

questions about memoir and historical memory. Why does Young select some memories over others? How is that selection influenced by present-day concerns about gender and ethnic identities? By other memoirs in this genre? How do Young's memories compare to other memories of this time and this place? These books point to the significance of various forms of evidence as well as to the fruitful questions that such evidence raises about the construction of history and historical memory.

Promise to the Land: Essays on Rural Women, by Joan M. Jensen. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991. xii, 319 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, index. \$27.50 cloth.

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In this handsome volume, the foremost historian of America's rural women presents eight new essays on the topic, along with eight previously published articles. There is something here for everyone interested in rural women's history. The essays range from those that are "staunchly academic" (xii) to those that deal with Jensen's own family history and personal memories. Jensen's "soup to nuts" approach is risky but ultimately succeeds.

Jensen's excellent introductory essay outlines the major themes in the history of America's rural women and discusses the principal literature on the subject. Part one of the collection, "Autobiography and Biography," includes her memoirs of life on a communal farm in the 1970s and a profile of her maternal grandmother, a German immigrant and Wisconsin farm woman. Essays in part two of the book, "Oral History, Iconography, and Material Culture," demonstrate the importance of using non-traditional sources to investigate the history of rural women. In particular, material in this section of the book highlights the use of such evidence to retrieve the history of rural women of color. In part three, "Rural Development," Jensen focuses on women's work within various rural economies. She includes essays on the Seneca women of New York, African-American women on a Maryland wheat plantation, and Euro-American dairy producers in the Philadelphia hinterland. In part four, "Rural Social Welfare," Jensen tackles a significant topic, providing essays that examine social welfare issues on the Wisconsin frontier, within the early programs of the New Mexico Agricultural Extension Service, and during the farm crisis of the 1980s. In part five of the book, "Rural History," Jensen reviews the historiography of Mid-Atlantic farm women and suggests

areas for additional research on the role of farm women in American history.

As Jensen states in her preface, the previously unpublished essays in this collection "move in new directions, to biography and autobiography, to iconography, and a linking of professional work to the more personal, emotional context that gave rise to them" (ix). Among the new essays, two in particular demonstrate Jensen's clever use of biographical evidence and skillful connection of "professional work" to its "personal context." In "Rise Up Like Wheat: Plantation Women in Maryland," Jensen examines the intersection of gender, race, and class on the Rose Hill wheat plantation in Cecil County, Maryland. She reconstructs the daily lives and work experiences of the women of the plantation over a thirty-year period, based on a diary kept by the plantation's mistress, Martha Forman, from 1814 to 1845. Supplementing the diary material with local histories, census records, and other Forman family papers, Jensen artfully recreates the work and family lives of the plantation's slave women, with particular attention to household worker Rachel Burk, whose efforts at textile and food processing were central to the economy of Rose Hill.

In "On Their Own: Women on the Wisconsin Frontier," Jensen likewise creatively uses a variety of sources to recapture the experiences of rural women who left behind few of their own records. Employing census material, the papers of various Wisconsin welfare agencies, and information from her own family history, Jensen examines the material conditions and survival strategies of impoverished Wisconsin farm women early in this century. In particular, she focuses on the experiences of her own grandmother, Matilda Schopp. This brief essay begins to answer some important questions about the ways in which poor rural women coped with their problems, and how they were treated by their communities, before the advent of federally supported social welfare programs in the 1930s.

As in her previous publications on the history of rural women, Jensen's new collection of essays places America's women of the land at the center of their own history. As active participants in the political, economic, and social systems they inhabited, these women made significant contributions to the larger history of rural America. Jensen's essays, most of which are accessible to both a scholarly and popular audience, combine innovative use of sources, personal experiences, and family history to tell the stories of America's rural women. The inclusion of a number of photographs and drawings of rural women and their artifacts highlights the importance of material culture in revealing the history of rural women and provides the reader with some interesting visual material.

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