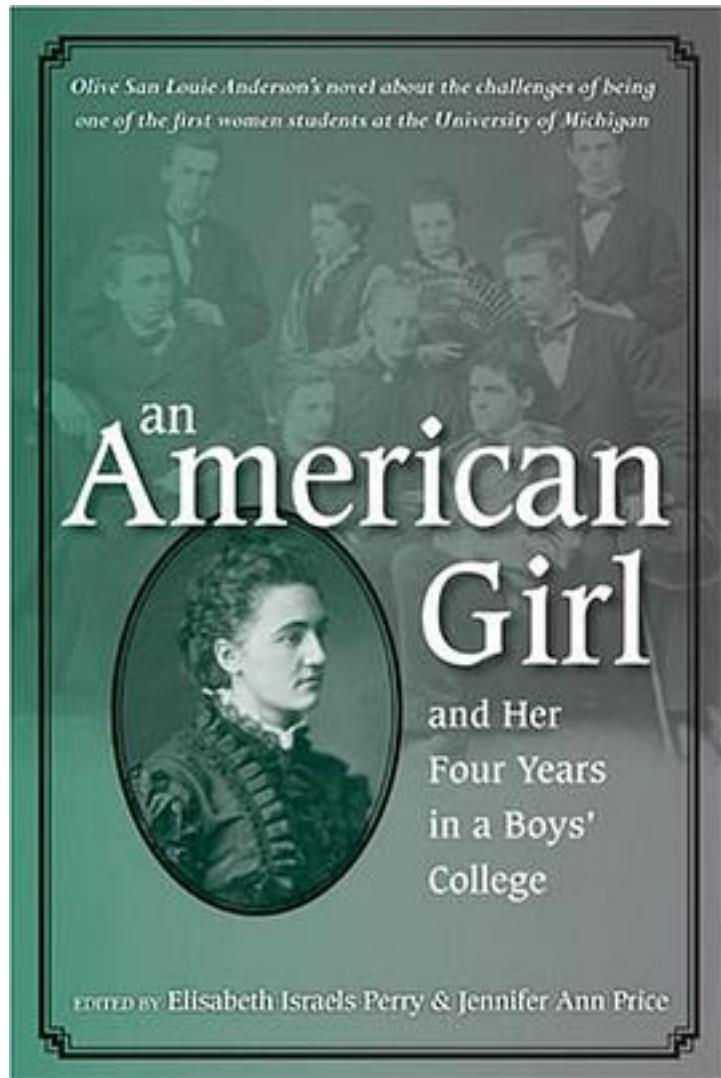


# An American Girl, and Her Four Years in a Boys' College



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In 1870, the University of Michigan—one of the oldest, largest, and most prestigious public universities in the United States—admitted its first woman student. "An American Girl, and Her Four Years in a Boys' College," written by one of the first woman graduates from the University of Michigan and published pseudonymously in 1878, describes what it was like to be a member of this tiny group of brave coeds. The story is told through the eyes of Wilhelmine Elliot, an untraditional girl who enrolls at the fictional University of Ortonville, a thinly disguised stand-in for the University of Michigan. Will's challenges mirror those of other women college students of the era, including the reactions of male faculty and students, relationships with other women students and with family and friends back home, and social attitudes toward the women's movement and liberal religious values. The editors' engaging introduction places the novel in its relevant historical and literary contexts, as do helpful annotations throughout the text. "The 1870s were an important moment of debate over women's roles and responsibilities. What's here is very interesting not only about higher education, and 'strong-minded women,' but about religion, domesticity, independence, marriage, and homosocial bonding."—Carol Lasser, Oberlin College  
Olive San Louie Anderson (ca. 1852-86) graduated from the University of Michigan in 1875 and published "An American Girl" in 1878 under the name SOLA. Elisabeth Israels Perry is John Francis Bannon Professor of History, Saint Louis University. Jennifer Ann Price is a Ph.D. candidate in American Studies at Saint Louis University.

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