The Papers of James Madison, Presidential Series. Volume 3: 3 November 1810–4 November 1811. Edited by J. C. A. STAGG, JEANNE KERR-CROSS, and SUSAN HOLBROOK. (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1996. xlii, 548p. Bibliographical references, index. $55.00.)

With this, the third volume in the Presidential Series, Stagg, Kerr-Cross, and Holbrook have taken us into Madison's third year of his first term as president of the United States, a point in Madison's public career that many historians regard as an anticlimactic era in the life of our most prestigious founder. Most feel that Madison's real importance to the development of the early republic came as the author of the Virginia Plan, or as the Speaker of the House of Representatives during the tumultuous days of the "first party conflict,"or as the leader of the Democratic-Republican Party during the 1790s. When, most recently, one of our foremost Madison scholars, Lance Banning, chronicled a period of Madison's life in *The Sacred Fire of Liberty: James Madison and the Founding of the Federal Republic*, he, of course, chose the period from 1780 to 1792. This emphasis makes sense from a historiographical standpoint, too, as the popularity of Elkins's and McKitrick's mammoth synthesis *The Age of Federalism* attests to the current rekindling of interest in the politics of the founding era. But Madison's career obviously did not close with the eighteenth century, and while historians have placed his significance rightly in the founding, Madison himself certainly did not comprehend this. As much as his republican ideology instructed him to fear centralized power, and as much as he himself distrusted that power in an executive, this volume makes clear that Madison took seriously the execution of his duties as president. As president he believed that he was singularly responsible for the success or failure of the republican experiment. By the close of this volume, the nation and the experiment stood on the brink of its greatest challenge, and it stood there largely because of Madison's actions.

This volume begins its coverage of Madison's correspondence the day following

his proclamation to Great Britain that she lift orders in council against American shipping within three months or face the prospect of nonintercourse with the U.S. while her Continental enemy, France, would then enjoy the full benefits of a trading relationship with the Americans. The volume then proceeds for a year and a day squarely focused on the problems that those warring European superpowers posed for the young republic. In public opinion from November 3, 1810, on, Madison found himself in a precarious position, caught between Federalists, on the one hand, who argued that the French had lifted their Berlin and Milan decrees against American shippers in name only, and patriotic Republicans on the other who clamored for a quicker and more forceful remedy for British disregard of American neutrality. Into the middle of this crisis stepped an insubordinate secretary of state, Robert Smith. Smith was no more sure than were the Federalists that France had actually lifted the Berlin and Milan decrees, since American vessels still found themselves prone to French detention. Neither was Smith convinced that threatening the British with nonintercourse was the best course, given the poor record of embargo tactics since the Jefferson administration. It was bad enough for Madison that his secretary of state held such contradictory views on the eve of the arrival of John Foster, a new and, Madison hoped, more reasonable British minister to Washington, but the fact that Smith so publicly spread his views around the capital made him more than just a political and diplomatic liability. Madison summarily replaced Smith with James Monroe. Smith responded with his *Address* to the people of the United States openly criticizing the president and his entire administration in its handling of foreign policy. That "wicked publication of Mr. Smith," as Madison derided it, served the British with support for their refusal to repeal orders in council and left Madison with few options other than to begin preparing the nation for war.

This volume also reveals Madison's execution of a foreign policy of a different sort in his presidential interaction with the Native Americans of the Old Northwest and the Old Southwest. In the former, he gives William Henry Harrison of Indiana tacit approval to militarily disband the inter-tribal organization of Tecumseh and the Prophet at Tippecanoe, and in the latter, he instructs the Creeks to allow the construction of a road from Tennessee to Mobile. Madison was no unqualified champion of internal improvements in 1811, however, for he ignored pleas for federal assistance from the New York State Canal Commission in its attempts to begin construction on a canal connecting Lake Erie and the Hudson River.

Madison's personal life rarely escapes through his correspondence. Occasionally we hear him invite the Monroes or Thomas Jefferson to Montpelier in the late summer, and we listen in on conversations with Benjamin Rush, in whom Madison placed his confidence as physician for his nephew, Alfred Madison, stricken with consumption in the autumn of 1810 and doomed to expire before spring.

This third volume of the Presidential Series to appear in the last twelve years is,

like its predecessors, expertly edited. The editors apply accurate footnotes to detail the minutiae, explain missing correspondence, and paraphrase long-winded writers when appropriate. One helpful tool for the nonspecialist is the "Significant Federal Officers" page, which names Madison's cabinet, the Supreme Court, and others like the vice president, Speaker of the House, and so on. Yet it would be more helpful, even for the specialist, if the editors could provide a brief, one-line biographical note on each of Madison's correspondents either as a separate page or as a footnote to each entry. This suggestion aside, *The Papers of James Madison* continues to be a first-rate collection and a must for research libraries large and small.

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