

## Chapter 61 - Monroe's First Term Marked By Peace Abroad But Challenges At Home



**Dates:**  
1817-1821

**Sections:**

- Monroe's First Inaugural Address
- Overview Of Monroe's First Term

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Time: March 4, 1817

### Monroe's First Inaugural Address



The Capitol is still being rebuilt after the 1815 fire, when James Monroe is inaugurated, on March 4, 1817. The ceremony takes place in the temporary quarters of the House, known as the Brick Capitol. He is sworn in by his childhood friend, Chief Justice John Marshall, and then sets a precedent by stepping outside to deliver his address to a gathered crowd.

His speech begins by reflecting on the current state of the nation, which he finds flourishing under the government institutions in place since the Revolution.

*I should be destitute of feeling if I was not deeply affected by the strong proof which my fellow-citizens have given me of their confidence in calling me to the high office whose functions I am about to assume....From the commencement of our Revolution to the present day almost forty years have elapsed...During a period fraught with difficulties and marked by very extraordinary events the United States have flourished beyond example. Their citizens individually have been happy and the nation prosperous.*

James Monroe (1758-1831)

He then outlines several of his proposed priorities: strengthening the national defense; developing infrastructure and manufacturing to expand the domestic economy and export trade abroad; managing public finances; and achieving harmony between western settlers and the Indian tribes.

*In commencing the duties of the chief executive office it has been the practice of the distinguished men who have gone before me to explain the principles which would govern them in their respective Administrations.*

*National honor is national property of the highest value...To secure us against dangers our coast and inland frontiers should be fortified, our Army and Navy, regulated upon just principles as to the force of each, be kept in perfect order, and our militia be placed on the best practicable footing.*

*Other interests of high importance will claim attention, among which the improvement of our country by roads and canals, proceeding always with a constitutional sanction, holds a distinguished place.*

*Our manufacturers will likewise require the systematic and fostering care of the Government*

*Equally important is it to provide at home a market for our raw materials, as by extending the competition it will enhance the price and protect the cultivator against the casualties incident to foreign markets.*

*With the Indian tribes it is our duty to cultivate friendly relations and to act with kindness and liberality Equally proper is it to persevere in our efforts to extend to them the advantages of civilization.*

*The great amount of our revenue and the flourishing state of the Treasury are a full proof of the competency of the national resources for any emergency, as they are of the willingness of our fellow-citizens to bear the burdens which the public necessities require*

*It is particularly gratifying to me to enter on the discharge of these duties at a time when the United States are blessed with peace. It is a state most consistent with their prosperity and happiness. It will be my sincere desire to preserve it...*

Monroe concludes with comments on the favorable state of the nation, and a wish for help from both citizens and the Almighty in the job that lies ahead.

*Equally gratifying is it to witness the increased harmony of opinion which pervades our Union. Discord does not belong to our system.*

*Never did a government commence under auspices so favorable, nor ever was success so complete.*

*Relying on the aid to be derived from the other departments of the Government, I enter on the trust to which I have been called by the suffrages of my fellow-citizens with my fervent prayers to the Almighty that He will be pleased to continue to us that protection which He has already so conspicuously displayed in our favor.*

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Time: (March 4, 1817 – March 3, 1821)

## **Overview Of Monroe's First Term**

In assembling his cabinet, Monroe begins with a heady move by naming John Quincy Adams as his choice for Secretary of State. Adams's foreign experience begins at age eleven when he accompanies his

father to his post in Britain. From there he serves as a U.S. Senator, then as minister to the Netherlands, followed by Prussia, Russia and, from 1814-17 in England, where he first establishes a level of respect and trust with then Secretary of State Monroe that endures. Politically, Adams has grown up a Federalist, but he is forced out of the party in 1807 when he helps to draft the 1807 Embargo Bill and caucuses with the Democratic-Republican side in choosing Madison as their 1808 nominee. The partnership between Monroe and JQA will compare with that between Jefferson and Madison.

The new President retains Crawford in his Treasury post, and reaches out to Congressman John Calhoun, an outspoken supporter of the 1812 conflict. These two, along with Adams, will contend to succeed Monroe when the 1824 presidential race begins.

**James Monroe Cabinet In 1817**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Home State</b>
Vice-President	Daniel Tompkins	New York
Secretary of State	J Quincy Adams	Massachusetts
Secretary of Treasury	William Crawford	Georgia
Secretary of War	John C. Calhoun	South Carolina
Secretary of the Navy	Benjamin Crowninshield	
Attorney General	Richard Rush	Pa son of Benj

Adams, like Monroe, believes that America is poised in 1817 to put aside its external concerns about safety and concentrate on its many opportunities for internal development.

*Every serious difficulty which seemed alarming to the people of the Union in 1800 had been removed or sunk from notice in 1816. With the disappearance of immediate peril, foreign or domestic, society could devote all its energies...to its favorite objects.*

This outlook is so pervasive that, in July 1817, the *Columbia Sentinel* newspaper declares that the nation has entered an “era of good feelings.” Symbolic of this view is the start of work on an audacious engineering project that will last for eight years – construction of the Erie Canal, which will ultimately create a water route for commerce from Lake Erie to New York harbor.

Unfortunately the rosy outlook predicted upfront fails to materialize as planned.

First off, Monroe finds that the War of 1812 has had serious residual effects on the American economy, and these lead to the so-called “Panic of 1819.”

Then events in 1820 multiply the challenges.

In South America, the famous liberator, Simon Bolivar, is busily overthrowing Spain’s colonies, with the effects reaching all the way up to America’s southern neighbor, Mexico. Concerns mount about incursions from Spain or surrogates back into the Western Hemisphere. Troubles in Spanish Florida around rebel Seminole Indians increase these worries.

Then comes another shock, this time from a Pennsylvania congressman, James Talmadge, who offers up an amendment to a bill involving statehood for Missouri that sets off a firestorm around the long suppressed topic of slavery. It will prove to be the opening thrust in a 40 year conflict between the South and the North, that ends up in civil war.

The good news is that, by the end of his first term, Monroe has navigated many of these set-backs quite well.

### Key Events: Monroe's First Term (1817-1821)

<b>1817</b>	
March 4	Monroe inaugurated
July 4	Construction begins in Rome, NY on DeWitt Clinton's Erie Canal project
July 12	Columbia Sentinel newspaper dubs the period "the era of good feelings" in America
Sept 27	Ohio Indians cede 4 million acres of land to state of Ohio
Oct 8	John C. Calhoun named Secretary of War
November	First Seminole War begins
Dec 2	Monroe asserts that federal funds can be used for infrastructure projects
<b>1818</b>	
Jan 8	Sharp post-war declines in manufacturing output are recorded
Feb 28	New York passes bill requiring debts be paid with specie or US banknotes
May 24	General Andrew Jackson takes Spanish outpost at Pensacola, Florida
June 20	Connecticut becomes the first eastern state to drop property requirement for suffrage
July 1	Second US Bank tightens money supply by requiring states to pay off debts in gold
Aug 23	First steamship trip goes across Lake Erie to Detroit
Oct 19	Chickasaw Indians cede lands between Mississippi and Tennessee Rivers
Oct 20	US and Britain sign Convention of 1818 on Canadian borders, except for Oregon region
Nov 20	Bank of Kentucky suspends operations, causing public panic
Nov 28	JQ Adams informs Spain that it must either control Seminoles or cede Florida to US
Dec 3	Illinois admitted as 21 <sup>st</sup> state
<b>1819</b>	
January	Beginning of widespread bank failures, foreclosure and financial collapse
Jan 12	Clay bill to condemn Andrew Jackson's unilateral actions in Florida fails to pass
Feb 2	In <i>Dartmouth v Woodward</i> , Supreme Court says corporate charters are valid contracts
Feb 13	James Tallmadge seeks to amend Missouri statehood bill by ending slavery there
Feb 22	In Adams-Onis Treaty, Spain cedes East Florida to US for \$5MM and "hands-off Texas"
Feb 27	After Tallmadge Amendment passes in House on Feb 17, the Senate votes it down
Mar 6	In <i>McCulloch v Maryland</i> , Supreme Court says USB is legal and state cannot tax it
May 5	Sermon by William Ellery Channing announces Unitarian schism with Christian churches
June 20	Steamship Savannah completes trans-Atlantic journey to Liverpool
Dec 14	Alabama admitted as 22 <sup>nd</sup> state
<b>1820</b>	
Jan 23	The House votes to admit Maine as 23 <sup>rd</sup> state, but the senate holds this up
Jan 26	The House supports the Taylor amendment allowing Missouri to enter as a slave state
Feb 6	Ship carrying 86 free blacks sets sail from New York headed to Sierra Leone
Feb 17	The Thomas amendment in the Senate adds the 36'30" free/slave dividing line in La. land
Mar 3	Missouri Compromise admits Maine as free, Missouri as slave state and 36'30" as redline
Mar 15	Maine is admitted as 23 <sup>rd</sup> state, making 12 free and 11 slave at the moment
April 24	Public Land Act passes: price/acre down from \$2 to \$1.25; minimum plot from 160 to 80
May 15	To stop smuggling of foreign slaves into US, congress deems this piracy punishable by death
July 19	Initial Missouri constitution bars free blacks and mulattos from entering the state
Dec 6	Monroe wins second term in a landslide
December	Kentucky Relief Party set up to relieve debtors, opposed by Clay, supported by Jackson
<b>1821</b>	
Jan 17	Spain gives Moses and son Stephen Austin okay to settle 300 Americans in San Antonio
Feb 24	Mexico declares independence from Spain
Mar 2	Congress agrees to admit Missouri, if it drops unconstitutional ban against free blacks
--	Benjamin Lundy begins publishing <i>Genius of Universal Emancipation</i> newspaper