



James Madison: Defender of the American Republic (First Men, America's Presidents)

Donald Dewey, Barbara Bennett Peterson

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This book follows the life of James Madison, our 4th president, who at the tender age of twenty-five was thrust into significant politics as an elected member of the Virginia House of Burgesses. Even in his first venture into statesmanship, Madison took notes on constitutional deliberations, a practice that he would continue in the Federal Convention that proposed the United States Constitution and throughout much of his legislative career whether in Philadelphia, New York City, or Williamsburg, Virginia. Just as most of our knowledge of the framing of the U.S. Constitution is provided by Madison's painstaking notes of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, much of our knowledge of George Mason's many contributions to the Virginia Constitution of 1776 are also known through Madison's efforts. His major personal contribution to that seminal state constitution is a brief but key phrase in the Virginia Declaration of Rights that would in many respects become a pattern for the Bill of Rights that Madison was later largely responsible for addition to the United States Constitution. His addition of a simple clause converted Mason's proposed language from religious toleration, where an official church would permit citizens to attend other churches, to religious freedom with its clear implication that it was one of the Rights of Man that were so important to that revolutionary generation. Throughout his career he remained committed to religious freedom and he is still considered one of its greatest contributors. During the brief time between his terms in Congress he would prevail in battles against the re-establishment of the Episcopal Church in Virginia and would win legislative approval for the Statute for Religious Freedom that Jefferson wrote and in which he took enormous pride, but which required the legislative management of James Madison to become law. Madison is best and justifiably known as 'Father of the Constitution'.

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