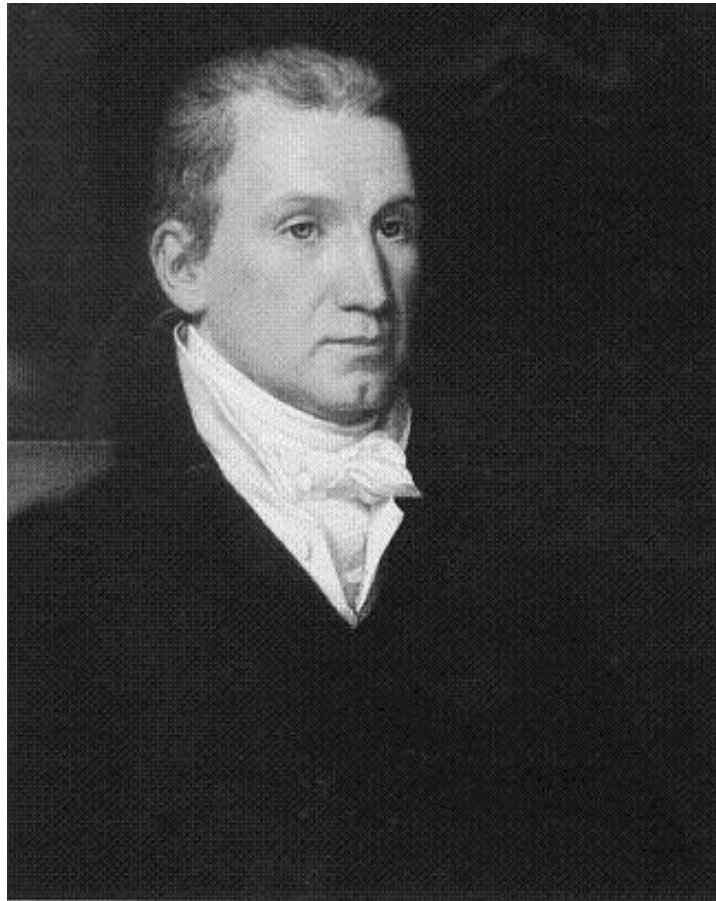


# James Monroe

Leggo My Eggo  
Fifth, 1817-1825



**Nicknames:** “The Last of the Cocked Hats”, “The Era of Good Feelings President”

**Birth:** April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1758, Westmoreland County, Virginia

**Death:** July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1831, New York City

**Significant Events During Monroe's Terms:** Yosemite Valley Discovered by Whites ... Mexico's Independence from Spain ... Erie Canal Begun ... Missouri Compromise ... Monroe Doctrine ... Denmark Vesey's Slave Rebellion ... BIA Created ... Mississippi (#20), Illinois (#21), Alabama (#22), Maine (#23), and Missouri (#24) become States

**Quotes:** *"The earth was given to mankind to support the greatest number of which it is capable, and no tribe or people have a right to withhold from the wants of others more than is necessary for their own support and comfort."* -- James Monroe

*"A man whose soul might be found wrong side outwards without discovering a blemish to the world."*  
-- Thomas Jefferson, speaking of James Monroe

*"If Mr. Monroe should ever fill the Chair of Government he may (and it is presumed he would be well enough disposed) let the French Minister frame his speeches...There is abundant evidence of his being a mere tool in the hands of the French government."* -- George Washington, c. 1797

*"Surely our government may get on and prosper without the existence of parties. I have always considered their existence as the curse of the country, of which we had sufficient proof, more especially in the late war."* -- James Monroe, speaking of the War of 1812

**How his term ended:** Following Washington's precedent, Monroe retired after two terms.

**Other Professions:** Soldier, Lawyer

**Worst Mistake:** Monroe stole the liberty from all of those whom he enslaved

**Saving Grace:** Monroe spoke against Indians being forcibly removed from their land, saying, "The condition of the Aborigines [Indians] within our limits, and especially those who are within the limits of any of the states, merits particular attention...To remove them from it, the territory on which they now reside, by force, even with a view to their own security and happiness would be revolting to humanity and utterly unjustifiable. Between the limits of our present States and Territories and the Rocky Mountains and Mexico there is a vast territory, to which they might be successful."

**Notes:** Monroe's father died when he was sixteen.

Monroe crossed the Delaware River with Washington and engaged in the Battle of Trenton during the Revolutionary War. He also wintered at Valley Forge and served as a scout for Washington.

Monroe was called "The Last of the Cocked Hats" because he was the last Revolutionary War officer to serve as President.

Monroe's period of administration was called the "Era of Good Feelings." He ran essentially unopposed for a second term. George Washington has been the only other person to not have an opponent running against him in a U.S. Presidential race. Although Monroe was unopposed, unlike Washington, he did not win unanimously. The supposition has been made that one of the electors, presumably to maintain that record (of a unanimous victory) for Washington alone, cast a vote for John Quincy Adams, so the electoral vote ended up 232-1. The elector's son, though, said that his father truly did not like Monroe (and/or his politics), and his vote cast against Monroe was "in earnest."

Monroe helped negotiate the Louisiana Purchase during Jefferson's (#3) time in office.

Monroe approved the Missouri Compromise, postponing the coming crisis over the slavery issue.

Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia, was named for him.

Monroe decorated the refurbished Executive Mansion--which had been burned by the British during the War of 1812 and then began to be called "The White House" because of the white paint used to cover over the smoke marks--with furniture and silverware purchased from the auction of possessions of executed Queen of France Marie Antoinette.

The primary thing for which Monroe is known is the "Doctrine" bearing his name. This he defined in these terms:

"We should consider any attempt on their part [that of European powers] to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety. With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered, and shall not interfere. But with the governments who have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power, in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States."

In other words, Monroe was placing a big "Keep Out" sign on the western hemisphere, meant for European colonial nations such as England, France, Spain, Holland, and Portugal. That foreign policy was actually John Quincy Adams' (#6) idea, who was Monroe's Secretary of State. The American government rejected the "doctrine" at the latest in 1898 during the Spanish-American War, when it interfered in the affairs of European colonies. In doing so, it also rejected Washington's (#1) advice to avoid "foreign entanglements."

Monroe ended up impoverished and for years unsuccessfully attempted to collect money from the government for expenses incurred during his years of service. Eventually, he had to sell his Virginia estate and move in with one of his married daughters in New York City. Shortly thereafter, Monroe died (as had second President John Adams and third President Thomas Jefferson), on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, in his case five years after them, in 1831.

There is no evidence of such, but the circumstances of Monroe's death--his relatively young age (he was seventy-three), the fact that his wife had died and that he was reduced to poverty and living with his daughter, and that he died on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, makes one wonder if perhaps his death was more planned than natural.