

The Papers of James Madison [Secretary of State Series]. Volume 6: 1 November 1803–31 March 1804. Edited by Mary A. Hackett, J. C. A. Stagg, Ellen J. Barber, Anne Mandeville Colony, and Angela Kreider. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002. Preface, editorial method, chronology, notes, index. Pp. xxxix, 724. \$70.00.)

The period covered by the present volume in the James Madison Secretary of State Series was one of tremendous territorial and political growth for the United States. The Louisiana Purchase had been ratified on October 20, 1803, and Madison continued to work on incorporating the newly acquired lands and peoples of Louisiana while also pursuing the acquisition of Florida territory from Spain. Madison also had to contend with diplomatic problems overseas, as British impressment of American seamen continued apace and the French were still interfering with American overseas commerce—problems exacerbated by the resumption of war on the Continent. The capture of the frigate *Philadelphia* and the enslavement of her crew also occurred as the United States was settling the war with Tripoli and attempting to maintain a tenuous peace with the Barbary pirates.

This volume presents over six hundred documents covering a five-month period, from November 1803 to March 1804, in 658 pages. While a majority of the documents are presented in abstracted form, it is still possible to appreciate the tremendous volume of correspondence Madison handled as secretary of state during this short time span.

The correspondence of the acting governor of Louisiana, William C. C. Claiborne, to Madison seems almost to dominate this volume. Claiborne, unsure of his duties and his ability to carry them out, wrote to Madison daily or even twice daily, asking for assistance. One such letter, dated January 9, 1804, from New Orleans, asks for guidance in “deciding how far the American Government shall assist by Force of Arms, the French Commissioner. . . .” Madison seldom responded to his letters, or to those of other American diplomats abroad. Some diplomats would go for years without having any direct communication with the secretary of state, save for regular circulars issued by the State Department. This makes judging Madison’s obvious skills as a diplomat difficult. The January 5, 1804, letter to James Monroe in England about the British impressment of American seamen deals with the negotiations for a convention between Great Britain and the United States “which cannot be much longer delayed without danger to the good understanding of the two nations.” The letter contains changes to the convention between the two countries and follows Madison’s observations on the plan. Writing about the need to protect neutral shipping and the freedom of the seas, Madison states, “But no where will she [Great Britain] find an exception to this freedom of the seas, and of neutral flags, which justifies the taking away of any person not an enemy in military service, found on board a neutral vessel.” This is an example of the skills Madison is known for as one of the authors of the *Federalist Papers* and the American Constitution.

This is a well-executed volume. The notes accompanying each letter, whether presented in full or as an abstract, are clear and informative. The index is well organized and easy to use. The editorial statement explains the rationale behind the selection of the correspondence and the omission of other items. It will continue to add to our knowledge of Madison and his career as a diplomat and political leader.

David Serxner

North Carolina State University