

Yankeys Now

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Now

*Immigrants in the
Antebellum U.S.
1840-1860*

JOSEPH P. FERRIE

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The first great wave of European migration to the United States before the Civil War transformed both the migrants themselves and the country they entered. The extent of this transformation has been difficult to gauge without information on migrants before and after their departure from Europe. *Yankeys Now: Immigrants in the Antebellum US 1840-1860* provides the first detailed look at how these immigrants were changed by their relocation and how the American economy responded to their arrival.

The book employs unique data on more than 2,400 British, Irish, and German migrants who appeared on both passenger ship rosters and US census records to document the geographic, occupational, and financial movements of Europeans who traveled to this nation in the 1840s. Contrary to other studies of antebellum immigrants, Joseph P. Ferrie's work finds substantial mobility in all three of these contexts. The ability to follow immigrants from their arrival through several censuses makes it possible to compare the experiences of immigrants who remained in one location to those of immigrants who sought opportunity in new places throughout the 1850s. The latter group's achievements, as carefully traced in this volume, account for most of the contrast with previously published work on this topic. Using information on more than 4,000 native-born Americans followed through the 1850 and 1860 US censuses, Ferrie finds little evidence that immigrants' arrival negatively affected this country's labor force, excluding craft workers in the urban northeast.

Taken as a whole, his findings demonstrate the American economy's ability to absorb additions to its workforce while also illustrating the range of opportunities available to nineteenth-century migrants drawn to the United States.

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