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Review of *War Dance at Fort Marion: Plains Indian War Prisoners*. By Brad D. Lookingbill

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War Dance at Fort Marion: Plains Indian War Prisoners. By Brad D. Lookingbill. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006. xiii + 290 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.

Fort Marion in San Augustine, Florida, may seem far removed from the Great Plains, but as Brad Lookingbill ably demonstrates the events that transpired there between 1875 and 1878 form an important chapter in the history of several Plains Indian communities. In April 1875, thirty-three Cheyenne, twenty-seven Kiowa, nine Comanche, two Arapaho, and one Caddo prisoners departed Fort Sill, Indian Territory, destined for imprisonment in Florida. Captain Richard Henry Pratt, a staunch proponent of forced Indian assimilation, was placed in charge of them. At Fort Marion he implemented a regimen designed to erase any vestiges of the prisoners' Indian identities and instill in them the virtues and habits of the dominant society.

Lookingbill focuses on the prisoners' responses during their three years of confinement, arguing that through a complex interplay of resistance and accommodation they succeeded in retaining their indigenous identities while simultaneously availing themselves of the skills needed to negotiate a rapidly changing world. He relies heavily on government documents, newspaper accounts, and Pratt's writings to reconstruct the prisoners' experiences and makes limited use of the numerous autobiographic and biographic

drawings produced by the prisoners during their incarceration, feeling that their precise meanings are largely inaccessible. Some readers will no doubt wish that he had made greater use of the drawings, seeing them as yet another window into the prisoners' viewpoints. Nevertheless, this should not detract from what is ultimately a rich and detailed account of life at Fort Marion.

Lookingbill situates the prisoners' incarceration within the broader context of contemporary debates concerning U.S. Indian policy and Indian education, revealing the prominent role the Fort Marion "experiment" played in these debates. In a dialectic process, policies implemented at Fort Marion were not only influenced by the conventional wisdom on these topics but also served to shape it. Lookingbill does an excellent job of identifying the different stakeholders within the dominant society who took an interest in the prisoners. He reveals that the War Department, Interior Department, reform-minded activists, and Christian clergy, allies in the push for Indian assimilation, often disagreed on how best to implement assimilationist policies. Explicating the assimilationists' sometimes competing agendas is one of Lookingbill's major contributions.

Furthermore, the author is well aware that the prisoners' journeys did not end with their departure from Fort Marion. He chronicles their return home to reservations plagued by poverty and hunger. Through their letters, he is able to convey the sense of disillusionment and betrayal many felt as they struggled to implement what they had learned in a context largely devoid of economic opportunities.

War Dance at Fort Marion is a valuable contribution to the literature. It will particularly appeal to individuals interested in Plains Indian history; however, students of U.S. Indian policy and Indian education in general will find much of interest as well.

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