

GRAY, Patrick, Joshua HALL, Ruth WALLIS HERNDON, and Javier SILVESTRE, eds. 2022. *Standard of Living. Essays on Economics, History, and Religion in Honor of John E. Murray*. Cham: Springer, 482 pp.

This book is a tribute to the life and work of American economist and economic historian John E. Murray (1959–2018). Graduating in Economics in 1981 from Oberlin College, he completed a master's degree in Mathematics at the University of Cincinnati and earned a PhD in Economics from Ohio State University. He taught Economics at the University of Toledo in Ohio until 2011, when he accepted the Joseph Reeves Hyde Chair of Political Economy at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee.

His PhD dissertation focused on the living standards of the Shakers, an egalitarian religious communal movement noted in the 19th century for its craftsmanship and agricultural activities. After his PhD, Murray would enrich the literature on anthropometric history, following in the footsteps of his mentor at Ohio State University, Richard Steckel. Murray published numerous articles on anthropometric history in the 1990s.

Looking at the chapters in *Standard of Living*, I was struck by the diversity of subjects covered in the book. This range of interests rightly mirrors John Murray's own diverse set of research areas. Murray researched the labor market and income inequality between men and women. He analyzed the history of child labor in the US and wrote a captivating book covering the history of the first municipal orphanage in the United States. This award-winning book examined the welfare and education of thousands of children from poor families in the Southern city of Charleston, South Carolina in the 19th century. His work beautifully blends quantitative rigor with qualitative narratives that make history digestible and meaningful. His research interests varied throughout his academic life, publishing across numerous fields of research before his untimely passing away at the age of fifty-eight.

My first introduction to the work of John Murray was through one of his most important publications, *Origins of American Health Insurance: A History of Industrial Sickness Funds*, a book published in 2007 about the origins of the health insurance system in the United States and its development in the early decades of the 20th century. The book received praise and was recognized by Princeton University as one of the most notable books in the category of industrial relations. A second book, co-edited in 2009 with Ruth Wallis Herndon, addressed the apprenticeship system among the poor in early America. It is an often overlooked but important history of child labor and its contribution to early American life. His last works, in collaboration with

Javier Silvestre, focused on technological change and the safety of coal mines in Europe and America, with results published in various journals (*Economic History Review*, 2015; 2020; *Technology and Culture*, 2021; *Cliometrica*, 2023).

Aside from Murray's prolific academic writings, he worked as a manager of important academic journals. He served on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Economic History*, *Explorations in Economic History*, *History of Education Quarterly*, *Social Science History*, and was an associate editor at *Social Science History*. Moreover, John Murray was the kind of academic who offered guidance to colleagues and fostered talent in young aspiring researchers. For these reasons, *Standard of Living* abounds with contributions from colleagues who accompanied and collaborated with him in his intellectual and professional career as an economic historian. Often these contributions are followed by a short, personal note of remembrance for the impactful life John lived.

The book contains twenty-two contributions that address the main lines of research Murray developed over three decades, related to standards of living in general, mostly around mortality, health, and child labor. It presents original and interdisciplinary research in the intersection that the honoree loved so much: history, economics, and religion.

Health topics are prominent in this anthology. Cain and Rotella show the contribution that spending on sanitation systems (water, sewage, and garbage collection) had in reducing waterborne disease mortality in American cities during the first three decades of the 20th century. Work on the importance of water and sewage sanitation systems continues to be a topic enriched by the mixture of quantitative and qualitative research methods that Murray's work exemplified. Senney and Steckel analyze the relationship between rapid economic growth and the high prevalence of hypertension in African American populations in the Southern United States. Fishback looks at changes in labor regulation of minimum wages and hours through state legislatures and courts between 1898 and 1938, primarily in women's and children's work.

The relationships between health insurance systems and disease is central to a couple of contributions in the book. Short writes on the effect of the 1918 flu pandemic on life insurance holdings in the United States. Using data from a sickness insurance institution, Hinde, Gorsky, Guntupalli, and Harris examine morbidity trends in England between 1870 and 1949. This essay also has a nice discussion on the methodological problems arising from the sources. Vilar and Pons examine the development of mutual aid societies in pre-Civil War Spain. They identify that the help offered by mutual aid groups became the historical precursor of medical and pharmaceutical service in the more urban areas of the country.

History of work and the peculiarity of the labor market are well represented. Grubb focuses on the contracts of immigrant convict servants in colonial America. While Bodenhorn analyzes the later achievements in the working lives of poor apprentices in the mid 19th century, Logan addresses the resource allocation strategy within households in industrial families of the late 19th century. Outside America, Gokatalay offers a historical study of child labor in the early days of Republican Turkey.

Finally, no work honoring John Murray would be complete without covering the themes of religion and family. In this regard, Gray examines the demography of orphans and widows in the Greco-Roman world, and the economic implications in early Christian communities. In contrast, Mammen and Wegge document the religious diversity of a German principality in the mid 19th century. In recent times, Murray showed special interest in labor conditions and the impact of technological change in mining. Therefore, his colleague Silvestre reviews the advances achieved in productivity and mortality thanks to technological innovations in European and American coal mining during the long 19th century, while Singleton focuses on the network of mining engineers, academics, and companies involved in designing and improving mining rescue equipment in Britain in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The anthology is brilliantly prepared by Murray's close collaborators and friends, Patrick Gray, Joshua Hall, Ruth Wallis Herndon, and Javier Silvestre. Interweaving contributions from colleagues and close friends, mentors, and apprentices, it reads as both a testament to the inspiration John Murray instilled in all who crossed his path as well as to the example his life and career set for so many economic historians. The four editors of this volume should be confident in knowing that the legacy of John Murray will continue to inspire generations of academics.

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