

The Papers of James Madison. Presidential Series. Volume II: 1 October 1809–2 November 1810. Edited by J. C. A. Stagg, Jeanne Kerr Cross, and Susan Holbrook Perdue. (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1992. Pp. xlvii, 647. \$50.00, ISBN 0-8139-1345-4.)

The appearance of this volume is evidence of carefully planned and steadily, superbly executed editorial work. With the publication in 1991 of Volume XVII, the regular, chronological series of Madison's *Papers* was completed to 1801. The Secretary of State series, 1801–1809, which began publication in 1986, saw Volume II in print in 1993, and work is underway on the next volumes in both the Presidential and Secretary of State series. We are, then, well in the midst of two splendid series of publications that will for the first time allow detailed insight into the conduct of the executive department, 1801–1817. (Since the Madison *Papers* are now much ahead, chronologically, of the Jefferson *Papers*, and since the publication of the papers of other Republican leaders,

notably Albert Gallatin and James Monroe, are not in comparable form, the Madison volumes will be the vital, path-breaking resource.)

The editors continue to struggle, on the whole successfully, with the huge mass of mostly routine paper with which an executive officer must cope. This volume, covering thirteen months, lists roughly eight hundred documents in the table of contents, of which perhaps one-third are abstracts of communications to Madison, and only about one hundred and fifty are letters by Madison. Consequently, much of the volume seems like an executive journal rather than a revelation of Madison's own thought and conduct, but it may nonetheless convey the rhythm of his life as president. It is encouraging, furthermore, that this volume covers nearly twice as many months as the first in this series—a pace, if continued, that may even bring its completion within measurable view.

The intent of the editors is to document as fully as possible Madison's thought and action as president. This is relatively simple and straightforward when a letter or message he wrote, or a significant letter to him, is at hand. More complex, though, are the cases of the letters dispatched over the signature of Madison's Secretary of State, Robert Smith, and of the delicate situation in West Florida in 1810. Because of Madison's distrust of Smith's discretion, understanding, and even loyalty to the administration, he undertook to rewrite and even draft many of the secretary's diplomatic dispatches—do these then become Madison documents? Unwilling to print these lengthy and previously published documents in full, the editors instead include abstracts of them to allow readers to get the gist of negotiations and to have reference to full publication elsewhere. On West Florida, the editors offer a fifteen-page editorial note that serves as an introduction to and interpretation of a variety of documents related to the "Collapse of the Spanish-American Empire: The West Florida Crisis of 1810." Besides helping the reader understand the many letters, proclamations, and memoranda, the note is itself a major contribution to the historical study of a tangled episode. Altogether, then, this volume is an important resource not only for the study of Madison's own life and thought but also as an aid for our understanding of the office of the presidency and of American policy at a tumultuous moment in world affairs.

The Maxwell School, Syracuse University

RALPH KETCHAM