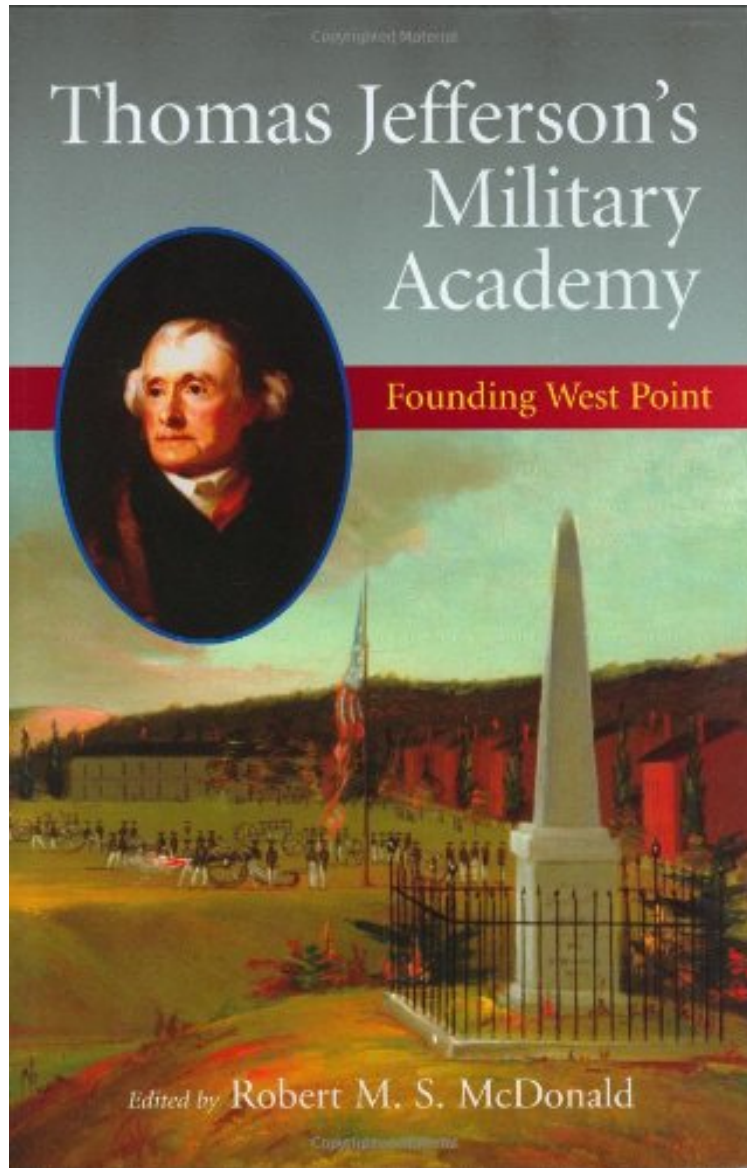


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Thomas Jefferson's Military Academy: Founding West Point (Jeffersonian America)

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From Brand: University of Virginia Press : Thomas Jefferson's Military Academy: Founding West Point (Jeffersonian America) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Thomas Jefferson's Military Academy: Founding West Point (Jeffersonian America):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Top NotchBy Hugh PiperSound and diverse array of scholarly

works. This is truly the canonical history of West Point's founder and its role in the early republic.³ of 5 people found the following review helpful. Excellent. By Caleb S. Cage Suppose you are elected to the presidency of the United States in such a way that contemporaries and histories refer to your movement as revolutionary. Suppose you are elected to unify a polarized--and indeed lopsided--nation. Your predecessor used every power of his high office to destroy you and to quell your movement. He used the rhetoric of order to suppress dissent with powerful new legislation and new bureaucracies that would no doubt remain partisan in nature. Already in existence, of course, was the military, an organization already powerfully in your opponent's corner. He cleverly used second-tier bureaucratic appointees, like the regional US Attorneys, fully packed with his own partisans, to frustrate your causes every chance he got. You, in this case, are Thomas Jefferson, the "change" candidate of the Revolution of 1800, and in the most acrimonious election in American history, you have taken control of the executive branch by defeating President John Adams. There is only one question: what do you do to reverse John Adams's machinations enough to allow you to govern? Ted Crackel, author of one of the finest essays in this collection, argues convincingly that President Jefferson, quickly and methodically moved to counteract Adams' residual presence in his branch by signing into law the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1802. In doing so, and in conjunction with his replacement of most other Federalist partisans in the first and second tier of federal appointments, Jefferson was moving to not only untie his own hands to govern, but to also move towards a more balanced union. The establishment of the Military Academy effectively meant that Jefferson would be able to appoint future members of the US Army officer corps to an institution that would not only groom them for service, but help facilitate their Republican-ness. Jennings Wagoner and Christine Coalwell McDonald's essay on the educational history of the academy fascinates as well, and supports Crackel's thesis. Jefferson, always one to elegantly maximize his policy-proposals towards his broader vision, saw the military academy as an opportunity to not only Republicanize the Army, but as his best shot at a national scientific university that would complement his University of Virginia in Republicanizing the nation. Opening the volume, Don Higginbotham, David Mayer, and Elizabeth Samet all lay out various arguments connecting the Academy to the President. Higginbotham lays the groundwork for the Academy by laying out its pedagogical and institutional models. Mayer explains that a nuanced read of Jefferson's Constitutional reading allows for explanation of his perceived inconsistency in creating a national Military Academy. And Samet depicts the quiet ways in which Adams and Jefferson were alike in wanting to preserve the duty and disinterestedness of the early republic, even if they never quite saw eye to eye in the election of 1800. Rob McDonald's essay points to our upcoming election in much the same way that Ted Crackel's does in explaining how Jefferson was the lost founder of the Military Academy. His memory was clouded as the Academy became more partisan, and the neo-Hamiltonian wing of the Republican Party (the swaggering Roosevelt-ians who are clearly the predecessors of today's neoconservative movement.) In the end he associates hope for the Academy through its appreciation and self-association with Jefferson and Jefferson's ideas. One can hope that he is right, and that the unveiling of the Thomas Jefferson Library later this Fall on the West Point campus will help open the eyes of the cadets to the rights of man, and thus, inform the greater Army with liberal principles over partisan haggling.

Why did Thomas Jefferson, who claimed to abhor war and fear standing armies, in 1802 establish the United States Military Academy? For more than two centuries this question has received scant attention, despite the significant contributions of both Jefferson and West Point to American history. Thomas Jefferson's Military Academy is the most comprehensive treatment to date of the origins, purposes, and legacies of Jefferson's school on the cliffs above the Hudson River. In a series of essays, an interdisciplinary group of military historians, legal and constitutional scholars, and experts on Jefferson's thought challenge the conventional wisdom that the third president's founding of the academy should be regarded as accidental or ironic. Although Jefferson feared the potential power of a standing army, the contributors point out he also contended that "whatever enables us to go to war, secures our peace." They take a broad view of Jeffersonian security policy, exploring the ways in which West Point bolstered America's defenses against foreign aggression and domestic threats to the ideals of the American Revolution. Written in clear and accessible prose, Thomas Jefferson's Military Academy should appeal to scholars and general readers interested in military history and the founding generation. Contributors: Peter S. Onuf, University of Virginia Don Higginbotham, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill David N. Mayer, Capital University Law School Elizabeth D. Samet, United States Military Academy Theodore J. Crackel, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania Jennings L. Wagoner Jr., University of Virginia Christine Coalwell McDonald, Storm King School Samuel J. Watson, United States Military Academy Robert M. S. McDonald, United States Military Academy Jean M. Yarbrough, Bowdoin College

McDonald's collection permanently corrects the view that Jefferson was the academy's 'accidental founder.' The contributors illuminate the complexity of Jefferson's motives as well as the larger context in which his decision was made. Taken together, the essays offer a compelling story of one of Jefferson's most unlikely, but most enduring, accomplishments. (Rosemarie Zagari, George Mason University) About the Author Robert M. S. McDonald is

professor of history at the United States Military Academy.