

## The Louisiana Purchase

### **B. The Land**

The Louisiana territory included present-day Louisiana, Mississippi, and Missouri plus approximately 10 million acres of land stretching from the Mississippi River westward to the Rocky Mountains. The eastern portion of the Louisiana Purchase had been originally owned by France, while the western portion was held by Spain. France had sold the land to the Spanish in 1763, and the Spanish gave it back to France.

France had sold the land back to the United States in 1800, but the Spanish still controlled some 800,000 square miles of the western part of the Mississippi.

Initially, James Madison thought that purchase of the land from France would be the best course of action, and suggested to his cabinet members that they should buy the land from France. Madison's position was based on the "original compact" which had expressed the intent of the United States and France "that all other lands situated to the west and south were to be ours."

Jefferson, on the basis of the "original compact" and the fact of "discovery," as the only grounds for territorial acquisition, believed that the United States should not buy the land from France, but instead should wait until the United States could claim it through its own exploration and settlement.

### **C. Financial Problems: Cost of Acquisition**

The total cost of the Louisiana Purchase has been estimated at \$15 million, or about one cent per acre. The amount paid for the Louisiana Purchase is considered to be the largest sum ever paid for land in history. The total cost of the Louisiana Purchase includes the original purchase price of \$15 million, plus the additional amount paid for the acquisition of the 800,000 square miles of land from Spain.

### **D. Financial Difficulties: Time to Acquisition & Settlement**

Jefferson believed that the time from "discovery" to entry, Spanish ownership of the land should suffice for the United States to consider the land as its property and therefore as their territory. However, the time from "discovery" to entry, Spanish ownership of the land should suffice for the United States to consider the land as their territory.

Jefferson's position was based on the fact that the United States had no way to settle the land from Spain, and the only other option open to him was to wait.

### **E. Population and Disagreements**

The French and the Spanish had different views on the subject of population. French authorities and colonists believed in the concept of "colonization," in the sense of settling native French and non-French people in the new colonies. The Spanish, however, believed in the concept of "colonization," in the sense of settling native Spanish and non-Spanish people in the new colonies.