

James Monroe

The Fifth President of the United States of America



When James Monroe entered the White House as President, he appeared much different than his predecessor James Madison. Madison was only 5'4" tall and 100 lbs. Monroe was the opposite. He was over 6' tall, of stocky build with broad shoulders.

James Monroe was born on April 28, 1758 in Virginia. He went to William and Mary University. During the Revolutionary War, he was a lieutenant and served with George Washington. In fact, Monroe and his men crossed the Delaware with Washington.

After the war, he was a member of the Virginia Assembly then a member of the Continental Congress. Prior to becoming President he also served as:-

- 1790-94 U.S. Senator from Virginia (a staunch Anti-Federalist)
- 1794-96 Minister to France (very pro-French, almost too pro-French!)
- 1799-1802 Governor of Virginia
- 1803 Special envoy for the Louisiana Purchase
- 1803-1807 Minister to Great Britain – he failed in stopping impressment.
- 1811-1817 Secretary of State for James Madison
- 1812 During the War of 1812 he was the Secretary of War, a position he kept until 1815 - he could not convince Congress to establish a military draft.

Monroe's run for the Presidency began in 1816 when he opposed William H. Crawford of Georgia for the Republican Party nomination. In a close race Monroe won by 65 votes to 54.

His Presidential campaign was against Rufus King of New York, a long-standing Federalist and Minister to Great Britain in 1825 for John Quincy Adams.

The Electoral College saw Monroe as the better of the two candidates. Soon after the election King's health failed and he died on Long Island in 1827.

Monroe was a popular President, the nation felt as though it only had one political party again. There were no real arguments in Congress and based upon this his first term was nicknamed "**The Era of Good Feelings**"

Political Actions that took place during the terms of James Monroe

First Seminole War 1817-1818

The Seminole Indians and Fugitive slaves were continually raiding Georgia. Monroe sent General Andrew Jackson to invade Spanish Florida and brutally crush the Seminole Indians.

Rush-Bagot Agreement 1818

Monroe completed a disarmament agreement between the United States and Great Britain, which demilitarized the Great Lakes after the War of 1812.

The Convention of 1818

Monroe finalized a treaty with Canada where American fishermen could now fish in Canadian Waters. In addition the treaty fixed the U.S.-Canada border from Minnesota to the Rockies.

Adams-Onís Treaty 1819

Monroe signed a treaty with Spain. The key issues were that Spain would cede Florida to the United States and promise to pay \$ 5 million in damages lodged against them by U.S. Citizens

The treaty also fixed the South West boundary of the nation. It left modern day Texas under Spanish control

The final part of the treaty was that Spain relinquished all claims to Oregon

The Panic of 1819

Economically the nation did not do well during Monroe's terms. His terms included the first depression in the nation after the War of 1812, a depression that lasted until 1821

The Missouri Compromise 1820

Monroe was faced with the admission of two new states, Missouri and Maine, a slave versus a free state. Henry Clay of Kentucky led Congress into considering what the nation would do to the remainder of the lands from the Louisiana Purchase, if they were to be slave or free states. The compromise was that a line was created 36° 30' across the nation. North of the line was to be for free states where slavery was not allowed, South of the line would have states that were pro-slavery. Monroe wanted to veto Clay's bill but did not as he feared that his veto would start a civil war.

The Monroe Doctrine 1823

First enunciated by President James Monroe on December 2, 1823, during his seventh annual State of the Union Address to the United States Congress, the Monroe Doctrine is one of the longest standing tenets of American foreign policy. The doctrine advocated that the New World and the Old World were to remain distinctly separate spheres of influence, for they were comprised of entirely separate and independent nations. It was born from concerns of both the United States and Great Britain that Spain would attempt to restore its influence over Spain's former colonies and that Russia wanted to claim Alaska and the Oregon Territory.

In his speech he stated that European powers were no longer allowed to colonize in the Americas, or interfere with the affairs of the newly independent states of the Americas. The United States would not interfere with existing colonies or their dependencies in the Western Hemisphere. However, any attempt by a European nation to oppress or control any nation in the western hemisphere would be seen as an act of aggression and the United States would intervene. Any effort to extend European political influence into the New World would be considered by the United States "as dangerous to our peace and safety." Basically, the doctrine warned the European powers "to leave America for the Americans." It also created a sphere of influence that would grow stronger with the addition of the Roosevelt Corollary under President Theodore Roosevelt and the Good Neighbor Policy under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. .

Because the U.S. lacked both a credible navy and army at the time, the doctrine was largely disregarded internationally. However, the Doctrine met with British approval, and the Royal Navy mostly enforced it as part of Pax Britannica, which enforced the neutrality of the seas.

On December 2, 1845, U.S. President James Polk announced to Congress that the principle of the Monroe Doctrine should be strictly enforced and that the United States should aggressively expand into the West, (Manifest Destiny). In 1852, some politicians used the principle of the Monroe Doctrine to argue for forcefully removing the Spanish from Cuba. In 1898, following the Spanish-American War, the United States obtained Puerto Rico and the Philippines from Spain and began an occupation of Cuba that lasted until 1902.

James Monroe, a true Virginian President, only served two terms in office. He gracefully declined running for a third term, just as his predecessors before had done. He campaigned for and was replaced by John Quincy Adams. In 1825 James Monroe officially retired in Virginia.