

BOOK REVIEW

The Eskimos of Bering Strait 1650-1898 is more than just an excellent history of western Alaska, it will stand as a basic reference work for many years to come.

Dorothy Jean Ray has devoted more than fifteen years to research on the history of the Seward Peninsula and the Bering Strait Region. In reading this book it is evident that she tracked down nearly every thing that has been written about the early history of this area. She had to dig through stacks of original or primary source material, sort out the important events and people and place everything in proper perspective. Then she set out to do fieldwork among the Eskimos to get their input and give a complete picture from all points of view. It is the type of work that only an anthropologist-historian-scholar and understanding person could produce.

The reader finds, then, that this is not just an average local history for Alaska. It is a precise work, correct in the smallest detail. She points out, for instance, that the proper designation of the region is the Bering Strait (not Straits). In matters where

there has been a great deal of controversy or confusion, she sets the record straight. Questions about the expansion of the Malemiut, the so-called "lost Russian Settlement of Kheuveren", the search for the Franklin expedition the early missions and schools are all answered clearly and succinctly.

This is not the kind of book that one browses through quickly. It is the sort of work that a person reads and re-reads several times and each time finds something new and worthwhile. This reviewer recommends that people buy the hardback copy; in years to come, the interested reader will have many occasions to use the book as a standard reference in Alaskan history.

The community college at Nome has already adopted the book as a basic text on Alaskan heritage. Hopefully, other colleges and universities will add it to their libraries and classroom use as one of the books on Alaska. In 1899, Edward Nelson published his classic work on the Eskimos About Bering Strait. Dorothy Jean Ray's book not only supplements Nelson's great

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work, but in this reviewer's opinion, will be recognized as an equally important contribution to Alaskan history and anthropology.

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