

**Ralph Lewis** was born in 1909, and obtained degrees in biology and entomology from the University of Rochester, New York. In 1935 he came to work for the National Park Service (NPS) as an assistant curator. He helped plan several park museums and the museum in the Department of the Interior Building in Washington, D.C. He served in a year-long Rockefeller internship at the Buffalo Museum of Science (1937-38), and worked as a historian (interpreter) at Jefferson National Expansion Memorial from 1941 to 1946. He became assistant chief of the NPS Museum Branch in 1946, and served as chief of the Museum Branch from 1954-1964. After the reorganization of the Museum Branch, Lewis was chief of the Branch of Museum Operations (1964-1971). After his retirement, Ralph Lewis wrote the NPS Manual for Museums published in 1976 and produced collection management plans for seven parks. His book entitled *Museum Curatorship in the National Park Service, 1904-1982*, was published in 1993. The following series of four papers were delivered at Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in March 1946, not at the 2002 symposium. In this edited version they remain an accurate and entertaining summation of the sequence of events which resulted in the Louisiana Purchase and its aftermath, and a good introduction to the papers presented at the symposium.

### **THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE, Part I – Louisiana, Pawn of Empire**

By the acquisition of Louisiana the United States not only doubled its area, which in itself would be a great accomplishment; but it opened the way for its eventual expansion to the Pacific and consequent rise to the status of a major world power. Furthermore, thanks to a peace-loving president, Louisiana was obtained without fighting some other nation for it.

The full story of the Louisiana Purchase is a complex but intensely interesting one. The purchase of Louisiana by the United States ought to be considered in the light of the importance which the various countries involved placed on the province. Louisiana started out as a dream in the mind of Robert Cavalier Sieur de LaSalle, and he gave his life in trying to make the dream come true. In the early spring of 1682 LaSalle and his companions descended the Mississippi River by canoe and eventually reached the delta at the mouth of the river. There LaSalle enacted a solemn pageant. A stout post was cut and set in the ground. On this post hung the fleur de lis, and LaSalle ceremoniously laid claim to the valley of the Mississippi in the name of the Sun King, Louis XIV of France. In his honor the territory was named "Louisiana."

The territory of Louisiana as LaSalle annexed it to France extended from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico and from the Appalachians to the Rockies. It even included a sizable portion of Florida. Having claimed it, LaSalle's next concern was, of course, to make good the claim by establishing a colony there. He

worked his way back up the river to Canada, took ship to France, and at Paris succeeded in getting support for his projected colony. The expedition sailed from France in 1684, but missed the mouth of the Mississippi, and LaSalle and his followers were finally put ashore on the Texas coast in the vicinity of Matagorda Bay. After nearly three years of struggle to gain a secure foothold, LaSalle set out overland for Canada and was murdered en route by a discouraged follower.

Louis XIV was sincerely interested in the development of Louisiana, but war absorbed the energies and money of France. During most of the 1690s England and France were engaged in what is called in American history "King William's War". A leading episode was the destruction of the British posts on Hudson's Bay, where the Hudson's Bay Company was establishing its fur trading operations. The leader of the French expedition to Hudson's Bay was Pierre Lemoyne, Sieur D'Iverville. He was a member of one of the leading families of Canada, his father holding one of the semi-feudal baronies near Montreal. Charles Lemoyne had eleven sons, of whom D'Iverville was the third. In 1699, the year in which the seminary priests founded the Mission of the Holy Family to the Tamaroa Indians at what is now Cahokia, Illinois, D'Iverville took the next step toward realizing LaSalle's dream. He sailed into the Gulf of Mexico and founded a little colony in Louisiana. It was Fort Maurepas on Biloxi Bay, and it was the first French settlement in the domain that LaSalle had claimed. Nineteen years later, in 1718, D'Iverville's younger brother, Bienville, ninth son of Charles Lemoyne, founded a post on the Mississippi and named it New Orleans. In 1722 New Orleans became the capital of Louisiana.

Wars still raged in Europe. In 1700 Louis XIV's grandson accepted the throne of Spain, which placed two great nations in control of the Bourbon family. This threatened the balance of power and England, Holland and the Hapsburgs of the Holy Roman Empire allied themselves to fight the War of the Spanish Succession. It was a long war and the royal treasury of France had no spare funds for the development of Louisiana. In 1712, therefore, the exclusive privilege of exploiting the territory was granted to an enterprising man, Antoine Crozat. Crozat had ideas of quick wealth and spent his capital in a fruitless search for mines and other rich resources. Thus after five years he was forced to give up his charter with little accomplished. It is interesting to note that the man who governed Louisiana for Crozat was another of the well-known leaders of New France, named Cadillac.

When Crozat gave up his rights, Louisiana was turned over to the Western Company, a colonial trading organization in Paris. A leader of this enterprise was a respected Scottish banker and financier, John Law. The Western Company had great plans for the territory. It absorbed several other companies to become the "Company of the Indies." It sent Philip Renault with 200 miners and 500 slaves to work the Missouri mines. French investors were eager to purchase stock in the company and prices soared. There followed a period of wild speculation that

ended in 1720, when the company failed. John Law lost his reputation as a financier and many Frenchmen lost their life savings. This was called the “Mississippi Bubble.” The company continued to administer Louisiana until 1731, when a bad harvest and an Indian war exhausted their meager resources. For the next thirty years Louisiana was under royal control. Although there was little money to invest in the colony, a string of forts was constructed connecting it with Canada as a barrier to the English. Fort de Chartres in the Illinois Country was rebuilt and the little settlements of Kaskaskia, Ste. Genevieve, St. Philip and Cahokia were a remote, but integral part of the colony.

By this time the long colonial rivalry of France and England was again coming to a head. In 1754 the French and Indian War burst out – the American segment of the great Seven Years War. In America this bitter struggle reached its climax in September 1759, when on a dark night a thirty-two year old British general led his troops up a narrow ravine and formed them at daybreak on the Plains of Abraham before the citadel of Quebec. Wolfe formed his men only two deep and led them against the battalions of the French, massed six deep before the city. As you know, Quebec fell, along with both Wolfe and Montcalm, the young French commander. The next year Montreal surrendered and Canada was in English hands. Such colonial victories made England willing to listen to peace proposals.

Our scene now shifts to Europe, and from battlefields to conference tables. In 1761, although the war was still in progress, France and England began negotiating for peace. The fate of Louisiana was one of the things which hung in the balance. The great continental empires of Canada and Louisiana were rather less interesting to the great powers than the little fever-ridden sugar islands of the West Indies. At first, it seemed that England would give both Canada and Louisiana back to France in return for Caribbean islands. When it became evident that the British would demand Canada, France still hoped to retain Louisiana. A plan was discussed to move the French-Canadians out of Canada in order to populate Louisiana. France proposed to draw a new eastern boundary for Louisiana. It would extend from the Perdido River (east of Mobile) north to the west end of Lake Erie and on north to the vicinity of Hudson's Bay. The canny French saw they could well afford to give up Canada if they could divert the fur trade down the Mississippi. Unfortunately for that scheme, the English knew the value of the fur trade also. Finally, in order to keep the little island of St. Lucia, near Guadeloupe and Martinique, France offered England all of Louisiana east of the Mississippi.

All, that is, except the Isle of Orleans. The Isle of Orleans is an area of about 2,800 square miles lying between the Mississippi and Lake Maurepas and Pontchartrain. On that so-called island stands the city of New Orleans. France kept that small segment east of the river by some close bargaining, which one might say stretched the truth a little. The English demanded free navigation of the Mississippi, so the French assured them that the lakes bordering the Isle of

Orleans constituted a navigable mouth of the Mississippi. To be sure they are connected with the Mississippi by bayous, but the route was hardly navigable.

The peace negotiations about which we have been talking were in progress during 1761 and 1762, before the war was over. While France was dealing with England on the one hand, she was dickering with Spain in a very different light on the other. In 1761 the two Bourbon cousins, Louis XV of France and Charles III of Spain, secretly renewed the family compact of mutual assistance. They agreed that if England did not accede to reasonable terms, Spain would join the war in the hope that by a combined sudden onslaught they could turn the tables. The day after New Years, 1762, Spain declared war on England. It turned out to be an unhappy solution, for a few months later Havana – key to Spain's New World empire – fell to the British. Until the news reached Madrid, Spain hampered the French efforts to make peace. But after that, the Spanish were more than ready. Havana had to be bought back at any price. The price was Florida, which Spain ceded to England.

This unexpected outcome placed France in a rather delicate position. Spain, her friend, had come to her rescue and lost a valuable possession in consequence. There were three things to be done – Spain should be compensated for the loss of Florida, she should be kept in line for the next war with England, and she should be induced to make peace at once before any more was lost. To accomplish all three objectives France gave Spain all that was left of Louisiana, that is, the Isle of Orleans and all the territory west of the Mississippi. At first Spain was inclined to look a gift horse in the mouth. Probably France didn't think much of this territory she was giving away. On second thought, however, the Spanish could see the advantages and accepted. That was in 1762, and the following year the treaty of peace with England was signed giving up the eastern half of LaSalle's Louisiana.

For nearly forty years what was left of Louisiana remained a Spanish possession. The business of taking over the administration from France was a long process. Inquiries, studies and plans all had to be made. The official notice to the French governor at New Orleans that Louisiana had been given to Spain was not sent from Paris until the spring of 1764 (at which time the first buildings of St. Louis were being constructed on what the workers believed was French soil), and the news was not published in New Orleans until October 1764. A Spanish governor finally arrived at New Orleans in 1766, but the French garrison that was supposed to carry out his orders refused to serve under him, and when in 1768 he proclaimed major commercial restrictions, the inhabitants of the city revolted and threw him out. The next year a new Spanish governor arrived. He was backed by troops and his name was Alexander O'Reilly. With Irish vigor he established the Spanish administration of the colony and executed the ringleaders of the revolt. The same year a lieutenant governor was sent up to St. Louis to look after the upper part of the territory. Under Spain Louisiana had a fairly prosperous existence. Trade and population increased. New Orleans, in

particular, grew in importance, for it was discovered that sugar cane could be grown in the vicinity with profit.

To understand the next step we must again look at affairs in Europe. Late in the American Revolution Spain had joined France in the war to support the colonists against England. In consequence she had won back Florida. Then the picture changed. The French Revolution disposed of Louis and of the family ties with Spain. In fact, the two countries soon were at war with each other. The revolutionary government of France conceived a strong desire to get Louisiana back from Spain. It could see both political and commercial advantages. With a firm foothold in North America France would have greater influence on the United States, whose rapid growth in population and seeming friendship for England were causing concern. The commerce of Louisiana was likely to be profitable and in addition the colony could supply the needs of the French West Indies much more readily than could be done from France. The first means employed to get back Louisiana was rather direct. The French minister to the United States, Citizen Genet, was to encourage the elements in America opposed to Spanish colonization to organize an expedition and seize New Orleans. Genet found numerous westerners interested in his scheme, and George Rogers Clark, neglected hero of the Revolution, became deeply involved. When the United States discovered the bald attempt to violate its neutral status, Citizen Genet was asked to leave and the plan collapsed. The second means undertaken to acquire Louisiana was more diplomatic. Spain was asked to give it back in return for something else. For years, offer after offer was made. France would see that England gave back Gibraltar (which she could not guarantee); that England would permit Spain on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland (which also was beyond her ability to deliver); that Portugal would give Spain some of Brazil (which Portugal declined to do), or that the Duke of Parma would be given a handsome concession in Italy. Spain listened to all of these offers and never said a final "no". Neither did Spain say "yes", although at one point a treaty was actually signed. Spain suspiciously refused to let go of Louisiana until France fulfilled her half of the bargain, which was out of the question just then.

Italy at the close of the 18th century was not a nation. It was a peninsula containing numerous small independent nations. The Duke of Parma, brother of the queen of Spain, desired to rule at least one of these small countries in addition to his duchy. France had some voice in the affairs of the peninsula at this time because its armies were there fighting the Austrians. The French armies were commanded by a young general named Napoleon and were meeting with considerable success. This was the general state of affairs when Napoleon came into power as First Consul of the French Republic in 1799. It was Napoleon's ardent desire to rebuild the colonial empire that France lost in the long wars with England. The first step would be to get Louisiana back from Spain. Again the negotiations were pushed, this time with a firmer hand. On October 1, 1800 the Treaty of San Ildefonso was signed. According to this treaty, Spain would give

Louisiana back to France six months after the Duke of Parma should be in possession of an undefined kingdom in Italy. Spain also gave Napoleon six warships as part of the bargain. Spain was well pleased by the deal. The queen was happy over her brother's kingdom and Spain was rid of a colony that cost her several hundred thousand dollars a year more than was gained from it and that was a source of trouble with the Americans. Now France would provide the barrier needed to keep the English and Americans away from Mexico, and France would pay the bill for it too.

Now, on paper, Louisiana again belonged to France. It was a secret, of course, and Spain refused to sign the papers authorizing the transfer until the Italian situation was cleared up. By the next spring Napoleon had crossed the Alps and led his armies to a thorough victory over Austria and in the ensuing peace Tuscany was secured for the Duke of Parma. By this time, however, Bonaparte had taken a strong dislike to the Duke. Instead of giving Tuscany to him, it was arranged to give it and a neighboring territory to the Duke's son. It was called the Kingdom of Etruria and the young Prince of Parma was established on its throne. Spain still withheld Louisiana, however, because England had not yet recognized Etruria and French troops were still in occupation. These troops were eating up the profits that were to make Parma rich when Spain finally signed the last papers necessary to allow France to take over Louisiana. That was in the fall of 1802, over two years after the formal retrocession. Napoleon took immediate steps to occupy the colony. It should be added that Etruria was still not in the clear when Napoleon made another promise that was not going to be kept. His ambassador stated to the Spanish foreign minister, "I am authorized to declare to you in the name of the First Consul that France will never alienate it." A few months later, as we shall see, France turned about and sold Louisiana to someone else.

### **LOUISIANA PURCHASE, Part II –Trouble on the Mississippi**

The United States took its first census in 1790 and by then at least 110,000 people lived beyond the Alleghenies. Ten years later this number had more than tripled – there were over 385,000 westerners to be reckoned with. These westerners were a serious problem to two governments - the United States and Spain. The manifold worries of the young American government were complicated by the fact that the economic interests of the seaboard merchants and the western farmers often were on the opposite sides of a question. At least until Thomas Jefferson organized his political party, the people of the West did not feel very strongly attached to their nation. There were schemes for setting up a second independent country west of the mountains, and schemes for separating from the United States to join the Spanish possessions. Such proposals found many listeners, and tended to keep relations between the East and West in continual strain.

At the same time Spain also found cause for worry. It will be recalled that Spain held all of Louisiana west of the Mississippi plus the Isle of Orleans containing the colonial capital of New Orleans. As a result of Spain's intervention during the American Revolution she had won back the Floridas, which included much of present Alabama and Mississippi. By the 1790s Spain viewed with alarm the swarms of aggressive Americans who were moving across the Appalachians nearer and nearer to Spanish territory. Two types of countermeasures were tried. Through a system of alliances backed by liberal gifts, the colonial governor at New Orleans endeavored to forge a buffer state of Indian tribes hostile to the Americans. Since the Americans and the Indians of the Southeast were enemies of long standing, this was not too difficult. Forts were built in the Indiana country, commercial treaties were negotiated and Governor Carondelet even dreamed of organizing the 13,000 warriors into an army that would drive the Americans back across the mountains. The other means practiced by the Spanish was to sow dissension among the Americans. Many of the plots to separate the West from the United States were instigated by the Spanish officials, and numerous leading men of the western settlements had Spanish money in their pockets, paid to them for what bordered on fifth column activities. It was apparent that Spain realized the danger to Louisiana from the Americans.

In order to appreciate the reasons why Jefferson was concerned over the ownership of Louisiana, we must define more carefully American interest in the territory. By the 1790s Americans by the thousands were crossing the mountains and building their homes along the Ohio River and its tributaries. For the most part these men were farmers. Since they grew their own food in large measure, they were remarkably self-sufficient. They did not depend on other sections in order to live. On the other hand, their only hope of rising above the subsistence level or getting ahead in the world was to produce more than they needed at home and sell the surplus. They could produce salable goods in considerable quantities – flour, meat, tobacco, and cotton in particular. The great problem was to find a market. The nearest market, of course, was the eastern seaboard where Philadelphia, Baltimore and other centers of population needed Agricultural products. Between them and the cities, however, lay the Appalachian Mountains. As you know, the Appalachians are not high, but they are wide and rugged. There was ridge after ridge after ridge; the mountain belt was in places over 100 miles wide; there were almost no roads and only a few trails wide enough for packhorses. The westerners could, and did, drive herds of cattle and hogs over the mountains, transporting their surplus meat on the hoof. If their surplus grain were distilled and converted into whiskey, it was possible to carry that over the mountains at a small profit. With these exceptions the mountains were a very effective barrier between the westerners and their markets. When you pay freight rates of over \$100 per ton, there is little to be gained in transporting bulky agricultural produce.

Although the way to the East was barred to commerce, there was a natural outlet

for western crops. They could be floated down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to the sea. It was entirely practical for a farmer or small merchant to cut down a few trees, hew and saw out planks, and construct a simple flatboat. The flatboat, which cost little, could be loaded with several hundred barrels of flour, or salt meat, hogsheads of tobacco or bales of cotton. Then the farmer or merchant, with roughly four helpers, would let the flatboat drift with the current down the river. The total cost of the trip was roughly \$100 for the boat, \$200 for the wages and \$50 for provisions. Upon reaching New Orleans the cargo would be sold to merchants or ship agents who would transfer the goods to sailing ships and carry them to New York, Philadelphia, or Baltimore, or the West Indies; or even to Europe. Since the flatboat was useless for an upstream trip, it was sold for lumber (about \$5 worth), and the crew walked back to Nashville, or Marietta, or whatever was their starting point by way of the Natchez Trace. The trip down the river and back overland was cheap, but it was scarcely easy. On the way there was the danger of accident on the uncharted river, and the flatboats were of pretty flimsy construction. There were river pirates going down and land pirates coming back, who robbed and murdered without scruple. As you might imagine, it took tough men to carry on this trade. There are many stories of the flatboatmen. One would jump into the air, crack his heels together, flap his arms and crow like a rooster. Then he would proclaim his toughness and challenge any comer to a fight. If his challenge was accepted, the brawl might well end with ears or noses bitten off, an eye gouged out, or similar niceties.

The hope of economic progress in the West thus lay in the navigation of the Mississippi River. There was one grave flaw in the picture. The mouth of the Mississippi did not belong to the United States. From just below Natchez to the sea both banks of the river were Spanish. That meant that the goods of the westerners had to pass through a foreign port, and import and export duties cut deeply into their prospects of profit. With the population and production of the West growing rapidly, farsighted Americans on both sides of the mountains could say with Thomas Jefferson that the possessor of New Orleans was our “natural and habitual enemy . . . “

The Spanish authorities disliked and feared the westerners. There were frequent clashes of interest between the two countries over boundaries, the Indians, and particularly trade on the Mississippi. In 1795 the situation improved greatly when Thomas Pinckney succeeded in negotiating a favorable treaty with Spain. The boundary of Florida was settled to the temporary satisfaction of the U.S., eastern shippers obtained desirable concessions, but of prime interest was the agreement on the Mississippi question. Under the Pinckney Treaty Spain acknowledged the right of Americans to the free navigation of the river. In other words, American vessels could pass between American territory and the sea without hindrance from Spain. Furthermore, Spain granted the right of deposit at New Orleans. The nature of the American export trade made this provision of first importance. Westerners descending the river in their flatboats could enjoy the free use of the

river only if an American ship willing to buy their produce happened to be waiting at New Orleans. The boats were too frail to be tied up at the riverbank and wait until a ship appeared. Frequently they sank under those circumstances. Of course, the goods could be sold to New Orleans merchants, but that was importing, and involved high duties. What Spain granted in the right of deposit was the privilege of landing the flatboat cargoes at New Orleans, storing them in warehouses until a ship arrived and purchased them, and then transferring them to the ship. No duties were charged and the only fee was warehouse rent. The treaty guaranteed the right of deposit at New Orleans for at least three years, after which, if it were terminated there, another point would be designated. The westerners were delighted and trade down the river swelled in volume. At the end of three years the right of deposit was not terminated, and by 1802 over 500 flatboats were descending the river annually carrying over a million dollars worth of produce.

Conditions under Pinckney's Treaty were so favorable that many Americans were willing to let the ownership of New Orleans remain as it was. Spain was no longer a major world power and Jefferson, among others, felt that as long as Spain held the city the United States could bide its time. The West was growing stronger and when the time was ripe, New Orleans could be picked without difficulty. The principal cause of concern was the rumor that Spain might give Louisiana back to France. Negotiations were in progress between the two countries and the secret was leaking out. While Spain was weak and declining still more, France was the dominant world power – a very different neighbor to have at the back door of the West. American diplomats in Europe were working on the problem, but progress was slow and there seemed little urgency about it.

Then, on October 18, 1802, the Spanish Intendant at New Orleans issued a proclamation canceling the American right of deposit at that city. He pointed out that the treaty called for the right of deposit to last three years; the three years were long since up. Europe was at last at peace, and he consequently closed the port until the King at Madrid should order it opened. The proclamation was a bombshell. Western trade was based on the free deposit at New Orleans and the economic well being of hundreds of thousands of people depended on it. On the afternoon of October 18 two American flatboats reached the city and tied up, as usual, at the muddy batture just above the town. Imagine the surprise and anger when they were forbidden to land. Recalling the proverbial toughness of the men who handled the flatboats, you can guess that the official who forbade their landing did not go unguarded. The news of the closure swept back up the river and created a storm of controversy. Demands for action were made, of which this letter published in the Kentucky Gazette is a good example:

The reptile Spaniards act in a most hostile manner towards our citizens and commerce. With degrading remarks that the people of the United States have no national character – that they are divided, weak, quarrelsome people, without

energy – and that they have nothing to fear from them. Such language is too insulting.

To give you a further view of our aggrieved situation, I will only state that a few days since a parcel of cotton arrived at New Orleans, the bales being so damaged that it was necessary to have them repacked before shipped. They were landed by paying 6 per cent duty, and cannot be re-shipped on board an American vessel, but must on re-shipment pay 6 per cent more as Spanish produce on board a Spanish bottom. This rule will hold good in all instances where a landing is made in any case. I trust 700,000 persons will not wait for Mr. Jefferson to go through all the forms, ceremonies and etiquette of the courts of Spain and Bonaparte, before they determine whether it will be best to drive the miscreants from their waters or not. I say start and drive them with the spring flood and then negotiate. We can now get the whole province without the loss of one drop of blood, and let the French get there 'twill be otherwise.

P.S. I have it in my power to state that the fortifications at New Orleans are in no sort of repair, and that there are no effective troops in the province. The town duty is now done by the militia, and that from one end of the province to the other they are almost in a state of revolt. In my humble opinion three thousand Kentucky militia could put the U.S. in possession of the fairest country in the universe, without the shedding of one man's blood. Good God! can all western America be dead to their true interests, and will they pass over the present favorable moment to possess themselves of advantages that will never have an end, or will they blindly allow themselves to come under the French yoke of tyranny? How is it that the pens of thousands lie dormant on this most alarming occasion? That which is and will be death to western America if allowed, and life if speedily stopped. Let me beseech all those who subsist on the branches of the Mississippi to arm and defend their dearest rights and national privileges.

The westerners were angry and demanded action from the government or they would take matters in their own hands. Jefferson's political enemies jumped in to egg on the warmongers. Thus the Intendant's proclamation caused grave concern in Washington. The people of New Orleans also were surprised and dismayed by the order, for the American trade was a large part of the city's business and much of the food supply came down in the American flatboats. They, too, demanded the reopening of the river.

Not only were the westerners, the United States Government and the people of New Orleans amazed at the sudden proclamation; other Spanish officials in America were shocked and horrified. The governor of Louisiana, who shared the administration of the colony with the Intendant and had political authority over treaty matters, was strongly opposed to the measure, but was too old and vacillating to dare to cross the Intendant. The Spanish minister to the United States ordered him in the King's name to restore the deposit – and received the reply that he had no more right than the Intendant to speak in the King's name. Even the Captain-General in Havana, who was a direct supervisor of the

Intendant, failed to swerve him. Here was a mystery. The Intendant was a relatively meek man who had never distinguished himself for boldness, a civilian official of rather limited authority, yet he calmly defied every effort to countermand the proclamation. He claimed no authority higher than his own interpretation of his duty, but he refused to budge. Everyone thought they knew why, but no one was sure. They thought he had secret orders and that the orders were from Napoleon. Historians have searched the archives of Louisiana, Spain and France and have solved the mystery in part. The Intendant did have orders from Madrid. They were marked "Very Secret" and they told him to terminate the right of deposit and do it without revealing his instructions to do so. The mystery which remains is why the order was issued. What was the closure to accomplish? There are at least three possible explanations. The simplest, and perhaps the correct one, is that it was merely a matter of colonial administration. The Americans abused the right of deposit by smuggling. What bothered the Spanish officials most was that they smuggled Spanish money. We know that the order to close the port followed a correspondence among the King's ministers over a specific complaint against Americans at New Orleans. The decision was reached at the same time and by the same men as were the negotiations with Napoleon about the retrocession of Louisiana to France. Napoleon might have instigated the closure so that the onus of it would be spared his colonial officials when they took over, for he did not intend to operate Louisiana for the benefit of the Americans. On the other hand, the Spanish leaders hated Napoleon, and it is quite conceivable that they were stirring up a hornet's nest just before they stepped out. The closure remains something of a mystery.

At any rate, the closure at New Orleans affected the westerners and through their indignation the administration in Washington. With the West aroused and the French interest in Louisiana becoming more and more apparent, action was necessary. Jefferson's foes introduced a war measure in Congress. Thomas Jefferson did not want war. The country was still small and was unprepared. He was struggling to maintain an economical administration. An attack on New Orleans, he knew, would not stop there. It meant war with France and Spain. American maritime commerce, which then was second only to England's, would be swept from the seas. It would be long, costly, and the result was not certain. While Jefferson did not want war, he saw clearly that U.S. national interests demanded possession of the Isle of Orleans. While Spain owned it, the U.S. could afford to wait, but he had to keep it from France. If France could be induced to give it to the U.S., fine – if she would sell it the Americans would buy – but if these efforts failed, the Americans would have to try force. Jefferson spoke clearly when he wrote to Robert Livingston, the U.S. Minister in France –

There is on the globe one single spot, the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy. It is New Orleans, through which the produce of three-eighths of our territory must pass to market . . . The day that France takes possession of New Orleans, fixes the sentence that is to restrain her forever within her low

water mark. It seals the union of two nations, who, in conjunction, can maintain exclusive possession of the ocean. From that moment, we must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation.

Jefferson, who loved France and disliked England, went on to say that the U.S. must fire the first cannon in a renewal of the war against Napoleon, and make it the signal for tearing up the French settlement in America. To placate the westerners while diplomatic procedures were in progress and to hasten the negotiations he appointed James Monroe, who was highly regarded in the West, as a special envoy to France. Monroe's mission was to work with Livingston in trying to purchase – not Louisiana, which was of scant concern to Jefferson at this point – but the Isle of Orleans, which was essential, and the Floridas, which were desirable. If the mission failed, he was to cross the channel and broach an alliance with Britain.

Of equal interest with the U.S. reasons for wanting to buy Louisiana were Napoleon's motivations for wanting to sell. The French Revolution had destroyed about the last of that country's colonial empire. Between 1800 and the spring of 1803 Napoleon Bonaparte, who as First Consul of the Republic was the dictator of France, was deeply interested in reconstituting the French colonies, particularly those in America. His plan had two principal parts. He would get Louisiana back from Spain and establish a strong foothold on the North American continent where he could be in a position to influence, if not to dominate, the United States. Napoleon and his ministers knew better than most Americans, perhaps, that in spite of their traditional hatred toward England the natural interests of the British and American people would eventually bring them together. French possession of Louisiana would tend to prevent, it was hoped, the U.S. joining the British camp. Louisiana was to have another important function also. This was economic. From this colony could go the flour, salt meat and lumber needed in the French West Indies, especially Santo Domingo. American ships carried that trade for the westerners, but a French Louisiana would eliminate both the American ships and the American farmers from this profitable field. Thus French colonists and traders would prosper, and the West Indies would not be dependent on a foreign country for these necessary supplies.

Santo Domingo rather than Louisiana was the key point in Napoleon's scheme. For many years France had owned the western end of the island of Haiti. It had become an exceedingly rich possession. It was divided into large plantations where sugar, coffee and indigo were raised. The 50,000 whites of the island lived in luxury from the labor of 500,000 slaves. By hard driving on the basis that it was most profitable to work a slave to death in seven years, Santo Domingo in the 1780s accounted for 2/3rds of the entire external trade of France. Then in the 1790s the slaves rose in revolt, and under a remarkable leader, Toussaint L'Ouverture, gained control of the colony and drove off the invaders. Toussaint abolished slavery and brought relative peace and prosperity to blacks and whites

alike on the island, primarily because the French Revolution left him with an almost free hand. Now, however, the attention of France was once more focused on the island and its potential riches. Napoleon's France would once more rule Santo Domingo and made it the base of their American possessions. For this purpose the husband of Napoleon's favorite sister was placed in command of an expeditionary force. The general's name is familiar from French history – Leclerc. General Leclerc led what was for then a very large overseas force – 20,000 men of the French army. They left France late in 1801 and reached Haiti in January 1802. The landings were made and after a rather brilliant campaign of three months, Toussaint was captured by treachery, and the island seemed won. Toussaint, however, had disciplined, armed and trained his followers and they fought on. When the rainy season came, yellow fever fought with them. Leclerc's army melted away before the fever and the guerilla fighting. Then Leclerc died, and another commander with a familiar name replaced him. He was Rochambeau, son of the general who had led the French armies with George Washington at Yorktown in 1781. By the spring of 1803 Toussaint was dead in a French prison, but over 60,000 French soldiers had also died in Santo Domingo without success.

While one army was struggling to gain possession of Santo Domingo, another was being prepared for the occupation of Louisiana. Spain still held back actual possession waiting for France to fulfill her part of the bargain. The republican armies of France had created the Batavian republic in The Netherlands. According to the treaty of peace with England, the French troops were to leave Holland, but at this time there were still large forces there. Napoleon planned to send some of these to Louisiana. In the fall of 1801 the troops were assembled at Flushing and a commander was appointed, but all available transports were needed for the Santo Domingo expedition. A few months later, however, General Victor was placed in command of the Louisiana enterprise. In June of 1802 Napoleon wrote to his Minister of the Navy and Colonies, saying "My intention, Citizen Minister, is that we take possession of Louisiana with the shortest possible delay, that this expedition be organized in the greatest secrecy, and that it have the appearance of being directed on Santo Domingo . . . "

In midsummer 3,000 troops were ordered to Dunkirk, and supplies were assembled, but transports were still insufficient. In October Spain finally gave the order for the delivery of Louisiana to France and General Victor was directed to sail from near Rotterdam before the end of November. He was instructed to make alliances with the Indians and to make the colony so strong that an enemy would suffer heavy losses in trying to attack it. He did not sail at once, however, because too many transports were carrying reinforcements to Santo Domingo. In view of the delay Laussat, who had been appointed colonial prefect for Louisiana, was sent on ahead. On December 19, Victor received orders directly from Napoleon to start the expedition immediately. The ships were still not ready. By the end of December eleven of the twelve ships were ready and only a few supplies were lacking. Nearly 3,000 troops were ready to embark. Then

nature took a hand in history. A cold wave struck, the Dutch harbors froze and the ice held back the expedition for two critical months. When the ice finally melted British warships were cruising off the coast. Said the Foreign Minister:

With respect to the British vessels alleged to be cruising off the ports of the Batavian Republic His Majesty has several ships of war in the seas adjacent to those ports; but if their commanders have made any movements or held any language which could be regarded as of a hostile nature, their conduct has been in direct opposition to the tenor of their instructions.

The warships stayed on patrol. By then the chance to occupy Louisiana had passed. After the first of March 1803 Napoleon seems to have turned from dreams of colonial empire to his ambitions in Europe. The reconquest of Santo Domingo was a failure and 2,000,000 francs had been sunk in Victor's expedition – which never left port.

In Napoleon's change of interest we find his reason for selling Louisiana. Without Santo Domingo there was no hope of a financially lucrative American empire, so he turned to the task of humbling England. Within a few months the Grand Army was encamped at Boulogne and vessels were being assembled for the great invasion of England. By selling Louisiana Napoleon would break his word to Spain, but he could accomplish two important ends. He could raise money for the invasion and he could strengthen the country that was beginning to rival England in commerce on the high seas. He declared “. . . I have just given England a maritime rival that sooner or later will lay low her pride.”

### **LOUISIANA PURCHASE, Part III – Buying America's' Future**

The secret Treaty of San Ildefonso by which Spain agreed to give Louisiana back to France was signed October 1, 1800. It was not a well kept secret, however, for by the next spring rumors of the retrocession had reached Washington. At first the suspicion did not cause alarm. President Jefferson wrote that if it were true, it would “. . . be more to be lamented than remedied . . . “ Upon further thought Jefferson and others took a more serious view of the matter. By the winter of 1801 the U.S. minister in London had obtained a copy of the treaty and sent it to Secretary of State Madison. After that American concern over the fate of New Orleans grew until the administration was forced to act in order to avoid war. In the meantime, Jefferson left the problem largely in the hands of the minister to France, who had to work it out as best he could without specific instructions from the President.

The American minister in Paris at this time was Robert R. Livingston. Livingston is one of the forgotten men of American history, perhaps because he was never either president or a general. He was, however, a devoted public servant – hard

working, painstaking and intelligent. Robert Livingston was born in New York City and educated in the colonial forerunner of Columbia University. Like Jefferson he was aristocratic in his social background and democratic in his political interests. Like Jefferson, too, he built himself a fine country home to suit his own tastes and spent the time he was not in public office in amateur scientific studies. Both men were pioneers in scientific agriculture and both dabbled with fossils. Jefferson's home, Monticello, is well known – Livingston's was "Claremont," after which Robert Fulton named his famous steamboat. Robert Livingston backed most of the early experimenters with steamboats – Fitch, Stevens and Fulton – and in the last years of his life worked closely with Fulton to develop the steamboat into a practical machine. While Livingston has been criticized for securing a monopoly of the navigation on the principal rivers for his company, it should be remembered that he turned all his profits back into the steamboat business and so is considerably responsible for the rapid development of the steamboat on American waters.

During and after the Revolutionary War Livingston, who was regarded as the ablest lawyer in America, served in the Continental Congress. He was a hard working member of many important committees, including the one which drafted the Declaration of Independence (although he opposed the timing of the latter). He was one of the most ardent advocates of the Constitution and helped Alexander Hamilton secure the favorable vote of New York. As Secretary of Foreign Affairs under the Congress of the Confederation he very ably organized an effective diplomatic service. When Jefferson became President, he offered the secretaryship of the Navy to Robert Livingston, who declined the cabinet post. Then Jefferson asked him to serve as the United States minister to France and he accepted, sailing for Paris in October 1801, just a year after France and Spain had signed the treaty of retrocession. Livingston had to work under three principal handicaps - he was not well versed in the French language, he was partially deaf, and he had rather meager instructions. In spite of this he proved to be a very persistent, tenacious diplomat; and he was brave enough to be firm when he felt his country's interests demanded it. The French found him "most importunate" and even "almost menacing" at times. He refused to be ignored or to give up.

The American minister had two important assignments in Paris. He was to prevent, if possible, the retrocession of Louisiana from Spain to France, leaving the colony in the hands of Spain, and if too late for that, he was to endeavor to acquire West Florida for the United States. His second task was to get France to pay American citizens for the seizure and destruction of U.S. merchant ships, which had taken place in the 1790s and had almost forced the U.S. into war with France.

After Livingston reached Paris it did not take him long to become convinced that Spain already had agreed to give Louisiana back to France. Talleyrand, Napoleon's foreign minister, denied it completely, but Paris was full of enthusiasm for the

new colony. People were speculating among themselves about the prospects of investing money there. Books were being written. Comment was appearing in the newspapers. Only ten days after he arrived Leclerc's great expedition set sail for Haiti. Consequently, Livingston set out to salvage what he could. He fished for definite information by asking in a letter to Tallyrand for assurance that American commercial rights on the Mississippi would be preserved and inquiring whether France had gotten the Floridas too. He got only a discourteous and evasive reply. He hinted to the U.S. minister in London that the British could endanger Canada if they let Napoleon have Louisiana, hoping that England would take the hint and include the question of Louisiana in the peace negotiations then in progress. He worked on Napoleon's brother. He actively discouraged Frenchmen who hoped to make fortunes in Louisiana. He wrote a 20-page booklet detailing arguments to show how much better it would be for France to cultivate trade with the United States than to develop Louisiana in competition. This pamphlet was placed in the hands of high French officials. It was, incidentally, ahead of its time in economic thinking. Having belittled the value of the colony to France, Livingston suggested that Napoleon would do better just to give the U.S. New Orleans and the Floridas. After the Spanish closure of New Orleans to American commerce in 1802 Jefferson's political foes introduced a strong war measure into Congress – not to force the U.S. into war but to embarrass the administration. Livingston was astute enough to understand the nature and purpose of the resolution, but as soon as it reached him in Paris he placed a copy of it in the hands of the French government, hinting that it was evident the Americans meant business. Then he devised a new proposal which he submitted to the French. He suggested that France give the Isle of Orleans and all the territory north of the Arkansas River and west of the Mississippi to the U.S. By so doing, he pointed out, France would retain the best part of the colony, the part that would give her all the advantages she sought. At the same time it would placate the Americans and win their free consent to the return of the colony to France.

Perhaps also, since it separated Louisiana and Canada, this scheme would be more acceptable to the English. This imaginative proposal was the first suggestion by either side that land west of the Mississippi should be acquired by the United States. Livingston demonstrated dogged perseverance. When one method failed to make an impression or gain a hearing, he thought of another and better one. This continued from the fall of 1801 to the spring of 1803 with no apparent progress.

Livingston in this year and a half of negotiating received relatively little help from his superiors in Washington, and the help that did come was hardly calculated to improve his morale. President Jefferson, in the spring of 1802, wrote to Livingston saying that the possessor of New Orleans was the natural enemy of the United States and that when France took possession the U.S. must ally itself with Great Britain. The letter was addressed to Livingston and was sent to him, but it

was not intended primarily for his eyes. Jefferson sent the letter by a French businessman who had a gunpowder factory in America, Du Pont de Nemours, who was going back to France for a six month vacation. Jefferson gave Du Pont the letter unsealed and suggested that he read it before sealing. Thus Du Pont was equipped with inside information which he could quote, as the newspaper correspondents do today, "from an official who did not wish to be identified." He was expected to pass this rather alarming statement on to his influential liberal friends in Paris and did so. He worked to reconcile the best interests of both countries, but of course, he worked quite independently of Livingston. Soon he made the suggestion that the United States offer to buy New Orleans and the Floridas for \$6 million. As close as he was to affairs in Paris, Du Pont thought, like Livingston, that France had succeeded in getting Florida as well as Louisiana from Spain.

The next move in the negotiations came when President Jefferson was forced to take action because of the storm created in the West by the closure of the deposit at New Orleans. He appointed James Monroe as special envoy, got Congress to appropriate \$2 million for the purpose and instructed Monroe to go as high as \$10 million if necessary, but also, if necessary, to be satisfied with as small a crumb as a guarantee of the right of deposit in New Orleans. The appointment of a special envoy was an established procedure in American diplomacy. Monroe landed in France and was on route for Paris by coach when Tallyrand made the inquiry of Livingston as to American willingness to buy the whole colony of Louisiana, a sudden bombshell which Livingston must have found hard to believe.

Up to the time of this French offer the United States had expressed no interest in any part of Louisiana except New Orleans, and the American ministers had no authority to negotiate for any part of it west of the Mississippi. The decision to sell was made before Monroe reached Paris, so he had no part in it except in the dickering over price. It must be admitted, also, that all of Livingston's hard work probably had very little influence on the French decision. The offer of Louisiana was Napoleon's own idea made for his own reasons.

It probably was sometime in March 1803 that Bonaparte gave up his dream of a New World empire and determined to renew the war against England, for after that he issued no more orders about the military expedition to New Orleans. On Good Friday, April 8, 1803, he seems to have discussed with Tallyrand his plan to sell the whole of Louisiana. On the 10th, Easter, he told other ministers of his idea and at daybreak the next morning turned the negotiations over – not to his Foreign Minister, Tallyrand, but to his Finance Minister, Barbé-Marbois, setting a price of 50 million francs. Barbé Marbois was well fitted for his assignment. He was honest (which is said to be one reason why he rather than Tallyrand was chosen), he was a shrewd businessman, and he knew Americans, having lived in the United States and married an American girl. On April 12, the day after Barbé

Marbois had received his instructions to sell Louisiana to the United States and the day after Tallyrand had first broached the subject to Livingston, James Monroe arrived in Paris. That night Livingston tendered him a dinner party. While they were eating, Barbé Marbois was observed walking in the garden and was invited in for coffee. An appointment was arranged for eleven o'clock that night between Barbé Marbois and Livingston, and there the actual purchase negotiations started. Apparently, at this first conference, the final lines of the purchase were laid down. Barbé Marbois thought Napoleon's price of 50 million francs too low, so he did not mention that figure to the Americans, but doubled it, asking 100 million. When Livingston objected to such a figure, Barbé Marbois agreed that it seemed a little high, but that Napoleon said the U.S. could borrow the money. Finally, as Livingston refused to make a definite offer himself, Barbé Marbois suggested that a fair price would be 60 million francs plus the assumption by the United States of the various private claims against France.

It was a fair price, he said, but Napoleon might not agree. Livingston, of course, did not commit himself, and left the conference anxious to beat down the price. He did feel, however, that a bargain had practically been sealed. Monroe was more hesitant, since their instructions gave them no authority to purchase anything west of the Mississippi. There followed two weeks of haggling in which the Americans started at 40 million francs and Barbé Marbois jumped back to 100 million, plus claims. Finally, on April 29, both sides agreed on a purchase price of 60 million francs for Louisiana, assumption of the American claims to a total of 20 million francs additional, and various trading privileges. In other words, the United States was to pay \$15 million for Louisiana, \$11,250,000 of it for the colony and \$3,750,000 for payment of United States citizen claims against France. A few days later a formal treaty and two conventions were drawn up, and signed by the three negotiators. All three are dated April 30, although the signing did not take place until the first week in May.

Two sidelights might be inserted at this point. You will recall that Napoleon decided to sell Louisiana in preparation for a renewal of the war with England. Two weeks after the treaty was signed France and England were again at war. Spain had given Louisiana back to France in return for a kingdom for the Prince of Parma. Less than a month after Livingston, Barbé Marbois and Monroe had signed the purchase papers, the young king of Etruria was dead.

The treaty was signed, but Louisiana was not yet part of the United States. On the one hand Napoleon had no legal right to sell Louisiana without the consent of the French legislature or of Spain, and on the other the American ministers had no authority to buy. It was not impossible, also, that Spain might object strenuously. In the case of France, Napoleon ignored both Spain and the legislature. Spain made a show of protest over Napoleon's perfidy but was too anxious to get the expensive colony off her hands to want to fight about it. In the United States those who objected to the purchase did not hesitate to point out

that there was no constitutional authority for it and that it was an illegal act. As sober American historians have pointed out, the Americans were accepting stolen goods and acting as an accomplice to a highwayman. Napoleon had not fulfilled the obligations he had solemnly made when he obtained Louisiana from Spain and so Louisiana did not properly belong to him. Nevertheless, most Americans could see the great advantages offered by the chance to buy the colony. President Jefferson overcame his constitutional scruples and the Senate ratified the treaty by a good majority in the fall of 1803.

The next step after ratification was to finance the Purchase. The United States, in order to make the money immediately available to Napoleon, issued stock to the value of \$11,250,000. Since the bank of France refused to handle the stock, Napoleon turned – of all things – to an English firm. Alexander Baring, of Hope and Baring, British bankers, journeyed to Paris and conferred with Barbé Marbois, even after war between their countries had been declared. Then Baring came to America, got the bonds personally and carried them back to England. Whereupon Napoleon received his 11\_ million dollars for waging war against Britain. It had been suggested that it was British friendship for the United States which permitted the deal to go through. Interest on the purchase stock increased the amount actually paid for Louisiana to between \$25 to \$30 million. Nevertheless, the total cost figures out to only a nickel an acre.

After the treaty had been negotiated and ratified, Louisiana itself was at still in the hands of the Spanish administrators and still garrisoned by Spanish troops, for General Victor's expedition never set sail. Only Citizen Laussat, whom Napoleon had appointed Prefect of the Colony, had reached New Orleans. He arrived in the spring of 1803, before the sale of Louisiana to the United States had even been conceived. While he waited for Victor's troops to place him in power, he proceeded to mismanage his job in a surprising number of ways. The Spanish officials, the French settlers and the American merchants all disliked him and were resentful or suspicious. He seems to have quenched all enthusiasm that the French might have felt over the prospect of coming under the rule of their homeland again.

In July definite word came of the Louisiana Purchase, which further confused the picture. The American residents were anxious for American troops to arrive to effect a simultaneous transfer from Spain, to France to the United States. The Spanish officials were reluctant to act until they received specific instructions, which never came. Laussat was anxious to take over the colony, but had no support. Finally, the Spanish officials determined to turn the government over to Laussat on November 29, 1803. Accordingly, on the 30th in the pouring rain, the Spanish troops (including a detachment of Mexican chasseurs) paraded on one side of the Place d'Armes, the hastily organized militia of American sympathizers on the other and the townspeople about the square. Inside the Cabildo, two representatives of Spain and one of France made the formal exchange. The

Spanish Governor stepped to the balcony and released the drenched spectators from their fealty to Spain. A cannon salute was fired as the Spanish flag was hauled down and the French tricolor raised. American witnesses said there were no cheers. The next day Laussat held a "fete to the French flag," an all night merrymaking with much dancing and drinking. The Spaniards were relieved to have the tension over, and offered a big fiesta to the French a few days later and Laussat returned the compliment the next week. Laussat thus governed the province for a little less than three uneasy weeks. Then the American commissioners and troops arrived, and on December 20, 1803, the transfer ceremony was repeated much as it had been enacted by France and Spain. This time American soldiers were drawn up in the square and the American flag replaced the French. Observers reported that in spite of an attempt to stir up a cheer the natives viewed the affair without enthusiasm. They were figuring the price at which they had been sold - it came to "11 sous a head, counting negroes and cattle."

Louisiana was at last American. However, far away in St. Louis a Spanish lieutenant governor and a small garrison of soldiers remained in command of the capital of Upper Louisiana. Naturally the haughty and inept Laussat was not going to undergo the arduous three-month trip up the river to go through the mere formality of transferring a subdivision of the territory to the United States. Accordingly, his authority was delegated to the officer who should act for the United States in the matter. This was Captain Amos Stoddard of the U.S. Artillery. As well as being ordered to assume the territory in the name of the United States, he was empowered to represent the French Republic. Stoddard moved up the Mississippi from Kaskaskia, Illinois with a detachment of troops. With his men quartered on the American side of the river at Cahokia, he made contact with Lieutenant Governor Delassus late in February 1804. He found the lieutenant governor indisposed, so the matter was postponed for about two weeks until Col. Delassus should feel better.

In the interval Delassus had a flagpole erected beside the street in front of the Spanish Government House, which stood at the corner of what later became First and Walnut streets in St. Louis, and is today on the grounds of the Gateway Arch. On March 8 he issued a detailed order of the day for the ceremony, which was scheduled for the following noon. On the morning of the 9th soldiers of the garrison were to take the small Spanish flag belonging to the official boat and put it up at Fort San Carlos, which overlooked the city from the height where Fourth and Walnut streets now cross. The large flag of the fort was to be carried down to the Government House and raised on the new flagpole there. Then the barracks at the fort were to be carefully cleaned, for this was the final evacuation of the post, knapsacks were to be packed and the little garrison made to look as soldierly as possible. Late in the morning the troops were to march out of the fort, down the Street of the Tower with the drummer beating a quick step, to the main street. Then they were to wheel to the right and form their line in front of

the Government House. They were to remain there maintaining “that martial air so natural to the Spaniards” until the ceremony was concluded. Only two men were left at the fort, one to lower the small flag and the cannoneer who was to load powder charges in the guns.

During the morning of the 9th Capt. Stoddard crossed the river and was met by an escort to conduct him to the lieutenant governor. In the Government House the necessary papers were signed by the two men and their official witnesses – Antoine Soulard for Spain and Capt. Meriwether Lewis for Stoddard, who that day was representing France. Charles Gratiot, a Spanish citizen whose son was to become chief engineer of the United States Army a few years later, acted as interpreter. At noon the official party stepped out of the house and descended to the street, where the troops and a crowd of curious residents waited. The soldiers of the garrison snapped to attention, while lieutenant governor Delassus and Capt. Stoddard exchanged the papers they had examined and signed indoors. Then at a signal from a sentinel the drummer struck up “Troop the Colors”, the cannoneer at the fort touched off the first cannon of the battery, and the two Spanish flags started slowly down their staffs. For a few moments St. Louis must have been silent except for the roll of that single drum and the echoing boom of the slow cannon salute. When the flags were down, both Col. Delassus and Capt. Stoddard briefly addressed the people of St. Louis. Then the drum struck up the march step again, the soldiers swung south down the main street to their temporary quarters and the crowd dispersed. The next morning, March 10, 1804, Capt. Stoddard, now representing the United States, moved his detachment of American troops across the river, marched them up through the town to the fort on the hills and raised the American flag. There does not seem to have been an elaborate ceremony. With the completion of the transfer at St. Louis on March 10 all of Louisiana was officially in the hands of the United States.

#### **THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE, Part IV – Possessing the New Land**

The United States, a young country, now had to assume full and immediate responsibility for a vast territory and scattered population which had taxed the patience and pocket of Spain, the nation that probably was Europe's most experienced colonial administrator. It was fortunate that at this point the United States had a unique and farsighted colonial policy already established. When England founded the thirteen colonies along the Atlantic coast the colonial charters were likely to be very vague about western boundaries. Several colonies extended westward to the sea, wherever that might be. Consequently, at the close of the Revolution, several states maintained conflicting claims to the land west of the Appalachians. It was significant and much needed evidence of the reality of the union of the states when they voluntarily surrendered their western claims to the central government. By this action the United States acquired a public domain and the Congress of the Confederation rose to its finest accomplishment when, in 1787, it enacted “An Ordinance for the government of the Territory of

the United States north-west of the river Ohio.” Among other things the Northwest Ordinance formulated U.S. colonial policy.

The core of the policy, and the thing that made it unique, was in its purpose. It was not designed to exploit a colonial area for the benefit of the original states, but it was to develop the colony to the point where it could be admitted to the union as a full and complete equal with them. This colonial policy was a process for making new states. The process as set forth in the Northwest Ordinance consisted of three steps. First, the territory was organized and administered by the United States Government. A governor, a secretary and three judges were appointed. Under the Articles of Confederation the appointive power was in the hands of Congress, but after the Constitution was adopted the President made these appointments with the consent of the Senate. The governor and the judges formed a legislative body which decided upon the laws necessary to govern the territory, and the governor then administered them. This was simple and autocratic to be sure, but it was merely a temporary stage. There was protection for the individual also in the fact that the laws to be applied by the governor and judges were ones already in force in the original states. This preliminary stage lasted until the territory had 5,000 adult male inhabitants. Then the second step was taken. The governor was still a federal appointee, but the territory could elect a legislature and also a delegate to Congress, who sat in the House of Representatives and participated in the debates – without having a vote, however. The third step came when a division of the territory had a population of 60,000 free inhabitants. The people then had the right to draw up a constitution and be admitted to the Union “on an equal footing with the original states in all respects whatsoever.” This model system had been in operation for 16 years in the Old Northwest and one section, Ohio, had reached the final stage, being admitted as a state in 1803. Thus, the United States approached the difficult task of governing its new lands with some experience.

After the Louisiana Purchase Treaty was ratified, President Jefferson appointed in the fall of 1803 a temporary governor for the entire territory ceded by France. For this assignment he selected a young man not yet 30 years old, William C.C. Claiborne. Claiborne was a Virginian who had crossed over into Tennessee and made a name for himself in frontier law and politics. He was elected to Congress when only 22, and served in spite of being under the constitutional age limit. While in Congress his vote for Jefferson helped to defeat Aaron Burr’s bid for the presidency. Perhaps as a reward Jefferson appointed Claiborne to the governorship of the rather small Mississippi Territory, where he handled the difficult border problems creditably. Two years later came his appointment to the Louisiana governorship. He and Gen. James Wilkinson were the commissioners who received the territory from the French on December 20, 1803 at New Orleans, and under his governorship Capt. Amos Stoddard exercised his brief period of authority at St. Louis. This arrangement provided a constituted authority during the transition to effective American control. In March 1804,

about two weeks after the transfer ceremony at St. Louis, Congress divided Louisiana into two parts by a line running east and west along the 33rd parallel of latitude. The relatively small area south of that line contained most of the inhabitants of Louisiana and was made into the Territory of Orleans, while the vast region north of the line was not given territorial status, but was formed into the District of Louisiana.

William Claiborne was appointed the governor of Orleans Territory and a secretary and three judges were also appointed. Thus Orleans had a government in the first stage of territorial development. The problem there was not typical, however. Claiborne had to deal with a fairly large and highly mixed population accustomed to laws and political customs very different from those of the United States. The people of the territory were unsympathetic and the line which divided the area of Louisiana was very unpopular. You can imagine that the governor's job was not easy. Besides the creoles he had to deal with such perfidious Americans as Burr and Wilkinson. Claiborne was described as being of mild temper, good motives, scrupulous honesty and diligence. In spite of frequent unpopularity he guided the Territory of Orleans throughout its existence and saw it enter the Union as the State of Louisiana in 1812. He became governor of the state and was elected to the Senate in 1817, but died at the age of 42, before assuming office.

In the meantime the upper part of Louisiana, which had been designated as a district, was attached for the purposes of government to the Indiana Territory. Indiana Territory was what remained of the old Northwest Territory after Ohio was separated from it and admitted as a new state. It thus included what is now Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin, and was governed by William Henry Harrison from the capital at Vincennes. The attempt to govern St. Louis and the other towns on the west bank of the Mississippi from that distance was quickly found to be unsatisfactory and this arrangement was maintained for less than a year. In the spring of 1805 the District of Louisiana was changed to the Territory of Louisiana and was given a governor, secretary and judges of its own. For some reason Jefferson appointed as the first governor of the territory Gen. James Wilkinson, whom he seems to have trusted. Wilkinson had had a long record of intrigue, greed and hard drinking. As an officer in the Revolution he had been associated with Arnold and Gates and had participated in the Conway Cabal to oust General Washington. In frontier politics he had drawn a regular pension from Spain on the understanding that he would work to separate the western areas from the United States. At the time of his service as governor at St. Louis he was deeply involved in schemes with Aaron Burr, who visited him there. Wilkinson held the governorship for about two years, but he was much disliked and hardly a year had passed before it was found expedient to send him to the southern frontier on military duty. His successor, appointed in 1807, was Meriwether Lewis, newly returned from his expedition. It should be noted in passing that all of Jefferson's initial appointments to the territorial government

were not of Wilkinson's kind. Two of the judges became leading citizens of the community – Rufus Easton and J.B.C. Lucas.

Meriwether Lewis was territorial governor for approximately two years. In October 1809 he died on the way to Washington on business, probably by suicide. After his death Jefferson offered the governorship to William Clark, who had been co-commander with Lewis on the expedition, but Clark declined. Instead, Benjamin Howard of Kentucky was made governor of Louisiana Territory and served for three years.

In 1812 the name "Louisiana" was preempted by the new state formed from the Territory of Orleans. Consequently Congress changed the name of Louisiana Territory to Missouri Territory. At the same time it was advanced to the second stage of territorial government, a new governor was appointed and this time William Clark accepted. He continued to hold the office until the territory was divided and Missouri became a state in 1821. Before the end of 1812 the Territory of Missouri had held its first election, sending Edward Hempstead to Washington as territorial delegate and thirteen men to St. Louis as the first legislature.

The United States had acquired Louisiana, but to a considerable extent it had been “buying a pig in the poke”. Settlements were close to the river and little was known about the geography and resources of the hinterland. It was desirable to find out what the territory contained. To this end several exploring expeditions were sent out. The most famous was, of course, that of Lewis and Clark, but it was by no means the only one. Actually, the Lewis and Clark expedition had no connection with the Louisiana Purchase to begin with. Thomas Jefferson had long been interested in such a project and had been instrumental in initiating four previous attempts that had failed. In January 1803 he sent a confidential message to Congress explaining the purpose of the expedition and seeking an appropriation. The main object of the exploration was to find ways of tapping the fur resources of the Pacific Northwest for the United States, but since the party would be operating in the colonial possessions of foreign powers it was to be described as a scientific expedition. Congress agreed to the extent of appropriating the funds Jefferson asked – the handsome sum of \$2,500. This was done before the purchase of Louisiana had been conceived. Jefferson appointed his private secretary, Capt. Meriwether Lewis, to command the expedition and the work of organizing and preparing was underway before the Purchase also. It was the greatest and most successful of the expeditions into the new territory.

When Jefferson realized that Louisiana was to become a U.S. territory, he made plans to explore all the western tributaries of the Mississippi. The proposals were not all carried out, but a start was made. Thus in 1804 Jefferson delegated Thomas Freeman to explore the Red River and the Arkansas. Freeman was an Irish immigrant with sound scientific training. He had worked with Andrew

Ellicott on laying out the new city of Washington and had done other important surveys for the government. In 1804 the hostility of the Spanish authorities in Mexico (i.e. Texas) forced the postponement of the expedition. In 1806 Freeman and his party started up the Red River and surveyed it very carefully about as far as the present Arkansas-Oklahoma line. There his 17 soldiers were met by a force of several hundred Spaniards and made to turn back. In 1804, also, William Dunbar and George Hunter explored the Ouachita River as far as the hot springs for Jefferson. William Dunbar was a wealthy planter living near Natchez. A Scotsman, son of an earl, he had migrated to America because of poor health. As a Spanish citizen of West Florida he had worked hard to build up his fortune through the scientific management of his plantation. In 1799 a boundary settlement transferred his allegiance to the United States. He was widely known as a scientist in his day, having a well equipped observatory, keeping the first weather data for the Mississippi Valley and finding the solution to some practical astronomical problems.

Lewis and Clark, Dunbar and Hunter, and Freeman were the explorers sent out by Jefferson. He did not get any farther with his plans for the systematic exploration of the Purchase. At St. Louis, however, Governor Wilkinson sent out two additional expeditions. In the summer of 1805, 26 year old Zebulon Pike was dispatched with 20 men to explore the Upper Mississippi. He was back the next spring believing incorrectly that he had found the source of the river. Two and a half months later he was en route with a second expedition, this time to the headwaters of the Arkansas and Red Rivers. Whether or not Pike knew it, Wilkinson probably sent him out this second time to gather information helpful to the governor's personal schemes. Pike was arrested by the Spanish authorities, marched to Chihuahua, and later released. Nevertheless, the expedition was an important one. As a result of these early explorations the United States gained a better knowledge of Louisiana, but it would be many years before the nation fully understood the rich resources it had obtained along with the rather unwelcome people of Louisiana – the “wild men of the Missouri” or the slightly better “hotch-pot” of people centering in New Orleans.

In conclusion we may recall that France sold the United States a territory with very vague boundaries. There was much dispute as to how much of Florida, how much of Texas or how much of Oregon Louisiana included. The boundaries of Louisiana were not finally settled until 1819 when the United States relinquished any right to Texas in return for Florida. Under that treaty the western boundary of Louisiana was defined.

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