

The Papers of James Madison. Volume 17: 31 March 1797–3 March 1801, with a Supplement, 22 January 1778–9 August 1795. Edited by David B. Mattern, J. C. A. Stagg, Jeanne K. Cross, and Susan Holbrook Perdue. (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1991. Pp. xxx, 610. \$47.50, ISBN 0-8139-1288-1.)

In March 1991 *The Papers of James Madison* celebrated in Charlottesville, Virginia, the publication of its final volume in the *Congressional Series*, covering the years from 1797 to 1801 that Madison spent either in Virginia at his Montpelier plantation or in Richmond as a member of the Virginia General Assembly. This notable event marked the completion of the papers for Madison's years of public service spent largely as legislator and convention member. He served in the Virginia legislature from 1776 to 1777, 1784 to 1787, and 1799 to 1800; in the Continental Congress from 1780 to 1783 and 1787 to 1788; at the Virginia Convention of 1776; at the Annapolis Conference of 1786; at the Federal Convention of 1787; at the Virginia Ratification Convention of 1788; as well as in the Federal House of Representatives for four terms from 1789 to 1797. The full publication of the papers from this twenty-five-year legislative service (surely as important as any in American history) is a significant and useful documentary record. This last volume, moreover, fully measures up to the high editorial standards set at the project's inception more than thirty years ago.

The expected treasures of Madison's Virginia interlude are all here, learnedly and helpfully edited as usual: the steady, far-ranging, and candid correspondence with Vice President Jefferson in Philadelphia; the resolves and reports protesting the Alien and Sedition Acts; and the intricate politics of the 1800 presidential election. Madison's manifesto defending freedom of speech and the press, *The Report of 1800* on the responses to the Virginia Resolutions of 1798 (also authored by Madison), for example, is set for the first time in its full historical context.

At least two important authorship questions are settled by the editors with massive erudition and authority. The first Virginia General Assembly Address opposing the Alien and Sedition Acts—adopted in January 1799 and attributed in print to Madison at least twice and accepted by his biographers from John Quincy Adams to Irving Brant—is shown beyond all reasonable doubt to be not Madison's but probably the combined efforts of Wilson Cary Nicholas and John Taylor of Caroline. Just as conclusively the editors show that Madison did write two fascinating "op-ed" pieces, "Foreign Influence" and "Political Reflections" for the Philadelphia *Aurora General Advertiser* in early 1799. These pieces, opposing the "quasi-war" with France, are worthy additions to the Madison canon. Madison asks Americans "to reflect on the evils of a state of war, not only as it destroys the lives of the people, wastes their treasure, and corrupts their morals; but . . . [tends] to destroy the equilibrium of the departments of power, by throwing improper weights into the Executive scale." Thus Madison urges the people "to keep a watchful . . . eye, over that branch of the government which derives the greatest accession of power and importance from the armies, offices, and expences, which compose the equipage of war" (p. 241). Madison could well have written the same pieces 192 years later in the winter of the Persian Gulf War.

As if this were not enough, the editors are able to include in a supplement thirty-seven previously unpublished, long, and important letters (1782–1795) to Madison from the wise and learned Virginia elder statesman, Edmund Pendleton. These letters, which disappeared after being sold at auction in 1892, had been sought earnestly by scholars and editors ever since. This collection, bearing on the affairs of the Continental Congress, Virginia politics, the ratification of the Constitution, the drafting of the Judiciary Act of 1789, and other vital topics, is one of the most important additions to our knowledge of these events ever uncovered at so late a date. Altogether, this last volume of the *Congressional Series* may be the most interesting of all, signal testimony to the worthy career of its subject as well as to the importance of skilled and thorough editorial work.

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