Leggi e ascolta.

Building the USA

In the 1700s, there were many small European colonies in North America. The Spanish owned California, Texas and Florida. The French owned a large part of North America – from the Gulf of Mexico in the south to the Great Lakes in the north. There were Russian and Spanish settlers in Alaska, too.

At that time there were also the 13 British colonies on the east coast. They wanted to be independent and not pay taxes to Britain, so in 1776 they united to form the ‘United States of America’. Of course, the British King tried to stop them, but the new Americans fought hard and won their independence.

These 13 original states controlled the east coast. But they were also interested in buying land from France. In 1802, the American President, Thomas Jefferson, sent a group of diplomats to Paris to buy the city of New Orleans from the French for $10 million. Amazingly, in 1803 the French government also sold all of Louisiana to the United States for just $15 million!
At the start of the 1800s, American settlers began to travel west into these new lands. They crossed dangerous rivers and high mountains, and many settlers died. Others built farms and towns across the new states. Some of them also began to live in Spanish colonies, like Texas and Florida.

In 1819, Spain sold Florida to the Americans. In 1848, after a war with Mexico, Texas, California and four more states joined the United States.

Later, the government built railways across the United States. Farms, villages and then towns developed along the railways. Because of this, the Native Americans lost all of their land. They were moved to special government areas, called reservations.

In the 1860s the Russian government borrowed a lot of money from rich Americans. Later they couldn’t repay the money, so the Russians sold Alaska to the USA for $7.2 million. The Americans also bought more land from countries like Denmark and Spain. Then finally, in 1959, Hawaii became America’s 50th state.

In 150 years, the American people bought, or took, most of North America. History books say that the USA stopped growing when Hawaii became America’s 50th state, but did it? Ten years later, the Americans put the American flag on the Moon!