

to both its financing and diplomacy: Gallatin, who envisioned large debts arising from the war, supported the syndicate of John Jacob Astor, Stephen Girard, and David Parish to purvey bonds in America and in Europe to finance it. Gallatin also became one of the leading commissioners at Ghent: he corresponded and dealt with Viscount Castlereagh, ultimately convincing, after many memos regarding Canada and an Indian buffer state, the British foreign secretary to consent to a treaty with one significant provision. As Bickham explains, the 1814 Treaty of Ghent, which both American and British diplomats would sign on Christmas Eve, embodied the principle of *status quo ante bellum* and later would benefit America in pursuing its expansionist policies during the nineteenth century. He also believes that this war enabled the second British empire to foster its global policies and commercial activities and permitted Canada to consolidate and to push westward. Last, this war resulted in the oppression of the Native Americans.

This study has much to recommend it. Based on extensive investigation of primary sources, this book contains pensive theses and provides much context about the salient trans-Atlantic facets of the forgotten War of 1812. Bickham might have explained how policies of American and British leaders differed from the opinions of journalists in these two states. Nevertheless, this elegantly written book will become a classic in the field. Along with the studies of Donald Hickey, J.C.A. Stagg, Jon Latimer, and Jeremy Black, this imaginative work should be read by both scholars and students.

R. WILLIAM WEISBERGER

*Butler County Community College*

Alasdair Roberts. *America's First Great Depression: Economic Crisis and Political Disorder after the Panic of 1837* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012). Pp. 264. Illustrations, notes, index. Cloth, \$26.00.

Alasdair Roberts has written a concise and commendably readable book that shows clearly and well just how devastating the Panic of 1837 was for the United States. His study substantiates the claim that the Panic was a great depression, though as we learn more about the catastrophic impact of the American Revolution, it may not come to be viewed as the nation's first. In his introduction and conclusion Roberts also provides a timely discussion of the nation's economic life in a global system in which, going forward,

Americans should not expect to have the authority or control that they learned to take for granted during the last fifty years of the previous century.

A key theme of *America's First Great Depression* is that the antebellum US economy was very much a part of a global system in which the United States did not enjoy a position of dominance. The economic boom of the 1820s and 1830s depended on foreign, especially British, investment. As a result, economic, and ultimately political and social, conditions in the United States were highly influenced by British conditions and the actions taken by British statesmen, financiers, and consumers.

The 1830s boom that precipitated the Panic of 1837, and then the very serious collapse of 1839, was an international affair. Cotton production in the United States skyrocketed due to British demand. But British demand was fueled by a series of bumper harvests that drove grain prices in Britain to unusual lows, thereby freeing up large amounts of newly disposable income to purchase cotton goods. These conditions created something of a super boom as rising demand and rising incomes allowed for a vast increase in production. Due to the rising incomes, and despite this vast increase in supply, consumers could and did accept highly inflated prices. This boom led to intense exuberance about the American market generally, and foreign investment flowed into the United States as never before. At the end of the 1830s, however, a series of poor harvests in Britain led to a rapid rise in food prices, a corresponding decline in the demand for cotton goods, and a collapse in the price of cotton. Meanwhile, the Bank of England had grown fearful during the fat times about so much capital leaving England. The unprecedented level of British investment in the United States was seriously depleting the Bank's specie reserves. The Bank raised interest rates to check the specie drain just when economic conditions dramatically worsened—doing, in other words, precisely the opposite of what a century later John Maynard Keynes would say central banks should do.

The credit crunch and the savage deflation led to revenue collapses for all the governments connected to this global economy: Britain, the United States, and all the various state governments. Roberts is excellent as he discusses how many states had ridden the wave of foreign investment, borrowing at unprecedented rates to finance massive internal improvement projects. Many legislatures had convinced themselves that foreign investment could virtually take the place of taxation, as profitable ventures built on credit would more than pay for themselves. The cascading state defaults and, in some cases, outright repudiations reinforced the rising tide of bank failures

and suspensions of specie repayment. Roberts argues convincingly that the depression lasted from 1837 to 1846 (with a slight uptick in 1838 that was quickly obliterated in 1839).

To his great credit, Roberts shows that economic depression was very much a political and social experience. Rising desperation and urban violence in the 1840s led every major eastern city to create police forces during the 1840s and 1850s. The depression led to a wave of state constitutional amendments that seriously curtailed legislatures' ability to borrow and put the states on the road to the balanced budget requirements that forced our governors to act like fifty Herbert Hoovers when President Obama sought to channel his inner FDR.

In the end, the depression only ended with the war with Mexico. The war stimulated the economy and also led foreign investors to overcome their doubts as they saw the glittering (literally, in California) possibilities for future investment. The war allowed for the "readmission of the United States into the world of international finance" (196). Again, though, the global nature of nineteenth-century capitalism was clear. The United States seemed to be on the upswing by 1848 just as Europe experienced violent uprisings and revolution; suddenly, international finance did not mind as much the previous bad behavior of repudiating states like Mississippi.

Roberts has written a highly successful and comprehensible book that puts the early takeoff years of American capitalism in their proper international context. It is a noteworthy achievement.

ANDREW SHANKMAN

*Rutgers University, Camden Campus*

Bradley R. Clampitt. *The Confederate Heartland: Military and Civilian Morale in the Western Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011). Pp. viii, 236. Notes, bibliography and index. Cloth, \$39.95.

Bradley Clampitt's *The Confederate Heartland* examines the morale of white civilians and Confederate soldiers from Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee in 1864 and 1865. By using an array of wartime letters and diaries, Clampitt claims that white Southerners in these states constructed a Confederate identity based on a shared sense of sacrifice and desire to protect their homes from invaders.