

COPY

Shungnak, Alaska,

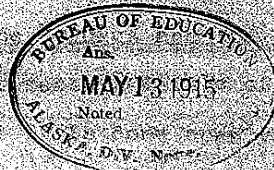
April 16, 1915

Mr. Walter Shields,

District Superintendent of Schools,

Nome, Alaska,

Dear Sir,



It is about 40 days since that you were reported at Kotzebue, so I have "given you up" as far as visiting with you this Spring is concerned. You may see your way to come up in the Summer to see our fine Gardens. I shall start planting indoors this week. Besides the Government seeds I have a large quantity that I have purchased from Seedhouses this year. I also have 50 lbs of nitrate and potash salts to experiment with, 100 lbs of what was to have been Chilean Saltpeter turned out to be Glaubers Salts. However it will not be a total loss as it is possible to use it on the natives as the Epsom Salts and Pills are all gone and the castor oil is nearly gone.

I am very sorry that I could not have seen you as there were several things that require your attention. 1st. The awarding of deer to "Crazy Charley" Murganak, 2nd. the payment of Lloyd and John for work on the building, 3rd the Division of the herd.

I wished to consult with you concerning adopting a stricter policy towards the reindeer herders, as they are so taken up with their petty quarrels and jealousies, that they are quite indifferent as to what becomes of their deer. What makes it worse they obey their families in the village instead of the chief herder. So many of the Government deer were lost that it will be hard for you to settle with Charley and the others.

The Expedition to the Komuk returned, one deer died on sickness enroute, and ten or twelve were left at the stons for sale. The expenses of the trip did not leave much profit to Tom Shea and Esay Broda.

2.

The deer averaged about 100 pounds, and sold for 40 cents a pound. The livers of most of the deer were so filled with cysts as to be unfit for sale. Some of the meat was also badly shot up with grubs. Tom is afraid that the condition of the meat will make it harder to sell in the future. The heavy snows made hunting easy in the Koyukuk and the market was flooded with wild sheep, caribou, and moose meat. The sale of this game is a direct violation of the game law, but it is done openly in the Koyukuk.

John and Crazy Charley wish to move their herds over to the Koyukuk, and as far as I am concerned they may do so as I am sick of the reindeer boys' troubles. However the boys spent their time in gambling and drinking whiskey, and I am sure that the herd would not last long in that country. I told them that they could drive steers over if they wished but that the females could not be driven without your permission.

Fawns have commenced to come. The herd will be stationed near the mouth of Shungnak Creek on this (the north) side of the Kobuk.

The moral condition of the village is as usual far from what might be wished. We have in this village five young women who are not living with their husbands. Their doings keep the village in hot water. They invite the attention of the whitemen and encourage the young married women in the village to follow their example. A very objectionable white man came up from Kiana and started to chase the kids, and spent his time in going from one house to another. He brought up his phonograph and started the "Whiteman dance" question again. I expected to have trouble with all the white men before I got through but I tried different tactics from Mr. Jones, and was able to break up the dancing without serious trouble or ill feeling. This man has gone to the Noatak for a all summer prospecting trip and I am much relieved. Yukon Charley, our most progressive native had his wife Nellie leave him on account of this man. Another very fine Native, Kokiak, died. A very large number of white men have had the Selawik Hot Springs

COPY

their headquarters this winter, and of course the native "ladies" had to revive a attack of rheumatism and follow. A great number of natives also went to hunt caribou, to trap and to take baths, but principally out of curiosity to see what the white men were doing, so at one time I thought that the whole village would go to the Springs. I am sure that the intentions of the greater part of the white men were good but two or three were "chasers". Of course I cannot be in any way responsible for what occurred at the Springs or its effect on the natives, no more than what I can be responsible for what they may learn at Kiana, or at Kotzebue. I was tempted to go over to the Springs for a weeks visit to see what was going on but I was afraid that I would find no school when I returned.

There was a light catch of fish last fall and the natives are about out of dog feed now. This is the poorest year for Ptarmigan that we have seen for years. There are very few rabbits within 15 miles of the school although they are very plentiful about 30 miles in all directions. Skins are very low, and the foxes are scarce, and the winds are bad for trapping. it is hard to keep the school going and I expect to close about the first of May.

I have a big woodpile 20 cords piled up and logs for about 40 more on the ground. If the spring freshet does not wash the wood away we shall have no wood question for the next two years. I am going to put the wire fence around the woodpile so that a foot or two of water will do no harm. I have not been able to collect all that I advanced last Spring, but in hopes that I can get in everything before the breakup. Of course it will be hard because the natives have but little food and nearly all of the able bodied men are preparing to leave for the Koyukuk to work for wages this Spring and summer. I shall make you a report on these two years wood supplies when the men finish cutting.

COPY

We have had a very enjoyable visit from archdeacon Hoare, and if there are any particulars concerning affairs up here that you are interested in you may inquire of him or of Dr Nichols as no doubt it will be several months before you will hear from me again.

I have been appointed Postmaster and have received the stamps and some supplies but the Mail route has not yet been established. We have had the worst year since we have been in Alaska, concerning the receiving and sending of Mails.

I am preparing to spend next year on the Kobuk, having bought a two years outfit when I heard about the war. I have not heard about my reappointment for next year, but I believe our work and policies have been so successful, that we think that you would not want to change.

We have used up all of the sewing supplies in. We will have over a dozen fish nets made when the school closes. 6 nets are finished and are over 15 fathoms in length each. It will be a great help to the village. I am going to try to have each pupil count his fish in order to find out how many fish are caught. I expect to have about 600 yds of net about 3 to 5 feet in depth. The children have been taught both the native style and the white fisherman style of weaving nets. I have written to the American net and twine Co to get other particulars in the manufacture, preservation, and setting of nets. It is well known that the natives nets are inferior to those made by the Whites.

I expect to be very busy with my garden this Spring and in August. I intend to make a trip about 40 miles up the Kobuk to the Summer fish camps. Then I shall return because Mr. Hoare is expected in to superintend the building of the Shungnak Church. It will certainly be a relief to have somebody to look after the missionary work for a while at least. I am certainly kept busy.

I have received a letter from Mr. Mendenhall saying that he had furnished Mr. Lopp with the evidence concerning the payment of his guide.

Since both Mendenhall and Samms agree that the native was not paid, I am

COPY

in hopes that the family may receive their money. Of course I have received no thanks from any one, but the satisfaction of having done my duty is a sufficient reward.

Our baby was very sick a couple of times this winter but she is all right now. Mrs. Sickler and I are enjoying the best of health.

I have done nothing about the Cold Storage proposition as I know that the natives here would not consider it as long as they can better themselves in the Koyukuk. At the minimum scale you quote, when one considers the expenses, risks, and wasted money blown in away from the families, I think that the Natives would be much better off to butcher the deer and use the meat and skins at home.

Mr. Hoare says that Johnson's account of the Peindeer Fair was quite good reading. You must have enjoyed yourself as I guess there were some funny things that happened. On the other hand it must have been considerable work for you to superintend all the details. The Eskimos are so jealous that it would be hard to make the awards.

I am going to send you a number of bills of sale for your signature and approval. I received the Herders' Blanks and filled in most of the spaces and signed them. I did not have the herders sign them as I was not sure as to how many deer to enter to each one's credit as the Herd count was so different from the records. Then the herders were not satisfied with the herd count, so I think it would be well to have a check count made next fall, when I propose to divide the herd, and then we could come in nearer the correct number of deer belonging to each herder. I expected that you would be here of course.

I have just received word that my brother has received an appointment in the Indian Service in engineering work.

I am very sorry that you gave us the go-by but I can understand that the trip up here takes considerable time and that you have been more than busy.

I think I have given you the most of the news so I must close
respectfully Fred M. Sickler