



Bought for a Song:
A Young Nation Expands



1803-2026
Louisiana's Old State Capitol

In 1803, France changed the course of world history.

The Louisiana Purchase formalized the transfer of the Louisiana territory from France to the fledgling United States.

Signed under the authority of Napoléon Bonaparte, First Consul of France, the agreement doubled the size of the United States overnight and reshaped the political and cultural future of the nation.

Today, more than two centuries later, this document returns for the second time to the very state it helped define.

Why It Matters

The Louisiana Purchase was a moment of diplomacy, strategy, and global influence.

For France, the agreement reflected shifting priorities. For the United States, it created the possibility for Westward expansion. For Louisiana, it cemented a layered identity that still defines the region today.

The imprint of France still remains visible across Louisiana in language, cuisine, music, and traditions.

The Louisiana Purchase, then, represents a bridge between nations.



About This Document

On view courtesy of the Nation Archives in Washington, D.C., this document bears the official seal and authority of Napoléon's government. Exchange copies were formal diplomatic versions retained by each nation as proof of treaty. Today, the Louisiana Purchase represents one of the greatest real estate transactions in history, allotting 828,000 sq. miles of new territory to the United States of America for a mere \$15 million. In other words, the Louisiana Territory was "bought for a song."

A Shared Legacy

The Louisiana Purchase connected France and the United States in a way that still shapes Louisiana today. French influence is still woven into our architecture, our legal system, our food, our music, and even in the language spoken throughout the state.

If you are visiting from France, you are not simply touring an American state. While you are here, it is our greatest hope that we are your home away from home.