

Part of the problem is Kirsch's choice of sources. He relied too heavily on "national" sporting newspapers that focused on New York. He could have written a stronger book by examining more primary sources, such as diaries and letters written by soldiers. Such sources, both in print and manuscript format, are plentiful in libraries and archives across the country. Also, Kirsch did not adequately place baseball in the context of other recreational activities engaged in by Union and Rebel soldiers during the war. That is important in order to understand how the game spread rapidly through the country after the war. This is the first book on baseball in the Civil War; I hope that a more comprehensive book on the topic will follow.

The Beecher Sisters, by Barbara A. White. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003. xiii, 399 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, genealogy, index. \$35.00 cloth.

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Barbara White conceives of her book as a "joint biography" of the three famous Beecher sisters: Catharine Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Isabella Beecher Hooker. White states that the "strongest emphasis" of her book will be on Isabella Beecher Hooker because there is "no existing biography" of her (ix).

Patriarch Lyman Beecher moved the family to Ohio in 1832 in order to "save" the West from Catholicism while he served as president of Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati. *The Beecher Sisters* has a distinctly eastern focus, however, since the Beecher family came from and then ultimately returned to New England.

Isabella Beecher Hooker became active in public life later than her two more prominent sisters. Catharine had been working for endowed schools for females since the 1830s. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published in 1852 and became an international best-seller and antislavery icon. It was only after the Civil War that Isabella Hooker began writing articles in favor of women's rights, including woman suffrage.

White outlines a fascinating sixty-year relationship between Isabella and John Hooker. A lawyer and abolitionist, the newlywed John, in 1841, agreed to help Isabella make up for her lack of a strong formal education by reading the law with her. When she discovered the extent of women's subordination under English common law, which was the basis of state laws in the United States, Isabella was shocked.

Later, Isabella and John Hooker jointly wrote a married women's property rights act, which they first presented in 1869 to the Connecticut state legislature (it finally passed in 1877).

Hooker led the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association and affiliated herself on the national level with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony at the moment they formed the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) in 1869. She organized the NWSA's national convention in Washington, D.C., in 1871, which featured a last-minute speaker, Victoria Woodhull, who had just argued before the House Judiciary Committee that "Congress simply needed to pass a declaratory act recognizing women's right to vote under the Fourteenth Amendment" (166). Hooker embraced the idea that women's right to vote could be solved so quickly and cleanly at the federal level.

Hooker had been determined that the 1871 convention project an image of total respectability. Ironically, however, by inviting Woodhull, Hooker became associated with a notorious "free lover." Hooker's defense of Woodhull's character and ideas severely weakened her relations with her family, particularly when Woodhull publicly charged Isabella's brother, the famous Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, with being a hypocrite for condemning "free love" as a sin while conducting a secret love affair with one of his parishioners.

During this crisis, Isabella Hooker turned to Spiritualism, gaining support from deceased family members when her living ones were not speaking to her. Isabella's diary, White asserts, "contains much to suggest that the writer had slipped over the line between sanity and insanity" (242). In her diary, for instance, Hooker fearfully predicted burglaries that did not occur; insisted that the Second Coming of Christ would happen before the end of the year in 1876; and wrote that after the Second Coming, she would head the new maternal government on earth as Christ's hand-chosen "vice regent." However, Hooker managed to pull herself together, participating in NWSA conventions and federal lobbying efforts.

White has wonderful material and fascinating subjects, but her joint biographical approach sometimes results in a scattered, under-analyzed book. In particular, Isabella Beecher Hooker is less developed as an individual than she could be. Hooker is a fascinating person who still deserves a separate full-length biography that fully explores her life and thought.

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