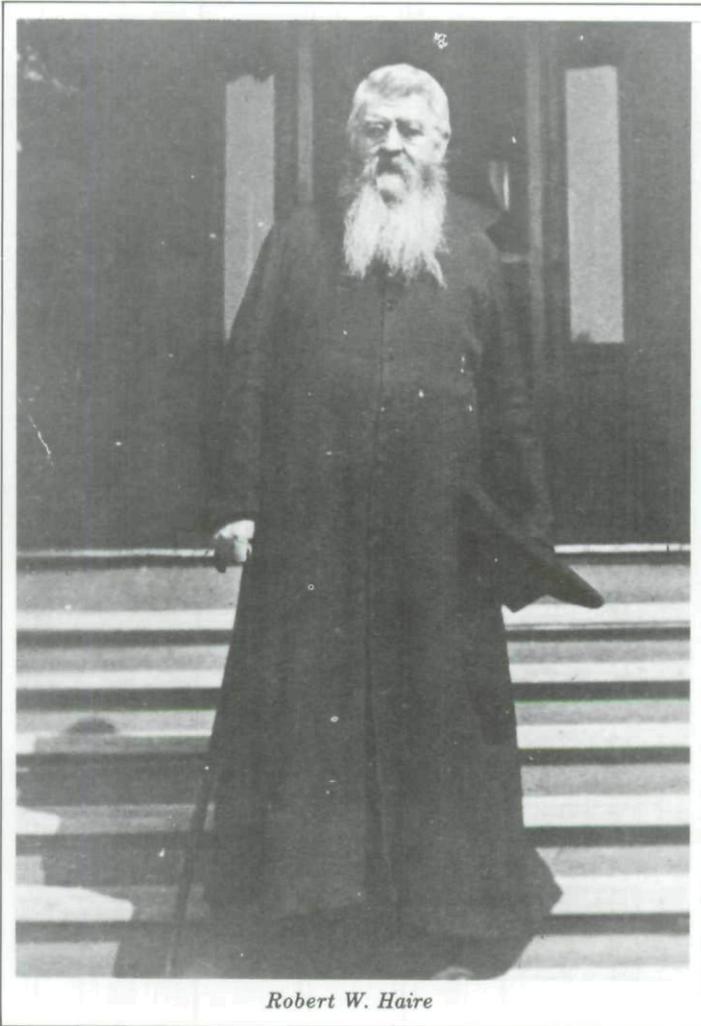


116 *South Dakota History*



Robert W. Haire

Dakota Images

The Reverend Robert W. Haire served a parish that extended from the Minnesota line to the Missouri River and from south of Huron to a point north of Ellendale, North Dakota, but his influence in the state could not be bounded.

Born in Freedom, Michigan, in 1845, he received a good education and taught school for a time. He had planned to get a law degree at the University of Michigan, but the call to the priesthood took him to Louvain, Belgium, to study theology. He was ordained in 1874 at the age of twenty-eight and assigned to parishes in Detroit. In 1880, while serving in Flint, he was bit by the "go west" bug and at the invitation of Bishop Martin Marty led a group of pioneers to Dakota Territory. He homesteaded near Columbia in what is now Brown County and, traveling on foot or by buggy, began founding and serving parishes in northeastern South Dakota.

Meanwhile, Father Haire became actively involved in political and social issues, promoting women's suffrage, prohibition, and labor reform. He expressed his views from the pulpit, at meetings, and through newspapers like the *Dakota Catholic American* and Knights of Labor publications. His outspokenness led to differences with Bishop Marty, who told him to choose between the priesthood and politics. Haire left the practice of his priesthood in 1889, going on to help found the Populist party in the state and playing a key role in making the initiative and referendum processes a part of the state constitution.

He also served on the state board of charities and corrections, was a member of the board of regents, and worked for the improvement of education on all levels. In 1901, he was reconciled with the new bishop, Thomas O'Gorman, and restored to the active priesthood. For fourteen years, he served as chaplain of the Presentation Sisters and Saint Luke's Hospital in Aberdeen. Father Haire said Mass the morning he died, 4 March 1916. He is buried in Columbia, where he built a sod church in 1882. In 1924, a statue was erected in his honor on the campus of Northern State College in Aberdeen and entitled "Humanity's Friend."

by SISTER ANNA MARIE WEINREIS

Copyright of South Dakota History is the property of South Dakota State Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.

All illustrations in this issue are property of the South Dakota State Historical Society except for those on the following pages: front cover and pp. 16, 19, 21, from State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck, N.Dak.; back cover and pp. 56–57, 70–71, 72, 79, 87, from Siouxland Heritage Museums, Sioux Falls; p. 5, from Eugene V. Debs Foundation, Terre Haute, Ind.; p. 8, from Manuscript Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, N.C.; pp. 13, 116, from Presentation Heights Archives, Aberdeen; p. 41, from Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minn.; pp. 42, 55, 61, from Official South Dakota State Year Book and Directory of Organized Labor (Huron: South Dakota State Federation of Labor, 1937); pp. 45, 65, from Art Carlson, Sioux Falls.