

The Papers of James Madison [Presidential Series]. Volume 6: 8 February–24 October 1813. Edited by Angela Kreider, J. C. A. Stagg, Anne Mandeville Colony, Mary Parke Johnson, and Wendy Ellen Perry. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008. Preface, acknowledgments, editorial method, chronology, index. Pp. xxxviii, 775. \$85.00.)

Volume 6 of the James Madison Presidential Series covers the period from February 8 to October 24, 1813. During this time Madison attempted to consolidate the American war effort against Great Britain and prevent outbreaks of fighting along the Louisiana Purchase territories. He also initiated the negotiations that would bring an end to the war. Madison began his second term in office in 1813, and in the draft of his second inaugural address, he cited the war effort as being a matter of “our national sovereignty on the High Seas.” He stressed the importance of national unity “without breaking down the Spirit of the nation, destroying all confidence in itself and in its political Institutions.” Madison’s response to the growing criticism of the war was that it “was just in its origin, and necessary and noble in its objects. . . .” (pp. 85–86).

The unity Madison wished for in his inaugural address was difficult to achieve. He faced a Congress that was becoming more fractious, political rivalries within his own cabinet, Federalist opposition to the war, and difficulty raising funds for the war effort. There were also unresolved issues involving earlier territorial purchases from Spain and France, including incursions from Native tribes, which were possibly funded by Great Britain in an attempt to open a second front to the war. He financed the war effort by raising taxes, creating new taxes on a variety of commodities and licenses, and collecting property taxes. Congress approved these efforts, thus creating new employment opportunities that required time to handle the increase in employment petitions.

Madison’s attempts to raise money, deal with diplomatic issues at home and abroad, and fill newly created revenue positions were hampered by his severe illness with a life-threatening fever. For several weeks in June and early July, Madison was unable to respond to events around him, but by the second week of July he was beginning to recover. In March, Russia had offered to negotiate a peace settlement with Great Britain, and in April, Madison and Secretary of State James Monroe had nominated a team to travel to Russia and an envoy to Sweden. The success of these efforts was hampered by Federalist senators and then postponed by Madison’s illness. After his recovery, Madison focused on the war effort, diplomatic concerns, and the continuing dispute with Spain over the Mississippi Territory and East and West Florida.

In describing their editorial method, the editors explain that in this volume they adopted more stringent requirements for selecting correspondence. A majority of the documents in volume 6 are addressed to Madison, but as reviewers of earlier volumes in this series have noted, the inclusion of more letters written by Madison would have shed additional light on his thoughts and personality. However, the editors have done an excellent job of describing the complicated national and international events covered in this time period. They also include the letters from Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours in the original French, followed by a condensed translation. The endnotes are clear and concise, and the index thoroughly covers the topics.

Volume 6 of the Madison papers increases our knowledge of this complex period in history, as America was engaged in the process of nation building and in charting her way on the ever-changing world stage.

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