

October 29, 1939

Mr. Edward A. Milligan  
Michigan  
North Dakota

Dear Mr. Milligan:

Thanks for your letter of October 25. I cannot imagine how anyone can describe Sitting Bull as a mail robber or bandit. My understanding is quite contrary, and has been set down in my book entitled Sitting Bull, published by the Houghton Mifflin Company, 2 Park Street, Boston, Massachusetts. Also in my book Warpath, which is published by the same company. It is a biography of Chief White Bull, a living nephew of Sitting Bull. I have expressed my findings with regard to Sitting Bull as a medicine man in my book, New Sources of Indian History, published by the University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma. When I first published material on Sitting Bull, I received a good many kicks from people who believed the old silly yarns about him, but after the third book appeared with all the documents, the sore-heads stopped kicking.

My information is that Sitting Bull did take part in some fights east of the Missouri River. These are described in connection with the pictures he himself drew, republished in my Life of Sitting Bull. These were minor affairs, and played a very small part in his career.

The information in my books was largely secured from full-blood Sioux Indians who had known Sitting Bull as a young man, and I think I have put in hardly anything which was not verified by at least two eyewitnesses.

Of course, we must bear in mind that people of limited education who have no experience in historical research and small opportunity to question Indians or to understand their answers properly, are likely to make mistakes and publish their mistakes in the paper. I am afraid there is nothing we can do about that. However, I sympathize with your desire to protest against false representation, and applaud your efforts.

In one respect I believe you are wrong. With regard to Sitting Bull carrying the flag at the Bismarck celebration: I am informed that Sitting Bull did carry the flag, and surrendered in good faith and having become, as he thought, a citizen of the United States. He probably regarded it as an honor. I was once shown a photograph of that part of the parade. In it an Indian who certainly resembled Sitting Bull was carrying a flag. I believe New York papers who had representatives in Bismarck at this time stated that this Indian was Sitting Bull.