

Arctic explorers stamp to be issued in North Pole

WASHINGTON — The Alaska Congressional Delegation today announced that a block of four 22-cent stamps which commemorate five Polar explorers will be issued May 28 in North Pole. The stamps will be available nationwide the following day.

The first day of issue ceremony, which is open to the public, will be held at 1 p.m. at North Pole High School. Assistant Postmaster general William Johnstone, members of the Congressional delegation, and state and local officials are scheduled to attend.

The stamps, designed by Dennis Lyall of Norwalk, Connecticut, honor Elisha Kent Kane, Adolphus Greely, Robert E. Peary and his assistant Matthew Henson, and Vilhjalmur

Stefansson.

Elisha Kent Kane, a U.S. Navy surgeon, probed north out of Baffin Bay and into the narrowing waters between Ellesmere Island and northwest Greenland in 1852-55. Pushing into what is now known as Kane Basin and the Kennedy Channel as far as Cape Constitution, Kane thought he had sighted the open Polar Sea.

Robert E. Peary, who also was honored on an Arctic Explorations stamp issued in 1958, launched many trail blazing expeditions over a 23-year period.

Peary endured numerous setbacks and the loss of eight toes in his quest for the pole. In 1909, he led five forced marches totalling 133 miles to finally reach the North Pole on April 6. He

then covered 485 miles in 16 days to get off the opening ice pack. Peary died in 1920.

On his final dash to the Pole, Peary sent back five support teams but kept Matthew Henson because, he wrote, "I can't get along without him." Henson died in 1955.

Vilhjalmur Stefansson spent 1908-12 in the Arctic conducting anthropological studies of the Inupiat.

His 1913-18 Canadian Arctic Expedition helped fill in the map of the northernmost islands of Canada.

Stefansson's explorations covered thousand of miles, but when his ship was caught in ice and sank, only nine out of 20 members of the expedition survived a 60-mile trek across the ice pack in weather 45-55 F° below freezing. Stefansson died in 1962.

He and his party accomplished important geographical and scientific work before his ship, *Advance*, trap-

ped by ice, had to be abandoned. Ravaged by scurvy and often near starvation, the group took 83 days to reach safety in August, 1855. Kane died in 1857.

Adolphus W. Greely, an Army officer, led an 1882 expedition that explored Ellesmere Island and established a new northernmost record on Lockwood Island. Greely's group collected valuable meteorological, tidal and magnetic data, faithfully carrying out their work as outlined by the International Circumpolar Conference.

Because scheduled relief ships never arrived, the party of 26 suffered two tragic years of lengthy marches, devastating blizzards and only 6-10 ounces of rations per man per day before Greely and only six other survivors were rescued. Greely died in 1935. Ft. Greely, near Delta, is named in his honor.