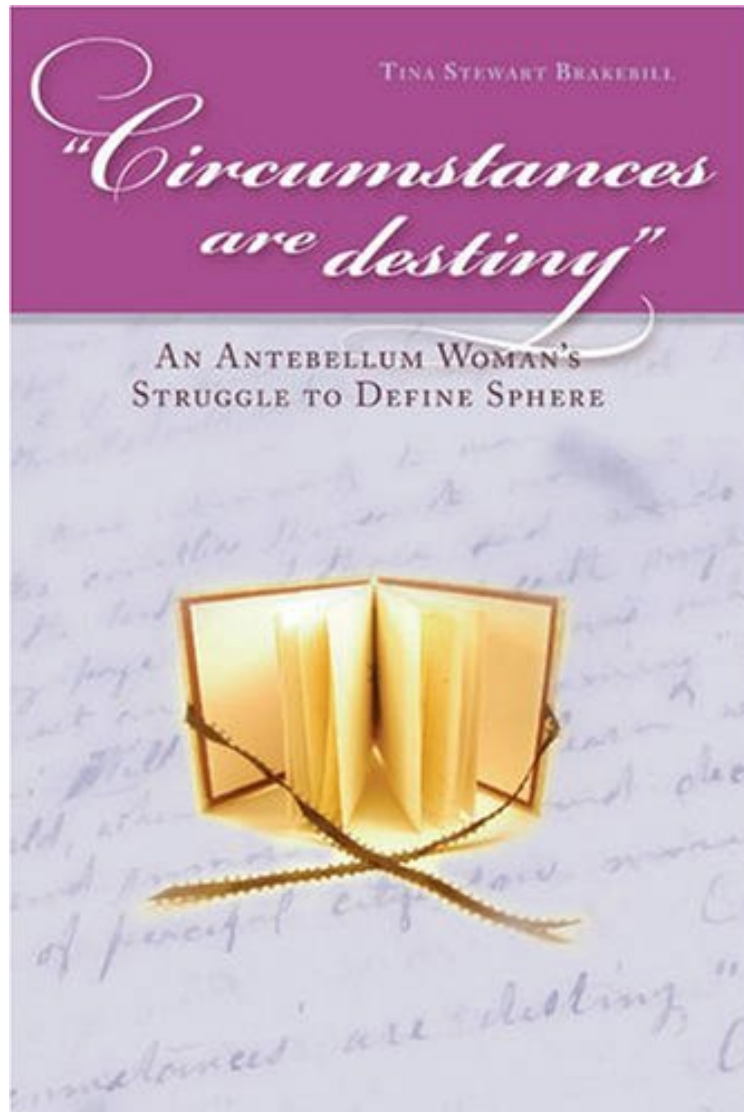


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## **Circumstances Are Destiny: An Antebellum Woman's Struggle to Define Sphere (Civil War in the North)**

*Tina Stewart Brakebill*

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A 19th-century midwestern woman's reflections on her role in society Celestia Rice Colby, born in Ohio in 1827, had lifestyle options that were relatively straightforward for the typical white female child born in the first half of the nineteenth century: she married in 1848, had five children, spent much of her life working as a dairy farmer and housewife, and died in 1900. Her rich legacy, however, extended beyond her children and grandchildren and survived in the form of detailed and reflective diaries and writings. Her private and published writings show that despite the appearances of the quintessential normal life, Colby struggled to reconcile her personal hopes and ambitions with the expectations and obligations placed on her by society. Author Tina Stewart Brakebill has woven original research with secondary material to form the fabric of Colby's life—from her days as the daughter of an Ohio dairy farmer to her relationship with her daughter, a pioneering university professor. What emerges is a multifaceted picture of one woman's lifelong struggle to establish her own identity within the confines of society's proscriptions. Colby's life story offers valuable insights that move beyond conventional generalizations regarding women of the past and that continue to affect the study of women today.

About the Author Tina Stewart Brakebill is an independent scholar and part-time history instructor in Illinois.