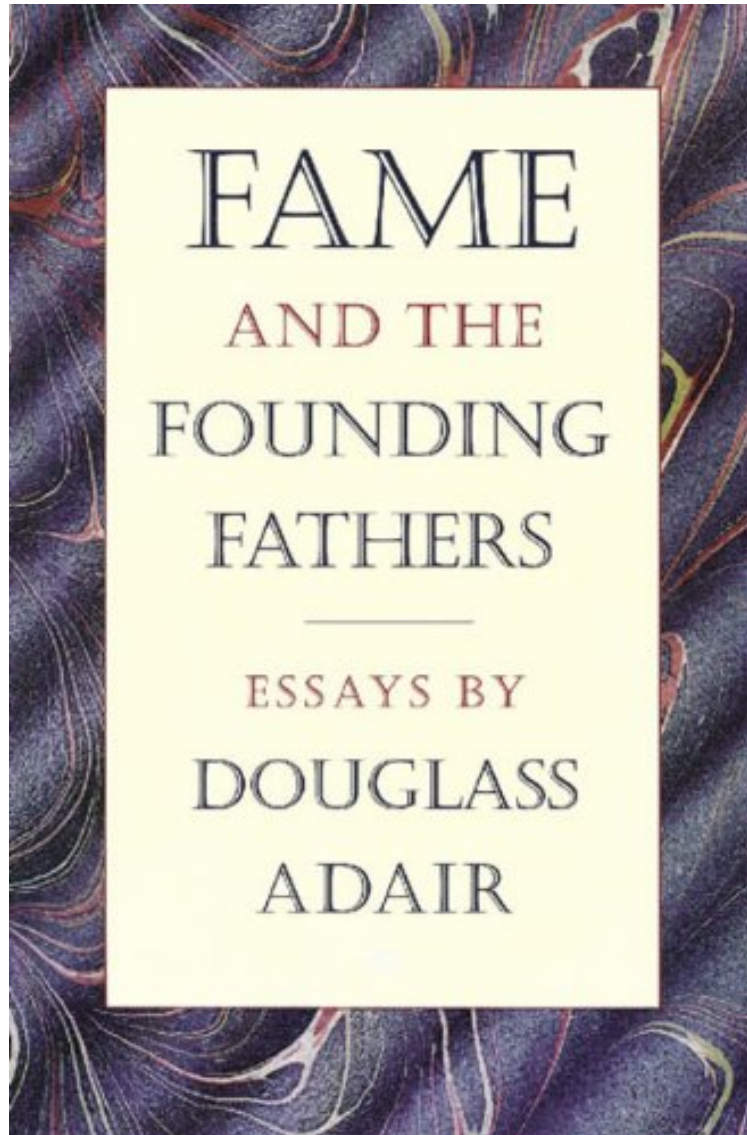


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Fame and the Founding Fathers

Douglass Adair

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Douglass G. Adair (1913-1968) revolutionized the study of American history in the Revolutionary and early national periods -- and yet, except for those who worked with him and learned from his writings, nobody has heard of him. Adair is one of the great tragic figures in the history of American history. He became the editor of the WILLIAM AND MARY

QUARTERLY and transformed that musty journal into the leading scholarly journal on American history and culture to 1815. His essays, mostly published there but also in other widely scattered venues, turned the writing of history of the Founding upside down. Not for Adair was stale economic determinism or patriotic hero-worship. Rather, Adair took ideas seriously, and took seriously the idea that human beings shape and are shaped by the ideas that capture their imaginations and move them to action. Adair took his own life in 1968, after years of struggle with academic culture's emphasis on writing books. His friends and colleagues gathered his best essays and published them in *FAME AND THE FOUNDING FATHERS* as a memorial to him. The essays collected in this volume are dazzling explorations in the history of ideas and politics. In the now-classic "The Authorship of the Disputed FEDERALIST PAPERS", Adair not only solved a historical puzzle that had perplexed generations of Americans -- he provided a model of deft historical detective work. Similarly, his two essays on THE FEDERALIST No. 10 -- "The Tenth FEDERALIST Revisited" and "'That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science:' Hume, Madison, and the Tenth FEDERALIST" -- are indispensable to anyone who would understand the FEDERALIST or James Madison. Among the other important essays collected here are Adair's superb brief biography of Madison, his trio of essays exploring knotty puzzles in the life and career of Alexander Hamilton, and his still-controversial essay on Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings -- though this last essay has been exploded by the work of Annette Gordon-Reed in her pathbreaking *THOMAS JEFFERSON AND SALLY HEMINGS: AN AMERICAN CONTROVERSY* (University Press of Virginia, 1997). In 1974, when this book first appeared, I had just completed my freshman year of college. I read it eagerly, and it opened my eyes to the value of writing about difficult historical issues in an elegant and accessible way. Anyone who is interested in American history between the 1770s and the 1830s must read this fine book. Anyone who cares about writing about history for a wide general audience will find this book to be a treasured model. I owe Douglass Adair, who died when I was 12, a debt that I can never repay. I hope that others will read this book and contract similar debts.-- Richard B. Bernstein, Adjunct Professor of Law, New York Law School

13 of 14 people found the following review helpful. A buried classic's welcome return
By A Customer
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[N.B.: This review was originally written for the paperback edition of this book and submitted to .com on 12 October 1998. It accompanies the listing for the paperback edition and should also accompany the simultaneously-published hardcover edition from the same publisher. -- RBB]

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