

Citizen Laussat: A Retrospective on the Louisiana Purchase  
Robert D. Bush

The United States' acquisition of Louisiana constituted a momentous event in our history. It marked the end of a French era of colonial aspirations in the New World, which had begun on the North American Continent under the ancien regime. An empire begun in Canada in 1608 ended in New Orleans in 1803.

Napoleon Bonaparte's decision to sell Louisiana, and the subsequent events of the political transfers which it involved, was significant in varying ways to its American, French and Spanish participants. The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 launched the expansionist American Republic onto the world stage in a manner no one had anticipated. Among the persons directly involved, no one was more caught up in these events than the political middle-man for the transfers of Louisiana from Spain to France (November 30, 1803), and France to the United States twenty days later, than the French Commissioner for the transfers of Louisiana, who also served as its one and only prefect, Pierre Clement Laussat (1756-1835). [1]As Bonaparte's envoy for the transfer ceremonies of Louisiana, Citizen Laussat was the highest-ranking French official in the colony until the American takeover on December 20, 1803. It was his responsibility to close the book on this chapter in French colonial administration. [2]

Prior to his departure from Louisiana for his next assignment, the prefecture of Martinique, in April 1804, Laussat took the opportunity to record his observations. Once he was notified of the Louisiana Purchase, the loss of Louisiana from the French colonial administration is a constant theme in his writings. "When I considered what I wanted to do and what I accomplished during my reign of twenty days," laussat recalled later, "I was not dissatisfied." [3] Much has been written about the Louisiana Purchase and its impact both in the United States and Europe. However, for this retrospective, I have chosen to focus on Laussat's actions and views in 1803 as they related to three political aspects of his administration in Louisiana: first, his activities directed toward paving the way for France's resumption of sovereignty over Louisiana and what he believed to be the imminent arrival of the military expedition with which to accomplish it; second, his daily interaction and relationship with the Spanish officials prior to the latter's retrocession, and at one point the rumors of and potential for a rescinding of that order; and third, after the news of the Louisiana Purchase was made official, preparations for a French interim administration, along with his views regarding Americans and Louisiana under the sovereignty of the United States.

First, as had been the case previously in history prior to its incorporation into the United States, the fate of Louisiana remained a pawn in European diplomacy. By the secret Treaty of San Ildefonso signed between France and Spain (October 1, 1800) Spain retroceded the former French colony, which it had held since 1762, in return for family lands in Italy and other European security guarantees. This arrangement, combined with the Peace (or truce) of Amiens between France and Great Britain concluded in March, 1802, necessitated that administrative and political arrangements be made for governing Louisiana as soon as possible. Bonaparte therefore made the necessary military and civil appointments with which to take control of Louisiana. His first appointment was that of captain-general for the Louisiana Expedition in the person of General Claude Victor-Perrin (1764-1841), who had been his comrade in arms at the Battles of Toulon (1793), Mondovi (1796) and then Marengo (1800). The need for secrecy concerning the military movements, with which to implement San Ildefonso, is indicated in a directive from Bonaparte to Admiral Denis Decres, Minister of the Navy and Colonies, on June 4, 1802.

“My intention is that we take possession of Louisiana with the shortest possible delay, that this expedition be organized in the greatest secrecy, and that it have the appearance of being directed toward Saint-Domingue. The troops that I intend for it being on the Scheldt, I should like them to depart from Antwerp or Flushing. Finally, I would like for you to let me know the number of men you think should be sent, both infantry and artillery, and for you to present me with a project of organization for this colony—for the army as well as for the civil authority—and for the fortifications and batteries we should have to construct there in order to have a roadstead and some men-of-war sheltered from superior forces. In this regard, I should like you to have made for me a map of the coast from St. Augustine and Florida to Mexico and also a geographical description of the different cantons of Louisiana with the population and resources of each canton.” [4]

The military expedition proposed for Louisiana was a sizable force composed of a dozen ships and over three thousand men.[5] However, the continued delays due to bad weather and logistics compelled Bonaparte to order that an advance French party precede the main force, primarily before Great Britain could learn of its true mission and possibly intervene. Hence, the civil administration was sent on ahead. It was a fateful decision.

Bonaparte’s choice for the civilian leadership was Pierre Clement Laussat to be colonial prefect, who was appointed “at my own request.” Laussat was born in Pau in 1756, and rose to local prominence as a financial administrator in Bearn. He was as a philosophical liberal during the early years of the French Revolution. When Bonaparte seized power in 1799, Laussat took part in

preparing the constitution that established the form of Government known as the Consulate (1799-1804), and in which Bonaparte was First Consul. The opportunity for a political appointment in Louisiana aroused Laussat's political ambition. He requested the position of colonial prefect, the highest ranking civilian official, and received it from Bonaparte on August 20, 1802. Laussat departed for Louisiana on January 10, 1803, while the Louisiana Expedition under the command of General Victor continued its preparations for departure in Holland. The Louisiana Purchase (April 30, 1803) altered Laussat's mission entirely, although he was not to learn of it for several months thereafter. It was not until August 18, 1803, that official documents on the sale of Louisiana and instructions arrived in New Orleans. After the sale of Louisiana to the United States, Bonaparte appointed Laussat as Commissioner of the French Government (June 6, 1803) for the retrocession of Louisiana from Spain to France, and then for the transfer from France to the United States. It is therefore against this political backdrop that one must view Laussat's observations, actions and motives. The first priority for the establishing of French control over Louisiana was to prepare for the arrival of the military expedition.

When Laussat arrived in Louisiana and took up his duties on March 28, 1803, he had every reason to be optimistic. Although he led only a small civilian administrative team, the arrival of the 3,000 men and supplies of the French Expedition was expected at any time, and he therefore began making the necessary preparations for them accordingly. As his extensive reports and documents reveal during these early months, Prefect Laussat's administration centered around three main activities in preparation for the arrival of the expedition in Louisiana: (a) acquiring the necessary supplies—everything from linens for uniforms to hospital and medical facilities, along with barracks--and the general military facilities needed locally for the impending arrival of Captain-General Victor's Expedition; (b) examining the status and construction needs of existing fortifications in and around New Orleans as well as negotiating with the Spanish officials on all matters of civil, local and military administration; and (c), establishing the official French presence in the eyes of the inhabitants. [6] As President Jefferson summed it up in mid-April, 1803, regarding French military/political preparations, "The day that France takes possession of New Orleans. . .we must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation." Unknown to Laussat, this diplomatic position of the United States was to have a profound impact on events in Europe, along with his career and mission, as Bonaparte looked to the future.

One of the intriguing possibilities in history is to speculate on: "what if" Bonaparte had not sold Louisiana, and the French military expedition of three thousand men and a dozen ships had arrived in Louisiana? Consider, for example, the political ramifications of a French professional military force, including artillery stationed up the Mississippi as far north as Illinois! Laussat

reported later, in December 1803, that, in addition to the 3,000 French regulars, Louisiana could raise a militia of about six hundred men as well. What would this sizable military force—by comparison, Spanish forces numbered less than 200 regulars-- have meant for the westward expansion of the United States, and/or the frontiersman's dependence upon the port of New Orleans for their trade and access to new markets? Some westerners believed that the Spanish closing of the "right of deposit" at New Orleans was due to intrigue from Bonaparte in anticipation of France's return to Louisiana. As Jefferson noted, French occupation of New Orleans would have altered forever the diplomatic position of the United States' neutrality during any future resumption of the Anglo-French conflict. And, finally, what would this circumstance have meant for the future of the Corps of Discovery of Lewis and Clark, who would have been trespassing on French lands and then returned to St. Louis to see the tricolor flying from the city hall?

However, the political reality was that Laussat was in a very difficult position during this time as his correspondence revealed. He was in Louisiana without any real political instrument of power until General Victor arrived; the Spanish Government vacillated between cooperation one day, and recalcitrance the next. And, the presence of ambitious Americans, such as Daniel Clark, added their own seeds of dissension and distrust, especially when combined with the increasing rumors, and American newspaper accounts, announcing the sale of Louisiana to the United States.

Both during the early days of his tenure in Louisiana, and later in his Memoirs, Laussat reflected on his precarious situation, which became more tenuous after Britain and France resumed hostilities in May 1803 that included a British naval blockade. The continued absence of the military expedition, diverted to action in Europe, now that war had resumed was compounded by another political problem—Spain.

Second, shortly after his arrival in Louisiana, Laussat was confronted with the recurrent rumors of Spain's possible refusal to transfer Louisiana, due to France's failure to abide by its obligations for the Italian land transfers per the Treaty of San Ildefonso. The military history of Spain's Louisiana governors, such as Francisco Luis Hector, baron de Carondelet (1792-1797) who was an able administrator; or, Don Bernardo de Galvez (1777-1783) who led a coalition of military forces that conquered the Gulf Coast from the British during the American Revolution, and who encouraged economic development in the colony, provided a historical backdrop the local rumor mill. Laussat attributed the source of the dissension being caused to non other than Governor Salcedo himself, as one of those who advocated that Spain retain its political and military power in Louisiana. The closure of the Port of New Orleans to American traders of their "right of deposit" on October 1, 1802, by Intendant Juan Ventura Morales, whom Laussat described as "an able administrator,"

seemed to give additional credence to such rumors. Again, Laussat blamed Governor Salcedo for the trouble, while many Americans seemed to believe France was the instigator. In addition to these political considerations, Spanish officials had a considerable force (150+) of regular troops, and militia, at their disposal as far north as the Illinois country. The May 10th arrival of the Marquis de Casa Calvo, a brigadier general in the Spanish army, from Havana, whom Laussat described "as vigorous in his conduct as M. de Salcedo was decrepit in his," added yet another card to the Spanish deck. The potential for Spain, therefore, to cause political trouble for France was more than just an idle rumor. However, Laussat was quick to reflect on the Spanish administration, as distinct from that of Intendant Morales: "As for the rest, what a detestable policy was that of the Spanish government!" Laussat, along with several later generations of Louisiana writers, contributed to and shared this common view of Spanish rule in Louisiana. The whole political uproar created as a result of the "right of deposit" trouble, which included persistent rumors of Americans coming down the river to take New Orleans by force, Laussat attributed to Governor Salcedo. Also, on more than one occasion, Governor Salcedo seemed to take a personal delight in taking advantage of French factionalism. The opportunity for such intrigue was provided by the public quarrel between Laussat and Adjutant General Charles Andre Burthe, who accompanied the French advance party and claimed to have "secret" orders from Victor himself, but who also was openly received by Governor Salcedo as if he were an official member of the French government! Finally, absent Captain-General Victor, and as if to add insult to the political injury, Laussat remained dependent upon Spanish troops, both regulars and militia, with which to enforce his actions. The political uproar over the cessation of the right of deposit was quieted only when Spain restored the treaty right to the Americans on April 19, 1803. But the political point had been made! Spain, despite the views of many contemporaries and later writers, was still able to control events.

Citizen Laussat found himself, therefore, in a very precarious position throughout this period; he did not wish to compromise himself with Spanish officials in Louisiana before he was convinced that the negotiations for the transfer of Louisiana between their governments in Europe had been completed. He was not officially installed as colonial prefect in the colony yet, and, absent any orders from Paris to the contrary, he had to continue to prepare for the impending arrival of the Louisiana Expedition with the result that he was barred from making any official statements which might compromise his future actions. Captain-General Victor, not Laussat, had been commissioned to represent France at the transfer ceremonies for the retrocession of Louisiana from Spain. Laussat was in New Orleans occupying an official government post, but without full powers, without the correct orders, and, above all, without military forces by which he could have French interests fully respected by all parties. He did, however, have one political tool at his disposal during the first weeks and months of his tenure in that he carried with him a large amount of

French specie, with which to acquire the necessary supplies for the Louisiana Expedition. Having hard currency in New Orleans, a city that lived on credit and promissory notes, did give him a small political as well as an economic edge, and allowed him to earn some local good will. But, so too, did Spanish officials, who were notorious for their ability to bribe political favors.

Although he received confirmation of the Louisiana purchase from the French charge d'affaires in Washington on August 18th, it was only on November 24, 1803, that Laussat received the necessary documents and credentials—Bonaparte had issued his commission to represent France on June 6, 1803—and instructions from Paris to negotiate officially with the Spanish and American authorities regarding the details of the successive transfer in sovereignty over Louisiana, which would later be held on November 30, 1803, with Spain. He would thereafter transfer Louisiana on December 20th to the United States. But until Spain actually transferred Louisiana, the opportunities for political intrigue, and even a last minute change of mind, was always a possibility to be reckoned with.

This was especially true when one considered the tactic used by successive Spanish governors of bribing American officials, and her ability to hire Indian mercenaries or create tribal alliances, in order to serve Spain's political and military objectives, despite the view among some of the tribes that Spain had sold them out in 1795 by a treaty favorable to the Americans. Hiring Indian mercenaries to accomplish Spanish political objectives was still a useful tactic; one which was demonstrated by Governor Salcedo, and described in detail by Laussat in his Memoirs. [7] This particular incident involved the case of the British adventurer, William Augustus Bowles, who lived among the Creeks and Seminoles, and who had disrupted Spanish economic and political interests in Florida for many years. Having captured him twice, Spain finally sent Bowles off to Havana where he would die in prison. The Indians who captured him, along with Governor Salcedo, called on Laussat led by their chief, Tastiki—whom Laussat referred to as “an unprincipled rogue.” Laussat recalled a portion of the interview: “Governor Salcedo, speaking to Tastiki, expressed surprise at his boldness to have dared to kidnap Bowls right in the midst of the Creek Assembly. ‘Sir,’ he retorted, ‘you gave me four thousand piastres for that; if someone gave me six thousand for kidnapping you from this city in front of your own garrison, I would do it.’” The conversation was a reminder that tribal alliances, however fickle they might be at times, combined with the regular troops of the Spanish Regiment in Louisiana, and some regulars from the Havana Regiment, remained a formidable military force; and, one that continued to occupy the city's fortifications. Laussat's military entourage, by comparison, consisted of one battalion chief of engineers, one ensign, and two aids de camp, plus an untried local volunteer militia--who had to provide their own weapons!

After knowledge of the Louisiana Purchase became commonplace in the press and local conversation, along with the rumors of Spain's possible prevention of Louisiana being transferred, French concern regarding Spanish intentions reached new heights of concern. New Orleans and the frontier in general were always caught up in rumors, and counter rumors, in an era of constantly changing political winds and personalities. In a dispatch from Washington (October 13, 1803), Louis Andre Pichon, French commissioner general and charge d'affairs, wrote Laussat of the seriousness and urgency of the Spanish matter.

“The dispatches from Paris announce that this power [Spain] has made known its displeasure over the cession of Louisiana to the United States. It does not appear that these dispositions have been voiced by a formal opposition, otherwise I would have surely been informed of it. Nevertheless, the Spanish minister either because he is executing or exaggerating his instructions, has taken steps which lead one to fear that, while circumspect in Paris, the court in Madrid may have given New Orleans orders contrary to those [of the King of Spain to the Marques de Someruelos, captain general of Louisiana, Havana, Cuba, to retrocede Louisiana] of the month of October [1802]—orders that produce a refusal to turn the colony over to you. Not only does the Marquis d'Yrujo protest against the acquisition by the United States, but he even presses them not accomplish the [terms of the] treaty by the payment of stipulated compensations. And what is no less significant, he has refused to certify the copy of the documents, both Spanish and French, which will authorize you to require the return of Louisiana from the Spanish officials.

As it will be urgent to have no further doubts about it as soon as possible, I have determined, without waiting for the exchange of ratifications, to expedite [the transmission of] the orders to you for taking possession in the name of the French government, without the refusal and subterfuges of the Spanish minister; they should be on the way.

The sole motive provided by the [French] government for taking possession only on the very day that they turn it over to the Americans is the fear of England; but that power has formally and by public notification acquiesced to the cession to the United States, and we are sure that this danger is no longer to be apprehended.” [8]

Then, nine days later, Pichon again stressed the need to proceed with the transfer as quickly as possible.  
Laussat was instructed to:

“The intention of the government, Citizen. . . was at first that the possession should be taken in the name of France on the same day that the deliverance would be made to the United States. That arrangement, as I have pointed out

too you, was established upon a fear lest England, during the interim of the two transactions, seize Louisiana. Today this fear is groundless; consequently, it is extremely important to ascertain the dispositions of the Spanish officers and the point to which the steps of the minister of that country here [Washington] are linked with counter orders given in New Orleans. On the other hand, if the orders of the month of October 1802, still hold, it is important to take formal possession and in that way obviate any eventualities.

I think, Citizen, I am able to advise you—and this advice is in accord with the American government—to present yourself before the Spanish commanders with the purpose of taking possession. If they are disposed to give it up, you will have the forts evacuated, you will have delivered to you such a symbol of sovereignty as you judge most manifest, and you will have the acts and minutes of the delivery exacted by the instructions of the respective governments, signed. . . . If, on the contrary, Citizen, the Spanish authorities refuse to deliver the colony, it will be advisable perhaps to make a protest and wait for the time when ratification of the United States being given, these latter shall send their commissioner. You shall then transfer the order of taking possession from the First Consul to that commissioner, and probably that would be the most regular manner of executing the treaty in favor of the United States, against the opposition of the Spanish officials.” [9]

Another intriguing “what if” therefore presents itself for historical speculation at this point: “what if” Spain considered France’s nonperformance with regard to land and a throne for the Duke of Parma in Italy per its treaty obligations as justification for its noncompliance with the Louisiana transfer? The West Florida boundary dispute always loomed very large in American-Spanish relations, but it would have taken on an entirely new political life had Spain remained in New Orleans. Spain would have continued as the Gatekeeper, even if it was a “porous” one, to the American West, and despite the widespread assessment of Spanish military capability in both France and the United States, this turn of events would nevertheless have profoundly altered American history. As we gather to celebrate the momentous events which occurred as part of the Louisiana Purchase, we ought to be mindful that circumstances might have been different.

Although they continued to present some difficulties, such as the use of the Louisiana militia in the transfer ceremony, Spanish officials prepared for the retrocession of Louisiana in November. Now, however, Laussat’s new challenges were to govern Louisiana in the name of France, even if only briefly, and to prepare for its final transfer to the commissioners of the United States.

Third, in retrospect, we see that Laussat’s view of Americans and the United States fluctuated with the political winds. In May of 1803, for example, while waiting for Captain-General Victor and the French Expedition to arrive, he had



occasion to write in his Memoirs that:

“The products of Louisiana are already quite considerable. Wherever the Anglo-Americans settle, land is fertilized and progress is rapid. There is always a group of them who act as trailblazers, going some fifty leagues in the American wilderness ahead of the settlers. They are the first to migrate to a new area. They clear, populate it, and then push on again and again without any purpose other than to open the way for new settlers. Those who thus forge ahead into unknown places are called backwoodsmen. They set up their temporary shanties, fell and burn trees, kill the Indians or are killed by them, and disappear from this land either by death or by soon relinquishing to a more stable farmer the land which they had begun to clear. When a score or so of such new colonists have congregated into one location, two printers arrive—one a federalist, the other an anti federalist—then the doctors, then the lawyers and then the fortune seekers. They drink toasts, nominate a speaker, set up a town and raise many children. Finally, they advertise the sale of vast tracts of land, attracting and deceiving as many land buyers as possible. They exaggerate the population figures so that they quickly reach the sixty thousand souls entitled to form an independent state and be represented in Congress. And so another star appears on the flag of the United States!

A district under the Spanish or French regime might begin, end, start again, and get lost again, and so successively until its fate is sealed—permanent existence or annihilation. Under the Anglo-Americans, a newly born state may thrive with more or less prosperity, but it will never decline; it keeps on growing and strengthening. One can hardly realize that forty years ago, on these vast expanses of land from the shores of the Mississippi to the Alleghenies, there was not a single farmhand to cultivate the soil. Today, these same regions flood the New Orleans market, by way of the Mississippi, with their abundant harvests.” [10]

A year later, in March 1804, Laussat noted the energetic character of Louisiana’s new owners. His observations and tone, however, were quite different now. He wrote: “The enterprising spirit of the United States was already showing itself in Louisiana. Traders were going up the Missouri, some traveling all over the Louisiana Territory. They wagered openly that they would have an open port on the Pacific Ocean within five years, and their commissioners in New Orleans cast covetous glances toward the Floridas! Before long, the United States will give Spain trouble; the acquisition of Louisiana has increased their ambition.” [11] Although the transfers of Louisiana had proceeded peacefully, and without incident, there were nonetheless obstacles which remained to be overcome. Laussat, both during the transfers of Louisiana and afterwards, washed his hands of the complicated and mutually contradictory boundary disputes regarding the frontiers of Louisiana, particularly the West Florida boundary dispute between Spain and the United

States, per the Treaty of San Lorenzo (1795), which would drag on for more than a decade. He bluntly informed the American Commissioners, W. C. Claiborne and General James Wilkinson, that this controversy was between their government and Spain's, since he had merely transferred to the United States what the Spanish had given to him, complete with all the boundary disputes. On another matter, that of the continued occupation of the forts in and around New Orleans by Spanish troops, Laussat found himself again in a difficult position. Although they had been transferred to him by Spain, and then in turn he had given them to the United States, Spain had not relinquished them. "In the meantime," Claiborne and Wilkinson wrote on 28 December that, "feeling persuaded of the good dispositions of the commissioner of France, to the United States, and his zeal for the prompt execution of the treaty, we rest in confidence that this inconvenience and obstacle, encountered by the troops of the United States, will be remedied as speedily as circumstances will permit." Spanish troops and their officials finally vacated the buildings and forts, and sailed from New Orleans for Pensacola in West Florida on April 11, 1804.

During the first few weeks and months following the transfer of Louisiana to the United States, New Orleans was the scene of some tense encounters between the newly arrived American officials and the established residents. No one had forgotten the rebellion of the Creoles against Spain in 1766, and the brutal Spanish suppression of the Creole leaders by public execution in 1768. After two public dances turned into open brawls between the French and the Americans, a reconciliation of sorts was struck which soothed the public demeanor. Even so, Governor Claiborne let it be known that: "to bring these folks to their senses, we'll have to aim cannons at them and knock down the walls of the city from top to bottom." Daniel Clark, who had his own ambitions, was quoted as having said, "until two or three Frenchmen have been hanged," a thinly veiled reference to Spain's action in suppressing the Creole rebellion in 1768 that "we will not rule over this country." Laussat condemned the Americans for their quick introduction of new laws, ordinances and values, such as imprisoning debtors, into Louisiana's social, economic and political life. But, he concluded, the "poor Louisianaian, will just have to get used to it." In retrospect, Laussat was correct when he observed in May 1803, that wherever the Americans settled "progress was rapid," as contrasted with those settlements of either France or Spain. Several of the prominent Louisiana Creoles recognized this trend as well, especially after years of trading activity through the port of New Orleans with the ever developing/expanding American frontier. Hence, despite the public social confrontations between the newcomers and the established Creoles, there was not to be another rebellion reminiscent of that against Spain. The political squabbles he described were led by American political factions, or parties for which he had only contempt and that took their positions which were either for or against the policies and personality of Governor William C. C. Claiborne. Some Creoles participated or even supported the American administration, but most remained apathetic.

Laussat's comment about the "poor Louisianian" therefore reflected his correct observation about the latent political ambivalence and apathy within New Orleans. However, Laussat's critical opinions of American officials in general, and Claiborne and Wilkinson in particular, were looked upon with disfavor in both Paris and Washington, where American neutrality during the current Anglo-French hostilities was regarded as a cornerstone of French foreign policy. In one dispatch to Paris, Laussat wrote that hardly had the Americans taken up the reins "than they made error after error and blunder after blunder." Or again, in another letter, he wrote in part: "American officials from the United States have entirely the character and manners of the Chinese!" Pichon, French plenipotentiary to the United States, cautioned Laussat on this point that: "as the Commissioner of the French Government, Citizen, your conduct and your acts must give legality to those of the United States government. I begin with the premise that there will not be, nor can there be in this regard in your mind, any doubt capable of retarding the energy which you should employ in this instance." He even warned Laussat in January 1804, of the "prejudices here against you."

Finally, on April 21, 1804, Laussat departed Louisiana for his next assignment in Martinique under the assumed name of Peter Lanthois, merchant of New Orleans and naturalized citizen of the United States, in order to avoid the British blockade. On his way to his new assignment in Martinique, Laussat summed up his tenure in Louisiana. "I have given step by step the details of my stay in Louisiana. It was a great period for the country. I assisted in, and cooperated in, its act of emancipation. I took pleasure in considering everything, setting down minutely even the least circumstances and delineating distinctly Louisiana's last relations with France, which I alone represented. And, finally, I described the departure by our colony for the American Confederation." [12] The departure in April, 1804, first of the Spanish and then French officials brought the Louisiana Purchase to its ultimate conclusion, the final chapter of which would be completed in 1812 when Louisiana became a state in the Federal Union.

#### Endnotes

1. Laussat, Pierre Clement de. Memoirs Of My Life, to My Son During the Years 1803 and After, Which I Spent in Public Service in Louisiana as Commissioner of the French Government for the Retrocession to France of That Colony and for Its Transfer to the United States. Translated by Agnes-Josephine Pastwa. Edited, with a Foreward, by Robert D. Bush. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978. Louisiana Paperback Edition, 2003. Hereafter cited as Memoirs. Additional sources on Laussat's career include: Robert D. Bush, "Colonial Administration in French Louisiana: The Napoleonic Episode, 1802-1803," Publications of the Louisiana Historical Society, II, 2nd series (1975), 36-59; Andre Lafargue, "Pierre Clement de

Laussat, Colonial Prefect and High Commissioner of France in Louisiana: His Memoirs, Proclamations and Orders,” Louisiana Historical Quarterly, 20 (1937), 159-82; and, by the same author, “Pierre Clement de Laussat: An Intimate Portrait,” Louisiana Historical Quarterly, 24 (1941), 5-8

2. For a description of the some six hundred letters and documents in the Laussat Papers at The Historic New Orleans Collection, see Robert D. Bush, “Documents on the Louisiana Purchase: The Laussat Papers,” Louisiana History, XVIII (1977), 104-107. A complete listing and annotated resource is provided in A Guide To The Papers of Pierre Clement Laussat Napoleon’s Prefect for the Colony of Louisiana and of General Claude Perrin Victor at the Historic New Orleans Collection. (Edited with an introduction by Jon Kukla), New Orleans: The Historic New Orleans Collection, 1993. Hereafter cited as Guide.

3. Laussat, Memoirs, 91

4. Letter from Bonaparte to Admiral Denis Decres, Minister of the Navy and Colonies, in Correspondance de Napoleon 1 (32 volumes: Paris, 1858-1870), VI, 617-618. See also, Ronald D. Smith, “Napoleon and Louisiana: Failure of the Proposed Expedition to Occupy and Defend Louisiana, 1801-1803,” Louisiana History, XII (Winter, 1971), 21-40. Laussat’s ship stopped at Saint-Domingue briefly (February 24-27, 1803) to take on supplies, he wrote in part: “The situation of our army was deplorable. It acknowledged Negroes as masters even down to the city gates.” In Memoirs, 8.

5. See, “Correspondance general, colonies-Louisiane,” in Archives nationales de la marine a Paris, ser. C13A, vols. 51-52.

6. See the relevant reports, documents and letters in Guide. See also, Alexander DeConde. This Affair of Louisiana. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1976.

7. Laussat, Memoirs, 36-39. On the subject of Spanish meddling in the internal affairs of the French delegation in general, and the role of Adjutant General Charles Andre Burthe in particular, see Robert D. Bush, “Civilian Versus Military Leadership in Napoleonic Louisiana, 1803,” The Journal of America’s Military Past, XXIX (Spring,/Summer 2003), No.3, 31-47.

8. Letter from Pichon to Laussat (October 13, 1803), in Laussat Papers.

9. Letter from Pichon to Laussat (October 22, 1803), in Laussat Papers.

10. Laussat, Memoirs, 24-25.

11. Laussat, Memoirs, 99.

12. Laussat, Memoirs, 111. For a general overview of these last days, see Robert D. Bush, "L'Abandon de la Louisiane," Revue de Louisiane/Louisiana Review (hiver/Winter, 1979), 120-129.