

THE PAPERS OF JAMES MADISON: *Secretary of State Series*, Vol. 1, 4 March-31 July, 1801. Edited by Robert J. Brugger, Robert Rhodes Crout, Dru Dowdy, Robert A. Rutland, Jeanne K. Sisson. (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1987. xxxi, 526 pp. Preface, acknowledgments, editorial method, depository symbols, abbreviations, short titles for books, Madison chronology, index. Cloth \$37.50.)

The day after Thomas Jefferson became president, he made the least surprising appointment of his administration by naming James Madison as secretary of state. The question of Madison's acceptance was already settled, but he was unable to take up his duties until May 2. Madison's own health had been poor ever since he has suffered an attack of rheumatism the previous December, and the death of his father on February 27 left him with the responsibility of settling the estate. As Madison wrote to the president, this was a particularly difficult matter because the will had been written thirteen years earlier before the deaths of two of his brothers (one of whom left nine children) and the acquisition of considerable property, some of which had to be sold in order to divide the inheritance according to his father's wishes.

While Levi Lincoln managed the office on a temporary basis, Madison was deluged with letters relating to it. Many of these were from men hoping to gain appointments under the new Republican administration, others were reports from ministers and consuls abroad, and some contained

congratulations on his appointment and Jefferson's victory over Burr in the House of Representatives. When Madison finally set out for Washington near the end of April, he carried a note from the president, who had just travelled the same route, which is interesting to anyone who has gone that way recently. Jefferson had arranged for two farmers to bring their horses to get the Madison carriage up "Bull run hill," which, he wrote, "is really the worst I ever saw on a public road. Still let nothing tempt you to go by Centerville as on that route the whole is cut by wagons into Mudholes." (p. 126) Jefferson also said that he would hold supper (until 4:00!), awaiting the Madisons' arrival.

It is a touching—but rare—glimpse into their friendship. This volume contains few such examples because their day-by-day proximity made correspondence unnecessary. Further, the third president, unlike the first, did not need to ask or receive his secretary of state's written opinions on matters of national importance. The two were clearly of one mind on virtually every issue.

Yet the volume has its own unique value. Federalists may have worried about the transition of power to leaders of another party, but it is clear that the processes of governing were well established when the Republic was only a dozen years old. The personnel changed, but most policies and procedures continued as before. Many of those are illuminated by succinct and informative editorial notes. For example, a note on "Avoiding the Maelstrom of Saint-Domingue" (p. 127) shows that Jefferson followed the essential principles of the Adams administration in the Caribbean. Because there were credible charges of misconduct by Adams's consul-general, the new president appointed Tobias Lear to replace him. Naming Lear was not a partisan matter; he had been President George Washington's private secretary.

Similarly, in "Dispatching a Naval Squadron to the Mediterranean" (p. 197), the Republican administration followed the frustrating and unfortunately uninformed policy of their Federalist predecessors. An editorial note on "The Struggle to Maintain Neutrality" (p. 268) explains how Jefferson and Madison tried to continue the policy that Jefferson had advocated when he was secretary of state, with Washington's support. Although the Jay Treaty that was negotiated after his resignation changed some of the circumstances, Jefferson, like his predecessors, hoped to maintain America's distance from Europe's quarrels.

In terms of domestic affairs, the first five months of Madison's tenure seem to have been a honeymoon period for the nation. The length of the honeymoon will be known only by studying later volumes in this excellent series.

From Madison's personal standpoint, this volume carries hints about a legal case that affected his own family's fortunes. On May 8, 1801, Wilson Cary Nicholas of Virginia sent Madison a letter of introduction to Joseph Daveiss, the federal attorney for the District of Kentucky who had been appointed by President John Adams. On May 20, James Monroe sent a similar letter. Perhaps neither knew, or both underestimated, Daveiss's ambition and his commitment to the Federalist party.

Daveiss had come to Washington to argue the plaintiff's position in *Wilson v. Mason* before the United States Supreme Court. His case rested upon information provided by a surveyor who misused his professional position, as is shown in *Supreme Court Reports* (1 Cranch 45 [1801]). As Daveiss wrote to a friend back home, winning the case would bring him 600,000 acres of land in the fertile Green River region of Kentucky. Mason's prior claim to 8,300 acres (within the 40,926 plat later claimed by Wilson) was originally registered by Madison's father, his brothers Ambrose and William, and George Mason.

Mason and the Madisons lost. Daveiss won, married a sister of John Marshall, and adopted "Hamilton" as his middle name to honor the first secretary of the Treasury. He was killed at the Battle of Tippecanoe, and a county in Kentucky was named for him (although it misspells his name as "Daviess").

One wonders whether Madison knew the purpose of Daveiss's trip to Washington. If there is an answer, it will be found in the volumes that follow this one. Such relatively unimportant incidents are often invented by scriptwriters, to their great pecuniary advantage. At the same time, they demonstrate once again that history is even more fascinating than fiction.

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