

history. The book is less relevant, however, for those interested in the larger issues and developments in the history of nineteenth-century photography. Although the author has provided the essential details of the locally oriented image maker, she does not place him within a larger context. In fact, as an entrepreneur who managed to learn and keep up with the rapidly changing photographic technologies of the era, Wetherby was hardly unique. Rather, he is one of a multitude of early photographers who moved westward, settled into a community, and spent their careers as the visual historian and documenter for a local or regional clientele. In the "exhibit" portion of the book, Sloninger focuses on local scenes and biographies but does not include information on materials, methods, and sizes of the various images, and is inconsistent with details of provenance.

The primary audience for this book is undoubtedly Iowan. The images will strike a chord with local or state history buffs, and the daguerreotypes of the Old Capitol, along with revealing pictures of Clinton Street and extant local architecture, are sure to pique the curiosity of local residents and anyone familiar with Iowa City.

Jane Grey Swisshelm: An Unconventional Life, 1815–1884, by Sylvia D. Hoffert. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. 254 pp. Illustrations, note on primary sources, notes, index. \$45.00 cloth.

Reviewer Stacey Robertson is associate professor of history and director of the women's studies program at Bradley University. She is the author of *Parker Pillsbury: Radical Abolitionist, Male Feminist* (2000).

Sylvia Hoffert offers readers a beautifully written and carefully constructed biography of one of the most interesting and understudied women of the nineteenth century. Jane Grey Swisshelm pioneered a place for women in journalism, established herself as a respected and original thinker, and gloried in her reputation as an idiosyncratic reformer. Hoffert helps us to understand Swisshelm's motivations and aspirations while drawing a colorful picture of this fascinating woman.

Swisshelm is best known as one of the few women in the nineteenth century to edit and publish her own newspaper. Indeed, she published three newspapers, in Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and Washington, D.C. A committed reformer, Swisshelm used her access to the media to advocate women's rights and abolition. She called for married women's property rights and supported women's access to all occupations. She sought an immediate end to slavery and worked with antislavery third parties to secure the election of abolitionist poli-

ticians. Her personal life was complicated by an unhappy marriage that eventually ended in divorce but also catalyzed Swisshelm's feminist inclinations.

Hoffert's thoroughly researched biography is organized thematically around critical issues affecting Swisshelm's life: her Calvinist Presbyterian Covenanter upbringing, failed marriage, journalism career, political partisanship, and reform activism. Hoffert concisely contextualizes each of these issues and highlights the ways they affected Swisshelm's development as a woman, activist, and journalist. Her Covenanter background, for example, instigated her commitment to reform as a part of "God's work," but it also led to a "distrust of personal attachments . . . [that] made it hard for her to carry out her reform efforts in collaboration with others" (23). That distrust helps reveal why Swisshelm never joined reform groups of any kind and remained distant from other women involved in reform efforts. Swisshelm did not participate in women's rights organizations and eschewed feminist gatherings. Her women's rights reputation emerged out of her writings in the several newspapers she edited, including the *Pittsburgh Saturday Visiter* [sic] and the *St. Cloud Democrat*. Her Covenanter background also helps to explain her unique and surprisingly traditional ideas about women's rights. Unlike Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, Swisshelm embraced "conventional ideas about gender" even as she called for some changes in women's legal status and decried obvious cases of discrimination (23). Hoffert shows that journalism allowed Swisshelm to advocate those causes she believed in without compromising her independence. Constantly at odds with other reformers, Swisshelm refused to be put in a box.

Hoffert is especially effective at highlighting how intertwined Swisshelm's personal and professional careers were. Her troublesome marriage to James Swisshelm, for example, clearly informed her writing on women's rights. Swisshelm struggled for years to gain financial independence from her husband, but the legal status of married women all but prevented her from claiming even her own earnings. After leaving her husband, she eventually resorted to breaking into her former home to recover her belongings, and before moving to Minnesota she indulged in a \$700 shopping spree, which she charged to her husband. James would eventually end up in court, sued for his refusal to pay Jane's bills by one of the merchants who sold Jane an expensive piece of jewelry. Jane and James would also battle it out in court, with Jane eventually winning one-third of the Swisshelm estate.

Despite her thematic organization, Hoffert manages to avoid repetition. She follows a loosely chronological approach to Swisshelm's

life, which is helpful to the reader. Some parts of the book could have benefited from additional contextualizing. Even though Swisshelm avoided other reformers and developed her own ideas about women's rights and antislavery, it would be helpful to learn more about other contemporary reformers. We get a hint about how contentious she was, but I would like to know about how she was perceived more generally. Such background might have helped the author construct an even more balanced view of this cantankerous woman who slandered local Dakota Indians in Minnesota even as she called for racial equality for African Americans.

Those interested in the history of Iowa and the Midwest will find this biography particularly interesting in relation to Swisshelm's years in frontier Minnesota. Hoffert shows how the complicated politics of frontier life affected Swisshelm's ability to start a newspaper and highlights the significant influence she wielded as the only publisher in the area. The book is a must-read for anyone interested in women's history, nineteenth-century reform, or the history of journalism. More broadly, its smooth, readable format will make it an enjoyable read for anyone interested in American history in general.

"Circumstances Are Destiny": An Antebellum Woman's Struggle to Define Sphere, by Tina Stewart Brakebill. Civil War in the North series. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006. vii, 255 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Joanne Passet is professor of history at Indiana University East. She is the author of *Sex Radicals and the Quest for Women's Equality, 1853-1910* (2003) and "Yours for Liberty: Women and Freethought in Nineteenth-Century Iowa," in the *Annals of Iowa* (2004).

In "*Circumstances Are Destiny*," Tina Stewart Brakebill explores the intellectual life of an antebellum midwestern woman as she struggled to reconcile her personal identity with that of prevailing and often constraining ideologies defining nineteenth-century woman's sphere. Celestia Rice Colby's life outwardly resembled that of many other white females of the era: marriage and motherhood set in the context of a dairy farm, punctuated by reading, reform sentiments, and writing for private and public consumption. In reality, however, her life defied categorization.

In part one, "An Expected Life," which spans the years 1827-1857, Brakebill examines the antebellum ideologies and northeastern Ohio culture that dominated Colby's formative years. As the daughter of a New England family that settled in an area known as the Western Re-