

## THE ANNALS OF IOWA

tic. The nineteenth-century feminist and abolitionist Jane Grey Swisshelm who spent six years in Minnesota and published the *St. Cloud Visiter* while there rejected the notion that women were different in more than a biological sense and demanded that they be considered individuals with needs, desires, and talents as complex as their male counterparts. Eva McDonald Valesh and Anna Dickie Olesen would have benefitted had Swisshelm's perspective been dominant. Both dedicated to politics, Valesh as a Populist and Olesen as the first woman chosen by a major party to be a candidate for the U.S. Senate, were frustrated by the conventions associated with womanhood. Valesh, her political ambitions thwarted in the mid-1890s, left Minnesota to pursue a career as a journalist, while Olesen, defeated at the polls in 1922, remained a Democratic Party stalwart and received as her reward federal appointments including the postmistresship of Northfield, Minnesota. Needless to say, neither felt that their potential as individuals had been fulfilled.

The essays which tend to be narratives are directed toward a general audience as well as professional historians. The former will discover history that until recently has been ignored in both scholarship and classroom, while the latter will find essays that serve as an excellent point of departure for further explorations of women's experiences. Readers of this journal will find it particularly interesting to compare the experiences of women in Minnesota and Iowa.

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*South Dakota: A History*, by John R. Milton. New York: W. W. Norton, and Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1977. pp. xv, 200. Illustrations, maps, notes, suggestions for further reading, index. \$9.95.

One positive outgrowth of the nation's bicentennial was an increased interest in both state and regional histories. *South Dakota: A History* is a volume of the State and Nation series published under the direction of the American Association for State and Local History. The author, a professor of English and editor of several literary anthologies, has written a concise history of South Dakota utilizing the essay format. In an attempt to recreate the past and capture the

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illusory history of the state, Milton frequently relies on personal reminiscences.

Each chapter follows in a chronological order the history of the state, as Milton attempts to correct myth and legend concerning the role of South Dakota's people in history. From the first chapter to the last, literary trends and novels about the prairie and stories of villains and heroes who either crossed through the physical region or actually resided within the state's boundaries dominate the work. The author concludes that in order to understand the dichotomy of the region and its inhabitants, one must describe the land, the weather, or the distance in terms of extremes while understanding the tension that often accompanies many extreme conditions.

Continuing with extremes, earlier writers often have depicted South Dakota as either tempting and romantic or hostile and forbidding, a nostalgic frontier haven for gunfighters and site of the last Indian wars, or gloomy, desolate, and hostile to settlement. A region and its people cannot, however, be so easily stereotyped. In his attempt to dispel myth, Milton tends to be romantic while still maintaining a degree of objectivity.

The volume is marred by several careless errors. The Gordan group, the first mining party to enter the Black Hills after the Custer Expedition of 1874 went to French Creek at Custer not Sturgis. In addition, the author confuses the distinct identity of the Mennonites with the Hutterites. David Plowden's photographic essay depicting abandoned rural farms does not illustrate growing industrial and urban centers. Other photographs were taken at several of the various Indian reservations and of Deadwood, remnants of an often controversial past and reminders of the romantic image.

Despite hasty errors, Milton's work has value, for he wrote what many residents feel about their state. No new ground is broken, nor is the book intended to be a standard reference source, but it has feeling and the author is sensitive toward all the many groups that played a part in the state's development.

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