

The Papers of James Madison. Secretary of State Series. Volume 5: 16 May–31 October 1803. Edited by DAVID B. MATTERN, J. C. A. STAGG, ELLEN J. BARBER, and ANNE MANDEVILLE COLONY. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000. xxv, 643p. Chronology, notes, index. \$67.50.)

The Papers of James Madison. Presidential Series. Volume 4: 5 November 1811–9 July 1812, with a Supplement 5 March 1809–19 October 1811. Edited by J. C. A. STAGG, ELLEN J. BARBER, ANNE MANDEVILLE COLONY, JEANNE KERR CROSS, MARTHA J. KING, SUSAN HOLBROOK PERDUE, and JEWELL L. SPANGLER. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000. xli, 675p. Chronology, notes, index. \$65.00.)

James Madison has become a hot topic of late. Lance Banning's *Sacred Fire of Liberty* (1995), Stuart Leibiger's *Founding Friendship* (2000), and Garrett Ward Sheldon's *The Political Philosophy of James Madison* (2001) have all tackled the founder's life, work, thought, and personal relationships. Through Madison, these prize-winning books have provided key insights into the founding and early national periods. The value of *The Papers of James Madison* series to these authors and their accomplishments cannot be overstated. These two most recent volumes of *The Papers of James Madison* measure up fully to the standards of the earlier volumes and will continue to provide present and future scholars with invaluable assistance. These series are a must for any university research library that seeks to service the political and ideological study of the early national period.

Volume 5 of *The Secretary of State Series* (May–October, 1803) finds the secretary dealing with a host of complex and crucially important matters of state. Great Britain and France opened a new war, Britain commenced the impressment of American seamen, Napoleon offered Louisiana for sale, the Spanish resisted that transfer, and the war with Tripoli raged on in the Mediterranean. Perhaps the most intriguing topic in this volume is Madison's role as a negotiator for the release of impressed American sailors from the British navy. Letters informing Madison of various impressments pepper the volume, as well as scores of letters back and forth between him and the British chargé d'affaires, Edward Thornton. Upon learning of the seizure of the American ship *Charles Carter* by the British ship *Boston* just outside of Norfolk, Virginia, and the impressment of two American citizens, Madison exploded in a reply to Thomas Newton, Jr.: "To impress our seamen on

the high seas, or indeed any persons from under our flag, not enemies in a military character, is agst. our natl. rights and has been acknowledged to be wrong by Lord St. Vincents. To impress them under the circumstances of the present case is abominable. How can ships of war expect to enjoy the hospitality of our ports if they make it subservient to the cruising agst. our commerce & seamen? It is sincerely our desire & our interest to live in friendship and free intercourse with G. B. but it is not less her interest & duty to respect our rights" (pp. 280–81). The same day, Madison wrote to Thornton and could not contain his exasperation. "You will pardon me, Sir," wrote Madison, "for making use of this occasion to touch on a subject . . . I mean the conversion of the ports of the United States into stations from whence Ships of War may furnish themselves with the means of keeping up cruisers against our commerce on our own coasts, and with information for rendering these cruises successful. Such an illicit communication and waters is the more to be apprehended in proportion as it may with our ports, be easily covered under pretexts that are specious. Not doubting your ready concurrence in proper steps for preventing in every case, practices of so evil a tendency, I beg leave to remind you of a circular letter from this Department dated April 16, 1795 . . ." (p. 283). In his reply a week later, Thornton announced that the one remaining impressed American would be returned, but at the same time defended the *Boston's* action in time of war, and scolded Madison and the Americans for their ingratitude, since the British were assisting the Americans at that time in their war with the North African corsairs. These very issues would not leave Madison undisturbed after 1803 and would later contribute to his crusade for a declaration of war against Great Britain in his first term as president.

Volume 4 of *The Presidential Series* (November 1811–July 1812) opens with Madison's third annual message to Congress, through which he began to prepare the nation for war with Great Britain, and ends just after Congress's declaration of war. The months that fell in between comprised the most frustrating and unnerving time of his presidency, perhaps of his entire political life. In the House of Representatives, Madison enjoyed a substantial majority of Republicans who favored his course, accepting the French retraction of the Berlin and Milan Decrees while making military and defensive preparations for war with Britain. But the Senate proved to be a more difficult matter. There a Federalist minority combined with discontented Republicans (many from New York) to stall the projected preparations. In the meantime, it looked as if the New York Republicans were prepared to nominate George or DeWitt Clinton over Madison for the presidency in 1812. Only quick action by Madison's supporters, excluding the Clinton backers from a Washington caucus, assured him the nod, though at the cost of both national and party consensus while heading into a war. On June 1, he wrote a letter to Congress that while not specifically calling for a declaration of war did lay out a list of grievances against Great Britain designed to lead Congress to that conclusion. He

began by condemning British impressment of American sailors. The "War Hawks" in the House debated, drafted, and passed a declaration of war in less than three days by a comfortable margin, but the Senate dragged its feet for more than two weeks before the discontented Republicans broke from the Federalists and provided a slim 19-13 margin of victory for the declaration.

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