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*Clio's Southern Sisters: Interviews with Leaders of the
Southern Association for Women Historians* (review)

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CLIO'S SOUTHERN SISTERS: INTERVIEWS WITH LEADERS OF THE SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN HISTORIANS. Edited by Constance B. Schulz and Elizabeth Hayes Turner. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2004. 276 pp. Hardbound, \$44.95.

In the 1950s, the outstanding historian Anne Scott was finishing graduate school and looking for a job. Oscar Handlin sent her to the University of North Carolina. She said, "When I got down here, I was told that the University of North Carolina had never hired a woman in the history department, and never would." Fletcher Green, the chair, told Oscar Handlin, "Could you send me a young man to teach American history next year?" Handlin replied, "I've already sent someone to Chapel Hill, Fletcher." The department relented and let her teach four sections of the introductory course, but did not give her an office (38). Carol Bleser said, "My mentor tried to help me get a job. He would call up a chairman and say, 'She's really top notch. You should be happy to have her, and after thirty minutes, you'll forget she's a woman'" (140). Sometimes when women applied for history teaching jobs, the chair wiggled out of responsibility for denying a job by saying that male faculty did not want to have a woman in the department. JoAnn Carrigan would get letters from chairs, saying, "You have a very good record and so on but the department is not ready to hire a woman" (173). Often women would be advised to get a job in a woman's college because they should never expect to teach in a university. The oral

histories in *Clio's Southern Sisters* take us back to the mid-twentieth century history profession, not just in the South, but all over this nation.

Even when a woman was lucky enough to get a job, interest in women's history was discouraged. Elizabeth Taylor was teaching general U.S. history with an emphasis on political history. When the editor of the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* requested an article about Tennessee, she submitted one on women's suffrage in Tennessee. The editor suggested that she send it to the League of Women Voters' publication or the American Association of University Women (24–25). At the University of Mississippi, when Joanne Hawks' graduate student wanted to work on women's suffrage, the chair decided, "I don't want her to do that; she's too good a student to do that" (236). Darlene Clark Hines said, "Privately, many of my white male colleagues advised me to stop doing black women's history. In the early 1980s, one professor told me that he thought that my work on the white primary and constitutional and political history was much more important and that no one was really interested in this history of black women that I was doing and that it was not going to get me promoted" (221).

The Southern Historical Association rarely allowed women to present papers or serve on committees. In 1970 between twenty and twenty-five women met in a hotel room basement and discussed ways to obtain opportunities for women to participate in the organization. Out of these discussions the Southern Association for Women Historians was formed. Their loyalty to the Southern Historical Association was never questioned, neither was their determination to change it. Elizabeth Jacoway reflected on their progress: "We've accomplished what we set out to do: to become visible, to be taken seriously, to be given opportunities for leadership within the larger organization, and to have women's history recognized and taken seriously" (168). They began by conducting research on the status of women faculty in history departments in the South and found that the ten most recent presidents of Southern Historical Association came from departments with very poor records on the hiring and promotion of women. Evidence such as this brought members' attention to issues of discrimination that they could not ignore. The women in Southern Association of Women Historians (SAWH) built their organization, inviting male members, awarding prizes for scholarship in women's history, recognizing women historians, and monitoring the *Journal of Southern History* to make sure it published women's articles and reviews.

Reflecting on what was done—and what could have been done—these leaders in the SAWH wish they had made a greater effort to involve black women historians, although one thing they did was to reach out to the Association of Black Women Historians. They regret that they were not more effective in bringing in public school teachers. The interviews with the fifteen women leaders are candid and revealing; because oral history is the primary research method, the volume offers a diversity of interesting viewpoints not often found in institutional history.

While these historians' emphasis is on gender, and to a much less extent on race, social class seems not to have appeared on their radar. Those of us who were working class and the first in our families to go to college, not to mention graduate school, might well find the range of experience narrow. In the interview guide presented as an appendix, there is no question on how women cared for their children or maintained a marriage, and consequently there is little information here

on these important aspects of their lives. It is as if they had only one role, that no other roles interacted much with this one.

Certainly this is a significant primary source for understanding women scholars' battles in academia in mid-century, but there is little analysis. There are few comparisons with what was going on in other national and regional organizations, except for a few mentions of the Berkshire Conference. Nor is there discussion of how the women's movement affected this movement of historians.

Nevertheless, within its limited scope, *Clio's Southern Sisters* presents interesting, personal, and valuable reflections, sometimes surprising, by smart women. Anne Scott, when asked about her scholarly writings, replied, "I really think that if St. Peter asked me to justify myself that students are the justification, not the scholarship. It was helpful, but it won't last forever. But students will have students, will have students forever" (46). And because of the efforts of these women to gain equal opportunity for women to participate in the historical profession, we all have students who will have students forever.

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