



were greatly helped by **Sacajawea**, an Indian woman who went with them from North Dakota to the Pacific Ocean. She acted as an interpreter and guide. She also helped make trades with tribes along the way.

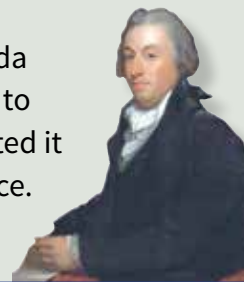
Sacajawea helped guide Lewis and Clark

The Historian's Apprentice

Was the Louisiana Purchase Constitutional?

In this section, you will explore the events surrounding the purchase of Louisiana in greater depth and consider whether President Jefferson acted constitutionally.

When Jefferson first learned that Napoleon had taken both Louisiana and Florida from Spain, he became deeply concerned that Americans might lose their right to ship goods out of New Orleans. If this right was not respected, Jefferson predicted it would bring an end to the close friendship between the United States and France. In April 1802, Jefferson wrote to Robert Livingston, the U.S. Minister (*representative*) in Paris:



Robert Livingston

“The cession of Louisiana and the Floridas by Spain to France works most sorely on the United States . . . Of all nations of any consideration (*importance*), France is the one which hitherto (*previously*) has offered the fewest points on which we could have any conflict of right, and the most points of a communion (*sharing*) of interests . . . 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 (*crops*) of three-eighths of our territory must pass to market, and from its fertility it will ere (*before*) long yield (*provide*) more than half of our whole produce (*crops*) and contain more than half our inhabitants. France placing herself in that door assumes to us the attitude of defiance (*resistance; hostility*).

If France considers Louisiana however as indispensable (*necessary*) for her views, she might perhaps be willing to look about for arrangements [that] might reconcile it to our interests. If anything could do this it would be the ceding (*giving*) to us the island of New Orleans and Floridas. This would certainly in a great degree remove the causes of jarring and irritation

between us, and perhaps for such a length of time as might produce other means of making the measure permanently conciliatory to our interests and friendships . . .

Every eye in the United States is now fixed on this affair of Louisiana. Perhaps nothing since the revolutionary war has produced more uneasy sensations through the body of the nation.”

—President Thomas Jefferson to Robert Livingston, April 18, 1802

By the end of 1802, the American “right of deposit” in New Orleans—the right to deposit goods at the port for transfer onto other ships—was temporarily suspended. This created a crisis in the United States. Jefferson appointed James Monroe to go to Paris to help Livingston purchase the port of New Orleans from the French. Congress voted to pay two million dollars for the purchase, and they were actually authorized to spend up to ten million. Jefferson sent the following instructions to Monroe in January 1803:

“The agitation (*excitement; anxious state*) of the public mind on occasion of the late suspension of our right of deposit at New Orleans is extreme. In the Western country it is natural and grounded on honest motives . . .

Something sensible (*reasonable*) therefore [has] become necessary; and indeed our object of purchasing New Orleans and the Floridas is a measure liable to assume so many shapes, that no instructions could be squared to fit them . . .

If we cannot by a purchase . . . insure to ourselves a course of perpetual peace and friendship with all nations, then as war cannot be distant, it behooves us immediately to be preparing for that course . . . We shall get entangled in European politics, and figuring more, be much less happy and prosperous. This can only be prevented by a successful issue to your present mission . . .”

To the complete surprise of Monroe and Livingston, as you know, Napoleon proposed the sale of the entire Louisiana Territory to the United States for \$15 million. The American representatives quickly signed a treaty with the French for the purchase on April 30, 1803.

The French offer posed a new problem, however, for President Jefferson: Was the federal government permitted by the Constitution to accept the new territory? The Constitution provided a procedure for the admission of new states from territory that already belonged to the United States. But there was nothing in the Constitution at all saying that the government could purchase new territory outside the United States.



The Louisiana Territory