of the Cook papers then in its possession. So, I have received approximately \$1,650 from FACS since my first contact with it in 1989, or an average of \$165 a year.

B13 In the interest of "balance," perhaps Russell Gibbons, Sheldon S.R. Cook and Ted Heckathorn would care to disclose the totals they have received from FACS's treasury since 1989? It is, after all, a public record in the State of New York. This accounting, I am sure, would make my receipts look like pocket change, and might go a long way toward explaining to readers of *DIO* and *Polar Priorities*, who may be puzzled by the trio's vehement and apparently irrational defense of Cook against the overwhelming documentary evidence of his deceits, what may be one of the basic motives behind it.

C "DIO's Fatal Flaw on McKinley: Ignoring Cook's Diary Sketch," by Sheldon S.R. Cook

C1 The next article in *Polar Priorities* by Sheldon needs little comment. The same patterns continue as in Sheldon's previous material. In this case the "fatally flawed" item alleged to have been "ignored," has been afforded more than 10 pages of detailed discussion in *DIO* 7.2-3 [pp.62-67; 70-74]. Sheldon's lengthy and repetitious treatment of the same circumstantial arguments first made in 1914 by Edwin Swift Balch in his book *Mount McKinley and Mountain Climbers' Proofs* are fully addressed in Chapter 28 of *Cook & Peary*. However, a few of Sheldon's other comments are worthy of note.

C2 Its most amazing feature is Sheldon's apparent schism with current FACS doctrine in his opening paragraph, in which he says Cook's upper sketch on page 52 of his 1906 diary "depicts features of the main mass of Mount McKinley" rather than Pegasus Peak. Sheldon told me in 1994 that he did not agree with Ted Heckathorn's contention that Cook climbed McKinley via the East Buttress. He then still adhered to the theory of Hans Waale, who had Cook take a circuitous trek to reach Pioneer Ridge as his ultimate route. Has Sheldon reverted to this former opinion?

C3 Sheldon's article contains some other astounding statements as well, the most flabbergasting being: "It should be pointed out that it has not been proven that the peak depicted in the photograph captioned by Cook as the summit is not in fact the summit or a peak in the summit formation. But even if it were positively demonstrated that the peak in Cook's summit photograph is not the true summit but another eminence, even Fake Peak, this fact would not establish that Cook did not reach the top," and also: "It seems unlikely that Cook's photograph captioned the top is Fake Peak." I am sure most readers of *DIO* did not have to have it pointed out to them that the comparative photos it contains prove that the two are one and the same. Could *anyone* looking at *DIO* 7.2-3 figures 4, 18, 6 and 8 not believe that? Only someone blind (or blinded by blind faith) could possibly believe otherwise. Such statements as Sheldon's (the historian emeritus of FACS) should totally destroy his credibility and that of the editor who endorses them by seeing them into print. Their inability to accept even the most absolute proofs against Frederick A. Cook's veracity should also utterly undermine any unbiased person's belief in their objectivity or capacity to accept any evidence that disallows their own wishes and desire to see Cook vindicated.

¹²W.B. Cook, Sr. to Russell W. Gibbons, November 21, 1994, copy, possession of author.

¹³Myerson to W. B. Cook, Sr., November 30, 1994, copy in possession of author.

D “Dr. Cook’s 1906 Mount McKinley Ascent,” by Ted Heckathorn

D1 Finally, we have Ted Heckathorn’s “response from someone who actually went there.” He starts this piece by trying to convince his readers that he “went there” as an impartial fact-finder. Small chance. Heckathorn had been expounding his “McKinley-gate” conspiracy theory long before he broached the idea of FACS footing the bill for his “fact-finding” mission to Ruth Glacier. He intimated as much to me in our very first meeting in 1990.¹⁴ He has written: “There was no secret agenda for my expedition and we did not know in advance what the results would be.” However, any reader who has gotten this far in these papers should know by now that impartial fact-finding is not a characteristic of persons with conspiratorial mentalities or a likely activity of an organization that is dedicated to gaining “official recognition for the scientific and geographic accomplishments of . . . Dr. Frederick Albert Cook.”

D2 Heckathorn may have had no “secret agenda,” but he certainly must have offered something more than an opportunity for unbiased fact-finding to convince the officers of FACS to part with \$40,000 in cash from its endowment to mount his excursion to Ruth Glacier in 1994. So what was it?

D3 Heckathorn himself tells us: “In October 1993 . . . I submitted a proposal to the Frederick A. Cook Society to organize an expedition of experienced mountaineers and historians to investigate Dr. Cook’s 1906 route In the worst case scenario, we might find no practical route for Dr. Cook in the upper Ruth Glacier. Since American mountaineering circles held him in low repute anyway, the potential additional damage to his reputation was small. We did have new supporting evidence, including Dr. Cook’s 1906 diary. The Society accepted the risk to their own credibility and approved my proposal.”¹⁵ Does this sound like a proposal aimed at unbiased fact-finding, when the planners take into consideration “worst case scenarios,” “supporting evidence,” possible “potential additional damage to [Cook’s] reputation” and the “risk to their own credibility”? Considering the personnel chosen for the trip, exclusive of the hired professional climbers,¹⁶ no one should be encouraged to believe that impartial fact-finding was high on their agenda, secret or not. Before he left, Heckathorn stated his “unbiased” intentions as “We will follow Dr. Cook’s route onto the upper Ruth and Traleika glaciers which few expeditions have visited since Dr. Cook first explored them in 1906. The evidence presented against Dr. Cook in the 1909-1912 period was either tainted or flagrantly false.”¹⁷ In any case, it seems that FACS was expecting big things, whatever else Heckathorn promised.

D4 This can be reasonably inferred from a letter I received from FACS president, Warren B. Cook, Sr., in advance of the expedition: “We will be engaged in a major Mt. McKinley project this summer, the results of which may be an additional, positive, influential force. . . .”¹⁸ And why shouldn’t they expect big things? Ted Heckathorn has never gone “into the field” yet and come back with a scrap of evidence *against* Dr. Cook. His latest “field investigation” is described on pp.4-15 of the 1998 issue of *Polar Priorities*. Just try to find a single solitary thing in it that Cook did not report absolutely accurately. Believe me, you will be wasting your time. Heckathorn is such an amazing field investigator, that even while flying in an airplane he can solve that which has baffled

¹⁴For a gauge of his impartiality, see Heckathorn, Ted, “Reopening the Book on Mount McKinley,” in the FACS reprint of *To the Top of the Continent*, p.239.

¹⁵TTC reprint, p.240.

¹⁶Walt Gonnason (long time advocate of Cook and foe of Bradford Washburn); Jim Garlinghouse, (member of FACS Board of Directors); Sheldon Cook-Dorough (FACS Historian, no introduction necessary) and Ted.

¹⁷*Frederick A. Cook Society Membership News*, v.1, #2 [July 1994]. Cook claimed a lot of things about Alaska, but he never claimed to have been on any part of the Traleika glacier.

¹⁸Cook to RMB, April 27, 1994, possession of author.

the world for decades, including the mysterious tale of the “great animal bones” told by Ahwelah to David Haig-Thomas in 1935.¹⁹

D5 Heckathorn tells us that a Polar Eskimo (who intimately knew the anatomy of practically every animal in the Arctic) could not tell a massive coral rock formation from animal bones, petrified or not. Heckathorn even could tell from looking out the plane’s window what Ahwelah was thinking in 1908 and how little time he had to examine his discovery of the “great animal bones” (read his text, I am not making this up). He also could discern what Ahwelah and Dr. Cook *did not* talk about 90 years ago. And, of course, all these things known only to Heckathorn turn out to be “an additional piece of evidence to substantiate Cook’s trip through Hassel Sound in 1908.”

D6 However, Heckathorn does not know some things. For instance his map of Cook’s route²⁰ does not corroborate Cook’s own testimony or match Cook’s own map. Cook said he went all the way to the end of Devon Island in an attempt to reach Lancaster Sound, but was unsuccessful and doubled back to Cape Sparbo for the winter. Cook also shows this on all of the maps he drew of his route, but Heckathorn’s doesn’t. Someone must be wrong, and we *know* it could not be Dr. Cook, since Ted Heckathorn has yet to catch him in a single error or misstatement about anything.

D7 As I recall Sheldon’s lengthy conversation with me just after the 1994 expedition returned from Alaska,²¹ he said Heckathorn went out with the intention of proving his theory that Cook had climbed McKinley via the East Buttress. Sheldon was very concerned that this would be the finding of the expedition, because at that time he still strongly advocated Hans Waale’s circuitous route for Cook up Pioneer Ridge.

D8 For those who missed it, it was on this expedition that Ted Heckathorn stepped foot on Ruth Glacier for the first and only time and thus became the superior of all who have never “been there” and even some who have been there far more than he ever will. Here, again, he beats his unending tattoo of “field experience” being a prerequisite for understanding historical events. I have already (¶4 §L6f) dealt with the weaknesses of this argument in some detail. However, I will say in contradiction of his specific argument here that it *is* possible to “see” Ruth Glacier from Maryland, and it does not require “supernatural visual abilities to see geographical features thousands of miles away.” That was made feasible centuries ago when topographical maps were invented. Ruth Glacier can be “seen” quite nicely, anywhere, through the study of appropriate contour maps and photographs (and the best ones of McKinley are all by Bradford Washburn), which Dennis Rawlins and myself did before making our analyses in *DIO* 7.2-3. And it *is also possible* for someone who has been to Ruth Glacier to make gross mistakes in describing the region he has seen in person, such as Heckathorn’s acknowledgement that he totally misplaced Pegasus Peak on his map. To prove my point, even though Ted Heckathorn has “been there,” his error was pointed out to him by a guy in Maryland (Rawlins: see ¶6 §N16) looking at a topographical map who had never “been there.” And anyway, if the test of credibility is who makes the fewest mistakes in his writings, Heckathorn loses hands down, despite his vaunted “field experience” and self-proclaimed reputation as a “polar historian.”

D9 There is even a question as to the extent of Heckathorn’s actual field experience, and where he has “actually been.” He continually refers to himself as the “leader” of FACS’s Ruth Glacier Expedition of 1994. And he states on page 5 of this issue of *Polar Priorities* that what “we saw on the East Ridge” matched Cook’s sketch on page 52 of his diary. However, in 1994, Sheldon, who was part of that expedition, told me just after the expedition’s return that Heckathorn was unable to reach the crest of the East Buttress himself, and so never could have seen the view he now claims proves Cook’s arrival there. His view

¹⁹See the 1998 *Polar Priorities* p.11.

²⁰“Based on 1998 Aerial Surveys by Ted Heckathorn”. In the world of FACS, gazing out a plane window = “aerial survey”; *Polar Priorities* = “scholarly journal.”

²¹I have no documentation for this.

of Pegasus Peak was solely from the air, and later from the pictures taken by the professional climbers who reached the ridge and had that vantage point. According to Sheldon, Heckathorn has never “actually been there.”²² Perhaps Heckathorn will state for the record if he did or did not reach the crest of the East Buttress or if he ever saw Pegasus Peak from that vantage point, or that he never did and thus never saw for himself the route he now advocates for Cook as “doable” (although to this date it has never been done). If Sheldon was correct (and there are plenty of other witnesses who can verify if Heckathorn was ever on the East Ridge) then that would considerably diminish his so-called “field experience.” Anyone, for a price, can be flown out to Ruth Glacier and traipse around a bit. Such a jaunt does not automatically make one an authority, however, or the leader of an expedition, either. If Heckathorn was not on the East Ridge, then his analysis of the similarity of Cook’s sketch to Pegasus Peak has no better basis than Rawlins’s and mine, since both were done from photographs, and thus his main argument against us is demolished.

D10 Heckathorn says that “[Bryce] continued to make a number of incorrect assumptions and statements about my 1994 expedition. He has never contacted me for accurate details and instead parroted incorrect quotes from others.”²³ Heckathorn continues his bad habit of not pointing out any of these “incorrect assumptions,” and I think the present reader can forgive me if I didn’t contact him for details, since he has so often failed to answer even my direct inquiries and requests for documentation on so many other occasions. He also says I “declined” to attend the FACS-sponsored symposium on Mt. McKinley in Seattle in September 1996. I didn’t decline. (I can’t even remember being invited.) I just chose not to go, since Seattle is 3,000 miles from my home and I was in the middle of finishing the galleys for *Cook & Peary* at that time. But I did talk to Sheldon for about two hours after the expedition’s return, and I read with care all of Heckathorn’s material about the 1994 expedition in the 1996 FACS reprint of *To the Top of the Continent*. I insisted that my editor insert several paragraphs about it in the galleys as a result. This material purports to contain a full account of the expedition, so if I arrived at any “incorrect” assumptions, they were derived from Heckathorn’s own published materials. Perhaps if he ever identifies these “incorrect assumptions” we could judge how incorrect they are.

D11 But even someone who hasn’t “been there” cannot escape the fact that the original print of Cook’s “summit” photo was actually taken at Fake Peak. He may avoid the issue absolutely, like Ted Heckathorn, but he cannot escape it. Heckathorn fails to confront this undeniable fact even obliquely in his article, but instead dismisses it as part of a “re-hash” of old allegations by Belmore Browne²⁴ concerning “photographs on the lower Ruth Glacier.” Old allegations on which Heckathorn has spent considerable energy; old allegations he described as part of a plot to destroy Cook; old allegations he does not now wish to acknowledge as being 100% true. Certainly, Browne and Parker do not get off without criticism in *Cook & Peary*. However, it is entirely unjust to further continue the imputation that they forged or misrepresented their evidence against Cook gathered by them on Ruth Glacier in 1910. Fake Peak is Cook’s “summit.” Of that there can be no doubt, and

²²This appears confirmed by an account of the expedition that appeared on the Associated Press wire service, datelined Seattle, July 26, 1994 which said: “Three climbers — [Scott] Fischer, Doug Nixon of Oak Harbor and Vern Tejas of Anchorage — scaled a ridge at approximately 11,500 feet. What they saw and took photos of from there matched Cook’s descriptions and sketches perfectly, they said.”

²³He cites *DIO* 7.2-3 pp.63 and 77 as examples, but he is not even mentioned on p.77. The quote of Dee Molenaar on p.63 expresses Molenaar’s negative opinion of Heckathorn’s abilities to make maps and interpretations of Cook’s route; it makes no assumptions about his expedition.

²⁴Heckathorn says of Browne: “In 1910, he finally stepped upon the Ruth Glacier. . . .” Actually Browne stepped on Ruth Glacier for the first time in 1906. Something else this “polar historian” does not know. [See *TTC*, p.170 and Belmore Browne’s diary for July 22, 1906, BBD.] Heckathorn makes slight mention of the fact that Browne’s “field experience” was considerably more than his own, including participation in three pioneer attempts to climb Mount McKinley before any workable route to the top had been discovered, the last missing by only about 264 feet being the first to reach the actual summit in 1912.

Cook went to his grave with the lie on his lips that this photo was taken at McKinley’s top. **D12** It is very curious why Heckathorn attaches such significance to Browne’s exchange of letters with Edwin Swift Balch in 1915. Heckathorn omits the letter from Browne in response to the one from Balch dated March 19, 1915, and Balch’s response, which again refused his offer. He also omits Browne’s third letter to Balch, dated March 29, 1915, for which Browne was rebuked for “your nonsense” by Balch on April 1. Here is the text of that letter:

My dear Mr. Balch:

Your letter of the 25th instant received. My absence from New York for a few days is responsible for my not having answered sooner.

After reading your two letters I am forced to admit that I cannot understand your point of view. As I look at the question the important facts are these. You have written a book entailing a great amount of study and research, and the purpose of the work is a settlement of a controversy that has grown to be of world wide importance. In this book you have used the data you possessed to reverse the popular belief.

Then I write you a letter stating that I have valuable data which you have not studied, urging you to examine it. Instead of the prompt acceptance that I expected, you merely express surprise that I have not made the matter public, and steadily maintain that you will not study the data until it is published.

Now, photographic proof exists in original prints and negatives alone. When photographic proofs are published they are but indications that originals exist.

As the reason for the publication of a book such as yours is to give the truth to the world, I refuse to believe that you will ignore my third invitation to study photographic proof that has an important bearing on the future standing of your book.

Trusting that I may yet have an affirmative answer, I am

Yours sincerely,

Belmore Browne

D13 It is clear from even the selective letters Heckathorn prints that Browne is quite willing to lay all of his evidence before Balch, but that Balch indignantly refuses to have a look. And the reader can now decide for himself if Browne’s reasoning in the last of his letters to Balch is “nonsense.” So how does this reflect badly on Browne’s integrity? Can FACS members see something in these letters that other mortals cannot? In his analysis of Browne’s “integrity,”²⁵ Heckathorn seems eager to believe anything bad of Browne on the slenderest of evidence or implication, but when confronted with the multiple forgeries and lies exposed by *DIO* in Cook’s diaries and photographs, he does not see anything wrong with Cook’s integrity, whatsoever. Such is the amazingly biased mindset of a partisan. What Heckathorn alleges about Bradford Washburn and Pegasus Peak was true of Edwin Swift Balch: He was “afraid to look.” Cook partisans of 1915 were no more eager to have their apple cart upset than they are in 1998.

D14 When I belatedly took up Belmore Browne’s offer to Balch in 1991, and examined his evidence in the form of the original photographic prints and negatives from the 1910 Parker-Browne expedition, which are now among the Belmore Browne papers at Dartmouth College, I was convinced that Browne was utterly correct in his belief that his material was convincing, especially on the point of Fake Peak being the site of Cook’s photograph.²⁶

²⁵“Belmore Browne’s Slippery Slope”. *Polar Priorities*, v.15 [1995], pp.38-41.

²⁶See my discussion of this point in *C&P*, pp.816-17.

D15 No one who reads *Cook & Peary* could possibly agree with Heckathorn's statement that "Bryce uncritically accepted Barrill's purchased affidavit and Washburn's questionable claims."²⁷ On the contrary, I put Barrill's affidavit to every evidentiary test possible, and it held up far better than Cook's narrative. Nor did I uncritically accept Washburn's claims. On the contrary, I had some rather stormy relations with Dr. Washburn, exactly because I *wouldn't* accept his views without question, but in the end my study of the evidence proved that his views were basically sound, as well.

D16 In *Polar Priorities*, Heckathorn drones on about the sketches on page 52 of Cook's diary as if *DIO* didn't exist. He then argues that the upper sketch on page 52 cannot be of the features Washburn labels (I had already said the fit is inexact [fn 28]) because Thayer Basin and Harper Glacier are not visible from Ruth Glacier, and he prints a picture taken near the Gateway²⁸ to prove it. I personally believe that the upper sketch on page 52 was not made from Ruth Glacier but from Fake Peak. Look at fig.25 in *DIO* 7.2. These features *can* be seen from there because of Fake Peak's greater elevation and [*DIO* 7.3 ¶9 fn 7] distance. The caption written on page 52 itself by Cook unequivocally labels the sketch "McK.": McKinley, not Pegasus Peak. But it should be said that even if FACS could somehow prove Cook was on the ridge of the East Buttress (which they can't) that is a long sight from getting him up the still extremely difficult route it specifies as the one he accomplished in a few days. The professional climbers from Heckathorn's group made it to the East Ridge, but they could not do it, nor could Gonnason in 1956. And as Washburn and [*DIO* 7.3 ¶9 fnn 35-36] Rawlins point out, no one has done this "doable" route to this day.

D17 My favorite bit of Cookite tunnel vision in Heckathorn's piece is this, however: He reads my comparative analysis of the Cook-Barrill diaries with Cook's published narrative, which shows that: a) Cook suppressed the entire day from his narrative which he spent in the Fake Peak amphitheater faking his summit photograph along with several others he later said were taken during his "climb," and b) neither his published narrative nor his diary get him to the summit on the day he later claimed to have been there. Yet Heckathorn calls my analysis "correct but not a revelation."

D18 He also says I "uncovered many useful facts" but cites only one. In an article that establishes, absolutely, that Cook was a liar about his 1906 photographs, and not the innocent victim of some sloppy editor, as Cookites are wont to maintain, and which prints incontrovertible proof that Fake Peak is indeed the same place as the one he went to his grave saying was the summit of Mount McKinley, Heckathorn does not mention these as among those "useful facts." Instead, he points out as my major triumph the discovery of a photo that shows Cook camped where he said he didn't camp, proving him a liar in his narrative as well as his photographs. But that is not the "useful fact" he cites, either. Heckathorn says this photograph is important because it shows a pair of gloves hanging on the tent line, proving Cook had gloves on his trek! This is so important to Heckathorn because Bradford Washburn said Cook had no gloves with him. You see, to a Cookite, the only useful facts are those that help Frederick Cook (all those that contradict him are unuseful facts).

D19 Apparently, Heckathorn does not give a thought to the possibility that Washburn could simply have this notion that Cook had no gloves because *Cook never mentions gloves as part of the climbing apparel he details in his book about his climb*. Washburn could have just taken Cook at his word in making this statement (as FACS always does about everything). In other words, it was an honest mistake on Washburn's part — the very excuse Heckathorn uses for his gross misplacement of Pegasus Peak on his map of Ruth Glacier.

²⁷It might be said that in 1910, Browne and Parker were able to find the true location of Cook's summit photograph because Ed Barrill pointed out its precise location on a map he made to accompany his affidavit in 1909. Still, FACS maintains that Barrill's affidavit is utterly false. Heckathorn in particular cannot get out of his head the idea that, simply because Barrill was paid for it, its content is necessarily untrue. To the contrary, the accurate location of Fake Peak on his map shows he told the truth about this key element of Cook's fake.

²⁸ *Polar Priorities* 1998, p.46. [Bryce acknowledgement of imperfect fit: *DIO* 7.2 §G13.]

But to Heckathorn, Washburn's assumption is obviously a part of the evil plot "McKinley-gate", manipulated from the graves of the terrible "Peary Cabal" and a major "fabrication" on Washburn's part.²⁹ To a Cookite it is more important that Washburn was mistaken about Cook wearing gloves than it is that Cook knowingly misrepresented a photograph of a 5,000 foot molehill as the summit of the greatest mountain in North America! Does FACS really think the world at large is going to take such arguments seriously?³⁰

E "Points of difference"

Heckathorn then goes on to point out some of his fundamental disagreements with me:

E1 He says Cook's pace up Ruth Glacier that I infer from Barrill's affidavit is too slow for anyone traveling alpine style. If you can believe *DIO*, he says, Cook and Barrill "dawdled" along at 2 miles a day "for no apparent reason." Actually, Barrill's affidavit says they traveled 5-6 miles a day, not 2, and Cook himself says that he started up Ruth Glacier with no intention of climbing McKinley. So why should he rush? And how about this for an "apparent reason": If Cook had decided to fake the climb, he *needed* to dawdle as much as possible to allow a plausible time away from other witnesses so as to appear to have had time enough to have made the climb. (This is the exact same strategy he pursued in his fake North Pole claim two years later.)

E2 Heckathorn argues that the discrepancies between the Cook and Barrill diaries support their authenticity, because in a joint fake they would be exactly the same. That Cook was a psychological genius in regard to his North Pole claim should be apparent to anyone who reads my entire book. He was no less so in the psychology of his McKinley "climb." He knew that people like Ted Heckathorn would be more likely to believe diaries that might some day be alleged to be fakes, which contained conflicts and discrepancies rather than ones that matched each other perfectly, proving a joint forgery. And he also knew that if he were to come back with no record at all, that would look extremely suspicious. Nevertheless, once he had "improved" his story in his published narrative in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* in 1907, he could not publish his actual diary, because it was *more like the allegedly faked Barrill diary than his own narrative*. This major point still seems to be totally lost on Heckathorn. As for what was offered Barrill in exchange for his complicity, that has been alluded to already at ¶4 §L14 and is more completely explained on pages 838-39 of *Cook & Peary*. Sometimes I wonder if anyone at FACS has yet finished my book. It rationally explains every point FACS continues to raise.

E3 Heckathorn questions Barrill's account because it says they turned back on account of dangerous crevasses near the Gateway to Ruth Amphitheater, whereas he found none in that area in 1994. That Heckathorn did not observe any crevasses near the Gateway in 1994 means nothing in relation to the conditions prevailing there in 1906. Glaciers are dynamic systems that are constantly moving, not permanent, and a lot can change in 90 years. If Heckathorn does not think so, he should try to visit the once-famous Paradise Ice Caves below Mount Rainier in his home state. These were formerly the most popular attraction in the National Park, but they are all now gone — melted away. On page 4 of *Polar Priorities* Heckathorn says: "At Cape Hardy [in 1998] the snow was too deep to find Dr. Cook's 1908 cave." Notice he doesn't simply admit that there never was a "cave" at all.³¹ Perhaps the crevasses were simply covered with snow in 1994. If Heckathorn still doesn't think there

²⁹He even implies Washburn committed perjury in stating that Cook had no gloves. (See 1998 *Polar Priorities*, p.45.) [*DIO*: If FACS really distrusts Brad, why no on-site-checks of his photo-matches?]

³⁰[*DIO*: Gloves-diversion vs evidence-mountain? Sound familiar? Another analogy with O Simpson jury#1: ignoring spectacular blood-matches because of "contamination" is akin to ignoring all the verifications of Barrill's affidavit merely because he was paid by the Peary contingent. (This from a group getting large Cook-family-estate sums.) One more analogy: Cochran is a pathological lawyer.]

³¹It was actually a standard, comfortable Eskimo stone igloo, but "cave" sounds more dramatic and fits in better with the standard Cook mythology (¶4 §J6) that he survived a "Stone Age" winter.

were any there in 1906, he need only look at the map on page 44 between rules 6-10 in Dr. Cook's Mount McKinley diary to see the seracs penciled in there.³² Seracs do not exist without crevasses. And as everyone in the Frederick A. Cook Society knows, Dr. Cook would *never* tell a lie, or even draw one.

E4 Another good example of Heckathorn's homeostatic view of the universe is his statement that "our expedition did expose [Belmore Browne's] false statement about frequency of avalanches when we camped near the East Ridge." Again, he seems to give no thought to the possibility that conditions may have changed in the intervening 84 years since Browne camped there. Bradford Washburn proved that more than 50 feet of snow had melted away at Fake Peak in only 50 years. Might there just have been less snow on the East Buttress to avalanche in 1994? Also, Heckathorn fails to recall Dr. Cook's description in his book of camping at the same location: "The death-dealing spirit of the avalanches created more anxiety here than at any other camp The tumble from cliff to cliff, from glacier to glacier down the seemingly endless fall was soul-stirring to the verge of desperation."³³ Apparently, when agents of the "Parker-Browne-Pearly troika" say anything, it is false.³⁴ But when Frederick Cook speaks the exact same words, they are unquestionably true.

E5 One thing I would agree with Heckathorn on is his statement that "where Dr. Cook is concerned [Bradford Washburn] displays an anger and vindictiveness that is hard to explain." This is especially so when you consider the lightweights he is up against in the three Cookites under discussion here. Dr. Washburn should relax and enjoy his well earned reputation and realize that, as one dismayed Pearite wrote at the height of the Polar Controversy, "there will probably be idiots who believe in Dr. Cook long after we are all dead."

E6 Undoubtedly, there will be, and many innocent people of average intelligence as well, such as the annual winner of the "Ruth Cook Hamilton Award" featured in every issue of *Polar Priorities*. This is a \$500 cash award FACS gives to the student who writes the best (read: most favorable) essay on Frederick A. Cook, which regurgitates the FACS party line and its invented fantasies most faithfully. (This is a good example of the focus and scope of FACS's rôle as an "educational" organization in the State of New York.)

E7 This year's winning essayist states that Helene Cook Vetter "offered the [Cook McKinley Diary] to the American Alpine Club and the Club refused it." This is lifted directly from a Sheldon piece in a back number of *Polar Priorities*: "Shortly after the diary was found in 1956, Helene Cook Vetter offered the diary to the American Alpine Club as a valuable record of Dr. Cook's 1906 ascent of Mount McKinley and as an historical relic of the first importance. The Club refused to accept it."³⁵

E8 When I read this in 1996, I was absolutely incredulous. I could not imagine Cook's daughter offering it to the AAC, which is so closely allied with Bradford Washburn, nor could I imagine the AAC refusing such a fabulous artifact of North American mountaineering history, true or false, had the offer been made. Bradford Washburn would have been very eager to examine it, as he was in 1983 when its existence was revealed to him by Hans Waale. Besides, Vetter's personal correspondence contradicts this. She realized the "mixup in the dates" in her father's diary was a problem and didn't show it to anyone.³⁶ So I wrote to Sheldon to ask what evidence he had of this statement. Here is what he said:

If my memory of her stating to me that she offered the diary to the AAC is correct, and I have carried it since December 1973, I am sure in my own mind that an offer of some kind was made. It may have been a preliminary attempt

³²See *DIO* 7.2 p.60.

³³*TTC*, p.205.

³⁴Browne even published photos of actual avalanches in progress in his book, *The Conquest of Mount McKinley*, Putnam: 1913.

³⁵Cook-Dorough, Sheldon, "Concerning the Mount McKinley Diary of Dr. Frederick A. Cook, 1906," v.15 [1996], p.12.

³⁶Vetter to Hans Waale, November 18, 1973. CSC.

on her part which was rebuffed and of which there is no formal written record at the AAC. Helene would never have fabricated such a thing. It would only have harmed her father's cause and would have been contrary to her own character.³⁷

E9 So the "evidence" is only Sheldon's memory, "if my memory . . . is correct" but something of which he is "*sure in my own mind*." He qualifies even this by saying that the offer "may have been" of such a nature that "there is no formal written record at the AAC." In other words, personal fantasy and indefinite hearsay is again being presented as absolute fact. Thus is the wishful thinking of FACS passed on to the next generation, who are then encouraged (by the awarding of cash prizes) to repeat it as truth. Frederick Cook predicted there would always be a place in history for him. "This may be high, it may be low," he said, but he was sure there would be a place. That wasn't because he had discovered the North Pole or climbed Mount McKinley, but because he knew human nature so well.

E10 The letter Heckathorn refers to concerning editorial errors in *To the Top of the Continent* that I found in my research was dated long after Cook had been accused of fraud in the matter, and is therefore not "evidence" in his favor of any kind. It is simply, like most of the other material cited by his supporters, a personal assertion of his, which is unprovable.

E11 Again, Heckathorn accuses me of "foolish errors and erroneous conclusions" in *DIO* 7.2-3, just as he did regarding my book, without once specifying a significant example of either. After so many unfulfilled claims of this sort [like *DIO* 1.3 fn 252], one realizes he obviously hasn't got much. He claims to know of "other statements in the [*DIO*] articles that are either wrong or questionable, but there is neither time nor space to deal with them all." The one he "deals" with is Rawlins's statement [D9 fn 25] that FACS has no navigators among its members. Heckathorn's retort: this is a "rather interesting" statement since FACS may once have had one (Heckathorn isn't sure), but he died 33 years ago. This exemplifies the amazingly low level of rebuttal that *DIO*'s critique has elicited.

E12 Though Heckathorn has no "time or space" to correct all those foolish errors and wrong statements, he has time and space in the same issue of *Polar Priorities* for a four-page "interview with the Greenland Explorer's [Etukishook's] Son" the body of which contains *not one single quoted word* from the man's lips.

E13 One final note. Heckathorn's assertion that the \$5,000 given Barrill for his affidavit would today have the buying power of \$250,000 is incorrect. I provide a table to convert the sums mentioned in my book on page 991. A dollar in 1909 had the buying power of about \$16 today, so \$5,000 would be worth about \$80,000 in today's money (1999). Also, it should be noted that Barrill only received a portion of this \$5,000, which was drawn to cover "all expenses" of obtaining anti-Cook affidavits. An eyewitness said Barrill received only \$1,500, or about \$24,000 in today's money.

F Other Notes and Oddities

This issue of *Polar Priorities* is so rich with these that to note them all would take forever. Nevertheless, the record of the psychology of Cook's partisans obliges me to record for

³⁷Cook-Dorough to RMB, November 16, 1996, possession of author. [*DIO* note. Though Helene Cook Vetter publicly pretended to openness about her father's records, she ignored DR's 1969/4/27 & 1972/12/4 letters asking to see them — and then attacked DR (Balto *Evening Sun* 1973/9/21) by claiming they were open to researchers but that DR had not asked to see them! Despite DR's 1973/12/19 letter pointing out his previous inquiries, she refused his request to either retract her published lie *or* to grant access to the again-advertised and again-requested data. . . . Her thermofax copy to DR of her full three-page single-space 1973/9/12 comments to the *EvSun* (replying to DR's 1973/7/14 *EvSun* review of Eames's book) originally stated: "Rawlins did not contact me for any data. His mind was programmed on what he wanted to fabricate . . ." (Note loose [and ironic] use of the last word, as at §D19.) She has scratched out (in ballpoint ink) only the word "any". An honest, non-truth-juggling person would have scratched out the whole sentence.]

posterity some of the more choice oddities it contains and make a few other general comments.

G “The Philately of Dr. Frederick A. Cook.”

It is about time Cook was immortalized on a postage stamp (though to be so immortalized today is practically meaningless as a significant recognition of greatness; after all, Goofy has more than a score of philatelic tributes to his credit to date), and it is a relief that it is not as “discoverer of the North Pole” but for his genuine contribution to the success of the Belgian Antarctic Expedition. That was his great shining moment, when he played a key rôle in the safe return of the expedition and its valuable scientific results.

H “Court of Historical Geography.”

H1 Sheldon rehashes the “First Eskimo Testimony” (again), and finally admits that there was later negative testimony from the Polar Eskimos that directly refutes the sacred “First Testimony” (always in caps). He attributes this to either Rasmussen wanting to get on the “right” side of the Polar Controversy once the trend was clearly running against Cook, or to the inability of the intermediary missionary, who obtained this testimony for Rasmussen direct from Cook’s two companions’ lips, to understand the language of the Eskimos as well as Rasmussen did when he took the First Testimony from third parties that was favorable to Cook. Unfortunately for this last theory, the missionary in question was a Greenlander taken to Denmark and trained in the Gospel, then returned to preach among his brethren in their own language. Here is what Rasmussen himself said of him *prior* to taking the testimony:

Before I left [Greenland], I sent a letter to Hans Olsen, the new priest in North Star Bay, who was born in Greenland. I asked him to undertake the examination [of Cook’s companions] during the winter; and he can do it. He is a very intelligent man, who will not be in doubt about what it depends upon, and he is better able than I to win the confidence of Dr. Cook’s two Eskimos.³⁸

H2 A few more miscues should be brought to the reader’s attention in order to illustrate the “balance” Russ Gibbons extols, if for no other reason:

- Edwin S. Brooke, Jr. was not “an independent and impartial searcher for the facts,” as Sheldon styles him. He was very likely planted on the Crocker Land Expedition by Fred High, Cook’s publicity agent. Brooke later served as Cook’s motion picture photographer on Cook’s trip to India in 1915. So his testimony is no more unbiased than Peary’s agents’.
- All this business about Steensby and Schoubye witnessing Rasmussen’s taking of the “First Eskimo Testimony” is again found only in Cook’s personal memoirs written in the 1930s, and cannot be trusted as fact without additional documentary evidence. Neither man’s writings say they witnessed Rasmussen taking this testimony.³⁹
- Harry Whitney was certainly not a supporter of Frederick Cook after he returned to the United States in October 1909. See my discussion of this on pages 909-10 of *Cook & Peary*.

³⁸Egan, Maurice Francis, “The Witnesses for Dr. Cook,” *Rosary Magazine*, v.35 [November 1909], p.499. Quoting an interview with Rasmussen which appeared in *Zum Dannebrog*, October 26, 1909.

³⁹Their accounts may be found in Steensby, Phil. H.P., “The Polar Eskimos and the Polar Expeditions,” *Fortnightly Review*, November 1909; Egan, Maurice Francis, “The Witnesses for Dr. Cook,” *Rosary Magazine*, November 1909.

H3 Sheldon’s article has a good example of the tangled confusion of sources used by FACS to try to lend some documentation to its case. Sheldon cites a story by “Robert Fuller” which he claims appeared in the pages of the *New York Herald* for October 13, 1909. He says it reports an interview with Robert Peary that took place at North Star Bay on August 23, 1909, just after Peary came down from interviewing the Cook Eskimos at Etah. Sheldon says it contains evidence that contradicts the version of Cook’s journey that Peary later reported had been told him by the Eskimos who had accompanied Cook, which Peary published as evidence against his rival.⁴⁰ This same assertion, nearly word for word, was published by FACS in 1993.⁴¹

H4 However, I own a copy of the *Herald* for Oct.13, and there is no such interview printed there. The only thing relevant to Sheldon’s account is this single paragraph:

When a *Herald* reporter saw Mr. Peary at North Star Bay on August 24, he said then that he did not believe Dr. Cook had gone further north than the record made in 1906, but intimated at the time that he was depending on the condition of the sledge which he refused Mr. Whitney permission to take aboard the *Roosevelt* to substantiate the statement. Nothing was said at this interview about the statement made by the two [Eskimo] boys.

H5 The same article details this sequence of events: Peary had been told by Whitney at Etah that Cook had gone beyond his Farthest North of 1906, as Cook had instructed him to do. Peary did not hear that from the Eskimos, as Sheldon implies in his article. Instead, the *Herald* article specifically says that after Peary had this information from Whitney he called in Cook’s two Eskimo companions and interrogated them. The article in the *Herald* says Peary’s interview with its reporter took place on August 24, not August 23, and the article is unsigned. The reporter in question was named Royal Fuller, not “Robert.”⁴² So Sheldon has that wrong as well, and it is not from the October 13 *Herald*, since there is no actual interview with Peary printed there, nor is there any article signed by “Robert Fuller.” Perhaps Sheldon could provide a better reference for this reported interview so readers could find it for themselves and read it in full. Documentation that cannot be recovered is useless as evidence.⁴³

H6 Therefore, not only does Sheldon’s attempt to document his case fail, his thesis that there had been no refutation of the original story the Eskimos had told Peary (that Cook had beaten his farthest north) is a completely false statement. But why beat a dead horse? We have already seen that Sheldon is blind to any possibility short of sainthood for the man he has gradually named himself after; that he cites his own questionable memories as “evidence” and that he cites sources that cannot be located in the places he cites them.

H7 Finally, there is his box (1998 *Polar Priorities* p.31) on “Hall’s 1917 Verdict”, where Sheldon ends his quotation of Hall before he reaches the critical point at which Hall proposes that Cook may have had “good reasons for the Jones Sound trip.” I explain those reasons in detail on pages 902-04 in my book.

⁴⁰ *NYT*, October 13, 1909.

⁴¹ Cook-Dourog, Sheldon, “Cold Facts: The First Eskimo Testimony,” *Polar Priorities*, v.12 [1993], pp.25-28. FACS constantly recycles its limited counterarguments; one size fits all. Many of the exact same “First Eskimo Testimony” arguments used against *Cook & Peary* were used against Wally Herbert’s *Noose of Laurels* in 1990. See above at ¶4 fn 88.

⁴² In the 1993 version, Sheldon just calls him “one Fuller.”

⁴³ Sheldon may have learned this trick from the master. There is a famous example of citing unrecoverable “evidence” in the footnote to page 534 of the 1913 edition of *My Attainment of the Pole* [New York: Mitchell Kennerley]. Here Cook writes that “the well known Engineer R.C. Bates” went on record in the *Los Angeles Tribune* of February 13, 1913, supporting Cook’s claim and alleging he had verified this by climbing to 11,000 feet on the Northeast Ridge in 1911. No one has ever been able to find the article Cook referred to in the *Tribune*, or anywhere else, though I know for a fact that Sheldon himself went to Los Angeles and took the newspapers for February 1913 apart line by line in an attempt to do so.

H8 The “Court of Historical Opinion” has rejected Cook’s claim to have reached the North Pole based on his lack of evidence several times. As no less an authority than the Polar Historian Ted Heckathorn says in this same issue of *Polar Priorities*, at the time of Cook’s death, “Historians generally regarded his North Pole claim and Mount McKinley ascent as hoaxes.” Generally, since then, they have continued to regard them as such, despite several attempted comebacks mounted by Cook himself and his sympathizers. But now that my book has been published, there is no longer a chance for another comeback. Now even the man in the street, with no background in this tangled dispute at all, may form his own rational verdict based on the documentary evidence presented in *Cook & Peary, the Polar Controversy, Resolved*.

I “Bartlett Biographer”

I1 The favorable opinions of Harold Horwood as espoused in his 1977 book, *Bartlett: The Great Canadian Explorer*, are next dusted off as positive “evidence.” During my research I had read this book and was greatly interested in a number of statements it contained that I had seen nowhere else. Since Horwood’s book had no notes on his sources, I contacted him in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia (he does not live in Newfoundland as it says here) to ask him about where he found some of this unique information so I could read its sources first-hand. Horwood told me that he no longer had his research notes, but cited a number of manuscript repositories and, in some cases, specific published works where I could find the sources of the passages I found so intriguing.⁴⁴ None of them proved out, however, so I wrote to him again. This time he referred me to the collections at Bowdoin College and claimed these were supplemented by personal interviews with surviving Bartlett crew members in Newfoundland.⁴⁵ In 1991 I visited the collections at Bowdoin and found some of the materials Horwood had referred to in his letters, but they did not corroborate the unique statements I was seeking confirmation of.

I2 In his first letter, Horwood had told me that his research papers were housed at the University of Calgary. Never wanting to give up any lead, I tried again there. But my inquiries produced this reply from the Special Collections Librarian: “I regret to say that I do not believe that we can be of any further assistance. In the material relating to *Bartlett, the Great Canadian Explorer*, there appears to be nothing like the items to which you refer.”⁴⁶ All leads led nowhere. So I had to write off Horwood’s material as unsubstantiated. He may actually have been citing real documents and actual interviews (though he never indicated what came from which), but he could not provide me with any evidence that he had, and all his references to specific sources were mistaken in regards to my specific inquiries.

I3 In *Cook & Peary*, on the other hand, I provide the exact citations by which any future researcher, whether negatively or positively disposed toward my findings, can check them against original documents. Of course FACS quotes Horwood’s undocumented book as fact and rejects my documented findings as fiction, since, as we have seen, it prefers positive opinion on Cook to negative primary evidence against him.

J Eames vs. Rawlins

J1 I would have to agree with Hugh Eames on a number of points in criticism of Dennis Rawlins’s statements about Cook in his book *Peary at the North Pole; Fact or Fiction?* In my opinion, Dennis Rawlins severely misinterpreted Cook’s motives and character in his book (and still does) by assuming Cook was no more than a simple con artist without deeper drives or ambitions beyond making a quick buck. This is hardly a unique attitude to

⁴⁴Horwood to RMB, April 3, 1990, possession of author.

⁴⁵Horwood to RMB, August 2, 1990, possession of author.

⁴⁶Appollonia Lang Steele to RMB, February 23, 1994, possession of author.

be taken toward Frederick Cook by his opponents, but it is as misguided as the portrayal of Cook by his supporters as a capable and brilliant explorer, who was nonetheless also a total naif and innocent abroad when it came to the “ways of the world,” and so was done in by the big money and political power of the “Peary Cabal.”

J2 He was neither of these, but rather an exceedingly complex personality, with a very individual outlook on life and his place in the universe; a near genius, but one, who, in common with most of his fellows, was a contradictory mixture of the noble and the base. I hope that those who are still holding a simplistic view of this man (including Dennis Rawlins and most of the members of FACS) will one day read *Cook & Peary* start to finish and thereby discover who he really was, and thus the answer to the “controversy within the controversy.” Only by coming to understand Cook’s complex nature and individual thought can all of the seemingly contradictory loose ends of the never-ending controversy over the discovery of the North Pole be knitted together so its pattern can be seen whole. Only then will it be possible to come to an appreciation, for better or worse, of what this “man unknown,” Frederick Albert Cook, really was and really did. Only then will the Polar Controversy be resolved.

J3 Having said that, I would also say that I disagree with some of Eames’s statements. It is absolutely clear from the documentary record that [as Rawlins 1973 p.80 had argued (see also ¶6 fn 66), to explain Cook’s immediate subsequent resort to fraud] Cook was personally bankrupted by Henry Disston’s failure to pay him the \$10,000 he had promised in 1906.⁴⁷ Eames assertion that Cook made \$10,000 a year as a physician can’t be true. According to the *New York Times* the average annual salary of a doctor in New York in 1909 was only a little over \$1,500.⁴⁸ That Cook could have seen 6 2/3 times the number of patients an average doctor did is numerically impossible, given Cook’s known office hours.⁴⁹ And notice that, again, Eames’s evidence of this is pure hearsay. He cites a letter discovered by Cook’s daughter as his evidence, sight unseen and without reproducing any part of it.

J4 Eames’s citation of Cook’s ability to return to his base in Greenland after a minimum trip of 1,640 miles as proof of his ability to navigate is nonsense. All it means is that he could follow Sverdrup’s map, which he had with him, and could generally distinguish North from South or East from West, since he was never out of sight of land, except perhaps for a day or two on the Polar Sea.

K “A Remarkable Physical Examination”

K1 The examination of Robert E. Peary by Frederick Cook aboard the *Erik* in 1901, which is reviewed by Dr. Myerson, was indeed remarkable, since there is every indication that it never took place. Again, the only record of it is in Cook’s personal memoirs written in the 1930s. Cook was always careful to wait until witnesses were dead before putting words in their mouths, as he does here.⁵⁰ There are numerous examples of this in his memoirs. Other than this source, *there is not a shred of independent evidence that Cook made the examination, diagnosis or prescription for cure that is recounted here.*

K2 In fact, in this analysis of Peary’s health, Cook did not even get Peary’s height right. He was just short of 6 feet tall, not 6 feet 4 inches.⁵¹ Even better, he did not get Peary’s age

⁴⁷His wife still had a considerable personal fortune at this time, but according to some sources, refused to give him any money toward a North Pole venture.

⁴⁸*NYT*, October 8, 1909.

⁴⁹See *C&P*, p.229.

⁵⁰The one exception was Mrs. Peary, who outlived almost everyone in the polar saga, but she was not present at the alleged “examination.”

⁵¹One might expect that in the next *Polar Priorities* Ted Heckathorn will be calling this misjudgment a huge “blunder” on Cook’s part, as he did [¶4 §L5] my misreport of Gonnason’s height. But since Heckathorn believes Cook was incapable of error, he will more likely argue that if Cook said Peary was 6’4”, all others must have measured him wrong.

right; in July 1901, Peary was 45, not 49. Yet Cook gives us a graphically detailed description of all of the particulars of Peary's physical condition. If Cook couldn't remember such simple facts about Peary as his height and age, how can we believe that he could remember, more than a quarter of a century after the fact, such minute physical details?

K3 I explain on pages 787-88 of *Cook & Peary* why a diagnosis of pernicious anemia in Peary was *medically impossible* by Cook in 1901, and point out a number of major internal discrepancies which condemn Cook's account as *a completely after-the-fact fabrication*. I also show that the testimony of Peary's subsequent physicians and the record of his subsequent physical history do not support any such diagnosis being accurate in 1901. Dr. Myerson, a physician himself, knows this to be so, yet gives no rebuttal to my points, medical or otherwise, in his article on this incident. Would this be a case of selective reporting or possibly ignoring? I am surprised, because among all the FACS officers Dr. Myerson (currently VP) has always struck me as a reasonable man. This is a continuing example of how greatly the powers of Frederick Cook have always been underestimated.

L "Onas [sic] Indian Account"

L1 Finally, we have Russell Gibbons's ludicrous attempt to justify Cook's embellished article on the guanaco hunt he said he took with the treacherous Ona Indians after his return to South America from Antarctica in 1899. In my book I point out how extremely unlikely the scenario outlined in Cook's article is.⁵² Yet this does not faze Gibbons, who repeats all of Cook's preposterous statements as fact. He is so oblivious to the absurdities of Cook's story that he quotes Cook's later article, which contradicts any possibility that he could have gone off into the interior with Indians then openly engaged in all-out warfare with the encroaching whites.

L2 Gibbons says that the hunt was postponed from the first visit of the *Belgica* on the way to Antarctica "because of native hostility." Yet he then says that even though this hostility had grown much greater by the time of the ship's return, Cook went anyway. He then quotes Cook, who says things were so hazardous that he had to be taken by gunboat to study the comparatively civilized Indians living around the missions, that two missionaries sent to calm the Onas had been murdered by them, and that "in the face of this hazard it was considered prudent for me, when I returned to continue my anthropological studies, to work with military representatives and with the still friendly mission Indians of the east and south. Protected in this way I secured my best photographs." Nothing whatever was said about his marvelous hunt. Would anyone except Russell Gibbons quote Cook contradicting himself as evidence in his favor?⁵³

M "The 'Fake Peak' Serials 1910-1998: special supplement to *Polar Priorities*, v.18, 1998"

M1 This 16-page, "special supplement" was actually issued in April 1999 and has been posted on the Internet for anyone wishing to read it in full. It is a good example of how repetition never improves a bad argument, and that such repetition is the only recourse when there is no valid counterargument to be made. The supplement is in five parts:

1. The DIO genesis & one-sided media 'Controversy.' Gibbons repeats, nearly word for word, his material from the 1998 *Polar Priorities*. See ¶4 §§Bff&J for my response.

2. Forgotten Prelude: The 1903 Circumnavigation. This part, by Dr. Myerson, is an account of Cook's unsuccessful attempt to climb Mount McKinley in 1903. In so doing, it recapitulates the material contained in *Cook & Peary: The Polar Controversy*,

Resolved, pages 235-62, which, despite its alleged inaccuracy, is cited by Dr. Myerson four times.⁵⁴ In fact, with the exception of two background sources on the early discovery of the mountain, all of the 24 citations are in (or from) my book, as is some of Dr. Myerson's actual text.⁵⁵ So, obviously, I am not one of those who has "forgotten" this "prelude," nor have I played it down. In *Cook & Peary*, I described Cook's 1903 journey as probably the most underrated feat in the pioneer exploration of Alaska. So, I have nothing but admiration for it, and nothing to take exception to in Dr. Myerson's account, beyond a number of small factual errors.⁵⁶ But Cook's legitimate 1903 expedition is irrelevant to a discussion of his 1906 fake, other than that it was in 1903 that Cook gained the experience and made the observations necessary to carry out his later hoax.

3. Ignoring the Pegasus Peak Sketch in Cook's Diary. *DIO* 7.2-3 devoted over 10 of its pages (62-67; 70-74) to "ignoring" this sketch. What Sheldon must mean by "ignoring" it is that *DIO* failed to agree with his (and Ted Heckathorn's) conclusions that the sketch was indeed of Pegasus Peak (though Sheldon disagrees with himself on this point: see §C2). When this identification has been shown to be false, as it was in *DIO*, then all of Sheldon's arguments have no evidentiary basis, whatever, and therefore have no factual basis. For why you should reject FACS's conclusion about this sketch, read the above-cited pages of *DIO* 7.2-3 where we "ignored" it. Sheldon's comparative outlines of Cook's sketch and the photo of Pegasus Peak published with the article, if anything, graphically emphasize the dissimilarity of the two in the same respects noted in words on *DIO*'s pages, rather than convincing the viewer they are identical. Even Edwin Swift Balch would not attempt to lay those two pictures over one another! As far as Cook's descriptions are concerned, I acknowledge in my book that some of them are uncannily accurate, but explicable in terms of Cook's experience and previous observations in 1903. These, combined with the solid data available to Cook, such as Russell Porter's detailed 1906 triangulations of the mountain, allowed him to make accurate descriptions and estimates of the heights of the various features Sheldon notes. Some of the evidence he credits to Cook as original observations, had already been published and were thus available in the public record. For instance, the fact that McKinley's two summits are approximately two miles apart had been published earlier than 1906 in the surveys made by the US Geological Survey. Cook's several accurate descriptions cited by Sheldon (there are many others which Sheldon fails to mention that are totally inaccurate), are not in the same class of evidence with the original documents of the expedition: the photographs made and original diaries kept on the expedition. As *DIO* shows, in all crucial respects dealing with Cook's alleged ascent, these photographs and diaries are all fakes.

4. Fake Peak I: Browne Blown Away by Balch, 1910. Balch's circumstantial arguments of 1914 (not 1910) are once again trotted forth by Ted Heckathorn to "blow away" Belmore Browne. But Belmore Browne has proven to be a far more substantial figure than Heckathorn believes, and remains standing. We have already seen above at §D how Edwin Swift Balch did not want to look at any evidence Browne offered in contradiction to his own arguments. In truth, these 85-year old arguments were unperceptive in 1914 and seem downright daffy now that Cook's original photograph is available for study. In any case, I pointed out on page 816 of *Cook & Peary* why Balch's method of analysis, which is the basis for the abstracts of his arguments quoted here, was bankrupt as evidence.

5. Fake Peak II: The East Side of Mt. McKinley, 1956. Here Heckathorn continues to indulge his penchant and preference for headlong illogic and baseless innuendo rather than resorting to sound judgment and solid evidence. But what else could be expected

⁵⁴He has two separate references numbered 24 in his text, both occurring on the page cited in my book.

⁵⁵He quotes the opening sentence from Chapter 12 of my book exactly as I wrote it with the exception of a single word, but gives no acknowledgement to me.

⁵⁶For instances: Fidele Glacier was named for his wife, not his daughter; Cook succeeded Greely as president of the Explorers Club in 1906, not 1903, etc.

⁵²"With Fuegians on a Guanaco Hunt," *Outlook*, February 1901, pp.567-80.

⁵³For a full discussion of this tell-tale article, see *C&P*, pp.786-87.

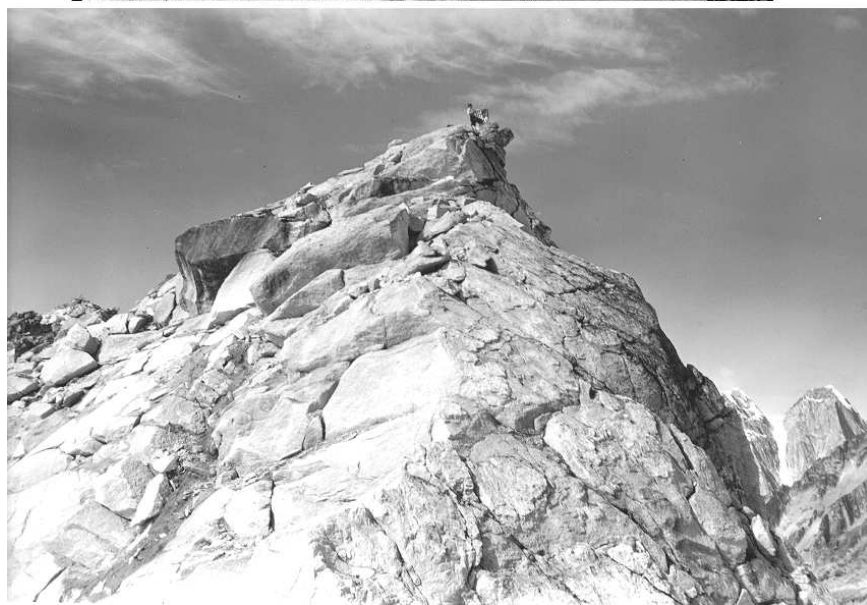


Figure 6: [a] Cook's 1906 photo (top) compared at the same size to [b] the Carter-Washburn 1957 photo of Fake Peak [D7 Fig.5] (some top-right profile lost by then [D9 fn 13]). [DIO note. The conspiratorialist (§B1, ¶4 §§K9-K10 & fn 95) Cook Society **STILL** can't own (¶6 §C7 & fn 11) that photo [a] (Cook's "summit" shot [D7 Fig.18]) wasn't taken atop McK. So: *what* Wingéd Demon lifted, off **McKinley's** top, those unmistakably-shaped rocks on photo [a]'s left side (shapes same in Cook's published [D7 Figs.2&3] & Browne's 1910 photos: ¶6 fn 16) & flew them 19 miles onto an identical left-side setting (photo [b]) on **Fake Peak's** top?! All before Browne Fake Peak photo#1 (1910/6/28, years ere Cook's lessers climbed McK), *snapped the very month when Root-of-All-Evil Washburn was born: WERE THE ROCKS ON LEFT FLOWN TO FAKE PEAK BY WASHBURN'S STORK?*]

from someone unable to follow even his own stated facts? He says that "while Washburn was playing with his 'fifty-foot erector set' on the lower Ruth Glacier, Gonnason's 1956 expedition was exploring the East Ridge area on the Upper Ruth Glacier." However, only two paragraphs before, Heckathorn tells us that Washburn had erected his photographic mast (the referred-to "erector set")⁵⁷ in an attempt to duplicate Cook's photo in 1957, not 1956, so the two events were *not* coincident. When a "polar historian" cannot keep his facts straight for three consecutive paragraphs, how much faith can we have in his command of detail or logic? So when Heckathorn introduces the obscure 1956 expedition of one James Mills, which he says was the first to ascend Pegasus Peak, we must beware of his intent. Heckathorn offers that "Mills had no idea that Cook had visited [Traleika Col] half a century before or had seen and sketched Pegasus Peak in his 1906 diary." So, what is the point in mentioning Mills at all then? That becomes clear only later when Heckathorn says "Washburn's photographic evidence and persuasive arguments (published in the 1958 number of the *American Alpine Journal*) seemingly closed the door on Dr. Cook's 1906 ascent. The expeditions of Gonnason and Mills were reduced to footnotes or less." His implication could be that news of Mills expedition was intentionally suppressed by the terrible "Peary Cabal" — cum Washburn, even though Heckathorn has just finished saying that "until the diary of the dead explorer [Cook] . . . arose from the archives" no one, including Mills, knew that Cook had visited Traleika Col and seen Pegasus Peak. Therefore Washburn, also, could have had no idea that Cook had allegedly done this great feat, much less that it would become the key argument put forward in his defense by his followers forty years later. So, even the malevolent, ever-present and never-ending "Peary Cabal" could have had no reason to "suppress" anything about Mills's expedition at all. Therefore this is a most ridiculous implication. And of course, *DIO* 7.2-3 has shown conclusively that Cook neither reached Traleika Col, nor is the drawing on page 52 actually Pegasus Peak, so this entire argument is irrelevant, anyway.

6. Fake Peak III: The Rehash to Fit the Model, 1998. Here Heckathorn selectively quotes from my book to place in the reader's mind the idea that I did not come to a definite conclusion in my book about Cook's "summit" picture being the same place as "Fake Peak" and that my subsequent "rehash" of the identification of the place in Cook's picture was only an "afterthought" inspired at the urging of that diehard vendettist, Brad Washburn, to fit Belmore Browne's 1910 model. This is totally false. On page 821 of *Cook & Peary* I discuss the Cook photograph that first appeared in *DIO* 7.2-3 (Fig.18) and was later reprinted in the *New York Times*, in exactly the same terms as I did in the article; I just didn't print the picture in the book because I did not have a reproducible copy at the time the book was published. There I state: "In [Cook's original] print the rock structures stand out boldly, and it cannot be doubted that they are identical to those of Fake Peak that still remain. Furthermore, more of the 'distant peak' at the right is visible, and the top of the adjacent cliff, shown on the left margin of [Cook's summit photo] can be seen protruding over the left shoulder of Cook's 'summit,' doubly confirming that the places Cook and Browne photographed were, indeed, one and the same." Apparently these facts are still lost on Ted Heckathorn. Instead, he seems to suggest here that the photo printed in *DIO* is some sort of fake perpetrated by Belmore Browne on Cook's original image when he supposedly obtained it in 1910. He cites my own book as evidence for this innuendo, where I expressed some doubts of Belmore Browne because he once had Cook's negatives in his possession, and because I remarked that apparently Bradford Washburn was never aware that "Cook's negatives had once been in Browne's possession." I suppose I should be flattered that Ted Heckathorn puts such faith in my speculations even though he rejects facts I first brought to light, such as the identical nature of Cook's summit and Browne's Fake Peak, but I now accept that my belief that Browne once had Cook's negatives was mistaken: when the entire

⁵⁷[DIO note. Reference is to an almost-high-enough platform Washburn & Adams Carter had to build (due to post-1906 snowmelt: §E4) to acquire Fig.6's near-match. (In Fig.6 caption: D7 = *DIO* 7.2 ¶7, and D9 = *DIO* 7.3 ¶9.) The ironic inappropriateness of CookSoc's sneer is stressed at ¶6 fn 11.]

Browne letter of 1914 is read in context there is another perfectly innocent interpretation of it that, if accepted, would “blow away” Heckathorn’s continued assault on Browne’s honesty. Here is the relevant passage in full:

Captain Baldwin has called on me several times lately, and I have furnished him with a copy of Dr. Cook’s, and my own book, as well as the original negatives of Dr. Cook’s fakes, which I secured in 1910. He has secured an affidavit from his photographer to the effect that these negatives have never been tampered with.⁵⁸

M2 The “original negatives of Dr. Cook’s fakes” could legitimately be interpreted, not as Cook’s negatives, but the ones Browne took in Alaska during his attempt to duplicate Cook’s pictures, which he, for a fact, “secured in 1910” on his expedition to Fake Peak. And if Browne never had Cook’s negatives, then Heckathorn’s conspiratorial implications of suppression in the astonishment he expresses that Browne never discussed these negatives with Washburn vanishes as completely as Bradley Land has since the last time Dr. Cook “saw” it. If it is Heckathorn’s implication that the photo appearing in the *New York Times* is some sort of fake by Browne (and this is by no means sure from Heckathorn’s muddled text), that notion is severely undermined by the next sentence of the letter quoted, in which Browne states that Baldwin’s photographer had made an affidavit saying that the “original negatives” Browne gave him “have never been tampered with in any way.” So whether they were Cook’s or Browne’s, any implication of fakery involving these negatives is refuted. This statement is significant in that in 1914 E.C. Rost, who was Cook’s paid private Congressional lobbyist at the time, made the allegation that Browne’s photo of Fake Peak was a composite photo/painting. The timing of Browne’s gift of negatives to Baldwin and the affidavit certifying that they “have never been tampered with” by the photographer strongly imply that the negatives in question were Browne’s, not Cook’s, and the affidavit of their genuineness was intended to counter Rost’s allegation. On the basis of this new reading of Browne’s letter, I now lean toward this interpretation, and that the negatives referred to are those of Browne now at Dartmouth College, not Cook’s. My examination of Baldwin’s papers showed that they contained neither Cook’s nor Browne’s negatives, however. The incriminating full image of Cook’s summit photo turned up in Cook’s own papers, instead; and we have it from no less an authority than FACS’s “historian” that the original print I discovered there, **whose subsequent mysterious disappearance has yet to be explained by FACS**, had an inscription on the back in Dr. Cook’s own handwriting that it was made from the original negative.⁵⁹ As so often before, Dr. Cook’s own hand condemns him, and demolishes Heckathorn’s implication of Browne’s deceit in one motion. Heckathorn still does not seem to comprehend in the slightest the point of the *Times* presentation of the uncropped photo. By superimposing on the full original image taken by Cook in 1906 a frame representing the area included in the version of this photograph as published in 1908, it shows what *Dr. Cook, himself, cropped off his original for publication so as to hide the geographical features visible in the background that would give its true location away*. Belmore Browne certainly had nothing to do with that! And its true location is Browne’s Fake Peak, and not the mighty summit of Mount McKinley.

M3 Finally, Heckathorn quotes a passage from “a critic” on the amazon.com web page. This passage was so enigmatic that I wrote to the author to get an explanation of just what it meant. The writer turned out to be Dr. Nancy Nicholson, a professor at the University of Miami, Ohio. I have since had extensive e-mail correspondence with her and I have sent her additional materials, including *DIO* 7.2-3. After reading my articles, she termed them “excellent” and she now agrees that Cook’s “summit” photo is identical with Fake Peak. She has also requested enough copies of the Mount McKinley *DIO* issue to furnish one to

⁵⁸Letter, Belmore Browne to Thomas H. Hubbard, January 21, 1914, PFC.

⁵⁹See *DIO* 7.2-3 p.45.

each student in the class she teaches that examines the nature of true and false discourse, and she has placed *Cook & Peary: The Polar Controversy, Resolved* on the class reading list. She is also using other material I provided her to show that it was impossible for Cook to reach the North Pole along a “magnetic meridian,” as he claimed.⁶⁰ On June 3, 1999, Dr. Nicholson submitted another evaluation to Amazon declaring, “As a piece of scholarship, this is a definitive book. . . . Those wishing to spend time with this book will be rewarded with credible information about one of the fascinating human stories of the last two centuries.” *DIO*’s analysis of Cook’s fake summit picture is not argumentation “to fit the model.” Anyone with eyes can see that it is identical to Fake Peak, and there can be no further argument about that, since the fit is perfect. On the other hand, Heckathorn’s argument that the sketch on page 52 is Pegasus Peak is designed to fit his model and, as anyone with eyes can see, that is quite a stretch, indeed.

N Conclusion

N1 I have now come to the absolute conclusion of my response to these three would-be critical reviewers. But to say this is *the* conclusion would be to fall to a level of wishful thinking only possible to a Cookite. Any *true* scholars of this subject, having had this many errors, fallacies, absurdities, and self-contradictions pointed out in their writings, would shrink away in shame knowing their credibility could never be made whole again, and would move on to some other field of endeavor not requiring fundamental research skills or even the ability to make a logical argument. But these three will never quit. Their credibility may be gone, but as long as the trust set up to bankroll FACS by Dr. Cook’s granddaughter remains solvent there will be more *Polar Priorities* with more criticisms of *Cook & Peary*, *DIO*, and any other future forum which dares to bring proofs against their wishes.⁶¹

N2 On that basis I would recommend future issues of *Polar Priorities* to all students of the psychology of cultism and hero worship, as well as to those interested in the methods of egotism, self-justification and common greed, but not as a serious forum for the discussion of polar history.

References

- BBD The papers of Belmore Browne, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H.
 CSC The collection of the Frederick A. Cook Society, Ohio State U., Columbus, Ohio.
 FCC The Frederick Cook Collection, Library of Congress.
 PFC The Peary Family Collection, National Archives.
 SCD The Vilhjalmur Stefansson Collection, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H.
 NYT The *New York Times*

[Note added 2001. The Library of Congress currently has on display an exhibition entitled “American Treasures of the Library of Congress.” Tens of thousands of tourists have visited this exhibition, which devotes one entire display case to Dr. Frederick Cook and his claim to have reached the North Pole. It contains one of his original polar notebooks and several of his stereopticon slides. The explanatory panel in the case adopts Bryce’s conclusions that Cook’s diaries have contradictions, insertions, deletions, and substantial erasures that brand the narrative they contain as a fabrication. Visitors to the Library of Congress can view the exhibit on the 2nd floor of the Jefferson Building.]

⁶⁰E-mails from Nancy Nicholson to the author, dated March 8 and 10, 1999; June 3-4, 1999; possession of author.

⁶¹[For proof, see the accusations in FACS publications made against the *New York Times* after it printed a story (November 26, 1998 p.1) on Bryce’s discovery of the original of Cook’s “summit” photo.]