

REPORTS ON RECENT PH.D. THESES

HAROLD F. WILLIAMSON
Northwestern University

If any demonstration were needed, the participants in this session have shown that business history is a many faceted subject. In estimating agricultural income in Illinois in the 1840-1860 period, for example, Robert Ankli not only accepted the realistic assumption that farming itself is a business operation, but that the amount of farm income during these years had important implications for the manufacturing, commercial, and transport sectors of the economy. Elizabeth Swayne's analysis of the ownership pattern of metropolitan newspapers between 1950 and 1967 reveals the extent to which family pride offset what might well have been a trend toward impersonal corporate ownership of these news media. Stephen Butcher's account of the evolution of the Business Men's Assurance Company of Kansas City provides an interesting example of how a business organization responded successfully to the need for services not available from other insurance companies. Finally, Robert Waller's story of changing competitive relationships among producers of guitars indicates the way an oligopoly can emerge in what is still essentially a craft industry.