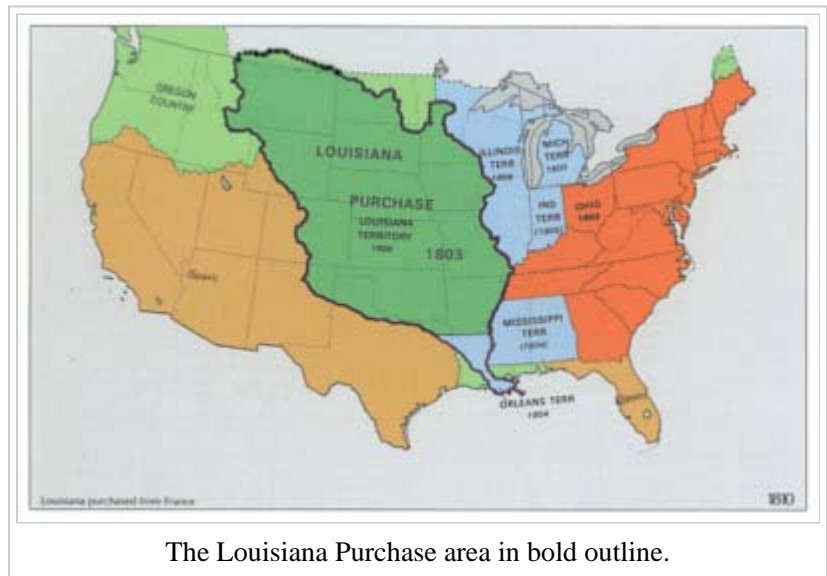


Louisiana Purchase

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The **Louisiana Purchase** (French: *Vente de la Louisiane*) was the acquisition by the United States of America of 828,000 square miles (2,140,000 km²) of French territory ("Louisiana") in 1803. The cost was 60 million francs (\$11,250,000) plus cancellation of debts worth 18 million francs (\$3,750,000). Including interest, the U.S. finally paid \$23,213,568 for the Louisiana territory.^[1]

The Louisiana Purchase encompassed portions of 15 current U.S. states and 2 Canadian provinces. The land purchased contained all of present-day Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, parts of Minnesota that were south of the Mississippi River, most of North Dakota, nearly all of South Dakota, northeastern New Mexico, northern Texas, the portions of Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado east of the Continental Divide, and Louisiana on both sides of the Mississippi River, including the city of New Orleans. (The Oklahoma Panhandle, and southwestern portions of Kansas and Louisiana were still claimed by Spain at the time of the Purchase.) In addition, the Purchase contained small portions of land that would eventually become part of the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. The land included in the purchase comprises around 23% of the territory of the United States today.^[1]



The Louisiana Purchase area in bold outline.

The purchase was an important moment in the presidency of Thomas Jefferson. At the time, it faced domestic opposition as being possibly unconstitutional. Although he felt that the US Constitution did not contain any provisions for acquiring territory, Jefferson decided to purchase Louisiana because he felt uneasy about France and Spain having the power to block American trade access to the port of New Orleans.

Napoleon Bonaparte, upon completion of the agreement, stated, "*This accession of territory affirms forever the power of the United States, and I have given England a maritime rival who sooner or later will humble her pride.*"^[2]

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Background

The city of New Orleans controlled the Mississippi River through its location; other locations for ports had been tried and had not succeeded. New Orleans was already important for shipping agricultural goods to and from the parts of the United States west of the Appalachian Mountains. Through Pinckney's Treaty signed with Spain on October 27, 1795, American merchants had "right of deposit" in New Orleans, meaning they could use the port to store goods for export. Americans also used this right to transport products such as flour, tobacco, pork, bacon, lard, feathers, cider, butter, and cheese. The treaty also recognized American rights to navigate the entire Mississippi River which had become increasingly vital to the growing trade of their western territories.^[3] In 1798 Spain revoked this treaty, which greatly upset Americans. In 1801, Spanish Governor Don Juan Manuel De Salcedo took over for Governor Marquess of Casa Calvo, and the right to deposit goods from the United States was fully restored. Napoleon Bonaparte returned Louisiana to French control from Spain in 1800, under the Treaty of San Ildefonso (Louisiana had been a Spanish colony since 1762.) However, the treaty was kept secret, and Louisiana remained under Spanish control until a transfer of power to France. The transfer finally took place on November 30, 1803, just three weeks before the cession to the United States.



A contemporary mapmaker's vision of "Louisiana", edged on the west by the Rocky Mountains.

James Monroe and Robert R. Livingston traveled to Paris to negotiate the purchase in 1804. Their interest was only in the port and its environs; they did not anticipate the much larger transfer of territory that would follow.

Negotiation

Jefferson laid the groundwork for the purchase by sending Livingston to Paris in 1801, after discovering the transfer of Louisiana from Spain to France. Livingston was to pursue a purchase of New Orleans, but he was rebuffed by the French.

In 1802, Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours was enlisted to help negotiate. Du Pont was living in the United States at the time and had close ties to Jefferson, as well as to the political powers in France. He engaged in back-channel diplomacy with Napoleon, on Jefferson's behalf, during a personal visit to France. He originated the idea of the much larger Louisiana Purchase as a way to defuse potential conflict between the United States and Napoleon over North America.^[4]

Jefferson disliked the idea of purchasing Louisiana from France as that could imply that France had a

right to be in Louisiana. A strict constructionist, Jefferson also believed that a U.S. president did not have the authority to engage in such a deal because it was not specified in the constitution, and that to do so would moreover erode states' rights by increasing federal executive power. On the other hand, he was aware of the potential threat that a neighbor like France would be for the young nation, and was prepared to go to war to prevent a strong French presence in the region. Meanwhile, Napoleon's foreign minister, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, was vehemently opposed to selling Louisiana since it would mean an end to France's secret plans for a North American empire.

Throughout this time, Jefferson had up-to-date intelligence on Napoleon's military activities and intentions in North America. Part of his evolving strategy involved giving du Pont some information that was withheld from Livingston. He also gave intentionally conflicting instructions to the two. He next sent Monroe to Paris in 1803. Monroe had been formally expelled from France on his last diplomatic mission, and the choice to send him again conveyed a sense of seriousness.



The original treaty of the Louisiana Purchase.

Napoleon was faced with the defeat of his armies in Saint-Domingue (present-day Republic of Haiti) where an expeditionary force under his brother-in-law Charles Leclerc was attempting to reassert control over a slave rebellion that threatened France's most profitable colony.

Political conflicts in Guadeloupe and in Saint-Domingue grew with the restoration of slavery on May 20, 1802, and the defection of leading French officers, like the black general Jean-Jacques Dessalines and the mulatto officer Alexandre Pétion in October 1802, within the context of an ongoing guerrilla war. The French had successfully deported Toussaint L'Ouverture to France in June 1802, but yellow fever was destroying European soldiers and claimed Leclerc in November.

Lacking sufficient military forces in America, Napoleon needed peace with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland to implement the Treaty of San Ildefonso and take possession of Louisiana. Otherwise, Louisiana would be an easy prey for the British or even for the Americans. Britain had breached her promise to evacuate Malta by September 1802 as stipulated in the peace of Amiens, and in the beginning of the year 1803, war between France and Britain seemed increasingly unavoidable. On March 11, 1803, Napoleon decided to start building a flotilla of barges to invade Britain.

These circumstances led Bonaparte to abandon his plans to rebuild France's New World empire. Napoleon gave notice to his minister of the treasury, François de Barbé-Marbois, on April 10, 1803, that he was considering surrendering the Louisiana Territory to the United States. On 11 April 1803, just days before Monroe's arrival, Marquess de Barbé-Marbois offered Livingston all of Louisiana instead of just New Orleans. President Jefferson had instructed Livingston to only purchase New Orleans. However, he was certain that the United States would accept such a large offer.

The American negotiators were prepared to spend \$10 million for New Orleans but were dumbfounded when the entire region was offered for \$15 million. The treaty was dated April 30, 1803, and was signed on May 2. On July 14, 1803, the treaty reached Washington D.C. The Louisiana territory was vast,

stretching from the Gulf of Mexico in the south to Rupert's Land in the north, and from the Mississippi River in the east to the Rocky Mountains in the west. Acquiring the territory would double the size of the United States at a cost in the currency of the day of less than 3 cents per acre.

Almost all of the land was occupied by American Indians, from whom the land was acquired a second time, piece by piece. The actual price paid for the land of the Louisiana Purchase was thus much higher than the sum paid to France. It was not the ownership of the land that was acquired so much as the right to acquire the land from the Indians who already occupied the land. Neither seller nor purchaser consulted with any Native Americans before the sale, and most Native Americans never even knew it had taken place.

Domestic opposition

The American purchase of the Louisiana territory was not accomplished without domestic opposition. Jefferson's philosophical consistency was in question because of his strict interpretation of the Constitution. Many people believed he was being hypocritical by doing something he surely would have argued against with Alexander Hamilton. The Federalists strongly opposed the purchase, favoring close relations with Britain over closer ties to Napoleon, believing the purchase to be unconstitutional, and concerned that the U.S. had paid a large sum of money just to declare war on Spain. The Federalists also feared that the political power of the Atlantic seaboard states would be threatened by the new citizens of the west, bringing about a clash of western farmers with the merchants and bankers of New England. There was concern that an increase in slave holding states created out of the new territory would exacerbate divisions between north and south, as well. A group of Federalists led by Massachusetts Senator Timothy Pickering went so far as to plan a separate northern confederacy, offering Vice President Aaron Burr the presidency of the proposed new country if he persuaded New York to join. Burr's relationship with Alexander Hamilton, who helped bring an end to the nascent northern secession movement, soured during this period. The animosity between the two men ended with Hamilton's death in a duel with Burr in 1804.

Treaty signing

On April 30, 1803, the Louisiana Purchase Treaty was signed by Robert Livingston, James Monroe, and Barbé Marbois in Paris. Jefferson announced the treaty to the American people on July 4. After the signing of the Louisiana Purchase agreement in 1803, Livingston made this famous statement, "We have lived long but this is the noblest work of our whole lives...The United States take rank this day among the first powers of the world"^[5]. The United States Senate ratified the treaty with a vote of twenty-four to seven on October 20; on the following day, it authorized President Jefferson to take possession of the territory and establish a temporary military government. In legislation enacted on October 31, Congress made temporary provisions for local civil government to continue as it had under French and Spanish rule and authorized the President to use military forces to maintain order. Plans were also set forth for a mission to explore and chart the territory, which would become known as the Lewis and Clark Expedition.



At the Purchase's centennial fair, one illustrator imagined the treaty signing as above.

France then turned New Orleans over on December 20, 1803 at The Cabildo. On March 10, 1804, a formal ceremony was conducted in St. Louis to transfer ownership of the territory from France to the United States.

Effective on October 1, 1804, the purchased territory was organized into the Orleans Territory (most of which became the state of Louisiana) and the District of Louisiana, which was temporarily under the control of the governor and judges of the Indiana Territory.

Boundaries

The tributaries of the Mississippi were held as the boundaries. Estimates that did exist as to the extent and composition of the purchase were initially based on the explorations of Robert LaSalle.

If the territory included all the tributaries of the Mississippi on its western bank, the northern reaches of the Purchase extended into the equally ill-defined British possession—Rupert's Land of British North America, now part of Canada. The Purchase originally extended just beyond the 50th parallel. However, the territory north of the 49th parallel such as the Red River Basin, Milk River, and Poplar River watershed was ceded to the UK in the Anglo-American Convention of 1818.

The eastern boundary of the Louisiana purchase was the Mississippi River, from its source to the 31st parallel, although the source of the Mississippi was then unknown. The eastern boundary below the 31st parallel was unclear; the U.S. claimed the land as far as the Perdido River, and Spain claimed the border of its Florida Colony remained the Mississippi river. In early 1804, Congress passed the Mobile Act which recognized West Florida as being part of the United States. The Treaty with Spain of 1819 resolved the issue. Today, the 31st parallel is the northern boundary of the western half of the Florida Panhandle, and the Perdido is the boundary between Florida and Alabama.

The purchase extended westward to the Rocky Mountains, specifically the Continental Divide, but southerly only so far as the territory remaining in New Spain after the Third Treaty of San Ildefonso, in 1800.

The southern boundary of the Louisiana Purchase (versus New Spain) was initially unclear at the time of purchase; the Neutral Ground Treaty of 1806 created the Sabine Free State during the interim and the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 began to lay down official dividing lines.



Louisiana and the State of Louisiana shown on



The Purchase was one of several territorial

the Louisiana State
Quarter.

additions to the U.S.

Financing

The American government used \$3 million in gold as a down payment, and bonds for the balance to pay France for the purchase. Because of the impending war with Britain, French banks would not buy or market the American bonds. The American diplomats Livingston and Monroe therefore recommended the firms of Baring and Company of London and Hope and Company of Amsterdam for the transaction which France agreed upon. Because of their reputation as the two most stable financial houses in Europe and because Napoleon wanted to receive his money as quickly as possible, the French treasury minister Barbé-Marbois made arrangements with the two firms to convert the bonds France would receive into cash. After the American bonds had been delivered, the French government then sold them to Baring and Hope at a discount. Also, part of the 80 million Francs (approximately \$15 million) sale price was used to forgive debts owed by France to the United States. In the end, France received \$8,831,250 in cash for the sale.

The original sales document of the Louisiana purchase was exhibited in the entrance hall of Baring's London offices until the bank's collapse in 1995.

See also

- History of the United States
- Historic regions of the United States
- Fulwar Skipwith
- Alaska purchase

References

1. ^a ^b Table 1.1 Acquisition of the Public Domain 1781-1867
2. [^] Godlewski, Guy; *Napoléon et Les-États-Amis*, P.320, La Nouvelle Revue Des Deux Mondes, July-September, 1977.
3. [^] Meinig, D.W. *The Shaping of America: Volume 2*, Yale University Press, 1993. ISBN 0-300-06290-7
4. [^] Duke, Marc; *The du Ponts: Portrait of a Dynasty*, P.77-83, Saturday Review Press, 1976
5. [^] The Louisiana State Capitol Building

External links

- Text of the Louisiana Purchase Treaty
- Louisiana Secretary of State
- Library of Congress - Louisiana Purchase Treaty
- Teaching about the Louisiana Purchase
- Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial 1803-2003
- New Orleans/Louisiana Purchase 1803
- The Haitian Revolution and the Louisiana Purchase

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