

Wetherby's Gallery: Paintings, Daguerreotypes, & Ambrotypes of an Artist

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Wetherby's Gallery: Paintings, Daguerreotypes, & Ambrotypes of an Artist, by Marybeth Slonneger. Iowa City: By Hand Press, 2006. 184 pp. Illustrations (some color), notes, bibliography, timeline. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Rachel Sailor is assistant professor of art history at the University of Texas, Tyler. Her dissertation (University of Iowa, 2007) was "Meaningful Places: Nineteenth-Century Photography and the Local Landscapes of the American West."

Wetherby's Gallery reveals the history and production of a nineteenth-century Iowa City image maker. The first half of the book provides a biography of Isaac A. Wetherby (1819–1904), with detailed accounts of family history and significant events in his life and a close look at the history and operations of the photographer's gallery and studio. Slonneger explores local history, Wetherby's family history, his personal relationships, his notable professional achievements, and the history of his business in Iowa City. The second section is devoted to over one hundred of Wetherby's paintings, daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, and tintypes. Slonneger has set up this section as an exhibit, with brief informational captions for each illustration.

Rooted in extensive archival research at the State Historical Society of Iowa, Slonneger's book presents a slice of history from the early days of Iowa City. Beginning with an exploration of Wetherby's family history, which Slonneger traces to seventeenth-century England, the book focuses on the chronological development of the events and commercial growth of Wetherby's various photographic pursuits. Via "daybooks," "a box of ephemera," and a significant visual resource, Slonneger pieces together a narrative of an Iowa photographer who was a typical nineteenth-century practitioner, with the entrepreneurial zeal necessary to sustain a business in the early days of a small mid-western community.

Slonneger tracks Wetherby's life, however, in a way that exposes more than just the details of his family and career. Her careful scrutiny of the archival resources concerning Wetherby gives readers an opportunity to glimpse aspects of a cultural life that is remote, and often seems bizarre to twenty-first-century readers. For instance, Slonneger devoted time and energy to reproducing and explicating random bits of ephemera from the Wetherby archive such as "boyhood sketches . . . receipts for photographic supplies, business trade cards, state fair tickets, and other miscellaneous documents" (15), including lecture posters, local event programs and tickets, and the photographer's cloth business sign.

Because Slonneger heavily favored archival research, her book will be immensely interesting to anyone with an interest in local Iowa

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-