

# 200 YEARS IN THE MAKING

## 3 A New American Territory

The Louisiana Purchase more than doubled the size of the United States and gave the young nation control of the important Mississippi River. It also paved the way for the admission of Louisiana as the eighteenth state in the union.

### Guiding Questions

1. What international events made it possible for the United States to purchase the Louisiana Territory in 1803?
2. Why was the Louisiana Purchase important to the young United States?
3. What events in New Orleans surrounded the 1803 land transfers from Spain to France and from France to the United States?

### Napoleon Bonaparte

Louisiana's colonial period ended on December 20, 1803 when the French colonial prefect, Pierre Clément de Laussat, transferred the territory to representatives of the United States, William C. C. Claiborne and General James Wilkinson. A scarce twenty days before, Spain's officials, Governor Manuel de Salcedo and the Marqués de Casa Calvo, had transferred Louisiana to Laussat and the French. This seemingly sudden change in rule had been years in the making.

Napoleon Bonaparte, soon to be Emperor of France, had a vision for a renewed



*Right: Napoleon Crossing the Alps*  
Early 19th century  
Attributed to the Studio of Jacques-Louis David  
Louisiana State Museum

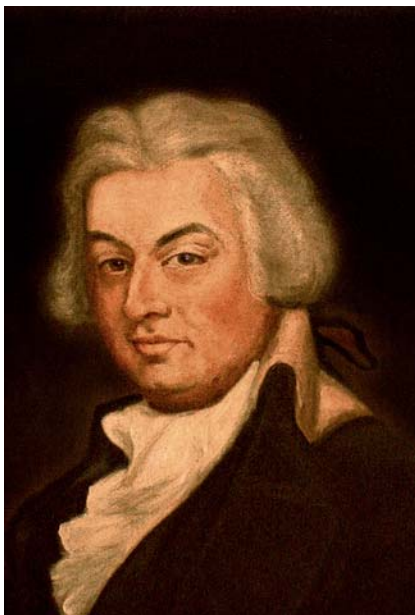


*Left: Hoisting American Colors, Louisiana Cession, 1803*  
Thure de Thulstrup  
c. 1903  
Courtesy of the Louisiana Historical Society

French colonial empire in the Americas that included Louisiana. Control over this vast territory would halt the westward expansion of the young United States and provide the sugar-producing

islands of the West Indies with needed supplies. To this end, Napoleon signed the 1801 secret Treaty of Ildefonso with Spain, an agreement that returned Louisiana to France.

Napoleon's plan for his American empire collapsed as a result of a twelve-year revolt, which was led by enslaved Africans and free people of color, in Saint-Domingue (Haiti). The revolutionaries defeated Napoleon's troops and forced them to return to France. This turn of events prevented French troops from reaching their ultimate destination,



*Left: Robert R. Livingston*  
Lucienne de St. Mart  
Louisiana State Museum

Louisiana. As Napoleon's New World empire disintegrated, the loss of Saint-Domingue made Louisiana unnecessary.

### **The United States**

The United States was interested in acquiring New Orleans because of its vital geographic location at the mouth of the Mississippi River. Many American settlers and merchants had already made their way to the region; many more shipped their farm goods and produce down the Mississippi River through the port of New Orleans and to ports along the eastern Atlantic coast and in Europe.

When President Thomas Jefferson discovered the transfer of Louisiana from Spain to France, he sent Robert Livingston to France to negotiate a purchase of New Orleans from Napoleon. Napoleon initially refused. This prompted Jefferson to send James Monroe to help close a deal. However, France's sudden need to dispose of Louisiana in the wake of the Saint-Domingue disaster and the United States' desire to obtain the port of New Orleans drew representatives of both governments to the bargaining table.

In April 1803, just days before Monroe was to arrive in Paris, Napoleon



offered to sell not only New Orleans, but all of Louisiana to the United States. Napoleon's minister of the treasury, the Marquis de Barbé-Marbois, dealt with Livingston and Monroe concerning the terms of the Louisiana Purchase. The United States purchased Louisiana for \$11,250,000 and assumed claims of its own citizens against France up to \$3,750,000 for a total purchase price of \$15 million. The treaty was translated from French to English, and the diplomats signed it on May 2, 1803 in Paris, although the documents were dated to April 30.

On November 30, 1803, Spain's representatives officially transferred Louisiana to France in the *Sala Capitular* (council meeting room) in the Cabildo. Although the French representative, Laussat, had been instructed to transfer Louisiana to the United States the next day, twenty days actually separated the transfers, during which time Laussat became governor of Louisiana and created a new town council.

Thomas Jefferson selected William Charles Cole Claiborne, governor of the Mississippi territory and highest-ranking civilian official in the vicinity, to govern lower Louisiana. Backing Claiborne with military power was General

James Wilkinson. On December 20, 1803, again in the *Sala Capitular*, these two commissioners signed the transfer document with Laussat, giving lower Louisiana to the United States. Three months later, a similar

transfer took place in St. Louis, when France handed over the rights to upper Louisiana to Captain Amos Stoddard, the U.S. representative.



Above: The Cabildo

The site of the Louisiana Purchase Transfer, the Cabildo was constructed in 1795-99 as the seat of the Spanish municipal government in New Orleans. The name of the governing body that met there was the "Illustrious Cabildo," or city council. <http://lsm.crt.state.la.us/cabex.htm>.

Right: The *Sala Capitular*

The *Sala Capitular* also functioned as a courtroom, first for the cabildo under Spanish rule (1799-1803), then the superior court in the territorial period (1803-1812), and later the Louisiana Supreme Court after the Civil War (1868-1910).



## PREFECT LAUSSAT DESCRIBES THE TRANSFER CEREMONIES



Above: Pierre Laussat  
Andres Molinary  
c. 1911  
Louisiana State Museum

### GPS VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP ACTIVITY

Visit the Place d'Armes (Jackson Square) in New Orleans, or enter the following coordinates at <http://maps.google.com> to explore a satellite image of the Place d'Armes: 29°57'25.93"N, 90°3'47.04"W

### FIELD TRIP ACTIVITY

Visit the Cabildo in New Orleans; walk through the *Sala Capitular* where the historic land transfers took place.

### FROM SPAIN TO FRANCE

At 11:45 on November 30, 1803, I set afoot for the City Hall [Cabildo], escorted by about sixty Frenchmen . . . We arrived at the Place [d'Armes]. . . . The commissioners of His Catholic Majesty came to meet me . . . Monsieur de Salcedo seated himself in the middle . . . I sat . . . on his right, the Monsieur the Marquis de Casa Calvo on his left. I presented my powers . . . . The Marquis declared in a loud voice that “the subjects who did not wish to remain under Spanish domination were from that moment completely freed of their oath of allegiance.” The governor handed me on a silver tray the keys to the forts St. Charles and St. Louis. We signed and affixed seals. We then arose and went out on . . . the balconies of the City Hall.

Pierre Clément de Laussat,  
*Memoirs of My Life*

### FROM FRANCE TO THE UNITED STATES

The commissioners, Messieurs Claiborne and Wilkinson, were received at the foot of the stairs of the City Hall . . . . I advanced toward them, midway down the length of the council room [*Sala Capitular*]. Claiborne seated himself in an armchair at my right, and Wilkinson in another at my left. I announced the purpose of the ceremony. . . . I ordered to be read: first, the treaty covering the cession; second, my powers; and third, the act covering the exchange of ratifications. I then declared that I transferred the country to the United States . . . . I handed the keys of the city, interlaced with tricolor ribbons, to Monsieur Wilkinson, and I immediately released from their oath of fidelity to France all those inhabitants who wished to remain under the domination of the United States.

Pierre Clément de Laussat,  
*Memoirs of My Life*

## TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE

On the island of Saint-Domingue, Toussaint L'Ouverture's resistance coupled with the loss of valuable French troops to an epidemic of yellow fever interfered with Napoleon's plans for empire. In 1793, L'Ouverture took charge of the poorly organized revolutionaries and shaped them into an efficient guerrilla force. In 1796, he became Saint-Domingue's governor general and began to rebuild his war-torn island.

Promulgating the Constitution of 1801, L'Ouverture officially established control over all of the island of Hispanola. Article 3 of the constitution states: "There cannot exist slaves [in Saint-Domingue], servitude is therein forever abolished. All men are born, live, and die free and French." In 1802, the French lured L'Ouverture to a meeting under the guise of discussing peace. Once there, French troops captured and transported him to France. He died ten months later in a French prison. Far from ending the revolution, the death of Toussaint L'Ouverture strengthened the resolve of the revolutionary leaders. Saint-Domingue (Haiti) formally renounced its colonial ties with France in January 1804 with the formation of the Republic of Haiti.

### ACTIVITY: TIMELINE

*GLEs– Grade Eight: 4, 62, 63, 71, 76; Grade Three: 46, 54; ELA Grade Eight: 9, 16, 18, 19.*

#### Overview

Students work in groups to develop a tri-level timeline of Louisiana history covering the period 1500-1800.

#### Directions

1. Timeline organization: The top level should focus on Louisiana history, the middle level should correlate with colonial/U.S. history, and the bottom level should correlate with significant events in world history. For the Louisiana section, have students include early French and Spanish explorers (e.g., Desoto, LaSalle, Iberville), colonial governors (e.g., Bienville, Cadillac, Ulloa, O'Reilly, de Galvez, Miro), important treaties (e.g., Fontainebleau, San Ildefonso), and other important events. Distribute copies of the timeline, page forty-two.
2. Have students annotate these entries to indicate how each individual or event shaped Louisiana history.
3. Have students describe possible cause/effect or push/pull factors between events in similar time periods and among the timelines (world, U.S., Louisiana) (e.g., French and Indian War ending in 1763 and the arrival of the first Acadians in the 1760's; Haitian uprising led by Toussaint L'Ouverture and Napoleon selling Louisiana to the United States).

#### Assessment

Ask students to choose a time period from the timeline and write a news article describing events that were occurring in Louisiana, the United States, and the world during that time period. A generic writing rubric is on provided on page 114.

### Tri-Level Louisiana History Timeline



# CHAIN REACTION GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Student Worksheet  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Directions

Prepare a tri-level timeline of Louisiana history from 1500 through 1800.

1. Timeline organization: The top level will focus on Louisiana history, the middle level will correlate with colonial/U.S. history, and the bottom level will correlate with significant items in world history. For the Louisiana section, include early French and Spanish explorers (e.g., Desoto, LaSalle, Iberville), colonial governors (e.g., Bienville, Cadillac, Ulloa, O'Reilly, de Galvez, Miro), treaties (e.g., Fontainebleau, San Ildefonso), and other important events.
2. Provide a brief description of each entry to indicate its significance in Louisiana history.
3. Describe the possible cause/effect or push/pull factors between events in similar time periods and among the timelines (world, U.S., Louisiana) (e.g., French and Indian War ending in 1763 and the arrival of the first Acadians in the 1760's; Haitian uprising led by Toussaint L'Ouverture and Napoleon selling Louisiana to the United States).

## Tri-Level Louisiana History Timeline

Louisiana History  
Level

1500

1800

U.S. and Colonial  
History Level

World History  
Level



## LESSON: LOUISIANA PURCHASE

GLEs– Grade Eight: 65, 73, 78;  
Grade Three: 53, 54

### Overview

Students complete a graphic organizer examining actions and reactions that may have influenced negotiations between the representatives of France and the United States.

### Directions

1. Make copies of the Chain Reaction graphic organizer, page forty-four, one per person or group.
2. Ask students to write a speech as a supporter of either the interests of Thomas Jefferson or Napoleon Bonaparte. The speech should be a defense of the choice made by either Jefferson or Napoleon regarding the Louisiana Purchase to someone who might be critical of the choice (e.g., Why would Jefferson want the United States to buy the property? Why would Napoleon be willing to sell?).
3. Explain that students should describe the importance of each action (listed on the chart below) to the development of Louisiana. Sample answers are provided below.

### Chain Reaction Graphic Organizer Sample Answers *Events Related to Louisiana Purchase*

ACTION	REACTION	
	Napoleon Bonaparte (France)	Thomas Jefferson (United States)
Increased use of New Orleans as a port of trade	<i>Potential for collecting and trading resources from North American interior</i>	<i>The continued use of New Orleans as a trading port for the western United States</i>
France regains possession of Louisiana		
Saint-Domingue Revolt		
War between France and England		

# CHAIN REACTION GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Student Worksheet  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Directions

Write a speech as a supporter of either the interests of Thomas Jefferson or Napoleon Bonaparte. Your speech should be a defense of the choice made by either Napoleon or Jefferson regarding the Louisiana Purchase. Write the speech as if you are speaking to someone who might be critical of the choice made (e.g., Why would Jefferson want the United States to buy the property? Why would Napoleon be willing to sell?). Use the graphic organizer shown below to gather ideas for your speech. Describe and explain the importance of each event in the development of Louisiana.

### Chain Reaction Graphic Organizer *Events Related to Louisiana Purchase*

ACTION	REACTION	
	Napoleon Bonaparte ( <i>France</i> )	Thomas Jefferson ( <i>United States</i> )
Increased use of New Orleans as a port of trade		
France regains possession of Louisiana		
Saint-Domingue Revolt		
War between France and England		