

Finding the North Pole

The *American Patriot's Almanac* carried the message: **Stars and Stripes Nailed to the Pole.**

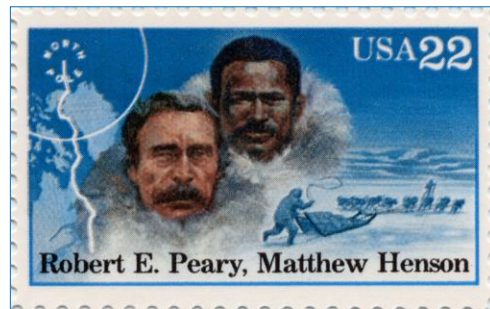
That's what an exuberant Robert Peary telegraphed from Labrador, Canada, announcing he had reached a goal long sought by explorers – the North Pole.

Peary, a 52-year-old U.S. Navy commander, had made several Arctic expeditions and two failed attempts to reach the Pole. He had spent years learning from the native Inuit (indigenous peoples inhabiting the Arctic regions) the best ways to dress in furs, build igloos and drive sledges across the ice. On one trip, he had lost eight toes to frostbite. But he was determined and endeavored “to hurl myself, time after time, against the frigid No of the Great North.”

On March 1, 1909, Peary set out from his base camp on Ellesmere Island, 413 miles from the Pole. His team consisted of 24 men, 19 sledges and 133 dogs. With him was his longtime assistant, Matthew Henson, an expert explorer in his own right.

For weeks, the men battled roaring winds and temperatures of -50 degrees. They hacked trails across rough patches, floundered in snowdrifts, and hauled their sledges across ridges of ice. At times, channels of water suddenly opened before them. They waited for the water to refreeze, then scampered across the thin ice.

Peary, Henson and four Inuit made the final 133-mile part of the trek. On April 6, Peary calculated they had reached their goal. “The pole at last!” he wrote in his diary. “The prize of three centuries.”



Through the decades, some critics have questioned whether Peary actually made it as far as the North Pole. For years, Henson received scant recognition for his role. Today, the two men generally are credited as the first to reach the Pole. Both are buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Peary's gravesite is inscribed with his motto: *I shall find a way or make one.*

How strong is your determination to accomplish what you want ... in your career, in your marriage, in your life?

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:7 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter