

The Mississippi River and New Orleans As the number of westerners grew, so did their political influence. A vital issue for many farmers and merchants was the use of the Mississippi River. They used this highway of commerce to transport their products through the New Orleans port, across the Gulf of Mexico, and then to East Coast markets.

Although originally claimed by France, the port was turned over to Spain after the French and Indian War. In a secret treaty in 1800, Spain returned the port to France's powerful leader, Napoleon. Now Napoleon planned to colonize the American territory. This brought America close to war.

The United States Expands In 1802, before turning Louisiana over to France, Spain closed New Orleans to American shipping. Angry westerners called for war against both Spain and France. To avoid hostilities, Jefferson offered to buy New Orleans from France. He received a surprising answer. The French asked if the United States wanted to buy all of the Louisiana Territory—a tract of land even larger than the entire United States at that time.

A number of factors may have influenced Napoleon's offer. He was probably alarmed by America's determination to keep the port of New Orleans open. Also, his enthusiasm for a colony in America may have been lessened by events in Haiti, a French colony in the West Indies. There, a revolt led by Toussaint L'Ouverture (too•SAN loo•vehr•TOOR) had resulted in disastrous losses for the French. Another factor was France's costly war against Britain. America's money may have been more valuable to Napoleon than land.

Jefferson was thrilled by Napoleon's offer. However, the Constitution said nothing about the president's right to buy land. This troubled Jefferson, who believed in the strict interpretation of the Constitution. But he also believed in a republic of small farmers, and that required land. So, on April 30, 1803, the **Louisiana Purchase** was approved for \$15 million—about three cents per acre. The size of the United States doubled. At the time, most Americans knew little about this territory. But that would soon change.

 **SUMMARIZE** Explain how the United States acquired the Louisiana Territory.

Exploring the Louisiana Territory

 **KEY QUESTION** What were some effects of exploring the Louisiana Territory?

Since 1802, Thomas Jefferson had planned an expedition to the Louisiana country. Now that the Louisiana Purchase had been made, learning about the territory became more important than ever.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition Jefferson chose a young officer, Captain Meriwether Lewis, to lead an exploration of the Louisiana country. Lewis asked Lieutenant William Clark, a mapmaker and outdoorsman, to help him oversee a volunteer force, or **corps**. They called it the Corps of Discovery, but it soon became known as the **Lewis and Clark expedition**.

Clark was accompanied by York, his African-American slave. York's hunting skills won him many admirers. The first black man that many Native Americans had seen, he became something of a celebrity among them.

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Dissent and Rebellion

Haiti had been a highly profitable French colony that used slave labor. Toussaint L'Ouverture, a former slave, led a 1791 rebellion against French rule. Thirteen bloody years later, Haiti became the first independent black republic in the world.