

Alaska Purchase

On March 30, 1867, Secretary of State William H. Seward agreed to purchase Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million. Do you think this was too much to pay for a piece of land that was mostly unexplored? At the



time, critics thought Seward was crazy and called the deal "Seward's folly." Seward was laughed at for his willingness to spend so much on "Seward's icebox" and Andrew Johnson's "polar bear garden." But Seward had wanted to buy Alaska for a long time. Alaska is so large that the addition of this land would increase the size of the U.S. by nearly 20 percent. Russia had established a presence in Alaska in the early 18th century and offered to sell it to the United States during President James Buchanan's administration. But the Civil War stalled negotiations. After the war, it was not easy for Seward to convince the Senate that Alaska would be an important addition to the United States. The Senate ratified the treaty that approved the purchase by just one vote. Was buying Alaska a good move? Ultimately, buying Alaska proved to be a very good move. Major discoveries of gold were made there in the 1880s and 1890s. These discoveries brought attention and people to Alaska. Today, petroleum transported across the state through a pipeline is Alaska's richest mineral resource. Do you know when Alaska became a state? In 1946, Alaskans approved statehood and adopted a constitution in 1955. On January 3, 1959, President Eisenhower announced Alaska's entrance into the Union as the 49th state. How much do you think Alaska, the nation's largest state, would be worth today?

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Questions:

1. Who agreed to purchase Alaska?

2. Who did he purchase Alaska from?

3. How much did he pay for Alaska?

4. What was the nickname given to this purchase?

5. How much did the purchase increase America' size by?

6. When did Alaska become a state?

7. What number state was it?

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Answers:

- 1. William Seward**
- 2. Russia**
- 3. 7.2 Million**
- 4. Seward' Folly**
- 5. By 20 percent**
- 6. In 1946**
- 7. 49th**