

The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series. Volume 7: 25 October 1813–30 June 1814. Edited by Angela Kreider and others. (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2012. Pp. [xi], 649. \$85.00. ISBN 978-0-8139-3256-9.)

This new volume in the presidential series of James Madison's papers covers a critical period of his administration, dominated by the unfolding

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events of the War of 1812. Extending roughly from the end of the United States' abortive 1813 Canada campaign to the 1814 British coastal offensive that culminated in the burning of Washington, D.C., in August, this collection of letters and documents will be useful to historians of the war and of the politics of the early republic.

The bulk of the material published here relates overwhelmingly to the war, including state papers, official documents, presidential addresses, and above all, letters from Madison and to him written by military leaders, administration officials, and members of the public. The focus of the material shows just how central the war effort was to this phase of Madison's presidency, illuminating both the complexity of that effort and the great uncertainty felt not only by the administration but also by many Americans about the war's purposes and its prosecution.

Several things stand out. One is the high level of contentiousness within the administration, between the civilian and military leadership, and among military leaders over the conduct of the war—over goals as well as strategy. The rhetoric of contention was often vicious, filled with charges and countercharges of incompetence, even disloyalty, among those involved.

Several more specific issues also loom large in the papers, notably problems financing the war and difficulties growing out of the complex attempts to achieve a diplomatic solution to the conflict. Many historians will find intriguing the complicated military and diplomatic questions raised by the United States' relations with Native Americans and the pressures created by those relations, especially the intersection of military concerns with Anglo-Americans' expansionist desires. No less intriguing are the official—and unofficial—reactions to the ways slaves took advantage of opportunities created by the wartime environment, and by British encouragement, to escape from bondage.

This volume also vividly documents the strong opposition to the war. Perhaps necessarily, Madison's bitterest opponents have little to say here, but Republican interpretations of opposition arguments figure strongly in the papers, providing a good sense of their formidability and significance on constitutional as well as political grounds. No less striking, however, are the words of those who became frustrated with the continued fighting during this period—supporting the administration, even believing in the necessity of the war, but hoping for its rapid end.

The great thing about a volume such as this, of course, is that it allows readers to get a sense not only of the events but also of the language that gave those events meaning. The language of national honor was something of a constant among the war's supporters, including Madison himself, in regard to the war's prosecution and to any potential diplomatic resolution.

So, too, was a language of partisanship, even hyperpartisanship, in the conflicts between the administration and its opponents and even among key players in the administration itself. This language framed the charges of disloyalty, even treason, occupying such a prominent place in this volume. An expectation of seeing both played a significant role in the ways participants interpreted the events they confronted. In a habitual merging of the personal with the political, objectionable decisions were said to come

from bad motives and bad motives from bad character, creating a political truism that few seemed disposed to challenge.

To be sure, not everything in the papers is about the war. At least some of the documents have to do with politics more broadly: with the day-to-day work of Madison's administration, with patronage and jockeying for position, with winning the favor of the president and other officials. Lots of people looked to the president for lots of things—some important, some relatively trivial—as many letters make clear. There are a few letters, too, pertaining to Madison's personal life, including the operations of his Virginia plantation and family matters.

Editorially, the volume maintains a high standard of scholarship with clear and useful annotations throughout. Historians will be glad to have it.

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