

Reviews of Books

HENRY P. BEERS, *Editor*

National Archives

DOCUMENTARY PUBLICATIONS

The Papers of James Madison, ed. by William T. Hutchinson and William M. E. Rachal. Vol. 1, 16 March 1751–16 December 1779. Vol. 2, 20 March 1780–23 February 1781. ([Chicago], University of Chicago Press, [1962]. lxii, 344, xix, 344 p.; illus., maps, indexes. \$10 each.)

James Madison and Thomas Jefferson were so closely associated during much of their public careers that historians have found occasion again and again to compare them, often to the disadvantage of the former. More recently writers have emphasized their collaboration in public life, and Irving Brant's multivolume biography has refurbished Madison's historical reputation as a statesman. Now, in presenting the first two volumes of Madison's *Papers*, Messrs. Hutchinson and Rachal have achieved a high level of historical editing worthy of their subject, even as they cite Boyd's edition of the *Jefferson Papers*, "whose volumes have set a standard of excellence which other editors of historical manuscripts use as their gauge."

The present editors are including "all extant writings of Madison which appear to have been wholly or in large degree the product of his mind" as well as "letters and other papers, addressed to him and known to have received his careful attention," and they do not exclude items "such as his speeches in Congress or almost contemporaneous accounts of his conversations, recorded by someone who heard him." Presumably the Madison-Jefferson correspondence will appear throughout this edition (it begins in Volume 2) as it does in Boyd's. The citation for letters from Jefferson to Madison is to the printed texts in Boyd; for Madison's letters to Jefferson it is to the original manuscripts; and scholars should consult both editions for the annotations.

The editors' introduction contains an illuminating historical sketch of the Madison papers before and especially after his death when Dolley Madison, like many another widow seeking to maintain a livelihood and to serve as literary executrix, found no satisfactory solution to her dual responsibility. Partly because of the extravagance of her son, John Payne Todd, she was less successful in maintaining the papers intact than was Thomas Jefferson Randolph in preserving his grandfather's. In both cases manuscripts were dispersed for personal reasons and sales to the Federal Government were not predicated on archival considerations. So, too, the resulting editions of Madison's *Papers* by Henry D. Gilpin (1840) and of Jefferson's by Henry A. Washington (1853-54) reflected no great credit on the Government by asso-

Books for review and related communications should be addressed to Henry P. Beers, Office of Civil Archives, The National Archives, Washington 25, D. C.

ciation through a committee of Congress. The task of the present editors has not been lightened by the existence of an epistolary register such as Jefferson kept from day to day. Although they have spread a wide net for Madison manuscripts, there will continue to be "discoveries" of letters in private hands for a long time to come.

In size, two volumes of *Madison Papers* equal one of *Jefferson*: 728 pages including introduction and indexes as compared with 737 pages with introduction and without index; the price, \$20 for two volumes of *Madison*, \$10 for one of *Jefferson* until Volume 16 (\$12.50). These first volumes cover nearly equal periods of their early lives: *Madison* to age 30 in 1781; *Jefferson* to age 33 in 1776. The total extant correspondence of each is nearly the same in quantity: 162 letters to and from *Madison*, 150 to and from *Jefferson*, the latter with a wider variety of persons. The correspondence between them began in March 1780 when *Madison* was a member of the Continental Congress and *Jefferson* was Governor of Virginia. Both held public office by their midtwenties and participated in the revolutionary events of 1776—*Madison*, not yet distinguished, in Williamsburg, *Jefferson* in a leading role in Philadelphia.

These early *Madison Papers* have a broad range of subject matter, local and national, as the young politician becomes more widely known in public life. The diligence of the editors in performing their task has rendered the documentary texts of maximum use; and, if they seem overzealous at times in supplying detailed factual information to supplement the manuscripts (*e.g.*, 1: 122, 128, 156-157, 183), this service extends quite properly beyond the needs of scholars. Some of the documents consist of official records of governmental agencies on whose deliberations *Madison* as a member doubtless brought some influence to bear. In deciding what documents to include as representative or as historically important, no two editors would agree. In the judgment of the present reviewer the excerpts from the Board of Admiralty records are excessive, and less so those from the Virginia Council of State. Furthermore, such selected documents demand additional explanatory notes that at times become almost irrelevant to *Madison's* ideas and actions as the chief reason for publishing his *Papers*. The editors, however, have provided an excellent essay or "editorial note" on the Council of State (1: 214-216) and they have illuminated likewise other pertinent subjects—*e.g.*, the Motion regarding Western Lands (2: 72-77) and the Commission of John Laurens and Amendment to His Instructions (2: 256-259).

Large editorial undertakings that are inevitably projected into the distant future, uncertain of both longtime personnel and financing, must soon justify themselves by the high caliber of their published work if they expect to find continuing support. Editors Hutchinson and Rachal have achieved this first goal with distinction. Scholars will look forward to the publication of subsequent volumes in their handsome format with confidence that the Father of the Constitution is in skillful editorial hands.

LESTER J. CAPPON

Institute of Early American History and Culture