

The Papers of James Madison, Presidential Series, vol. 7: 25 October 1813–30 June 1814. Ed. by Angela Kreider, J. C. A. Stagg, Mary Parke Johnson, Anne Mandeville Colony, and Katharine E. Harbury. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012. xl, 649 pp. \$85.00.)

The last months of 1813 and first half of 1814 saw the Madison presidency and the War of 1812 continue their downward trajectory. First the U.S. Army's ill-led efforts on the Canadian frontier ground to a halt, and then Napoleon I's unanticipated fall from power freed up Britain's enormous military resources to be focused on the American war—if the British wanted them to be. President James Madison held out hope that the sudden disappearance of the French Empire's continental system, and the associated reopening of European trade with America, would give Britain's allies strong incentives to push Britannia toward a peaceful resolution of its nagging American fight. Still, he recognized at least verbally that Britain might push the conflict to a punishing conclusion.

This volume of Madison papers once again makes clear how substantially the historiography of the early republic stands to benefit from this documentary project. Previously, much of Madison's outgoing and virtually none of his incoming correspondence had been published, but now scholars will have readily available documentation of many of the types of concerns that

demanding the president's, or at least his aides', attention on a regular basis. The editors' selections of documents to publish from among the incoming mounds of requests for appointments to offices both significant and trivial, petitions for executive clemency, suggestions concerning military strategy, and pleas for personal financial assistance show that the nineteenth-century presidency mixed fascinating high politics with a substantial burden of tedious administrative work.

Although he set a notable precedent for scrupulous presidential adherence to the Constitution in time of war, in case any of his successors should care to notice, Madison's conduct of the War of 1812 itself does not win him any accolades among historians or experts in military strategy. His leadership had the country vacillating between military initiative and a wait-and-see attitude, between plans for economic coercion and repeal of recently adopted embargo laws. For example, the advent in December 1813 of new hope for a negotiated end to the war prompted Madison to scrap his intended 1814 initiative in Lower Canada—just when military gains might have done the cause of an advantageous peace the most good (p. xxiii).

So, too, does Madison's mid-1814 Montpelier vacation amid a war being fought not only on America's shores and rivers, but on American territory, recall a bygone day of an essentially amateur American government. One result of his and Dolley's absence from Washington in April–May 1814 was the president's inability to head off the scheme of his feckless, plotting secretary of war, John Armstrong Jr., to drive Gen. William Henry Harrison to resign his commission. Madison's tendency to let Secretary Armstrong have his head can also be seen in the nonresponse to the several legislative resolutions and letters from seaboard cities and states included in this volume imploring the president to look to their defenses, some of which came from people who had lodged similar complaints before. Madison commanded Armstrong to submit plans to remedy these problems (p. 600n1), but the secretary attended to this charge half-heartedly at best. These documents foreshadow the fate of Washington, D.C., at the hands of a British force only two months after this volume's close.

Also of interest are an admiring letter from the noted French economist Jean-Baptiste Say covering a copy of Say's latest book (p. 565), a letter proposing a world court with an independent army and the task of stamping out war (pp. 579–81), and several missives outlining proposals for funding the American war effort, usually by establishing a new institution akin to Alexander Hamilton's defunct Bank of the United States. We, of course, know that the president would soon sign a bill into law creating a new bank eerily similar to the one upon whose unconstitutionality he had so stridently insisted in 1791. Another Madisonian volte-face already evident in this volume concerned protective tariffs, which in March 1814 he called on Congress to continue for at least two years after the war's end (p. 400).

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