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Introduction

The two following articles—'Economics in America: the Continental influence,' and 'What do we know that Francis Amasa Walker didn’t?'—were presented as papers at the New York meetings of the American Economic Association in December 1985 in a session chaired by A. W. Coats for the History of Economics Society under the title “American Economics Officially Turns One Hundred.” The session was not designed to be historical in a conventional sense of the term. No attempt was made either to survey the past century’s record or achievements or to celebrate the Association’s anniversary. There was insufficient time for the first undertaking, while the second task was the responsibility of the meetings’ organizer, Alice Rivlin, the President Elect—and, incidentally, the first woman to hold that office.

Unfortunately a third paper—designed to provide an eminent sociologist’s reflections on the economics profession—failed to materialize. Nevertheless there was a large audience and a lively informal discussion inspired by the papers. No formal discussants had been selected.