

# *With Good Intentions: Quaker Work Among the Pawnees, Otos, and Omahas in the 1870s* by Clyde A. Milner II (review)


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Mogen's analysis of the West as cultural myth will not appeal to everyone. Those who adhere to the conventional wisdom that the American West and Outer Space are unique and basically not comparable will not find much merit in Mogen's point. Those willing to admit that the West is at least as much a creation of the American as the American of the West, will find *Wilderness Visions* a convincing study.

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*With Good Intentions: Quaker Work Among the Pawnees, Otos, and Omahas in the 1870s.* By Clyde A. Milner II. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982. 238 pages, $21.50.)

*With Good Intentions* is a highly specialized study: it deals with the work of only one branch (Hicksite) of one religious denomination (Quaker) with three Indian groups (Pawnees, Otos, and Omahas) in only one decade (the 1870s) in one state (Nebraska). Consequently, the appeal of Milner's book appears to be severely limited — mainly to historians interested in specific areas of Indian-white relationships in the West. Yet what Milner's study offers, because rather than in spite of its close focus and careful, detailed research, is something of far greater importance. The book shows precisely what went wrong with Indian policy after the Civil War.

The heart of the matter, not only for Pawnees, Otos, and Omahas but for most apparently "settled" Indians west of the Mississippi, was a well-intentioned but ultimately tragic assumption held by both secular and religious white leaders. This assumption, central in Western European and American cultural mythology as well as in governmental Indian policy, held that diversified subsistence farming was the proper means of survival for once "wild" Indians. As one Quaker wrote in 1877, "Agricultural life is the grand panacea for all nomads[;] anchor them to the soil, make the cultivation of it profitable to them, and they will . . . gather around them all the comforts and conveniences of civilized life." The enormous irony of this assumption lies in the painful and clearly observable failure of white farmers who, even with their extensive agricultural heritage, couldn't make a go of farming on the central plains in the 1870s.

In addition to showing the sad results of agricultural assumptions when applied to Nebraska Indians in the 1870s, *With Good Intentions* shows how government-Quaker cooperation relied on an illusion of Indian-Quaker cooperation in the colonial past, how white reformers failed to understand tribal differences among the Indians they wanted to help, how good intentions were essentially blind to matters of culture, how local white interests could foul up even the most knowledgeable of good intentions, and how the reforming zeal of Carl Schurz (as Secretary of the Interior after 1877) only made

matters worse for Nebraska Indians. The book also shows how Quaker pacifism, though noble in theory, rendered Quaker officials absolutely helpless to prevent other Indians (especially Sioux) from raiding those tribes under government control in eastern Nebraska. The terrible event known as Massacre Canyon, where over fifty Pawnees (including a majority of women and children) were killed by raiding Oglalas in 1873, serves as the most obvious evidence of this problem.

Milner's book does not deal in any manner with western American literature. But it does portray the disturbing context of Indian-white affairs within which much western literature is set. The fact of "good intentions," much the same as those which would produce the Dawes Act in 1887, rather than Custer-like military conflict, suggests the extent of the irony here.

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*Frank Matsura, Frontier Photographer.* By JoAnn Roe. Introduction by Murray Morgan. (Seattle: Madrona Publishers, 1981. 144 pages, $27.50.)

Frank Matsura arrived in the small town of Conconully in north-central Washington in 1903. He died of tuberculosis ten years later — June 16, 1913 — in the neighboring town of Okanogan. He arrived a Stranger, according to Murray Morgan, the first Japanese in town — lured by an advertisement for a job as a cook's helper and laundryman. But he arrived also wearing a suit, white shirt, tie, and hat, and sporting a camera. He was well-educated and spoke English with only a trace of an accent.

Though his past remained — and still remains — a mystery, Matsura did not remain an Outsider. He made his living when and as he could with his camera, and his camera brought him friends and respect. By 1906 the local paper reported he was the best photographer in the region; several years later J. A. McCormick, official photographer for the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, commended his photographs of the Okanogan Country as the very best submitted for the Exposition. In 1911 the Great Northern Railway Company, busy building a line north from Wenatchee, selected forty of his photographs to help publicize the Okanogan Valley. Matsura traveled widely and constantly and seemingly took pictures of everything and everyone there was to see. The town honored him at his death with the largest funeral yet held in the community.

Murray Morgan calls Matsura's photographs (the plates were stored and almost forgotten for forty-one years) "windows on the Okanogan frontier." But if they are, it is the eye of the artist and not this particular frontier that makes them memorable. JoAnn Roe's collection contains a few landscapes, and there are a larger number of pictures that catch the activities of empire-building: a mine, a lumber-camp, installing the waterworks in the town of Omak in 1910, or construction of the Reclamation Project that brought water