

# A rare era of good feelings in U.S. politics from 1815-24

Return with me today to yesteryear, 200 years ago, to a time when there was virtually no turmoil in America: economic, social or political, neither domestic nor foreign.

A virtual fantasy? No, the period has been called by historians the Era of Good Feelings and it lasted from 1815-24. How and why did this seeming utopia occur? What ended it?

As you read about this era, savor its uniqueness and contrast it to current conditions.

The chief components of the Era of Good Feelings that contributed to its unmatched national harmony were: total dominance of national politics by one party to the virtual exclusion of any others, intense patriotism and nationalism, great prosperity, great optimism, unprecedented expansion westward and a tremendous growth in international respect and prestige. Almost sounds like a fictional fairy tale today, doesn't it? Here's



how it happened:

The nation had just, to the astonishment of many nationally and globally, confirmed its independence by again upsetting the world's leading economic, military and geopolitical power Great Britain in what we called the War of 1812 (1812-15). Historians have since also called it the War to Confirm Independence. Post-war patriotism, nationalism, prosperity and expansionism followed. One political party had dominated since 1800. It was the ancestor of today's Democratic Party, which then

were called Democratic Republicans or, ironically, Republicans. Thomas Jefferson's two terms were followed by two for James Madison. By the time James Monroe began his two terms in 1816, the Federalist Party had died and no opposition party would replace it until the late 1830s (the Whigs).

Monroe began his presidency with an immensely successful two-year national unification tour promoting peace and compromise with former Federalists and stressing patriotism and nationalism, appealing to what Abraham Lincoln would

later refer to as "the mystic cords of memory" that dwell "in every patriot's heart" and "the better angels of our nature."

Domestically, a policy created by Henry Clay called the American System featured emphasis on infrastructure improvements, a sound national bank and fiscal policy and a high protective tariff had greatly promoted prosperity. The ever-lurking problem of slavery and its expansion into the West had been temporarily solved (actually just postponed) by the Missouri Compromise of 1820, again more of Clay's work. In addition, the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice John Marshall, had reinforced the supremacy of national over state governmental power in its landmark *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819) ruling.

Internationally, enhancing America's already rising prestige due to the War of 1812 victory, the Monroe Doctrine (1823) established the United States as the

prime power in the Western Hemisphere as it assumed the role of its policeman and protector against internal violence and foreign colonization. We would defend the newly independent nations of Central and South America against the recolonization efforts of their former European mother countries.

In exchange, the U.S. vowed isolationist neutrality in all other European affairs. Great Britain, partly from newfound respect and partly because it felt it was to its economic advantage, supported the doctrine and would help America enforce it with its navy.

So harmonious and salubrious was America that in 1820 Monroe ran unopposed for re-election.

In four years this utopia ended. The villain was politics within the Democratic Party. As early as his farewell address in 1796, George Washington had warned Americans of the potentially dangerous, divisive impact of political parties (he called

them factions). Monroe had agreed with Washington and this was part of his motivation for his national unification tour. Perhaps proving Washington prescient, with no political opposition party to contest with in 1824, Democrats began to battle among themselves to become Monroe's successor.

Factions led by Clay, John Quincy Adams, William Crawford and Andrew Jackson eventually feuded in the hotly contested election of 1824 that would end the Era of Good Feelings. Alas, the near decade of almost total national harmony was over, seemingly never to fully return again.

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## Other Side

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most hurricane of such intensity ever to form in the Atlantic basin. Interestingly, or tragically, as it turned out, Lorenzo was responsible for the loss of a seagoing tug called the Bourbon Rhode west of Cape Verde. Later, as it drew closer to the U.S., it was directly responsible for multiple drownings due to rip currents off the North Carolina coast as well as the loss of other swimmers who were swept away off Long Island, N.Y.

The fact that Lorenzo made it all the way up to a Category 5 on the Saffir-Simpson Scale meant that it ranked among the most severe hurricanes ever. Weather professionals in Portugal warned that such a monster storm could result in catastrophic damage. They predicted waves reaching eight stories high and accompanying winds approaching 160 mph. As previously stated, hurricanes are rare this far north in the Atlantic basin. The water is generally too cold to support their development or to sustain those that have already developed. Those that do develop rarely make it as far as the Azores, but Lorenzo proved to be an exception.

Located out in the middle of the Atlantic, the Azores archipelago consists of nine rocky, volcanic islands

in three groupings situated just about 900 miles off the coast of Portugal. The middle three of these islands are clustered together in the central part of the archipelago and are bracketed by groupings on either side.

As usual, we had commenced our visit on the largest island, San Miguel, of the central group, and booked an Airbnb in its capital city of Ponta Delgada. Most of our time, however, would be spent on the island of Terceira, or "third" island. Personally, I am most familiar with Terceira because of Lajes Air Force Base. I first flew into Lajes in October 1978. I loved it from the moment I climbed out of my Phantom. I have loved the place ever since and have returned to Lajes and Terceira 20 or 30 times during my military career and three or four times with my wife. I love the vistas, the food, the culture and the people. I've even managed to get Gretchen hooked on the place, but I have not run with the bulls since that very first trip back in 1978.

Running with the bulls on Terceira is a great experience; I'll save that story for another time.

We made the 20-minute flight from Ponta Delgada to Terceira on Sunday. After renting a car at the airport, we drove about 40 minutes to the village of

Serreta on the northwest coast where our next Airbnb was located. Along the way we took in the sights. Azorean viewpoints are called "miradouros" and every one is breathtaking, nothing less than spectacular. All of the islands, but Terceira in particular, feature rocky, steep and craggy volcanic cliffs along the shoreline perimeter, while checkerboard green fields dot the interior plains and lowlands. Meanwhile, hundreds of feet below, huge Atlantic waves crash against those jagged volcanic cliffs resulting in an endless display of white foam and rainbows in the mist.

Terceira itself was first settled in the 14th century. It lays claim to a long agrarian tradition. Today, there are more cows on Terceira than people by a 3-1 ratio. The tiny village where we were staying, Serreta, is perched high up on the windward side of Terceira, its northeast coast. Homes there seem to cling precariously to the black volcanic rock. Hundreds of feet below, huge waves crash endlessly on the jagged rocks.

The Airbnb house we rented was well over a century old. Carved out of solid lava, its walls were 3 feet thick, while the house itself was capped by a heavy tile roof. A huge floor-to-ceiling window faced west out

toward the ocean. I commented to Gretchen that we would have a front-row seat to witness Lorenzo's passage. All of the other windows and doors in the house were fitted with shutters fashioned from heavy planked lumber. The place was a fortress. It was there that we planned to ride out Lorenzo, and ride it out we did.

The storm howled all night long. The wind sounded like a series of heavy freight trains flying by constantly. The noise was deafening, even a little scary. Gradually, very gradually, the noise relented and began to subside. And then as morning dawned, the magic happened.

That morning after the passage of Lorenzo, the horizon was clear and bright. As I looked out from that huge westward-facing window, I saw there on the horizon, probably 8 miles distant, an island. Checking my map, I ascertained that it had to be the nearby island of Graciosa. Initially,

though, I was sure that that island had not been there when we had gone to bed the night prior. But how could that be?

Finally, I realized that the storm must have reduced the prevailing visibility to less than eight miles, so that the island, which was just 8 miles away, had been invisible to us until the morning afterwards when the sky cleared. I also realized that as the visibility reduced, as it surely would, the island would disappear as magically as it had appeared. That is the story of my magical appearing and disappearing island.

And now, a final footnote about this experience. Even today, as was true then, there is but one decent restaurant in all of Serreta. Ti Choa is located just down the hill from our Airbnb, and it specializes in that delicious traditional Azorean stew called "alcatra," sometimes referred to as the Portuguese version of pot roast. A serving of Alcatra provides a hearty,

full-meal, so much so that we went home with leftovers that fed us for the two days that it took for Lorenzo to completely pass us by. Today, a year later, I come close to duplicating "alcatra" by using a Tagine that my son gave me for Christmas. The alcatra and Donas Amelias aside, what really made an impression on us during our stay in Serreta was Sergio.

Sergio was (and is) the one and only waiter at Ti Choa and he surprised us by showing up on our doorstep to make sure we were fully prepared with hatches battened down, just hours before Lorenzo made itself known. That's the Azoreans for you. They are a wonderful, kind and warm people. We can't wait to go back.

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## Over the Back Fence

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Christian broadcasting for a dozen years and I saw it firsthand.

Linking Trump and Christians may have long-term effects in keeping people away from church.

"I have really struggled with continuing to even call myself a Christian, because I feel like I cannot continue to call myself a Christian if Trump is what Christians want to be like," Maria Felix told Business Insider magazine.

She was on a church mission's trip when she made that comment.

"I just can't be OK with the misogynistic, homophobic, racist, xenophobic, et cetera, things that spew from Trump's mouth," she continued. "Or the people that follow him that also call themselves Christians."

The evangelical church may have shot itself in the foot endorsing Trump when folks under 40 seem to have less and less interest in attending church. Hypocrisy is not a tool to attract new church members.

I have a friend of over 25 years who is pastor at a non-denominational church. He provided Christian Voter's Guides to his congregation

and has continued to hold church services amid the COVID-19 pandemic with little social distancing or use of masks. I cannot dislike this person despite his mistakes. I see him as gullible and misled as I see many Christians.

Trumpsters will not go away next week. The right-wing media will continue to spew conspiracy theories on numerous talk radio stations, Fox News, Newsmax and other networks and convince the poor and uneducated that Republicans are on their side when they are only on the side of Wall Street.

## New council

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Meier said having the properties on the ROSI list told the state the city wanted the land as recreation and open space. The public did not have an opportunity to comment on the resolution, he said.

Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan said the city rushed by putting the properties on the ROSI list and the city was taking a step back to "talk about it." Gillin-Schwartz said any delay in getting the resolution to council was his fault as the new administration gets organized.

"If we're going to say that everything last month was done in a rush, then what are we doing in the first week of this new year?" Meier asked.

He said council was try-

ing to undo the 3-2 vote for the ROSI list of the previous council.

"We were handed a hot potato here and we have an emergency and, frankly, it's not the first time by far that we'd had a resolution for an emergency," Mullock said.

He said the city needed to notify state officials of the ROSI list change as soon as possible.

"What this resolution does for us is it buys us time to make an appropriate plan and make sure that whatever plan we go forward with is maximizing the value of that property to the taxpayers of the city of Cape May," Mullock said.

Bezaire said the resolution was in the best interests of Cape May but as a matter of principle, he

was "not exactly thrilled" council was voting for the resolution on short notice.

"It kind of goes against everything that we said we wanted to do and to make things open and clear to the public and give as much advance notice as we can," he said. "I do understand time is of the essence for this one for notification to the state."

Bezaire said his vote would have been the same at council's next meeting but he did not want to set a bad precedent on notice to the public on agenda items.

"I want to make sure this isn't a pattern we set in the future because this is not what we said we would do," he said.

Meier said the ROSI resolution was not an emergency and may complicate the Sewell Tract litigation.

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