

party leader who encouraged her to run for county treasurer. She stumped the country, was elected, and eventually served three terms. But in 1924 she developed asthma and except for her writing, never worked again.

In 1929 Houghton Mifflin published this, her first book, which was the most successful of her writings. In 1938 she was awarded an honorary master of letters degree by the University of Colorado at Boulder, an astonishing event for a woman who had only completed the fifth reader in a mining camp school. Then sixty-three years old, she was tired and ill; within a few months her long and incredibly full life came to an end.

As literature, Ellis' writing draws, even compels, the reader to become engrossed with the twistings and turnings of her life in the mining regions of the Rockies. Not maudlin or overly-dramatic, Ellis told her tale in a straightforward manner that elicits a variety of emotions. As history, however, the book is more difficult to assess. Reminiscences and memoirs' typically tend to recount events as larger or smaller, harsher or easier, happier or sadder than other sources written at the time indicate they actually were. Since Ellis did not keep a diary and so few other mining camp women's diaries have as yet been published, it is almost impossible to determine the amount of distortion which may have crept into her story. Only scholarship as yet undone on this segment of women's history in the West will provide the perspective necessary to judge Ellis' worth as an historian.

**Glenda Riley**  
**University of Northern Iowa**  
**Cedar Falls, IA**

*Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present*, by Sheila Rothman. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978. pp. xiv, 322. Photographs, index. \$12.50.

In *Woman's Proper Place*, Sheila Rothman examines two issues central to the contemporary controversies concerning social policies affecting women's position: 1) woman's proper place in society; and 2) the presumed conflict between what is good for women and what is good for children, families, and society in general. The author contends that where we perceive conflict between the many roles women assume in current society, our ancestors found interdependence. While in the past, expectations concerning woman's "proper place" and her role were in harmony, today we find discord. Today's woman

struggles to balance her personal needs with the role society has prescribed for her. This book examines the history of these two issues in order to determine where the assumptions in women's role have changed.

Rothman describes and analyzes the changes in the definitions of "womanhood," and in women's social aims and undertakings during the past one hundred years. The century is divided into four periods. Each period is characterized by an ideal, a widely accepted view of what woman should be, and the social programs consistent with that ideal. These four periods are: 1) "Virtuous Womanhood" (1870-1900); 2) "Educated Mothers" (1900-1920); 3) "Wife Companion" (1920-1950, excluding the Depression and World War II); and 4) "Women as Person" (1960-1970). Each ideal is shown to have shaped the manner in which activist women both responded to social expectations and effected social policies. The author describes varying experiences of generations of women within the home and family, the workplace, and in public life.

In "Virtuous Womanhood" Rothman outlines the constraints of the Victorian woman's sphere and the erosion of this ideal by changes in household technology and the labor market. She discusses, with critical skepticism, women's voluntary association with social and philanthropic goals. "Educated Mothers" were the moving force for social welfare legislation, such as maternal and child health care, suffrage, and settlement homes. The "Wife Companion" moved women from the nursery to the bedroom; disillusioned with social causes, women retreated to private goals, and their lives shifted to the romantic and sexual. This ideal is epitomized by the career of Margaret Sanger in the birth control movement. The norms established for women in the 1920s were revived in the 1950s; the Great Depression and World War II are treated simply as interruptions in this evolution of "womanhood." The fourth period describes the Women's Liberation movement, from its beginnings with Betty Friedan, to the present agitation for the Equal Rights Amendment, day care facilities, reproductive freedom, and children's rights. Emphasis is on "rights," not "needs;" therefore, the new ideal is termed "Woman as Person."

These four periods, or ideals for womanhood, form the framework of the book. This analysis is, however, too simplistic. The author recognizes that the concepts overlap; however, in reality, all four ideals coexisted throughout most of the twentieth century. Rothman attributes the changes in the status and role of women to developments in higher education, advanced technology, and advice given to women by professional experts. The ideals chosen as characteristic of

all women primarily reflected the behavior of middle-class women. The advances made in women's higher education and changes in the curricula or behavior of college women affected only a tiny minority of American women. Rothman also fails to relate the changing concept of womanhood to general patterns of social, economic, and political change. Discussion of the birth control movement never directly focuses in on the revolutionary implications of contraception for women, and the question "What effect did the Great Depression and World War II have on women?" is left unanswered.

Rothman synthesizes much of the recent work written in women's history; her analysis incorporates data obtained from memoirs, club and agency records, serials, college reports, and polemic and didactic literature on women's role. Her discussions on health care, the growth and effectiveness of women's voluntary associations, women's role in initiating and supporting progressive legislation, the medical profession's destruction of the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Program, and the historical and present drive for federally supported day-care programs are enlightening. The concerns of today's women are placed in a context which clarifies what is, and what is not novel about current controversies. The evolution of woman's role in American society is written in a style understandable and appealing to the non-historian. In the concluding chapters, Rothman sits back and ponders what she has learned and observed. She is open and honest with the reader, for she includes an analysis of the divisive and potentially damaging effects of woman's drive for personal fulfillment upon society and its institutions.

Janice Nahra Friedel  
Loess Hills Area Education Agency  
Council Bluffs, IA

## BOOK NOTICES

*Eastern Iowa Prehistory*, by Duane Anderson. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981. pp. 108, illustrations, sources, suggested reading, \$10.95 cloth.)

At the time Iowa State University Press published Duane Anderson's *Western Iowa Prehistory* (1975), the author was living in Cherokee, Iowa. Now that Dr. Anderson is living in Iowa City and is the State Archaeologist it is proper that ISU Press has published the present

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa 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.