



FROM THE BRAFFERTON

# James Monroe Returns to Campus

BY W. TAYLOR REVELEY III  
*President, College of William & Mary*

**T**HANKS TO THE ARTISTRY OF GORDON KRAY '73 AND THE GENEROSITY OF Carroll and Patty Owens, both '62, a magnificent graven image of our alumnus James Monroe now stands just northwest of the Wren Courtyard in front of Tucker Hall (p. 3). Monroe, who held more senior positions in state and federal service than anyone before or since, has returned to William & Mary over two centuries since he left to fight in the American Revolution. His likeness comes home to the Alma Mater of the Nation in more tranquil times.

An extraordinary frieze circles the base of the statue. The frieze is compelling in its quality and detail, depicting eight milestones in Monroe's life, starting with his education at William & Mary. Other scenes include his heroic part in the Battle of Trenton and his service as secretary of state and secretary of war. Above the frieze stands President Monroe at full height, with the Monroe Doctrine reflected in the way one of his hands shields the American continents on a globe beside him. All in all, the sculpture symbolizes the caliber of leaders educated at William & Mary and brings long due attention to the remarkable achievements of this particular alumnus, who served his state and his country in myriad fashions.

In modern times, these achievements have received less attention than they warrant. This is surprising in light of Monroe's vital role in the early survival and success of the United States. Doubtless

this is a product, in part, of Monroe's far greater concern to achieve important results than to claim credit for having done so. His crucial role in the Louisiana Purchase is a telling instance of just this focus on action, not acclaim.

We have an effort underway to better understand and recognize Monroe's contributions as a nation-builder. Former rector Jim Murray J.D. '74, LL.D. '00, who along with former rector Jeff Trammell '73 is leading William & Mary's "Monroe Renaissance," put it best during his Charter Day speech last February: "Monroe lacked the flair that makes a celebrity ... In today's terms, he would be known as an operational CEO, the Eric Schmidt to Google's Sergey Brin. So while Monroe may not be called a creator of this nation, he should be credited with being a builder of this nation."

William & Mary owns and operates Ash Lawn-Highland, Monroe's home in Albemarle County, outside Charlottesville. The rolling acres that make up Ash Lawn-Highland are cheek-to-jowl with the equally gorgeous land owned by the University of Virginia called Morven, once owned by William & Mary alumnus William Short. Morven, in turn, abuts alumnus Thomas Jefferson's incomparable Monticello. These three homeplaces, together with James Madison's Montpelier, have come together with William & Mary and the University of Virginia to create what we call the "Presidential Precinct," devoted to helping spur democracy around the globe. Last summer, for example, 25 emerging leaders from Africa who were participants in the White House's Young African Leaders Initiative studied at all of the Precinct sites, including a two-week stay at William & Mary.

On campus, of course, we have long had the Monroe Scholars program, which recognizes students of great academic ability and supports their research. Monroe Scholars usually begin their time at William & Mary living in Monroe Hall. On recent Charter Days we have begun awarding a Monroe Prize in Civic Leadership to a student who has shown leadership "of an unusual quality," coupled with character and commitment to the needs of our society. When bestowing the prize, we emphasize that the inspiration for the award is the example set by James Monroe.

Now, with President Monroe's return to campus as a life-size bronze statue, standing astride a major east-west campus artery, William & Mary can seriously begin reclaiming an understanding of our great alumnus, the fifth president of the United States.

---

"...this is a product, in part, of Monroe's far greater concern to achieve important results than to claim credit for having done so."

---