**Week 2: A Virtual Field Trip in Preparation for Cumulative Examination #1**

No unread replies. No replies.

Among the most the most influential founders of the U.S. government, James Madison, is today only foggily recalled by most Americans.  More are familiar with, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, or--especially in recent years, owing to a hit Broadway musical--with Alexander Hamilton.

In reality, no one did more to think up the details of the U.S. Constitution than the now-comparatively-overlooked Madison.  As John Quincy Adams, whose father had been a sometimes-rival of James Madison's, explained to a grieving  House of Representatives in 1836, upon news that Madison had died:  it is "in a pre-eminent degree by emanations from his [Madison's] mind that we are assembled here as the Representatives of the people and States or this Union."  In other words, the basics of the whole system of government, federally joining states in the union, was first thought up in Madison's mind, well before the Constitutional Convention made them real--a conclusion well-supported in evidence that survives from the period.  For good reasons,  the generation that followed Madison's  recalled him as "The Father of the Constitution."

What manner of person, what sort of a mind,  was so dominantly behind our Constitution?    Let's begin thinking about that, and gently preparing for this week's cumulative exam, by taking a virtual tour of James Madison's still-surviving Montpelier home.  [Click here to begin (Links to an external site.)](https://www.google.com/maps/%4038.2190835%2C-78.1687263%2C2a%2C75y%2C131.6h%2C84.56t/data%3D%213m7%211e1%213m5%211sekdigAuElHgAAAQfCQIwiQ%212e0%216s//geo2.ggpht.com/cbk%3Fpanoid%3DekdigAuElHgAAAQfCQIwiQ%26output%3Dthumbnail%26cb_client%3Dmaps_sv.tactile.gps%26thumb%3D2%26w%3D203%26h%3D100%26yaw%3D51.711815%26pitch%3D0%26thumbfov%3D100%217i13312%218i6656).  Having done so, you will find yourself in "Google Street View," standing just outside of  Madison's house.  If you then mouse over the image of his home, you will see an arrow appear.  Click on it, and keep clicking to walk down the pathway to his front door, and ultimately to walk inside the house and begin looking around.  Take 5-10 minutes thus virtually touring Madison's house.

What values or priorities of Madison, and perhaps generally of people of his wealth and social standing in his time and place, do you see reflected in the layout and decor of Montpelier?   What does it tell us about Madison?  My own view--with which you need not agree--is that the very architecture and decor of Montpelier reflected a Madisonian commitment to sophisticated balance, control, equilibrium-- the very imperatives and priorities of his that we will bring sharply into focus in Cumulative Examination #1.

Note: when you are done contributing to the present discussions thread, return to this week's module: [Week Two: The Framework of Government,](https://mobap.instructure.com/courses/21600/modules/106537) and there take a sneak peak--which you are allowed, indeed encouraged, to do--at Cumulative Examination #1.

P.S.  What is that you say?  "A virtual field trip to Montpelier is not enough.  I am determined to visit it right now, in person!"  ....Okay, then.  Below is a map to get you there--think of it as analogous to the map Madison made in his mind of the Constitution even before the 1787 Constitutional Convention.  Have a great trip, and do be sure to share pictures--and maybe even some souvenirs--of your trip on the discussions board! 😉

