



Postal Data Analysis and US Economic History in the 19th Century

Measuring Business Cycles and Social Mobility

By Robert Dimand and Michael O'Reilly and Emily Sanders and Thomas Velk and Mengyue Zhao

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This is an interesting read for people involved with nineteenth-century US economic history as this book uses unexploited postal data to explore regional economic fluctuations in the nineteenth-century United States and to study social mobility and status among postmasters, particularly women and African Americans.

This book uses the published compensation of US postmasters to find the revenues of each post office through most of the nineteenth century, providing a proxy for economic activity in the area served by each post office for every two-year period. This disaggregated, high-frequency measure of economic activity makes it possible to see, for example, the impact of railway construction on economic activity or the way in which business cycles differed across regions. Data on postmasters and their compensation also provide insight into social mobility and status, with emphasis on female and African American postmasters and on the transmission of postmaster positions within families.

Readership

Anyone interested in nineteenth-century US economic history, including economic historians (both in economics departments and in history departments), students in economic history and US history courses and the wider reading public.

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