Early Arctic Films of Nancy Columbia and Esther Eneutseak

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The Chicago World's Fair: 1892-1893

In the fall of 1892 a small schooner, the *Evelena*, arrived in Boston from Labrador. It carried a cargo unlike any that had arrived at that port before, one that attracted the immediate attention of the local press. The *Boston Globe* chartered a tug to meet the ship in the harbour even before it made port. Under the title "Strange People,"[1] it reported on "queer-looking natives" who crowded to the ship's rail "with their eyes protruding from their flat, flabby faces, and their capacious mouths opened to the fullest extent."

The *Evelena* carried a cargo of 60 Inuit from Labrador. Ralph Taber, 28-year-old promoter and showman, had been engaged to travel the Labrador coast and recruit Inuit[2] – Eskimos – to take to Chicago where they would form a human ethnic exhibit , one of many, for the entertainment and education of visitors to the World's Columbian Exposition which would open the following spring.

The Chicago World's Fair, as the exposition would be more prosaically known, was a year late. It had been planned to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Columbus's discovery of a new world, but also to recognize American dominance of that world and to promote American ingenuity and innovation on the world stage. Some of the fair's buildings were covered in stucco, which created a dazzling effect and earned the fairgrounds the nickname "The White City."

Eighty acres of the fair – about 1/8 of the total site – was dedicated to an area called the Midway Plaisance. This, the original midway, had been designed as a home for the fair's ethnographic exhibits. It was conceived as an educational trip from the primitive through progressive steps of civilization leading up to the contemporary self-congratulatory effusion of the White City.

In March of 1892 The World's Columbian Exposition had entered into a contract with J. W. Skiles & Company of Spokane, Washington, to present an Eskimo Village[3] and Labrador Trading Post at the exposition.[4] The 7-page contract granted to the company the exclusive right to erect and maintain on a designated tract of land "all the buildings, structures and appurtenances necessary for the representation of an Eskimo Village and Labrador Trading post." The company would employ natives of Labrador who would manufacture "native ornaments, carvings in ivory, spears, bows and arrows, canoes and sledges and native garments." The company would exhibit furs, polar birds and animals, alive and stuffed.

The contract contemplated that Skiles would form a second company to which he would assign his rights under the original contract. This second company was duly formed with Mr. M. Daniels as its president, W. D. Vincent its secretary, and Ralph Taber its treasurer.

Ralph Taber and Lyle Vincent[5] travelled north on the chartered *Evelena* in June of 1892. They recruited Inuit in Rigolet and Davis Inlet, and then on the rugged coast north of Hamilton Inlet. The promoters imagined that the most northerly Inuit - "heathen aborigines from Cape Chidley and the shores of Ungava" - would excite the greatest interest in Chicago "as they are typical of the ancient race they represent and are unsullied by the touch of civilization…"[6]

They promised the Inuit that they would be paid for their attendance and performances at the fair. In return for lodging and food and a pittance in real money, they would be expected to put on demonstrations of kayaking, dog-sledding, native music, and hunting and fishing methods. The promoters promised to return them to their homes at the end of two years and to pay them (presumably each male adult head of household) "a gift of 2000 Newfoundland shillings, each shilling being 20 cents in United States money, or $100 for two years labor." There would also be "very liberal donations" at the end of their two years servitude. Each man was promised "one Winchester rifle and 200 rounds of cartridges" and each family would receive "one barrel of pork, three of flour, one of pilot bread, twenty gallons of molasses, ten pounds of tea, 200 pounds of salt, thirty pounds of rice, and 100 fish hooks…" In addition, each woman was promised "thirty yards of calico and four woolen blankets."[7]

The life of a hunter and fisherman on the Labrador coast was hard, often filled with deprivation and hunger. These promises may have sounded too good to be true, but for many families they were worth taking a chance on. The fishing along the coast was said to be a failure that summer and starvation was rampant. Indeed, one report said that conditions were so desperate that "the World's fair could have had about the entire population for the asking."[8] By the time the ship was ready to depart from Rigolet, it had 60 Inuit aboard, along with 20 dogs, kayaks, sleds, tents, and personal effects.

From Boston, the Inuit travelled to Chicago in a passenger rail car. Their belongings and the paraphernalia that the promoters had acquired for use in the Eskimo Village accompanied them in a sealed freight car. Along with the dogs, kayaks, sleds and tents were included "several

barrels of seal oil and blubber, a lot of green skins to be made into garments, dried deer and seal meat and a lot of walrus and fish bones to be manufactured into trinkets."[9]

The Inuit arrived in Chicago on October 17, the earliest living exhibit to arrive. It had been purposely planned that they should arrive in the fall and spend the winter getting acclimatized to the Chicago weather.[10] The fair would not open for a number of months, so the Inuit men were set to work to assist in the construction of the very dwellings that they would live in, the so-called Eskimo Village. About three acres in size, it had a location a little off the beaten path, in the extreme northwest corner of Jackson Park, near the intersection of Fifty-seventh Street and Stoney Island Avenue. On the edge of a pond, its location was protected by a grove of trees. Its neighbours were the exhibits of the states of Nebraska and North Dakota. The village comprised a cluster of a dozen odd shaped houses, and seal and caribou skin tents. The trading post was built of wood but the habitations of the Inuit themselves were sealskin tents, erected in "genuine Esquimaux style," as well as sod and moss huts – the promoters had thought to bring a supply of moss from Labrador for authenticity. Among the Moravian Inuit from the central Labrador coast was a family of three from the small mission station of Zoar. Because the Moravians were diligent record-keepers we know a considerable amount about this family.

The breadwinner was Abile, a man in his late 40s who had been born January 5, 1848 at the main Moravian station of Nain. His father was named Jakob, his mother Clara. The European names indicate that they had been baptized. The name Abile is itself an Eskimoization of the Biblical Abel. World's Fair literature sometimes names him as "Yoo-ka-lucke" and "Johnny-Jump-Up" and "Rev. Mr. Abile," an indication that he may have been a lay catechist for the Moravian church. Abile was a hunter and fisherman who often traded at the Hudson's Bay Company post

at Davis Inlet. One description from Chicago says that "While retaining his native garb of undressed seal skin and adhering to the ancient customs of his people, he has received something of an education at the missionary post in his native village, and is an exhorter of the Christian creed to his wild-mannered tribesmen, who listen with perplexed souls to the strange stories which this seemingly learned man expounds from the white man's talking-book…"[11]

On February 19, 1870 Abile married Helena Jeremias, daughter of Jeremias (formerly Itorsuak) and Ester. She had been born November 22, 1853 at Okpatik near Zoar, and was therefore sixteen years old at the time of her marriage. Abile and Helena were accompanied by their only child, a fifteen-year-old daughter, Esther,[12] born April 18, 1877 in Zoar. When Esther left Labrador from Davis Inlet aboard the *Evelena* in late August of 1892, she was four months pregnant.

On January 16, 1893, over three months before the exposition would be officially opened, and with the Eskimo Village still under construction, Esther gave birth to her child, a girl born for the camera. The very first pictures of this American-born child of Labrador show her facing the camera directly, sometimes even smiling for the photograph. She would go on to become the most famous and most-photographed Inuk of her time. The pose that she adopted as a baby presaged the one that she generally maintained for the camera for the next two decades.

Fair officials insisted in having a hand in her naming, and she was given the unwieldy name of Nancy Helena Columbia Palmer. Officials claimed that she was named Nancy after Abraham Lincoln's mother, Nancy Hanks, although this

is unlikely. Nancy was the name of her paternal grandmother, an Inuk herself, the mother of the young man in Labrador whose dalliance with Esther had resulted in her pregnancy. It is likely that Esther herself chose her daughter's name. Helena was of course for Esther's mother. And Columbia was given in honour of Christopher Columbus, for whom the exposition was named. And Palmer? Mrs. Bertha Honoré Palmer, usually known as Mrs. Potter Palmer, was the wife of a prominent Exposition official, a real estate tycoon and hotelier. She herself was President of the fair's Board of Lady Managers. She took an interest in the child, is said to have become her godmother and given her her name.[13] The child was usually known as Nancy Columbia.[14]

It wasn't long before some of the Inuit became unhappy with the restrictions placed on their lives by management of the Eskimo Village. Some complained about being forced to wear sealskins in warm weather. Others complained about being confined to the village and not being given the run of Chicago. A few men left the village, one putting on an independent Inuit show outside the fairgrounds and working as a carpenter. When he returned to the village he made application in the circuit court for a writ of habeas corpus "to release certain residents of the village, who allege that they are being detained against their will, and are not being well treated."[15] In the midst of this dissension, a measles epidemic struck the village, which resulted in its temporary closure by health officials.

On April 20, still before the official opening of the fair, a number of Inuit left the fairground. Press reports of their departure were almost Biblical in their descriptions of the event. One article was entitled "Exodus of Eskimos,"[16] and described the Inuit's desire to be "out of bondage." Peter Mesher was described as their Saviour and Abile as their Moses. The five families, numbering thirty people in all, bade farewell to the Inuit who had chosen to remain, and left the

village enclosure. They clambered aboard horse-drawn carriages and were driven away to the Poplar Hotel on Hope Avenue.

Nancy Columbia was among this party, a group larger than many traditional camps in the Arctic or in Labrador. Oblivious to the drama that was keeping her awake at midnight, Nancy, aka Columbia Palmer, rode contentedly on her mother's back in an amautik, the spacious baby-carrying parka favoured by Inuit women throughout the Arctic. She was just three months old. Her mother, Esther, had celebrated her sixteenth birthday only two days earlier.

Although Nancy had no way of knowing it, this night marked the first move in her young life. From the confines of an artificial Esquimaux Village, built to replicate as closely as possible an Inuit environment which she had never known, she was moving to a life outside that village, free in Chicago, but with no guarantee that those on whom she depended would ever see Labrador again. This move was the first of many for this young Inuit girl, who would go on to become the most traveled Inuk of her time.

The group set up their own attraction just outside the fairgrounds, opposite the 57th Street gates. Whereas the official village charged 25 cents admission, the new show was offered for the bargain price of only 10 cents. One advertisement for this new attraction referred to Nancy by name, as Columbia Palmer, the name most commonly used at the time. The choice of location for the upstart village was designed to maximize visitor traffic, for it was located next to Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. William Cody, an astute businessman, knew that he would attract crowds, and he could see no reason to share the proceeds with the World's Fair corporation; he set his show up outside the gates, and it acted as a magnet for other entrepreneurs to establish

their own exhibits in proximity. Although Nancy Columbia was too young to realize, this was her first encounter with large-scale show-business. It was a taste of things to come.

Some of the 57th Street Inuit eventually returned to the Esquimaux Village within the fairgrounds. Abile's family was among them. But they returned to their isolated corner of the fairgrounds, not the Midway. It is doubtful that Skiles and his partners made any money on their endeavour.

The world into which Nancy Columbia was born was a world of hype and humbug, of ethnic stereotypes, of gawking visitors in search of the "other". Her first home was a wooden hut in winter, a sealskin tent in summer, both constructed incongruously on the edge of a lagoon in a burgeoning metropolis in America's heartland. At three months of age, snuggled innocently in the protective cocoon of her teenaged mother's amautik, she was the youngest of the party to abandon the official village and move to the dicier world of hucksters and flimflam artists outside the fairgrounds. A few photographs survive of the infant Nancy Columbia, either perched in Esther's amautik, seated on her mother's lap, or wrapped comfortably in clothing which already bears bore the distinctive trimmings of a Labrador Inuit costume. Perhaps Esther had already determined that returning to a life in Labrador was not in her own future, that the circus, the carnival, the midway held more excitement and promise. The World's Columbian Exposition, Nancy Columbia's birthplace, was also her introduction to show business. It would be her life.

A Nomadic Life in America: 1893-1896

Many of the Inuit who had been brought from Labrador to America in 1892 had remained in the United States past the end of their two-year contracts. Some had stayed voluntarily, others had been stranded there, the victims of misunderstandings or disputes between themselves and their promoters. Some spent the winter living in tents in the back yard of explorer Frederick Cook, and returned to Labrador the following year. Some went to California to appear at the California Mid-Winter Fair and these too were able to eventually return to Labrador. Gradually, all but a few returned home.

Among the few who remained in America were Abile and his family, including their young granddaughter, Nancy. Newspaper archives provide an outline, by no means complete, of their travels. Near the end of 1893 the family was in Boston and on New Year's Day, 1894, they were exhibiting there at Austin and Stone's Museum. Later that month they staged a three-day exhibition in Lowell, Massachusetts. In early March they were performing in an Eskimo Village exhibit at Huber's Museum in New York. On May 7, they visited the White House. A family business card produced many years later claims that they were in attendance at the California Midwinter exposition in San Francisco, a show that ran from January 27 to June 30. If, in fact, they attended this event at all, it was not for its entire duration. At some point in 1894 they toured with Barnum and Bailey's Circus, "The Greatest Show on Earth," as part of its Ethnological Congress. (The circus season that year was from March 26 to October 20, so they would not have been with the circus for the entire season.) On October 21, they were back at Huber's Museum again. On April 1, 1895 they began a one-week engagement in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. That year they toured again with Barnum and Bailey's Ethnological Congress.

Later in 1895 they had an Inuit exhibit at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta; this exposition ran from September 18 to December 31.

Labrador Interlude: 1896-1899

In 1896 Abile and Helena decided to return to Labrador. Their stay in America had been over three years long. They and their family had travelled extensively, and had seen more of the United States than the average American could ever hope to see. With Barnum's circus the family is reputed to have made $150 a week, a huge sum over a century ago. Like the other Inuit who had performed in Chicago, Abile was astute at separating onlookers from their money. But Abile was naïve and gullible. Money had been a foreign commodity to him in Labrador. At the Moravian station in Zoar, the Inuit were held in perpetual thrall to the mission which controlled trade there. Abile, like many others, took his trade to the rival Hudson's Bay Company post in nearby Davis Inlet. But cash was not a commodity there either. Inuit were paid in tokens which never left the company store. Placed on the counter as payment for a delivery of fur, they were removed one by one in payment for articles of trade chosen by the hunter and his family, until none remained. Selling furs had been a zero-sum game. Chicago had been the first experience Abile and his countrymen had of real money, coins and bills that they could put in their pockets and spend as they pleased. But 1896 he had nothing to show for his efforts.

With the family penniless and Helena recovering from a serious illness, Ralph Taber and Franz Boas, then at the American Museum of Natural History, provided the means for their passage

home. Friends provided Abile with a parting gift – a hunting outfit, including a new gun - to allow him to start afresh in Labrador.

Abile and Helena boarded a steamer in Brooklyn on July 11, bound for St. John's. They took with them their three-year-old granddaughter, Nancy Columbia, the famous baby born at the Chicago World's Fair. One person was absent from this small troupe. Esther Eneutsiak – the self-chosen surname means "wonderful person" – Nancy's mother and the daughter of Abile and Helena, had decided some months earlier that she would remain in America. Some time before 1896 Esther had fallen in love and married. Of her husband, little is known. His name was Charles Bein, a German-American, said to be a "dray driver," that is to say, the driver of a heavy horse-drawn cart used in haulage. We know very little about Esther's life in New York for the next three years, save that it was financially difficult. An excellent seamstress, she found some work at the museum, through the kindness of Boas.

Nancy remained in Labrador for three years, living with her grandparents. They lived at or near Davis Inlet trading post and would have visited the Moravian mission station at Hopedale often. (Zoar had closed during their absence.) Compared with the life she had lived in America, this was a sedentary life. And it was one filled with relatives. This was a new experience for Nancy, to be part of a community filled with aunts, uncles and cousins. These three years were Nancy's only experience of Labrador.

European Tour 1899-1901

In 1899, when Nancy was six, this experience came to an end. In September the promoter Ralph Taber returned to Labrador with his wife and Esther, travelling on a vessel from St. John's, the *Ingraham*. Taber, with Esther's help, was recruiting Inuit to take on another tour, this time to Europe. The passage to Labrador must have been one of excitement mixed with trepidation for Esther. She had not seen its coasts in seven years. There is no indication that she had wanted to return. Indeed, she didn't view this as a return, but rather a stopping-point on the way to something better, the life that she had sought and not found in Chicago and New York. This would be different. And with no other promoters but Taber to contend with – and she got along well with Taber – she would be more in a position of control than she had been in Chicago. There she had been a 16 year old mother, no more than a girl really. Now she was 22, street-wise to the ways of the biggest city in America. She would be a star.

On September 19, Esther was reunited with her parents and her daughter at Davis Inlet. It must have been a joyous reunion but unfortunately no record of it survives. The vessel continued north along the coast, recruiting Inuit as it went, and returned to Davis Inlet on September 30. There Taber and his group of thirty Inuit – a group which included Nancy, Abile, Helena and Esther – transferred to the Hudson's Bay Company ship, *Erik*, for the crossing to England. While the ship made a quick stop in Rigolet, Esther dashed off a letter to Franz Boas. In it she told him about the trip thus far. She had signed a two-year contract with Taber. Her letter conveys not emotion but excitement. When Esther writes, "we are going to London in this big steamer,"[17] it is with a childlike enthusiasm for the unknown, an enthusiasm that she had shown as a teenager in Chicago, as a young mother at various circuses and exhibitions after Chicago, and as a young

woman who took a chance in remaining in New York when her family had returned to Labrador in 1896. For Esther the unknown always held promise.

Their first engagement was in London where they wintered. The show was at the great hall, Olympia, where they were exhibited, incongruously, at a show called "Briton, Boer and Black in Savage South Africa." The published program advertising this spectacle for Olympia's winter season bore the headline, "Savage Africa," and below it listed first "The Eskimo Encampment," followed by "The Zulu Kraal," and "The Soudanese Village."[18]

Nancy turned seven at Olympia. Promotional material gives her name as Nancilinek, perhaps an attempt to make the name seem less English. Taber's material referred to her "regular features and rosy complexion" as proof that she was "but half an Esquimau; her father having been a white man in the employ of the Hudson Bay Company."[19] In fact, her father was the son of a white settler and an Inuit woman, making Nancy three quarters Inuit. The first explicit newspaper reference to a young girl who can only be Nancy was made on December 5. The reporter commented that "one sweetly pretty little maid of about six is a finished coquette."[20]

For Nancy this must have been an exciting time, for she was travelling with many who were family members rather than strangers. Her great-aunt, Ajupiuk, Helena's sister, was on the trip. She was married to a man variously identified as John Pudjutik or John Oliver Pudjutik. He was a man of mixed blood, 36 years old, whom Taber described as "the interpreter of the colony, having been for many years a valued servant of the Hudson Bay Company at Davis Inlet."[21]

In fact, probably the majority of those recruited by Esther for Taber's European venture were her relatives. Nancy was, therefore, among friends and relations and would feel as much at home on this European sojourn as she had in Labrador with her grandparents.

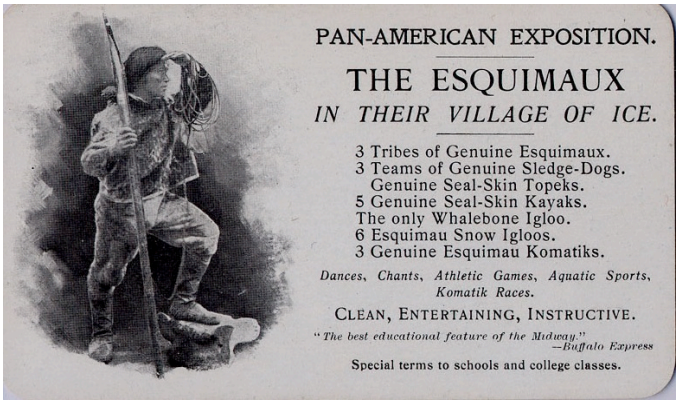
The Inuit remained in England until early March 1900. From there Taber took his troupe and their paraphernalia to Madrid where he had made arrangements with a local impresario to exhibit the Inuit in the "Jardines del Buen Retiro," a city park. They arrived on March 10th and remained for almost two months before departing for Barcelona.

When the Inuit left Madrid, Esther was not among them. She had returned to America, for reasons that are not clear. Her husband had joined her in Europe early in the year. Ship records show that Charles Bein and his wife Ester (sic) Bein sailed from Southampton, England for America aboard the ship, St. Louis, on April 21st, 1900. Both were listed as American citizens, aged 21. In fact Esther had turned 23 just three days earlier.

Nancy remained in Europe, again in the kind care of her grandparents. After Barcelona, the group travelled to Paris, then North Africa and finally Naples, Italy. From there they embarked for New York in 1901.

The Buffalo World's Fair: 1901

The *Trojan Prince* had delivered the Inuit to Ellis Island in New York, where they were duly processed on April 29, 1901. This was just in time, for the Pan-American Exposition – otherwise known as the Buffalo World's Fair - was to open on May 1.



If Chicago had marked the conception of the Midway, then Buffalo was its actual birth. At Chicago, the presence of the Midway, with its array of ethnographic exhibits and popular entertainments, had not been so much embraced as grudgingly accepted. Official publications had either ignored the Midway attractions, or offered embarrassed apologies for their supposed crassness. Not so in Buffalo. The fair organizers embraced the idea of the Midway from the outset. Its ethnic attractions and popular entertainments were celebrated and official publications made much of them. This fair would cater to the masses and give them what they wanted to see. This time there would be no illusions that this Eskimo Village would be an ethnographic exhibit.

The Esquimaux Village was expected to be a hit. Indeed it occupied a position of prominence, immediately inside the Plaza entrance. The guidebook described it this way:

> "Genuine Arctic life, presented by representatives of three tribes of Esquimaux from Hudson Straits, with all their home belongings – dogteams, sledges, topeks, kayaks, weapons, etc. The Esquimaux are employed curing skins, carving ivory, manufacturing seal-skin clothing, etc. They present, in an ice-grotto, typical Esquimau dances, chants and athletic games, dog-races, also aquatic sports on the lake. The most instructive and entertaining ethnographic exhibit in the Midway. Special rates to schools and colleges."[22]

On November 18, with the fair over, the Inuit boarded a train in Buffalo and departed for Charleston. One young girl didn't want to leave. Nancy Columbia was by now eight years old and the Esquimaux Village on Laughter Lane in the Midway had been the only home she had known for six months. Moreover, it had been a home almost as full of Inuit relatives as a real Labrador village would have been. A newspaper article noted that she was departing "with her mother, who is Esther, the interpreter, and her grandmother and her aunts and cousins and second cousins."[23] But still she hated to leave. "In the distance behind were the wondrous plaster icebergs of her Midway home. She was leaving them and her ice igalo (sic), which wasn't really, but cloth and plaster, and the skin tent of her grandfather, and the muddy little lake, and pretty nearly everything else she had learned to love. As she looked back she couldn't suppress the tears, which ran down slowly down her chubby cheeks."

For Nancy this was one of many farewells. Doubtless she had had a similar tearful farewell when she had left Davis Inlet in 1899. No doubt she left friends behind in Madrid, Barcelona and Paris, as well. The Moravian missionaries of Labrador had encouraged the Inuit to give up their nomadic ways, and Nancy's ancestors had settled down, first near the Nain mission and then at Zoar. But ironically Esther and her parents, Abile and Helena, had again taken up the nomadic ways of their forefathers, this time in Europe and America. They were now show people, no different in their habits than carnival workers or circus performers. Until well into adulthood, Nancy's life would be one of farewells.

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Nevertheless, during Nancy's time in Buffalo, her group of Inuit had left behind a permanent record of a highly significant nature, one that we can still see today. For it was here that the first films associated with Esther and Nancy's group of Labrador Inuit – indeed the first films ever made of Inuit people – were made. The Thomas Edison Manufacturing Company, eager to cement its role as the country's – and the world's – premier supplier of "actuality" films, had sent several film crews to Buffalo to film every aspect of the Exposition. They planned scenic films, panoramas from various fixed points by day and by night, films of ceremonial occasions, and individual films of the various exhibits and pavilions. And, while the buildings – especially when illuminated by night by an enormous array of electric lights – were natural subjects of such films, the exhibits of "exotic" peoples were even more ideal. After all, since way back in the 1890's, when Edison's "Black Mariah" studio in New Jersey had hosted scenes of Sioux Indians from Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, along with Japanese fan dancers and a "Chinese Laundry Scene," ethnic subjects had been stock in trade for Edison and other companies, and one of the most bankable spectacles of the era of the "cinema of attractions." In those days, Edison's men had to arrange to have the show brought to their cameras; now, with outdoor filming perfected, the camera could go to the show.

Two men from the Edison staff, Edwin S. Porter and James H. White, were assigned to film the "Esquimaux Village" attraction.[24] Although there are no surviving production notes, we can tell from their copyright registrations that they were filmed on two different occasions: on July 31, the first film, "Esquimaux Village," was registered, and then on August 9 the remaining two titles, "Esquimaux Game of Snap-the-Whip" and "Esquimaux Leap-Frog" were completed. Presumably, Porter and White solicited the co-operation of the Village's proprietors and performers; the lighting being entirely dependent on the sun, the performers had to squeeze the

most possible action into around fifty seconds of film. Judging by the shadows, late morning or early afternoon was judged ideal; the shadows are short and sharp, and the Inuit's white cotton anoraks are brightly reflective, making it difficult to see any facial details that might help identify individuals. The camera position was fixed, the angle wide, and the depth of focus long, as was customary for such outdoor shots.

"Esquimaux Village" is the first of the films, and the only one with sequential scenic content. A dog-sled upon wheels is driven, with considerable energy, into the mock "ice" tunnel

at the back of the "village" set; other Inuit left behind run back and forth, gesticulating as though concerned for their comrade's return; on his emergence from the tunnel, he is greeted, and two Inuit guide the dogs around directly toward the camera; the film then ends at 51 seconds. A notable feature is the village's lagoon, in which reflections of both the "ice" tunnel and the dog-team are visible. "Esquimaux Game of Snap-the-Whip" is far briefer at 24 seconds, and shows an attraction common to Esquimaux shows since at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. It involved a small stump or stick, on which exposition-goers could place a nickel or a quarter; an Inuk would then demonstrate his skill by snapping the whip to dislodge the coin, and later collect the gratuity. In the Edison scene, the

target is outside the bottom of the frame; two Inuit, one on the left apparently dressed in furs, and one on the right in a cotton outfit, take turns cracking the whip at the unseen target. The plan may have been to make it seem to audiences as though they themselves were attending the attraction, pulling them into the scene and adding a slight visual thrill. In mid-frame, behind the two figures with whips, a skin tupik can be seen, beside which are two other figures, apparently women, one of whom may have been Esther Eneutseak; unfortunately, the lack of tonal variation on the paper print makes it impossible to say for certain.

The other remarkable feature of this short is the appearance, about ten seconds into the film, of a determined-looking Inuk man wearing a black cloth hood and smoking a pipe; he strides right in front of the camera, his face turned toward it; four seconds later he is gone, leaving only a small trail of smoke at the left-hand side of the frame. Whether his appearance was planned or not, it adds a punctuation mark of novelty to an otherwise repetitive sequence.

The third film, "Esquimaux Leap-Frog," is perhaps the least effective of the group; while the antics of the Inuit men in leaping, tumbling, and jumping over each others' back are acrobatic

and comical, there is no progression; as in "snap-the-whip," it is simply a repeated sequence of the same or similar movements.

All in all, Edison's cameramen recorded just over two minutes – 128 seconds – of film, and while the dramatic content is slight, their historical significance is hard to overstate: these are the earliest surviving films of actual Inuit people. Yet Edison's cameramen were not the only ones present; a team from the rival American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, led by cameraman Arthur Marvin, was also present at the exposition, but their films do not appear to have survived.[25] One, "Natives of the Esquimaux Village on the Midway playing a curious game," may have had content similar to Edison's "Leap Frog." A second film, "Natives of the Esquimaux Village … in a weird dance characteristic of the Frozen North," depicts an unknown subject. The third film shot by Marvin was panoramic in form, using a slow pan in which "the huts and natives of the Esquimaux Village, kayacks in the water, and dog sleds" each gradually came into view. The length of Marvin's films is unknown, but presumably was similar to that of the surviving Edison subjects. Marvin, the brother of one of AMB's founders, made numerous short films in the years to come; today he is best remembered for his 1900 short, "Sherlock Holmes Baffled," the very first film adaptation ever made of Conan Doyle's Holmes stories. These six films were to remain the only ones of Inuit for some years to come.

World's Fairs and Coney Island: 1902-1909

Ralph Taber ended his association with the Eskimo Village art the end of the Buffalo fair. When the Inuit show reached Charleston for the South Carolina Interstate and West Indies

Exposition, which ran until June 1, 1902, it was managed by a new showman, 44-year-old John Casper Smith. The Inuit troupe also appeared in Atlanta for a short stint at the Southern Interstate Fair in October. In between these two fairs, they had appeared at Coney Island in an exhibit called "Trip to the North Pole," and returned there after Atlanta for an exhibit at Luna Park. By this time Esther was married to John Smith; she gave birth to a son, Norman, in September 1903. Smith took the troupe to St. Louis in 1904 for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, then back to Coney Island for "New York to the North Pole."

Various exhibitions followed, throughout the United States and in 1907 Esther gave birth to a daughter, Florence. During these years, most of the Inuit who had been with the troupe in Buffalo had returned to Labrador. Esther's father, Abile, had died at Coney Island in 1905, and her mother, Helena, returned to Labrador shortly thereafter. By the time of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in 1909, John Smith's troupe consisted only of his immediate family, that is, his wife Esther, step-daughter Nancy, and children Norman and Florence, plus two Labrador men probably related to Esther, Simon Aputik and Zacharias Zad, who had joined the group in Buffalo in 1901.

It's possible that a film was made of the Inuit at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904; a film entitled "Esquimaux of Labrador" was released by the Goodfellow Manufacturing Company in 1908, but as it does not seem to have survived, the date and location where it was made are a matter of conjecture. What is clear, and remarkably so, is that when the next films depicting actual Inuit in their daily life were made a few years later, the stars once more were the troupe of Esther Eneutseak, Nancy Columbia, and their family – members of

which would go on to appear in more than a dozen films in the decade between 1910 and 1920, becoming in fact the first professional Inuit actors in the history of film.

Films for Selig Polyscope, 1909-1911

The re-entry of this group into films reveals a great deal about the evolution of the show-trade, as well as of the film industry. Large world's fairs and expositions were changing in form, and the line between what was "education" and "entertainment" had been subtly redrawn. Ethnic exhibitions were a constant feature of such fairs from 1893 to 1909, but soon after that point began to decline in prestige and profitability. Nations around the world took a new interest in the welfare and treatment of their nationals; laws were passed to prevent the trade in human shows, and it became increasingly difficult for professional troupes such as Esther and Nancy's to obtain steady and profitable bookings. At the same time, the film business had greatly evolved; the prestige films of the day were now at least one reel (ten minutes) in length, and directors such as D.W. Griffith, Thomas Ince, and Cecil B. DeMille would soon be experimenting with epics whose length could run to six, eight, or even twelve reels. Narrative content was now expected of all films, and with a far more sophisticated array of camera techniques, stories could be told in a way that promised greatly increased authenticity in terms of settings, costumes, and scale.

On top of all these changes, the sheer demand for film content was enormous. A glance through the trade periodicals of the period from 1910 onwards shows that somewhere between fifteen and twenty new films were released every week by a wide variety of companies. Edison

and his Patents Trust were making their last attempt at monopolizing the film trade, inviting former competitors such as Vitagraph and Selig Polyscope to join with them. Nevertheless, the trust's delay in making the move toward longer feature films eventually led to discontent, and independent companies gained ground. With the impending expiration of key patents in 1913, the writing was on the wall, and the former Trust members – Selig, Vitagraph, Essanay, and Kalem – were soon to break loose and join in the fray with independents such as Triangle and Famous Players-Lasky, each of them competing to outdo the other in films of greater length and ambition. Most significantly for Esther and Nancy's group, one of the more commercially bankable genres between 1910 and the early 1920's was a sub-genre of the "Western" known as the "Northern."

Northerns involved melodramatic plot elements similar to those of early Westerns – dance-hall girls with hearts of gold, good and evil love interests, tavern brawls, and last minute rescues by chisel-chinned Mounties – but added the crucial ingredient of the northern wilderness. Suddenly, venues for "snow pictures," as some called them – along with such necessary props as log cabins, sleds and dog teams, and (of course) "Eskimos" – were in tremendous demand.

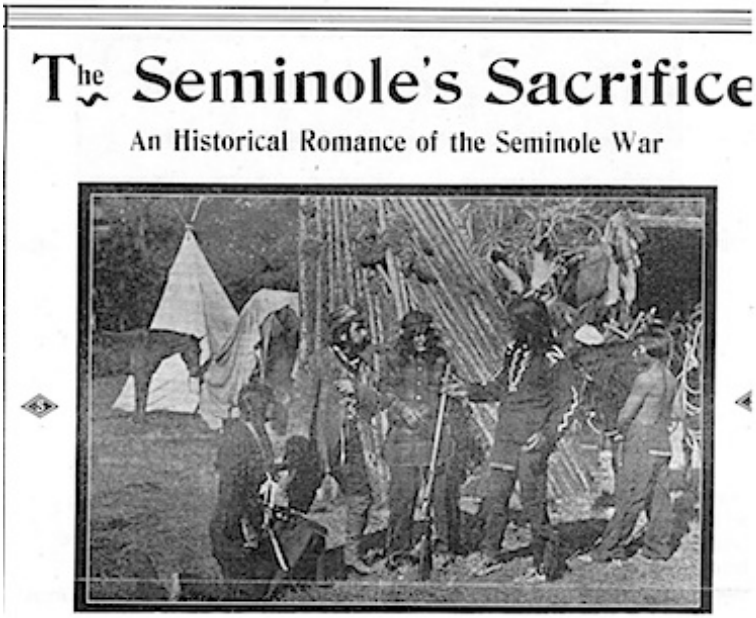
As fate would have it, the peak of the ethnic shows came just before Nancy and Esther's return to motion pictures. At the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle in 1909, they were part of a large "Eskimo Village" attraction, which also featured 37 Siberian Yupik, 41 Alaskan Eskimos, and showman/raconteur "Caribou Bill," who claimed to have mushed his team of malamutes from Nome to Seattle for the occasion.[26] It turned out to be one of the biggest moneymakers of the A-Y-P midway, which was known as the "Pay Streak"; Nancy herself was

elected as "Queen of the Pay Streak" in a widely publicized contest. After the fair, Nancy's family moved into a house near the grounds, but by 1910 they were back on the exhibition circuit again, appearing in Denver at the Food and Industrial Exposition that summer, and at the Appalachian Exposition in Knoxville, Tennessee that fall. Both these fairs, notably, were of a far smaller scale and duration than the A-Y-P, and the question of where and how to get work through the winter months must have weighed on everyone working there. At Knoxville, Esther and Nancy met up with Caribou Bill again (he'd spent his summer doing shows at Coney Island), and combined their acts for bigger effect. The amusement area at the Appalachian Exposition was known as the "Midway Jungle," and hosted a wide array of curious exhibits, including the "Big Otto Animal Show," "Ferare's Snake Den," and "Hannihan's Goat and Monkey Circus." It also included Colonel Zack Mulhall's Wild West Show, which at that time was featuring a little-known cowboy performer by the name of Tom Mix.

It was through Mix – who had already played a few bit roles in one-reelers produced by the Selig Polyscope Company – that the Labrador Inuit were to find their way back to film. With the close of the Exposition in October, many of the acts were looking for work. Mix, engaged by Selig to recruit both human and animal actors for a series of "Jungle" and "Indian" films he planned to make near Jacksonville, Florida over the winter, sized up his fellow performers, and apparently decided that the Inuit would do fairly well for "Indian" roles. In doing so, he declined to hire actual Plains Indians from Zack Miller's troupe, complaining in a letter to the Selig home

office that their hair was too short and they didn't look the part of 'picture Indians'[27] – and yet nevertheless he engaged the Inuit, whose two male figures – Zacharias Zad and "Chief" Apotek – both had the typical Inuit "bowl cut" short hair! An unstated goal may have been to secure the services of Nancy or Esther, as women were scarce among Wild West Indian troupes, and he can hardly have overlooked Nancy, then 17, who had both native "authenticity" and the sort of all-American good looks that suited her for more prominent on-camera roles.

No record survives of his reasoning, or of what exactly transpired between Mix and the Inuit, but as the surviving films, release flyers, and film stills demonstrate, they did a considerable amount of work together that winter in Jacksonville. Zacharias Zad appeared in at least two films as a Seminole Indian extra, and we believe that that Nancy was also in at least one of these films. Most importantly, the entire Inuit troupe seems to have formed a strong connection with William V. Mong, the Selig story man assigned to the Jacksonville shorts. This, as it later turned out, was a good career move; when Mong had a falling out with Otis Turner, the director, and was recalled back to Chicago, the Inuit went with him and found themselves at the center of a remarkable pair of films, films in which they would finally appear again as actual Inuit, and the stars of their own shows.



The 1910 films, though, include some remarkable scenes, scenes in which, paradoxically, white actors in redface (including Mix himself) played the lead Indian roles, as the Inuit were relegated to bit parts. The earliest of these, "The Seminole's Sacrifice," was released in February of 1911. Zacharias is shown prominently in the photo used in the release flyer (fig. #), and can be seen in a production still as well (fig #). However, since the film itself has not survived, it's impossible to say how prominent a role he played.

Better luck followed his second appearance, which was in "The Witch of the Everglades," a dramatic fantasy featuring a memorable performance by Kathlyn Williams as the "Witch." A lovely tinted print of this film survives at the EYE Institute in the Netherlands, and

we've been able to see him quite clearly although his appearance is brief. For a few frames, he shares the screen with a woman we now believe to be Nancy; she too was cast as a Seminole, and has a brief scene a moment later when another "Indian" speaks and gestures to her. (fig #).

Because he appears so recognizably in "The Witch of the Everglades," we should perhaps add a few words about Zacharias Zad. He had been born at the Moravian mission station of Zoar in March 1884, which makes it likely that he was related to Esther. His father had died when he was five years old. When Ralph Taber's Inuit troupe had returned from Europe for the Buffalo

Fair, the promoter recruited more Inuit directly from Labrador. Zacharias, then 17 years of age, was among that group, arriving with Simon Aputik in mid-1901. He had been with the Smith family ever since.[28]

It's in the third Selig film of this period, however, that the most dramatic footage survives. "Life on the Border," eventually released on August 22nd, 1911, was filmed around this same time, but no surviving print was known until a partial copy was located in Australia. This copy was eventually deposited in the Smithsonian Institution; lacking its first few moments and titles, it was classified using its first intertitle as "The Arrow Maker." And, in this very scene, we see a young "Indian" woman seated near Tom Mix's "Chief," who is demonstrating the bow and arrow to a group of young braves. At the Chief's request, the woman goes off to the back of the scene, behind a tipi, and returns a moment later with a small pot of water. She pours some of this out for the Chief, who seems to make a remark to her, at which she gives a look as though taken aback. A moment later, she returns to where she was originally seated, and is not seen again in the portion of the film which survives. The whole episode runs only about 14 seconds, but it and "The Witch of the Everglades" are our earliest glimpses of Nancy and her group on film.

Our identification of the "Life on the Border" footage was made possible by a series of those remarkable coincidences which seem possible only in the internet era. Kenn had just recently made contact with Nancy's daughter, Sue and had been given a cache of old family

photos. Among these was one of Nancy dressed as a Plains Indian, with a headband and feather, a long dress with decorative markings, and several frilly necklaces. Sue told Kenn that this was her mother dressed for a film; if she hadn't been able to pass along this knowledge in person, we'd probably have never guessed it. In this strange costume, and with a deliberately stern look, she hardly resembles the beaming Queen of the Pay Streak, or the charming Inuk whose face graced A-Y-P-E souvenirs. Kenn had sent me the image via e-mail, wondering what to make of it, at just the time I'd sent him a link to the surviving footage of "Life on the Border," which the Smithsonian had placed online. I looked at the photo, and he looked at the footage, and all at once we wondered, could this be Nancy? Final identification had to await a better-resolution copy from the Smithsonian; on its arrival, I looked at it closely and was amazed to see that this Plains Indian woman was dressed exactly as Nancy was in the photo. By preparing a series of digital frame stills and comparing them side-by-side, the identification was made

certain: here was the first known footage of Nancy Columbia! (Our identification of Nancy in The Witch of the Everglades, although it was filmed earlier, came later.)

Escanaba Eskimos: 1911

The account of how Nancy, after her initial success in such a curious role, found her way not only to appearing in a film, but writing and starring in one, took many careful months of research to discover. With the help of information supplied by Selig biographer Andy Erish, we learned of the split between William V. Mong and Otis Turner, and of how Mong was recalled to Chicago. Mong wanted greater influence on the pictures, and he and Turner disagreed so strongly about one scenario that he was on the verge of quitting. Selig, wisely, decided that instead of accepting his resignation, he'd offer this young Turk a chance at directing some pictures himself. Mong apparently welcomed the opportunity, and invited Nancy and her entire troupe to return with him. Having just written the scenario of Selig's "Lost in the Jungle," he came up with one entitled "Lost in the Arctic," and then, working with Nancy, developed a treatment for a film of Inuit life to be called "The Way of the Eskimo."

Again, we have little in the way of background for these lost films, but thanks to careful research, we have uncovered a great deal about their shooting and contents – indeed, more than is known about many Selig films that *have* survived. Again, much of this is due to materials supplied by Nancy's daughter Sue, especially one lone postcard, showing Esther and the family in their fur costumes out on what appeared to be a frozen lake. On it was written "Escanaba – January 1910"; the 0 in the date had been crossed out and a "1" written in its place (see fig. #).

The date turned out to be slightly misremembered, but the place, the city of Escanaba on Michigan's remote Upper Peninsula, proved to be a vital clue that could have come from no other source. The late Jim Zwick, in his book on Nancy's family and their career, had tracked down a few details about these films, but believed they had been filmed in the mountains of Truckee, California.[29] He had found only one rather enigmatic image for "The Way of the Eskimo," that of a dogsled in the snow, on a Selig release flyer, and knew little of the circumstances of the film's production. Now, thanks largely to Nancy's daughter, and with the help of Karen Lindquist, archivist at the Delta County Historical Society in Escanaba, along with a visit Kenn made to the society and the local library, we have been able to track down a remarkably rich account of this film as well as "Lost in the Arctic," along with photographs, news stories, and oral histories about their production. Further research by Andy Erish has also turned up a release flier for "The Way of the Eskimo" which clearly shows Nancy alongside William Mong in their lead roles, and Kenn located a detailed scene continuity at the AMPAS library which gives us a shot-by-shot account of the film's composition.

Once we made contact with Escanaba, the news stories from the local papers there gave us the basics. The first clipping we received, from the Escanaba Daily Mirror of March 14th, 1911, read as follows:

> **ESCANABA IN POLAR REGION? Well, not exactly, but This City is Selected as the Most Suitable Place for the Taking of Motion Pictures of Scenes and Adventures in the Frozen North.**

It described the appearance in town of the film crew and the actors, who apparently arrived separately, and noted that the "manager of the Selig crew" (presumably Mong), far from warning people away from the set, invited them to be present at the shooting. He also reassured the town fathers that the town had not been selected because it was actually as cold as the Arctic, but rather on account of the fact that nearby sections of Lake Michigan were frozen well into the spring, while yet the weather was generally "clear" enough for the taking of moving pictures. Nancy, not surprisingly, was the one member of the cast who was mentioned by name:

> "The most interesting member of the band of Esquimeaux [sic] is Miss Columbia who, it will be remembered, was born at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1895 [sic], and who was christened 'Miss Columbia' by Mrs. Potter Palmer. Miss Columbia has grown to be a handsome young woman and is very intelligent."

After the filming commenced in earnest on March 16th, the "manager" was less open with his welcome; the *Daily Mirror* reported that "Visitors were accordingly asked to stay well away from "the man who is operating the picture machine" and also "entirely out of the way of the performers." This did not, apparently, produce the desired effect, and so on March 18 filming was moved to Portage Point, further away from town. Further complications came on the 21st when, although the company had managed to get quite a few good scenes, the impending break-up of the ice in Little Bay de Noc threatened to ruin everything.

On Friday, March 24, the polar bear, which had been brought from a zoo in Chicago, took part in a movie scene for the first time. Until then he had been kept in an enclosure at Schram's Hide House. A local directory shows that Isaac (Ike) Schram sold hides at 421 Ludington Street. The *Daily Mirror* reported that the bear "was a real sport and gamboled about the ice and played in the water for some time before he was driven back into his cage. He played 'dead' and also had much fun in a hand to hand encounter with one of the Esquimaux." The paper noted that the bear had been inactive for several days and needed the exercise.

The film-makers must have despaired on Sunday, March 25 when a rain storm occurred. This weakened the already-disintegrating ice considerably. It would have been a welcome occurrence for those in business who hoped for an early opening of navigation into the port. Indeed, weather records indicated that the average date for the opening of navigation into the port of Escanaba was April 15, and this may have been one of the factors that led the Selig company to choose Escanaba as a surrogate film location for the Arctic. Although the previous year had been an anomaly, with the port opening on March 31, it had not opened in the two years previous to that until April 19.

Fortunately, the rains of March 25 were followed two days later by a blizzard that "placed an effective lid on all hopes for an immediate opening of navigation." Open water could be seen from Ford River, but the ice on the bay was "still solid" and was "not likely to move for several days." By northern standards, it wasn't much of a storm, the wind reaching only 34 miles per hour, but that was enough the bring down some power lines and create a short period of havoc in the community. But the temperature was a chilly 18 degrees F. The blizzard and below-freezing temperature must have been a

The storm lasted for several days, and the temperature remained fairly constant, being 19 degrees on the morning of March 29. By March 30 the storm was reduced to snow flurries and the weather was expected to clear during the day. Film-making likely continued through at least part of this storm. Thursday, March 30, was the final day of shooting, and it also involved shooting of a different kind. On that afternoon, at about one o'clock, on the Ford River Road, Bruno, the polar bear, by now beloved of the people of Escanaba, was killed in a hunting scene. The killing was reported in the *Daily Mirror* under the headline, "Thrilling Drama is Enacted," and with the sub-title "Polar Bear is Slain to Make the Climax of a Drama for Production of Moving Pictures." In the movie, Bruno was brought down by the skill of "the crafty hunter,'Opiteck,' [Aputik], the king of the Esquimaux tribe." In the movie, Aputik harpoons the bear. The Selig producers may have doubted Aputik's skill with the harpoon after ten years in the United States, for they employed two other "crafty" hunters off-camera, to ensure that the bear was killed. Two local men, shot the bear, one bullet penetrating the heart and the other the brain, while at the same time, Aputik "cast his trusty spear." The producers need not have doubted his abilities for the spear was found "penetrating the heart and protruding from the far side of the beast."

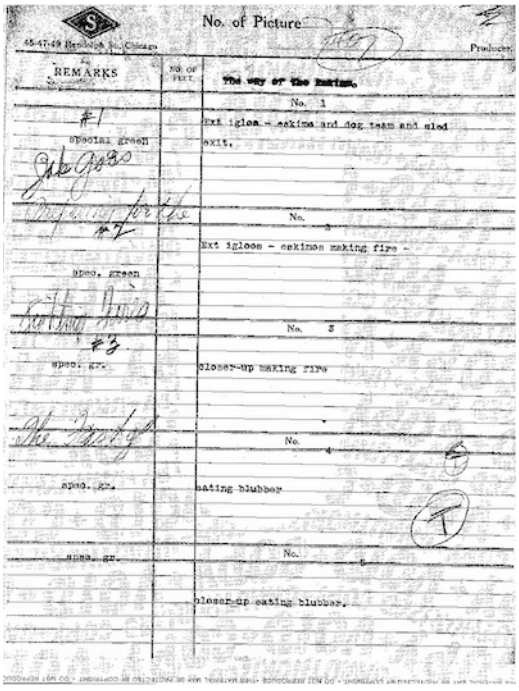
Yet despite the detailed coverage of the shooting, in only one of the Escanaba newspaper articles from 1911 is it mentioned that two films were being made simultaneously, or either film named. This article states that "the Selig Polyscope Company has been "in the city for about two weeks taking pictures representing two dramas, 'The Way of the Esquimaux' and 'In the Frozen North.'" Curiously, the second title seems to be in error; although this may have been a working title; a film with this name -- a more conventional "Northern" melodrama -- had already been released by Selig a year earlier. This is the same article which describes in detail the killing of

the polar bear, but we now know that the scene in which the polar bear is killed is from “Lost in the Arctic” and not “The Way of the Eskimo,” as is evident from the release flyer. Most citizens of Escanaba were probably unaware that two titles were being filmed at once, and indeed William V. Mong may not have been certain of it himself. While he doubtless had in hand the “scenarios” for two films, there were many vagaries that could affect production in those days, and there was no way to fully evaluate the footage until the crew returned to the Selig studios. The continuity pages for “The Way of the Eskimo,” which survive in the Selig papers at the AMPAS library, indicate not only various editing sequences, tinting, and so forth, but also note scenes that had come out too dark, or were otherwise unsuitable for use. Such unforeseen factors could considerably shorten the amount of usable footage, and with the location no longer available, re-shoots were not an option. One indicator that something of this kind happened is that the second film, “Lost in the Arctic,” ended up with too little footage to fill a ten-minute reel, and had to be marketed as a “split reel” with a featurette entitled “Noted Men.”

The films themselves have not, to the best of our knowledge, survived. A short clip from one of them was saved by a local Escanaba projectionist who had screened the film in the town in 1911, but although donated to the local library, it went missing sometime in the 1930's. Fortunately, we have a variety of other documentary sources: the continuity script at the AMPAS library give us a scene-by-scene account of "The Way of the Eskimo"; three stills for the two films are known from release flyers, and two very singular photographs from the filming were preserved by Nancy's family. Lastly, in large part due to its unusual subject matter, "The Way of the Eskimo" was more widely and extensively reviewed than was typical of films from this period, and there are at least a half-dozen fairly substantial reviews from magazines and newspapers in the United States, New Zealand, and Australia. "Lost in the Arctic" received

fewer and briefer reviews, though the scene of the killing of the polar bear received widespread mention. These documents give us a rich sense of what it must have been like for audiences in 1911 to see these films which, in a manner never attempted before, brought before them images of real "Eskimos" as the featured characters in stories based on their actual history. And, if the accounts widely given to the press by the Selig studios can be trusted, "The Way of the Eskimo" was based on a treatment written by Nancy Columbia herself[30] -- making this the first Inuit-written, Inuit-cast movie, ninety years earlier than Zacharias Kunuk's *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, the previous claimant of this honor.

The continuity script lists each of the twenty-two shots which make up "The Way of the Eskimo." The opening scenes depict the "Eskimo ritual" of saying farewell to the Sun, which involved building a fire, dancing, and the eating of "raw meat" (Scenes 1, 2, 21/4, 21/2, and 23/4). Next, John C. Smith and Mong, who are credited as "trappers," are shown building a winter shelter (Scene 3). The next sequence shows the Inuit hunter, played by Zacharias Zad (as "Zak"), parting with his love "Ananak, an Eskimo Maiden" played by Nancy. After Zak and his dog team have departed, the old chief "Opetek" reassured Ananak and Zak that they may marry after the sun returns (Scene 4). The next few edits intercut scenes of Mong hunting unsuccessfully for food, eventually becoming lost, with Zak trekking across the snow with his dog team (Scenes 5-7). We then see Mong falling into the snow and


No. of Picture

Producer

REMARKS	NO. OF FEET	The way of the Eskimo.
#1 special green		No. 1 Ext igloo - eskimo and dog team and sled exit.
#2		No. 2 Ext igloos - eskimos making fire -
spec. green #3		No. 3 closer-up making fire
spec. gr.		No. 4 eating blubber
spec. gr.		No. 5 closer-up eating blubber.

sleeping; a moment later Zak arrives and rescues the frozen trapper (Scene 8). Zak brings him back to the village, where he is revived, but on seeing Ananak falls in love with her at first sight. Soon they are in each other's arms, an act which Opetek attempts to punish by hitting Mong with his spear; Ananak boldly comes between them, defending the white man with upraised arms (Scenes 9-10). Mong then takes the chief's spear from him, and he and Ananak leave the igloo (Scenes 11-14). Meanwhile, Zak is seen hunting at his "summer camp" (Scene 15), after which Smith returns to find that his fellow trapper is still alive (Scene 16). He and Mong prepare to depart, but when Ananak tries to go with them, Mong will not let her (Scene 18). Despondent, Ananak ties a stone to a rope around her neck, and prepares to throw it into a river to drown herself. Happily, at the last moment, Zak arrives and rescuses her (Scene 19). In the final scenes, Ananak is welcomed back into the village, and she and Zak are reconciled, living (one presumes) happily ever after; the title card reads "ZAD BRINGS HOME HIS BRIDE" (Scene 22). At the end of the script is the handwritten notation "1072 feet" -- to which is then added 139 feet, for a total of 1,211; this corresponds closely with the typewritten indication on the cover page, which reads "Length of picture about 917 feet. Length of announcements about 131 feet. Total lengths about 1048 feet." It appears that, some of the footage having been trimmed during editing by about 150 feet, the final length with the intertitles added was just over the 1,000-feet mark of a one-reel film.[31]

Reviews of the finished film were unusually detailed and positive. Some of the strongest praise came, interestingly, from newspapers in New Zealand, where the film was shown late in 1910 and early in 1911: "The dramatic section included a film of great value from a scenic point of view, being 'The Way of the Eskimo.' The surroundings are all in keeping with life in the frozen regions inhabited by the Inuit. Such customs as bidding the sun goodbye before the long

winter sets in are shown, and even apart from the interest created by the dramatic story, the film stands as one of an unusual type of excellence."[32] The film was held over at one New Zealand cinema, with the local paper singling it out for unusually strong praise:

> It is seldom that a more unique film than that entitled "The Way of the Eskimo" has been screened at His Majesty's Theatre, and it appears to have met with much approval. The original intention of the management was to screen an entirely new series of films this evening, but they have been prevailed upon to retain the above-mentioned item of the previous series. The film referred to is indeed a rarity, and the spectacles of a romance enacted on the snowfields of Labrador and the mounds which form the dwelling-places of the Eskimos during the winter months is certainy unique. The photography, too, is all that could be desired, the lighting effects being strange but picturesque.[33]

Some American papers were more qualified in their praise, saying that "the plot was slender, but the scenes portrayed the life of the frozen north with great fidelity and vigor." The reviewer for the Jonesboro Arkansas *Evening Sun* singled Nancy out for special praise: ""This film will possess a peculiar interest for all, from the fact that the leading part has been taken by a young Esquimo girl of American birth, and that all the other characters - with the exception of two American trappers, who were impersonated by regular Selig actors - have been sustained by Eskimos. Columbia Enuteseak [sic] is the name of the Eskimo maiden, her Christian name being due to the fact that she was born during the World's fair in Chicago eighteen years ago. Mrs. Potter Palmer, at that time holding a prominent official position in connection with the exposition, acted as godmother to Columbia ... Miss Enuteseak [sic] is a bright, intelligent young lady and could easily be mistaken for a girl of American blood. She has proved herself a clever actress, as her work in this unique film will show."[34]

As for "Lost in the Arctic," we have much less detail. Mong and Smith were now listed in flyers as playing "Arctic Explorers"; the chief "Opetek" and his wife were played by Aputik and Esther; Nancy was now an "orphan girl" and Zacharias was "The Bear Hunter." A curious credit on the release flyer adds "Members of the Tribe, by Pearytok, Lolituk, Autosig, Beasotuk,

Magook, and Tava." Some of these may refer to Norman and Florence, who may have appeared as the tribe's children, but the seven names suggest that possibly other Selig extras donned fur clothing to add to its numbers. The description on the release flyer is the most detailed we have:

> "In far away Labrador, there is an unwritten law among Eskimos providing a death penalty for any member of the tribe, male or female, who is too ill or too aged to participate in the annual hunt. In 'Lost in the Arctic,' we see a tribe of these far away people starting on their hunt, they come upon the hut of a young orphan girl, she is ill and without food. The natives immediately go into council and the orphan is placed in a canoe and set adrift. Next, we see Davis, an Explorer, the only survivor of a lost polar Expedition. He is spearing seals through the open ice, when he finds himself floating out to sea, to be met by the orphan girl who has been cast adrift. Their meeting at sea and their rescue, the trials and sufferings of Captain John Smith, the explorer in search of Davis, the thrilling picture of the Eskimos harpooning [sic] a polar bear, go to make up a picture that will out-rival any Arctic picture ever produced."[35]

The scene of the killing of the polar bear was universally noted by reviewers, and deserves special mention. From his earliest days, Selig had operated his own menagerie of animals for use in his films, and indeed on his move to California, opened a lavish but short-lived zoo. Like Carl Hagenbeck before him, Selig was not averse to showing the killing of an animal on camera, provided that it would repay the loss by the immense interest of the public in the resulting film. By 1910, Selig was routinely shipping animals to filming locations in Florida, Colorado, and California, and so providing a polar bear for the Escanaba production was right in line with his usual practices.

Reviews were enthusiastic, though not so strong as they had been for "The Way of the Eskimo"; one gets the sense that, aside from the scene of the orphan girl meeting the explorer, the final sequences may have been somewhat jumbled. The *New York Dramatic Mirror* offered that the film had "many interesting features"; the *Moving Picture World* allowed that "the photographs must have been taken under difficulties" but that "some of them are very good, " both mentioning specifically the scene of the death of the bear. The *MPW* allowed that it had a "well-designed and fairly dramatic, though slight, plot, but shows so much of Eskimo customs

and so vividly pictures the experiences of exploring parties on the ice fields that it will be a very pleasing number on any bill."

Our last, and in some ways most tantalizing source of information on these two films comes from photographs. The Selig release flier for "Lost in the Arctic" shows a scene with an Inuk and three dogs passing by a flag with vertical stripes; one for "The Way of the Eskimo" shows a similar scene but without any human actors: three dogs beside an American flag on a pole leaning up against a sledge. The role of the flag in either film seems far from clear; it's certainly not mentioned in any surviving treatments. One can only suppose that it was meant to evoke, in some vague way, the Peary/Cook controversy, which had erupted in the media in the fall of 1909 and continued unabated until long after these films had been shot. And yet it corresponds in some ways with a remarkable panoramic photograph that is, in many ways, the most dramatic document of any of the Selig northern films. The photo was preserved by Nancy's daughter, and is of a type made by a panoramic or "circuit" camera popular around the time; the film was on a concave backing, and the lens literally panned across the scene while keeping the image in constant focus. We are still more fortunate in that we have a photograph of Nancy being shown this same camera by a "Mr. Kneeland" (so identified in her own handwritten caption).

The scene in the photo appears to show the Selig cameraman actually filming what looks to have been quite a dramatic scene: one can make out a white man wearing furs and a knit cap who is struggling with another fur-clad figure, while two Inuit stand nearby beside a sledge very much like the one shown in the release flyer for "Lost in the Arctic." The man in the knit cap is wearing glasses, and looks very much like John C. Smith; the other is in all probability Mong. In

his hand, the second man is clutching a bit of cloth that looks like it might be a folded American flag. A pole leaning against the seldge is in very much the same position that the release flyer shows the flagpole. But what is going on here? The scene doesn't correspond with anything mentioned in either film's publicity or reviews. It may be evidence that the original film scenario called for a struggle between two explorers, again meant to evoke Cook and Peary – or it may just be a fragment of some other abandoned sub-plot.

In the second photo, Nancy is holding the panoramic camera used to make the first photo, while "Mr. Kneeland" looks on. In the background is a man whose coat and cap closely resemble the Selig cameraman seen in the panoramic shot. On the front of the photo Nancy has written "Mr. Kneeland and Me"; the backing is that of a "real photo" postcard but it has unfortunately been trimmed, and the message obscured. All that can be made out is "... ld not buy / ... ture from / ... much fine / Kneeland. " It is addressed to "Miss Columbia, " in care of Selig's Chicago studios, so it seems as though Kneeland must have sent it to her there with the expectation that it would reach her,

and it must have done so. Had she told him she was going to do further films with Selig? The postcard is dated April 1, just one day after the local papers indicated that the Inuit had left town.

A remarkable third photo was located in the Selig collection at AMPAS for us by Andy Erish. It's from a different, two-page spread on the film that, for whatever reason, Zwick and other researchers never found. It looks more like a staged shot than one of the production in progress, and contains three elements. At far left, two fur-clad "Eskimos" stand face-to-face, presumably exchanging an "Eskimo Kiss. " In the background is a cluster of fur-clad figures, who presumably represent the villagers as depicted in the two films. Lastly, in the foreground, a smiling Nancy walks forward arm-in-arm with a white "explorer" (Mong); she is carrying a striped fur rug or blanket, and he holds a more elaborate garment of some kind – it could be a parka, or perhaps the "sacred seal skin" referred to in the scenario for "The Way of the Eskimo." The scene corresponds roughly with scene 14 of that film, in which Mong and Nancy were shown leaving the village together.

Lastly, we have a fourth photo – in fact the very photo that originally put us on to the Escanaba site. It's a striking one, and shows Nancy & Esther's group standing on the ice beside a prop igloo festooned with reindeer antlers. Zacharias is standing at left, next to Nancy, who is facing the igloo entrance, her back turned to the camera. A child stands in the center, also back to camera – this seems likely to be Florence (then two and a half). Her brother Oscar, just eight months old, is riding high in Esther's hood; between them stands a figure who must be Aputik, though since most of his face is hidden in his hood it's hard to be absolutely certain. At far right are a man (mostly obscured) and an older woman in fur garments whose identities are uncertain. It's possible that non-Inuit in costume participated in the film; as we'll see in Nancy & Esther's later films, this happened on occasion. The man and woman in this Escanaba photo may indeed prove to be such an instance.

"The Way of the Eskimo" was released on July 17, 1911, and "Lost in the Arctic" on September 18th, both to good reviews. And yet remarkably, Nancy and Esther's group is not known to have appeared in any further films for the next two years. Esther and her husband John C. Smith appear to have made unsuccessful attempts around this time to recruit more Inuit from Labrador, apparently at the behest of German zoo magnate Carl Hagenbeck. Unfortunately for these plans, the legislature of Newfoundland and Labrador had just passed a new law in March that greatly restricted such recruitment, and whatever plans there had been for a London showing fell through.

Hamburg, Seattle, and Santa Monica: 1911-1914

With other Inuit unavailable, the Smith/Eneutseak troupe ended up going to Germany themselves for a featured appearance at Hagenbeck's Hamburg zoo late in 1911, as well as at a related "Nordland" exposition in Berlin. After Germany, they had been appearing at an ice-skating rink in Brussels known as "La Pole Nord. The photos we have of this period are among the few in which Nancy is seldom smiling, and the group as a whole looks rather weary. The demands placed on them may have been great, or the hours long, or Nancy may simply have been missing American friends and connections. In the spring of 1912, for reasons not entirely clear, John C. Smith abandoned Zacharias and Aputik in Belgium and returned to the United States with his immediate family.

The Smith family returned to Seattle, scene of their greatest success. Smith got a job at the "Hudson Bay Fur Company" of Seattle – no relation to the great HBC of lore and legend, but a far more modest shop that sold fur clothes, shoes, and Indian curios, and was managed by one Moritz Gutmann. If the family appeared in any public venue in Seattle, there seems to have been very little trace of it, although there is one photo of Esther and her children in a show setting which may date to sometime later in 1912. Only the immediate family now remained, and for a time, it did not look as though they would ever return to show business. The 1914 city directory lists the family at 4044, 9th Avenue NE, and Smith as a salesman for Gutmann's company; in 1915 the address is the same, but Smith is listed as a "master mariner." And yet, by some point that year, the family seems to have found its way back to the film industry, which in the interim had moved most of its facilities to southern California.

Jim Zwick believed that Nancy & Esther's family may have been involved with several films in 1914, among them the Selig feature "The Spoilers," one of the studio's most successful – and last – films. He had found a newspaper sketch showing Inuit extras in a street scene in Nome, and also identifies four fur-clad figures who briefly appear later in the film as part of their troupe. Yet while there seem to be Eskimo children and an adult woman in the sketch, the finished film shows only two indistinct child-like figures in strangely-tailored furs which are clearly not Labradorean. In the later scene, none of the four actors are clearly recognizable as Inuit, although one of them bears a resemblance to a Siberian Yupik named "Kauvechka" who was briefly associated with John Smith & Esther's troupe.[36] In addition to this, since we have located school records for the family that place Nancy's younger half-siblings in Seattle throughout the 1913-1914 school year, we believe it very unlikely that Esther and Nancy's family participated in "The Spoilers" in any way.

Nevertheless, when the family did relocate to Santa Monica in 1915, the new "Eskimo Village" they established on the pier in a way that demonstrated their renewed commitment to, show business, including films. This new attraction, unlike their more recent work at zoos and world's fairs, was more of a midway show, drawing perhaps from their earlier experience at Coney Island. This real-photo

advertising card bears an interesting caption which suggests that Smith not only wanted to draw tourists to the Village, but hoped to offer his troupe, and their acountrements, to film companies:

> For Rent or For Sale. All kinds of Fur Rugs and Skins of every description, large and small, also Wolf Teams and Dog Teams, Sledges and everything to make up a good Show or Arctic Picture.

The group on this card includes Esther and Nancy and her half-siblings, along with a number of new figures, Kauvechka (at far right) among them.

1915 thus started out as a year of promise -- Esther and Nancy were back in their element, and the newly-expanded troupe at the Ocean Park Eskimo Village was doing well. In the summer of 1915, Nancy appeared, in part by chance, in another brief film made at the Ocean Park pier. The Mutual Film company was producing at the time a newsreel series known as the "Mutual Weekly," and had come to Santa Monica to film what was then (perhaps) an even greater novelty than a village of Inuit: the all-girl lifesaving crew headed by champion diver (and future Olympian) Aileen Allen. While there, the film crew apparently convinced Nancy to "shoot the breakers" in her fur costume; the footage appeared with the caption "Miss Columbia, Eskimo girl, shoots the breakers in her little skin Kayak, or native canoe." The newsreel has long been lost, but the scene was photographed for the local paper (figure #). Nancy herself did not enjoy

the experience; according to her daughter, she later recounted that she hated the water, and that the film crew had to exercise considerable persuasion to get the shot.

The Ocean Park Eskimo Village would surely have been destined for great things, were it not for the fire in December of that year – the second of many to befall the Ocean Park pier – which completely destroyed the attraction, along with the Dance pavillion, the Ben Hur roller coaster, and the Rosemary Theater. Fortunately, as the *Los Angeles Times* remarked, "The huskies of the Eskimo Village escaped the danger of the flames, as they are out on a jaunt in the mountains in a 'movie' drama."[37] From this, it's clear that even as their new attraction was open for business, Nancy and Esther's group had already returned to appearing in films. And, while originally this may have been a a supplement to the Village's income, after the fire, it became a mainstay; the period 1916-1920 may well have been the family's busiest on film.

This second round of movies is fascinating, as Esther and Nancy's move to California coincided with the movement of the whole film industry -- Selig himself was the first to move west, and William V. Mong later became associated with Triangle, a combine which included Thomas Ince's first mega-studio at Inceville, a short trolley and buggy ride from the beach at Ocean Park. We believe that the majority of Nancy & Esther's work at this time was tied up with Ince, though they also found work with at least one other company, Vitagraph. Both Nancy and Esther continued to get minor roles in films through about the year 1920, at which point their direct involvement with the film industry seems to have ended. Nevertheless, this brief period saw them appearing in a least half a dozen films, with directors such as Ince, Cecil B. deMille, Clarence Brown, and Rollin S. Sturgeon.

Films with Thomas H. Ince and others, 1915-1920

While their involvement with Selig at this date is uncertain, their connection with Thomas H. Ince and the "Inceville" studio he built at Santa Monica is quite clear. Ince was in many ways the first movie mogul, the first to build an enormous outdoor production lot, and the first to churn out a heavy schedule of multi-reel features in an almost production-line manner. Westerns were Ince's original stock in trade, and to help make them he brought out an entire Indian village, a group formerly associated with the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch, a touring "Wild West" show. Some of these Indian extras lived in Inceville, but quite a few stayed in the area of Ocean Park. A trolley ride from the Park took them to the base of the road leading to Inceville, where horse-drawn carriages would take them up to the studio itself. It's hard not to imagine that many of these Indian actors would have spoken with the "Eskimos" there about the opportunities for making money in films, or it may well have been that Nancy & Esther had already made use of their resumé with Selig to get work with Ince. In any case, there is ample evidence that they appeared in Ince productions, both as Inuit and as Plains Indians, and even – in the case of Esther – as a Japanese woman

The evidence for all this comes from three sources: 1) Family photos showing Nancy and Esther in costume; 2) Production stills and footage from surviving films; and 3) stories in the press about the making of "snow pictures" up in the area's mountain resorts. The photos ae the most dramatic evidence, although (frustratingly) the most difficult to link to specific films. In one (fig #), we see Esther on the snow-covered porch of a log cabin, with Oscar and Sidney, all in full sealskin outfits. Judging by their apparaent ages – Oscar looks to be 5 or 6, and Sidney perhaps 4 -- this photo dates from 1915 or 1916. And, as it happens, we have an excellent

candidate for what film this might be, which is "God's Country and the Woman," directed by Rollin S. Sturgeon. The film is remembered today as the first appearance of actor/director Nell Shipman, and was filmed in the mountains near Big Bear Lake in California. Indeed, Nancy and Esther's group, along with their dogs and equipment, may well have been on location for this film when the "Eskimo Village" attraction was destroyed by fire in December of 1915.

We are fortunate to have two bits of corroborating evidence. The first is a news item from the Los Angeles Times of 9 January 1916, the headline of which reads "Snowbound Party Freed." The article is worth quoting at length:

> After an all day's struggle through the snow on the north side of the San Bernardino Mountains the party of twenty motion-picture actors, many of whom are women, who have been marooned in Bear Valley because of the heavy snow that made access into the valley by automobiles impossible, arrived at Victorville tonight. A message to that effect was received from Henry Shay of the transportation company which went out from Victorville yesterday to meet the people who planned to leave Bear Valley with Alaskan dogs and sleds and snowshoes. Instead, however, Shay met two men at Cactus Flats who brought news that the snow had melted sufficiently for the trucks to reach a point within walking distance of Pine Knot Lodge.

This must have been the film crew for "God's Country and the Woman," as it was the only production made at that location at that time; the phrase "many of whom are women" likely refers not only to Nell Shipman, but also to Esther and Nancy, as well as (possibly) Florence; there was also another young actress, Nell Clark Keller, among the credited cast. Our second piece of evidence is thus, we feel conclusive: Florence's son Paul clearly recalls that his mother's family appeared in this film.[38] Unfortunately, there are no known surviving prints of this film,

and very few production stills, all of which show only the lead actors. The film was based on a story by James Oliver Curwood, who was practically a one-man show when it came to penning novels fit to be turned into "northerns"; three years later, Nell Shipman would co-write and star in her own Curwood northern, "Back to God's Country." That film does survive, and includes several scenes with Inuit. It would certainly a logical film in which to expect appearances by Esther and Nancy, but unfortunately, in a move that would become a Hollywood tradition, they are all played by Japanese-American women.

After this film, the next fairly definite project with which Nancy & Esther's group appeared was "The Flame of the Yukon." This was a Thomas H. Ince production, with many of its scenes filmed either at Inceville or in the mountains nearby in the winter of 1916-17. We don't have specific photographic evidence here – although the photo of Esther with Oscar and Sidney could possibly date to this period as well – but the advertising campaign for the film was quite explicit, advertising "Real Eskimos," " Real Husky Dogs," and a "miniature village of twenty Eskimos" (fig. #). Given the proximity to Inceville as well as other productions of Ince's in which we know Esther at least played a role, this is compelling circumstantial evidence of their participation in this film, even though the group at Santa Monica never numbered more than 16 persons. This film, too, is considered to be lost, and although there are a few production stills, none that we have found shows the Inuit.


GEM THEATRE
Extra Special
TWO DAYS
Wednesday and Thursday
AUGUST 15-16
TWO DAYS
A WOMAN OF FIRE
Ablaze with an untamed Spirit—Until She Meets the Stranger.
DOROTHY DALTON
She was renowned in every Dance Hall of Alaska as
"THE FLAME of THE YUKON"
A Triangle Drama of the Gold Mad Days in the Lawless Artic Lands.
The Production You Have Been Waiting For. Don't Miss It.
7 BIG ACTS
Moving Picture critics claim that it is one of the greatest dramas ever filmed. A complete Alaskan village built especially for this picture. A miniature tribe of twenty Eskimos are seen in this picture. Alaskan dog teams. It carries you back to the days of '98 when gold was discovered way up north, showing you just what the far north was really like. A picture you will always remember. Don't miss it.
Dorothy Dalton in Triangle Play, "The Flame of the Yukon."
7 BIG ACTS
A Few of the Cast.
Ethel Evans, "The Flame" Dorothy Dalton
"Black Jack" Hover ..Melbourne McDowell
Geo. Fowler, "The Stranger" .....
.....Kenneth Harlan
Delly .....Margaret Thompson
George Fowler, Minor ..... Carl Ullman
Mrs. George Fowler ..... May Palmer
4 SHOWS DAILY
Matinee 2:15- 4:15 .... Evenings 7:30-9:00 p. m.
Admissions:
Adults 25c Children 15c
COME EARLY
Your money back if you are not satisfied.
DON'T MISS IT.

Finally, some intriguing evidence of further work with Ince's productions comes from an unexpected quarter. When interviewing Florence's son, Kenn was stunned to hear him say that his grandmother Esther had appeared as a Japanese woman alongside Sessue Hayakawa in an Ince production – and then even more stunned when he produced a photograph of her in Japanese costume (fig. #). That Japanese-American actors would play Inuit is, as we have noted, a long tradition, but to hear that an Inuk would be cast as a Japanese woman was certainly news. Ince was a pioneer in Asian-themed film, hiring Sessue Hayakawa and his soon-to-be wife Tsuru Aoki in 1914 to make a series of films with Japanese themes and content. Aside from Hayakawa and Aoki, Ince also drew extras from a small Japanese-American fishing village that was just around the corner from the point where the road to Inceville reached the ocean. Ince tended to draw a strong line between his extras and his featured players, and only a very few of the large number of Indian or Japanese-American actors ever had major roles; indeed in one film, he had Hayakawa play an Indian chief's son rather than hire any of the dozens of Indians available. He may very well have hired Esther on account of her considerable experience, thinking it preferable to have a veteran actress in a more prominent role.

The photo of Esther is additionally interesting in that it shows a group of men – one of whom bears a strong resemblance to Ince himself – in the background. It may very well have been taken by a family member while Esther waited for her scene on camera. We have scrutinized most of the surviving films of this era, including "The Dragon Painter" (1919) but have not found Esther in any of the footage. Hayakawa's earlier films, "O Mimi San," "The Wrath of the Gods," and "The Typhoon" can probably be ruled out as candidates for films in which Esther may appeared as they were all released in 1914, a year in which the city directory indicates that John Smith and family were still in Seattle. Most of his other surviving features from this early period all have him in Western attire, but as he continued to appear in films with Japanese themes and subjects throughout the period from 1915 to 1919, it may well have been one of these later films; our research continues.

We have one last clue from Paul, which is a statement that his grandmother also appeared in an early film directed by Cecil B. DeMille. DeMille directed Hayakawa in 1915's "The Cheat," so although this is a Western-dress feature, there clearly was a potential connection with DeMille. It is possible that Esther's DeMille and Hayakawa films were one and the same, although this is not proven. DeMille also made a "northern" feature in this period, 1914's "The Call of the North." but we believe it to be too early for the Inuit to have appeared in it, and a viewing of a surviving print shows no evidence of their presence. DeMille directed 25 films in 1914 and 1915 alone, including a few "Wild West" features, so it's entirely possible that Esther or Nancy appeared in one of them in some capacity, most likely as "Indians."

The final film for which we have direct evidence of Nancy's participation is the 1920 version of "The Last of the Mohicans," where once again she appears as a Plains Indian woman. A photo which may be from this era shows both Nancy and Esther in Indian costume (fig. #), which suggests that Esther too may have played a role. We have been able to identify Nancy in one production still (fig. #), and it's also possible to see her in the finished film. By this time, she was no longer making many, or possibly even *any* appearances as an "Eskimo" on display.

Conclusion

Over two decades of nomadic life as entertainers ended when the Inuit family settled down in Santa Monica. They remained there. In 1922 Nancy Columbia married Raymond S. Melling, a cinema projectionist, and seems to have retired permanently from show business. A daughter was born to the couple five years later but the marriage soon ended in divorce. Nancy died in

1959; for the last decade of her life she had lived with the debilitating effects of a stroke. Esther outlived her daughter by two years.

Between 1901 and 1920, Nancy and Esther and the Inuit associated with their various shows appeared in at least *nineteen* films, and possibly many more. It's a remarkable record for a period in which First Nations/Native American actors were very rarely cast in any featured roles, least of all portraying themselves. They include the earliest films ever taken of Inuit, the first Inuit-cast Inuit-written film, and some of the earliest work of figures such as Tom Mix, Nell Shipman, Sessue Hayakawa, and Cecil B. DeMille, who were to have a lasting impact on the history of cinema. Ninety years before *Atanarjuat*, and eleven years before *Nanook of the North*, Nancy Columbia was the very first Inuit film star, and though only a few fragments of footage remain, it's clear that she was as captivating on the silver screen as she had been at the many World's Fairs and other expositions in which she appeared from her birth in 1893 through her days in Santa Monica. It's a pioneering role that has never before been thoroughly documented or acknowledged. It is our firm hope that this article will start the process of her recognition.

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[1] "Strange People," *Boston Globe*, October 15, 1892, p. 1-2.

[2] Inuit is a plural noun, literally meaning "people." It also signifies the group of people that history once knew as Eskimos. Its singular nominal form is Inuk. In our usage, the adjectival form is Inuit.

[3] The term used in Skiles's contract was "Eskimo Village." However most actual exhibition villages used the old, originally-French, spelling "Esquimaux Village," perhaps to add an extra element of exoticism. Both terms are used in this article.

[4] Concession Agreements, Volume 1, Contract 8, F38 M2 1893, Chicago Historical Society.

[5] Relationship to W. D. Vincent unknown

[6] "Strange People," op. cit.

[7] "Exodus of Eskimos," *Inter Ocean (Chicago)*, April 21, 1893, p. 1

[8] "Strange People," op. cit.

[9] "A Party of Esquimaux Arrive in the Windy City," *Sandusky Daily Register (Sandusky, Ohio)*, October 19, 1892.

[10] A promotional publication was poetic but in error when they wrote that the Esquimaux "came when the winter's snow was still on the ground and the winds that blew had the tone and touch of the North Pole, and gave to them a genial welcome." *Chicago Times Portfolio of the Midway Types, Part Two* (Chicago: The American Eng. Co., 1893), p. 6 (unnumbered).

[11] *Oriental and Occidental Northern and Southern Portrait Types of the Midway Plaisance* (St. Louis: N. D. Thompson Publishing Co., 1894), text accompanies third unnumbered plate.

[12] Also known as Ester, Esthermut Abila (on the ship's passenger list), and later as Enutseak or Esther Enutseak, also Esther Eneutseak. The name Enutseak was first used in promotional material for the Buffalo fair in 1901. It is an Inuit word meaning "good person." The variant spelling "Eneutseak" came later in her career.

[13] Ross, Ishbel, *Silhouette in Diamonds: The Life of Mrs. Potter Palmer*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 92.

[14] Nancy Columbia was not the first baby to be born at the Chicago World's Fair. A daughter had been born to Simon and Susan Manak on November 1, and named Columbia Susan; she died less than a week later. Two days after her birth, Kuttukitok, the wife of Kupah, both "northern heathens," gave birth to a daughter, Kotuktooka, whom fair officials insisted on naming Evelena, after the ship that had transported her parents to Boston. Later that month, another family had a son which was given the name Christopher Columbus Tuktoosina (Tooktoosina); the parents of this child are not identified.

[15] "Sealskins in Warm Weather," *The Constitution (Atlanta, Georgia),* April 2, 1893, p. 21.

[16] "Exodus of Eskimos," op. cit.

[17] Esther Bein to Franz Boas, Rigelutt [Rigolet], Labrador, October 2, 1899. Franz Boas Papers, American Philosophical Society.

[18] Campbell, Lady Colin, *Olympia, Winter Season, 1899-1900. Savage Africa, The Eskimo Encampment, The Zulu Kraal, The Soudanese Village, and Behind the Scenes* (London: Walter Hill & Co. Ltd., [1899]).

[19] [Taber, Ralph.] *The Esquimaux, Their Life, Customs and Manners* (Niagara Falls, N.Y., The Gazette Press, n.d.), p. 13.

[20] "Christmas Programme at Olympia," *London Times*, December 5, 1899, p. 7.

[21] [Taber, Ralph,] *The Esquimaux*, op. cit., p. 14.

[22] *Official Catalogue and Guide Book to the Pan-American Exposition* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Charles Ahrhart, 1901), p. 42.

[23] "Esquimaux Natives All Gone," *Buffalo Courier*, November 19, 1901. (Scrapbook or Pan-American Exposition newspaper clippings on microfilm, Special Collections Department, Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, Buffalo, New York).

[24] All information on the three Edison films of the Esquimaux comes from the Library of Congress's website, Inventing Entertainment: The Motion Picture and Sound Recordings of the Edison Companies, *http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/edhtml/edhome.html.*

[25] All information on the Marvin films comes from the Internet Movie Database, along with the Complete Index to World Films at *http://www.citwf.com.*

[26] Caribou Bill, whose actual name was William F. Cooper, also become heavily involved in the early film industry and the popularity of the Northern genre. He built a motion picture camp near Saranac Lake, New York in 1909-1910, and a significant number of films were made there. He appeared himself in the 1911 Vitagraph version of *Last of the Mohicans*, and was still active in the industry as late as 1930, when he worked as a consultant for RKO Pictures. He died in 1933.

[27] Richard D. Jensen, *The Amazing Tom Mix: The Most Famous Cowboy of the Movies* (Bloomington, Indiana: iUniverse: 2005), p. 43. Jensen also gives an account of Mix's ongoing quarrels with Zack Miller, which doubtless also played some role in his decision.

[28] In 1913 Smith abandoned both Zacharais Zad and Simon Aputik in Europe when he and his family returned to Seattle. The British Government repatriated them to Labrador. Zad died in Hebron, Labrador in 1918 of Spanish influenza.

[29] Zwick's book, *Inuit Entertainers in the United States: From the Chicago World's Fair through the Birth of Hollywood,* was self-published in 2006. Zwick's research was largely conducted using the internet, and he did not have access to the family members and materials that Nancy's daughter and Florence's son shared with Kenn. Thus, while the book offers a reasonably accurate account of the family's exhibition days, his account of their work in films is sketchy and missing much vital information.

[30] According to Selig expert Andy Erish, the firm was not averse to attributing a film's script to a well-known figure in order to generate publicity. Nevertheless, in this case we feel the claim is credible, on the grounds that Nancy's name was *not* listed as a credited writer in the trade advertisements and flyers, but only given in *response* to a querent's letter in the generally well-connected *Motion Picture Story Magazine*, and appeared in the issue of October, 1911 -- well after the point at which it would have been useful for publicity purposes. See *Motion Picture Story Magazine,* Vol. II No. 9, p. 143; the response to 'C.L.' of St. Louis reads in full as follows: "The Selig 'The Way of the Eskimo' is probably the Photoplay you mean. It was written by Columbia Enuteseak [sic]. She was born at the Columbian Exposition."

[31] There exists, along with the editing continuity, a series of four draft title lists, only the last of which seems to have been actually used. At the end of this list is the handwritten indication "49 ft. + 965 = 1,014 feet," which would seem to offer a different accounting of the final length. Without the actual film, it may not be possible to determine the exact length or running time of the final print.

[32] *The Poverty Bay Herald*, 28 December 1911, p. 3.

[33] *The Poverty Bay Herald*, 29 December 1911, p. 3.

[34] *The Jonesboro Evening Sun*, 22 August 1911.

[35] Release flyer, Selig Collection, AMPAS Library.

[36] "Kauvechka" appears in the picture postcard of the new Eskimo Village that Smith and Co. established in Santa Monica in the summer of 1915 (see figure #). He bears a strong resemblance to a Siberian Inuk who was part of the group at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific exposition in 1909, so his history may well extend back before 1914; we're continuing to research his identity. He became best known as the bridegroom in an elaborately-staged "Eskimo Wedding" hosted at the Ocean Park venue in the summer of 1915, but he vainshes from the public record almost immediately thereafter.

[37] "Fire the Toll of Cigarette?" *The Los Angeles Times*, 28 December 1915, p. II3.

[38] This evidence is especially compelling since Paul was largely raised by his grandmother Esther, and would have been able to hear about the filming at first hand.