

\$6 million over budget—the viaduct opened to a spectacular display. But the toll bridge, which still stands, was a financial failure despite its storied aesthetic appeal.

Written in workmanlike prose, Jackson's history is a useful analog to endeavors by transcontinental-minded railroad leaders and local boosters to bridge the Mississippi River into Iowa. Indeed, efforts by Chicago interests to do so energized civic leaders further south. Those with a taste for the intricacies of nineteenth-century business history will find this book to be an intriguing read.

*Sex Radicals and the Quest for Women's Equality*, by Joanne E. Passet. Women in American History Series. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003. ix, 250 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth, \$25.00 paper.

Reviewer Alison M. Parker is associate professor of history at the State University of New York, Brockport. She is the author of *Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform, and Pro-Censorship Activism, 1873-1933* (1997).

Joanne Passet's *Sex Radicals and the Quest for Women's Equality* is an excellent new volume in the Women in American History series published by the University of Illinois Press. It highlights the contributions of nineteenth-century sex radicals who, as Passet puts it, insisted on "a woman's right to control her body and to freely discuss such critical issues as contraception, marital sexual abuse . . . and sex education" (1).

Passet debunks the stereotype of "free love" ideas as an East Coast and urban phenomenon. Painstaking research allowed Passet to create a new profile of women readers and contributors to the sex radical periodicals from 1853 to 1910 as having rural and midwestern (and western) backgrounds. Isolated rural farm women in states such as Iowa found that sex radical periodicals linked them to a larger reform movement and addressed their central concerns regarding their high number of pregnancies, which risked their health and lives. Unlike most suffragists, Woman's Christian Temperance Union members, and social purity reformers who insisted that sex be tied only and directly to reproduction, sex radicals embraced sex and sexuality as an embodiment of true love between a man and a woman (even if unmarried). They also advocated versions of John Humphrey Noyes's male continence technique that allowed for intercourse without ejaculation, thereby protecting women from unwanted pregnancies.

Detailing the life and work of sex radical Mary Grove Nichols, Passet highlights the first phase of the sex radical movement from 1853 to 1870. The example of Nichols neatly illustrates how people

were drawn to sex radicalism from other secular and religious reform movements, including abolitionism, Quakerism, Spiritualism, and communal living experiments. Yet Passet's chapter on Nichols and her sex radical publications is strangely devoid of quotes from her extensive writings. What is quoted are contemporary critical responses to her writings. Without a sense of how Nichols expressed her own sex radicalism, it is difficult to assess the import of her ideas or these critiques.

Although sex radicals supported women's equality, they did not view suffrage as the best way to achieve that goal. Most were suspicious of the government's control over people's lives and bodies. They insisted that voting within a corrupt system would only benefit the economic elites, male politicians, and their allies rather than average women. They further argued that women's control of their bodies and money within marriage were fundamental issues that needed to be addressed first. The infamous sex radical Victoria Woodhull gained the temporary support of suffragists in the National Woman Suffrage Association in the early 1870s by eloquently arguing that women's right to vote was already guaranteed by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution. This alliance was brief and ended when the suffragists were unwilling to risk further damage to the moral reputation of the suffrage movement (and its members) by its association with a notorious "free lover."

After the passage of the Comstock Act in 1873, sex radical periodical editors endured prison sentences and fines for publishing supposedly "obscene" articles. The forbidden articles included graphic descriptions of husbands' sexual abuse of their wives, medical discussions of various aspects of sex or reproduction, and support for women's access to birth control and abortions if necessary. The movement gained readers and financial support as its martyred editors gained publicity and moved to the forefront of free-speech advocacy during the 1880s and 1890s.

A crucial change occurred in the movement from the 1890s to the 1910s. The concerns of women sex radicals were pushed aside as male editors changed the focus of the movement to eugenics. Women were cast primarily as reproducers of children who would help improve "the race" by bearing genetically superior children (because they would be conceived within loving relationships). Some discussion of the racist as well as sexist dimensions of this shift in the movement would have helped place it in its historical context. It should be clearer to readers why a sex radical such as Moses Harman would change the name and focus of his long-running periodical (1883–1907) from *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer* to the *American Journal of Eugenics* (1907–1910).

Joanne Passet's fine study of nineteenth-century sex radicals illuminates a lesser-known strand of the women's rights movement and highlights the activism of rural, midwestern women. Historians will find it to be a useful, engaging, and well-written book that can be assigned in women's history courses, courses on reform movements, and those that more generally cover the nineteenth-century United States.

*Print the Legend: Photography and the American West*, by Martha A. Sandweiss. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. xiii, 402 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewer C. Elizabeth Raymond is professor of history at the University of Nevada, Reno. She is a coauthor of *Stopping Time: A Rephotographic Survey of Lake Tahoe* (1992).

Historical photographs can be tricky, as Martha Sandweiss reminds us in *Print the Legend*. Encountered long after their creation, they can be heartbreaking in their immediacy. We search the faces of long-dead miners from the California Gold Rush for the contours and expressions of people we know. Yet such photographs remain insoluble mysteries, and the "truth" that they offer us is inevitably incomplete.

By now, such observations are familiar. Thanks to the work of scholars such as Peter Bacon Hales, Anne Farrar Hyde, Alan Trachtenberg, and others, we have become keenly aware that historical photographs are intentionally created images. We have learned to view them as malleable, freighted with ideology at the time of their making, and subject since then to multiple uses and interpretations by viewers. Nowhere is this more true than in photographs of the American West, defined in this book as the region west of the Mississippi River. Yet, as Sandweiss observes in her introduction, we still rely on these images for significant information about the past: "No part of the American historical imagination is so shaped by visual imagery as its image of the nineteenth-century West" (13). The consequences and complexities of this situation are her subject in *Print the Legend*.

Sandweiss offers a series of essays about the social and cultural role of photography in the trans-Mississippi West from the 1840s to the early 1890s. In general, this is a work about the context of photography rather than its content, about the way photographs were used rather than the people who created them. There is significant thematic overlap and repetition among the chapters, but this incremental method repays readers with a rich and nuanced understanding of the subject, with particular attention to the "disjuncture" between modern responses to these historical images and those of the original audiences.

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