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The Annals of Iowa

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In This Issue

BRIE SWENSON ARNOLD, assistant professor of history at Coe College, offers an account of an unsuccessful effort by seven African American women in Cedar Rapids to break the color line at a garment factory in 1897. Arnold sets that effort thoroughly in the context of the experience of African American and Bohemian American working-class women in the city at the turn of the twentieth century.

PAM STEK, a doctoral candidate and graduate instructor in history at the University of Iowa, provides a detailed account of another instance of labor activism in Cedar Rapids at the turn of the twentieth century, a strike by women workers at the American Cereal Company in 1898. Stek argues that the strike is illuminating for several reasons: it reflects the experience of the vast majority of working women who did not join unions; it was a rare instance when local newspapers took the strikers' cause seriously; and the strikers were able to prevail against ethnic discrimination and powerful company resistance to their efforts to shape the conditions of their employment and to gain recognition as competent and serious workers.

Front Cover

Marshall and Louisa Perkins (center, in doorway) are pictured with their children and staff, circa 1900, in front of Marshall's Restaurant, one of the few racially integrated workplaces in turn-of-the-century Cedar Rapids. From the collection of the African American Museum of Iowa, Gift of Harriet Perkins. Both articles in this issue are devoted to the experiences of working women in Cedar Rapids at the turn of the twentieth century.

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