

ments that there was racial prejudice against African Americans in the Portland area, but she does not integrate that discussion into the larger one of impressive black gains during the conflict. African Americans earned good money, even in segregated shipbuilding work; the NAACP increased its members tenfold; and millions migrated from the very segregated South to the less segregated North, where they joined big-city political machines and began to make their voices heard in politics. In Vanport there was housing segregation in part because managers had to find homes for blacks without alienating whites, who might move to another job or back home. The hypermobility of the work force was one of the biggest production problems of that conflict. Fryer sees only the civil rights implications of the Vanport managers' actions, not their political realities.

Finally, Fryer's conspiracy is above all a conspiracy of race. One is reminded of excitable McCarthyite politicians and pundits who thought there was a Communist behind every bush. For Fryer, there is a racist lurking there instead. Yet the Midwest, and Iowa in particular, was especially friendly to Japanese resettlement there from the camps!

Acts of Conscience: World War II, Mental Institutions, and Religious Objectors, by Steven J. Taylor. Critical Perspectives on Disability. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009. 484 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, indexes. \$34.00 cloth.

Reviewer Kimberly D. Schmidt is professor of history at Eastern Mennonite University. Her research and writing have focused on Amish and Mennonite women.

An old debate among historians centers on World War II as a watershed moment in American history. Where some see continuity in issues besetting the nation such as civil rights and women's rights, others see significant change. Place disability history in the picture and the claim for watershed becomes stronger; prior to World War II the plight of the mentally disabled, confined for the most part to state and privately run "insane asylums," was readily and conveniently forgotten. That all changed, as Taylor documents, with the assignment of conscientious objectors to serve in such institutions.

Conscientious objectors (COs or "conchies") were young men who for religious or moral reasons refused to bear arms, although they were willing to serve their country in alternative service assignments. Most of the men were from the historic peace churches: Mennonites, Church of the Brethren, and Quakers, although the Methodists were represented as well. Under the direction of the Selective Service, con-

chies worked for the National Park Service, the Forest Service, and the Soil Conservation Service. After conchies questioned if ditch digging and road building best utilized their energy and talents, the Selective Service expanded work assignments, authorizing work as attendants in hospitals and other institutions with significant numbers of mentally disabled patients. The standard care of the time, which is graphically illustrated throughout the book and on its cover, consisted of unsanitary crowding, poor food, no clothing, "restraints" such as handcuffing the patients to their beds for days at a time on soiled and urine-soaked sheets, and significant physical abuse. Into these difficult situations were placed idealistic, often activist young men.

Taylor's narrative relates how the CO experience during World War II reshaped attitudes and practices regarding patient treatment. Conchies exposed the horrors and reformed if not revolutionized the treatment of patients they strove to care for using pacifist ideals as their guide. Conchies refused to beat or harm patients. Many rejected the use of restraints on patients except under the most dangerous conditions. Four conchie activists founded the Mental Health Foundation, a clearinghouse for a number of issues associated with attendant care, institutional reform, and educating an unaware public. Although they were ultimately not successful — mental institutions continued some of their most egregious practices through the 1960s — CO activists were instrumental in bringing the horrific conditions to national attention, including to Eleanor Roosevelt, who became an ardent supporter.

Taylor provides a narrative rich in detail and anecdotes. The section on race relations is fascinating, although it is buried in a chapter on "Detached Units." Because of conchie insistence, some CO dining halls were desegregated by 1943, eleven years before the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision. Quakers and members of the Church of the Brethren, along with Methodists, Jews, and many who had no religious identification led this effort. The largest group of COs, however, hailed from Mennonite and related Anabaptist groups such as the Amish. Mennonites and Amish did not engage with state authorities, preferring to "witness silently."

This story is fascinating, and the sources are many and unassailable, but the magnitude of Taylor's project tends to overwhelm the narrative. He provides so much context that it takes until page 136 to finally get through the background and into the story of World War II. The text vacillates between engaging and flowing narrative and ponderous prose, especially when the author reverts to detailed explanations of meetings where summaries would have benefited the reader. Some sections read like lectures with odd snippets introduced seem-

ingly at random for humorous effect. A few chapters lacked coherent organization, and some chapter titles were confusing. And the conclusion provides Taylor's own compelling reasons for writing this history, material that belongs in the introduction.

Yet, Taylor's resurrection of the history of CO resistance to a very popular war in spite of public condemnation is a story that bears telling. In it one finds the beginnings of the mental health profession in the United States, and it shows how the consistency of pacifist ideals of justice played out both politically (against the war) and personally in the care exhibited for the mentally disabled and other oppressed groups.

Anamosa Penitentiary, by Richard Snavely and Steve Wendl. Images of America Series. Mt. Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2010. 127 pp. Illustrations. \$21.99 paper.

Reviewer L. Mara Dodge is professor of history at Westfield State University. She is the author of *Whores and Thieves of the Worst Kind: A Study of Women, Crime, and Prisons, 1835–2000* (2002).

This slim volume consists primarily of a photographic history of the Anamosa State Penitentiary. The chapters are titled The White Palace (on the prison's construction and architecture), The Keepers, The Kept (including infamous cases), Work, Play, Hearts and Minds (education and rehabilitation), Day by Day, Escapes, Views, and Tailings.

The authors, Richard Snavely and Steve Wendl, were career employees of the Anamosa Penitentiary and helped establish its prison museum, the source for most of the images and stories. The authors begin with the claim, "They just don't build prisons the way they used to. . . [But] over a century ago, in a small town on the Iowa prairie, a beautiful prison was built" (7). This celebratory tone infuses the work, providing both its strength and weaknesses. Indeed, according to Arcadia Press, its Images of America series is designed to "celebrate the history of places, towns and cities across the country."

Each chapter consists of just a single-page introduction to the topic, followed by a dozen, high-quality glossy images. Although the photo captions are extremely detailed and informative, there are no citations, no references to the major works on prison history, and no index. The approach is anecdotal and descriptive rather than analytical. No overall statistics are provided on such topics as the number of prisoners and changing patterns of incarceration over time; average sentences; or the types of crimes for which prisoners were sentenced or how these patterns changed. Nor is there any demographic data on such