

One might wish for more information about the enormously complicated seasonal movements of the Ioway and more specific demographic data. Women are largely invisible in this book, and the activities of non-Indian men get more attention than is appropriate for a tribal history book. Given the author's sources and objectives, such omissions and emphases are understandable.

What is perhaps most unsettling and thought provoking about the book is its framing. History, after all, is engaging because it is useful. The past mirrors the present. The Ioway became "helpless victims" in a changing world (4), Olson writes in the book's introduction. Thus, he deliberately frames the trajectory of Ioway history as a descent into lives freighted with humiliation, despair, and violence. Such was the undeniable historical experience of American Indians. The author gazes into the heart of darkness as one unable to avert his eyes from a car wreck. Rather than reifying the outdated and ethnocentric western history about the triumph of superior civilization over savagery, however, Olson maintains a respect for the Ioway and offers scrupulously objective interpretations of conflicts. Is Olson urging us to maintain our balance on this fertile, river-laced land, or face a similar fate?

*The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley: Pioneer of Women's Education in Missouri*, by Kristie C. Wolferman. Missouri Heritage Reader. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008. xi, 160 pp. Illustrations, suggestions for further reading, index. \$17.95 paper.

Reviewer Rebecca Schelp is a graduate assistant in the History, Humanities, Philosophy, and Political Science Department at Northwest Missouri State University.

In *The Indomitable Mary Easton Sibley*, Kristie C. Wolferman recounts the remarkable life of the founder of Lindenwood College, the first women's college west of the Mississippi. The biography begins with the arrival of the Easton family in St. Louis after it was newly acquired as part of the Louisiana Purchase. Wolferman describes Sibley's early years in the frontier town, her informal and formal education, and her marriage to George Sibley. After a short-lived business venture at Fort Osage, George and Mary moved to St. Charles and acquired property outside of the city, which they named Linden Wood. There, Mary experienced her religious conversion and decided to found a women's college. Lindenwood grew from modest means into a respectable and renowned institution, its status made possible by Sibley's commitment to education and her belief in the independence of the female intellect.

Wolferman uses primary documents and accounts and interweaves local, state, and national history throughout Sibley's story. The background information supplied by the author places the biography in the context of important issues of the period, such as the frontier, American Indian history, slavery, women's roles, and the Great Awakening. Wolferman has made the biography accessible to readers of varying backgrounds and knowledge. The work would be enlightening for anyone interested in the general history of the frontier Midwest, educational history, or women's roles as they fit within the framework of this period of Missouri history.

*The Nebraska-Kansas Act of 1854*, edited by John R. Wunder and Joann M. Ross. Law in the American West Series. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008. xi, 220 pp. Maps, notes, appendix, index. \$30.00 paper.

Reviewer James L. Huston is professor of history at Oklahoma State University. He is the author of *The Panic of 1857 and the Coming of the Civil War* (1987); and *Securing the Fruits of Labor: The American Concept of Wealth Distribution, 1765–1900* (1998).

Of the thousands of laws passed by the U.S. Congress, the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 stands by itself in terms of the monumental consequences it produced: the death of one political party, the rise of another, the promulgation of civil war. *The Nebraska-Kansas Act of 1854* — in their introduction the editors explain the reversed order of the state names in the title of the book — consists of seven essays taken from a conference held in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 2004. Overall the essays are excellent and well worth reading by anyone interested in the antebellum era. But there is an overarching problem: the essays really do not explain why the law had the impact it did.

The introduction ably summarizes the content of the seven contributions. Mark E. Neely questions the importance frequently given the *Appeal of the Independent Democrats*; by an interesting and incisive overview of meetings and speeches after January 1854, he finds few contemporary references to that propagandistic publication. Indeed, Neely finds it difficult to explain why the act created a firestorm. He postulates that in the North a residual ideal of honor and faith produced the inflammatory Northern outburst more than any rational thinking about the "slave power." From a different angle, but with a similar result, Brenden Rensink questions why Northerners exploded in fury over the legislation because, except for the explicit repeal of the Missouri Compromise line, it was typical, not atypical, of most territorial legislation. Rensink validates Stephen A. Douglas's claim that the