

Q: Why did MacMillan turn back early from his first expedition with Robert Peary?

A: He got cold feet!

Four Years in the White North by Donald B. MacMillan (New York, London: Harper & Brothers, 1918)

Etah and Beyond; or, Life Within Twelve Degrees of the Pole by Donald Baxter MacMillan (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1927)

Arctic Odyssey; The Life of Rear Admiral Donald B. MacMillan by Everett S. Allen (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1962)



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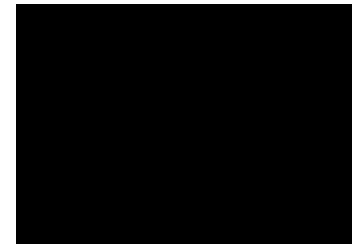
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Who was Donald B. MacMillan?
Where was he from?
What did he do in the Arctic?



Bowdoin College

Donald Baxter MacMillan was born on November 10, 1874 in Provincetown, Massachusetts. From the time he was a little boy, MacMillan was very curious about the Arctic and the sea. When he was only eight years old, MacMillan begged his father, Captain Neil MacMillan, to take him north on one of his fishing trips.



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MacMillan's father refused because his son was too young, but when he grew up, MacMillan finally achieved his dream of sailing north. MacMillan paid his way through Bowdoin College and graduated in 1898 with a degree in Geology. For ten years following graduation, MacMillan dedicated himself to teaching in Maine and Massachusetts.

One summer, MacMillan saved nine people from drowning after their boats capsized (in a Maine bay). This heroic deed caught the attention of the great Arctic explorer Robert E. Peary, who was so impressed by MacMillan's courage that he sent him a letter not only congratulating MacMillan,

but also inviting him on his 1905 expedition to the Arctic. MacMillan turned down this offer because of a commitment he had already made to teach, Peary invited him again in 1908, and MacMillan was quick to accept. During MacMillan's first trip to the Arctic, which was when Peary reported that he reached the North Pole, MacMillan's feet froze and he was forced to turn back early. Not discouraged in the least, MacMillan returned to the Arctic nearly 30 times throughout his life.

In 1913, MacMillan launched an expedition to a place called Crocker Land. Peary had seen Crocker Land in the distance, but nobody had ever been there, and MacMillan wished to be the first to explore it.

When he arrived at the location where Crocker Land was said to be, there was no land at all. Crocker Land was a mirage, or an optical illusion! Due to bad ice conditions that would not allow a rescue ship to reach his camp, MacMillan stayed in the Arctic for four years in Northwest Greenland.



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During this time, MacMillan and his crew gathered information about the Inuit, who live in the Arctic, as well as the animals, the environment, the plant life, and the geography. During this particular trip to the Arctic, MacMillan designed a ship that could survive the difficult Arctic conditions. When he got home, he had this ship built and named it the *Bowdoin*, after Bowdoin College. This extraordinary ship carried MacMillan and his crew to the Arctic on almost all of his subsequent expeditions.



In 1935, MacMillan married Miriam Look. Miriam joined MacMillan on many of his expeditions, taking pictures and performing her duties just like the other crewmembers.

MacMillan made his last voyage to the Arctic when he was eighty years old!