

ELISABETH RUTH PERLMAN

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EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Economics, Boston University, Boston MA, 2015 (expected)

Dissertation Title: *Connecting the Periphery: Three Papers on the Developments Caused by Spreading Transportation and Information Networks in the Nineteenth-Century United States*

Dissertation Committee: Robert A. Margo, Carola Frydman, Daniele Paserman

M.A., Political Economy, 2012

B.A., Physics and Economics, Carleton College, Northfield, MN, 2006

Diploma, Northfield Mount Hermon School, Northfield, MA, 2002

FIELDS OF INTEREST

Economic History, Innovation, Labor Economics, Urban/Regional Economics

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor, Economic Institutions in Historical Perspective, Department of Economics, Boston University, Spring 2012, Fall 2012

Teaching Fellow, Introductory Microeconomic Analysis, Department of Economics, Boston University, Fall 2010, Fall 2011, Fall 2013

Teaching Fellow, Introductory Macroeconomic Analysis, Department of Economics, Boston University, Spring 2011, Spring 2014

Teaching and Laboratory Assistant, Department of Physics, Carleton College, Fall 2004-Spring 2006

Intermediate Price Theory Tutor, Department of Economics, Carleton College, Fall 2004

WORK EXPERIENCE

Senior Research Assistant, Capital Markets, Federal Reserve Board, 2007-2009

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

Sokoloff Dissertation Fellowship, Economic History Association, Fall 2014-Spring 2015

Dissertation Research Improvement Grant, National Science Foundation, Summer 2014

Economic History Association Data Grant, Spring 2013

Summer Research Grant, Boston University, Summer 2012

WORKING PAPERS

“Dense Enough To Be Brilliant: Patents, Urbanization, and Transportation in Nineteenth Century,” November 2014.

“Delivering the Vote: The Political Effect of Free Mail Delivery in Early Twentieth Century America” (with Steven Sprick Schuster), July 2014.

“The Impact of Railroads on School Enrollment in Nineteenth Century America” (with Jeremy Atack and Robert A. Margo), June 2012.

WORK IN PROGRESS

- “Superstars and Scale: The Effect of Market Size on Top Income Inequality” (with Peter Sims)
- “Credit Access and Patenting Activity in Nineteenth Century America” (with Matt Jaremski)
- “Free Mail Delivery, Sears, Roebuck & Company, and the Rural General Store” (with Steven Sprick Schuster)

CONFERENCES AND EXTERNAL PRESENTATIONS

- NBER Productivity Lunch Seminar, Cambridge MA, December 2014 (scheduled)
- 39th Annual Meeting of the Social Science History Association, Toronto, Canada, November 2014
- NBER Summer Institute: Development of the American Economy Workshop, Cambridge MA, July 2014 (poster)
- Western Economic Association International 89th Annual Conference, Denver CO, June 2014
- 39th Annual Economic and Business History Society Conference, Manchester UK, May 2014
- Economic History Thesis Workshop, LSE, May 2014
- All-UC Group in Economic History Conference “One Hundred Flowers,” UC Berkeley, May 2014
- Economic History Tea, Harvard University, March 2014
- Patent Law from the Law-and-Economics Perspective Reading Group, Yale Law School, December 2013
- Essex FRESH Meeting, University of Essex, October 2013
- Seventh World Congress of Cliometrics, Honolulu, Hawai’i, June 2013
- Perspectives on Sources for Economic and Business History, University of Nottingham, April 2013
- XVIth World Economic History Congress, Stellenbosch, South Africa, July 2012
- All-UC Group in Economic History Conference “Transport, Institutions, and Economic Performance: Historical Perspectives,” UC Irvine, December 2011
- Economic History Tea, Harvard University, November 2011
- Cage Summer School: Historical Patterns of Growth and Development, University of Warwick, July 2011

OTHER CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

- 39th Annual Meeting of the Social Science History Association, Toronto, Canada, November 2014 (discussant)
- Western Economic Association International 89th Annual Conference, Denver CO, June 2014 (discussant)
- Economic History Association Annual Meeting, Vancouver, Canada, September 2012 (discussant)
- EconCon 2012, Princeton University, August 2012 (discussant)

COMPUTER SKILLS: Stata, Python (NLTK, scikit-learn), ArcGIS, SAS, MS Office, and L^AT_EX

CITIZENSHIP: USA

REFERENCES

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ELISABETH RUTH PERLMAN

Dense Enough To Be Brilliant: Patents, Urbanization, and Transportation in Nineteenth Century America (Job Market Paper)

This paper explores the evolution of the geographical distribution of patenting in response to the sharp increases in access to transportation that occurred in the nineteenth century United States. I revisit the Sokoloff (1988) hypothesis that increasing market access, through the spread of transportation infrastructure leads to an acceleration of innovation. I find that twenty years after the arrival of a railroad in a county the number of patents per capita has doubled, and 1% increase in the area of the county that is within 1.5 miles of some form of transport corresponds to a 1.5% increase in patenting. This is driven by the area of a county that is close enough make a round trip to transportation with in a day, and not by area further away, even controlling for urbanization, and much of the effect comes from patenting in counties that had not previously patented. This suggest that access to a larger market spurs development that increases innovation in the area.

Delivering the Vote: The Political Effect of Free Mail Delivery in Early Twentieth Century (with Steven Sprick Schuster)

The rollout of Rural Free Delivery (RFD) at the turn of the twentieth century dramatically increased the frequency with which rural voters received information about the outside world. This paper examines effects of RFD on changes in voters' and elected officials' behavior. Using a panel dataset covering the years surrounding the rollout of RFD, and a set of instrumental variables to address the endogenous allocation of routes, we find that communities that received more routes experienced higher rates of voter turnout, spread their votes more widely across candidates in Congressional elections, and voted for smaller parties in greater numbers. We also show that elected officials in rural communities were more likely to favor pro-temperance and anti-immigration policies after following RFD rollout. Several of our results are primarily driven by counties in which daily newspapers are located, supporting the hypothesis that the effects we observe are the result of changing information flows.

The Impact of Railroads on School Enrollment in Nineteenth Century America (with Jeremy Atack and Robert A. Margo)

One of the central features of nineteenth century economic development in the United States was the "Transportation Revolution," in which the speed of moving goods and people increased rapidly, and prices fell, with important economic and social effects. This paper uses a newly created panel data set matching information on transportation infrastructure to individual-level census data for the period 1850 to 1880 to study the impact of the diffusion of the railroad – a key component of the Transportation Revolution – on human capital investment. Using a difference-in-differences approach, we find that gaining access to rail transportation in a county significantly increases the likelihood of school attendance among children ages 6-16. The treatment effect of the railroad is robust to controls for demographic characteristics, socioeconomic status, and location, and is also similar in magnitude for boys and girls. Causal mechanisms are explored, including the effects of rail on the supply of schools through higher property values.