Mass migration as a transnational business in long distance travel

This is the first systematic examination of the business of mass migration travel across the North Atlantic during the period of unprecedented globalization prior to World War I. It explicates the reinforcing interests and actions of the oceanic shipping lines, their migrant customers, and contemporary government authorities, in coping with the substantial risks of mass physical relocation, particularly those due to cyclical economic recessions, and in keeping migration safe, smooth and largely self-regulated. In a comprehensive analysis backed up by extensive and consistent statistics, it details the motives and mechanisms by which these eleven million Europe-born migrants made nineteen million ocean crossings on eighteen thousand voyages of several hundred large steamships, generating hundreds of millions of dollars in revenues for these steamship lines during the pivotal peak years of early twentieth century migration between Europe and America, and it describes how this long-lived long-distance travel business operated as the crucial common denominator of the greatest and most ethnically diverse mass transoceanic relocation ever.

Here we find an old and much-traversed topic of economic history, but examined with a totally new approach…the literal process of migration, and the business that made it possible. This broad definition…allows Keeling to set straight the record on all sorts of things that historians of migration as conventionally understood have asserted without proof thus far.

Ann McCants, MIT

Keeling’s impressive study on how and why millions of Europeans crossed to the United States between 1900 and 1914 works because he writes about migrants and transport in equal doses.

Michael Miller, University of Miami

The research here is broad-based, multinational and extremely impressive. The level of the analysis and the insights provided throughout suggest strongly that it will have an important impact among a wide variety of scholars. The book takes a mass of evidence and makes it comprehensible. This is no small achievement.

Lewis R. Fischer, Memorial University, Newfoundland