

Editor's Notebook

To an economist's eye, the cycles of world history reflect economic developments that conventional accounts of history often underestimate. This issue presents a special section edited by Mark C. Schug and William C. Wood that places economics firmly at the center of major historical developments from imperial Roman times to the present.

In the opening article, Robert Whaples examines the extraordinary transformations that have allowed recent generations to escape the poverty that was the fate of humankind for most of history. He provides an overview of the advances in trade, technology, and supportive institutions that have led to living standards "unimaginable to our distant ancestors." (57)

Edward Gibbon's famous treatise placed the blame for the fall of the Roman Empire on the lack of civic virtue of the Roman ruling class. Tawni Hunt Ferrarini views the principal cause as the economic impact of unrestrained government expenditure whose effect was to make the costs of government greater than the benefits. Her article traces the economic mismanagement that undermined the Empire.

In medieval times, William Bosshardt and Jane S. Lopus point out, a significant part of the skilled urban labor force was organized into guilds, "which provided economic, educational, social and religious functions." (64) Their article uses a primary source from 1347 ("The Rules of the Hatters of London") to provide students with a greater understanding of the economic role of the guilds.

Scott Wolla points out that, in the fifteenth century, "in many ways, Chinese explorers were much more technologically prepared to dominate the seas than explorers from Europe," (69) yet it was Columbus who reached the New World rather than a Chinese explorer. Wolla investigates the reasons why China stopped launching naval expeditions and adopted isolationist policies at the same time as Europeans were trying to discover new territories.

In a case study of Tokugawa Japan and Britain, Lucien Ellington argues that the textbook presentations of the Industrial Revolution in both countries have significant flaws, and overemphasize the negative aspects of industrialization. He emphasizes that, contrary to the stereotype, Tokugawa Japan was well positioned for the Industrial Revolution because of its agricultural productivity, literacy, relative economic freedom, and flourishing commerce.

European exploration of the world led to colonialism and imperialism, as a country's flag often followed its trade. Bruce Brunton presents the history of the British East India Company, founded in 1600 and dissolved in 1871, which exemplified this pattern. The company was the precursor of the British government in ruling large parts of India, and its intercontinental trade linked it to both the Boston Tea Party and the opium trade that eventually caused the nineteenth century Opium Wars.

Mark C. Schug investigates the relationship between slavery and the concept of free markets. Although slaves were regarded as private property, and the institution of slavery operated in many ways like a market, he concludes that "slavery fundamentally fails the test of

being a market institution" (86) because it depended on coercion and denied economic freedom to the enslaved.

Does world history contain lessons for the present day? M. Scott Niederjohn, Mark C. Schug, and William C. Wood believe that this question must be on the mind of Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke. They imagine a dream by Bernanke (a sequel to similar dreams in earlier issues of *Social Education*), in which the ghosts of Milton Friedman and John Maynard Keynes discuss Fed policies in the light of past international precedents.

This issue also contains a second special section, organized by our technology editors, Michael J. Berson and Meghan McGlinn Manfra, which offers cutting-edge ideas to our readers on "Technology for Inquiry, Innovation, and Integration in the Social Studies."

The release of personal data from the 1940 census offers great possibilities for students to track their family histories. Guidelines are presented by John Lee, Adam Friedman, Cheryl Mason Bolick, and Andy Mink, who conducted research on the grandfather of one of the authors by examining the census records for a small town in Georgia.

Meghan McGlinn Manfra highlights advances in nanotechnology. She points out that nanotechnology has important social and ethical ramifications, but also offers prospects for the better treatment of illnesses, which opens up possibilities for interdisciplinary study.

Mark van 't Hooft maintains that while QR codes "are mostly used in advertising or on product packaging," (99) they can also be ideal educational tools. He suggests attractive activities that enable students to create useful content accessible through QR codes, and offers step-by-step instructions for creating such codes.

The wide acceptance of the Common Core Standards has prompted a renewed focus on the promotion of literacy through social studies. Ilene R. Berson and Michael J. Berson present an attractive set of selected digital resources that can help social studies educators advance disciplinary literacy.

In addition to the special sections, our readers will enjoy our regular columns. In his regular Internet feature, C. Frederick Risinger reviews sites on economic globalization, and recommends a selection that can enhance social studies instruction.

In the opening "Teaching with Documents" column, Bruce Bustard and Lee Ann Potter describe the DOCUMERICA project of the 1970s in which photographers across the country assisted the investigation of the U.S. environmental crisis by the Environmental Protection Agency. The imaginative teaching suggestions will assist student understanding of that period of our environmental history.

Kevin Scruggs devotes his Looking at the Law column to the case of Clarence Gideon, a convict whose petition to the Supreme Court, written on prison notepaper, led to the famous decision in *Gideon v Wainwright* establishing the right of an indigent defendant to assistance by legal counsel.

The editors welcome the comments of readers on any of the contributions to this issue at socialed@ncss.org.