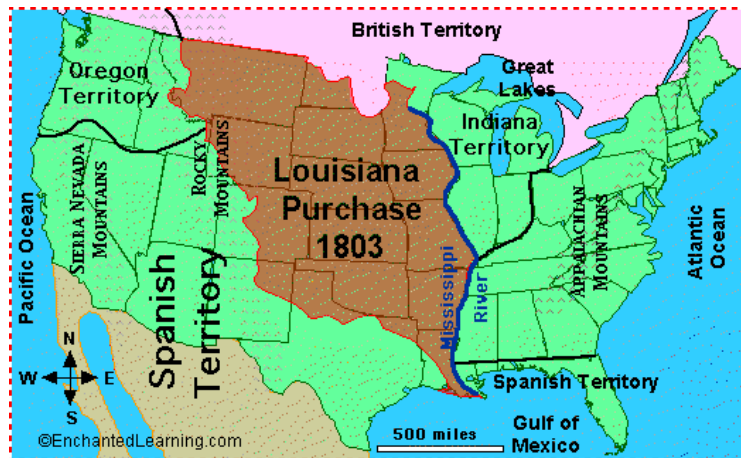


Chapter 24 - The Louisiana Purchase Doubles America's Landmass

Time: May 2, 1803

Napoleon Offers To Sell The Louisiana Territory To The U.S.



Territory Gained by the Louisiana Purchase of 1803

With Leclerc's efforts against Saint-Domingue in motion, Napoleon looks toward America, and begins to test its will. He begins by ordering his Spanish surrogate administrator to shut-down the port of New Orleans to U.S. shipping, on October 16, 1802. He also assembles an army in Holland intended for a probe into America.

Jefferson and his advisors are fully alarmed at this point. Especially since the American minister to France, Robert Livingston, informs Jefferson of a rumor that Napoleon has reacquired Louisiana.

Jefferson can easily imagine how his aspirations to expand westward would be impacted by hostile French forces lining up along his new western border, the Mississippi River, and closing the port of New Orleans, the emerging hub of all commerce on the frontier. His reaction is telling:

There is on the globe one single spot, the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy. It is New Orleans.

Unlike Touissant, he acts swiftly to deter Napoleon. He vigorously protests the shipping restraints and then, in March 1803, sends his trusted friend, James Monroe, to France with approval to spend up to \$9 million to try to buy the crucial port of New Orleans, along with West Florida.

By the time Monroe arrives, however, the situation has changed for Napoleon.

The Saint-Dominique intervention, which started so well, has begun to fall apart.

This set-back, along with the complexities of planning for the invasion of Britain, dampens Napoleon’s interest in any immediate action against America. Instead he decides that France is best served by taking America’s money and encouraging her to join in the fight against British, with her developing naval power.

So, when Monroe arrives, Napoleon’s surrogates, Talleyrand and Marbois, signal their willingness to discuss a purchase – not only of New Orleans, but of the entire Louisiana Territory.

Jefferson, ever the western expansionist, jumps at the opportunity. On May 2, 1803, American Ambassador Livingston agrees to buy 827,000 square miles of land from France for \$15 million, or roughly 3 cents/acre.

The President sees the Louisiana Purchase as “land for the next twenty generations” of American farmers, the key to the agrarian ideal in his vision.

Napoleon shrugs off the deal as a momentary set-back. He will use the money to defeat the British and then re-visit America at a later date, if he decides to take it.

Jefferson’s Louisiana Purchase: Key Events

1697	Spain cedes Saint-Dominique to France
1756	The Seven Years War pits Britain vs. France/Spain
1762	France “unloads” Louisiana on Spain
1763	Treaty of Paris ends The Seven Years War, with Britain victorious
1781	America wins its war with Britain
1794	Jay’s Treaty with Britain: abandon forts for fur-trading rights
1780	Saint-Dominique slave plantations dominate sugar and coffee production
1791	Slave revolt leaves Toussaint Louverture in control of St. Dominique
1799	Napoleon assumes power in France as First Counsel
1800	Spain gives Louisiana back to France in secret Treaty of San Ildefonso
1801	America learns that France again owns Louisiana
	Ambassador Robert Livingston begins negotiations with Talleyrand
1802	In January LeClerc lands in San Dominique with 20,000 troops
	Toussaint is captured and sent back to a French prison to die
	Yellow fever decimates the French troops and kills LeClerc
1803	Monroe arrives with \$9 million to try to buy New Orleans
	Napoleon begins to plan invasion of Britain
	The US acquires the entire Louisiana territory for \$15 million
	Jefferson sends Lewis and Clark off to explore the new land
1804	Dessalines drives the French out and names himself Emperor
1805	Horatio Lord Nelson defeats a French invasion fleet at Trafalgar

Time: October 29, 1803

After Fiery Debate Congress Approves The Purchase

Ironically, in agreeing to buy Louisiana, Jefferson oversteps the limitations on Executive power he has tried so hard to impose in his Tenth Amendment and in the “Kentucky Resolutions” of 1798 where he calls for “nullification” of Adams’ Sedition Acts.

The result is a firestorm of opposition in Congress.

While the Senate is upset by Jefferson’s unilateral activities, it does ratify the Louisiana Treaty on October 20, 1803, some five months after the deal was agreed to in Paris.

The House is a different matter. It controls the nation’s purse strings, and is determined to demonstrate its prerogatives in this regard. It hurls a series of challenges Jefferson’s way.

Some question whether France even owns Louisiana, or whether it still belongs to Spain.

Others ask about the boundaries of the territory and the number of new states it might generate – only to find that precise answers are lacking.

Easterners are immediately concerned that opening this much new land will eventually erode their power in the Congress – and go so far as to suggest that such a deal actually violates the original Constitution 1787.

The debate also touches on the issue of slavery. The 1787 Northwest Ordinance and the 1790 Southwest Ordinance have assigned the Ohio River as the demarcation line for slavery, out to the Mississippi River. But what about the new land to the west of the Mississippi River – will it allow slavery or not?

Jefferson is surprised by the opposition to an acquisition that seems so obviously right to him. In response he ponders the need for a constitutional amendment to justify the deal, but soon dismisses the idea.

Finally, a House resolution to reject the Louisiana Purchase fails to pass by a slim majority of 59-57.

On October 29, 1803, the House passes an appropriations resolution giving Jefferson the go-ahead he wants.

Upon completion of the purchase, America now owns 56% of its eventual east to west coast land mass. The remainder is in the hands of Spain.

America’s Acquisition Of Land

Year	Land Gained	From	Via	Square Miles	% US
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1784	13 colonies to Miss R	Britain	War	888,811	29%
1803	Louisiana Territory	France	Buy	827,192	27