

*The Limits of 'Good Feelings':
Partisan Healing and Political Futures
during James Monroe's Boston
Visit of 1817*

SANDY MOATS

On July 8, 1817, the *Columbian Centinel*, a Federalist newspaper in Boston, declared that James Monroe's recent visit to that city had resulted in the establishment of 'good feelings' and the end of partisan animosities. Newspapers throughout the nation reprinted the *Centinel's* claim, some more critically than others, leading to its widespread dissemination in 1817. Since then, many historical studies have kept this expression alive by labeling Monroe's two-term presidency the 'Era of Good Feelings.'¹ More recent histories have rejected

The author wishes to thank the American Antiquarian Society, particularly Caroline Sloat and the anonymous reviewers, for encouraging the publication of this article. She also appreciates the guidance of Joyce Appleby and the comments of Andrew W. Robertson at the 2007 SHEAR conference.

1. See George Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1952) 95, and Harry Ammon, *James Monroe: The Quest for National Identity* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990) 366, 380. Both books employ this phrase and then discredit it. Catherine Allgor accepts the phrase 'Era of Good Feelings,' but gives the Madisons, particularly Dolley, credit for planting the seeds of nonpartisanship that bloomed during the early years of Monroe's first term. See *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006) 347-48.

SANDY MOATS is a member of the department of history, University of Wisconsin, Parkside.

Copyright © 2008 by American Antiquarian Society.

this sanguine assessment, some by simply relabelling the 1810s and 1820s as the 'Era of Bad Feelings.'²

Despite the phrase's widespread circulation and repetition, there has been little effort to explore its origins in the intense political needs of the New England Federalists, or the role that ceremonial culture played in producing this expression in the first place. This article demonstrates that the phrase, instead of cogently summarizing either the peace or the chaos of an era, refers to an unexplored moment in early American history, when the Federalists sought redemption and even a rebirth during Monroe's northern tour of 1817. Instead of finding the new political life they sought in Monroe's vision of national healing and partisan-free government, many older Federalists abandoned politics altogether, while their younger counterparts went on to establish invigorated political institutions from which to seek national office. The unrealized aspirations and hopes embodied in this notion of 'good feelings' exposes a vital transition in the nation's early political development as the Democratic and Whig parties gradually replaced the ailing organizations of the founding period to form the second American party system.

James Monroe entered the presidency in 1817 determined to resolve many of the tensions that had plagued the nation during the recent War of 1812. Regional and partisan animosities among North and South, Federalist and Republican, and merchant and farmer had conspired to undermine an already fragile American war effort. In the war's aftermath, Monroe saw an opportunity to unite the nation around its shared revolutionary and republican heritages, including the possibility of partisan-free government. During his first term in office, Monroe embarked on two presidential tours, ostensibly to inspect coastal defenses, but more importantly to promote this message of partisan healing and national unity.³

2. For a recent example of the 'bad feelings' approach, see Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), 181.

3. There are numerous primary and secondary sources that have discussed Monroe's tours, with the 1817 trip receiving the bulk of the attention. Several contemporary sources published the newspaper accounts and the welcoming addresses from the tours. These include: *A Narrative of a Tour of Observation, Made during the of 1817, by James Monroe*,

While Monroe formulated a postwar vision, the Federalists of New England contemplated their political future as well. No group suffered greater injury in the postwar environment than the Federalists, whose outspoken opposition to the war and poorly timed Hartford Convention rendered them almost moribund as a national party. The Federalists desperately needed a political resuscitation, and they saw an opportunity for redemption in the New England visit of a Republican president from Virginia. During the summer of 1817, Monroe and the New England Federalists came together to promote their respective political visions: one based in nonpartisan government, the other in a bipartisan coalition. Watching closely from the sidelines were the nation's newspaper editors, who offered highly partisan interpretations of the visit, and members of Monroe's Republican Party, who privately expressed alarm.

Despite proclamations of 'good feelings' by a Federalist newspaper, neither side achieved its political goals during Monroe's remarkable weeklong visit to Boston. Monroe never succeeded in launching partisan-free government, and Federalists never attained the high-level political appointments in Monroe's administration that they believed would revive them. Instead, Monroe's northern tour marked the beginning of a major transformation in American politics, as the founding generation abandoned hopes

President of the United States, Through the North-eastern and North-western Departments of the Union (Philadelphia: S. A. Mitchell and H. Ames, 1818), and Richard Radcliffe, ed., *The President's Tour: A Collection of Addresses Made to James Monroe, Esq. President of the United States* (New Ipswich, Mass.: Salmon Wilder, 1822). Samuel P. Waldo published three books on Monroe's tours, beginning with the northern tour and then including updates of the subsequent tours. These are: *The Tour of James Monroe, President of the United States, in the Year 1817* (Hartford: F. D. Bolles and Company, 1818), *The Tour of James Monroe, President of the United States, through the Northern and Eastern States, in 1817; His Tour in the Year 1818; together with a Sketch of his Life* (Hartford: Silas Andrus, 1819), and *The Tour of James Monroe* (Hartford: F. D. Bolles and Company, 1820). A recently published documentary history covers the northern, southern and abortive Chesapeake tours. See the *Papers of James Monroe: A Documentary History of the Presidential Tours of James Monroe, 1817, 1818, and 1819*, ed. Daniel Preston, 2 vols. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2003). Among secondary sources, two recent Monroe biographies address the tours, as does David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) 296, 298-302, 338-39. See Ammon, *James Monroe*, 369-79, 437-38; and Noble E. Cunningham, Jr., *The Presidency of James Monroe* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 31-40, 71-75.

of partisan-free government and disappointed Federalists sought a new political home elsewhere.⁴ During Monroe's northern and southern tours of 1817 and 1819, the seeds of the second American party system were sown by a new generation of leaders such as Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, and Andrew Jackson who shared the stage with the last founding father and began to form more vigorous political organizations to promote their policies and ambitions.

The War of 1812 provided the backdrop for Monroe's two-term presidency. Both the Federalist and Republican parties confronted philosophical and political challenges in the conflict's aftermath. The War of 1812 was sometimes referred to as the 'Second War of American Independence.' Many Americans believed they had fought to liberate themselves from Britain once and for all. Despite considerable diplomatic efforts to establish America's autonomy, Britain had been unwilling to acknowledge American sovereignty, particularly in the area of transatlantic trade. The practice of impressment, through which British ships gained access to American ships in order to seize American sailors claimed to be British deserters, epitomized America's lack of independence. Although this violation of citizenship outraged many Americans, particularly southerners and westerners, many coastal New Englanders enjoyed a cozy and profitable trading relationship with Britain and tolerated this behavior.⁵ The war was the final straw for a party and a region that felt increasingly alienated from a national government that they saw as pro-French, anti-British, and headed by a never-ending succession of

4. This article joins a rich literature on political culture in the early republic. See Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Simon P. Newman, *Parades and Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); and Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*. On the role of first ladies and other Washington women in the establishment of a political culture, see Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000) and *A Perfect Union*.

5. Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

Virginia Republicans.⁶ The New England Federalists gathered at the Hartford Convention in late 1814 to translate their unhappiness into a cohesive political platform that would revive their national fortunes.⁷

Unfortunately for the Federalists, their poorly timed convention had just concluded its work when the war took a victorious turn, with Andrew Jackson and his troops decisively defeating the British at the Battle of New Orleans in January 1815, and news of the Treaty of Ghent reaching America in February 1815.⁸ While a relieved nation celebrated its renewed independence, victory cast a sinister light on the activities of the Federalist opposition. Their concern with regional advantage and political status during a war that assumed national significance made them seem disloyal, if not treasonous, during wartime.⁹ Although the Hartford Convention was intended to revive a struggling national party, it hastened the Federalists' decline instead. Amidst the almost universal rejoicing, the War of 1812 produced one significant casualty: the Federalists, who retained pockets of regional strength but began a swift retreat from the national political stage after 1815.¹⁰

Despite the considerable weaknesses plaguing the war effort, the nation's successes at least equaled its failures, permitting the United States to claim victory. (Britain's preoccupation with the

6. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000).

7. For a detailed account of the Hartford Convention, see James M. Banner, Jr., *To the Hartford Convention: The Federalists and the Origins of Party Politics in Massachusetts, 1789-1815* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970). For a firsthand account of its work, see Samuel G. Goodrich, *Recollections of a Lifetime*, 2 vols. (New York: Miller, Orton and Mulligan, 1857), 2: 9-61.

8. Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 173-75.

9. Samuel Eliot Morison, *Harrison Gray Otis, 1765-1848, Urbane Federalist* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 395.

10. At the state level, the Federalists remained competitive in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, and Maryland into the late 1810s and early 1820s. See Shaw Livermore, *The Twilight of Federalism: The Disintegration of the Federal Party, 1815-1830* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 265; and Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 200.

Napoleonic Wars did not hurt either.) Officially, the Treaty of Ghent restored the prewar status quo, since neither country ceded rights or territory to the other. However, America obtained a degree of autonomy that had not existed prior to the war, particularly in trading matters. What had been initially dismissed as 'Mr. Madison's War' had assumed a national significance as a string of military victories enabled America to finally achieve its independence from Britain.¹¹

The war's successful resolution permitted James Monroe to enter the presidency at a time of unusual calm as Americans and their leaders made sense of a dramatically altered landscape. Monroe's elevation to the presidency in 1816 was largely a foregone conclusion due to the Federalists' attenuated national standing. As Secretary of State, as well as Secretary of War during a portion of the War of 1812, Monroe knew firsthand the weaknesses that had undermined the nation's effectiveness in defeating the British. Monroe dedicated his presidency to the elimination of political parties, which had caused so much strife during the war. He also tackled the military and transportation problems that had become so acute during the war. In his inaugural address, Monroe recommended a group of programs more traditionally associated with the Federalists, including fortifying coastal and inland frontiers, strengthening the Army, Navy, and militias, discharging the national debt, fostering domestic manufacturers, and improving roads and canals.¹² To his ambitious list, Monroe added the standard Republican caveat: 'proceed always with a constitutional sanction.'¹³

Ironically, the nation's deficiencies during the War of 1812 affirmed the wisdom of many Federalist programs, but the party's diminished postwar status prevented its members from championing their beloved agenda. The Republican Party's abandonment of its more decentralized, state-based approach in favor of the Federalists' economic program further hastened its opponents'

11. Hickey, *War of 1812*.

12. John L. Larson, *Internal Improvement: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

13. Monroe's First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1817, in *Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), 32-34.

national decline. This program of internal improvements, a national bank, and tariffs, eventually packaged together as Henry Clay's American System, would dominate the national political debate for the next forty years.¹⁴

Monroe's desire to eliminate political parties and his decision to tour the nation had roots that went back to the beginnings of American republican government.¹⁵ A protégé of Washington and Jefferson as well as a war hero, Monroe served as a tangible link to the nation's revolutionary and republican pasts; his choice of old-fashioned knee breeches evoked memories of an earlier era. As the last of the founding presidents, Monroe in his two terms saw the gradual transfer of power from a generation who had participated in the revolutionary struggle to a new generation who had inherited its legacy.¹⁶ Although Jefferson played a prominent role in encouraging Monroe's political career and fostering his ideas, Monroe, in a bipartisan gesture, returned to the example of his first mentor when he embraced Federalist policies and emulated Washington's tours of the United States.

While presidential tours were not unprecedented in republican government, the most recent examples had occurred during George Washington's first term, almost thirty years earlier.¹⁷

14. On the American System, see Robert V. Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991), 225-33.

15. On Monroe's vision of managing partisan discord through one-party government, see Hofstadter, *Idea of a Party System*, 22-23, 194-203.

16. Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

17. Monroe's two tours inspired a spate of political journeys, most notably the Marquis de Lafayette's visit of 1824-25. See *Lafayette, Guest of the Nation: A Contemporary Account of the Triumphant Tour of General Lafayette*, ed. Edgar Ewing Brandon, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford Historical Press, 1950); *Lafayette: Hero of Two Worlds*, ed. Stanley J. Idzerda (Flushing, New York: Queens Museum, 1989); Lloyd S. Kramer, *Lafayette in Two Worlds: Public Cultures and Personal Identities in the Age of Revolutions* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Anne C. Loveland, *Emblem of Liberty: The Image of Lafayette in the American Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971); and Sylvia Neely, *Lafayette and the Liberal Idea, 1814-1824, Politics and Conspiracy in an Age of Reaction* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991). For accounts of political journeys by younger politicians, such as Henry Clay, Andrew Jackson, and Daniel Webster: Fletcher M. Green, 'On Tour with President Andrew Jackson,' *New England Quarterly* 36 (1963): 209-28; Remini, *Henry Clay*, 353-54, 356-57, 442-43, 538-39, 630-41; and Robert V. Remini, *Daniel Webster: The Man and his Time* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997), 388-93.

Seeking ways to promote the new national government, Washington had toured the northern states in 1789 and the southern states in 1791. During these trips, Washington presented himself as a living embodiment of republican government in each town and city he visited in order to allow the nation's sovereign citizens to affirm the Constitution's authority and legitimacy. While many Americans recognized the necessity of Washington's tours, others believed these journeys were overly reminiscent of monarchical progresses. As the nation's first Republican president, Thomas Jefferson steadfastly rejected all forms of presidential ceremony associated with his Federalist predecessors as un-republican. This disagreement over presidential ceremony contributed to an increasingly shrill philosophical debate over the best way to interpret the Constitution, a discussion that eventually produced the Federalist and Republican parties.¹⁸ Given Monroe's strong Republican credentials and his long political association with Jefferson, he seemed an unlikely person to adopt the Federalists' ceremonial mantle. Or perhaps as had his former rivals, he regarded these tours as a public opportunity to seek redemption for his own political excesses.¹⁹ Through his embrace of Washington's presidential style, Monroe became the living embodiment of partisan-free government as he made friends with former Federalist enemies in New England.²⁰

In proposing an end to political parties, Monroe was revisiting a fundamental objective of the founding fathers as the best way to

18. For a 'corrective' to the emphasis on presidents in understanding early American politics, see Jeffrey L. Pasley, Andrew W. Robertson, and David Waldstreicher, eds., *Beyond the Founding Fathers: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

19. Monroe's greatest partisan blunder came during his stint as Washington's minister to France between 1794 and 1796. Washington envisioned Monroe's appointment as a bi-partisan gesture intended to assuage his Republican critics; instead, it became a diplomatic embarrassment. Monroe, departing from the administration's policy of neutrality, expressed pro-revolutionary sentiments to the delegates in Paris, forcing Washington to recall him. See Ammon, *James Monroe*, 114-25.

20. Sandra A. Moats, 'The Last Republican: James Monroe's Tours and the Politics of Succession' (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 2001).

manage factions that threatened the government's stability and survival.²¹ The early partisan organizations of Federalists and Democratic-Republicans that emerged during the 1790s eventually matured into the national political parties of Whigs and Democrats. Born out of competing interpretations of republicanism, they enabled sovereign citizens to communicate their opinions to their official representatives—a process that ironically strengthened republican government. Although Monroe saw the nation's future in the reclamation of this republican ideal, his predecessors, Jefferson and Madison, had come to recognize the importance of parties to representative government. Nonetheless, Monroe remained steadfast in his belief that political parties had been the source of much of the nation's recent discord.

Even before becoming president, Monroe had begun to contemplate both partisan-free government and a trip to visit New England Federalists. While serving as Secretary of State, he dispatched Christopher Hughes to Boston with 'instructions' to meet with Federalist leaders.²² Reporting to Monroe on April 13, 1816, Hughes described his warm reception: 'I have received very distinguished attentions from all the first people here; this is my first visit, and I find everything in point of society, private and public establishment and political feeling and principle very much better than expected.'²³

While in Boston, Hughes met extensively with Hartford Convention leader Harrison Gray Otis, who seemed particularly eager to redeem himself and his party in the convention's aftermath. Otis, recognizing Hughes's close association with Monroe, used the visit as an opportunity to explain the true motives behind

21. Madison advanced this argument in *Federalist* 10.

22. Christopher Hughes, Jr. (1786–1849) was a young diplomat from Baltimore who had served as a secretary to the Treaty of Ghent peace delegation. See *American National Biography*, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, 24 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 11: 421.

23. Hughes to Monroe, April 13, 1816, James Monroe Papers, Library of Congress, reel 6, series 1.

the Hartford Convention.²⁴ Otis stressed that disunion was never the goal of the Hartford Convention, and Hughes stated in a letter to Monroe that 'the principle of the permanence of the Union of the States, was the very soul of the Hartford Convention.'²⁵ Hughes relayed Otis's suggestion that the next president should travel to New England, where he would receive a warm reception from the region's residents that would demonstrate their support for the union. Hughes added that Otis believed such a visit would be beneficial for all concerned. It is unclear whether Monroe, via Hughes, proposed a presidential tour to Otis to seek his support, or if Otis originated the idea. In either case, Otis and Monroe entertained an alliance of convenience that Otis believed would redeem himself and his Federalist colleagues.²⁶

Despite the positive exchanges between Otis and Monroe in 1816, the lingering taint of the Hartford Convention, along with Monroe's assumption of the presidency and his opponents' agenda, produced grim political prospects for the Federalist Party nationwide. Early in 1817, Jeremiah Mason, a United States Senator from New Hampshire, assessed the political impotence of the Federalists in Congress in a letter to former Senator Christopher Gore. Mason lamented, 'On no occasion has anything like a Federal opposition appeared during this session, in either House,' concluding, 'It will never again be seen.'²⁷ By June, Mason considered the situation so hopeless that he resigned his Senate seat, two years before his term expired. Daniel Webster, a congressman from New Hampshire, joined the ranks of exiting

24. Although the author of the convention report remained anonymous, it was widely assumed to have been written by Otis, who was in Washington with two of his convention colleagues to present the Federalists' recommendations, when the Treaty of Ghent was announced. Banner, *To the Hartford Convention*, 324, 347; and Morison, *Harrison Gray Otis*, 353.

25. Hughes to Monroe, April 13, 1816, James Monroe Papers.

26. On Otis's plans to revive the Federalist Party through Monroe's visit, see Morison, *Harrison Gray Otis*, 402-3.

27. Mason to Gore, January 25, 1817, in *Memoir of Jeremiah Mason*, ed. G. J. Clark (Boston: Boston Law Book Company, 1917), 144.

Federalists who no longer saw a political future for themselves or their party.²⁸ Writing to Mason, Webster cogently described the party's congressional decline: 'Who remains, fit to prescribe any course to us?'²⁹ Between 1815 and 1817, the number of Federalists decreased from seventy-five in the Fourteenth Congress to fifty in the Fifteenth Congress.³⁰ With his own congressional term over in 1817, Webster relocated to Boston to practice law and to contemplate other options.³¹

After Monroe's inauguration in March 1817, word began to spread concerning his plans to tour the northern states, and Federalists exchanged letters to discuss how best to take advantage of the impending visit. Former Federalist Nicholas Biddle, a close associate of Monroe who had served as his aide in London in 1806, responded to Monroe with a plan for a robust national government headed by a powerful executive who promoted a comprehensive economic program.³² Lamenting the loss of presidential influence, Biddle declared: 'Ever since the time of General Washington, the President has unfortunately appeared to the nation too much like the Chief Clerk of Congress—a cabinet man, stationary at his desk relying exclusively on secretaries, and invisible except to those who seek him.'³³ Because Federalists had always favored an energetic government headed by a strong executive, Biddle praised Monroe's proposed tour as an opportunity to reinvigorate the executive branch. With the Republicans forced

28. Jeremiah Mason of New Hampshire (1768–1848); Christopher Gore of Massachusetts (1758–1827); Daniel Webster of New Hampshire and later, Massachusetts (1782–1852). See *Biographical Directory of the American Congress*, 1455, 2027, and *American National Biography*, 9: 298.

29. Webster to Mason, June 28, 1817, in *The Papers of Daniel Webster*, Series 1: Correspondence, ed. Charles M. Wiltse, 7 vols. (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1974), 1: 211.

30. Data compiled from *Biographical Directory of the American Congress*, 86–91.

31. Remini, *Daniel Webster*, 143, 144, 148, 150.

32. Thomas P. Govan, *Nicholas Biddle: Nationalist and Public Banker, 1786–1844* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 19.

33. Biddle to Monroe, April 10, 1817, in James Monroe Papers, New York Public Library, Reel 3.

to abandon the Jeffersonian vision of a limited federal government, the Federalists remained hopeful that their governmental ideal would be restored under Monroe.³⁴

Biddle also believed that Monroe needed to conduct himself as a proper republican in order to enhance the dignity and the influence of the presidency. He advised Monroe to abstain 'from all exhibitions of mere ostentation or festivity' and to decline all personal invitations as a reminder to the nation that he was conducting public business. Adopting this approach, Biddle wrote, would insulate Monroe from criticism because 'everyone will perceive the propriety of that course and no one could possibly object to it.'³⁵ Curiously, Biddle's own admonishment did not prevent him from inviting Monroe to stay at his home when the president visited Philadelphia. As a friend and political supporter, Biddle must have considered himself insulated from the criticisms that might accompany invitations from others.

News of the impending tour reached a wider audience when newspapers along the eastern seaboard began announcing the president's plans to their readers. Thanks to the Postal Service Act of 1792, newspapers were charged a nominal postal rate, allowing editors to exchange news among geographically distant cities and towns inexpensively.³⁶ As soon as a Baltimore or Philadelphia newspaper reported the president's plans, the mail would carry these papers to Boston, Massachusetts, or Concord, New Hampshire, where the identical article would be reprinted several days later.³⁷ But nineteenth-century newspapers did more than

34. On Federalists' ideology, see Elkins and McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*; Ellis, *Founding Brothers*; and Banner, *To the Hartford Convention*.

35. Biddle to Monroe, April 10, 1817, James Monroe Papers, New York Public Library.

36. The rate was one cent for papers traveling fewer than one hundred miles and one-and-one-half cents for papers traveling more than one hundred miles. Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 36.

37. Newspapers that ran a separate column entitled 'By the Mail' to incorporate articles from other towns included *Columbian Centinel* (Boston) and *New-Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth).

just reprint articles. Editors with strong partisan and regional biases freely and frequently offered their opinions on events occurring locally and elsewhere.³⁸ Monroe's tour generated intense commentary as editors both praised and criticized his use of presidential ceremony and the public's response to it. The sharing of news played a critical role in the planning, promotion, and execution, as well as the analysis of the northern tour's meaning.

Published reports of the upcoming tour provided Harrison Gray Otis, recently appointed a United States Senator, with a fresh opportunity to communicate with Monroe about his impending visit to Boston. Writing on April 22, 1817, Otis, noting that 'an intimation has appeared in a newspaper of this town, of an intention in you to make a visit,' humbly extended an extraordinary invitation. He wrote, 'I know not on what foundation the report is reared, but in the hope of its reality I beg honor with Mrs. Otis to request that you and your lady and suite will do us the honor to take up your residence with us while you remain in town.' Otis acknowledged 'on the score of personal acquaintance, we have no pretensions that will justify the freedom we take in making this proposal,' but believed that his position as a federal official made this offer an appropriate one.³⁹ During Monroe's tour to heal party divisions, Otis intended to offer every possible courtesy to the Republican president in the hope that these gestures of friendship would be reciprocated with political appointments for the Federalists.⁴⁰

Monroe interpreted Otis's invitation as a continuing sign that the New England Federalists intended to dispense with previously held animosities and embrace his party-free vision. In recognition of this gesture, Monroe responded promptly and cordially to Otis

38. On the partisan nature of early republic newspapers, see Jeffrey L. Pasley, *The Tyranny of Printers: Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001).

39. Otis to Monroe, April 22, 1817, Otis Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

40. On Otis's plans to revive the Federalist Party through Monroe's visit, see Morrison, *Harrison Gray Otis*, 402-3.

on April 28, thanking the Massachusetts senator for his 'very polite and obliging invitation.' Monroe, heeding Biddle's advice to avoid personal invitations, continued: 'Having already declined the invitation of some friends, in other cities, on the principle, that I deemed it improper, to burden them with such an intrusion, I am restrained, by respect and delicacy to them, from departing from the rule.'⁴¹ This remarkable interchange continued the process of reconciliation that Monroe and his former opponent began in 1816.

Monroe's northern tour officially began on June 1, 1817, when the president departed Washington and traveled north to Baltimore, his first stop. During the first two months of the tour, he visited cities along the Atlantic coast, stopping in Philadelphia, Trenton, and New York, before proceeding into New England. Monroe reached his northernmost point along the Atlantic when he arrived in Maine in late July. For the remaining two months of his tour, he travelled west into the nation's interior, visiting New York, Michigan territory, Ohio, and western Pennsylvania, before returning to Washington, D.C. on September 17, some four months and two thousand miles later.⁴² He began a tour of the Chesapeake region in 1818, but cut the trip short because of the controversy surrounding the Seminole War and the recent acquisition of Florida.⁴³ Monroe toured the southern states between March 30 and August 8, 1819, covering approximately 2,600 miles along the southern coast and interior.⁴⁴

While Monroe envisioned his 1817 tour as an opportunity to foster partisan healing and to inspect coastal defenses, cities, and towns along the route, he expanded the tour's length and its meaning into a celebration of republican government and its civic

41. Monroe to Otis, April 28, 1817, Otis Papers.

42. For the northern tour's itinerary, see *Papers of James Monroe*, 1: xvii, 7-8.

43. On the Chesapeake tour, see *Papers of James Monroe*, 1: 518-49. On the Seminole War crisis, see Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire, 1767-1821* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977), chapters 22 and 23.

44. *Papers of James Monroe*, 1: xxii.

achievements. The city of Baltimore instituted the rituals that became a standard feature of Monroe's northern and southern tours: an escorted procession, a welcoming speech, a dinner or ball in the president's honor, and, if time permitted, a tour of the locale's highlights. The widespread circulation of newspapers permitted communities along the route to monitor Monroe's expected arrival date while also keeping abreast of these welcoming rituals. A vigorous rivalry emerged as cities and towns strove to match, if not exceed, the hospitality extended by others. During his three-day stay in Philadelphia, Monroe visited cultural and civic institutions that highlighted the city's progress and prosperity, including the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the Academy of Natural Sciences, the Athenaeum, the Museum of Charles Willson Peale, as well as the prison, hospital, and the Navy Yard.⁴⁵ During his five-day stay in New York City, he visited Fort Bellows and the Navy Yard, the New York Academy of Fine Arts, the New-York Historical Society, the Lyceum of Natural History, and the Literary and Philosophical Society.⁴⁶ Despite these impressive attractions, Boston emerged as the pinnacle of the northern tour because Monroe devoted an unprecedented week to visiting its attractions and socializing with his former political rivals during a stay that coincided with the nation's celebration of Independence Day.⁴⁷

As Monroe made his way northward, partisan animosities remained remarkably subdued in public festivities and in private correspondence, with many praising the president's efforts to eliminate political parties. One exception was the nation's newspapers, where partisan opinions were freely expressed but also remained largely contained. John Lang, editor of the *New York Gazette*, reflected the opinion of many editors and readers when he

45. *Philadelphia: A 300-year History*, Russell F. Weigley, ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1982) 205, 218, 242, and *United States Gazette* (Philadelphia), June 6, 1817.

46. *National Intelligencer*, June 19, 1817, and June 24, 1817, and *Connecticut Gazette* (New London), June 25, 1817.

47. *Papers of James Monroe*, 1: 7-8.

praised the tour's adherence to republican ideas, declaring: 'A more noble and dignified spectacle has never been exhibited in a free and civilized nation, than the reception and conduct of the President of the United States and his Constituents.'⁴⁸ In a preview of the bumpy road ahead, some comments assumed a more contentious tone as southern newspapers criticized the actions of northerners, northern cities chided one another, and newspapers in both regions blamed Monroe for the tour's excesses. Timothy Green, editor of the Fredericksburg-based *Virginia Herald*, assumed a more critical stance toward the tour, writing: 'Knowing something of the character of Mr. Monroe . . . we had hoped that he would shrink from the glittering "pomp and circumstance" of courtly parade, and courtier-like attention, which the good people of the North lavish upon him.'⁴⁹ During the first month of Monroe's northern tour, partisan and regional sniping was largely confined to the nation's newspapers, as many Americans seemed eager to embrace, at least for the time being, the possibility of political harmony. Boston would offer the real test of whether these tensions had been extinguished or were merely dormant.

As Monroe made his way north, the mood among Federalists lifted as they anticipated his arrival. The discussion temporarily shifted away from the party's demise toward an evaluation of the practical ramifications of Monroe's plans to reach out to Federalists. Jeremiah Mason wrote to Rufus King, who had been Monroe's nominal Federalist opponent in the 1816 presidential election, to describe the elaborate preparations underway for the president's reception in Boston.⁵⁰ At a minimum, Mason reported, these festivities are intended 'to work out the stain of the Hartford Convention and their other rebellions.'⁵¹ During Monroe's visit in New York City, King had met with the president

48. *New York Gazette and General Advertiser*, June 18, 1817.

49. From the *Virginia Herald* (Fredericksburg), reprinted in *Charleston Courier*, June 24, 1817.

50. Rufus King of New York (1755-1827). See *American National Biography*, 12:711-13.

51. Mason to King, June 26, 1817, in *Memoir of Jeremiah Mason*, 155.

and described their exchange as friendly but vague. Responding to Mason, King summarized his impressions of the president's intentions: 'I think the chief must, and will be mainly influenced in his course by the perpetual changes in the political horoscope.'⁵² Mason echoed King's assessment when he wrote to Christopher Gore: 'No one can foretell what this will produce; but I do not believe the Federalists, or quasi-Federalists, have anything to expect from Colonel Monroe.'⁵³ Despite their pessimistic assessments, Mason, Gore, and other Federalists actively welcomed the president.

While his Federalist colleagues handicapped their political futures, Otis continued to curry favor with the Republican president. Although Monroe had declined an offer of private hospitality, Otis dedicated his energies to playing a prominent role on Boston's Committee of Arrangements. The celebrated architect Charles Bulfinch, who was chairman of Boston's Board of Selectmen (similar to a city council), was the obvious person to head the committee and deliver Boston's welcoming address.⁵⁴ For his part, Otis led the delegation that greeted Monroe outside Boston and escorted him into the city, a role that afforded Otis considerable access to the president.⁵⁵ During a two-day horseback ride to Boston, a Federalist senator and a Republican president finally met face-to-face to address their shared goal of political reconciliation.

One Boston Federalist who seemed less anxious than his younger colleagues about Monroe's upcoming visit, was former president John Adams. Writing to Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse at the time when intense planning was underway in Boston, Adams jested: 'Have you adjusted your Bib and Tucker to visit the president?' But Adams concluded his letter on a more charitable note,

52. King to Mason, July 4, 1817, in *The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King*, Charles R. King, ed., 6 vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900), 2: 76.

53. Mason to Gore, June 18, 1817, in *Memoir of Jeremiah Mason*, 152.

54. Charles A. Place, *Charles Bulfinch, Architect and Citizen* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925), 203.

55. *Columbian Centinel*, June 7, 1817.

declaring: 'His plain manner will please in general. Tranquility and prosperity to his Administration. Amen.'⁵⁶ As the Boston visit drew closer, Adams welcomed Monroe, noting: 'In the good old English Language of your Virginian and my New England Ancestors, I am right glad to see you in the oldest Plantation, in Old Massachusetts . . . where you will be received with more splendor and I hope equal cordiality.'⁵⁷

There are two obvious explanations for Adams's tone. At the age of eighty-two, he had long since retired from national politics, and his future did not hinge on the success or failure of the Republican president's visit. Also, John and Abigail Adams were delighted that Monroe had invited their son, John Quincy Adams, to serve as his Secretary of State. A culmination of the young Adams's impressive diplomatic career, this position also established him as Monroe's presidential heir apparent.⁵⁸ The Boston visit would provide an opportunity for two former partisan combatants to affirm their friendship, while also allowing the Adamses to thank Monroe in person for their son's appointment.

Despite the superficial appearance of harmony between the Federalists and Monroe, their contrasting needs placed them on a collision course that eventually doomed the aspirations of both. The first sign of trouble came even before Monroe reached Massachusetts. As was customary throughout the tour, Boston dispatched representatives from its committee of arrangements to escort the president into the city. In fact Boston produced rival welcoming committees, with competing political affiliations. On June 30, a Federalist committee led by Otis met Monroe in Providence, Rhode Island, to escort him into Boston. A day later, in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, Monroe's entourage encountered a Republican committee, headed by General Henry

56. Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse, June 18, 1817, *Papers of James Monroe*, 1:101.

57. Adams to Monroe, July 1817, *Papers of James Monroe*, 1: 198.

58. Ammon, *James Monroe*, 361; and Paul C. Nagel, *John Quincy Adams: A Public Life, A Private Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 245.

A. S. Dearborn and Justice Joseph Story, which also intended to accompany Monroe into Boston.⁵⁹ Brigadier General Joseph Gardner Swift, who accompanied Monroe during the eastern leg of the northern tour, directed the second contingent to 'fall in and form a part of the cortege,' and the two committees then escorted Monroe to Dedham, Massachusetts.⁶⁰ This delicate compromise could not last because, as Swift explained, both groups wanted 'to take charge of the president,' and neither party was willing to share power with the other. Engaging in 'ceremonial consultations' with the two committees, Swift selected the Federalist committee as the legitimate escort because they had been appointed by Boston's Committee of Arrangements. Adding insult to injury, the Republican committee was invited to present a written address to its party's president, but only after he reached Boston.

Because of the current political needs of the Massachusetts Federalists and their longstanding philosophical beliefs, party animosities remained high and palpable, differentiating Boston from other cities along the tour route. Committed to the principles of stability, hierarchy, dependence, and the common good, these Federalists saw themselves as the true philosophical heirs of the nation's republican tradition, while they viewed the Republicans' belief in opportunity, mobility, and self-reliance as a threat to these ideals. Since the late 1790s, Federalists had formulated their most strident, but coherent, opposition to the Republican Party from a city where they controlled the civic and commercial

59. General Henry A. S. Dearborn was the son of Major General Henry Dearborn, one of the commanding officers during the War of 1812. Joseph Story was a Supreme Court Justice. He also served on the Committee of Arrangements in his hometown of Salem, Massachusetts, when Monroe visited on July 8. On Dearborn, see *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, 20 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), 3: 176-77. On Story, see *American National Biography*, 12: 711-13.

60. As the chief engineer of the Army and superintendent of the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, Swift offered technical expertise as Monroe inspected coastal fortifications during the northern tour. See Joseph Gardner Swift, *The Memoirs of General Joseph Gardner Swift, LL.D., U.S.A.* (Worcester, Mass.: F. S. Blanchard and Co., 1890).

institutions as merchants, bankers and manufacturers.⁶¹ During Monroe's visit to their stronghold, Boston Federalists sought a rebirth that might even return them to what they considered to be their rightful place at the head of the federal government. The Boston Republicans, who lacked their opponents' political and economic clout, nonetheless dedicated themselves to blocking any sort of alliance between Monroe and their partisan enemies. Unlike welcoming committees in cities earlier along the route where partisan tensions remained largely confined to newspaper editorials, the rival Boston committees had publicly and explicitly uncorked the genie of party. Once unleashed, it would prove extremely difficult to bottle up these tensions again.

The intensity of the partisan rivalry came as no surprise to Christopher Gore, who observed to Jeremiah Mason that the two parties were engaged in a contest to appear more devoted to the president. Hedging his bets, Gore added that the Federalists seemed 'to have got the start in the race.'⁶² However, Federalist editors in Boston were so eager to promote an image of loyalty and unity to the rest of the nation that, in their otherwise overheated coverage, they failed to mention the city's competing welcoming committees.

With Boston's considerable commercial and civic resources at their disposal, the Federalists offered Monroe a welcoming ceremony and a non-stop swirl of receptions, dinners, concerts, sight-seeing trips, and honors unmatched by any other city during the northern tour. To escort Monroe into Boston, the town fathers convened a mile-long procession consisting of cavalry squadrons, military officers, militia units, the Committee of Arrangements, civil officials of the United States government, a cavalcade of citizens on foot and on horseback, and lines of carriages.⁶³ Monroe was in the middle section of this grand procession as he rode into

61. Banner, *To the Hartford Convention*, 22, 31, 50, 190-92.

62. Gore to Mason, June 22, 1817, in *Memoir of Jeremiah Mason*, 153.

63. *National Intelligencer*, July 8, 1817.

Boston as a heroic figure on his customary white horse.⁶⁴ The parade snaked through the streets of Boston along a two-and-a-half-mile route, where a crowd of forty to fifty thousand had assembled to greet the president.⁶⁵ The *Columbian Centinel* reported that 'the sideways, avenues, windows, roofs, and even chimney tops were thronged with a smiling population,' while streamers hung from windows and balconies and bands played patriotic music.⁶⁶ In case Monroe had forgotten why the Boston Federalists prepared such a lavish reception, the Republican president received a vivid reminder when he entered the Boston Common. There, Monroe witnessed four thousand children 'of both sexes, about two-thirds boys; who were principally dressed in blue coats, with white underclothes, and the girls in white,' carrying bouquets of red and white roses.⁶⁷ The ardently pro-Federalist *Columbian Centinel* pointed out that these roses stood as 'an emblem of the union of parties.'⁶⁸

After the parade ended, Monroe took up residence at the Exchange Coffee House. From the first floor of this six-story tavern and inn located in the heart of Boston's government center, Charles Bulfinch delivered the city's welcoming address to Monroe and the assembled crowd.⁶⁹ The Federalist Committee of Arrangements eagerly embraced the tour's republican vision in order to expunge the sins of the Hartford Convention. Bulfinch, articulating this enthusiasm, expounded upon the themes of political unity, the nation's glorious origins and Monroe as the living embodiment of these values.⁷⁰ He linked Federalist to Republican by invoking memories of Washington's visit to Boston, kindling memories of Monroe's 'illustrious predecessor, the father of

64. *Papers of James Monroe*, 1:190.

65. *Columbian Centinel*, July 5, 1817, and *Papers of James Monroe*, 1: 197.

66. *Columbian Centinel*, July 5, 1817.

67. *Papers of James Monroe*, 1:197.

68. *Columbian Centinel*, July 5, 1817.

69. Caleb H. Snow, *A History of Boston, The Metropolis of Massachusetts* (Boston: Abel Bowen, 1828), 329-31.

70. Place, *Charles Bulfinch*, 242.

his country,' and, of course, the first Federalist president. Bulfinch commended Monroe's revolutionary and political service to the nation: 'Called to the service of your country at an early period of life . . . you are now raised to the highest dignity which can be conferred by a free people.' He added a veiled reference to the 'solicitude' of Boston's residents in the hope that Monroe would exercise his constitutional powers 'with a sincere regard for the welfare of the people.'⁷¹ With their loyalty to Monroe and to the nation dramatically illustrated in their welcoming reception and opening remarks, the Boston Federalists now waited to see if this visit would produce more tangible results such as political appointments.

During Monroe's weeklong visit, Boston's leaders eagerly sought to present a picture of a growing and vibrant city and state—even if this was not necessarily true. The Federalists' political decline coincided with the state's diminished population as its residents increasingly moved south and west to seek cheaper land and less restrictive communities. By 1820, with the loss of Maine as well as continued emigration, Massachusetts fell from second place to fifth in population, ranking behind New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Ohio.⁷² To counter any impression of decline, Boston offered the president a whirlwind of official visits and social calls. In return, Monroe embraced the Federalists' hospitality as proof that his former foes were relinquishing their partisan armor. Monroe visited the Navy Yard, the Arsenal, Fort Independence, Fort Warren, and ships of war.⁷³ His hosts also introduced him to the city's leading attractions such as Bunker Hill and Harvard College, where he received the penultimate Federalist honor, an honorary Doctor of Laws degree.

The Boston visit provided Monroe with an opportunity to sit for a portrait with Gilbert Stuart, thereby joining a virtual pantheon of

71. *National Intelligencer*, July 8, 1817.

72. Banner, *To the Hartford Convention*, 13.

73. *Niles Weekly Register*, July 12, 1817.

distinguished sitters.⁷⁴ Monroe's fashion-conscious wife, Elizabeth, who did not accompany her husband on the northern tour, encouraged him to take advantage of Stuart's residence in Boston to initiate his presidential portrait.⁷⁵ Over the course of three sittings, Stuart produced a bust-size image of the fifth president as the epitome of republican simplicity and dignity. Dressed in a black coat and a white shirt and cravat, the gray-haired, blue-eyed president maintains a direct and serious gaze. Not until December 1819 did the notoriously slow Stuart send the completed portrait to Monroe in Washington, permitting the president and the nation to have a tangible souvenir of his historic visit to Boston.⁷⁶

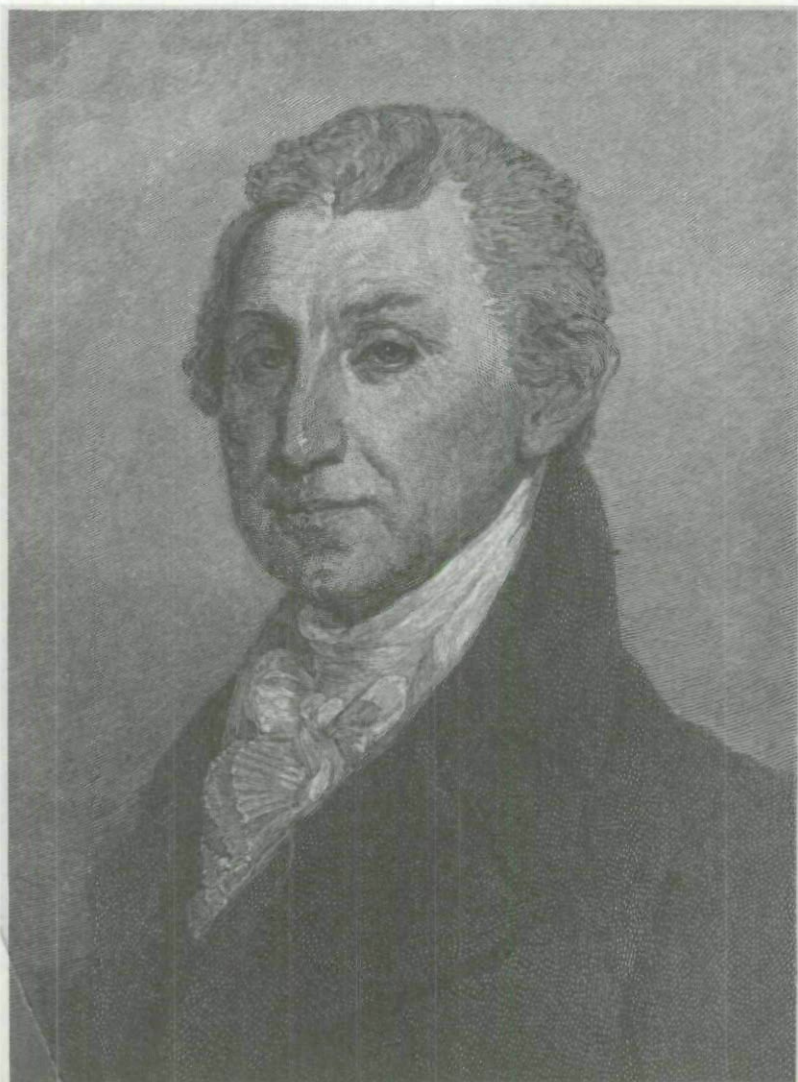
The president's stay in Boston coincided with the celebration of Independence Day, America's most sacred and most contested civic holiday. The holiday owed its most important associations to the writings of Thomas Jefferson, a foe of Federalists, and since the government's inception, the festivities had become partisan rallies as each side declared itself the true heir of the nation's revolutionary tradition. By celebrating Independence Day together, Monroe and his hosts achieved a symbolic reconciliation as they labored to expunge longstanding partisan hostilities from the day's festivities.⁷⁷ In addition, the holiday provided the Federalists with an important occasion to express their national loyalty directly to the president. Serving as a reminder of the limits of this newfound political comity were the Boston Republicans, who did not participate in the president's gathering with the Federalists, but met with him separately on July 4 to deliver their long-overdue welcoming address.

74. *Papers of James Monroe*, 1: 230-31.

75. Elizabeth Kortright Monroe was regarded as a highly fashionable, if somewhat reserved and formal, first lady. While in France, she received high praise for her stylishness in the nickname 'La Belle Americaine.' See W. P. Cresson, *James Monroe* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946), 205. See also Carrie Reborá Barratt and Ellen G. Miles, *Gilbert Stuart* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 310.

76. Barratt and Miles, *Gilbert Stuart*, 310, 312.

77. Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997).



James Monroe, from a woodcut of the Gilbert Stuart painting (then owned by Thomas Jefferson Coolidge), *Harper's Weekly* 40 (1896): 76. American Antiquarian Society.

Led by General Dearborn, the Republican delegation praised Monroe's message of unity but advised him to remain faithful to constitutional principles.⁷⁸ Hinting at the recent missteps of the Federalists, the Republicans declared that while they understood Monroe's desire to eliminate 'the asperity of party dissensions,' they remained hopeful that he would show equal respect for constitutional principles. Reluctant to draw attention to Boston's competing parties, Monroe offered a brief response, which was not printed, and then offered a written reply later that day. In that response, Monroe reiterated that the 'union of the whole community, in support of republican government,' was his top priority.⁷⁹ To the disappointment of his fellow Republicans, Monroe intended to pursue a policy to unify the country that included the elimination of parties. Overshadowed by its Federalist opponents, Monroe's own party was relegated to the sidelines during his historic visit to Boston.

In an effort to advance a political reconciliation with the Federalists, Monroe broke with his policy of declining personal invitations halfway through his Boston visit and began to attend dinners and parties at private homes. John Adams had participated in several welcoming dinners for Monroe in Boston, and Monroe then visited John and Abigail Adams at their Quincy home, where they hosted a dinner for forty people in his honor.⁸⁰ Adams fostered both partisan healing and a personal friendship with Monroe when he declared: 'Sir, I am happy to welcome you and your friends, and to acknowledge my high appreciation of the distinction which you propose to confer on my son as Secretary of State.'⁸¹ For a former

78. Dearborn was the federal collector of customs and like Abraham Bishop in New Haven, who was named to this post by President Madison in 1812, possessed political influence in Boston as a federal political appointee. See David Waldstreicher and Stephen R. Grossbart, 'Abraham Bishop's Vocation; or, The Mediation of Jeffersonian Politics,' *Journal of the Early Republic*, 18 (Winter 1998): 617-58.

79. The pro-Federalist Boston press did not publish either address. Instead, *Niles' Weekly Register* reprinted them on July 19, 1817, and July 26, 1817 respectively.

80. *Papers of James Monroe*, 1: 197, 224, 226.

81. *Papers of James Monroe*, 1: 226. Although appointed to this position on March 6, 1817, John Quincy Adams did not return to the United States from his diplomatic posting in England until August 6, 1817. See Ammon, *James Monroe*, 361; and Nagel, *John Quincy Adams*, 236.

Federalist president and father of a possible future president, the political situation, at least for the Adams family, looked relatively sanguine.

Monroe reached out to other Federalists outside Boston. After visiting the Adamses, he stayed on briefly in Quincy to socialize with Josiah Quincy, a former Federalist mayor of Boston, where a relaxed Monroe wandered around the family farm and 'mounted on the fence to look at the carrot field and regretted he had not time to go down to the salt works.' He then visited with the Quincy family for an hour before departing.⁸² Monroe also traveled to Medford to pay a personal call on former senator Christopher Gore.

Not to be forgotten amidst the nonpartisan socializing was Harrison Gray Otis, who, with his wife, Sally, scored the major social coup of the northern tour by hosting a lavish ball at their home in the president's honor. Described in the newspapers as a 'brilliant party; enlivened by a band of music placed in the garden and a display of fireworks,' the ball represented the fruits of Otis's considerable efforts to ingratiate himself with the Republican president.⁸³ Eliza Quincy, daughter of Josiah Quincy, noted the excitement of the evening: 'The crowd was great both within and without the mansion.' She added, 'I passed a most amusing evening, walking about the rooms, talking to the beaux and belles and listening to Mr. Monroe's conversation, with my father and mother.'⁸⁴ A day after the triumphant ball, Monroe left Boston on July 8, confident that he was achieving his goal of eliminating parties, while the Federalists believed that they had taken a major step forward in preserving theirs.

The high point of the Federalists' newly acquired influence occurred right after Monroe's Boston visit, when they tried to promote one of their own for a position in Monroe's cabinet. Two

82. *The Articulate Sisters: Passages from the Journals and Letters of the Daughters of Josiah Quincy*, ed. M. A. De Wolfe Howe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), 21.

83. *Columbian Centinel*, July 9, 1817.

84. *The Articulate Sisters*, 20.

days after Monroe left Boston, Congressman George Sullivan of New Hampshire proposed Daniel Webster as the next attorney general. In a letter to Monroe, Sullivan supported Monroe's quest to eliminate traditional party structures and he said that Federalists would rally to Monroe's side if he would give 'some pledge that they will be received into your counsels.' Sullivan believed that appointing Webster would provide the commitment that the Federalists desired. In recommending his friend as a bridge between the two parties, Sullivan summarized Webster's assets: 'You would find him a rock, on which your administration might rest secure against the violence of parties. His admission to your counsels would be a sufficient pledge to the mass of federalists and their leaders could ask no more. His popularity with republicans everywhere would exclude all jealousy of federal influence.'⁸⁵ Webster represented perhaps the best hope for the Federalists' return to national politics because he embodied the party's values while avoiding the political baggage of an earlier generation. For his part, Webster had remained conspicuously absent during the tour, having privately encouraged Monroe to travel to New England.⁸⁶

Although an idealistic Monroe might have welcomed Webster's appointment as an important step in his campaign to reconcile the two parties, Republicans and many Federalists were strongly opposed to sharing power with their opponents. In Boston the proposal horrified not only Republicans, but also many Federalists, who believed some of their colleagues had relinquished the party's last shreds of political dignity in an embarrassing attempt to gain favor with Monroe. Joseph Hopkinson, a Federalist congressman from Philadelphia, scolded Webster for the excessive and transparent reception that members of the party had extended to Monroe during his visit to Boston. Hopkinson wrote: 'I

85. Sullivan to Monroe, July 10, 1817, in James Monroe Papers, Library of Congress, reel 6, series 1.

86. *Papers of Daniel Webster*, 1:211, and Remini, *Daniel Webster*, 171.

think Boston federalism is in a fine way—you erect triumphal arches—and glittering thrones, and sing songs of triumph to Mr. Monroe, whose path is strewed with flowers by virgins (or those who pass for such) . . . and all this for harmony and brotherly love.’ Although Hopkinson recognized a need to offer Monroe ‘every mark of a dignified and proper respect,’ he believed that New England Federalists had ‘pushed the thing to the very borders of the ridiculous.’⁸⁷ Hopkinson’s criticism may have captured the apparent excesses of the Federalists, but their declining political fortunes explained their behavior. Hopkinson’s own career illustrated the problems of remaining a Federalist. Without a viable political home, he left politics in 1819 to pursue a career as a lawyer, participating in landmark Supreme Court cases such as *Dartmouth College v. Woodward* (alongside Webster) and *McCullough v. Maryland*.⁸⁸

Other New Englanders criticized the Federalists’ outpouring of sentiment for Monroe. William Abbot wrote to Leverett Saltonstall, a Massachusetts state senator, that he was pleased that the president visited New England and that he was received warmly.⁸⁹ However, Abbot added: ‘I should have been as well pleased with a little more simplicity and godly sincerity.’ Abbot hoped the visit would benefit the region, but feared the tour’s excesses might outweigh its contributions. Paraphrasing Thomas Ritchie, the Republican editor of the *Richmond Enquirer*, Abbot wrote that Monroe’s reception in New England ‘out-herods Herod’—an allusion to the grandiosity, ostentation, and lavish wealth associated with the Judean king’s reign.⁹⁰ In the aftermath of the president’s visit to Boston, Federalists there remained on shaky ground as

87. Hopkinson to Webster, November 20, 1817, in *Papers of Daniel Webster*, 1:214.

88. ‘Joseph Hopkinson,’ *American National Biography*, 11: 192.

89. Leverett Saltonstall (1783–1845) in *Who Was Who in America, Historical Volume, 1607–1896* (Chicago: A. N. Marquis Company, 1963), 532.

90. Abbot to Saltonstall, July 23, 1817, Saltonstall Papers, Box 5 (1817), Massachusetts Historical Society. On King Herod the Great, see *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2d ed., 15 vols. (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2003), 6: 801–3.

they waited hopefully for news from Monroe while enduring criticism from many of their constituents and leaders.

Despite the superficial comity that Monroe and the Federalists achieved, the Boston visit revealed deep-seated partisan tensions that would ultimately doom Monroe's republican vision. Nothing better illustrated the gap between his ideas and the political realities than the *Columbian Centinel's* exaggerated coverage of the tour. Owned by Benjamin Russell, a member of Boston's Committee of Arrangements, the *Centinel* unabashedly promoted the resurrection of the Federalist Party during Monroe's visit. Throughout his newspaper career, Russell had been an ardent Federalist, actively defending the Sedition Act of the Adams administration, for example. When Jefferson was elected in March 1801, Russell presented an epitaph for his party, declaring: 'Yesterday expired, deeply regretted by millions of grateful Americans, and by all good men, the Federal Administration of the Government of the United States.'⁹¹ Along with other Federalists, Russell hoped to see the return of his party to national politics.

A few days after the president left Boston, the *Centinel* announced a Federalist redemption to the rest of the nation: 'During the late Presidential Jubilee many persons have met at festive boards, in pleasant conversation, whom party politics have long severed. We recur with pleasure to all the circumstances which attended the demonstrations of good feelings.'⁹² Russell's declaration of 'good feelings,' while exaggerating the degree of political unity in Boston and elsewhere, suggested that the controversial Hartford Convention was a distant memory and that Federalists were no longer pariahs. In this rosy assessment, it would be only a matter of time before Federalists resumed their proper role at the head of the national government. It remained to be seen, however, whether a Federalist rebirth would occur beyond Boston.

91. 'Benjamin Russell,' *American National Biography*, 19: 87-88.

92. *Columbian Centinel*, July 12, 1817.

Despite compelling evidence to the contrary, particularly in Boston, the *Centinel's* optimistic declaration was widely reprinted in the nation's newspapers, leading many to describe Monroe's first term as the 'Era of Good Feelings.' This phrase endured because it embodied the hopes of many Americans that Monroe's tour had succeeded in eliminating the destructive forces of parties and had returned the nation to its republican roots. Rather than promoting good feelings, the *Centinel's* announcement increased partisan tensions as Federalists shifted their efforts from achieving redemption to gaining political appointments, while Republicans worked vigorously to block them. The *Centinel's* coverage also unleashed rivalries with newspapers outside New England, which challenged its jingoistic interpretation of Monroe's visit. Although Monroe and his supporters continued to celebrate his republican vision during the last two months of the tour, his message began to lose its impact as he headed west, due in part to partisan and regional tensions stirred up during and after his Boston visit.

The regular exchange of newspapers through the mails permitted Republican editors to launch a vigorous rebuttal to Benjamin Russell's claims. Joseph Gales and William Seaton of the *National Intelligencer* described the *Centinel's* coverage as 'fatiguing,' to which the *Centinel* responded that there was a 'Clay-cold fastidiousness in several newspapers'—a direct reference to Henry Clay's opposition to the tour and his association with Gales and Seaton.⁹³ Reflecting regional disagreements as well as partisan ones, Thomas Ritchie, the Jeffersonian editor of the *Richmond Enquirer*, offered a broader criticism of the unrepublican nature of 'coteries' and 'corteges' found during the president's tour—a critique that Russell published and entitled 'Sour Grapes.'⁹⁴ In a second exchange, entitled 'More Sour Grapes,' Ritchie aimed his criticism directly at Russell, declaring: 'Who is a patriot! The

93. *Columbian Centinel*, July 23, 1817.

94. From the *Richmond Enquirer*, July 18, 1817, reprinted in the *Columbian Centinel*, July 26, 1817.

printer who can best dog the heels of a President, and tell how many times he partook of refreshments, where he dined, and with whom he supped, what pageantry accompanied the procession which led him to his lodging.⁹⁵ Even as Monroe continued to celebrate republicanism while he toured the nation, his message correlating party and national unity was unraveling in the nation's newspapers.

Forced to confront the challenges of other newspapers, the *Centinel* assumed an increasingly defensive tone that demonstrated the fragility of the political revival it was trying to promote. Responding to its political enemies, the *Centinel* abandoned its declaration of 'good feelings' and presented a party and a nation plagued by discontent and disagreement. An article on its front page on September 13, declared that: 'at no period since the adoption of *their Constitution*, in 1788, have the Federalists, as a party, been more the objects of violent but senseless abuse and recrimination.' The *Centinel* followed with extracts from a Pennsylvania editorial that defended the honor and historical legacy of the Federalist Party. This editorial counted among Federalist achievements the Constitution, the presidency of George Washington, and the financial program of Alexander Hamilton, but its partisan interpretation of early American history seems only to have helped revive the political disagreements that Monroe's tour was supposed to have resolved.⁹⁶

Responding to his critics, Russell also worked to undermine whatever sense of national harmony Monroe's tour might have engendered. Declaring Ohio to be too backward to erect triumphal arches to welcome Monroe, the *Centinel* acknowledged that the state nonetheless 'condescended' to imitate New England's welcoming rituals, even though Ohio papers had criticized them as 'anti-republican.'⁹⁷ With his paper's overly optimistic assessment

95. From the *Richmond Enquirer*, July 29, 1817, reprinted in the *Columbian Centinel*, August 6, 1817.

96. *Columbian Centinel*, September 13, 1817.

97. *Columbian Centinel*, September 20, 1817.

of the Federalist revival under challenge, the *Centinel* lashed out at its critics and renewed those disagreements that Russell and his political associates had claimed were extinguished. The short shelf life of 'good feelings' demonstrated that this ephemeral sentiment had never existed in the first place and had been the creation of a group of Federalists eager to announce their political revival to the rest of the nation.

Months after their celebration for Monroe, New England Federalists, having gambled their political fortunes on the tour, pondered what tangible signs of reconciliation they could expect to see. Shortly after the president passed through Portsmouth, New Hampshire, an excited Jeremiah Mason shared his observations with Rufus King regarding the prospects for bipartisan government: '[Monroe] was fully determined to do every thing in his power to exterminate it, and to produce an union of talents for national objects.'⁹⁸ Despite his optimism, though, Mason conceded that the president 'did not, in any degree, designate the means by which he intended to accomplish this important object.' While Mason trusted Monroe's motives—he thought it—'probable that he is inclined to conciliate the federalists, and gain their support if he can without offending his old adherents'—he reluctantly concluded, 'I doubt whether he is prepared, at present, to risk much in this experiment.'⁹⁹

While Federalists awaited positive news from the president, members of Monroe's Republican Party privately expressed deep reservations about sharing power with their opponents. Secretary of the Treasury, William H. Crawford, shared his opinion with his predecessor, Albert Gallatin: 'Seriously, I think the President has lost as much as he has gained by this tour.'¹⁰⁰ Crawford believed that the inroads Monroe had made with the Federalists had undermined his ability to lead his own party.

98. Mason to King, July 24, 1817, in *Life and Correspondence of Rufus King*, 2:79.

99. Mason to King, July 24, 1817, in *Life and Correspondence of Rufus King*, 2:80.

100. Crawford to Gallatin, October 27, 1817, *The Writings of Albert Gallatin*, ed. Henry Adams, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1879), 2:55.

Henry Clay, the Republican Speaker of the House, offered this caustic critique of the Federalists' motives, 'The pomp and ostentatious parade with which the President has been received in New England has an object too obvious, I should think, to deceive any one.' Clay dissected the Federalists' aspirations in reaching out to Monroe: 'Disappointed in getting power by disloyalty and gasconade, the Leaders are now anxious to bury the past, and what they could not gain by force, to obtain by sycophancy.' Exposing what he saw as Federalists' disingenuousness and Monroe's naïveté, Clay concluded, 'If indeed they are real converts to the true faith, and their conversion is attributable to the tour of Mr. Monroe, he merits the honors of a political saint.'¹⁰¹ Still angry that Monroe had not appointed him Secretary of State, Clay emerged as Monroe's most ardent critic, a position that allowed him to express views that other party members could not.¹⁰² While many Republicans publicly supported the tour, they shared Clay's deep reservations about the Federalists' motives and Monroe's efforts to reach out to them.

Partisan realities trumped ephemeral good feelings when it came time for Monroe to consider political appointments for Federalists. Despite a vigorous Federalist lobbying effort on behalf of Daniel Webster, he appointed a fellow Virginian and Republican (and his earlier biographer) William Wirt, as attorney general.¹⁰³ Rufus King summarized his party's disappointment: 'Our Boston folk have not been honored by an admission to the Cabinet; I allude to the office of Attorney General.'¹⁰⁴ While

101. Clay to Russell, August 18, 1817, Jonathan Russell Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

102. Remini, *Henry Clay*, 150-51.

103. Wirt, who disguised himself as the 'British spy' in a series of newspaper essays published in 1803, wrote of Monroe: 'Nature has given him a mind neither rapid nor rich . . . But to compensate him for this, he is endued with a spirit of generous and restless emulation, a judgment solid, strong and clear, and a habit of application, which no difficulties can shake.' As Monroe toured the northern states, this description reappeared in many newspapers as they sought to provide their readers with biographical details about the fifth president. See William Wirt, *The Letters of the British Spy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 174.

104. King to Mason, November 30, 1817, *The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King*, 2: 82.

John Quincy Adams's appointment as secretary of state might be interpreted as a significant Federalist achievement, the younger Adams possessed only superficial connections to his father's party. Serving as a United States Senator from Massachusetts between 1803 and 1808, Adams tended to vote with the Republican Party more often than with the Federalists.¹⁰⁵ He had also been living abroad as a diplomat since 1809 and was not as steeped in Federalist politics as his contemporaries Otis and Webster. In fact, Monroe found Adams's lack of overt partisan credentials appealing, believing that his long absences from the United States meant the lack of a political following. Adams would not become a competitive presidential candidate nor would he be a divisive figure in his cabinet.¹⁰⁶ Adams's appointment represented the triumph of Monroe's nonpartisan vision instead of the Federalists' hopes for a bipartisan coalition.

The few Federalists that Monroe appointed to office were cautious and uncontroversial choices, such as Charles Bulfinch, whose selection as the new architect of the Capitol was a direct result of his service as the president's official host and escort in Boston. Monroe was impressed by Bulfinch's political tact and skill and the numerous Federal-style buildings that Bulfinch had designed in Boston.¹⁰⁷ In December 1817, Monroe asked Bulfinch to replace the troublesome Benjamin Latrobe in order to complete construction of the Capitol.¹⁰⁸

Ultimately, New England Federalists succeeded in reaffirming their national citizenship during the northern tour, but a return to national politics remained more elusive because of pressure from Monroe's party. The greatest achievement of the Federalists during the Boston visit was limited to what Abigail Adams

105. Nagel, *John Quincy Adams*, 146-47; Ammon, *James Monroe*, 361.

106. Ammon, *James Monroe*, 360-61.

107. Harold Kirker, *The Architecture of Charles Bulfinch* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 321-22.

108. Place, *Charles Bulfinch*, 242-43. Talbot Hamlin, *Benjamin Henry Latrobe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 476-80.

referred to as an 'expiation' of their earlier political sins, but did not extend to the rebirth they desperately sought.¹⁰⁹

The strongest opposition to Monroe's idealized vision of governing came from the party system he had hoped to dismantle, because neither Republicans nor Federalists were willing to relinquish their philosophical and organizational differences. Monroe envisioned the elimination of all parties, including his own, but the Federalists wanted to maintain their party identity and form a governing coalition within his administration. The refusal of Republicans in Congress and in Monroe's cabinet to share power with their opponents exposed the flaws in this makeshift alliance. While Otis and the Federalists had campaigned to achieve both redemption and political power, Clay prevailed because he recognized that they sought power at the expense of his own party. Unlike many of the founding fathers, who had initially opposed parties, younger politicians such as Clay and Crawford began their careers at a time when parties, because of their ability to represent ideological differences and dictate patronage, were an integral part of republican government. By 1817, the two-party system was two decades old and was a fact of life in American politics.¹¹⁰ Having worked their way up through the party structure, Clay and Crawford were unwilling to cede power to their Federalist opponents.

The enduring legacy of Monroe's northern tour was, therefore, not the elimination of political parties, but the reaffirmation of their usefulness in republican government. Monroe's unwillingness to be a partisan leader of his own Republican party and his inability to make substantive Federalist appointments hastened the decline of both major parties. The inconclusive presidential election of 1824 demonstrated the inherent flaws in partisan-free politics as a younger generation of regional candidates—John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay and

109. Abigail Adams to Richard Rush, July 14, 1817, *Papers of James Monroe*, 1: 235-36.

110. Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*.

William Crawford—attempted to attain the office without a national organization or following. With the Federalist Party no longer a national force and the Republican Party languishing under too many competing political ideologies, younger politicians like Jackson and Clay realized they would need to establish new and vigorous political institutions to launch their ideas and ambitions. Jackson's supporters immediately began organizing what became the Democratic Party to support his presidential candidacy in 1828, while the National Republicans, led by Clay and Adams, eventually reorganized themselves into the Whig party in the early 1830s, in part to oppose Jackson and his policies.¹¹¹ Amidst the collapse of the Federalist and Republican parties of the founding period, the Second American Party System emerged to represent and negotiate a new era of politics.

While their Republican counterparts confronted an increasingly amorphous political ideology during Monroe's two-term presidency, Federalist well wishers from the president's northern tour began to contemplate a political future that would not include appointments in his administration. Many younger Federalists found a comfortable political home in the new Whig party's national message of social and economic progress.¹¹² Nicholas Biddle, who had encouraged Monroe to embrace his former opponents in 1817, would later be viewed as Jackson's chief nemesis during the Bank War. Daniel Webster, who had pushed for the tour and had hoped to be named Monroe's attorney general, joined the Whigs as a senator from Massachusetts, while Nathaniel Silsbee, a member of Salem's Committee of Arrangements, led the Massachusetts Whig convention in 1832 and as a Whig, also

111. On the establishment of the Second American party system, see Richard P. McCormick, *The Second American Party System: Party Formation in the Jacksonian Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966); Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom, 1822-1832* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981); Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

112. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 2-3, 7.

served as a senator.¹¹³ Monroe's namesake and nephew, Lieutenant James Monroe, also became a member of the Whig party and served as a congressman from New York City from 1833 to 1835.¹¹⁴ And Harrison Gray Otis, who perhaps best epitomized the efforts of younger Federalists to revive their party during Monroe's Boston visit, also became active in Whig politics during the 1830s as a supporter of Henry Clay.¹¹⁵

In the summer of 1817, Monroe and the New England Federalists gathered in Boston to promote their respective visions for the nation's political future. Representing an earlier generation of American politics, Monroe and the Federalists affirmed their friendship and their national loyalty during this visit, but were less successful in attaining their partisan visions. Monroe wanted the Federalists to accept a government without parties, while they wanted him to accept a bipartisan coalition that included their involvement in his administration. These contradictory desires doomed the efforts of both, and instead, the Boston visit produced a different outcome, which affirmed the importance of ideological and partisan distinctions in American politics. Despite the best intentions of the Federalist press in Boston, the term 'good feelings' captured the aspirations of an ailing political party, rather than any actual achievement of its goals. Monroe's northern tour marked an important moment in the nation's early political history, as an earlier generation of leaders and parties attempted to make one final contribution to national politics. Their efforts resulted in a stalemate, producing a vacuum out of which a younger generation of politicians would establish a Second American party system that was vigorously and unapologetically partisan and democratic.

113. *Who Was Who in America, Historical Volume, 1607-1896*, 484.

114. *Who Was Who in America, Historical Volume, 1607-1896*, 362.

115. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 97.

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.