

## Book Notices

*Hear Me Patiently: The Reform Speeches of Amelia Jenks Bloomer*, edited by Anne C. Coon. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994. xiv, 201 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$55.00 cloth.

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Many Americans know that Amelia Jenks Bloomer (1818–1894) was an enthusiastic, though ultimately unsuccessful, advocate of women's dress reform. Indeed, her name provided the eponym for the oft-ridiculed costume designed to free mid-nineteenth-century women from uncomfortable Victorian "fashions."

Bloomer was more, however, than a frustrated advocate of dress reform. She was a passionate and popular lecturer who spoke to mixed audiences in New York and the Midwest on temperance, woman suffrage, and women's right to education and employment. Bloomer's newspaper, the *Lily* (1849–1855), further publicized her ideas. As a resident of Seneca Falls, New York, for many years, Bloomer associated with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. In 1855 she and her husband, Dexter Bloomer, moved to Council Bluffs, Iowa; there, Bloomer continued to give public lectures and became the first vice-president of the Iowa Woman's Suffrage Society. Still, in going west, Bloomer had moved to the margins of the women's rights movement and, until now, she has been neglected by historians.

Anne Coon gives Bloomer the attention she deserves. In an excellent introduction, Coon analyzes the difficulties Bloomer faced in juggling activism with domestic duties and explores the social anxieties that led her to feel both inspired and intimidated by Stanton and Anthony. She also discusses the rhetorical strategies that made Bloomer a successful public speaker. The speeches collected here reflect Bloomer's development as a reformer, beginning with temperance and then continuing to the speeches on women's rights and woman suffrage. This book should be of interest to all women's historians as well as to midwesterners who want to know more about nineteenth-century politics and society in their region.

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