



## Documents for John Quincy Adams

All of the documents below, unless otherwise specified, are from the EDSITEment resource [American Memory](http://memory.loc.gov/) [http://memory.loc.gov/]. The excerpts are all in the language of the original. Annotations in parentheses define terms in italics or add information. Some spelling and punctuation has been standardized. Abbreviations with the potential to be confusing have been replaced with full names.

### Background

Account of Adams's and Monroe's Conduct of Foreign Affairs on **The American Presidency**, a link from the EDSITEment-reviewed website **Internet Public Library**:

#### **The First Seminole War and Spanish Florida, 1817-1818**

With the end of the War of 1812, tensions mounted and Monroe sent General Andrew Jackson, the hero of the Battle of New Orleans, and his Tennessee militia to the Florida border in 1817 to stop the raids and to catch runaway slaves. Exceeding his orders, Jackson invaded Florida in 1818, using the ambush of his troops-in which forty soldiers were killed-as the excuse. Jackson burned Seminole villages, hanged tribal leaders, captured Pensacola and deposed the Spanish governor. He even executed two British citizens whom he accused of having incited the Seminoles to commit atrocities against American settlers.

Because Jackson had acted without specific authority, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun urged Monroe to reprimand Jackson. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams came to Jackson's defense, however, and used the occasion to pressure Spain to sell all of Florida to the U.S. Preoccupied with revolts throughout its Latin American empire, Spain understood that the U.S. could seize all of Florida at will. In a brilliant series of diplomatic moves, Adams convinced Spain to sell Florida to the United States and to drop all its claims to the Louisiana Territory and Oregon. In return the U.S. agreed to relinquish its claims on Texas and assume responsibility for \$5 million owed to American citizens by the Spanish government. The resulting treaty, known as the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 (named after John Quincy Adams and the Spanish Minister Luis de Onís), was hailed as a great success, although some detractors thought that Adams should have obtained Texas in the bargain.

On another diplomatic front, Adams negotiated two important accords with Great Britain that resolved border disputes held over from the War of 1812. The Rush-Bagot Treaty of 1817 (named after Acting Secretary of State Richard Rush and British Minister Charles Bagot) demilitarized the Great Lakes, limiting each country to one 100-ton vessel armed with a single 18-pound cannon on Lake Chaplain and Lake Ontario. Two similar sized ships were permitted each nation on the other lakes. The Convention of 1818 fixed the present U. S.-Canadian border from Minnesota to the Rocky Mountains at the 49th

parallel. The accords also resolved conflicting U.S. and British claims to Oregon with the agreement that both nations would jointly occupy the region for the next ten years.

### **The Monroe Doctrine**

With Spain out of Florida, and the western borders more-or-less quiet, Secretary of State Adams turned his attention to troubles in South and Central America. In 1821, Mexico won its independence from Spain; by 1822, Argentina, Chile, and Columbia had followed suit. Monroe quickly recognized their independence and encouraged the popular perception of Simon Bolivar (of Colombia) as the George Washington of Latin America. France, Austria, Russia, and Prussia began talking of a plan to help Spain recover her lost colonies. To counter the planned move, Britain proposed that the U.S. and England issue a joint declaration against European intervention in the Western Hemisphere. Adams insisted, however, on a separate American policy. On December 2, 1823, President Monroe presented a statement to Congress calling for an end of colonization in the Western Hemisphere by European nations. The proclamation, which was also aimed at Russian's Pacific coast settlements north of Oregon (in present-day Alaska), pledged that the U.S. in turn would not interfere in the affairs of European nations in their remaining New World colonies.

### **Documents**

- 1817: Exchange of Notes 1817: Proclamation (Relative to Naval Forces on the American Lakes), also known as the Rush-Bagot Treaty.  
The naval force to be maintained upon the American lakes, by his majesty and the government of the United States, shall henceforth be confined to the following vessels on each side, that is –
  - ❑ On Lake Ontario, to one vessel not exceeding one hundred tons burden, and armed with one eighteen pound cannon.
  - ❑ On the upper lakes, to two vessels, not exceeding like burden each, and armed with like force.
  - ❑ On the waters of Lake Champlain, to one vessel not exceeding like burden, and armed with like force.
  - ❑ All other armed vessels on these lakes shall be forthwith dismantled, and no other vessels of war shall be there built or armed.
- 1818 March: In response to a House resolution of the previous December, President Monroe introduces Secretary Adams's report on the Independence of the Spanish Provinces. Included here not for its content but to show that the question of recognizing the revolutionary governments of Spanish America was under consideration for a long time. Interested students can view a series of documents following President Monroe's introduction by Adams and important figures such as Bernardo O'Higgins.
- 1818, October 20: Convention of 1818 between the U.S. and Great Britain, on the EDSITEMent-reviewed website The Avalon Project, set the 49th parallel as the U.S.-Canadian border from Minnesota to the Rocky Mountains.

- 1818, November 28: Letter from Secretary of State Adams to Spanish Minister to the United States Don Luis de Onís demonstrates Adams's negotiating style in the months before the Adams-Onís Treaty (the Adams-Onís Treaty was signed on February 22, 1819). The right of the United States to the river Mississippi... is established beyond the power of further controversy....  
You have been informed of the evidence *inculpating* (incriminating) the governors of those places, *as* (of) having utterly neglected to carry into effect the stipulation in the treaty of 1795, by which Spain was bound to restrain, *by force*, the Indians within her territories from committing hostilities against the United States... You have been informed that these were the real and only causes of the occupation of those places by the commander of the American forces....  
...it would be worse than superfluous to stipulate for restoring them to Spain in the very treaty by which they are to be ceded... to the United States.
- 1819, February 22: Transcontinental Treaty with Spain signed (ratified February 22, 1821) Treaty of Amity, Settlement, and Limits Between the United States of America and His Catholic Majesty. 1819 (1)

#### ARTICLE I

There shall be a firm and inviolable peace and sincere friendship between the United States and their citizens and His Catholic Majesty....

#### ARTICLE II

His Catholic Majesty cedes to the United States, in full property and sovereignty, all the territories which belong to him, situated to the eastward of the Mississippi, known by the name of East and West Florida....

#### ARTICLE III

The boundary-line between the two countries, west of the Mississippi, shall begin (the article goes on to specify the boundaries)

...The United States hereby cede to His Catholic Majesty, and renounce forever, all their rights, claims, and pretensions, to the territories lying west and south of the above-described line; and, in like manner, His Catholic Majesty cedes to the said United States all his rights, claims, and pretensions to any territories east and north of the said line....

#### ARTICLE IV

To fix this line with more precision, and to place the landmarks which shall designate exactly the limits of both nations, each of the contracting parties shall appoint a Commissioner and a surveyor, who shall meet before the termination of one year from the date of the ratification of this treaty at Nachitoches, on the Red River, and proceed to run and mark the said line....

#### ARTICLE V

The inhabitants of the ceded territories shall be secured in the free exercise of their religion, without any restriction; and all those who may desire to remove to the Spanish dominions shall be permitted to sell or export their effects, at any time whatever, without being subject, in either case, to duties.

#### ARTICLE VI

The inhabitants of the territories which His Catholic Majesty cedes to the United States, by this treaty, shall be incorporated in the Union of the United States as soon as may be consistent with the principles of the Federal Constitution, and admitted to the enjoyment of

all the privileges, rights, and immunities of the citizens of the United States.

ARTICLE VII

The officers and troops of His Catholic Majesty, in the territories hereby ceded by him to the United States, shall be withdrawn, and possession of the places occupied by them shall be given within six months after the exchange of the ratifications of this treaty, or sooner if possible....

ARTICLE IX

The two high contracting parties... renounce all claims for damages or injuries which they, themselves, as well as their respective citizens and subjects, may have suffered until the time of signing this treaty.

ARTICLE XI

The United States, exonerating Spain from all demands in future, on account of the claims of their citizens to which the renunciations herein contained extend, and considering them entirely cancelled, undertake to make satisfaction for the same, to an amount not exceeding five millions of dollars.

ARTICLE XV

The United States, to give to His Catholic Majesty a proof of their desire to cement the relations of amity subsisting between the two nations, and to favor the commerce of the subjects of His Catholic Majesty, agree that Spanish vessels, coming laden only with productions of Spanish growth or manufactures, directly from the ports of Spain, or of her colonies, shall be admitted, for the term of twelve years, to the ports of Pensacola and St. Augustine, in the Floridas, without paying other or higher duties on their cargoes, or of tonnage, than will be paid by the vessels of the United States. During the said term no other nation shall enjoy the same privileges within the ceded territories. The twelve years shall commence three months after the exchange of the ratifications of this treaty.

Done at Washington this twenty-second day of February, one thousand eight hundred and nineteen.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

LUIS DE ONÍS.

The following note is also found on the EDSITEment resource The Avalon Project:

(1) This treaty was concluded February 22, 1819. The ratifications were exchanged February 22, 1821, and proclaimed February 22, 1821. By the treaty of Saint Ildefonso, made October 1, 1800, Spain had ceded Louisiana to France and France, by the treaty of Paris, signed April 30, 1803, had ceded it to the United States. Under this treaty the United States claimed the countries between the Iberville and the Perdido. Spain contended that her cession to France comprehended only that territory which, at the time of the cession, was denominated Louisiana, consisting of the island of New Orleans, and the country which had been originally ceded to her by France west of the Mississippi. Congress passed a joint resolution, approved January 15, 1811, declaring that the United States, under the peculiar circumstances of the existing crisis, could not, without serious inquietude, see any part of this disputed territory pass into the hands of any foreign power; and that a due regard to their own safety compelled them to provide, under certain contingencies, for the temporary occupation of the disputed territory; they, at the same time, declaring that the territory should, in their hands, remain subject to future negotiation. An act of Congress, approved on the same day,

authorized the President to take possession of and occupy all or any part of the territory lying east of the river Perdido and south of the State of Georgia and the Mississippi Territory, in case an arrangement had been, or should be, made with the local authority of the said territory, for delivering up the possession of the same, or any part thereof, to the United States, or in the event of an attempt to occupy the said territory, or any part thereof, by any foreign government.

- 1820, May 20: Extract of a Letter from Minister to Spain John Forsythe to JQ Adams on the Cessation of Florida.  
Mr. Onís has published a memoir.... He accuses us of ambition and *avarice* (greed), and yet endeavors to show that the treaty of cession of Florida ought to be considered as a treaty of exchange of Florida for Texas....
- 1821, July 4: Warning Against the Search for Monsters to Destroy on Documents Relating to American Foreign Policy, a link from the EDSITEMent resource World War I Document Archive.  
America... has uniformly spoken... the language of equal liberty, of equal justice, and of equal rights. She has, in the lapse of nearly half a century, without a single exception, respected the independence of other nations while asserting and maintaining her own. She has abstained from interference in the concerns of others, even when conflict has been for principles to which she clings, as to the last vital drop that visits the heart....Wherever the standard of freedom and Independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. She will commend the general cause by the countenance of her voice, and the benignant sympathy of her example. She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom. The fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from *liberty* to *force*.... She might become the dictatress of the world. She would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit....

1822, February 25: JQ Adams to the Russian Minister to the United States

The President of the United States... has seen with surprise... the assertion of a territorial claim on the part of Russia, extending to the 51<sup>st</sup> degree of north latitude on this continent... The relations of the United States with *His Imperial Majesty* (the Russian Czar) have always been of the most friendly character; and it is the earnest desire of this government to preserve them in that state. It was expected, before any act which should define the boundary between the territories of the United States and Russia on this continent, that the same would have been arranged by treaty. To exclude the *vessels* (ships) of our citizens... has excited still greater surprise.

- This ordinance affects so deeply the rights of the United States and of their citizens, that I am instructed to inquire whether you are authorized to give explanations of the *grounds of right* (legal grounds for your actions), upon principles of... the laws and usages of nations....

- 1823, July 22: Instructions from Adams to Middleton in Negotiating with Russia  
The right of the United States from the 42<sup>nd</sup> to the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel... we consider as unquestionable, *being founded* (based), first, on the acquisition by the treaty of February 22, 1819, of all the rights of Spain; second by the discovery of the Columbia River, first from sea... and then by land by Lewis and Clark; and third, by the settlement at its mouth in 1811. This territory is to the United States of an importance which no possession in North America can be of to any European nation, not only as it is but the continuity of their possession from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean....

...we are willing to agree to the boundary line within which the Emperor Paul had granted exclusive privileges to the Russian American Company, that is to say, latitude 55.

- 1823, August 18: JQ Adams on Greek Revolution  
With regard to... recognition... the United States have recognized the fact of foreign sovereignty only when it was undisputed, or disputed without any rational prospect of success. In this manner the successive changes of government in many of the European States, and the revolutionary governments of South America, have been acknowledged. The condition of the Greeks is not yet such as will admit of the recognition upon these principles....

- 1823, November 7: John Quincy Adams's Account of the Cabinet Meeting of November 7, 1823 on Documents Relating to American Foreign Policy, a link from World War I Document Archive.

*Washington, November 7th.* – Cabinet meeting at the President's from half past one til four. Mr. Calhoun, Secretary of War, and Mr. Southard, Secretary of the Navy, present. The subject for consideration was, the confidential proposals of the British Secretary of State, George Canning, to R. Rush (minister to Great Britain), and the correspondence between them relating to the *projects* (designs) of the Holy Alliance upon South America. There was much conversation, without coming to any definite point. The object of Canning appears to have been to obtain some public pledge from the Government of the United States, ostensibly against the forcible interference of the Holy Alliance between Spain and South America; but really or especially against the acquisition to the United States themselves of any part of the Spanish American possessions.

Mr. Calhoun inclined to giving a discretionary power to Mr. Rush to join in a declaration against the interference of the Holy Allies, if necessary, even if it should pledge us not to take Cuba or the province of Texas; because the power of Great Britain being greater than ours to *seize* ...them, we should get the advantage of obtaining from her the same declaration we should make ourselves.

I thought the cases not parallel. We have no intention of seizing either Texas or Cuba. But the inhabitants of either or both may exercise their primitive rights, and solicit a union with us. They will certainly do no such thing to Great Britain. By joining with her, therefore, in her proposed declaration, we give her a substantial and perhaps inconvenient pledge against ourselves, and really obtain nothing in return. Without entering now into the enquiry of the expediency of our annexing Texas or Cuba to our Union, we should at least keep ourselves

free to act as emergencies may arise, and not tie ourselves down to any principle which might immediately afterwards be brought to bear against ourselves.

Mr. Southard inclined much to the same opinion.

The President was averse to any course which should have the appearance of taking a position subordinate to that of Great Britain....

I remarked that the communications recently received from the Russian Minister (that seemed to imply Russian interest in expanding their sphere of influence in the Northwest)... afforded, as I thought, a very suitable and convenient opportunity for us to take our stand against the Holy Alliance, and at the same time to decline the overture of Great Britain. It would be more candid, as well as more dignified, to avow our principles explicitly to Russia and France, than to *come in... in the wake of the British man-of-war* (ride in on Britain's coattails).

This idea was *acquiesced in* (agreed to) on all sides....

- 1823, December 18: New York Citizens Petition of Sympathy for Greece, demonstrates public sympathy toward revolutionary movements. The citizens... have, in common with their fellow-citizens throughout the United States, witnessed... the heroic efforts of the Greeks to rescue themselves from Turkish bondage.
- 1824: Convention with Russia, the conclusion of Adams's efforts in negotiating with Russia. Article 1. It is agreed that in any part of... the Pacific Ocean... the respective citizens... shall neither be disturbed nor restrained either in navigation, or in fishing....

Article 3. It is moreover agreed that hereafter there shall not be formed by the citizens of the United States... any establishment upon the Northwest Coast of America... *to the north* of fifty-four degrees and forty minutes of north latitude; and that in the same manner there shall be none formed by Russian subjects or under the authority of Russia *south* of the same parallel.