

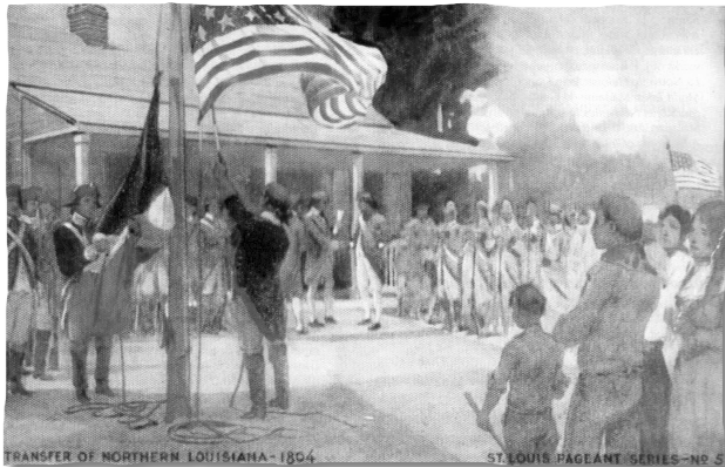
the Louisiana Purchase

The Purchase

Fourth
of a
Four
Part Series

In the Louisiana Purchase of April 1803, the United States bought a huge piece of land west of the Mississippi River, doubling the young country's size. More than just a political deal, the Louisiana Purchase suddenly changed the lives of all sorts of people.

Imagine that you and a close friend are **diplomats** who have been sent on a mission by President Thomas Jefferson. Your job is to **negotiate** with Napoleon, the Emperor of France, and buy some land. President Jefferson has asked you to make a **treaty** with Napoleon to buy the city of New Orleans for the United States. New Orleans is in the southern part of the Louisiana Territory. Napoleon offers to sell you the entire Louisiana Territory for only two cents an **acre!**



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You live in a time when there are no cars, no planes, no phones, and not even a telegraph machine. President Jefferson did not give you permission to buy the entire Louisiana Territory, and you are so far from home there is no way to ask him. But how can you pass up this great deal? What should you do?

This is the exact problem James Monroe and Robert Livingston had to solve. In 1803, President Jefferson sent them to negotiate with Napoleon for New Orleans. When they got home, Jefferson learned they had purchased the entire Louisiana Territory for only \$15,000,000! At this time, no one was sure if Monroe, Livingston or the President had the right to purchase land for the nation without asking permission from

Congress. Also, they didn't know exactly what they had purchased. During this time, maps were not exact. Borders weren't very clear and many people disagreed about who owned what.

Native Americans were the first people to live in the Louisiana Territory. Their ancestors had lived on the land for thousands of years. Spain had also once claimed the Louisiana Territory. Many Spanish residents living in the territory believed that it still belonged to Spain.

Many French residents believed the land belonged to France. Because there were no telephones, televisions or newspapers, a lot of people living in the territory didn't know about the Louisiana Purchase until nearly two years later!

Even though there was a lot of confusion about the Louisiana Purchase, the territory was officially **transferred** to the United States. This transfer occurred at two different times. The lower portion of the Louisiana Territory (the modern states of Louisiana and Arkansas) was transferred in December 1803. The upper portion was transferred on March 9-10, 1804 at the Three Flags Ceremony.

The Three Flags Ceremony was held in St. Louis on a spot where the Gateway Arch stands today. It was called the Three Flags Ceremony in honor of the three countries involved in the transfer: France, Spain and the United States. However, the ceremony did not honor Native Americans. They were not considered part of the involved nations.

Not far from the Three Flags Ceremony was a camp where Lewis & Clark waited to begin a long journey. President Jefferson had asked them to find an easy **route** to the Pacific Ocean. Jefferson hoped this route would help the United States find ways to trade with more people. Because of the Louisiana Purchase, Lewis

& Clark's exploration became much more important. They were setting off to explore the new lands of their country!

The Louisiana Purchase is a very important event in American history. The purchase doubled the size of the United States and created a place where more people of different cultures could trade and settle. This is why the United States is **commemorating** the **bicentennial** of the Louisiana Purchase in 2003 and 2004.



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