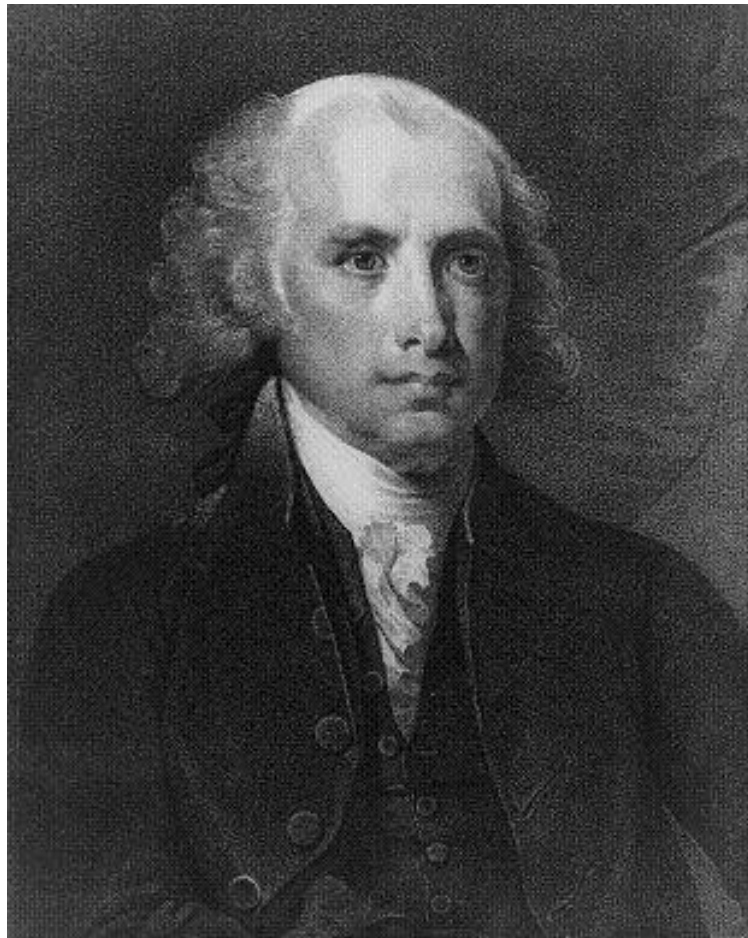


James Madison

Absquatulater
Fourth, 1809-1817



Nicknames: "The Father of the Constitution", "The Fugitive President", "Withered Little Apple-John"

Birth: March 16th, 1751, Port Conway, Virginia

Death: June 28th, 1836, Montpelier, Virginia

Significant Events During Madison's Terms: Battle of Tippecanoe ... War of 1812 ... New Madrid Earthquakes ... Battle of the Thames/Tecumseh killed ... Battle of New Orleans ... Louisiana (#18) and Indiana (#19) become States

Quotes: *"If men were angels, no government would be necessary."* -- James Madison

"A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."

-- James Madison

"No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare." -- James Madison

How his term ended: Madison retired after his second term, in keeping with Washington's precedent.

Other Professions: Lawyer

Worst Mistake: Madison stole the liberty from all of those whom he enslaved.

Saving Grace: Although a slaveholder himself, Madison did at least advocate the abolition of slavery, albeit gradually. When government officials are willing to do the right thing, but not until "later" (let somebody else do it), especially regarding slavery, it reminds me of Martin Luther King, Jr's response to the exhortation to exercise patience regarding the acquisition of equal rights for minorities: "We have waited for more than three hundred and forty years for our constitutional and God-given rights." How long would the would-be mollifiers be willing to wait for relief if it were they who had been the afflicted?

Notes: Madison was a key player in the Constitution, shaping and writing it; he was also co-author of the pro-Constitution "Federalist Papers" along with Alexander Hamilton and John Jay. He later authored the Bill of Rights, too.

Patrick Henry, author of "Common Sense" and the man who demanded, "Give me Liberty or Give Me Death!" was against ratification of the Constitution, as he thought it gave too much power to a central government.

Although he had, as mentioned, co-authored "The Federalist Papers," Madison later switched from the Federalist to the Democratic-Republican party, siding with Thomas Jefferson (#3) over Alexander Hamilton and his relative George Washington on the issue.

At 5'4" and 100 pounds, Madison was the shortest and slightest President. On the other end of the scale (no pun intended), the heaviest was William Howard Taft (#27), who, though "only" 6 feet tall weighed more than 350 pounds during his term as President.

Madison often made a bad first impression on people due to his diminutive size, shy nature, weak voice (thin and low volume), as well as his lack of skill at small talk.

Madison's father died when he was nine years of age. Although one of his nicknames was "The Father of the Constitution" due to his work on the Constitution and Bill of Rights,

Madison never became a father to any human descendants.

Madison was the first President to regularly wear long trousers (as opposed to knee-breeches).

Madison suffered with psychosomatic seizures similar to epilepsy.

The War of 1812 took place during Madison's presidency (it was sometimes referred to then as "Mr. Madison's War"). France and Britain, as was their wont, were also engaging each other in warfare at the time. Some Americans (mostly New Englanders) favored Britain, others (primarily those in the South and the West) favored France; Madison endeavored to stay neutral in that conflict.

The reason given for the War of 1812 against Britain was that Britain was "impressing" American citizens as sailors on its ships (kidnapping them and forcing them to work as seamen). This was not really the case, as Britain had agreed to stop the practice shortly before the war was declared. The real reason for the war was Britain's hope to regain its lost colonies, and America's aim to acquire even more territory – most specifically British Canada.

During the War of 1812, Madison fled to safety when the British were approaching Washington, D.C., thus leaving his wife Dolley behind to "defend" the White House. She waited for him as long as she could, and finally rescued the portrait of George Washington just before the British arrived and burned the place. Upon their return to Washington, the Madisons lived in Octagon House while the White House was being repaired.

Madison expressed himself about impressment this way: "Thousands of American citizens ...have been torn from their country and from everything dear to them; have been dragged on board ships of war of a foreign nation and exposed; under the severities of their discipline, to be exiled to the most distant and deadly climes, to risk their lives in the battles of their oppressors, and to be the melancholy instruments of taking those of their own brethren."

His indignation was certainly justified, but what about Madison himself? He was a slaveholder. The same objection he made against Britain could have been made regarding America's treatment of kidnapped Africans. Apparently, the President failed to note the parallel.

Besides Washington, Madison was also related to Zachary Taylor (#12).