

Louisiana Purchase

The Texas Eagle route traverses land which was part of the Louisiana Purchase all the way from northeast Texas to St. Louis. Anyone with the courage and fortitude to travel this route in the year 1800 would have been trekking through wilderness owned by France and occupied by numerous Native American tribes. Thomas Jefferson saw acquisition of this massive territory as essential to enabling the United States to become a world power.

The Louisiana Purchase is considered to be the most influential property purchase in our nation's history. Full of unknowns, this land held promise as the gateway to the west. During the settlement of North America, the port of New Orleans and the mighty Mississippi were coveted by the countries that sought to settle in the new land because the river was the main artery of trade and the country that ruled the port city could control trade on the river.

This addition of over 800,000 square miles doubled the size of the United States in 1803 for less than five cents an acre. The U.S. paid France for the territory, which encompassed vital parts of Louisiana, land along the entire Mississippi River and much of the Rocky Mountains.

The signing of land agreements did not guarantee that the U.S. could control the territory; this would require a great deal more work. The United States had to assert its power over the newly purchased land, explore the great unknowns, and establish the western boundaries of the purchase. To accomplish these goals explorers like Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were sent out to survey the land, missions and forts were established, and government policy was created. The now famous Lewis and Clark expedition traveled by rivers across the northern states in hopes of finding a passage to the Pacific Ocean. Along this trip the men served as ethnographers, explorers, botanist, and diplomats, making this one of the greatest explorations of that time.

This great expansion of the United States symbolized the freedom to expand and explore. Today the land bought under the Louisiana Purchase includes 14 states from Montana to Louisiana. The land bought under the Purchase was filled with opportunity and struggle— European settlers and many Native Americans already inhabited much of the land, which created a long period of struggle to gain control over the new territory.

The Louisiana Purchase set the stage for the next 200 years of our future and settlement. This land was full of unknowns and opportunity, and was the gateway to the expanding West.

Source(s):

Louisiana State Museum. (n.d.). The Louisiana Purchase. Retrieved on January 10, 2011 from <http://lsm.crt.state.la.us/cabildo/cab4.htm>

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