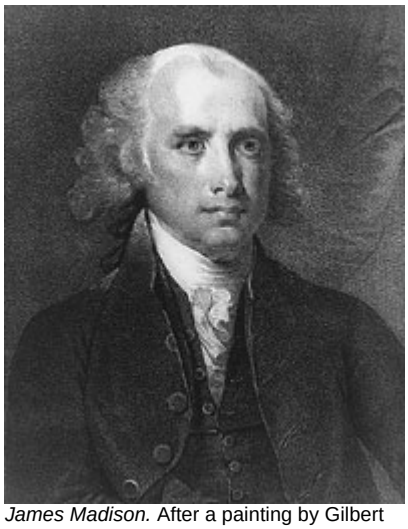

James Madison. After a painting by Gilbert Stuart.
Courtesy of the Library of Congress (LC-USZ62-13004 DLC).

Madison, James (5 Mar. 1751-28 June 1836), "the father of the Constitution" and fourth president of the United States, was born in King George County, Virginia, the oldest child of James Madison, Sr., and Nelly Conway, who at the time was visiting her mother's estate on the Rappahannock River. The senior Madison, a vestryman, a justice of the peace, and Orange County's leading planter, was the master of 4,000 acres and perhaps 100 slaves. Although without a formal education of his own, he was determined to provide his namesake with the training and accomplishments appropriate for one who was expected to assume a place among the great Virginia gentry. In 1762, at age eleven, the younger Madison (who would subscribe himself "James Madison, Jr.," until his father's death in 1801) began five years of study at Donald Robertson's boarding school in King and Queen County. From there, encouraged by the Reverend Thomas Martin, who gave him two more years of tutoring at home, he traveled north to Princeton, where he passed examinations with the freshman class in September 1769 and completed the next three years in two.

The Madisons, like Martin, were enthusiastic Whigs, and James matured with the American Revolution. In 1765, while he was learning Greek and Latin at the Scotsman's school, Patrick Henry opened the revolt against the Stamp Tax. Politics, together with the rising reputation of the institution, may have influenced his selection of the College of New Jersey, where President John Witherspoon (1723-1794), another immigrant from Scotland and a future signer of the Declaration of Independence, directed a curriculum that may have been the most progressive and exciting on the seaboard. At Princeton, patriotic students dressed in homespun, mustered in their academic garb to demonstrate against the relaxation of nonimportation, and spoke at their commencements on "The Rising Glory of America" or on the circumstances under which oppression could be rightfully resisted. After graduating in September 1771, Madison stayed in Princeton through the winter, mending his debilitated health and reading law, theology, and Hebrew under Witherspoon's direction. He returned to the plantation in the spring, two years before Parliament responded to colonial resistance with the infamous Coercive Acts. As Orange County mobilized for war, he joined his father on the local Committee of Safety, practiced with a rifle, and drilled with the county militia. As he put it late in life, "he was under very early and strong impressions in favor of liberty both civil and religious."

The Revolutionary War

Civil and religious liberty were intimately linked in Madison's career and thinking. His intense involvement in the early Revolution is a necessary starting point for understanding his distinctive role among the major framers of the Constitution. Although religious topics disappear from his surviving papers after 1776 and his mature convictions are unknown, he was an earnest Christian on the eve of independence and, throughout his long career, a dedicated champion of the Enlightenment's most forward-looking stance on freedom of religion. His earliest involvement in Virginia's politics, in 1774, was to denounce the jailing of unlicensed preachers in neighboring

Culpeper County. When his feeble health defeated plans for active military service, the gratitude of Baptist neighbors may have helped him win election to the state convention of 1776, which framed one of the earliest, most widely imitated revolutionary constitutions. In this convention, he made his first important contribution to the revolutionary reconstruction: an amendment that replaced a reference to religious "toleration" with a recognition of an equal, universal right to freely exercise religion and wrote into Virginia's Declaration of Rights a standard that no society had ever recognized in its organic law. He also gave his full support to Thomas Jefferson's attempts to liberalize the state's religious statutes.

Defeated at the next election--he would not provide the customary treats for voters--Madison was soon selected by the legislature as a member of the executive Council of State, where he served with Governors Henry and Jefferson. Two years later, in December 1779, the legislature picked him as a delegate to Congress. In that body, where he set an unexampled record for attendance, he acquired a continental reputation for his mastery of legislative business. Seated in the spring of 1780, Madison was instrumental in Virginia's cession of its claims to the old Northwest, which paved the way to ratification of the Articles of Confederation and the creation of a national domain. Soon regarded as the most effective member of the Congress, he appealed repeatedly to his Virginia friends for full compliance with congressional requests, favored the creation of executive departments, and supported Robert Morris's attempts to bring more rationality to the Department of Finance. At the conclusion of the war, when angry grumblings in the unpaid army posed a crisis, he introduced the compromise that ended in the congressional recommendations of 18 April 1783, which called upon the states for an amendment to the Articles permitting Congress to impose a 5 percent duty on foreign imports, for the completion of their western cessions, and for other revenues required to pay the interest on the continental debt. He retired from Congress in November 1783 and stood immediately for reelection to the state assembly.

When Madison returned to the Virginia House of Delegates in April 1784, he was the commonwealth's most knowledgeable authority on federal affairs, accepted from the outset as a major legislative leader. He supported the reforms of April 1783. He was an advocate, as well, of granting Congress power to retaliate against British restrictions on the country's foreign trade. He hoped that peace would make it easier for states to meet their federal requisitions, that better times and quick adoption of these limited reforms would make it possible for Congress to fulfill its obligations and restore its faltering prestige. However, he had learned that absolute dependence on the states for revenues, as well as for enforcement of its treaties, rendered the Confederation government unequal to its tasks and could endanger its existence. Thus, he watched the nation's progress from an apprehensive, continentalist perspective, convinced that revolutionary liberty could not survive disintegration of the continental union, which protected the republican experiment from foreign intervention and secured the states against the rivalries and fragmentation that had splintered Europe and condemned its peoples to oppressive taxes, swollen military forces, tyranny, and wars.

Creation of a National Republic

Peace, however, was succeeded by a sharp postwar depression. The states did not approve amendments to the Articles of Union. Most of them were late or short in meeting their federal requisitions. Animosities between them rose to dangerous extremes as several tried, by separate legislation, to retaliate against restrictions on their trade, only to be baffled by conflicting regulations by their neighbors. Deprived of steady revenues, the Continental Congress failed to manage its domestic debt and found it ever harder to secure the European loans with which it met its foreign obligations. In 1786, as Madison prepared for the Annapolis Convention, northerners and southerners clashed bitterly in Congress over the negotiation of a commercial treaty with

Spain. Deadlocked on this issue and unable to agree on new proposals for a federal power over commerce, members from both sections talked about a speedy separation into smaller, regional confederations.

Madison had never been an unreserved enthusiast for extralegal meetings, and a convention to consider better means of regulating trade had won his backing only after other motions were defeated. At Annapolis, however, Madison and others gathered in a context of profound, immediate concern for the survival of the union. More in desperation than with any real conviction that the measure would succeed, the dozen delegates on hand agreed upon the most decisive action circumstances would permit, recommending the appointment of another general convention to consider all of the "exigencies" of the Confederation. From September forward, Madison was thoroughly committed to this course.

By 1786, moreover, Madison no longer hoped that a revision of the Articles could solve the country's problems. Neither was he worried solely by the peril of disunion. In all the states, the legislatures were attempting to protect their citizens from economic troubles. Many of their measures--paper money, laws suspending private suits for debts, postponements of taxation, and continued confiscations of the Loyalists' estates--interfered with private contracts, threatened people's right to hold their property secure, or robbed the states of the resources necessary to fulfill their individual and federal obligations. To Madison, the multiplicity, the mutability, and the injustices of local laws were challenging the basic premise of republics: that private rights and public good could both be best protected by the body of the people.

Virginia managed to avoid the worst abuses of the middle 1780s, but Madison was thinking continentally. During the fall of 1786, correspondents warned him of increasing disillusionment with popular misgovernment, especially in Massachusetts, where Shays's Rebellion climaxed in the winter (see Daniel Shays). Virginia's own immunity from insurrection or abuses seemed increasingly in doubt. The legislature had refused to call for a revision of Virginia's constitution. Madison had often been defeated when he moved for major state and federal reforms. His single greatest triumph, the enactment of the Statute for Religious Freedom (19 Jan. 1786) had been won, in his opinion, only after jealousies between Virginia's multiplicity of sects had blocked the passage of a bill providing tax support for teachers of religion, which would have been a devastating blow to freedom of religious conscience. Fearful and disgusted, Madison was even more afraid that the revulsion from abuses in the states could spread in time to growing numbers of the people, whose commitment to the revolutionary enterprise was threatened by a governmental system that could not advance their interests or protect their fundamental rights. An effectual reform, he told one correspondent, must "perpetuate the union." More than that, it must "redeem the honor of the republican name."

Framing the Constitution (1787)

No one played so critical a part in the developments that followed. Returning from Annapolis to the Virginia state assembly, Madison secured the legislature's quick endorsement of the plan for a convention, wrote the resolutions that announced the state's profound commitment to the project, and helped persuade George Washington to lead a delegation whose quality encouraged other states to send distinguished men as well. Selected for the delegation, he was also reelected now that he was eligible again, to his familiar place in the Confederation Congress. Rushing to New York, he helped complete the groundwork for a well-attended meeting. By this time, he may already have prepared his notes on other ancient and modern confederations. In April 1787 he also wrote a formal memorandum on the "Vices of the Political System of the United States." Here and in his letters to his friends, he argued that the mortal ills of the Confederation government and the

concurrent crisis in the states demanded the abandonment of the existing federal system and the substitution of a national republic that would derive directly from the people, would possess effective, full, and independent powers over matters of general concern, and would incorporate so many different economic interests and religious sects that popular majorities could seldom form "on any other principles than those of justice and the public good." Urging other members of Virginia's delegation to arrive in Philadelphia in time to reach agreement on some introductory proposals for the meeting, he arrived, himself, the best prepared of all who gathered for the great convention.

Madison made numerous distinctive contributions to the writing of the Constitution. To begin with, he was certainly the major author of the resolutions introduced by Edmund Randolph (1753-1813) on 29 May: the propositions that initiated the convention's sweeping reconsideration of the federal system and served throughout the summer as the outline for reform. In the early weeks of the deliberations, he and other advocates of this "Virginia Plan" persuasively explained why no reform could prove effective if it left the central government dependent on the states. With other members from the larger states, he argued stubbornly for proportional representation in both houses of the Congress, popular ratification of the new federal charter, and a careful balance of authority between a democratic House of Representatives and branches less immediately responsive to majority demands. Most distinctively of all, he urged the other members not to limit their attention to the weaknesses of the Confederation but to come to grips as well with the vices of republican government as these had been revealed in the revolutionary states. A sound reform, he argued, had to grant the central government the powers necessary to perform its delegated tasks. A sound reform would also have to overcome the doubts engendered by majority abuses, both by placing limitations on the states and by correcting the mistakes of governmental structure common to the early revolutionary constitutions. In all these ways, Madison pushed the convention toward a thoroughgoing reconsideration of the nature of a sound republic, even as the other members were compelling him to reconsider his initial thoughts about the character of federal reform. The finished Constitution differed in a number of significant respects from his original proposals. Nevertheless, by general agreement of his peers and modern scholars, he was unmistakably the most important of its framers.

The federal convention ended on 17 September. Before returning to Virginia, where his leadership was crucial to defeating Henry and other Antifederalists, Madison resumed his seat in the Confederation Congress, helped provide some central guidance for the ratification contest, and joined with Alexander Hamilton to write *The Federalist*, the most important exegesis and defense of the completed Constitution. Madison's numbers of *The Federalist*, regarded to this day as probably the greatest classic in the history of American political thinking, justified the compromises made by the convention, explained the partly national and partly federal government created by the charter, and in doing so, contributed as surely to the shaping of the Constitution as the work of the convention. Almost from the start, *The Federalist* was recognized as an essential source for understanding the intentions of the framers, and Madison's great theme--that the completed Constitution was entirely faithful to the principles of 1776, a necessary, democratic remedy for the diseases most destructive to republics--was only one of his enormous contributions to the document's success.

The Bill of Rights

The newly constituted government assembled in New York in April 1789. As everyone expected, Madison immediately assumed a leading role in the First Federal Congress. He drafted Washington's inaugural address, prepared the reply of the House of Representatives, and helped defeat proposals to address the president as "highness"--important contributions to the early effort

to define the protocol between the branches and to set the democratic tone he wanted for the new regime. He introduced the resolutions that resulted in the first federal tariff and took the lead in the creation of executive departments, successfully insisting that the president alone should have the power to remove executive officials. Most importantly of all, he drafted the constitutional amendments that became the Bill of Rights.

Through much of 1788, while the adoption of the Constitution was in doubt, Madison had disapproved of the demand for these amendments. He argued that the powers of the federal government were limited to matters that did not involve the fundamental rights protected by the constitutions of the states. He warned that an insistence on a federal bill of rights might threaten the essential liberties that its proponents wanted to protect; an inadvertent error or omission could become the basis for a claim to powers not intended by the Constitution. At the Virginia state convention, nonetheless, the Federalists were forced to promise that amendments would be added once the Constitution was approved; and Madison repeated this commitment during his campaign for a position in the House. Politics were not his only reason.

Throughout the course of constitutional reform, Madison's insistence on a stronger federal system had been linked to a commitment to a form of government that would remain responsive to the people. Even as he worried over popular abuses, he reminded correspondents of the dangers that could rise from rulers who were able to escape a due dependence on the people; and even as he argued that the central government would have to be released from its dependence on the states, he recognized that too much power could be placed in federal hands. In *The Federalist* he described the new regime as neither wholly national nor strictly federal in structure, but as an unexampled compound under which concurrent state and central governments would each be limited to the responsibilities that each was best equipped to meet, while each would check intrusions by the other. These ideas, together with his recognition that a Bill of Rights could reconcile the opposition and become a bulwark for the courts, enabled him to change his mind and persevere in overcoming stout congressional resistance to amendments.

The Jeffersonians

The same ideas can also help account for the "reversal" of positions many analysts associate with Madison's career. As early as the second session of the new Congress, Madison became alarmed about the sectional inequities and other dangers that appeared to him inseparable from Hamiltonian finance. Among these, as he saw it, was the broad construction of the Constitution used by Hamilton to justify his economic program. In 1791, when Secretary of the Treasury Hamilton proposed creation of a national bank, Madison protested that the chartering of corporations went beyond the powers granted by the Constitution and that bold reliance on a doctrine of implied authority could rapidly transmute a limited, republican regime into a system that could undermine the Revolution. Soon thereafter, he and Jefferson encouraged the establishment of Philip Freneau's *National Gazette*, a semiweekly watchdog over governmental usurpations. To this paper, even as he organized an opposition in the House, Madison contributed a string of unsigned essays seeking to arouse the people to the danger. Before the end of 1792, he and Jefferson were the acknowledged leaders of a movement that would soon become a true political party.

Jefferson resigned as Washington's secretary of state in December 1793. Madison continued in the House of Representatives, as leader of the party, until adjournment of the Fourth Congress in March 1797. He declined reelection. On 15 September 1794, after a courtship of four months, the longtime bachelor had married the attractive young widow, Dolley Payne Todd (Dolley Payne Madison) whose husband and one of their two children had been victims of the yellow fever epidemic of 1793. Madison himself would have no children. The same year saw the loss of

Madison's brother, Ambrose Madison, who had carried much of the responsibility for managing the family plantation. With his father in declining health and Jefferson returning to the seat of government as vice president, Madison decided that his long public service entitled him to withdraw to "Montpelier."

The retreat to private life proved brief. To Madison's disgust, the Washington administration had escaped a crisis in its relationship with Britain by concluding a commercial treaty that the Jeffersonians regarded as a sacrifice of vital national interests. Damaged and offended by this treaty, revolutionary France, at war with most of Europe since the execution of King Louis XVI, began to prey on U.S. merchant shipping. President John Adams (1735-1826) sought to solve the crisis with a combination of negotiations and increased appropriations for defense, but the negotiations stalled when unofficial agents of the French foreign minister--referred to in American dispatches as X, Y, and Z--informed the American commissioners that nothing could be done until they paid a bribe to Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, apologized for Adams's belligerent remarks, and consented to a large American loan to the French republic. In April 1798 Adams publicized the XYZ affair, and patriotic fury focused both on France and on its Jeffersonian supporters. Seizing on this panic, the Federalist-dominated Congress launched a naval war on France, together with a program intended to crush domestic opposition. The Alien and Sedition Acts unleashed a bloodless reign of terror on the opposition press.

The Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions (1798)

From the beginning of the war in Europe, Jeffersonians had feared that their opponents were conspiring to subvert the Revolution. Hamiltonian finance and broad construction of the Constitution seemed deliberately designed to concentrate all power in the distant central government and most of that in branches least responsive to the people. The foreign policy of Federalist administrations seemed to sympathize with European despots and to yearn for an alliance, maybe a reunion, with the British. Now, the Quasi-War with France, the effort to intimidate domestic opposition, the enlargement of the army, and a measure authorizing the enlistment of a larger force of 50,000 men (which was to take the field in the event of an invasion) seemed abundant proof that this conspiracy had burst into the open. While Republicans in Congress blasted the repressive legislation as a patent violation of the First Amendment and a potent danger to the people's underlying right to criticize official acts and change their government through free elections, Jefferson and Madison decided to arouse the states. Each drafted secret legislative resolutions condemning the Alien and Sedition Acts. Madison gave his to John Taylor (1753-1824) of Caroline, Virginia's agricultural thinker and an influential party pamphleteer. Jefferson slipped his to John Breckinridge (1760-1806) of Kentucky. On 16 November 1798 Kentucky's legislature resolved that the repressive laws were unconstitutional, "void and of no force." On 24 December Virginia voted a similar condemnation and called upon the other states to join the protest.

All the other states refused to join Virginia and Kentucky on a path that led, much later, to nullification and secession. Their responses to the resolutions prompted Madison to stand for reelection to the state assembly in 1799 and to prepare his Report of 1800, which explained the compact theory of the Constitution and initiated modern, literalist interpretations of the First Amendment as proscribing any governmental interference with the free development and circulation of opinion. The Kentucky and Virginia resolutions also opened the campaign of 1800, which carried the Republicans to power.

Service as Jefferson's Secretary of State

Madison returned to federal office as his old collaborator's first lieutenant. From 1801 to 1809, he served not only as the new administration's secretary of state, but also as a principal adviser on the range of policies that followed from the president's determination to restore the federal balance and withdraw the central government to the limits that the Jeffersonians believed had been intended when the people ratified the Constitution.

The victory of 1800, as the Jeffersonians conceived it, rescued the Republic from a plot that might have ended in subversion of the Constitution and a reintroduction of hereditary rule. Nonetheless, a party victory was not enough without a change of governmental measures. Hamilton and his successors had supported rapid economic growth, envisioning the quick emergence of an integrated state in which the rise of native manufactures would provide materials for export and a large domestic market for the farmers. Republican ambitions focused more upon the West, where a republic resting on the sturdy stock of independent farmer-owners could be constantly revitalized as it expanded over space. The Federalists had been intent on the creation of a modern nation-state, which could compete with European empires on the Europeans' terms. Jefferson and his lieutenants hoped to free the country's oceanic commerce and provide new markets for its agricultural producers, but they also meant to keep the federal government within the limits of the Constitution. Hamilton had seen the national debt as an advantage for the country, because it could be used to back a stable currency supply. The Jeffersonians were willing to subordinate much else to the reduction of the debt as quickly as the public's contracts would permit, believing that the interest payments transferred wealth from the productive to the nonproductive classes while creating a corrupting link between the federal government and special-interest factions. In foreign policy, moreover, they intended to pursue a policy of genuine neutrality between Great Britain and the French republic, not the national subservience to Britain that had seemed to them the policy of Washington and Adams.

The "revolution of 1800," as Jefferson described it, was amazingly successful. From 1801 to 1803, the only interlude in twenty years of constant European warfare made it possible for the Republicans to concentrate on their domestic program, which consolidated their support among the people. In 1803 Napoléon Bonaparte's resumption of the war prepared the way for the Louisiana Purchase and the doubling of the size of the United States. Although he was a strict constructionist in general, Madison conceded that contingencies could sometimes justify departures from the letter of the Constitution. He defended the Louisiana Purchase on these grounds and by suggesting that a power to acquire new territory was inherent in a sovereign nation. As Jefferson's successor, he would act upon the basis of implied authority again in ordering the occupation of West Florida, where the United States and Spain had overlapping claims; and he would also recommend rechartering the national bank, maintaining that repeated acts of every part of government, repeatedly approved of by the people, had overruled his earlier opinion. Nevertheless, his leadership as president was marked by deep respect for both the letter and the spirit of the Constitution. This was, at once, his weakness and his strength.

Madison's Administration

When Madison succeeded Jefferson in 1809, like Adams, he inherited a crisis. This one, in substantial measure, was a product of his own ideas. By 1805 Napoléon controlled the whole of western Europe. Britain ruled the seas. Both powers were determined to deny their enemy the benefits of neutral commerce, trapping the United States between the tiger and the shark. By 1807, France or Britain had condemned some 1,500 U.S. ships and passed decrees that threatened most of its remaining commerce. Jefferson's administration faced the crisis in the way that Madison had always recommended. Throughout the 1790s, he and Jefferson had both maintained that the United States possessed a weapon that could guarantee its national interests as effectively as war. That

weapon was its trade. Most American exports, as the Jeffersonians conceived it, were necessities of life: raw materials and food on which the Europeans and their island colonies were vitally dependent. Most American imports, they believed, were "niceties" or "luxuries" that the United States could either do without or manufacture on its own. Accordingly, in any confrontation with the Europeans (and especially the British), the United States could force the enemy to terms by a denial of its trade; and it could do so while avoiding higher taxes, swollen military forces, rising debts, and all the other dangers to a sound republic that appeared inherent in a war.

In 1807 Jefferson's administration answered French and British depredations by imposing a complete embargo on the nation's trade. By early 1809, as Jefferson prepared to turn his office over to his friend, the embargo had resulted in a sharp depression, a revival of the Federalists, and an enforcement policy so fierce that it endangered the Republicans' commitment to protecting civil rights. With neither Jefferson nor Madison approving of the action, but with neither intervening with his party, the embargo was repealed. Congress substituted legislation limiting nonintercourse to trade between the United States and the belligerents alone.

The new administration was confronted from the start with problems it was poorly suited to resolve. A principled proponent of substantial legislative independence, Madison was different in his relationships with Congress, where rifts among Republicans had opened as the Federalists lost strength. The program of commercial confrontation was relaxed as Congress fruitlessly attempted to apply it in a manner that would hurt the Europeans more than it was hurting the United States itself. In 1810 nonintercourse was ended, and a bill was passed providing that restrictions would be reimposed on either European power if the other would respect the nation's neutral rights. Napoléon delivered an ambiguous announcement, which suggested that he might exempt Americans from his decrees. Madison decided to interpret the announcement as fulfilling the American demands and called upon the British to respond in kind. When they refused, he reimposed nonintercourse with Britain.

The War of 1812

By the winter of 1811-1812, commercial warfare had been pressed, in one form or another, for a full four years. The people were becoming restless under policies that damaged their prosperity without compelling any action by the British. The Federalists were winning state elections. Hostilities continued with the northwest tribes, which were encouraged and supplied by British officials in Canada. Thus, before the Twelfth Congress met, the president reluctantly decided that his only choices were submission to the British or a war. On 18 June, in what was basically a party vote, a declaration passed the Congress.

The War of 1812 consigned the Madison administration to a mediocre rank in modern ratings of the presidents' successes. Although its chief had recommended stronger preparations as the war approached, the United States embarked upon the conflict with a fleet of fourteen warships and an army that mustered less than 7,000 well-trained troops. After years of economic confrontation, the United States was so divided that New England governors refused to let the country's best militia march beyond the borders of their states, and western forces met with only limited success before the battle of New Orleans. Congressional refusal to preserve the national bank had crippled the treasury, and the president deliberately attempted to conduct the war at minimal expense to the republican and federal nature of the country. The consequence was thirty months of warfare, during which it was uncertain whether the United States would manage to survive intact, followed by a peace (agreed upon at Ghent, Belgium, on 24 December 1814) that settled none of the disputes about which fighting had begun.

Contemporaries, nonetheless, were more impressed with the administration's conduct and achievements than historians have been. Adams wrote that Madison had won more glory and secured more union than all of the preceding presidents combined. Certainly, the presidency ended in a brilliant burst of national harmony and pride and with important readjustments to the lessons of the war. On 5 December 1815, in his final annual message, the great coarchitect of Jeffersonian beliefs proposed a federal program of internal improvements, modest tariff protection for the infant industries that had sprung up during the war, and the creation of a new national bank. Early in 1816, with the Federalists collapsing, Congress enacted all of his proposals, although the president refused to sign the bill for internal improvements until a constitutional amendment clearly authorized the federal government to act. The readjustment hardly constituted a complete surrender to the Federalists' ideas. Madison believed that education, an enormous reservoir of western lands, and the continued leadership of the legitimate defenders of the people's Constitution might preclude the civic evils he and Jefferson had long associated with these programs. Nevertheless, his willingness to borrow from his old opponents helped legitimate the other side of a debate that had embroiled the nation since adoption of the Constitution. Within four years of Madison's retirement, the triumph of the Jeffersonian Republicans was practically complete. With James Monroe's essentially unanimous election to a second term, the country entered on a period of single-party rule.

Madison's Hopes for Preservation of the Union

Retiring to his Orange County home, Madison reassembled his surviving letters, aided Jefferson in the creation of the University of Virginia, and lived as a revered, though troubled, oracle on the creation and interpretation of the Constitution. His final years were haunted by his own insistence that the federal charter was a compact among the sovereign peoples of the several states, who were the only power capable of making a definitive decision on its meaning. This compelled him to combat the southern use of the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions to elaborate a doctrine of interposition and nullification. It compelled him also to resist the broad constructions of the Marshall Court. The Constitution could be stretched beyond endurance, he believed, much as it could be constricted to the point that the United States would once again be faced with problems of the sort that had destroyed the old Confederation. Preservation of the continental union was, as always, at the center of his hopes. As always, too, he argued to the last that only a capacity for mutual conciliation and restraint--the spirit that had marked the great convention--could preserve what he and other founders had constructed. Madison died at breakfast at Montpelier days before the sixtieth anniversary of independence. He was the last, as he had once been first, among the framers of the Constitution.

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Lance Banning

Online Resources

- The Bill of Rights
  http://www.nara.gov/exhall/charters/billrights/billmain.html
  From the National Archives and Records Administration. Includes images of the original document and a transcription.
- The Constitution of the United States
  http://www.nara.gov/exhall/charters/constitution/conmain.html
  From the National Archives and Records Administration. Includes images of the original document and a complete transcription.
- The Federalist Papers
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- Madison's Treasures
  http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/madison/
  An online exhibition from the Library of Congress.
- Montpelier: The Home of James Madison
  http://www.montpelier.org/
  From the National Trust For Historic Preservation.

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