


BOOK REVIEWS

anda M. Freeman, Louise V. North, and Janet M. Wedge, eds. *Selected Letters of John Jay and Sarah Livingston Jay: Correspondence by or to the First Justice of the United States and His Wife*. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2005. Pp. 319, photographs and illustrations, appendices, chronology, bibliography, index. Hardcover \$75.00.)

The American Revolution is, and will remain, one of the most researched and studied periods in American history. The importance of the separation from Great Britain is equaled only by the stature of the men and women who fostered the Revolution. To better understand these important people, historians have long studied their correspondence. This new collection looks at two such important figures, John Jay and Sarah Livingston Jay. John Jay served in the Continental Congress, ambassador to Spain, and president of the Continental Congress. He also later served as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court during the Washington

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administration. Sarah Livingston Jay was an important sounding board for her husband's ideas and thoughts throughout their marriage. She also served as an important connection to the Jay and Livingston families while John served his country in Congress and abroad.

The preface of *Selected Letters of John Jay and Sarah Livingston Jay* provides a brief biography of John and Sarah to familiarize readers with their relationship, while the introduction provides family trees of the Jay and Livingston families as well as short histories of these two influential New York families. The editors also discuss, in detail, the colonial postal system of the 1700s and the practice of letter writing. Anyone wishing to study the colonial postal system or the importance of family correspondence will find this an excellent reference.

The editors, moreover, provide a guide to help readers understand the letters and connect them to important events of the time. Chapter headings provide excellent descriptions of the most important correspondence in each section. Illustrations provide further insight into the Jay family and their correspondence. The editors also provide definitions to archaic words found in the letters, possibly unfamiliar to modern readers, which makes *Selected Letters of John Jay and Sarah Livingston Jay* a very reader-friendly work.

Everyday life in late colonial America could be difficult at times and the letters provide a firsthand account of the daily concerns brought about by the American Revolution. The hopes and wishes of a people can be seen in the correspondence between John and Sarah. The letters also provide a glimpse into the political atmosphere of the Revolution and the struggle to legitimize the Revolution in Europe. The section on Jay's diplomatic work in Spain is especially useful in this regard.

Laid out in an easy to read narrative fashion, the Jays' story draws the reader beyond the lives of the Jays and into the Revolution itself. The selected correspondence is not only between John and Sarah, but other family members and notables of colonial America, including such important people as Benjamin Franklin, the Marquis de Lafayette, and John Adams, among others. The editors do not try to analyze the letters or discuss their importance against the broader scope of the Revolution. Rather, they let the letters speak for themselves. However, as the title reveals, the editors "selected" certain correspondence over others, which points to possible omissions in the "narrative." They do, nevertheless, keep all of the letters in the book intact and do not edit them individually in any way.

Throughout his career, Sarah remained John's faithful wife and anchor in turbulent times. She helped to further his political career, provided much needed information when both knew their letters were being intercepted and read, and kept John well informed on the local course of the war and the family. Their letters stand not only as powerful messages between husband and wife but as two people living in extraordinary times. As such, their correspondence offers much to not only historians of the Revolutionary period, but of marriage and the family in the late eighteenth century.

JASON M. SOKIERA

University of Southern Mississippi

Jerrold M. Packard. *The Lincolns in the White House: Four Years that Shattered a Family*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005. Pp. 304, 32 pages of photographs. Notes, bibliography, index. \$26.95.)

The title *The Lincolns in the White House: Four Years that Shattered a Family* suggests not only the tragedies that afflicted the Lincolns and their family during the years 1861–1865, but also the interactions with the historic house that surrounded and influenced family relationships. Indeed, no contemporary historian has focused exclusively on the many social, personal, and medical travails that challenged the Lincoln family during its White House years. Packard's novel perspective should have provided opportunity for the telling of a relatively fresh story that included treatment of all the travails to which a loving family was subjected as they attempted to live their lives while one of their members governed the nation during four years of national crisis. Unfortunately, this book does not live up to this promise.

A professional writer of books about the nineteenth-century in Britain and America, Jerrold Packard has retold an established tale without offering anything new or of consequence to readers who have already read David Donald's *Lincoln*. Lincoln emerges from these pages as we have come to know him: a hard-working chief executive, dedicated to his children, and committed to his wife despite her well-known shortcomings. Because Packard took his research solely from books and a few Internet sites, he has not incorporated the most recent scholarship either on Mary or the Lincoln's marriage. Accepting the biting depiction of Mary by Lincoln's aides John Hay and John