Proclamations and the Founding Father Presidents, 1789–1825

By Christopher J. Young

As the British army closed in on Washington City during the late summer of 1814, President James Madison declared in a proclamation that on "an occasion which appeals so forcibly to the proud feelings and patriotic devotion of the American people none will forget what they owe to themselves, what they owe to their country and the high destinies which await it." At that grave moment, the President called on all patriots to defend the nation's capital and reminded them that by doing so the sons would maintain the "glory acquired by their fathers" during the War for Independence. Even as the British invaded the District of Columbia, the commander-in-chief proclaimed that now the United States could fight with the "augmented strength and resources with which time and Heaven had blessed them."[1]

The White House in August 1814 after the attack by British forces.

Presidential proclamations from the Founding Father chief executives, such as James Madison's call to arms, capture the excitement and urgency that pulsated through the infant republic. With the possible exception of President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, Americans are generally unfamiliar with Presidential proclamations. It is quite possible that most Americans have not read one (again with the exception of the Emancipation Proclamation). While some have been essentially ceremonial, others have had serious political consequences. Proclamations have been the vehicle for some Presidential "firsts" such as connecting with the people as quasi-spiritual leader by proclaiming days of thanksgiving. They have also served an informative purpose, enunciating laws and treaties and announcing the consequences for violators. As commander-in-chief, the President has used the proclamation to authorize the use of armed force against domestic insurgents

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[1] James Madison, "Proclamation—Calling All Citizens to Unite in Defense of the District of Columbia," September 1, 1814, John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project*, *http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=65968*. Proclamations under review in this essay can be found in James D. Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, Vols. 1 & 2 (New York: Bureau of National Literature, Inc., 1897); John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project*, *http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/proclamations.php;The Papers of George Washington Digital Edition,* ed. Theodore J. Crackel. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008; *The Thomas Jefferson Papers*, *http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/jefferson_papers/;The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg, vol. 35 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 747; *The Papers of James Madison,* ed., J.C.A. Stagg. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2010.

or as chief of state to annul recognition of a foreign consul. During the formative period of the United States and the American Presidency, between 1789 and 1825, proclamations documented key, often dramatic moments in early national life.[2]

This article highlights the research value of Presidential proclamations and why they should be more frequently studied. These proclamations have been generally overlooked by historians, but they provide a rich resource with which to view challenges faced by early American chief executives. The issuance of Presidential proclamations was a creative way that Presidents from Washington to Monroe established the authority of the executive office.

Presidential proclamations can easily be confused with executive orders. Generally speaking, executive orders are directed to those within the government, especially within the executive branch, while Presidential proclamations are addressed to those outside the government. As Phillip Cooper so succinctly put it, a "proclamation is an instrument that states a condition, declares the law and requires obedience, recognizes an event, or triggers the implementation of a law (by recognizing that the circumstances in law have been realized)." Furthermore, a Presidential proclamation "may call upon citizens outside government but within the United States or upon other countries or citizens of other countries to acknowledge the proclamation and bring themselves into compliance with it."[3]

This essay explores Presidential proclamations issued by the Founding Father Presidents—George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe—in order to consider the documents' function and consequences during this formative period of the republic and of the American Presidency before the rise of mass party politics. When considering the development of the executive office, historians and political scientists tend to be particularly interested in the developing institutional relationships, especially between the President and Congress. Since proclamations were (and still are) intended for people outside of the government, this essay will consider proclamations as vehicles that allowed the executive to communicate the authority of the President of the United States directly with the American public.

The essay concludes with the Presidency of James Monroe because the close of the "Virginia dynasty" marked a transition in early American history. When the controversial election of John Quincy Adams in 1824 galvanized the supporters of Andrew Jackson there was a genuine change in American politics. The generational shift coincided with a shift in political culture. Traditionally considered as a shift from the "first party system" to the "second party system," it has been more recently viewed by historians as an evolutionary change in the political culture as it went from being deferential to democratic.[4]

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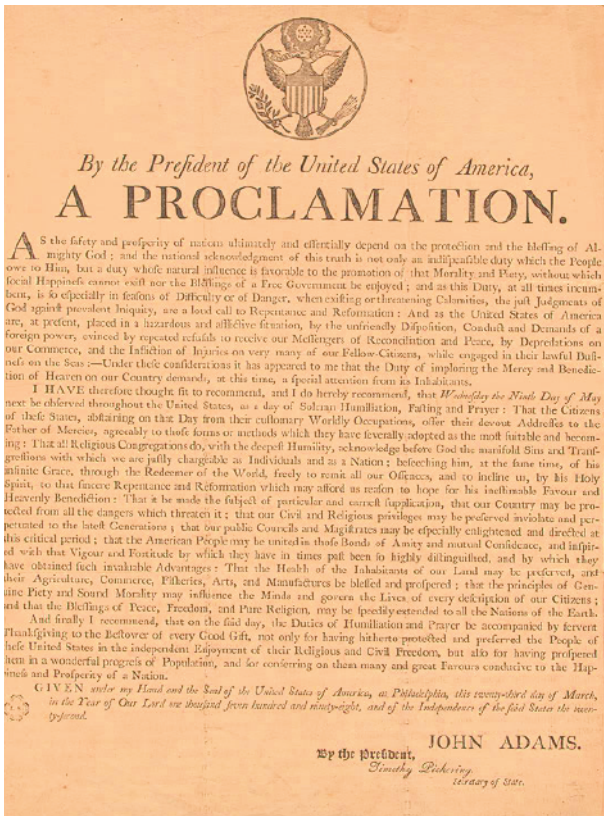
[2] Robert W. Coakley, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1789–1878* (Washington D.C.: Center for Military History, United States Army, 1988).

[3] Phillip J. Cooper, *By Order of the President: The Use and Abuse of Executive Direct Action* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 117–19. See also, Brandon Rottinghaus, "The Power to Proclaim," in John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/proclamations.php*

[4] For instance, see Gordon Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789–1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), and Todd Estes, *The Jay Treaty Debate, Public Opinion, and the Evolution of Early American Political Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006). The dovetailing of the generational and political shifts can be seen in Sandra Moats's descriptive analysis of President James Monroe's tours. See, Sandra Moats, *Celebrating the Republic: Presidential Ceremony and Popular Sovereignty, from Washington to Monroe* (DeKalb, Ill., Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 91–169.

Different Types of Proclamations

Between 1789 and 1825, U.S. Presidents issued 104 proclamations. Party affiliation and number of terms do not appear to reveal a pattern in the number of proclamations issued by a President. James Madison, a Republican, issued the most proclamations of the Founding Father Presidents with a total of 39. Madison also issued the highest number of proclamations in a single term with 27, the same number directed by George Washington during his two terms in office. Unlike the other Presidents covered in this study, Madison was the only one to preside over an officially declared war—the War of 1812. During the course of that conflict, Madison issued 12 proclamations. Between 1789 and 1825, the Federalist John Adams was the only President to serve one term. He was also the only other "war President" during the period covered in this essay. (He was also the sole non-Virginian and non-slaveholder to be President during this period.) Adams's single term in office was consumed by a single issue—relations with France, of which the unofficial or "quasi war" was a part. During his four years as President, Adams issued more proclamations than his successor Thomas Jefferson did in eight (11) and only one short of James Monroe who served two terms (14). The fewest proclamations came from President Thomas Jefferson. In his first term as President, this self-consciously anti-ceremonial chief of state issued only 4. During his second term, President Jefferson nearly doubled his use of this instrument of executive authority, issuing 7 proclamations, the same number issued by Monroe during each of his terms.[5]



By the President of the United States of America,

A PROCLAMATION.

AS the safety and prosperity of nations ultimately and essentially depend on the protection and the blessing of Almighty God; and the national acknowledgment of this truth is not only an indispensable duty which the People owe to Him, but a duty whose natural influence is favorable to the promotion of that Morality and Piety, without which social Happiness cannot exist nor the Blessings of a Free Government be enjoyed; and as this Duty, at all times incumbent, is so especially in seasons of Difficulty or of Danger, when existing or threatening Calamities, the just Judgments of God against prevalent Iniquity, are a loud call to Repentance and Reformation: And as the United States of America are, at present, placed in a hazardous and afflictive situation, by the unfriendly Disposition, Conduct and Demands of a foreign power, evinced by repeated refusals to receive our Messengers of Reconciliation and Peace, by Depredations on our Commerce, and the Infliction of Injuries on very many of our Fellow-Citizens, while engaged in their lawful Business on the Seas:—Under these considerations it has appeared to me that the Duty of imploring the Mercy and Benediction of Heaven on our Country demands, at this time, a special attention from its Inhabitants.

I HAVE therefore thought fit to recommend, and I do hereby recommend, that *Wednesday the Ninth Day of May* next be observed throughout the United States, as a day of Solemn Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer: That the Citizens of these States, abstaining on that Day from their customary Worldly Occupations, offer their devout Addresses to the Father of Mercies, agreeably to those forms or methods which they have severally adopted as the most suitable and becoming: That all Religious Congregations do, with the deepest Humility, acknowledge before God the manifold Sins and Transgressions with which we are justly chargeable as Individuals and as a Nation; beseeching him, at the same time, of his infinite Grace, through the Redeemer of the World, freely to remit all our Offences, and to incline us, by his Holy Spirit, to that sincere Repentance and Reformation which may afford us reason to hope for his ineffinable Favour and Heavenly Benediction: That it be made the subject of particular and earnest Supplication, that our Country may be protected from all the dangers which threaten it; that our Civil and Religious privileges may be preserved inviolate and perpetuated to the latest Generations; that our public Councils and Magistrates may be especially enlightened and directed at this critical period; that the American People may be united in those Bonds of Amity and mutual Confidence, and inspirited with that Vigour and Fortitude by which they have in times past been so highly distinguished, and by which they have obtained such invaluable Advantages: That the Health of the Inhabitants of our Land may be preserved, and their Agriculture, Commerce, Fisheries, Arts, and Manufactures be blessed and prospered; that the principles of Genuine Piety and Sound Morality may influence the Minds and govern the Lives of every description of our Citizens; and that the Blessings of Peace, Freedom, and Pure Religion, may be speedily extended to all the Nations of the Earth.

And finally I recommend, that on the said day, the Duties of Humiliation and Prayer be accompanied by fervent Thanksgiving to the Bestower of every Good Gift, not only for having hitherto protected and preserved the People of these United States in the independent Enjoyment of their Religious and Civil Freedom, but also for having prospered them in a wonderful progress of Population, and for conferring on them many and great Favours conducive to the Happiness and Prosperity of a Nation.

GIVEN *under my Hand and the Seal of the United States of America, at Philadelphia, this twenty-third day of March, in the Year of Our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the said States the twenty-second.*

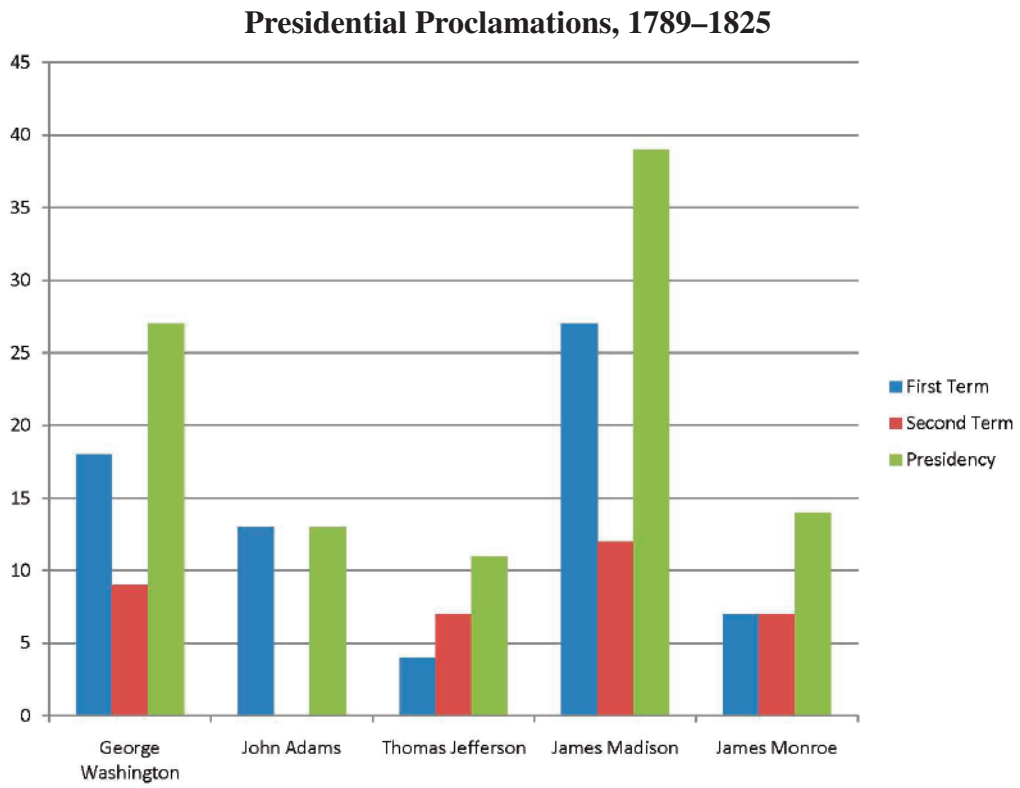
JOHN ADAMS.

By the President,
Timothy Pickering
Secretary of State.

John Adams proclaimed a day of national thanksgiving on March 23, 1798.

President Washington's first direct connection with the American people came in the form of a proclamation. Interestingly, and in hindsight ironically, the first use of this instrument to address the American public stemmed from a congressional request. This development reflects Washington's cautiousness

[5] George Washington issued a total of 27 proclamations; John Adams, 13; Thomas Jefferson, 11; James Madison, 39; James Monroe, 14. The numbers were compiled from Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents;* Woolley and Peters, *The American Presidency Project*, *http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/proclamations.php; The Papers of George Washington Digital Edition,* ed. Crackel; *The Thomas Jefferson Papers*, *http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/jefferson_papers/; The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Oberg, 35: 747;*The Papers of James Madison,* ed., Stagg. For Thomas Jefferson as an anti-ceremonial President, see Moats, *Celebrating the Republic,* 63–90; The language used by President Jefferson sounded remarkably similar to that used by President Washington, whose proclamations he had criticized while serving as secretary of state. See, Jeremy D. Bailey, *Thomas Jefferson and Executive Power* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 230–31.



during his first term as well as his lifelong respect for—even at times, deference to—legislative bodies. In accordance with Congress's request for a day of thanksgiving, George Washington's proclamation called on Americans to thank God for carrying them through war, for the union and prosperity they currently enjoyed, for the ratification of constitutions, "particularly the national one now lately instituted," and for the liberties "with which we are blessed." Moreover, the President encouraged his fellow citizens to give thanks for "the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge; and, in general, for all the great and various favors which He has been pleased to confer upon us."[6]

President Washington valued the diffusion of knowledge and information throughout his Presidency. Several years later he would sign into law the Post Office Act of 1792. This law provided the infrastructure such as post roads, postmasters, and post offices to facilitate the diffusion of information. Moreover, it allowed printers to exchange newspapers with other printers throughout the republic at very low cost. In short, the law facilitated a national discussion of politics like never before. It also assured that communication between the President and the people in the form of a proclamation would reach the general public in the most efficient manner.[7]

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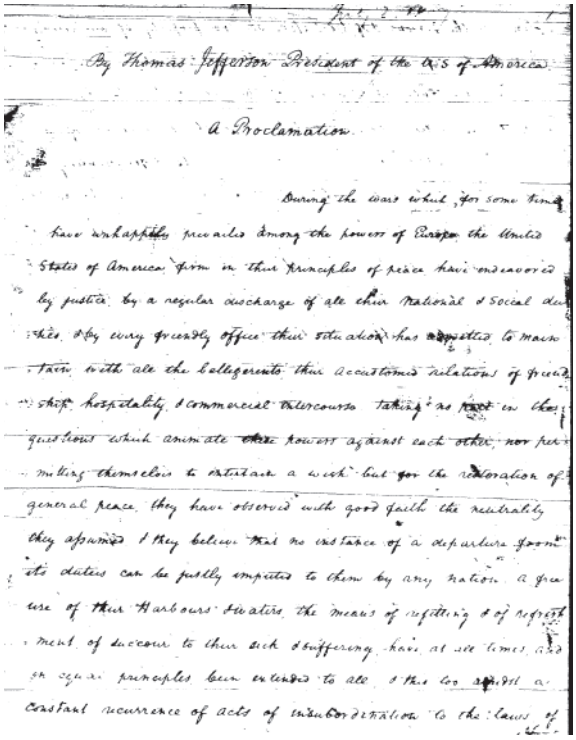
[6] George Washington read his inaugural address to Congress on April 30, 1789. See, *http://inaugural.senate.gov/history/daysevents/inauguraladdress.cfm.* The first President addressed his speech to his "Fellow-Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives." Unlike the inaugural address, the proclamation of thanksgiving on October 3, 1789, was directed to the "People of the United States." See George Washington, "Proclamation—Day of National Thanksgiving," Oct. 3, 1789. Presidential proclamations beseeching God's blessings and protection were issued by three of the first five Presidents: George Washington, John Adams, and James Madison. Thomas Jefferson and his Albemarle county neighbor, James Monroe, declined to follow this tradition. Nonetheless, proclamations of thanksgiving continue to be part of Presidential protocol, usually soon after a President is sworn into office.

[7] Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 25–63; Richard R. John and Christopher J. Young, "Rites of Passage: Postal Petitioning as a Tool of Governance in the Age of Federalism," in *The House and Senate in the 1790s: Petitioning, Lobbying, and Institutional Development*, eds. Kenneth R. Bowling and Donald R. Kennon. (Miami, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2002), 100–38.

Proclamations and Presidential Prerogative

During the era of the Founding Father Presidents, proclamations tended to revolve around foreign policy issues, domestic insurrections, and trade relations. Unlike the proclamations of thanksgiving, these types of proclamations more closely correlated with specific sections of Article II of the United States Constitution. Article II defines the President as the chief executive of the United States as well as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the United States. It explains the process of electing a President as well as the duties and abilities of the office, such as the power to pardon. It also states what the President cannot do and who is eligible to serve in the office as well as what disqualifies someone to be President.

The reasoning behind nearly all of the proclamations issued between 1789 and 1825 effectively derived from Article II, Sections 2 and 3. Section 2 focuses on the civilian power over the military, the formation of what soon became known as the "cabinet," the power to pardon, and the authority to appoint judges and other federal positions. Section 3 details the President's duty to give the state of the union, to convene either or both houses of Congress, to receive ambassadors as well as other public ministers, and to commission officers of the United States. Most importantly for our discussion here, Section 3 commands that the President of the United States "take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed." Either explicitly or implicitly, this phrase served as the catalyst to approximately two-thirds of the proclamations issued between 1789 and 1825. By far, Article II, Section 3, of the United States Constitution was the primary justification for Presidential proclamations during this formative period.


By Thomas Jefferson President of the U.S. of America.

A Proclamation.

During the wars which, for some time, have unhappily prevailed among the powers of Europe, the United States of America, firm in their principles of peace, have endeavored by justice, by a regular discharge of all their National & Social duties, & by every friendly office their situation has admitted, to maintain with all the belligerents their accustomed relations of friendship, hospitality & commercial intercourse. taking no part in those questions which animate these powers against each other, nor permitting themselves to entertain a wish but for the restoration of general peace. they have observed with good faith the neutrality they assumed. & they believe that no instance of a departure from its duties can be justly imputed to them by any nation. a free use of their Harbours & waters, the means of refitting & of refreshment, of succour to their sick & suffering, have at all times, and on equal principles been extended to all. & this too, amidst a constant recurrence of acts of insubordination to the laws of

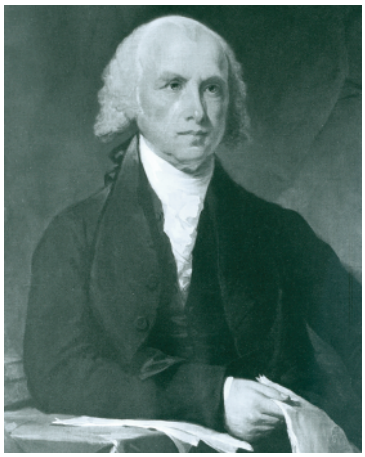
Thomas Jefferson's proclamation of July 2, 1807, ordered armed British vessels to depart from American harbors.

The most controversial proclamation of this type was George Washington's proclamation of neutrality. Issued on April 22, 1793, it declared the United States to be impartial in the European conflict that was being carried out on the high seas as well as at times in American seaports. Immediately, critics questioned whether the President had the authority to declare a state of neutrality. Some wondered if this handicapped Congress's ability and constitutional right to declare war as stated in Article I, Section 8. Published when the flamboyant and reckless French minister Edmond Genet was at the height of his popularity in the United States, the proclamation of neutrality was the catalyst to a number of essays, most famously the public debate between Pacificus (Alexander Hamilton) and Helvidius (James Madison). It also inspired

the trial of a seafarer named Gideon Henfield and a large number of resolutions from citizens around the country supporting Washington's decision to keep the United States out of the fight.[8]

The controversy stemmed no doubt from constitutional issues, but also a deeply rooted fear that reemerged several years earlier during the Constitutional Convention and the ratification debates regarding what was known as the "prerogative." The issue arises when a Presidential action does not have, according to critics, statutory support. The concern for some was whether the difference between the chief executive of the United States and the British Crown would be in name only because of the executive's "prerogative," or as Americans have historically called it, "presidential discretion." Regardless of Hamilton's attempt in *Federalist* number 69 to ameliorate concerns regarding the prerogative, the neutrality controversy brought them out anew.[9]

The Power to Pardon


James Madison, President, 1809–1817

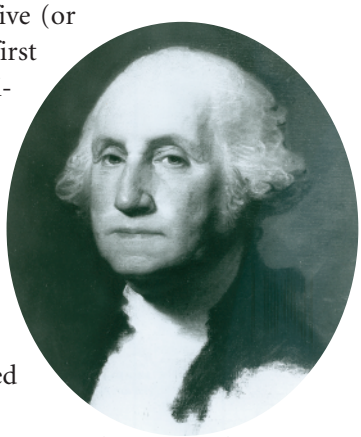
The second largest group of Presidential proclamations during the period under consideration found justification under Article II, Section 2. The power to pardon was the primary justification for eight Presidential proclamations that drew on this section of Article II. George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson each used a proclamation to communicate a pardon during their years as President. James Madison issued five pardons via proclamation while his successor, James Monroe, did not issue any. Three types of groups were pardoned by Presidents during this period: AWOL soldiers; domestic insurgents; and an outsider-group, the Baratarian pirates, who had wreaked havoc on American shipping. In short, the Presidential pardons via proclamation were mass pardons.

The most pardons (5) were issued to encourage troops who had deserted to return to the military. The terms allowed the soldiers to report to any military post in the United States and instructed officers of the pardon. President Jefferson declared the first such pardon. His successor, James Madison, issued four pardons for troops who had deserted, half of which came in 1812—the year simmering tensions between Great Britain and the United States finally boiled over into war.

[8] For a challenge to the President's right to issue a proclamation, see "Veritas," *National Gazette* (Philadelphia), May 15, June 1, and June 8, 1793. Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, *The Letters of Pacificus and Helvidius* (1845; rep., New York, 1976), 5–52; William R. Casto, *Foreign Affairs and the Constitution in the Age of Fighting Sail* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 91-97; Charles Marion Thomas, *American Neutrality in 1793: A Study in Cabinet Government* (1931; rep., New York, 1967); Albert Hall Bowman, *The Struggle for Neutrality: Franco-American Diplomacy During the Federalist Era* (Knoxville, 1974). For resolutions supporting Washington's policy of neutrality, see *The Papers of George Washington Digital Edition,* ed. Crackel.

[9] Glendon A. Schubert, Jr., "Judicial Review of Royal Proclamations and Orders-in-Council," *The University of Toronto Law Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1951): 69–106; Alexander Hamilton, "Federalist 69," in ed. Clinton Rossiter, *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Penguin, 1961), 415–23; Robert Scigliano, "The President's `Prerogative Power'" in Thomas E. Cronin, ed. *Inventing the American Presidency* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 236–56; and Cooper, *By Order of the President*, 4–9. The proclamation as a vehicle for Presidential action apparently did not garner much attention at the Constitutional Convention. See James Madison, *Journal of the Constitutional Convention*, ed. E. H. Scott (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1893), and Max Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*, 4 vols. (1937; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

The second group consisted of those who rebelled against the laws and government of the United States. The first of this type were the so-called "Whiskey Rebels" of western Pennsylvania who had been steadily intensifying their protests over the years against the March 1791 excise tax formulated by Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, which they believed fell disproportinately hard on them. After failing to come to terms with the rebels or to end the escalating violence inflicted on federal officers, President Washington led troops from several states toward western Pennsylvania to quell the insurgency. (President Washington remains the only sitting President to have led the military in the field.) This episode led to five (or roughly 20 percent) of Washington's proclamations. The first proclamation demanded that the obstruction of justice and violence stop. The second, dated February 24, 1794, offered a reward for information leading to the arrest of those responsible for the attack on the revenue collector and his property in western Pennsylvania:


George Washington, President, 1789–1797

> WHEREAS by information given upon oath, it appears that in the night time of the twenty second day of November, a number of armed men having their faces blackened and being otherwise disguised, violently broke open and entered the dwelling house of Benjamin Wells collector of the revenue arising from spirits distilled within the United States, in and for the counties of Westmoreland and Fayette in the district of Pennsylvania, and by assaulting the said collector and putting him in fear and danger for his life, in his dwelling house aforesaid, in the said county of Fayette did compel him to deliver up to them his commission for collecting the said revenue, together with the books kept by him in the execution of his said duty, and did threaten to do further violence to the said collector, if he did not shortly thereafter publicly renounce the further execution of his said office:
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> And WHEREAS several of the perpetrators of the said offense are still unknown, and the safety and good order of society require that such daring offenders should be discovered and brought to justice so that infractions of the law may be prevented, obedience to them secured, and officers protected in the due execution of the trusts reposed in them, *therefore* I have thought proper to offer and hereby do offer a reward of TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS for each of the said offenders that shall be discovered and brought to justice for the said offence, to be paid to the person or persons who shall first discover and give information of the said offenders to any judge, justice of the peace, or other magistrate.

The third in this series of proclamations explained why the President was calling out the militia. According to Washington, the regular judicial routes were no longer possible for addressing the challenge to the government. Unlike other Presidents during this period in similar situations, Washington did not simply state it; rather, he specifically noted that Supreme Court Justice James Wilson certified this to be the case. The next proclamation declared that troops would be marching to western Pennsylvania "to reclaim the wicked from their fury . . . [and with] a perfect reliance on that gracious providence which so signally displays its goodness towards this country,

to reduce the refractory to a due subordination to the law." The final proclamation dealing with the insurgency in western Pennsylvania held out a pardon for those involved in the rebellion.[10]

In 1799 President John Adams also faced a rebellion in Pennsylvania against a federal tax policy. This insurgency was led by John Fries, and consequently the episode has since been known as "Fries Rebellion." The proclamations issued by Adams during this crisis followed closely the pattern established by Washington during the Whiskey Rebellion. However, Adams announced in a single proclamation that both the situation was beyond normal judicial control and that he was calling out the militia. He then, like his predecessor, pardoned those involved in another proclamation.[11]

Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, President Madison pardoned the Baratarian pirates who based their operations out of Louisiana's Grand Terre Island, which had Barataria Bay to one side and the Gulf of Mexico on the other, when they came to the defense of New Orleans during the British invasion at the beginning of 1815. American frustrations with the pirates led by Jean Lafitte began when the United States acquired Louisiana in 1803 and continued unabated after Louisiana became a state in 1812. The Baratarian pirates, described by historian Donald Hickey as "a lawless band of thieves and smugglers, perhaps 1,000 strong," had an intimate knowledge of the land and waterways around New Orleans. The British recognized this and tried to recruit Lafitte's band to assist in their invasion. He refused. While Gen. Andrew Jackson did not care much for Lafitte, he finally came around to accepting the pirates' assistance.[12]

Done upon the recommendation of the state of Louisiana, President Madison issued a proclamation absolving the Baratarian pirates for the trespasses committed prior to the Battle of New Orleans. Madison recognized that Lafitte and his men had been invited to assist the British with the "most seducing terms of invitation." Instead, the President noted, the pirates "exhibited in the defense of New Orleans unequivocal traits of courage and fidelity" when they repelled a "hostile invasion of the territory of the United States." Such people, Madison proclaimed, "can no longer be considered as objects of punishment" but instead must be seen as "objects of a generous forgiveness." However, pirates were still pirates, so they needed to present proof in the form of a "certificate in writing" from the Louisiana governor testifying that the person "aided in the defense of New Orleans and the adjacent country during the invasion."[13]

Promoting Trade and Communication

With the exception of a proclamation offering a reward for the capture of the person responsible for brutally murdering a respectable Washington grocer, William Seaver, in July 1821, the proclamations issued by President James Monroe deal almost exclusively with restoring trade with in-

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[10] See Presidential proclamations of Sept. 15, 1792, Feb. 24, 1794, Aug. 7, 1794, Sept. 25, 1794, July 10, 1795.

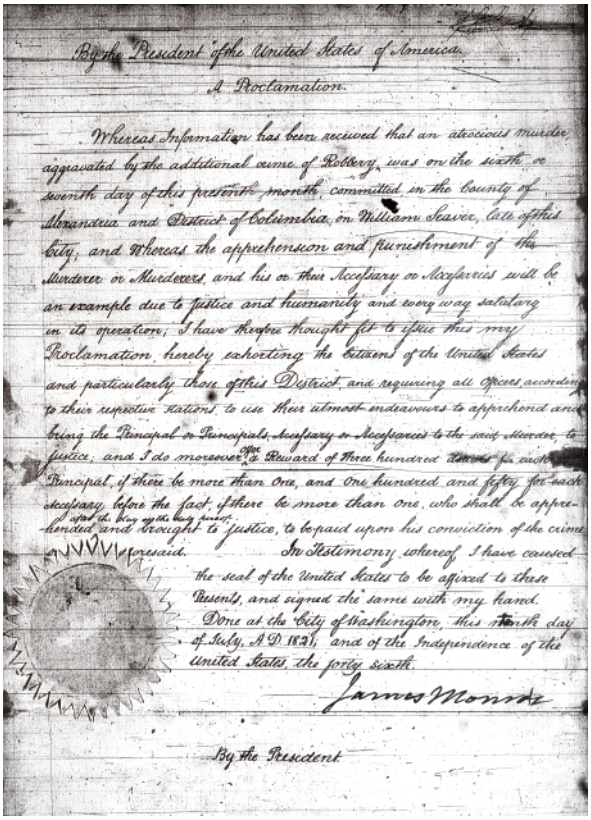
[11] Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 620–21, 696–700. See John Adams's Presidential proclamations of Mar. 12, 1799 and May 21, 1800.

[12] Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 169, 204, 207–8. Quote is on 204; Walter R. Borneman, *1812: The War that Forged A Nation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 274–275, 284.

[13] James Madison, "Granting Pardon to Certain Inhabitants of Barrataria Who Acted in the Defense of New Orleans," Feb. 6, 1815, in Woolley and Peters, *The American Presidency Project, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=65982.*

ternational partners, most conspicuously Great Britain and France. The use of proclamations signaled a transition, if not a departure, from the aggravated international relations between the three powers that had consumed Monroe's predecessors.[14]

Once a pro-French partisan of the Republican Party, President Monroe toured the United States in 1817 and 1819 as George Washington had done during the early 1790s, hoping this exercise in Presidential ritual would unite the country and heal its partisan wounds. To Monroe's chagrin, the next generation of Presidential hopefuls used the chief executive's visit through their region as an opportunity to increase their own political value and exposure.[15]



By the President of the United States of America.

A Proclamation.

Whereas Information has been recieved that an atrocious murder aggravated by the additional crime of Robbery, was on the sixth or seventh day of this present month committed in the County of Alexandria and District of Columbia, on William Seaver, late of this City, and Whereas the apprehension and punishment of the Murderer or Murderers, and his or their Accessary or Accessaries will be an example due to Justice and humanity and every way salutary in its operation; I have therefore thought fit to issue this my Proclamation, hereby exhorting the Citizens of the United States and particularly those of this District, and requiring all Officers according to their respective stations, to use their utmost endeavours to apprehend and bring the Principal or Principals, Accessary or Accessaries to the said Murder, to Justice, and I do moreover offer a Reward of Three hundred Dollars for each Principal, if there be more than One, and One hundred and fifty for each Accessary, before the fact, if there be more than one, who shall be apprehended and brought to Justice, to be paid upon his conviction of the crime aforesaid. In Testimony whereof I have caused the seal of the United States to be affixed to these Presents, and signed the same with my hand. Done at the City of Washington, this tenth day of July, A.D. 1821, and of the Independence of the United States, the forty sixth.

James Monroe

By the President

James Monroe offered a reward on July 10, 1821, for the capture of the murderer of grocer William Seaver in the county of Alexandria and the District of Columbia.

Like President Monroe's tour, proclamations served as a means for the President to communicate with the public. A proclamation could be aimed at a national constituency such as the Neutrality Proclamation, or it could be intended for a local audience such as when a reward was offered for the capture of a murderer. Proclamations could be directed at relations with a nation as exemplified in the number of trade-oriented proclamations, or they could be targeted at an individual, such as James O'Fallon whose intrigues in the west on behalf of the South Carolina Yazoo Company during the early 1790s had the potential to undermine relations between the United States and Spain.[16]

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[14] James Monroe, "Proclamation offering Reward for the Apprehension of the Murderer of William Seaver," July 10, 1821, Woolley and Peters, *The American Presidency Project, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=66271.* See also, *The Evening Post* (New York, New York), July 11 and July 13, 1821; the *Washington Gazette*, July 16 and July 27, 1821; the *Baltimore Patriot*, Apr. 30, 1822; and the *Independent Chronicle & Boston Patriot*, May 4, 1822. This was not the first time a President of the United States offered a reward for the capture of an individual who had committed a crime. See President Washington's proclamation of Dec. 12, 1792, which offered a reward for information leading to the arrest of "certain lawless and wicked persons" who destroyed a Cherokee town and killed "several Indians of that nation" and his proclamation of Feb. 24, 1794, which is quoted above. President Jefferson also offered a reward for a crime committed against the Cherokee nation. This time it was offered for apprehending those responsible for murdering a Cherokee woman in Knox County, Tennessee, during the summer of 1801. See, Jefferson's proclamation of Nov. 30, 1801, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 35: 747.

[15] James Monroe, *A View of the Conduct of the Executive in the Foreign Affairs of the United States, Connected with the Mission to the French Republic, During the Years 1794, 5, & 6* (Philadelphia, 1797); Sandra Moats, *Celebrating the Republic*, 91–169.

[16] John Carl Parish, "The Intrigues of Doctor James O'Fallon," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Sep., 1930), 230–63.

The Research Value of Presidential Proclamations

Proclamations contributed to the formation of the Presidential office as an instrument of direct Presidential action as well as a vehicle for carrying out laws passed by Congress. The Founding Father Presidents may have been surprised by this development considering that the concept of proclamations as a Presidential tool failed to gain much, if any, attention when the Constitution was formed.[17] Nonetheless, within four years Washington put it to use during America's first foreign crisis when he declared the United States to be impartial in 1793.

The content of the proclamations reflect the challenges that the first five Presidents faced during their time in office. The rhetoric of the Presidential proclamations reveals individual Presidential styles and priorities, personalities and dispositions, as well as the political and philosophical positions of the Founding Father Presidents. Proclamations provide keen insight into early national life at a time when the young republic was still adjusting to its new Constitution as well as to its place in the Atlantic World.

Accessibility and the potential for significant insight make Presidential proclamations a fruitful source for historical research. Proclamations afforded the early Presidents a means by which to communicate directly with the American people. By establishing a Presidential presence in the public sphere, proclamations contributed to the authority and place of the executive office in the evolving political culture of the new nation. The worth of Presidential proclamations for scholars goes beyond capturing a vividly described moment in time that involved the President of the United States. Proclamations reflect assumptions and attitudes of the era in which they were written just as one would expect to find in a court case, a letter, or a newspaper. Just as importantly, these Presidential documents offer tantalizing suggestions regarding the mentalité of America's early chief executives. As such, proclamations have significant research value for historians of the early republic, of the Presidency, and of the federal government. Possible avenues of research opened by proclamations include institutional development and inter-branch relations, Constitutional provisions and Presidential authorities, and early American leadership and crisis management.

It was through a proclamation that the President of the United States first communicated directly with the American Indians as well as with his national constituency, the American people. Through proclamations the federal government first authorized using armed force against domestic insurgents, but it was also an instrument used to pardon these same people. The Presidential proclamation was an unlikely vehicle of executive power in early American public life. It acted as a conduit between the early Presidents and the variety of publics served and represented by these Founding Fathers. From the loading docks on Lake Champlain to the streets of Alexandria, Virginia, from Philadelphia taverns to Cherokee towns, the Presidential proclamation was for many the voice of the federal government during the early years of the republic.

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[17] Madison, *Journal of the Constitutional Convention,* ed. Scott ; Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787;* Rossiter, ed., *The Federalist Papers*.

Sources for Presidential Proclamations, 1789–1825

As of this writing, there appears to be no single source that lists all of the U.S. Presidential proclamations from 1789 to 1825. A number of sources in a variety of mediums were used for this article to establish the total of proclamations issued for the period. The National Archives has produced three series of microfilm that include specific rolls dedicated to Presidential proclamations. They are National Archives Microfilm Publications T1223, *Presidential Proclamations, 1–2160, 1789–1936;* T279, *Index to Presidential Proclamations, 1789–1947:* and M1331, *Numerical List of Presidential Proclamations, 1–2317, 1789–1938.* While incomplete, the first two volumes of James D. Richardson's *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (1897) and the online *The American Presidency Project* by John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters *(http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/proclamations.php)* are the most useful sources for proclamations that span multiple Presidencies.

However, one must use these excellent sources in conjunction with the papers of the individual Presidents. The digitized *Thomas Jefferson Papers* at the Library of Congress are useful, but incomplete compared to the print version published by Princeton University Press. The print copies of the *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, the *Papers of James Madison*, and the *Papers of James Monroe* either remain works in progress or require the researcher to know the subject of the proclamation in order to locate it within the many volumes that cover their Presidencies. The most useful tool for researching the proclamations of the individual Presidents are the digitized manuscripts of George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison that are part of the University of Virginia's Rotunda project. Unfortunately, these sites are not widely accessible to individuals and academic institutions with limited resources. Happily, in the future these important online documents (which have been expertly annotated) will be available to the public.

Photo credits: White House drawing, Adams Proclamation, Library of Congress; Bar graph, author; Jefferson and Monroe proclamations, National Archives Microfilm Publication T1223, *Presidential Proclamations, 1–2160, 1789–1936;* James Madison, National Archives, 148-CC-13-3; George Washington, National Archives, 148-GW-8610001.