

The Papers of James Madison [Secretary of State Series]. Volume 8: *1 September 1804–31 January 1805, with a Supplement, 1776–23 June 1804*. Edited by Mary A. Hackett, J. C. A. Stagg, Anne Mandeville Colony, Jeanne Kerr Cross, Mary Parke Johnson, Angela Kreider, and Wendy Ellen Perry. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007. Preface, acknowledgments, editorial method, Madison chronology, notes, index. Pp. xxxix, 644. \$85.00.)

In the recent avalanche of books, articles, and films about the American founders, James Madison has been largely absent. He was small in stature, but his formidable

intellect made him a towering figure alongside many of the other founders. Documents in this volume in the Secretary of State Series, which cover only a four-month period from September 1804 to January 1805, reveal his guarded nature, and readers will understand why many historians and biographers have been reluctant to investigate him.

Volume 8 (of a projected sixteen) of the series provides a snapshot of American foreign policy in the early republic and policymaking in the Thomas Jefferson administration. Most of the documents reveal the raw materials of foreign policy—the routine business of the State Department in addition to the intricacies of diplomacy. During these months, Madison dealt with several deteriorating situations throughout Europe. England presented the most serious problem, dominating the seas, denying American rights, and kidnapping sailors from neutral powers. Even-tempered as ever, Madison worked to contain the problem, despite British Minister Anthony Merry's patronizing letters. In this volume, readers will see no conclusion of these British offenses, which eventually resulted in war between the United States and Great Britain during the Madison presidency.

Diplomatic historians will welcome this collection of complex documents. The editors have done a superb job of selecting items, a difficult task when dealing with foreign relations material. They have also published the most important letters, although calendaring unpublished letters—rather than the current practice of abstracting these letters—may clear room for additional documents. The volume also contains the latest supplement of previously unreleased documents dating from 1776 to 1804. Because they were written as part of his duties as secretary of state, these letters leave few hints of Madison the man. The reader can almost see the contemplative Madison painstakingly choosing every word.

While the volume's focus is almost exclusively diplomatic, Madison's October 12 letter to Noah Webster is especially interesting. In response to Webster's inquiry, Madison recalls his and others' efforts to hold the Constitutional Convention, sharing his memories of the failed convention in Annapolis, Maryland, and Virginia's role in calling the successful Philadelphia convention in 1787. Madison, who always ruminated over intellectual pursuits, was considering writing his own history of the American Revolution "from the materials in my hands" (p. 161). This letter offers a glimpse of a contemplative and history-conscious Madison, who will come alive in the forthcoming Retirement Series.

Since the 1950s, the James Madison papers project has been collecting and publishing the correspondence of the fourth president, highlighting the four main phases of Madison's career—congressional, secretary of state, presidency, and retirement. These volumes are building blocks in a massive historical undertaking. The Madison papers, along with the Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Adams family correspondence, have created a standard for America's documentary editing tradition, and this volume underscores why the Madison papers stand at the forefront of this tradition.

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