



Independent Institutions: Understanding Institutional History with Primary Sources

NCHE

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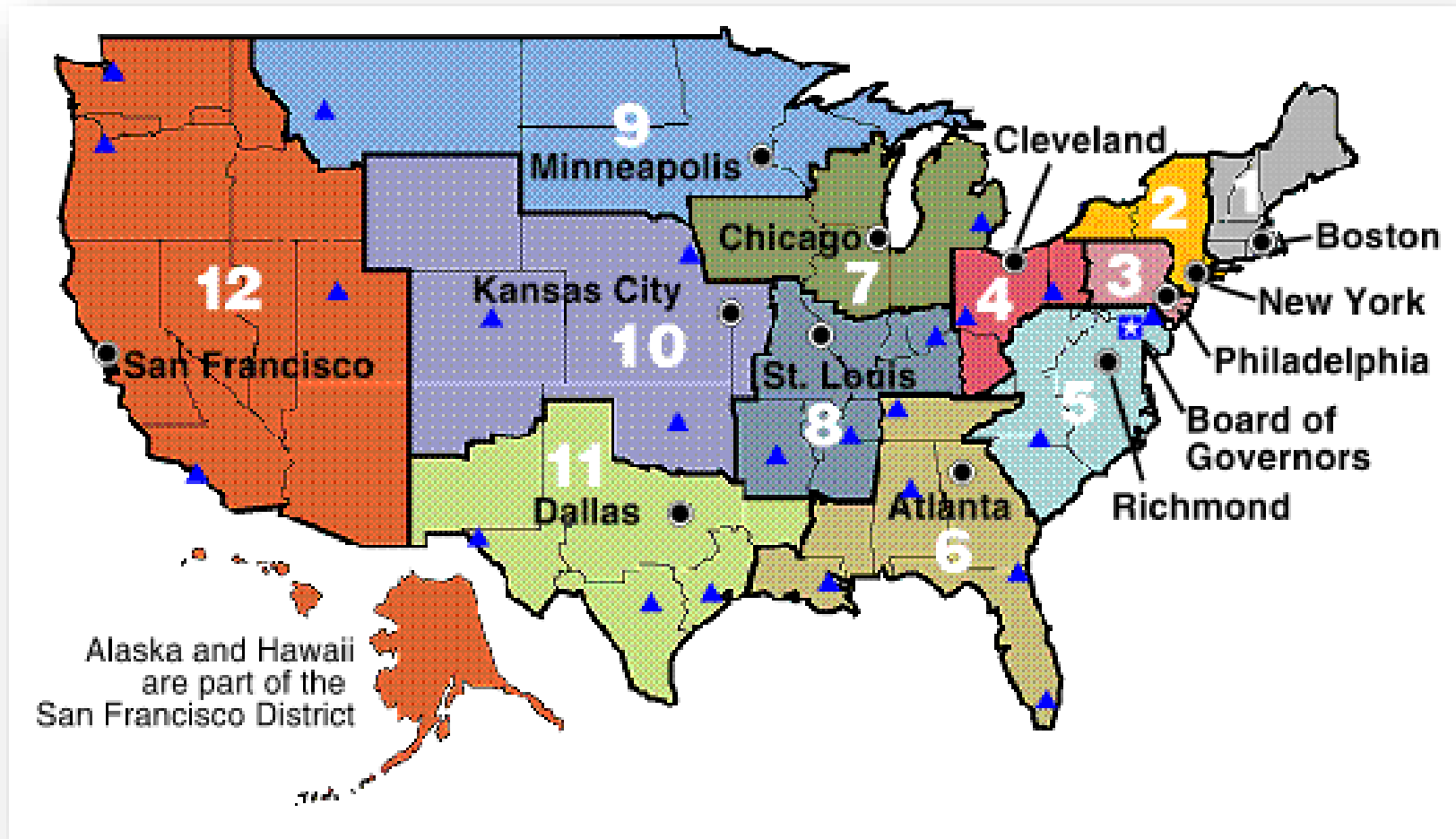
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Our Institution's Institution: The Federal Reserve System



The St. Louis Fed & Eighth Federal Reserve District

The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis believes that providing quality economic education resources promotes a healthy economy and financial stability.



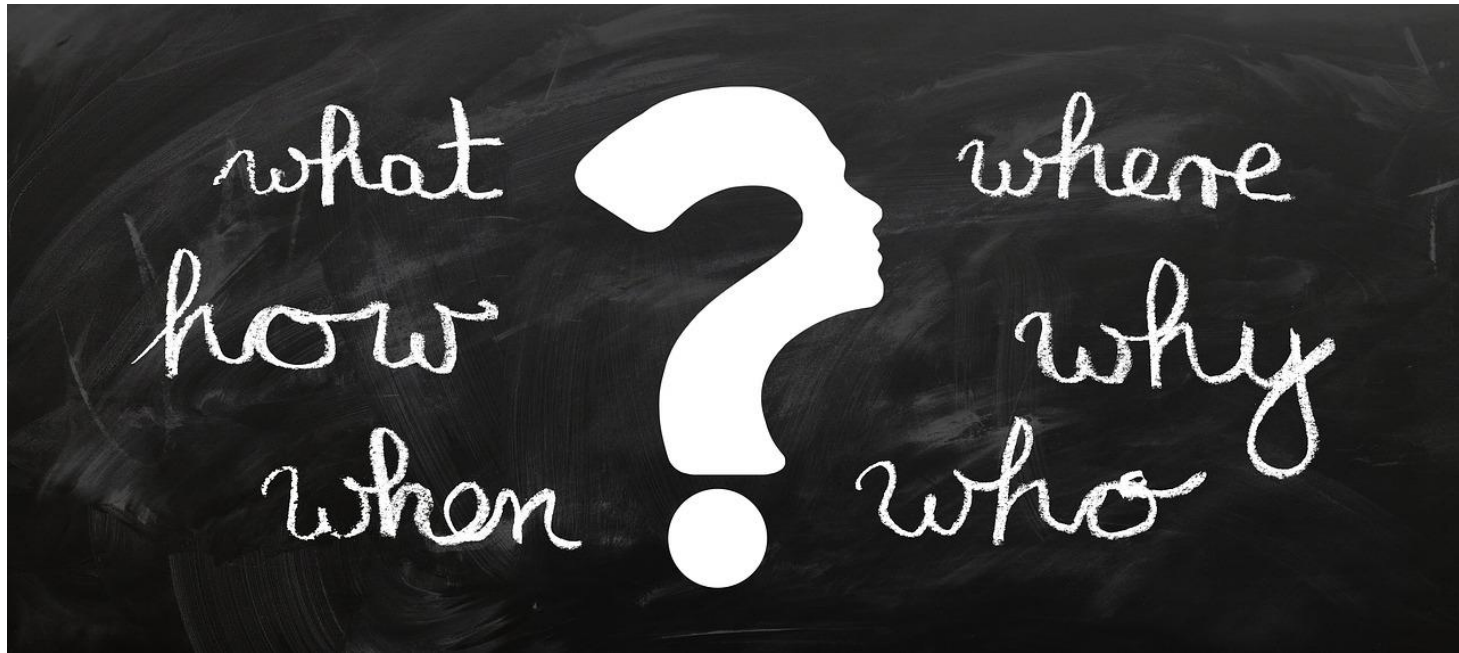
President James Bullard

What is Institutional History?

Institutional history focuses on the study of the development of individual institutions—social entities that have their own goals, identities, and influence on the society in which they exist.



Interrogating Institutional Power



- Legitimacy
- Authority
- Power
- Funding
- Relationships
- Purpose

What Is an Institution? What Isn't?



An institution is a defined social structure that shapes culture and society.

... huh?

Why study institutions?

- Institutions are participants in history, not the backdrop
- Governments, corporations, universities, social groups, all have their own agendas
- Institutional change is (usually) gradual
- Institutions are the historical evidence of the efforts of lots of people, not just “great men”

Independence



- From whom?
- How can you tell?
- Who benefits from institutional independence?
- Independence vs. oversight

Institutional Communications:

The “party line” and everything else



Institutional Archives 101

- Why do we have what we have?
- Where did it come from?
- What's missing or hiding?
- Where is it now?



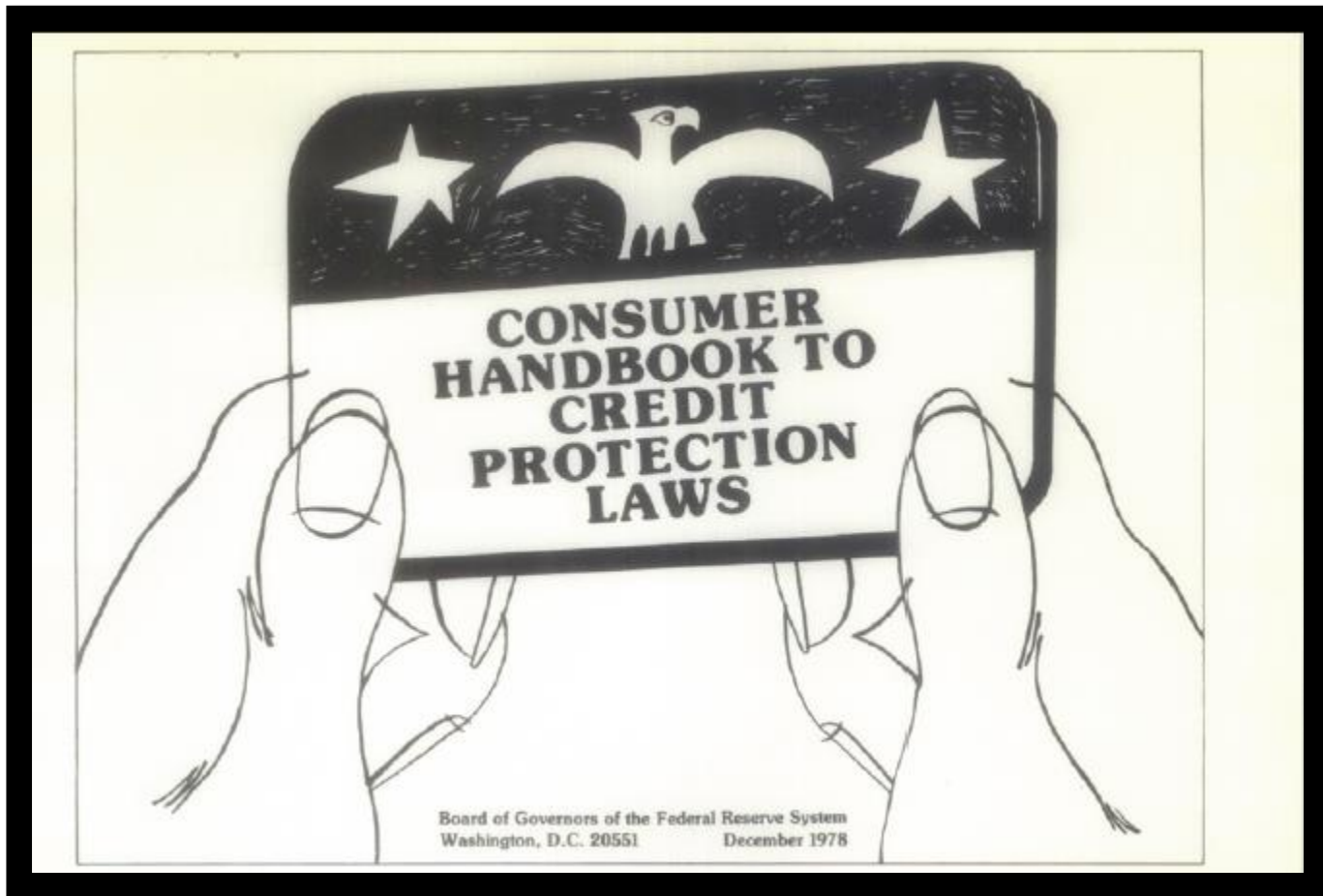
Evaluation tool

Primary Source Evaluation Rubric

- Access
- Breadth
- Credibility
- Density



Institutional Primary Source Guide



Working With Primary Sources

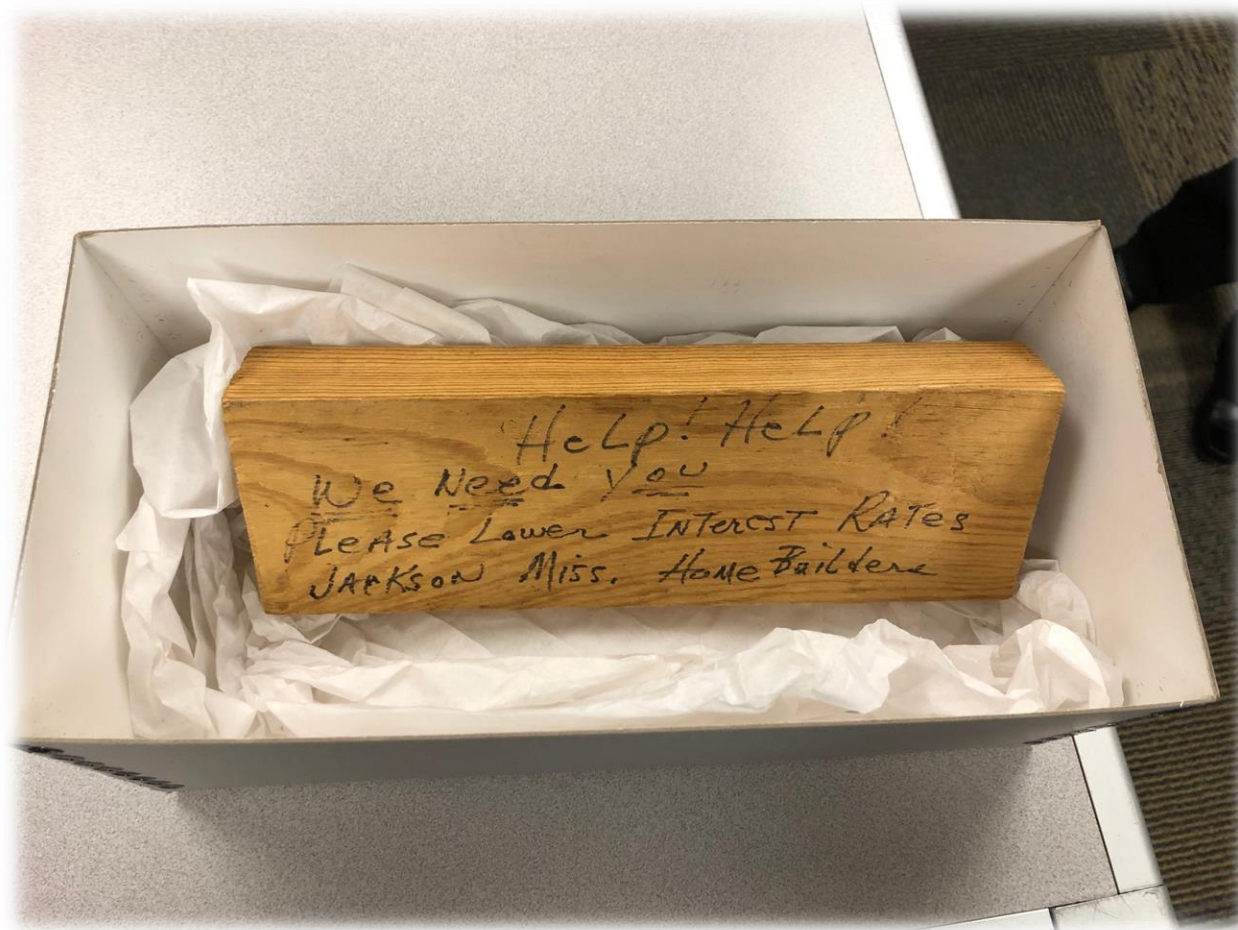
Students will:

1. Engage

2. Explore

3. Reflect and Analyze

From the Archives: A “Volcker 2x4”



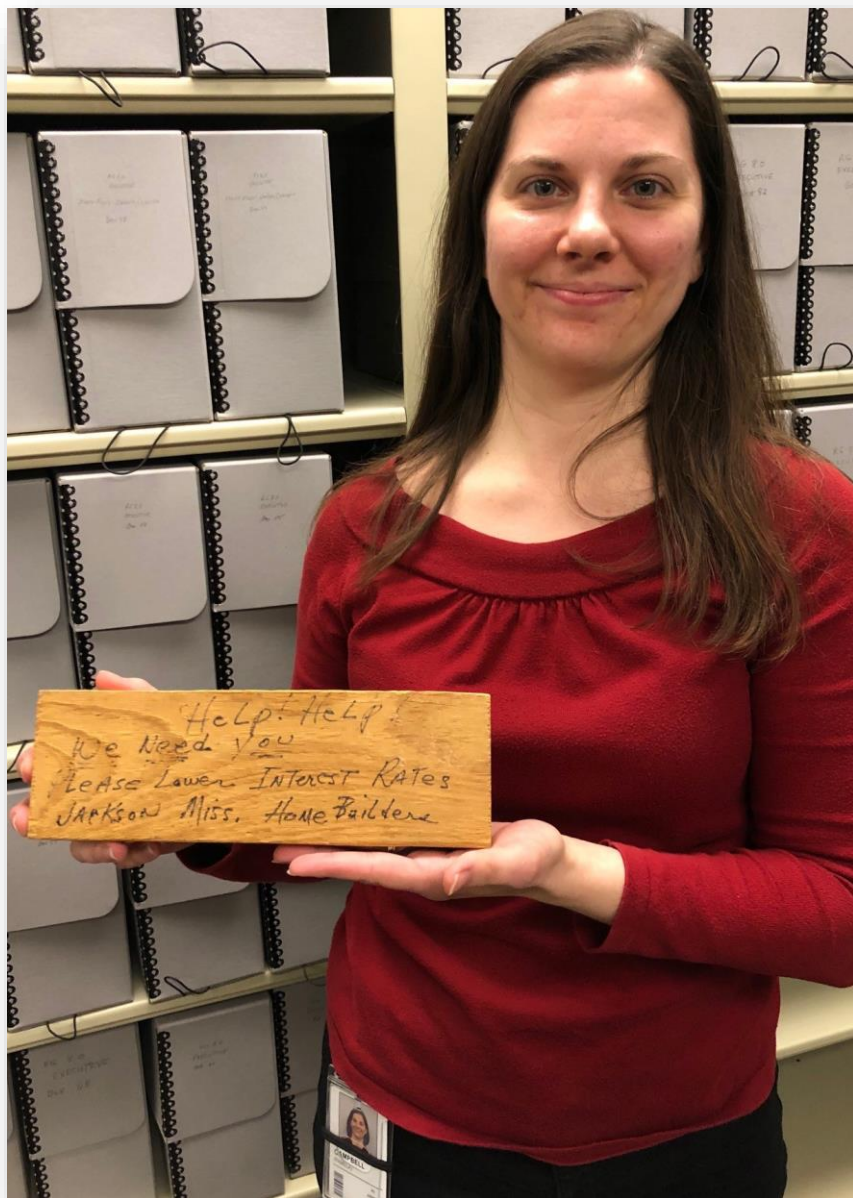
HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION OF MISSISSIPPI
728 NORTH CONGRESS
JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI 39202

Mr. Paul A. Volcker, Chairman
Board of Governors
U. S. Federal Reserve System
20th & C Streets, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20551

Help! Help!

We Need You

Please Lower INTEREST RATES
JACKSON Miss. Home Builders



Everything is Online!

... except for

- Scale
- Texture
- Smell (mmm, old books)
- True color

This piece of wood has been stamped just like an envelope. What does that tell you about the Home Builders Association?

What is this, and what does it tell you about the other institution involved with this artifact?

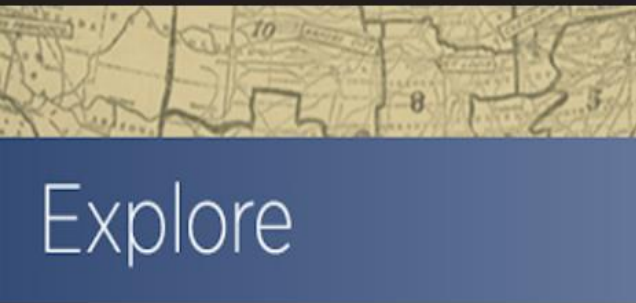


The address uses the Chairman's full name and address, and the full name of the institution. Who are the Home Builders talking to?

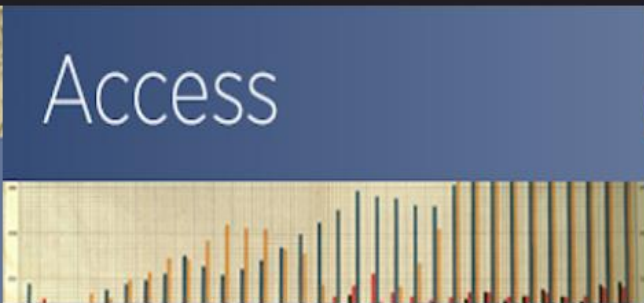
What does the material the message is written on tell you about the message? How do you think the builders felt about it? How do you think the Fed felt about it?

Think about the way this message is written. Is this how you would expect a business organization to write to a government institution? Who is "you" in this message? Who is the "we"?

Now that you've looked at this artifact, what other questions do you want answered?



Explore



Access



Learn

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Uncurrent Events: The Woman-Power Behind the “Woman in Industry Service”

Before there was a Women's Bureau, there was the WWI-era Woman in Industry Service. Read about the accomplishments of this Department of Labor division and its director, Mary Van Kleeck. [Read more](#)



Staff Picks: The Freedman’s Savings and Trust Company



Learn about the short-lived first major bank for African Americans and its records that provide a unique record of their lives just after the Civil War. [Read more](#)

[View All](#)

WHAT'S NEW less 

- Early issues of the Bulletin of the Women’s Bureau, including the first bulletin published in 1919, are

 **FRASER**
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 View a report of gold and gold certificates received by Fed Banks March 6-16, 1933 ow.ly/T5P430nRioB
 1h

 **FRASER**
 @FedFRASER
 Happy birthday, Alan Greenspan! Greenspan was first appointed to the Federal Reserve Board of Governors in 1987. Read his nomination hearing here ow.ly/3aFQ30nRioz
 5h

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Consumers

Deposit to Your Idea Archive

- Institutional history is just a perspective shift
- An institution isn't a neutral vessel
- Primary sources are everywhere
- “Independence” isn't cut and dry
- Things are kept (and not kept) for a reason

Questions? Comments? Talk to Us!

Booth 4 in the Exhibit Hall

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