

THE PAPERS OF
Andrew Jackson
VOLUME IV, 1816-1820



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EDITORS



This fourth volume of *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, covering the five-year period from 1816 through 1820, documents Jackson's role as a major general in the United States Army during James Monroe's first term as president. Already in his early fifties, the Hero of New Orleans had served his country for more than thirty years and, as he repeatedly professed, longed to leave public life.

In general, the two themes of service and honor dominated Jackson's career and actions and precluded retirement. As the documents reveal, Jackson's military duties mainly involved establishing and keeping the peace between Indians and whites and protecting the peace won at New Orleans. In fostering domestic peace, Jackson as Indian treaty negotiator secured for the United States millions of acres of Indian land on the southern and western frontiers, forcing the Indians westward and opening the fertile lands for white settlement. Security of the Gulf Coast against foreign intervention remained foremost in Jackson's mind during these years, and to ward off any foreign threats, Jackson oversaw topographical surveys of the Gulf Coast and the construction of a string of fortifications along the frontier. Jackson's preoccupation with Gulf Coast security led to one of the most important, and one of the most controversial, decisions of his long career: the invasion of Florida in 1818.

Jackson's service to his country during these years was distinguished, though not without controversy. Among other questionable actions and a nearly endless array of quarrels, his invasion of Pensacola saddled him with baggage that he never lost. For one faction, the Pensacola affair offered irrefutable proof that he was the "savior" of his country; for another, it was merely additional evidence that he was a "military chieftain." From mid-1818 through 1820, Jackson's actions as major general became a chief topic of politics in Washington. To the assaults on his character and honor, Jackson responded with a dogged determination to remain at his post so long as there was any hint of tarnish to his name and reputation.



The Series

The Papers of Andrew Jackson is to be a selective edition of sixteen volumes, bringing together the full text of the most significant letters and documents by and to Jackson. Each volume will also list and describe the remaining body of Jackson manuscripts, drawn from widely scattered repositories, not selected for reproduction. A comprehensive index will complete the series.

The Editors

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Jacket illustration: Andrew Jackson, oil on canvas by Charles Willson Peale. Courtesy of Collections of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania on Deposit with the Masonic Library and Museum of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

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EXCERPTS FROM VOLUME FOUR

On Presidential Appointments

AJ TO JAMES MONROE, November 12, 1816

“Now is the time to exterminate that *Monster* called Party spirit. By selecting characters most conspicuous for their probity, Virtue, capacity and firmness, without any regard to party, you will go far to, (if not entirely,) eradicate those feelings which on former occasions threw so many obstacles in the way of government; and, perhaps, have the *pleasure*, and *honor*, of uniting a people heretofore (now) politically divided. The Chief Magistrate of a great and powerful nation should never indulge in party feelings. His conduct should be liberal and disinterested, *always* bearing in mind that he acts for the *whole* and not a *part* of the community.”

On Indian Treaty Negotiations

AJ TO JAMES MONROE, March 4, 1817

“I have long viewed treaties with the Indians an absurdity not to be reconciled to the principles of our Government. The Indians are the subjects of the United States, inhabiting its territory and acknowledging its sovereignty, then is it not absurd for the sovereign to negotiate by treaty with the subject—I have always thought, that Congress had as much right to regulate by acts of Legislation all Indian concerns as they had of Territories”

On Military Chain of Command

DIVISION ORDER, April 22, 1817

“The commanding General considers it due to the principles of subordination, which ought and must exist in an army, to prohibit the obedience of any order emanating from the Department of War, to officers of this Division, who have reported and been assigned to duty, unless coming through him as the proper organ of communication.”

On Retirement

AJ TO JAMES MONROE, December 20, 1817

“It is my wish to retire from publick life, for I am advancing to that age which makes retirement desirable, but as long as I can be really serviceable to my country and there remains any prospect of my services being wanted I will not retire”

On the Constitution

AJ TO ANDREW JACKSON DONELSON, January 31, 1820

“Let me assure you my young friend that I have suffered too many privations in my youth for the Establishment of that happy constitution, & form of goverment, under which we live ever to violate its provisions, unless when dire necessity compells me; and then only to preserve my country, & the constitution with it.”

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