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[History](#)



Was the period after our victory of the War of 1812 really an “Era of Good Feelings?” Historians have traditionally labeled it that, but many wonder why? The Era of Good feelings took place from 1817 to 1825. During that time, James Monroe was elected president for two terms. The Era of ‘Good’ Feelings is misleading because many issues troubled the country around that time such as the American system, which tied to sectionalist events and economic panic and depression. Though there are some beneficial events, it was an overall devastating era.

Henry Clay’s American system consisted of the Second National Bank, the Tariff of 1816, and internal improvements. The Second National Bank was voted by Congress in 1816. The lack of the national bank during the War of 1812 created a bank vacuum which led to troubled local banks, and depreciated bank notes that hampered the war effort. Jeffersonians supported this, but Federalists thought of it as unconstitutional. After the war, Britain flooded America with cheap goods attempting to crush U. S. factories.

The Tariff of 1816 was made to protect American manufacturing from the British. It imposed 20-25% duties on imports. This created a sectional battle between Calhoun, Webster, and Clay. “... [no] one interest in the country [should be] sacrificed by the management of taxation to another...”

(Document A) Along with the others of the American system, internal improvements were a complete failure. Madison vetoed the bill for internal improvements. Jeffersonians saw it as a “state” issue, not the job of Congress.

Most improvements were then made locally at the expense of state and local governments. In 1819, the U. S. reached a financial crisis from over speculation on frontier lands by the Second National Bank; the Panic of 1819. The BUS forced western banks to fore close on western farms, and stopped allowing payment in paper, only specie; farmers did not have specie. This resulted in calls for reform and pressure for increased democracy. Western farmers viewed the bank as an evil financial monster.

The Panic of 1819 was the first financial panic since the critical period of the 1780s under Articles of Confederation. A year later came the Missouri Compromise of 1820, in which Missouri was asked to be a slave state. The House of Representatives attempted to pass the Tallmadge Amendment; prohibition of slaves in Missouri, and gradual freedom for children born to slaves that are already there. Southern states did not favor in this idea, they felt like it was a menacing threat to sectional balance. The senate refused to pass this amendment.

In the end, after the help of Henry Clay, Congress agreed to admit Missouri as a slave state, and Maine was added as a free-soil state. Thomas Jefferson states that “ A geographical line, coinciding with a marked principles, moral and political, once conceived and help up to the angry passions of men, will never be obliterated; and every new irritation will mark it deeper and deeper,” (Document F) meaning that the 36; 30’ lines will not solve slavery. Slavery became a controlling issue in American politics and will be hard to overcome.

The South began to develop sectional nationalism of its own and the end of this compromise in the 1850s resulted in civil war. Meanwhile, there were some miraculous events that lingered in the Era of Good Feelings. Federalists were disloyal during the War of 1812, and became extremely sectional. After the election of James Monroe in 1816, the Federalist Party had reached a downfall. The Monroe Doctrine, written by John Quincy Adams, demanded that colonial powers could keep their existing colonies but gain no new ones.

It also let new republics govern themselves. This “afforded a very suitable and convenient opportunity for us to take our stand against the Holy Alliance, and at the same time to decline the overture of Great Britain.”; he didn’t want to appear to be hiding being Great Britain. (Document H) The Monroe Doctrine was the most famous expression of nationalism during the era, and also maintained Washington’s tradition of avoiding “entangling alliances.” The long term impact resulted in the Monroe Doctrine becoming a cornerstone of U.

S. foreign policy during the last half of the 19th century & throughout the 20th century. Great Britain benefitted from this proclamation, along with the U. S. with trade in Latin America. Later in 1819 the U. S. gained Florida from the Spanish (Adams-Onís Treaty); which meant Indians could not attack anymore. Also, the density of population in 1820 showed signs of westward expansion that could possibly promote nationalism, but drag slavery towards the west. (Document E) After Monroe’s presidency, in the presidential election of 1824, Jackson had the most popular votes and electoral votes, but due to majority voting issues, John Quincy Adams was surprisingly voted as

president. Supporters of Jackson denounced this as “ corrupt bargain. ”

(Document I) These inconveniences during the era overpowered the few successful events that occurred. Overall, the “ Era of Good Feelings” was a time of complete destruction. One of the leading problems was Henry Clay’s American system. This promoted sectionalism during the era, and also resulted in economic panic and depression. This period of time did not deserve the name “ Era of Good Feelings. ”