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Review of *Father Francis M. Craft: Missionary to the Sioux* By Thomas W. Foley

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Father Francis M. Craft: Missionary to the Sioux. By Thomas W. Foley. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002. xvi + 195 pp. Maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00.

The bland title of this biography might not attract the many readers the book deserves since Craft's name is known only from occasional footnotes related to the Ghost Dance religion that ended with tragic bloodletting at Wounded Knee in 1890. Using the priest's journals and researching references contained within them, the author draws from obscurity a life that should inspire scholars to tap similar material repositied in Marquette University's Catholic Indian mission archives. Diaries and journals stored there are a treasure trove of ethnographic and historical information that still awaits baring. Biographers can use Foley's work as a standard to imitate.

Until this work, Craft appeared as a kind of itinerant Irish-Catholic priest who happened to be present (for unknown reasons) at Wounded Knee. He becomes substantially more complex as Foley shows he also bore the titles of soldier, physician, convert to Catholicism, and, of special significance, a priest of Mohawk descent. In the Jesuit Order for six years, Craft was later ordained for the Diocese of Omaha where he served as a "missionary to

the Sioux" of North and South Dakota. He was adopted by the family of Spotted Tail and spoke Lakota fluently.

Craft's later presence at Wounded Knee was to people among whom he once served as priest but who were now under military arrest. Unlike many later historians, Craft commended the soldiers for their restraint on this occasion. Were he to be fatally wounded, however, he asked to be buried with the Lakota who died there and were placed in a mass grave that now marks the site.

Foley reveals a late nineteenth-century world of religious sectarianism that influenced the actions of many who converged upon the American frontier. When not contending with Protestant government officials, Craft regularly confronted the hierarchy of his own Church who showed more interest in Katherine Drexel's well-funded evangelistic efforts than in his founding of a devout, but penniless, congregation of Lakota nuns. In the end, the veteran of five wars and missionary to several Lakota agencies found his much-deserved respite as a parish pastor in Pennsylvania.

Readers will not be sympathetic to the priest's Catholic opponents and non-Catholic detractors with whom he regularly skirmished. Unlike many who contended with Craft in his lifetime, they probably will identify with the hundreds who attended his funeral to mourn a heartfelt loss. So compelling is Foley's larger-than-life portrait that readers may wish to see it brought to the movie screen.

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