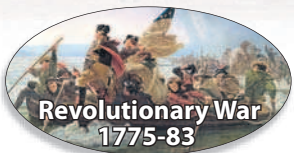


First of a four-part series

OUR FEDERAL LANDS

From conquest and treaty to conservation, the story of our public lands has been a contentious one.

The Birth of a Nation



Revolutionary War
1775-83

1776 The Declaration of Independence is signed.

1781-1802 The states cede "western lands" to the central government to create the public domain.

1783 Treaty of Paris is signed; U.S. gains more than 270 million acres east of the Mississippi River, not including the original 13 colonies.

1785 The Land Ordinance is created to manage land growth and the legal sale and settlement of public lands.

1789 The U.S. Constitution gives Congress the "... power to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory and other property belonging to the United States."

1803 Louisiana Purchase nearly doubles the size of the U.S.; Ohio becomes the first state created from the public domain.



Thomas Jefferson



1804-06 Lewis and Clark Expedition.

1812 The General Land Office is created as a branch of the Treasury Dept. to administer and dispose of federal lands.



War of 1812

1819 Florida acquired through a treaty with Spain, adds more than 46 million acres to the public domain.

1824 Office of Indian Affairs is established within the Department of War.



This rendering by Charles M. Russell depicts the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-06) meeting indigenous peoples on the Lower Columbia River.

Sources: Congressional Research Service; U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management; USDA Forest Service; The Forest History Society; EO Media Group research

Alan Kenaga/Capitol Press

Next week: Westward expansion

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