The Donald Robertson School was a small school attended by James Madison in King and Queen County, Virginia. Donald Robertson was born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. Came to Virginia in 1753 and became a tutor in the home of a prominent Virginia family. In 1758 he established in his own school and had, among his pupils, James Madison.

Madison attended this school from 1762 to 1767. See "James Madison The Virginia Revolutionist" by Irving Brant. pp. 57, 58, 101, 131 Published by Bobbs Merrill Co. 1941.
Among the scholars at Donald Robertson's school, three besides Madison became distinguished. "John Taylor of Caroline," brilliant of mind and frail of body, had just been adopted by his uncle, Edmund Pendleton, and attended the school while Madison was there. He was second cousin of the elder James Madison. John Tyler, father of President John Tyler, and alternately Madison's friend and foe in state politics, left the school shortly before Madison entered. Finally, to stretch the word "scholar" a bit, there was the future conqueror of the Old Northwest, George Rogers Clark, who with his elder brother Jonathan had been sent to stay during their school career at the near-by home of their maternal grandfather. The Scotch pedagog was then courting Rachel Rogers, but neither fear, favor nor avarice diverted him from the line of duty. He bounced George Rogers Clark back to the home farm -- charging, apparently, no tuition for the wasted months -- and married his Aunt Rachel, without a tremor.


He had been grounded so deeply in classical scholarship at the Donald Robertson school that what he received later was surplusage. Ibid. Ch.V, p.101.

Madison's northward trip coincided with a decision made in his father's household that William Madison, now in his twelfth year, was ready to leave home and go to school. The decision was made late in 1773 with uncertainty as to his destination. Donald Robertson's school had closed (the pedagog turning farmer), and no other in Virginia was convenient. Ibid., Ch. VI, p. 131.
February 26, 1962

Mrs. Henry Grady Weaver
204 Cloverly Road
Grosse Pointe Farms 36, Michigan

Dear Jane Weaver:

Thanks so much for your letter of the 24th about the Donald Robertson School.

One of the reasons why Henry’s Meinspring sells so well is our constant reference to it. Note what we say about it in the two enclosures.

Reference is also made to Meinspring in sound films which we have made for the American Management Association and also in LP recordings which soon will be announced to our entire mailing list.

All my best!

Cordially,

Leonard El. Read

enclosures
Dear Mr. Read,

In reply to your inquiry of Feb 20th, the Donald Robertson School was a small school attended by James Madison in King and Queen County, Virginia. Donald Robertson was born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, came to Virginia in 1753 and became a tutor in the home of a prominent Virginia family. In 1758 he established his own school and had, among his pupils, James Madison.

Madison attended this school from 1762 to 1767. See "James Madison the Virginia Revolutionist" by Irving Brant, pp. 57, 58, 101, 131. Published by Bobbs-Merrill Co. No. 7, 1741.
Thank you for the royalty check. I was amazed at the amount! Henry would be so pleased to know that his message lives on.

All good wishes.

Sincerely,

Jane Weaver.
March 2, 1962

Mrs. Joseph Casalone
9 Fleetwood Park Road
Bethel, Connecticut

Dear Mrs. Casalone:

We have your letter of February 5 and regret that Mr. Weaver has been dead several years. However, we are still distributing his book, and have recently come across some information about the Donald Robertson School, which we'll enclose. Mr. Weaver did not get to do that book he'd planned.

Also enclosed is a resume of our activities and a sample copy of our journal The Freeman, which you may find of interest.

Thanks for liking Mainspring.

Sincerely yours,

Paul L. Poirot

Enclosures
March FREEMAN resume
Special Issue of Notes photocopy of piece Marge typed
Dear Sir,

Recently I came across a copy of your book called "Monsigny."
In one of the footnotes you said, "sometime you would write a book or at least a pamphlet on the educational techniques that produced such men as Washington, Jefferson,—etc."

Would you please advise me if during the intervening years you have so done and where it is available. The chapter dealing with the Saracens was of great interest to me. During my school days I thought myself an up-history student, however it would...
seem that our study of the Crusades, and the period of history it encompassed, left much to be desired (and the great pity is Mrs. Lane is a resident of the town where I graduated from school).

My two boys will have the advantage of being better informed thanks to Mrs. Lane and your book.

Enclosed are stamps, if you would care to reply.

Sincerely,

Maryette Casaline
(Mrs. Joseph Casaline)
MUCH GREEK AND MORE LATIN

In the family James Madison was born into, the rudiments of an education were a portion of the accepted order of life; beyond that, the acquisition of learning depended upon a desire for it. There was no social obligation to go through college, but, so far as American schools are concerned, no financial barrier to doing so. Opportunity, therefore, combined with inclination to make "book learning" the aim and motive of Madison's juvenile years.

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In what appear to be autobiographical notes dictated when he was about eighty years old, Madison said that "at the age of about twelve years" he went to the school of the distinguished teacher, Donald Robertson, in King and Queen County, and "having remained for three or four years with Mr. Robertson, he prosecuted his studies for a year or two under the Rev. Thomas Martin," who came to live with the Madisons at Montpelier. This would make his formal schooling begin in 1763. Gaillard Hunt accepts that date, but reverses the time under the two teachers, giving him two years under Robertson and four under Martin. Neither statement corresponds with the records of the Donald Robertson school, whose "Account of Scholars" shows the first payment of tuition for Madison on June 14, 1762, and final payment on September 9, 1767.

From this it appears that he entered the school of the Scotch pedagogue shortly after his eleventh birthday, and remained for more than five years. This makes the training under Robertson bulk much larger in Madison's education than has been supposed, and correspondingly reduces the importance of the two-year Martin tutorship.

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Following the last tuition payment for the year 1762, Donald Robertson wrote in his account book, "Deo Gratia & Gloria. All paid." If this suggests that Madison's teacher was enough of a Scotch classicist to do his financial thinking in Latin, it likewise reflects the necessary blend of culture and business in his calling. Donald Robertson, born in 1717--in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, it is thought--received his education in Aberdeen and Edinburgh and came to Virginia in 1753. Family records indicate that he first became a tutor in the home of Col. John Baylor of Caroline County, establishing his own school in King and Queen County on the banks of the Mattapony four miles above Dunkirk in 1758. As a Baylor tutor he would have had contact with the Madisons and Taylors, for Colonel Baylor's family spent every summer on the great plantation he owned in Orange County, adjoining the estate of James Taylor and the Todd-Taliaferro-Battaile land patent of which Montpelier formed an original part.

Listed in the English course in 1762, Madison was recorded a year later as a Latin student. His tuition account for 1763 included £s.4d. for the historical writings of Cornelius Nepos, which usually followed Ruddiman's RUDIMENTS. He studied Virgil in 1764 and a year later was absorbing Horace and Justinian's INSTITUTES. The Madison debits include an entry on March 24, 1764: "To Mr. Jamie's hat, paid Captain William Lyne 17s.6d." This purchase by the schoolmaster may have been a trifle confusing for he entered it first in the credit column. Consecutive entries "To Master Jamie's year, £5" do not indicate that Jamie's education put much of a strain on the family's finances.
The way this Scotch schoolmaster drove knowledge into the head of a fifteen-year-old boy and the boy's ability to absorb it may be judged by examining the school notebook entitled "James Madison his Book of Logick," which for many years has reposed under a glass case in the exhibition hall of the Library of Congress. This notebook bears the date 1766, and is further identified with the Donald Robertson school (instead of Princeton, to which it has been ascribed) by the fact that it is bound with a piece of cardboard originally addressed to "Mr. James A. Garlick, King William County, Virginia." Samuel and Camm Garlick were schoolmates of Madison under Robertson in 1766 and 1767.

The intellectual strength and maturity shown by Madison in his early adult years have been a marvel to later generations, schooled under less exacting masters, and they are prone to ascribe it to native genius and the health-destroying drive of his college days. In reality his maturity of understanding and expression date from the period of his study under Donald Robertson. Late in his career Madison is reported to have said of him: "All that I have been in life I owe largely to that man."

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