

Kyle D. Kauffman, ed.. *New Frontiers in Agricultural History*. Stamford, Conn: JAI Press, 2000. xiv + 252 pp. \$78.50, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7623-0612-1.



Reviewed by Allan G. Bogue

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This book is the first volume in an annual series that is designed, Kyle D. Kauffman explains, to "provide the center stage" for one of the numerous subdisciplines in the "overarching tent of economic history"--the "hybrid field" of agricultural economic history. This, he argues, is a "dynamic field" in which there is a "growing research output" (pp. xiii-xiv).

Eight authors or author teams have contributed to this volume. Each of the chapters relates or overlaps in subject matter or method with at least one other essay. In their lead chapter, Lee A. Craig and Thomas Weiss reconsider "Hours at Work and Total Factor Productivity Growth in Nineteenth-Century U. S. Agriculture," a subject that is of considerable interest to all those interested in the historical development of American agriculture. Craig and Weiss present new estimates of hours worked by agriculturalists in the nineteenth century United States and evaluate their implications for the calculation of total factor productivity in agriculture. They conclude that "a view of the mid-to late nineteenth century as an era of technological revolution probably can-

not be sustained" (p. 23). Rather, they suggest, agricultural development during that period primarily reflected an increase in inputs, particularly of labor. In answering the question "Did the Black-White Income Gap Close during the Late Nineteenth Century?" Anthony Patrick O'Brien confronts analogous analytical problems in estimating the income of black workers during the second half of the nineteenth century. After developing new estimates, primarily for 1860, O'Brien suggests that the improvement in black income between that date and 1860 was substantially less than Robert Higgs argued in his monograph *Competition and Coercion: Blacks in the American Economy, 1865-1914*. O'Brien's contribution is also somewhat related to Jay R. Mandle's concluding chapter of the collection in which he describes "The Social Prologue to the Civil Rights Movements." Surveying the place of the Afro-American population in the American economy from the slavery era to the 1960s, he maintains that by the latter date, the Afro-American population of the United States, "for the first time ... found itself in

an environment in which successful political mobilization ... had become feasible" (p. 249).

Three authors investigate the Hawaiian sugar industry: Sumner J. La Croix and Price Fishback examined the place of "Migration, Labor Market Dynamics, and Wage Differentials in Hawaii's Sugar Industry, 1901-1915" in a long and impressively documented analysis of the efforts of sugar planters to attract workers and the wage rates paid to various ethnic groups. Despite the divergent goals of employers and workers, planters succeeded in maintaining ethnic wage gaps among their workers because they "constantly found new low-wage immigrants to work in the Hawaii market"(p. 66). Allan Dye introduces cross-national comparisons in his chapter "Factor Endowments and Contract Choice: Why Were Sugar Cane Supply Contracts Different in Cuba and Hawaii, 1900-1929?" In the latter country the production units were for the most part plantations drawing most of their cane for processing from fields under their own management whereas outside contractors produced most of the cane processed in the Cuban sugar industry. The contrast between the two national industries, Dye concludes, was explained by the considerable differences in the transaction costs involved in producing and harvesting cane in the two countries and he suggests as well that this cost factor was a universal element in accounting for global variations "in the use of the plantation or contracting out [system] in the twentieth-century cane sugar industry" (p. 167).

Two authors consider aspects of the European wine industry. In his essay, entitled, "Cooperation and Cooperatives in Southern European Wine Production, The Nature of Successful Institutional Innovation 1880-1950," James Simpson explains that the development of cooperatives in the wine industries of France, Spain and Italy assisted landowners in obtaining labor in an era of declining prices, helped small and medium sized wine producers obtain access to scientific knowl-

edge and expensive technology, and improved growers' bargaining power in the wine market. Over time the French government came to use the cooperatives in its efforts to regulate the wine industry. Simpson credits the cooperative movement with slowing the exodus of workers from the wine regions and also with enhancing prices without unduly restricting competition.

Francesco L. Galassi entitles the second of these chapters, "Moral Hazard and Asset Specificity in the Renaissance: The Economics of Sharecropping in 1427 Florence," and asks, why share contracts came to predominate in the tenure and administration of land in Tuscany during the Renaissance era and remained a major institutional arrangement until mass urbanization after World War II "emptied out the countryside" (p. 199)? In answer he argues that demographic growth at the end of the medieval period "intensified cultivation and brought about a redefinition of property rights in land" as the manorial system broke down and urban businessmen increasingly controlled the countryside (p. 178). Intensified agriculture and increased investment in agricultural processes, the potential costs of supervision, enhanced risk, and the need to tie the tenant's remuneration to the success of the husbandry made share-cropping arrangements attractive to land owners in that era. Although the Black Death reduced population pressures significantly, continuing emphasis on the wheat crop and especially vine culture sustained these tendencies. Galassi successfully tests the hypothesis that "share tenancy was a way of controlling some dimensions of opportunistic behavior [by tenants] with high monitoring costs" by applying logit analysis to wage and rental contract data from the property registration and population census of Florence taken in 1427. He prefers the latter conclusion to the suggestion that the processes described here illustrate path dependency.

Karen Clay and Werner Troesken also discuss land tenure arrangements in their chapter deal-

ing with "Squatting and the Settlement of the United States: New Evidence from Post-Gold Rush California." Asserting that we are less well informed about the motivation and activities of squatters in California than in the Midwestern region of the United States, these economic historians have assembled data relating to squatting activity on the Spanish and Mexican land grants upon whose validity the American judiciary ruled. Using logit regression the authors conclude that the squatters "were acting in a way that is consistent with profit-maximization" (p. 208).

The contributors to this volume are economists and their work for the most part illustrates tools and approaches current in quantitative economic history. With perhaps only one exception they shed new light on important historical issues. From the standpoint of the discipline, it is particularly encouraging that several of the authors chose to pursue research that involved cross-national comparisons of agricultural development. One hopes that this trend will become increasingly evident in agricultural history because it promises to enhance greatly our understanding of agricultural history both in the United States and abroad.

In sum the essays in this volume promise that the series that it introduces will make an extremely useful contribution to our understanding of agricultural history. Economic historians have already used their special skills to make invaluable contributions to this field and the *Advances in Agricultural Economic History* series will be a factor in insuring that this trend continues. As a devoted fan of the genre, however, this reviewer hopes that this breed of researcher will always remember that many historians, including some who are interested in agricultural history, do not fully understand econometric methods and that an additional two or three sentences or a short appendix explaining the analytical methods in use or careful definition of terms may considerably increase the potential audience of a piece of

research. For example, Thomas Weiss's publications in his major field of research have been exemplary and the Craig and Weiss essay in this collection is an important one. However, the uninitiated reader will find no clear definition of total factor productivity until that person penetrates the explanatory material of Table 3 on the seventeenth page of the chapter. Care also is required in providing background in text and bibliography. Picking again upon Craig and Weiss, we find that they list among their references Paul David's elegant and justly famous essay, "The Mechanization of Agriculture in the Antebellum Midwest." Standing by itself, however, that paper leaves a reader with a much-distorted understanding of the way in which the reaper entered Midwestern grain technology. Alan L. Olmstead's essential corrective does not appear in the Craig and Weiss bibliography.

In their interesting and ingenious chapter dealing with squatting in California, Clay and Troesken focus upon the economic motivation of California squatters citing various sources in support of their contention that scholars are still uncertain about the motivation of this type of individual, the "new themes" having failed to "tarnish the original vision of the squatter as a valiant yeoman farmer." Although frequently used by historians the term, yeoman, is less often defined and definition in this case would have been appropriate. Surprisingly too these authors ignore a rather obvious tentative hypothesis. Since it has been shown rather convincingly that Midwestern squatters were profit maximizers and many Californian settlers were Midwesterners or Oregonians with Midwestern roots would it not be reasonable to assume that they carried this same cultural trait to California? In this research also we find the results of logit regression described so parsimoniously as to bewilder the uninitiated.

This plea for an econometric history that makes a better case for itself in the eyes of historians generally should not be viewed as dispa-

ment of the quality or importance of the contributions to this volume. They promise a long and useful life for the new series of which it is a part.

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