



When he was 32 years old, James Madison (then a member of the Continental Congress) fell in love with the daughter of a colleague. Totally smitten, Madison commissioned Charles Willson Peale to create miniature portraits of both himself and “Kitty” Floyd.

This image of Madison, now owned by the Library of Congress, depicts how Madison appeared at the time (in 1783). The Library’s curators [tell us more](#):

*Gold-cased oval portrait miniature, given to Catherine “Kitty” Floyd, presented as a pin, in velvet-lined container.*

As we know from history, Madison’s wife was [Dolley Payne Todd](#) (not Kitty). That’s because Kitty Floyd fell in love with someone closer to her own age (a 19-year-old medical student), thereby breaking her engagement to Madison.

James Madison has been called the “Most Significant Framers of the New Nation.” Why - during the 21st century - is he viewed in this light when, for much of America’s history, he seemed to be a man hidden in the shadows?

In addition to his major role, in drafting the U.S. Constitution, Madison was a man who knew how to form partnerships with influential people. Those partnerships were key to getting the Constitution off the ground and to helping Madison in his role as America’s fourth president.

David O. Stewart, in his 2015 book entitled [Madison’s Gift: Five Partnerships That Built America](#), tells us that Madison had five main partnerships:

*Madison’s five principal partnerships were with Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe and Madison’s influential wife, Dolley. Stewart calls this spousal tie Madison’s most important partnership. (See [Library of Congress article](#) regarding Stewart’s book.)*

What was Madison’s role in drafting America’s Constitution? The Library of Congress answers that question (and also provides some [interesting background information](#)):

*When James Madison and the other 56 delegates to the Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia in May 1787, they intended to amend the Articles of Confederation. They ended up creating a new constitution, and Madison, representing Virginia, became the chief recorder of information (he took a lot of notes).*

*Madison had helped develop Virginia’s Constitution 11 years earlier, and it was his “Virginia Plan” that served as the basis for debate in the development of the U.S. Constitution. Madison argued strongly for a strong central government that would unify the country. The Convention delegates met secretly through the summer and finally signed the proposed U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787. Did this mean that the Constitution automatically became the law of the land?*

*In order for the Constitution to become the law by which all Americans abided, two-thirds of the 13 states had to ratify (approve) it individually, and it was sent to them for this purpose on September 28. Madison campaigned for the ratification of the Constitution by co-authoring a series of essays with John Jay and Alexander Hamilton that appeared in various New York newspapers and then circulated around the states. There were 85 essays in all (Madison wrote 29), and they were known as the Federalist Papers.*

*Madison’s important contribution to the overall creation of the Constitution earned him the nickname “Father of the Constitution” later in life. On June 21, 1788, New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify the new Constitution, and that was enough to make the Constitution the law of the land. But that wasn’t all. ... Madison went on to strengthen the Constitution even further. Do you know how?*

The short answer, to that question, is “[The Bill of Rights](#).” The Library of Congress [continues its background story](#):

*In 1789, as a member of the newly created U.S. House of Representatives, James Madison introduced the first amendments (additions) to the Constitution, which are now known as the Bill of Rights. Ratification of the Constitution by some states was based on the expectation that the Constitution would be changed by amendments such as these.*

*Madison originally drafted 19 amendments, 12 of which his congressional colleagues passed on to the states for their approval.*

*On December 15, 1791, 10 had been ratified by enough states to become part of the Constitution. These amendments guarantee our individual rights as citizens, such as the freedom of speech, religion and the press (in the First Amendment)...In 1785, Madison had written one of the most significant essays regarding separation of religion and government (often referred to as the separation of church and state), which no doubt gave him inspiration for some of the Bill of Rights.*

James Madison became America's fourth president, taking office on the 4th of March, 1809 and serving until March 4, 1817.

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Credits:

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/James-Madison-Framer-of-a-New-Nation>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/James-Madison-Framer-of-a-New-Nation>