

Faribault, Alexander. (1806-1855)

Alexander Faribault was born at Prairie du Chien, now in Wisconsin, on June 22, 1806. His father was Jean-Baptiste Faribault¹, a well-known French-Canadian fur trader with the Northwest and American Fur Companies. His mother was Elizabeth Pelagie Ainse, a half-Dakota daughter of Joseph-Louis Ainse, a British superintendent at Mackinac. Jean Baptiste survived regime changes in the fur trade, working for the British Northwest Fur Company and later the American Fur Company, with whom Alexander became a clerk at the age of 12. Before he turned 20, he was a licensed fur trader and his marriage to Mary Graham, member of another prominent French-Dakota family, contributed to his very successful business enterprises.



Faribault eventually diversified his business interests to include banking (in partnerships that included Henry Sibley, Charles Oakes and Charles Borup); milling; and land speculation, founding the town of Faribault and one of the original partners in the establishment of Hastings. He accompanied the Dakota delegation to Washington for a treaty in 1837, but did not sign the treaty. In 1851, while a member of the Minnesota Legislature, he was one of a group of traders who helped engineer both Dakota land cession treaties and in that process received \$13,000, roughly equivalent to \$300,000 today.

George Faribault, the son of Alexander and Mary, also signed one of the 1851 Dakota treaties. He became Chief of Indian Police at the Standing Rock Reservation in North and South Dakota.

Alexandre Faribault is credited with fueling most of the early settlement activity in the area around the Cannon River and what is now Faribault, Minnesota beginning in 1826, when he established a fur trading post on the banks of the river. By 1834, the trading post had grown in popularity and was relocated to the Straight River, one mile (1.6 km) upstream of its junction

¹In May 1798, Jean Baptiste went with others to the island of Michilimackinac, one of the depots of the Parker, Gerrard, and Ogilvy Company. For over ten years, he traded with the Potawatomie Indians at Kankakee, with the Dakota Indians at Redwood, on the Des Moines River, and at Little Rapids, on the Minnesota River just upstream of present-day Carver, on behalf of the Northwest Company. In 1809, he settled in the small village of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, and commenced trading, on his own account, with the Indians of the Winnebago, Fox, and Dakota tribes. In 1819, he removed to Pike Island in the Mississippi River, and in 1826 to *St. Peter*, opposite the military post of Fort Snelling.

with the Cannon River, the site of modern-day Faribault. The young Alexander Faribault used his knowledge of Dakota language and culture to improve relations with the displaced Wahpekute and even helped the tribe to resettle in the area. This relationship was instrumental in ensuring the success of the trading post and allowing safe travel to the area for settlers.

With the completion of the area's first steam-powered sawmill in early 1854, the next year would bring Faribault from a sleepy settlement of 20 buildings to a bustling town with more than 250 buildings. Historians attribute Faribault's impressive growth during this period to a number of important milestones which were passed in 1855 and 1856, including the creation of roads connecting to other settlements and trading posts in Iowa and Minnesota Territory, the availability of mail service, and the construction of schools and churches.

The City of Faribault was platted in 1855 and granted a home-rule charter in 1872.



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Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell
Coordinator of Métis Heritage and History Research
Louis Riel Institute