

What two reasons did Napoleon have for selling Louisiana to the United States?

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The two major reasons Napoleon sold all of Louisiana to the United States were due to (1) Haiti, and (2) Great Britain.

France lost Louisiana Territory when the British won the Seven Years War, by the Treaty of Paris in 1763. Britain awarded this territory to Spain, to add to its empire of Nueva Espana in Mexico, as a reward for assisting Britain in the war against France.

When Napoleon invaded Spain and installed his brother as the new emperor of Spain, he had his dutiful brother transfer title of Louisiana Territory back to France. Napoleon dreamed of a new French empire in the Americas. The lynchpin for his dream was the French colony on the island of Hispaniola, which was extremely profitable due to the growing of sugar cane. Sugar was in such demand in Europe that high prices could be charged, and the cost was low because slaves were brought from Africa and literally worked to death doing the farming. Napoleon was extremely racist, and cared nothing for expanding the rights of liberty, equality, fraternity in French lands to black people.

Napoleon's grand plans were thwarted when the slaves revolted and established the independent nation of Haiti. Napoleon sent a large army to subdue the rebels, but the rebels defeated the grand French army. And, when massive numbers of French troops died of tropical diseases, combined with massive numbers killed by the black rebels, Napoleon realized his dream was lost.

He had counted on the French island colony as a crucial stop-off point in the journey from France to New Orleans, so with Haiti gone his plans were upset. At this point U.S. Ambassador James Madison approached Napoleon and asked if he would sell the port of New Orleans to the Americans.

At this point France became embroiled in a war against Great Britain. Napoleon was in desperate need of cash to finance his army, so he knew he could get more money for the entire territory than just for New Orleans alone. He also knew that if he sold New Orleans alone, Britain could invade the inland territory from British Canada. It would be far better to deny that large territory to his British enemy while aiding the United States. He hoped the Americans would be France's ally against their common British enemy.

By selling Louisiana to the U.S. Napoleon would make the best of a bad situation, and get paid in the process. Without the success of the Haitian Revolution, and without the war between France and Britain, it is doubtful Louisiana Territory would have been added to the United States. The USA would most likely have been permanently bordered by the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi River. Louisiana and the west would have remained French, Spanish or English.

Walter L. Williams, Ph.D. former professor of American history

