

Henson honored as co-discoverer of North Pole with Robert Peary

By GAREY REYNOLDS

ANNAPOLIS — Gov. J. Millard Tawes called the late Matthew Alexander Henson "a great American, a great Marylander and a great human being" Saturday as the Free State honored the co-discoverer of the North Pole.

The 1,500 persons attending witnessed the dedication of a bronze memorial plaque in the House of Delegates Chambers and its unveiling in the old senate chambers.

Mrs. Lucy Henson of New York, wife of the now famed Marylander, participated in the ceremonies which were covered by all press media.

Music for the impressive ceremonies was provided by chorus groups from Robert E. Peary High School, Coppin State Teachers College and the Wiley H. Bates High School, band and choir.

THE MAN MOST responsible for it all, Herbert M. Frisby, presided.

Others on the program were Neil Swanson, world affairs editor for the News Post; James E. Evans, counselor to the assistant secretary of defense; Clifford W. Mackay, AFRO editor; Dr. Fred L. Dunn, principal of Robert Peary High School; Albert P. Backhaus, director of public improvements of Maryland; Dr. Martin D. Jenkins, president of Morgan State College, Senator Alvin Jones, Senator John T. Parran Jr. and Commander Edward Peary Stafford, grandson of Admiral Robert Peary.

Also guests were William H. Q. Halm, Ghanian ambassador; Juliu M. Udochi, Nigerian ambassador, and S. Edward Peal, Liberian ambassador.

In his prepared text, Governor Tawes said, "There is nothing that we can do here today...that will enhance the brilliant achievements of this first man to set foot upon the top of our planet.

"Let me say, however that I, and all Marylanders are proud of this man, born in our state, who accompanied the illustrious Admiral Robert E. Peary on many expeditions, and who finally on April 6, 1909, just a few minutes before Peary, succeeded in reaching the North Pole.

"IN HIS MEMOIRS of the explorations, Admiral Peary, himself gave most of the credit for his success to Henson, praising the Maryland man who was his personal assistant, his surgeon, his interpreter, his indispensable companion and aide, for his endurance, his loyalty and his arctic skills.

"I am proud to have played a small part in honoring this man. And I am profoundly grateful to all of you who have come here today to pay tribute and express reverence to Matt Henson."

AFTER THE ceremony, Mr. Frisby presented to Governor Tawes a gavel made from wood recovered from the Henson home in Charles County, Md.

Governor Tawes made special mention of the ambassador from Liberia, requesting him to convey the state's greetings to President William V. S. Tubman of Liberia. The state has a warm spot in its heart for him, Gov. Tawes said.

Mrs. Henson expressed gratitude to Governor Tawes and to Mr. Frisby, who, she said, "dedicated his life to give him (her husband) the

honor he deserves as a Marylander.

"Today must be an especially happy one for Mr. Frisby to see a dream come to fruition," Mrs. Henson said.

Mr. Swanson termed the ceremonies "an act of justice... an act of faith."

"This is a memorial to our ideals as a people, a memorial that achieves ideals for which we stand," he declared.

MR. MACKAY praised the perseverance that took Matt Henson to the North Pole, and the perseverance that drove Mr. Frisby to realize his wish for a memorial for his inspiration — Matt-Henson.

The editor also acknowledged the AFRO's part played in Mr. Frisby's going to the Pole as its correspondent in 1956.

Mr. Backhaus presented the plaque to Mr. Jenkins.

In his acceptance, Dr. Jen-

kins hoped it would "provide untold inspiration for untold generations ahead."

Mr. Evans saw Henson as having followed in the footsteps of the Afro-European Andrew Alonso Pedro Nino, who was reported on board the Santa Maria when Columbus discovered America.

In both cases, Nino and Henson prepared a reception for their leaders.

COMMANDER Stafford, grandson of Admiral Peary, praised Henson for his "trust, reliability and loyalty."

He viewed the discovery of the Pole as being accomplished by three races, the white, the colored and eskimo, and hoped for joint cooperation in future discoveries of this country.

In his brief remarks, Mr. Frisby said his task to get Henson honored in a creditable manner first met with stiff opposition.

But he said, "We have come a long way in a very short time. This could only happen in America."

AFTER THE unveiling of the plaque by Mrs. Henson in the South Wing, Mrs. J. Millard Tawes and Mrs. William Middendorf Jr., presented Mrs. Henson an American Flag.

The bronze plaque with the bas-relief face of Matt Henson in arctic headgear, is 28 by 36 inches.

An inscription under it reads: "Exemplification of courage, fortitude and patriotism, whose valiant deeds of noble devotion under command of Admiral Robert Edwin Peary, in pioneer arctic exploration and discovery, established everlasting prestige and glory for his state and country."



AN IMPORTANT MOMENT — The widow of Matthew Henson, co-discover of the North Pole, is holding on to one side of the flag after it had been removed from the plaque honoring the Maryland native at the State House on Saturday. Governor

J. Millard Tawes holds the other end. Others in the picture included Herbert M. Frisby, who made this moment possible; Commander Stafford, a grandson of Admiral Robert Peary, and Mrs. Verda F. Welcome, member of the House of Delegates.