

political scientist with meticulous archival research into the papers and writings of leading political and religious figures in frontier Illinois, the author offers penetrating insights into the nature of liberal democracy in the age of Jackson. His work reminds us that western-style republicanism configured race, class, and culture in ways that tested the limits and possibilities of democracy in nineteenth-century America and resonates in the identity politics of our own age.

Wages and Labor Markets in the United States, 1820–1860, by Robert A. Margo. NBER Series on Long-term Factors in Economic Development. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. xii, 200 pp. Tables, references, index. \$28.00 cloth.

Reviewer Mark A. Lause is assistant professor of history at the University of Cincinnati. His field is labor and reform history; his most recent work, *The Civil War's Last Campaign* (2001), is on the third party movement of 1880.

To what extent did American civilization offer a land of opportunity with relatively higher wages and more upward mobility than contemporary nations of the western world? To get beyond the rhetoric of national chauvinism requires historians and social scientists to study the often dry-as-dust record of past economic activities. Social scientists have also tried to employ often controversial models of the present state of economic life to reconstruct earlier conditions. Whether favoring an optimistic or a pessimistic assessment of such models, economists have debated whether the antebellum labor market was effective in allowing for the optimal distribution of workers and work.

Economist Robert A. Margo attempts to ground the discussion of antebellum wages and labor markets in hard statistical data. In doing so, he reaches beyond contemporary census materials and later nineteenth-century compilations into hitherto undigested payroll records for civilian employees at U.S. forts and military installations. He breaks those figures down among various census regions: the Northeast, the Midwest, the South Atlantic, and the South Central, with a separate section on California in the Gold Rush. Within those regions, he distinguishes between wages paid in three occupational categories: unskilled laborers, artisans, and white-collar workers. While seeking to translate "nominal wages" (the amount of money paid) into "real wages" (the purchasing power of that money paid), Margo also applies various formulae to adjust for the disproportionately isolated circumstances of these installations.

In the end, this masterly demonstration of the economist's art uses the available sources to construct a plausible model of wage level

fluctuations. While demonstrating a general rise in the wages studied from 1820 to 1860, Margo documents fluctuations so uneven and volatile that some wages possibly even declined in certain places for a time.

There are some problems in this useful exercise. Margo's discussion of the effectiveness of the labor market seems to lack a legitimate point of comparison to anything the labor markets did not themselves do; in the same sense that one's legs might be long enough to reach the ground, antebellum labor markets were sufficiently effective to move the work force and the economy where it went. More deeply, many historians may share my skepticism of the modeling preoccupations of the social sciences, which often fail to consider matters unimportant to the modeling but vital to understanding past experience. While modeling wild fluctuations in earnings, Margo largely ignores the mechanisms essential to such fluctuations. Insufficient attention is paid to the role of child and female labor—and their shifting importance relative to adult or male labor—or the shift from skilled to unskilled workers in the wider labor market. Finally, fluctuations reflected the seasonal and transient nature of work and employment and the ongoing and localized renegotiations that framed the exact nature and length of that season.

In the end, nonspecialists uninterested in number crunching will find an understanding of *Wages and Labor Markets* elusive and the effort frustrating. However, a specialist with some statistical training will find Margo's book usefully suggestive in that it raises a series of sound questions in the course of addressing its central concern.

History of the 33d Iowa Infantry Volunteer Regiment, 1863–1866, by A. F. Sperry, edited by Gregory J. W. Urwin and Cathy Kunzinger Urwin. Civil War in the West Series. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999. xxx, 360 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, appendixes, index. \$38.00 cloth, \$22.00 paper.

Reviewer Terry L. Beckenbaugh is assistant professor of history at McNeese State University. His primary area of research is Union Major General Samuel Ryan Curtis and the Civil War in the trans-Mississippi region.

Civil War regimental histories must be evaluated with a critical eye. Some were written many years after the events they describe, when memories had softened and faded. They are little more than a mythic storytelling of a particular unit's invariably heroic exploits. Thankfully, Andrew Sperry's *History of the 33d Iowa Infantry Volunteer Regiment* does not fall into that category. Sperry wrote the regimental history in 1866, while the memories of the war were still fresh. He depicts the

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