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From Brand: Temple University Press : Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960 (Critical Perspectives on the Past) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960 (Critical Perspectives on the Past):

9 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Not June Cleaver
By katiek
This is a great compilation of essays about women during the 1950s who did not fit the idealized "feminine mystique" of the housewife. Joanne Meyerowitz's essay responding to Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" is particularly interesting and revealing. Meyerowitz conducted thorough research and came to the conclusion that the media, while celebrating domesticity, simultaneously applauded women who achieved in politics, careers, volunteer work and other areas outside the home. The book includes sections on Chinese American women and their arrival after the second world war, the brutal murder of Emmett Till, women labor activists, nurses, and education. It is comprehensive and highly historical, but easy and interesting for non-researchers to read.
7 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Refreshing reading
By Robin Orłowski
Like many gen-x progressives, I had absorbed the popular portrayal of the 'feminine mystique' without realizing there were still progressives fighting the good fight in post-war America. Not until working on a graduate level independent study did I realize how easily the mass media had distorted and hidden a fascinating history of feminism and progressivism--at a time supposedly antithetical to both. Without diminishing the hardships that did exist (restrictions on abortion, contraceptives, pregnancy discrimination, racial discrimination, homophobic bar raids) she shows how these groups responded with ingenuity and independence. As an added plus, the book confirms dissent was much larger than the mass media or public officials cared to actually admit back to the general public. This false reassurance temporarily fit into the cold-war's emphasis on bland conformity, but it silenced many people's experiences until now. Progressive actions must have been impossible in the era of McCarthyism's suppression of political and cultural dissent, but perseverance made the women's victories all the more rewarding. Furthermore, many of the same women profiled in Meyerowitz's book used the time to lay critical groundwork essential for the 'revolutionary' 1960's and 1970's. Feminism did not simply reconstitute itself after an 'absence' following suffrage victory, but was marginalized by an unspoken arrangement between the media and politics. Buy two copies of this book. One for yourself--and one to give your least favorite far right politician a much needed wakeup call.

In the popular stereotype of post-World War II America, women abandoned their wartime jobs and contentedly retreated to the home. These mythical women were like the 1950s TV character June Cleaver, white, middle-class, suburban housewives. Not June Cleaver unveils the diversity of postwar women, showing how far women departed from this one-dimensional image. This collection of fifteen revisionist essays charts new directions in American women's history and provides connections to scholarship that, until recently, has focused primarily on the years before 1945 and after 1960. The contributors explore the work and activism of postwar American women and also point to the contradictions and ambiguities in postwar concepts of gender. Including examinations of such aspects of postwar women's history as the arrival of Chinese women immigrants in New York City; women's changing presence in the labor force and in union organization; and the precarious lives of women abortionists, lesbians, and single mothers, the authors effectively demonstrate how postwar women's identities were not only an expression of their gender but also of their class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, occupation, and politics.

From Publishers Weekly
Women's history is being rewritten, deconstructed and reconfigured daily. Existing scholarship has tended to reinforce the perception that the women's movement retreated in the years between WW II and the '60s. Not June Cleaver, reconsiders the roles of women as mothers, workers, activists, unionists and pacifists and read together these fine essays signify a systematic devaluation of women that eventually manifested itself in the coming of age of the women's movement. Of particular interest are the chapters, "Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?" by Deborah A. Gerson and "I Wanted the Whole World to See" by Ruth Feldstein. The former chronicles the efforts of the Families Committee of Smith Act Victims in defying McCarthyism, while the latter recounts the trial of Emmett Till, focusing on how motherhood was defined along class and racial lines. Other chapters recognize the contributions of Chinese and Mexican-American women to the union movement; recount the sexual demonization of lesbians; and reveal how mothers became the surprise "weapon" of the Civil Defense protest movement. Meyerowitz has pulled together a collection that smartly argues that for women the 15 years following WW II were not a time for reflection and analysis, rather a period of re-massing and struggle. Copyright 1994 Cahners Business Information, Inc. "Not June Cleaver reconsiders the roles of women as mothers, workers, activists, unionists and pacifists and read together these fine essays signify a systematic devaluation of women that eventually manifested itself in the coming of age of the women's movement." Publishers Weekly