

What it Did

The Louisiana Purchase made official the transfer of the Louisiana Territory from France to the young United States in 1803.



Signed under the authority of **Bonaparte**, the agreement doubled the size of the United States overnight. It reshaped the political and cultural future of the nation.

The purchase included land from part or all of fifteen present U.S. states — Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming.

The acquired land was from the Mississippi River west to the Rocky Mountains and from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian border. The territory did not include the Florida parishes of modern day Louisiana (east of the Mississippi River), which were acquired later.

Timeline

April 30, 1803 Louisiana Purchase treaty signed in Paris

July 4, 1803 Treaty publicly announced in the U.S.

October 20, 1803 U.S. Senate ratifies the treaty

December 20, 1803 Formal transfer ceremony in New Orleans

April 30, 1812 Louisiana admitted as the **18th state**
(exactly 9 years after the treaty signing)



LOUISIANA'S
OLD STATE CAPITOL



The 176-year-old statehouse has withstood war, fire, scandal, bitter debate, abandonment, and an occasional fistfight. Today, Louisiana's Old State Capitol, one of nine Secretary of State museums, now serves as a museum of political history. Through exhibitions and educational programming, Louisiana's Old State Capitol brings the stories of Louisiana and its people to life.

louisianaoldstatecapitol.org



Secretary of State Nancy Landry

Bought for a Song

A Young Nation Expands



The Louisiana Purchase at
Louisiana's Old State Capitol

April 14 — July 11, 2026

Why it Matters

At first, the United States only wanted New Orleans and access to the Mississippi River.

President **Thomas Jefferson** sent diplomats to France to try to buy the city and protect trade routes. But facing war and challenges overseas, **Napoleon Bonaparte**, First Consul of France, offered to sell all of the “La Louisiana” colony instead.

The United States agreed, turning a small deal into a historic moment.



For France, the sale reflected shifting priorities in its wars. For the United States, it opened the door for expansion. For Louisiana, it marked the start of a story that continues today.

France’s influence can still be seen across Louisiana in its language, food, music, and traditions.

About the Document

"Let the Land rejoice, for you have bought Louisiana for a Song."

*GEN. HORATIO GATES TO PRESIDENT THOMAS JEFFERSON
JULY 18, 1803*

The Louisiana Purchase includes three documents: the Treaty of Cession, and two Conventions that outline payment and debt terms.

The Old State Capitol is displaying one of the Conventions, outlining payments France owed its French citizens in the colony. The document, signed by Bonaparte, is on loan from the **National Archives and Records Administration** in Washington, D.C.

The document carries the official seal of Napoleon’s government. A ribbon and wax seal, designed to prevent tampering, are protected by a large skippet, and the velvet cover is embroidered with silver and gold thread and white silk appliqué.

Each nation kept its own official copy as proof of the treaty.

Today, the Louisiana Purchase is often called one of the greatest land deals in history—828,000 square miles for \$15 million, or about 4 cents per acre.

In today’s dollars, that equals about \$438 million, or \$1.17 per acre. In other words, the Louisiana Territory was “bought for a song.”

Designing the Deal

Used to verify authenticity, the skippet contains the seal of the French government impressed in wax.



The velvet cover is marked “PF” for *Peuple Français* (the French people).



The caduceus symbol, seen in the four corners of the document’s cover, represents commerce and negotiation.



The French exchange copy on display is signed by First Consul of France Napoleon Bonaparte.