

American Minute with Bill Federer

James Monroe, 5th President "When the people become ignorant & corrupt ... they become the willing instruments of their own ... ruin"

James Monroe's great-grandfather, Captain Andrew Monroe, fought as a Royalist on behalf of King Charles I in the **English Civil War**.

He was taken **prisoner**, and in 1647, was **exiled to Virginia**.

There **Andrew** acquired a farm, which grew in two generations to 1,100 acres, part of which was inherited by **Colonel Spence Monroe**.

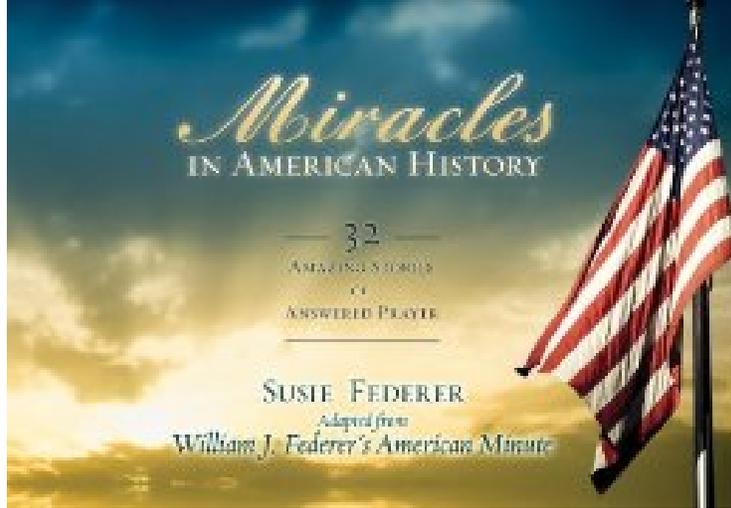
Spence signed **Richard Henry Lee's Westmoreland Protests** in 1765 against the **British Stamp Act**.

Spence's son, James Monroe, was born APRIL 28, 1758, and was **baptized** in the **Anglican Church** in Washington Parish, Westmoreland County, Virginia, the same country **George Washington** was born in ...

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As a youth, **James** was tutored at home by **Scottish Anglican minister Reverend William Douglas**, whose career included tutoring **Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Meriwether Lewis**.

James Monroe then attended **Campbellton Academy**, considered one of the finest schools in Virginia.

It was run by its founder, **Scottish minister Reverend Archibald Campbell** of Washington Parish. **James Monroe's classmates** were **James Madison** and **John Marshall**, the future **Chief Justice of the Supreme Court**.

James' maternal uncle, **Judge Joseph Jones**, was a member of the **Virginia House of Burgesses** and the **Continental Congress**, serving with **Thomas Jefferson** and **Patrick Henry**.

Jones was on the committees which declared Virginia **independent** from Britain and chose **George Washington** to be the **Commander** of the **Continental Army**.

At the age of 14, **James' mother died**, and two years later, **his father died**, leaving him the family plantation.

Judge Joseph Jones brought **James Monroe** to **Williamsburg**, where he met **Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Patrick Henry**.

James attended the **College of William and Mary**, the second-oldest institution of higher education in the United States, after Harvard University.

Students were required to be at **morning and evening prayer** in the **Sir Christopher Wren Chapel**, and **Sunday service** at **Bruton Parish Church**.

When the Revolutionary War started, **Monroe** dropped out of school at age 17 and joined the **Continental Army**.

In June of 1775, he and 24 others **raided the Virginia Governor's arsenal**, carrying away 200 muskets and 300 swords to arm the **Williamsburg Militia**.

Monroe was part of **General Washington's crossing of the Delaware River** the night of December 25, 1776.

He is portrayed in Emanuel Leutze's famous painting "Washington Crossing the Delaware" as **standing behind Washington holding the flag**.

At the age of 18, **Monroe** was leading soldiers in the dark of night toward **Trenton, New Jersey**, when the dogs of **Dr. John Riker** started barking.

Woke by the noise, **Dr. Riker**, a patriot, decided to follow the troops.

Monroe led the charge at the Battle of Trenton and was struck in the shoulder by a **musket ball, bleeding profusely**.

He would have quickly **bled to death** had not **Dr. Riker** been there to immediately **clamp the ruptured artery**.

Monroe was cited for his bravery by General Washington.

In John Trumbull's famous painting "Capture of the Hessians at the Battle of Trenton," **James Monroe** is portrayed center left, **wounded, lying on the ground.**

Without fully recovering, **Monroe** returned to the front lines.

He served on the staff of **Scottish American General Lord Sterling**, who noted for helping stop the **Conway Cabal** to replace Washington.

While there, **Monroe** became friends with **French officer Marquis de Lafayette**, who was six months older.

In 1777-1778, **Monroe** fought in the **Philadelphia Campaign**, and spent the **freezing winter** with the army at **Valley Forge**, sharing a log shelter with **John Marshall**.

He fought in the **Battle of Monmouth**, June 28, 1778, and after the British captured **Savannah, Georgia**, he was promoted to **lieutenant colonel**, but was unable to recruit a regiment.

Having never fully recovered from his wounds, on the advice of his uncle, Joseph Jones, **Monroe** returned to Williamsburg in 1779 to study law under professor **George Wythe**, a **signer of the Declaration of Independence** and America's **first university law professor**.

Wythe had been a notable leader in the **Virginia House of Burgesses** and **Mayor of Williamsburg**.

He designed the **Seal of Virginia**, which depicted the warrior woman "Virtus" with a spear, sword, and broken chain, standing victoriously over the fallen king, with the words, "**Sic Semper Tyrannis**" -- "**Thus Always to Tyrants.**" The reverse side has :**Deus Nobis Haec Otia Fecit**" -- "**God has granted us this rest.**"

In his *Remonstrance to the Stamp Act* of 1765, **George Wythe** wrote:

"it is essential to British liberty that **laws imposing taxes** on the people **ought not** to be made **without the consent of representatives chosen by themselves** ...

British patriots will **never consent** to the exercise of **anti-constitutional power.**"

James Monroe moved to Richmond in 1780, to study law under **Virginia Governor Thomas Jefferson**, selling his family's small plantation to pay for it.

In 1780, at the age of 22, **Monroe** was chosen as a **delegate** to the **Continental Congress**.

He later purchased an estate, **Ash Lawn-Highland**, which was next to **Jefferson's Monticello estate**.

Monroe was admitted to the Virginia bar and practiced law in Fredericksburg, where he attended **St. George's Episcopal Church** and served as a vestryman.

After the Revolution, **Monroe** was elected as a **delegate** to the **Virginia House of Delegates** in 1782.

As a delegate to the **Virginia Ratifying Convention**, **Monroe** joined Patrick Henry in **opposing the ratification of the U.S. Constitution**, as it **did not have a Bill of Rights**, limiting the Federal Government's power.

The next year, he was elected to the **U.S. Congress**.

In 1786, at the age of 28, **James Monroe** married **Elizabeth Kortright**, 18-years-old, at **Trinity Episcopal Church** on Wall Street in New York City.

She was the daughter of a wealthy merchant from Holland, Netherlands, who helped found the New York

Chamber of Commerce.

In 1790, he was elected a **U.S. Senator**, where he served till he was appointed **Minister to France** in 1794.

Being in **France** during the **Reign of Terror**, **James Monroe's wife, Elizabeth**, helped secure the release of **Madame Lafayette**, the wife of Marquis de Lafayette, who was threatened with **death by guillotine** like **Queen Marie Antoinette**.

Monroe was elected **Governor of Virginia**, serving 1799-1802.

The **Monroes** attended **St. John's Episcopal Church in Richmond**.

In 1803, **Monroe** was made **Ambassador to Britain and Spain**.

On April 30, 1803, **Jefferson** sent **Monroe** and **Robert Livingston** to France to **negotiate the Louisiana Purchase, doubling the size of the United States**.

James and his wife, **Elizabeth**, were invited to **Napoleon's coronation in Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris**, December 2, 1804.

Monroe was again **Governor of Virginia** in 1811, then later that year, he served as President Madison's **Secretary of State**.

At the end of the **War of 1812**, he was made **Secretary of War** in 1814.

In 1816, **James Monroe** was elected the **5th U.S. President**.

He attended **St. John's Episcopal Church** in Lafayette Square, **directly across from the White House**.

He and Elizabeth sat in the **"President's Pew."**

He sent **General Andrew Jackson** into **Florida** in 1817, and sent **his Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams**, to **negotiate the Adams-Onis Treaty**, acquiring **Florida** from **Spain** in 1819.

States that were added to the Union during **Monroe's** administration were:

- **Mississippi**, 1817;
- **Illinois**, 1818;
- **Alabama**, 1819;
- **Maine**, 1820; and
- **Missouri**, 1821.

President Monroe proclaimed the "**Monroe Doctrine**" in 1823, authored by **Secretary of State John Quincy Adams**, which **forbade European powers** from **interfering** with the independent nations of the **Western Hemisphere**.

Monroe helped **freed slaves** found the nation of **Liberia** on **west coast of Africa**.

In 1823, their capital city was named in his honor - **Monrovia**. It is the **only foreign capital named after a U.S. President**.

In his First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1817, **President James Monroe** warned:

"What raised us to the present happy state?..."

The Government has been **in the hands of the people**. To the people, therefore ... is the credit due ...

It is only **when the people become ignorant and corrupt**, when they degenerate into a populace, that **they are incapable of exercising the sovereignty**.

Usurpation is then an easy attainment, and an usurper soon found.

The people themselves become the willing instruments of their own debasement and ruin ..."

Monroe continued:

"If we persevere ... we can not fail, under the favor of a **gracious Providence** ...

My fervent prayers to the **Almighty** that **He** will be graciously pleased to continue to us that protection which **He** has already so conspicuously displayed in our favor."

When **Muslim Barbary Pirates** committed terrorist attacks, **President James Monroe** refused appeasement.

Instead, he deployed the **U.S. Navy**, stating March 5, 1821:

"Our relations with the **Barbary Powers** are preserved ... by the same means that were employed when I came into this office.

As early as 1801 it was found necessary to **send a squadron into the Mediterranean** for the protection of our commerce."

In his 5th Annual Message, December 3, 1821, **President James Monroe** reiterated:

"**A squadron** has been maintained in the **Mediterranean**, by means whereof peace has been preserved with the **Barbary Powers** ...

From past experience ... it is distinctly understood that **should our squadron be withdrawn they would soon recommence their hostilities** and depredations upon our commerce."

President Monroe, with the U.S. Congress, ordered a city to be founded in 1823 in honor of **Commodore**

Stephen Decatur - the city is **Decatur, Alabama**.

Stephen Decatur was the renowned U.S. Naval officer who helped force the Muslim pirates to surrender, thus ending the **Barbary Wars**.

Though he was a **consistent Episcopalian**, **Monroe** seldom wrote about **religion** in his personal correspondence.

In his First Annual Message, December 2 1817, **President James Monroe** stated:

"In grateful acknowledgments to that **Omnipotent Being** ... in **unceasing prayer** that **He** will endow us with virtue and strength."

On November 16, 1818, in his 2nd Annual Message, **President Monroe** stated:

"For these inestimable blessings we can not but be grateful to that **Providence** which watches over the destiny of nations ...

When we view the blessings with which our country has been favored ...

Let us then, unite in offering our most grateful acknowledgments for **these blessings** to the **Divine Author of All Good**."

On November 14, 1820, in his 4th Annual Message, **President Monroe** stated:

"When ... we take into view the prosperous and happy condition of our country ... it is impossible to behold ... without being penetrated with the most profound and **grateful acknowledgments** to the **Supreme Author of All Good** for such manifold and inestimable blessings ...

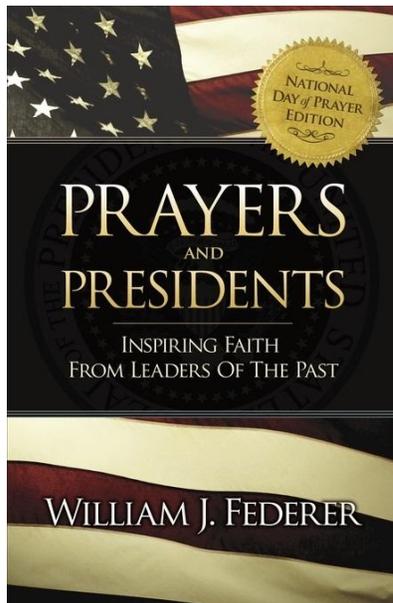
especially ... **our most excellent system of**

government, the powerful instrument in the hands of our **All-merciful Creator** in securing to us these blessings."

On March 5, 1821, in his 2nd Inaugural Address, **President Monroe** stated:

"The **liberty, prosperity, and happiness** of our country will always be the object of my **most fervent prayers** to the **Supreme Author of All Good ...**

With a firm reliance on the protection of **Almighty God.**"



On December 3, 1821, in his 5th Annual Message, **Monroe** stated:

"Deeply impressed with the blessings which we enjoy ... my mind is irresistibly drawn to that **Almighty Being**, the great source from whence they proceed and **to whom our most grateful acknowledgments are due.**"

He wrote:

"**The establishment of our institutions** forms **the most important epoch** that history hath recorded ...

To preserve and hand them down in their utmost purity to the remotest ages will **require the existence and practice of the virtues** and talents equal to those which were displayed in acquiring them."

Monroe wrote (*James Monroe Papers*, New York Public Library, Miscellaneous Papers and Undated Letters):

"Of the **liberty of conscience** in matters of **religious faith**, of **speech** and of the **press**; of the **trial by jury**; ... of the benefit of the **writ of habeas corpus**; of the **right to keep and bear arms ...**

If these rights are ... secured against encroachments, it is impossible that government should ever degenerate into tyranny."

Monroe died **July 4, 1831**, being the third President to die on **July 4th, Independence Day**, following **Jefferson** and **Adams** in 1826.

In his 8th Annual Message to Congress, December 7, 1824, **President James Monroe** stated:

"For these **blessings** we owe to **Almighty God**, from whom we derive them, and with **profound reverence**, **our most grateful and unceasing acknowledgments**

...

Having commenced my service in early youth, and **continued it since with few and short intervals**, I have witnessed the **great difficulties to which our Union has been exposed**, and admired the virtue and intelligence with which they have been surmounted ...

That these blessings may be preserved and perpetuated will be the object of my fervent and unceasing prayers to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe."

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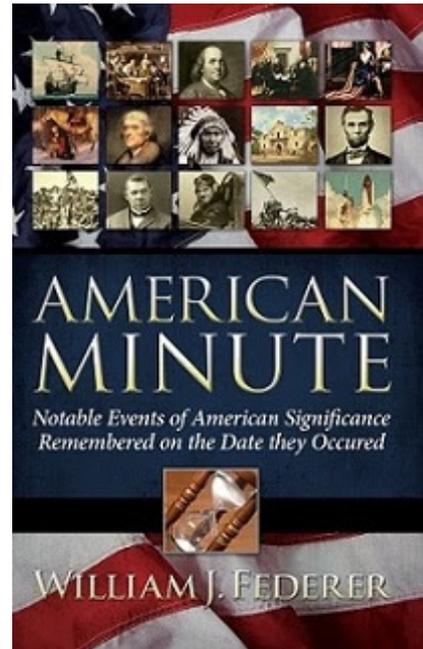
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