

# Explorer's grandson discovers his roots

Arctic descendants tour State House

6/5/87 Associated Press D3

Ussakaq Henson gazed admiringly at the plaque in the State House honoring Matthew Henson, the grandfather he knew only from stories told to him as he grew up in a tiny village in the northernmost reaches of Greenland. **EVENING STAR**

He was delighted, he said through an interpreter, to know that his grandfather was such a famous man.

Henson is in the midst of a once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage through Maryland and other northeastern states to learn more about his grandfather, a black explorer who, along with Cmdr. Robert E. Peary, journeyed to the North Pole in 1909.

Both men fathered illegitimate sons during their long stay in the Arctic, and now 13 of their descendants have traveled thousands of miles from the remote villages where they live to learn more about Henson and Peary and meet American relatives. **JUN 5 1987**

Henson's son, Ahnaukaq, 80, was too tired to make the trip from Washington yesterday, but Peary's son, Karree, also 80, was present with his son and grandson.

The three Pearys, along with Ussakaq Henson, his four brothers and four of Matthew Henson's great-grandchildren, visited the State House to see the plaque and then walked to a nearby museum to view



**JUN 5 1987 EVENING STAR** Associated Press

Ussakaq and Avakaq Henson place a wreath at a plaque commemorating their grandfather, North Pole explorer Matthew Henson. With them is Karree Peary, left, son of explorer Robert Peary.

a display of Henson's papers and belongings.

Ussakaq Henson said he had expected to see a monument or statue of his grandfather outside the State House, but seemed pleased and impressed that it was "such a beautiful plaque inside."

The trip was arranged by S. Allen Counter, a Harvard professor who first made the outside world aware that Peary, widely credited with discovering the North Pole, and Henson had fathered sons. **EVENING STAR**

He tracked down the two sons on trips to northern Greenland, and began planning the trip to the United States a year ago after Ahnaukaq Henson said it had been his lifelong dream to visit his father's birthplace and meet relatives.

Counter arranged for the two sons to get together last year. It was the first time they had seen each other

since Peary's family moved about 90 miles to another village when the two were 15 years old.

The trip has been quite an experience for the visitors from Greenland, who live in such remote villages that the only transportation is by dog sled. There are not even any snowmobiles, Counter said.

While the visitors were in Massachusetts, Counter arranged for Peary to meet 83-year-old Robert Peary Jr. It was, he said, their first meeting. **JUN 5 1987**

Ussakaq Henson and his sons and grandchildren also visited Henson's birthplace in Charles County and met American relatives yesterday.

While Cmdr. Peary is widely credited with discovering the North Pole, Henson's exploits in being the only man to accompany him are a well kept secret.

Peary's decision to take Henson,

a black man, with him and leave scientists who were on the expedition behind at a camp did not go over well either with the members of the expedition or with Americans in general. **JUN 5 1987**

Hanson had started out as a valet to Peary and became, over the years, a friend. When the time came to make the final trek to the North Pole, Peary told associates he could not go without Henson.

The two men later had a falling out, and Henson died a bitter man, unhappy that his country had not recognized or rewarded his achievement. **JUN 5 1987**

If his descendants were aware of that, it did not interfere with their enjoyment of the trip to Annapolis.

"They realize that their grandfather is a very respected man, here as well as in the Arctic," Counter said.