

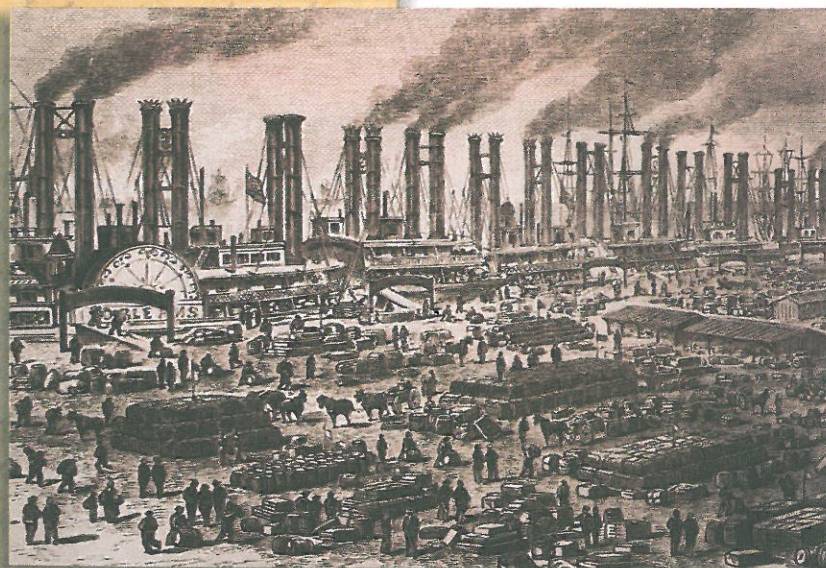
LEWIS AND CLARK EXPLORE THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE

New Orleans is, and has always been, a very important port. That is because it sits at the mouth of the Mississippi River. In the early days, farmers from all over the Midwest used the Mississippi and the rivers that connect to the Mississippi to ship their goods to New Orleans. At that great port, everything from flour and bacon to beeswax and bearskins was loaded onto ocean-going ships and sailed to markets in faraway places.

Farmers couldn't take their goods over land. The time it took could cause their produce to spoil. For many, their success or failure as farmers depended on the Mississippi River and the city of New Orleans.

The problem was, the United States did not own New Orleans. France owned it. In fact, France owned much of the rest of the country, from the Mississippi River just about to the Rocky Mountains. This entire region was

These steamboats are docked at the Port of New Orleans.



known as the Louisiana Territory. If France wanted, it could stop American ships from using the port in New Orleans. This had happened before, when Spain controlled the region. America couldn't let that happen. So, President Thomas Jefferson decided to try to buy the land from France.

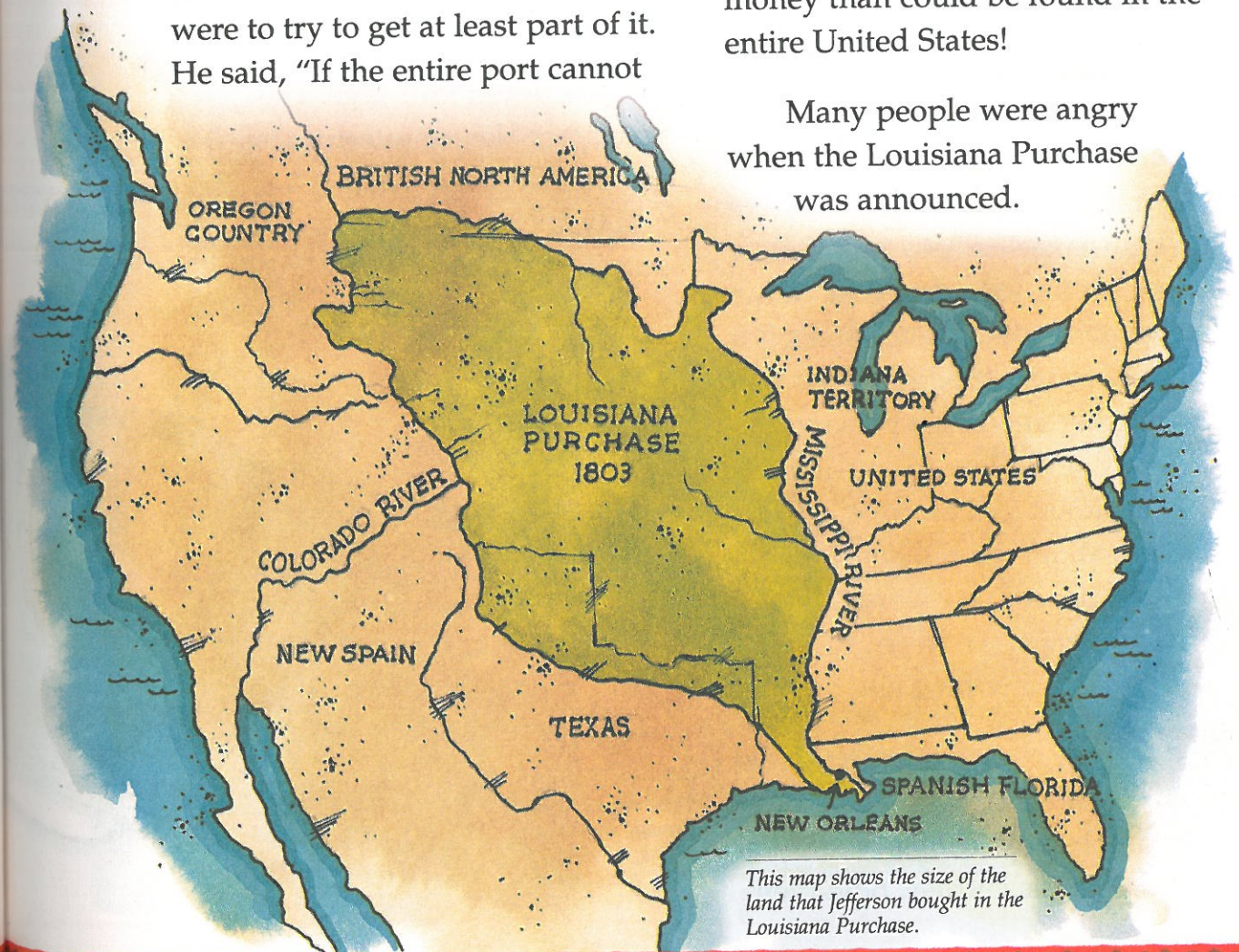
Jefferson Buys Louisiana

Thomas Jefferson did not think that the French would sell all of New Orleans. So, his instructions to the officials he sent to France were to try to get at least part of it. He said, "If the entire port cannot

be acquired [bought], try for a good riverbank site for a dock plus warehouses—along with some land at the very mouth of the river."

President Jefferson was in for a surprise. France needed money. France also wanted to keep Louisiana out of British hands. So, France offered to sell all the Louisiana Territory to the United States. The cost was \$15 million. Today, \$15 million sounds like a small price to pay. However, at that time, \$15 million was more money than could be found in the entire United States!

Many people were angry when the Louisiana Purchase was announced.



This map shows the size of the land that Jefferson bought in the Louisiana Purchase.

Some were upset about the \$15 million debt. Others felt the United States would now be too big to remain one nation.

Some thought, as president, Thomas Jefferson did not have the right to make the decision by himself. That was more like what a king would do.

In the end, though, the people accepted the purchase. On December 20, 1803, in a celebration in New Orleans, the area called Louisiana officially became part of the United States of America.

Lewis and Clark Prepare for an Adventure

No one—not the French and not the Americans—knew just how big the Louisiana Territory was. But, Thomas Jefferson wanted to know. He wanted to know everything about Louisiana. So, he asked Meriwether Lewis, his personal secretary, to explore the territory. The president told Meriwether to find out about the Indians, the animals, the soil, the stones, the birds, the bugs, the water, the weather, and anything else he saw on his trip.

Meriwether Lewis invited an old army buddy, William Clark, to join him on his journey. Both men

were very interested in nature. Plus, William could draw, so Meriwether would depend on him to sketch the new animals and plants they found. Together, history will always remember them as Lewis and Clark.

It took Meriwether Lewis and William Clark months to get ready for the trip west. They had to think long and hard about what to take on the journey. After all, they knew they would be gone for a couple of years. For example, they knew there would be no place in the wilderness to get bullets for their guns. So, they stored their gunpowder in lead kegs. The waterproof kegs protected the gunpowder. And, when a keg was empty, it could be melted down into lead bullets.

These notes and the drawing are examples of what Lewis and Clark wrote and drew during their trip.



Lewis and Clark also assembled a great group of men for the trip. Each of the 30-or-so men chosen brought special skills to the group. For example, one was a gunsmith, one a cook, one a carpenter, and one an expert fisherman. All brought enthusiasm to the party, because they all were excited to go with Lewis and Clark. "I am so happy as to be one of them picked men," one man wrote home.

A Two-Year Journey

On May 14, 1804, Lewis, Clark, and the rest of the men set out from St. Louis. A large flat-bottomed boat, almost 60 feet long,

held most of the men and supplies. Two dugout canoes accompanied the big boat. Together the big and little boats began a long voyage of discovery. The first leg took them up the Missouri River.

By October, the men had reached the home of the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, in present-day North Dakota. The Indians were kind and helpful. So, the explorers decided to spend the winter there. The settlement they built was called Fort Mandan.

During the winter at Fort Mandan, the Lewis and Clark party was joined by a trader and his wife. The trader's name was Toussaint Charbonneau (too SAN shar buhn OH). He was French Canadian. His wife was a Shoshone (shoh SHOH nee) Indian. Her name was Sacagewea (sak uh juh WEE uh).

Sacagewea's people lived in the Rocky Mountains. As a child, she had been kidnapped and brought to the country of the Mandan. Eventually, Toussaint Charbonneau bought her. Now, with her



Sacagewea and her baby boy are shown on this coin.

husband, she would help Lewis and Clark communicate with the many different Indian groups through whose lands they would travel. On her back, Sacagewea carried her baby boy, Baptiste, who was born that winter.

When spring came, it was time for the party to move on. Soon they faced the Rocky Mountains, where no large boats could sail. So, they sent their large boat back down the Missouri, home to St. Louis. The boat carried reports about what Lewis and Clark had seen and studied. It also carried samples and artifacts—such as the skins of unknown animals and specimens of unknown plants. These things were delivered to the White House, since there was no museum to house them yet.

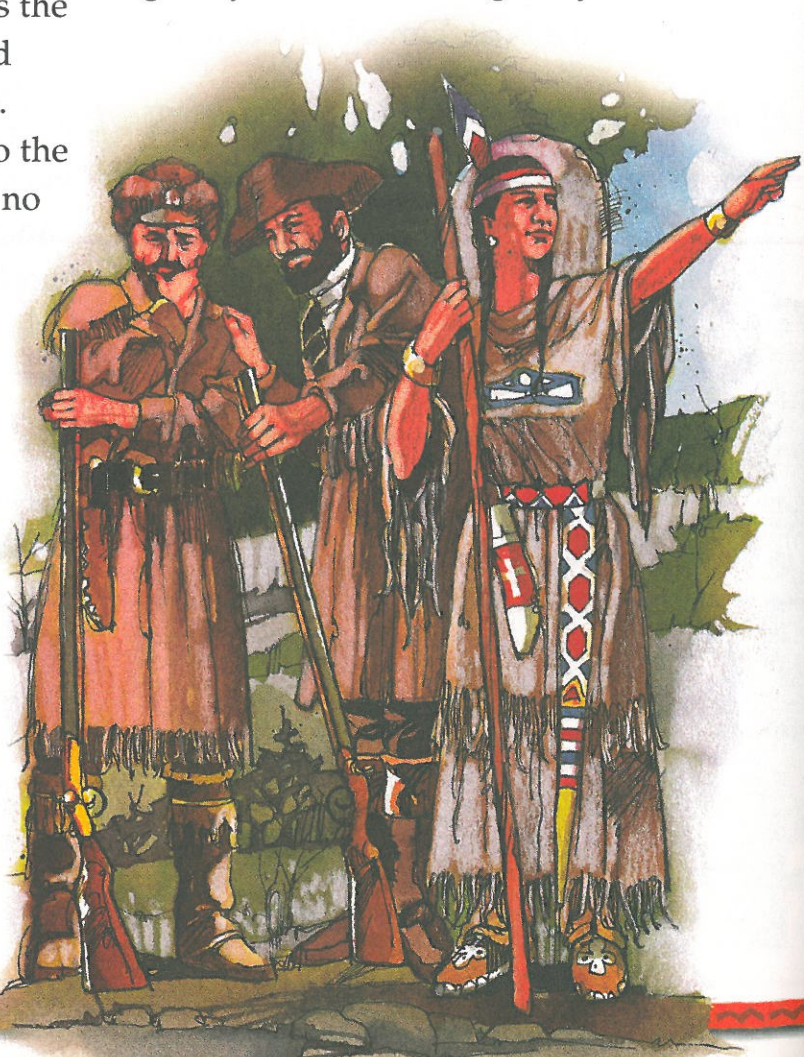
The group moved west, always gathering information and samples and mapping the unknown land. Finally, in November 1805, a year and a half after their journey had begun, Lewis and Clark reached the Pacific Ocean.

Sacagewea worked as a guide for Lewis and Clark.

For the first time, the people of the United States had some idea of what they had gained when the Louisiana Territory was added to the nation.

Lewis and Clark and Bears (Oh My!)

Grizzly bears were among the many new kinds of animals that impressed Lewis and Clark. They described the grizzly as a “furious and formidable animal” that “will frequently pursue the hunter when wounded.” In fact, Lewis and Clark were so impressed with grizzly bears that two grizzly cubs



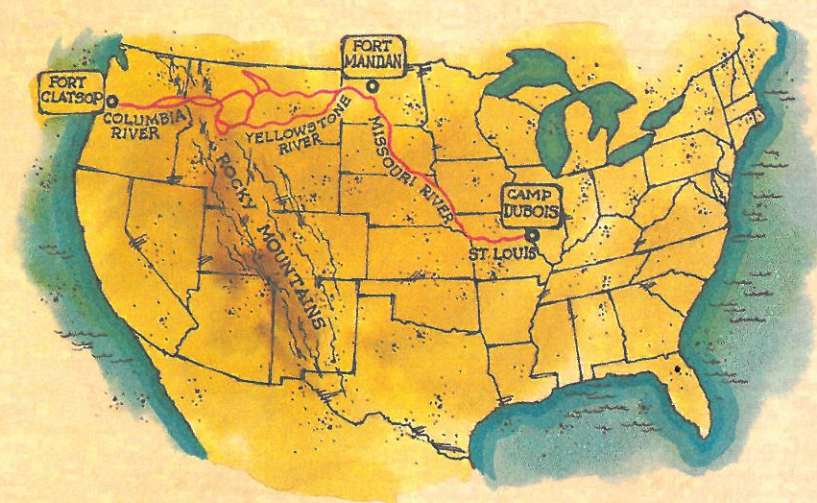
were among the hundreds of plants and animals they brought back for President Jefferson.

Meriwether wrote about one especially scary grizzly encounter. He said that six hunters had gone after one grizzly bear. They all shot at it. But the bullets only made the bear angry. It chased after the

hunters, who tried to run and reload their guns at the same time. Two of the men jumped off a 20-foot cliff into a river. But, the bear jumped off after them! More shots finally killed the bear. It took eight bullets in all to bring the bear down.

Show What You Know

Here is the route followed by Lewis and Clark on their way through the Louisiana Territory. On the map, write a 1 at the spot described in the first sentence below. Write a 2 by the place described in the second sentence. And write a 3 by the place described in the third sentence.



In the middle of May 1804, Lewis and Clark started their journey by boarding boats in St. Louis and sailing north up the Missouri River.

In the fall of 1804, they reached a place about 150 miles east of where the Missouri and the Yellowstone rivers meet. They built Fort Mandan and settled in for the winter.

In November 1805, Lewis and Clark were full of joy as they finally looked out at the Pacific Ocean.