

Editor's Introduction

WILLIAM J. HAUSMAN

I am writing this in December 1999, one day before this issue of *Enterprise & Society* will be sent off to Oxford University Press for processing, printing, and distribution. Pat Denault and I have spent the weekend making the final corrections and putting the finishing touches on the first issue of what we hope will be the premier journal in business history. What we are doing this weekend is the result of a rather massive, collective endeavor. Everyone involved recognizes that establishing a quarterly journal is a big undertaking for the Business History Conference, but I believe that it is a logical step for the publication program of this dynamic and growing organization, a key player in a vibrant, global discipline.

How did we get here? The first meeting of what was to become the Business History Conference was held in Evanston, Illinois, at Northwestern University in February 1954, with eighteen people in attendance. No papers were read at the first meeting; rather, organized discussions of research on and the teaching of business history took place. Interest in the field was stimulated, however, and irregular meetings occurred over the next few years. The meetings gradually became

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more formal, with papers being delivered, and since 1958 they have occurred annually. Printed proceedings of the conferences between 1954 and 1974 were occasionally produced under various titles, in varied forms, by various publishers. Starting in 1975, with the support of the University of Illinois and under the editorial guidance first of Paul Uselding and then of Jeremy Atack, the conference proceedings were published annually under the title *Business and Economic History*. I became editor of this publication in 1988.

Since 1993 *Business and Economic History* has been published twice a year, with the first issue containing papers presented at the meetings and the second taking different forms, depending on the size and timing of the annual meeting. In most years, the second issue contained quasi-refereed papers based on competitive selection among those presented at the meeting.

Through all these years the journal had been produced using desktop publishing techniques. Given the obviously increasing interest in the field of business history, measured by factors such as the growing and increasingly diverse membership of the Business History Conference, the increased number and quality of papers submitted for presentation at the annual meeting, and the formation of new organizations around the world—for example, the European Business History Association—the time seemed ripe to consider expanding and enhancing the quality of the journal. This led to a proposal in late 1997 for creation of a quarterly, refereed journal, with one issue still dedicated to the annual conference. Several publishers were approached and expressed interest. After a thorough refereeing process, Oxford University Press made a formal proposal to the Business History Conference, which, after careful debate, was accepted by the Trustees in 1998. The last volume of *Business and Economic History* was to be produced under the editorship of Roger Horowitz in 1999, to be superseded by *Enterprise & Society* in 2000.

Enterprise & Society is founded with the expectation of becoming a significant voice in the field of business history. There has been an explosion of scholarly work in business history during the last decade. In part, this has come as a natural reaction to “the Chandlerian synthesis,” both from scholars applying it and from those testing its limits and pointing out alternative views. But the outpouring of work has also arisen as business history as a field has grown away from the company history *narrowly defined* and has attempted to deal with business as a part of social, cultural, and intellectual history, opening up issues of race, gender, ethnicity, and the interaction of business, society, and technology. Business history is pushing out and encountering, borrowing and lending, and interacting in many ways with numerous other disciplines. This inaugural issue clearly sits on the

boundary between business and technological history. The September 2000 issue will be devoted to "beauty and business."

Enterprise & Society has no intention of being faddish, but we also want to avoid any narrow conceptions of where business history is to be found. I steadfastly believe that one of the real strengths of the Business History Conference, and one that will be reflected in *Enterprise & Society*, is its openness to many viewpoints and its unwillingness to represent any single view or school of thought exclusively. Another major strength of the Business History Conference has been its international scope, a strength that will be reflected in the journal, in the sources and topics of its articles, in the scope of its review section, and in the range and scholarly diversity of its editors and editorial board.