

Book Review

By Wally Olson

A Small History of the Western Kenai, by Walt & Elsa Pedersen
Adams Press, Chicago, Illinois 1976 Price: \$5.00

Walt and Elsa Pedersen have a homestead at Moose River on the Kenai Peninsula. Both have lived in Alaska for more than thirty years and finally decided that it would be nice to collect a short history of the area in the "Foxfire" style; local people tell the history of the area as they know it and have lived it. The writing is rather uneven, as would be expected when each individual does his own thing. But it also gives a lot of insight into the feelings, hopes, expectations and problems they have had as real human beings. In many cases these are personal histories.

Unlike many histories which only begin with the coming of the Whiteman, this one starts with the Indians of the area. Elsa gives a very brief ethnographic sketch of the old way of life and brings it down to the present day. An interesting addition is the numbering of pages both in regular Arabic numerals and the old Kenaitze language.

Although the book has very little on Native people, it is a good example of what can be done with local history. Village schools and even high schools might want to get a copy of the book for their students to look at and get some ideas for writing their own histories. Many histories cover large areas or specialize on one topic or the other. A local history such as this one gives a different point of view; it shows what has happened in one particular place. This reviewer, and many others, would like to see more local histories like this.

It doesn't pretend to be a great book. Its not even a big book. It's just a nice little book and lots of fun to read. Wouldn't it be nice to have the same kind of book on the Yukon Delta, the North Slope, or Kodiak? Many places have a history of which they can be proud, but they remain to be written. A Small History of the Western Kenai is a good start and a good inspiration.