



# The SONS DRUMBEAT

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**BOM Meeting**  
Pages 5-6

**South Atlantic  
Society**  
Pages 7-8

**Reinterring  
13 Soldiers**  
Pages 49-51







# From Caterpillar to *Butterfly*:

*Rebuilding the Birthplace Home of James Monroe*



*Fifth President of the United States,  
1817 - 1825*

On April 22nd, members of the Virginia Society Sons of the Revolution attended the 265th Birthday Celebration Ceremony of the nation's Fifth President at the newly opened James Monroe Birthplace and Park in Westmoreland County, Virginia, near the town of Colonial Beach. The event was sponsored by the James Monroe Memorial Foundation, which the VSSR has supported with assistance from the Society of '83.

The spring ceremony was the first heavily attended public event at the restored home, following the completion of the project and dissipation of Covid concerns. The home, which the Foundation had to completely rebuild from the ground up, opened in October 2021. The project was a ten-year endeavor of planning and fundraising. In 2005, the Foundation obtained a 99-year lease on the land from Westmoreland County to build a replica of Monroe's childhood home. Monroe was President from March 4, 1817, to March 4, 1825, the last of the "Virginia Dynasty."

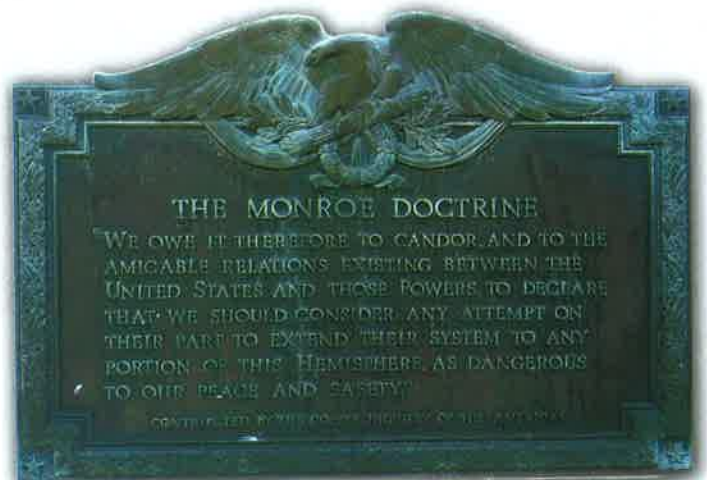


At the 2021 opening event, according to a report in *The Free-Lance Star* newspaper, Colonial Beach Mayor Robin Shick spoke of a time during her childhood when her father stopped next to the site of the former President's boyhood home to fix a flat tire. Nothing was there except some gravel on the ground and an old sign. As her father changed the tire, she found a caterpillar and took it with her to school. "As that caterpillar eventually became a butterfly, so, too, have these grounds evolved from a caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly."

## Career Accomplishments

After fighting with distinction in the Continental Army, Monroe resigned his commission and joined the Virginia militia. He later studied law under Thomas Jefferson and practiced law in Fredericksburg. He was named to the Virginia Convention to ratify the US Constitution, where he sided with the anti-Federalists. He would go on to serve multiple terms as Governor of Virginia. He was also appointed Ambassador to France and later to Britain. In the administration of James Madison, he became the only person in US history to fill two cabinet posts simultaneously: Secretary of State and Secretary of War. In 1803, he and Robert R. Livingston negotiated the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from Napoleon Bonaparte.

According to his White House biography, Monroe's ambition and energy, and his support from President Madison, made him the Republic choice for the Presidency in 1816. He won re-election virtually unopposed in 1820. Major achievements during his terms included the Treaty of 1818, the Adams-Onis Treaty, and the Missouri Compromise. He is most remembered for the Monroe Doctrine, which forbade European countries from meddling in the affairs of newly independent nations of the Western Hemisphere.



*The Monroe Doctrine was issued on December 2, 1823, and is one of the earliest tenets of US foreign policy.*





*The replica house under construction*



*The public celebration of President Monroe's 265th birthday, April 22, 2023*



*Interior of Monroe birthplace replica*

*All photos courtesy James Monroe Memorial Foundation*

<https://monroefoundation.org/2021/07/11/monroe-birthplace-grand-opening/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/jmonroebirthplace/>  
<https://www.colonial-beach-virginia-attractions.com/james-monroe.html>