

# 1817 - 1828

## Themes:

*Transportation Revolution*

*Expansion/Compromise*

*Compensated Emancipation/Early Abolition*

## Presidencies:

*James Monroe (Democratic-Republican) – 1817 - 1825*

*John Quincy Adams (Democratic-Republican/National Republican) – 1825 - 1829*

## Overview:

Many of the themes associated with this time period are ongoing – meaning they started in earlier time periods and will end in later ones. This is easier for you as a student because all you have to do is learn the themes once and then understand what happens in each time frame.

Two quick trigger topics to know about are the American System and the Era of Good Feelings, explained briefly below:

*The American System:* After the War of 1812, Britain had a ton of goods waiting in warehouses that they hadn't been able to sell to us during the war. Now that the war was over, they avalanched them into the US, often at cut rates, and hurt American factories. *So an extremely Federalist congress passed the Tariffs of 1816 – a tax on British imports. Henry Clay loved this idea and wanted to use the money from the tariff to pay for roads, bridges and canals in the interior.* In the end, not much money was raised, and the Presidents often vetoed spending like that.

*The Era of Good Feelings* – Not as hippie as it sounds, trust me. It was just the only time in our history – for a period of eight years, 1816 - 1824 – when we had only one major political party. The Federalist Party was dead, and the Democratic-Republicans were in power. It wasn't all love and skittles though.

As far as the expansion of the country went, the only territory added to the US at this time was Florida – ceded by Spain to the US in 1819 with the Adams-Onis Treaty. Besides that, we had plenty of land to settle out west, and Manifest Destiny as a social concept was still gaining momentum. The farther west farmers moved for fresh land, though, the more states would eventually come into the Union. In 1820, there was debate about admitting the new State of Missouri – would it be a slave state or a free state? And if admitted in either way, wouldn't that upset the balance between free and slave states in Congress? So a compromise was needed, the first of many over slavery and expansion. In steps **Henry Clay** who would later be nicknamed the "Great Compromiser" because he was so good at making deals in Congress. The Missouri Compromise was one such deal – it admitted Missouri as a slave state, and then Maine as a free state at the same time, which meant neither North nor south would get an advantage in Congress. In addition, from then on, any new territory added to the US north of the 36 degrees 30' North line of latitude would be automatically free territory. While it worked for 30+ years, the compromise also promoted the division of the country – called **sectionalism** – along economic and slavery lines.

As the population moved west into new territories, there was increasing demands for new transportation routes and methods to keep both goods and people flowing west and east. So the fact people were moving west created a national push for new roads, bridges, canals and technologies.

The Transportation Revolution – roughly 1815 – 1845 – can be broken down into a few basics:

*The Steamship* – shipping not reliant on wind or manpower to move changed everything. Now we could move people and goods quickly and efficiently in both directions on the Mississippi River – even upstream, as well as on the Great Lakes and even across the Atlantic for international trade.

*Turnpikes* – This was an ingenious method of paying for new roads. Because many people didn't want to pay taxes to build roads in states they would never go to, a turnpike charged only the people who used the road, until such time as the road was paid for. Once it was, they could move the turnpike into a new area and charge to pay for its construction. Similar turnpikes are still in use today on the east coast.

*Canals* – The Erie Canal was finished by the State of New York in 1825 – and ran the length of the entire state from west to east. It wasn't used for irrigation like today's canals, it was used for barging manufactured goods and raw materials between cities. A lot of times the barges were even pulled by horses or mules. The owners of the canal would charge people shipping (one reason why it's called "shipping") to transport these goods. Later, these canals couldn't compete with the railroads, which ended up being cheaper and faster, and they stopped building them.

*The Cumberland (National) Road* – Our first interstate highway, constructed with public money that ran across five states from Maryland to Ohio. It took a very long time to complete, but accelerated the westward movement and the growth of states that were then on the frontier.

### **Monroe and Compensated Emancipation**

President James Monroe was an abolitionist, which meant he was way ahead of his time. He also knew there was no possible way that he could politically restrict slavery – Congress wouldn't permit it and the country didn't yet support it. So he turned to private organizations such as the American Colonization Society, which raised private donations and paid slaveowners for their slaves, with the ultimate goal of returning them to Africa. Tens of thousands were purchased and sent to the new colony of Liberia, where the freed slaves were given aid in starting a nation and receiving education. Of course, they then proceeded to discriminate against the native Liberians who already lived there. The capital of the country was named "Monrovia" in honor of the President. While well intended, compensated emancipation was a failure. Most slaveowners just took the money and bought more slaves, usually younger ones and the process continued, and no real difference in the institution of slavery was noticeable.

### **Monroe's Doctrine**

President Monroe also staked out some territory and influence for the US, even though it was a little early and we were still a weak country. In his Monroe Doctrine of 1823, he declared the Western Hemisphere as part of America's influence, while the Eastern half of the world would fall under Europe's control. Mainly he wanted Europe to stop building new colonies in this half of the world. Later, when the US became an empire, the Monroe Doctrine was dusted off and used as a justification.