

probably wish that the author had spent less time describing Shambaugh's bourgeois lifestyle and more on a critical analysis of the photographs themselves. And students of the Amana Colonies, and of rural Iowa more generally, will most likely find the plates of greater utility than the text. Both groups should get a copy of *Picturing Utopia*, however, for the questions that it raises; its first-rate presentation makes the book an excellent resource for diverse readers.

Can She Bake a Cherry Pie?: American Women and the Kitchen in the Twentieth Century, by Mary Drake McFeely. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000. x, 194 pp. Notes, index. \$24.95 cloth.

Reviewer Anne Kaplan is managing editor of *Minnesota History*. She is co-author of *The Minnesota Ethnic Food Book* (1986).

Like the fixings for a cherry pie, most of the ingredients for a work on this topic are staples. Thanks to work in women's studies, history, folklore, and anthropology, material abounds on the nature of women's work in general and cooking in particular. In addition, readers—especially women—will bring their own experiences to the table.

Mary Drake McFeely seasoned her library research with some interviews and a hearty dose of personal experience. She begins with America's nostalgic ideal: the women of rural Napton, Missouri, whose 1928 cookbook provided a window into a life of from-scratch cooking on wood stoves. These women worked hard, using recipes usually learned at a mother's knee. While yearning for conveniences, they had the sure knowledge at the end of the long day that "what they were doing was essential. It went without saying" (18). Throughout the twentieth century this stereotype, McFeely says, has been held up as woman's proper place, the ideal of female fulfillment, and the basis of a happy family and a strong society.

The book then flashes back to the mid-nineteenth century to chart the evolution of women's culinary roles. It chronicles iconoclasts such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, whose prescription for freedom from drudgery proved way ahead of its time. It rehashes the "scientific cooking" advances of women such as Fanny Farmer, who would make women scientists and management experts but still chain them to the kitchen. The twentieth century's burgeoning technology and convenience items did not free women from the kitchen. Instead, through two world wars, depression, and prosperity, corporate America and the U.S. government taught women to be good consumers, thrifty managers, and creators of ever more elaborate, if tasteless, foods. Women, according to McFeely, ceased being confident carriers of tradition as they

were demoted to the status of trained workers using standardized recipes to produce middle-class white fare. Turning a shortcoming of her book into one of its parameters, McFeely admits that her sources ignored all but white, middle-class women, making their bland tastes and idealized lifestyles the standard. These are the women she, too, concentrates on. Had she relied less on the printed word and more on interviews with women who represent the century's diversity, her study would have been far more inclusive and interesting.

The book's remaining chapters sketch the impact of feminists such as Betty Friedan, who said that the kitchen symbolized women's imprisonment, in tandem with foodies such as Julia Child, who taught *anyone* (male or female) that cooking could be fun and creative. The turbulent 1960s and '70s, with environmental concerns, interest in vegetarianism, ethnic food, and natural foods, were followed by health-conscious decades when cooking was redefined as performance art, survival, or self-realization. Throughout, new technologies, conveniences, and global marketing have cut time and expanded horizons—while the amount of time families spend together at the table has declined.

In the end, McFeely concludes, "The tradition that arranging for dinner to happen is a female task is deeply enmeshed in the social fabric" (166). Freed from the necessity to cook, women can now realize or rediscover the sensual pleasure of cooking. "We do not have to lose our kitchens to keep our freedom" (169).

By the end of the book, many readers may be thinking, "Tell me something I don't know!" And then, there it is: McFeely wants us to enjoy real, from-scratch cooking now that we are not chained to the stove. Suddenly, certain seemingly irrelevant passages in the book fall into place: the details of her early married life in suburbia, her grandmother's use of canned soup, and her dislike of the revised *Joy of Cooking* make sense. McFeely has been building up to this personal plea all along. Her earnest look at a century of women in the kitchen is not really a history. It's neither inclusive nor incisive enough, and other books are far superior at explaining subjects touched on in this book; see, for instance, Laura Shapiro's superb *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century* (1986) or Friedan's *Feminist Mystique*.

Historian Linda Kerber's blurb on the book's jacket is accurate: "This book is an easy read. . . . a route to understanding that activities of daily life . . . have social and political histories." Anyone not alive during the last quarter of the twentieth century might learn from this "cooking light" approach to history. Some might enjoy reminiscing with the author or finding unexpected details that complement their

own experiences. It's kind of like watching your neighbor bake a cherry pie. Unless you've never eaten one, the only possible surprises can come from her unusual methods or an exotic ingredient. In this case, most readers will find a familiar dessert.

"Bending the Future to Their Will": Civic Women, Social Education, and Democracy, edited by Margaret Smith Crocco and O. L. Davis Jr. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999. vii, 291 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$24.95 paper.

Reviewer Sandra D. Harmon is instructional assistant professor and acting director of women's studies at Illinois State University. Her research and writing have focused on women and education.

"Bending the Future to Their Will" is a collection of essays about eleven women who, through their writing and teaching, grappled with issues of social education. Coeditor Margaret Smith Crocco defines social education as that which "seeks to address the issue of what skills and knowledge individuals need to live effectively in a democracy" (1). Through careers that spanned the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century, these women offered theories and methods often at odds with the educational wisdom of the day. Only one of the women, Jane Addams, is widely known today, and she is not necessarily known for her contributions to social education. The others—Mary Sheldon Barnes, Lucy Maynard Salmon, Mary Ritter Beard, Marion Thompson Wright, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, Bessie Louise Pierce, Rachel Davis DuBois, Hilda Taba, Alice Miel, and Hazel Whitman Hertzberg—will be familiar to some and new to others. In fact, a recurring theme of the essays is the invisibility of these women in histories of American education for democracy.

The editors note that their sample of women educators is neither comprehensive nor representative. All but one of the women was white; only one was foreign born; and most were affiliated with eastern institutions, particularly Columbia University's Teachers College. Nevertheless, several had midwestern roots, including Bessie Louise Pierce. Raised in Waverly, Iowa, Pierce attended the University of Iowa, where she received both her bachelors' (1910) and doctoral (1926) degrees. She taught in Iowa high schools and at the University of Iowa until 1929, when she accepted a position at the University of Chicago. Murry R. Nelson discusses her research on teaching methodology and on the relationship between educational policy and national ideology, which she began during her years in Iowa.

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