

Adsf college essay



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Module 3 – The Formative Years of the New Nation, 1820-1860

The Louisiana Purchase

The Louisiana Purchase was the largest land transaction for the United States, and the most important event of President Jefferson's presidency. Jefferson arranged to purchase the land for \$11, 250, 000 from Napoleon in 1803. This land area lay between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains, stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian border. The purchase of this land greatly increased the economic resources of the United States, and proved Jefferson had expansionist dreams by doubling the size of the United States. Jefferson believed that the republic must be controlled by ambitious, independent, property-holding farmers, who would form the incorruptible bedrock of democracy (LaFeber 179). In order to complete his vision the country needed more land.

The Constitution did not authorize the acquisition of land, but it did provide for the making of treaties, so that Jefferson felt the acquisition of new territory was constitutional, with an amendment. He had mixed feelings about this issue and warned that American liberty would be threatened if the Constitution was distorted (LeFeber 181). He was not willing to lose the opportunity to expand the United States. The purchase of Louisiana from France had long been a favorite project with Mr. Jefferson. He viewed it as essential to removing from the United States a source of continual conflicts with the European possessors of the land, besides securing the use of the Mississippi River and the fertile land itself. When Napoleon became head of

the French government, he planned to use the territory for his own gain. In view of the threatening crisis, President Jefferson immediately sent Mr. Monroe as envoy extraordinary to the French court, with instructions to negotiate the purchase of Louisiana from France.

In April 1803, the negotiation was concluded and the entire region of Louisiana was ceded to the United States for the sum of \$11, 250, 000 dollars (LeFebvre 182). The American negotiators seized the favorable circumstances to urge the claims of American merchants on the French government for \$3, 750, 00. This important acquisition more than doubled the territory of the United States. The great majority of the nation received the treaty with jubilation, but there were some particularly in the eastern States that disclaimed strenuously against it. They saw in the great enlargement of our territory and was nothing more than a great waste, a wilderness unpeopled with any beings except wolves and wandering Indians. We are to give money of which we have too little for land of which we already have too much (LeFebvre 183).

When the treaty arrived from France; the Jefferson requested that Congress convene at the earliest day practicable for its ratification and execution. The Federalists in both houses declaimed and voted against it, but they were now so reduced in numbers as to be incapable of serious opposition. The question on its ratification in the Senate was decided by twenty-four to seven. (LeFebvre 183). The transfer to the American government took place on December 20, 1803. Fifteen states were created from it Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Missouri, Iowa, Wyoming, South Dakota, Texas, Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana and New Mexico.

The purchase of the Louisiana territory came about because of concern to secure free navigation of the Mississippi River. President Jefferson sent Robert R. Livingston and James Monroe to negotiate with the government of the powerful Napoleon for the sale of New Orleans. Surprisingly, Napoleon offered not only to sell New Orleans, but the entire Louisiana territory. The treaty that Livingston and Monroe sent home aroused constitutional worries in Jefferson's mind. A Constitutional amendment would be extremely slow and Napoleon wanted the transaction finalized by a specific date. Since the nation was so young, issues such as the one at hand had not arisen before.

Jefferson had to make a decision and that he did. He acted without hesitation and left the matter to the people to decide. With the exception of a small number of Federalists in New England, the people overwhelmingly accepted Jefferson's actions. The Louisiana Purchase was by far the greatest achievement of his presidency. This began exploration in the United States. Lewis and Clark were sent by Thomas Jefferson to explore the territory of the Louisiana Purchase.

Jefferson's scruples about the constitutionality of the purchase were overcome by his fears that Napoleon might change his mind and by the overwhelming public approval of the Louisiana Purchase. The U. S. Senate in October and the U. S. flag was raised over New Orleans on Dec. 20 ratified the treaty. The Louisiana Purchase, extending from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mts. and from the Gulf of Mexico to British North America, doubled the national domain, increasing it c. 828, 000 sq. mile. The final boundaries of the territory were not settled for many years since the 1803 treaty did not set the limits of the region.