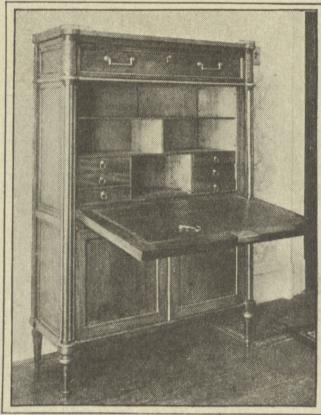


# America for Americans

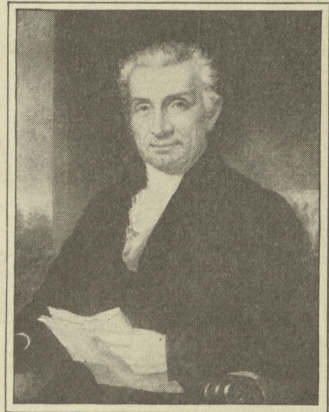
## Side Lights on the Authorship of the Monroe Doctrine

### By Rose Gouverneur Hoes

Great-Granddaughter of James Monroe



The Desk on Which James Monroe Wrote the Monroe Doctrine



Original Portrait of James Monroe, by James R. Lambdin

FOR years to the majority of American women, with no time or inclination to probe into the deeper affairs of life, the

hundred years ago. In the first of these paragraphs Monroe declares that the governments of Russia and Great Britain have been informed that the American continents henceforth will not be considered subjects for future colonization by any European power. In the second paragraph he says that the United States will consider any attempt on the part of the European powers to extend their system to any part of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.

These heroic words were especially addressed to Spain and Portugal. They undoubtedly expressed the ruling sentiments of the people of

Monroe Doctrine has been a phrase, a tradition, something connected with early American history and musty books and letters, to be ignored for lighter and brighter subjects. This certainly was the impression made a while ago at a tea table where a woman, by no means devoid of brain power, frankly exclaimed: "Can any one present explain in everyday language the Monroe Doctrine?" She simply knew it as a subject discussed by the people of every land.

There was a pause in the conversation; the women grouped around the tea table all sat up and "took a notice." Then a quiet little woman in a distant corner said: "I think I can. It means to all foreign countries 'Hands off of the North and South American continents.'"

This terse elucidation of what was evidently regarded as an abstruse historical term was generally accepted, but it is doubtful if a single woman present followed up the brief information thus obtained by looking more deeply into the subject or even by turning her attention for a brief moment to the life and characteristics of James Monroe, the distinguished American statesman who, as President of the United States, in a message to Congress dated December 2, 1823, promulgated the doctrine which has made his name famous.

IT IS also questionable whether the majority of people are aware that, during President Madison's administration, James Monroe, as Secretary of State, strenuously conducted our relations preceding and during the war of 1812 and, in addition, carried on his shoulders at the darkest hour of that struggle the burden of the War Department besides. These efficient services commended him preëminently for the Presidency in 1816; and so popular was his first term of office, known as the "era of good feeling," that, like Washington, he received from the people a unanimous reelection for a second term. One of the state electors, to be sure, with an independent regard for his constituency which to-day would be thought outrageous, threw away his ballot to prevent such a parallel; but the fact remains that of all Presidents chosen since the Union was established, no other has gained or even approached the plane of unanimous approval to which Washington and Monroe attained. It is also interesting to note that Thomas Jefferson once declared that "James Monroe's soul was so white that if it were turned inside out there would not be found a single mark or blemish." Such was the regard in which was held James Monroe, soldier, lawyer, author, diplomat and statesman, famous as the originator of the Monroe Doctrine.

Indeed, the one great event indissolubly associated with the Presidency of James Monroe is the announcement made by him of the policy of the United States in regard to foreign interference in the affairs of this continent, and the declaration justly bears the name of the Monroe Doctrine. It has recently been brought into greater prominence than ever before through the discussions held by the representatives of the various nations at the Peace Congress. It is a measure that every patriotic American citizen, independent of party strife, feels must be preserved. It is discussed in works on public law and in all general histories, and is universally regarded as a concrete summary of the principles of the United States with respect to the development of South America.

The words of this famous utterance are included in two paragraphs of a Presidential message of nearly one

HE EVEN goes one step farther and says of the governments of North and South America, "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 manner their destiny, by any European power, in any light than as a manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States."

this country during the early part of the last century, and were the embodiment of a doctrine which had been vaguely referred to by Washington in his "Farewell Address." In turn these undeveloped ideas, coming down through the succeeding administrations to the Monroe period, took more definite form and finally found an outlet in this epoch-making message.

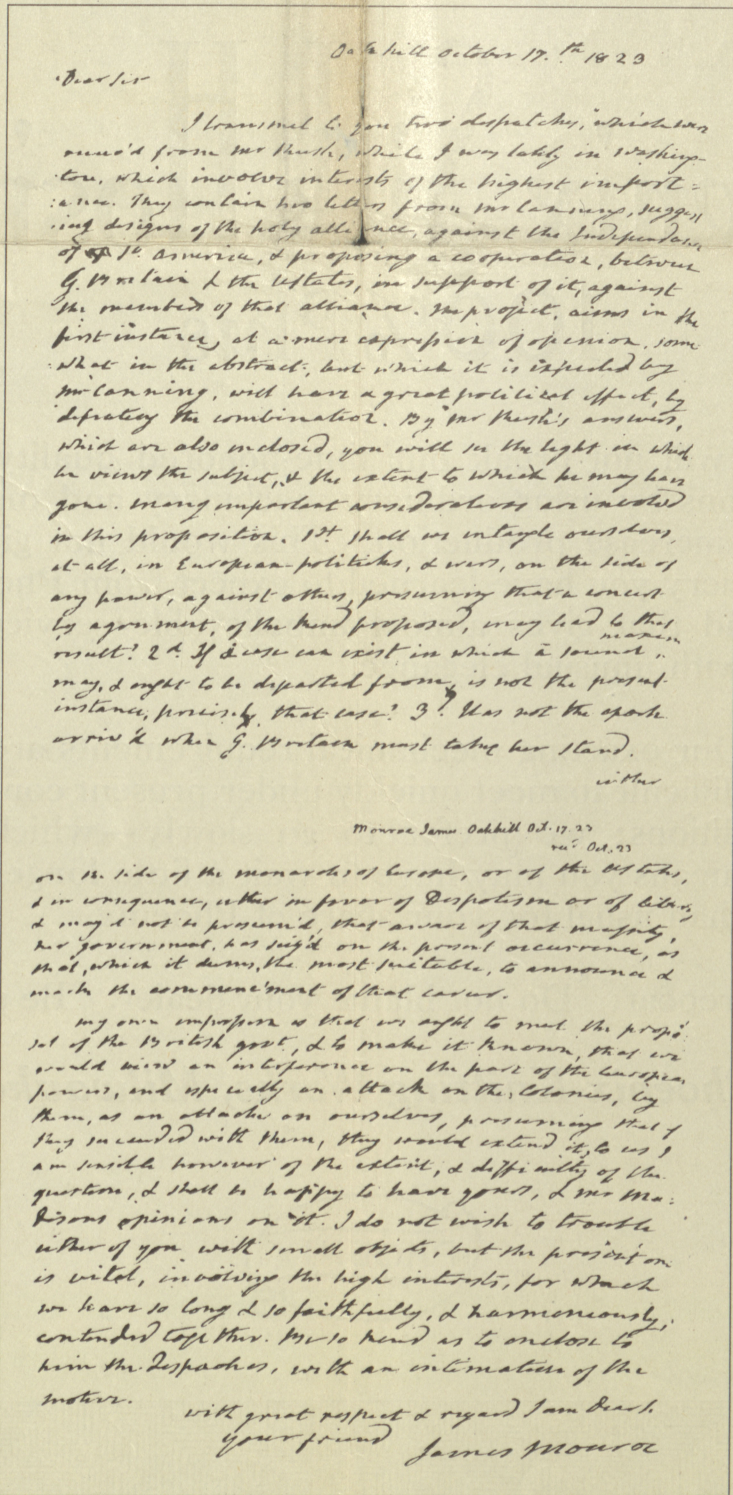
Monroe's chief counselors, especially in foreign affairs, unlike the present time, when the Chief Magistrate of our land gathers around him the various members of his cabinet, were his two great predecessors

in office. It can therefore be safely stated that this trio of successive Presidents, Jefferson, Madison and Monroe, always congenial, constantly in close consultation, ever watchful of public affairs, from the same state, Virginia, then steadily at the helm of the young Union, formed a bulwark of strength, a unit of power, which will probably never be seen again.

It is not, then, surprising to read in a concluding sentence of a letter, addressed to Jefferson by Monroe in relation to the Monroe Doctrine, these words: "I shall be happy to have yours, & Mr. Madison's opinions on it. I do not wish to trouble either of you with small objects, but the present one is vital, involving the high interests, for which we have so long & so faithfully & harmoniously, contended together. Be so kind as to enclose to him the dispatches, with an intimation of the motive."

Can the individual be found who does not occasionally catch an inspiration, perchance borrow a phrase, or ask the advice of another? Notwithstanding the fact that it was the habit of a lifetime for James Monroe to seek the advice and counsel of his fellow statesmen, especially Thomas Jefferson, who had been his early preceptor as well as friend, credit should be accorded him and him only for a truly heroic act, the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine. He showed a fearlessness of consequences and moral courage of the highest order, as history records that in the original draft prepared by him he showed a defiance of Europe almost warlike. He was finally, however, persuaded to subdue his language; but just the same, the final act of holding fast to the trumpet through which the great blast was blown was no small act of valor.

NEARLY two months before President Monroe sent his famous message to Congress he wrote a letter to Jefferson in which is embodied a summary of the Monroe Doctrine. It was written from Oak Hill, his home in Loudoun County, Virginia, and is dated October 17, 1823: "I transmit to you two dispatches, which were received from Mr. Rush, while I was lately in Washington, which involve interests of the highest importance. They contain two letters from Mr. Canning, suggesting designs of the holy alliance, against the independence of So. America, & proposing a co-operation, between G. Britain & the U. States, in support of it, against the members of that alliance. The project, aims in the first instance, at a mere expression of opinion, somewhat in the abstract, but which it is expected by Mr. Canning, will have a great political effect, by defeating the combination. By Mr. Rush's answers, which are also enclosed, you will see the light in which he views the subject, & the extent to which he may have gone. Many important considerations are involved in this proposition. 1st. Shall we entangle ourselves at all, in European politicks, & wars, on the side



Original Letter Addressed to Thomas Jefferson by James Monroe Two Months Before the Monroe Doctrine Was Promulgated

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# America for Americans

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of any power, against others, presuming that a concert by agreement, of the kind proposed, may lead to that result? 2nd. If a case can exist in which a sound maxim may, & ought to be departed from, is not the present instance, precisely that case? 3ly. Has not the epoch arrived when G. Britain must take her stand, either on the side of the monarchs of Europe, or of the U. States, & in consequence, either in favor of despotism or of liberty, & may it not be presum'd that aware of that necessity, her government, has seiz'd on the present occurrence, as that, which it deems the most suitable, to announce and mark the commencement of that career.

"My own impression is that we ought to meet the proposal of the British Govt. & to make it known, that we would view an interference on the part of the European powers, & especially an attack on the Colonies, by them, as an attack on ourselves, presuming that if they succeeded with them, they would extend it to us."

JEFFERSON'S reply, received one week later, October twenty-fourth, is one of the most remarkable letters ever written by him. In flaming sentences he illuminates like a beacon light the whole long, intricate pathway of the Doctrine. There is no sidetracking, just one grand sentence after another, reeking with patriotism and fervor, advising Monroe as to the course to be pursued. "The question presented by the letters you have sent me," he writes, "is the most momentous which has been offered to my contemplation since that of Independence. That made us a Nation, this sets our compass and points the course which we are to steer through the ocean of time opening on us. And never could we embark on it under circumstances more auspicious. Our first and fundamental maxim should be, *never to entangle ourselves in the broils of Europe*. Our second, *never to suffer Europe to intermeddle with cis-Atlantic affairs*. America, North and South, has a set of interests distinct from those of Europe, and particularly her own. She should therefore have a system of her own, separate and apart from that of Europe. While the last is laboring to become the domicile of despotism, our endeavor shall be, to make our hemisphere that of freedom."

Every sidelight bearing on the Monroe Doctrine is of interest, and the following letter written by Monroe's son-in-law, Samuel L. Gouverneur, ninety-six years ago, shows at least the sentiment of appreciation of those friendly to the administration. It is dated December 6, 1823, four days after Monroe's message to Congress:

"I RECEIVED last evening the copy of your message, which you were so kind as to send me. I had however read it before in the public papers with the most exalted pleasure. It is decidedly the best you have ever written, and I believe that the public will bear me out when I say, that it has never been surpassed in dignity and solidity of reflection, united upon the most enlightened views of national policy. You have a full indemnification for all of the time and attention it may have cost you, in the sentiment which has accompanied it throughout the nation, and I mistake greatly if it does not excite a feeling in Europe as honorable to our country, as it may be unacceptable to many there. You will have the merit of professing an enlightened system of policy, which promises to secure the united liberties of the New World, and to counteract the deep-laid schemes in the Old, for the establishment of universal Despotism.

"The sentiment and feeling which the message expresses, you may rest assured, will be echoed with pride and pleasure from every portion of our widely extended country, and will be esteemed to have given to our national character new claims upon the civilized world. The operation of your message also upon the reputation of your administration cannot be mistaken. Effecting higher objects, it will also be distinctly traced in the prostration of those limited views of policy which have infected so many of those who

have been intrusted of late with a portion of the power and character of our country, and in the diffusion among our citizens of a great confidence in the general administration, so essential to the prosperity of our system. By giving a new and exalted direction to the public reflections, a tone of feeling and expression must succeed as fatal to the pretended patriots of the last two years as it will be honorable to those who, at the risk of popularity, have been the objects of their clamorous abuse."

DURING Monroe's life in the White House, according to his Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, it was his everyday habit to study alone far into the night the great problems of state which confronted his administration. These were not the days of official stenographers, typewriters and innumerable secretaries. The watchword was economy; one private secretary was all that was allowed a President; and the messages, generally speaking, sent to Congress at this formative period of our history, were written by a person of no less distinction than the Chief Magistrate himself.

Using the midnight oil at this time was no easy matter, as it consisted principally of homemade candles, "tallow dips," made and molded by each thrifty housewife, the First Lady of the Land being no exception to the rule. The tradition has been passed down in the Monroe family that for weeks in advance of a public function at the White House, slaves were kept busy making candles for the anticipated state entertainment, and that the cost of lighting this great mansion alone was five hundred dollars, paid out of the private purse of the President.

In 1794 the then youthful Monroe was sent to Revolutionary France by President Washington as second United States minister. The history of this mission is almost too well known to dwell upon. He arrived in Paris just after the fall of Robespierre, and the impulsive Virginian yielded to the fraternal embrace and other enthusiastic follies of the French Directory. At any rate he was recalled in the most summary fashion, and in the same independent spirit, on his return to his native land, at once antagonized Washington and nearly fought a duel with Alexander Hamilton.

WHILE in Paris, Monroe was given *carte blanche* by the United States Government to furnish a house in proper style for the representative of the new Republic. This was the period of great elegance in furniture, the spindle leg was then at its height and brass inlaying was in vogue. Among the beautiful pieces purchased by the American Minister was a mahogany desk for his own use, made in fine style, with fluted brass columns, white marble top, with a brass rail an inch high surmounting it. Maybe it was the woman who accompanied him on all of his missions, Mrs. Monroe, who decided the matter, but at all events the desk was brought from Paris along with other personal possessions, installed first at Oak Hill, and later was taken from the near-by plantation to the National Capital.

On this desk President James Monroe wrote all his state papers, including the framework of the Monroe Doctrine. Scratched and stained as it appears to-day from habitual use, with ink slung from the ubiquitous quill of a century ago, and candle grease, too, Monroe's descendants, in whose possession it still is, cherish each spot or blemish as a hallowed memory.

In this day of grace, when life flows along smooth and easy, owing to the many inventions of the last fifty years, it seems somewhat difficult to see a mental picture, as it were, of an old man, somewhat bent by the burdens of state, working laboriously far into the night, in the great white mansion built by the Government to be the home of Presidents, sitting at an old-time desk, with only wood fires for heat, the light of a candle or two his only illuminating power, writing an immortal document, which bears the name of the Monroe Doctrine.

## THE MASTER NOTE

ON THE very day when the great violinist, John Pulaski, accidentally found evidence which seemed to prove that his wife cared for another man, his only friend, he also made another astounding discovery—that he could play a master note which, if prolonged sufficiently, would lay buildings in ruins and even snuff out life itself! The use which he made of these two bits of knowledge forms the theme of Herbert D. Ward's dramatic short story which is soon to appear in THE HOME JOURNAL.