Abstract

This paper investigates the early development of English cotton spinning by analyzing about 700 bankruptcies and 1300 dissolutions of partnership reported in the *London Gazette*, 1770–1840. The data show two temporal cycles, peaking in the early to mid-1800s and in the later 1820s, near the ends of investment booms. Both earlier peaks were absolutely higher than the later, despite industry growth. Over time both bankruptcies and dissolutions show the concentration of spinning in greater Lancashire, and within greater Lancashire in the surrounding towns rather than in Manchester. The industry was dominated by single proprietors or firms with only two partners and integration with weaving was steadily increasing. This paper demonstrates the potential of the *Gazette*, now searchable online, as a source for business and industrial history.