

Article #1 The Louisiana Purchase

Let's imagine that you are at a family reunion. While you are looking over all the desserts on the dessert table, your Uncle George comes over and cuts the best looking cake in half and takes it to his seat. When your Uncle Joe and Uncle John see what is happening, they run over and wrestle over who gets the remaining half. They have quite a tussle, and each one ends up with about half of the half. You can hardly believe your eyes. The cake is gone, and you didn't even have a bite. Believe it or not, that is pretty much how the newly discovered North American continent was divided up.

Columbus discovered that there was a huge mass of land blocking his passage to China. France, Spain, and England all decided to send explorers and settlers to the new land. The Spanish stayed in the southern portion of the continent in what we now call Mexico, Florida, Texas, and California. The French stayed in the north in what is now Canada and the northern sections of the United States. The British took over the coastal region on the Atlantic. There were battles fought among the three nations over land claims and territorial boundaries.

As more settlers came to the new world, more space was needed for them to live. The original thirteen colonies began to expand westward. There was an obstacle which kept the settlers from going too far to the west. There is a chain of mountains which runs from the northern colonies to Georgia in the south. These mountains all together are called the Appalachian Mountains. The early British settlers pushed the Native Americans who had lived on the coast over the mountains. The colonists were satisfied with living on the land between these mountains and the Atlantic Ocean.

A few brave explorers crossed the Appalachians to see what was on the other side. They found that there was a great expanse of land good for farming, plenty of fresh water, and rivers to transport their goods to the east. There was a danger in being attacked by the Native Americans of the area, but the explorers felt that the land was worth the challenge. After the Revolutionary War, a new set of settlers came to America. Many of these settlers took the risk of crossing the Appalachians. They moved the Native Americans farther west and took all the land they could east of the Mississippi River.

At one time the French claimed most of the land west of the Mississippi, then the Spanish took over their claim. Finally, the French decided to reclaim the land. The leader of France in the early 1800's was a man named Napoleon Bonaparte, or Emperor Napoleon I. He had a vision in his mind to make France more powerful in the world. The capital of his new empire would be Hispaniola, an island which is now Haiti and the Dominican Republic. He believed that the French could use the Mississippi River to transport the food they would need to support Hispaniola. Unfortunately for him, the natives of Haiti had other plans and overtook the government of their island leaving the French without a trade center. Napoleon decided to sell the land the French had claimed and get the money he needed to finance his military campaigns in Europe.

At the same time, President Thomas Jefferson became concerned about the French plans and sent two American envoys to Paris to see if they could strike some kind of deal with the French emperor. They were flabbergasted when Napoleon offered to sell the whole tract of land, all 800,000 square miles, to the Americans for 15 million dollars. When you do the math you find that it comes out to around \$.04 an acre. The Americans were to pay \$11, 250,000 in cash to the French. The remaining \$3,750,000 would be used to pay off debts the French owed to colonists. Jefferson and his congress agreed to the deal. In one quick business deal in 1803, the territory of the United States had been more than doubled. The new country was growing and the opportunities for settlements, trade, and agriculture were outstanding.

Article #2 The Burning of Washington

The War of 1812 is not talked about a lot. This war was fought early in the nation's history. Our national anthem was written during this war. The war showed other nations that the United States was strong. Britain damaged many things in the war. One of the things that Britain damaged was Washington, D.C.

Washington was not a large city in 1814. Only eight thousand people lived there. Some of these people were slaves. This did not matter to Britain. They wanted to make the American soldiers weaker. They thought attacking the capital would do this. Britain also wanted to get revenge for things that America had done to Canada.

In August of 1814, the Americans were beaten outside of the city. This opened up a clear path straight to the capital. Attacking Washington was part of a bigger plan. It was the first of three attacks. Britain thought that by attacking three important cities, it could win the war.

The British general was named Robert Ross. On August 25th, he marched his troops to Capitol Hill. There were not enough troops to stay in the city. Ross thought the best thing to do was destroy as much as they could. The soldiers met little or no resistance.

Before the soldiers arrived in Washington, the city was evacuated. The president had left days before. He thought there would be a plan to defend the city. There wasn't one. Everyone had to run away as quickly as they could. Americans who ran blew up the Navy yard before they left. They didn't want the British soldiers to get any supplies.

The buildings where the Senate and House of Representatives met were burned. The Library of Congress was also burned. The inside of that building was ruined, as were all the books and papers that were in it. The outside was not destroyed. Thick walls and a heavy rain helped to save it. Later, Thomas Jefferson would sell his library to replace what was lost.

The troops then turned toward the president's house. Dolly Madison, wife of the president, was still there. She had refused to leave. She was trying to save as many important things as she could before the British came. Moments before the soldiers came to the White House, she managed to get away.

When the soldiers came in, they found the table set for dinner. The soldiers ate all of the food before setting the house on fire. The house would be gutted. Only walls on the outside would still be standing. Of all the goods that the British soldiers took, only two things have ever been recovered. Much of it was lost when a ship carrying it sank.

Many people say the White House got its name because it was painted white to cover up the smoke damage on the outside of the building. This is probably not true. It had been painted white since it was built in 1798.

Fuel was added to some of the fires to keep them going all night. It is said that the flames could be seen in Baltimore. This probably made a lot of people very nervous.

The soldiers also burned the United States Treasury. Many other public buildings were also burned. The Patent Office was saved. One man managed to convince the soldiers that the papers in the building were too important to burn.

During the burning, a heavy storm went through the area. There was even a tornado. The tornado damaged some of the city, too. But the heavy rain helped to put out some of the fires that were burning. The soldiers were in the city a little more than a day. Within a week, they were sent to their next target. It was Baltimore. Thanks to the fires, though, the people there were more prepared to fight back.

The buildings on Capitol Hill were rebuilt. The new buildings weren't completely done until 1830. Very few houses had been burned. The British generals would not allow it, and the soldiers followed the order. This attack did not weaken the American soldiers; it made them stronger. It would help them fight to the end of the war.

Article #3 James Monroe – The Monroe Doctrine

James Monroe was a Virginia gentleman. He was born into a wealthy family in 1758. He had all the advantages a young man could have in those days. He attended college at William and Mary in Williamsburg. One of his classmates and a good friend was Thomas Jefferson. Monroe was a soldier in the Revolutionary War. After the war, he was anxious to practice law in Fredricksburg, Virginia.

Monroe sided with Jefferson in his choice of governments for the new country. A group who called themselves Federalists believed that an extremely strong central government was called for. They did not trust the common man to make decisions for all citizens. Jefferson and Monroe believed that the powers of the government should be spread out among all the people. This group was given the name Democratic-Republicans or just Republicans, for short. Monroe voted to ratify the Constitution while a member of the Virginia Constitutional Convention.

In 1790, Monroe was elected as a United States senator from Virginia. From 1794 to 1796 Monroe and his wife, Elizabeth, lived in France. He had been appointed as a minister to France. Monroe had a deep interest in the French and their attempt to develop their own

independence. His friendship with the French government became quite helpful later. He was instrumental in working out a deal with the French to buy land that would become known as the Louisiana Purchase.

Monroe was a kind and well-liked government official. These qualities made it quite easy for his Republican party to nominate him for president in 1816. He won. He won re-election in 1820. Two events marked the Monroe presidency in history. In 1819, Missouri applied for statehood. It asked to be admitted as a state that allowed slavery. Monroe and his government were concerned about allowing too many slave states into the Union. Two years later, Monroe was able to work out a compromise that would allow Missouri to become a state. In this agreement, Maine would also be admitted, but it would be designated a slave-free state. A bill named the Missouri Compromise made it mandatory that a slave state be paired with a free state to be admitted.

The second memorable decision to come from Monroe's term was the Monroe Doctrine. Spain still held land in North, South, and Central America. Its finances and military power were weakening. The United States was able to purchase Florida from the Spanish at this time for about \$5 million. Other Spanish holdings in Central and South America did not really interest the American government. The same cannot be said for some European countries, such as Russia. Colonizing areas in this new world seemed like a good way for these European countries to gain power and wealth for themselves.

James Monroe and Secretary of State John Quincy Adams decided that something needed to be done. In December of 1823, Monroe gave a speech to Congress that was to set rules that the United States government still uses today. The purpose of his speech was to set some boundaries. The United States would keep its hands off any land in Europe, and European countries were to keep their hands off land in the Americas. It wasn't until the early 1850s that this rule officially became known as the Monroe Doctrine. By this time, Monroe had been dead for twenty years. He died on July 4, 1831, five years to the day after his good friend and colleague Thomas Jefferson died.

Article #4 Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman was born a slave around 1820. But she did not stay a slave. Harriet ran away and then helped other slaves make their way to freedom. She is known for being a conductor on the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad was a system of safe houses. It was used to help runaway slaves escape to safety in the North.

Tubman's parents were both slaves. This meant that she was a slave as soon as she was born. When she was around five years old, she started working as a house slave. When she was a teenager, she was sent to work in the fields.

She was always ready to stand up for other people. Tubman tried to protect another slave who was going to be punished for running away. While doing this, she was hit in the head with a two-pound weight. The effects stayed with her the rest of her life. The injury caused her to have headaches and seizures.

In 1844, she married a free black man, John Tubman. In 1849, Tubman was afraid that she was going to be sold. She decided the best thing to do was to run away. She left one night on foot. A white woman helped her. At night, she followed the North Star. She made it to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. There she found work. She also joined an abolitionist group in the city. Abolitionists were people who worked to end slavery.

In 1850, Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act. This led Tubman to join the Underground Railroad. In 1851, Tubman made her first trip back to the South. She managed to lead her sister and her sister's children to freedom.

From that time until the Civil War, Tubman made many more dangerous trips to the South leading slaves to freedom. She helped most of her family members escape as well as many other people. She had tricks to help her. She had slaves run away on Saturday nights. This was because the owner couldn't put a notice in the paper until Monday.

Tubman was also said to carry a gun with her. She carried it with her for protection. She also threatened runaway slaves with it if they tried to turn back.

Her reputation kept growing. By the time of the Civil War, she had made nineteen trips to the South. She had helped close to three hundred slaves.

She was never caught. Other people were always afraid for her, but she never seemed to be afraid. The idea of being caught never seemed to worry her.

At the end of the Civil War, Tubman married Nelson Davis. They lived in Auburn, New York. Nelson died in 1888. In 1908, Harriet built a home for the elderly and the poor. She worked at this home. She was also taken care of there for two years before she died in 1913.

Tubman was buried in Auburn, New York, with military honors. Since her death, she has been honored in many ways. Many schools and a U.S. Navy ship have been named for her. Her picture was put on a postage stamp. There are many statues of her in cities and towns across the United States. She is remembered as a woman of courage.

Article #5 Slavery, Compromised, and Dred Scott

You have heard of the Civil War that took place in the United States from 1861-65, but do you know what events led up to it? Many people think it was just about the slavery issue. That is not really true. It was also about who had the power to make laws. Was it the individual states, or was it the federal government?

Slavery had been part of the founding of the new country of the United States. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson both owned slaves, although they both spoke against slavery. Washington's will freed his slaves upon his death.

As cotton-growing plantations grew, they needed more and more slaves. Growing cotton became more profitable, and more and more plantation owners wanted more land. When new territory became available through the Louisiana Purchase, the issue of slavery spreading into those new territories and, later, new states, was a big issue. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 came about for this reason. Missouri wanted to join as a Slave State, but many people did not want slavery spreading further. They refused to accept Missouri as a state if slavery was allowed there.

A deal called the Missouri Compromise was made that let Missouri join the United States as a Slave State when Maine joined the United States as a Free State. That kept the numbers of "Free" and "Slave States" even. It kept the balance of power in Congress even between Free and Slave States. Many people did not like the Compromise, but they agreed to it.

Sometimes slaves would escape and go to the free Northern states. Many of the people in the Northern states helped runaway slaves. They gave escaped slaves food and shelter. They helped runaways get to Canada where they could live free. There were laws that said runaway slaves should be returned to their owners, but many people didn't obey those laws.

The plantation owners thought that laws protecting their "property" should be enforced. In 1850, another compromise was passed in Congress. It was really five laws in one. One of those laws was about runaway slaves. It was called the Fugitive Slave law. It said that if someone was found to be helping a runaway slave, he could be fined a lot of money. Black people were given a trial. Judges were paid more money to say a person was a slave than they were paid to say a man was free. Black people could not defend themselves and had no legal rights. They were sent back into slavery. Many people were angry about this unfair law.

It was during this time that a slave named Dred Scott tried to get his freedom. His master had taken him to live in a Free State for several years. Dred thought that would be enough to make him free because he had lived in a state where slavery was illegal.

One of the problems was that he moved back to Missouri, a Slave State, with his master before he asked for his freedom. The Federal Supreme Court finally decided the verdict in 1857. Dred was not considered a citizen. It said that only white men were citizens of the country. Dred Scott had no legal standing. The court also said that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional. It said that Congress did not have the power to limit slavery in the territories.

People on both sides of the issue became more and more angry. People in the Northern states wanted to end slavery. People in the South said it was up to the states to decide- not the Federal government- if slavery was allowed in their state or not. The Dred Scott decision sharply divided the nation into these two sides. In four more years, the United States would go to war over these issues.