

Louisiana Purchase, Completed in Cabildo, Stands as Greatest Realty Deal in History

EVERY other real estate deal in history fades into insignificance when compared with the Louisiana Purchase.

For \$15,000,000, France turned over to the United States all of what is now known as Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Oklahoma; three-quarters of Louisiana, Colorado, Montana and Wyoming; half of Minnesota and North Dakota; a quarter of New Mexico and small parts of Mississippi, Idaho and Texas. And Napoleon Bonaparte made up his mind to make that sale while he was mad as a hornet in his bathtub!

The date was December 20, 1803. Louisiana had been French from the discoverers to 1763, then Spanish until November 30, 1803, French again for 20 days, and now was to become American.

Up there in the Sala Capitular of the Cabildo, the second-story room on the corner of St. Peter and Chartres streets today, the great valley empire of the Louisiana Purchase was to be transferred with pompous formality to the United States of America.

In the Sala Capitular the dignified gentlemen were exchanging credentials. Pierre Clement Laussat, colonial prefect of Louisiana, who for 20 days had ruled the huge province for Napoleon Bonaparte, first consul of France; William C. C. Claiborne, first American governor of Louisiana; General James Wilkinson of the United States army.

Laussat was preparing to turn over to Claiborne and Wilkinson the vast territory Napoleon Bonaparte had sold for \$15,000,000 in the name of the republic of France to President Thomas Jefferson in the name of the United States of America.

The 30,000 population of New Orleans, streaming toward the Place d'Armes, packed inside it, couldn't have dreamed of all that. Nor the 50,000 population of the great empire up the valley. All they knew was that the flags and the ground rules were changing again. Most of them hated the change. They had been successively subjects of Spain, citizens of the republic of France, citizens of the United States of America, all within 22 days.

The spectators watched the troops march into the square and take up their positions, in even ranks. There was the New Orleans militia under Colonel Bellechasse. There were United States army regulars in their tight kneebreeches and tailcoats, their criss-cross white belts, their heavy smooth-bore muskets. Here in a group stood the "Kaintocks"—Kentucky flatboatmen, many in Indian buckskin and coonskin caps. Some carried the long Kentucky rifles on their arms, were booted with hunting knife and Indian tomahawk.

Inside the Cabildo the dignified gentlemen had accepted the others' credentials. Clerks had droned through the lengthy wording of international legal documents. The gentlemen rose and solemnly shook hands. Governor Claiborne produced his first proclamation of this vast new land he ruled. It was in three languages—English, French and Spanish. Claiborne, Wilkinson and Laussat advanced to the second-story windows of the Cabildo. The proclamation was to be read in all three languages. The United States of America notified the world thereby that Louisiana was now American. Some cheers rose.

Stars and Stripes Hoisted
Then an armed color guard marched to the flagpole in the middle of the Place d'Armes. Solemnly they hauled down the flag of France. Solemnly they hoisted to the top of the pole the Stars and Stripes. And the United States army regulars at the sharp command of an officer raised their muskets and fired a salute to the flag that, with added stars, floats over Louisiana yet. Then the Claiborne proclamation was read.

Americans began pouring into New Orleans from that day. The 1810 census, seven years later,

shows 17,242 population for the city, 76,556 population for Louisiana. New Orleans was launched on her career as the greatest city of the South.

Incredible today sounds the welter of motives and circumstances that led to that transfer of Louisiana 131 years ago. They didn't even know many of the details, then, those folks who feasted and danced and drank deep at the banquets and the brilliant ball given in New Orleans that night of December 20, 1803. Documents then buried in private and secret archives have come to light since that day. Now the almost unbelievable picture is clear.

First of all, Napoleon Bonaparte literally made up his mind to sell Louisiana in a fit of rage while he was, as the black mammys say, "naked as a jaybird" in his hot bath. It was a strangely shaped copper tub with its own charcoal stove attached. Napoleon's circulation was poor. He awoke cold. He would sit an hour in that simmering, soapy, perfumed water. Such a tub stands in the Cabildo today.

Two Americans in Paris
In Paris, then, were two Americans, Robert R. Livingston, brilliant New York lawyer (who never saw the Louisiana he helped buy for his nation), and James Monroe, later president of the United States. They came with President Thomas Jefferson's proposal to buy Louisiana. Napoleon delegated to deal with them Barbe Marbois, "peer of France." Actually, Robert R. Livingston and Barbe Marbois did about 90 per cent of the negotiating. Monroe arrived late; was sick in bed much of the time.

Napoleon Needed Money
Napoleon was planning to invade the British Isles and conquer his worst foes in their homeland. He needed money for army and fleet. But he hadn't made up his mind yet to sell Louisiana.

A letter of his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, tells how he did make up his mind in his bath. Joseph and Jerome, two of his brothers, called on him that morning. Jerome was brilliant in a new uniform of light blue and silver. Napoleon's Mameluke valet admitted them. Napoleon, neck-deep in hot water, his brothers standing near the tub, suggested it might be a good thing to sell Louisiana. The brothers fought the idea hotly. Their language angered Napoleon. Suddenly, as the three screamed at each other, quarrelling, excited Corsicans all in the midst of a family battle, Napoleon leaped to his feet. A wave of soapy water deluged Jerome Bonaparte, ruined his costly new uniform. Their high, shrill voices alarmed the Mameluke servant. He came running from the ante-room, thought he saw the brothers about to fight each other, and fainted with fear and excitement. Napoleon, naked, leaped from the tub. The three brothers bent over the unconscious servant, reviving him.

But Napoleon's last defiance of his brothers: "Who rules France? You or I? If I want to sell Louisiana, I will!" became his fixed determination.

Americans Delighted
Livingston and Monroe learned to their delight that Napoleon would sell. After long haggling, the price was fixed at \$15,000,000, a tremendous sum in those days. The treaty was signed at last by Livingston, Monroe and Barbe Marbois. A letter from Living-

ston and Monroe to Rufus King, then American minister to England (first of the long line of what became ambassadors to St. James), was the first notification to anyone that the treaty was signed. The treaty was signed and sealed in triplicate.

Thomas Jefferson admitted he "strained his power until it cracked" making that \$15,000,000 purchase. He had to borrow the money. And the lender was the London banking house of the Baring—the great English financial firm of the day!

It sounds incredible that an English banking firm lent the money to the United States, England's recent victorious enemy, to pay Napoleon Bonaparte for Louisiana when England wanted Louisiana, anyway, and it was Europe's open secret that Napoleon planned to invade England and was seeking desperately to finance the proposed expedition. But they did.

Money for Army and Fleet
Napoleon spent the money on army and fleet, the fleet that never sailed from Boulogne to land that army on English soil. The adverse winds, the stormy channel crossing, saved England that invasion.

And, as the War of 1812 and the Fakenham expedition that failed at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815 revealed, England had planned to take Louisiana by force, anyway.

But that was all in the remote future, undreamed by those crowds in New Orleans that fateful day of December 20, 1803. Some of them cheered, some complained. A lot of them went to sleep to wake with headaches caused by anything from champagne and madeira, port and sherry, to Monongahela whiskey and West Indian rum. And with the ceremonies all over, Governor Claiborne started out next day to solve problems practically unsolvable, to govern in American fashion, as American citizens made overnight, a population of some 60,000, the language of most of whom he didn't even understand!

Fish Abundant in Lake, Streams Near City Gates

With hundreds of lakes and streams near by and New Orleans only a short distance from the Gulf of Mexico, restaurants here are able to supply the choicest of fish fresh from the water, and housewives have a wide choice to select from in preparing fish courses.

As a result of this condition many new recipes for cooking fish have been developed in homes and by chefs of the city.

Visitors to New Orleans declare that nowhere is fish cooked in such palatable ways as in this city. The experience of generations of fine old cooks has been brought to bear upon the preparation of the fish found in the Louisiana waters and those of the Mexican gulf, with the result that a Creole code of rules for the cooking of even the smallest and least important fish prevails, and it is considered little short of barbarous to depart from it.

The Creole methods of boiling and baking fish are the perfection of culinary art and unlike any method in vogue elsewhere.

Muskrat Catch Provides State Big Fur Yield

Louisiana produces more fur than any other state in the Union. And it's all due to the lowly muskrat.

Cousin of the house rat, the muskrat is the particular quarry of the trappers. Under the name "Hudson seal" the muskrat is introduced in all social circles and at times commands a price almost as great as the pelts of many more aristocratic animals.

The rats are caught when they come out of their carefully constructed houses and run along water-covered paths looking for roofs and sprouts of swamp grass which form a large part of their diet.

Secret Entrances
The houses are made of straw, reeds and grasses, which are woven together and plastered with mud. To protect themselves from land foes, the rats make as the only entrances to their homes long water-filled tunnels which open at the bottom of a near-by pool. The houses inside are comparatively dry and roomy.

The father of the family usually is the forager and it is he who goes out of the house on a cool morning to find breakfast. If during his walk through the water-covered paths he springs the trigger of a trap and its iron jaws close upon him, the next member of the rat family in line for the task of foraging is the mother. If her fate is similar to that of the male, the duties of finding food fall upon the kits, or adolescent rats.

The wiping out of the younger generation and the tiny mice means the destruction of the stock, and conservation department officials place a limit on the number of mice pelts which a trapper may take.

Have Clean Habits
Louisiana muskrats grow rapidly and are full-grown when only three months old. They measure about 14 to 18 inches in length, exclusive of their hairless tails. Although rats are generally believed to be dirty animals, muskrats have several customs which place them in a class above most other animals.

While the life of the muskrat is a hard one, the life of the trapper who seeks the rodents' pelts is by no means one of ease. A short time before the beginning of the season, trappers go into the swamps and establish their winter homes, which are usually one or two-room shacks set on stilts to prevent their being flooded.

Some Take Families
A few of the trappers take their

families with them, but most of them live in complete solitude, visited only by fur buyers who come by boat to the cottages. A large part of the trapper's day is spent wading through shallow water in the swamp paths, inspecting and resetting traps, removing animals from them and looking for signs of rats in new runways.

Returning to his cabin, the trapper skins the muskrats and stretches the pelts, which have been turned wrong side out, on wire or wooden frames. These are hung on ropes stretched along the outer walls of the shacks or from posts near by.

Many of the uninitiated believe that in the mysterious marshes lurk snakes and alligators, but these are among the smallest of the trapper's worries. Most of the snakes hibernate and the alligators are sluggish and inactive during the winter. The trapper's chief troubles are wet clothes, cold winds that whip through the ramshackle houses and the loneliness of the swamps.

One of the large units of the fur business is the trapping which is permitted on the wild life preserves of the state. Working upon the theory that proper trapping of muskrats aids migratory bird life, the department of conservation permits trapping of the preserves and sells the fur at auctions conducted during the season.

Orleans Leader of New South in Size, Resources

New Orleans not only is the largest city of the South in the matter of population, but likewise is the South's financial, manufacturing and geographic center, economists assert.

The products of its factories are valued at \$200,000,000 annually and 900 different products are manufactured here by 1100 companies engaged in this work.

In addition, most of the cotton produced in the South is sold in New Orleans. The city possesses one of the three great cotton exchanges of the world. It is one of the large alcohol-producing centers of the nation, is the center of the sugar industry of the South and has property with an assessed valuation of approximately \$545,000,000.

The city is the center of a large rice-milling industry; has a trading territory with a population estimated at 2,000,000; has an airport on the shore of Lake Pontchartrain rated among the finest of the world, and has many other distinct advantages.

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