



## The Louisiana Purchase



In 1803, the United States bought the Louisiana Territory from France, which was in dire straits following their revolution. On the Lewis and Clark site, there is this map of the Louisiana Purchase.



As you can see, there was a great deal more of what is now the United States that was not settled. Look at Spanish Florida, New Spain, Oregon Country and British North America.

The North West had been the habitat of fur traders, mostly from the British Isles, for many years. Meanwhile, in the South, there was the desire to expel the Spanish from Florida. As American expansionism moved the boundaries further west and south, the British pushed back.



Greatness of the Port of New Orleans dates back to the Revolution when the Ohio River Valley was settled, and the settlers had no other way to market their produce then down the river to New Orleans – then a Spanish Port. First they came on rafts then flatboats, and, finally keelboats which could be poled back up the river. (Rafts and flatboats were broken up and the timber sold.) In the early years of this river traffic, tough American boatmen had many a argument

with Spanish troops of New Orleans. Here we see Governor Miro halting once such argument. Miro hoped to persuade Tennessee and Kentucky to secede from the United States and join Spanish Louisiana. Instead, the valleyfolks brought such pressure on President Thomas Jefferson that the Louisiana Purchase resulted. An indication of the volume of this early trade between the Americans and the Spaniards at New Orleans is the American dollar. Instead of basing it on the British pound, Alexander Hamilton modeled U.S. currency after the Spanish piece-of-eight. Our dollar mark (\$) is simply an 8 with another line stuck through it.



This most unprivate baths of baths took place April 7, 1803, in the Palace of the Tuileries in Paris. Napoleon has just told his brothers, Joseph (standing) and Lucien (seated) that he has decided to sell all of Louisiana to the Americans without consulting the French Assembly. As ambassador to Spain, Lucien has played a major role in getting Louisiana retroceded to France. Joseph was a member of the Assembly.

Both are aroused at this dictatorial action of Napoleon, probably his first imperial action as he would not be Emperor for another year. According to Lecien, who kept a diary of this meeting, Napoleon's butler swooned at the sight of these three great men in such a heated argument. Napoleon in his anger at his brother's opposition, nearly fell out of the tub, and splashed water all over Joseph.



Robert Livingston (seated) and James Monroe (standing) look on as Francosi Barbe-Marbois, the French Minister of the Treasury, signs his name to the right of theirs. France has accepted the offer of the United States to purchase some 900,000 square miles of North America for 4 cents an acre. The purchase treaty was signed April 30, 1803 the biggest real estate deal in history. Anxious for money to continue

his war on England, Napoleon was willing to sell for \$10,000,000 but Barbe-Marbois upped the price to \$15,000,000. Because the United States didn't have \$15,000,000 in 1803, Napoleon accepted bonds which he immediately discounted. In the end the amount of interest the United States paid, plus the cost of the Napoleon's discount, resulted in the bank getting \$900,000 more for Louisiana than Napoleon got. This scene in Barbe-Marbois' apartment in Paris is accurate in every detail, and the figures are posed after the stature by Karl Bitter

made in 1903, when the world's fair in St. Louis commemorated the centennial of the Louisiana Purchase. The statue is still to be seen in St. Louis. As shown here the Louisiana Purchase is being signed in Paris. It was then brought to the United States to be ratified. Upon being approved by the United States government, the document was then sent to New Orleans. On December 20, 1803, in the Cabildo, Pierre Laussat, representing France, signed the document and by doing so officially transferred the Louisiana Territory to General James Wilkinson and Governor W.C.C. Claiborne representing the United States.

*Pictures taken in the Musee Conti Wax Museum – 917 Conti St. in the French Quarters in New Orleans, Louisiana.*



The Cabildo, where the Spanish government turned over the Louisiana Purchase to the United States in 1803, was built in 1795 as the Spanish seat of government. Located on 701 Chartres St., at St. Ann Street on Jackson Square, New Orleans, Louisiana.



The Cabildo, more than any other landmark, symbolized Louisiana's early past.

Completed in 1799, the present structure occupies a site associated with New Orleans' first official buildings. The Cabildo's predecessors, along with those of St. Louis Cathedral and the Presbytere, existed to house the essential functions of a newborn colony. As it did when New Orleans was founded in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the trio of buildings overlooks Jackson Square, once the heart of the city known as the Place d'Armes.

Built to house the Illustrious Cabildo, or governing body of Spanish Colonial New Orleans, the landmark achieved its greatest claim to fame in 1803. On December 20 of that year the Louisiana Territory was transferred to the U.S. in the Cabildo's Sala Capitular, or counsel chamber.

The Sala Capitular was also once home to the Louisiana Supreme Court. It was in this room that several nationally significant decisions, among them Plessy vs. Ferguson and the Slaughterhouse Cases, were argued.

The flagship building of the State museum since 1911, the Cabildo now houses exhibits that trace Louisiana's history from European settlement through Reconstruction.



One of the museum's most famous artifacts is Napoleon's Death Mask. Cast from a mold made hours after the exiled emperor's death, the mask is one of only four in existence. It and other Napoleonic memorabilia surrounding you in the entry area to the second floor, symbolize the waning influence of France as Louisiana progressed from colonial to U.S. rule.

City authorities moved the death mask, along with their offices, from the Cabildo in 1853. During the tumult that accompanied the Civil War, the mask disappeared. A former city treasurer spotted the mask in 1866 as it was being hauled to the dump in a junk wagon.

Rather than return the mask to the city, the treasurer took the mask home and put it on display there. Eventually Napoleon's death mask wound up in the Atlanta home of Captain William Greene Raoul, president of the Mexican National Railroad.

Finally, in 1909, Napoleon's death mask made its way back to the Crescent City. Captain Raoul read a newspaper article about the missing mask and wrote to the mayor of its whereabouts. In exchange for suitable acknowledgement, Raoul agreed to donate the death mask to New Orleans. The mayor transferred the mask to the Louisiana State Museum that year.

The Louisiana Purchase, which doubled the land size of the United States, is nowhere more fittingly remembered than in the Sala Capitular, where finalization of this momentous transaction actually occurred. Because no artifacts of the occasion exist, the museum has re-created what the chamber might have looked like, reproducing furnishings based on a brief, surviving inventory and other research.

Documents and images also illustrate the Cabildo's legal legacy. Plessy vs. Ferguson and the Slaughterhouse Cases, post-Reconstruction decisions with far-reaching civil rights implications, are remembered in the very room wherein they were argued.

The state's entry into the Civil War is remembered in the Official Journal of the Convention of the State of Louisiana. This remarkable document chronicles actions that led to Louisiana being the sixth state to leave the Union.

Several artifacts, photographs and other items document the hardships experienced by those on both sides of the conflict. A surgeon's medical chest, filled with instruments for treating battlefield injuries, is displayed along with uniforms, weapons and equipment. A silver reliquary encasing the quill pen used to sign the Order of Emancipation passed by the Louisiana Free State Constitutional Convention in 1864, illustrates the evolution into Reconstruction.

The "experiment" of Reconstruction began after the Civil War and lasted until 1877. The "ordeal" as it was interpreted by most Louisianians was, however, instrumental in shaping presidential policy, influencing legislation and inspiring heated national debate. A ballot box, represents the right to vote by black males, and the c. 1870 carpetbag symbolized the much-maligned "carpetbaggers" of the era.



#### HOMER ALDOPH PLESSY (1862 – 1925)

On June 7, 1892, Homer Aldoph Plessy defied a Louisiana law that segregated railroad trains on the bases of race. He was arrested and became the defendant in the May 18, 1896 United States Supreme Court decision of Plessy vs. Ferguson. Which condoned "Separate but Equal" facilities in the United States. Sponsored by a New Orleans group called the 'Comite Des Citoyens,' Plessy civil disobedience marked one of the first legal challenges to the separations of races in the south following the reconstruction period. Though he lost the case in 1896. The court later upheld Plessy's fourteenth amendment arguments in 1954 in Brown vs. Board of Education. The Comite Des Citoyens included Louis Andre Martinet, attorney and publisher of the Crusader Newspaper,



who is entombed in St. Louis Cemetery II. Lead attorneys in the case were James Walker of New Orleans and the noted reconstruction author, Albion W. Tourgee of New York.

*Pictured is the tomb and the plaque of Homer Aldoph Plessy in the St. Louis Cemetery, I – 400 block of Basin St., French Quarter, New Orleans. This “City of the Dead” is the oldest extant cemetery in the city, it was founded in the late 1700’s. The cemetery features large tombs, monuments, and smaller, unmarked niches that resemble baker’s ovens.*



*People still leave gifts at the tomb of Marie Laveau, the Voodoo Queen. St. Louis Cemetery I.*



#### Orleans Battalion of Artillery

Within this burial memorial rests some of the gallant defenders of New Orleans. Members of the battalion which fought with honor on the plains of Chalmette on January 8, 1815 against the British invaders.

Date of construction is unknown restored in 1974. New Orleans Archdiocesan Cemeteries. St. Louis Cemetery I, New Orleans, Louisiana.

St. Louis Cemetery I, New Orleans, Louisiana.



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<http://ism.crt.state.la.us/cabildo/cab4.htm>

Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte had a vision of a renewed western empire for France, and his schemes included the recapture of Louisiana from Spain. Control over this vast territory would halt the westward expansion of the young United States and would supply French colonies in the West Indies with the goods they needed. In 1800, Napoleon signed the secret Treaty of Ildefonso with Spain, an agreement that stipulated that France would provide Spain with a kingdom for the son-in-law of Spain's king if Spain would return Louisiana to France. However, Napoleon's plan collapsed when the twelve-year revolt of slaves and free blacks in the French colony of Saint-Domingue succeeded, forcing French troops to return defeated to France and preventing them from reaching their ultimate destination--Louisiana--and from being able to defend it. As Napoleon's New World empire disintegrated, the loss of Haiti made Louisiana unnecessary.

The United States wanted to acquire the area near New Orleans primarily to guarantee its right to sail vessels down the Mississippi River through Spanish territory and unload goods at New Orleans for shipment to the Atlantic coast and Europe. Moreover, the United States wanted to possess the entire territory of Louisiana because so many American settlers and merchants were already in the region and because of its vital geographic position at the mouth of the Mississippi River.

The United States discovered the transfer of Louisiana from Spain to France and sent Robert Livingston to France in 1801 to try to purchase New Orleans. Napoleon initially refused, leading President Thomas Jefferson to send James Monroe to secure the deal. However, in April 1803, just days before Monroe was to arrive in Paris, Napoleon offered to sell the United States not only New Orleans but all of Louisiana. Napoleon's minister of the treasury, the Marquis de Barbé-Marbois, dealt with Livingston and Monroe over 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.

On November 30, 1803, Spain's representatives, Governor Manuel de Salcedo and the Marqués de Casa Calvo, officially transferred Louisiana to France's representative, Prefect Pierre Clément de Laussat, in the Sala Capitular in the Cabildo. Although 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, former 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 officially to the United States. The United States took formal possession of the full territory of Louisiana, although its boundaries were vaguely defined, in St. Louis three months later, when France handed over the rights to upper Louisiana.

Between April 10 and 15, 1825, the Marquis de Lafayette, a Frenchman who assisted the Americans with their war for independence and became a hero of the French Revolution, resided in the Cabildo during a visit to New Orleans. Lafayette stayed in the city as a part of his tour of the United States in 1824 and 1825.



*Impoverished by the French Revolution, Lafayette declined President Jefferson's offer to become the first governor of Louisiana, but he did accept money and lands from the United States Congress, due him as a Veteran of the American Revolution. Much of this land was in Louisiana. Indeed some 155 acres were in mid city New Orleans. So his visit to New Orleans was mostly for business, even tho the legislature voted \$15,000 to entertain him. It was at this time that Lafayette Square in New Orleans and Lafayette in southwestern Louisiana were renamed in his honor.*

Laborers converted the Sala Capitular into a lavish drawing room where Lafayette met various delegations during his stay, including a deputation of free men of color, "who, in 1815, courageously assisted in the defense of the city." The room was completely redecorated to fit its elegant purpose of hosting Lafayette and his visitors. New wall hangings and furniture were procured, and wallpaper, draperies, carpets, and chandeliers were installed for the five-day stay.

The Louisiana State Supreme Court met in the Sala Capitular from 1868 to 1910. During the course of its tenure here, the Supreme Court heard several important cases that in turn went on to the United States Supreme Court to become landmark cases in American history. Among these was Plessy v. Ferguson, which was first argued in 1892. The case tested legislation passed in Louisiana in 1890 that permitted separate railroad cars for whites and blacks.

In March 1892, Homer Adolph Plessy, a light-skinned New Orleans black man who was actively involved in the civil rights movement, purchased a ticket on the East Louisiana Railroad, sat in a whites-only coach, and refused to move. In the criminal suit that resulted, Judge John H. Ferguson upheld Louisiana's segregation law, and Plessy appealed the ruling to the Louisiana State Supreme

Court, housed in the Cabildo, which also ruled against Plessy, stating that his rights had not been violated. When the United States Supreme Court decided the case in 1896, they upheld the state's ruling in favor of Ferguson, thereby sanctioning the doctrine of "separate but equal" and legalizing segregation in the United States for more than the next fifty years.



Between 1834 and 1890, what collectively is called the Myra Clark Gaines Case went to the Louisiana Supreme Court five times and to the United States Supreme Court seventeen times, making the case the longest-running lawsuit in the history of the United States Supreme Court. One of the five lawsuits heard by the Louisiana Supreme Court was heard in the Sala Capitular. The cases arose over Myra Clark Gaines' claims to her father's estate, and although Clark won in the end, she expended the fortune that her second husband, General Edmund Pendleton Gaines, left her and died penniless in 1885, five years before the final lawsuit was decided in her favor.

### Purchase Power By Pamela Fettig

On July 4, 1803, citizens of the United States had more than their country's independence to celebrate – the government had announced that their country's size was going to practically double. With the signing of the Louisiana Purchase Treaty, a new Western world was ready for exploration and settlement, and many brave men and women, including Capt. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, faced the challenges of conquering the newly acquired territory of Louisiana.

In 1800 Spain had relinquished a large chunk of land in the New World – extending from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains and from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian border – to France. When President Thomas Jefferson found out about the secret exchange the following year, he became uneasy about the French controlling the Mississippi River, a waterway essential to trade and travel.

At that time, Napoleon Bonaparte, first consul of France, was leading his forces across Europe and quickly becoming a powerful dictator. Jefferson made the purchase of New Orleans a priority, appointing Robert R. Livingston, American ambassador to France, and James Monroe with the difficult job of securing the city and surrounding area for the United States.

Because Napoleon was in dire need of money to fund his military ventures, he countered the U.S. offer and proposed that the United States purchase the entire Louisiana Territory, which amounted to more than 800,000 square miles of land.

In April 1803, Livingston and Monroe agreed to a purchase price of \$15 million (or four cents an acre) even though the territory's boundaries were unclear. The Louisiana Purchase, as it became known, was ratified in the Senate six months later.

This year the nation will celebrate the bicentennial of the purchase with exhibits, concerts, films, reenactment, activities, and events. For more on the Louisiana Purchase, visit [www.louisianapurchase2003.com](http://www.louisianapurchase2003.com).



French Foreign Minister Charles Maurice de Talleyrand negotiated with U.s. delegates Robert R. Livingston and James Monroe on behalf of Napoleon. Photo by Bettmann/CORBIS