

contributors themselves. Margaret Gillett, a long-time professor at McGill, and Ann Beer, an assistant professor also at McGill, have brought together the stories of a wide variety of women. This collection is an important resource for anyone interested in the lives of contemporary women and the history of women's higher education.

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Carol Gold. *Educating Middle Class Daughters: Private Girls' Schools in Copenhagen, 1790–1820*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1996. Pp. 243.

In 1814 Denmark became the first country in the western world to make elementary education compulsory, four years after it had been made compulsory in Copenhagen. The 1814 law stated that every child between the ages of seven and fourteen—the year of confirmation—had to be taught the three Rs and religion.

So far researchers in Danish history have limited themselves to pointing out that, depending on the economic situation of the family, schooling became part of the reality for some children earlier than for others. U.S. historian Carol Gold has chosen another perspective. In her book *Educating Middle Class Daughters*, she concludes that some children had already been to school several years before the introduction of a national education system. According to Gold, the new public education system in Copenhagen stood on the shoulders of an older private school system—and to a large extent depended on it during much of the nineteenth century.

Between 1790 and 1817 there were 261 private “school keepers” in Copenhagen, among whom were 210 women. Half of all children went to school, and of these, 70% went to a private school. The female school keepers share two things: their main reason to keep a school going was economic, and they have all been judged harshly by later generations of historians of education. Gold disputes this interpretation.

In *Educating Middle Class Daughters*, Gold depicts a world of variegated schools, where small dame schools or daycare centres existed side by side with bigger girls' schools or academies. Whereas girls in some schools were taught at a very low level, girls in others were taught at something near high school level.

Female school keepers were mainly single and relatively poor, but in opposition to the tradition that holds the women were mostly illiterate, Gold shows these women could read and write and sometimes more than that. Most had a petit bourgeois or artisan background and some came from school keepers' families.

The girls in private schools received an education in line with the expectations of the time. They were taught to be loving wives to their husbands but also to help them in their daily business. As far as one can gather from the source materials, the girls at the highly ranked and expensive girls' institutes had a middle-class background, whereas those at in the daycare centres and smaller girls' schools had more modest social backgrounds.

Gold shows us a series of parents—mainly fathers—who belonged to the Copenhagen middle class and, inspired by the French Revolution, wished both their sons and daughters could go to school to become citizens. The parents energetically pursued this project: they created educational societies, sat on the boards, hired teachers, and managed accounts. They even organized charity schools for the daughters of middle class parents who had lost their fortunes.

Without prior guiding traditions in the field of girls' education these early school enthusiasts had to learn from daily experience and from contemporary educational debates. Through case studies of the Copenhagen Daughters School and the school of the Society for Sororal Charity, both from 1791, Gold demonstrates how the curriculum gradually came to harmonize with the new nineteenth-century middle-class conception of the good mother and wife. The old vision of a woman as both wife and helper was pushed to the background.

Gold has written a good and generally informative book. She helps an audience unfamiliar with Danish history to understand developments. For Danes, this is a relatively unknown chapter in the history of Danish education. The source material and the author's imaginative and creative approach are impressive.

Sometimes the author's fondness for the early girls' schools allows her to get lost in empirical details. Further, any historian of childhood will find it surprising that the history of the early private girls' school are interpreted only from a women's history perspective. As a result, the relation between the history of education and the history of childhood is absent.

Ning de Coninck-Smith

Paul Axelrod. *The Promise of Schooling: Education in Canada, 1800–1914* (Themes in Canadian Social History). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.

Since the appearance of *Canadian Education: A History* (edited by J. D. Wilson, R. M. Stamp and L.-P. Audet) in 1970 there has been no one-volume synthesis of Canadian educational history. Although Paul Axelrod's *The Promise of Schooling* is not a full-pledged synthesis, as his sub-title indicates it is a summary and analysis of educational developments in nineteenth-century Canada up to World War I.