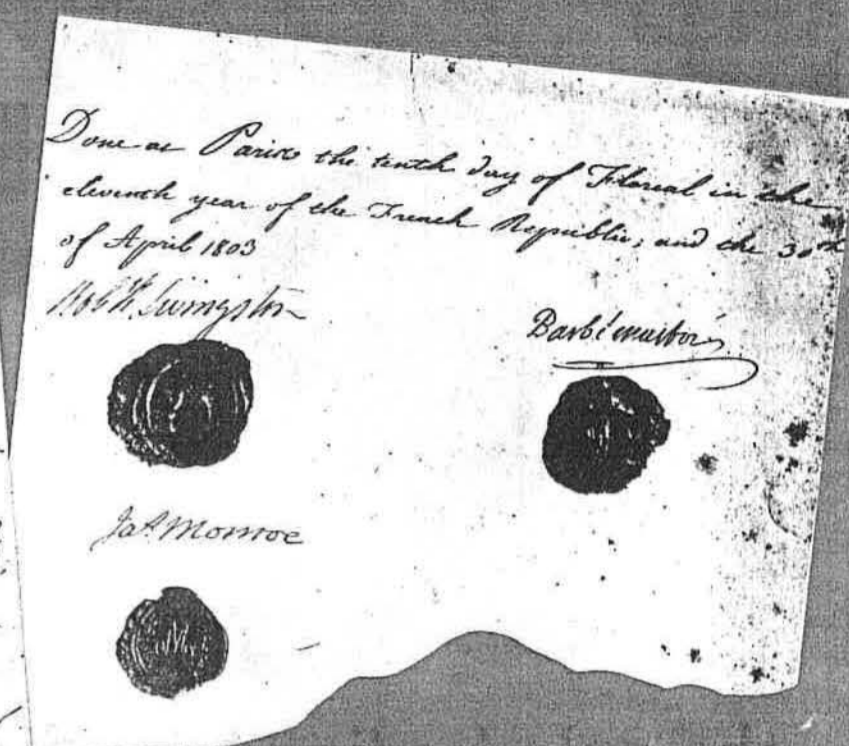
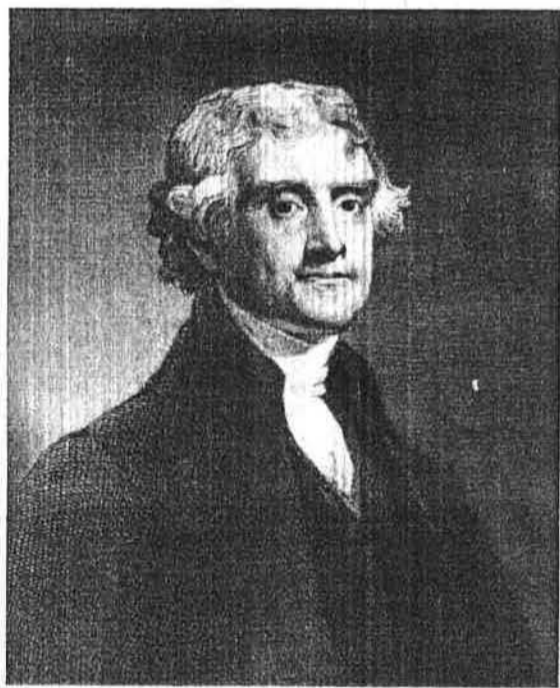


Celebrating 150 Years of The Louisiana Purchase



The historic Purchase document, which is on display this year at New Orleans, was signed by James Monroe and Robert R. Livingston for the U.S., Francis Barbé-Marbois for France



President Jefferson originally wanted to buy only the city of New Orleans and surrounding area, to give Americans free access to Gulf



Monroe and Livingston (seated) watch the French finance minister, Barbé-Marbois, sign Purchase treaty in Paris. Statue is in St. Louis



Napoleon sold Louisiana because he was going to war with England and feared he couldn't protect territory from British navy

Collier's for March 21, 1953

In one bold step, for just \$23,000,000, we bought greatness: thousands of square miles of sweeping prairie, rich farmland, underground wealth, invaluable waterways—and the path to world leadership. No other single event in American history was more important

By BERNARD De VOTO

Bernard De Voto is rated top American historian of the West. His latest book, The Course of Empire, the last of three dealing with westward expansion, won the 1952 National Book Award for nonfiction

ONE hundred and fifty years ago this spring, the United States closed one of the biggest real-estate deals of all time, the Louisiana Purchase. We spent a few million dollars; we bought greatness—the wealth, security and power that have brought us world leadership. No event in all American history—not the Civil War, nor the Declaration of Independence nor even the signing of the Constitution—was more important.

The land we bought from France in 1803 consisted of 909,130 square miles, almost all west of the Mississippi. It was mostly wilderness then. Its value today is beyond estimate. The present state of Iowa, amounting to about 6 per cent of the Purchase, cost us \$1,400,000. Its corn crop alone was worth \$713,000,000 in 1951—and the value of the state's entire farm plant was \$5,500,000,000!

Today, no one can imagine what the century and a half of our history since 1803 would have been like if the Purchase had not been made. Yet the price was fantastically small. Figuring down to the last cent, this is what we paid:

Counted as part of the price was an agreement by the U.S. to pay its citizens for shipping losses inflicted by France in an undeclared naval war a few years before. Washington settled the claims for about twenty cents on the dollar, entangling some of them in so much red tape that the account was not closed until 1925; the total was \$3,747,268.98. We also paid France \$11,250,000 in six per cent twenty-year bonds. Interest came to \$8,221,320.50, less discounts of \$5,031.75.

For the nine hundred thousand square miles, therefore, we paid \$23,213,557.73—about \$25.50 per square mile, or just under four cents an acre. Iowa farmland went for that price, and Minnesota pine forest, Wyoming oil and Colorado gold.

The United States got a 7 per cent return on the whole capital investment in the first year following the Purchase, just from receipts at the New Orleans customhouse.

Louisiana extended from the Mississippi to the crest of the Rockies. The territory was bought during a brief armistice in the wars of Europe that were almost continuous from the French Revolution to the downfall of Napoleon. The tensions of those wars, which had long threatened to spread to the United States, made the Purchase possible. It was a peace measure; a defense measure, a war bargain—and a stunning surprise.

Buying Louisiana was by far the bold-est step that the United States, then in its fifteenth year under the Constitution, had ever taken. Besides more than doubling the young nation's size, it had vast commercial, social and agricultural significance.

In 1803, the most important geographical feature of the area which the United States now occupies was the Mississippi, whose name means Big River. Its military importance was that its mouth was the strategic key to North America. Its commercial importance was that, until roads and canals were

built, it provided the only means by which the crops of the United States west of the Appalachian Mountains could be taken to market. Its social importance was that, with its tributaries, it formed the network of communication. Its economic importance was that in natural resources its great valley, from the Appalachians to the Rockies, from Lake Superior to the Gulf, was the richest area in the whole world. And in 1803 its political importance, international as well as domestic, was that the United States possessed only the eastern half of the valley. A foreign nation owned the western half and controlled the mouth of the river.

At the end of the revolution, the Mississippi became our western boundary. Florida and a strip extending across southern Alabama and Mississippi were Spanish, as well as the area west of the Mississippi. Of this area, the 900,000 square miles called Louisiana had been ceded to Spain by France in 1762, at the end of what American histories call the French and Indian War, to prevent Great Britain from getting it at the forthcoming peace conference (as she was sure to get Canada).

When the United States achieved independence, Great Britain, Spain and France all hoped to confine its development to the area east of the Appalachians. They soon saw that this restriction was impossible, for increasing numbers of Americans were emigrating to Kentucky, Tennessee and, somewhat later, Ohio and Mississippi.

So the three foreign powers shifted their objective to that of weakening the United States by taking the West out of its control. All of them believed that this split could be achieved openly if the United States should be drawn into the wars with which Europe was aflame. If not, efforts to detach the West must be secret and conspiratorial. All three nations, but most notably Spain, had underground apparatus trying to stir up dissatisfaction among the Westerners, so that they would withdraw from the Union and set up for themselves, or join one of the powers.

The Western frontiersmen were a vigorous,

boisterous, unruly lot, with a large proportion of the half-horse, half-alligator type that figures so colorfully in our folklore. ("Sired by a hurricane, dam'd by an earthquake, half brother to the cholera, nearly related to the smallpox on the mother's side," Mark Twain wrote.) The ties that held them to the young Republic were loose at best, and were weakened by many grievances against the richer, more populous communities of the seaboard.

Most important, their survival depended on the water transport afforded by the Ohio River, its tributaries and the Mississippi. Practically nothing could be profitably transported across the mountains by pack horse. Almost all bulk freight had to be floated to New Orleans, a Spanish town, and there put aboard ocean-going vessels. This traffic produced the rowdy rivermen and the swarms of rafts, flatboats, broadhorns, mackinaws, keelboats and other homemade craft that grew more numerous every year on the Western waters.

Concessions Exacted from Spain

To close the Mississippi to American commerce would be to strike a shattering blow at American unity. Spain's reported threats to do just that produced a crisis during Washington's second administration, at a time when the United States appeared to be on the verge of war with Great Britain. (Jefferson, who was to make the Louisiana Purchase, was then Secretary of State.) However, by negotiation backed by a show of force, the United States had secured concessions from Spain. For a limited term, we were guaranteed free navigation of the Mississippi and the right of deposit at New Orleans—that is, the right to transfer cargo from river boat to ocean vessel without paying excises.

The crisis which resulted in the Louisiana Purchase was precipitated by Napoleon in 1802. (So it was the aggression of a dictatorship which was feared as justly as Stalin's is now which led to the increase of wealth that made us a world power.)

Napoleon's fixed purpose was to defeat Great Britain. The method he chose was to attack the British Empire, and he led an army to Egypt, intending to go on and conquer India. British sea power frustrated the plan and Napoleon turned to the Western Hemisphere. He would, he thought, restore the French Empire there, and eventually break up the British Empire by conquering Canada.

In 1800, as a first step, he forced Spain to return Louisiana to France, by a secret treaty that did not remain secret long. News of it reached the United States two months after Jefferson became President in 1801, and created intense alarm. For it established France, instead of the weaker Spain, on our western border—Europe's greatest military power, ruled by a dictator whose purpose was world conquest. French possession of Louisiana, Jefferson said in a famous phrase, would force us to "marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation." Here, in realistic fear of the world conqueror, is the first statement of a strategy that would lead to the Monroe Doctrine—and to NATO, as well.

Napoleon then made two more moves, both charged with danger to the United States. Early in 1802, he sent an army to Haiti, to recover the island

What We Got for Our Money

The present value of the old Louisiana Purchase territory is incalculable. Billions of dollars' worth of crops, minerals and livestock products have been produced from its rich soil; billions more have come from river transportation and activities of the port of New Orleans; the land features that attracted hordes of settlers have meant unmeasured wealth in manufactured goods and a variety of other products and services. To give some idea of what we got for our \$23,000,000, this table shows the estimated cost of each state in the territory (or part of what later became a state), and the value of just one of its products during a single recent year

STATE	COST	PRODUCT	VALUE
Louisiana*	\$1,100,000	Minerals	\$616,245,000
Arkansas	1,354,000	Cotton	251,000,000
Missouri	1,776,000	Poultry	145,974,000
Iowa	1,435,000	Corn	713,657,000
Minnesota*	1,420,000	Dairy Products	233,434,000
North Dakota	1,802,000	Barley	72,897,000
South Dakota	1,964,000	Rye	11,381,000
Nebraska	1,969,000	Beef	371,000,000
Kansas*	1,890,000	Wheat	277,448,000
Oklahoma*	1,610,000	Crude Oil	482,620,000
Colorado*	1,100,000	Beet Sugar	22,681,000
Wyoming*	1,875,000	Sheep	120,605,000
Montana*	3,385,000	Copper	27,784,000

* Bought in part

A tense international melodrama preceded the Purchase. The hero was Jefferson

from the Negro genius Toussaint L'Ouverture, who had conquered it ostensibly for France, but who was ruling it as a personal dictatorship. At about the same time, Bonaparte mobilized a second army, to hold Louisiana secure against Great Britain, ultimately to invade Canada and meanwhile to put pressure on the United States.

The first army did capture Toussaint, but was itself wiped out by a terrible epidemic of yellow fever. Napoleon had no choice but to divert the other force to Haiti. Yellow fever and guerrilla warfare began to destroy it, too.

Ole Miss Closed to American Commerce

In October, 1802, two years after the signing of the secret treaty, the Spanish minister was still skillfully delaying the transfer of Louisiana to France. In that month, Spanish officials in New Orleans again closed the Mississippi to American commerce. The closure created a situation so serious for the U.S. that a swift solution was imperative.

Of various dangers, the worst one was that the Westerners might raise militia forces and reopen the Mississippi themselves by occupying New Orleans. If they did, both Spain and France would surely declare war, and the United States would be thrust into the strife from which it had so far held aloof. Our national survival might depend on Jefferson's finding a peaceful solution.

Actually, Jefferson and his Secretary of State, James Madison, had been negotiating for a permanent settlement of the whole Mississippi question ever since they had learned that Louisiana was to be returned to France. Through the American minister to France, Robert R. Livingston, they had proposed various means of securing the rights of navigation and deposit.

The most desirable solution, the one Livingston proposed most often, was for the United States to buy the so-called Isle of Orleans, an area that included the city, the mouth of the Mississippi, and adjacent territory east of the river, amounting in all to 2,800 square miles. (At times, Livingston offered to buy a much larger part of Louisiana. He, Jefferson, and many other thoughtful Americans believed that the energy of westward emigration would someday carry the United States across most or all of the trans-Mississippi West.) But for more than a year, the French foreign minister, Tal-

leyrand, refused Livingston any satisfaction, playing a brilliantly meaningless diplomatic chess game and never coming to grips with his proposals.

Nevertheless, Jefferson believed that the precariousness of the world situation would enable him to solve the problem—provided war did not break out first. The principal threat of war was the belligerent outrage of the Westerners. If they could be restrained, then the growing tension between France and Great Britain, and the failure of French arms in Haiti, might make Napoleon more amenable.

To convince the Westerners that their interests were being taken care of, Jefferson sent James Monroe to France as a minister extraordinary to negotiate a settlement. Monroe was prepared to offer various alternatives, but his main aim was the same as Livingston's: the purchase of New Orleans.

By the time Monroe reached France, however, the matter had been settled. The steady destruction of his second army in Haiti made Napoleon abandon his plan to restore the French Empire in North America. Instead he decided to attack Great Britain directly—across the English Channel, and also by way of her allies in Germany. But, he reasoned, at the very outset of such a war, Great Britain, the mistress of the seas, would occupy Louisiana. Such an increase of British wealth and strength must be prevented at any cost.

The best way of preventing it, Napoleon decided, was to dispose of the Louisiana territory before the war began. By selling it to the United States, he would strengthen a rival of Great Britain—and, since the area would lose its identity, the memory of his failure would soon fade from French minds.

With a dramatic suddenness possible only to dictators, Napoleon ordered Talleyrand to find out how much the United States would pay for all Louisiana. When Monroe arrived, ready to buy a town of nine or ten thousand inhabitants, he found his colleague Livingston haggling over the price to be paid for 900,000 square miles of wilderness.

The formalities were simple. A treaty of cession and two conventions covering the payment of the American claims and related matters were signed between May 2 and 9, 1803, but dated back to April 30th. Official notification did not reach Washington till July 14th, but somehow unofficial word got around as early as June 19th. The Senate ratified the treaty on October 20th, the Federalist members (and newspapers) shouting that the Pur-

Not Everybody Was In Favor of It

The Louisiana Purchase, one of the greatest territorial bargains a nation ever got, was bitterly attacked by members of Congress and newspapers before it was ratified by the Senate. Outraged Federalists (and a few Democrats) protested that Jefferson lacked constitutional authority to buy new land, or to promise its settlers statehood; that Louisiana was too far away to govern, and too wild to live in; that the land wasn't Napoleon's to sell; that the new Western tail might someday start wagging the older Eastern dog. Here are some samples:

Representative Roger Griswold, of Connecticut: "Should we not enquire into the validity of our title? Suppose France had ceded to us the Island of Great Britain. Would the mere cession give us the right to the soil and jurisdiction of that country?"

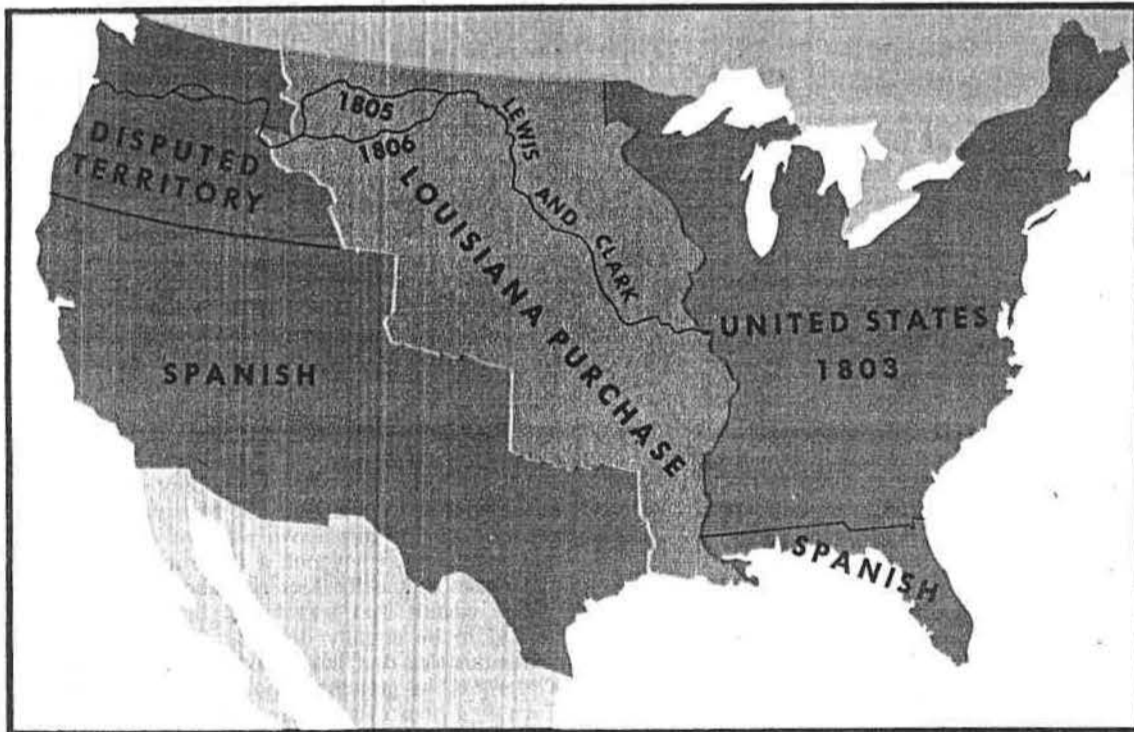
Senator William Plumer, of New Hampshire: "Admission of this western world into the Union would destroy at once the weight and importance of the eastern states and compel them to establish a separate, independent empire."

The Trenton Federalist: "Fifteen millions of dollars!!" (The reference was to the cash payment, not including the accompanying claims settlement agreement.) "For nothing—yes, for nothing; for, to New Jersey and all the Atlantic states, it is worse than nothing. If (Louisiana) is so important to the western people, they ought to pay for it themselves."

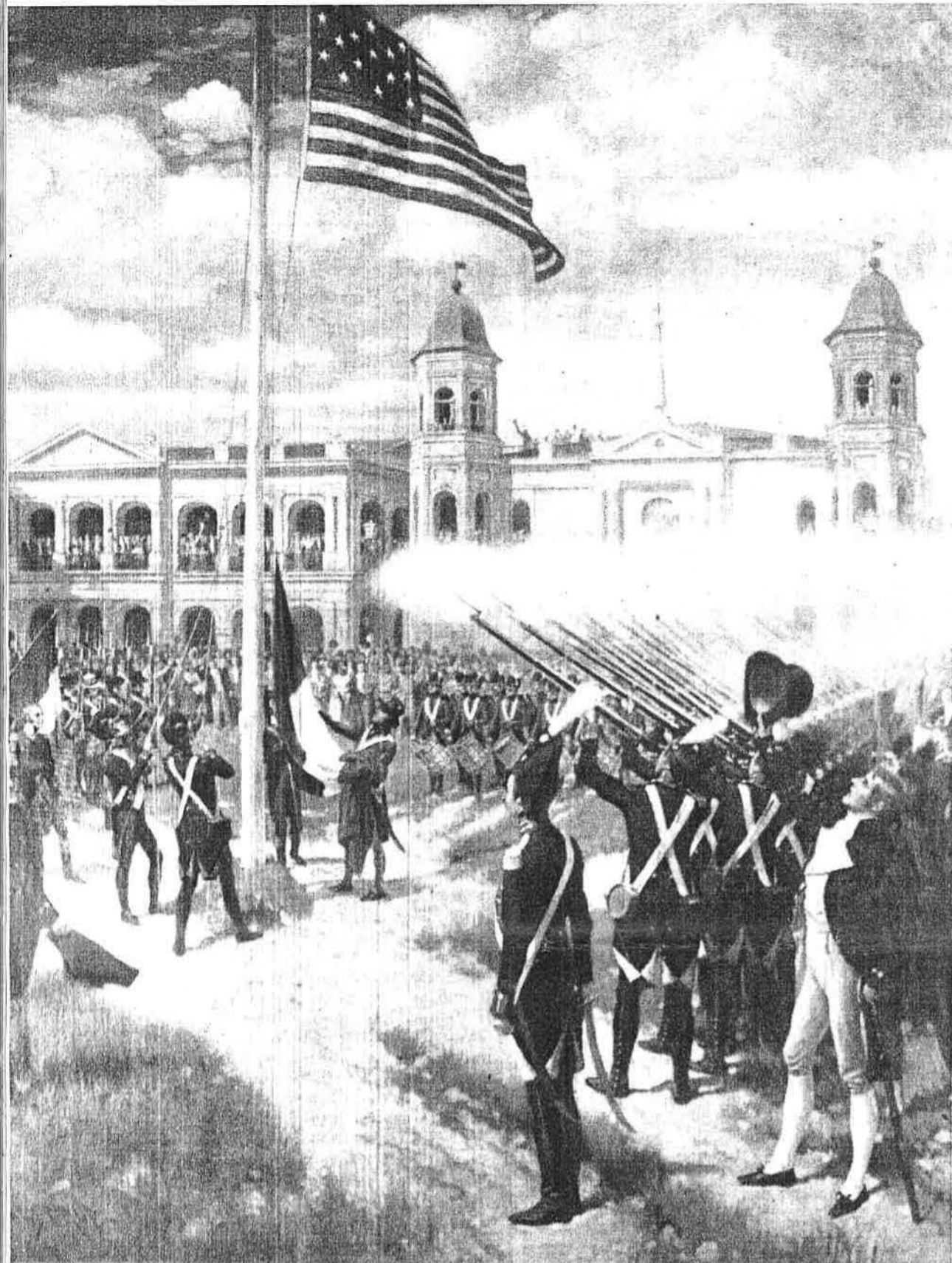
Representative Thomas Griffin, of Virginia: "(I) fear this Eden of the New World would prove a cemetery for the bodies of our citizens."

Senator Samuel White, Delaware: "I believe it will be the greatest curse that could ever befall us. Citizens will be removed to the immense distances of two or three thousand miles from the Capitol, where they will scarcely ever feel the rays of the Central Government. Their affections will become alienated; they will gradually begin to view us as strangers. I would rather see it (Louisiana) given to France, to Spain, or to any other nation . . . upon the mere condition that no citizen of the United States should ever settle within its limits."

Jefferson himself doubted the constitutionality of the Purchase, but he dropped plans to ask for a constitutional amendment when it appeared the delay might cause the whole transaction to fall through. Although the Supreme Court of his time might very well have invalidated the Louisiana Purchase, it was never asked for an opinion; some years later, the court ruled the deal constitutional.



This is how the present area of the United States was cut up at the time of the Purchase. Lewis and Clark Expedition to the Northwest actually was planned before we owned Louisiana
Collier's for March 21, 1953



COURTESY CABILDO LOUISIANA STATE MUSEUM, NEW ORLEANS

The territory was transferred from France to America in New Orleans on December 20, 1803, with appropriate ceremonies. France had taken it back from Spain less than three weeks previously

chase was unconstitutional. According to constitutional theories accepted at the time, they were probably right (as Jefferson half admitted, privately). Also, by both French and international law, Napoleon's sale was probably illegal: it was never confirmed by the French Senate and Assembly, as it should have been, and it violated the "secret" treaty with Spain, which provided that Louisiana must never be transferred to a third nation.

Napoleon, furthermore, had sold what he did not yet possess. For months, a French prefect sent to govern Louisiana had been waiting in New Orleans for Spain to effect the transfer. On November 30, 1803, he formally received Louisiana from Spain. Twenty days later, in a simple ceremony and to the raucous delight of a handful of Americans, he transferred it to the American commissioners: William C. C. Claiborne, who was governor of Mississippi Territory, and the scoundrelly General James Wilkinson, who was receiving pay from Spain as a spy.

Next December 20th, the state of Louisiana will observe the 150th anniversary of the transfer as the climax to a year-long celebration; President Eisenhower has been invited to attend.

Upper Louisiana, the huge northern province of which St. Louis was the seat of government, was transferred from French to American control on March 9, 1804. The French empire had disappeared from the continent of North America forever. The first and greatest step in the expansion of the United States had been completed.

Thus we acquired the vast area which La Salle, the first white man to descend the Mississippi to its mouth, had claimed for France in 1682 and had named in honor of Louis XIV.

Just what did the Louisiana territory consist of? The part of the state now named Louisiana that lies west of the Mississippi was part of the Purchase, as well as the city of New Orleans, which lies east of it. Six entire states were included:

Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota. Minnesota west of the Mississippi was included, and all Oklahoma except the narrow panhandle that stretches west of the 100th meridian, with Texas to the south and Kansas and Colorado to the north.

The 100th meridian is important because the area west of it and south of the Arkansas River belonged to Spain, and always had. For the same reason, the southwestern corner of Kansas was excluded; the rest of the state was part of the Purchase. So was Colorado north of the Arkansas and east of the Continental Divide, and so were Wyoming and Montana east of the divide.

Only a minute fraction of this vast wilderness had ever been seen by white men. Such maps as existed were based on guess, fantasy and whim. So there were ambiguities about the northern boundary. The complex negotiations that settled them produced some curiosities. Thus there is a portion of Minnesota that lies north of the 49th parallel and has no land connection with the United States, of which it is the most northerly extension except for Alaska. This is the so-called Northwest Angle, on the western shore of Lake of the Woods. The lake to the south of it is American but the land west of it is Canadian—because when the treaty that declared it American was made, the source of the Mississippi was believed to be farther north and west than it is.

North to south, the original Louisiana extends through nearly twenty degrees of latitude, just under 1,400 miles. The east-west width is greatest at the northern boundary and shrinks to less than 150 miles in the narrowest part of the state of Louisiana. At the mouth of the Missouri it is fifteen degrees, more than a thousand miles.

The diversity and variety of the countryside in these limits stagger the imagination.

Temperatures Vary Along the River

The lowest average winter temperature in the United States, under 10 degrees F., is that of northeastern Montana, North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota; a segment of this zone contains almost all the stations that have ever reported temperatures lower than 60 below. But at New Orleans the average winter temperature is 55 degrees, and only lower Florida and southern California have warmer winters.

The Mississippi rises in the evergreen forest of Minnesota, a lake country, Paul Bunyan's country. Come down the river by boat (it will have to be a canoe at first), and you will traverse wild-rice country, pass oak openings and prairies, cross the cultures of corn and cotton and sugar cane, and the last several hundred miles of your journey will be among live oaks, Spanish moss, canebrakes, bayous and alligators.

Or drive west, say on U.S. 20 from Dubuque. When you start you will be in what's called a moist, subhumid climate, where the rainfall is more than 32 inches a year. As you go west you will cross a dry, subhumid zone, then a semiarid one, and will end in an arid zone where the rainfall is less than 15 inches. You will cross the central lowland prairies and the Great Plains—the tall-grass country, the short-grass country and the sagebrush desert.

All this time you will be climbing the gradient of the continental incline. The Mississippi is never higher than 500 feet above sea level—but Denver is a mile high, Cheyenne a thousand feet higher and peaks of the Rockies rise above 14,000 feet.

The wealth that was latent in Louisiana has proved to be equally diverse. Despite the cities and industries that have grown up in the former wilderness, its greatest importance is agricultural. Corn is grown everywhere except in the western fringe where the rainfall is scanty, but Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska are part of the corn belt proper, which has the best-balanced and most profitable

another nation owned its mouth

agriculture in the world. Wherever there is corn there are hogs; the corn belt also is our principal cattle-feeding region; and dairy farming is important in most of it, too. It also grows wheat, hay and oats—three of the six principal American crops. The others are corn, tobacco and cotton—and Arkansas and Louisiana are part of the cotton belt.

Wheat farming, which lends itself to large-scale operations, prefers the flat country. Oklahoma, Kansas and Nebraska are a winter-wheat region; a long winter makes the Dakotas a part of the spring-wheat belt, which extends into Canada. But the enormous wheat ranches, which make such striking subjects for photography, with their endless lines of combines marching across the land like a tank corps, are in Montana.

Where climate becomes unfavorable for corn, in parts of Kansas and Oklahoma, sorghum takes its place. Where it is too capricious for wheat, in parts of the Dakotas, the hardier barley is grown.

In the Old Western Cattle Country

These crops are the great staples with which the United States feeds much of the world. They obscure the fact that practically everything else is grown in this region of practically every kind of soil and climate: rice in Arkansas, tobacco in Missouri, tung oil in Louisiana, soybeans in many places. And the whole western portion of the area is stock country. It was originally the open range, the setting of the now romantic drama of the cattle kingdom. It is cattle country still, although sheep are important in Wyoming, and in Colorado and Montana.

Since the region is mostly prairie and plain, timber is important only along the fringes, in Minnesota, Arkansas, Louisiana and the Rocky Mountains. There is a timbered island in the Black Hills of South Dakota and there are others in the Ozark and Wichita Mountains. But the great rafts of logs and lumber that once floated down the Mississippi, one of which carried Huckleberry Finn to immortality, came from Wisconsin, which was not part of the Purchase.

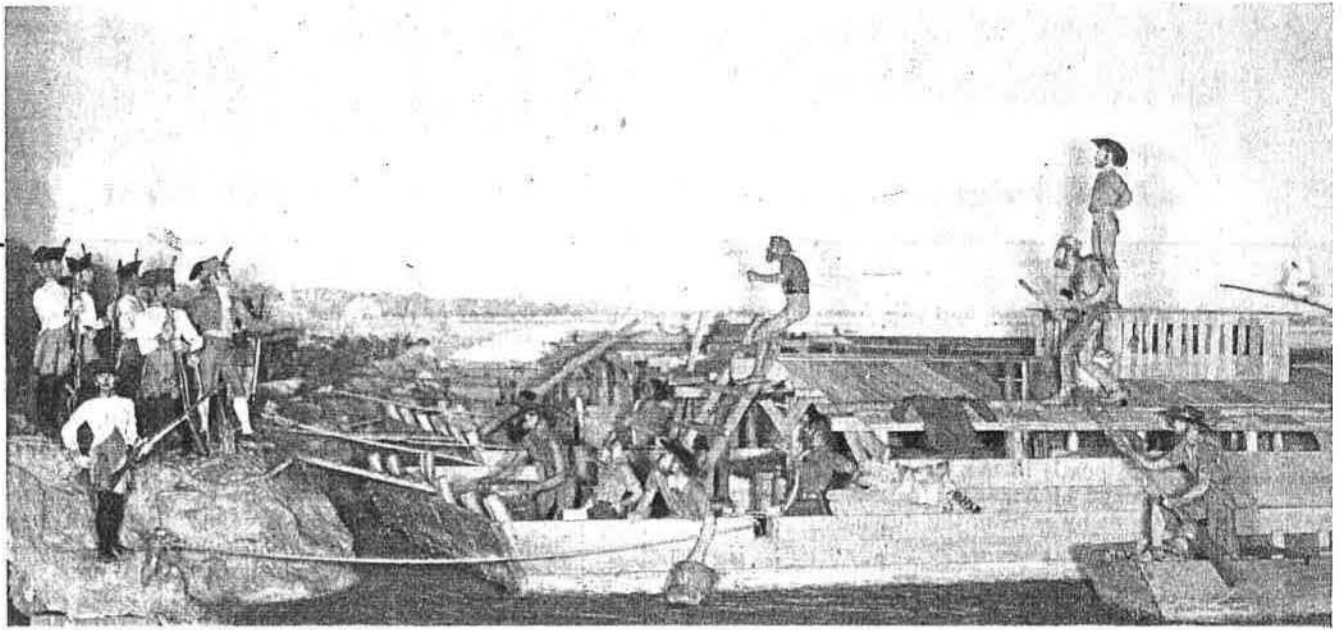
No single image could symbolize the whole Louisiana Territory as it is today, but there is a montage of symbols which instantly identifies it to every American. They are the symbols of the wide, fat land: grain elevators against the sky or against the aching loneliness of the plains, silos and corncribs by the thousand, reapers and threshing machines, combines spouting chaff to the wind that is never still, the rattling belts of hay loaders and balers, gangs of plows or harrows pulled by tractors, windmills and cotton pickers and cane-crushers, and always the barn that dwarfs the farmhouse and crouches in the angle of its wind-break.

But the land has other symbols, most notably the latticed towers of oil wells. Kansas and Oklahoma are in the Mid-Continental field, Wyoming and Montana in the Rocky Mountain Province. There is oil in Louisiana and Colorado, and the most promising recent strike is in North Dakota.

There are metals or other minerals in nearly every part of the Purchase. The sulphur deposits of Louisiana, with their extension in Texas, are the richest in the world. It was the gold of South Dakota's Black Hills that made the town of Deadwood a legend and brought on the Sioux wars and the Custer massacre. Before that there was a spectacular gold rush to Colorado—"Pikes Peak or Bust"—and Colorado silver added such roaring towns as Leadville and Cripple Creek to the album of Western spectacle. Montana was gold-rush country too—spawning towns like Alder Gulch and Last Chance Gulch, now Virginia City and Helena.

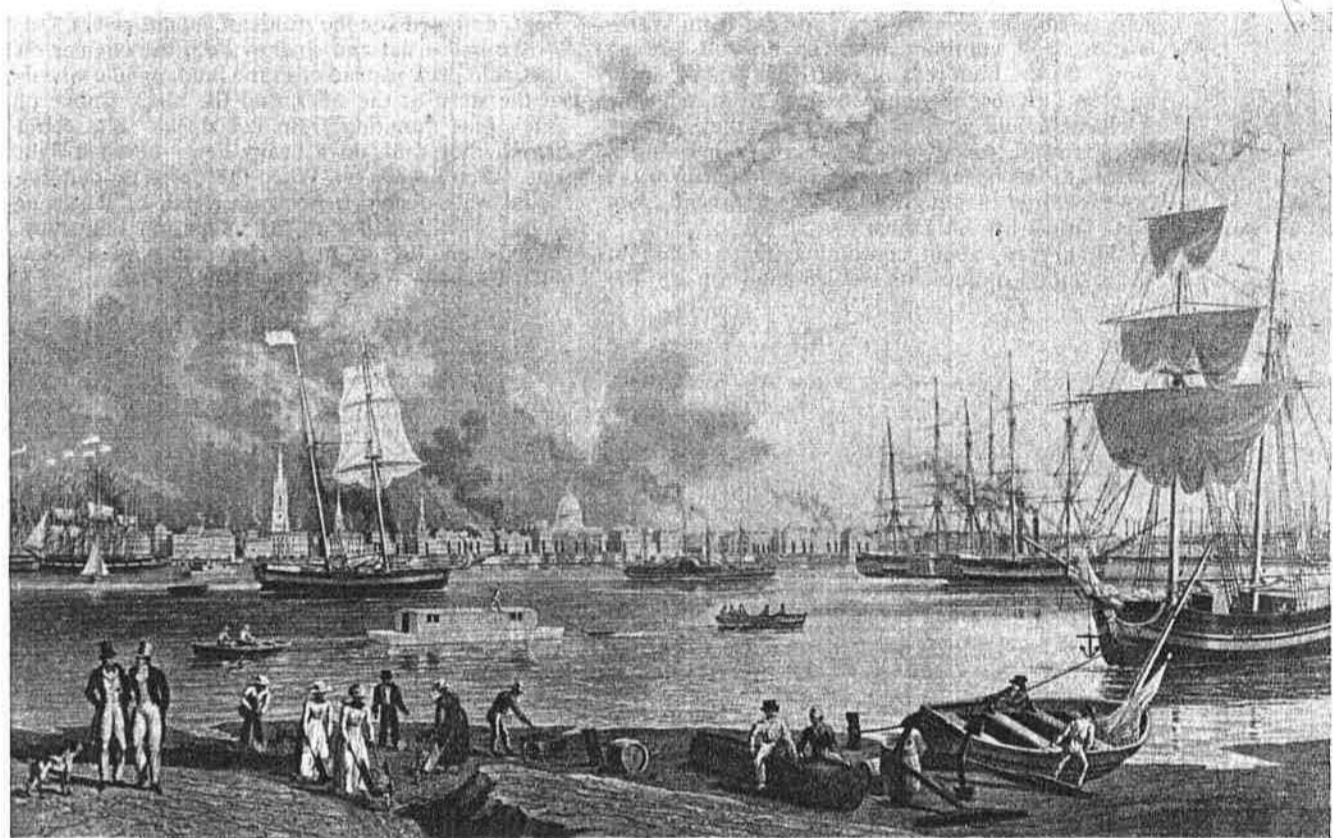
Missouri mines zinc and manganese and bauxite; Iowa, zinc and lead. Coal beds underlie parts of Iowa and Kansas and recur in Wyoming, Colorado and Montana. The bituminous deposits are

Collier's for March 21, 1953



DIORAMA IN MUSEUM OF NATIONAL EXPOSITION, ST. LOUIS

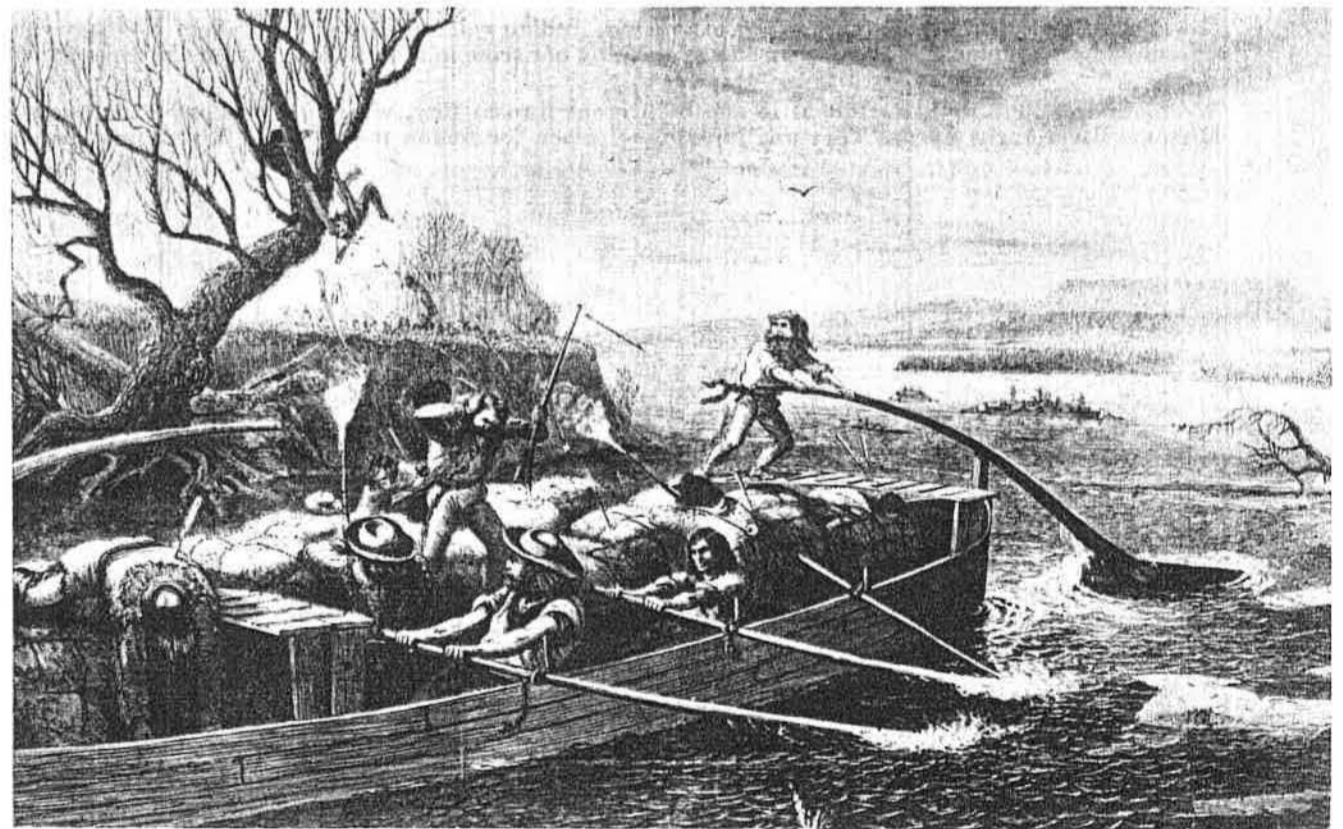
Crisis which made clear our need for New Orleans occurred in 1802, when Spanish suddenly closed the port to American river traffic. Some enraged Americans talked of seizing the city by force



HOWARD-TILTON MEMORIAL LIBRARY, TULANE UNIVERSITY

In first 15 years after Purchase, New Orleans tripled in size, as steamboats brought goods down Mississippi from the interior for transfer to seagoing ships. This picture was painted in the 1820s

While Mississippi was becoming commercial artery, hunters and traders were moving up Missouri River. Country was still wild; explorers like these fur traders often were attacked by Indians



For Americans, tomorrow always lay to the West. After Louisiana? The Pacific

well developed, and vast stores of lignite await an era that will be forced to use low-grade fuels. That same future time will also utilize the enormous but now mostly untouched resources of low-grade iron, some of them in Missouri and Arkansas, but the bulk of them in the Rocky Mountains. There are pearls in the lower rivers, and diamonds are mined in Arkansas. Semiprecious stones abound in many parts of the Purchase.

Louisiana meant illimitable size, illimitable distance. The distances within the United States seemed overwhelming *before* the Purchase; the vast areas the Purchase added seemed likely to smother the nation.

Jefferson himself wondered whether we would long be able to govern a region so far from Washington, with communication so difficult and so slow. Of the hundreds of craft that floated down to New Orleans, now an American town, only the keelboats could go back upriver and they only by being rowed, poled and towed in as grinding a labor as Americans have ever had to perform. A boat required two months or more to ascend from New Orleans to St. Louis.

What, then, about continuing up the Ohio to the rapidly multiplying settlements—or up the

Arkansas or the Missouri into the unknown lands?

But for communication and transportation, the true measure of distance is not miles, but time. And it is a striking fact that every step of American expansion has produced an increase in our cultural energies, much as an electric current is stepped up by an induction coil. Such an acceleration now brought about one of the greatest of American inventions, the river steamboat. In 1812, nine years after the Louisiana Purchase, Nicholas Roosevelt took a steamboat from Pittsburgh to New Orleans. On the return it could get no farther than Natchez, but in 1815 one made it from New Orleans to Pittsburgh in 54 days.

The time and distance barrier was broken. The next year saw the first of the type that was to conquer the Western waters, the Mississippi steamboat, designed for the needs of inland rivers.

She had a flat and shallow hull, the engines on the main deck instead of in the hold, paddle wheels at the stern or the sides, and the black smoke of pitch pine vomiting from tall stacks. She could travel, they said, on a heavy dew—or on a light one, when necessary. When there was no dew she could walk over the shoals on a pair of shears or stilts, or with a device for increasing buoyancy, like the one invented by a riverman named Abraham Lincoln. And now the flush age began.

Everything converged on New Orleans, which tripled in size during the first 15 years following the Purchase. The Mississippi became one of the great highways of the world and New Orleans one of the great ports. It was the commercial depot of all inland America. The voyage to the Atlantic ports began here, and the voyage to Mexico, to Central America, to South America, to Africa.

Tonnage doubled and redoubled and the row of steamboat stacks along the water front lengthened to two miles. Roustabouts rolled that barrel, toted that bale. The Natchez and the Robert E. Lee, racing from New Orleans to St. Louis, piled lightwood and cotton and sides of bacon on the fires and wedged the safety valve shut; the Lee won, covering the 1,278-mile distance in 94 hours. If the boats blew their boilers, no one cared, so great was the torrent of profits, immigrants and new boats.

Presently forces began to operate that would confine New Orleans to being merely the greatest city of the South, but in that bedazzled time it seemed certain to become the greatest in the country. It is a great terminal today, and in 1953 its promise for the future is just what it was in 1803. Only five years ago it got a foreign trade zone, which makes it what the half-horse, half-alligator Americans wanted to make it then: a free port.

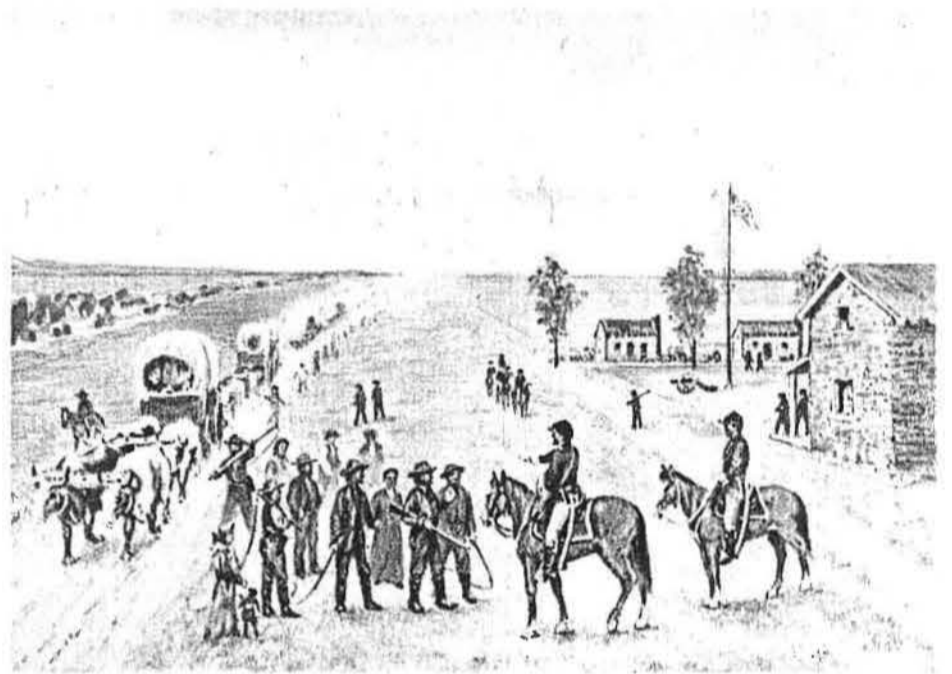
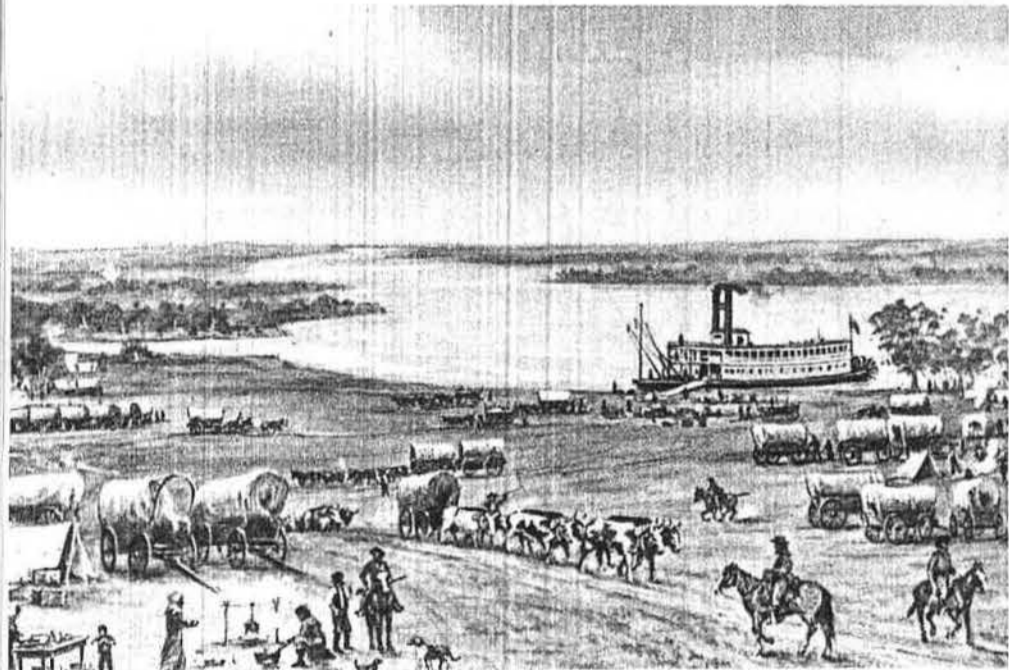
Glance at the western bank of the Mississippi,

PAINTINGS © HOWARD R. DRIGGS



Lewis and Clark broke trail for western expansion. Indian relations were smoothed by Shoshone girl Sacajawea, shown greeting her tribe in Montana

Westbound settlers took steamboat to site of present Kansas City, where Missouri River turns north. That was jumping-off place for wagon travel

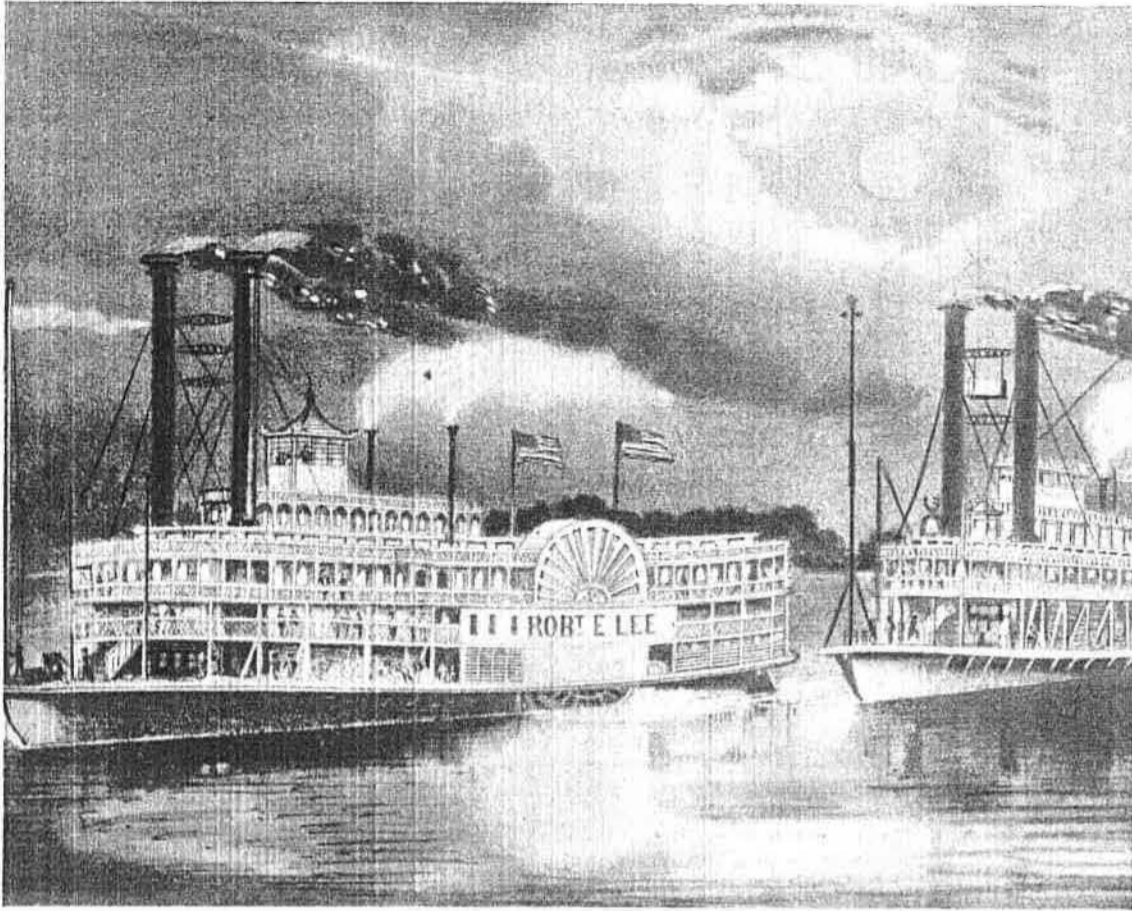


Fort Kearney—site of Kearney, Nebraska—was erected by U.S. Army on the Oregon Trail to protect pioneers from attack by plains Indians

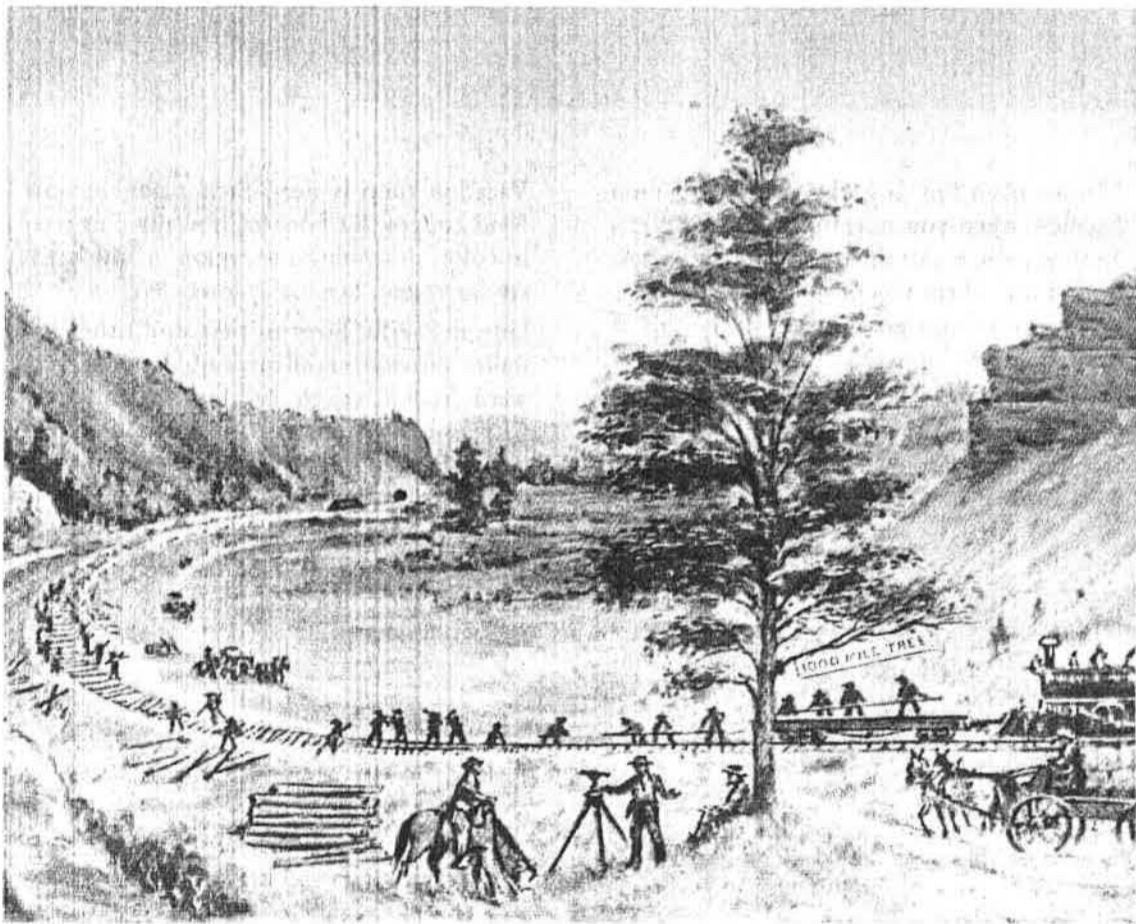
Pony express risked Indian attack, too. Scene is valley of Sweetwater River, near Continental Divide, where the Oregon Trail left Louisiana



It was a vast area—too vast, folks said. Rails and river boats cut it to size



River boats, able to go upstream as well as down, solved the territory's communication and transport problems. Business was so good, boatmen would risk boiler blowups by tying down safety valves to get more speed. This shows famous race between Robert E. Lee and Natchez



Railroads went where steamboats couldn't, following the overland trails to the West. The Union Pacific (pictured here under construction in Utah, 1,000 miles from Omaha) followed the Oregon Trail, and the Santa Fe railroad went along famous trail for which it was named

where the villages were always waked to furious activity, Mark Twain says, by the cry, "Steamboat a-comin'!" Below St. Louis, there is no important city on the west bank, but above it the steamboat age created Keokuk, Davenport, Dubuque and many others on up to the head of navigation.

On the upper Mississippi, a hamlet called Pig's Eye grew up, to be more decorously christened St. Paul. It was on the east bank, and therefore American soil before the Purchase. But the best approach to St. Anthony's Falls was from the west. When the falls were harnessed to power the mills that converted the inland empire's wheat to flour, Minneapolis grew up on the purchased land. (Both the Twin Cities span the river now.)

Stump-Pulling Boats in Red River

The Red River, in what is now the state of Louisiana, led through a country that was to remain almost exclusively agricultural. The river was undependably navigable at best, even after Henry Shreve's weird stump-pulling boats got rid of its Great Raft of matted snags. But the steamboat age created Shreveport, which was named for him. Farther north, the Arkansas was navigable almost to the Oklahoma line and the steamboats created Little Rock. Tulsa and Wichita are in its valley, too, but the steamboats weren't able to go that far.

Go on up the Mississippi to the mouth of the Missouri, that unruly stream whose name means what the white men have called it through all the years they have struggled with it, the Big Muddy. You are 1,100 river miles from the Gulf. Up in the portion of Montana that lies west of Yellowstone Park is Red Rock River, the ultimate source of the Missouri. The Red Rock River is farther (again in river miles) from the seacoast than any other fresh water on earth that drains into the ocean: 3,892 miles from the Gulf.

"The meeting of the waters," a celebrated fountain in St. Louis is called, and unquestionably the meeting of the Missouri and the Mississippi is the world's most important river junction.

The junction was in the Louisiana Territory. In 1764, on the first high ground south of the meeting place, Pierre Laclède and his young nephew René Auguste Chouteau built a fur-trade post that became the city of St. Louis. In 1947, the city of St. Louis announced a competition for the design of a monument or memorial that would best symbolize its past, present and future. The competition was won by Eero Saarinen & Associates, whose design centers on an arch made of stainless steel, 590 feet high, which will rise from the St. Louis water front, on the west bank of the Mississippi, in the old Louisiana Territory.

There could be no better symbol. The junction of the two great rivers is the arch of the North American continent. Through that arch, through the city of St. Louis, the American people streamed westward to occupy, settle and develop the vastness that had been called Louisiana. Later, they pushed beyond Louisiana all the way to the Pacific.

Fur traders went up the Missouri by pirogue and keelboat, battling the currents and forever-changing channels, menaced by snags and sucks and whirlpools and sandbanks and caving banks, maddened by gnats and mosquitoes, preyed upon by hostile Indians. By 1792, they had got as far as the site of Bismarck and thought themselves close to the Pacific. They were to get no farther for 12 years.

In the same week that he sent Monroe to France, Jefferson secretly asked Congress to authorize an expedition which would ascend the Missouri. It was to explore the Louisiana which he did not know he was about to buy, and to go on and descend the Columbia River, whose mouth Captain Robert Gray had discovered in 1792. In 1804, Captain Meriwether Lewis and Lieutenant William Clark set off up the Big Muddy at the head of a forty-five-man expedition. In 1806, they were

Collier's for March 21, 1953

The returns on Jefferson's investment have been stupendous. Once a wilderness, the



Iowa is world's most productive corn area, also has large income from stockyards. Photo shows cattle, hogs being fattened on corn diet



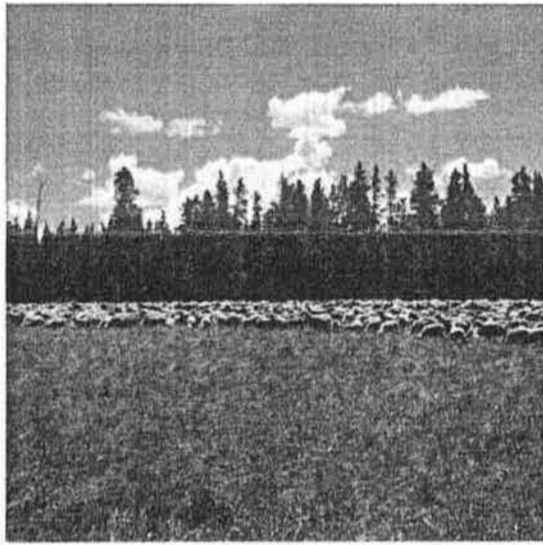
Montana copper mines are just across Purchase border, but refineries are inside area. This is Anaconda plant at Great Falls



Nebraska, besides being great agricultural state, is important transportation hub. This shows Union Pacific railroad yards at Omaha



North Dakota, which has severe winters, is part of spring wheat belt extending into Canada. This wheat farm is near Grand Forks



Wyoming sheep ranch, near the Big Horn River. The state is the most important sheep raising area in the former Purchase territory



Oklahoma derives vast part of its income from petroleum and natural gas wells. This picture shows gas plant located in Maysville



Colorado, besides being important mining region, is one of America's main sources of beet sugar. Farm shown is in Morgan County



South Dakota is a major mining state. This is the Homestake Mine in town of Lead, largest gold mine in the Western Hemisphere



Arkansas is one of few Purchase states with valuable timber. Wood supplies pulp for paper mills, state's most important industry

old Louisiana territory is one of the most productive areas in the whole world today

back in St. Louis, having made the incredible 8,000-mile journey they had been ordered to. They were an unmistakable portent of the future.

As with the other river towns, the cities of the Missouri were founded principally by the steamboats. In fact, to list the Missouri River cities is to show how deep into the continent the steamboat age carried us. It is also to map one main course of our development: Jefferson City and Kansas City (at the mouth of the Kansas River), in Missouri; Leavenworth and Atchison, in Kansas; Council Bluffs (just above the mouth of the Platte River), and Sioux City, Iowa; Pierre, South Dakota; Bismarck, North Dakota.

The head of navigation was Fort Benton, Montana. It is not a ghost town now, but it is quiet compared to what it was in the pyrotechnic era when the boats dumped the gold seekers and the freight ashore and hurried off down-river lest they miss the high water and be stranded there for a year.

There was a limitation to the river-boat age, and eventually there had to be an end to it. Steamboats could go varying distances up the larger rivers, pirogues and dugouts could go varying distances up the smaller ones. But of the Mississippi's western tributaries, only the Missouri was an important waterway. And it was intolerably roundabout, precarious, laborious and time-consuming.

The steamboat also began to suffer from competition. In the older United States, more and better roads were built as time went on. Then came the canals—beginning with the Erie Canal, the most important one—and then railroads. Roads, canals and railroads took the products of the interior—which had once gone down-river to New Orleans—to the Eastern cities and seaports.

The principal routes of travel shifted from north-south—the direction of the navigable rivers—to east-west, and the steamboat came to be of limited value. The shift was inevitable. The geography of the American continent said that the American people must travel mainly west. That movement began when they disembarked at Jamestown and Plymouth; it continued till they reached the Pacific.

Tide of Migration Flows Westward

The purchase of Louisiana made sure that the Americans would surge across its distant western boundary and go on beyond it as far as there was land. They began this surge before the frontier reached western Missouri, before there was more than a thin fringe of settlements in eastern Iowa, before there were any settlements at all in Kansas or Minnesota. In the United States, to travel toward the sunset has always been to travel toward the dawn. Tomorrow has always lain to the west.

Every year, more thousands of emigrants came from the East and from Europe. Every year, they pushed farther west. Every year, there were more farms, settlements, towns; more commerce, greater tonnage, larger crops to be transported; more prairies to be broken to the plow; more distant areas to push into. The steamboats could not reach enough of the areas and could not carry enough of the settlers and the freight.

When, later, the Civil War—a far more grievous cause than Spanish rivalry—closed the Mississippi for four years, the steamboat age began to end. Since then, river traffic has been mainly the freight for which speed is not essential—coal, oil, steel, grain. A Diesel towboat pushing a line of barges has replaced the Natchez and the Eclipse, spouting sparks for a Currier and Ives print.

But the trails still followed the river valleys. In the years after the Purchase cattle and swine came down the valley of the Red River, the snorting bull teams of the freighters labored up it—and that valley led to the far edge of the Purchase and on to Texas. The valley of the Arkansas led to New Mexico. And there was a more important valley,

that of the Platte River, which led to the Pacific.

To get to either the upper Arkansas or the Platte, the Americans had first to go to St. Louis. As New Orleans lost importance, St. Louis gained it.

The westbound adventurers usually went by steamboat up the Missouri to where it turns north, which is where the Kansas River comes in from the west. There or thereabout was the jumping-off place, where you took to land travel. There the trains of huge, ox-drawn freight wagons formed for Santa Fe, and the smaller trains of emigrants formed for Everywhere.

Freighters at a Historic Road Fork

The trail was an expanse of intermingling ruts that became a road. Both the freighters and the wagons traveled it for about seventy-five miles, and then they reached a momentous road fork. The freighters kept to the branch that led southwest. Swaying and creaking on through prairie heat and violent storms, they reached the valley of the Arkansas and turned up it. (Such Kansas towns as Lawrence, Topeka, Dodge City would spring up at their campsites.)

When they crossed to the right bank of the river they left the United States and were in Mexico. They were taking American manufactures to Santa Fe and would bring back silver and the mules that were Mexican but are called Missouri mules to this day. The traffic they were engaged in—the commerce of the prairies, it was called—became a leverage that steadily forced New Mexico away from Mexico. It was little more than a formality when, in 1846, the small, jovial armies of our only war of conquest followed the wagons down the Santa Fe Trail to make New Mexico American.

At the fork in the trail seventy-five miles beyond the Missouri, the most significant road sign ever erected in the United States pointed up the right-hand fork. It was a board with a crudely whittled index finger and a crudely lettered legend that read, "Road to Oregon." It marked the beginning of the great emigrant road—branching later into the Oregon Trail, the Salt Lake Trail, the California Trail, but still a single trail where it crossed Louisiana. It angled across Kansas to the valley of the Platte in Nebraska, then west and northwest. Beyond the site of Casper, Wyoming, the trail left the Platte Valley for that of a smaller stream, the Sweetwater River. Just beyond the Sweetwater we should erect another arch. For Louisiana ended here, at South Pass, and the Continental Divide began.

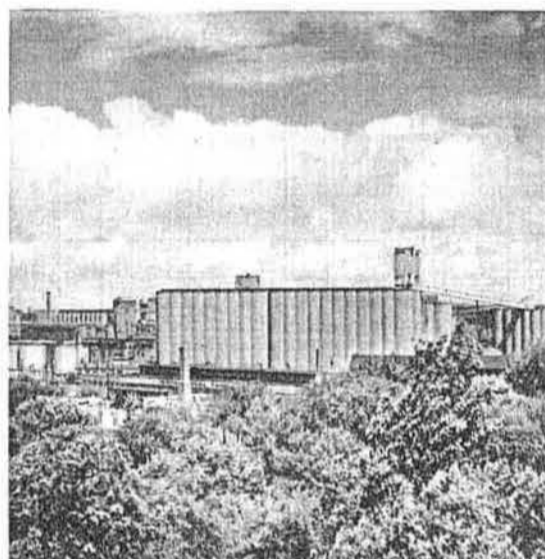
Motorists feel the same wonder that emigrants felt a hundred years ago—the divide they drive across is in a depression. When the emigrant wagons crossed it, they left the United States behind. From here on, all rivers flowed toward the Pacific; they were in Oregon. Mexico was in sight to the southwest. But they had not left the United States behind for very long: they pulled it after them through this western arch. Oregon became American as far north as 49 degrees; the part of Mexico that was called California, which includes Utah and Nevada, became American, too.

This trail was the route of our great migration, whose symbol is the whitetop, the covered wagon. It was the road of the emigrant farmers and drovers, of the gold rush, of the overland stagecoach, of the pony express. It is marked by such cities as Grand Island, Kearney and North Platte in Nebraska, and Casper, Wyoming. They all began as river fords or stage stations, but they were to develop as railroad towns.

For the vastness of the Louisiana Purchase made one more thing necessary before it could be "brought in," before its parts could become states. The first tier of states, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa and Minnesota, was settled easily enough, and so was the eastern edge of Kansas. But beyond them development stalled, bogged down in space and distance. While the plains were



Missouri became stockyard state because many of the important Western cattle trails led there. These are the Kansas City yards



Minnesota, connecting wheat belt with Mississippi, developed flour industry. Mills shown are at Minneapolis, world flour capital



Kansas, famed as farm state, also has big aircraft industry, centered around Wichita. This is a photograph of the Boeing factory

What did the Purchase mean? One people, one government, in a continental unit

still empty of everything but buffalo and migratory Indians, the surge of emigrants and gold seekers had created large populations on the Pacific Coast. Moreover, it took four months to reach San Francisco by ox team and, usually, as long or longer to reach it by ship round Cape Horn.

Once more, the industrial genius of the United States had to compress distance by shortening time. The answer was the railroad. Almost all the Western roads were built by government subsidy, by land grant. The first, the Pacific Railroad, whose Louisiana Purchase half is the Union Pacific, was finished in 1869. The Union Pacific created Omaha as surely as gold discoveries created Denver.

The Union Pacific follows the Oregon Trail across the Purchase; the Santa Fe, of course, follows the trail whose name it inherited. The Northern Pacific heads across North Dakota and turns up the valley of the Yellowstone River, the Milwaukee crosses South Dakota angling for Marias Pass south of Glacier National Park, the Rock Island goes southwestward across Kansas.

These railroads are like the spokes of a wheel across the old Louisiana Territory and there are others in concentric circles that cross them till a modern railroad map of the old Purchase territory looks like a web. This web is what brought the Purchase to harvest. The farm lands of that western half had been bought for \$25 a square mile, but while they remained unsettled and unused their value was zero dollars per square mile. It was the railroads that took the men to the empty land and gave it its present value, which is beyond calculation.

In our own time, we have seen distance compressed still farther by the Diesel locomotive, the streamliner, and especially the airliner, till you can reach San Francisco from St. Louis in an afternoon. But the great work was completed when the

railroads were built. The full meaning of the Louisiana Purchase was in.

* * *

That meaning is too great to be comprehended, even now. We can look back and understand more than Jefferson could in 1803, but looking ahead we can foresee only, as he did, that the future will be on a gigantic scale.

There were those candlelit evenings in the President's house, which was not yet called the White House, when Jefferson and his Cabinet discussed the Spanish and French threats and how the Mississippi's mouth could be secured. There were those other evenings in Livingston's house in Paris when he and Monroe and Barbé-Marbois, the finance minister who took over the negotiations from Talleyrand, discussed the price that a young and weak republic should pay for 900,000 square miles. Those evenings changed the shape of American history, and of world history, too.

From New Orleans to Minneapolis, from St. Louis to Denver. Six states, the greater part of seven others. Corn, wheat, cotton; oil, gold, silver, copper. The Louisiana Purchase can be put in terms of such distances and areas, such crops and minerals.

It can also be put in terms of tonnages, carloadings, manufactures. Or in terms of the millions of Americans who have lived and died in it, the 22,000,000 who live in it today, and their houses and schools and hospitals and museums. It can be put in visual symbols, such as the prairie schooner and the streamliner, the oil derrick and the combine. It can be put in songs which everyone knows, from "Waitin' for the Robert E. Lee," to "Good-by to my paint, I'm a-leavin' Cheyenne."

But however it may be put, it is still too momentous to be understood.

Great illuminated arch of stainless steel is to be erected at St. Louis, gateway to the West, as part of regional celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase

Well over a hundred years ago, when Americans were a more exuberant people than they are now, they had a phrase that probably expressed as much of it as can be put in words: manifest destiny. It is rhetorical and arrogant, but less aggressive than some have thought. What it meant to our ancestors was that the United States was not going to stop at the Rocky Mountains, that it was the nation's destiny to push farther. Common sense and something beyond sense insisted that there must be a single nation all the way to San Francisco Bay. The Louisiana Purchase created Manifest Destiny.

There was the head of a military college in the state of Louisiana. He liked Southerners a good deal better than Northerners, and the fiercest of them did not despise abolitionists more than he did. Wrangling about slavery disgusted him—but when there began to be talk about states seceding from the Union, he warned his Southern friends. The United States would not permit secession, he said: the United States would fight to prevent it. Why?

General Sherman States a Principle

To this college president—his name was William Tecumseh Sherman—the answer was perfectly clear. A confederacy of Southern states could no more be permitted to close the Mississippi than Spain or France had been. "The Mississippi, source and mouth, must be controlled by one government," he told them; and General Sherman packed up his possessions and started north.

And Lincoln said that the land itself "demands union and abhors separation." He pointed out that the area which the United States occupied "is well adapted to be the home of one national family and it is not well adapted for two or more."

That is the basic fact: there could not be a United States and a Republic of the South and a Republic of the West. American citizens had to be able to travel from St. Paul to New Orleans without being stopped by a frontier guard. They had to be able to cross from St. Paul to Minneapolis without entering a foreign country. But if from St. Paul to Minneapolis, then also from St. Paul to San Francisco and from St. Louis to San Francisco.

The Mississippi Valley is not only the richest area in the world, it is also the largest area "adapted to be the home of one national family." In January, 1803, the United States owned only the eastern half—a family confined to half a house.

Before 1803 ran out, the United States got the other half of the house. You could now cross from East St. Louis to St. Louis without crossing a national boundary. You could, in fact, go from New York to Denver without crossing one, and from Minneapolis to New Orleans.

But once you could go from New York to Denver, then it had become certain that at no very distant time you would be able to go on to San Francisco. New York to San Francisco, Key West to Seattle, Bangor to Los Angeles—a single people under a single government in a continental unit. That is what the Louisiana Purchase meant. It meant the unity, the wealth and the power that have kept the United States secure against division from within and dismemberment from without.

Eero Saarinen's arch is to rise from a park on the Mississippi water front at St. Louis. The park is to symbolize the Louisiana Purchase and all that has followed from it. It is to be called the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial. And that is just. For Jefferson was the author or architect of the Louisiana Purchase and the Louisiana Purchase was the principal force in what was then our future and is now our history.

Collier's for March 21, 1953



FAIRCHILD AERIAL SURVEY

Louisiana's biggest city, New Orleans, key to the entire Purchase transaction, has become one of the busiest United States ports, competing strongly with those on the East Coast. Compare this view of the New Orleans water front with that of 130 years ago, page 49

