

American experience. Furthermore, local research reveals both factors determining common experiences and the diverse experiences that occur even at the local level" (179). This, in fact, is the strength of the book: reiterating the value of local history. McLean County is in the middle of Illinois, and some of its characteristics are a bit exceptional, but, then, every local history highlights the exceptions and unique nature of a community. Nonetheless, I believe that the evolution of health care in one county in Illinois is highly suggestive of what one might find in other counties, beyond the large cities so typical of many studies. Even if such were not the case, anyone interested in how changes in life, death, and expectations about health care evolve over a century would be remiss if they did not read, and enjoy, this book.

Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906–46, by Nancy Marie Robertson. Women in American History Series. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007. xvii, 276 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 cloth.

Reviewer Virginia R. Boynton is professor of history at Western Illinois University. Her research and writing have focused on issues related to gender and race in the twentieth-century Midwest.

In *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906–46*, Nancy Marie Robertson provides a thoroughly researched and nuanced study of the transformation of this major national women's organization from a racially segregated religious association in 1906 into a racially integrated democratic institution by 1946. Her work is an important contribution to the scholarship on race relations and the origins of the modern civil rights movement, and enhances the historical literature on women's activism and on American religious institutions.

Taking a largely chronological approach to her topic, Robertson delineates the origins of the national organization in a 1906 merger of two groups of young women's evangelical Protestant organizations dedicated to social change within a racially segregated context: one group was located primarily in the cities of the Northeast; the other had arisen on midwestern college campuses. In a series of chapters that trace the gradual evolution of the national organization from its origins at a national conference for white women only, held in the South in 1907, through the Progressive era, World War I, the post-suffrage decade of the 1920s, the New Deal, and World War II, Robertson documents the continuous struggle within the organization over race relations, culminating in its members' decisions in 1946 to unanimously adopt an "Interracial Charter" and move toward complete

desegregation of all branches of the YWCA. Throughout this period, both the black and white women of the YWCA invoked the concept of "Christian sisterhood" to justify their social activism, although over the course of the first half of the twentieth century, the rhetoric of both groups in support of racial equality shifted from primarily religious in nature to increasingly democratic, without ever abandoning the members' commitment to acting as "Christian citizens" (174).

Among the wealth of historical sources Robertson draws on as she traces the struggle among the black and white women of the YWCA to adopt increasingly progressive policies on race relations are the records of the YWCA's national conferences, including those held in the mid-western cities of Cleveland (1920), Milwaukee (1926), Detroit (1930), Minneapolis (1932), and Columbus, Ohio (1938). Her focus on the evolution of race relations in the YWCA leads her to give particular attention to the YWCA in the South, but Robertson also notes that as a result of the organization's wartime activities during the First World War, "some white women had begun to see race relations as a problem in both the South and the North" (70). Of particular interest to readers of the *Annals of Iowa* is Robertson's brief reference to a 1919 incident at a YWCA student convention held in Des Moines, when the organization "violated a commitment to equal accommodations for black women" (68).

Christian Sisterhood will be of most interest to readers concerned with the history of American race relations, the civil rights movement, the transition from the woman suffrage movement to the modern women's movement, and the history of modern American Protestantism. Robertson has provided a nuanced and balanced account of the YWCA's struggles over racial justice that neither glosses over the recurring instances of racism within the YWCA nor ignores the roles that women of both races played in the effort to move the organization toward embracing the goal of racial equality.

Fighting for Hope: African American Troops of the 93rd Infantry Division in World War II and Postwar America, by Robert F. Jefferson. War/Society/Culture Series. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. xvii, 321 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, essay on sources, index. \$55.00 cloth.

Reviewer Andrew E. Kersten is professor of history at the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay. His books include *Labor's Home Front: The American Federation of Labor and World War II* (2006) and *Race, Jobs, and the War: The FEPC in the Midwest, 1941–1946* (2000).