

The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series, Vol. 2: *1 October 1809-2 November 1810*. Edited by J. C. A. Stagg, Jeanne Kerr Cross, and Susan Holbrook Perdue. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992. Pp. xlv, 645. \$50.00.)

With the publication of this second volume of the presidential series of *The Papers of James Madison*, the editors continue the important task, launched eight years ago, of filling gaps in the published documentary record of Madison's presidency. If the first volume focusing on Madison's early months in office offered scholars little new information about his presidency, the second volume is more satisfying. It casts new light on a number of important issues, especially foreign policy questions growing out of America's relations with England and France during the Napoleonic Wars.

Foreign policy issues dominated Madison's presidency during the thirteen-month period covered here. The correspondence discloses the complexity of the problems Madison confronted in trying to preserve American neutrality and also devise trade policies that would produce

enough customs revenue to balance the budget and retire the national debt. The vexations of dealing with the well-meaning but inexperienced British minister David Erskine and his overbearing successor, Francis James Jackson, compounded his problems. Additionally, he had to contend with a recalcitrant Congress. It rejected Madison's navigation bill, called Macon's Bill No. 1, which more than any subsequently enacted congressional measure promised to achieve American diplomatic and trade objectives. If successful, it would have increased customs revenue and spared the government the pain of enforcing domestic trade restrictions against its own citizens. Madison was not deceived by Congress's substitute measure, Macon's Bill No. 2. He did not think that "feeble" measure would achieve the desired objectives. Congress also rejected his January 1810 recommendation to enact measures for improving the nation's defenses. His efforts to institute militia reform, enlist volunteers, and place the army and navy in a state of readiness were unsuccessful. The documents and correspondence contained in this volume do not support the charge of Madison's critics that war with England in 1812 resulted from the failure of presidential leadership.

Although much of Madison's attention during 1809-1810 was taken up with foreign policy problems relating to England and France, the documents here reveal that he devoted a great deal of time to the West Florida question. The dissolution of the Spanish empire in America provided Madison with the opportunity to expand national boundaries. He moved decisively to annex West Florida in October 1810. The editors offer a long and excellent note detailing aspects of Madison's actions leading to the annexation. But neither that note nor the documents themselves tell the full story. The editors acknowledge that "in many cases after 1809, the best sources of information about Madison's presidential decisions are to be found not in his own correspondence but in records that fall outside the criteria established for the inclusion of documents in this edition" (xxxi). The editors assist the reader by citing additional historical sources containing evidence bearing on Madison's conduct. Beyond this, they maintain the same high standards of editorial scholarship that were established at the inception of *The Papers of James Madison* more than thirty years ago and which were faithfully upheld by editor-in-chief Robert A. Rutland until his retirement in 1986.

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