

## This Day in History... December 30, 1853

# Gadsden Purchase Settles Border Dispute

On December 30, 1853, the Gadsden Purchase was completed, adding over 29,000 square miles of land to the United States.

The Gadsden Purchase was the last major territorial acquisition in the contiguous United States. It was also at the center of the growing slavery debate, the transcontinental railroad system controversy, and outstanding border issues left over following the Mexican-American War of 1846-48.

The controversy began in 1845, when a transcontinental railroad was proposed to the US Congress. When they took no action, a convention was held in Memphis. James Gadsden of South Carolina recommended a deep southern route for the railroad, one that crossed Mexican territory to reach the Pacific Coast without crossing treacherous mountain ranges. A few years later, a similar convention was held in St. Louis, where attendees recommended a northern route. With war looming, the North and South were each concerned with the tactical advantage gained by controlling the nation's railways.



*The majority of the land gained by the purchase was in Arizona.*

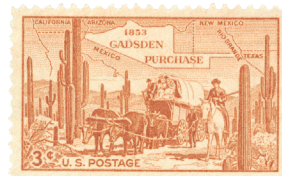
Shortly after the conclusion of the Mexican-American War in 1848, the exact boundary between the United States and Mexico came into dispute. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis urged President Franklin Pierce to buy the land in northern Mexico for the railroad. Gadsden, who had been appointed ambassador to Mexico, negotiated the purchase. After heated debate in both countries, the US acquired the territory for \$10 million. However, the Civil War interfered before the railroad could be built.



*President Pierce signed the Gadsden Purchase in the spring of 1854.*

The purchased area consisted of 29,640 square miles of land in present-day southern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico. Gadsden negotiated the purchase with Antonio López de Santa Anna, the Mexican president. The treaty of sale for the Gadsden Purchase was signed December 30, 1853, and the two countries exchanged ratifications of this treaty on June 30, 1854.

Mexican opposition to the sale was one of the contributing factors in Santa Anna's banishment in 1855.



*Stamp includes a map of the area of the Gadsden Purchase.*



*The new land was initially added to the New Mexico Territory, until the US split it to form the Arizona Territory during the Civil War.*

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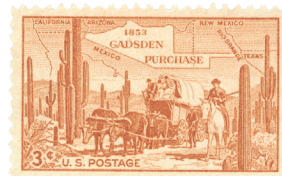
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