

She Remembered Purchase of Alaska



114 YEARS OLD - Old, old woman, Dolly Komakhuk, died this month at a Nome nursing home. Dolly had vivid memory of the time when Alaska was purchased from Imperial Russia in 1867. On March 5, last month, Dolly is shown listening to Emma Black, Nome Eskimo woman, who is reading the Bible translating it into Eskimo language.

-REV. D.W. HILDIE Photograph

Dolly Komakhuk, 114 Years Old, Dies at Nome

Mrs. Dolly Komakhuk, who remembered when the United States purchased Alaska from the Russians, died recently in Nome. She was about 114 years old.

She was born near Council on the Seward Peninsula sometime in 1852. Her family also lived at Norton, Solomon and White Mountain before moving to Nome.

Mrs. Komakhuk spent most of her life in the Norton Sound area, moving to Anchorage in 1950. She later returned to Nome, and was living in a nursing home there when she died. Her husband, Charles, died about 20 years ago.

Her memory was especially keen until a few weeks ago,

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Dolly...

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and she attended church the Sunday before her death.

Members of her family do not know exactly how many survivors Mrs. Komakhuk left. Known survivors include a sister, Mrs. Pauline Curran of Texas, and all five of her children—Mrs. Grace Alexine of Nome, Mrs. Mary Hanson of New York, Mrs. Alice Kalerak of Anchorage, Billy Komakhuk of Nome and Peter Komakhuk of Anchorage.

In 1662, she had 80 grandchildren and 48 great-grandchildren. Since then, several great-great-grandchildren have been born.

Alaska was purchased shortly after Mrs. Komakhuk was married, and she vividly remembered the excitement among her people at the sale.

Prior to that time, she recalled, her people traded with the Russians at what is now St. Michael's. When the Russians sold Alaska, they were afraid the trading would be discontinued.

At the time, her people were mostly hunters, trappers, and fishermen. "We had only wood traps," she recalled, "and fishing nets made out of caribou sinew and seal hides."

"Only matches we had were jade rocks, and we had jade knives," she recalled. Her people used fish traps, ranging down to five feet long, operating the year around—including under the ice in winter.

In 1962 in Anchorage, she was still making Eskimo yo-yos and dolls and doing other sewing. She gave as the reason for her long life the fact that she only ate meat, berries, muktuk, fish and wild potatoes.