James Madison: Life Story And Political Achievements

Before he became the 4th president of the United States of America, James Madison had always been involved in politics and he helped shape the way the U.S is run today. David O. Stewart authored Madison's Gift; Five Partnerships That Built America to put into writing Madison's relationships with the most influential people of America. Stewart believed that Madison wasn't recognized to the degree that he deserved and his book expanded on his many achievements. From when he helped the nation keep a lid on their fear of division after making peace with by being the leader of the convention where he took notes which are unfortunately insignificant to us, to joining Alexander Hamilton in creating the Federalist Papers in a doubtful fight in support of ratification which he led everywhere. In addition to that, he led the first Congress where he made laws and its departments. Stewart wrote the book to pay homage to James Madison, to bring into writing his achievements with the people he came in contact with, his life with his wife, and the legacy he left behind.

Apart from what has been mentioned above, Madison contributed to multiple other aspects of the American Government. In my opinion, of all of Madison's contributions, the two that stood out to me the most were his division of the federal government and his contribution to the Federalist Papers. His plan was to divide the Federal Government into 3 branches to ensure checks and balances and complete separation of the government powers; the legislative, the executive and the judicial. The Legislative Branch which consists of the House of Representatives and Senate makes the laws, each state gets only two senators while their House of Reps depends on their state population. The Federalist Papers were written by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison. According to David O. Stewart, it was "the finest political writings by Americans ever", but this notion wasn't completely agreed to during Madison's time. The first impression of their essay was thought to be "...too learned and too long for the ignorant" (pg.45, line 22-23), it was later that Chief Justice John Marshall predicted it will be valuable like Stewart also believed.

Madison's romantic life started with heartbreak when he fell for a younger girl who later got engaged to someone around her age- it'll be years later he'd find his wife Dolley Todd. He didn't let his hurt affect him for too long as he was a family man who believed in taking care of his parents and siblings whichever way possible. In his personal life, with those, he was closest to, Madison was more of a laid back person who'd sit back and just have a conversation with wine. After Aaron Burr introduced Dolley Todd to Madison his personal life changed, they got married and he was heartbreak free. During the same time as his heartbreak, he also faced political problems with the nation being in debt and Congress's constant need to ask it's citizens for money to fund both the war and peace. And his misinterpreted social attitude couldn't have helped matters; to those who knew him in both his personal and public life he was laid back and intelligent, to those who came in contact with him, he'd seem unapproachable. So Madison went home and spent his time reading and preparing, he was more calm and patient in his political public life. He believed in working with others since their common majority goal was to build the nation. Having being raised in a plantation with slaves, Madison has always struggled -both politically and personally- with his fight for liberty and the way he was raised. When the "slavery" questions arose, he'd try to defend their actions or not outwardly oppose their actions, and he'd try to find a compromise. The mistakable hypocrisy of

it.

James Madison opposed the Bill of Rights along with Alexander Hamilton. Madison didn't see the need to make one when the new government was still under construction, he believed that the Bill of Rights -if made- was to ensure the rights of America's citizens, and states, but in his previous opinion, he saw it as limiting the citizens' rights. Later Madison realized that the Bill of Rights wasn't really hurting anyone directly if anything it wasn't horrible and it could help to unite people to the Constitution -something he'd been aiming to do. In today's society, we most definitely need a Bill of Rights. The Amendments were created when America was still recovering and trying to be their own nation, they needed something that would guarantee them a definite safety. For example, the Fifth Amendment protects people from self-incrimination, being tried in a court for the same crime more than once, and compensates those who lost properties to the government. It shouldn't come as a surprise that the latter was made law because that was an issue during the wars that were fought. The people needed a guarantee that they'd be remunerated for their sacrifices and now they could it because the law promised the compensation. There are numerous other Amendments in the Bill of Rights that help the people and this was why Madison regretted opposing it, because if tweaked a little they could still help more people. If the Bill of Rights had not been ratified earlier in our history government officials would have been corrupted more easily and Madison's fear of people being unprotected by their own country would have been a very serious reality.

Madison established a lot of important longlasting relationships with his successful partnerships. Of all of his many partnerships and friendships, his wife was the most important. Dolley Madison was formerly Dolley Payne Todd whose husband and young son died from a pestilence outbreak in Philadelphia, Dolley was left with an 18-month-old and married James Madison when her son was 2 and a half. Half his age, Madison and Dolley were the perfect alliance; she admired him, especially his height, and he loved her from the first sight. Dolley Madison was a little of everything, which made her the perfect partner; she was a little of a wife, a little of a political friend who gave her political opinion here and there and was like a little birdy, whispering into Madison's ear sometimes, she was a little of a child when she and Madison played around, she was a little feisty and she owned it when Henry Clay wondered why she was so cherished by everyone, she was a little of a party lover, a little of a decorator when she hired an architect into the Executive Mansion (or White House) to redecorate and refurnish it from what it was during the previous presidencies. For a man like James Madison, who was a politician and was always finding a better way for the United States and who had a lot of visitors who'd come to his home to discuss political matters, he didn't need another complete politician by him every day he needed a companion. A companion with grace, beauty, occasional feistiness, and a racing mind. "There was nothing in her manners that that looked like condescension...everything she did had the appearance of real kindness and seemed to spring from a sincere desire to oblige and to gratify." (pg. 283, line 12-15), she was everything Madison needed.

When he partnered with Hamilton, he created a constitutional government that controls political powers. With Washington, he built a new government and created the Bill of Rights which christened him "Father of the Constitution". When he banded with Thomas Jefferson, he co-founded the Democratic-Republican Party even though he didn't quite like political parties. With James Monroe, although it wasn't smooth sailing they shared somethings. And as his marriage to Dolley Madison continued to flourish, they were blessed with joy and a republican government, he always looked good with her. Maybe Madison's height made him an automatic

underestimation, he wasn’t John Adams, he didn’t command attention when he walked into a room, he was intelligent but almost shy, calculating and meticulous. Maybe Madison knew mostly how to work a small crowd, or maybe because he escaped when took the capital. If he had died after America’s victory at New Orleans, he would have been a national hero. Either way, Madison had a sense of priority, he knew what the nation needed first and focused on providing it.

Last but not least, Madison was on the winning side of every important event he was involved in, his cautious executive decisions helped the United States more times than the nation ever counted or remembered. All of his partnerships benefitted the nation one way or the other, and as they learned from him, he learned from them too. He is the reason why citizens, by law, are guaranteed rights to their religion and free speech, he is the reason why governments powers are limited, he’s success in the war of 1812 -even though it had its moments- gave the United States a reason to be proud, and he is part of the reason why American is a centralized and unified nation. In addition to his political prowess, Madison was a character to follow, he proved that you don’t have to be the funniest or most outgoing person in the room to be successful. He was a calculating success, and America was fortunate to have graced his presence.