

## Era of Good Feelings, 1816-1825

A period in United States political history in which partisan bitterness abated.

- ↪ The political bitterness declined because the Federalists had largely dissolved and were no longer attacking the president.
- ↪ There was only one dominant political party, the Democratic-Republicans.
- ↪ President James Monroe deliberately downplayed partisanship.
- ↪ The individuals who were lobbying for power and influence in the first generation of the nation's existence were supplanted in the second generation by those who wished to continue the status quo of success.

Nostalgia for the revolutionary era infused the culture, particularly as revolutionary-era leaders passed away. Evidence of 'unity through mourning'.

The Era of Good Feelings started after the War of 1812.

- ↪ The Hartford Convention of 1814-1815 underscored the perceived disloyalty of the Federalists during the war.
- ↪ Nationalism surged even though there was no redress of pre-war grievances at the Treaty of Ghent.
- ↪ The victories instilled pride in the new nation.
- ↪ President Monroe paid little attention to party in dispensing favors.

President Monroe rarely departed from his predecessor's (President James Madison) nationalistic program.

- ↪ He supported federal funding for internal improvements, though he hesitated to authorize direct federal involvement, and he raised protective tariffs to spur American manufacturing.

Slavery had come to the forefront as a national issue, but Henry Clay's negotiation of the Missouri Compromise in 1820 ameliorated the crisis.

- ↪ The solution was to balance admission of Missouri Territory as a slave state, with the admission of Maine as a free state.
- ↪ The issue of slavery was part of the larger issue between the North and the South of economic and social sectionalism. Local politics were largely conducted without divisive party labels or party conventions.

Adams-Onis Treaty (Transcontinental Treaty) of 1819 – Florida was acquired from Spain to general acclaim; Oregon Territory to US uncontested.

- ↪ This gave the US its first legitimate claim to the west coast!

Transportation revolution begins

- ↪ 1817, New York begins construction of the Erie Canal
- ↪ First major canal project in US; when completes, it stretched 363 miles, linking waterways from the Northeast with the frontier west
- ↪ US government invested in the National Road
- ↪ By 1818, it stretched from Maryland to Virginia
- ↪ Served as the foundation for the growing road system

Postwar economic prosperity enhanced political optimism in the United States.

- ↪ The economy dramatically expanded as a result of a postwar borrowing and buying frenzy. Banks lent money with little or no collateral to businessmen seeking to buy land, build factories, and develop industries.
- ↪ The high protective tariff of 1816 promoted further domestic development. Accompanying this expansion was the steady rise of inflation, the increase of paper money and credit leading to higher prices and less valuable currency.
- ↪ In 1818, the global demand for American goods declined, in part because Europe had recovered from the devastation of the Napoleonic Wars.
- ↪ As a result of the decline in trade, the U.S. economy began to collapse and banks contracted their lending practices. Many state banks folded and many borrowers declared bankruptcy. In what became known as the Panic of 1819, land values fell 50 to 75 percent, rich land speculators lost fortunes, and homesteaders became mired in debt. The depression lasted roughly three years.

The Monroe Doctrine, 1823 – advised European powers against attempts to reassert their control over former colonies in the New World.

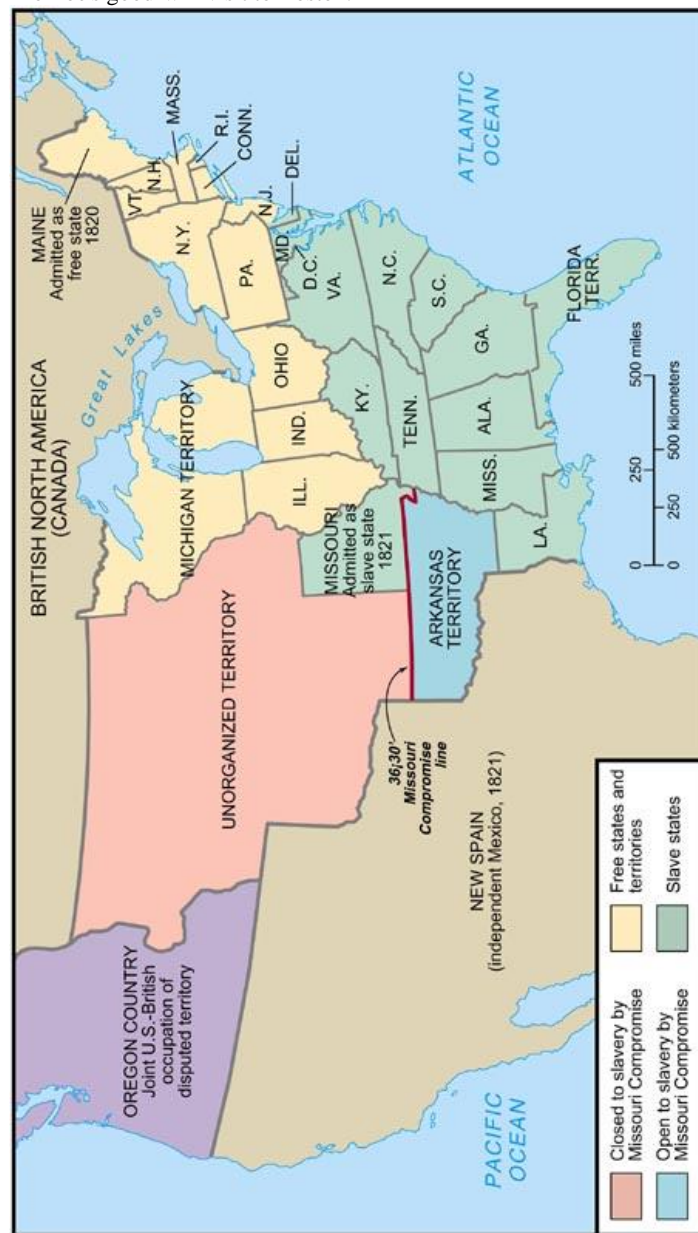
- ↪ The Monroe Doctrine boldly asserted the status of the United States as a full-fledged nation, and this gained the administration popular support during a time of increased nationalism.
- ↪ Provided for US involvement in wars only when its interests were at stake, and it rejected European colonial overtures "unfriendly acts".

The era gave a pause to bitter debates over the protective tariff and the Second National Bank which occurred a decade earlier.

End of the Era of Good Feelings was caused by three events

- ↪ After the Panic of 1819 and the Missouri Compromise of 1820, the national mood grew more tense.
- ↪ However, the relentless daily bitter attacks by one party against the other did not resume until about 1828.
- ↪ Before 1820, the Democratic-Republican Party members of Congress had met in caucus and decided on the party's presidential candidate.
- ↪ The system collapsed in 1824 as four men competed: John Quincy Adams, William Crawford, Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson. The four formed regional coalitions with state politicians and pursued the electorate.
- ↪ At the polls, turnout was light because there were no parties to mobilize voters. Then, because no one received a majority in the Electoral College, the decision on the presidency went to the House of Representatives.
- ↪ Clay (Speaker of the House of Rep.) swung the election to Adams, who then appointed Clay as Secretary of State.
- ↪ The result outraged Jackson and his supporters. They alleged that a "corrupt bargain" had taken place and immediately began their crusade to regain the "stolen" presidency.

The phrase "Era of Good Feelings" was coined by Benjamin Russell, in the Boston newspaper, Columbian Centinel, on July 12, 1817, following Monroe's good-will visit to Boston.



THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE, 1820-1821

Map of the United States, c.1821