

Book Reviews

The Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series, Volume 9, 1805, and The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series, Volume 7, 1813–1814.

Edited by Mary A. Hackett, J.C.A. Stagg, Anne Mandeville Colony, Katharine E. Harbury, and Mary Parke Johnson. Charlottesville, VA and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011, Volume 9: 616 pages, \$85.00 Hardcover; 2012, Volume 7: 696 pages. \$85.00 Hardcover.

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With these two volumes, the editors of *The Papers of James Madison* continue the excellent work that has characterized the series. Not all letters to and from Madison are published, but those not included are summarized and their location identified. Letters in foreign languages are printed in the original and paraphrased or summarized. Excellent, detailed footnotes explain references to people and events so that students and amateur historians using the volumes can understand a letter's historical context. The index, too, cross-lists topics in every conceivable way (for instance, New York merchants trading with the Middle East are indexed under their names, New York [City], the ships involved, the people, states, and consuls in the Middle East, etc.)

The Secretary of State volume shows Madison dealing chiefly with three issues: American relations with the states of North Africa; difficulties concerning newly acquired Louisiana and Spanish Florida, including his insistence that the Spanish were responsible for American claims against the French during their brief occupation before the Louisiana Purchase (his desire to find an excuse to seize Florida is obvious); and the seizure of American vessels by the British. Residents of

New York come into play as both merchants and impressed seamen who suffered during these seizures. Madison also stayed on top of party politics, noticing that a dispute in which two seventy-year old New York state senators attacked each other on the floor of the legislature over whether to charter the Merchants' Bank of New York—there were accusations the Bank had bribed the representatives to pass the bill—did “not augur well either for the credit or the cohesion of republicanism in the State” (196–197). DeWitt Clinton, in 1805 Mayor of New York City and still on good terms with Madison (in 1812, he would run against him for President), warned Madison about Thomas Barclay, a former New York lawyer, “very rancorous against our Govt.” who was attained for treason during the Revolution but returned as a British *chargé d'affaires* in that city. Barclay was “apt to urge extravagant pretensions” when identifying supposed deserters from the British navy who had enlisted on American ships and thus had to be returned (303).

Volume 7 of the Presidential series covers October 25, 1813 to June 30, 1814, so we will have to wait for Volume 8 for the battles in and around Washington, D.C. during the War of 1812. But we do see a harried chief executive dealing with the usual problems of office seekers (both military and civilian) while trying to plan and fight a war for which the nation was woefully unprepared. The three letters from New York Governor Daniel Tompkins to Madison illustrate this. Tompkins wrote twice recommending Col. Anthony Lamb for a military appointment and Horatio G. Spafford of Albany to present his plan to patent a new method of making carriage axles (399, 408). But Tompkins's most important letter, as both its content and style demonstrate, was written in a state of panic. On January 3, 1814, he informed the President of “the capture of Fort Niagara, with its immense stores,” the burning of Buffalo and Lewistown “& all the buildings near the Niagara River from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie . . . & the massacre & scalping of a number of inhabitants of Lewistown and Niagara.” Needless to say, western New Yorkers were “abandoning their possessions & retiring into the interior.” Tompkins urged that Madison send 2,500 regulars to defend the western part of the state, adding that he would contribute 5,000 New York militia. But he confirmed standard judgment of the militia that had prevailed since the Revolution: “as auxiliaries to the army, Volunteers

& Militia answer a valuable purpose. But attempts at expeditions with volunteers of Militia alone have generally failed & are peculiarly unwise for the reduction of fortified places.” In short, they could not retake Niagara on their own. Tompkins concluded that “something must be done speedily, or the next must be a defensive campaign only, if not one of absolute & irretrievable disgrace” (167–168).

Madison’s reply must have sent Tompkins into despair: “As there can be little comparative inducement to the Enemy, to prolong their barbarities in that neighborhood, it is most to be apprehended that the attention of that part of their force, will be turned to some other quarter” (229). Fortunately for New York, Madison guessed correctly and left the regulars in New York guarding the approach to Lake Champlain which “have an essential and constant claim to our attention” (229).

One fascinating and much understudied topic that consumes a good deal of Volume 7 concerns the treatment and exchange of prisoners of war. The obnoxious Thomas Barclay against whom Clinton had warned Madison in 1805 was in charge of handling this for Great Britain. His complaints about the mistreatment of British prisoners and intransigence added to the burdens of both American prisoners and their wartime President.

Those interested in New York history will find interesting information of various sorts scattered through these volumes thanks to the superb editorial work. Students of the War of 1812, military history, foreign affairs, and American politics will find them indispensable.