

Point Lay Store—

Resettled Village Well Supplied

By MARGIE BAUMAN

Birthday candles, canned meats, fruit and vegetables are all for sale these days in the village store at Point Lay, far above the Arctic Circle along the Chukchi Sea.

Working through the Alaska

Native Industries Cooperative Association, (ANICA) Seattle, Wash., residents of this small Eskimo community southwest of Barrow on Alaska's North Slope have laid in a wide variety of supplies for the long winter.

Point Lay residents gathered for a special village meeting back in May, to make out the huge shopping list for the cooperative store. The order had to be placed by early June, in time to get supplies on the old Bureau of Indian Affairs freighter, the famed North Star, which heads north as the ice goes out, delivering supplies along the west and north coasts of Alaska.

"Birthday candles are the only frill," remarked Nancy Gray, one

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Point Lay Native Store . . .

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of the village residents who helped make up the shopping list. "Most of it is survival stuff."

Ninety-seven people are enrolled back to Point Lay under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, but some are not in residence now. Nonetheless, villagers ordered enough supplies to handle about 150 people, said Abel Akpik, president of Cully Corp., the village corporation organized under the land claims act.

This means there will be enough food and fuel and other survival goods for sale for hunt-

ers and other visitors who may need supplies during the winter months.

When store manager Benjamin K. Neakok announced the reopening of the store this past autumn, ANICA promptly named it their "store of the month" and reprinted an article and picture on the store from June of 1953.

Neakok told ANICA in the announcement that he would "try to keep in touch with you often, but sometimes we don't have our mail in for several weeks at a time. Wish us luck."

Twenty years ago, the stock at the Point Lay Native Store was a bit different. People came from outlying areas to buy whale guns, rifles, ammunition, and trade furs, whale and seal oil. The present store sells ammunition to hunters, but no guns yet, although it is licensed to do so.

A specialty of the house is Cully Cooler Cola, the name given by villagers to the cola flavored soda pop (Cooler brand) hauled up on the North Star. Cully, the name of the village corporation, is actually a corruption of the Inupiat Eskimo word "Kili," which means "mound of earth towed."

For at least several thousand years the Point Lay area has been a favored seasonal hunting ground and meeting place for Eskimo peoples in the Far North.

Visitors these days will find things not all that quiet as it once was, however. Not far behind the reopening of the village store is coming the reopening of the Point Lay School, now under jurisdiction of the North Slope Borough.

The school, expected to open by December, will also purchase fuel oil at the Point Lay Native Store.