



The Papers of James Madison: 10 July 1812 - 7 February 1813 (Presidential Series)

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The Papers of James Madison Presidential Series, Volume 5

10 July 1812–7 February 1813

Edited by J. C. A. Stagg, Martha J. King, Ellen J. Barber, Anne Mandeville Colony, Angela Kreider, Jewel L. Spangler

Volume 5 of the *Presidential Series* covers the first seven months of the War of 1812, documenting the problems Madison faced as he led the United States into its first major military conflict under the Federal Constitution. The planned American invasions of Canada faltered because of General Henry Dearborn's inept leadership in the East and General William Hull's shocking surrender at Detroit. Quarrels about the role of the state militias and recruitment and supply difficulties contributed to these and subsequent setbacks. General William Henry Harrison's inability to achieve a major victory in the Northwest, the failure of two poorly planned offensives on the Niagara peninsula, and the U.S. defeat at the river Raisin in January 1813 round out the dismal picture of U.S. military affairs presented by documents in this volume.

Meanwhile, Madison faced pressure not only from Federalists, whose numerous angry letters occasionally included threats of secession, but also from Republicans dissatisfied with his leadership. Many of the latter supported De Witt Clinton in his unsuccessful bid to unseat Madison in the election of 1812. Others urged the president to take steps to "intimidate" his political opponents; Madison, however, declined to use federal power to enforce loyalty. Two of his cabinet colleagues added to the president's problems: Secretary of War William Eustis was so "profoundly oppressed" by U.S. defeats that Paul Hamilton, secretary of the navy, suspected "a danger of his mind being affected"; Hamilton, an alcoholic, had tolerated sloppy bookkeeping and alleged corruption in the Navy Department. By the end of 1812 both had resigned.

On the diplomatic front, the volume documents U.S. chargé d'affaires Jonathan Russell's unsuccessful peace talks with Great Britain and the midwinter odyssey of minister to France Joel Barlow, who, returning from negotiations with Napoleon at Vilna, died of pneumonia in a Polish village. Also covered is Madison's continuing effort to craft a policy serving American interests in the Spanish borderlands. Access to people, places, and events discussed is facilitated by detailed annotation and a comprehensive index.

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