

John C. Fredriksen. *The War of 1812: U.S. War Department Correspondence, 1812-1815.* Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2016. 488 pp. \$95.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-7864-9408-8.

Reviewed by Katrina Ponti

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

The War of 1812: U.S. War Department Correspondence, 1812-1815, by the late American military historian John C. Fredriksen, is a reference guide to the microfilm reels of Records Group 107 housed in the National Archives, Records of the Department of War. This record group contains the entire war correspondence from the War of 1812. This includes three years of material from 1812 to 1815, containing 11,322 pages of correspondence, written by 2,459 authors, including Andrew Jackson and James Madison. Fredriksen's preface highlights the organization of the documents, which he orders alphabetically by author/organization, with the exception of the first forty-six letters, whose authors are anonymous and organized by chronological order. Each entry follows the same format: author/institution, item number, date, location, number of pages, series/reel number, and frame number. A précis on research relevance follows each entry.

In the foreword, University of Virginia historian J. C. A. Stagg explains the project and recalls his own experience accessing Records Group 107. Stagg details the poor organization of the materials on the microfilm and the time-consuming work of reading through each roll to seek bits of relevant information. This system of access is somewhat prohibitive for researchers, taking up valuable research time and financial resources.

These prohibitions limit a full analysis of the documents. In sum, Fredriksen rectifies the "long-standing informational malaise" that resulted from this inconvenient organization and sheer volume of information contained within the microfilms (p. 3). He provides a logical guide to the documents that illustrate, at least in part, the story of America's "Second War of Independence."

Readers can immediately see the usefulness of Fredriksen's approach and can easily locate the letters that they seek. Fredriksen also includes other helpful sections in the book. For example, he provides an occupational index of the correspondents, which lists not only the roles of quartermasters and cavalry officers but also the involvement of bank officials and spies in the conduct of the war. A subject index offers another way to explore the book. According to Fredriksen, these organizational elements open up new thematic and quantitative ways to approach the documents and to the story of the war itself. What emerges is the story not just of pitched battles and noble officers but also of near-constant supply chain issues, unsung diplomatic efforts of Indian agents in the West, and the multifaceted struggle of the US government to orchestrate a war on different fronts.

It is also important to note that this correspondence was not restricted to military commu-

niqués. Civilians buoyed much of the American war effort through manufacturing, provisioning, and information gathering. Some familiar civilian names emerge amid the entries, including Paul Revere, who produced brass canons for the war effort, fur-trader John Jacob Astor, and Eli Whitney. Whitney, while known for his production of the cotton gin, contracted with the government to manufacture arms. These men are some of many in Fredriksen's book who surface readily from his clear and concise entries.

This book is most useful for an audience of historical researchers, genealogists, and graduate students with special interests in the War of 1812. There is also information that would interest researchers with a focus on relationships between American agents and Native Americans on the western front of the war. This correspondence only forms part of the story of the War of 1812, focusing on official, government transactions. The experiences of individuals not directly involved with the US government, such as women, African Americans, and Native Americans are not included in this record group. In this case, the book serves as a useful supplement to other resources.

Fredriksen achieves his aim to reorganize a substantial and valuable document collection for future scholars. He also succeeds, through the efficient organization of the book, in providing many new perspectives and topics from which to view the War of 1812. This book is a highly recommended asset to any personal research collection on antebellum American history.

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