



Hard at Work

Women at the Amana Refrigeration Company, 1950-1970

In the early 1950s, the Amana Refrigeration Company experienced a burgeoning demand for freezers, refrigerators, and air conditioners. Finding good solid workers for the booming appliance business proved challenging, however, as the isolated location in rural Iowa made a working class population scarce. Amana decided in order to recruit enough employees, they would open the factory doors to women as well as men. Though they appreciated their new jobs, the women struggled with the transition from farm to factory. Over time, they bonded together as they shared recipes, gardening tips, and advice on canning. When they fought for longer restroom breaks, safer workplace conditions, and higher wages, they acted as a unified force. Since they lived in small towns and farms spread across a geographic distance of 20 to 40 miles, the only space they shared was at the factory and socially as part of the union. The bathrooms served as an escape from the watchful eyes of the line foremen and a chance to smoke. Some women shared rides to work and spent the travel time bonding and sharing workplace grievances.

**Thursday, March 7, 2013
12-1 p.m.**

State Historical Society of Iowa
402 Iowa Ave. (Iowa & Gilbert),
Iowa City

**Bring a lunch & explore
Iowa history**

*This event is free and open to the public.
Call (319) 335-3911 for information.*

Through her research, Dr. Cori Derifield demonstrates the way in which women at Amana used the factory and their common rural identity to form a working class consciousness, based on grievances records from 1950-1970, oral histories, and union records. She finished her Ph.D. in May 2012 from Purdue University and is currently working as an adjunct instructor at Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo and as a Limited Term Lecturer at Purdue University teaching courses online.

STATE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY of
IOWA

A Division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs