"King Cotton" before the Civil War as a Southern proslavery, proexpansionist, and prosecession movement.

Weak points within Schoen's analysis are few and do not detract from his book's overall arguments, but they are noticeable nonetheless. Perhaps most glaring is Schoen's framework of "global" instead of "Atlantic" to frame the issues of Southern cotton production. While Schoen does include occasional references to the East Indies in his analysis, his sources instead point to the importance, first and foremost, of Anglo-American trade. Likewise, Schoen's treatment of Southern expansionist (and sometimes antiexpansionist) tendencies toward Latin America only shows their relevance in their relation to European powers. All told, Schoen's work would fit better within a Euro-American or "Atlantic" framework, instead of his chosen one of "global," to explain changes in Southern political economy in the early nineteenth century.

The book *The Fragile Fabric of Union* deserves to be widely read, particularly in graduate seminars on the Early American Republic, the American Civil War, and American Economic History. Although Schoen is one of several recent authors who have published useful works on the nineteenth-century Southern economy, his extensive notes and very useful "Essay on Sources" are particularly useful for graduate students and will be of aid to any scholar who wishes to examine the antebellum Southern economy, Southern politics, or the origins of the American Civil War.

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John Laurence Busch. *Steam Coffin. Captain Moses Rogers and the Steamship Savannah Break the Barrier*. New Canaan, CT: Hodos Historia, 2010. vi +726 pp. ISBN 978-1-893616-00-4, $35.00 (cloth).

The history of the steamship *Savannah* is typically presented in seven words: "the first steamship to cross the Atlantic." But in *Steam Coffin*, John Laurence Busch expands those seven words into a 612-page narrative that devotes just one chapter out of twenty five to the transatlantic crossing. The somewhat discursive narrative is based on wide-ranging research and has something for everyone: for buffs interested in a specific steamship; for serious maritime historians interested in the early years of steam on the water; and for business

historians interested in American entrepreneurial activities in the early nineteenth century.

Although "business history" is not explicitly addressed, that subject is strewn throughout the narrative and forms an important part of the context for the story of SS *Savannah*. The history of shipping and the business of ships were central to early American economic history. In that sense, *Steam Coffin* rightly sees everything through the lens of the mercantile and shipping activities of the people and ships Busch explores. Throughout the book, Busch provides a broad overview of the economic and political climate of the time. In particular, the drama of SS *Savannah* highlights the importance of land, cotton, wheat, corn, rice, and tobacco—and therefore trade and transportation—in the economy of the young republic. Transportation—national roads (turnpikes), canals, and particularly *steamboats*—was key to all of the economic developments. To understand the economy of the United States during the administration of James Monroe, the book implicitly argues, one must understand the economic challenges of SS *Savannah*, and to understand the financial constraints under which *Savannah* operated, one must understand the national economy, 1818–1822.

It was during these early decades of the century that a new form of maritime enterprise was being created. One of the book's numerous mini histories summarizes the invention of Robert Fulton's *North River Steam Boat*, brought into existence thanks to a special kind of partnership: Robert Fulton's creativity and inventiveness and Robert Livingston's wealth. The personal relationship in business enterprise was critical to Fulton as indeed it was to the backers of *Savannah*.

Busch tells a story of imagination and technology, but also of economics and the control that economic conditions have over human choices. Financing *Savannah* required investors who hoped to recoup their investments by, first, sending their new steamship across the Atlantic and back and then by establishing a regular transatlantic steamship service. A successful round-trip transatlantic crossing would disprove the fears that this new invention was a "steam coffin" (hence the book's title). Enhanced advertising that emphasized "the elegant ship" *Savannah* could, investors hoped, result substantial profits.

But, as Busch illustrates throughout the story, the options available to those investors, and therefore *Savannah*, were severely limited by the Panic of 1819 and the depression that saddled the nation for the next two years—essentially the lifetime of the steamship. As a result, the story of *Savannah* is less that of a transatlantic voyage (the conventional story), and more the story of a man on a sales mission, because Moses Rogers, captain of the ship, was going from port to port trying to sell *Savannah*. Understandably, then, Busch extends the story from Liverpool (the conventional end) on to Stockholm and

St. Petersburg, where Rogers hoped that Tsar Alexander I would want to buy the ship.

That attempt failed, and Captain Rogers headed his vessel back to the United States—this time under sail except for demonstrations of steam power on departure and arrival. But with domestic economic conditions even worse than before, individual investors were desperate to liquidate their holdings in order to pay their own creditors. And so Captain Rogers turned to the next variation on the plan: to try to sell the ship to the U.S. government for use either as a warship or a revenue cutter. Busch offers a fascinating and detailed description of the process of lobbying the government for military spending in an era long before the "military–industrial complex."

But meetings with Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and Treasury Secretary William Crawford failed to produce results. In the end, the vessel was sold at a bargain price to a private investor—who had been familiar with the cohort that had produced both Fulton's steamboat and *Savannah*. The vessel was converted back to a sailing ship and a year later grounded in a storm off Long Island and sank.

Busch has done exhaustive research on the career and world of SS *Savannah*. He has explored relevant secondary literature, government publications, pamphlets, articles, personal papers, historic maps, and long lists of newspapers from the United States, Britain, Ireland, Norway, Russia, and Sweden. Certainly, he has examined everything that could be examined. As a result, he seems to want to give every detail about every development in the world that shaped the vessel's short life.

Although not by any means a traditional "business history," *Steam Coffin* does provide numerous insights into the American entrepreneurial world during the first two decades of 19th century. A reader who has the stamina to make it through the entire narrative will gain useful illustrations of methods used to raising capital and also the importance of personal connections in the business world. These were not vast corporations, but expanded partnerships, with financial needs that exceeded what could be satisfied with a traditional partnership. But *who* the people were—their reputations—was central to the ability to raise the funds. Finally, the presence of government was always evident—the looming Supreme Court decision about interstate commerce (*Gibbons* v. *Ogden*), government fees and regulations, and government's potential to help nascent enterprises. *Steam Coffin* contains all of that plus a story about a ship that we thought we knew but actually did not.

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