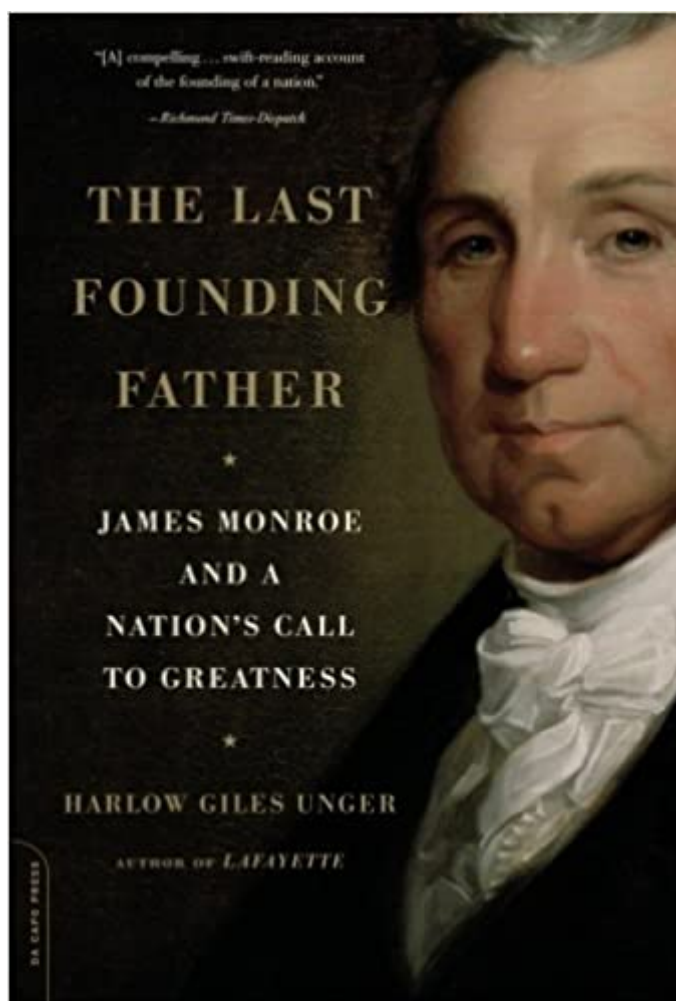


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# The Last Founding Father: James Monroe And A Nation's Call To Greatness



## Synopsis

In this compelling biography, award-winning author Harlow Giles Unger reveals the epic story of James Monroe (1758-1831), the last of America's Founding Fathers, who transformed a small, fragile nation beset by enemies into a powerful empire stretching from sea to shining sea. Like David McCullough's John Adams and Jon Meacham's American Lion, *The Last Founding Father* is both a superb read and stellar scholarship; action-filled history in the grand tradition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Dead Presidents website, 10/19/10 "What stands out most about Unger's book is the clarity and ease of the author's writing. I read a lot of books about Presidents that I already know a lot about, but this book taught me more about a single President than I have learned in years. James Monroe deserves his place amongst the giants of our Founding, and Harlow Giles Unger has forever ensured it." •WhatWouldtheFoundersThink.com, 1/27/11 "This book is so full of interesting connections and characters that it is impossible to do it justice in the space of a review. This book is a pleasure to read and the wonderful use of illustrations augments it." •A Journal of Southern History, May 2011 "Unger shows how the public and private commitments of early American diplomats were sometimes intertwined." •The Waterline, 10/6/11 "Unger writes an excellent biography, and dissects the major events that would shape our young nation. A fine read." •A

A former Distinguished Visiting Fellow in American History at Mount Vernon, Harlow Giles Unger is the author of sixteen books, including six biographies of America's Founding Fathers. He lives in New York.

I rate this history excellent, even though I think it less excellent than Ferling, Wood and Henry Adams. It is a complete history, although not as detailed as the other authors cited, and it is eminently readable. Unger impressed me with how little I knew about the Monroe presidency, the last of the founding fathers, and how much of consequence happened in his life and under his watch. To me, he is the consolidator of the first four presidencies. The Monroe Doctrine marked the passage of the United States from a new nation to a powerful international nation, something I knew, but not in the detail that Unger presents. I am just a reader of history, not an expert, but I do think I'm qualified to recommend this history to others who also love the pageant of our history.

Mr. Unger sets the bar high for his subject when on the Acknowledgments and Dedication page he describes; "...James Monroe as the most significant Founding Father after George Washington". He goes on to produce a very thorough ~400-page biography of our fifth President - full of things we may have known, but now detailed and well retold, as well as many things we (the average reader) did not know about the man, his remarkable career and his family. The author's observation (page 2) that, "Washington's three successors - John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison - were mere caretaker presidents who left the nation bankrupt, its people deeply divided, its borders under attack, its capital city in ashes" - rouses the reader's interest, establishes the tone and encourages the read to come. What does come - despite the rhetoric - is delivered in a very even-handed and professional manner. I did not find the unfairness or bias detected by other reviewers here. The style and conclusions at times can be zealous, but certainly not unsupported, or implausible. By example, Mr. Unger offers a full spectrum of possibilities in his explanation for the rift between Monroe and his colleagues Madison and Jefferson (page 199) through the presentation of a number of historian's conclusions. In the end Mr. Unger suggests human foibles and pride as the cause for the breakup. Despite the author's high-admiration for his subject - the reader is often left wondering whether or not pure happenstance is as much a factor as heroics in many of the enormous events of the era. Was the Louisiana Purchase the legitimate "catch" of Mr. Monroe, or Mr. Livingston... or would Napoleon Bonapart have virtually "handed" the prize to any American envoy that President Jefferson might have sent? Mr. Unger suggests Mr. Monroe - but does not

convince. Other matters of character or judgement are left quietly unexplored. For example, the damning Reynolds Dossier - a packet of proofs that ultimately destroy Alexander Hamilton are left for safekeeping with Mr. Jefferson, by Mr. Monroe. The dossier is subsequently shown to the press. Mr. Unger clearly believes Monroe above duplicity, but leaves the issue unexplored, except of course for the obvious deception of Mr. Jefferson. Could Mr. Monroe really have been "above" politics even at that most partisan of times? In the end, a number of events akin to the examples above make the reader feel that the author has set the bar too high for his subject, but no-matter Mr. Unger's research and skill with the written word make the book a very worthwhile and enlightening read.-----kindle edition-----Generally well done with the expected hyperlinks. There are numerous portraits and maps that are worthwhile to the read. The maps especially are somewhat tortured by the resolution of the kindle. The book does have hardbound page number locations which are displayed (page bottom) from the menu & toolbars display (tap page top). The index - which can be a very valuable tool in a biography - is worthless. It contains neither page number nor hyperlink - merely a shell of what should have been, despite the full price extracted for an e-book by the publisher, Da Capo Press. e-Book publication quality, ⚡⚡⚡...⚡⚡⚡...⚡⚡⚡⚡⚡⚡⚡⚡⚡.

Unger takes a historical figure who has been almost ignored and gives us a new modern look at Monroe. His book is very readable and gives some information that had almost been lost or at least overlooked by other historical scholars. Some biographers are a proponent of their subject given that they spend years researching the life of a person that is understandable. Unger goes over the top though. He attempts to paint Monroe as a perfect being and others around him as being the fault of any trouble that goes on with Monroe. Is it worth reading? Yes, but you really have to hold your nose during some of the parts where the author is really attempting to shape every event into a syrupy commentary on Monroe while detracting from other figures. While a lot of this is factual, Monroe was not a perfect man. While this biography was needed to those of us who enjoy early American History we will have to continue to wait for a more unbiased attempt at defining Monroe and his contributions to our country.

Excellent written, based on thorough, sound research and an abundance of source material without losing sight of the grander international historic setting. The author has optimally combined the personal aspects, reflecting on Monroe's character, the personal material circumstances and his family life with the multitude of problems besetting a young, vulnerable nation experimenting with democracy; a nation still very much influenced by its colonial past.

I'm on a personal reading adventure of US Presidents' biographies. This one gives the most comprehensive look at US history from pre-Revolutionary War days through the broad expansion of the country with James Monroe's influence. With interesting writing style, the author brings the reader in contact with each of the Presidents from Washington to Jackson, gives insight to early international diplomacy, and the roots of the wonderful experiment of the republic of the United States of America.

"The Last Founding Father: James Monroe and a Nation's Call To Greatness" An excellent historical biography of the 5th US President. Monroe, from his teens on, had an astonishing career in service to our nation. This history covers much ground about an important time in the new nation's history. Monroe's Presidency was called the "Era of Good Feeling" for good reason, and this book covers that and much more quite well in a readable style.

An excellent work for those of us who love history but aren't historians. I love in depth books but I also have a lot of interests as it pertains to history so I would rather not read an epic about any single individual. This work was the perfect fit. Very well written and keeps the reader interested with a good mix of personal and professional life. My only complaint is that I would have preferred a little bit more information regarding President Monroe's role in establishing Monrovia in Africa... since his stance on slavery is the one horrible blemish on his record.

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