

# Barrill's Mount McKinley Affidavit

H. BRADFORD WASHBURN

*A major article has emerged on the subject of Dr. Frederick A. Cook's claim to have made the first ascent of Mount McKinley on September 16, 1906. When Adams Carter and I wrote the article which appeared in the American Alpine Journal, 1958, we did not have one most important and interesting reference, which has just come to our attention. On October 14, 1909, the Globe and Commercial Advertiser of New York published the complete affidavit made by Edward N. Barrill made on October 4, 1909. The next day, the same newspaper published Barrill's diary. (It is interesting to note that the newspaper cost one cent.) Barrill clearly states that he and Dr. Cook never got higher than the Gateway of the Great Gorge of the Ruth Glacier (altitude 5200 feet) and that Dr. Cook's "summit" photograph was taken many miles from the top of McKinley and only at about 5000 feet.*

*This was published at the heat of the Cook-Pearry controversy. The spelling of Barrill's name (not Barrille as used by Dr. Cook and as it appears on most maps) is confirmed by this material. Neither the original affidavit nor Barrill's diary has been located. We would appreciate any information our readers would have to locate them.*

*Space limitations prevent our publishing the diary in full, but Barrill's affidavit follows, in part in facsimile, from the Globe and Commercial Advertiser.*

## **IN THE MATTER OF THE ASCENT OF MOUNT MCKINLEY BY FREDERICK A. COOK**

State of Washington, County of Pierce, ss:

I, Edward N. Barrill, being first duly sworn, do on oath depose and say, that I am a citizen of the United States, forty-five (45) years of age, was born in Buffalo, New York, on the 9th day of April, 1864. I was in company with and was the only party present with Dr. Fredrick A. Cook, upon Sunday, the 16th day of September, 1906, the date upon which said Dr. Cook claims to have reached the summit of Mt. McKinley, in Alaska. I am the party referred to as Edward Barrill, at page 231 of Dr. Cook's book entitled, "To the Top of the Continent," published by Doubleday, Page & Company, at New York, in 1908.

Guide Who Went on Alaskan Expedition Swears Alleged Discoverer of the North Pole Was Never Nearer Than Fourteen Miles of the Summit of the North American Continent's Tallest Peak—Highest Elevation Reached Not in Excess of Ten Thousand Feet.

## IN AFFIDAVIT TEARS TO PIECES DR. COOK'S CLAIM

Changes Ordered in Guide's Diary to Make It Appear That the Top of the Mountain Was Attained—Viewed Peak From All Sides So As to Be Able to Write Plausible Description—How Photograph of Barrill on the "Summit" Was Made Without Exposing Its Falsity on Its Face.

(This is not copyrighted.)

Dr. Cook's claim to "the conquest of the pole" having been called in question, definite proof is now offered that his earlier claim to having achieved the ascent of Mt. McKinley was without foundation. The only man who accompanied him on the night

compar-

The photograph opposite page 22 of the doctor's book, entitled "In the silent glory and snowy wonder of the upper world, 15,400 ft.," was taken two or three hours before the taking of my picture with the flag, and was taken in the amphitheatre about one mile North-easterly of the point where it was so photographed.

*Elio H. Barrill*

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 11th day of October, 1909.

**{SEAL}**

*W. H. Barrill*  
Notary public in and for State of Washington, residing at Tacoma.

Facsimile of part of the front page of *The Globe and Commercial Advertiser* of New York on October 14, 1909, and the signed end of the Affidavit.

I am referred to throughout as Barrille or Edward Barrille, in said book, and in the magazine article written by Dr. Cook, bearing upon our expedition to said mountain.

I now reside at Darby, Montana, am married, and have a family of five children, and have maintained my home in Darby for the last eighteen years. During this present summer I have been engaged in the real estate business at Hamilton, Montana, eighteen miles from Darby. Before last summer my business was that of a blacksmith, which I followed continuously in Darby, Montana, for seventeen years, excepting only the part I was absent with Dr. Cook, as hereinafter stated.

I first met Dr. Cook at Missoula, Montana, on or about the 8th day of May, 1906. I was taken to him from my home at Darby by one Fred Printz. Printz was a guide and a packer who had been in the Mount McKinley region with Dr. Cook's party in 1903, as he informed me. I also understood that Printz had been a guide and a packer with the Geological Survey, in Alaska, in 1902.

#### *START OF THE EXPEDITION*

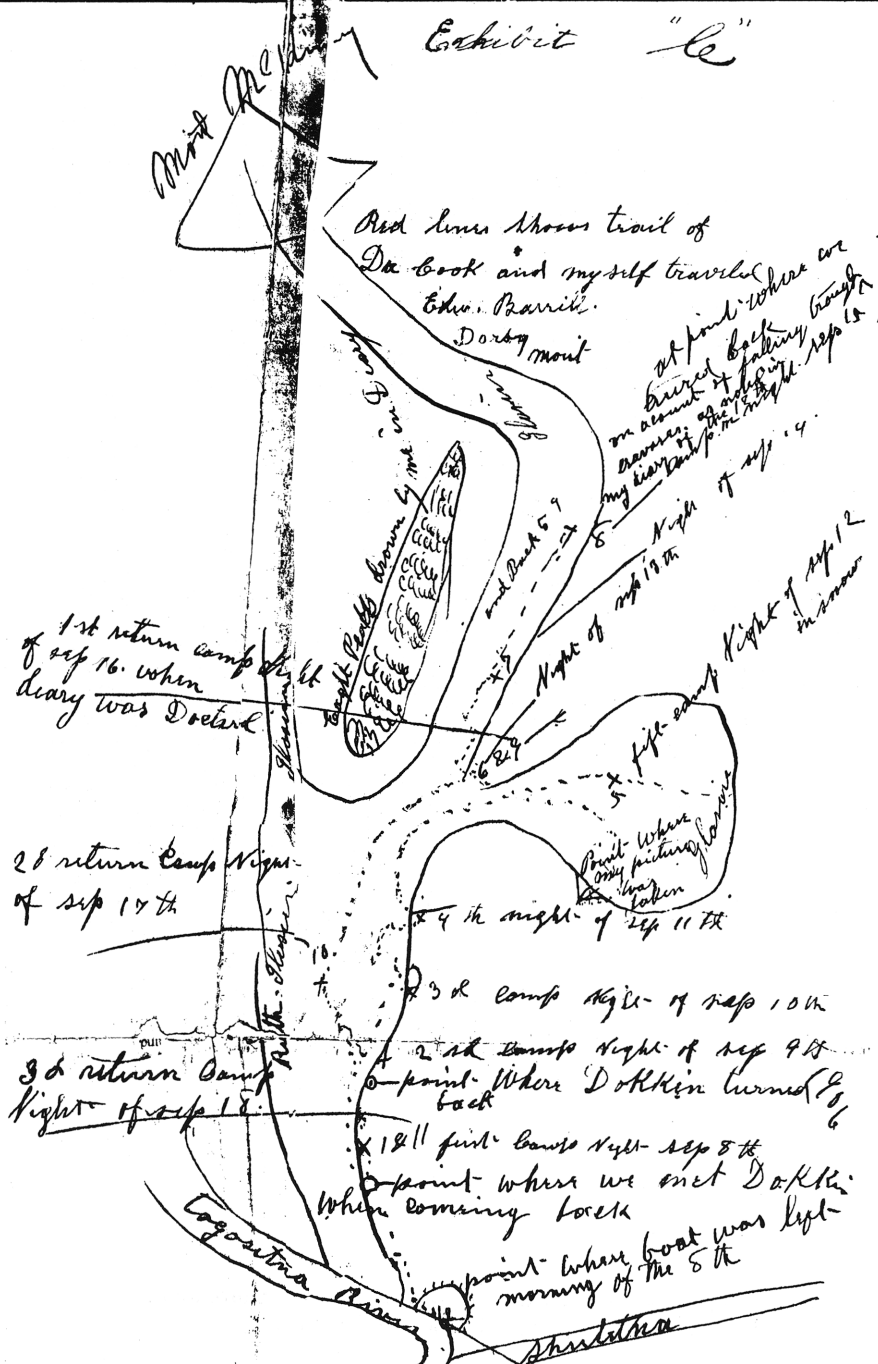
Printz informed me that he was authorized by Dr. Cook to hire a man for the purpose of assisting Printz as a packer. I went to Missoula with Printz, and was introduced by him to Dr. Cook, the doctor stepping off a westbound Northern Pacific train for the purpose. I remained until the following day to look after pack saddles and other equipments, and overtook Dr. Cook at North Yakima, where he and Prof. Parker of Columbia University, New York, and R.W. Porter were buying horses for our Alaska trip. Mr. Printz and I left North Yakima May 14th for Seattle, taking twenty head of horses with us.

Dr. Cook, Prof. Parker, and Mr. Porter joined us at Seattle the following day. The expedition consisting of these gentlemen: Mr. Printz, Belmore Brown, an artist and naturalist of Tacoma, State of Washington; Walter Miller, a photographer, of Seattle, Washington, and Samuel Beecher, who afterward became a cook for the party, and myself.

We sailed from Seattle on the steamer Santa Ana May 17th, 1906, with horses on board. We arrived at Seldovia, Alaska at 5 p.m. on May 28th. The expedition, with horses and equipment, transferred from the Santa Ana to the steamer Toledo. We left on the Toledo for Tyonek, near the head of Cook's inlet, the following day at 11 a.m., unloaded the horses, swimming them ashore, where some of them got away. We lost six head, which were never found. On the following day—Wednesday, May 30th—Dr. Cook went up to Shusitna [sic] Station with a load of supplies on his boat, a gasoline launch. Hereunto attached, and marked "Exhibit A" in red ink upon the inside of the front cover, is a pocket diary kept by me during all the time that Dr. Cook and I were together near Mount McKinley, and the same is a truthful record, with the exception of the entries and changes made by me therein under the orders of Dr. Cook, which entries and changes are hereinafter referred to.

**BARRILL'S DRAWING SHOWING COOK'S ROUTE ON MOUNT M'KINLEY**

Exhibit "C"



The above is a reproduction of the drawing made by Dr. Cook's companion, showing exactly the distance accomplished on the expedition up Mount McKinley and is marked Exhibit "C" in the affidavit of the guide. Barrill's references to the drawing in his affidavit, which was printed in full in The Globe yesterday, are as follows:



On the left page is Barrill's drawing of where he and Cook went.  
 Above is their route marked on the modern USGS sheet.

The said diary contains my doings and those of the expedition so far as they come under my notice, from May 14th, 1906, to November 9th of the same year. To guard against mistakes in the reading of this diary, I have attached to this my affidavit, a transcript of said diary, which I have carefully compared with the original, and have certified that said transcript is a true copy of my original diary, and have marked such copy "Exhibit B." All writing and drawings in the original diary are by my own hand.

### *START UP THE MOUNTAIN*

On the evening of September 9th, 1906, Dr. Cook and I started alone for the purpose of exploring Mt. McKinley. He informed me before starting that his purpose was to find a way for ascending the mountain, as he and Prof. Parker intended to climb the mountain the following year. When we started, I had a 65-pound pack on my back, as I had weighed the contents there upon the boat before starting for the mountain. Dr. Cook had upon his back a pack which would weigh about 40 pounds.

I am six feet two inches in height, with an average weight of 200 pounds. As shown in my diary, we took to the ice on Sept. 9th. From and including then down to and including the 18th of September, all writings are by me, but were made under directions of Dr. Cook. I wrote all the dates during this time at his direction. The figures until the date of Sept. 12th were changed by me at the dictation of Dr. Cook and on Sept. 12th Dr. Cook directed me to stop keeping my diary and leave pages there in blank. I cannot now remember the exact dates which I had in my diary, before I was so directed to change them. I know the elevation under what now appears as Sept. 12th was not to exceed 10,000 feet and I think it was 8,000.

We gave up any further attempt towards ascending the mountain upon Sept. 15 and returned to the boat, a gasoline launch, named Bolshoy, which was in the water at the foot of the glacier. We reached the launch on Sept. 19, having travelled twenty-six miles or more on the top of the glacier to the place we quit climbing, on Sept. 15th.

### *COOK CHANGES THE DIARY*

On the 16th, when at our first camp returning from the glacier, I doctored and changed the entries therein from and including Sept. 12th. These changes were made under the orders of Dr. Cook. From the 12th to the 16th was written at the first camp returning on the night of the 16th, and from the 16th to and including the 18th, was written in our last camp returning on the evening of the 18th, and written solely under the dictation of Dr. Cook, and just as he said. From and including Sept. 19th down to the end of the diary on November 9th the entries therein are my own. They cover the actual facts, and were not dictated to me by any one.

Dr. Cook first told me to stop my diary on Sept. 12th, when we were in our 5th camp going up the glacier, and at or near the point which Dr. Cook claimed as the top of Mt. McKinley. This point was within sight of us at this time. Dr.

Cook stated at this time and place that the same conditions existed there as did exist on the top of Mt. McKinley, and directed me to stop my diary until further orders. At this time we had been to the top of the point claimed by the doctor as the top of the mountain, and the doctor had taken a photograph of the point with me standing on the top thereof, with the American flag in my hand. The photograph to which I refer is shown opposite page 227 of the doctor's book, entitled "To the Top of the Continent," before mentioned. The jagged marks on the apex of the stone in that picture as shown from the bottom of the picture up in the granite rock forming the top of the point, are my foot marks and those of Dr. Cook. My best recollections of this are as follows. Dr. Cook and I went to the top of this point together, and he said, "We will go back down and get a picture of this." We did not take our bags with us to the top of the point, having left them down in the saddle above the glacier. We then both went down from the point to where our bags had been left. The doctor took the American flag out of one of the bags and handed it to me, and sent me back to the top of the point, and told me to hold it there on the end of the ice axe, which I did.

#### *PICTURE OF THE SUMMIT*

The doctor then with the camera took the picture shown opposite page 227, which picture is there designated as "The Summit of Mt. McKinley" in his work, "To the Top of the Continent." The truth being that the summit of Mt. McKinley was over twenty miles distant in an air line from the point where my picture was so taken, according to the scale on Dr. Cook's map shown between pages 152 and 153 on the book referred to above. I then came down with the flag to where Dr. Cook was standing with his camera, and I made the remark that the eight peaks on the other side of this point where I had been photographed would probably show in the picture, and he said that he had taken the picture at such an angle that those peaks would not show. The peaks to which I refer are sketched by me in my diary and are marked 1 to 8, inclusive, and are shown in said diary on the page just preceding the date appearing therein as Sept. 9th and on the pages following Sept. 12th. These peaks were so sketched and numbered by me when I was in the camps opposite them, where I could have a fine view of them. The camps where I so sketched the peaks are the camps marked upon my drawing, "Exhibit C," hereunto attached as the 6th and 8th camps when we were going up the glacier.

When we were in the saddle near the point where I was photographed I made a drawing of what I named "Glacier Point." At the same time and point I made a drawing of Mt. McKinley, as I could see the top of Mt. McKinley off to the northwest, and, I should say, at least twenty miles away. This drawing of Glacier Point and Mt. McKinley is shown in my diary, on the 4th and 5th pages of the sketches therein, and represents conditions as they appeared to me upon the ground. Dr. Cook stood by my side when I was making these sketches, using instruments for the purpose of taking temperature, elevations, and the like. We remained in the saddle after I was photographed in the point for about one-half hour during which I sketched as above stated, and the doctor used his instruments.

When I came down from the point and handed the doctor the flag, in addition to what I stated above he made several other remarks, and there was more or less talking done, which I do not now recall; but whether at that time and place or thereafter and between the 12th and the 16th of the month, when my diary was doctored to fit the conditions in order to prove that this point was the top he stated to me as follows: "That point would make a good top of Mt. McKinley. It looks just about like the gunsight peak would look on Mt. McKinley," which we had been looking at from the saddle.

### *VIEWS FROM THE SIDE*

In about half an hour after the picture was taken we fixed up our packs, and at about 10:30 or 11:00 o'clock on Sept. 13th we started down and around to the place designated on "Exhibit C" as the 6th camp, the doctor saying that he wanted to go around there in order to get farther up on the main glacier, so as to get a good view of the N.E. Ridge leading up to the summit of Mt. McKinley, so as to ascertain if that ridge was connected solid to the top of the mountain, so that it would have an appearance similar to the description that he would have to give in his writings; as the doctor had seen the mountain from all sides excepting this side, and as this was the side where he proposed to claim that he had climbed it, he wished to know the nature of the ridge leading up to the top of the mountain, so that he could write about it as it appeared. In doing this we put in the balance of the 13th and all of the 14th and 15th day of Sept., and the 8th camp, on Sept. 15th Dr. Cook made his observations of the ridge. We then turned back from this camp for the reasons that we had both fallen through crevasses as correctly stated in the diary, and we considered it too dangerous to proceed further without snowshoes, as the doctor had obtained a good view of the ridge which was all he wanted.

On the first day returning we made the camp of Sept. 16th, shown on "Exhibit C," which was the same camp that we had used on Sept. 13th. The second day returning we made second return camp shown on "Exhibit C." Our third camp returning was on the night of Sept. 18th. On the next morning we found John Doken, and he continued back with us to the boat, which we reached on Sept. 19th, having been absent since the morning of Sept. 8th. Doken had started from the boat with us on the morning of the 8th, but turned back at the point designated on "Exhibit C," stating as his reason the dangerous crevasses in the glacier. When Doken determined to turn back, Dr. Cook told him to return to the boat, after which he should come up the glacier to meet us. Doken was so returning to meet us, when we found him on Sept. 19th as above stated.

### *WORKING ON HIS BOOK*

After the above experiences, I returned with Dr. Cook to Seward, Alaska, where he worked upon his manuscripts for the book above referred to. I remained with him at Seward for 20 days.

In coming out from the glacier we left Tokositna River with the launch on Sept. 20th and reached Susitna Station on Sept. 22nd. Here we met other members of the party, named Walter Miller, Fred Printz, and R.W. Porter, the topographer of the party. They returned with the doctor and myself in the launch to Kenai, Alaska, at the lower end of Cook's Inlet, where we all remained about two weeks, waiting for a vessel to get out. We finally got the steamer Tyonek and went upon her to Seldovia. There we met Samuel Beecher and Belmore Brown, two other members of the party. Dr. Cook left us here and took the steamer Dora for Seward, Alaska. We all followed in two or three days thereafter on the steamer Bertha.

We found the doctor in Seward, where he was detained by a lawsuit pertaining to certain horses which we hired on the trip to take the place of the 9 horses which we had lost, including the 6 first above mentioned. He sent all the members of the expedition out to Seattle on the steamer Bertha, excepting me and R.W. Porter, I being as a witness in a lawsuit, and Porter remained assisting Dr. Cook in connection with his book.

I have attached hereunto as "Exhibit D" the United States geological map of the Mt. McKinley region as surveyed in 1902. Upon this "Exhibit D" Walter Miller has drawn in red ink our exact route toward the mountain and back therefrom. In black ink Miller has drawn the outlines of Ruth Glacier. This drawing has been done under my direction, and the same is correct. The red writing on "Exhibit D" is by Miller and under my direction, and the same is correct. "Exhibit C" is a rough drawing made by me for the purpose of showing in detail where different camps were, with the dates thereof, and for the purpose of showing the variances between the changes or writings in my diary, made under the direction of Dr. Cook, and the actual facts of his movements and mine, which facts are shown from "Exhibits C" and "D."

I was with Dr. Cook continuously every day during the time he was attempting to ascend the mountain, in the year 1906, and the nearest point to the summit of Mt. McKinley which we reached was at least fourteen miles distant from the summit of that mountain, and at no time did we reach an elevation in excess of 10,000 ft., and the doctor told me when we were at the place where my picture was taken, that we were not over 8,000 ft. high. I neglected to state that on the 10th of September, after Doken left us, and on the evening of Sept. 9th, Dr. Cook asked me if I was willing to stay with him. I said "yes," when he said; "I will see you get \$200.00 extra for doing so."

#### *SOME FALSE PICTURES*

The photograph opposite page 171, in Dr. Cook's book above mentioned, and described therein as "The Eastern Cliffs of Mt. McKinley," are not such cliffs, but are a part of the eastern slope of the 8th peak of the peaks above mentioned, and drawn by me in my diary attached hereto.

The photograph opposite page 192 in Dr. Cook's book was taken the evening of the same day that he took me with the flag at what he claims as the top of

McKinley and was taken at camp 6, shown on attached exhibits "C" and "D." The camp in this picture is noted thereon to be 5,000 ft. This being so the point where my picture was taken with the flag should not exceed 7,000 ft. as the 5,000 ft. camp was established only 6 to 8 hours after my picture was so taken.

The drawing opposite page 204 of Dr. Cook's book above mentioned is entirely false, as we never built a snow house on the trip, although the diary as dictated by the doctor says so; nor did we shake hands or have any other similar ceremonies as stated in the diary.

The drawing opposite page 209 of the doctor's book is also false. We never climbed anything half as steep as there shown, and we never established any camp, nor slept as there shown. We slept every night upon comparatively level spots.

The photograph opposite page 226 in the doctor's book, entitled "In the silent glory and snowy wonder of the upper world, 15,400 ft.," was taken two or three hours before the taking of my picture with the flag, and was taken in the amphitheatre about one mile North-easterly of the point where it was so photographed.

Edward N. Barrill

Subscribed and sworn to before me the 4th day of October, 1909

(SEAL)

W H Camp

Notary public in and for State of Washington, residing at Tacoma.

The Japanese climbing magazine, **IWA TO YUKI**, covers news and photos, many in color, about mountaineering all over the world, climbing gear, high-altitude medicine and much more. Although published in Japanese, it has a summary, photo captions and maps in English. The yearly subscription for six issues is 7380 yen, including sea mail. Send to **IWA TO YUKI**, Yama To Keikoku Sha Co. Ltd., 1-1-33 Shiba Daimon, Minato-ku, Tokyo, 105 Japan.