

Editorial Comment—

The Subject Of Nooiksut

Not long ago, an article appeared in the local daily paper dealing with the repopulation of the old village of Nooiksut on the Arctic Slope. The article surmised that the Arctic Slope people did not have the right to resettle the village — that it was non-existent and that the resettlement was a trespass on the state lands. The paper's argument was prominently featured on the front page. The result — a rather large development of misgivings and doubt among the population especially among the White population that Nooiksut had never been there.

We are, at the moment, not completely sure ourselves about the existence of the village but we are on the strong trend that it did indeed exist. Upon results of further scrutiny, we will, of course, present our opinion one way or the other.

There have been many Nooiksuts, Nuwooks (True Point Barrow ten miles north of the present village of Barrow) and many others that have disappeared from the face of this northern land. These things began to happen at some festering point sometime back in the early 1800's when a first English ship sailed into the Arctic. From that time on, some Eskimo villages began to be decimated by new diseases to which the people had no immunity. Some large villages were wiped out. Chicken pox, measles, influenza, small pox, and tuberculosis were fatal diseases. Gonorrhea and syphilis began to run rampant. Great hunters of villages died and starvation became common. Social systems crumbled under the great pestilential onslaught.

Nuwook (Point Barrow) did not escape the scourge although the decimation occurred in comparatively recent times. An epidemic struck the village and the great many of some 94 villagers perished. The survivors could no longer sustain the little settlement and they apparently moved to the nearby larger community of Barrow.

Although we are, as yet, somewhat unsure of the fate of Nooiksut, we are at the moment, willing to contend that some corrosive visitation struck the village at some point in the past and that the survivors, as did the Nuwook survivors, moved to the larger village of Barrow.

The final history of Nooiksut has not been written and we are willing to keep it at this stage at the present time. We are very reluctant to accept the self-styled historical utterances of the local daily paper and those of Bud Helmericks who has been off and on in the north since 1952, as any authentic summation of the Nooiksut situation. We will be observant to the utterances of more qualified efforts of individuals who will delve more deeply into the matter.