

Louisiana Purchase

Overview: In 1803 France presented then president **Thomas Jefferson** with a deal much too good to pass up. **Napoleon** of France wanted to sell France's territories in North America, in part to finance war against Britain in addition to ridding France of colonial territory thousands of miles away.

Since the Constitution made no provisions for the president purchasing territory, Jefferson decided to push through the \$15 million dollar sale as **treaty** with France. Even though treaty making was a power of the presidency, this action was seen as a **loose** interpretation of the Constitution, clearly in opposition to Jefferson's own **strict** views on the document. Regardless of the Constitutional debate, the sale was completed and later ratified by the Senate and the size of the United States' territory doubled overnight. (from: regentsprep.org)

TERRITORIAL GROWTH

COLONIAL PERIOD: 1775

- Original Thirteen Colonies
- Other British territories

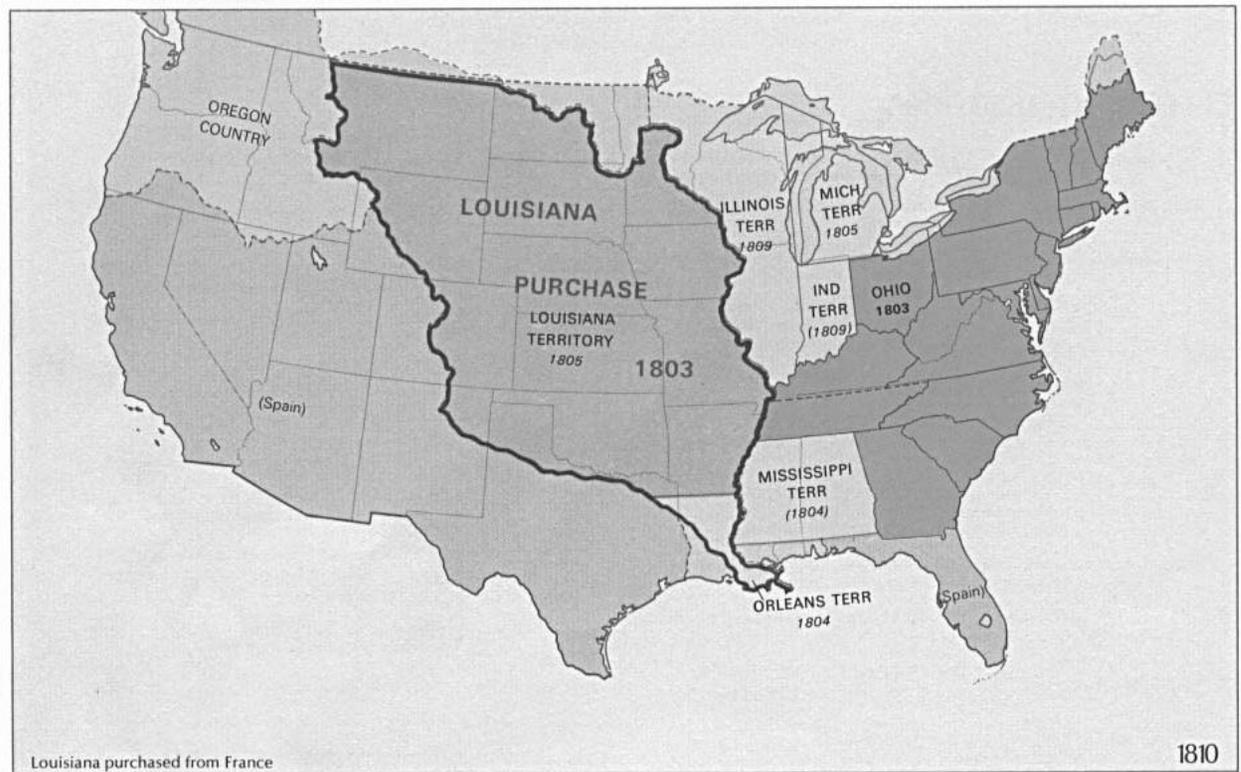
UNITED STATES: 1790–1920

- States
- State claims
- Special status areas
- Territories
- Unorganized territories
- Claimed areas
- Foreign areas

- 1803** Dates of territorial acquisitions
- 1805** Dates of initial territorial organization
- (1809)** Dates of latest change within given time period
- 1812** Dates of admission to the Union

Map scale 1:34,000,000

Compiled by H. George Stoll, Hammond Incorporated, 1967;
rev. by U.S. Geological Survey, 1970



Understanding the Importance of the Louisiana Purchase

On April 11, 1803, Talleyrand asked Robert Livingston how much the United States was prepared to pay for Louisiana. Livingston was confused, as his instructions only covered the purchase of New Orleans and the immediate area, not the entire Louisiana territory. James Monroe agreed with Livingston that Napoleon might withdraw this offer at any time. To wait for approval from President Jefferson might take months, so Livingston and Monroe decided to open negotiations immediately. By April 30, they closed a deal for the purchase of the entire 828,000 square mile Louisiana territory for 60 million Francs (approximately \$15 million). Part of this sum was used to forgive debts owed by France to the United States. The payment was made in United States bonds, which Napoleon sold at face value to the Dutch firm of Hope and Company, and the British banking house of Baring, at a discount of 87 1/2 per each \$100 unit. As a result, Napoleon received only \$8,831,250 in cash for Louisiana. Dutiful banker Alexander Baring conferred with Marbois in Paris, shuttled to the United States to pick up the bonds, took them to Britain, and returned to France with the money - and Napoleon used these funds to wage war against Baring's own country!

When news of the purchase reached the United States, President Jefferson was surprised. He had authorized the expenditure of \$10 million for a port city, and instead received treaties committing the government to spend \$15 million on a land package which would double the size of the country. Jefferson's political opponents in the Federalist Party argued that the Louisiana Purchase was a worthless desert, and that the Constitution did not provide for the acquisition of new land or negotiating treaties without the consent of the Senate. What really worried the opposition was the new states which would inevitably be carved from the Louisiana territory, strengthening Western and Southern interests in Congress, and further reducing the influence of New England Federalists in national affairs. President Jefferson was an enthusiastic supporter of westward expansion, and held firm in his support for the treaty. Despite Federalist objections, the U.S. Senate ratified the Louisiana treaty in the autumn of 1803.

The Louisiana Territory, purchased for less than 5 cents an acre, was one of Thomas Jefferson's greatest contributions to his country. Louisiana doubled the size of the United States literally overnight, without a war or the loss of a single American life, and set a precedent for the purchase of territory. It opened the way for the eventual expansion of the United States across the continent to the Pacific, and its consequent rise to the status of world power. International affairs in the Caribbean and Napoleon's hunger for cash to support his war efforts were the background for a glorious achievement of Thomas Jefferson's presidency, new lands and new opportunities for the nation.

(from: <http://www.nps.gov/archive/jeff/lewisclark2/circa1804/heritage/LouisianaPurchase/LouisianaPurchase.htm>)

The Lewis and Clark Expedition

The results and accomplishments of the Lewis and Clark expedition were extensive. It altered the imperial struggle for the control of North America, particularly in the Pacific northwest, by strengthening the U.S. claim to the areas now including the states of Oregon and Washington. Lewis and Clark achieved an impressive record of peaceful cooperation with the Indians and generated American interest in the fur trade. This had a far reaching effect, since it led to further exploration and commercial exploitation of the West. Lewis and Clark added to geographic knowledge by determining the true course of the Upper Missouri and its major tributaries, and producing important maps of these areas. They forever destroyed the dream of a Northwest Passage, but proved the success of overland travel to the Pacific. The expedition compiled the first general survey of life and material culture of the Native American tribes they encountered.

Lewis and Clark made significant additions to the zoological and botanical knowledge of the continent, providing the first scientific descriptions of many new species of animals, including the grizzly bear, prairie dog, pronghorn antelope, and mountain goat. They made the first attempt at a systematic record of the meteorology of the West, and less successfully attempted to determine the latitude and longitude of significant geographical points.

Lewis and Clark traveled over 8,000 miles in less than 2 1/2 years, losing only one member of their party, at a total cost to the taxpayer of \$40,000. By any measure of scientific exploration, the Lewis and Clark expedition was phenomenally successful in terms of accomplishing its stated goals, expanding human knowledge, and spurring further curiosity and wonder about the vast American West.

(from: <http://www.nps.gov/archive/jeff/lewisclark2/CorpsOfDiscovery/CorpsOfDiscoveryMain.htm#TheImportanceOfTheExpedition>)

Questions:

1. How did the United States come to acquire the Louisiana Territory? (Who did we purchase it from, was there a deal that had to be met, cost?)
2. How did Jefferson's decision to purchase the territory go against his strict interpretation of the Constitution?
3. Why was the purchase important to the development of the United States? (What did we gain by getting this territory, how did it strengthen the US?)
4. The Federalists had said that the Louisiana Territory was a "worthless desert". How did Lewis and Clark's expedition prove this to be untrue?