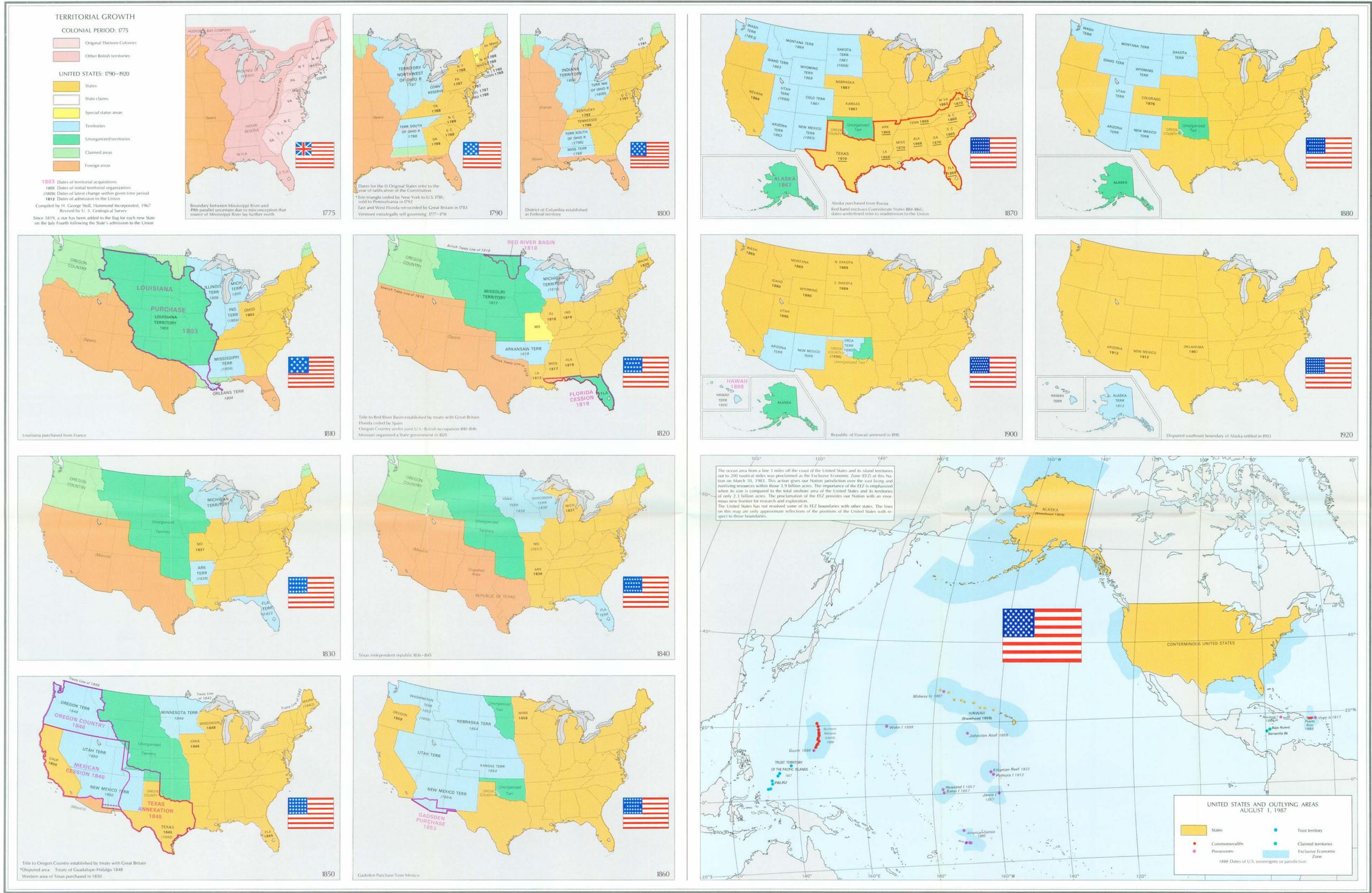


GROWTH OF THE NATION



NATIONAL ATLAS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
 RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092



As the Nation's principal conservation agency the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interest of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island Territories under U.S. administration.

In 1807, President Thomas Jefferson signed a bill that formally recognized the Federal government's responsibility for the "development and dissemination of maps and charts to promote the safety and welfare of the people." The need to assure safety through accurate maps and charts for the waterborne commerce of the Atlantic coast, the young Nation's lifeblood, inspired this legislation. The work of the Survey of the Coast (today's National Ocean Service) resulted in numerous innovations in geodetic surveying, nautical charting, and topographic mapping, and laid the groundwork for all future Federal mapping activities.

Prior to the Civil War, exploratory surveys, usually sponsored by the Army, expanded geographic knowledge of the hinterlands. The Lewis and Clark explorations of the Northwest (1804-1806) and the Zebulon Pike expedition to the Rocky Mountains (1805-1807) were among the earliest. These explorers returned with a wealth of information about a land previously unknown to its citizens, and supplied the military with important intelligence data. Meanwhile, government map-makers were surveying wagon roads, railway routes to the Pacific Coast, and newly created international boundaries, as the Nation expanded westward.

Military operations during the Civil War also stimulated cartographic activity. Defense surveys were conducted of strategically important sites, including Washington, Philadelphia, and St. Louis. Maps played a critical role in most key wartime operations, such as Sherman's march to the sea and Grant's running of the Confederate batteries at Vicksburg.

With the War at an end, the Nation shifted its attention toward movement, geographic expansion, and economic growth. Congress recognized an urgent need for detailed information about America's interior, and authorized four Federal territorial surveys between 1867 and 1872. The King, Hayden, Powell, and Wheeler surveys explored the 40th parallel, the western territories, the Rocky Mountain region, and lands west of the 100th meridian, respectively. Personal and professional rivalries between the leaders of these expeditions, and the need to establish a more efficient, centralized organization to conduct a systematic scientific classification of the Nation's lands led to the establishment of the U.S. Geological Survey on March 3, 1879.

Today's U.S. Geological Survey is responsible for identifying the Nation's land, water, energy, and mineral resources; classifying Federally owned lands for mineral, energy, and water resource potential; investigating natural hazards, such as earthquakes, volcanoes, and landslides; and conducting the National Mapping Program. The National Mapping Program provides graphic and digital cartographic and geographic products and information for the United States and its possessions and outlying areas. Available products include several series of topographic maps and digital data, photomaps, land use and land cover maps and data, thematic maps, geographic names information, geodetic control data, and remotely sensed data such as aerial photographs and satellite images.

The maps shown above are from the "Territorial Growth" sheet of the National Atlas map series, one of several thematic map products of interest to researchers, schools, and libraries. The maps show the extent of the British Colonies and the growth of the United States, and its possessions and outlying areas, for key years between 1775 and 1987.

Three years after the Constitutional Convention of 1787, the United States and its territories and claims stretched as far as the Mississippi River (except for what is now Florida and parts of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, then Spanish). The map for 1790 shows the young Nation at this point in its development; the dates on the 13 Original States refer to the year each ratified the Constitution.

The rapid westward growth of the United States and the retreat of "foreign areas" is easy to trace; each map depicts the areal extent of current States, territories, and claims; relevant dates; and the National flag of the time. Today's United States is represented on the larger map at the lower right. U.S. outlying areas from the Caribbean Basin to the western Pacific Ocean are highlighted.

Information collected and produced by the U.S. Geological Survey is in the public domain and is available for purchase. For information on map products and data produced by the U.S. Geological Survey, contact:

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