

The Papers of James Madison. Volume 16: 27 April 1795-27 March 1797. Edited by J. C. A. Stagg, Thomas A. Mason, and Jeanne K. Sisson. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989. Preface, acknowledgments, editorial method, abbreviations, short titles, Madison chronology, index. Pp. xxviii, 527. \$45.00.)

It is always good to return to original sources; a perusal of this latest volume in an ongoing series confirms that dictum. No secondary account can quite convey the flavor and tone of late eighteenth-century America like the chronologically ordered letters of those who lived then. Through this volume of *The Papers of James Madison* the reader experiences firsthand the emotional opposition to John Jay's treaty, sees the birth of James Madison's efforts to intrude the House of Representatives into the treaty-making process, and then witnesses the fight over Jay's treaty evolve into the election of 1796 as Madison conspired to lure Thomas Jefferson into standing for the presidency.

The prominence of certain events and issues in these pages provides an index to the concerns and priorities of Madison and his friends. For example, Madison consistently relayed to others the extensive descriptions of postrevolutionary France provided by James Monroe, minister to France. On the other hand, the Whiskey Rebellion and President George Washington's Farewell Address enjoy only passing mention. Careful reading also reveals the beginnings of party development in references to the "republican" and "British parties"; Jefferson's sour comment that John Adams would inherit the blame for Washington's failures while Washington would have "his usual good fortune of reaping credit from the good acts of others" reveals the depth of political divisions.

These primary materials also remind the twentieth-century scholar of the temporal distance from the eighteenth century, as when authors of the letters referred to such mystifying ailments as "the autumnal plague," or when Madison on December 25 wrote both his father and Jefferson without once mentioning the Christmas holiday, or when a letter writer related how the outcome of the presidential election of 1796 remained in doubt at the beginning of the new year.

The utility of such a volume rests on the editing, and that in this instance is superb; copious notes clarify obscure references. Where appropriate, lengthier editorial introductions bring to bear the apparatus of historical criticism, and a detailed index completes the work. This volume is a most useful tool for both the researcher and the teacher.

Robert W. McAhren

Washington and Lee University