

3 Flags Festival

March 10-14, 2004 - St. Louis, Missouri

THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE BICENTENNIAL



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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The events in St. Louis forever shaped the future of the young United States in 1804. It started with a few strokes of the pen and a simple ceremony, officially completing the transfer of the Louisiana Territory to America.

LOUISIANA PURCHASE

In 1803, American President Thomas Jefferson sent statesmen James Monroe and Robert Livingston to France to negotiate for the purchase of New Orleans. Instead, France, strapped for cash, offered the entire Louisiana Territory. The United States purchased the territory for approximately \$15 million.

The territory stretched 828,000 square miles from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains, including all or parts of 13 modern states (Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota and Wyoming). The Louisiana Purchase brought with it new cultures, new citizens and vast natural resources.

As the purchase literally reshaped America, it also transformed the struggle over slavery, the nature of relations between Euro-Americans and Native Americans, the cultures and ethnicity of the American peoples, and the scope and complexity of the economy. The Missouri Compromise and the Dred Scott trial, held in St. Louis, emerged from the Louisiana Purchase and, ultimately, played roles in the American Civil War.

THREE FLAGS CEREMONY

The transfer of territory occurred in two stages. The Lower Louisiana Territory passed into American hands at a ceremony in New Orleans in December 1803. The United States then assumed control of the Upper Louisiana Territory, which eventually became 11 states, in a formal ceremony conducted in St. Louis March 9-10, 1804.

The changing of the flags flying over the colonial headquarters provided the clearest and most dramatic symbolism for the historic moment. The Spanish flag was lowered, accompanied by cannon salvos, and the French flag was raised. At the request of St. Louis' predominantly French residents, the French flag flew until the following morning, when the American flag was raised.

(more)

1804

1904

2004

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American explorer Meriwether Lewis crossed the Mississippi River from Cahokia, Ill., to attend the event and sign the transfer document as a witness. With the transaction complete, Lewis and William Clark assumed the monumental task of following the Missouri River westward. Their expedition created a rich trove of information about the peoples, geography, flora and fauna in the Upper Louisiana Territory.

TIMELINE

1762	France cedes Louisiana Territory to Spain in Treaty of Paris
1800	Spain secretly returns Louisiana Territory to France in Treaty of San Isle de fonso
1802	Cession of Louisiana Territory announced to United States Congress
April 30, 1803	United States buys the Louisiana Territory for \$15 million
July 4, 1803	Louisiana Purchase announced to the American people
November 30, 1803	Spain transfers Lower Louisiana, including New Orleans, to France
December 20, 1803	France transfers Lower Louisiana to the United States
March 9-10, 1804	Three Flags Ceremony in St. Louis; Spain transfers Upper Louisiana to France, which then transfers it to the United States
May 14, 1804	Lewis and Clark leave from Wood River, Ill., entering the newly acquired Louisiana Territory