

LOUISIANA: EUROPEAN EXPLORATIONS AND THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE
A SPECIAL PRESENTATION FROM THE GEOGRAPHY AND MAP DIVISION
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A Brief History of Louisiana to 1812

The Louisiana of today bears little resemblance to the vaguely defined territory acquired by the United States from France in 1803 for \$15 million. At the time of the Louisiana Purchase no one could present any maps or documents that delineated the boundaries of the province with reasonable accuracy. As a result of that uncertainty, the United States was more or less free to advance its claims beyond the Mississippi River on terms favorable to its own interests.

Louisiana as a province had a colorful and dramatic history in its roles as a European colony, a pawn in European diplomacy, and a territory coveted by the young United States. Over the centuries Louisiana has represented various possibilities to different interested nationalities—both geographically and politically. To the Spanish, Louisiana formed their northernmost borderland in an empire stretching from Buenos Aires to California. For the French, whose ambitions envisioned a North American colony encompassing the entire Mississippi Valley and the Great Lakes Region into Canada, Louisiana and its immense resources held out a great deal of promise, but in reality offered very little in return. For the British, Louisiana represented a challenge to Spain's authority in the Mississippi Valley.

Louisiana's boundaries periodically were shifted and redrawn to suit circumstances of empire. The first officially sanctioned geographic and political limits associated with the Louisiana Purchase were not laid down until the state of Louisiana was admitted to the union in 1812—the first state carved out of the Purchase as well as the first state west of the Mississippi.

The one prominent feature of Louisiana upon which all powers agreed as being both markedly fixed and of utmost significance for advancing national interests further west was the Mississippi River. The largest and most important river in North America, the Mississippi held the key to controlling the vast interior of the continent. Indeed, the boundaries of the Louisiana Purchase recognized today are formed by the western watershed of the Mississippi River in its entirety. Because diplomacy and accepted standards failed to define Louisiana in the early 19th century,

the Mississippi and its tributaries delimit it.

Spanish explorers sailed along Louisiana's coast as early as 1520 and encountered the Mississippi River for the first time on land in 1542. The Spanish, however, never gained a foothold in the region. Nearly a century and a half later, in 1682, the famous French explorer René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, descended the Mississippi to its mouth and by right of discovery promptly claimed the entire region for Louis XIV of France (reigned 1643-1715). Not long thereafter, in 1699, a permanent French colony was planted on the Gulf Coast. Proving unprofitable for the French Crown, control of the colony was transferred successively to the merchant Antoine Crozat and to the Scottish financier John Law. Under the latter, the colony experienced some development, such as the founding of New Orleans in 1718 and the introduction of slaves from Africa. In 1731, beset by Indian wars and continuing economic losses, the company returned Louisiana to Louis XV (reigned 1715-74), under whom it remained for the next three decades.

By secret treaty during the French and Indian War (1755-63) the French transferred Louisiana to Spain in 1762. The acquisition made Spain the controlling authority over the Mississippi River to its origins. Louisiana remained under Spanish rule until 1800, during which time it prospered, witnessing the germination of the vibrant cultural and artistic life for which the state is still known. During the American Revolution, Louisiana under Governor Bernardo de Gálvez aided the colonial cause against Britain by forwarding supplies to the insurgents via New Orleans and capturing key British posts in (the province of) British West Florida. In a 1795 treaty with Spain, the United States obtained rights to navigate the Mississippi River and use the port of New Orleans as a place of deposit for American commodities and transshipment on oceangoing vessels.

In 1800 Louisiana was ceded by Spain to France in the secret Treaty of San Ildefonso but regime change in the colony occurred slowly. The French leader Napoleon Bonaparte viewed Louisiana and the Mississippi Valley as the cornerstone of his new colonial empire in North America.

Spanish Intendant Juan Ventura Morales closed the port of New Orleans to American trade in the fall of 1802. The loss of those rights threatened commercial and political interests of Americans residing west of the Appalachians. As a result, the United States, which was beginning to assert its claims to the vast unknown lands beyond the Mississippi, was forced to negotiate for commercial privileges with a potential rival on the continent, Napoleonic France. Napoleon gave up plans for reestablishing the French empire in America, however, and sold Louisiana to the United States in 1803 for \$15 million in what became known as the Louisiana Purchase.

Spanish protests over the sale of Louisiana were ignored. The United States acted quickly over the next decade to extend the region as far as possible to the west and northwest. The United States sought to include West Florida within the Purchase, delimit Louisiana's borders to its advantage, define the terrain of the land, and govern Louisiana as a new territory with a view to creating new states within the union.

Realistic cartographic knowledge of the Louisiana territory in its entirety was lacking, however. Nonetheless, major segments of the area, particularly the Gulf Coast, the Mississippi River, and the Missouri River, had been unsystematically explored and mapped by the colonial powers since the 16th century. President Thomas Jefferson, an ardent exponent of American expansion and scientific exploration, lost no time in mounting the first federal expeditions to survey his new property.

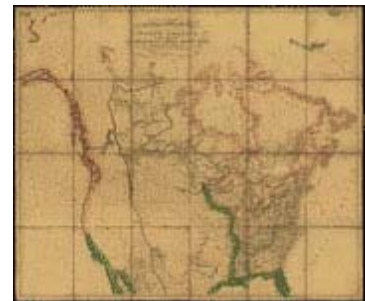
Nine years of territorial government under the administration of William C. C. Claiborne witnessed an uneasy transition from former colony to state. The majority of Louisiana's French Creole residents, resentful of an American intrusion into their affairs, opposed efforts by the United States to make Louisiana part of the federal fold. Spain meanwhile, justifiably feeling its presence in the Gulf Coast threatened, vehemently denied that the province of West Florida was part of the Louisiana Purchase. Within a decade, however, the region succumbed to American-instigated disputes and intrigue and it officially became part of the United States.

A Question of Boundaries

French and American representatives faced a vexing issue when they met in Paris in April 1803 to negotiate a treaty by which the United States would purchase the province of Louisiana from France. Since most of the territory to be exchanged had never been explored, surveyed, or mapped by any European nation or the United States, the negotiators were unable to include within the treaty any accurate delimitation or precise definition of the boundaries of Louisiana. Previous treaties transferring ownership of Louisiana between France and Spain never included any boundary delineation. For those reasons, no one knew what the Purchase meant in size, nor did anyone have a realistic conception of how its overall terrain should appear on a map.

All that the representatives knew was that the territory historically had been bordered on the south by the Gulf of Mexico and on the east by the Mississippi River between its mouth and its uncertain headwaters. Undeterred by the prospects of such a limitation, or perhaps inspired by the possibilities it offered, the American representatives agreed, according to the ambiguous language of the treaty of cession, to receive on behalf of the United States "the Colony or Province of Louisiana with the same extent it now has in the hands of Spain and that it had when France possessed it."

The negotiators presumably would have requested the most accurate and comprehensive map of the continent likely to be available in Paris at the time. One such candidate would have been Aaron Arrowsmith's 1802 *Map Exhibiting All the New Discoveries in the Interior Parts of North America*, which embodied the most modern geographic knowledge of North America prior to Lewis and Clark's expedition. By today's standards, this map leaves much to the imagination, particularly with regard to the vast region



Aaron Arrowsmith, A map exhibiting all the new discoveries in the interior parts of North America : inscribed by permission to the honourable governor and company of adventurers of England trading into Hudsons Bay in testimony of their liberal communications to their most obedient and very humble servant A. Arrowsmith, January 1st 1795. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3300 1802 .A7 Vault Casetop [About this image](#)

known as the Far West. Louisiana is no more than a nebulous entity, its only conspicuous boundary an unspecified segment of the Mississippi River.

At the time of the Purchase, both the United States and France presumed that the territory was made up of the Mississippi River, including the various French settlements along the full-length of its western bank; the Red River Valley as far as the frontier of the Spanish province of Texas; the Missouri River to undetermined limits; the town of New Orleans; and the Isle of Orleans—that piece of land bounded on the west by the Mississippi River, on the east by the Gulf of Mexico, and on the north, going from west to east, by Bayou Manchac, Lake Maurepas, Lake Pontchartrain, Lake Borgne, and the Mississippi Sound. More complicated was the small region known as Spanish West Florida, which was claimed by the United States as part of the treaty, a claim later challenged by France and Spain.

Even before Louisiana was acquired by the United States, President Thomas Jefferson began to press American claims farther afield. He asserted that Louisiana embraced all of the lands drained by the western tributaries of the Mississippi, including the far-flung and uncharted headwaters of the Missouri and the area drained by its northernmost tributaries, in addition to the West Florida. Jefferson also planned the first transcontinental expedition prior to the negotiations for Louisiana. Once the new territory became part of the nation, federally sponsored expeditions, guided largely by Jefferson's counsel, set about exploring and surveying it to define and describe Louisiana geographically; to expand the bounds of the territory as far to the Southwest, the West, and the North as far as possible; and to make the region's lands and peoples subject to the authority of the United States. Those efforts produced the first reasonably accurate delineations of the American West and began to give formal shape to the boundaries of the new territory.

The first printed map depicting the topography of the Louisiana Purchase was published in 1804 in an atlas by Aaron Arrowsmith. All of the American maps within the atlas, including the one identified simply as *Louisiana*, were drawn by the American cartographer and draftsman,

Samuel Lewis. Arrowsmith and Lewis based their product upon the best information at hand. Their representation of the upper Mississippi and Missouri basins, for example, was borrowed from a groundbreaking map of the American West drawn in St. Louis in 1795 by French engineer Pierre Antoine Souldard. *Louisiana*, however, included several readily evident errors and blank spaces, among them being a South Fork of the Platte River which extends far south into present-day New Mexico; the omission of the great Colorado River of the West, still awaiting discovery by the United States; an uncertain source of the Mississippi; the Rocky Mountains portrayed too far to the west and in a single broken chain; and a minimized Columbia River system.



Aaron Arrowsmith and Samuel Lewis, Louisiana, 1804. From their New and Elegant General Atlas, Philadelphia, 1804, plate 55. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4050 1805 .L4 TIL
[About this image](#)

Once federal explorations of the West were underway, it was only a matter of time before their newly uncovered wealth of information found cartographic expression. One of the earliest commercially issued maps to incorporate data from the famed 1804 transcontinental expedition of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark appeared in an atlas issued by Philadelphia publisher Matthew Carey in 1814. The map, also drawn by Samuel Lewis, depicts the *Missouri Territory Formerly Louisiana*, which was organized in 1812, the year that the first state Louisiana was created out of the Louisiana Purchase area (the Missouri Territory comprised the remaining lands). The "probable north boundary of the Missouri Territory," is at odds with British claims to the Pacific Northwest—in fact, the "probable" northern and southern boundaries appearing on *Missouri Territory Formerly Louisiana* correctly intimate that the United States had assumed years of border disputes with Spain and Great Britain.



Matthew Carey, Missouri Territory formerly Louisiana, 1814. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4050 1814 .C3 TIL
[About this image](#)

Within two decades of the Purchase, official boundaries had been realized either through treaty or annexation. The first major adjustment occurred in 1810, when a revolt in that part of Louisiana known as Spanish West Florida—today the Louisiana parishes east of the Mississippi River and of Lake Pontchartrain, led the United States to annex the territory from the Mississippi to the Pearl River.

After 1815 the United States concluded treaties with both Great Britain and Spain. As a result of the treaty with Britain, the 49th parallel from the Lake of the Woods (along the present border of Minnesota and Canada) to the continental divide of the Rocky Mountains was established as the northern boundary of the Louisiana Purchase, and the United States gained territorial rights to the Pacific Coast. Under the terms of the 1821 Adams-Onís Treaty, also known as the Transcontinental Treaty, Spain ceded East Florida—an area of Florida extending east of the Apalachicola River to the Atlantic Ocean—to the United States. The treaty set the western boundary of Louisiana along the Sabine and Red rivers which separate Texas and Louisiana, then north along the 100th meridian to the Arkansas River—which it followed westward to its source in the Rockies, then north to the 42nd north latitude, and on a line then west to the Pacific Ocean. An undated subsequent edition of *Missouri Territory Formerly Louisiana* by Carey and Lewis, probably published after 1818, has been amended by hand in watercolor to record some of the treaty adjustments.



Matthew Carey, Missouri Territory formerly Louisiana, 1814. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4050 1814 .C31 TIL
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By 1823, when the last bonds issued in Great Britain and the Netherlands for financing the purchase were paid off with interest by the United States Treasury, the total spent for Louisiana amounted to \$23,313,567.73. As if sympathetic to President Jefferson’s assertions, the boundaries of Louisiana expanded and adjusted over time until they eventually stretched from the Gulf of Mexico to British America (present-day Canada) and from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains. Today the lands constituting the Louisiana Purchase are estimated to

cover between 850,000 to 885,000 square miles. Areas once part of Louisiana form six states in their entirety: Arkansas, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma; most of the states of Louisiana, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado; and sections of New Mexico and Texas. At the time of the Purchase, small segments of the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan also were presumed part of the transaction.



Boundaries of the Louisiana Purchase as recognized today.

European Explorations and Encounters

Early Spanish Interests

Louisiana's coast and the mouth of the Mississippi River were observed by the Spanish as early as 1519. Just over 20 years later the Spanish explorer Francisco Vázquez de Coronado and his party became the first Europeans to venture into the part of the region that was acquired in the Louisiana Purchase. Coronado and his men journeyed north out of Mexico as far as present-day Nebraska, which they probably reached in 1541. Two years earlier another team of Spanish explorers, headed by Hernando de Soto, began to penetrate the southeastern interior of what is now the United States, and in 1541 became the first Europeans to officially sight the Mississippi River inland. Following Soto's death in June 1542 and his subsequent burial in the Mississippi, his followers wandered through Texas and Louisiana, finally returning to the river and descending to the Gulf of Mexico by way of the river's mouth. Soto's expedition laid the groundwork for later Spanish claims to the entire Southeast.



Antonio Arredondo, Descripcion Geografica, de la parte que los Espanoles poseen Actualmente en el Continente de la Florida . . . , 1742 / 1914. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3860 1742 .A7 1914 TIL Vault [About this image](#)

In search of rumored material wealth but encountering mainly privations, the surviving members of the Soto expedition who returned to Spain carried with them valuable firsthand information. This information was included in [Gacilaso de la Vega's *La Florida del Inca*](#), a 1605 publication recounting the Soto expedition through Florida and southeastern North America. The observations of the region's terrain and inhabitants also appeared on what is the only surviving contemporary, and possibly the first, cartographic representation of the lower Mississippi Valley and the interior of the present-day United States as seen by a party of European explorers. Many details from that manuscript map, compiled around 1544 in Seville by Spanish royal cartographer Alonso de Santa Cruz, appeared on *La Florida*.

This map was included by the Flemish cartographer and publisher, Abraham Ortelius, in the 1584 edition of his monumental atlas, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*.

Besides illustrating the same region and relying on similar outlines of the coasts, both the manuscript map and its printed offspring contain many equivalent names. There are 22 Native-American villages on *La Florida*; some reportedly visited by the Soto party. All the villages are represented pictorially and identified by name, a few of them still recognizable, such as "Tascalisa" (Tuscaloosa) and "Chiacha" (Choctaw). The appearance of the Mississippi River on *La Florida* ("Rio del Spirito Santo," or River of the Holy Spirit) is the earliest reference to the Mississippi River on a printed map. The unnatural manner in which the other rivers branch and link reflect a European misinterpretation of geographic information, particularly distances and travel networks, as understood and provided by Native American informants.



Alonso de Santa Cruz, [Map del Golfo y costa de la Nueva España], 1572. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call Number: G3860 1572 .S3 Vault : Low 60 [photostat of an original in the Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Spain] [About this image](#)



Abraham Ortelius, *La Florida*. Auctore Hieron. Chiaves, 1584. [From Ortelius' *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, Antwerp, 1584.] Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3290 1584 .07 Vault [About this image](#)

French Canada Explores the Mississippi River Valley

Although French *coureurs de bois* (illegal traders) are believed to have reached the northern Mississippi River by 1659, official exploration of the Mississippi commenced in 1665 with the appointment of Jean-Baptiste Talon as intendant (chief civil administrator) of New France. Talon resolved to expand French governmental control over the Great Lakes Region. He engaged an expedition to locate and survey the fabled Great River, or Father of Waters, rumored to flow through the American interior either into the Gulf of California or the Pacific Ocean to the west, or into the Gulf of Mexico in the south. Firsthand knowledge of the river and charts of its course gave New France a definite advantage in its contest with Great Britain and Spain for rule over North America. A chain of forts and trading posts extending from the lower reaches of the river to the St. Lawrence stemmed the advance of the English, already established at Hudson's Bay and along the Atlantic seaboard.

Once France had officially declared sovereignty over virtually all of North America in 1671, Talon was ready to dispatch his expedition for exploring and mapping the Mississippi Valley. As its leader he chose the French Canadian surveyor, cartographer, and explorer Louis Joliet, who was accompanied by Jacques Marquette, a Jesuit missionary and scholar of Indian languages. They embarked in May 1673, and following the course of the Wisconsin River, reached the Great River on June 17, exactly one month later.

Talon's successor, Louis de Buade, le comte de Frontenac et de Palluau, became the expedition's patron. Joliet called the Great River "Riviere Buade" in honor of the governor's family name. This map is based upon the one that Joliet prepared from memory following the journey. Although the expedition never descended beyond the mouth of the Arkansas River, the map displays an



Louis Joliet, Nouvelle Decouverte de Plusieurs Nations Dans la Nouvelle France en L'annee 1673 et 1674, 1674. [Facsimile from *The Jesuit Relations*, vol. 59, opp. p. 86.] Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3300 1674 .J6 1896 TIL [About this image](#)

assumed rendering of the "Riviere Buade" all the way to the Gulf of Mexico.

In addition to having deduced the Mississippi's course to the south, Marquette and Jolliet first reported on the Missouri River, which they called by its Native American name, Pekitanoui, or Muddy River. Marquette, in his memoir, erroneously proposed the Missouri as a route to the Pacific Ocean. The first published depiction of the discoveries of Marquette and Jolliet appeared in a map drawn by the French traveler and writer, M elchis edech Th evenot, to accompany a printed version of Marquette's narrative included in Th evenot's *Recueil de Voyages* in 1681.



M elchis edech Th evenot, Carte de la decouverte faite l'an 1673 dans l'Amerique Septentrionale, 1681. From his *Recueil de Voyages de Mr. M elchisdec Th evenot . . .*, Paris, 1681. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G159 .T38 05022117 General coll
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One year after Th evenot's map provided the Western world with its initial view of the Mississippi River, La Salle took formal possession of the Mississippi Valley for France and moved towards his goal of building a French commercial and military empire stretching from the St. Lawrence Seaway to the Gulf of Mexico. At a time when French energies and finances were devoted to wars in Europe rather than colonies in America, La Salle's confidence gained the support of Governor Frontenac and the endorsement of the French Crown for erecting forts in western New France and profiting from a monopoly in hides.



Robert Cavalier de la Salle, profile, facing left, n.d.. Engraved for the Magazine of American History from a photograph of the original painting. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-5545]
[About this image](#)

Despite setbacks that would have discouraged a less audacious man, La Salle pursued his quixotic agenda by bold means. An enemy of Canadian fur traders and Jesuits, he was befriended by the indomitable soldier and explorer Henri de Tonti. With Tonti, the priests Zenobius Membr e and Louis Hennepin, and a group of French and Canadian woodsmen, laborers, and Native Americans, La Salle entered the Mississippi in early February 1682 and reached its mouth

three months later.

In order to sustain what tenuous hold La Salle and France had on the lower Mississippi Valley, a fort and colony needed to be established at the river's mouth to guard against English or Spanish intrusions. La Salle repaired to France to seek the crown's support. Realizing that royal patronage would be withheld if his colony could not be proven economically viable, he was forced to compromise the integrity of his project, falsifying the geography of the river's course. La Salle described its mouth as being far west of its true location by about 8 degrees of longitude, or roughly 500 miles, where it would serve as an ideal location for staging incursions into Spanish settlements and attacks on the silver mines of northern Mexico.



J. B. L. Franquelin, Carte de la Louisiane ou des voyages du S[ieu]r de la Salle . . . 1684. [Facsimile from *The Jesuit Relations*, vol. 63.] Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3300 1684 .F7 1896 TIL
[About this image](#)



J. B. L. Franquelin, Amerique Septentrion[ale], 1686. [Manuscript copy of an original in the *Bibliothèque du Depôt des Cartes et Plans de la Marine, Paris.*] Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3300 1686 .F7 Vault
[About this image](#)



J. B. L. Franquelin, Carte de l'Amérique septentrionale, 1688. [Manuscript copy of an original in the *Bibliothèque du Depôt des Cartes et Plans de la Marine, Paris.*] Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3300 1688 .F Vault : Oversized
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La Salle's fraudulence manifested itself in a famous 1684 manuscript map. Subsequent maps by Jean Baptiste Louis Franquelin, such as his 1686 map, continued to depict the Mississippi's terminus inaccurately, while a more elaborate 1688 map incorporated new information, yet was based heavily upon its predecessors.

Having gained French support for his project, La Salle attempted to return to the Mississippi by way of the Gulf Coast in 1684-85, but his ships missed the mouth of the river and the expedition landed at Matagorda Bay, Texas. Two years of starvation and disease followed and subsequently a mutiny took his life. La Salle failed to establish a permanent colony in the lower Mississippi Valley but he did plant French claims over the vast region that eventually became the Louisiana Purchase.

Louisiana as a French Colony

Difficult Early Years of the Colony

From its inception Louisiana faced an inauspicious existence. Its fate was bound to the French economy during the last years of the reign of Louis XIV. Already a vast empire, the French government and its highly centralized bureaucracy disfavored policies that would have nurtured the economic independence of its colonies. Further, the French treasury, depleted by wars in Europe, was unable to finance adequately the Department of the Marine, which oversaw colonial operations.

Although all French colonies were subject to the same desperate circumstances, the Mississippi colony, as the newest in the French imperial system, fared the worst. This 1701 map by Nicholas de Fer depicts the colony in its infant stages, a period when Louisiana's settlers were neglected by the government and left entirely to their own resources. Lured by promises of mines and gold, most of the early settlers made little effort to hunt or plant crops. Few farms developed along the banks of the Mississippi or along the sandy coast. Since the



Nicholas de Fer, Les costes aux environs de la Riviere de Misisipi. Découvertes par Mr. de la Salle en 1683. Et reconues par Mr. le Chevallier d'Iberville en 1698. et 1699, 1701. From his L'Atlas curieux . . ., Paris, 1700-05. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4042.M5 1701 .F4 Vault : Low 251 [About this image](#)

earliest settlers were never furnished with adequate food supplies, they frequently resorted to scavenging for crabs, crayfish, and seeds of wild grasses. Whenever possible they traded blankets and utensils for corn and game with the surrounding Native American tribes. Disease, particularly yellow fever, diminished the community. Floods, storms, humidity, mosquitoes, and poisonous snakes added to the misery. Although few settlers escaped the hardships, by far the sturdiest members were those who had accompanied Iberville from Canada.

Having maintained direct control over its Mississippi colony for 13 unprofitable years, the French court held less than sanguine prospects for its future development. In an effort to instill vitality into Louisiana, King Louis XIV granted a proprietary charter on September 14, 1712, to the merchant and nobleman, Antoine Crozat. The royal charter afforded Crozat exclusive control over all trading and commercial privileges within the colony for a 15-year period. Crozat gained a monopoly over all foreign and domestic trade, the right to appoint all local officials, permission to work all mines, title to all unoccupied lands, control over agricultural production and manufacture, and sole authority over the African slave trade. In return he was obligated to send two ships of supplies and settlers annually and to govern the colony in accordance with French laws and customs.

The colony could neither be governed adequately nor profited from. Estimates placed Crozat's losses in Louisiana at just under 1 million French livres (about \$1 billion). Unable to sustain the colony any longer, in August 1717 he petitioned the king and his ministers for release from his charter.

Crozat's failure to turn Louisiana to his financial advantage once more made the colony a ward of the crown. In September 1717 the Regent of France, Philippe, duke of Orléans, fearing that the province would again drain his country's already bankrupt treasury, placed its fortunes into



Louis XIV, King of France, Lettres Patentes du Roy, Qui permettent au Sieur Crozat Secretaire du Roy, de faire feul le Commerce dans toutes les Terres possedées par le Roy, & bornées par le nouveau Mexique & autres, 1712. Printed document, 8 pp. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Manning F. Force Papers, Peter Force Collection, Series 8D, no. 49.
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the hands of John Law, a Scottish investment banker.

Law cultivated a childhood talent for equations and games of chance into a career as a financier. His Company of the West, more commonly known as the Mississippi Company, was granted a 25-year proprietorship with a commercial monopoly over the colony, along lines similar to those furnished Crozat. A year earlier Law had made his reputation in Paris by founding a private bank with powers to issue paper money. So successful was his venture that the regent had it chartered as the Royal Bank of France.

Seeing an opportunity to simultaneously pay off the public debt and develop Louisiana by using the bank's deposits, Law also offered his company's shares to the public. The Company of the West later merged with the French East India Company and several trading concessions to form the Company of the East, which became responsible for managing the collection of revenues and taxes. The company's stock soared in value, the bank continued to print money, shareholders indulged in their newfound paper wealth, and Law became the toast of France. Law himself fueled the frenzy by having ingots of gold, advertised as being from the mines of Louisiana, displayed in the shop windows of Paris.

Promotional literature, much of it including maps of Louisiana, added to Law's inflated reputation as a financier par excellence and roused interest in his plans for developing and settling New France. A singular example of such propaganda was the map produced in 1718 by the noted French cartographer Guillaume Delisle. A milestone in North American cartography,



Seeking instant fortunes, peasants and nobles from all over France jammed the Rue Quincampoix, otherwise known as "The Street of Speculators," before the offices of the Mississippi Company in Paris. Investors mortgaged estates in an effort to purchase 100-par shares of John Law's stocks, which at one point were valued at \$3600 apiece. Only those few who had managed to turn their stock into solid value were saved from ruin.

Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Photograph Collection. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Reproduction number: LC-USE6-D-009367

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incorporating the latest topographical information about the region, the map was designed chiefly for mercantile reasons.

The wild speculative orgy that had inflated the company's stock to ethereal levels burst in 1720, when Law's organization was forced into bankruptcy by reports of mismanagement and dire hardships in the colony. The failure of the company took down its chief creditor, the Bank of France, and financial ruin descended upon thousands of investors on the continent, including John Law, who was run out of Paris by a mob. After several reorganizations and years of financial reverses incurred in managing affairs in Louisiana, the directors of the Company of the East returned the colony to Louis XIV in 1731.



Guillaume Delisle, Carte de la Louisiane et du Cours du Mississipi . . . , Paris, 1718. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. G3700 1718 .L5 Vault : Low 288 [About this image](#)

Bienville and the Founding of New Orleans

Despite the unwillingness of French citizens to leave France for Louisiana, Law's company was obliged to populate the colony with new citizens. Arrangements were made with the government to force inmates of prisons, asylums, and houses of corrections to emigrate. In an effort to improve the quality—and quantity—of its colonists, the company resorted to furnishing large land grants to wealthier Europeans who promised to settle the grants with their families.

Later, the Company of the East agreed to pay emigration expenses and furnish each family with livestock, supplies, and food. Between 1717 and 1722 several thousand families and individuals from the German Rhineland, Switzerland, and the Low Countries (the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg)—the countries on low-lying land around the delta of the Rhine and Meuse rivers—took up residence in settlements along the Mississippi just above New Orleans in an area that soon became known as [La Côte des Allemands, or the German Coast](#). These settlers were industrious farmers and their efforts laid the basis for agriculture in Louisiana.

Law's scheme ultimately advanced the crown's desire to populate Louisiana by transporting émigrés from France and elsewhere to settlements along the Gulf Coast and Mobile, as well as to other locales in the lower Mississippi Valley. If the population were to expand, however, so would the need for providing them with an adequate and well-founded seat of local government, preferably at a location that controlled transportation and communications along the Mississippi River.

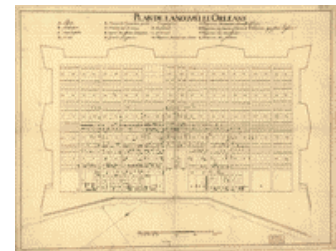
Possibly the most ardent proponent of establishing a permanent capital for Louisiana was Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville. For many years Bienville had in mind a proper site for a capital. This site lay on a slightly elevated tract of land at a bend of the Mississippi closest to Lake Pontchartrain. This location also commanded a handsome view of approaching ships from the east bank of the river. When Bienville was reinstated as governor of the colony, he was authorized in 1717 to establish his capital and trading post on the banks of the river.

Wanting to name the seed of his city in honor of the company's friend and patron, the duke of Orleans, he called it *La Nouvelle-Orléans*, or New Orleans.

A year after its founding, New Orleans consisted of a few dwellings and storehouses by the riverbank, vulnerable to perennial flooding despite feeble protection afforded by a levee, drainage ditches, and a moat. After its destruction by a hurricane in 1719, the city's site was reassessed by engineer Le Blond de La Tour. Despite his adverse appraisal, work continued under the assistant engineer, Adrien de Pauger, who properly surveyed the land and oversaw the construction of the first four blocks in 1720. Probably within a year de Pauger prepared plans for a more permanent city. His plan of



Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, half-length portrait, standing, facing slightly left. Engraved by J.C. Buttre from a portrait in the possession of J.D.B. De Bow, Esq., copied from the original in the family of Baron Grant of Longueil, Canada. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-100821 [About this image](#)



Adrien de Pauger and Le Blond de la Tour, Plan de la Nouvelle Orleans, ca. 1720. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4014 .N5 1722 .P51 Vault [About this image](#)

New Orleans may have been a collaborative design between the two engineers, who had already established the settlement at New Biloxi.

Census figures for New Orleans in 1721 reveal that within three years of its founding the town's population stood at 372 persons, including 147 men, 65 women, 38 children, 28 servants, 73 African slaves, and 21 Native Americans. To this day, New Orleans remains a community defined by its heterogeneous mixture of races and bound by longstanding cultural affinities.

With the relocation of the capital to New Orleans, the colony of Louisiana acquired the beginnings of permanence. New France, until then consisting entirely of Canada, acquired a southern component worthy of its equal at the opposite end of the Mississippi Valley. Imperial France, by attempting to establish a firm presence at the mouth of the Mississippi, had in effect taken the first steps towards uniting defenses and communications from Quebec to New Orleans and was in a position to command access to the Great Plains and beyond.

Hostilities on the Frontier

By the 1720s the Native Americans of the lower Mississippi Valley were beginning to resent openly the growing European presence in their tribal homelands. During the early period of French settlement of what is present-day Louisiana, the area was inhabited by six Native American linguistic groups—the Caddoan, Tunican, Atakapan, Chitimachan, Muskogean, and Natchezan. Each group was composed of a number of different tribes and each resided within a separate region of the colony. Although the many tribes differed in traditions, languages, religion, and customs, they also shared many similarities. Most tribes lived along the banks of lakes and rivers, upon which they could travel for trade in foodstuffs and finished products, as well as communicate in the regional dialect of Mobilian. They supported themselves by hunting, fishing, gathering, agriculture, and trade.

At first, the French were able to cultivate relatively friendly relations with the various Louisiana

tribes. However, as more French settlers began to encroach on lands occupied by Native Americans, colonial administrators were faced with the dilemma of maintaining good relations with the tribes while satisfying growing demands of their colonists for arable lands.

In general, the Native American policy of Bienville's successor, Étienne Boucher de la Périer de Salvert, disfavored tribal ownership of property. As the nine Natchez villages occupied some of the most desirable lands in the colony, the situation was ripe for conflict. The French



Alexandre Debatz, Coupe et profil de la Redoute de Rosalie au Natchez [Mississippi] prise sur la ligne A.B. au lieu le 11 may 1732. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3984.N2:2F6A35 1732 .B2 Vault
[About this image](#)

engaged in three wars with the Natchez Indians. In 1729 full-scale conflict erupted between the French and the Natchez when Périer unwisely supported a punitive order given by the commandant of Fort Rosalie to force the Natchez from their village of White Apple and abandon all adjoining lands under cultivation. The fort, erected by the French in 1716 on the bluffs of the Mississippi, overlooked the Great Village and its surrounding fields.

The Natchez responded out of desperation with a brutal massacre on November 26, 1729, killing about 250 settlers of the region, including the commandant of the post, and enslaving 300 others. Additional tribes from other parts of the colony joined the uprising. A combined force of mostly French and Choctaws mobilized for a counterattack on the Natchez. After being routed, the Natchez withdrew to defenses and managed to fend off their opponents until early 1731, when they were driven out and either killed or captured and sold into slavery. The few who escaped ultimately became assimilated with other tribes, such as the Chickasaw. As a result of the war, the Natchez nation was driven to extinction.

In early 1731 Louisiana found itself once again a dependent of the French Crown. King Louis XV (reigned 1715-74) and his ministers immediately turned to Bienville, making him the royal governor of the province. Upon his return in 1733 Bienville faced a growing threat from the

Chickasaw Indians, who occupied the western parts of the present-day states of Kentucky and Tennessee.

Chickasaw resistance to French rule dated to 1720, when the French set their Choctaw allies against the Chickasaw for having established trade ties with the English in the Mississippi Valley. To Bienville's dismay, the Chickasaw provided refuge to members of the Natchez tribe who had survived the punitive expeditions under Governor P rier, and, to the further detriment of the French, had rejected renewed demands for ceasing their trade with the British. When the Chickasaw refused an order to surrender the remaining Natchez rebels, Bienville went to war.



Bienville's strategy for fighting the Chickasaw included strengthening his forces with auxiliary Native American troops. A 1743 manuscript map, compiled and drawn by French military engineers and draftsmen, shows that he also constructed forts at key points on the southeastern frontier and developed lines of communication and movement between tribes supportive of the French.

**Broutin, Saucier, et al.,
Carte Particuliere d'une
partie de la Louisianne . .
. ., 1743. Geography and
Map Division, Library of
Congress. Call number:
G4010 1743 .D4 Vault
[About this image](#)**

For years the French waged an unsuccessful war of vengeance against the fierce and well-defended Chickasaw. Major military campaigns undertaken in 1736, 1739, and 1752 resulted in either defeat for the French or inconclusive results. By the end of French rule over Louisiana, the Chickasaw remained unvanquished.

The Indian wars of P rier and Bienville resulted in economic and military difficulties in the colony. Trade and currency reforms instituted in the early 1730s failed to revive Louisiana's sluggish economy. By the end of the decade, natural disasters combined with a shortage of currency, led to a decline in agricultural production and export trade. As a result, the quality of life further diminished for a population whose ranks were already thinned by yellow fever

epidemics and decreasing immigration.

Louisiana under Vaudreuil and Kerlérec

Bienville's failure to subdue the Chickasaws decisively resulted in his declining fortunes. Weariness and old age ultimately led him to draft his letter of resignation as governor in March 1742. Bienville sailed for France in mid-August 1743, never to return to the colony. The "Father of Louisiana," who had spent 40 of his 65 years promoting the growth and development of the province, retired in Paris, where he died in obscurity in 1768.

Bienville's successor was Pierre François de Rigaud Cavagnal, marquis de Vaudreuil, a Quebec native, who ruled the colony from 1743 to 1752. Vaudreuil is remembered more for his penchant for lavish entertainment than for his accomplishments as a colonial governor. Nonetheless, he also implemented several programs to stimulate trade, ameliorate the colony's shortage of currency, develop the town of New Orleans, improve roads and levees, and reduce crime and drunkenness.

Louisiana had not yet achieved self-sufficiency in the production of staple crops by the 1750s, although Vaudreuil encouraged agricultural development. Colonists continued to grow small amounts of food crops—corn, rice, and vegetables—and tend livestock for personal consumption. They also produced nonedible agricultural goods such as tobacco, indigo, wax, and silk for both domestic use and export. Small levels of industry and trade provided the population with only the basic necessities of life.

New Orleans, the provincial capital, remained a magnet for the criminals, prostitutes, gamblers, and vagabonds who were shipped out of France. Vaudreuil, in his efforts to curb public



Pierre Francois de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil, half-length portrait, facing left, n.d. From an engraving after the original painting. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-110256
[About this image](#)

drunkenness, introduced strict regulations governing the distribution and sale of liquors.

In 1752 the French government rewarded Vaudreuil with a promotion to the office of governor general of Canada. Louis Billouart, chevalier de Kerlérec, also of noble and aristocratic extraction, but disciplined by many years of service as an officer in the French navy, became governor of Louisiana.

Kerlérec served as governor of Louisiana until 1763 and the French and Indian War (1755-63) was fought during his administration. His actions as governor reflected an overall concern for protecting French interests against British advances on the colony. He held the southern Native Americans, especially the Choctaws, in allegiance to France by gaining their confidence and supplying them with better weapons and provisions. For his services to their tribe, the Choctaws bestowed upon Kerlérec the title "Father of Choctaws."

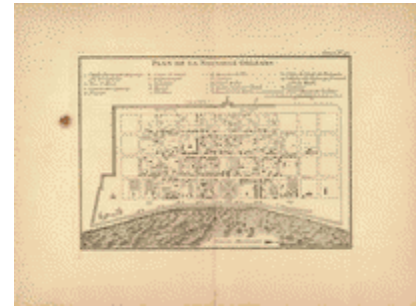
Kerlérec improved colonial defenses by constructing a palisade around New Orleans and rebuilding batteries, such as the one at English Turn on the Mississippi River. A beautifully drawn [manuscript map by French architect, Alexandre de Batz](#), illustrates an earlier design for the fort, whose planning and initial construction were undertaken by Governor Vaudreuil in preparation for a possible attack on New Orleans by the British navy.

In 1762 Kerlérec conferred upon the firm of Maxent, Laclede and Company a grant to trade with the Native American tribes on the Missouri River. Pierre Laclede Liguist began constructing his new trading post in February 1764 at a choice location on the west bank of the Mississippi, just below the mouth of the Missouri. In April 1764 the new settlement was named St. Louis, in honor of Louis IX, king of France (reigned 1226-70).

By the middle of the 18th century France had established a strong presence in the central Gulf Coast region, deflecting Spanish influence on the coast towards the east in Florida and in the west in Northern Mexico. The populace took advantage of the commercial and agricultural



Alexandre Debatz, Carte Generale de toute la côte de la Louisiane jusqu'a La Baye St. Bernard. . . , 1747. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3862.C6 1747 .B2 Vault [About this image](#)



Jacques Nicolas Bellin, Plan de la Nouvelle Orleans, 1764. From his Petite Atlas Maritime, Paris, 1764, vol. 1, plate 45. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. G1059 .B45 1764 Vault [About this image](#)

benefits afforded by proximity to the Mississippi River and settled along its banks. Another striking manuscript map by Alexandre de Batz displays a strong French presence throughout the lower Mississippi Valley and the Gulf Coast region, where numerous settlements protected the vast interior known as “La Louisiane.”

Although still allowing room for additional growth, the town of New Orleans and the properties it comprised were in the process of being developed and occupied as control of the province was passing from French to Spanish rule.

The Lively Arts in Colonial and Territorial Louisiana

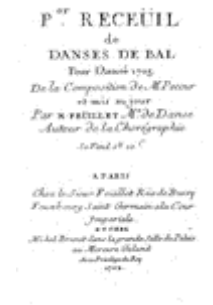
During his term as governor in New Orleans the marquis de Vaudreuil ushered in a tradition of performing arts and culture. He beguiled his colonists with balls and ostentatious displays of pomp and power.

Elaborate state dinners were frequently held. Food in New Orleans was inexpensive and plentiful for Louisiana’s French aristocracy; most game for these "court" banquets were supplied by the Native Americans who lived and hunted just outside of town.

These fetes were incongruous in New Orleans, as this was a little frontier settlement, with rough manners, unpaved and unlit streets, and very small population of so-called socially acceptable inhabitants. Nonetheless, these evenings set the *mode de vie* which became the norm for society. Presently, these occasions are still manifested in the elaborate Mardi Gras, or Carnival season, and in the strictly formal balls given throughout the winter season, ending with the onset of Lent.

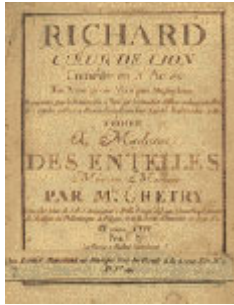
Perhaps the most celebrated of the marquis's entertainments was the first theatrical performance presented in the province of Louisiana--a tragedy called *The Indian Father*, written in blank verse by Le Blanc de Villeneuve, an officer of the garrison.¹ The performance was held in early 1753 at the governor's mansion, and was performed by members of the marquis's entourage.

The first theater in New Orleans, which opened in 1792, was officially and popularly named *Le Spectacle de la Rue Saint-Pierre*. Founded by a company of French and Canadian actors--refugees from Santo Domingo--the theater soon became known as *Le Théâtre de Saint-Pierre*. In 1796 the theater presented a one-act opera, *Silvain* (1770), by André Ernest Modeste Grétry. The composer was the rage of Paris, both before and after the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror. In 1806 the theater presented Grétry's three-act opera, *Richard Coeur de Lion* (1784).



Pages from a Dancing Master's instruction manual of 1703 as would have been used at the Court of Louis XIV. Per RECUEIL / de DANSES DE BAL / Pour l'Année 1703. / De la Composition de M. Pecour / et mis au jour / Par M. Feüillet Me de Danse / Auteur de la Chorégraphie, Paris, Le sieur Feüillet [etc.] 1702. Music Division, Library of Congress. Dance instruction manuals. Call number: GV1590 .F53

[About this image](#)



Ernest Modeste Grétry, Title page from his Richard coeur de lion used in the original New Orleans productions, 1784. Music Division, Library of Congress. Call number: M1503.G837 R52 [About this image](#)



Ernest Modeste Grétry, Title page from his Silvain used in the original New Orleans productions, 1770. Music Division, Library of Congress. Call number: M1500.G8 S3 [About this image](#)

New Orleans was the site of the fully staged grand opera. Since 1796 the city has given the North American premieres of more than 150 operas by more than 65 composers.² During the first years of opera in New Orleans, performers were still divided between professionals and amateurs.

The roster of French and American artists then in *Nouvelle-Orléans* included the native-born composer, Philippe Laroque. Laroque wrote three operas for *Le Théâtre de Saint-Pierre*: *La jeune mere*, *Nicodeme dans la Lune*, and *Pauvre Jacque*. The latter opera was commissioned and composed explicitly for the final night's performance at the theater on Saint Peter Street, with the composer conducting. No music has been located for any of Laroque's operas. He also composed the very dramatic piano solo, *The Hero of New Orleans / Battle of the memorable 8th of January 1815*, music reminiscent of the biblical sonata of Johann Kuhnau, *Il*



Philippe Laroque, The Hero of New Orleans / Battle of the memorable 8th of January 1815, Philadelphia, 1815. Music Division, Library of Congress. Call number: M1 .A1 L 2003697550 [About this image](#)

combattimento à David e Goliath.

Of the Frenchmen who contributed to the development of the performing arts in the Louisiana Territory, Jean-Baptiste Francisqui [Francisque, Francisquy] was one of the most important. Considered the most gifted and prolific of the French dancer-choreographers to immigrate to the United States, he is directly credited with bringing classical ballet to the opera in New Orleans.

Until he immigrated to the United States, Francisqui danced with the Paris Opera Ballet. He traveled and performed extensively in the Caribbean and on the East Coast of the United States as well as in the Spanish colony of Louisiana. An 18th-century playbill dated September 3, 1799, shows that Francisqui performed at the “New Orleans theatre on St Pierre Street.”³ Francisqui not only founded the city’s opera-ballet company, but became one of the very early directors at *Le Spectacle de la Rue Saint-Pierre*. When the theater closed, he took the company on tours to the East Coast and to Havana, Cuba. Not only did Francisqui introduce classical dancing to New Orleans, he helped prepare the city for the eventual appearance and enthusiastic acceptance of later artists.

New Orleans was hospitable to music, dance, theater, and opera, as well as to painting and literature. Music in particular drew inspiration from the rich blend of French and African traditions available in Louisiana. The musical influences that combined the mostly classically schooled French musicians of south Louisiana and the more informal developments in the folk music of the Acadians from Nova Scotia also added elements from the French/Caribbean and a very hybridized African style. Some people contend that the modern musical genre known as jazz came directly from those musical elements fused in New Orleans.

Contest for Sovereignty over the Mississippi Valley Frontier in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

The Mississippi Valley was an object of international ambitions and rivalries for over a century,

from approximately the time of its initial occupation by the French in 1682 until the defeat of British forces at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815. For most of that period, the valley was associated with Canadian interests under France and then subjected to various stages of rule under Spain, Great Britain, and the United States. The incomparable significance of the Mississippi and its adjoining lands for both commercial and military purposes was not lost on any of those nations.

Early European Designs on the Mississippi Valley

Great Britain's claims to the Mississippi dated from her initial explorations of the New World during the late 15th-century expeditions of the Italian navigator John Cabot. Cabot sailed under the flag of England and claimed the entire landmass in the name of the English Crown.

Over the succeeding centuries England made land grants to both individuals and land companies (groups of individual land speculators) for all lands extending from "sea to sea," that is, the boundaries of the Atlantic seaboard colonies extending westward beyond the Mississippi River all the way, in theory, to the Pacific Coast. Prime examples of these grants include the royal charter conferred upon the London Company in 1606 for colonizing Virginia and the proprietary rights given to William Penn in 1681 for settling Pennsylvania.

Although the French colonial system in the New World took root in 1608, the year that France founded its first permanent settlement in North America at Quebec, it did not spread beyond its Canadian limits until the explorations of Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet in 1673-74. France did not formally claim the lands encompassing the Mississippi until 1682, when René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle took possession of the entire region for King Louis XIV and named it in his honor.

France's effective occupation of the Mississippi Valley began in 1701 with the founding of Detroit. This city was the principal means of access to the upper three Great Lakes, as well as

the strategic gateway to the Mississippi and Wabash rivers from the Great Lakes via the plains of the Illinois Country. By erecting a string of forts and posts that stretched along the St. Lawrence River, the Great Lakes, and the Mississippi Valley, the French endeavored to control communications and movement along the Grand Water route, and thus the interior of continental North America, by 1730. French ambitions at the time were checked by inaccurate perceptions of the nature of the territory. Nonetheless, France apparently felt confident to deal with the entire tract which spread from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and from the Allegheny Mountains to the Rockies as one vast empire bounded by natural frontiers.



Guillaume Delisle, Carte de la Louisiane et du Cours du Mississipi . . . , Paris, 1718. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. G3700 1718 .L5 Vault : Low 288 [About this image](#)

That chauvinistic view of North America, as seen from Paris, is quite apparent in the celebrated map by Guillaume Delisle entitled *Carte de la Louisiane et du Cours du Mississipi*. The map was originally published in 1718 to promote settlement in John Law's colony of Louisiana. The French territory of "La Louisiane" comprises all of the lands drained by the Mississippi River and most of what is now the southeastern United States, including the Carolinas—long recognized as a British possession. Also reflected are French efforts at barring English advances west of the Alleghenies, which, from the point of view of France, had to be the eastern boundary of Louisiana, rather than the Mississippi.



Herman Moll, A New Map of the North Parts of America claimed by France under ye Names of Louisiana, Mississipi, Canada and new France with ye Adjoyning Territories of England and Spain . . . the South West part of Louisiana is done after a French Map Published at Paris in 1718 . . . , 1720. From his A New and Compleat Atlas . . . (London, 1720), plate 9. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3300 1685 .F7 Vault [About this image](#)

Two years later, in an effort to rebut the pretensions set forth in Delisle's map, North America was rendered from a decidedly British point of view by the London cartographer and publisher, Herman Moll. The Carolinas and other claims in the mid-Atlantic region were restored to Britain as well as claims in Georgia and Florida. As the title of his

map indicates, Moll suffered no remorse in plagiarizing Delisle's depiction of Louisiana and the American Southwest.

From 1689 to 1763 there were four territorial wars in North America between Britain and France. King William's War (1689-97) occurred primarily on the frontiers of northern New England, without conclusive results. By the treaty ending the war, France retained Louisiana.

Queen Anne's War, known as the War of the Spanish Succession in Europe, lasted from 1702 to 1713. The war revolved around fighting in New England and eastern Canada between the two European powers and their Native American allies. It concluded with one of the great international settlements of the 18th century, the treaty signed at Utrecht in 1713.

By the Treaty of Utrecht Great Britain obtained major territorial gains in North America and became the dominant colonial power in North America east of the Mississippi River. During treaty negotiations the British sought to usurp the French fur trade in Canada, the Old Northwest, the Illinois Country, and Louisiana. Britain was awarded the Hudson's Bay Region, Nova Scotia and New Foundland, and sovereignty over the Iroquois, or Five Nations. The Iroquois were declared British subjects—in effect conferring ownership of all lands conquered by the Iroquois to the British Crown.

A neutral zone of wilderness respecting the integrity of the Native American tribes located in the Ohio Valley region was established. British and French subjects were permitted free transit in those lands to trade with the tribes. Although France managed to retain Louisiana in the negotiations, its ability to defend the colony was weakened. England had thus gained the dual advantage of being able to establish itself solidly about the northern and northeastern perimeters of Louisiana as well as the ability to press its authority over a portion of the Mississippi Valley. After roughly a quarter century of relative peace the American phase of the War of the Austrian Succession, known as King George's War (1744-48) erupted. At issue were English trading rights in the Spanish colonies. There were also disputes over boundaries between French and

English possessions in the Ohio Valley, which the French considered part of Louisiana.

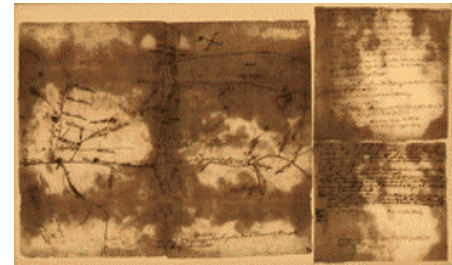
The notable event of the war in North America was the English capture of the French fort at Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island, which was returned to France at the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748. The struggle for control of the North American territory was suspended for another six years. Neither the war nor the treaty resolved any territorial disputes and conquered lands were mutually restored.

The Mississippi Valley during the French and Indian War, 1755-63

The inability of France and Great Britain to establish boundaries in North America at the close of King George's War in 1748 created a power vacuum on the continent. British and French interests clashed on the Ohio River, the principal eastern tributary of the Mississippi. Largely in an effort to contain British expansion, the French established Fort Duquesne at the forks of the Ohio in 1754. Unlike previous conflicts, the final European struggle for control of North America arose in the American wilderness, triggered by competition over the Ohio Valley. Hostilities soon erupted into the French and Indian War (1755-63).

The overall objective of the British during the French and Indian War was to expel the French from North America and claim the continent for Great Britain. At the point that France and Great Britain faced the prospect of open hostilities over their contested rights to land in North America, map publishers and copyists representing both nationalities supplied maps in support of those rights. These maps served as tangible expressions of political propaganda used on the one hand to aggrandize national title to the rich and fertile lands of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, and on the other, to discredit the legitimacy of territorial claims as pressed by the enemy.

Both sides had powerful Native American allies fighting on their behalf. A member of the Miami Nation prepared a map for the benefit of his English allies in the early years of the conflict.



Chegeree, Map of the country about the Mississippi. Drawn by Chegeree (the Indian) who says he has travelled through the country, 1755(?). Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3300 1755 .C5 Vault [About this image](#)

Possibly the most striking map of the era is Dr. John Mitchell's *A Map of the British and French Dominions in North America* Mitchell was interested in enlarging the representation of British colonial possessions while simultaneously minimizing French expansion in North America. Ironically, the Mitchell map's fame as "the most important map in American history" as stated by Lawrence Martin, former Chief of the Geography & Map Division at the Library of Congress, was established in 1782-83 when it was consulted by British and American ministers for delineating the boundaries and recognizing the independence of the United States after the Revolutionary War.⁴



John Mitchell, A map of the British and French dominions in North America, with the roads, distances, limits, and extent of the settlements, humbly inscribed to the Right Honourable the Earl of Halifax, and the other Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners for Trade & Plantations, by their Lordships most obliged and very humble servant, Jno. Mitchell. Tho: Kitchin, sculp., 1755. [second impression of first edition] Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3300 1755 .M51 Vault [About this image](#)

At the commencement of the French and Indian War, France claimed "all America, from the Alleghenies to the Rocky Mountains, and from Mexico and Florida to the North Pole, except only the ill-defined possessions of the English on the borders of Hudson Bay; and to these vast regions, with adjacent islands, they gave the general name of New France."⁵ Pursuant to those pretensions, mapmakers in France applied public and personal chauvinistic notions of empire to their maps of North America in an effort to countermine the perception of a British bias. In many cases British holdings were portrayed as limited to a strip of the seaboard along

the Atlantic Coast, with no inroad to the interior. The latest topographic features, however, were lifted directly from John Mitchell's map, seen as the most geographically accurate of the era.

Jacques Nicolas Bellin, hydrographer to the king of France, prepared maps to emphasize French sovereignty over the Great Lakes and the frontier lands of the northern Ohio Valley. Bellin's maps clearly designate the lands encompassing the Mississippi Valley as French Louisiana.



Jacques Nicolas Bellin, *Partie occidentale de la Nouvelle France ou du Canada* par Mr. Bellin, ingénieur du roy de la marine pour servir à l'intelligence des affaires de l'état present en Amerique, communiquée au public par les Héritiers de Homan, 1755. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3310 1755 .B4 Vault
[About this image](#)



Jacques Nicolas Bellin, *Carte de la Louisiane et pays voisins, pour servir à l'Histoire générale des voyages. Par M. B., ing. de la marine, 1757. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3300 1757 .B4 Vault*
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French diplomats and cartographers adopted a geographical demarcation to separate Canada and her western dependencies from the British colonies. All lands drained by waters flowing into the St. Lawrence River, the Great Lakes, and the Mississippi River would belong to France. That idea manifests itself in a pair of maps published in 1756 by Jean Baptiste Nolin, who employed a prominent boundary to separate British holdings from New France, and effectively established France in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and along the western ridge of the Appalachians.

Such French pretensions changed dramatically, however, following a series of major British victories. The French and Indian War climaxed in 1759 when English forces under General James Wolfe succeeded in laying siege to and capturing the well-defended French bastion of Quebec. The British then expelled several thousand French inhabitants of Nova Scotia who refused to take an oath of allegiance to the English Crown. The uprooted Acadians were dispersed throughout the English colonies, with many of them eventually settling along the bayous and rivers of southern Louisiana.



Jean Baptiste Nolin, Carte du Canada et de la Louisiane qui forment la Nouvelle France et des colonies angloises ou sont representez les pays contestez, 1756. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3300 1756 .N61 Vault [About this image](#)

British Designs on the Mississippi Valley before the American Revolution

The end of the French and Indian War eliminated France as a colonial power in North America, although French political and cultural influence was not wholly extinguished from the continent. By the Treaty of Paris of 1763, England obtained Canada and Louisiana east of the Mississippi River from France, as well as East Florida and West Florida from Spain. However, the Isle of Orleans and all territories west of the Mississippi formerly



Jean Baptiste Nolin, Carte des colonies anglaises dans l'Amérique septentrionale, terminée par la re. Ohio. Traduite de l'anglais de la carte de H. Overton, et augmentée par le Sr. Nolin, 1756. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3300 1756 .N6 Vault [About this image](#)

under French sovereignty fell into Spanish hands. France retained the two small but economically viable islands of Saint Pierre and Miquelon off the southern coast of Newfoundland. The land was reapportioned; lands arising out of the treaty appear in a map published in 1763 by Emanuel Bowen.



Emanuel Bowen, *An accurate map of North America. Describing and distinguishing the British, Spanish and French dominions on this great continent; according to the definitive treaty concluded at Paris 10th Feby. 1763.* . . . Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3300 1763 .B6 Vault [About this image](#)

One outgrowth of the Treaty of Paris was the establishment of the Mississippi River as the boundary separating the English and the Spanish empires in North America. Great Britain also gained the right to navigate the river, thus providing an opportunity to exploit the Mississippi Valley fur trade, although the river's major port, New Orleans, was under Spanish control . Two years later the first official British military expedition to the Illinois Country surveyed the Mississippi Valley and charted the river's course from "Balise a Fort" on the east pass of its mouth to Fort Chartres, Missouri.



Lieut. Ross, *Course of the river Mississippi, from the Balise to Fort Chartres; taken on an expedition to the Illinois, in the latter end of the year 1765.* By Lieut. Ross of the 34th regiment: Improved from the surveys of that river made by the French, 1772. Geography and Map Division. Call number: G4042.M5 1765 .R6 Am. 5-30 [About this image](#)

The removal of the French from the Mississippi Valley initiated a flurry of land speculation with a view to placing the vast and uncultivated earth of the trans-Appalachian region to the plow. Towards the end of the war several companies of speculators were formed for taking up and colonizing lands under British protection. Ambitious planters and speculators were undeterred by the Royal Proclamation of 1763 that forbade colonial governors from issuing land grants west of the Allegheny Mountains, or by fear of likely Native American reprisals.

George Washington, an established surveyor and prominent landholder, headed a group of speculators known as the Mississippi Land Company. These speculators unsuccessfully petitioned the crown

for 2.5 million acres at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers in 1763. Nevertheless, Washington and others continued to acquire vast tracts of land west of the Alleghenies, as seen in a [1774 map](#) that he drew of his acreage along the Kanawha River in West Virginia.

Although Great Britain was able to occupy and garrison several locations on the east bank of the Mississippi, these lands did not produce the commercial benefits expected from such an advantage. For the most part the British never gained control of the river, nor were they permitted an entrepôt at New Orleans. Furthermore, [British plans for enlarging the Iberville River](#), in order to render it navigable to British ships and commerce, never came to fruition. Great Britain held the eastern part of Louisiana ceded by France in 1763 for 20 years until it, too, was driven from North America by its own insubordinate colonies.

Louisiana under Spanish Rule

Diplomacy of the French Cession

The impetus to cede the French colony of Louisiana to the Spanish was the long, expensive conflict of the French and Indian War, also known as the Seven Year's War, between France and Great Britain. Initially, France offered Louisiana to Spain in order to bring Spain into the conflict on the French side. Spain declined. Spanish officials were uncertain about what exactly constituted the vague and immense colony of Louisiana. When the "Family Compact," a supposedly secret alliance between France and Spain, became known to the British, they attacked Spain. In November 1762 in the secret Treaty of Fontainebleau, France handed over Louisiana and the Isle of Orleans to Spain in order to "sweeten the bitter medicine of Spanish defeat and to persuade them not to fight on" against the British.⁶

The cession of Louisiana was kept secret for over a year. France feared that Louisiana would become British. As a result, France sought to preempt any actions that Britain would undertake if it became known that Louisiana no longer enjoyed French protection before the Spanish were able to occupy and defend it. Great Britain officially conceded Spanish ownership of Louisiana in February 1763 in one of the series of treaties ending the French and Indian War. This gesture was a mere formality, for the territory had been in Spanish hands for almost three months.

Spanish Rule and a Revolt

Spain was slow to take actual possession of its newly acquired colony. In general, French colonists reacted negatively to the idea of Spanish rule. Spain was also loathe to spend sufficient funds for either an effective military presence or adequate maintenance of the colony. To make matters worse, the new colonial governor, Don Antonio de Ulloa, did not arrive in Louisiana until March 1766.

Spanish rule in Louisiana needed to accommodate an ethnically diverse population. There were large numbers of different Native American tribes, a small but influential European populace that was primarily French, and a small but significant number of Africans, both slave and free. Many of the colony's officials were either French or of French ancestry, which contributed to the tenuous nature of Spanish management of the colony. Spanish officials, aware of their own numerical insignificance and of the diversity of peoples, showed some flexibility in procedures by maintaining the French language and customs.



Don Tomás López de Vargas Machuca, La Luisiana cedida al Rei N. S. por S. M. Christianisima, con la Nueva Orleans, è isla en que se halla esta ciudad. Construida sobre el mapa de Mr. d'Anville. Por D. Thomás Lopez, 1762. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4010 1762 .L6 Low 467
[About this image](#)

Ulloa landed at New Orleans with a small detachment of troops in March 1766. He delayed formal transfer of power for more than a year, by which time administrative and financial chaos ensued. In an attempt to remedy the damage and set the colony exclusively within the commercial sphere of Spain, Ulloa turned to various economic expedients which only worsened the situation. He also promulgated a series of unpopular ordinances.

Although Louisiana was granted more extensive privileges than were accorded other Spanish colonies, restrictions were placed on trade. Louisiana's trade was limited to nine ports in Spain and the passage of any ship that did not possess a captain and a crew that were two-thirds Spanish was prohibited. Trade with Great Britain and Mexico was outlawed and the importation of French wine into the colony was banned.

In the words of one historian, Ulloa had inaugurated the uprising that swept him from office because he had issued orders "that threatened the existing customs and economic interests of the colony but was denied the money and military manpower needed to give his authority credibility."⁷ Facing a large wave of dissent, particularly from the leading French citizens of New Orleans who acted under the auspices of the Superior Council, Louisiana's local governing body, Ulloa was driven from the colony by an open revolt in October 1768.

Louisiana citizens loyal to the French Crown held a convention in New Orleans on October 29, 1768, to air their grievances against Spanish authority. They formally petitioned the Superior Council to reinstate the colony's former status and force Ulloa's departure. The Superior Council issued a decree ordering the expulsion of the Spanish governor and drafted a memorandum to present to the French minister of foreign affairs petitioning for the restoration of



Charles III, King of Spain, Real Decreto, que Previene las Reglas, y Condiciones con que se Puede Hacer el Comercio Desde España a la Provincia de la Luisiana . . ., Madrid, 1768. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress. Call number: F373 .S73 [About this image](#)

French rule, all to no avail. Spain, unwilling to countenance such a revolt, responded with force.

The crown discharged a fleet of 24 ships and 2,000 troops under the command of General Alexandre O'Reilly, who took possession of Louisiana on August 18, 1769. O'Reilly quickly arrested, tried, and convicted the leaders of the rebellion of treason, executing 12 men, sentencing others to lengthy prison terms, and confiscating the properties of all.

O'Reilly also established a series of reforms designed to reassert Spanish authority. In December 1769 he abolished the Superior Council and replaced it with the Cabildo. The Cabildo was a form of municipal government common throughout Spanish America—a city council of 10 members presided over by a governor.

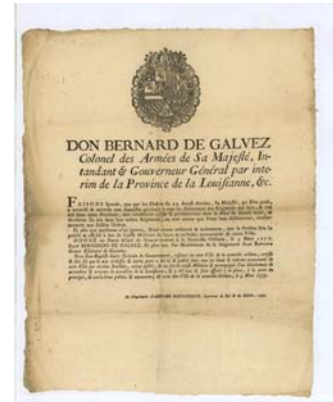


General Alexandre O'Reilly, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing left, n.d. Engraving after an undated miniature. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-41388
[About this image](#)

Louisiana in the American Revolution

[Don Bernardo de Galvez](#) became Spanish governor of Louisiana in January 1777. Under his rule the harsh commercial restrictions were somewhat relaxed and Louisiana eventually sided with the Americans in their war against Great Britain. Although initially neutral in the war, Galvez actively assisted the American agent in New Orleans in shipping Spanish supplies up the Mississippi to American troops in the Old Northwest. Spain had allied with the American Revolutionaries in an effort to reclaim territory lost to the British and as a natural enemy of the British in America.

To bolster Louisiana's forces in the event of a possible British naval invasion, Galvez published royal orders to grant amnesty to all deserters from regiments serving or having served in the province, on condition of their appearing within four months and remaining for six years with the same regiment, or any other so designated. When Spain declared war on Great Britain in June 1779, the British were attacked in three major offensives.



In September 1779 Gálvez launched his first offensive. He successfully led his forces against Fort Bute at the junction of the Iberville and Mississippi rivers and Fort New Richmond at Baton Rouge; shortly thereafter the British surrendered Fort Panmure at Natchez. Additional Spanish victories above and on Lake Pontchartrain secured control of the region west of the Pearl River. Gálvez's two later offenses in 1780 and 1781 resulted in the capture of Fort Charlotte and Mobile as well as Fort George at Pensacola, respectively. Thus, within a two-year period, Spain had augmented her North American territories by regaining control of East and West Florida through Gálvez's efforts.

Don Bernardo de Galvez, Don Bernardo de Galvez, Colonel des Armées de sa Majesté, Intendant & Gouverneur Générale par interim de la Province de la Louisianne . . . à la Nouvelle Orléans, le 3 Mars 1777. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress. Printed Ephemera Collection, broadside portfolio 24, folder 3] 2005700123 [About this image](#)

Spanish Louisiana's Development to 1803

From the end of the American Revolution until the final years of the 18th century, officials in Spain continued their efforts to make Louisiana economically viable by integrating it into the imperial Spanish economy.

The royal trade decree of March 1768 initiated Spanish commercial concessions in Louisiana and were modified over time. Additional regulations attempted to limit Louisiana's dependence upon the importation of foodstuffs and foster the production of agricultural and small-scale manufacturing goods for export as well as local consumption.



In the early years of Spanish rule farmers made use of healthy export prices to raise cash crops such as indigo, tobacco, cotton, and timber for shipment overseas. Staple crops, subject to wider market price fluctuations, were neglected. During a period of governmental reorganization, Alexandre O'Reilly attempted to address this issue by initiating price controls over foodstuffs and other commodities to encourage their production and export. O'Reilly also temporarily abolished import and export duties at New Orleans.

Charles III, King of Spain, Real Decreto, que Previene las Reglas, y Condiciones con que se Puede Hacer el Comercio Desde España a la Provincia de la Luisiana . . . , Madrid, 1768. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress. Call number: F373 .S73 [About this image](#)

In the 1770s the Spanish government took advantage of strong tobacco markets in Mexico and Europe by purchasing tobacco for export. Working with tobacco planters in June 1777, Governor Galvez set a fair price for tobacco, bought the entire crop for almost 50,000 pesos, and arranged for its grading, packing, and shipping overseas. In 1785 the Spanish tobacco monopoly decided to import Louisiana tobacco into New Spain, resulting in almost five years of prosperity. Louisiana remained a significant exporter of tobacco until 1789-90, when tobacco exports to New Spain and Seville were severely curtailed.

Colonists also continued to obtain foods and other commodities from Native Americans through means of exchange or barter, a practice in place since the earliest periods of French settlement. That simple yet vital economy spread across the lower Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coast and connected Native American villages with colonial settlers and African slaves. Native Americans exchanged deerskins, pelts, corn, meat, fish, bear oil, legumes, and fruits directly for axes, rifles,

gunpowder, blankets, beads, liquor, and sundry other items.

African slaves grew crops for their own consumption and traveled from plantation to town in order to sell livestock, poultry, rice, and milk on behalf of their owners. This economy worked successfully across class, racial, and institutional barriers until it gradually was replaced in the last years of the 18th century by the commercial production of sugar and cotton.⁸



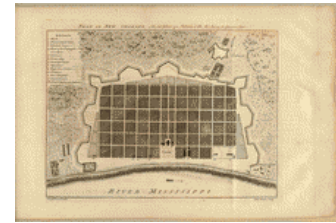
The outbreak of war between France and Spain in 1793 forced the colony to draw up proposals for governing trade and commerce between Louisiana and the allied nations with whom Spain had commercial ties. The proposed trade regulations remained in effect until 1802. These regulations were intended to liberalize trade between Louisiana and other colonies of both Spanish and non-Spanish America. Concessions, granted to Louisiana and the Floridas, were not extended to other Spanish holdings, for their intent was to promote the prosperity of the border colonies. In spite of such efforts on the part of Spanish authorities, trade with the United States expanded as New Orleans increasingly accepted ships whose ports of origin were on the mid-Atlantic coast of North America.

Don Diego de Gardoqui, Comercio de la Luisiana y Floridas, 1793. Printed document, 9 pp. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Diego de Gardoqui Regulation, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection [About this image](#)

Such emphasis on trade naturally resulted from the colony's ties to water as its principal means of long-distance transportation. The local overland traces, or customary Native American trails through marshlands and woods, proved inadequate for carrying large amounts of goods to market. The center of river and overseas trade in Louisiana was New Orleans, which served as the principal entrepôt for goods moving into and out of the colony. Because of its prime location above the mouth of the Mississippi, New Orleans was able to accommodate deep water ships that

could ascend the river no further while it served as a depot for smaller vessels that had descended its course with their cargo.

New Orleans changed very little in its first 20 or so years as a Spanish city. In the last two decades of the 18th century, however, New Orleans and its immediate environs began to expand and undergo alterations in its appearance. Two fires, the Great Fire of Good Friday, March 21, 1788, and one in 1794, destroyed major portions of the city.⁹ The second fire prompted an extensive rebuilding campaign. Subsequent construction codes limited the availability of building materials to adobe or brick and required tile roofs. Thereafter the city began to take on a Spanish flavor in its architecture. [A plan of New Orleans and its adjacent plantations](#), prepared by surveyor Carlos Trudeau for Governor Carondelet, depicts the city during this period.



Philip Pittman, Plan of New Orleans . . . , 1770. In his The Present State of the European Settlements on the Mississippi . . . , London, 1770, opp. p. 10. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress. Call number: F352 .P68

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Land Settlement Policies and Practices in Spanish Louisiana

Spain's initial census of Louisiana in 1769 counted little more than 13,500 people living on frontier settlements, along Bayou Teche and the lower Mississippi, including New Orleans. Spanish officials were concerned that Louisiana was dangerously underpopulated. To prosper economically and to serve as an effective buffer against British and American encroachment, the colony needed to increase immigrant settlers.

In an effort to offset the threat of foreign trespass, Spanish officials offered concessions and liberal grants of land to outsiders provided that they take loyalty oaths to the Spanish Crown and adopt Roman Catholicism as their formal religion. Other inducements included free land grants, tax exemptions, financial subsidies, and farm implements. As a result, Spanish Louisiana opened its doors to many nationalities, among them Acadians from Nova Scotia, Isleños from the Canary Islands, Germans from various German states, as well as English, French, and

Americans. Communities representative of those groups installed themselves at various locales, such as the one at Villa de Galvez on the Amite River.

Large numbers of Anglo-Americans began emigrating to British West Florida during the American Revolution and continued to do so after the war when the province was ceded to Spain. The former charges of the British government merely shifted their allegiances to the Spanish Crown in order to retain title to their properties.

Many settlers were concentrated near the banks of the Mississippi River in the vicinity of Natchez in Spanish West Florida. Even prior to the implementation of the treaty of 1795 which set West Florida's northern border at the 31° north latitude, the current boundary between Louisiana and Mississippi in the southern part of both states, Anglo-American settlers sought permission from the Spanish governor of Louisiana to acquire property in that area.

In the years before they conceded Mississippi navigation rights to Americans, the Spanish undertook various efforts to regulate commerce on the Mississippi River and protect their lands to the west of it. Spanish gunboats were employed in an attempt to govern commercial and military traffic on the river and halt illegal trade. A string of forts along the Mississippi from Tennessee to the river's mouth served as the first line of defense against a possible attack.

Spanish measures for enlarging the population of Louisiana were not limited to the nether regions of the colony. With the acquisition of the territory from France, Spain recognized the trans-Mississippi West as a



Author unknown, *Plaza de la villa de Galvez*, 1778. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4014.G225 1778 .P5 Vault
[About this image](#)



Georges Henri Victor Collot, *Plan of the fort of New Madrid or Anse a la Graisse*, 1826. In his *Voyage dans l'Amérique Septentrionale, ou description des pays arrosés par le Mississippi, l'Ohio, le Missouri, et autres rivières affluentes*. . . , Paris, 1826, plate 30. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G1375 .C6 1826
[About this image](#)

persevered.



Georges Henri Victor Collot, Map of the Country of the Illinois, 1826. In his Voyage dans l'Amérique Septentrionale, ou description des pays arrosés par le Mississippi, l'Ohio, le Missouri, et autres rivières affluentes . . ., Paris, 1826, plate 28. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G1375 .C6 1826 [About this image](#)



Georges Henri Victor Collot, Map of the Course of the Mississippi from the Missouri and the Country of the Illinois to the mouth of this River, 1826. In his Voyage dans l'Amérique Septentrionale, ou description des pays arrosés par le Mississippi, l'Ohio, le Missouri, et autres rivières affluentes . . ., Paris, 1826, plate 25. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G1375 .C6 1826 [About this image](#)

The Spanish regime ordered a census of Louisiana in 1799. Spain's liberal immigration policy had obviously achieved the desired effect, for the census indicated that colony's overall population had reached almost 50,000 people, or an increase of roughly 500 percent since 1763. Slightly more than 6,000 of these individuals resided in Upper Louisiana. Although strong in absolute terms, the numbers were low in relation to the numbers of Anglo-Americans moving into the trans-Appalachian West over the last two-thirds of that same period.

The settlers moving into Louisiana brought a wider variety of ethnicity, language, culture, and customs than did their counterparts in Kentucky and Tennessee. With its enumeration of Spanish, French, Dutch, and English surnames, as well as African slaves, the census signified the evolving cultural geography of the colony at the turn of the century.

Spain Recognizes American Rights on the Mississippi, 1795

Waning Spanish Interest in the Mississippi Valley

At the time of Louisiana's founding and throughout the first century of its existence, both France and Spain practiced a system of political economy known as mercantilism. Mercantilism enabled the parent country to oversee the establishment of colonies and trading monopolies. The profits derived from the economic productions and foreign trade of the colonies were used to support the growth and development of the parent countries. While other colonies were profitable under mercantilism, Louisiana never achieved the hoped for level of economic prominence.

Louisiana was unable to develop and sustain the level of foreign trade required to support economic growth. The strict regulation of Louisiana's commerce by Spanish colonial authorities was responsible for this stagnation. Irregular shipments of supplies, a perpetual want of currency and credit, a scarcity of agricultural labor, and a lack of tradesmen and artisans, exacerbated the situation.

Successive Spanish governors hoped to make the colony profitable by implementing a variety of measures designed to increase agricultural output and foreign trade, yet keep Louisiana firmly within the Spanish colonial system. A policy of granting generous land concessions sought to increase the overall European population of the colony and hence the number of workers engaged in farming. Year after year Spanish officials were forced to adopt increasingly relaxed commercial restrictions projected to promote self-sufficiency in the production of cash crops and profitability in exports. However, either the programs were too late or not enough, for Louisiana did not become a major source of income for the Spanish Crown.

Inhabitants of the colony were forced to look to sources other than the local government to supply them with many of their basic needs. After 1763 Louisiana's officials were beset by a large contraband trade carried on by the British, but they looked the other way out of desperation so as to obtain the British goods. Spanish authorities also ignored American violations of Spanish trade laws out of a need for western commodities. And routine exchanges with Native American tribes under Spanish rule continued to bring food, skins, and hides for weapons, farming implements, and sundries.

Spain's natural advantage in defending its position had always been the Mississippi River. Command of the Mississippi was a notable auxiliary feature of its acquisition of Louisiana from France at the end of the French and Indian War. A natural as well as a symbolic boundary, the Mississippi remained the chief barrier to American encroachments on Spanish territory to the west. Over the years Spain adopted various measures to protect its Mississippi asset. These measures included establishing a series of small posts along the river south of its confluence with the Ohio and employing a fleet of gunboats to regulate traffic. Yet pressures beyond Spain's control began to erode her ability to control the river.

Coupled with the problem of Louisiana's persistently sluggish economy was the threat of a growing number of Americans on the Mississippi River. Disputes arose over the rights to control the territory known as West Florida, which had become the destination of thousands of Anglo-Americans during the American Revolution.

By the end of the 1780s Spanish Louisiana was engaged in an undeclared economic war with the inhabitants of the western interior who began to press for navigation rights on the Mississippi River. River boats from Kentucky and Ohio were sometimes confiscated before they reached market. The growing westward movement of the American population also imperiled Spain's internal provinces. Spanish governors responded to this threat with diplomatic machinations designed to foster discontent and possible rebellion against the United States, while protecting themselves from potential attack by an army of farmers.

Spain set great store by Louisiana in its initial years of possession. By 1795, however, events and circumstances in both Europe and North America forced Spain to recognize that Louisiana was not proving its worth as an integral part of the Spanish empire. The colony was abandoned to the Americans—allowing them in the course of a few years to either penetrate the region peacefully or take by force a portion of the defensive borderlands Spain had hoped to retain.

Pinckney's Treaty

The right to navigate the Mississippi River freely to New Orleans had eluded western American commerce since 1763, when the treaty ending the French and Indian War allowed Great Britain to retain control of the river's east bank and all rights to its navigation. As early as 1776 the British colonies, particularly Virginia, asserted these rights, but were denied recognition when Spain declared war on Britain in May 1779.

As part of the settlement of the Treaty of Paris of 1783, Great Britain ceded the rights of both English and American citizens to navigate the Mississippi to its mouth. Spain retained control of Louisiana and Florida and thus both banks along the lower course of the river. The Spanish Crown rightfully feared that territorial acquisitions along the Mississippi would engender unlawful traffic in its colonial borderlands and encourage penetration into New Spain. It therefore refused to recognize the British treaty provisions and closed the river to non-Spanish vessels in July 1784.

Appeals to the Spanish court to open the river highway to American traffic were not answered. In 1784 American Foreign Minister John Jay negotiated with Don Diego de Gardoqui, Spanish envoy to the United States, to surrender America's claims to the Mississippi for 25 years in exchange for commercial privileges in Spanish markets supportive of the New England fishing industry.

Federal willingness to accept the closure of the Mississippi raised very strong objections in the trans-Appalachian settlements, especially in Kentucky. Regional discord, including threats of secession, and opposition in Congress led by James Madison prevented the treaty's ratification and the issue remained unsettled for 11 years.



Rising discontent in the west coincided with uneasiness in the southwest along the Spanish-American borderlands. Several frontier leaders urged collaborating with Spain to obtain advantages which the United States was unable to provide. American leaders faced the possibility of a separate southwestern confederacy under Spanish protection.

John Filson, *This map of Kentucke, drawn from actual Observations, is inscribed with the most perfect respect, to the Honorable the Congress of the United States of America; and to His Excellcy. George Washington, late Commander in Chief of their Army. By their humble servant, John Filson . . . , 1784.* Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3950 1784 .F5 Vault [About this image](#)

The 1783 peace arrangements led to a frontier border dispute between Spain and the United States. As part of its settlement with Spain, Great Britain returned East Florida and West Florida, but without precise agreement on its northern boundary. Spanish officials retained the British interpretation of the border, which placed it at latitude 32° 28' near the junction of the Yazoo and Mississippi rivers, thus enlarging Spain's Florida claims and giving it even tighter control over access to the Mississippi. The United States, however, argued for a more southerly position at the 31st parallel near the Mississippi's confluence with the Red River. The situation became strained as increasing numbers of settlers moved into the disputed territory under Spanish sponsorship in the last two decades of the 18th century.

While John Jay was attempting to forge a satisfactory treaty of neutrality and commerce with Great Britain, Spain faced the likelihood of losing its North American possessions and control of the Mississippi to a combined Anglo-American force. About to engineer a switch in alliances from Britain to France in a European war, the Spanish minister of foreign affairs thought it best to gratify American interests and avoid possible British vengeance. However, Spain was unable

to halt the advancing tide of American settlers and frontiersman upon her Louisiana and Florida borderlands, threatening to supplant Spanish colonial authority during a period of relative decline. Thus, the United States found itself in a position to procure from Spain virtually all it had sought for 12 years.



Charles IV, King of Spain, Tratado de Amistad, Limites y Navigacion, Concluido Entre el Rey Nuestro Señor y los Estados Unidos de América; Firmado en San Lorenzo el Real á 27 de Octubre de 1795. De Orden del Rey, Madrid, 1796. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress. Call number: E313 .S792
[About this image](#)



U.S. Congress, Senate, Treaty with Spain, 1795. Law Library, Library of Congress. The Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States, or The Annals of the Congress of the United States, Senate, 4th Congress, Special session, 2561-68
[About this image](#)

American demands were met in the treaty signed by Envoy Extraordinary from the United States to the Court of Spain, Thomas Pinckney, at San Lorenzo on October 27, 1795. By its provisions, Pinckney's Treaty, as it is commonly known, recognized American boundary claims at the 31st parallel; allowed for the appointment of commissioners and a surveyor to lay down a well-defined border; established commercial relations with Spain; prohibited the Spanish from

inciting Native American raids within federal territory; and, most importantly, furnished citizens of the United States and Spain with unimpeded navigation of the Mississippi River, with the right to deposit their goods duty free at the port of New Orleans for transshipment and export, subject to renewal after three years, or if suspended for any reason, relocated to another convenient site in Spanish territory.

Hence, the United States had gained a threefold victory by settling a longstanding dispute with Spain over its southern boundary, obtaining a badly needed entrepôt at the mouth of the Mississippi, and laying the foundation for further economic and political expansion to the west. Militarily and diplomatically, Spain commenced its retreat in eastern North America.

Because of diplomatic delays and requirements involved in the exchange of ratifications, official orders implementing the right of deposit were not received by Spanish officials at New Orleans until the summer of 1798. Increasing numbers of farmers from the interior, however, began taking advantage of their new rights as quickly as possible, descending the Mississippi to New Orleans in greater numbers with their cargoes of tobacco, corn, flour, hides and furs, salted and smoked beef and pork, poultry, salt, lead, finished lumber, whiskey, bear's grease, lard, tar, and pitch. Almost 600 river boats docked at New Orleans in 1801.

By 1802 New Orleans had been transformed into one of the busiest ports in North America, overseeing in that one year more than \$5 million in goods. Foreign trade had grown rapidly. As of 1794 only 31 oceangoing vessels had cleared port at New Orleans; but the number grew to 78 in 1799, slightly more than 200 in 1801, and 265 in 1802, with most of them sailing for ports outside North America. Exports in 1802 included 2 million pounds of cotton; almost 2.5 million



Georges Henri Victor Collot, Sketch of flat bottom boat, such as are used to descend the Ohio and the Mississippi, 1826. In his Voyage dans l'Amérique Septentrionale, ou description des pays arrosés par le Mississipi, l'Ohio, le Missouri, et autres rivières affluentes . . . , Paris, 1826, plate 7. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G1375 .C6 1826 [About this image](#)

pounds of sugar; 167,000 pounds of lead from Upper Louisiana and the Illinois Country; more than 200,000 pounds of hides and furs—including deer, beaver, otter, bear, and fox; more than 80,000 pounds of indigo; 50,000 barrels of flour; 2,000 hogsheads of tobacco; 3,000 barrels of salted beef and pork, and 800 hogsheads of molasses. Spanish Louisiana was also a major importer of goods produced elsewhere, including clothing, shoes, cloth, soap, coffee, nails, tools, wine, steel, hemp, meats, beans, foodstuffs, and sundries.

The Louisiana Purchase

Napoleonic France Acquires Louisiana

On October 1, 1800, within 24 hours of signing a peace settlement with the United States, First Consul of the Republic of France Napoleon Bonaparte, acquired Louisiana from Spain by the secret Treaty of San Ildefonso. To the distress of the United States, Napoleon held title to the Mississippi River and the port of New Orleans.

With the signing of the Treaty of San Ildefonso, Napoleon sought to reestablish an extended French maritime and colonial empire in the West Indies and the Mississippi Valley. He planned to develop a commercial bloc in the Caribbean Basin that consisted of the strategically important West Indian islands of Guadalupe, Martinique, and Saint Domingue, which in turn would be linked with Louisiana. France would export manufactured goods to the islands, whose plantations would produce sugar, molasses, rum, coffee, and cotton for France. Flour, timber, and salted meat from Louisiana would sustain French troops stationed in the West Indies. Furthermore, French goods were expected to find a ready market at New Orleans, a stepping-stone for settlers into the Mississippi Valley.



Napoleon I, Emperor of France, full portrait, ca. 1812. From an engraving by Laugier, after the painting by Jacques Louis David, 1812. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-17088 [About this image](#)

To round out his imperial presence in the region Napoleon intended to pressure Spain into ceding the Floridas to France. Apparently anticipating the success of his plan, he ordered struck 200 copies of a medallion bearing his profile for distribution to Native American chiefs in a gesture of grassroots diplomacy. Napoleon's plan did not succeed.



Médaille pour les sauvages de la Louisiane [Medal struck for North American Indians], ca. 1802. From Villiers du Terrage, *Les Dernières années de la Louisiane Française*, Paris, [1904], p. 380. General Collections, Library of Congress. Call number: F373 .V75

The chief impediment to Napoleon's designs for a North American empire lay in Saint Domingue, France's most valued trading resource in the Caribbean and the gateway to the Gulf approaches to Louisiana. In 1791 the island's slaves, inspired by the French revolution, revolted under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture. After several years of fierce conflict, L'Ouverture and his army of former slaves had driven colonial forces from the island.

Because Napoleon did not have enough troops to reconquer Saint Domingue and occupy Louisiana simultaneously, he decided first to subdue the rebel slaves and reestablish French authority on Saint Domingue. In the fall and winter of 1801 he despatched to Saint Domingue an army of 20,000 men under his brother-in-law, General Charles Victor Emmanuel Leclerc. Toussaint surrendered to Leclerc in three months. Napoleon also assembled an expedition at a Dutch port in the winter of 1802-03 for reinforcing Leclerc's army and, with Saint Domingue as its base of operations, took possession of Louisiana.

"There is on the globe one single spot"

Rumors of the secret retrocession of Louisiana from Spain to France prompted anxiety in Washington city. By May 1801 the American minister to Great Britain, Rufus King, had apprised President Thomas Jefferson with some certainty of the transaction, an event that Jefferson said was "an inauspicious circumstance to us."¹⁰ Painfully aware of the potential difficulties in having Napoleonic France as a neighbor, Jefferson informed William C. C.

Claiborne, governor of the Mississippi Territory, that he regarded Spanish "possession of the adjacent country as most favorable to our interests, & should see, with extreme pain any other nation substituted for them. Should France get possession of that country, it will be more to be lamented than remedied by us . . ." ¹¹ In November 1801 Secretary of State James Madison received a copy of the Treaty of San Ildefonso from Ambassador King, confirming the diplomatic transaction previously denied by France.

Over the course of several years President Thomas Jefferson prepared to handle an impending French presence in the Mississippi Valley and his administration's first great diplomatic crisis. Jefferson was probably America's foremost geographical thinker and a student of the American West. The plight of the western farmers evoked his empathy and his support. He was also a long-time friend of France; his stint as ambassador to Paris (1784-89) had familiarized him with French diplomacy and politics. A political veteran of the American Revolution, Jefferson was also an Anglophobe.

By early 1802 events in Europe led Jefferson to reappraise and reformulate American relations with France, especially in light of her intended occupation of the Mississippi River and the port of New Orleans. War between France and Great Britain was expected. Jefferson realized that if France claimed Louisiana, Great Britain would try to capture and occupy the region. In a April 18, 1802, letter to Minister Robert R. Livingston, Jefferson revealed that the prospect of potential war with France and the unpleasant consequence of an alliance with Great Britain "completely reverses all the political relations of the U.S."



Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States, full portrait, facing front, n.d. From an engraving by Cornelius Tiebout, after the painting by Rembrandt Peale. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-75384
[About this image](#)



Thomas Jefferson, letter to Robert Livingston, Washington, April 18, 1802. Letterpress copy of autograph letter signed, 4 pp. (with transcription). Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Thomas Jefferson Papers
[About this image](#)

Jefferson and Secretary of State James Madison had hoped to fashion a foreign policy congenial to French interests. They disapproved of the slave uprising in Saint Domingue, intimating through diplomatic channels that the United States might assist France in subduing L'Ouverture. They appointed the pro-French Robert R. Livingston as American minister to Paris. In May 1802 Madison instructed Livingston to negotiate for the purchase of New Orleans. Livingston was also directed to ascertain whether the cession included East Florida and West Florida, and, if so, to negotiate a price for acquiring them, or at least the right of navigation and deposit on one of the rivers feeding into the Gulf.

"The Mississippi is everything"

In the fall of 1802, while Livingston's efforts to negotiate with the French government over New Orleans and the Floridas were stymied, a more pressing crisis confronted the United States: restricted access to the port of New Orleans. By the 1795 Treaty of San Lorenzo, Spain granted American citizens free navigation of the Mississippi River and the right to deposit their goods at the port of New Orleans for re-export on seafaring vessels. The treaty granted the right of deposit for three years. At the end of that time, the Spanish king was required to either renew the right of deposit or furnish Americans with another port to offload their goods.

On October 18, 1802, the Spanish Intendant of the Louisiana Province, Juan Ventura Morales, issued a proclamation terminating the right of deposit at New Orleans on grounds that the three-year treaty guarantee had expired. Although Spain had legal justification for its action--the terms of the Treaty of San Ildefonso had not yet taken effect and Louisiana was still a Spanish colony-- Ventura Morales failed to supply an alternate site. Thus, transshipment of goods became inconvenient for American shippers, who were made to transfer their cargoes directly to vessels lying in port.



Robert R. Livingston, seated portrait, facing right, n.d. From an engraving by E. McKenzie, after the painting by J. Vanderlyn. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-16708 [About this image](#)

Evidence now indicates that Spanish officials, including Ventura Morales, had for some time complained of illegal conduct by the Americans, who were accused of abusing their rights by smuggling and thereby avoiding the customary duties, especially on specie. They further feared that allowing the Americans to establish an entrepôt at a location other than at New Orleans would diminish the commercial viability of that city and decrease its population.



Port of New Orleans shut // Proclamation of the Intendant, Tennessee Gazette, Saturday, November 20, 1802, page 2, column 3. Serial and Government Publications Division, Library of Congress.
[About this image](#)

A general alarm ensued, especially among the western residents of Kentucky and Tennessee, where the Spanish proclamation and news of the closure of New Orleans incited heated reactions. The legality of the intendant's actions was questioned, particularly by western Americans, who regarded their briefly-held privileges of entrepôt as a natural right. On a more practical level, western farmers, facing a loss of overseas markets, saw their livelihoods threatened by limitations imposed on the commercial traffic at New Orleans, for there were no feasible alternative channels by which to route their products to the East Coast.

Kentuckians, suspecting French mischief behind the closure, believed that war was their only option and threatened to descend the Mississippi with an invading army of backwoodsmen in order to seize New Orleans and parts of Louisiana and West Florida in the process.



James Madison, letter to Charles Pinckney, Washington, November 27, 1802. Copy of letter signed, 5 pp. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. James Monroe Papers
[About this image](#)

When word of the port's closure reached Washington in November 1802, Secretary of State Madison expressed equal amounts of concern and disbelief, particularly regarding what he interpreted as Spain's violation of the Treaty of San Lorenzo. In a letter to Charles Pinckney, the American minister to Spain, Madison admonished the Spanish government and noted that he expected it to countermand the action immediately and repair any resulting economic damages which

it may have incurred.

By January 1803 the Jefferson administration was weighing the possibility of war. On January 31 Jefferson informed the British Chargé d'affaires, Edward Thornton, that the United States would never abandon its rightful claims to the free navigation of the Mississippi, that Americans would resort to force to regain it, and that if they did "they would throw away the scabbard." The negotiations over the purchase of the Isle of Orleans and the Floridas received congressional support in the form of a \$2 million appropriation that same month. By February, however, the actions of the Spanish intendant at New Orleans had begun to provoke rancorous debate and talk of open war in Congress, particularly in the Senate.

Federalist opponents of the Jefferson administration encouraged dissent by siding with the plight of the western states. These opponents demanded immediate action, including military intervention and occupation, to defy the intendant's actions and immediately open the river and port to American commerce.

Pennsylvania Senator James Ross made an inflamed speech on February 16, 1803. He introduced two resolutions—one authorizing the president to employ territorial and state militia units to seize the Isle of Orleans and another for a \$5 million appropriation to finance it. Although the Senate defeated the Ross resolutions after lengthy debate, it approved another series of resolutions by John C. Breckenridge, a Republican from Kentucky. Breckenridge proposed to seize New Orleans with 80,000 militia and a \$5 million appropriation.

"A noble bargain"

In January 1803 Jefferson nominated his friend and a former Minister to France, James Monroe, as a special envoy to assist Livingston in



James Monroe, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing right, n.d. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Reproduction number: LC-USZ61-186 [About this image](#)

persuading Napoleon to sell New Orleans. Monroe was an ideal choice, for he held the confidence of both the French government and, as a former governor of Virginia, the frontiersmen of the west. Jefferson authorized Monroe to offer \$10 million for the Isle of Orleans and the Floridas. Apprising Monroe of his appointment as minister extraordinary of the United States to the French Republic on January 13, Jefferson stressed that "on the event of this mission depends the future destinies of the republic." Furthermore, he urged Monroe to hasten his departure, as "the moment in France is critical," noting Napoleon's inability to quell the uprising in Saint Domingue prevented his forces from invading Louisiana.¹²

Secretary of State Madison's official instructions to Livingston and Monroe indicate that the United States did not envision obtaining the entire region of Louisiana. A draft treaty prepared by Madison accompanied the instructions. He hoped that France's imminent war with Great Britain, among other circumstances, would lead her to abandon her interests in the West Indies rather than protect them at great expense. And, if an arrangement with France was not forthcoming, the American envoys would open communications with the British government. Before Monroe was able to read his instructions at Paris, however, Napoleon had already decided to sell all of Louisiana to the United States.

Events outside the control of either Livingston or Monroe forced Napoleon's hand. After a year of ferocious fighting on Saint Domingue, the French army under Leclerc was depleted from the combined effects of guerrilla warfare and yellow fever. Napoleon's fleet of reinforcements remained icebound at port. France's impending war with Great Britain diverted resources towards Europe, leaving Louisiana vulnerable to attacks from the superior British naval forces. Finally, Napoleon was probably convinced that the Americans themselves posed a threat to his possessions. For some time he had been receiving reports of saber rattling among western



James Madison, letter to Robert R. Livingston and James Monroe, Washington, March 2, 1803. Autograph letter (in the hand of a clerk) signed (by Madison), 38 pp. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. [James Monroe Papers](#) [About this image](#)

Americans and in March 1803 Livingston gave him a copy of the Federalist motion calling for an invasion of New Orleans.

By April Napoleon had decided to divest himself of the entire territory. This was disclosed to the American diplomats by his Minister of Foreign Affairs Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgard. Reporting to Madison on the morning of April 11, an astonished Livingston wrote that "Mr. Talleyrand asked me this day, when pressing the subject, whether we wished to have the whole of Louisiana. I told him no, that our wishes extended only to New Orleans & the Floridas . . . He said that if they gave New Orleans the rest would be of little value, & that he would wish to know 'what we would give for the whole'." ¹³

The American representatives probably received the news with equal amounts of delight and hesitation, for they had not received authorization to purchase Louisiana in its entirety. Rather than risk another change in Napoleon's plans while awaiting communications with Washington, they decided to exceed their instructions and negotiate a purchase, stating their reasons in a [May 14 letter to James Madison](#).

Putting their mutual jealousies aside, the two American negotiators debated treaty drafts with François de Barbé-Marbois, a career diplomat and French cabinet official, and negotiated a price over the last two weeks of April. One of the drafts was prepared by Napoleon himself. An early draft treaty submitted by Barbé-Marbois was rejected by Livingston and Monroe as being too indefinite and not clearly rendering title to West Florida. After several days of haggling and revisions they signed the treaty of cession and the two conventions attached to it on April 30.



James Monroe and Robert R. Livingston, Project of a Treaty Proposed to Mr. de Marbois, Minister of the Treasury, by the undersigned, Ministers Plenipotentiary of the United States, Paris, April 1803. Autograph draft document, 13 pp. (imprint nos. 1261-68) Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. James Monroe Papers [About this image](#)



James Monroe and Robert R. Livingston, Project of a Treaty Proposed to Mr. de Marbois, Minister of the Treasury, by the undersigned, Ministers Plenipotentiary of the United States, Paris, April 1803. Autograph draft document, 9 pp. (imprint nos. 1270-74) Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. James Monroe Papers. [About this image](#)



James Monroe, A Convention between the French Republic and the United States of America, Paris, April 30, 1803. Autograph draft document (in Monroe's hand), 4 pp. (imprint nos. 1525-26) Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. James Monroe Papers. [About this image](#)

The treaty of 16 articles and 2 conventions consisted of 3 interdependent agreements. France would cede Louisiana to the United States for 80 million francs at a fixed exchange rate of 5.3333 francs to the dollar (or \$15 million). The United States agreed to pay France \$11,250,000 dollars in stock bearing 6 percent interest and assume \$3,750,000 in debt claimed by American citizens against France for privations committed on the high seas. France would also acquire favorable commercial privileges at New Orleans.

The wording of the first article quoted verbatim from the Treaty of San Ildefonso, by which Spain had retroceded the province to France three years earlier. The reasons for the ambiguity of the language have been debated but never completely resolved. One obvious explanation was that neither the French nor the Americans knew where Louisiana's borders were drawn. When Livingston and Monroe registered complaints over the imprecise definition of boundaries, Napoleon reportedly said to Foreign Minister Talleyrand that "if an obscurity did not already exist, it would perhaps be good policy to put one there."¹⁴ Or, perhaps the failure to set forth

specific limits was a concession to the United States so that it could somehow be allowed to assert a claim to West Florida as part of Louisiana.

The United States agreed to acquire the entire western drainage basin of the Mississippi River—a region of ambiguous limits and uncertain proportions—as an outlet for the East. This area would be exchanged for an amount of money that exceeded the deposits of the federal treasury. When pressed by Livingston on the issue of Louisiana's borders, the French foreign minister replied: "You have made a noble bargain for yourselves, and I suppose you will make most of it."¹⁵

Louisiana Becomes an American Territory

News of the treaty reached the United States the last week of June 1803. Newspaper headlines ran the story several days before President Jefferson received official notification. To the chagrin of Jefferson and Madison, a copy of Livingston's memorandum, which attempted to dissuade the French government from retaining Louisiana on the basis of its disadvantages, appeared in the *National Intelligencer* one week after it had announced the acquisition.

By mid-July Jefferson proclaimed his intention of convening Congress several weeks earlier than usual in order to hasten the vote on ratification and pass the necessary appropriations bill. In a mid-August letter to Madison he expressed his presumption that "Congress will enlarge the Indian fund and authorise us to send embassies to the Indian tribes of Louisiane, who may at the same time explore the country and ascertain its geography. Those large western rivers of the Misipi [sic] and Missouri whose heads form the contour of the Louisiana territory ought to be known."¹⁶

In a letter to John Dickinson, also in August, Jefferson indicated that he had begun to formulate a



**U.S. Congress, Senate,
France and Spain –
*Louisiana // Treaty
between the United States
of America and the
French Republic.* Law
Library, Library of
Congress. The Debates
and Proceedings in the
Congress of the United
States, or The Annals of
the Congress of the
United States, Senate,
7th Congress, 2nd
Session, 1003-1012
[About this image](#)**



[Detail] *Louisiana ceded to the United States!*
Independent Chronicle,
Thursday, June 30, 1803,
page 2, columns 3 and 4.
Serial and Government Publications Division,
Library of Congress
[About this image](#)

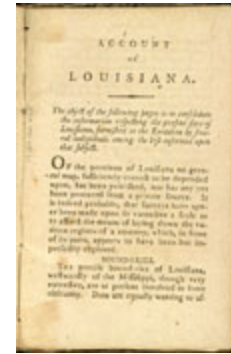


[Detail] [*Article announcing the purchase of Louisiana*],
Columbian Centinel and
Massachusetts Federalist,
Wednesday, June 29, 1803,
page 2, column 3. Serial
and Government Publications Division,
Library of Congress
[About this image](#)

mental map of the territory. He asserted that the "unquestioned bounds of Louisiana are the Iberville & Mississippi on the east, the Mexicana [Sabine], or the Highlands east of it, on the west; then from the head of the Mexicana gaining the highlands which include the waters of the Mississippi, and following those highlands round the head springs of the western waters of the Mississippi to its source where we join the English or perhaps to the Lake of the Woods." In Jefferson's mind the territory could be "considered as a triangle, one leg of which is the length of the Missouri, the other of the Mississippi, and the hypotenuse running from the source of the Missouri to the mouth of the Mississippi."¹⁷

Jefferson appears to have disregarded the possibility of Spanish dissent arising over American efforts to lay claim to the Spanish controlled lands of Texas and West Florida. He was ready to extend the western limits of Louisiana to the Rio Grande and include a portion of West Florida as part of the purchase agreement by delegating the Perdido River as its boundary on the east. With confidence he avowed "we shall get the Floridas in good time."

As congressional debate over the Purchase neared, Jefferson was faced with the challenges of organizing his new territory and justifying its acquisition to the nation. Members of Congress complained that he had failed to abide by his earlier message and furnish them with adequate details on the geography of the Louisiana territory and modern, accurate information, such as a precise delimitation of the region's boundaries, its natural features, the people and their customs, and its potential commercial and political value. Jefferson had already begun to remedy that gap in knowledge in the summer of 1803, when he drew up a list of 45 questions to distribute to individuals personally acquainted with Louisiana.



Thomas Jefferson, An account of Louisiana Laid before Congress by direction of the president of the United States, November 4, 1803: comprising an account of its boundaries, history, cities, towns, and settlements . . . , Providence, [1803]. 72 pp. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress. Call number: F373 .U584 [About this image](#)

The responses to Jefferson's questions on the newly acquired territory were assembled and redacted under his direction and with benefit of his own extensive readings. On November 14, 1803, Jefferson presented Congress with *An Account of Louisiana*, a digest of all he knew on the subject. The document was an introduction to the territory's

geography, natural resources, government, laws, courts, commerce, taxes, and Native American inhabitants. Given Jefferson's efforts during the summer of 1803 at defining Louisiana's boundaries, *An Account* contained relatively little information on that subject.

Obstacles potentially prevented the transfer of territory. The French constitution forbade the separation of French territory without legislative approval. Spain objected on the grounds that France had never completely fulfilled the terms of the Treaty of San Ildefonso, thereby nullifying French possession of Louisiana.

Doubts arose over the legality of the purchase, for the United States Constitution contained no wording on the acquisition of new territory. All problems, however, were soon resolved to the benefit of the United States. Napoleon simply acted without legislative authority and Spain was

powerless to halt the retrocession.

A strict constructionist in his views on the Constitution, Jefferson at first believed that the acquisition of Louisiana required a constitutional amendment. He adhered to his long-held belief that the federal government could exercise only those rights specifically addressed in that document. Jefferson proposed a Constitutional amendment (he made at least two drafts) authorizing the United States to purchase new lands and incorporate them within its boundaries. Secretary of State Madison, among others, advised against the amendment, arguing that the process would create an untimely delay and that ratification might be defeated by the states.

Ultimately, Jefferson realized that he would have to set aside his misgivings in order to promote western expansion. He dropped his proposed amendment rationalizing that his power to make treaties with the consent of the Senate justified the ends.

Jefferson sent the treaty to the Senate on October 17. The New England Federalists immediately raised heated protests, particularly with regard to its extra-constitutionality. The Senate Republican majority, however, approved the treaty on the evening of October 20 by a vote of 24 to 7. The House appropriated funds, which also provided for the temporary occupation and government of Louisiana.

Louisiana is Transferred to the United States

Louisiana's retrocession to France in 1800 and the arrival of a new prefect, Pierre Clement Laussat, may have come as a surprise to its citizens, for the treaty of San Ildefonso did not take effect until mid-October 1802, delayed by several years of sluggish diplomacy and slow



Thomas Jefferson, [Draft of Constitutional Amendment Incorporating Louisiana Territory into the United States, 1803]. Autograph document, 1 page. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Thomas Jefferson Papers: General Correspondence, 1651-1827
[About this image](#)

communications. On May 18, 1803 the last Spanish governor of the province, Don Manuel de Salcedo, formally announced to the colony's residents its transition from a ward of Spain to a possession of Napoleonic France.

Louisiana's inhabitants, although primarily French in language, customs, and heritage, greeted the colony's acquisition by the United States with mixed feelings of surprise, anger, and apathy. Although Laussat reacted with disbelief, his protests were brief; his rule lasted only 20 days. During his brief tenure, however, he appointed the first municipal government for the city of New Orleans, including the prominent sugar planter and landowner, Étienne de Boré, as mayor, and a city council composed of Americans and French Creoles. He also established a city fire department, began formulating police regulations, and ordered the preservation of public archives.

Official ceremonies marking the retrocession of the colony from Spain to France were held on a rainy November 30, 1803, at the Cabildo. Laussat accepted the colony on behalf of France from the Spanish Governor Salcedo and his commissioner, the marquis de Casa-Calvo.

During the brief French interregnum, President Jefferson designated William C. C. Claiborne, governor of the Mississippi Territory, and U.S. Army General James Wilkinson to receive the territory on behalf of the United States. On December 20 Laussat met with the two American commissioners in the great hall of the Cabildo to sign the deed of cession transferring possession of Louisiana from France to the United States.

Claiborne delivered a brief address. He later issued a proclamation promising the citizens of Louisiana that they ultimately would be "incorporated into the United States, and admitted as



Don Manuel de Salcedo, Brigadier de los reales exercitos gobernador militar y político de la Provincias de la Luisiana y Florida occidental . . . Dado en la Nueva-Orleans á 18 de Mayo de 1803. Printed document, 2 pages. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress. Printed Ephemera Collection, broadside portfolio 24, folder 6 [About this image](#)

soon as possible according to the Principles of the Federal Constitution to the enjoyment of all the rights, advantages, and immunities of citizens of the United States," but that their freedoms would be protected until that time.

In a ceremony held less than three months later, Major Amos Stoddard, acting on behalf of France, received the entire upper province of Louisiana from the Spanish commandant. Stoddard surrendered the territory to the United States the next day. All lands drained by the Mississippi and its headwaters, including the city of New Orleans, became United States territory.

Ceremonies in New Orleans marked the official transfer of the province to the United States. *Le Moniteur de la Louisiane*, the first French newspaper in the colony, described the events in this rare issue.



**Jean Baptiste Leseur
Fontaine, Moniteru [sic]
de la Louisiane . . . A la
Nouvelle-Orléans . . .
Lundi 2 Janvier de
l'année commune 1804.
Rare Book and Special
Collections Division,
Library of Congress. sn
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The Cartographic Setting: Evolving European and American Conceptions of Louisiana to 1803

Until 1803 the exploration and mapping of the territory acquired by the United States in the Louisiana Purchase was undertaken by the major colonial powers for a variety of reasons. Chief among them was the occupation of the lower Mississippi Valley, as well as the attempted possession of the Great Plains, the Missouri Basin, and the Pacific Northwest. An added incentive was the centuries-old expectation of finding an overland way across the North American continent to the Pacific, with the most desirable route hopefully following the Missouri or one of its tributaries to its westward flowing headwaters, which were believed to empty into the ocean. Once established, that route would enable the command of a vast segment of the North American interior and dominate trans-Pacific trade with the Orient.

France, Spain, and Britain had separate motives for exploration. France hoped that the less

significant rivers, especially those believed to have their origins somewhere in the American southwest, might lead to increased trade with the Internal Provinces of New Spain, as well as to place Spain's claims to lands beyond the Mississippi at defiance. New Spain sought to explore its northern borderlands and develop a barrier to guard against perceived British, French, and, later, American encroachments on territories possessed by the Spanish Crown. Finally, Britain's control over Canada after 1763 was a catalyst for the English-sponsored fur companies and Canadian trappers to push further west over the interior plains in search of beaver and increased commercial contact with the many Native American tribes beyond the Mississippi.

The colonial era maps spawned by those explorations depict, with varying dependability, geographical information about Louisiana's periphery rather than its interior.¹⁸ As conceived by the historical geographer John Logan Allen, the general American view of "the trans-Missouri region on the eve of Lewis's and Clark's trek could best be described as a basin, surrounded by ridges of better knowledge and grading into a vast, flat surface of pure conjecture, broken here and there by a peak of better understanding."¹⁹

Of more or less better quality were maps of the Great Bend of the Upper Missouri, which had been reached by British traders from the north and explorers under Spanish patronage working their way up the Missouri from St. Louis.²⁰ However, that most singular feature of the Missouri River did not begin to take on any recognizable shape, direction, or magnitude on a map until the 1790s.

In preparation for the journey of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark across the continent, President Thomas Jefferson spent the latter half of 1803 and much of 1804 researching the boundaries, extent, terrain, people, and resources of his newly acquired territory. He relied upon his own extensive library, as well as correspondence, reports, and maps from individuals who possessed firsthand knowledge about Louisiana. Jefferson's books and maps on the history and geography of the region, however, were inadequate. The knowledge of his informants was also limited.

One of the more accurate maps that Jefferson gave Meriwether Lewis was prepared as the result of Spanish activities on the Missouri River in the mid-1790s. This map focused primarily on delineating the course of that river as far as the mouth of the Yellowstone. The other map, drawn by cartographer Nicholas King, was a composite based upon both old and new sources that Jefferson and his Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin, thought would be useful to the expedition. The maps consulted by Jefferson and his colleagues confirmed what was already obvious even to the casual observer—Louisiana was terra incognita in want of definition.²¹

Earliest Renderings of Louisiana

Although Spaniards had sailed along Louisiana's coast and penetrated its interior as early as the mid-16th century, cartographers either left the region blank, designating the area terra incognita, or identified a major portion of what is now the southeastern United States as *La Florida*, thereby linking the entire area in both name and topography to the state readily recognizable today.

In 1650 the French cartographer Nicolas Sanson's map of North America conveyed to the literate European world accepted notions about the continental interior just prior to its penetration by the French Canadian explorers, missionaries, and fur traders, who descended from the north. The elder Nicolas Sanson founded the French school of cartography and mapmaking and his map of North America exerted an influence on its delineation for more than 50 years.

Sanson departs from his predecessors by altering the configuration of the southern river system, and he continued to ignore reports by Spanish explorers that the Mississippi was one large river. His 1657 map entitled *La Floride* shows a gradual change in the names and topography



**Nicolas Sanson, *Amerique Septentrionale*, 1650.
Geography and Map
Division, Library of
Congress. Call number:
G3300 1650 .S3 Vault
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of the region as a result of new information that had reached Europe. The map demonstrates the practice of European cartographers to expand territorial claims in the New World by enlarging and redrawing their boundaries on official maps and also perpetuates hydrographic misconceptions.



Nicolas Sanson, La Floride . . . , 1657. From his L’Amerique en Plusieurs Cartes (Paris, 1657), plate 4. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3860 1657 .S3 Vault : Low 149

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French Exploratory Mapping, 1670-1760

French exploratory mapping of the interior of the Louisiana territory commenced in 1673 with Marquette and Jolliet’s voyage down the Mississippi. The two explorers were the first Caucasian men to report on the position of the Missouri River, which they designated Pekitanoui, a derivation of one its various Native American names. Marquette proposed the Pekitanoui as a possible



Louis Joliet, Nouvelle Decouverte de Plusieurs Nations Dans la Nouvelle France en L’annee 1673 et 1674, 1674. [Facsimile from The Jesuit Relations, vol. 59, opp. p. 86.] Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3300 1674 .J6 1896 TIL

[About this image](#)



J. B. L. Franquelin, Carte de la Louisiane ou des voyages du S[ieu]r de la Salle . . . 1684. [Facsimile from The Jesuit Relations, vol. 63.] Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3300 1684 .F7 1896 TIL

[About this image](#)

transcontinental route to the Pacific Ocean. The Jolliet-Buade map depicts the "Pekitanoui" as one of two major affluents of the Mississippi River feeding into it from the west. Several other maps of the period refer to the Missouri as "Riviere des Osages," after the Native American tribe

inhabiting its banks.

Speculation that the Missouri served as a water route to the silver mines of northern Mexico took cartographic form in the important manuscript maps produced by J. B. L. Franquelin. His *Carte de la Louisiane* from 1684 mistakenly identified the Platte as the Missouri ("La Grande Riviere des Emissourites ou Missouriit"). Franquelin's depiction of the hydrography of the trans-Mississippi west was contrived from information conveyed to La Salle by Plains Native Americans, whose notions of space and distance were often misconstrued by Europeans and therefore subject to improper rendering in their translation to maps.

French movement into the western plains commenced in 1699 with Pierre Charles Le Sueur, who journeyed to New France with his relative, Sieur d'Iberville. His expedition of 1700-02 ascended the Mississippi from its mouth as far north as the Falls of St. Anthony and eventually settled at a spot on the Blue Earth River in present-day southern Minnesota.

Information from Le Sueur's journal was used in 1702 to compile a French manuscript map on five sheets of the Mississippi River. The original manuscripts were prepared by Guillaume Delisle. Under Le Sueur's guidance, Delisle drew the most accurate and up-to-date map of the Mississippi Valley of its time.



Guillaume Delisle, Carte de la Riviere de Mississipi sur les memoires de Mr. le Sueur . . . , 1702. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4042.M5 1702 .L5 Vault
[About this image](#)

–The Delisles

The next significant advancement in the cartography of Louisiana was undertaken by Guillaume Delisle and his father, Claude, prominent French mapmakers. For nearly a century, their maps of North America influenced subsequent cartographers in their delineation of the Mississippi Valley, New France (Canada), the American Southwest, and the Great Plains. As geographers to

the king and leading members of the French Royal Academy of Sciences, the Delisles had unparalleled access to the maps and firsthand reports sent to Paris by French Canadians who were descending the Mississippi River and beginning to traverse the northern and central plains.²²



Guillaume and Claude Delisle, *Carte du Mexique et de la Floride des Terres Angloises et des Isles Antilles du Cours et des Environs de la Riviere de Mississipi . . .*, 1703. From their *Atlas de Géographie* (Paris, 1700-12), no. 46. Call number: G3300 1703 .L5 TIL Vault [About this image](#)

In 1703 the Delisles published *Carte du Mexique et de la Floride*, the earliest printed map to delineate with reasonable accuracy the general course and location of the Mississippi River and its drainage system and basin. The map is noted for its attempt to identify and to locate numerous Native American tribes along the Mississippi and its tributaries, as well as in the southeast and Texas.

In 1718 the Delisles again contributed another milestone in the cartographic representation of North America. The map, *Carte de la Louisiane et du Cours du Mississipi*, for which they drew upon 20 years of research, was originally made for financier John Law's Company of the West to promote settlement in Louisiana. With regard to the lands lying west of the Mississippi, the map includes a vast body of new information that had been obtained from Frenchmen, most notably Étienne Bourgmont, traveling along the Missouri River and onto the southern plains. More accurate renderings of the lower Missouri and Osage rivers appear, as do the Kansas and the Platte. The Missouri also has its origin near the headwaters of the Rio Grande, presumably in the belief that New Spain could be reached via the Missouri. The important Spanish settlements of Texas and New Mexico are included. And, like its predecessor of 1703, this map endeavors to identify and to locate the numerous Native American villages along the rivers and in the prairies west of the Mississippi, and designates specific regions by their tribal names.



Guillaume Delisle, *Carte de la Louisiane et du Cours du Mississipi . . .*, Paris, 1718. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. G3700 1718 .L5 Vault : Low 288 [About this image](#)

-La Harpe to Vérendrye

Spanish movements onto the Great Plains prompted Governor Bienville to counter with French explorations in 1718-19 under the auspices of Law's Company of the Indies. In 1718 Jean Baptiste Bernard, Sieur de La Harpe, arrived in Louisiana with orders to prevent Spanish encroachments across the northwestern border of Louisiana. Hearing that the Spanish had established a post at Los Adayes within a few miles of Fort St. John Baptiste, La Harpe ascended the Red River to a spot in the vicinity of present-day Shreveport, where he erected a small fort. An exchange of correspondence followed between the leaders of the two posts. They ultimately agreed upon a dry ditch known as the Arroyo Hondo as the indefinite boundary between Spanish and French claims.

La Harpe journeyed overland to the confluence of the Canadian and Arkansas rivers, making contact with the Osage Indians and exploring a portion of present-day Oklahoma. Two years later La Harpe headed an expedition to establish a settlement near present-day Galveston Bay in Texas, but was forced back by threats from Native Americans in the area. A final expedition up the Arkansas River to the Padouca Nation in Oklahoma followed in 1722-23.

Following his return to France La Harpe wrote a valuable history of the establishment of the French in Louisiana. A manuscript copy of La Harpe's journal was compiled in the mid-1720s by Jean de Beaurain, royal geographer to King Louis XV, to whom it was dedicated. A beautifully drawn manuscript map accompanies the journal. It depicts the expeditions of La Harpe and other French explorers onto the Great Plains, illustrating the expanding influence of France into the region south of the Missouri River.



Benard de la Harpe, Carte Nouvelle de la partie de l'ouest de la Louisiane. Faite sur les observations & decouverte de M. Bernard de la Harpe, l'un des Commandans audit Pays, ca. 1721/1766. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. From Chevalier de Beaurain's manuscript copy of Jean Baptiste Bernard de la Harpe's Journal Historique concernant l'Etablissement des François à Louïsiane tiré des memoires de Mrs. d'Iberville et de Bienville, vol. 1, Louisiana Miscellany [About this image](#)

France had long been lured by the possibility of a water route crossing the interior of North America from the Great Lakes to the Pacific Ocean. That obsession stretched back to Samuel de Champlain (1567-1635), the explorer who advocated the need for pushing further west in pursuit of a shorter route to China.

The search for a direct route by water arose out of two misconceptions which both influenced geographical thinking in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and distorted the geography of the western half of the continent until the second half of the 18th century. It was mistakenly believed that a Long River, or River of the West, crossed the continent, connecting possibly the Great Lakes or some branch of the Mississippi with the Sea of the West, a large interior lake or inlet which fed into the Pacific. And, in lieu of a massive range of north-south mountains (the Rockies), maps portrayed "a height of land . . . not far distant from the western edge of French knowledge, and from this the Mississippi and Missouri ran down to the Gulf of Mexico on one side and a great westward-flowing river on the other."²³ Franquelin's *Carte de la Louisiane* modified the notion somewhat by depicting a fictitious river that flowed southwest into the Gulf of California from a lake situated near the headwaters of the Missouri and the Rio Grande.

The fabled River of the West makes its most notorious appearance on a map by the adventurer Louis-Armand de Lom d'Arce, baron de Lahontan who depicted a system of rivers flowing almost directly from the Mississippi across the Great Plains into the western sea. Lahontan's map is further embellished with Native American artifacts and the names of several fictitious tribes, which he claimed as having provided him with geographical information. This map was published with an account of Lahontan's travels in 1683-93 in New France.



Louis Armand de Leon d'Arce, Baron de Lahontan, Carte de la Riviere Longue et de quelques autres qui se dechargent dans le grand fleuve de Missisipi . . . // Carte que les Gnacsitaires ont dessiné sur des peaux de cerfs . . . , 1703. From Lahontan's Nouveau Voyages de Mr. le Baron de Lahontan, dans L'Amerique Septentrionale . . . (The Hague, 1703). Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4050 1703 .L3 Vault [About this image](#)

Still seeking to verify the existence of the Sea of the West 20 years later, the French government enlisted the services of the Jesuit priest, Pierre François Xavier Charlevoix. Descending the Mississippi from Illinois to its mouth in 1721-22, Charlevoix gleaned enough information to conclude that the Sea of the West lay to the southwest of the Lake of the Woods and that it could be reached "either by ascending the Missouri River—which he favored, or by establishing an outpost among the Assiniboines north and west of Lake Superior from which future expeditions could be sent westwards."²⁴ Charlevoix believed in the possibility of a direct water route across North America.



Jacques Nicolas Bellin, Carte de l'Amerique Septentrionale . . . , 1743. From a composite collection of manuscript and engraved maps entitled Cartes et Plans de l'Amérique (Paris, 1745), plate 3. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G1100 .C3 1745 Vault [About this image](#)

The next major explorers out of Canada were the ex-soldier and fur trader Pierre Gaultier de Varennes; Sieur de la Vérendrye, a native-born Canadian, and his sons. In 1742-43 two of Vérendrye's sons traveled westwards towards northeastern Wyoming in an effort to follow traditional Native American routes to the Western Sea. They discovered either the Black Hills of Dakota or the Big Horn Range of Wyoming, the first recorded sightings of the Rocky Mountains by French Canadians.



Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Vérendrye, Hudson's-Bay-Country, After La Varanderie. About 1740, 1740/1855-59. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. J.G. Kohl Collection, no. 130 [About this image](#)

Although his goal of locating the River of the West was not fulfilled, Vérendrye explored and mapped a large portion of the northwestern plains between Lake Superior and the Missouri River. Several important maps are associated with Vérendrye's expeditions, notably the *Carte des Nouvelles Decouvertes dans l'Ouest du Canada et Des nations, Qui y Habitent*. The original map was drawn around 1740 from information in Vérendrye's memoirs, but the manuscript copy seen here was made by the cartographic historian Johann Georg Kohl in the 1850s. Most importantly, Vérendrye identified the River of the Mandans with the

Missouri River, not the River of the West, and realized that the Missouri's upper course would never lead to the Sea of the West.²⁵

The efforts of Vérendrye and his sons pushed French control of the lucrative fur trade as far west as the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan rivers. Further colonial plans for developing and settling lands along the major river valleys in the interior of the continent awakened governments to the paucity of information contained in the popular maps of the times. Obvious circumstances, such as the French and Indian War and the American Revolution, required more precise geography of the continent and greater detail in maps of key regions.

Delisle's 1718 map continued to influence the cartography of North America for almost 100 years. That map's inadequacies, however, became evident as Europeans pushed further westward.

British Mapping from the North, 1760-1801

The commencement of English exploratory mapping of the plains region west of Hudson's Bay coincided with the decline of the French Empire in North America in the early 1760s. Territories once controlled by French explorers and fur traders, including Canada, the Great Lakes, and the Upper Mississippi, were opened up to employees of the Hudson's Bay Company and its rival, Britain's North West Company. Officials and traders of those companies prepared manuscript sketch maps and surveys based upon information gathered by observation or obtained by Native Americans inhabiting the prairies. Their surveys focused on the vast interior plains of present-day Canada, although there is some innovative information about the lower reaches of the northern plains.

Materials compiled by the Hudson's Bay Company were sent to London where they remained reserved for official Company use until the early 1790s. Beginning in 1795, however, information on those maps began to appear in printed maps of North America prepared by the

publisher Aaron Arrowsmith. Copies of maps compiled by Americans traveling independently or working for the North West Company also found their way to London.

The first English-speaking explorer to move into the upper Mississippi Valley was the American Jonathan Carver. A member of Rogers Rangers, he fought against the French and the Native Americans and narrowly escaped the 1757 massacre at Fort William Henry. Following the French and Indian War, Carver journeyed between Lake Superior and the Upper Mississippi and popularized his adventure in *Travels throughout the Interior Parts of North America in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768*. Carver's map of North America was copied largely from an influential map published by Jacques Nicolas Bellin in 1755. In the tradition of his French predecessors, Carver gave further confirmation, albeit erroneously, that the Pacific could be reached via a direct water route from the Mississippi River.



Jonathan Carver, A new map of North America, from the latest Discoveries, 1778, 1781. From his Travels through the interior parts of North America, in the years 1766, 1767, and 1768 (London, 1781), facing introduction. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress. Call number: F597 .C35 - In-Analytic for map
[About this image](#)

An advancement in the cartography of the West was made in 1785 by the American fur trader and explorer Peter Pond, an employee of the North West Company. His map was produced by J. G. Kohl, who traced a manuscript facsimile in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, the original having been lost. Pond promoted the company's interests in the Athabasca Lake and River regions, along the Saskatchewan and North Saskatchewan rivers, the Minnesota River, and Lake Dauphin.



Peter Pond, Hudson's Bay's Country by P. Pond 1785, 1785/1855-59. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. G3400 1785 .P6 Vault : Kohl 137, 137a
[About this image](#)

Pond made three variations of his continental map, one of which was presented to Congress in 1785. Although the map is noted for its proper delineation of the system of lakes and rivers of the northern plains, it erroneously suggested that the headwaters of the Missouri

River might be close to the source of a western river in the country of the Flathead Indians. Pond nonetheless connected the upper and lower courses of the Missouri River, whose source is given as a chain of mountains "called by the natives Stony-Mounts."

In 1797-98 the experienced surveyor and astronomer, David Thompson, undertook a surveying expedition for the North West Company. This journey led him from Lake Superior to Lake Winnipeg and then overland, on foot, in the dead of winter from the Assiniboine River down to the Mandan and Pawnee villages on the Missouri River. In his narrative account of the expedition he remarks that "my time for full three weeks was employed in calculating the astronomical observations made to, and from, the Missisourie River; and making a Map of my survey, which, with my journal was sealed up, and directed to the Agents of the North West Company."²⁶

Although not the original map to which Thompson's narrative refers, his efforts reveal the exact latitude and longitude of Great Bend of the Missouri near its junction with the Knife and Little Missouri rivers for the first time. The map was copied by the explorer Meriwether Lewis and may have been consulted during the planning stages of his expedition with William Clark. It is believed to have served them during the actual journey, as well, for its reverse bears the note that "this belongs to Capt Lewis."



David Thompson, [Sketch of the Great Bend of the Missouri River], 1798. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4127.M5 1798 .B4 TIL Vault : L&C j [About this image](#)

Surveyors and traders for the major fur trading companies obtained much of their geographic information about areas that they had not yet explored from Native Americans who inhabited the plains and prairies. Topographic details drawn from their own observations were combined with second and third party reports, often by both Native Americans and other company employees.

One example of a map, drawn by the Native American Blackfeet chief Ac ko mok ki, otherwise known as The Feathers, was prepared for the benefit of Peter Fidler. Fidler, the preeminent Canadian surveyor, explorer, and cartographer for the Hudson's Bay Company, was the first to map the headwaters of the North and South Saskatchewan rivers, as well as those of the Assiniboine.²⁷ He copied and reduced the size of this highly stylized map

in 1801, which was traced by J. G. Kohl in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives. The map illustrates the headwaters of the Missouri and Saskatchewan river systems flowing eastward from the Rocky Mountains. It identifies all 14 of the Missouri's tributaries by their Blackfeet names, and also includes the names of 11 peaks within the Rocky Mountain Range. At the time, Fidler's map presented advancing fur trappers with the best picture of area.

Information deposited in London archives eventually found expression in Aaron Arrowsmith's map of North America. Arrowsmith's fine reputation as a map publisher furnished him with unparalleled access to the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, which preserved a rich body of original sources upon which he could draw. His 1802 map of North America (the map was first printed in 1795 and updated in 1802) represents for its era the most accurate and comprehensive map of the trans-Mississippi west, including the territory which was to make up the Louisiana Purchase one year before the transaction.

Arrowsmith's map includes David Thompson's carefully plotted bend of the Missouri, the system of rivers feeding into it as originally drawn by Ac ko mok ki, and details about the Pacific Northwest coast that were based



Peter Fidler after Ac ko mok ki, An Indian map of the Upper-Missouri. 1801, / 1855-59. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4127.M5 1801 .J6 TIL Vault : Kohl 243 [About this image](#)



Aaron Arrowsmith, A map exhibiting all the new discoveries in the interior parts of North America : inscribed by permission to the honourable governor and company of adventurers of England trading into Hudsons Bay in testimony of their liberal communications to their most obedient and very humble servant A. Arrowsmith, January 1st 1795. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3300 1802 .A7 Vault Casetop [About this image](#)

upon the explorations and charting of British Royal Navy Captain George Vancouver. The vast empty spaces attest to the map maker's integrity; rather than filling them in with erroneous geographic data, he left them blank.

This edition of Arrowsmith's map was consulted by Thomas Jefferson and Meriwether Lewis in the summer of 1803 as they made preparations for the Lewis and Clark Expedition the following year. A copy of the map guided the expedition on the first leg of its journey.

Spanish-Sponsored Mapping of the Missouri Basin and Lower Louisiana

Spanish-sponsored exploratory mapping of the Missouri Basin and the central American plains was, like British mapping efforts, concentrated in the last decade of the 18th century. In the first half of the 18th century Spain looked watchfully towards the northeast from northern New Mexico, alert to any westward movement by the French in the upper and middle Mississippi Valley.

– Spanish Entrada into the Southwest

Since 1540 Spanish culture and civilization had spread into the area known today as the American Southwest by way of military, religious, and commercial expeditions, in a movement known as the *Spanish Entrada*. Despite a prominent Spanish presence in the area, its cartographic picture remained largely unknown outside of the Spanish empire until about 1800, primarily because the maps remained in manuscript form and unpublished.



Captain George Vancouver, A Chart shewing part of the Coast of N. W America with the tracks of His Majesty's Sloop Discovery and Armed Tender Chatham; Commanded by George Vancouver . . . , 1798. From the atlas to accompany A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean, and Round the World, London, 1798, plate 5. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G1107 .P3V3 1798 Vault [About this image](#)

Before the [pioneering explorations of Father Eusebio Kino](#) into the far northwestern reaches of New Spain in the period 1687-1701, Spanish maps, in general, mixed fact with fiction, legend, and confusing accounts supplied by Native American sources. California's depiction as an island, one of the more prominent myths perpetuated by cartographers of North America for almost a century, was refuted by Kino in maps of his travels around Tucson, Arizona, as far as the mouth of the Colorado River.

Efforts at exploring the area to the north and west of Santa Fe and also much of Texas were checked by the steadfast Apache and Comanche Indians. There were two exceptions. First, [the explorations of Franciscan priests Silvestre Vélez de Escalante and Francisco Atanasio Dominguez](#), who, journeyed through parts of Colorado, Utah, and Arizona in 1776-77, ultimately penetrating into the central Rockies And, from 1786 to 1793, the Frenchman Pedro Vial, commissioned by the governor of Texas to cross the southwestern plains of Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico, sought to establish three new routes connecting Santa Fe with San Antonio, Natchitoches, and St. Louis.

Spain acquired the frontier lands of Arkansas as part of Louisiana in 1762. The major European settlement in the region was the Arkansas Post, a small village and a military post near the mouth of the Arkansas River that was inhabited primarily by French fur traders and backwoodsmen. Overall, the region did not have a substantial number of settlers loyal to the Spanish Crown. Following the American Revolution, Spanish authorities in Louisiana sought to populate the area through immigration.

In 1766-68 Spanish officials in northern New Spain undertook "the last great exploratory journey of this period" to curb the southwestern Native American tribes spread out between the Gila River on the west and the borders of Louisiana on the east.²⁸ A beautifully drawn manuscript map of the Internal Provinces of New Spain was prepared to accompany a report on the 23-month, 6,000-mile, expedition under the Marques de Rubi to survey the presidios and defenses of northern New Spain. A note along the 30th parallel follows Rubi's recommendation

that a line of defense consisting of 15 presidios spaced at even intervals be established from the Gulf of California to the Red River of Louisiana. The 30th parallel served as New Spain's projected line of defense against incursions by Native Americans and non-Spanish Europeans, the latter largely unaware of the geographical information compiled about the Spanish frontier.²⁹

– Initial Phase of Spanish Exploration of the Missouri River

By 1718 Spanish authorities knew that Native American tribes occupying the margins of Spain's northern frontier were receiving guns and ammunition from French traders. Northern New Spain faced the very real possibility of having its northern and northeastern border areas overrun by nations of the southern Plains, particularly the Comanches and the Apaches.

In 1719 officials in the viceregal capital of Santa Fe ordered the establishment of a presidio on the Great Plains, at the site of El Cuartelejo in southwestern Kansas. An expedition was to proceed beyond the presidio and head off the encroaching French. By 1720 that expedition of 300 Spaniards under Captain Pedro de Villasur had reached the North Platte River in present-day Nebraska, where it suffered a crushing defeat under a party of Comanches. For the next 40 or so years Spanish interests in exploring the Great Plains were repressed. Although exploratory mapping of the Spanish domain beyond Santa Fe and Texas remained limited in the decades of the 1740s and 1750s, the years nevertheless witnessed much interaction, in the form of contraband trade, between the Spanish, the French, and the Native American peoples of the central prairies.³⁰



Nicolas de LaFora and José de Urrutia, Mapa, que comprende la Frontera, de los Dominios del Rey, en la America Septentrional, segun el original que hizo D[on] Joseph de Urrutia, sobre varios puntos observados por èl, y el Capitan de Yngenieros D[on] Nicolas Lafora, y sobre los mas veridicos, y diarias noticias, que pudieron recojer en el tiempo de la Expedicion, que hizieron por dicha Frontera à las ordenes del Mariscal de Campo, Marques de Ruby, 1769. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4410 1769 .U7 Vault
[About this image](#)

Spain obtained Louisiana in 1762, but was slow to gain accurate knowledge of the Missouri River Basin above the Platte. Asked for a map of the province in 1785, the Spanish Governor of Louisiana, Esteban Rodríguez Miró, forwarded a description summarizing knowledge of the Missouri River and its Native American tribes. He added that he had no map to send since his French predecessor had not left one.

For several years the Spanish had obtained furs from the Native Americans along the Missouri River. They followed naturally in the footsteps of French-Canadian *voyageurs* and *coureurs de bois*, whose presence on the Missouri was reported as early as 1704 and who continued to operate on the river under Spanish authority. By 1790 British traders, who dominated the industry on the Upper Mississippi, began to exert pressure on the Spanish by making contact with the Upper Missouri tribes, particularly the Mandans.

Spanish officials of Upper Louisiana sponsored three major expeditions up the Missouri River. These expeditions were attempts to establish commercial relations with the Native Americans and lay a direct route to the Pacific Ocean—thereby wresting trade from the British. Another expedition out of Texas across the southern plains from Santa Fe to the Red River sought to fill knowledge gaps about the geography of the region and assist in opening a route from Louisiana to northern Mexico.

In 1794 the newly formed Missouri Company chose Jean Baptiste Truteau to lead an expedition to the Mandan villages along the Missouri's Great Bend and to erect a post and establish an agency for trade. By mid-1795 Truteau had reached the Cheyenne River, his farthest point of penetration.

In preparation for Truteau's exploration, the Surveyor-General of Upper Louisiana, Pierre Antoine Soulard, was ordered by Governor de Carondelet to draw a new map to incorporate the

latest information about the courses of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers and the central plains. Soulard's map was a milestone in the cartographic depiction of the American West and the Missouri watershed—the latter conforming for the first time to its actual course. Many secondary streams of the Missouri make their initial appearance. The map constituted "a respectable achievement in gathering and digesting available material to represent the Missouri Valley as it was known in St. Louis in 1794, on the eve of Spanish explorations."³¹

The relative accuracy and detail of Soulard's map led Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to consult it in planning their expedition of 1804-06. Although the original Spanish edition of this map has disappeared, copies in three languages survive.

The identification of the Canadian Plains above the Saskatchewan River and Lake Winnipeg as "Possession Espagnole" may reflect some anxiety on the part of Spain, since Spanish claims to that territory were rendered obsolete by the time that the map was drawn. Such pretensions on Spain's part were likely a relic of the uncertain boundaries attached to the Treaty of Paris of 1763, when French possessions in North America were divided between Britain and Spain. That the "two legates did not agree on their boundaries beyond the point where the Mississippi River ceased to divide them" enabled the British to occupy the territory beyond Lake Winnipeg without any resistance.³²

– Second Phase

The second phase of Spain's mapping of the Missouri Valley and the Great Plains originated in a secret reconnoitering mission sponsored by France. In an effort to repossess Louisiana, the



Pierre Antoine Soulard, Idée topographique des hauts du Mississipi et du Missouri pour servir à la connaissance d'une partie des Nations sauvage qui y habitent. dressée après des renseignements donnés par divers voyageurs, Dessinée par Mr. Soulard . . . année 1795 . . . / 1855-59.

Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4125 1795 .S6 Vault : Kohl 242

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French government ordered General Georges Henri Victor Collot in 1796 to descend the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to New Orleans to study the military features of the region. This mission established the groundwork for a possible rebellion against the United States by the western settlements.

Collot was briefly detained by the Spanish authorities upon his arrival in St. Louis; at that time he may even have ascended the Missouri. While in St. Louis he met Jean Baptiste Truteau, recently returned from his explorations. Truteau compiled his information, possibly on Collot's behalf, in a document entitled *Description du Haut Missouri*, which is among the Joseph N. Nicollet Papers in the Library of Congress.

Collot incorporated information from Truteau's report into a book and a map of the region. The book, accompanied by an atlas of skillfully drawn engravings that depict locales in the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri valleys deemed strategic to the French, was compiled shortly after 1796, published in Paris in 1804, but not released until 1826, many years after Collot's death. Plate 29 of the atlas, illustrates the most recent late 18th- century information about the Missouri and the middle American plains known to Spanish officials in Upper Louisiana. References to tributaries of the Missouri, such as the Cheyenne, the White, and the Yellowstone rivers, came from Truteau. The influences of Arrowsmith and Soulard are also evident, particularly with regard to the northern plains and rivers of the central plains, respectively.

– Mackay and Evans

In 1795-97 the Missouri Company sponsored a third expedition to the upper Missouri. James



Georges Henri Victor Collot, Map of the Missouri; of the higher parts of the Mississippi; and of the elevated plain, where the waters divide, which run eastward into the river St. Lawrence; northeast into Hudson's Bay; north north west into the Frozen sea; and south into the Gulf of Mexico. To which is added Mackenzie's track in 1789, 1826. In his Voyage dans l'Amérique Septentrionale, ou description des pays arrosés par le Mississipi, l'Ohio, le Missouri, et autres rivières affluentes . . . , Paris, 1826, plate 29. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G1375 .C6 1826 [About this image](#)

Mackay, an experienced Scottish fur trader who had switched his allegiance from the British North West Company to become the manager of the Missouri Company's affairs in Spanish Louisiana, led the expedition. Mackay's assistant was John Evans, a Welshman who had come to America in quest of the mythical "Welsh Indians" believed to inhabit the banks of the Missouri. Mackay was charged with constructing forts and trading posts wherever necessary to protect Spanish commercial interest from British encroachments. Both men possessed experience in surveying and mapmaking.

The Mackay-Evans detailed and influential manuscript map is recognized as another milestone in the cartography of upper Louisiana. It "provided the first accurate renderings of the upper course of the Missouri based on astronomical sightings and compass readings, and by carrying their survey up to the Mandan-Hidatsa villages, they finally brought into contact the two exploratory mapping frontiers of the interior plains."³³ Spanish and American authorities now had the most precise cartographic representation of the lower and middle segments of the Missouri River before Lewis and Clark reached the area.

The Mackay-Evans map depicts the course of the Missouri from Fort St. Charles to its bend and (conjecturally) to the mouth of the Yellowstone River. Several major affluents of the Missouri, connecting at reasonably accurate locations, make their initial appearance on the map and are identified by recognizable names.

Although several copies of the map are known to have been made by James Mackay with the assistance of John Evans, only this one survives. A French army engineer and cartographer employed by the Spanish government in St. Louis³⁴ may have drafted this map for use by Lewis and Clark on the first leg of their journey up the Missouri River.



James Mackay and John Evans, [Map of the Missouri River from St. Charles to the mouth of the Yellowstone River], 1797-98. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4052 .M5 1796 Vault oversized [About this image](#)

Mackay and Evans's design for the lower and middle courses of the Missouri River is also seen in a composite manuscript map of Louisiana drawn in the final years of the 18th century. The cartographer misplaced much of the Missouri's upper course, perhaps deliberately in an attempt to validate the Spanish notion that northern Mexico was embraced by both the Mississippi and the Missouri rivers.³⁵ He also omitted any reference to the Rocky Mountains, but adopted Pierre Antoine Soulard's depiction of the northern plains and hydrography. The cartographer used Mackay's term to identify the Mandan-Hidatsa tribes as "Wanutaries," as well as Wantuns and Mandans.



Author unknown, [Spanish map of North America from the Mississippi River to the Pacific, between the 35th and 60th parallels of latitude], ca. 1797-1800. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3300 179- .N6 TIL Vault : L&C I
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The map may be of Spanish origin, although it was copied and amended from the original by a French draftsman who served the Spanish government probably in St. Louis. It indicates one of the earliest references to the Great Falls of the Missouri on its upper course, here identified by the word "Chute," and marks the first appearance of the Yellowstone River, "R. des Roche Jaune," on a map.³⁶



François Marie, Perrin du Lac, Carte du Missouri levée et rectifiée dans toute son étendue, par F[rançois] Perrin du Lac, l'an 1802. From his Voyage dans les deux Louisianes . . . , Paris, 1805. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress. Call number: F373 .P45
[About this image](#)

– Later Maps

Details from the explorations of Mackay and Evans also found their way into published maps. One map, produced in 1805 under the direction of François Marie Perrin du Lac, the French traveler and explorer, was prepared to accompany his *Voyage dans le Deux Louisianes*, a popular account of his expedition to Louisiana to visit the Native American tribes along the Missouri River. The map suggests a familiarity with the manuscript maps of Mackay and Evans, but has that river's

headwaters stretching towards the northwest. Notable is the careful delineation of Mackay's track in Nebraska in 1796, as well as reasonably accurate depictions of the tributaries of the Missouri.

Because Perrin du Lac's narrative falsely claimed that he had ascended the Missouri from St. Louis to the White River in present-day South Dakota, it is believed that he also relied heavily for his description of the Missouri on the travels of fur traders living in St. Louis. Perrin du Lac's map also contains an early reference to the Nebraska Sand Hills, which are identified as a large desert of sand unable to support any flora or fauna, save for a little tortoise of a variety of colors. Although Perrin du Lac himself made no advances in the cartography of the Missouri Basin, his "beautifully-executed map was the only published form in which the work of Mackay and Evans could be found for upwards of a century," according to Carl Wheat in *Mapping the Transmississippi West, 1540-1861*.³⁷

Despite two-and-a-half centuries of exploration and mapping of North America, by 1803 there was no entirely accurate or complete picture of the territory comprised by the Louisiana Purchase. More advanced knowledge came in stages, beginning in 1805, with the expeditions of Zebulon M. Pike to the headwaters of the Mississippi and into the southwest, and ultimately from the journey of Lewis and Clark. The maps emanating from these exploration—and from equally significant explorations undertaken by others, gradually eliminated the uncertainties appearing in earlier maps and allowed the expanding United States to establish legitimate claims to the immense territory that had come into its possession.

American Exploration of Louisiana

Acquisition and exploration of American lands throughout the first decade of the 19th century began and ended with President Thomas Jefferson. Whether involved in purchasing the Louisiana Territory; promoting national interests or nurturing his own curiosity by obtaining scientific, cultural, and geographic knowledge; or, organizing expeditions by choosing their

leaders; planning their goals; and raising public and private funds for their execution; Jefferson stood at the forefront of those programs. Behind his involvement lay a firmly-rooted vision of an "empire of liberty" that stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast.

Before 1800

In the decade following the American Revolution the federal government sponsored four attempts to explore the region beyond the Mississippi River. Jefferson prompted three of them and he was also involved in developing legislation for governing the admission of new territories to the United States. Rumors of a British expedition from the Mississippi Valley to California prompted Jefferson in late 1783 to tap revolutionary war hero and longtime friend George Rogers Clark to head a party into the west, presumably along the Missouri. Clark, supportive of Jefferson's intentions, declined.

While a member of Congress in 1784 Jefferson also chaired a committee to draw up plans for administering the new Northwest Territory that had been added to the United States by the Treaty of Paris of 1783. Although the original ordinance was repealed, it became the basis of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. The latter ordinance provided for the admission of territories to statehood in stages, thus helping to lay the foundation for future growth of the nation and the disposition of western lands, including Louisiana.

In 1786, while serving as American minister at Paris, Jefferson became acquainted with the sailor and adventurer John Ledyard, to whom he proposed the "enterprise of exploring the Western part of our continent, by passing thro Petersburg to Kamschatka, and procuring a passage thence in some of the Russian vessels to Nootka Sound, Whence he might make his way across the continent of America."³⁸ Ledyard agreed to travel to the Atlantic Coast from Paris by way of Russia, the Pacific Northwest, and the Missouri River in 1786-87, but was apprehended before reaching Russia's eastern Pacific Coast.

In 1790 Henry Knox, Secretary of War, inaugurated the first official attempt to explore the Missouri River. Knox secretly ordered Lieutenant John Armstrong to venture up the Missouri to its source and explore all of its southern branches. Poorly planned and under equipped, Armstrong's expedition never left St. Louis.

The Boston navigator and fur trader, Robert Gray, commanded the first ship to sail into the estuary of the Columbia River in May 1792. He promptly named the river after his ship, the *Columbia*, and established an American presence on the northwest coast of the continent, albeit without any sanction from the United States government. Equally important, he correctly fixed the longitude of the river's mouth, which set it roughly 3,000 miles west of Virginia, thus establishing, in Jefferson's mind, a more precise and permanent conception of the actual breadth of the continent.

Jefferson remained enthusiastic about mounting an expedition to explore the Northwest by way of the Missouri River. At Jefferson's urging the American Philosophical Society sponsored an expedition in 1793 by the young French naturalist, André Michaux, to find "the shortest & most convenient route of communication between the U.S. & the Pacific ocean," with the Missouri River "declared as the fundamental object."

Jefferson drafted detailed instructions charging Michaux to report carefully on the topography of the region, its wildlife and flora, and its Native American inhabitants. When Michaux found himself "at the point from whence you may get by the shortest & most convenient route to some principal river of the Pacific ocean," he was "to proceed to such river, & pursue its course to the ocean." Almost as quickly as it had begun, however, Michaux's journey was aborted in Kentucky when his involvement in the intrigues of Citizen Genêt for inciting insurrection in western lands became known.



Thomas Jefferson, letter to André Michaux, after January 23, 1793. Letterpress copy of letter, 4 pp., with transcription. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Thomas Jefferson Papers
[About this image](#)

Throughout most of the 1790s Jefferson was pressed by the concerns of public service as well as private affairs at his Monticello estate. As a result he ceased planning for an expedition up the Missouri River towards the Northwest, although he never lost interest in such a venture. His vision of one day securing an "empire of liberty" stretching across both ends of the North American continent continued to fuel his desire of acquiring new lands in the effort to expand American borders towards the west.

The First Federal Expeditions in Louisiana and the Spanish Borderlands in the Decade after the Purchase

Jefferson the scholar was a lover of books and libraries. Chief among his interests were American history and geography. His third and largest library, which he sold to Congress in 1815, contained more than 200 works on the geography and exploration of North America. One of the gems of his collection was *Voyages from Montreal . . . through the Continent of North America, to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans; in the Years 1789 and 1793* (London, 1802) by Alexander Mackenzie, the North West Company trader and explorer. A bestseller, *Voyages from Montreal*, was reprinted in 26 editions in four languages and included several Native American vocabularies and an early history of the Canadian fur trade.

Mackenzie mounted two expeditions through the heart of the Canadian wilderness in search of a direct passage to the west coast of the continent. On the first expedition, in 1789, he paddled out of Lake Athabasca in the central Canadian prairie on the river that today bears his name and mistakenly reached Arctic waters instead of his goal of the Pacific.



Alexander Mackenzie, A map of Mackenzie's track from Fort Chipewyan to the north sea in 1789. London, 1801. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. [About this image](#)

Having better prepared himself at fixing latitude and longitude, Mackenzie undertook a second expedition from July 1792 to August 1793. Even more dramatic and arduous than the first expedition, it led him across the rough waters of the Canadian Rockies towards the Pacific Coast above Vancouver Island and eventually discharged him into the ocean at the mouth of the Bella Coola River. As a result, Mackenzie became the first man to cross the interior of North America above Mexico. Though possessing little practical results, his success proved that an overland passage across the northern continent was possible.

Additional maps depicting Mackenzie's 1793 track from Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca to the Pacific were published in his

Voyages from Montreal . . . through the Continent of North America, to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans; in the Years 1789 and 1793. Mackenzie had reached the Fraser River and not the Columbia (the mythic River of the West) as he believed. The implication of his achievement was clear: the British had beaten the United States across the continent to the Pacific Northwest and were therefore in a position to dominate commercial intercourse between the two oceans.

The final pages of Mackenzie's *Voyages from Montreal* were read by both Jefferson and Meriwether Lewis. These pages urged the British government to establish a fur-trade dynasty in North America with the aid of its Hudson's Bay Company, to which Mackenzie had switched his allegiance.

The British were to accomplish this by commanding navigation of the Columbia River Basin and operating a series of trading posts in the American interior north of the 48th parallel, thus driving



Alexander Mackenzie, A Map of Mackenzie's track from Fort Chipewyan to the Pacific Ocean in 1793, 1802. From his *Voyages from Montreal . . . , Edinburgh, 1802.* Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3466.S12 1801 .M21 Vault [About this image](#)



Alexander Mackenzie, A map of America, between latitudes 40 and 70 North and longitudes 45 and 180 west, exhibiting Mackenzie's Track from Montreal to Fort Chipewyan & from thence to the North Sea in 1789 & to the West Pacific Ocean in 1793, 1802. From his *Voyages from Montreal . . . , Edinburgh, 1802.* Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3401.S12 1801 .M2 Vault [About this image](#)

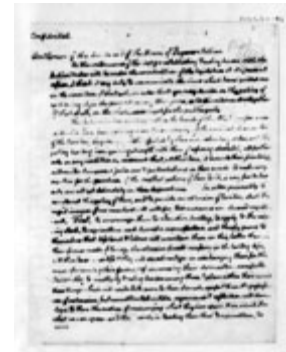
out potential commercial competition with Asia by the United States.

So pressing was the American need for mounting a major expedition into Louisiana, and so confident was Jefferson that one day Louisiana would fall into the hands of the United States, that he obtained congressional appropriations to explore it four months before it had even been offered for sale by Napoleon. In a January 18, 1803, confidential message to Congress couched among a discussion of Native American trade and commerce west of the Mississippi that was designed to shield it from congressional opposition, Jefferson requested \$2,500 to kick off the expedition.

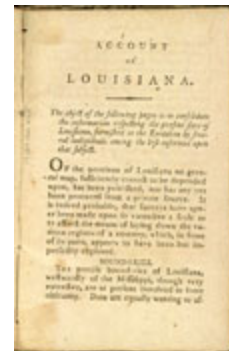
In early 1805 Congress appropriated an additional \$5,000 to explore Louisiana, permitting Jefferson to proceed with his plans of surveying and mapping the lower Mississippi Basin. Jefferson's primary interest lay in exploring the Arkansas and Red rivers to their headwaters, since they were believed to flow out of the highlands close to the southwestern borders of the territory. Verification of the precise location of those headwaters was the prerequisite to establishing the precise boundary between American and Spanish dominions.

– Dunbar

Before the president's plan for exploration got under way, private explorations of the Red River were carried out in 1803-04 by Dr. John Sibley of Natchitoches. Sibley ascended the Red as far as present-day Shreveport and obtained information about the further reaches of the river from French inhabitants of the area. Although neither scientific in nature nor federally sponsored, Sibley's expedition provided

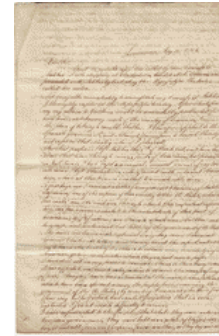


Thomas Jefferson, message to Congress, January 18, 1803. Letterpress copy of document signed, 4 pp., with transcription. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Thomas Jefferson Papers
[About this image](#)



Thomas Jefferson, An account of Louisiana Laid before Congress by direction of the president of the United States, November 4, 1803: comprising an account of its boundaries, history, cities, towns, and settlements . . . , Providence, [1803]. 72 pp. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress. Call number: F373 .U584
[About this image](#)

Jefferson with many firsthand details about the Red River region. These details were incorporated into his *An account of Louisiana*, an abstract of documents from the offices of the departments of State and the Treasury, distributed to members of Congress in November of 1803. A self-made authority on Louisiana, the Red River, and Louisiana Native American languages, Sibley eagerly shared his knowledge with an unknown recipient in a letter dated shortly after the Purchase.



Dr. John Sibley, letter to an unknown recipient, Louisiana, August 15, 1804. Autograph letter signed, 9 pp. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. John Sibley Letter, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection
[About this image](#)

The first federally funded scientific expedition in Louisiana was headed by Sir William Dunbar, a distinguished scientist, astronomer, physician, and plantation owner. Dunbar was also an experienced surveyor who had represented Spain's interest by surveying with Andrew Ellicott the 31st parallel as the boundary between the United States and Spanish West Florida. Jefferson, familiar with Dunbar's work through a mutual correspondence and joint membership in the American Philosophical Society, appointed him and Dr. George Hunter, a Philadelphia physician, to conduct coordinated explorations of the Red and Arkansas rivers in 1804-05. Jefferson, writing to Dunbar in March 1804, more or less requested that he oversee the expedition. He outlined his desire to establish the source of the two rivers. "These several surveys," said Jefferson, "will enable us to prepare a map of Louisiana, which in its contour and main waters will be perfectly correct."



William Dunbar, half portrait, n.d. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-41062
[About this image](#)

The Dunbar-Hunter Expedition, however, never ascended the Red River any further than its junction with the Ouachita, as it was deterred by threats from both the Osage Indians and the Spanish. The two explorers opted instead to follow the course of the Ouachita River to its headwaters and Hot Springs, both in Arkansas. Dunbar became the first person to give a scientific account of the springs and an

analysis of their waters. Though deterred from their original goal, Dunbar and Hunter furnished Jefferson with practical information for organizing future explorations. Nicholas King, a draftsman and cartographer for the War Department, illustrated the [Dunbar and Hunter exploration of the Ouachita River](#).

– Freeman

Jefferson's desire to mount an expedition for ascending the Red River finally saw fruition in 1805, when he received the requisite Congressional funding. He chose Thomas Freeman, an astronomer and civil engineer, to lead the expedition. Freeman, also employed as a surveyor for the District of Columbia, was commissioned by George Washington in 1796 to assist Andrew Ellicott in surveying the boundary which divided the United States from the Spanish Floridas (his Spanish counterpart was William Dunbar). Peter Custis, a young medical student with an interest in botany and zoology, was selected as expedition naturalist.

On April 14, 1804, Jefferson communicated his instructions to Freeman for exploring the Arkansas and Red rivers from their confluence with the Mississippi to their headwaters. His instructions emphasized making detailed observations of the Native Americans of the region. At Jefferson's request the logistics of mounting the expedition were arranged by William Dunbar, who furnished Freeman and Custis with some practical advice for attempting such a venture, especially with regard to the taking of celestial observations for recording the expedition's daily location.

From its outset the expedition raised strong suspicions among Spanish officials in Louisiana and Mexico. These officials feared that Jefferson's motives were more military than scientific,



Thomas Jefferson, letter to Thomas Freeman, Monticello, April 14, 1804. Autograph letter signed, 6 pp. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Thomas Freeman Collection, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection
[About this image](#)

especially since a team of American explorers and army officers would be penetrating a relatively unknown region claimed by both nations. Furthermore, a primary object of the expedition was to explore the Red River to its headwaters, which were believed by both Spanish and Americans to be in the Rocky Mountains not far from the town of Santa Fe, the Spanish capital of the Province of New Mexico.

Initially consisting of 24 men, the expedition departed Fort Adams just south of Natchez, Mississippi, on April 19, 1806, in two flat-bottomed barges and a pirogue. The party, later growing to 40 members in 7 boats, followed the course of the Red to a point beyond the Little River near where the states of present-day Arkansas, Texas, and Oklahoma currently meet. There they encountered a detachment of 300 Spanish soldiers who ordered them to turn back. Weary and unable to defend themselves, they obeyed.

Freeman and Custis collaborated on a small report of their expedition, which was published with Freeman's map of the Red River, reduced and redrawn from the original manuscript by Nicholas King. The manuscript



Nicolas King, Map of the Red River in Louisiana from the Spanish camp where the exploring party of the U.S. was met by the Spanish troops to where it enters the Mississippi, reduced from the protracted courses and corrected to the latitude. Philadelphia, 1806. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3992.R4 1806 .K5 Vault [About this image](#)

account of their journey, which is held by the Library of Congress, includes information on the terrain of the region and its natural history; recounts the numerous herds of buffalo seen along the river banks; describes the various Native American villages met on the way and their unfortunate reception by the Spanish; details their meteorological observations; and includes lists of flora, fauna, and minerals. Although the expedition accumulated variegated data about the region, it failed to attain its objective, which was to identify the sources of the Arkansas and Red rivers.

– Pike

Before formal explorations of the lower tributaries of the Mississippi had commenced, another expedition was headed towards the northern reaches of that river. Acting in Jefferson's interests but not on his instructions, Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike, a protégé of General James Wilkinson, received orders in the summer of 1805 to explore the headwaters of the Mississippi River and obtain sites from the Native Americans for establishing military posts. Pike returned by April 1806 without having correctly determined the source of the river. He did, however, transmit new topographical information

about the Upper

Mississippi. Nicholas

King's map, based on

Pike's survey notes,

accompanies his condensed

version of Pike's journal,

which is in the Library's

Manuscript Division. The

journal and map were

published together for distribution to Congress.



Nicolas King, Map of the Mississippi River from its source to the mouth of the Missouri. Laid down from the notes of Lieutt. Z. M. Pike by Anthony Nau. Reduced and corrected by the astronomical observations of Mr. Thompson at its source; and of Captn. M. Lewis, where it receives the waters of the Missouri, [1811?] Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4042 .M5 1811 .K5

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General Wilkinson's intrigues with the Spanish government may have been the driving force behind Pike's next expedition. Newly returned from his survey of the Mississippi, Pike was given orders by Wilkinson requiring him to return some Osage Indian captives and cultivate relations with several tribes of Plains Native Americans. Pike's journey to the southwest had been preceded by an earlier reconnaissance of the Osage country in Kansas and Oklahoma. That journey was carried out under the joint sponsorship of Wilkinson and his business partner, the merchant August Chouteau.

For reasons not clearly understood, Wilkinson instructed Pike to search out the headwaters of the Arkansas River, then move south and follow the Red River from its source. One theory holds that Wilkinson was attempting to establish the most convenient military approach to Santa Fe in the event of a possible rebellion against the United States involving the lands west of the Red River. The general's own son, serving as Pike's second in command for part of the trip, descended the Arkansas under Pike's orders to map the river and make observations of its course. The trip ultimately resulted in Pike's arrest and imprisonment by the Spanish, who accused him of being a spy.

Out of Pike's second expedition (1806-07) came the first published maps of the American southwest illustrating topographical information gathered firsthand by a party of American explorers.³⁹ The maps depict a practical route between settlements on the Mississippi River, primarily St. Louis, and Santa Fe in northern New Mexico. Two of the maps were drawn by Anthony Nau, who produced large-scale maps of Pike's Mississippi River expedition. Another map copied from an earlier map of New Spain by the German explorer and naturalist Baron Alexander von Humboldt, follows Pike's expedition into Mexico and its return to Louisiana Territory. It incorporates geographic features sighted by Spanish explorers in the southwest.

Taken together, Pike's three maps reflect Jefferson's interests in surveying the lands recently purchased from France, as well as his concern for establishing a more precise boundary between Louisiana and the borderlands of Spanish Mexico. The maps arising out of his expedition also helped to create a public image of the Southwestern plains that persisted for half a century—a vast empty prairie of little water or timber, unsuitable for cultivation or settlement, but potentially rich in trade with northern New Mexico and Santa Fe.

The *First Part of Captn. Pike's Chart of the Internal Part of Louisiana* covers the area west of the Mississippi River to a spot on the Arkansas River in present-day Kansas and from the Red River north to the Platte River in central Nebraska. Pike's second map of



Zebulon Montgomery Pike, The First Part of Capt. Pike's Chart of the Internal Part of Louisiana . . . Reduced and laid down on a Scale of 40 miles to the Inch. By Anthony Nau, 1807. From An Atlas to accompany Pike's Account of expeditions to the sources of the Mississippi, and through the western parts of Louisiana, . . . (Baltimore, 1810), plate I. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G1380 .P5 1810 Copy 3 Vault [About this image](#)



Zebulon Montgomery Pike, A Chart of the Internal Part of Louisiana, Including all the hitherto unexplored Countries, lying between the River La Platte of the Missouri on the N: and the Red river on the S: the Mississippi East and the Mountains of Mexico West; with a Part of New Mexico & the Province of Texas. By Z. M. Pike Captn. U.S.I., 1807. From An Atlas to accompany Pike's Account of expeditions to the sources of the Mississippi, and through the western parts of Louisiana, . . . (Baltimore, 1810), plate II. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G1380 .P5 1810 Copy 3 Vault [About this image](#)



Zebulon Montgomery Pike, A Map of the Internal Provinces of New Spain, 1807. From An Atlas to accompany Pike's Account of expeditions to the sources of the Mississippi, and through the western parts of Louisiana, . . . (Baltimore, 1810). Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4295 1807 .P5 TIL [About this image](#)

Louisiana's internal provinces extends west of Kansas into the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, and from the Canadian River in Texas north to the Platte River. It traces Pike's route and encampments along the Arkansas River to its headwaters and across various dividing ridges of the Rocky Mountains and the subsequent path of his descent to the New Mexican settlement of Santa Fe, where he was detained by the Spanish colonial authorities. A third map, *A Map of the Internal Provinces of New Spain*, encompasses virtually the entire American southwest and northern Mexico.

Pike's ventures into territory held by Spain worsened relations between that country and the

United States, especially with regard to the southwestern border issue. After his apprehension, Spanish officials, among them Valentín de Foronda, the Spanish chargé d'affaires in the United States, accused Pike of being an American spy. When Secretary of State James Madison was pressed with a bill for money advanced to Pike by his Spanish captor in Chihuahua, Jefferson authorized him to pay it, protesting: "Will it not be proper to rebut Foronda's charge of this government sending a spy in any case & that Pike's mission was to ascend the Arkansas & descend the Red river for the purpose of ascertaining their geography . . ."40 He also reminded the Spanish that Pike had inadvertently entered the waters of the Rio Grande, which, in Jefferson's mind, were open to American navigation.

– Lewis and Clark

Federal expansion towards the West prompted explorations for surveying and mapping the new territory with a view to filling in the gaps on the cartographic record. None is more famous than the expedition of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark from 1804-06. In 1803, Jefferson and his Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin, ordered surveyor and cartographer Nicholas King to draw a manuscript map of North America west of the Mississippi. A composite of both old and new maps, King's map of western North America digested and summarized for Lewis and Clark all available topographic information about the region on the eve of their journey. Its inclusion of comparatively recent and reliable determinations of latitude and longitude "were vital guideposts for Lewis and Clark," and facilitated the making of their own maps.⁴¹



Nicholas King, [Lewis and Clark map, with annotations in brown ink by Meriwether Lewis, tracing showing the Mississippi, the Missouri for a short distance above Kansas, Lakes Michigan, Superior, and Winnipeg, and the country onwards to the Pacific], 1803. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4126.S12 1803 .K5 TIL L&C a; [About this image](#)

More importantly, the map produced by King represents the first federal attempt at defining, in graphic terms, the vast empire purchased from Napoleon. Both Jefferson and Gallatin had

furnished their immature knowledge of western geography to its construction. In the region of the upper Missouri, the cartographer, in accordance with Jefferson's thinking, perpetuated the belief in a direct water route between the Missouri and the Pacific by delineating a river (labeled on the map as "Conjectural") that connects the mouth of the Columbia with the Missouri.

Lewis and Clark's journey corrected many such flaws and yielded the first published map displaying reasonably accurate geographic information of the trans-Mississippi West compiled by their expedition. The map was copied and reduced for engraving by the artist and cartographer Samuel Lewis. It appeared initially in 1814 in Nicholas Biddle and Samuel Allen's *History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark, to the Sources of the Missouri*.



Samuel Lewis, A map of Lewis and Clark's track, across the western portion of North America from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean : by order of the executive of the United States in 1804, 5 & 6 / copied by Samuel Lewis from the original drawing of Wm. Clark ; Saml. Harrison, fct., 1814. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4126.S12 1814 .L4 Vault

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Because the map included so much innovative information about the American West in general, it is arguably the foremost cartographic achievement of the 19th century. Above all, it put forth the view that the West was an intricately composed landscape of distinct geographic regions. Other notable firsts include the map's depiction of the Rockies as a complex chain of mountains, as well as the correct course and location of several major western rivers, among them the Missouri and the Snake.

In November 1816 John Melish published the first American wall map to show the country from coast to coast. To one cartographic historian it became the map that "best publicized for the American people the data derived from the Lewis and Clark Expedition and Zebulon Pike's exploration of the southwest."⁴² Thomas Jefferson, a contemporary admirer of Melish's work, received one of the first copies of the Melish map. Jefferson praised the author for the map's execution and "well chosen scale," adding that it provided a "luminous view of the comparative

possessions of different powers in our America."⁴³

The former president, however, could not resist correcting Melish on what he believed to be inaccurate delimitations of the northern and southwestern boundaries of the Louisiana Territory on the first edition of his map. In Jefferson's view, earlier diplomatic agreements had placed Louisiana's true northern boundary along the 49th parallel, extending west of Lake of the Woods and including all the highlands of the northern waters of the Mississippi. Jefferson conveniently placed all of Texas and part of New Mexico within the Louisiana Purchase, adding that the "western boundary of Louisiana is, rightfully, the Rio Bravo (its main stream) from its mouth to its source, and thence along the highlands & mountains dividing the waters of the Mississippi from those of the Pacific." He conceded, however, that Louisiana's western boundary did not extend to the Pacific, but was willing to argue on a basis of polity that American settlement near the mouth of the Columbia River had extended American rights over "all its waters."

Melish apparently accepted Jefferson's notions of geography and politics. In subsequent editions of his map, American possessions are shifted further west to the lower Rio Grande and the Rio Puerco; the northern boundary accommodates his thinking on the 49th parallel and includes the headwaters of the Missouri and Clark rivers. This seventh edition of the Melish map, likely produced in 1817, illustrates those changes.



John Melish, Map of the United States: with the contiguous British & Spanish Possessions Compiled from the latest & best Authorities by John Melish, 1816. First state (incomplete proof copy). Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3700 1816 .M4 Vault Mel. [About this image](#)



John Melish, Map of the United States: with the contiguous British & Spanish Possessions Compiled from the latest & best Authorities by John Melish, 1816. Seventh state. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3700 .M4f Vault Mel. [About this image](#)

Borders are Defined: Louisiana as Territory and State

Louisiana entered into a brief period of transition with its sale to the United States. The treaty of purchase stipulated that Louisiana's residents would become citizens of the United States; however, it contained no provision requiring their consent. Consequently, difficulties arose between the United States and the inhabitants of the region, who were transformed into American citizens almost overnight.

Congress, however, lost little time in drawing Louisiana and its inhabitants into the federal fold and passed a bill on March 26, 1804, that officially organized Louisiana into two territories. Lands below the 33rd parallel became the Territory of Orleans. Lands above that parallel became known as the District of Louisiana. Both territories would be administered according to the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which provided for the evolution of new territories into statehood.

Jefferson appointed William C. C. Claiborne as the first governor of the Territory of Orleans in August 1804 for a three-year term.

Claiborne was awarded the governorship of the Mississippi Territory in 1801 and was subsequently named co-commissioner with General James Wilkinson of the ceded territory of Louisiana in October 1803.

Upon assuming command of his new post in early 1804 Claiborne became the first American official ever to administer a federal territory populated primarily by non-English speaking peoples who hailed from a variety of ethnic groups.



William Charles Cole Claiborne, Governor of the Territory of Orleans and first governor of the state of Louisiana, half-portrait, n.d. Engraving by J. B. Longacre from a miniature by A. Duval. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-10458

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Louisiana Begins to Assume Its Present Shape

Governor Claiborne commissioned New Orleans architect and engineer Barthéleme Lafon to conduct extensive surveys of the territory in 1804-05. The United States needed detailed and accurate maps of its lower regions, particularly the commercially vital, strategically important areas comprising the lower Mississippi Basin and delta.



Barthéleme Lafon, Carte Générale du Territoire D'Orleans comprenant aussi la Floride Occidentale et une Portion du Territoire du Misissippi, 1806.

Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4010 .1806 .L3 Vault

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Lafon produced the earliest large scale engraved map delineating the Territory of Orleans in 1806. The map includes areas that became part of Louisiana at a later date, specifically segments of east Texas and Spanish West Florida.

In 1810 a revolt in West Florida led the United States to annex a part of that region to the United States. Two years later, when the territory was admitted to the union as a state, the eastern boundary was shifted from the junction of the Iberville and Mississippi rivers to the Pearl River, adding another 5,000 square miles to the state. Today that part of Louisiana is known as the Florida parishes. Louisiana's western boundary was officially established in 1821 with the confirmation of the Adams-Onis Treaty between Spain and the United States. The boundary line extended from the Gulf of Mexico up the middle of the Sabine River to the 32nd parallel, thence due north to the Red River.

Twelve counties were created in 1804 by the ruling Legislative Council in an effort to administer Louisiana in uniformity with other American territories and states. Those counties served as the electoral districts for the 25- member legislature upon the establishment of an organized territorial government in March 1805. In 1807 the territorial legislature abandoned the county as the name of the administrative subdivision in favor of the French-based parish, which continues as the fundamental unit of state government to this day.

Problems along the Spanish Border and the Burr Conspiracy

The western part of the Orleans Territory remained a source of dispute between the United States and Spain until 1819. At that time, the two nations established the boundary separating Louisiana from the province of Texas along the Sabine River. Before 1819 the United States, especially Thomas Jefferson, pushed for recognizing the western boundary of the Louisiana Purchase as the Rio Grande River. The Spanish, however, maintained that the Arroyo Hondo, the ditch lying between Natchitoches and Los Adayes, had been recognized as the line dividing Spanish and American possessions since the early 18th century.

A clash was averted in 1806 when General James Wilkinson, commanding general of American troops in the territory, reached an agreement with his Spanish counterpart and created a "neutral territory" between the Sabine River and the Arroyo Hondo. His actions postponed the delimitation of the disputed frontier for over a decade.

Within a few months General Wilkinson gained added notoriety from his involvement in a possible conspiracy organized by former Vice President Aaron Burr against the United States. Nationwide rumors accused Burr of attempting to either foment a rebellion in the American Southwest or assist the Spanish in Mexico in invading and occupying the lower Mississippi Valley. Or, perhaps Burr simply wanted to establish a colony on the Bastrop claim in the northeastern part of the Orleans Territory, where he had acquired 400,000 acres in an attempt to settle it with Americans. Whatever Burr's motives, Wilkinson, long a spy in the service of Spain, moved his troops back to New Orleans in late 1806, and with the hesitant support of Governor Claiborne, used his authority as commander of the Army of the Southwest to adopt a series of questionable actions designed to guard his Spanish interests.

An anonymous tract describes events during the six months when New Orleans was subjected to Wilkinson's "reign of terror." On the pretext of halting Burr's purported invasion of Mexico via New Orleans, Wilkinson placed the city under martial law, strengthened its defenses, and erected an embargo upon all vessels entering its port. He unsuccessfully attempted to transfer additional troops to the city and to raise money from the viceroyalty of New Spain in the name of protecting Spain. He even dispatched subordinates up the Mississippi to kidnap Burr during his descent. Moreover, Wilkinson was arrested and imprisoned, without due civil process, and scores of citizens suspected of being Burr's agents were transported, several of them in chains, out of the territory. Burr was eventually arrested, tried in Richmond, Virginia, and acquitted.



Author unknown, A faithful picture of the political situation of New Orleans, at the close of the last and the beginning of the present year, 1807, Boston, 1808. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress. Call number: F379 .N5 .F1

[About this image](#)

General Wilkinson was vindicated in the immediate aftermath of the crisis by Claiborne and Jefferson, who professed mutual support for him. Wilkinson denounced Burr to Jefferson, who had received a falsified version of one of several coded letters exchanged between Wilkinson and Burr. General Wilkinson never completely severed his ties with Louisiana; after several indictments and a court-martial, he retired to a plantation below New Orleans.

Partly as a result of the Burr-Wilkinson imbroglio, the inhabitants of the territory prepared a revised civil code in 1808. Based on both customary Spanish laws and the Napoleonic Code, the new code became the foundation on which Louisiana state laws were devised in 1825. In any event, the citizens of the territory did not wish to separate from the United States and employed the codes in maintaining law and civil order.

Territorial Growth and Statehood

Between 1803 and 1812 the Territory of Orleans served as a terminus for thousands of emigrants—freemen and slaves—from the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, and the United States. Their numbers swelled in proportion to the growing agricultural and commercial prosperity of the region. Citizens of France, especially, were attracted by the region’s congenial cultural climate, the familiar language, and the possibilities of beginning life anew.

Most of the transplanted Europeans arrived aboard ships sailing off of the East Coast, or descended the Ohio and Mississippi rivers by more rustic means, such as a flatboat. In 1808-09 one such emigré, Jean Baptiste Florian Jolly, comte de Pontcadeuc, a French royalist who had escaped the guillotine, eventually proceeded to New Orleans ahead of his family. Florian Jolly recorded his experiences at various points throughout his journey in a series of letters addressed to his wife and daughters in London. His correspondence provided a lively description of the nature of river travel from Pittsburgh to New Orleans. Jolly’s views of the new region and its inhabitants were mostly favorable. Like many other emigrés to New Orleans, he succumbed to yellow fever within a few years of his arrival.



Jean Baptiste Florian Jolly, Comte de Pontcadeuc, his sketch of a flatboat such as were used to descend the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, in his letter of November 22 - December 4, 1808, to his family. Autograph letter signed, 4 pp. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Papers of Jean Baptiste Florian Jolly, Comte de Pontcadeuc
[About this image](#)

The swell of immigrants, as in the case of the comte de Pontcadeuc, had the obvious effect of expanding the territory’s population. According to the 1810 census, the Orleans Territory exceeded 76,000 persons, several thousand more than needed for statehood under the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Consequently, a convention was called in 1811 to draft a constitution and to form a state government.

The Louisiana state constitution, originally printed in both French and English, called for a bicameral legislature, an executive, and a judiciary appointed for life by the governor. Upon congressional approval Louisiana was admitted to the Union on April 30, 1812, almost nine

years to the day that the Louisiana Purchase Treaty was signed. It became the first state to be carved out of the Louisiana Purchase, as well as the first state west of the Mississippi River.

Louisiana's first capital appropriately was New Orleans.

The original boundaries of the state of Louisiana—indeed the first official state boundaries delineating lands acquired as part of the Purchase—covered 48,523 square miles, of which 3,593 were water. Louisiana as a state made its first appearance on a map of the United States as early as 1812. The first separate state map to depict Louisiana was published in 1814. The map, included in Mathew Carey's *General Atlas*, formally separated, at least on paper, lands belonging to the United States from the Spanish province of Texas. Carey's interpretation of America's southwestern border was adopted five years later by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and Spanish Minister to Washington Luís de Onís while negotiating the Transcontinental Treaty which set the western bounds of the Louisiana Purchase.

The Question of West Florida

The ambiguous language and the omission of specific boundaries in the Louisiana Purchase Treaty failed to resolve the title to the region known as West Florida. American officials held that it had constituted part of Louisiana; the Spaniards denied such claims. The issue remained unsettled until 1821, when the last portion of West Florida was incorporated into the United States.



Jacques Tanesse, Plan of the city and Suburbs of NEW ORLEANS from an actual survey made in 1815 by I. Tanesse, City Surveyor, 1817. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4014 .N5 1815 .T3 Vault [About this image](#)



Mathew Carey, Louisiana, 1814. From his *General Atlas*, improved and enlarged . . . Philadelphia, 1814, plate 26. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G4010 1814 .C3 TIL [About this image](#)

By the Treaty of Paris of 1763 which ended the French and Indian War, Spain ceded its former

colony of Florida to Great Britain, which divided the region into two provinces, East Florida and West Florida. A West Florida map was one of the earliest attempts to define the province's boundaries in a manner favorable to the British. West Florida was bounded on the west by the Mississippi River, to the south by the Gulf of Mexico, in Louisiana by the Iberville River and Lake Pontchartrain, on the north by the 31° parallel, and to the east by the Apalachicola River, which separated it from East Florida. The northern section of a map by engineer, naturalist, cartographer, and author, Bernard Romans, shows the region in its final years under British control. Although not published as a single map until 1781, Romans' map was drawn in 1774, and is part of his *Concise Natural History of East and West Florida* (1775).



Author unknown, *A Plan of West Florida, the Isle of Orleans, and some parts of the Spanish dominions to the westward of the Mississippi*, ca. 1763. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3980 1763 .P5 Vault [About this image](#)



Bernard Romans, *Maps of East and West Florida*. B. Romans, inv. delin. & in Ære incidit., 1781. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress. Call number: G3861.P5 s500 .R6 Vault Shelf [About these images](#)

Britain retained both East Florida and West Florida until 1783, when the second Treaty of Paris returned the provinces to Spain. Almost from its inception in 1783, Spanish West Florida and its boundaries became a source of dispute between Spain and the United States. Spain held that the northern border of West Florida lay at the junction of the Yazoo and Mississippi rivers. The United States, on the other hand, placed the border lower, at the 31st parallel, in an effort to include a larger number of the region's inhabitants squarely within American hands. The issue remained unresolved until 1795 when Spain and the United States fixed the boundary at the 31st

parallel by the Treaty of San Lorenzo.

Protests by Spanish Minister Carlos Martínez Marqués de Casa Yrujo over the legality of the transfer of Louisiana by France in 1803 were refuted without difficulty by the United States. Jefferson and his administration were on weaker ground, however, in claiming that West Florida belonged to the United States by virtue of the treaty. Believing that their presence in the Gulf area was being eroded, the Spanish strongly denied that any part of Florida fell within the boundaries of Louisiana, on the basis that the two provinces had been administered discretely by both Britain and Spain.

The United States pursued a variety of measures, including bribes and coercion, to validate its claims over West Florida. None succeeded.

While Spain and the United States competed for territorial jurisdiction, the region experienced intermittent problems, including two domestic rebellions, before any national claims were resolved.

Among the chief difficulties was the spirit of independence developing among its population centers. American settlers along the Tombigbee River resented Spanish exactions levied on their commerce at Mobile, which was the focus of a large Creole community more or less satisfied under Spanish authority.



James Akin, The prairie dog sickened at the sting of the hornet or a diplomatic puppet exhibiting his deceptions, 1804. Etching with watercolor. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Reproduction number: LC-USZC4-4544 (color film copy transparency); LC-USZ62-28114 (b&w film copy neg.)
[About this image](#)

Anglo-Americans, many of them Tories fleeing the hostilities of the American Revolution, took up residence chiefly in the region east of the Mississippi River above Baton Rouge. Among their numbers were even earlier immigrants who had since become Spanish citizens.

Following the war, the liberal land policies of the Spanish government attracted numerous Americans into the area. Consequently, by the time of the Purchase, much of West Florida, especially the region under the jurisdiction of Baton Rouge, and in particular the lands around Bayou Sara, was inhabited primarily by English-speaking emigrants who grew weary of paying

Spanish tariffs and professed little loyalty to the Spanish Crown. Compounding that issue was the problematic system of land ownership that developed as each successive authority—France, Great Britain, Spain, and the United States—settled the region with its own citizens, who, until the Spanish period of occupation, often had no cartographic record legitimizing their claims to individual parcels of land.

Ultimately unable to defend its possession against a tide of American territorial acquisition and disturbances within the colony itself, Spain saw West Florida slip from its grasp. It subsequently became American federal territory in stages beginning in July 1810 when a number of its citizens, conveniently headed by Jefferson's friend, then U.S. Consul General (and commercial agent in Paris) Fulwar Skipwith, staged a revolt to establish independence from Spain and form the Republic of West Florida. (Skipwith became governor of West Florida in October 1810.) That nation was short-lived, lasting only 92 days. On October 27, 1810, President James Madison issued a proclamation ordering Governor Claiborne to take possession of the territory for the United States over Spain's protests.

In the process of forming a state government and seeking admittance into the Union, members of the constitutional convention of the Orleans Territory petitioned the U.S. Congress in early 1812 to annex the territory of West Florida. The petitioners were outnumbered by a majority of French Creoles, who objected to state citizenship for the thousands of Anglo-American settlers living in West Florida.

Louisiana was admitted to the Union on April 30, 1812, without any of the Florida parishes. Six days later President Madison issued a proclamation adding the Florida parishes to the newly created state of Louisiana. In less than a decade the American absorption of West Florida was complete. The parcel lying between the Pearl and Perdido rivers was annexed to the Mississippi Territory in 1812. Mobile was seized by the United States in 1813 and the remaining Perdido-Apalachicola portion was acquired in the Florida purchase of 1819, as ratified in the 1821 Adams-Onís or Transcontinental Treaty.

The Legacy of the Louisiana Purchase

The significance and ramifications of the Louisiana Purchase are still felt today. Originally a small outpost on the colonial frontier, Louisiana came to refer to the western watershed of the Mississippi River in its entirety. The United States doubled in size almost overnight. No other nation in history had augmented its holdings to such an extent in such a brief period.

The United States extended its territory opportunely, without having resorted to invasion—although invasion was threatened during the first half of 1803. Yet that expansion was not entirely without resistance from the residents of Louisiana, especially since most of them elected not to become Americans. In the words of the historical geographer, Donald W. Meinig, Louisiana represented "a remarkable case of expansion without conquest," yet it was "nonetheless an imperial acquisition—imperial in the sense of the aggressive encroachment of one people upon the territory of another, resulting in the subjugation of that people to alien rule."⁴⁴

The United States, while not an imperial power, had inherited the culture of European imperialism, which was melded with its own unique spirit of Western nationalism and expansion. The protests of former French and Spanish subjects over American citizenship, although earnest, were brief and ineffectual. Competitors, chiefly France, Spain, and Great Britain, were simply pressured to the perimeter of the shifting American frontier. The original, less fortunate inhabitants of the continent were systematically conquered and displaced in a program whose ideological underpinnings were developed prior to the annexation of Louisiana.

Jefferson and his predecessors had long been vexed with the dilemma of how to expand the national domain while divesting the Native Americans of their lands without incurring injurious political repercussions, as well as ethical and historical opprobrium. At first a champion of acculturation and assimilation of Native Americans into white society, Jefferson eventually adopted removing the Native Americans as the only remedy for preserving their tribal cultures

while controlling expansion for white settlers. His proposed amendment to the Constitution for incorporating Louisiana into the United States includes language which confirmed for Native Americans "the rights of occupancy in the soil, and of self government" under federal authority in lands west of the Mississippi that had been exchanged for lands on the east side of the Mississippi.

The addition of the Louisiana Purchase to the United States was critical not only for the future of the Native Americans but for that of African slavery as well. As Native Americans were forcibly moved to the newer lands, their old lands in the South were increasingly developed as plantations run with slave labor. The national debate about the expansion of slavery would have taken a very different form had the Louisiana Territory not been available.

Yet, in 1803, when the purchase was made, it was the ability of Americans to freely travel on the Mississippi River that had prompted U.S. diplomatic overtures to France regarding Louisiana. In retrospect, it must be recognized that in addition with the vast properties that came to the young United States in 1803 was the opportunity to develop a self-sustaining agricultural empire whose production would find easy passage on the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico. The addition of the vast Louisiana Purchase area provided an expanded frontier for the new nation filled with rich soil and ample space for further immigration.

The Louisiana Purchase doubled the landholdings of the American union, an expansion that brought increasingly new opportunities to the young republic. Through the 1803 purchase, an impetus to connect the republic from sea to sea ensued, extending the U.S. from an Atlantic-hugging nation to a transcontinental body, all within 20 years of its founding. This transformation required decades before the United States fully realized its potential.



Thomas Jefferson, [Draft of Constitutional Amendment Incorporating Louisiana Territory into the United States, 1803]. Autograph document, 1 page. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Thomas Jefferson Papers [About this image](#)

The initial explorations and expeditions devised and promoted by President Thomas Jefferson's desire to obtain increased knowledge about the Purchase area contributed to an appreciation and understanding of the importance of the acquisition of Louisiana from France. He must have envisioned that a land resting on two major oceans and a gulf, while vulnerable to foreign attack, had the potential to develop its own destiny unencumbered by shipping rights-of-way and the scarcity of arable land.

By 1850, roads and even the beginnings of railroad lines, opened the way for further settlement and commercial expansion west of the Mississippi River. The Oregon and Santa Fe trails crisscrossed the trans-Mississippi West, bringing along new settlers and speculators who eventually filled the vast space of the West. Thus, by the mid-19th century, Louisiana, a former European colony, was no longer a little-known and contested borderland but the heartland of an expanding United States of America.

The Louisiana Purchase allowed the United States to control completely the main waterway system--the Mississippi-Missouri-Ohio rivers--providing the middle part of the country with access to the global economy. As a result, the pace of North American settlement occurred at a rate twice the speed of settlement as that of the 200 years preceding the Purchase. The new territories that were carved out of the Louisiana Purchase area became sites that helped mold the character of the republic and gave it an expanded view of what it was capable of accomplishing. The Mississippi River became the westernmost point of the east.

The outlay of \$15 million in 1803 was truly a bargain. The peoples who occupied the space, both the indigenous and newcomers, contributed mightily to the growth of the nation and the expansion of its ideals.

¹ The Ray M. Thompson Papers, Index of Columns, Know Your Coast, Series VI, Box 2, Folder 6, August 6. University of Southern Mississippi, McCain Library and Archives, Manuscript Collection.

The Indian Father tells of a tragic incident that actually happened in 1751. A Colapissa Indian murdered a Choctaw and then fled to New Orleans. The Choctaws appealed for justice to the marquis de Vaudreuil, who ordered the arrest of the Colapissa. The Colapissa, however, evaded arrest. The father of the murderer was so disgraced by his son's cowardice that he offered himself to the Choctaw chief. The chief accepted the offer, and had the murderer's father beheaded in lieu of the fugitive.

² Julius Mattfield, ed. "Handbook of American operatic premiers, 1731-1962," *Detroit Studies in Music Bibliography*, no. 5 (Detroit: 1963). The years just prior to Louisiana statehood in 1812 included the following performances, which are listed alphabetically:

L'amour filial (P. Gaveaux)

Le Spectacle de la Rue Saint-Pierre, henceforth called Le Théâtre de Saint-Pierre, 1809.

Azemias (N. Dalayrac)

January 2, 1906.

Il barbiere di Seviglia (G. Paisiello)

July 12, 1810.

La belle arsene (P. A. Monsigny)

Le Théâtre de Saint-Pierre, October 29, 1806.

Les deux journées (L. Cherubini)

Le Théâtre de Saint-Philippe, March 12, 1811.

Un folie (E. N. Méhul)

Le Théâtre de Saint-Philippe, January 30, 1808.

Un heure de mariage (N. Dalayrac)

Le Théâtre de Saint-Pierre, circa 1803-1808.

Le jugement de Midas (M. Grétry)

Le Théâtre de Orléans, June 11, 1808.

Ma tante Aurore (A. Boieldieu)

Le Théâtre de Saint-Pierre, 1810.

Pizarre (P. J. Candaille)

Le Théâtre de Saint-Pierre, circa 1803-1810.

Raoul, sire de Crequi (N. Dalayrac)

[?] 1810.

Renaud d'Ast (N. Dalayrac)

[?] September 3, 1799.

Richard coeur de lion (M. Grétry)

Le Théâtre de Saint-Pierre, circa 1803-08 (probably 1806).

Romeo et Juliette (D. Steibelt)

Le Théâtre de Saint-Pierre, August 6, 1810.

Silvain (M. Grétry)

[Le Théâtre de Saint-Pierre?] May 27, 1796.

³ Original in the Notarial Archives of New Orleans.

⁴ Walter W. Ristow, compiled and edited from various published works of Lawrence Martin, "John Mitchell's Map of the British and French Dominions in North America," in *A la Carte: Selected Papers on Maps and Atlases*, compiled by Walter W. Ristow (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1972), 104.

⁵ Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe*; Part I, vol. VIII of *France and England in North America* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1965), 20.

⁶ Paul E. Hoffman, *A History of Louisiana before 1813* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Bookstore, 1996), 90.

⁷ *ibid.*, 107.

⁸ Daniel H. Unser, Jr., "The Frontier Exchange Economy of the Lower Mississippi Valley in the Eighteenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (April 1987), 165-92; and "American Indians on the Cotton Frontier:

Changing Economic Relations with Citizens and Slaves in the Mississippi Territory," *The Journal of American History* 72, no. 2 (September 1985), 297-317.

⁹ The original Church of Saint Louis was one of numerous structures in the city destroyed by the Great Fire of Good Friday in March 1788. When the fire broke out, people rushed to the church to toll the bells as warning. However, even though a conflagration was racing across the city, church bells are not allowed to ring on Good Friday. Hence, the church burned to the ground. Its reconstruction was completed on the same site at the end of 1794 and the new church was dedicated as a cathedral on Christmas Eve of that year. What was then a simple parish church became the Basilica of Saint Louis, King Louis IX of France, by virtue of an Apostolic Brief, issued by Pope Paul VI in 1964.

¹⁰ Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Mann Randolph, Jr., Washington City, May 14, 1801, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

¹¹ Thomas Jefferson to William C. C. Claiborne, Washington City, July 13, 1801, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

¹² Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, Washington, January 13, 1803. James Monroe Papers, Library of Congress.

¹³ Robert R. Livingston to James Madison, Paris, April 11, 1803, *American State Papers, Foreign Relations*, 2, 552.

¹⁴ Quoted in marquis Francois de Barbe-Marbois, *History of Louisiana*, 286.

¹⁵ Quoted in Robert R. Livingston to James Madison, Paris, May 20, 1803, "State Papers and Correspondence Bearing upon the Purchase of the Territory of Louisiana," 57th Cong., 2nd sess., H.R. Doc. no. 431, 200.

¹⁶ Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, August 16, 1803, Monticello, James Madison Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁷ Thomas Jefferson to John Dickinson, August 9, 1803, Monticello, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁸ The lower Mississippi Valley, in particular, was well represented in the archives and official repositories of Europe, Mexico, and Cuba. Several hundred maps, charts, and plans of Louisiana from the French and Spanish colonial periods of occupation reveal a wealth of information on early explorations, hydrography, topography, coastal areas, military campaigns, design and construction of forts, roads, and locations of Native American tribal territories and villages. See Jack D. L. Holmes, "Maps, Plans and Charts of Louisiana in Spanish and Cuban Archives: a Checklist," *Louisiana Studies* 2, no. 4 (Winter 1963), 183-203; and Holmes, "Maps, Plans, and Charts of Louisiana in Paris Archives: a Checklist," *Louisiana Studies* 4, no. 3 (Fall 1965), 200-21.

¹⁹ John Logan Allen, *Passage Through the Garden: Lewis and Clark and the Image of the American Northwest* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 55.

²⁰ John Logan Allen, "Geographical Knowledge and American Images of the Louisiana Territory," in *Geographic Perspectives on America's Past; Reading on the Historical Geography of the United States*, edited by David Ward (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 39.

²¹ For the preparation of "The Cartographic Setting: Evolving European and American Conceptions of Louisiana to 1803," I am greatly indebted to the generosity and learning of the cartographic historian Ralph E. Ehrenberg, whose authoritative work, "Exploratory Mapping of the Great Plains Before 1800," in *Mapping the North American Plains: Essays in the History of Cartography*, edited by Frederick C. Luebke (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), has inspired the thematic and organizational framework of this section of the presentation, and has also provided it with much of its information, particularly in regard to the exploratory mapping of Vérendrye, Pond, Evans, Mackay, and Soulard.

²² Jean Delanglez, "The Sources of the Delisle Map of America, 1703," *Mid-America* 25, no. 4 (1943), 275-98.

²³ William P. Cumming, et al., *The Exploration of North America, 1630-1776* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1974), 182.

²⁴ Ralph E. Ehrenberg, "Exploratory Mapping of the Great Plains Before 1800," in *Mapping the North American Plains: Essays in the History of Cartography*, edited by Frederick C. Luebke (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), p. 13

²⁵ Ralph E. Ehrenberg, "Exploratory Mapping of the Great Plains Before 1800," in *Mapping the North American Plains: Essays in the History of Cartography*, edited by Frederick C. Luebke (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 13-16.

²⁶ Richard Glover, ed., *David Thompson's Narrative, 1784-1812* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1962), 181.

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- ²⁷ Richard I. Ruggles, "Mapping the Interior Plains of Rupert's Land by the Hudson's Bay Company to 1870," in *Mapping the North American Plains: Essays in the History of Cartography*, edited by Frederick C. Luebke (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 153.
- ²⁸ William P. Cumming, et al., *The Exploration of North America, 1630-1776* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1974), 163.
- ²⁹ This information was reported to the author by Anthony P. Mullan, reference specialist, Humanities and Social Sciences Division, Library of Congress, on June 19, 2001.
- ³⁰ Henri Folmer, "Contraband Trade between Louisiana and New Mexico in the 18th Century," *The New Mexico Historical Review*, 16 (1941), 249-74.
- ³¹ Aubrey Diller, "Maps of the Missouri River Before Lewis and Clark," in *Studies and Essays in the History of Science and Learning*, edited by M. F. Ashley Montague (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 509.
- ³² _____, "A new map of the Missouri River drawn in 1795," *Imago Mundi* 12 (1955), 175-80.
- ³³ Ehrenberg, "Exploratory Mapping of the Great Plains," 22.
- ³⁴ W. Raymond Wood, "Nicholas de Finiels: Mapping the Mississippi & Missouri Rivers, 1797-98," *Missouri Historical Review* 81, no. 4 (July 1987), 387-402.
- ³⁵ Ehrenberg, "Exploratory Mapping of the Great Plains," 23.
- ³⁶ *ibid.*, 186.
- ³⁷ Carl I. Wheat, *Mapping the Transmississippi West, 1540-1861* 1 (San Francisco: The Institute of Historical Cartography, 1957), 164.
- ³⁸ Thomas Jefferson, autobiography draft fragment, entry for May 17th, 1821, 82 and 85, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.
- ³⁹ Seymour I. Schwartz and Ralph E. Ehrenberg, *The Mapping of America* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.), 225.
- ⁴⁰ Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, August 30, 1807, Monticello, James Madison Papers, Library of Congress.
- ⁴¹ Donald Jackson, *Thomas Jefferson and the Stony Mountains*, 133.
- ⁴² Walter W. Ristow, *American Maps and Mapmakers: Commercial Cartography in the Nineteenth Century* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985), 446.
- ⁴³ Thomas Jefferson to John Melish, Monticello, December 31, 1816, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress.
- ⁴⁴ D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America; A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*. 2: Continental America, 1800-1867 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 23.