

## Book Reviews

*Marquette's Explorations: The Narratives Reexamined.* By Raphael N. Hamilton, S. J. (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1970. Pp. xv, 275. Maps, notes, illustrations, appendices, bibliography, index. \$10.00.)

Every schoolboy knows that Jacques Marquette, a Jesuit priest, accompanied fur trader Louis Jolliet on the famous French expedition of "discovery" and exploration of the upper Mississippi River Valley in 1673 and wrote a chronicle of their travels. But among scholars (Catholic ecclesiastics at that) there is agreement only that Marquette did indeed make the historic journey. Father Francis B. Steck, an ordained Franciscan, has argued that Marquette was not a member of the Society of Jesus, that the narrative of the trip is actually Jolliet's duplicate journal embellished by Claude Dablon (Superior of the New France missions), and that Marquette has been accorded a greatly exaggerated role in the expedition. According to Father Jean Delanglez the *Récit* was not based exclusively on Jolliet's account but was fashioned by Dablon from a variety of contemporary sources. Father Joseph C. Short has contended that Marquette was never ordained and thus confined his missionary work to that of lay catechist. Such heresies have not gone unchallenged through the years, but it has remained for Father Raphael N. Hamilton, himself a Jesuit and longtime student of Marquette and the upper Mississippi frontier, to resolve the major points of contention.

Much of the dispute stems from the quantity and quality of the historical record. The official log of the trip and other firsthand reports were lost when Jolliet's canoe capsized; the surviving evidence is scanty, vague, and at times contradictory. This is especially true of the lone extant account of the expedition, the *Récit* traditionally attributed to Marquette. In order to ascertain the authenticity and accuracy of the *Récit* and related documents, Hamilton subjected every known piece of Marquette material to exacting internal and external criticism, employing bibliotic and cartographic techniques in addition to rigorous content analysis. The result is a work of impeccable scholarship that constitutes a resounding reaffirmation of Marquette's renown as a Jesuit priest, explorer, and chronicler.

Because of the nature of the problem at hand, *Marquette's Explorations* is more a legal brief than an historical narrative. Specialists will find this fascinating piece of detective work both entertaining and edifying, but the general reader will find it heavy going. This narrowly focused and closely reasoned study assumes

much familiarity with the competition among European powers for empire in North America, the intramural rivalry between Jesuit and Recollect missionaries, the history of New France under Jean Talon and Louis de Buade de Frontenac, and the structure and operation of the Roman Catholic Church and the Jesuit Order. Although judicious English translations accompany literal transcriptions of the original French and Latin, knowledge of seventeenth century French is desirable since textual analysis is the warp and weft of Hamilton's intricate scholarly tapestry. This reviewer's only substantive criticism is the perhaps inevitable elevation by implication of Marquette to coequal status with Jolliet when the fur trader was undoubtedly the prime mover of the pioneering enterprise. Be that as it may, it is fitting that this impressive volume along with the recent biography of the missionary-explorer by Father Joseph P. Donnelly assures Marquette of his rightful place in the annals of history as the tercentenary of the French discovery of the Father of Waters approaches.

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*Free Soil: The Election of 1848.* By Joseph G. Rayback. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970. Pp. ix, 326. End maps, notes, tables, note on sources, index. \$12.50.)

Joseph G. Rayback's *Free Soil* provides an excellent account of the presidential politics leading up to the election of 1848, but it is much less successful in explaining the politics of the free soil issue itself. Drawing upon a multiplicity of newspaper sources to trace the development of the various careers of presidential candidates, Rayback is especially good in describing the ebb and flow of their political fortunes and showing how even the most ephemeral of occurrences can raise or dash political prospects. In the early summer of 1846 a chance sentence in General Winfield Scott's correspondence with James K. Polk's secretary of war apparently destroyed his candidacy. More significantly, the book makes clear that it was Zachary Taylor's victory at Buena Vista and the wild popular enthusiasm which it engendered, more than any political consideration, that made him the Whig candidate in 1848.

Rayback seems much less at home with the politics of the Democratic party, which was intimately concerned with the issue of slavery in the territories in the period from 1846 to 1848. At one point he confesses to being puzzled as to "why northern Democrats delayed so long in revealing their [antislavery] attitude" (p. 60). Whatever their moral concern, politicians infrequently take up an issue which