They Opened the Door... And Let My Future In

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opened and a fourth operated, and numerous posters and entries for
the Index of American Design were created. Yet few artists were em-
ployed in Iowa, and little art was produced in the aggregate.

Grieve’s contextualization of the intellectual history preceding this
middlebrow/highbrow debate is splendid. In lucid, well-organized
chapters, she introduces readers to John Dewey, Constance Rourke,
John Cotton Dana, Van Wyck Brooks, George Santayana, and many
others, and just enough of their writings and thinking to understand
the debate that engaged them. These threads are nicely tied together
in the biography of Holger Cahill, who headed the FAP. The excitement
of this intellectual debate — what American art was or should be,
what a museum was or ought to be, the place of art in a democratic
society — is readily apprehended through Grieve’s telling. Because
these issues are still with us, this exceptional resumé of that intellec-
tual history is of great value.

They Opened the Door . . . And Let My Future In, by Helen Phelan Au-
gustine. Emmetsburg: The author, 2006. vi, 126 pp. Appendix of pho-
tographs, documents, and maps.

Reviewer Jeffrey A. Kaufmann is professor of history at Muscatine Community
College. His doctoral thesis focused on country schools in Iowa in the 1930s.

Helen Phelan Augustine’s book is a delightful journey to a bygone era
in Iowa and midwestern history. Augustine is clearly inspired by her
own experience in Iowa country schools. She weaves this inspiration
throughout her description of the country school experience, focusing
on 34 former teachers who shared their reflections on teaching in Iowa
country schools in the 1930s and 1940s. The book is a wonderful mix-
ture of memories, anecdotes, and reflections embedded in the context
of rural educational history. The book is well organized into topical
chapters with appropriate teacher memories supporting summaries
and generalizations about Iowa country schools.

The focus of the book is on teachers and their experiences, includ-
ing a wide array of topics such as pedagogical techniques, contract
language, teacher training, boarding in the community, and more sub-
jective areas such as motivation, autonomy, and the impact of World
War II on the school experience. An appendix of documents and pho-
tographs personalizes both the topics and the 34 teachers interviewed
for the book.

This is an excellent mix of nostalgia and oral history, an opportunity
fading fast with time. The use of former teachers and their insights
grounds the book in authenticity, even as a positive tone pervades
every page. This book will appeal to thousands of former students and teachers as well as add a personal dimension to the analysis of this important phenomenon in Iowa and midwestern educational history.


Reviewer Bill Douglas lives and works in Des Moines. He is the author of “Penn in Technicolor: Cecil Hinshaw’s Radical Pacifist-Perfectionist Experiment at William Penn College, 1944–1949” (Quaker History, 2007).

Pacifism has always been a distinctly minority position in U.S. society, but between the world wars it exercised enough influence that even the ultimate, if fictional, ecclesiastical opportunist Elmer Gantry toyed with preaching pacifism during his Methodist phase. But it apparently required principles.

These two fine books both deftly illuminate mainstream Protestant pacifism from around 1920 to 1960 and its evolution within that time, but in very different ways. (We should pause to note that there were other disparate Protestant pacifisms, including a diminishing Pentecostal variety and an enduring Anabaptist one that were larger numerically if not as influential intellectually until after this period, when John Howard Yoder synthesized Mennonitism and Barth.) Appelbaum is interested in pacifism’s internal dynamics; Kosek in its influence on American society.

Both authors take a primarily biographical approach, and some similarities emerge. Both begin with Harold Gray, the World War I conscientious objector whose memoir Character Bad would be influential for World War II objectors. Kosek adds into the mix Gray’s shipmates on his YMCA journey to Europe, Evan Thomas and Kirby Page. Both Appelbaum and Kosek seek to rehabilitate the historical memory of the almost forgotten Page, whose tireless efforts as a pacifist “social evangelist” crisscrossing the country in the 1920s and ‘30s did as much as anyone’s to popularize pacifism. Kosek and Appelbaum both devote considerable space to Richard Gregg, an early nonviolent theorist. (Only Kosek mentions the earlier theorist Clarence Case, a University