interest in it in 1834. Subsequently, he devoted himself to real estate investment and urban development. He became New York City’s largest landlord—at one point he had 450 tenants—and, with his son, he built the famous Astor House hotel. When he died in 1848 his estate was worth eight to ten million dollars, a very large fortune for that day.

“Astor’s career,” Haeger sums up, “was remarkable for its modernity, vision, and reflection of American economic and political values” (pp. 284-85). Haeger’s book is noteworthy for its grasp of the economic milieu in which Astor moved, for its concern with scholarly detail, and for its appeal to both the expert and the general reader.

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A new bridge, constructed across the Ohio River at Wheeling in northwestern Virginia in 1849, the first west of the Allegheny Mountains, became an engineering marvel of the day and a promising east-west connection of both the National Road and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The height of the span did not allow passage of some steamboats with very tall chimneys, and residents of nearby Pittsburgh complained that the structure was an obstacle to upper river traffic. In fact, there were instances where boats did strike the bridge. Litigation between Pennsylvania and Virginia, the two states involved in this dispute, went to the Supreme Court where competition between growing western cities and between types of internal improvements (railroads and steamboats) led to a new constitutional question.

In 1852 the court held that the bridge was indeed an interference with interstate commerce and must be altered or removed. It was an issue of federalism, of national and state powers. Forthwith, Congress, until then silent on standards of bridge construction, responded to political pressures to override the judicial ruling by declaring the Wheeling bridge an essential postal and military road. The issue called into question which branch of government, the court or Congress, had the greater authority to interpret the Constitution. When that problem came to the justices in 1855, they answered that it was Congress, at least in this instance.

The interplay of politics and economic development is thoroughly researched and explained. Elizabeth Brand Monroe draws upon a great many primary materials (government documents,
manuscripts, newspapers) as well as the relevant historical literature. She seems on sure ground in revising the familiar thesis of Willard Hurst on law stimulating economic growth. As she points out, different parts of the economy had conflicting interests; and therefore the legal system often favored one at the expense of another. Though she also has worthwhile observations on the constitutional competition of judicial and legislative branches, the long-range distribution of the commerce power between them receives less emphasis.

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R. Douglas Hurt remedies Missouri’s exclusion from studies of Upper South agriculture in the antebellum period by providing an in-depth description of seven Missouri counties: Clay, Lafayette, Saline, Cooper, Howard, Boone, and Callaway. These counties earned the sobriquet of “Little Dixie” for their fealty to the Democratic party and by the concentration of slave labor found there.

Farmers who began arriving in Little Dixie after the War of 1812 remained subsistence producers up to the 1820s because of a scarcity of markets rather than from lack of desire. These settlers also suffered from contentious land sales stemming from Spanish titles in the old Louisiana territory and from the economic depression following the Panic of 1819. Still, with the Missouri “fever” running high, Little Dixie did not lack for immigrants by the mid-1820s.

A majority of the immigrants shared a heritage which disposed them toward southern crops and southern labor systems. Migrants from the Upper South transplanted tobacco cultivation to their new home and found rich Missouri soils far more productive than worn-out Upper South soils. The southern economy’s increased reliance on cotton made hemp cultivation, to produce rope and bagging for cotton bales, a mainstay of Little Dixie agriculture. Missouri farmers also raised hogs, sheep, cattle, and mules. Much of the livestock was sold on a local market, but Little Dixie farmers also drove herds of animals to eastern and southern markets. Although quality control and prices remained a problem throughout the antebellum era, these products tied Little Dixie to a larger market.

While Missouri averaged a slave population of 10 percent of the total population by 1860, in Little Dixie the percentages ran