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Harold Moser, Wyatt C. Wells, J. Clint Clifft, eds. *The Papers of Andrew Jackson. Vol. 6, 1825-1828.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002. xi + 674 pp. $70.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-57233-174-7.

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Jackson's Quest for the Presidency

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The presidential campaign of 1828 is the primary focus of Harold Moser's latest edition of the Andrew Jackson papers. But readers must begin with the election of 1824 in order fully to understand its scope and content. In the fall of 1824, Andrew Jackson received the plurality of the popular vote, but did not receive the majority of electoral votes. As such, the election was thrown into the House of Representatives for the second time in twenty-five years (the 1800 election between Thomas Jefferson and John Adams was the first). Volume 6 of *The Papers of Andrew Jackson* begins in January of 1825, before the contest had been decided but when reports of a "fix" trickled down to Jackson supporters. Soon it became clear exactly what that meant: according to rumor, House Speaker Henry Clay had made a deal with John Quincy Adams, in which Clay would receive the office of Secretary of State in return for delivering key western states in the House run-off. Jackson's camp initially did not believe it, but they became agitated when Adams won on the first ballot and subsequently offered Clay the State Department. For the next four years, they worked tirelessly to ensure that the recipients of this "corrupt bargain" would not stay in office beyond their one term.

In the brief introduction to the volume, Moser makes clear that the corrupt bargain allowed the General to intertwine his defense of honor with a mission to save democracy from a corrupt few. As Jackson himself put it, "If at this early period of the experiment of our Republic, men are found base & corrupt enough to barter the rights of the people for proffered office, what may we not expect from the spread of this corruption hereafter?" (p. 37). By the spring of 1825, the Jackson camp was hard at work in preparing for the next four years. The correspondents during this period include political operatives great and small, and their letters in many cases move beyond the national arena to show the reader the mechanics of presidential politics at the state and local levels. Particularly strong, unsurprisingly, is the window into Tennessee's political scene. John Overton, John Eaton, John Coffee, and Hugh Lawson White are merely a few of the important Jackson lieutenants whose letters cover important local, state, and presidential topics. Yet the editors do not slight Jacksonian political endeavors in other states. Operatives such as New York's Samuel Swartwout, Mississippi's Anthony Butler, and Pennsylvania's John Pemberton provide good insight into the nature of Jackson's support across the Union.

Besides the intricate networks of correspondents, two other issues stand out as particularly interesting. First, Moser shows that despite public proclamations to the contrary, Jackson used various presidential committees to become personally enmeshed in the 1828 campaign. Perhaps the most prominent of these was the Nashville Committee, which his opponents derisively labeled his "character-cleaning up" board. Established in March of 1827, in response to charges that Jackson had lived in sin with another man's wife, the committee became a vehicle for the protection of Jackson's character. They found Jackson a willing participant in their mission–he carefully fed information to the committee so that it could draft responses to such disparate but important issues as his marriage to Rachel and his 1806 duel with Charles Dickinson (p. 321).[1] Protecting the rights of the people, it seemed, was too important to be left only to his political lieutenants.

Second, students of Tennessee politics will find in the correspondence a subtle picture of the shifting nature of the state's political culture during this era. While opponents such as James Jackson and John Williams certainly disliked Andrew Jackson on a personal level, the General and his associates also described them as being hacks of the American System, Henry Clay's title for an entrepreneur-based economy that endorsed endeavors such as internal improvements, extensive banking, and protective tariffs. Politics, in other words, had be-

come just as ideological as it remained personal.

Although politics without question takes center stage in volume 6, the editors are careful not to neglect other aspects of nineteenth-century life. Through Jackson's correspondence, the reader will find good material on slave life, religious understandings, and economic growth in Tennessee (particularly as regards the cotton market). Rachel Jackson's letters are particularly useful in showing her piety, although this points to one area that perhaps does not receive as much attention as some scholars would like: that of gender. Although female correspondents appear throughout, and Rachel Jackson's letters certainly catch the reader's eye, most of this volume revolves around men and male endeavors.

As to the mechanics of volume 6, the annotation is solid and the discussion of document collection is sound. Although the primary beneficiaries undoubtedly will be political and presidential historians, all scholars will find something of interest and value. As such, Moser's latest edition is an important and welcome contribution to the larger body of Jackson scholarship.

Note

[1]. As to the Dickinson affair: in May 1806 Jackson initiated a duel with Charles Dickinson over perceived slanders stemming from a horseracing debt. It was a bloody ordeal that Jackson won, but at the expense of receiving a bullet a few inches from his heart. Afterward the public castigated him for it, and his political opponents seized this information for the 1828 campaign. For more on the Dickinson affair, see Robert Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire, 1767-1821* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977); or Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace and War, 1760s-1880s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

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