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Dr. Cook-Mt. McKinley Controversy Closed

Uncropped 'Mountain' Summit Photo Proves
Cook Climbed Molehill Instead

Belmore Browne & Brad Washburn Vindicated

Cook-Defenders' Star "New Evidence" Serially Suicides

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Dr. Frederick A. Cook

‡7 The Fake Peak Revisited

An examination of the new evidence for and against Frederick A. Cook's claim to have climbed Mount McKinley in 1906

by Robert M. Bryce¹

A Introduction

A1 Late on the night of October 2, 1906, a telegraph messenger knocked at the door of 604 Carlton Avenue in Brooklyn, New York. Herbert L. Bridgman, business manager of the Brooklyn *Standard Union*, paid the \$12.50 collect charges and opened the telegram. It was dated September 27:

Tyonek, Alaska

H. L. Bridgman, Brooklyn, NY:

We have reached the summit of Mount McKinley by a new route in the north, and have mapped 3000 miles of country. Return to Seattle by next steamer. Fred. A. Cook.²

A2 Frederick A. Cook was a medical doctor and friend of Bridgman's. He was also a noted explorer. Cook had been Robert E. Peary's surgeon on his North Greenland Expedition in 1891-1892 and was recognized publicly by Peary for his contributions to its success. He had also served with distinction in a similar role with the Belgian Antarctic Expedition of 1897-1899. In 1903 he had made his first attempt to climb the highest peak in North America, and now his telegram to Bridgman proclaimed his victory in that venture. But this claimed success came as a surprise to many, especially Herschel Parker, a physics professor at Columbia University, who had only recently returned from Alaska, where he had been part of Cook's expedition. He was under the distinct impression that Cook had given up any attempt to climb the mountain. In fact, that is why Parker had returned to New York ahead of the rest of the party.

A3 When confronted with Cook's telegram, Parker could scarcely allow that it could be true. "He will have to tell me how he did it before I can believe that it was done,"³ asserted Parker. "He may have ascended one of the peaks of the range, but I do not believe that he made the ascent of Mount McKinley."⁴ When Cook reached New York in November, he went to see Parker, who apparently⁵ was convinced of the truthfulness of Cook's claim, though he discounted its scientific importance. In Alaska, however, doubts remained that an Easterner had done what most Alaskan "Pioneers" considered impossible.

A4 Cook published the first account of his climb in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* in 1907.⁶ The tale it told was very thrilling. Cook, with two companions, an Alaskan miner named John Dokkin and a horse packer from Montana named Ed Barrill, set off toward

¹ [Note by DR: Robert Bryce (Head Librarian, Montgomery College, Germantown Campus, telephone 301-353-7855) is author of the widely and well reviewed 1997 book, *Cook & Peary: The Polar Controversy, Resolved* (Stackpole Books, 5067 Ritter Rd, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055, telephone 800-732-3669). *Cook & Peary* has deservedly become — and will remain — the prime source on The Controversy.]

² *New York Times*, October 3, 1906.

³ *Ibid*, October 7, 1906.

⁴ *Ibid*, November 10, 1906.

⁵ Though, see D. Rawlins Peary *at the North Pole: Fact or Fiction?* (Wash, DC, 1973) p.81.

⁶ Cook, Frederick A., "The Conquest of Mount McKinley," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, May 1907, pp.825-837.

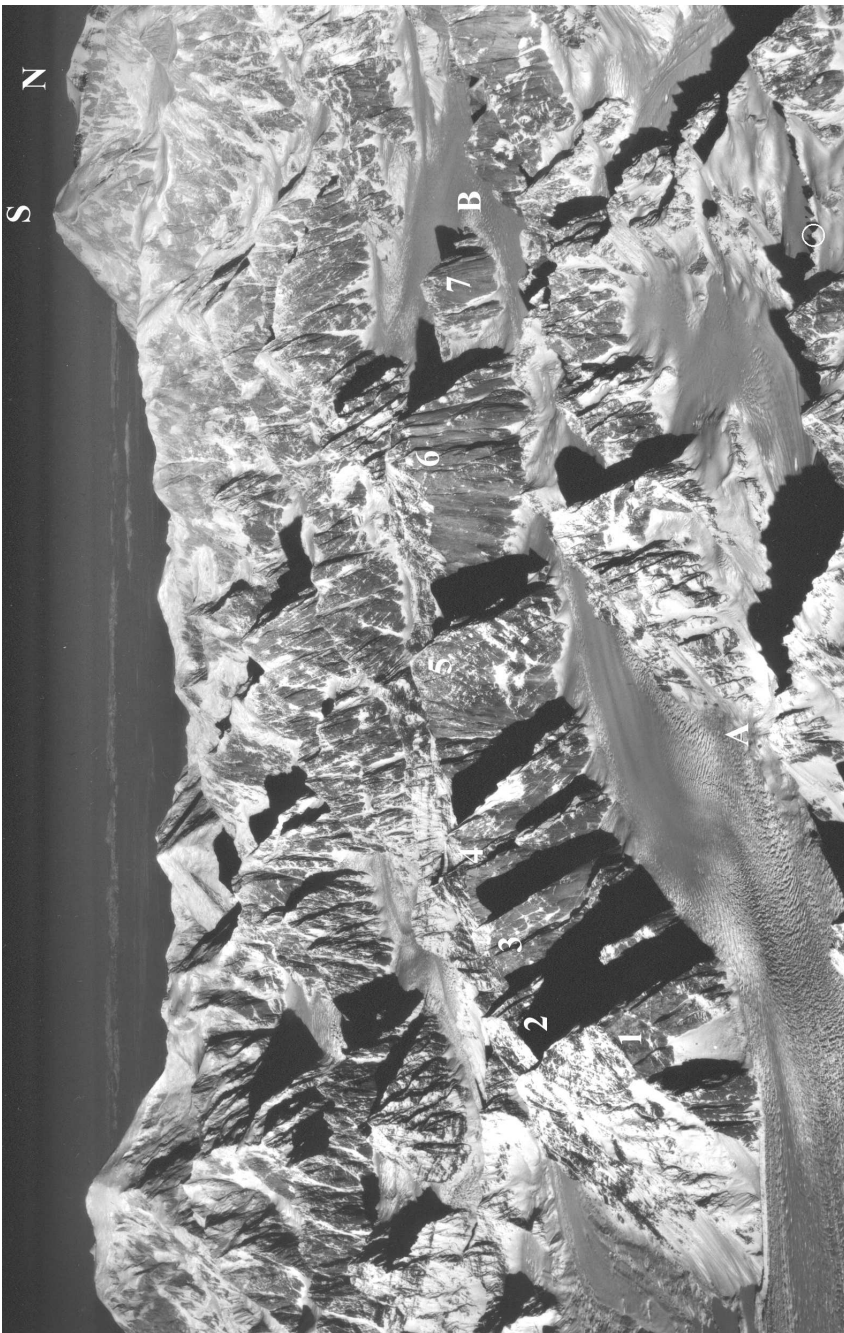


Figure 1: Aerial photo (compare to Fig.32), looking WNW: Mt. McKinley looms over Fake Peak (circled molehill, lower right). Key: 1 = Mt. Church (8233 ft), 2 = Mt. Grosvenor (8450 ft), 3 = Mt. Johnson (8460 ft), 4 = Mt. Wake (double-peak, c.9100 ft), 5 = Mt. Bradley (9140 ft), 6 = Mt. Dickey (9545 ft), 7 = Mt. Barrille (7650 ft), A = Glacier Pt. (3753 ft), B = Gateway (c.5000 ft), S = Mt. McKinley S. Peak (20320 ft), N = N. Peak (19470 ft). Cook's final 1906 movements (before heading home): through lower-left corner to A; thence to Fake Peak area; back to A; A to B (past peaks 1-7). Photo courtesy of Bradford Washburn.

Mount McKinley by motor launch (the *Bolshoy*) in late August. Cook had told the rest of the expedition members who stayed behind that he would merely be looking for a workable route for another attempt the following year. According to Cook's account, they established a base camp some 40 air miles from the mountain and started up Ruth Glacier, which Cook had discovered curling away from McKinley's southeastern flanks in 1903 and named for his adopted daughter. Dokkin soon turned back, but Cook and Barrill continued on with heavy packs, and in three days reached the base of a 12,000-foot ridge on the mountain's eastern flank. Once atop this ridge, they were encouraged to go on by a break in the weather. They continued climbing for two more days and, after a number of harrowing escapes and a miserable, sleepless night spent in a hole dug into a nearly vertical slope at 14,000 feet, they realized they had a chance of reaching the very summit. The weather held, and despite headaches, nosebleeds, snowblindness and other evil effects of the high altitude and intense cold, Cook related, they managed to struggle to within 2,000 feet of the top on the seventh day of the climb. On the morning of the eighth day they made a dash for the higher of the twin summits and reached it about 10 o'clock, September 16. They stayed only twenty freezing minutes at -16 degrees before beginning their descent, reaching their boat again on September 20.

A5 Accompanying his article, Cook published two drawings showing dramatic scenes from the narrative, several photographs with captions implying they had been taken during the actual ascent, and one unequivocally identified as the summit with Ed Barrill standing at its apex holding an ice ax with an American flag lashed to it. During December 1906 and the first months of 1907, Cook lectured on his climb and was elected the second president of the Explorers Club of New York, succeeding Adolphus W. Greely.

A6 In July 1907, Cook embarked on a new expedition to the Arctic. During his absence, in 1908, a full-fledged book detailing his two expeditions to Alaska appeared under the title *To the Top of the Continent*, in which the same pictures as had appeared in *Harper's* were printed with somewhat different captions. In the case of the one of Ed Barrill on the summit, the picture was rendered differently from that which had accompanied Cook's article. In *Harper's* the sky had been airbrushed out and appeared blank, but in the book, the same picture had a dark sky, matching the description in Cook's narrative, which remarked on its peculiar color at the summit. The book was reviewed favorably in America and Europe and there seemed to be no lingering doubts over Cook's claim to have conquered the great Alaskan peak.

A7 All of that changed on September 1, 1909, when Cook sent a dispatch from Lerwick, Scotland, saying that he had reached the North Pole on April 21, 1908. He was being given a tumultuous welcome in Copenhagen, Denmark, when word arrived from Robert E. Peary that he claimed he had reached the North Pole in April of 1909, followed shortly by Peary's first allegation that Cook's prior claim to the Pole was a fraud. In the charges and countercharges that were to rage for months in the nation's newspapers, the initial doubts about Cook's climb of Mount McKinley were raised early on, but it was not until October 14, 1909, that Cook's climb of McKinley became a central issue in what has since been dubbed The Polar Controversy.

A8 On that day, the *New York Globe & Commercial Advertiser* published a detailed affidavit signed by Edward Barrill swearing that neither he nor Cook had ever been within 12 miles of the summit of Mount McKinley, that they had never climbed even a 12,000 foot ridge, much less stood on the 20,320-foot summit, and that all of the harrowing adventures in between had been nothing but fantasy on Cook's part. Cook's many supporters, including the powerful *New York Herald*, countered that Barrill's affidavit could not be trusted, since it had been made by a man who was now admitting to have lied in the past when he told friends on numerous occasions that he and Cook had reached the summit. He had even shown them his diary bearing a record of the climb, substantially as Cook had described it in his writings. Indeed, the diary, when published in full the next day, did corroborate in all major aspects Cook's narrative of his ascent. However, his affidavit said that the diary

entries regarding the climb were also invention, having all been dictated by Cook.

A9 Before the affidavit was published, there had been numerous rumors of bribes offered to Cook's former climbing partner and to others for the purpose of bringing down Peary's rival. Barrill's affidavit proved that either in the past or now, he was a liar; but, purchased or not, the affidavit was ultimately to have a powerful effect on the decline of public belief that Frederick Cook was a truthful man. Nonetheless, when Cook's North Pole claim was rejected in December 1909 by a *Konsistorium* appointed by the University of Copenhagen to examine his proofs, many still adhered to the notion that Cook had been defeated by a moneyed conspiracy bankrolled by the powerful men of the Peary Arctic Club, which had financed Peary's attempts to reach the Pole for ten years — a conspiracy, they said, in which the Barrill affidavit, which had been bought, had played a major role.

A10 In 1910, the Explorers Club, which had previously formed a committee to examine the merits of Cook's claim to have climbed Mount McKinley and rejected it, fielded its own expedition to Alaska. Led by Herschel Parker along with another former member of Cook's 1906 expedition, Belmore Browne, it was financed by the Peary Arctic Club. Its objective was to visit the small peak along a tributary of Ruth Glacier described in Barrill's affidavit to obtain photographs that would show that it, and not the summit of the great mountain, was where Cook's picture of Barrill standing with the flag had been taken.

A11 Browne and Parker located the spot, but were unable to exactly duplicate Cook's photo due to deep snow, which obscured many of the important features visible four years before, and because a shift in a drifted snow cornice prevented them from standing in the position that would have allowed the same camera angle Cook had used. So even their photographs of what they called "Fake Peak" did not convince some that it was the same place as the one in Cook's photograph, especially since they were sponsored and financed by Cook's opponents. Browne and Parker were successful in exactly duplicating several of Cook's other photographs, however, thus showing conclusively that they were not taken at the locations or the altitudes ascribed to them in Cook's book or magazine article, being miles away and thousands of feet lower in altitude than those he had assigned them.

A12 In the 1950s, Bradford Washburn, the foremost expert on the topography of the Alaska Range, was able to duplicate all but two of the controversial pictures in *To the Top of the Continent*, none of which were at the altitudes or locations Cook had said they were. But he too was unable to duplicate Cook's summit picture at Fake Peak, for two reasons. Fifty feet of snow had melted away⁷ at the site since 1906, placing the spot Cook might have stood when he took his picture far up in thin air. Also, part of the right side of the profile of rocks just below the position Barrill was shown standing in Cook's photograph was missing, making an exact duplicate of this key photo no longer possible.

A13 This same rock profile was visible in Browne's Fake Peak photo of 1910, but Washburn contended that this ledge had collapsed since Browne's photograph was taken; Cook's supporters maintained that this ledge had never existed (‡7 §G1), but had been painted into Browne's photo to convict Cook of fraud. Even Washburn associate Adams Carter's 1957 attempt to erect a climbable 50-foot mast so as to place him at the right camera angle failed to settle the matter when he found it left him several feet short of the conjectural spot where Cook had stood in 1906.

A14 In 1995, Brian Okonek, an Alaskan climbing guide, duplicated the last of Cook's supposedly high-altitude pictures from the surface of Ruth Glacier (*Top* opp. p.238). But without a duplicate of the summit picture, many Cook supporters remained adamant that his photo actually showed the top of the continent as it looked in 1906, and suggested several innocent-sounding excuses to explain the misattribution of the locations of the rest. Thus, Cook's photograph of Ed Barrill holding the flag has been called "the most controversial picture in the history of exploration." Is it a fake or not?

⁷ See Bradford Washburn, "Doctor Cook and Mount McKinley," *American Alpine Journal*, vol.11 no.1 [1958], p.22.

B New photographic evidence comes to light

B1 In 1989 most of Frederick Cook's papers were donated to the Library of Congress. They had been in the possession of his family since his death in 1940 and had never been available as a whole for scholarly examination. Among them was the original diary of his 1906 expedition to Alaska, the existence of which was previously known only to Cook's family and a few of their intimate friends. However, a portion of the papers remained in the custody of the Frederick A. Cook Society, a non-profit educational organization composed of a small group of ardent supporters and Cook family members headquartered in the Sullivan County Historical and Cultural Museum in Hurleyville, New York.

B2 In the course of research for a biography of Frederick A. Cook,⁸ I was given unlimited access to both repositories of the papers once held by the Cook family. In a search through the photographic materials at Hurleyville in 1991, a number of negatives taken by Cook in 1906 turned up, some of them never published.

B3 It had always been lamented that no one had ever had access to the original negative of Cook's summit photograph, because the picture as published in his book was dark, obscuring many of the details needed to definitely identify where it had been taken, and the publication of the same photo in *Harper's* had been so badly retouched that it had the same effect. If additional prints could be made from the original negative, students of the subject speculated, that might clear up the whole matter. Unfortunately, the negative of Cook's most controversial picture was not among those at Hurleyville. There were a number of prints made from Cook's original negatives, however, and among them was a sharp, clear copy of his summit picture. That should have settled the matter, but the history of this picture continued to be bizarre.

B4 As part of my request for documentation from the Frederick A. Cook Society, a copy of this picture was asked for on several occasions.⁹ Nearly all of my many other requests were eventually filled — but time after time a copy of the crucial summit picture did not

⁸ Bryce, Robert M. *Cook & Peary: the Polar Controversy, Resolved*, Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1997.

⁹ Letters, Robert M. Bryce to Mary Allison Farley [then-archivist of the Frederick A. Cook Society], dated October 21, 1991: "Definite musts . . .: Photocopy of Dr. Cook's 'summit' picture that we saw among his Mt. McKinley photos on my first trip this summer."; December 11, 1991: "On the summit picture: Please send me a 1:1 size copy of this and one as large as you can get on a page by enlargement. Take an enlarged exposure lighter and darker also. This picture was part of the McKinley prints we came across on my first visit."; January 21, 1992: "What I wanted was the print of the famous 'Top of the Continent' picture — the one that Dr. Cook always claimed was the top of Mt. McKinley with Ed Barrill holding the flag. We found a print of it in those boxes of Alaskan pictures we looked through on the first visit." Letters, Robert M. Bryce to Warren B. Cook, Sr., dated February 6, 1993; March 3, 1993; February 17, 1994; April 15, 1994: "I do wish, though, when he found it, that [Sheldon Cook-Dorough, the Cook Society historian at the time] had sent me copies of the Mt. McKinley summit picture as I outlined in detail in several of my letters to Ms. Farley."; May 11, 1994: "While [Mrs. Burns, caretaker of the collection at Hurleyville at the time] is at it, I hope she will send me the copy of the 'summit picture' that I have requested on a number of occasions in the past, or that you will do it yourself when you make your upcoming visit to the Museum mentioned in your letter. . . . When I was last in Hurleyville, the picture was contained in a green cardboard folding storage box on the top of the grey bookcase behind the desk as you entered the door to the room in which the papers were held. Sheldon confirmed to me that it was still so located when he was at the Museum doing his evaluation of the papers in 1993. Obtaining a copy of this is also important, since, while my memory is excellent, I would rather not rely on it here. Of course, it would be best if I could be sent an actual photographic copy of the photo. It would have to be 1:1 in size (not an enlargement), then the xerox copies would be unnecessary, but they also would be completely satisfactory, and preferable, if this is going to cause a big delay or cause you any inconvenience. I am sending a copy of the 'summit photo' from *Harper's* so that Mrs. Burns might easily recognize the one I am looking for."; May 18, 1994. Copies, possession of author.

come.¹⁰ In 1994, a direct appeal to Warren B. Cook, Sr.,¹¹ president of the society, produced a series of xerox copies of a print from the original negative of Cook's summit photograph, but not from the one I had seen in 1991.¹² This second print was distinguishable by a different inscription on its back and, judging from the copies, was evidently not as sharp as the one I had seen in 1991. However, when copied at various settings on the xerox machine, its details were enhanced so that they were clearly discernible. Later, in 1994, I was asked by the society to evaluate the collection at Hurleyville for content and preservation.¹³ During my examination of the collection, I revisited the original negatives and prints that I had seen in 1991. The society's former archivist had processed the photographic materials since my last visit and had placed each of these items in a separate acid-free envelope. I looked at each of the pictures again, but the summit picture I had seen in 1991 was no longer among them. There was, however, one empty acid-free envelope in the box containing the other 1906 prints. Fortunately, the second print (from which the xerox copies that I had received were made) was still among the papers; but as suspected, instead of being crisp and clear, it had yellowed and faded badly.

C The three versions of Cook's "summit" photograph

C1 Cook's "summit" photograph was first published in the May 1907 issue of *Harper's Monthly Magazine* as part of his article entitled "The Conquest of Mount McKinley." (see Fig.2). In this guise, it was cropped at the left and right and the sky was painted out. Many Cook critics have assumed that this was an intentional attempt to alter the picture enough to make it difficult to recognize the place where it had been taken. However, according to the later recollection of a member of the *Harper's* staff, Cook was not responsible for these changes; the retouching had been an editorial decision taken without consulting Cook, and

¹⁰ Letters, Mary Allison Farley to Robert M. Bryce, dated January 17, 1992: "I've enclosed several copies of summit shots since I do not remember precisely which one you were thinking of. If these are not what you had in mind, perhaps you can check again if you make a return trip this spring." June 30, 1992: "You will find the photocopy of the print of Marie Cook climbing in 1903 as well as another peak shot. The only print that I can find of Barrill on the summit is a reproduction of the photograph from the book." Letters, Warren B. Cook, Sr. to Robert M. Bryce, dated February 16, 1993; March 22, 1993: "I appreciated your long letter of 3/3/93 and will try to help or seek help wherever possible to address the open issues"; March 8, 1994: "As regards your requested items via your 5/18/93 letter, you can imagine my frustration in not being able to oversee distribution of any items that might be of value to your research if indeed we have same in Hurleyville." Attached to this letter was a copy of a letter to Warren B. Cook, Sr. from Sheldon Cook-Dorough, dated February 26, 1994, which contained the following: "The other item which Robert wanted which I was able to find was a print of Dr. Cook's photograph of the peak which he captioned the top of Mt. McKinley. Now, of course, I could not mail this photograph. But I told Bill [Smith, executive director of the Cook Society at the time] that Robert was very interested in it and I told Bill, as I recall, where the photograph was filed. I then wrote Robert, I believe after I returned to Atlanta, that the photograph he wanted was indeed still in the Collection, in the box where he had seen it the previous year." All, possession of author.

¹¹ Letter, Robert M. Bryce to Warren B. Cook, Sr., dated March 22, 1994. Copy, possession of author.

¹² Letter, Patricia Burns to Robert M. Bryce, dated July 1, 1994: "I have enclosed copies of McKinley — sorry we could not locate the original." Possession of author. That there was a different, sharper copy was confirmed by then-historian of the Frederick A. Cook Society, Sheldon Cook-Dorough, in a letter to the author dated June 25, 1994: "I found the photograph of the summit of Mt. McKinley to which you referred: Cook's summit. It is indeed in the collection and is a print from the original negative, so noted by Dr. Cook on the back of the photograph. I told Bill Smith who is executive director of the Collection that I had found it and its exact location and that you might want to copy it for your book. Write Bill a note and let him know your desires." Only six days after this letter, as noted above, Patricia Burns sent me the xerox copies of the faded picture, but "could not locate the original" even though the historian of the society had told the executive director the "exact location" of it. Both, possession of author. [In a phone conversation in February 1998, Mary Allison Farley told the author that she was never instructed to hold the photograph back by anyone in the Cook Society, and that she had no knowledge of what became of it.]

¹³ Bryce, Robert M. *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, 33 pages.

Cook had objected to the alterations, since they had removed the dark sky prominently mentioned in his text and replaced it with a featureless white blank; the magazine was already on sale by the time of his objection, however, and nothing could be done.¹⁴

C2 The next version of the “summit” photograph was the one that appeared in Cook’s *To the Top of the Continent* (Doubleday, Page, 1908, Fig.3). In this version, the picture was cropped more on the left than in *Harper’s*, but less on the right, revealing an important detail that the magazine’s editor had mostly cropped and partially airbrushed out. This is in the form of a peak visible in the distance, which Cook’s critics asserted gave the true location of the picture away. They said this “distant peak” was identical to one of the mountains that could be seen across Ruth Glacier in one of Cook’s other photographs that appeared in his book (Mt. Grosvenor, Fig.4). If this was true, they reasoned, then Figs.3 & 4 must have been taken at very similar locations. Fig.4 was later shown by Bradford Washburn to have been taken from the top of Fake Peak itself, proving that Cook visited the spot in 1906.¹⁵ Therefore, if any feature of Cook’s “summit” photograph could be tied to Fig.4, it would conclusively demonstrate that Cook’s summit is identical to Browne’s Fake Peak. That connection can now be clearly established with the recovery of the original prints of Cook’s photographs.

C3 The collection formerly held in Hurleyville by the Frederick A. Cook Society is now housed at Ohio State University as a result of an agreement concluded between the two in 1996. An inquiry to the university’s archives disclosed that the sharp, original print viewed in 1991, which was missing from the Hurleyville collection in 1994, was not transferred to Columbus along with the rest of the documents. But the yellowed version used to make the 1994 xerox copies was. It is this copy that has been used here for the first publication of Cook’s full original photograph that he claimed represented McKinley’s summit in 1906 (Fig.18, pp.68-69).¹⁶ When Cook’s original photograph is compared with Fig.4 and the photograph taken by Adams Carter in 1957 (Fig.5), it can be indisputably shown that Cook’s is indeed Fake Peak and not part of Mount McKinley, much less its summit.

D The three key points of comparison

D1 Each of the key points has been numbered for comparison on Figs.2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 18. The “distant peak” seen on the extreme right (Mt. Grosvenor) is labelled [1]. This was mostly cropped and airbrushed out of the *Harper’s* version, but a part of it is visible in the one from *To the Top of the Continent*. Fig.6(a), an enlarged detail from Fig.4, is provided for comparison with Fig.6(b), and enlargement of the same detail from Fig.18. Notice how the snow lies identically on this peak in both photographs, which were exposed within minutes of each other. Adams Carter was unable to get quite high enough for a perfect alignment of the distant peak with the rock face of Fake Peak that would match Cook’s photo (see

¹⁴ Letters, William E. Mears to E.A. Murphy, dated October 14 & 26, 1931. Frederick A. Cook Papers, Library of Congress. See *Cook & Peary* pp.819-820.

¹⁵ Washburn, Bradford, *American Alpine Journal*, vol.11 no.1 [1958], p.17.

¹⁶ Fig.18 is reproduced from the yellowed print enhanced by OSU by means of a die-sublimation printer, which corrects for the original’s faded appearance. The original print seen in 1991 was even sharper than this. Notice the blemish in the sky in the upper right quadrant of both this print and the one printed in *To the Top of the Continent*, which proves that the same negative was used to print both of them. Correspondence with Laura J. Kissel, Polar Curator at the Byrd Polar Research Center at OSU, disclosed that although she said “OSU received the entire photographic collection that was in Hurleyville, to the best of our knowledge” and that she “confirmed this with Dr. Goerler, the University Archivist,” a number of items seen by the author during his research were not transferred from Hurleyville to Columbus. These included: the clear original print of Cook’s summit picture; all of the original 5 x 7 negatives taken on Ruth Glacier in 1906; the full original print of the picture reproduced on p.822 of *Cook & Peary* showing Ed Barrill standing to the right of the tent; the clear version of the photo reproduced at the bottom of p.832 in *Cook & Peary*. [E-mail messages from Laura J. Kissel to Keith Pickering, dated November 13 & 17, 1997; January 26, 1998 (quoted above).] Copies, possession of author.

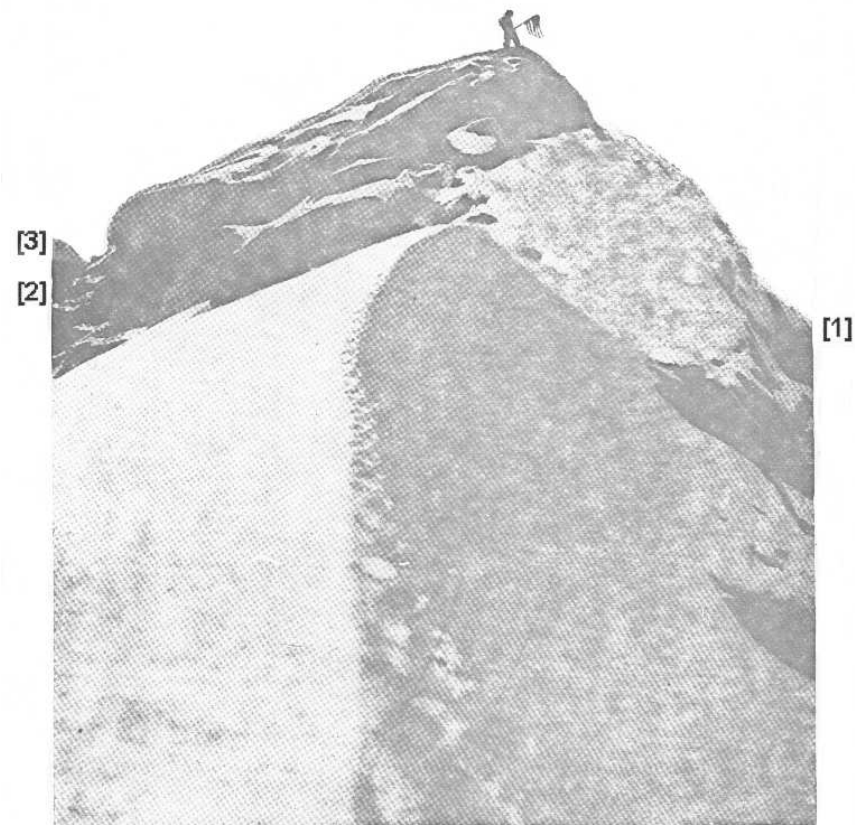


Figure 2: Cook’s “summit” photograph as it appeared in *Harper’s Monthly Magazine*, May, 1907. Original caption: “THE FLAG ON THE SUMMIT OF MT. MCKINLEY, 20,300 FEET ABOVE SEA-LEVEL”. The left and right edges have been cropped and the sky has been painted out.

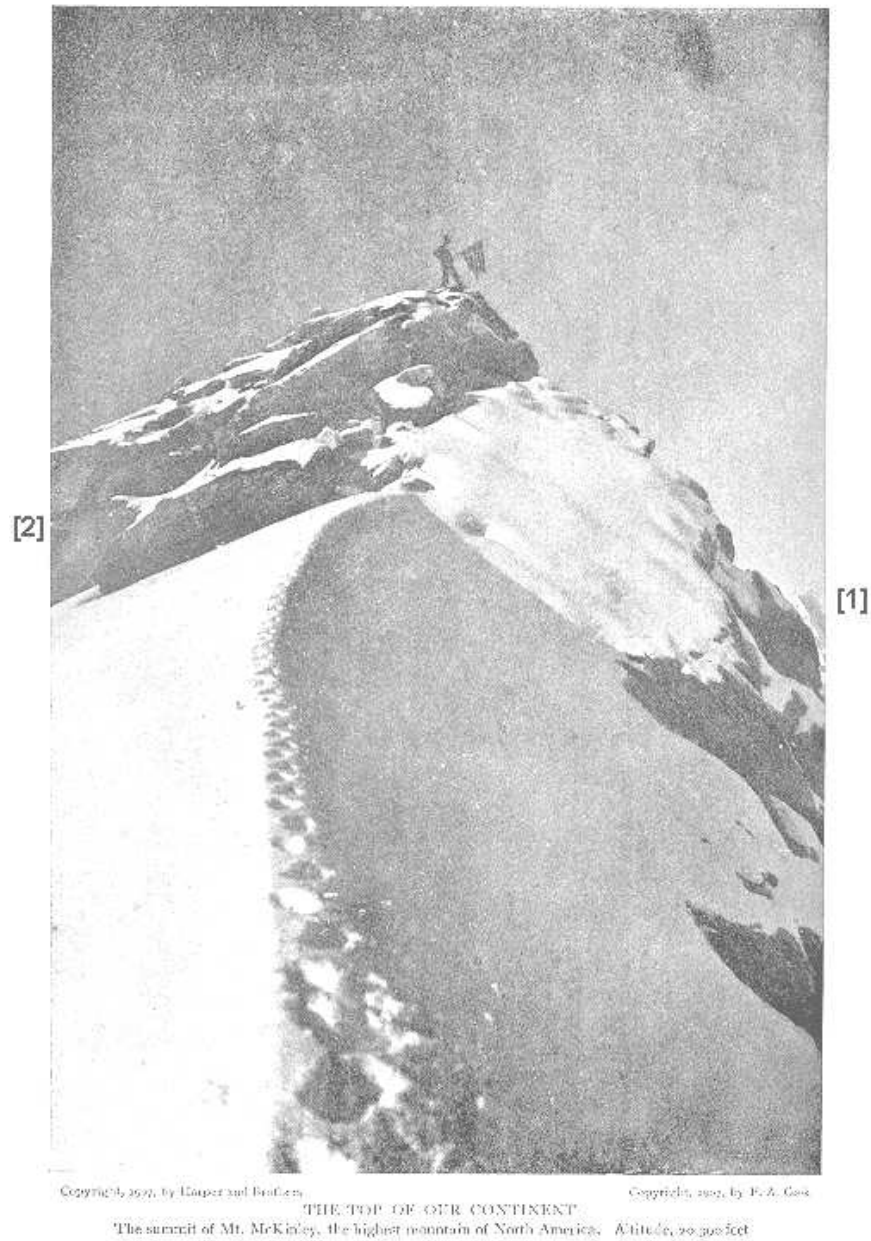


Figure 3: Cook's "summit" photograph as it appeared opposite p.227 in *To the Top of the Continent* (1908). Original caption: "**THE TOP OF OUR CONTINENT**. The summit of Mt. McKinley, the highest mountain of North America. Altitude, 20,390 feet". The left edge has been cropped more severely than Fig.2, but the sky is original. Note feature [1], the "distant peak" (Mt. Grosvenor), at the center of the extreme right-hand margin.



Figure 4: The full, original print of the photograph that appeared opposite p.239 in *To the Top of the Continent*, published here for the first time. Cook's 1908 caption: "**SCENE OF GLACIERS, PEAKS AND CLIFFS**. Shoulder of Mt. McKinley, a cliff of 8,000 feet. Ruth Glacier, a freight carrier of the cloud world. The Great White Way, where the polar frosts meet the Pacific drift of the tropical dews." (His *Harper's* 1907 article p.833 put this scene at 16,000 feet.) View looks a little south of west-southwest, from atop Fake Peak. The tall background peaks Cook named (l. to r.) Mt. Church (8233 ft), Mt. Grosvenor (8450 ft), & Mt. Johnson (8460 ft), names evidently not now recognized by the USGS. (See Fig.1 & fn 33.) Details of this photograph are enlarged as Figs.6(a) & 8(a). Photo courtesy of the Ohio State University Photo Archives.

§A13), but had he been able to, it would align correctly. But of course, the missing rock profile made a duplicate of Cook's photo by Carter impossible. Due to the change in the position of the snow cornice leading up to the top, Parker and Browne were unable to align the peak with the foreground in their 1910 photographs, either (Fig.7).

D2 What appears to be a dark cave-like recess, but may be only a shadowed rock face, is the second key point [2]. This feature is visible in all versions of Cook's picture and is especially striking when Carter's and Cook's original photographs are compared. Notice the dark streaks radiating down the slab above the recess. Only the top slab of this feature protrudes from the snow in the Parker-Browne photograph.

D3 The top of the cliff adjacent to Fake Peak on the extreme left is the third key point [3]. This is the cliff prominent on the left-hand margin of Fig.4. This tell-tale feature is cropped out of the version printed in *To the Top of the Continent*, but is just visible in the *Harper's* version, though badly retouched. Here, for the first time, a direct comparison can be made between Cook's two original photographs. Two details are included. Fig.8(a) is an enlargement of the top of the cliff as it appears in Fig.4. Fig.8(b) is taken from the center of the left-hand margin of Fig.18. Notice the rock outcrops and that the snow is lying identically in all of the crevices in both of the pictures, proving it is the same cliff and that the pictures were taken at nearly the same location. Notice, too, the orientation of this same cliff to Fake Peak in the Parker-Browne photograph (Fig.7).

D4 Comparing Cook's original summit picture with Carter's photograph discloses several other interesting points. The rock face below Barrill must have actually collapsed, since all other features are readily identifiable from one picture to the other, except for one large rock, which can be seen below and slightly to the left of Barrill in Cook's original (Fig.18), that also has slipped away. In 1912, a strong earthquake centered in the Katmai Peninsula violently shook the area immediately surrounding Mount McKinley. This may have been responsible for these changes, which are known to have occurred sometime between 1910, when Parker and Browne made their photographs, and 1938 when Ted Leitzell, a journalist and supporter of Cook, visited Fake Peak and first noted that this rock face was absent. There is no known published record of any other visit to this spot in the intervening 28 years.

D5 With the publication here — at last — of Cook's full "summit" photo, there can be no further argument over its authenticity. It joins all the others in *To the Top of the Continent* that purport to represent Cook's climb (beyond the Ruth Glacier) in being a misrepresentation of both its location and altitude. The point at which Barrill is standing in Cook's photograph is merely a few hundred feet above the glacier floor and 19.42 miles from the actual summit of Mount McKinley. Its altitude is only 5338 feet, as opposed to McKinley's altitude of more than 20,000 feet.

E Other photographic evidence

E1 As Cook's allegedly-high-altitude pictures were revealed, one by one, as misrepresentations, his advocates advanced various explanations that would avoid them being branded as outright fakes. They were mix-ups at the publisher's for which Cook was not responsible, they said, or they were substitutions for photographs that had been spoiled by the harsh conditions encountered at high altitudes on the mountain. One Cook biographer¹⁷ who accepted that the summit picture was probably a fake, allowed that in presenting Fake Peak as the summit, Cook was merely "cutting a corner," and still maintained that Cook had actually climbed the mountain. If Cook did, then his narrative should support him.

E2 Another important picture that turned up in the searches of the Cook Society's collection bears directly on the veracity of Cook's account. That photograph was first reproduced on p.822 of my book, *Cook & Peary: the Polar Controversy, Resolved*. The

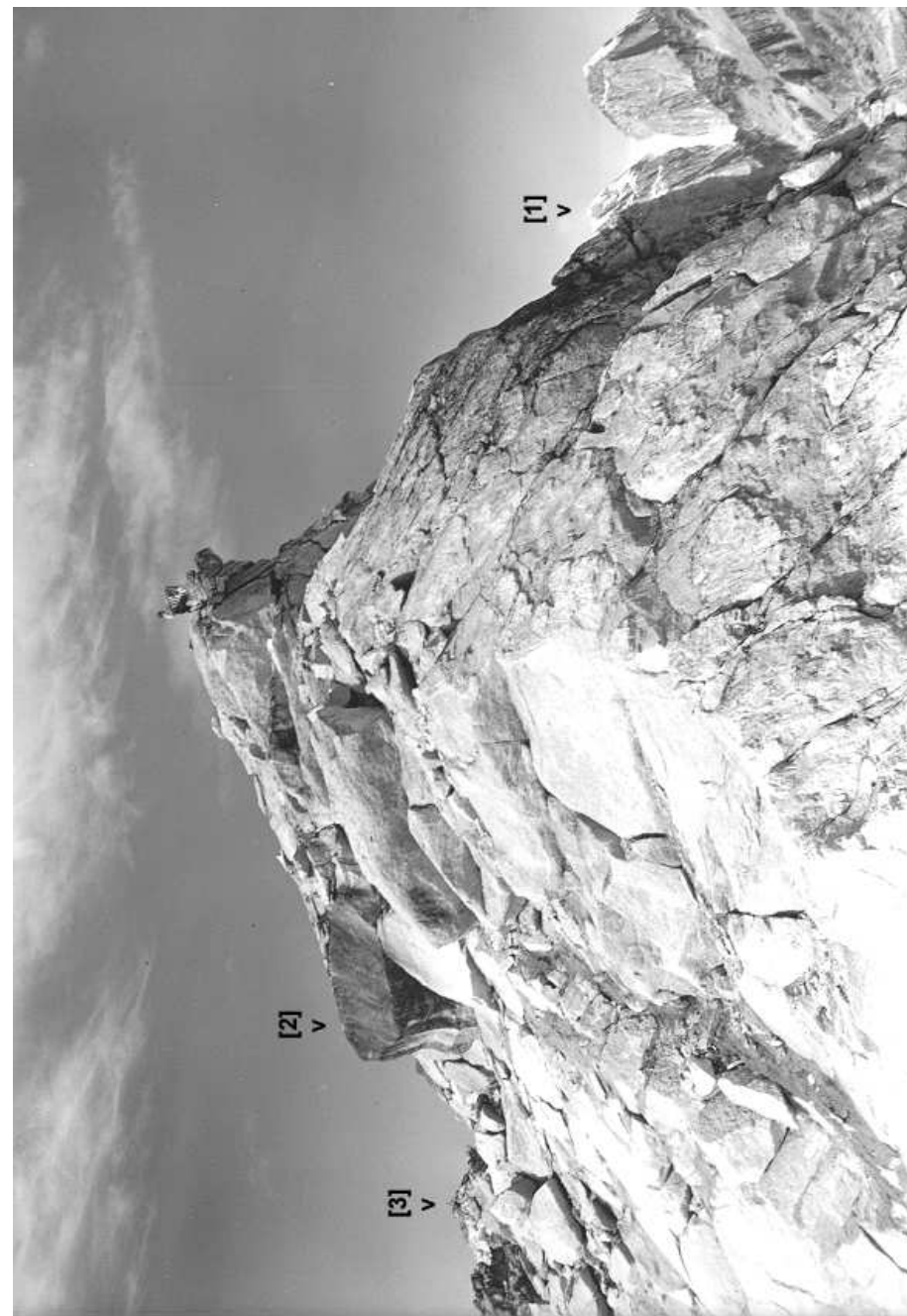


Figure 5: Photograph of Fake Peak made from a 50-foot mast by Adams Carter, July 21, 1957. Photo courtesy of Bradford Washburn.

¹⁷ Hugh Eames, *Winner Lose All*, Little, Brown, & Co., 1973, p.67. See ¶9 §A2.

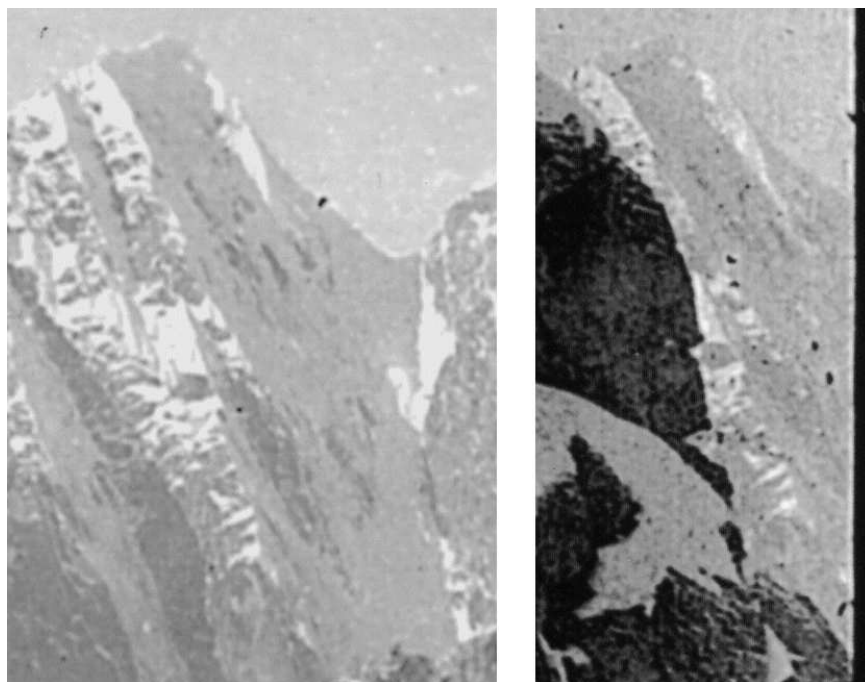


Figure 6: [a] A 4.5x enlargement of the middle peak from the right of the “Peaks and Cliffs” photo, Fig.4 (p.49). [b] A 4.5x enlargement of the distant peak in the background at the extreme right edge of the original “summit” photo, Fig.18 (pp.68-69). Slight differences in shadows indicate that Fig.4 was taken a little after Fig.18. Note the matching patterns of bare rock and snow below the summit, and the chevron-like rock patterns near the bottom. (Photos courtesy of the Ohio State University Photo Archives.) Both images in possession (for 91 years) of the Cook family, then the Cook Society — but never published by them.

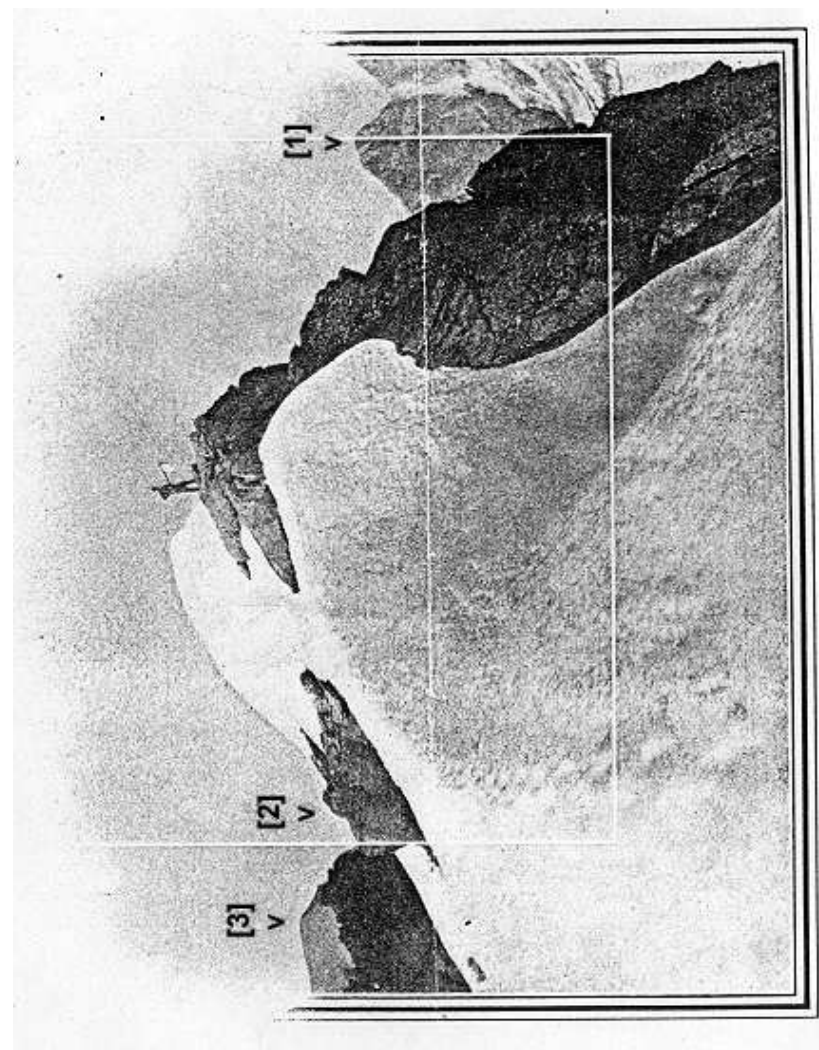


Figure 7: Parker-Browne photograph of Fake Peak. Photo by Merl La Voy, July 1910, published in Winchester, J.W., “Dr. Cook, Faker,” *Pacific Monthly*, March 1911, p.253. The white frame line corresponds to the field of view shown in Cook’s “summit” photograph as published in *To the Top of the Continent*. The other white line running across the whole image is a defect caused by a fold in the original page’s middle. Notice that the photographer was unable to align Mt. Grosvenor with Fake Peak’s rocky outcrops because the snow cornice had shifted to the left from where it was in 1906. Note also the orientation (with respect to Fake Peak) of the cliff top seen on the left margin of Fig.4.

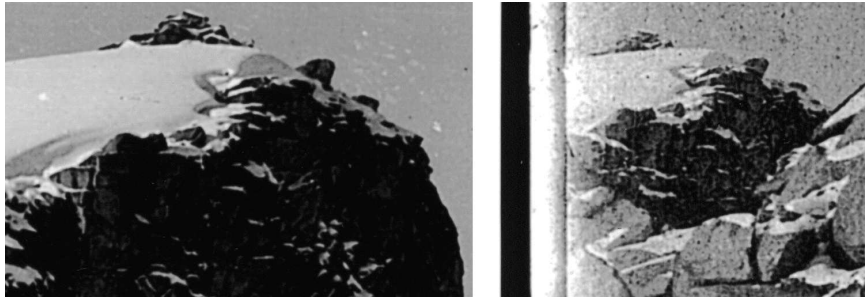


Figure 8: (a) A 2.5x enlargement from the left of the “Peaks and Cliffs” photo, Fig.4 (p.49). (b) A 2.5x enlargement of the cliff top from the left of the original “summit” photo, Fig.18 (pp.68-69). Note the matching patterns of rock and snow, especially the angular shadow just below the top of the snowbank. The slight differences in size and orientation show that the vantage point of (b) is farther from the cliff and lower & to the left. Photos courtesy of the Ohio State University Photo Archives.

image printed there was made from a copy of a cropped test print, which I took as a study record for my 1994 report on the Hurleyville papers. Fig.9 reproduces the image of this same print from the (also-cropped) copy now at Ohio State University. Cook took this photograph from the east side of Ruth Glacier looking northwest toward Mount Barrille, which is prominently seen in the distance. A very similar, but not identical, view (Fig.10) appeared in *To the Top of the Continent*, but again, the one Cook published did not show the scene’s most significant element: the presence of Cook’s distinctive tent in the foreground, which was cropped out of the published print. (In both 1991 and 1994, I also saw the original of this image which includes the figure of Ed Barrill standing to the right of the tent. An inquiry to the university’s archives disclosed that this, like the original sharp summit print, was not transferred to Columbus by the Frederick A. Cook Society.)

E3 In his narrative in *To the Top of the Continent*, Cook said he reached a place he called Glacier Point in two days travel from his boat. After he left the camp at Glacier Point, he next camped at “8000 feet within a few miles of the northern ridge.”¹⁸ The entry on p.65 of Cook’s diary for the day after he camped at “Cerac (sic) point” (as he called Glacier Point in his diary) is headed “Cerac to 8300 camp at base of N. Ridge.” He notes that he started from Glacier Point at 8 A.M., and claims that he camped at the base of the N. Ridge at 6 P.M. There is no text in his diary to indicate any stops or camps between these two points. But this alleged 8,300 foot camp does not fit the location shown in Fig.9 at all, being far beyond it and much higher. Fig.9 was taken at an elevation of 4767 feet, near the Gateway (the north end of the Great Gorge: see Fig.32), at the western foot of the granite cliffs of the Moose’s Tooth.¹⁹ Mount McKinley is still 12.68 miles distant. This location exactly fits the

¹⁸ Cook, Frederick A., *To the Top of the Continent*, New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1908, p.202.

¹⁹ Washburn, Bradford, *American Alpine Journal*, vol.11 no.1 [1958], p.15. Some might argue that the camp at “Cerac pt.” could be the one pictured here, and therefore a different camp from the one described by Cook at Glacier Point in *To the Top of the Continent*. But this is disproved by Cook’s own texts. Cook describes the camp at “Cerac Pt.” in his diary as pitched “on a bed of picturesque moss” — exactly what is shown in the picture of his camp at Glacier Point in his book, which he describes there as on “a beautiful moss-covered point.” There is no moss shown in the picture of the tent pitched on the glacial ice across from Mount Barrille, and there is no moss anywhere near this campsite, which was located at the foot of the near vertical cliffs of the Moose’s Tooth. Glacier Point can’t be the “2000 foot camp,” mentioned in Cook’s diary, either, because he labels his picture of it in *To the Top of the Continent* (opp. p.192) “Camp at 5,000 feet”. Actually, the camp shown in his picture at Glacier Point is 3753 feet above sea-level. The correct altitude of the Mount Barrille camp is only 4767 feet,



Figure 9: Looking WNW toward Mt. Barrille, a view similar to the one that appeared opposite p.193 in *To the Top of the Continent* (Fig.10). Notice Cook’s distinctive tent pitched in the lower right hand corner, with gloves drying on the tent line. That this is not the full image can be shown by taking a simple ratio. A 5 x 7 photograph has a ratio of 0.714 between its width and height. But this photograph has a ratio of about 0.8 between its two dimensions. [DIO note. The above reproduction misses a bit on the left edge, and the image reproduced at *Cook & Peary* p.822 missed a sliver on the right.] A slide made at Hurleyville by the author, of a print of the photo shows a ratio exceeding 0.75. Therefore, a substantial part of the original image has been cropped off. The original of this photograph showed Ed Barrill standing to the right of Cook’s tent. This original version was evidently not forwarded by the Cook Society to OSU. Photograph courtesy of the Ohio State University Photo Archives. [DIO note. Umbral and parallax analyses show that Fig.10 was taken a few minutes later and near the tent, which is why the tent is not visible in Fig.10.]

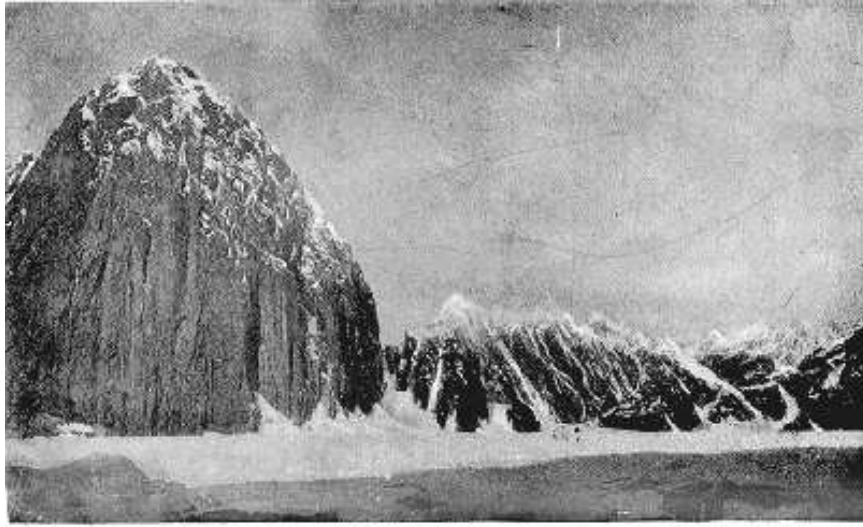


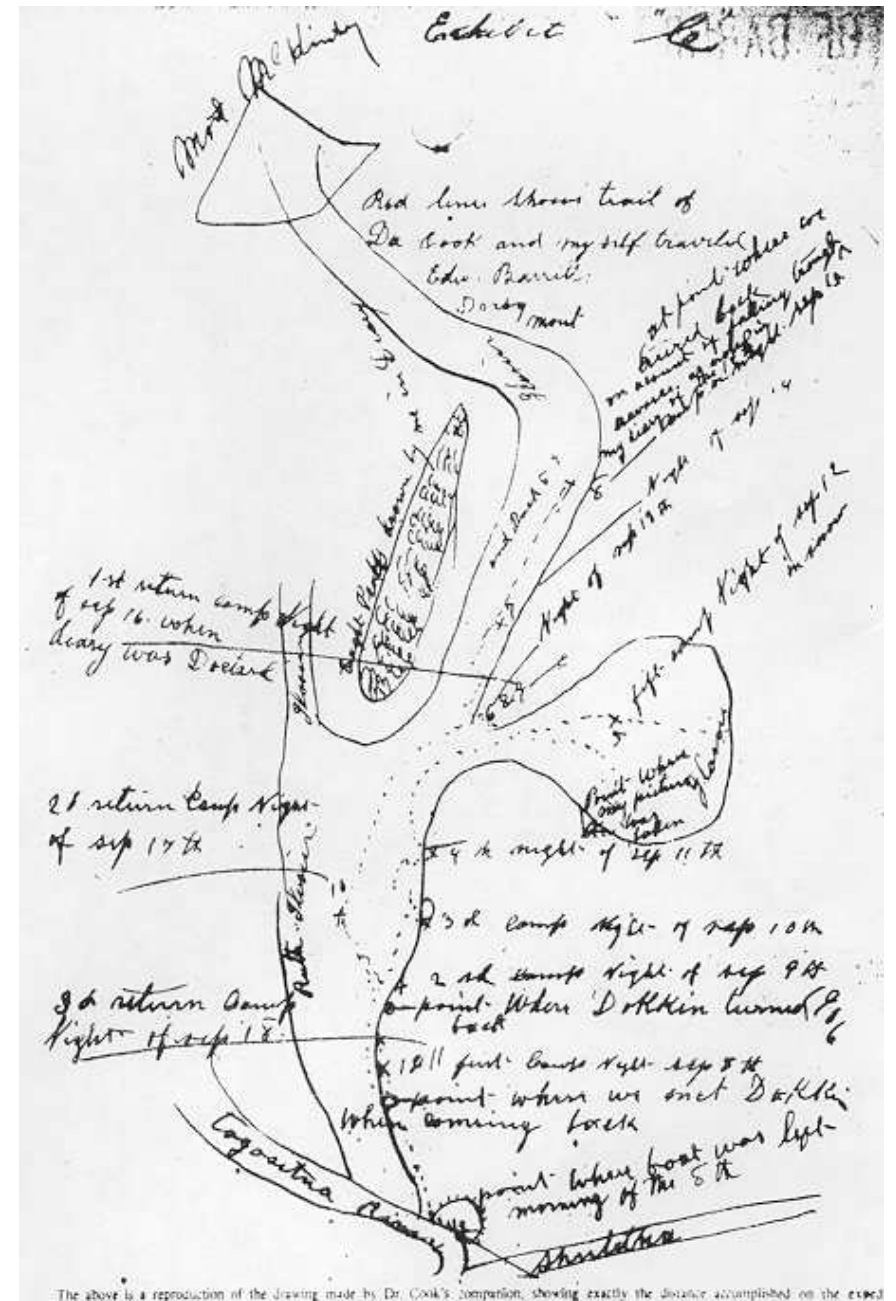
Figure 10: View similar to Fig.9 as published.

position of camp 8 on the map Barrill drew to accompany his affidavit (Fig.11). This was the last camp Barrill said he and Cook made during their journey up Ruth Glacier before turning back.

E4 In his book, Cook says they made such “splendid progress” that he set up his tent for two hours at lunch time²⁰ on September 10. So this photograph, it might be argued, was made at this lunch stop, though there is no mention of setting up the tent or stopping for lunch in either Cook’s or Barrill’s diary text to support this conjecture. Moreover, Fig.9 was taken only about five miles farther up the glacier from their last camp at Glacier Point. So this “splendid progress” would be less than Cook’s reported average for the first two days of the trip. But it is the picture itself that proves that this is an overnight camp, not a lunch stop. The tent is pitched on the glacier at the foot of the great cliffs below the Moose’s Tooth. In the picture, the shadows of these cliffs extend across the glacier toward

not the 5500 feet he mentions in his diary (p.59) for “Cerac pt.”. All of Cook’s altitudes are in some error, due either to the inaccuracy of his aneroid barometers (which he relied upon for his readings) or because they are either guesses or fantasies. But the difference in the given altitudes for Glacier Point and Cerac Point of only 500 feet assures that they are the same place, since the actual difference in altitude between the two camps in Cook’s photographs is 1000 feet. The difference of 500 feet merely follows Cook’s pattern of lowering the altitudes in *To the Top of the Continent* from the figures he recorded in his diary. For instance, the camp beyond Glacier Point is put at 8,300 feet in the diary, but only 8,000 in the book. Furthermore, in his diary he says he camped at Cerac Point first, *before* going into the Fake Peak amphitheater. If Cerac Point was the camp opposite Mount Barrille, he would have had to double all the way back to the amphitheater and return to the same camp before going on to the 8,000/8,300 foot camp, something that would be difficult to do in one day, and something he does not claim to have done, either in his diary or his book. Besides, this course of action would make no sense whatever for a person whose intent was (as Cook claimed) to climb Mount McKinley rapidly, before the season got any later.

²⁰ The text on pp.201-202 of *To the Top of the Continent* reads: “We tried to set up our alcohol lamp in a big grotto, but deflected currents of air so blew the blue flame that the heat was lost. The tent was set up and in it we brewed a pot of tea, ate pemmican and biscuits, and rested for two hours. . .” Was the lunch tent set up in the grotto? At the next camp Cook specifically states that the tent was set up “on the glacier.”

Figure 11: Barrill’s map as published in the *New York Globe*, October 15, 1909. Notice the position of camp 8, which corresponds to the location shown in Fig.9.

Mount Barrille. Since the cliffs are in the east, this shadow pattern indicates early morning, not lunch time. At noon the sun would be in the South, and would cast no shadows from eastern cliffs across Ruth Glacier, which runs nearly north-south. Also, Cook mentions in his text that he found the best way to dry clothing was not to take it into the tent, but rather to leave it on the tent line overnight. A pair of gloves can be seen hanging from the line. In short, all of this indicates that there seems no more reason to believe in the authenticity of his narrative when Cook says that he stopped for lunch than there is to believe any of its far more fantastic claims.

E5 Cook's narrative in *To the Top of the Continent* skips a day here; its September 10 corresponding to his diary's September 11. In the diary, September 10 was devoted to exploring the amphitheater containing Fake Peak, where his fake summit photograph and some of his other misleading pictures were taken. His published account remains out of kilter with his diary from here virtually all the way to the summit (see ‡8). This skipped day may explain the peculiar split entry in Cook's diary that was first noted in *Cook & Peary*, where there is every indication that he arrives at the summit on September 15. Since he did not want to mention anything in his narrative about the Fake Peak side trip, that put the diary one day ahead, date wise, which would have necessitated his arrival at the summit on September 15, which the entry indicates. But it appears he added one more day, via the split entry, stretching the time he allowed himself to reach the summit in his narrative while allowing him to leave out the day he spent in the Fake Peak amphitheater. Curiously, he fails to make up for this day in his narrative. If a careful accounting of his recorded activities is made, the reader will find him arriving at the summit on the 15th anyway, even though he says it is the 16th! (A full discussion of the date-discrepancies between the primary documents of Cook's climb is appended to this article as ‡8.)

E6 In December 1906, Cook published a picture in *Collier's* magazine that, from its caption, implied it had been taken from the summit itself.²¹ This picture was never again reproduced by Cook, but an original print of it was still among his photographs at Hurleyville in 1994. Its true geographical location was identified by Brian Okonek. It was taken, as were so many of the others, on the tributary of Ruth Glacier containing Fake Peak.

E7 Other unpublished photographs seen at Hurleyville also showed that the drawing done by Russell Porter for *To the Top of the Continent* to illustrate Cook's camp on the ridge at 12,000 feet was based on a scene photographed just below Fake Peak. The other drawing by Porter showing Cook and Barrill dug into a hole for the night on a near-vertical slope at 14,000 feet has background elements drawn directly from Fig.4, taken from Fake Peak itself.²² Thus every one of the published illustrations, whether photographs or drawings, directly related to Cook's climb have now been shown to be misrepresentations, fabrications or frauds. None of them were taken outside of the area that Barrill said he and Cook visited during their sojourn on Ruth Glacier, and there are no unpublished photographs that support any other conclusion but that Barrill's account of events is generally accurate. A further study of Cook's narrative only diminishes the trust that can be placed in Cook's version of events.

²¹ "The Highest Mountain in America," *Collier's*, December 29, 1906. Caption reads: "The summit of Mt. McKinley, the top of the continent piercing arctic skies at an altitude of 20,464 feet, on which the American flag was planted by Dr. Frederick A. Cook on September 16th last." The implication seems clear because the summit of Mount McKinley is nowhere visible in the picture.

²² See *Cook & Peary*, pp.830-835. Since the publication of the book, the mountain in the distance in the clear picture (p.832, Fig.5 of *Cook & Peary*) has been identified as the Moose's Tooth, positively confirming that the location ascribed to it in *Cook & Peary* is correct.

F New evidence from Cook's 1906 diary

F1 Until recently, the diaries of the two men had been hidden from scholarly eyes, Cook's in the (generally²³ unacknowledged) possession of his descendents, Barrill's effectively lost²⁴ in the immense accumulation of papers kept by Robert E. Peary. The opening of those diaries only further undermines the claim of Frederick Cook to have ascended Mount McKinley in 1906. Barrill's diary is the less important find of the two, since the entire diary appeared in a reasonably accurate transcription in the *Globe* on the day following the publication of his affidavit against Cook. The *Globe* article also reproduced in facsimile the pages of the diary covering the days of the climb.

F2 Of special interest are two pages from Cook's diary, here reproduced for the first time (Figs.12 & 13). These show sketch-maps of Ruth Glacier, one more detailed than the other, with several important and telling features when compared with Barrill's published map (Fig.11) and affidavit. One is the position of two lakes on the map on diary p.46. These lakes were mentioned by subsequent travelers on Ruth Glacier, and they are key to understanding the rate of Cook's progress up the glacier.²⁵ Note the word "Lake" just below-left of center of the map on p.44 (Fig.12) between rules [13] and [14]. In his diary, Cook says he camped at the second lake the second day out from his base camp (September 9), but Barrill's affidavit says this camp was made the fourth day out. The word "camp" is written about the same position on this map (between rules [11]-[12]) as Barrill indicates they camped (fourth day out) on his sketch-map (Fig.11), which accompanied his affidavit. Cook does not indicate that he camped in this area at all in any of his writings. In fact, his published narrative says they camped at Glacier Point on September 9. Barrill said in his affidavit that Cook instructed him to rewrite and backdate his diary to shorten the time to the beginning of the actual climb in order to make his time schedule look more plausible. If true, Cook must have done the same himself. These features of Cook's map and internal evidence in both diaries support Barrill's assertion, especially the confusion of dates throughout Cook's. Also, the two men's diaries coincide in other respects that support Barrill's version of events and refute Cook's.²⁶

F3 A number of small circles with lines radiating from them can be seen on Fig.12, suggesting that these might be reminders of the positions from which Cook's photographs were made. (Some of these circles seem to have a line pointing away, possibly indicating the camera's direction.) When compared with the actual locations of the photographs he published, all of the marks correspond exactly with this interpretation. (The *Top* page numbers opposite these photos are listed to the right of Fig.12.) However, no such symbols can be found on the tributary glacier coming in from the east. This is where most of the photographs Cook misrepresented as having been taken on the actual climb were taken and where Fake Peak, which he tried to pass off as Mount McKinley's summit, is located. Perhaps the absence of these symbols from this part of the map indicates that he had already decided which photographs he would display as taken on the climb, and that he didn't want it known where they had been exposed.

²³ In a 1973/7/25 letter to D.Rawlins, Helene Cook Vetter stated that she possessed Cook's "diaries and notes". But not even contemporary believer Hugh Eames was allowed to plumb them.

²⁴ [Until found by author Bryce. - ed.]

²⁵ In 1996, the Frederick A. Cook Society published a transcription of Cook's diary as part of a new edition of *To the Top of the Continent*. The transcription contains errors that seriously compromises its value. For instance, on p.55, the word "lake" is twice transcribed as "fork," which completely destroys the significance of the passage. (A typed transcript of the diary by Helene Cook Vetter, who was intimately familiar with her father's handwriting, also transcribes these words as "lake.") The published transcription fails to reproduce the two maps on pp.44 & 46 (Figures 12 & 13), which show the two lakes being referred to and which contain other crucial elements necessary for a correct interpretation of the diary's text. These may all be innocent errors, but in light of the society's failure to forward any of Cook's original 1906 negatives or the original prints of key photographs to OSU, these mistakes and omissions in the society's transcription of the diary may be viewed by some in a more skeptical light.

²⁶ See *Cook & Peary*, Chapter 28 for a full discussion of Cook's Mount McKinley claim.

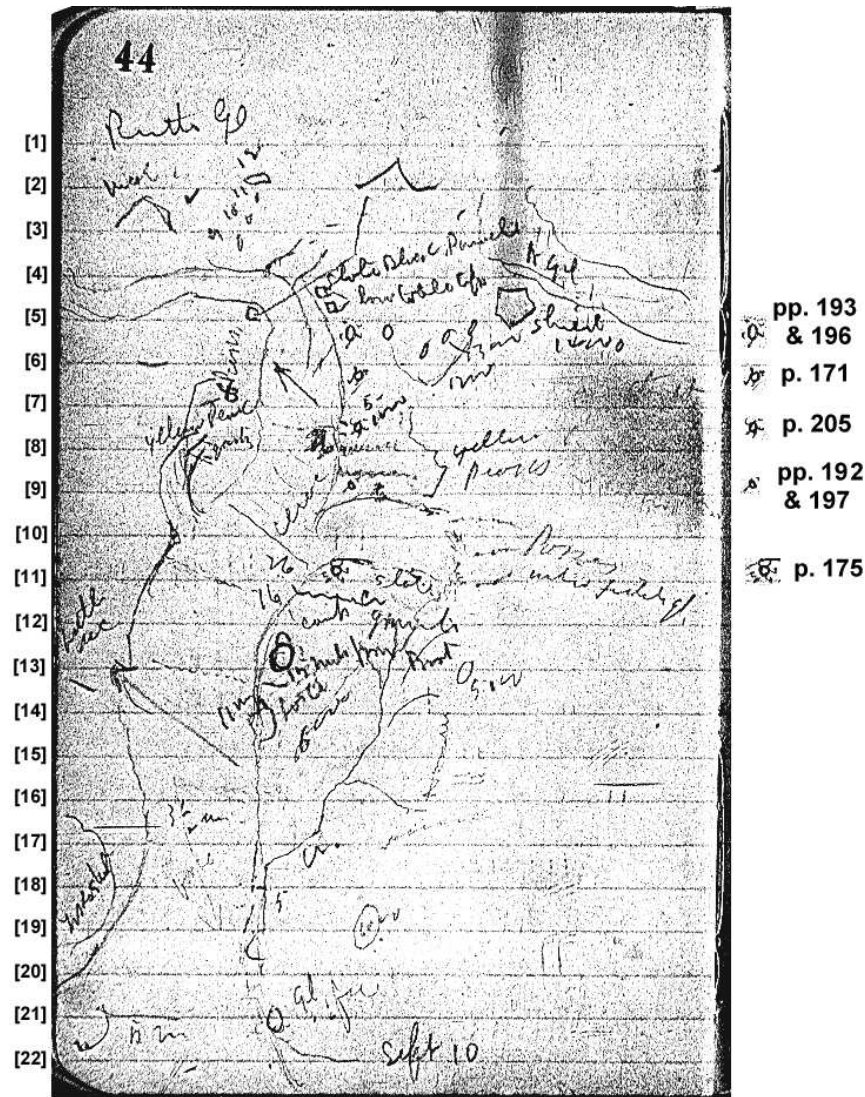


Figure 12: Page 44 from Cook's Mount McKinley Diary, 1906, published here for the first time. (See ¶9 §F2[e].) Note the word "Lake" at rule [14]. The tiny circles with radiating lines may indicate several positions from which photos were taken. The corresponding photographs are indicated (by pages-opposite in *Top of the Continent*) at the right-hand margin of the figure. All of Cook's various written notations are transcribed as they fall above the rules on the page, left to right, as follows: [1] Ruth gl. [2] McK.; 12. [3] 10; 11. [4] 9; slate Black Pinnacles; N gl. [5] low table top. [6] 13000; shield; 14000. [7] 8 Peaks [written vertically]; 5; 12000. [8] yellow peaks; quartz; 26; 1000. [9] yellow peaks. [10] Cerac. [11] 26; slate; passes into Fidele gl. [12] 16; camp; cr.; granite. [13] Little Mc [written vertically]; 15 miles from Boat. [14] 11mi; Lake; 5000. [15] 6000. [17] 3 1/2 mi. [18] cerac; cr. [19] Tokoshit; 5; 6000. [21] gl. face. [22] 5 mi; Sept 10.

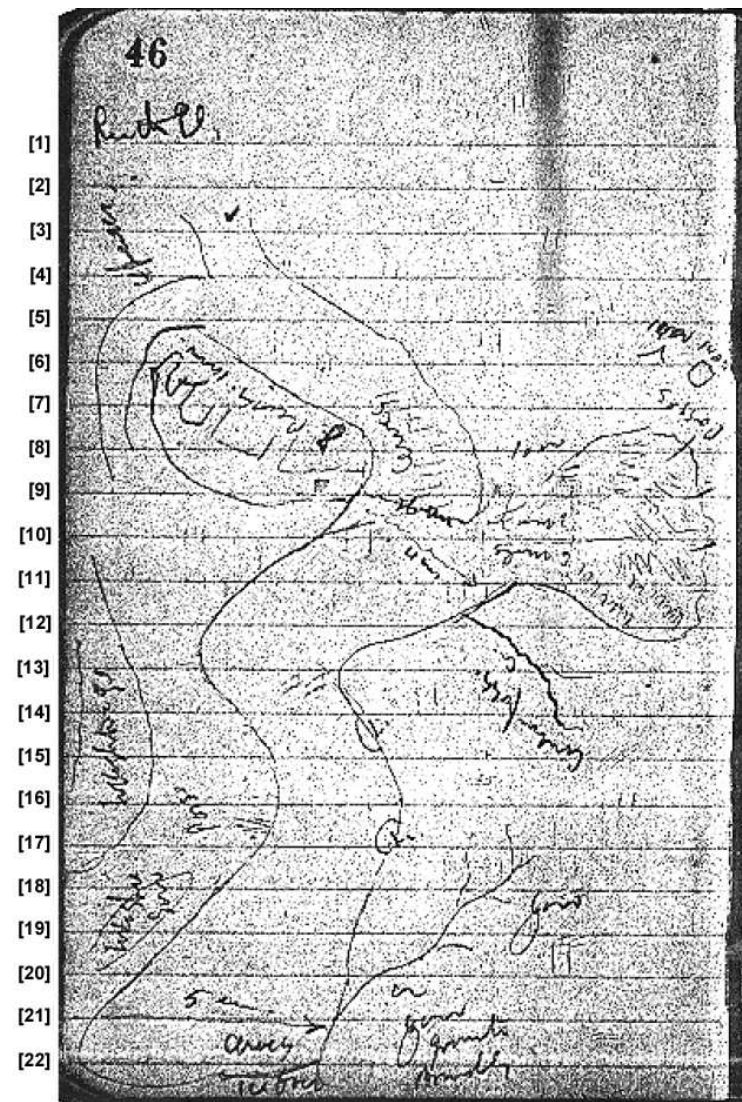


Figure 13: Page 46 from Cook's Mount McKinley diary, 1906, published here for the first time. Note the two circles below the center of the page labelled "L." indicating the two lakes mentioned in Cook's diary text. The notations are transcribed as they fall above the rules on the page, left to right, as follows: [1] Ruth gl. [4] 4 peaks [written vertically]. [6] 1400; 1400. [8] 8 peaks 10000 [written almost upside down]; 1000; passes [upside down]. [9] ceracs [written vertically]. [10] 26 mi; 2 mi [upside down]. [11] 4 mi; 6 miles [upside down]. [13] cr. [15] L.; Caribou pass [written vertically]. [16] Tokoshitna gl. [written vertically]. [17] pass; L. [19] 6000. [20] Tokosha 5000 [written vertically]. [21] 5 mi; cr; 6000. [22] ceracs; granite. [Above bottom of page] ice face; mostly.

G Cook's diary sketches

G1 The feature of Cook's diary that has generated the most controversy since it was made known to scholars are two sketches Cook made on diary p.52. The first to theorize on this page was a retired California gardener named Hans Waale, who had limited formal education but was, in fact, a self-educated genius, holding several important patents related to astronomy. Waale had access to parts of Cook's diary through an intimate correspondence with Cook's daughter, Helene Cook Vetter. He became absolutely obsessed with trying to prove Cook's climb authentic and carried on an interesting correspondence with Bradford Washburn about it for many years. After prolonged study and great personal expense, he worked out an ingenious, if circuitous, route for Cook by which most of the directions mentioned in his diary and narrative and the physical descriptions Cook gave of the mountain in his 1908 book could be explained. His route had Cook going over the East Buttress of the mountain and down into the Traleika Amphitheater on his eventual way to Pioneer Ridge, by which Waale theorized Cook gained access to Harper Glacier as a route to the summit by traversing the north face of the mountain. A number of Waale's suppositions have, upon close examination, proved to be no more than wishful thinking on his part,²⁷ but his argument that Cook's sketches on diary p.52 were drawn from the crest of the East Buttress has taken root with another group of Cook backers who contend, unlike Waale, that it holds the key to proving that Cook climbed to the summit from the East Buttress itself.

G2 This has become the mantra of Ted Heckathorn, a real estate agent from Woodinville, Washington, and longtime friend of the Frederick A. Cook Society. In 1993 he proposed that the society finance an expedition to test this theory, and, with several Cook Society members, hired and accompanied several professional Alaskan guides as they made an attempt in 1994 to follow Cook's hypothesized route to the summit by way of the East Buttress. This attempt got no farther than a point on his ridge at about 11,000 feet. The professional climbers, who were the only ones to reach even this point, obtained a photograph there that (they told Heckathorn) seemed to match Cook's drawing. Even if this were so, it would not come close to proving that Cook reached the mountain's summit, but the Cook Society's point was that such a match would prove Barrill's version of events corrupt, since if Cook did reach this point, it would be in direct contradiction of his partner's affidavit. That, in turn, would lend credibility to the contention that the rest of Barrill's story was a lie, and that the description of the climb contained in Barrill's diary, which largely corroborates Cook's, is more likely the truth. Although this approach to truth may seem more than unbiased logic would allow, and from a source paid by an interested party²⁸ — just what the Cook Society objects to about the Barrill affidavit — an examination of any merits it may have must be based on existing documentary evidence, not baseless speculation.

G3 There has been no comment from the members of the Frederick A. Cook Society about the conclusive revelations that Cook's summit photo is a fake, except perhaps for Heckathorn, who says he now considers all of the photographic evidence against Cook, including, it may be surmised, his faked summit photograph, "irrelevant" in light of the "new evidence" in his favor. This evidence is entirely embodied in the photograph of Pegasus Peak (Fig.14) obtained by the 1994 climbers on the East Buttress, which the Cook Society says matches one of Cook's sketches on p.52 of his diary (Fig.15). But neither in Cook's book nor in his diary is there any substantial support for the notion that he climbed McKinley via the East Buttress. In fact, Cook made two very definite statements that indicate that he claimed to have climbed Karstens Ridge, and most, if not all, of his descriptions given in his narrative of the climb tend to support Karstens Ridge as his route.²⁹ So, we must look in detail at p.52 to verify or reject the purported match of Fig.14 to Fig.15.

²⁷ See *Cook & Peary*, pp.830-835.

²⁸ Stranger yet: see ¶9 §B3.

²⁹ Cook, Frederick A., "Mount McKinley," *Overland Monthly*, February 1912, p.106; *My Attainment of the Pole* (Mitchell Kennerley, 1913) p.534. See also Fig.31 & caption.



Figure 14: Pegasus Peak, as published by the Frederick A. Cook Society in its 1996 reprint of *To the Top of the Continent*.

G4 Cook's handwriting is extremely problematic, and no one can guarantee absolutely what some of his written words actually are; but my long familiarity with it makes most words decipherable. Page 52's inscriptions are interpreted below Fig.15. What could they mean? And can they tell us anything about where these drawings were done, and what they represent?

G5 The Cook Society maintains that the top sketch represents Pegasus Peak as viewed from the East Buttress and that the lower one is a different mountain (Friendly Peak), which they identify as the "Gun Sight peak."³⁰ of diary p.52. However, the Society's view is not

³⁰ For a full presentation of the Frederick A. Cook Society's arguments see: Heckathorn, Ted, "Re-opening the Book on Mount McKinley," in Cook, Frederick A., *To the Top of the Continent*, Ninetieth Anniversary Edition. Seattle: Alpen Books, 1996. See also: *Polar Priorities* vol.14, pp.1-21; vol.15, pp.33-37; vol.16, pp.3-14; vol.17, pp.20-25. An experienced mountaineer and map maker who attended the Frederick A. Cook Society's symposium in Seattle in 1994 that presented its "new evidence," had this to say: "My observations of the writings and speeches of the Cook Society's Ted Heckathorn have given me no respect for his self-proclaimed status as 'Polar Historian.' In the appended material in the 1996 reprint of Dr. Cook's *To the Top of the Continent*, Heckathorn's text, photos and maps provide very sloppy interpretations of Cook's claimed route. His crudely drawn map [his Plate 2/12] has Cook's route to the East Ridge taking a straight line from above 'Sept 9' across the complex system of ridges and glaciers that form the massif of the Moose's Tooth. And his delineation of Cook's supposed descent route from the 'summit' follows a different line than the 'ascent' route, straight down the peak's upper east face. From there he has Cook and Barrill descending all the way to their base camp below the Ruth Gorge in a mere *two days!*" (Letter, Dee Molenaar to Robert M. Bryce, dated November 13, 1997.) [High praise for Heckathorn's solid and courageous research (in a non-Cook context) — contributing crucially to accurate polar history — can be found in, e.g., *DIO* 2.2 §F, *DIO* 2.3 ¶8 §B, and *Science* 1993 June 11. Although Heckathorn is a personal friend of *DIO*'s publisher, our policy is to give discoverer-authors wide interpretive and critical latitude, no matter how close to home shafts may strike. *DIO* readers, desiring direct access to Heckathorn's side of these matters, are urged to contact him, by telephone or fax, at 425-844-9302. — ed.] It might be added to this that Heckathorn's map, although his legend says it is derived, in part, from Cook's diary, is actually contradicted by Cook's diary at every turn. The September 8 camp is in the wrong place. Cook never said he camped anywhere near where the September 9 camp is located by Heckathorn. The map shows no camp on Glacier Point at all, even though Cook published a picture of it. Heckathorn has him going over the

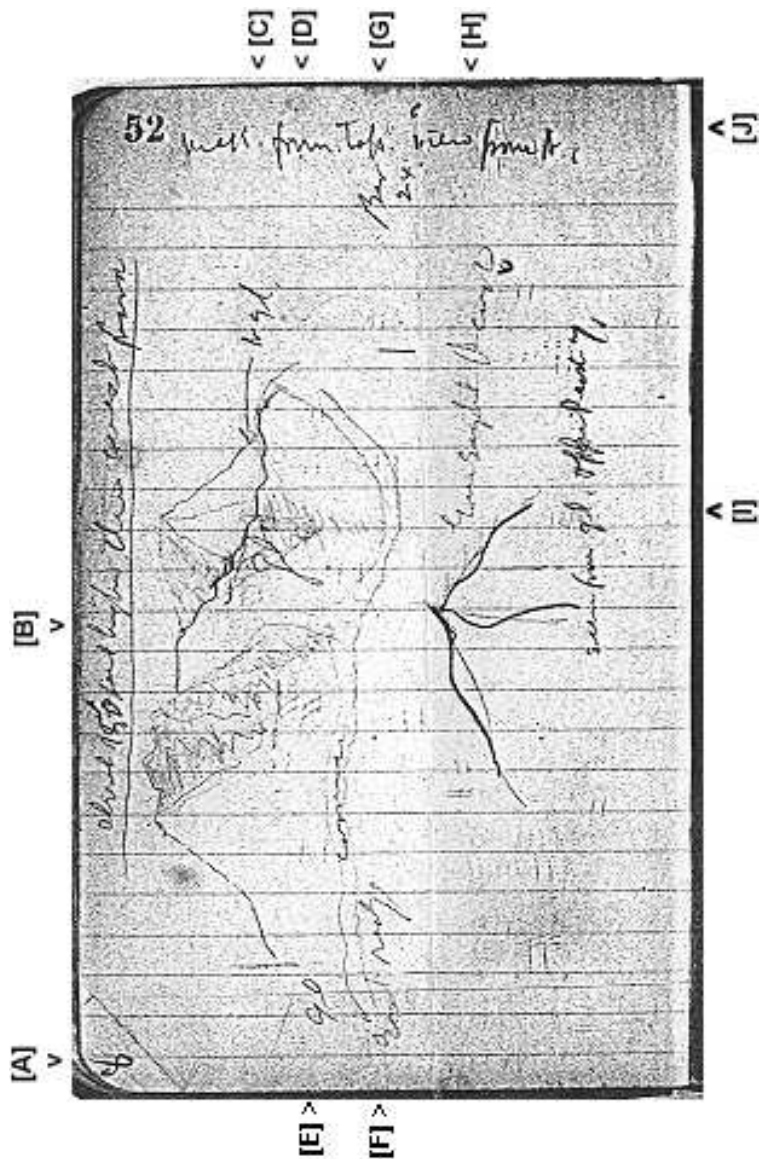


Figure 15: Page 52 from Cook's Mount McKinley diary, 1906. Transcriptions of this sketch's legends: [A] 8; [B] about 750 feet higher than west peak (the figure appears written over, and might be interpreted as 150); [C] N gl.; [D] gl. [Cook's consistent abbreviation for glacier]; [E] gl; [F] East ridge cornice; [G] Bar. 24; [H] Gun Sight peak; [I] seen from gl. opp. Peak 7.; [J] McK. from [or form.] Top. view from N (with a squiggle at the end).

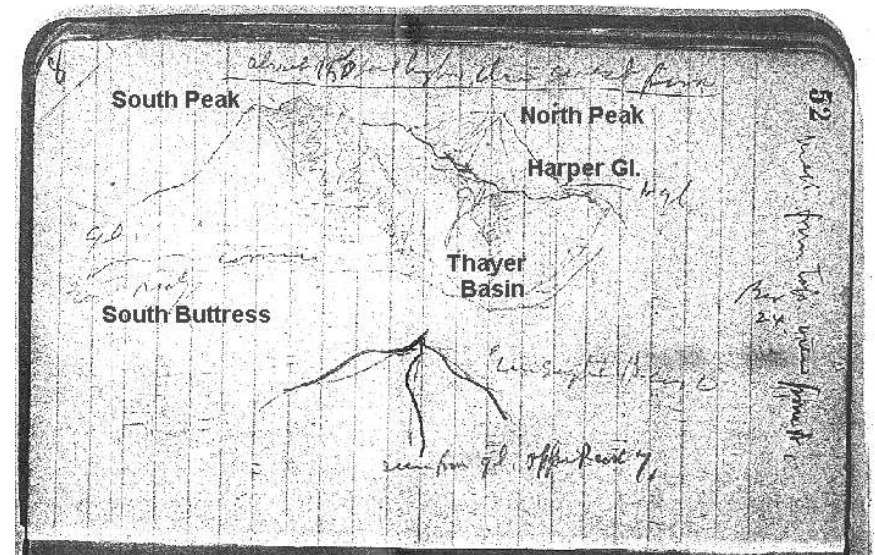


Figure 16: Page 52 of Cook's diary with the labels supplied by Bradford Washburn superimposed. Note the upper drawing's similarity to Fig.17 or Fig.25 (as against Fig.14), and the lower drawing's similarity to Fig.17 or Fig.27 (as against Fig.26).

accepted by experts on the mountain's topography. Brian Okonek, who has been over the area many times, guesses³¹ that the diary p.52 sketches are Cook's views from the Ruth Glacier region (though he warns that the "terrible" imprecision of the drawings hinders pinning down exact locations from them): the lower sketch is a detail of the South Peak, while the upper sketch is a panoramic representation of McKinley's two summits. Bradford Washburn agreed with Okonek's essential finding (that the upper drawing's subject is McKinley) and went further by helpfully supplying the author with a labelled copy. Fig.16 is Cook's diary p.52, with Washburn's labels (identifying the upper sketch's prominent features) superimposed on it.³² A comparison of several photos with Cook's drawings should show which theory has more in its favor.

G6 The weakest part of the Cook Society's contention is the claim about what it calls Gunsight Peak. The picture of it that the society published (Fig.26) has no similarity to Cook's sketch at all, being far too sharp a peak to match it. However, Cook's sketch fits well with Okonek's and Washburn's theory. Fig.17 is a detail of the summit taken from the direction of Ruth Glacier. Notice the similarity of the width of the peak and the position of the ridges to the lower sketch on p.52, especially the curve of the central ridge line.

cliffs, as Molenaar says, when Cook clearly describes traveling on the glacier at all times, and then he has him in a camp across from Mount Barrille, of which there is no trace in any of Cook's writings. Also, Cook's diary makes it very clear that they descended along the exact same route as they ascended, sleeping in the uppermost igloo on their return from the summit, and the text expresses emotion as they passed the hole where they had spent the night dug into the side of the mountain on September 13.

³¹ Letter, Brian Okonek to Bradford Washburn, dated November 22, 1992. Photocopy possession of author. Letter, Brian Okonek to Robert M. Bryce, dated January 13, 1993. Possession of author. Okonek initially wondered if the upper sketch was made slightly north of the Gateway (Ruth Glacier North Fork). He & Washburn have high admiration for Cook's genuine work in the McKinley region.

³² Attachment to letter, Bradford Washburn to Robert M. Bryce, dated December 14, 1992. Possession of author.



Figure 17: Summit of Mount McKinley, viewed from a little east of southeast. Mt. Barrille is at bottom center. (Solid line is Cook Society's hypothesized East Buttress route.) Compare this view to Figs.15 & 16, and 32. Detail of aerial photo by Bradford Washburn.

G7 The reference to “Gun Sight peak” [H] on Cook’s sketch is not to a specific mountain peak, but rather a general descriptive term then commonly applied to any peak coming to a sharp point. In 1909, Belmore Browne described the cliff adjacent to Fake Peak as a “gunsight peak” in his testimony before the Explorers Club committee that had been appointed to look into Cook’s claim. In Barrill’s diary he refers to the summit of McKinley as a “gunsight” peak. In his entry for September 16, he says “we reach the top at last at about 11 A.M. to the gunsight.” Moreover, in his affidavit, Barrill quotes Cook, himself, as saying of Fake Peak: “That point would make a good top of Mt. McKinley. It looks just about like the gunsight peak would look on Mt. McKinley,” which they had been looking at from the saddle of Fake Peak. Supporting the veracity of Barrill’s quotation is the fact that it was published in 1909, more than 84 years before the picture on p.52 of Cook’s diary with its notation about a “Gun Sight peak” became an issue or was even generally known to exist. Right under the lower sketch, Cook has written “seen from gl. opp. Peak 7.” Peak 7 was what Cook called Mt. Dickey (9545 ft) — or perhaps³³ adjacent Mt. Barrille (7650 ft) — near the north end of a row of peaks along the western margin of the Great Gorge of Ruth Glacier (see Fig.12, rules [5]-[7], or Fig.13, rule [8]; also Figs.1 & 32), close to the place Ed Barrill says they turned for home.

G8 Claude Rusk, a climber from Oregon, said of his view of the summit from the Gateway in 1910: “The summit, seen from the upper glacier, is a very sharp snow point, although seen from the other sides of the mountain it has more of a rounded and dome-like appearance.”³⁴ The lower drawing, therefore, is certainly what the inscription says it is, the sharp-pointed “Gun Sight peak” of McKinley as viewed from Ruth Glacier near the Gateway at the north end of the Great Gorge, where its conformation appears (Fig.27) to form a sharp point rather than looking rounded, and which Cook reproduces on p.52 with reasonable accuracy. What was “seen from gl. opp. Peak 7” if not “McK” itself (so cited on this very page)? Certainly not Friendly Peak, which when “seen from gl. opp. Peak 7” is largely blocked by intervening mountains.³⁵

G9 The upper sketch is more problematic, but if we assume for it no more than rough accuracy, then even this standard will eliminate the drawing as a representation of Pegasus Peak. Notice the following points of comparison:

Although some might initially see a rough conformity between the photograph circulated by the Cook Society (Fig.14) and Cook’s sketch, when the actual Pegasus Peak scene is enlarged (Fig.19), even this rough conformity dissolves. The sharp drop of the slope at the left does not match, and neither does the contour of the one at the right. The sketch’s line labelled “East ridge cornice” [F] running across the peak at the left is not present on Pegasus Peak. Notice also that the glacier noted at [E] and the nearly horizontal area between the two peaks are both absent. This label (which should actually be the South Buttress, as Bradford Washburn points out) is significant for another reason.

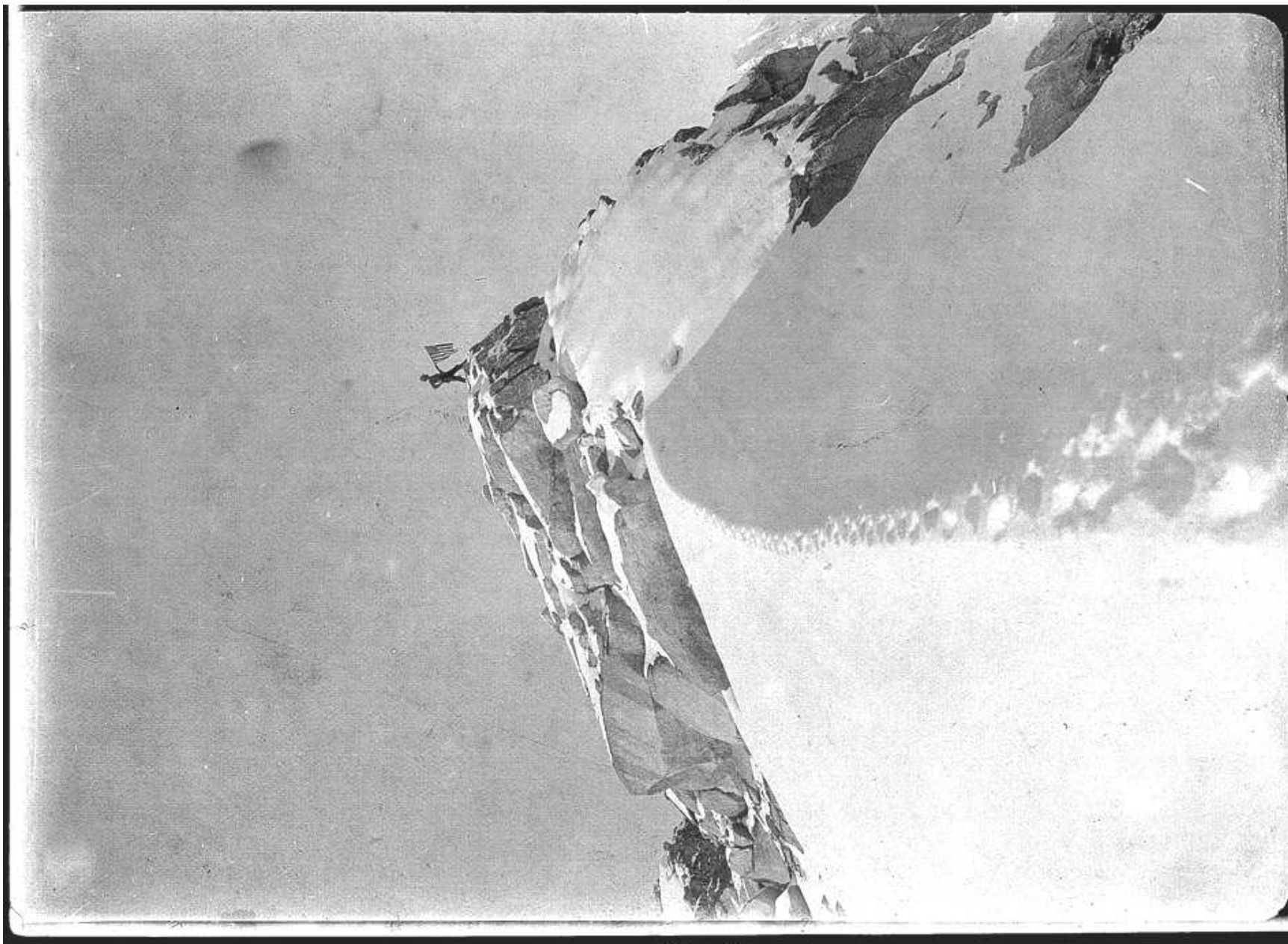
G10 This significance lies in the sketch on p.50 of Cook’s diary (Fig.20), which shows several peaks south of the location that would be the vantage point of the upper drawing on diary p.52, if we accept that it represents McKinley’s twin summits. The large arrow on Fig.12 between rules [13]-[15] may indicate the direction of the sketch on p.50. This is supported by the label on the sketch itself, which says “From 1st bend Bearings.” The bend of the glacier referred to can be clearly seen on Fig.13. If Cook made his sketches in sequence, p.50 would be the first page previous to p.52 available to him, since he kept his narrative diary on the odd numbered pages. If so, then p.52 would represent a natural

³³ Cook seems to have initially counted the peaks (the first six of which he estimated on his diary p.56 as “about 10000 feet high”: Fig.30), from Mt. Church north to Mt. Barrille, as seven in number, but later settled on eight as the correct figure. (See Fig.13, where “8” is written over original “7”.) [Barrill’s diary drawing of Mts. Wake through Barrille numbers them exactly as in our Fig.1.] For Cook, the high peaks’ names, in S-to-N order, were Church, Grosvenor, Johnson, Wake (double-peak), Bradley, etc. (All identified in Fig.1.) He also saw four more peaks beyond, in a line with these eight: see ¶9 fn 30.

³⁴ Rusk, Claude E., “On the Trail of Dr. Cook,” *Pacific Monthly*, January 1911, p.54.

³⁵ See ¶9 §D10.

[1]



[3] [2]

Figure 18:

The full, original uncropped version of Cook's "summit" photo, published here for the first time. Size of the original print is 5 x 7 inches. Details of this photograph are enlarged as Figures 6(b) and 8(b). Photo courtesy of the Ohio State University Photo Archives.



Figure 19: Expanded view of Pegasus Peak, as published (unidentified) by the Frederick A. Cook Society in *Polar Priorities*, vol.14 (October 1994), back cover.

progression as he moved up Ruth Glacier, and the arrow between rules [6] and [7] on Fig.12 may indicate the position from which at least one of the sketches on p.52 was drawn, which is “opp. Peak 7.” But it is the label “East ridge cornice” that definitely ties the two pages together. Each has a similarly shaped ridge with this label, and on p.50 the massif behind this ridge is unambiguously labelled “McK” — McKinley; p.52 says³⁶ at the top: “McK. from Top. view from N.” [J] Since Cook often wrote a summary of what was on his diary pages at the top of each page, and this is the only non-horizontal text on p.52, it would seem that the entire page is meant to represent the top of Mount McKinley itself viewed from the northern end of Ruth Glacier. Thus this label and the fact that the drawings on pp.50 & 52 seem to overlap, supports p.52 as a representation of the summit of McKinley, just as Okonek and Washburn believe. But the key to p.52 may have been given us, as has been so much else in solving the mysteries of Dr. Cook’s disputed geographical claims, from his own hand.

G11 In the upper-right corner of diary p.50 is the number “52.” This seems to be a reference³⁷ to the drawing on diary page 52. This falls in line with Cook’s tendency to cross reference within his diaries. There are many such references throughout his polar notebooks of 1907-1909 as well as some others in his 1906 McKinley diary.

G12 When Ed Barrill’s diary was transcribed in the *Globe*, only one of the sketches it contained was reproduced. However, the book has a number of other interesting drawings including one (Fig.21) which further supports the theory of §G11. The sketch was unquestionably made at nearly the same spot as Cook’s sketch on p.50. Both show “Little McKinley” (a name popularly applied to this³⁸ peak by Alaskan prospectors at the time but no longer used) to the left and similar ridges on the right. But Barrill’s sketch shows the entire massif beyond and unambiguously labels it “Mount McKinley from the south-east.” (Compare it to Fig.17, keeping in mind that the photograph was taken from a higher

³⁶ Possible reading: McK [seen] from top [of a vantage point, e.g., Fake Peak (see Fig.25)]. view from N [point of Great Gorge]. The latter interpretation is attractively consistent with the very specific note elsewhere on the page: “seen from gl. opp. Peak 7”.

³⁷ Just as the note “Tokoshit 54” on page 50 may refer to the Tokoshitna glacier — and thus to the “glacial notes” found on diary page 54. [A speculative alternate reading: “Center Tokosh 154”: a 154° compass bearing for the central Tokosha Mts. peak. — *ed.*]

³⁸ [“Little McKinley” was the old name for modern Mount Hunter (14573 ft). The “Hunter” Cook also cites on diary p.50 (Fig.20) was the old name for the highest (13440 ft) of Kahiltina Peaks. — *ed.*]

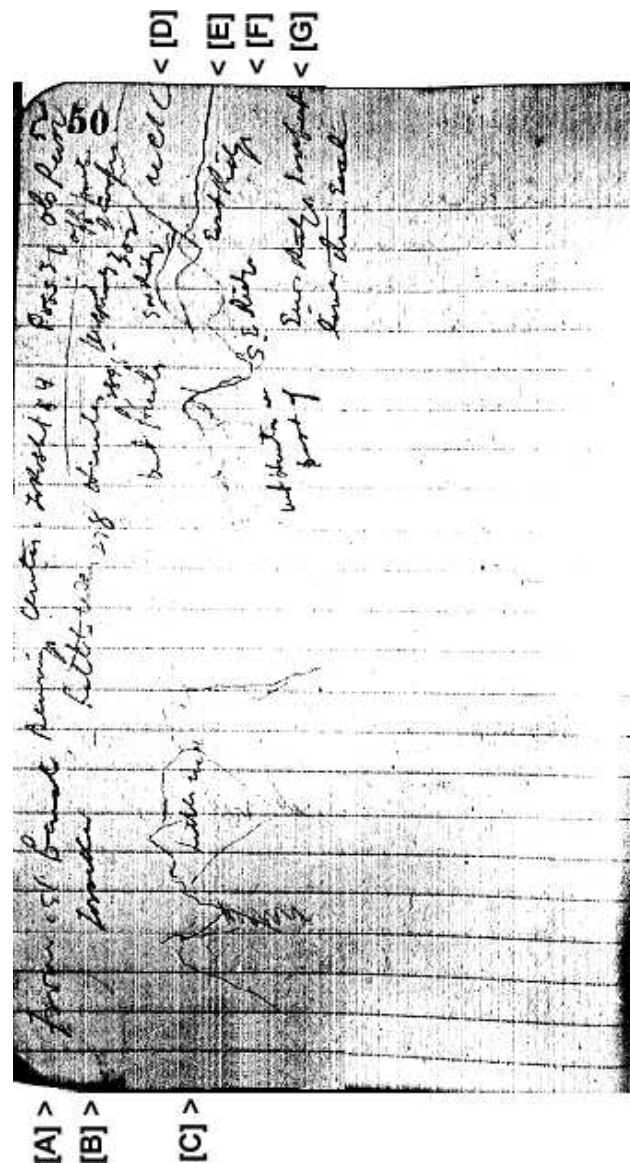


Figure 20: Page 50 from Cook’s Mount McKinley diary, 1906, sketch depicting his north-west view from Ruth Glacier (see ¶9 fn 26). The notations are transcribed as follows: [A] left to right: From 1st bend Bearings Center Tokoshit 54 Pass 31 obs Peak 52; [B] left to right: Foraker; Little McK 278; Hunter 289.5; McKinley 302; off points of compass; [C] Little McK. [D] Mt. Hunter; SW Ridge; McK. [E] East Ridge. [F] Mt. Hunter is part of S E Ridge. [G] Sw Ridge 1000 feet lower than East. (See ¶9 fn 26.)



Figure 21: Sketch from Barrill's diary matching p.50 of Cook's, published here for the first time. Peary Family papers, (RG 401), National Archives II, College Park, Md.

altitude.) The summit as drawn by Barrill from this position bears more than a passing resemblance to the contours of the mountain in the upper sketch on p.52 of Cook's diary.

G13 In the end, however, because his difficult writing leaves it open to interpretation, and because Cook was not much of an artist,³⁹ showing little talent with even the simplest of subjects (and because McKinley was far off, often surrounded by clouds), we may never know the exact spot where the upper sketch on p.52 was drawn. It is just not accurate enough that one can match each feature to reality, to everyone's satisfaction. Even Bradford Washburn's labels of the elements in Cook's drawing are open to quibbles for the same reasons. But if we allow the same standard of only rough accuracy used by the Cook Society to compare it to their photograph of Pegasus Peak, Washburn's labels fit far better, making it highly probable that Fig.15 was meant as a representation of McKinley's summit.

G14 Compare the aerial photograph (Fig.17) of the view of the summit area (from the same direction as Mt. Barrille) with the features Washburn has labelled (Fig.16). Also, compare Cook's drawing with the sketch of the twin summits of McKinley as viewed from the top of Fake Peak from Belmore Browne's diary (Fig.22), as well as the sketch drawn by Ed Barrill from nearly the same point (Fig.23) — a view Cook certainly had. They are far more similar to Cook's drawing than to Pegasus Peak. It may even be that Cook's upper sketch was made from the very same area as was Browne's and Barrill's — the Fake-Peak summit which Cook called "the top of our Continent." Here is what Cook said of that view in his p.59 diary entry (¶8 §B) for September 10: "The top from here two peaks middle gl. a way around the break," exactly as shown in the upper drawing on p.52. Also, Cook's top note, "about 750 ft. higher than the west peak" [B], is approximately accurate as a description of the difference between the heights of McKinley's twin summits⁴⁰ and such a notation written just above his sketch of them would be logical if the drawing was meant

³⁹ [Skeptics cannot be held hostage to Cook's artistic and other limitations. We cannot even be sure that he did not, e.g., deliberately exaggerate the height of the North Peak, in order to pretend that his vantage point was higher than reality. — *ed.*]

⁴⁰ The North Peak is actually 850 feet lower than, and almost due north of, the South Peak (¶9 fn 1). But, by Cook's perspective (looking more west than north) the former may have appeared relatively much further away than reality, because it is lower and Karstens Ridge partly blocks it. (Alternatively, Cook might possibly have been referring to 20120 ft-high Kahiltina Horn, just below-left of the South Peak's summit in Fig.15; if so, then his notation was "150 feet" instead of "750 feet". Kahiltina Horn is c.1000 ft west-southwest of the true summit and 200 ft below it: ¶9 fn 7.)



Figure 22: Belmore Browne's diary sketch of the summit of Mount McKinley, from the Fake Peak region. Courtesy, McGregor Robinson.



Figure 23: Barrill's diary sketch of the summit of Mt. McKinley from the saddle of Fake Peak, as published in the *New York Globe*, October 15, 1909. (Note: his "Glacier point" is not Glacier Point.)

to represent the summits.

G15 But Cook considered this view so important he did not trust it to his sketches or description alone. He made a photograph of it from the top of Fake Peak. This photograph (Fig.24) was never published, but it is now among the photographs at Ohio State University. An enlarged detail of this photograph (Fig.25) corresponds well to the upper sketch of diary p.52 (Fig.16).

G16 If the Cook Society's argument has any merit, then it is only reasonable to ask why Cook would lavish so much attention on Pegasus and Friendly Peaks⁴¹ (landmarks having no relation to his alleged objective), would draw them on the same page (when they are on opposite sides of the East Buttress), and label the page that bears them as "McK" — though his diary has not a single other sketch that indicates any portion of his actual route beyond where Barrill says he turned back. Common sense alone would seem to rule all of this out. (See ¶9 fn 41.)

G17 Although the sketches on p.52 can objectively prove nothing about Cook's route, much less the reality of his claim to have reached the summit, there are massifs of evidence showing Cook's dishonest tendencies, as already detailed, in both his and his only witness' writings and drawings and Cook's own duplicitous photographs of lower mountains that he passed off as scenes from his actual climb, crowned by his fake "summit" photograph.

G18 A far more fruitful approach to getting Cook's narrative in line with a possible route might have been based on the work of Hans Waale (§G1). Even Bradford Washburn had to admit that Waale's route fit Cook's sketchy narrative in all details and made sense of the many directional inconsistencies it had seemed to contain. However, upon study of Waale's proposed route, any reasonable person must agree with Washburn's objection that Cook and Barrill had neither the time nor the equipment to make such a circuitous⁴² journey and return to their base camp on the time schedule Cook claimed for his attempt.

⁴¹ Neither name appears to be recognized by the USGS.

⁴² [Washburn notes that no one has ever even tried to climb McKinley by Waale's route. — *ed.*]



Figure 24: Cook's photograph made from atop Fake Peak, between the vantage points of Browne's and Barrill's diary sketches (Figs.22 & 23, respectively), published here for the first time. Mt. McKinley's twin summits can be seen in the distance, the South Peak's top partly obscured by clouds. Notice the black rocks at the extreme right center, very much like those in Barrill's sketch (Fig.23); notice also the central snow point, which is labelled "Glacier Point" on Fig.23. Photo courtesy of the Ohio State University Photo Archives.



Figure 25: An enlargement of the twin summits of Mount McKinley from Fig.24. Compare to upper drawing of Fig.15. Photo courtesy of the Ohio State University Photo Archives.

H Summary of evidence, and a conclusion

H1 The pattern of belief in Frederick Cook's claim to have climbed Mount McKinley in 1906 has been one of almost continuous retreat. At first it seemed only just to defend him. He appeared to be in an unequal fight that had brought to bear upon his North Pole claim, and subsequently his McKinley climb, the vast monetary resources and influence of the powerful men who had backed Robert E. Peary. Furthermore, there seemed nothing in Cook's previously genuine record of achievement as an explorer that indicated that he was a man of less than ordinary veracity. A close study of Cook's prior career, however, has revealed a pattern of financial indiscretions and a life-long tendency to embellish his real experiences that were not known at the time of the initial controversy over his McKinley and Polar claims.⁴³ In comparison to false claims of such great feats of exploration, however, even these would have seemed minor offenses had they been known. The testimony of the witnesses against him seemed either bribed or faked. (Though, few Cook-supporters, even today, have considered the possibility that Ed Barrill was paid to recant his former lies rather than to invent new ones.)⁴⁴ But over the years, as it was incontestably shown that each of Cook's purportedly high-altitude photographs were located at different places than he attributed them, Cook partisans made excuses to relieve him of the responsibility for their erroneous captions or to explain them away in the most innocent way. All but a few of these adamantly defended Cook's "summit" photo to the end as the true summit of the great mountain.⁴⁵ Now that it, too, proves to be a fake, and as new evidence has proved that even the drawings that appeared as illustrations of the spine-tingling incidents of his climb in *To the Top of the Continent* are fabrications based on photographs of completely different places than they are said to represent,⁴⁶ his ardent supporters dismiss this pattern of deceit, including his faked summit photograph, as "irrelevant" (§G3) to the issue of whether he did climb the mountain or not.

H2 The evidence against Cook is neither irrelevant nor incidental, however, because (§9 D9) it is objective, not subjective, like the "new evidence" the Cook Society offers in his favor. Even subjectively, the Cook Society's theories suffer when compared with other, more logical interpretations. The evidence against Cook is central and specific to the question of whether Cook was an honest man, incapable of such grand deceptions as those of which he was accused, and it is based directly upon the primary documents left by Cook's own hand in the form of the photographs he made and the contents of the actual diary he kept, which are immutable.

H3 This, after all, is the central question — Cook's character. And all of this primary documentation points consistently to the conclusion that Cook was not an honest man in either his claim to have climbed McKinley or to have attained the North Pole,⁴⁷ but that both claims were knowing frauds. Despite this, the interested partisans of the Frederick A. Cook Society ask the world to believe that a man who has been proven untruthful by all the physical evidence that should support any honest report, is truthful when he presents

⁴³ See *Cook & Peary*, Chapter 27, for a full discussion of Cook's early career.

⁴⁴ Edward Barrill was paid a portion of a \$5,000 bank draft drawn upon the personal account of Thomas H. Hubbard, president of the Peary Arctic Club. A witness said Barrill received about \$1,500. The original bank draft, dated October 1, 1909, is still among the papers of Robert E. Peary, RG 401, National Archives II, College Park, Md.

⁴⁵ Part of the fake "summit" photo is used as a recurring logo on the back cover and title page of the Frederick A. Cook Society's 1996 reprint of *To the Top of the Continent*. Below the reproduction of the full picture within the book (its Plate 1/16), under the unequivocal caption: "THE TOP OF OUR CONTINENT", the society raises these questions to suggest its authenticity: "Was there exposed granite in 1906? How much did the 1912 earthquake change the configuration of the summit, and how deep is the ice now?" Apparently since the 1997 publication of *Cook & Peary*, some Cookites have at last realized that Cook's "summit" photograph is probably a fake. See note 49 below.

⁴⁶ See *Cook & Peary*, pp.830-835.

⁴⁷ See *Cook & Peary*, Chapter 29, for a full discussion of Cook's claim to have reached the North Pole in 1908.



Figure 26: Friendly Peak (height 8245 ft), as published by the Frederick A. Cook Society in its 1996 reprint of *To the Top of the Continent*, Plate 2/7. (See ¶9 §D10.)

nothing better than his bare word in support of his two most spectacular claims. There is simply little more than that to support the proposition that Frederick Cook stood at the top of the greatest mountain in North America seven years before anyone else, or ever attained the North Pole unresupplied and returned to tell about it, an accomplishment that was surely a physical impossibility using nineteenth century technological means. Furthermore, the only witnesses to both of these claimed achievements contradict Cook's bare word, and each of their statements stands the test of credibility that Cook's consistently fails.

H4 In the wake of Cook's fall from hero to humbug in 1909, one editor nevertheless declared, "There will be a 'Cook party' to the end of time, no matter how strong the evidence brought against him in the future, no matter if he made public confession to fraud. . . . This sentiment of personal devotion and championship once aroused is one of the most powerful and indestructible of human motives."⁴⁸ The continuing story of the efforts to defend Frederick A. Cook, despite all the evidence that has accumulated against him since then, proves that point, at least, beyond all cavil.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ "Psychology of the Cook Fake," *Independent*, December 30, 1909, pp.1513-1514.

⁴⁹ [A recent article has several good examples of the leaps of faith Cook's partisans are prepared to indulge in to keep this sentiment intact and their own self-interests alive. Ted Heckathorn, while tacitly acknowledging the summit photo is a fake, still excuses Cook's lack of any photographic evidence from any part of his alleged climb: "I'm convinced now that Dr. Cook was carrying bad film packs," he is quoted as saying. "He'd bought his film early in the year and now it was September and they'd been going through streams and fog and heavy snow for months. His real summit film was probably water-damaged, so he used other photos to express what the summit looked like." (Donahue, Bill, "Dissent on Denali," *Climbing*, May 1, 1998, p.116.) Heckathorn fails to explain why these "bad film packs," which he is convinced (¶9 fn 28) were damaged by age and exposure to the elements, produced the splendid sequence of pictures of every place Cook actually visited on Ruth Glacier right up to the very point Ed Barrill says they turned back for their boat, but without exception failed to record any scene beyond that point right up to the very summit itself. He also fails to explain why an honest man would take a *flag-raising* fake summit photo *before* he ever made an attempt to reach the actual summit.]

‡8 Cook's Curious Timetable

A A "spool of mysteries"

A1 Attempting to extract a clear and consistent narrative from Frederick Cook's various accounts of his climb of Mount McKinley in 1906 is a daunting task. For many years anyone who wished to do so had only the two published accounts in *Harper's* and *To the Top of the Continent* to puzzle over. It might be said of the story they contain, as Dr. Cook said of the "supra-cloudland" he only imagined he had visited, "It is difficult to grasp the thread with which it rolls up its spool of mysteries."

A2 Except for Bradford Washburn,¹ most readers have been so hopelessly diverted or confused by the many verbal flights of fancy, digressions and asides in Cook's published writings, that they have never noticed that the day to day sequence of events Cook describes comes up one day short of the date he says he reached the summit, September 16. Turning to his 1906 diary only confuses the issue further, since it contains alternate accounts for two of the days, has an additional day not described in Cook's published narratives and still comes up one day short.

A3 Ed Barrill swore that his diary entries recording the events of the climb were dictated to him by Cook. They are somewhat more in line with what is generally accepted as the outline of Cook's attempt. But they also contain the extra day left out of Cook's published reports and are therefore out of sequence by a day with Cook's published story most of the way. Because it retains the extra day, Barrill's account is the only one that actually reaches the summit on September 16.

A4 According to Helene Cook Vetter, it was exactly this "mixup in dates" that caused her to keep secret her recovery of her father's diary in the 1950s. These inconsistencies, both internally and with Cook's eventual story, condemn Cook's diary as a fabrication. Conversely, these variations and differences from his eventually published reports also indicate that Cook's official account was a story improved and adjusted as it evolved and not one based on even the content of his own original diary, much less actual experiences.

A5 To allow the reader to "grasp the thread" of this tangled web, the three accounts of the climb are here (§B) compared day by day. Notes on the contradictions they contain as well as other points of interest follow this comparison for each day. The *Harper's* article, being in almost every respect no more than a word-for-word, but shorter version of the account in Cook's book, is not examined here in detail, but is only called upon when a simplification of the convolutions of the book's text is needed.

A6 Barrill's diary for the days of the climb is brief, informal, unscientific, and occasionally humorous. Cook's is even briefer, with even less detail than Barrill's, and very sober. It generally contains no scientific notes other than barometer readings, temperatures and a few compass bearings. As was Cook's habit, his running account is written on the odd (right-hand) numbered pages only, his notes and sketches occupying the even (left-hand) ones. Cook's diary has a large number of blank pages. He generally sets down a characterization of the content of each page in a label at the top, or gives a heading which summarizes each dated entry. Therefore, it is easy to outline. The narrative in Cook's book is, on the other hand, a "spool of mysteries," rambling and diffuse, requiring concentration and often inference to decipher. So there is far more room for opinion about just what happened on what day, though there are several very definite time cues that help check the validity of any inferences. Thus an understandable chronology can be produced with care and patience.

¹ *American Alpine Journal* vol.11 no.1 [1958] p.6.

A7 In the summary that follows, anything in quotation marks is a direct extract from the item in question. The rest is paraphrase. The notes are aimed at giving insight to any reader attempting to come to grips only with what Cook *says* that he did — not with the *truth* of what he said he did, which is a far more challenging proposition. However, even the difficulty of doing the former goes a long way toward settling the latter proposition by suggesting reasons why these confusions in Cook's texts exist.

B Daily Comparisons

In the comparison that follows, each day of the climb is numbered in sequence and its date is given. The three sources are compared for each of the days Cook said he was engaged in the climb of Mount McKinley: BD = Barrill's diary; CD = Cook's diary; TTC = the narrative in *To the Top of the Continent*; BA = Barrill's affidavit of 1909; HM = the account in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*. Barrill's diary is unpagged; the pages referenced in the others are given. The quotations here are from the original diaries, not the inaccurate and corrupt transcriptions published by the Frederick A. Cook Society. All other accounts, and there are several incidental reports, are left aside due to the fact that they are reported second hand and are, therefore, strictly hearsay. Barrill's affidavit of 1909 purports to be what actually transpired while he and Cook were alone together on Ruth Glacier in 1906.

Day 1: September 8

BD: "We reach the ice cliffs at 7.30 PM"

CD, version 1, p.45: No heading. "Crossed a creek and camped along the first ice walls."

CD, version 2, p.51: No heading. Cook, Dokkin, and Barrill set off with heavy packs to explore the glacier.

TTC p.195: "We started from the [boat] *Bolshoy* where the altitude was 1000 feet, on the morning of the 8th of September."

Notes: It is only the first day and there are already complications aplenty. It is unclear from the two diaries when Dokkin, Cook and Barrill started from their boat. BA says that on September 9 "Dr. Cook and I started alone for the purpose of exploring Mt. McKinley." Barrill's map says they left the boat the "morning of the 8th," but since Dokkin is said to have turned back after the second day out, this would seem to imply they left on the 7th, but at its end BA says Dokkin turned back on September 10. CD p.47 implies two previous traveling camps (see below), but this might be corrupt, because Cook apparently set back his dates, and so this might be the description of a later day than the date given. On CD p.43 Cook writes: "On the 6th day we pulled into the Tokoshitna and there Brill make a dock for the *Bolshoy*. John baked the bread and on the next day Sept.9 we started for the gl." Cook left with Dokkin and Barrill in his motor boat on August 31, so the "6th day" out with the launch would be September 5, so the "next day" could not be September 9. In TTC, however, Cook definitely sets September 8 as the first day of the climb, so we will observe this convention throughout. Notice that there are two completely different versions of September 8 on two completely different pages in CD. It appears that the "second version" is an attempt to move the progress forward up Ruth Glacier on the first two days to allow longer for the serious climbing later, since the distance covered is far greater in the second version than that recorded in the first. BA says that all the early entries in BD were adjusted backward for this purpose. Both BD and CD show evidence that some of these early dates have been changed, Barrill's being erased and Cook's written over. BA states, however, that the events recorded up to September 8 in BD are true. The first version of CD matches BD; the second does not.

Day 2: September 9

BD: "We take to the ice today."

CD, version 1, p.47: No heading. "Last night and the night before we made superb camps beside the gl."

CD, version 2, p.55: Entry headed: "N. face of Gl. to 2nd Lake". Cook mentions stopping for lunch 15 miles from the boat at the first lake.

TTC p.196: "On the evening of the second day we took to the ice, crossed the first northerly tributary, and camped on a beautiful moss-carpeted point about fifteen miles from Mt. McKinley."

Notes: There are again two versions on two different pages. Neither CD version agrees with TTC, but the first version partially agrees with BD. The two lakes mentioned can be seen on the map on p.46 of CD, and both are far short of the "moss-carpeted point" Cook later called Glacier Point. BA says they did not camp at Glacier Point until the sixth day out, September 13.

Day 3: September 10

BD: "We seen a higher place here so we moved camp up this morning. . . . I don't think we can go any higher in this direction . . . Camped in 3 feet of snow to night."

CD p.59: Entry headed: "Cerac & amph exp." It describes the camp at Cerac pt. "on a bed of picturesque moss. . . . made a scouting trip into amph." Then they "ret[urn to] the big gl[acier]". Cook describes (†7 §G14) the top of McKinley as seen from this location.

TTC pp.201-202: They continue up the glacier, making "splendid progress"; they stop for lunch for two hours. "Before dark we pitched the tent on the glacier at an altitude of 8000 feet within a few miles of the northern ridge."

Notes: "Cerac pt." (a misspelling of serac) was what Cook called Glacier Point in TTC. (See †7 fn 19.) CD describes the side trip into the amphitheater containing Fake Peak, and BD seems to imply the same. However, TTC skips this day completely and thus is now one day ahead of CD. Unlike the first two days, there is only one version of the subsequent events in CD for the rest of the climb from here on. BA says that they visited the Fake Peak amphitheater on September 12, and camped there in the snow. According to BA, they did not camp at Glacier Point until the next night.

Day 4: September 11

BD: Barrill complains that it was so cold and his sleeping bag was so damp that it prevented him from sleeping, and describes the glacier at this point as "rough" and "scarry." He says they are about five or six miles from the top of Mount McKinley at this point.

CD p.65: Heading reads: "Cerac to 8300 camp at base of N. Ridge." Cook complains of his damp bag preventing him from sleeping.

TTC pp.204-210: Cook mentions they are now 35 miles from their starting point (or about 5 mi from the summit). "We chose the lateral moraine of the serac of the first glacial tributary as a route into an amphitheatre." They drop in the snow and eat pemmican for lunch. Then they climb the ridge and find themselves on the divide where the arctic air currents meet the tropical ones. They build a snow house at 12,000 feet.

Notes: CD and BD agree as to date and events. TTC is still one day ahead. BA says all these events and those from this point on are fiction, and that the night of September 14 was spent about half way between Glacier Point and the Gateway (see Fig.32). The camp shown in Fig.9 (Gateway) is the one of the night of September 15, according to BA, which says that they went no farther toward McKinley than this camp. From here on, the altitudes given for the same places in CD and TTC do not agree.

Day 5: September 12

BD: "It is 8000 feet high where we start." They make a snow house at 12,000 feet.

CD pp.71 & 73: Entry headed: "8300 to 12100 ft. Snow house N. Ridge. Base N. Ridge to top of Ridge." They build a snow house at the top of the ridge. Cook describes mirages and the meeting of the arctic and tropical air currents.

TTC p.213: After an hour of observations they set off. "We . . . started on the morning of September 12th"; p.217: They spend the night roped together in a ditch at 14,000 feet.

Notes: BD and CD agree, but TTC remains one day ahead.

Day 6: September 13

BD: "We camped here at an elevation of 14200 . . . We had to make a hole in the snow tonight." Barrill states they are "on the main ridg — That goes to the top."

CD p.77: Entry headed: "12,100 to 14,200. cut a hole in the side cliff after cliff step-cutting." Cook complains of a violent headache.

TTC pp.218-221: At daybreak they decide to go on. "Soon after noon we swung from the arête easterly to the glacier . . . to the gathering basin near the summit." The night in the ditch had exhausted them, so "under these circumstances it seemed best to seek a good camping spot on the glacier with a view to resting for a day to recuperate and store up force for the final spurt of the upper ascent." They camp early and build a second snow house.

Notes: CD and BD continue to be together, but TTC is still one day ahead. Here something strange happens in TTC. The text suggests that they might take the next day off to rest, but it does not specifically say they did so anywhere in the succeeding pages. On p.221, after they build the snow house, there is a long digression including what seems to be a recapitulation of the sensations of the climb up to that point. There are musings on the view from the icy ditch of the night before, the unreality of the whole present scene, clouds, colors, angels, boyhood notions of heaven, the peculiar dark sky, and then Cook states that "we were able to build a snow house and in it we packed ourselves for a long rest." What are we to make of this? On p.221 he has already mentioned building the snow house, and he is clearly inside it cooking dinner. By the end of his musings on p.224 he is building a snow house again. This might be interpreted as two different snow houses, but the action in between seems to be purely mental. Although there is no definite mention of two days passing, two might be inferred from the content of the reminiscences. But the heading of the chapter says "from 16,300 to 18,400," implying only two camps, so another day of travel and a third snow house seems improbable. There is no mention of a rest day in CD, and BD's time schedule does not allow for one at all, as we shall see. Likewise, there is no mention of a third snow house in either of the diaries. This question of whether or not they rested one entire day is important, however, and will be returned to later. Later in CD Cook mentions a camp at 15,600, and BD mentions the latter as the altitude of their first return camp, but this altitude is not mentioned anywhere in TTC. Referring to HM for guidance, we find the two pages of musings in TTC are absent, and there is no mention of even the possibility of "resting for a day to recuperate." On this evidence, the two mentions of building the igloo in TTC seem to be merely careless editing of the additional musings into the already existing magazine text, which contains the exactly worded second reference to building the snow house, but not the first.

Day 7: September 14

BD: "We had a hard days clime today. . . . We made a snow house here." (The entry does not give an elevation.)

CD p.85: Entry headed: "15,600 Snow House 2 to top vally". There are these two notes: "8 Am 15,600 temp —14.5. Snow House 2; 7 Pm 18,200 temp —15.4 top vally" He says they stopped early to attend to Barrill's nose bleed "and also to prepare for our last sprint to-morrow."

TTC pp.224-226: "The following morning, the sixth day of our climb, we kicked out the snow block which made our door. . . . Starting from camp, at 16,300 feet, . . . our progress was good . . . After prodigious efforts we were forced to camp at 18,400 feet." On p.227, Cook describes their difficult night and calls it "This last night of the climb."

Notes: As Hans Waale liked to say: "Mystery, Mystery!" Here the spool grows very tangled. Notice that BD gives no altitude for this snow house. CD identifies it as "Snow House 2" [not 3, notice] and places it by his heading and temperature note at 15,600 feet, an altitude, as we have seen, that is not mentioned at all in TTC, but is identified as the altitude of their first return camp in BD (see entry for September 16 below). Yet in the same entry, Cook gives a temperature reading and elevation for "top vally," indicating he reached 18,200 feet on this day. Also, he heads the page "Snow House 2 to top vally," indicating such a progression. Finally, he says that they plan to make their "last sprint to-morrow."

This leaves no account in CD of how he and Barrill got from the icy ditch at 14,200 feet to the place they built "Snow House 2." In other words, either a day is skipped here in CD, or two days are combined. So CD is now one day ahead of BD and has thus caught up with TTC, which had been one day ahead of both since September 10. Notice also that in TTC Cook says that this is the "sixth day of our climb" which it could not be, no matter how you count it up. If you count from September 8, it is the seventh day. If you count from when they started serious climbing on September 11, it is only the fourth day. Also, as noted above, the discrepancies in altitudes are growing larger between TTC and CD, in this entry they are as much as 700 feet apart at one point. However, CD and BD continue to agree as to altitudes. This is good evidence for the joint forgery BA claims, as well as for the idea of an invented story that is being improved in TTC, since it no longer matches the original diary even in specific details like the altitudes of Cook's camps.

Day 8: September 15

BD: "We reached the saddle about 4 PM. This is about 18200. . . . We will make the top or frees."

CD p.93: Entry headed: "18.200 in the split tent." "At dawn before sunrise we are ready for the final assault." He gives these notes: "Bar. 5 am. 18,150 temp —16.5. fine snow. 10am. Top. 20400 temp —16 — some snow."

TTC p.232: "Curious experience this."

Notes: Curious indeed! Under September 15, CD says that at dawn they are "ready for the final assault," and at 5 AM of that day they are at 18,150-18,200 feet. At 10 o'clock they are at "Top. 20400," in other words, on the summit. The only trouble is, the "final assault" and arrival at the summit is supposed to have happened on September 16. CD continues to be ahead of BD, which says that they didn't arrive at 18,200 feet until 4 PM. According to the chronology in the text of TTC, they spent the "last night of the climb" on September 14, which also implies that the events subsequently described are taking place on September 15, which would put Cook at the "Top of the Continent" one day early, also. The only way we might explain this away is by saying that Cook and Barrill actually rested for one entire day as suggested by the text on p.220 of TTC. But, as we have seen above (note under September 13), there is nothing specific to support this notion in the text of either the book or the two diaries. So we are left with this set of curiosities: BD is the only account that places Cook in position to arrive at the summit on the day he claimed to have stood atop Mount McKinley, but only because it retains the day dropped from TTC. CD implies that he reached the summit on the morning of September 15, one day early, and TTC, likewise, has left him one day short of getting there on the date he eventually reported. If we follow on from the text's progression in TTC, there is simply not a word about anything happening on September 15, since Cook arrives at the summit on September 16 by his definite statement on p.232.

Day 9: September 16

BD: "We reach the top at last at about 11 A.M. to the gunsight." He notes the return to the 15,600 foot snow house: "the little snow house looks good to me as I am tired."

CD p.101: Entry headed: "The top." "Exhausted — nearly frozen not in shape to enjoy the scene — the slope the snow, wind, clouds out of Pacific Japan Current out of the Arctic clouds, both meeting & drifting north easterly 250 miles. 50,000 sq. miles"

TTC p.232: "It was September 16th, the temperature 16 degrees below zero, the altitude 20,390 feet."

Notes: Notice that Cook has skipped eight pages in CD from September 15's entry, where he gave the time of his arrival at the summit and its temperature and altitude. On p.101 he records what he could see from the top and a few other details including a different altitude. This suggests that this entry may have been added in an attempt to make up for the diary entry for September 10, which he would want to skip in his published accounts because it contains a description of going into the amphitheater where he took some of his miscaptioned pictures and photographed Barrill holding the flag on Fake Peak. It appears



Figure 27: Enlarged detail of Bradford Washburn 1955 photo of Mt. McKinley, taken from the Gateway (Cook's closest 1906 approach), opposite Cook's peak #7, right where Cook states (Fig.16) that his "Gun Sight" drawing was made. The sharp-summit illusion is striking. (See Barrill on "gunsight" at ‡7 §G7.) The apparent top is actually Carter Horn. (See ‡9 §B2.) The reader can determine for himself whether this or Fig.26 more closely resembles the bottom drawing of Fig.16. Photo courtesy of Bradford Washburn. (Full photo: *AAJ* 10.1 [1956], taken a few minutes before plate 6b of *AAJ* 11.1 [1958].)

that he originally had himself at the summit on September 15 in his diary, but when he realized he should not mention the trip into the amphitheater, lest he give his deceptions away, he added in an extra day to make up for the omission. However, the two should have canceled each other out, and he still should have arrived on the 15th. Perhaps through oversight he declared September 16 as summit day without thinking about how the two days canceled each other out, and since he had nothing to offer for what happened on the missing day, he put in his vague hints about a "day of rest" to make up for the discrepancy already published in his *Harper's* article the year before. No other explanation accounts for the finished text of TTC, which places him on the summit one day sooner than he reported, otherwise. According to BA, the false entries in BD were made up on this very day, September 16, not in a snow house at 15,600 feet, but in their tent once again safely on the mossy carpet at Glacier Point. (This is very similar to what Cook seems to have done later with his North Pole narrative. He apparently wrote his account of his polar attainment while comfortably ensconced in a stone igloo at Cape Sparbo during the winter of 1908-1909. In that account there is evidence² that he set back his time by a week for the same reason: to make his timetable seem more plausible, and all of his earliest reports³ of his arrival at the North Pole are stated as April 22, 1908, thus differing by a day from the one he eventually settled on, April 21.) Significantly, September 16 is the first day that all three accounts have ever been together during the entire trip. As for his return journey, instead of coming all the way back from the summit to his boat in a mere four days, BA says they only had to return from Glacier Point, about 25 miles and 3,000 vertical feet in four days, as opposed to 40 miles and 19,000 vertical feet. Cook claimed it took him only two days to cover this distance going up with full packs. BA allowed five days for the outward journey over the same distance. In this, and in every other respect, BA seems the most plausible account of the four.

² *Cook & Peary* p.890f.

³ *Ibid* p.894.

‡9 A DIO Commentary:

Unfalsifiability-Summit, Flub-Summit, Barometer-Bomb

A If you missed the truth, the movie's just as good

A1 Fake Peak, in spite of its geographical¹ insignificance (see Fig.28) — no contour surrounds it on even the largest-scale USGS topographic map — has played a famous role in the history of US alpine exploration. In light of Bob Bryce's epochal recovery and analysis of Cook's uncropped 'Summit' photo (‡7), it's worthwhile to review some of the more recent arguments put forth by Cook supporters, regarding the importance of this photograph. (Throughout the following appraisal, we will use the abbreviation "CTC" for the Cook Society's 1996 reprint-plus-commentary of Cook's 1908 *To the Top of the Continent*.)

A2 In his biography of Cook, Hugh Eames conceded (‡7 §E1) that the 'Summit' photo really showed Fake Peak, but he excused² the fraud (see ‡7 §E1) with this argument: Cook needed to raise money by lecturing, lecturing was a form of show business, and in show business everyone lies. Therefore, reasoned Eames, it's okay for Cook to lie, too. In Eames' end-justifies-the-means view, the fake photo was nothing more than an early form of Special Effects, then as now a device for bringing in the crowds. And their funds.³

A3 Eames had seen Adams Carter's photo of Fake Peak (reproduced here as Fig.5), but was unaware of the existence of Cook's diary.⁴ Thus, although Eames concluded that the 'Summit' photo was taken as a backup in case of camera failure, he also believed (1973 p.65) that it was taken on the way *down* the mountain. But Cook's diary p.59 shows (‡8 §B Sept.10) that the excursion into Fake Peak amphitheater was made on the way *up* the mountain. Taking a spare on the way up cannot be easily explained, except in the context of deliberate fakery. Not only was this before Cook could have known whether his climb would be successful or not (see ‡7 §H4, fn 49), but also any 'backup photo' excuse must now suppose that Cook knew ahead of time that his camera (or film) was going to fail on the way to the top.⁵ So the 'backup photo' argument casts Cook not just in the role of a cautious man, but less plausibly in the role of an honest psychic.

¹ Fake Peak (5338 ft) is located at 62°54'16"N, 150°30'21"W (Michael Schoder, AEROMAP, 907-272-4495). The South Peak of Mt. McKinley (20320 ft) is at 63°04'09"N, 151°00'23"W (Jeffrey Yates, DAT/EM, 907-522-3681); the slightly lower North Peak (19470 ft) is at approximately 63°06'N, 151°00'W. [*DIO* thanks Bradford Washburn for expert information on locating Fake Peak, and for much other advice on McKinley and Cook, as well as providing crucial photos from his vast and unique Mt. McKinley collection.]

² *Winner Lose All*, Little, Brown, & Co., 1973 (pp.64f), a book published, ironically, on the same day (1973/6/29) as DR's *Peary at the North Pole: Fact or Fiction?*, which (at chapters 6 & 19) provides a much less glowing review of Cook's career as hoaxer. Could Eames (writing at the high-Watergate period of US history) have been influenced by various defenses of presidential "corner-cutting"? — such alibis as, e.g., if Johnson earlier got away with Nixonian crimes, then Nixon must be innocent.

³ To take Eames' reasoning a step further: if Cook hadn't lied about the "summit" photo, he wouldn't have had enough money to try for the North Pole prize. So if, as Eames seems to believe, it's acceptable to fake for money, why would he object to Cook's lying about making it to McKinley's summit? Since Cook's motive in that was also to raise money for exploration. [See fn 28.]

⁴ Note that Cook's 1906 diary was entered into a register with preprinted-pagination. Since such a choice makes fakery harder, this provides some evidence in favor of the theory that Cook originally intended to climb McKinley. He probably also intended in 1908 to reach the North Pole — presumably via Crocker Land (thus explaining his odd westerly detour across Heiberg Land), which then turned out not to exist: *DIO* 1.1 ‡4 §§B1-B2.

⁵ See *Cook & Peary* p.820 for an eyewitness account of an embarrassing slipup by Cook in this connection soon after his 1906 return.



IN THE SILENT GLORY AND SNOWY WONDER OF THE UPPER WORLD, 15,400 FEET

Figure 28: Another hugely mislabelled Cook 1906 photo, printed opp. p.226 of *To the Top of the Continent*. Original caption: “IN THE SILENT GLORY AND SNOWY WONDER OF THE UPPER WORLD. 15,400 FEET”. View actually looks a little east of south along the eastern edge of the Fake Peak amphitheater at merely 5305 feet. Barely 30 ft higher, Fake Peak itself is the tiny outcrop (5338 ft) indicated by the superimposed arrow. Ironically, the summit of Fake Peak was the highest altitude Cook attained on his 1906 expedition.

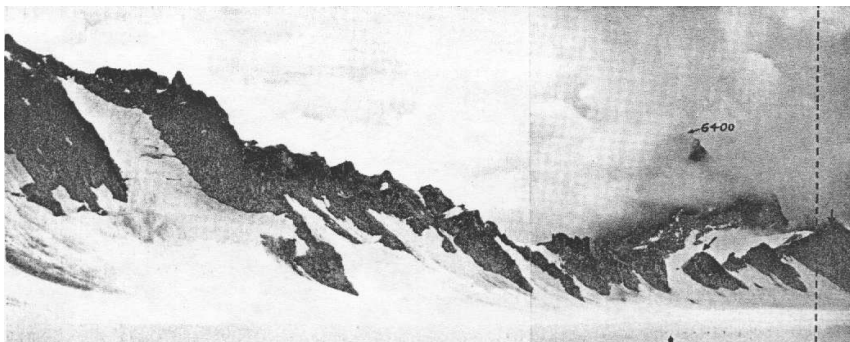


Figure 29: Bradford Washburn (*AJ 11.1* 1958) joined two of his 1956 photos to match Fig.28. (Tiny arrows point to Fake Peak and to the cliff of Fig.8. Dotted line equals right edge of Fig.28.) Accounting for Cook’s camera having been tilted 4° more clockwise than Washburn’s, the pictures (printed here to the same scale) will almost perfectly superpose. (Washburn’s location so closely matched Cook’s that, when photographing this scene, he found that he was virtually standing upon some of Cook’s 1906 camp-trash: Washburn 1958 p.16.) However (see §B3):

THE COOK SOCIETY IS NOT CONVINCED OF THE MATCH

B Similarities, Faking the Wrong Summit, & Legal Blindness

B1 According to Eames, “Cook chose the ‘fake peak’ to photograph because its tip resembled the tip of McKinley. The similarities between [them] are evidence that Cook’s memory of the scene as he struggled up the last hundred yards was very keen.”⁶

B2 But, even if one accepts this similarity (and other alleged ones), this is evidence only for the undisputed facts that: [a] Cook had eyes, and [b] McKinley (and some eastern ridges around it) are visible from the Gateway. (Note that, when he has to map the allegedly-explored area which is *not* visible from the Gateway, Cook’s putative ultra-keen memory fails horribly: see §§D4-D5.) However, this whole (already sufficiently ridiculous) line of argument ends up backfiring with high justice and higher comedy, due to a simple reality: the true, unsharp summit of McKinley is NOT seen as the highest point for an observer at Fake Peak or the Gateway: rather, narrow Carter Horn — 100 feet below and 1/5 mi east & south of the summit — seems angularly higher and intervenes;⁷ and pointed Carter Horn is in truth the sharp “Gun Sight” (Fig.27) that Cook, from his Ruth Glacier viewing position, mistook for the actual summit (which is not sharp: Fig.34). Therefore, by choosing acute Fake Peak specifically *for* this similarity (see ¶7§G7), Cook again bombs — and convicts himself of not arriving at the summit, where the actual situation⁸ would be obvious.

B3 The defensive notion that “similarity” is as important as hard reality may also be found in an especially weird Cookite passage, in which Washburn’s *lock-in* 1956 photographic match (our Fig.29) to the topography of Cook’s “15,400 ft” scene (our Fig.28) is passed off as not establishing anything much, because Walter Gonnason (who has drawn Cook-clique funding for decades)⁹ had a vision. CTC pp.251-252 (emph added): “Washburn *believes* that he found a spot on the lower Ruth Glacier where Dr. Cook took the [15,400 ft] cliff photo. Gonnason believes that he has seen a *similar* cliff near the Thayer Basin, which would be at the 15,000 foot level.” [*Photo not included.*] (Analogous fill at CTC p.252-253, regarding the summit.) Any situation that can broadcast such stuff should put in a disability claim for blindness. Mental or whatever.

B4 The front cover of CTC is a photo of McKinley from azimuth¹⁰ c.120° (virtually the Carter Horn azimuth — what a coincidence! — as well as Cook’s azimuth at the Gateway: fn 7), deliberately¹¹ presenting a sharp-looking “summit” to the unwary reader, who will not know that it’s actually Carter Horn. Thus, one of Cook’s funniest giveaway blunders is repeated and perpetuated.

⁶ *Winner Lose All*, p.67. This passage, through the word “evidence,” was inserted into Eames’ text at the last minute. [The same argument is still repeated in 1998: see ¶7 fn 49.]

⁷ From the true summit, Carter Horn’s azimuth is c.120°; the Cook northermost camp’s (also Fake Peak’s) azimuth is very similar: c.125°. (Angle of depression from the summit to Carter Horn is less than 1/10 radian, but it’s 1/4 radian to the Gateway, or 1/7 to Fake Peak.) The summit of Mt. McKinley is triangular, extending into three “horns”, each roughly 1000 ft distant from the only-slightly-higher central summit (20320 ft): Farthing Horn (20125 ft) c.25° east of north; Kahiltna Horn (20120 ft) c.25° south of west; and the highest (and slightly more distant) of the three, Carter Horn (20220 ft) c.30° south of east. In Cook’s p.52 sketch (Fig.15), the South Peak “summit” is Carter Horn, and the bumps just below it on either side are Kahiltna Horn (left) and Farthing Horn (right).

⁸ Cook later got imprecisely imprecise about the summit’s character: see his peculiar remarks at pp.530-531 of his 1911 book, *My Attainment of the Pole* (and the 1913 edition’s update at p.534). See also *Amer Alp J 11.1* [1958] pp.12-13 for Washburn’s amused & just comments thereon, as he contrasts Cook’s slippery prose with genuine first Mt. McKinley conquerer (1913) Hudson Stuck’s precise verbal description of the top. For a full description of McKinley’s real summit, see Washburn *op cit* Appendix A. For Stuck’s photo of the vista from McKinley’s summit (the best proof — which cannot be faked, so Cook of course didn’t have it), see opp. p.102 of H.Stuck *Ascent of Denali* 1914. (Note that Cookites tend to speak of early explorers’ difficulty with getting photographs of the summit — without mentioning Stuck’s more crucial photo *from* the summit. See, e.g., Eames 1973 p.62.)

⁹ See *Polar Priorities 14* p.25 & ¶7 here at fn 28.

¹⁰ Miscalled as just “east” (Cook Society’s now-favored Cook 1906 approach: CTC Plate 2/12) in the caption to CTC’s Plate 2/15 (of which the cover is a detail).

¹¹ Has the Cook Society ever published a photo of the actual unsharp summit? — which it keeps claiming (*Polar Priorities 14* p.11 & CTC pp.252-253) looks *just* like Cook’s sharp Fake Peak photo.

C I'll know it when I see it, unless I don't

C1 A more convoluted argument on the Summit photo can be found in a tract authored by (lawyer) Sheldon Cook-Dorough (no family relation to F. Cook) in *Polar Priorities 14*. It is so gloriously bizarre that it deserves to be quoted here at length. (Bear in mind that Cook-Dorough was the last person known to have seen the sharp, clear print of the uncropped Summit photo. That print was last seen in early summer 1994 [¶7 fn 12], just a few months before the article quoted here was published.) Cook-Dorough's reasoning:

The primary item of evidence which is presented by Cook's adversaries as supposed proof that he did not reach the summit of Mt. McKinley in 1906 is their allegation that the photograph which is displayed in Cook's book, *To the Top of the Continent*, as the summit of Mt. McKinley is in fact a much lower and indeed insignificant peak in the foothills of Mt. McKinley located off the lower reaches of Ruth Glacier having and [sic] elevations [sic] of only 5,500 feet.

C2 At the outset, the controlling point should be clearly [sic] stated and that is simply this: Even if the peak depicted in Cook's summit photograph is not the true summit but is a peak at a much lower elevation, this fact would not prove that Cook did not reach the summit. At most, it would raise a question as to whether or not Cook had in reality attained the top. In order to make a determination whether or not Cook actually reached the summit, it is necessary to examine and weigh all the evidence pertaining to his climb, the entire body of the evidence, including the photograph in question. If there is other evidence, evidence which is extensive and significant and supports Cook's assertion that he reached the top, as there is, then such a photograph, though not of the true summit, would almost certainly have an explanation which is consistent with his having scaled Mt. McKinley to the top of its ultimate peak. [See Lewis source cited at fn 16. — ed.] If the evidence as a whole strongly indicates that Cook accomplished the ascent, as it does, then it is quite probable that he did, and that the photograph was used for purposes of illustration because he was unable to make a satisfactory photograph at the summit and the highest elevations; that Cook was compelled to use a photograph of a peak other than a true summit for a reason other than his failure to reach the top.

C3 But the second point is equally interesting and may be dispositive of the assertions of Cook's enemies during the last 80 years, that the peak depicted in Cook's summit photograph is, in fact, an unimportant peak located in the foothills of Mt. McKinley off Ruth Glacier between 14 and 20 miles southeast of the summit and having an elevation of only approximately 5,500 feet. Cook's adversaries have referred to this peak as "Fake Peak" in derision of Cook's assertion that he reached the summit of Mt. McKinley in September 1906. The second point to be made is this: While Parker, Browne, and Washburn maintain that "Fake Peak" is the peak depicted in Cook's photograph of the summit of Mt. McKinley, three careful and thoroughgoing students of the question during the last 80 years have concluded that the peak depicted in Cook's summit photograph and "Fake Peak" cannot be the same; that the peak in Cook's summit photograph is not "Fake Peak." Edwin Swift Balch, a distinguished American historical geographer and mountain climber, made a very lengthy study of Cook's photograph of the summit and of Browne and Parker's photograph of "Fake Peak" during the period 1912-1914. He found that while there are some similarities between the two peaks, there are also distinct dissimilarities between Cook's peak and "Fake Peak." Edwin Swift Balch thus concluded that "Fake Peak" is not the peak reflected in Cook's photograph of the summit, that it cannot be.

C4 E. C. Rost also studied the question whether Browne and Parker's "Fake Peak" as shown in their 1910 photograph is the peak depicted in Cook's summit photograph. Rost examined the question independently of Edwin Swift Balch but during the same period, 1912-1914. Rost came to the same conclusion which was reached by Edwin Swift Balch: the peak in Cook's summit photograph and "Fake Peak" captured by the camera of Browne and Parker in 1910 are not the same peak, the dissimilarities between the two peaks are clear. Thus, the peak depicted in Cook's summit photograph is not "Fake Peak" and cannot be "Fake Peak." Rost's conclusions are set forth in his monograph,¹² *Mount McKinley and Its Bearing Upon the Polar Controversy*, 1914.

C5 Hans Cornelius Waale made an exhaustive study of this question in the 1970s and 1980s and concluded that the peak in Cook's summit photograph and "Fake Peak" are different peaks. He found marked dissimilarities between them, although like Rost and Edwin Swift Balch, he discovered some resemblance between the two peaks. But the pronounced differences between the two, in his view, make it impossible that they are the same. Waale concluded that whether or not Cook's summit photograph depicts the true culminating peak of Mt. McKinley, there is no question that Cook's summit is not "Fake Peak."

C6 Bradford Washburn contends that Parker and Browne were correct and that "Fake Peak" is the peak depicted in Cook's summit photograph. [*American Alpine Journal 11.1*, 1958] Neither explains satisfactorily how "Fake Peak" and Cook's Peak can be the same peak yet display certain marked dissimilarities.¹³ It seems most unlikely that the peak captured in Cook's summit photograph is "Fake Peak."

C7 To conclude with a reference to the first point made in this discussion: Even if it were shown that Cook's Peak is "Fake Peak," this would not prove that Cook did not reach the top of Mt. McKinley. The question whether or not Cook scaled Mt. McKinley to its summit must be resolved on the basis of all the evidence pertaining to his climb of the mountain in September 1906, the entire body of the evidence, including this photograph, and if the evidence as a whole supports the reality of his ascent, then it must be concluded that Cook probably, indeed almost certainly, reached the top and that the photograph has an explanation consistent with the reality of his achievement. The evidence as a whole very strongly supports Cook's claim to the first ascent of Mt. McKinley and renders it highly probable that he accomplished the feat.¹⁴

C8 Cook-Dorough starts by saying that if the summit photo shows Fake Peak, that would not prove that Cook didn't climb McKinley. In this way, lawyer Cook-Dorough tries to shift the burden of proof off Cook, in effect saying that Cook doesn't have to prove he reached the summit, rather his critics must prove he didn't. (Not the first time the legal profession

¹² Rost was Cook's often-acute paid Washington lobbyist, who later sued Cook for non-payment of wages. (The accurate title of his [atypically bad] monograph is *Mount McKinley, its bearing on the Polar Controversy*.) See Rawlins Peary . . . *Fiction* pp.247-248 and Bryce Cook & Peary, pp.599-601.

¹³ This argument tries to exploit nature's alteration of Fake Peak (including collapse of its right side). The reasoning is about on a level with disputing a coroner's identification, of a corpse whose right hand is missing, by protesting that the left hand's perfect fingerprint-match proves nothing without the other hand. If we add-in suspicion of forgery (§G), the parallel would be to suppose that the coroner could fabricate the corpse's left hand — but was stumped (if you will) by the task of faking the right hand.

¹⁴ *Polar Priorities 14* (October 1994) pp.14-15, note 2. Cook-Dorough (name now legally changed to Sheldon Shackelford Randolph Cook) can be reached in care of the Frederick A. Cook Society, Sullivan County Museum, P.O. Box 247, Hurleyville, NY 12747 (telephone 914-434-8044), which also handles membership-subscriptions (\$10/yr). Submissions to *Polar Priorities* go to editor Russell W. Gibbons, P.O. Box 11421, Pittsburgh, PA 15238; telephone 412-782-0171, fax 412-784-8801.

has turned sensible philosophy-of-science upside-down.)¹⁵ Then he rolls out an attempt at appealing to Authority, quoting experts who state flatly (and incorrectly) that “there is no question that Cook’s summit photo is not Fake Peak.” Then he reverses course again and says that, oh-by-the-way, just in case the summit photo really *is* Fake Peak, we must look at (all the other) evidence, (Of course, Cook-Dorough had seen the uncropped Summit photo — ¶7 fn 10 — and therefore must have known that his cited experts’ opinions were false.) Particularly precious is Cook-Dorough’s insistence that the Summit photo, even if fake, must have some perfectly innocent¹⁶ explanation. (Fn 17. Similar slipknot-thinking at fn 28.)

C9 Those who run out of hard evidence are prone to ask for a Larger View — appealing to the whole-of-the-evidence (§§C2&C7), or CTC p.253: whether-or-not-Cook’s-summit-shot-is-faked-is-secondary, because, “The real resolution to this dispute is to examine Dr. Cook’s complete route along the East Ridge to the summit.” (Which rather takes for granted that the route was completed. Or even started. After all, the more serious controversy here isn’t: did Cook get to Mt. McKinley’s top? It’s rather: did he even get to McKinley’s bottom?) There are several lawyeresque advantages of this wholistic approach: [a] No possibility of a crucial experiment is permitted — *the* prime condition for maintenance of an unfalsifiable mentality. [b] No matter the weight of evidence, the controversy’s loser can avoid admitting the embarrassing truth by eternally generating nit-picks and alibis.¹⁷ [c] Indisputable hard evidences are less important than our Expert Team’s superior understanding of the Whole Situation.¹⁸

C10 The trouble with item [c] is that it tends away from logic and towards personal attacks, an effect which may help explain the Cook Society’s peculiar venom towards the world’s leading Mt. McKinley expert, Bradford Washburn (longtime head of Boston’s Museum of Science),¹⁹ whose overwhelmingly conclusive 1950s photographic²⁰ investigations would have ended the Cook-McKinley controversy forever among persons of balanced judgement. A likely purpose of the recent Cook Society expedition to the McKinley area was the establishment of we’ve-been-up-there Expertise. None of which will impress scientists who observe the Society’s diary-p.52 four-way-disaster (see §F) or its mangling of the mere printing of basic surveying equations.²¹

¹⁵ E.g., the discovery-rule and the Mirandization of suspects are both flagrantly contrary to creating conditions in which competing theories’ credibility & fruitfulness can be tested by incoming evidence.

¹⁶ By golly, there must be *some* logical reason why the unimpeachable evidence does not fit the sacred theory, if only we could discern it. Readers with the wit to solve this riddle may also wish to help C. S. Lewis out of his equally self-imposed animal-pain dilemma: see *DIO* 4.3 ¶15 §I3, fn 42. Suggestions that either sacred theory might possibly be *wrong* will be received with predictable&invincible deafness.

¹⁷ A gem, by Cook-Dorough, from *Polar Priorities* 15: “The reasons for Cook possibly not having a photograph of the summit . . . could be weather conditions, snow, haze, extreme cold. Conditions are so poor on some days, particularly at the highest locations, that no good, clear photographs can be made. Thus a substitute photograph of similar features found at lower elevations might be used for purposes of illustration.” As Washburn notes, a poor-visibility excuse is pretty odd for an explorer who claimed (§D6) that he could see distant volcanoes from the summit! So CTC p.260 turns around and — in a master-display of swivel-hipped zigzag-unfalsifiability — offers that Cook’s very *claim* of seeing the volcanoes is evidence in his favor *regardless of whether it’s dead wrong* (which it positively is: §D6): “If someone were faking an ascent, it seems highly unlikely [that he] would provide refutable observations. [He] might easily claim that it was too cloudy to get a photo or see distant peaks.” This is typical (see also §D6) of the Cook Society’s evasion (noncitation) of Washburn’s demonstration that higher & nearer mountains are in a direct line with (and so make impossible) two of Cook’s reported volcano-sightings.

¹⁸ Eminent professors are not immune to such delusions: see *DIO* 1.2 fnn 66&100.

¹⁹ Science Park, Boston, MA 02114-1099, telephone 617-589-0229, fax 589-0363.

²⁰ The sheer beauty of Washburn’s pictures is assisted by use of large negatives. Cook made the same wise choice.

²¹ Compare CTC p.302 to the original Russell Porter rendering at p.41 of A. Brooks, “Mount McKinley Region, Alaska”, Dep’t Interior, USGeolSurv, Professional Paper 70 (Wash, DC, 1911).

D Doc Cooked: the unequal battle between Faith & Data

D1 So let’s follow Cook-Dorough’s advice and look at the evidence. The real evidence. Here we will include only evidence directly from Cook himself: his diary, his photography, and his published accounts. Much of this evidence has already been discussed in ¶7, but we will add one new exhibit here: the map published by Cook in his *Harper’s* article of 1907. Fig.31 is a detail of this map, enlarged 6 times; the original map was published in small scale, perhaps deliberately²² so as to obscure non-existent features.

D2 Compare this to a real map of the same area (Fig.32). Note particularly that the southern part of Ruth Glacier is drawn correctly, including the alcove on the eastern edge that contains Fake Peak. The westward curve of the lower glacier is also accurate. The tributary glacier west of Glacier Point is there, as is the narrowing of the Ruth Glacier north of Glacier Point. All of this is mapped correctly. (The map is the work of Russell Porter, a member of the 1906 expedition who had seen this portion of the Ruth Glacier from the west [short dash-dot line in Fig.31], before turning back to the coast in the late Summer.)

D3 But beyond the point Barrill said they turned back, the map is pretty bad. Ruth Glacier does not extend more than a few miles beyond Barrill’s turnaround point, but Cook’s map shows it becoming a huge serpentine²³ glacier curving far north-northeast, then backtracking far southwest to a point just below the summit.

D4 More important is the topography along Cook’s claimed route beyond the point that the map shows they left the glacier. The map has a continuous ridge line running northeast-southwest, leading directly to the summit in a roughly straight line for about 20 miles. Actually, there is a network of fairly short branching ridges leading to the summit. Of these, only Karstens Ridge runs northeast, and it peters out after about six miles. The East Buttress ends about seven miles from the summit, and it does not run in the direction Cook’s map shows. Bryce has plausibly suggested that Cook confused the East Buttress with Karstens Ridge; but this could only have happened had Cook *not* climbed the mountain.

D5 Even supposing Cook climbed the East Buttress and had mistakenly thought that it ran northeast, he would have been able to see from its top that the Ruth Glacier looks nothing like the way he mapped it. And most critically, he would have been able to see the region beyond the East Buttress: the Traleika Glacier and the upper Muldrow Glacier. Cook would have been the first person to have seen these features. Why are they missing from his map? In the area he indisputably traveled, his map is correct in all details; in the area in which his travel is in dispute, his map is suspiciously inaccurate.

D6 Here’s what Cook *did* claim to see from the top: “The icy cones of the burning volcanoes Redoubt, Iliamna, and Chinabora . . . were clearly visible with their rising vapors.”²⁴ To test this claim, Brad Washburn took a photograph from 1000 feet above the summit of McKinley on a perfectly clear day. With Mt. McKinley in the foreground, the photo shows that both Redoubt and Iliamna (modern spelling) are hidden from view by higher and directly-intervening topography, especially Mount Spurr. With Velikovskian invincible-unfalsifiability, the Cook Party does not cite the Mt. Spurr blockage and merely responds (CTC p.261; see also fn 17): “future observers may resolve this disputed item.”²⁵

²² Definitely deliberate: when virtually the same map was published in *To the Top of the Continent* (1908 pp.152-153), Cook’s 1906 route was omitted. Odd behavior for an allegedly honest man.

²³ The serpentine glacier of Fig.31 is evidently just a speculative extrapolation by R.Porter (an early skeptic about the climb: Cook diary p.164, CTC p.291), linking two prior (then-separate) dotted-line semi-conjectural glaciers. For the evolution of this mapping, see the 1906-data-based maps (XV vs. III&IX) in A.Brooks 1911 (cited in fn 21). (Bryce has wondered whether the serpentine glacier is ultimately based upon a huge Cook exaggeration-misplacement of the Ruth Glacier’s West Fork.)

²⁴ *To the Top of the Continent*, p.232. (See Washburn 1958 p.12.)

²⁵ Same defense for Cook’s lack of McKinley summit compass data (§E) and for his “North Pole” fantasy’s navigational howlers. The Cook Society contains no navigators, and for decades the Society has been unable (despite DR’s urging) to find — or even to ask publicly for — navigational experts who will vouch for the non-farcicality of Cook’s purported 1908 sextant “data”. (For which planet these alleged data put Cook on, see Rawlins Peary . . . *Fiction* 1973 pp.86-87.)

D7 The foregoing highlights a recurring theme in all of the evidence from the 1906 non-climb: absolutely everything can be verified below the point that Barrill said Cook & he turned back, and absolutely nothing can be verified beyond that point. Below the point Barrill said they turned back, we have:

- A complete photographic record, including many striking & beautiful photos;
- Several sketches in Cook's diary of views from the lower Ruth Glacier;
- Two sets of compass bearings²⁶ on visible peaks from the lower Ruth Glacier;
- Two sketch-maps in Cook's diary of the lower Ruth Glacier;
- A fine, accurate map representing the lower Ruth Glacier, published in *Harper's*.

D8 And above the point Barrill said they turned back:

- Not one photograph;
- Not one diary sketch that is a credible match to real terrain;
- Not one compass bearing;²⁷
- Not one diary sketch-map (the contrast to §D7 was suppressed in CTC: §F);
- A suspiciously incomplete map of the region north of the Gateway, published in *Harper's*.

D9 Final score on the hard evidence (see also ¶7 §H2): Cook is five-for-five in providing evidence below the point where Barrill said they turned back, as against zero-for-five in providing evidence beyond that point. And this score is charitable, since the published cartography is not merely lack of evidence but positive evidence for fraud. (Washburn notes: the map appeared 2 months before Cook left the US, for his polar hoax.) So if Cook reached the summit, not only did he stop taking photos at the precise point Barrill said they turned back, he also: stopped making sketches, stopped taking compass bearings, stopped making maps (did he lose his compass and his map-sense to the same gremlin who stole his films?),²⁸ and began to falsify the topography of the region. All at the same critical point.²⁹

²⁶ First recognized as such by Ted Heckathorn. See Cook diary pages 50 & 56, reproduced here as Figs.20&30 (also at pages 283&285 of Heckathorn's afterword to CTC). *DIO's* analyses of these two bearing sets put Cook on the Ruth Glacier at 62°47'N, 150°38'W (diary p.50), and 62°52'N, 150°.6 W (diary p.56). Both points (accurate to about a mile) are well south of where Barrill said Cook & he turned back. Most of the compass data on diary p.51, CTC p.283, are nothing but p.50 data offset by 1°1/2. (The same mountain [perhaps the 11530 ft peak at 62°57'N, 150°59'W] is called "Mt. Hunter" [¶7 fn 38] on p.50, "McK" on p.51.) So, the site was likely that of p.50. As for the 1°1/2 differential: its steadiness is a credit to Cook's vision, but its size shows poor accounting for compass deviation.) Note that the bunching of the p.56 bearings of peaks suggests that these data were taken as an afterthought during the return south — because it would be odd to observe such crowded bearings if one were moving northward, with the prospect of soon being more athwart the line of peaks.

²⁷ In spite of Cook's claim that he took "a round of angles with the prismatic compass" from the top of Mt. McKinley (*To the Top of the Continent*, p.233), his own diary contains no compass data except from Ruth Glacier (fn 26). Explaining-away this glaring omission requires an extra-epicycle alibi entirely separate from the other baseless excuse (film-going-bad) — and so we have the proto-makings of a burgeoning-out-of-control disconnected-alibi goulash, which obviously isn't going to make the Occam's-Razor cut. See §D9 & *DIO* 4.3 ¶15 §F5. (Also *DIO* 1.1 ¶7 §D1, *DIO* 1.2 §F4, fnn 103&209, 2.3 ¶8 §C20 & fn 46, 6 ¶1 fn 47.)

²⁸ [See ¶7 fn 49, where unshakable faith in Cook leads to the transformation of a desperately-conjured-up wispy speculation — that Cook's film suddenly went bad at the Gateway — into a concrete-positive conviction of this. No matter that Cook never publicly said so. Instead, he palmed off low-altitude photos as high-altitude. Which proves him a liar. OK, OK, so he lied about the film — but not the summit-conquest! (Note: the ability to be sure of this improbably disproportionate fine-distinction is what makes a Cookite. See fn 3. Also R.Newton at *Q. J. Roy. Astr. Soc.* 20:390 [1979], & 21:390 [1980], and *DIO* 1.2 §H3.) The sole, entire basis of the bad-film alibi is need: Cook-lovers crave a controversy-loser's escape-hatch, some way — any way — of continuing to insist that being on the wrong side of 100% of the photographic evidence proves nothing. *Nothing*. (See also fn 16.) Certainly, this overwhelming evidential situation cannot prove that Cook-junkies have for decades — i.e., for most of their research-lives — been wrong. Utterly & spectacularly wrong. Ironically-upside-down wrong: conned, into decades of dedication, by the clumsiest hoaxer in exploration history. No, *not for all those years* — during which devotees increasingly insulted the intelligence, integrity, and motives of those who have now been proven absolutely correct on THE key photo of the case.]

²⁹ Another type of hard evidence runs out at the Gateway: remains of Cook's camps have been found by both Washburn (see Fig.29 caption & *AAJ* 11.1 [1958] p.14) and Okonek (1993/1/13 letter to Bryce). But no traces of Cook's 1906 trip have been found closer to McKinley than the Gateway.

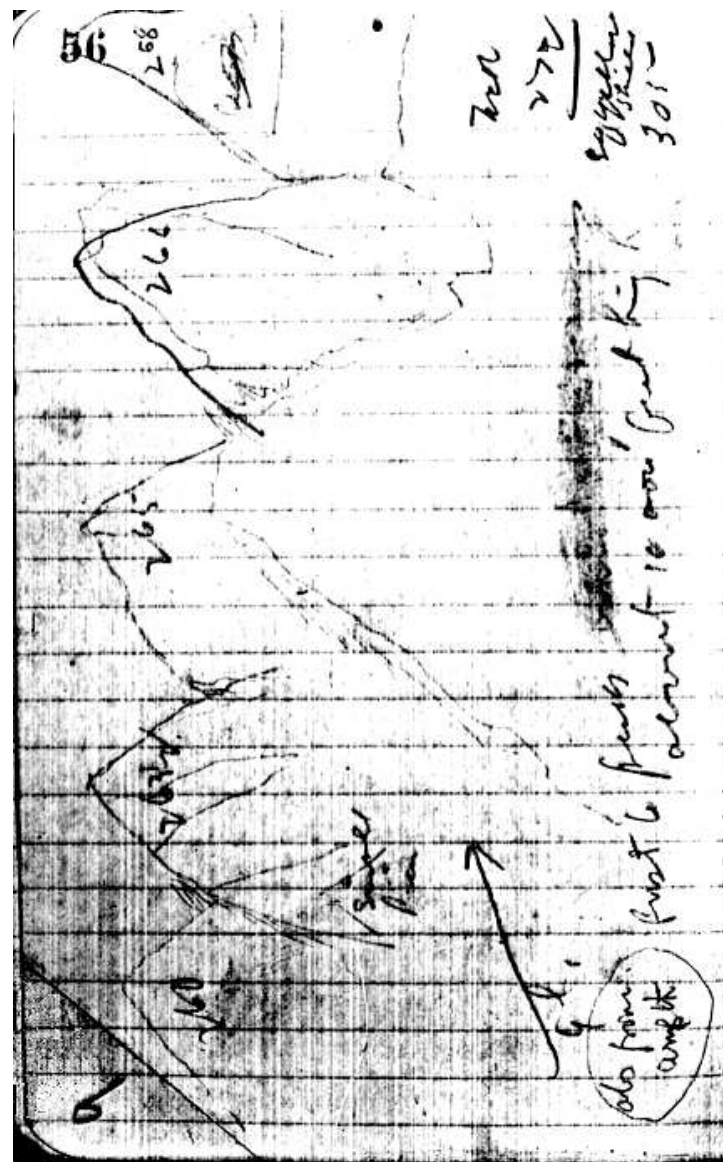


Figure 30: Page 56 of Cook's 1906 diary, showing a sketch of the peaks (Mt. Church, Mt. Grosvenor, etc.) along the western edge of the Great Gorge. (See Fig.1 & ¶7 fn 33.) Numbers on the peaks are Cook's measured compass bearings. The notation "obs from amp th" suggests that (at least part of) the drawing was made from the Fake Peak amphitheatre. However, the raw bearing-data indicate that they were observed south of Glacier Point. (See fn 26.)

D10 Cook's 1906 farthest north is also obvious from a glance at Fig.12 (diary p.44), where his own marks of activity — and the lack of a sketch-map farther north — show that he never even approached any of the four peaks he numbers #9-#12, which he merely saw³⁰ (at the Gateway) from the south, in the distance.³¹ Friendly Peak was probably peak#11 of the four. As Bryce correctly remarks (¶7 §G6), the Cook Society photo of Friendly Peak (Fig.26, same as CTC Plate 2/7) does not especially resemble Cook's "Gun Sight peak" sketch (bottom drawing at Fig.15), though the Society claims it does. This despite the neat assisting ploy of shooting this photo from a point³² less than 7000 ft above sea-level, more than 3000 ft lower than Traleika Col, from which the Society states³³ Cook drew Friendly Peak, and from which the Society claims (fn 33) its 1994 expedition swiftly spotted Friendly Peak as a match to the drawing. However, neither *Polar Priorities 14* nor CTC includes a photo of Friendly Peak taken at Traleika Col — from which point it in fact does not look like the lone peak depicted in Fig.15 or Fig.26: [a] it cannot there be seen against the sky (since it's much lower than Traleika Col); and [b] it merely looks like the front peak of a bunch of in-line peaks, Cook's #11-#9 (#10 peeking up from behind, on the left) — and anyone drawing it would obviously have depicted that situation.³⁴

D11 Unsurprisingly, Cook stopped just where the going got tough (as also in his try for the N.Pole). The Gateway is only 12 mi from McKinley's summit horizontally, but nearly 3 mi vertically, a huge 25% mean grade. Indeed, the entire McKinley massif is noted among alpinists for some of the steepest grades in the world. The East Buttress route currently favored by Cookites is particularly difficult. Cook at the Gateway was staring at a grade of over 100% (much tougher than what stopped him in 1903) just to get onto the E.Ridge at all. And, once up, he would have had to traverse a feature Washburn calls "Hairy Ridge" (Fig.33), which is so horrible that Gonnason and three others gave up their try after just 100 feet. In 1994, S.Fischer reached Hairy Ridge's start but didn't bite, obviously realizing³⁵ Cook couldn't have finished it without special equipment he lacked.³⁶

³⁰ Fig.12 & Top p.197 suggest probable (though not certain) identification of the four peaks #9-#12 which line up (both in reality and on Fig.12) with peaks #1-#8 (see Fig.1 & ¶7 fn 33). Heights of #9-#12 (S-to-N): 7272 ft, 7400+ ft, 8425 ft (Friendly Peak), and 9150 ft. The Cook Society 1994 expedition attempted (CTC p.245) to photograph the whole line of twelve, but the result is not in CTC.

³¹ There is an unexplained "26 mi" written near Glacier Point on Fig.13 (rule [10]). It seems to refer to the total distance travelled since leaving the boat. The same "26" appears on Fig.12 (rule [11]), just south of Glacier Point (scratched out at rule [8]). We also find purely northward distances given: at rule [13], "15 miles from boat"; and at rule [12], "16". So, the nearby "26" may reflect the addition of a leg up&back, perhaps into the Fake Peak amphitheatre (though, in Fig.12, "26" is a bit far south for that interpretation), perhaps to the Gateway. In any case, what is glaringly missing from Cook's diary is: sketch-map distance-data for his claimed travel beyond the Gateway.

³² Friendly Peak's location is accurately provided at CTC Plate 2/12. The Society's Friendly Peak photo (Plate 2/7, reproduced here at ¶7 Fig.26) was taken [also *PolPri 14* p.7 photo] from very near the center of CTC Plate 2/13, itself an aerial photo (with Friendly Peak stretching upward&rightward of center). Both of these CTC photos of Friendly Peak (Plates 2/7&13) are aimed roughly SSE.

³³ CTC Plate 2/12 caption. (Also p.245 & *Polar Priorities 14* p.7.) The E.Ridge viewing-site is probably not accidental. Without it, the drawings' order is odd: why should Cook draw Friendly Peak (which he encountered first) at the *bottom* of diary p.52 (Fig.16), and then later draw Pegasus Peak at the *top* of the same page? (So the Traleika Col site recommends itself to Cookites because it is the lowest point on the ridge from which Pegasus & Friendly peaks can both be seen.)

³⁴ One fails to see what a data-bare cult hopes to accomplish — other than soaking up tens of thousands of Cook Society dollars (which might be more profitably spent in glorifying Cook's genuinely heroic rôle on the *Belgica* expedition of 1897-1899) — by flying and climbing around the McKinley area, looking in all directions to try vindicating an isolated rough drawing by finding a *sharp peak*. As if that's a shockingly unusual sight in such a geologically new region.

³⁵ CTC p.262 counters with a (verbal) quote from a (deceased) guide (Cook Society-funded): "It was doable." Like "Can Do", *Guys&Dolls*' hymn to tout sheets and "a handicapper [who's] real sincere".

³⁶ Hairy Ridge is still unconquered by any human being. One can only hope that no misguided Cookite will be killed or injured on it, attempting [note Bryce 1997 p.731] a vain rescue of the lost Cook myth. [Recent close calls warn us of McKinley's mortal threat to real climbers (91 dead since 1932): *Newsweek* 1998/7/6 p.40. They also remind us of the dangers skillfully overcome by genuine summit-attainers, such as Brad Washburn — and his wife Barbara, the 1st woman ever atop McKinley.]

E Charge of the Slight Brigade — into the Valley of Eternal Reruns

When Cook's papers were finally opened a decade ago, his shrinking circle of loyalists jumped eagerly into them, nakedly hopeful of finding, e.g., the compass-data Cook claimed (fn 27) to have taken from the summit. *Polar Priorities 14* p.5 (similarly at CTC pp.239-240), bright with initial optimism upon the finding of his compass data, reported: "This new evidence warranted further investigation." But when this very investigation proved that *all* these compass data place Cook in the lower Ruth Glacier (fn 26), the Society neither learns anything nor informs its members. (See fn 16.) When every hope for hard-data vindication *came up utterly dry*, no then-sympathizer for Cook (except Bryce) was all-there enough to ask a simple question: does such total failure, on every evidential front, favor or disfavor³⁷ Cook's claims? Instead, the Cook Society began a well-funded diversion-campaign: [a] Glossing its publication, *Polar Priorities*. [b] Claiming Cook's film must have become damaged [fn 49]. [c] Spending tens of thousands of dollars upon its inner circle, and upon a prayerless-wheel of expeditions aimed at the chimera of generating convincing evidence for Cook's claims. (Cook himself having neglected to do so: CTC pp.261&265. Question: who would wish to squander his life in the rôle of a perpetual quixote — charging into one hopeless battle after another — defending so sloppy and feckless a "hero"? See *Cook & Peary* p.944.)

F Self-Destruct Bombs on Diary Page 52

F1 It is an appalling measure of the bareness of Cookism's evidential cupboard that, in pathetic apposition to the 5 hard-data blanks,³⁸ the only document in Cook's hand that the Society attempts³⁹ to call undeniable, startlingly specific proof⁴⁰ (that Cook passed much beyond the Gateway) is p.52 of the diary, i.e., the muddled sketches of Fig.15.

F2 The very idea of fighting perfectly & very-multiply-consistent photographic proof by adducing an isolated (¶7 §G16), discordant⁴¹ page of sketches (by an untalented and questionably honest artist) is wild, right on its face. But, as well, this "evidence" itself (Fig.15) cries out⁴² *in Cook's hand* with so many fatal contradictions of the very cult-theories it is supposed to confirm, that it may represent history's first known case of serial-suicide:

[a] The page is explicitly labelled "McK", which clearly backs the Okonek-Washburn-Bryce theory (¶7 §G5) that McKinley (not Pegasus-Friendly) is the subject of the drawings. The Cook cult simply ignores "McK" and claims that the upper p.52 drawing is of irrelevant Pegasus Peak, a view implicitly accepting that Cook was so smitten with Pegasus (unmentioned in his public or private writings) that he drew a closeup picture of it (and of minor Friendly Peak) — but none of his expedition's goal, Mt. McKinley.

[b] The Society's insistence, that p.52's upper drawing was made on the east ridge, has another unobvious difficulty, namely, this drawing's distant foreground is labelled "east ridge". (See Fig.15.) How could a ridge at the drawer's feet also be part of the horizontal-vista-drawing? (See ¶7 §G9.)

[c] The lower drawing is labelled as being from "gl. opp. peak 7", which is not anywhere near the east ridge. (See ¶7 §G7.) However, this contradiction would mean nothing to CTC

³⁷ The strongest admission (§C2): this "would raise a question" of possible non-success. "At most".

³⁸ See §§D7-D8.

³⁹ E.g., ¶7 §G.

⁴⁰ *Polar Priorities 14* cover, inside cover, p.8; CTC pp.248, 249, 253. Also here at fn 44 & ¶7 §G3.

⁴¹ One is reminded of the case of the Piltown "discovery", which — as anthropological data accumulated afterwards — was increasingly isolated-inconsistent with respect to the wider corpus of evolutionary knowledge.

⁴² There's a simple rule of investigative research: don't talk to evidence; listen to it. If you make up your mind before evidence arrives, then your intelligence will be spent not upon induction from the evidence, but upon resilience to it — and, when evidence gets overwhelmingly one-sided, the determined Believer eventually becomes as comic as Joe E. Brown in *Some Like It Hot*'s final scene.

readers, since CTC pp.281-282 fails to reproduce (or even provide the texts of) Cook diary pp.44&46 (Figs.12&13), both of which place peak 7 just short of the Gateway. (See also Bryce's comments at ¶7 fn 25.) Incidentally, as to the larger question of why Cook has sketch-maps south of the Gateway (but not north): the §D7-vs-§D8 contrast is also lost on CTC readers, again because the Cook Society has never published the sketch-maps.

[d] But the p.52 datum that definitively torpedos the whole east-ridge-Pegasus-Peak crock is the briefest entry on the page, "Bar 24" (right side of Fig.16) — Cook's barometer reading of 24 inches. This corresponds⁴³ to about 6000 ft; while, for 11,000 ft (the altitude the Cook Society has broadcast⁴⁴ for these drawings), the correct barometric reading would be 20 inches. (As to the likelihood of a 4 inch error: none of Cook's other real barometer readings vary from mean expectations [fn 43] by more than about 1 1/2 inches.) So, say goodbye to the Cook Society's prime new McKinley-data exhibit, by far the most-advertised evidence from its 1994 expedition, which drained the Society's coffers by roughly \$40,000.

F3 As the Cook Society falsely accuses (fn 46) others of forging material, even while the Society itself juggles (and repeatedly ignores inconvenient or even glaringly contrary parts of) its own sliver of self-proclaimed new-vindication p.52-evidence, it's time to reflect upon the psychological definition of "projection".

G Apostacy, Apotheosis, & Apology

G1 Returning to crucial-experiment-finality: the significance of the uncropped "Summit" photo is twofold: First, it shows indisputably that Cook lied in his display of the most important physical evidence from the climb. Cook's veracity is of central import when the only evidence in favor of his claim is his own unsupported word. Second, it shows that Belmore Browne, Herschel Parker, and Brad Washburn were not satanic defilers of The One True Explorer, but were legitimately attempting to determine the truth in their *now completely vindicated* investigations of Fake Peak. Past defenders of Cook (inspired by Cook himself)⁴⁵ have imputed various dishonest motives to these men [*Polar Priorities 15* pp.32&35], and their charges are still faithfully cited by Cookites today.⁴⁶ (*What does all*

⁴³ A convenient expression for the mean relation of height z (in statute miles above sea-level) to barometric pressure P (in inches of Hg) is: $z = 12 \cdot \log[30/P]$. That Cook's barometer was not seriously defective is acknowledged at CTC pp.269-270, and is obvious from the barometer data in the diary (CTC pp.283f). At diary pp.59&65, the barometer twice indicated P close to 24.6 inches (CTC p.286) for Glacier Point ("Cerac Pt.": ¶7 fn 19). Evidently working (accurately) from a table based on the above formula, Cook (diary p.59, CTC p.286) placed Glacier Point at about 5500 ft (5280-12·log[30/24.6]), though it is actually only 3753 ft above sea-level. The error could be from slight instrumental miscalibration or local atmospheric pressure-variation or both. Correcting for the effect, we can estimate that 24 inches on Cook's barometer at this time corresponded to almost 5000 ft, which is about consistent with his actual altitude in the Fake Peak-Gateway area, where he drew the p.52 sketches.

⁴⁴ E.Ridge 11000 ft altitude: *Polar Priorities 14* inside cover, p.8; CTC pp.245-248. And see fn 40.

⁴⁵ F.Cook *My Attainment of the Pole* 1913 ed. p.534, on Peary, Parker, & Browne: "bribery, conspiracy, and perjury." He continues (with unwitting irony, given his own later term in Leavenworth for mail fraud): "That such men can escape the doom of prison cells is a parody upon human decency."

⁴⁶ See §§C3-C5, CTC pp.252-253. Attacks summarized in Bryce's *Cook & Peary* pp.816f. Ted Leitzell's claim that Browne's photo was doctored (a charge spread by Cook himself: *My Attainment of the Pole* 1911 p.531) is published in *Polar Priorities 14* (1994) p.17. (Browne is an odd target of attack for fraud since he on 1912/6/29 got within a few hundred feet of McKinley's summit — all the way to Farthing Horn [fn 7] — yet honestly admitted he'd fallen short of the exact summit, entirely unlike the big-lie hero of those who keep denigrating him.) A more recent Cook Society attack on Browne claims (CTC p.261) that he temporarily mis-located Fake Peak on a map. Comments: [a] Since Browne was eventually the first post-1906 explorer to locate Fake Peak (demonstrably correctly — his written cairn-record was found on the spot: Washburn *AAJ 11.1* [1958] p.21 & plate 16), why obfuscate with such an obsolete nit-pick? [b] The Cook Society's own map (CTC Plate 2/12) mislocates its fave formation, "Pegasus Peak", placing the 12200+ft & 12060 ft peaks in its photo (our Fig.14) north instead of south of West Fork Traleika Glacier. (To prevent any unfair conclusion: the mapper in this case, Ted Heckathorn, is not ignorant of where these peaks are; i.e., this is just a meaningless slip. But, if one generates a nit-contest, this is the sort of thing that can get unmercifully blown out of proportion

this say about the Cook Society's ability to detect a genuine conspiracy?) In particular, Browne's Fake Peak photo was allegedly retouched and Browne himself was said to have been a party to fraud (allegations shown here to have been flat-out false all along). Question: *Why have such hysterically extreme charges persisted* (for over 90 years), if the Fake Peak photo's location is now being hurriedly re-classified as just ho-hum "irrelevant" (¶7 §G3) — as is certain to be the Cook party's permanent future party line?

G2 Cook's more imaginative supporters have (*Polar Priorities 15* p.36, 1995) accused Brad Washburn of ignoring or "suppressing evidence" as part of a "Peary-Browne-Washburn vendetta . . . a nasty⁴⁷ historical coverup" — and have tried portraying Washburn as a Peary-cult stooge (partly because Peary-backing National Geographic had the excellent good sense to award Brad its medals — and to reject Cook's gross hoaxes). Comments: [a] Anybody who knows Brad Washburn quickly realizes that his frank temperament is utterly antithetical to covering up anything. [b] Right in the preface to his crucial 1958 *Amer Alpine J* paper, Washburn pointedly criticized the over-aggressiveness of Peary's supporters. [c] The only time *DIO's* publisher and his wife have ever met Brad and Barbara Washburn (1995/7/16), Brad openly mentioned that Peary's failure, to take navigator-witness Bob Bartlett on the last leg of his famous 1909 trip, left Brad (& Bartlett, whom Brad knew) suspicious of the Peary North Pole claim. Such (typical) openness by Washburn — who is perfectly happy with our publication of his skepticism here — seems rather odd behavior for a National-Geographic-puppet-conspirator! (Further: the best review of Rawlins' disbelieving 1973 book, *Peary . . . Fiction*, was by Brad's protégé, Dave Roberts, in the 1973/7/19 *Wash Post*.) Since the Cook movement continues to focus on the theory that Pearyite forces are responsible for the nonrecognition of Cook's claims, it should be added further that this *DIO's* author, editor, and publisher are *all* utter disbelievers in Peary's North Pole claim. But the three of us agree with Washburn that Peary came much closer to the Pole than Cook, and the majority of the four of us believe that the immortal Peary at least tried his best in 1909 (short of suicide) — and was worth ten of Cook as an explorer.

G3 Questions for the suppression-loathing Frederick A. Cook Society: [a] Is *Polar Priorities* willing finally to publish the full "summit" photo (preferably the "lost" sharp copy: ¶7 fn 12) and its mate? (Our Figs.18&4, respectively.) Indeed, why has it not already long since done so, having (¶7 fn 9-12) possessed both for years? [b] Can *Polar Priorities* cite⁴⁸ this *DIO 7.2-3* and our address and phone&fax numbers? No need to suppress *Polar Priorities* readers' access to both sides of the McKinley controversy.

G4 The bottom line of §G1 and of the now-*complete* vindication of those who contended that Fake Peak was the site of Cook's "summit" photo: Cook's advocates obviously now owe Washburn — and the shades of Browne & Parker — an apology for their ironic⁴⁹ slurs. No matter how well deserved,⁵⁰ it is an apology that one sadly suspects will not come. If it does, *DIO* will be happy to report it.

and slung back at one. I.e., it's best if all sides simply stick to basic issues & logic.)

⁴⁷ More projection (§F3)? After evidence proves them wrong in a controversy, some openly acknowledge the fact (see, e.g., *DIO 1* ¶1 §C3, ¶9 fn 7, *DIO 6* ¶3 §F2), while others (the bad losers) can never forgive the bearer of that evidence — and find compensatory satisfaction in launching attacks upon him forever after. (See, e.g., *DIO 2.2* fn 14, and *DIO 2.3* ¶9 fn 32. Or the stalkeresque behavior of Keystone-CSICOPs-archon P.Klass — the goons' goon — towards Tom McIver [tel. 216-252-5715].)

⁴⁸ In as full & detailed a fashion as fn 14 & ¶7 fn 30, which here inform our readers: how to contact all the central Cook loyalists, how to obtain *Polar Priorities 14* & other issues, and how to subscribe and/or contribute to the Cookites' house journal.

⁴⁹ See disappearances: ¶7 fn 9-12, fn 25, §E2. (Also: *Skeptical Inquirer 2.1*:62 [1977] pp.73-74.)

⁵⁰ [On 1998/7/29, Washburn got new precise data on key controversy sites. Adopted here.]



Figure 31: A detail of Cook's map from p.826 of *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, May 1907 (enlarged so scale equals that of Fig.32). N-S solid line is longitude 151°W; E-W solid line is latitude 63°N, just north of the point Barrill said they turned back. The dash-dot line is the route Cook claimed he took to the summit. This path (like ‡7 §A1) is dramatically different from the Cook Society's proposed (E-to-W) East-Buttress route: CTC Plate 2/12. No path at all was provided on the map appearing in *Top* (1908 pp.152-153 or CTC Plate 1/5).

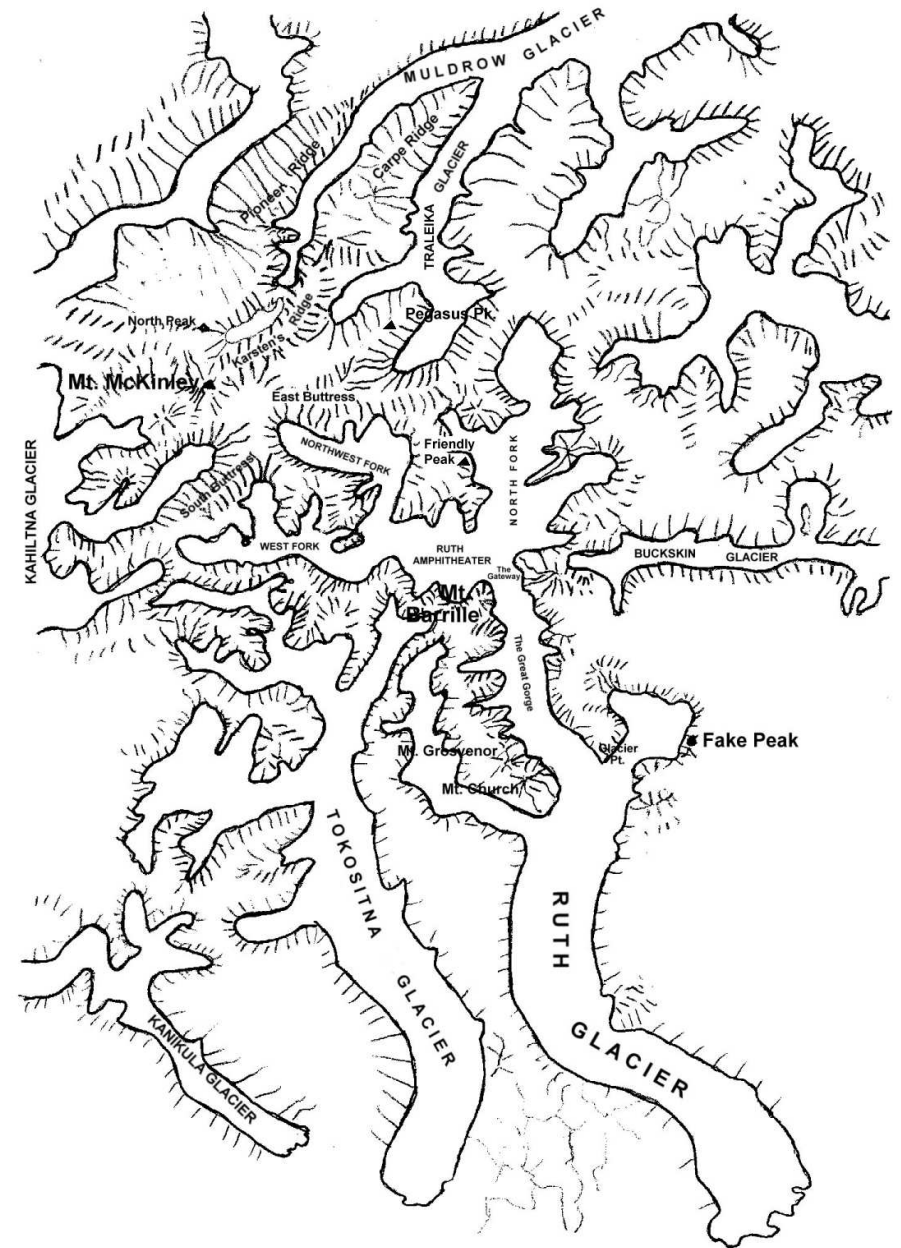


Figure 32: A simplified map of Ruth Glacier & the approaches to Mt. McKinley as they really are. Boundaries of glaciers in their upper reaches are approximate. The small glacier just northwest of Karstens Ridge is Harper Glacier. Scale: 2 1/2 statute miles per centimeter, same as for Fig.31.



Figure 33: Hairy Ridge, looking roughly northwest, at a little over 11,000 feet. (Location: just east of last “s” in “East Buttress” on Fig.32.) The Cook Society’s East Buttress Route supposes Cook went along the top of this serrated knife-edge from right to left, then straight up the icy cliff beyond. The opposite side of the Hairy Ridge is nearly as forbidding as the face shown. Photo courtesy of Bradford Washburn.

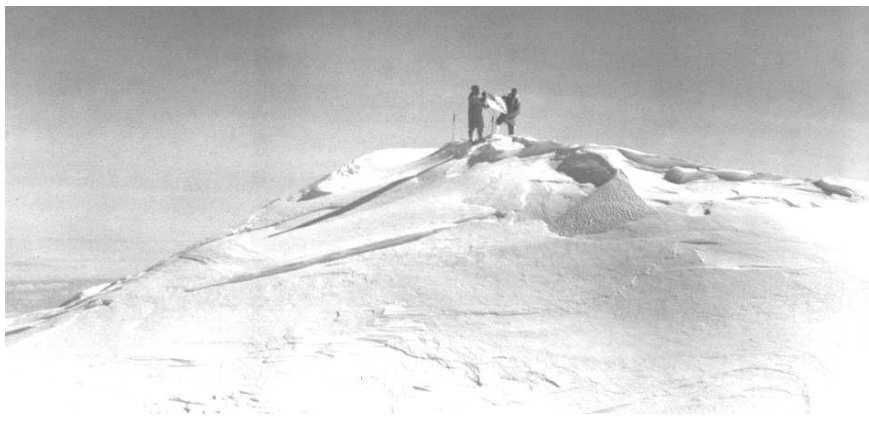


Figure 34: The summit of Mt. McKinley as it really is, looking due south. Terris Moore & Bob Bates, July 1942. Comparing to Figs.2, 3, & 18, it’s impossible to see any similarity. Photo by & courtesy of Brad Washburn.

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