The History of the Twentieth Century
Episode 59
"Ultima Thule"
Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

In the fourth century BC, a Greek explorer named Pytheas, from the Greek colony of Massalia, the city that today we call Marseilles, went on a voyage of exploration into northern Europe. He circumnavigated the island of Britain and visited a place he called Thule, where, he said, the sun shone for twenty-two hours during the summer solstice, and the natives told him that a little farther north, the sea itself was solid.

Many scholars in the ancient world doubted these claims. Modern scholars are more credulous. Many believe he did indeed visit what we today call Norway, perhaps somewhere around Trondheim, and produced the first written record of the extreme conditions of the far north.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening Theme]

Episode 59. Ultima Thule.

Ultima Thule means something like "Farthest Thule," and is how the semi-mythical Thule of Pytheas' explorations was referred to in ancient times. The phrase came to be used poetically to describe a distant place or a far off goal that was all but beyond reach.

Since ancient times many different human communities across the Northern Hemisphere worked out a few basic facts about the nighttime sky. While most stars are only visible during certain seasons, there is a region of the sky to the north where the same stars can be seen any night of the year. These stars circle around one particular star, an average star not noticeably different from the others, that is often called the North Star. The oldest known written record noting these facts comes from Mesopotamia and is more than 5,000 years old.

The ancient Greek scholars understood that the farther north one traveled, the higher the North Star rose in the sky and the larger became the region of sky that was always visible. From Greece itself, the region of sky always visible was contained within a circle that passed through the constellation they called the Great Bear. This is the constellation that includes the asterism known as the Big Dipper in North America and the Plough in the British Isles. But the Greeks

called it the Great Bear, or Arktos, and therefore called the circle full of stars that never set the Bear's Circle, or the Arctic Circle. Some Greek thinkers were able to see that what this meant was that the Earth was a sphere that turned on an axis that reached the surface of the Earth at a North Pole that was directly under the North Star. Actually, I suppose they mostly believed it was the sky turning over the Earth, but either way, there is still an axis, and that axis touches the surface of the Northern Hemisphere at the North Pole.

In this podcast, we've already talked about the Age of European Exploration that began in the fifteenth century, and was driven by a desire to skirt the Ottoman monopoly on trade with the Far East. As well as a desire for food that tasted good and clothing that didn't itch. The Portuguese cracked the problem first, by sailing around the southern tip of Africa. Christopher Columbus's desire to find a westerly route to the Far East led to him stumbling upon the Americas, although there was confusion over whether the Americas were a new found land, or simply part of the Far East. They proved to be the former, which led inevitably to the question, is there a way to sail through the Americas and on to the Far East, where the good stuff is. As we have already seen, Ferdinand Magellan led the expedition that first cracked that problem, but it required him to sail very far south, into what we now call the Strait of Magellan. That was even farther south than the Portuguese had had to go to get around Africa. So Europeans now had two ways to get to the Far East. Go far into the southern waters of the Atlantic Ocean, then turn left and go around Africa, or turn right, and go around South America. It was a long trip either way, but over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it became increasingly apparent that the Americas were a continuous strip of land with no sea passage at anything like a convenient latitude.

But what would happen if a European tried sailing north, and then turning right to pass north around Asia, or left, to pass north around the Americas? These two theoretical routes came to be called the Northeast Passage and the Northwest Passage, respectively. It's not so obvious on a flat map, but if you look at a globe you can see that the fact that the Earth is a sphere means that a ship leaving Europe would have a much shorter voyage to, say, China, by taking one of these routes than by going around South America or Africa. Even after the Suez Canal is built, the northern routes still look pretty good.

And so, the first European explorers of the far north were motivated, like the da Gamas and Columbuses and Magellans before them, by a desire to find a better route to the Far East. We who speak English are more familiar with the search for the Northwest Passage, as it was almost entirely a British project. British claims to North America began in part as a result of voyages of exploration seeking that Northwest Passage. Once the British became well-established in North America, interest in the Northwest Passage only increased, because the Passage, assuming it were found, would likely be British controlled.

That is, unless the Russians get there first. Russia, you'll recall, has been expanding eastward. It wasn't until 1728 that the Danish explorer Vitus Bering demonstrated that there was no land bridge between Asia and North America, but that didn't stop the Russians from exploring and

settling Russian America, what today we call Alaska, which brought the Russian Empire butting up against the British and Spanish Empires in the New World, and neither of them were very happy about that. But the British in particular did not want to see the Russians gain control of the Northwest Passage. In the worst-case scenario, you could imagine the Russians even using such a thing to establish a naval presence in the western Atlantic.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, British explorers had demonstrated that there was no Northwest Passage across North America anywhere east of Hudson's Bay or south of the Bering Strait. So by that time, the principle was fairly clear. You had to sail north of North America. But that's tricky. First and foremost, the arctic conditions are horrendous. Explorers of this time sailed aboard wooden ships crewed by sailors living in cramped, unhygienic conditions and being fed poor quality food. A life at sea was dangerous and unhealthy in the friendliest of climates; in the Arctic it was a deadly nightmare, and many who ventured there never made it back.

And even beyond all that, the geography of the Northwest Passage is not explorer-friendly. The Canadian Arctic Archipelago is a jumble of over 35,000 islands that make the sea passages between them like navigating a maze. Hudson's Bay tempted many an explorer to hunt too far south, and once you've figured out for certain that Hudson's Bay is a dead end and try to go north of it, you are up against the Melville Peninsula and the Boothia Peninsula, two long peninsulas jutting ridiculously far north from the Canadian mainland, that seem to exist for no other purpose than to force exploring ships to go way farther north into ice-laden waters and unforgiving weather than they should ever have to.

The northern tip of the Boothia Peninsula had been discovered by 1847, and with it, the fact that the Northwest Passage would require passing north of that point had been established. The northern coast of continental North America had already been explored and mapped by land. And so the situation was becoming an little embarrassing to the British Admiralty. The Northwest Passage was pretty well worked out now, on paper. Wasn't anyone going to, you know, be the first person to sail through it?

And so the veteran Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin stepped up. Franklin was a British naval officer with a distinguished career. He had served at the Battle of Copenhagen when he was just 15 years old. He was at the Battle of Trafalgar and the Battle of New Orleans, and had been on three previous Arctic explorations. Of course, he was also pushing sixty by this time, but he didn't let that stop him. (Hey, is anything wrong with being almost sixty?)

Anyway, the Admiralty gave him two ships, *Erebus* and *Terror*, both of which had served admirably in the Antarctic, as we will see in a future episode, and the expedition was outfitted with 132 men and what was cutting edge technology in 1845: steam power, including a steam heating system for the crew, iron rudders, and iron plating on the bow, all of which meant the ships should be able to plow their way through all but the thickest ice. Equipment for distilling

seawater into potable water. And canned food, a new technology at that time, that held the promise of protecting the crew from scurvy and other forms of malnutrition. The Admiralty stocked the ships with enough canned food to feed the entire expedition for three years. Unfortunately, the contract was awarded at the last minute to the lowest bidder, a supplier named Stephen Goldner, whose standards for both quality and cleanliness were much mocked, even at the time, and the cans arrived at the last minute, so there was no time to inspect them or sample the contents.

The Franklin expedition left London in May, 1845 with great confidence. Outfitted with all this modern technology and crewed with experienced explorers and sailors, they seemed more than equal to the task of finally exploring that last stretch of Arctic waters. In July 1845, a whaling ship reported exchanging greetings with the Franklin expedition in Baffin Bay.

And that was the last any European ever saw or heard of the Franklin expedition.

Almost forty expeditions would be sent out over the next ten years in search of the lost Franklin Expedition, and these searches would do much to complete the map of the Canadian Arctic. They would also cost many lives, and eventually the Crimean War would break out and the Admiralty would call off the search.

Many questions remain about the fate of the Franklin Expedition, and it would make a pretty good podcast episode all by itself—paging *Twilight History*—but this is not the right podcast for that episode. Over the years graves were found, trash dumps, bodies, and in 2014, the wrecks of the ships themselves were discovered. It appears that most of the crew, but not Sir John, survived more than two years, into the spring of 1848, and they had abandoned their ships and were trying to return by land, heading south. But they all died. Studies of the bodies suggest their deaths were due to a combination of tuberculosis, scurvy, and lead poisoning, possibly from the canned goods, maybe from the water distiller. Some have suggested botulism or other spoilage from the canned goods might have been a factor. Maybe someday, this mystery will be fully resolved.

[music: *Symphony No. 6 in B minor ("Pathetique")*]

European explorers were also searching for a Northeast Passage around the north coast of Asia. In 1596, the Dutch explorer Willem Barentsz discovered the Spitzbergen archipelago, north of Norway. He sailed as far as the islands of Novaya Zemlya, which were already known to Russians at that time, but were a new discovery to the Dutch. Because the warm waters of the Gulf Stream flow all the way up the coast of Norway and beyond, this route isn't too bad, at least as far as what we now call the Barents Sea. Once you get past Novaya Zemlya, however, the sailing becomes more hazardous, although still not as bad as in the Canadian Arctic, it seems, since there are reports of ships making the Northeast Passage run as early as the 17th century.

The 1872 Austro-Hungarian Polar Expedition discovered the archipelago that lies north of Novaya Zemlya, and east of Spitzbergen, which they named "Franz Josef Land," after the

Austrian Emperor Franz Josef. Somehow, that archipelago manages to retain his name to this day. In 1913, an Imperial Russian naval expedition probing the Northeast Passage discovered another archipelago east of Franz Josef Land, which probably counts as the last time in history anyone would discover any significant bit of new land on the surface of the Earth. They named it Emperor Nikolai II Land, 1913 being the year of the Romanov tercentenary.

These northern islands were at the time regarded as unclaimed by any nation and remained so into the 1920s. In 1925, Canada declared all lands north of the Canadian mainland as far as the north pole to be Canadian territory, and the following year the Soviet Union made a similar declaration, which made Franz Josef Land and Emperor Nikolai II Land formally part of Russia, although the Soviet government renamed Nikolai II Land to Severnaya Zemlya, which means Northern Land. Norway got to administer Spitzbergen, which the Norwegians call Svalbard, at about the same time, but gained only partial sovereignty. As I understand it, any citizen of any country that is a signatory to the Svalbard Treaty and who wants to, can go live on Svalbard if they like. Don't forget to write.

As for the Northeast Passage itself, the first ship made that journey from east to west in 1878. With the development of steamships and icebreakers, by the early twentieth century, Russia was experimenting with making the Northeast Passage militarily and commercially viable. These efforts met with some success, although using the passage remained risky.

The idea of heading north purely for the sake of seeing how far north you can get doesn't seem to have emerged until the early nineteenth century. You can argue over who was the first explorer whose intent was primarily to reach the North Pole, but a good candidate is William Parry. In 1819 he won a £5,000 prize for reaching a longitude of 110 degrees west via the Northwest Passage, and in 1827 he took a shot at another prize that was being offered for gaining a latitude of 83 degrees north. He and his crew traveled to Spitsbergen, and headed north over the ice on foot, but their progress was very slow, and hindered by the fact that the sea ice was moving south as they moved north, so it's kind of like traveling on a treadmill. A cold, slushy, miserable treadmill. They eventually made it as far north as 82 degrees 45 minutes, not enough to win the prize, but a record that would stand for almost 50 years.

Later in the nineteenth century, there were a few British and American attempts to reach the North Pole. Most did not end well. A Swedish explorer's attempt to reach the North Pole via balloon in 1896 ended in disaster when the balloon lost control and disappeared. The remains of this expedition were discovered in 1930, along with, remarkably, photographic plates that could still be developed, providing a pictorial record of the expedition's unhappy fate.

In 1903, the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen left Norway, which was then still in a personal union with Sweden, aboard a small ship, *Gjøa*, with a crew of six. By traveling light, living off the land, and sailing aboard a ship with a very shallow draft, which allowed him to stay very close to land, they were able to pass all the way through to Alaska, becoming the first ship

and crew to successfully navigate the Northwest Passage, although it took them three years. They reached San Francisco just months after the great earthquake of 1906, where the locals persuaded Amundsen to sell the ship to them. It was put on display in Golden Gate Park. It would be returned to Norway in 1972. Amundsen himself returned to a Norway that was now fully independent of Sweden and had a new king.

And that brings us to Robert Peary. Robert Edward Peary was born in Cresson, Pennsylvania in 1856. He grew up in Maine, and attended Bowdoin College, where he got an engineering degree. He joined the US Navy, and by 1885, he had laid out his ambition to become the first person to reach the North Pole. In 1886, he took six month's leave from the Navy and attempted to become the first person to travel across the ice cap of Greenland. He only made it 100 miles before having to turn back, but the attempt gained him valuable experience.

Afterward, he returned to Washington. There, while he was visiting a men's clothing store, he met a 21-year old African-American man named Matthew Henson, who was a sales clerk in the store. They got to talking and Henson revealed that he had worked as a cabin boy at sea for six years. Peary hired him on the spot as his valet, and Henson went with Peary on all his subsequent explorations.

Peary led multiple expeditions into the Arctic in the 1890s and 1900s. He discovered the northernmost tip of Greenland, defining at last the size of that island. He also discovered the northernmost point of Ellesmere Island in Canada. He became the most famous polar explorer of the day, and he did it by relying on techniques learned from the Inuit to survive in the Arctic. Unlike earlier explorers, Peary dressed in animal furs rather than wool, which loses its ability to keep you warm when it gets wet. He learned how to build igloos, eliminating the need to carry tents. He used dogs and sleds, and hired Inuit as hunters and sled drivers, to support his expeditions. And, it must be said, he had a reputation for treating both the dogs and his hired Inuit with appalling callousness.

He developed what was called the "Peary System," of setting out a chain of supply dumps as he traveled north. A large party would haul a lot of supplies to the first dump, then half of them would turn back, while the other half carried more supplies farther north, then half of them would turn back. Only a small group, including Peary, of course, would make the final leg of the trip, but then their route south would take them back past the prepositioned supply dumps, meaning they could travel fast and light on their return trip.

Although his explorations provided valuable information about the geography of the far north, some of Peary's discovery claims appeared far-fetched, and there are good reasons to doubt him. His navigation records are dodgy and incomplete, and his claims of straight-line travel across the Arctic are at odds with the known facts of drifting sea ice. In 1906, Peary claimed to have set a new record by reaching 87 degrees 6 minutes north, although that claim is in dispute, as it requires you to believe he traveled the last leg alone, by dogsled, over a round trip of 80 miles

overnight without sleeping. It sounds implausible, but I guess we can't say for certain whether or not he actually did it, because there were no eyewitnesses. Of course, the person who arranged it so there would *be* no eyewitnesses was Robert Peary.

He also claimed to have found an island, which he named "Crocker Land," after the wealthy banker who funded his expedition. Unfortunately for Peary's credibility, his own diary of the trip contains no mention of finding new land, and subsequent exploration demonstrated that Crocker Land does not exist. And his next, and last, expedition is only going to further aggravate his credibility problems.

That expedition set off in July, 1908, aboard the SS *Roosevelt* with the intention of conquering the North Pole at last. The expedition wintered over in the far north of Canada, at an Inuit community, and began the final assault, using the Peary System, on February 28, 1909. By April 1, the last support team had been sent back, and Peary began the last leg of his trip to the pole, now 154 miles away. He was accompanied by Matthew Henson and by four hired Inuit. Peary was the only member of the group who had the necessary skills to make sextant observations and calculate their latitude, having already sent back anyone else who was capable of checking—or challenging—his calculations. If you believe Peary, the six men reached the North Pole on April 6, which would have been an average speed of more than 30 miles per day over five days. IN the month before, his progress was about ten miles per day. Of course, you could also argue that a smaller team can move faster.

Anyway, they remained at the North Pole overnight, and headed south the next day. His party met up with the *Roosevelt* on April 27, but it took until September 6, 1909, to reach the telegraph office at Indian Harbour, in Labrador, where he announced his accomplishment to the world.

But the world was already reeling from an announcement made just four days earlier, by Dr. Frederick Cook, who had just told the world that *he* had reached the North Pole on April 21, 1908, almost a year before Peary. Cook, who had been a member of one of Peary's previous expeditions, back in the 1890s, and was also an experienced polar explorer, had left on this expedition, his own, a year earlier, in July 1907. By his account, Cook used many of Peary's methods, as well as doing a lot of hunting , so that he could travel light. His party wintered over in an Inuit community and headed north in the spring of 1908. The final leg of his trip was just Cook, two Inuit men, and two dogsleds, traveling 500 miles in 34 days, an average of nearly 15 miles per day. They spent two days at the pole, and had a harrowing return journey, during which a combination of bad weather, thawing ice, and ice drifting forced them farther west than they had intended. They ran out of food and ammunition, surviving by hunting with spears and eating their own leather straps. They had had to winter over again in the far north and finally, barely managed to return to an Inuit community in April 1909, to hear the news that Peary and his own expedition had passed through that same community headed north just a few weeks earlier.

When Peary heard about Cook's claim, he strenuously maintained that Cook must be a liar. It didn't help that Cook's notes and instruments got left behind in Greenland and couldn't be produced, although that was partly Peary's fault. He had refused a request to carry Cook's gear home aboard *Roosevelt* during its return journey.

It also didn't help Cook's claim that he had previously claimed to be the first person to climb Denali, the highest mountain in North America, in 1906, a claim that was also denounced as fraudulent.

In 1911, Peary gave testimony to the Naval Affairs subcommittee of the United States House of Representatives and presented his diary for examination. The subcommittee approved a bill honoring Peary for reaching the North Pole by a vote of 4-3. The three dissenters voted no because they didn't believe him. The bill that finally passed Congress and was signed into law by President William Howard Taft accepted Peary's claim to have reached the North Pole, although it was silent on the question of whether or not he had been the first. It also promoted him to Admiral and discharged him from the Navy, therefore granting him an admiral's pension. In spite of this congressional endorsement, there have always been doubters, and Peary felt he never got the recognition he deserved. He became embittered, and spent his retirement out of the public eye, and refusing to allow anyone else to look at his notes and records. He passed away in 1920, at the age of 63.

At about that same time, Frederick Cook was getting involved in the oil business. In 1923, he was indicted for stock fraud, based on a fraudulent claim that land owned by his company had oil under it. He was convicted and sent to prison. "You have at last got to the point where you can't bunco anybody," the judge told him at his sentencing.

But just to add to the confusion, while Cook was imprisoned, it turned out this land really did have oil under it, although it's still an open question whether Cook knew that at the time he was making his claim. He was released from prison in 1930, and died in 1940 at the age of 75. He insisted until his dying day that he really was the first person to reach the North Pole.

[music: *Symphony No. 6 in B minor ("Pathetique")*]

The National Geographic Society had been one of the sponsors of Peary's expedition and firmly backed his claim in 1909. Eighty years later, in 1989, the Society commissioned the British polar explorer Wally Herbert to reopen the question. Herbert was the first researcher to gain full access to Peary's records, and after studying them and analyzing Peary's observations, Herbert came to the conclusion that Peary was a liar.

So, which is it? Nobody can say for certain. It is possible that either Cook or Peary or both were telling the truth. It's also possible, and more likely, that both of them were either mistaken or deliberately lying. But at this point, no one can say for sure. No one has found physical evidence supporting either claim, but since the North Pole is in the Arctic Ocean, and the waters freeze

and thaw, and the ice moves around, physical evidence wouldn't mean much even if you did find it.

Well, then, if we decide not to believe either Cook or Peary, then who was the first person to reach the North Pole? The answer to that question is, it depends.

On May 9, 1926, a US Navy lieutenant commander, Richard Byrd, and a chief petty officer named Floyd Bennett piloted an airplane from Spitsbergen to the North Pole and back, a flight that took over 15 hours and covered over 1500 miles round trip. Byrd and Bennett would both receive promotions and Medals of Honor for this accomplishment, and Byrd would subsequently fly over the South Pole as well. But there is controversy in this case, too. An examination of Byrd's diary of the North Pole flight in 1996 revealed sextant observations that were penciled in and then erased. These erased observations do not agree with Byrd's official report. Some also question whether the airplane they were using was capable of the speed that would have been necessary to make the trip in that amount of time. And for these reasons, Byrd's claim has also come into question.

The first people with an unquestioned claim to reaching the North Pole were a dirigible crew who flew over the North Pole three days after Byrd's flight. This was the airship *Norge,* which flew from Spitsbergen to Alaska over the Arctic Ocean, and among the crew on that flight was our old friend Roald Amundsen, the first man to sail the Northwest Passage. As we are going to discuss in a future episode, Amundsen was the first man to the *South* Pole, so it is entirely possible, if you reject the claims of Cook and Peary and Byrd, that Roald Amundsen was the first person to reach *both* poles.

But flying over the North Pole isn't the same as standing on it. So you might want to ask, who was the first person who indisputably set foot on the North Pole? Well, his name is Alexander Kuznetsov, who led a team of Soviet scientists who flew to the North Pole aboard three airplanes, landing them on the ice, on April 23, 1948.

The crew of the world's first nuclear-powered submarine, USS *Nautilus,* reached the North Pole on August 3, 1958 by traveling underneath the arctic ice, *Nautilus* being the first submarine capable of operating underwater long enough to undertake that kind of journey. *Nautilus* was, of course, named after the fictional submarine in Jules Verne's 1870 science fiction novel, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea.* And, by the way, August 3, 1958, was also my first birthday, so, happy birthday, little me.

Okay, you might be thinking, flying to the North Pole or traveling there by submarine under water is all well and good, but who was the first person who indisputably reached the North Pole by traveling over the ice. Well, his name is Ralph Plaisted, an insurance salesman and snowmobile enthusiast from Minnesota, who led a party of four who reached the North Pole on April 20, 1968, using snowmobiles, then a recent invention. They also made use of supplies and

fuel being dropped to them by air. The crew of their supply aircraft were therefore able to confirm that, yes, they really did, indeed, reach the North Pole.

All right, but you might object that using snowmobiles is cheating, so who was the first person to reach the North Pole over the ice without using a powered vehicle? That would be British explorer Wally Herbert, who led the British Trans-Arctic Expedition on a 16-month journey over the North Pole from Alaska to Spitsbergen via dogsled. They reached the North Pole on April 6, 1969, the sixtieth anniversary of the date Robert Peary claimed to have gotten there. The Herbert expedition also relied on supplies dropped to them by airplane. And yes, this is the same Wally Herbert who, 20 years later, would be commissioned by the National Geographic Society to evaluate Robert Peary's records. So, when Herbert determined that Peary was lying, he was implicitly taking the title of first person to reach the North Pole on foot away from Peary and awarding it to himself. So, you might want to take that into account before you make your final decision about Peary.

So, there you have it. One of these people is the first person to reach the North Pole, depending on whom you believe, and what modes of transportation you're willing to accept. It turns out to be a surprisingly complicated question.

We'll have to stop there for today. This will be the last episode of *The History of the Twentieth Century* for the year 2016. As I said last time, I will be taking off for the holidays; the next episode will be released on January 8. Thanks to all of you who listen and who contribute to *The History of the Twentieth Century*, including Rasmus and Michael and Wayne. Thank you for your contributions. And if *you* have a few bucks to spare, head on over to historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and make a donation. Your support helps keep the podcast going.

And I will catch up with everybody next year, when returns to the United States to look at how things are shaping up in the aftermath of that 1910 midterm election. President Taft reaches out to Canada for a free trade agreement, hoping to nail down a concrete accomplishment he can run on for re-election in 1912. Will he get it? It was very unkind of those Canadians. That's next time, on *The History of the Twentieth Century.*

Oh, and one more thing. When I first mentioned to Mrs. History of the Twentieth Century that I was going to do an episode on the North Pole, she asked me how it was that the North Pole came to be the location of Santa Claus and his workshop. I had to confess I didn't know the answer to that question, although I imagined it had something to do with the North Pole being *terra incognita*, unreached by any human explorer, at the time the connection was first made.

But where does this story come from? Well, much of the legend of Santa Claus as we Americans know it today comes from the poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas," published anonymously in 1823, probably written by the American seminary professor and theologian, Clement Clarke Moore. The poem is still well known today, most commonly by its first line, "'Twas the night

before Christmas," and is generally regarded as the authoritative statement on all things Santa Claus. It is from this poem that we get Santa as a jolly elf who rides a magic sleigh pulled by flying reindeer, lands on the roof, climbs down the chimney, and leaves presents in nearby stockings, which were hung ahead of time for that purpose. And by the way, Clement Clarke Moore says that Santa is an elf, but he doesn't say anything about Santa's size and has little to say about his physical description. Dressed in fur, twinkling eyes, red cheeks and nose, smokes a pipe, white beard, round belly. It's possible that he was envisioning a being much smaller than an ordinary human being, which would explain the whole, you know, chimney thing.

The poem also doesn't say anything about where Santa came from or where he goes after he leaves. For that, we have to turn to the German-born American cartoonist, Thomas Nast. Nast was the most prominent political cartoonist in America in the late 19th century; among other things, he is responsible for giving us the donkey and the elephant as the animal symbols of the US Democratic and Republican Parties, respectively. Nast drew a famous illustration of Santa Claus visiting encamped US soldiers during the Christmas of 1862, while the Civil War was raging, and it became his custom to draw Santa cartoons every Christmas thereafter.

If Moore gave us the verbal legend of Santa, Nast gave us the image: human-sized, pudgy figure with wire-framed glasses, long, flowing white beard, and heavy winter clothing trimmed with fur. Nast's drawings of Santa's house and workshop, perhaps influenced by his German heritage, depicted them in a snowy setting, with many icicles. But Nast didn't say exactly where it was, either. In 1869, though, a collection of Nast's Christmas cartoons was published, accompanied by a poem by children's author George Webster, under the title *Santa Claus and His Works*. It is this book that for the first time explicitly places Santa at the North Pole, probably because it was at that time still an unexplored location, a wintry place where one could imagine finding something marvelous and unexpected. In the United States, the association of Santa with the North Pole was firmly attached to the legend by the 1870s.

[music: Closing Theme]