

JOSEPH LAFRAMBOISE: A FACTOR OF TREATIES, TRADE, AND CULTURE

by

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Abstract

Joseph LaFramboise' life was the product of a rich milieu of ethnicities working, trading, and living together in the first half of the nineteenth century. His was a multi-cultural experience on the fur trade frontier. Born in 1805 and living through the first half of the nineteenth century, LaFramboise utilized multiple identities and strategies drawn from Odawa, Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota, and French Canadian cultures while integrating into the developing American identity. He maneuvered socially and economically during an unstable political period along the shifting margins between native and Euro-American cultures. His life-long vocation in the fur trade, and more specifically with the American Fur Company, was influenced by his family's successful Michigan fur trade business, his friendships within the Company, and his experience as part of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota community. The fur trade afforded him both relational and economic ties to the Eastern Dakota bands of Minnesota and to the other trade families of the American Fur Company. The trade also placed him on the cusp of American exploration into the continent's mid-section allowing his local knowledge, built up by years of traveling the interior, to inform the explorations and writings of people like George Catlin, Joseph Nicollet, and John C. Fremont. By mid-century, ironically, LaFramboise, who had spent a lifetime building multi-ethnic relationships, found himself increasingly bound by rigid ideas about race, brought on by expanding American settlement. His business decisions and his familial ones became driven more by the expectations of an advancing Euro-American society. Even so, those decisions carried the distinctive character of a man used to living in a culturally complex world.

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Chapter I: From Mackinac Island to Islands on the Prairie: Joseph LaFramboise as a Factor in the Fur Trade on the Coteau

“The variety of the past is greater than the diversity of the present.”

Joseph Amato, PhD.

During the first half of the nineteenth century in the western reaches of the Old Northwest, a wide variety of relationships, cultural adaptations, and integrations evidenced a social system that involved multi-ethnic negotiations. Similar to the “middle ground” described by author Richard White, the fur trade along the Minnesota River and up the Coteau des Prairies enabled a common reference for traders, hunters, and their families.¹ When Joseph LaFramboise left his boyhood home on Mackinac Island, in Michigan, and came to the Upper Minnesota River to trade in 1824, he entered a business much different than his forefather’s, yet he replicated parts of his ancestral experience. His earliest immigrant ancestors, brothers Bertrand and Jean Pierre Fafard, came to New France in 1637 and became fur traders and merchants near Trois Rivieres, New France, in Quebec near present day Montreal.²

The very name LaFramboise may have come to the Fafard family because of their involvement with the fur trade. LaFramboise genealogist, Ron Ohlfs, explains the name change as such; “In the 1650-1680 period a popular practice in New France was for French-Canadians in the Montreal and Trois-Rivieres regions to adopt a second surname, which later (in most cases) became the surviving surname. Stories indicate that raspberries which were native and prominent in the Trois-Rivieres to Montreal area may have prompted acceptance of LaFramboise (raspberry in French) for an alias (dit) surname by so many different families.” Ohlfs quotes from the

publication “Wisconsin Early Habitants” by Jo Bartels Alderson and Kate Alderson Reinart that, “In 1688, when the total population of New France was less than ten thousand, about eight hundred courier du bois “runners in the woods” were illegally engaged in the fur trade.” Ohlfs claims that to protect their family members these courier du bois took on aliases so that officials could not distinguish to which family a LaFramboise belonged. “Bertrand Fafard Sieur de la Framboise used LaFramboise in 1650.”³ That surname continued throughout the generations.

Joseph LaFramboise was the product of a long lineage of fur traders and at least the third generation of his family to marry into a native band, as his father and maternal-grandfather had before him. The fur trade culture that surrounded his childhood prominently influenced his decisions and life choices in adulthood. “Marriages between people from different ethnic groups that comprised the fur trade society resulted in families. The lives of these families reveal some of the complicated human relationships that existed on Mackinac... [They] illustrate how people of different ethnicity wove themselves into a rich social fabric stretching in all directions on the middle ground of Mackinac,” describes historian, Keith Widder, about LaFramboise’ childhood surroundings on Mackinac Island.⁴ Threads of that social fabric sustained LaFramboise in later years hundreds of miles from Mackinac. One of the strongest ties was his relationship to his mother.

What was strikingly different about LaFramboise from others in the fur trade was the obvious influence his mother had upon him. Widowed at a young age, Magdelaine Marcotte LaFramboise raised her son and daughter alone, choosing not to re-marry. Her work as a very successful fur trader in her own right offered young Joseph a unique perspective. The respect she garnered from the American Fur Company, which bought her business out in 1818 and hired her as a trader, speaks to her unique abilities as a woman in a man’s work-world.⁵ Her influence

within the American Fur Company allowed LaFramboise to start not as a common laborer but as a young clerk assigned to an experienced company man at an outpost far from the familiar.

LaFramboise focused on understanding and integrating into the region and the Dakota bands with whom he traded. His relationship to the Dakota was an echo of his father's to the Odawa, but became a new creation formed in the developing American nation.

The Odawa Connection

Magdelaine Marcotte LaFramboise, born in 1780, was the grand daughter of Odawa Chief Kewinaquot (Returning Cloud).⁶ Her mother, Misigon, had married French-Canadian fur trader Jean Baptiste Marcotte. When Magdelaine was small her father died while working the trade along a portage between the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers and she and her older sister, Therese, were raised in their mother's village along the eastern shoreline of Lake Michigan.⁷ The two youngest were unable to attend school as their older siblings had and so remained illiterate until adulthood. Their mother took advantage, though, of the teaching and preaching of the Jesuits who traveled the region and Magdelaine learned to speak French from them. By age nine she was said to speak French as well as the finest of Parisian women.⁸ The Jesuits also brought Catholicism to her band. On August 1, 1786, Father Louis Payet baptized Magdelaine in Ste. Anne's Church of Mackinac Island. For the rest of her life, she faithfully observed the rites and practices of her father's religion.⁹ By the time Magdelaine was a young woman, she spoke a European language and followed a European faith, but continued the traditions of her Odawa kin. She was well prepared to be a true mediator between the cultures.

In 1794 Magdelaine Marcotte, at the tender age of fourteen, married twenty nine year old Joseph LaFramboise, Sr. *a la facon du pays*, meaning "in the way of the country." This institution of "the way of the country" created a "distinctive social character to the fur trade."¹⁰

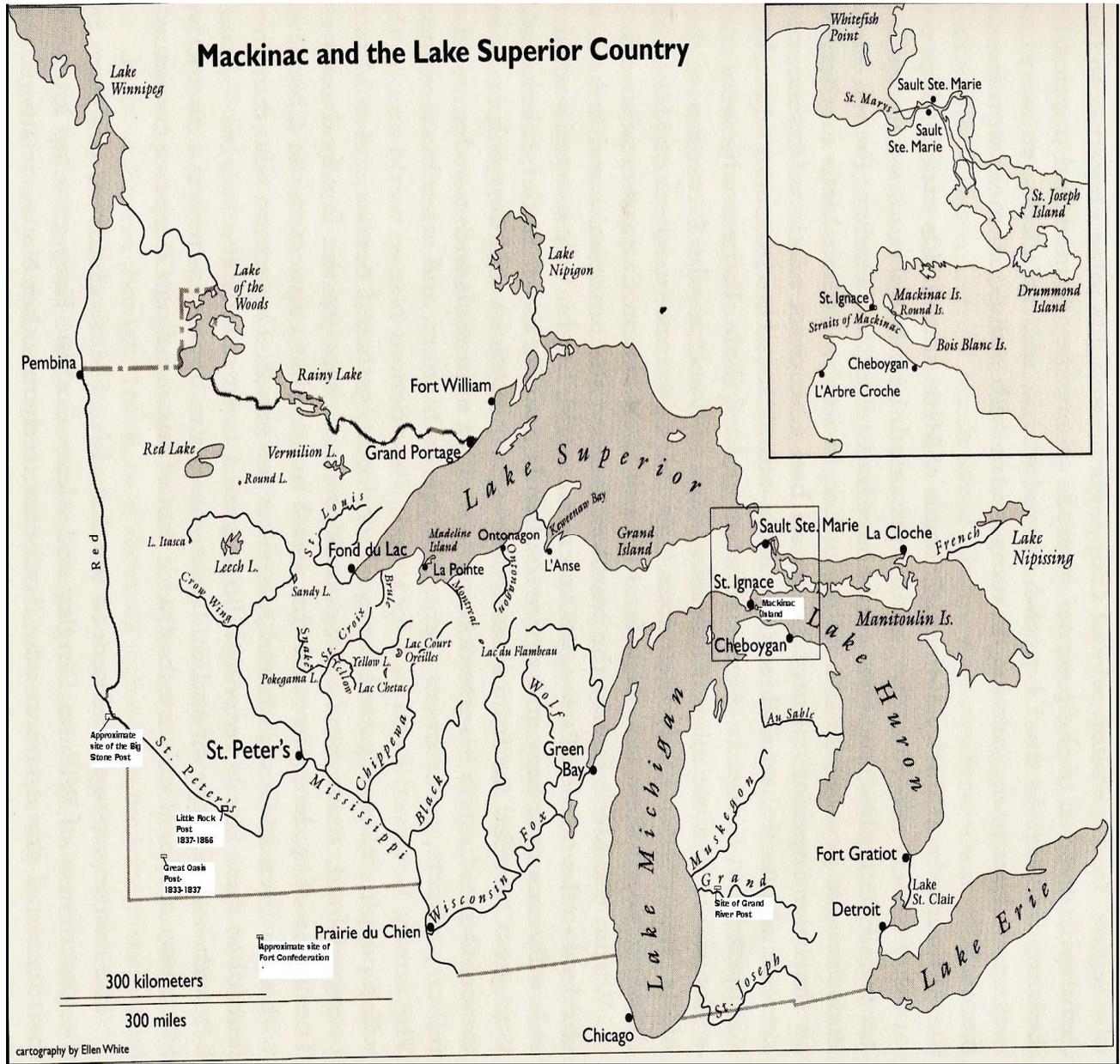


Figure 1: Map adapted from cartography by Ellen White in *Battle for the Soul* by Keith Widder¹¹

Joseph, Sr. was one of six brothers who traded throughout the Northwest. All were involved in the intricate trading network that emanated out from Mackinac. They created partnerships with each other as well as such notable traders as Cuthbert Grant, Sr., Charles Landglade, and James Gruet.¹² These men were deeply involved in the political machinations between the native tribes, the British, French, and later growing American powers. Landglade and his Great Lakes native force were credited with the successful defense of Fort Duquesne against British General Braddock and his young aid, George Washington, during the French and Indian War.¹³ Their children became actors in the development of the socially distinctive Métis culture. Cuthbert Grant, Jr. moved west to the Red River region and has been called the “First leader of the Métis.”¹⁴ LaFramboise’ children were part of the next generation to create a new and more tenuous type of middle ground.

The marriage between Magdelaine and Joseph, Sr. allowed an economic union between the inter-national fur trade based at Mackinac Island and the Odawa bands along the Grand River on the eastern shore of Lake Michigan. (See figure #1.) Historian Sylvia Van Kirk, in her book *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870*, describes women like Magdelaine as active participants in the fur trade in the role of “cultural liaison” between their husbands and their kin.¹⁵ The marriage of Joseph, Sr. and Magdelaine is a good example of those types of unions. Their marriage was not recorded in the Mackinac parish register until the summer of 1804 when the civil union was sanctified almost ten years later. “This same register indicates that this appearance before a priest was the solemnization of a native marriage by contract that had taken place some years before in accordance with the customs of the country.”¹⁶ A common practice within the fur trade was for traders to solidify ties to the tribes by marrying the relative of a chief. Doing so created kinship bonds that held both privilege and responsibility within the

tribe. Joseph's marriage to Magdelaine was in no way unusual for the times. "The parish register for Ste. Anne's Church at Michillimackinac between 1698 and 1818 discloses that European-American (primarily French-Canadian) men increasingly took Indian (generally Ojibwa or Odawa) or Mètis wives. For the years 1765-1818, the recorded marriages show that 65 percent of the European-American men married Indian women (14 percent) or Mètis (51 percent) women."¹⁷ What was unusual, according to author John McDowell, was that everyone at the wedding was able to sign his or her own names in the guest register except the bride.¹⁸ By this time the family was active in Mackinac society and the guests were most likely traders, clerks, and other members of the merchant society of the island.

Joseph, Sr. and Magdelaine maintained strong economic and family ties to the Odawa bands with whom they traded. Each year when their bateau headed for Grand River, Magdelaine accompanied her husband into the bush, as much to keep in touch with her relatives as to help her husband in the trade. Their success was due to his shrewd business acumen and her natural understanding of the tribes and nature of the Indians.¹⁹ Cross-cultural unions, such as the one between Joseph and Magdelaine, have been described by some historians as simple business dealings, with the husband often abandoning his wife when the trade moved on. Rather than just a vehicle for the trade, Sylvia Van Kirk argues that, "In Indian societies, the division of labor was such that the women had an economic role to play. This role, though modified, was carried over into the fur trade where the work of the native women constituted an important contribution to the functioning of the trade."²⁰ Van Kirk also argues, "...what is significant is that many of these marriages *a la facon du pays* developed into lasting and devoted unions."²¹ Magdelaine's union with Joseph, Sr. gave her elevated status within her Odawa band as well as an entry into Mackinac society. It remained a solid union until Joseph, Sr.'s death.

The couple continued their seasonal travels, spending winters near what is now the town of Ada, Michigan. Summers were spent on Mackinac Island, where they sold the winter's harvest, enjoyed time with friends and family, and prepared for the next wintering season. Mackinac was a cosmopolitan center. In 1792 there were a recorded 190 traders working out of Mackinac Island for various companies as well as independent traders.²² The island, taken over by the British in 1763, held a British garrison but the population of citizens was mixed. The island's Roman Catholic Parish of St. Anne's baptism and interment roll recorded the birth and death of Native, French, English, Scottish, and Mètis. The roll also recorded African slaves living in the community.²³ "During the British period, between 1765 and 1797, for example, when few Indians received baptism, 71.67 percent of the 131 baptisms recorded were Mètis."²⁴

The LaFramboise family enjoyed high standing in the ethnically mixed community. "Among their closest friends were Dr. David Mitchell, British Army surgeon, and [Elizabeth], his eccentric, energetic, and capable Ottawa wife: Joseph Bailly of a distinguished French family, since prominent in Philadelphia, and his wife, likewise an Ottawa: and others of the same congenial type."²⁵ Joseph and Magdelaine were slaveholders, owning an African woman, Angelique, and her young son, Louizon. Though it is unclear whether Angelique was still held in bondage or freed, she stayed with the family until Magdelaine's death in 1846.²⁶

Joseph and Magdaline's first daughter, Josette, was born September 24, 1795. Her mother was fifteen at the time of her birth. Josette remained un-baptized until 1799, as Mackinac had no permanent clergy for almost fifty years. Marriages and baptisms were sanctified only when a traveling priest stopped at the island. Visiting priest, Father Gabriel Richard, who traveled from Detroit to Mackinac to perform ceremonies and mass for the faithful, baptized the little girl. Richard is credited as the second-founder of Detroit and founder of the first university

in Michigan, the first library, the first newspaper, and the first good road!²⁷ Josette's early life would have been a seasonal round of playing with her Odawa cousins and relations along the Grand River with trips back across Lake Michigan to Mackinac, where she played with the sons and daughters of military personnel, merchants, métis traders, and indigenous children like herself from several tribes.

The next LaFramboise child, Joseph, Jr., was born during the winter of 1805 at the Grand River post and baptized by another visiting missionary priest the following spring. Where many of these unions averaged four children and a total of 8.5 for a long lasting union (one where the mother lived to be over forty years), Joseph, Sr. and Magdelaine had only two children in the first ten years of their marriage.²⁸ The small family did not know it but 1805 was their last year together.

There have been many stories told about this part of Michigan's history, most untraceable except to family tradition and local histories. In the fall of 1806, when on their annual trip to Grand River, the LaFramboise family and their whole entourage of voyageurs, stopped on the beach of Lake Michigan to camp just a day from the entrance to the river. While there a member of the Potawatomi tribe named Nequat insisted that Joseph trade liquor to him. When refused, the Indian left only to return at dusk when Joseph, who faithfully performed the ritual of Angelus every day at that time, was in prayer. The Indian stabbed the trader, fatally wounding him, leaving Magdelaine suddenly a widow at age twenty-four.²⁹

Magdelaine chose to go forward to the wintering grounds, near her family's home village, where she found support from friends and relatives there. Her son Joseph, just an infant, accompanied her. Ten-year old Josette had already been placed at a school in Montreal. At Grand River, Magdelaine went ahead with the season's trading. The goods were available and

the Odawa hunters expected them. By this time Magdelaine had been part of this business for over ten years and knew as well as Joseph, Sr. how to run it successfully.

One part of the Michigan legend that survives is that before her return to Mackinac the next spring a delegation from the Potawatomi tribe brought the offending Indian, Nequat, before Magdelaine for her sentence upon him for the death of her husband. It was their tradition for the victim's family to avenge deaths within that tribe. Magdelaine, true to her Roman Catholic beliefs, refused to sentence him and in an act of forgiveness told the astonished Potawatomi tribe members to let him go and that God would be his judge. They released him with a strong admonishment for what he had done and banished him to the wilderness. Though she had forgiven him, it became clear that the tribe hadn't. Nequat's body was found stabbed with his own knife the next season, hastening his judgment before Magdelaine's God.³⁰ The surviving story may simply reflect an ethnocentric view of Catholic mercy versus "savage justice." It was more likely that Magdelaine knew that the man was already doomed by native standards. If true the story shows, by the fact that the tribe had gone to some lengths to secure the offender, the high level of respect they held for LaFramboise and his widow. Magdelaine returned to Mackinac Island with the exhumed body of her husband, re-burying him with Catholic rights. She also returned with an impressive season's worth of furs. For the next fifteen years she became a successful woman in a male-dominated business.

Magdelaine, unlike many *métis* and native widows, never re-married and raised her children with the help of her extended Odawa family and her husband's French-Canadian family at Mackinac and in Montreal. She forged solid relationships within the fur trade culture that sustained her and her family through the changing and challenging socio-political expectations of

three distinct colonial powers. Magdelaine Marcotte LaFramboise moved through both cultural worlds if not seamlessly, then effectively, passing on her knowledge to Joseph, Jr.

The Mackinac Experience

Sylvia Van Kirk calls the culture built up over decades of Euro-Native negotiation in the Old Northwest a “fur trade society.”³¹ This society is called different terms by different historians. Lucy Eldersveld Murphy calls it a Creole society.³² Richard White’s term “the middle ground” has gained popularity in recent years. In his book of the same title, White explains the middle ground of early New France. “In the *pays d’en haut*, (the savage land) actual Indians and whites of widely different social class and status, for a variety of reasons, relied on each other in order to achieve quite specific ends. It was these Frenchmen...and Algonquin men and women who created common ground-the middle ground-on which to proceed.”³³ White believed the middle ground to be unique to the early period of French and Indian negotiation, but a recognizable vestige lingered into the nineteenth century in outposts where the fur trade required cultural negotiation. No matter what the term, the resulting culture was based, as Patricia Albers states, “in kinship identities rather than ethnic identities.”³⁴ The LaFramboise’ experiences at Mackinac Island during both the British and American periods underscore the social stability that the fur trade society offered to *métis* persons during political upheaval. The fur trade was the common denominator for this area and no matter how national politics changed, the residents continued close kinship ties to assure their economic future in the trade.

In November of 1796, The British surrendered Mackinac Island to the Americans during the long festering western front of the American Revolution. The Americans kept a tenuous hold on it until the War of 1812. A force of British and Indians re-captured the Island in July of 1812.

The story of its capture renders a picture of the complex cultural, political, and economic climate through which Magdelaine's family navigated.

The American Fur Company (AFC), under the direction of John Jacob Astor, came to Mackinac Island to compete with British companies in 1808. Early in the summer of 1812, Astor had caught wind that war was imminent between the countries and sent an agent to safeguard his trade goods at St. Joseph's, a small island nearby, and bring them back to Mackinac if possible. This would assure the use of those goods should the British prevail in the war. His messenger was a loyal British subject who alerted Captain Roberts of the state of war upon his arrival on St. Joseph's Island. Captain Charles Roberts, a soldier of the British Army, gathered fifty regular soldiers, over 150 voyageurs, and hundreds of Indians, including Mdewakanton Sioux, brought by British fur trader Robert Dickson. Dickson had recently sold his trading interests to Astor's American Fur Company, but remained very anti-American in his sentiments. They commandeered arms and boats from British and American traders alike on St. Joseph's Island and planned an attack on Fort Michillimackinac. The Commandant of the fort had not heard of the war declaration but felt something was amiss and sent an American fur trader, Michael Dousman, (also associated with Astor) to St. Joseph's to see what the British were up to. Dousman was captured en route by Robert's group and taken prisoner.

Upon reaching Mackinac in the middle of the night Dousman was released, though he was a regular in the Michigan militia, with strict orders not to tell the fort the British had landed. Dousman agreed but ran to tell all the civilians on the island to hide, as once a battle started there was no way for the commander to restrain the many different tribal warriors from killing military prisoners and civilians alike. Often warriors induced to fight in battles were offered the opportunity to take plunder and scalps in reward for their help. The residents, British, American,

French-Canadian *métis* and Indian, ran to an old distillery building on the west side of the island. If they had not already left for their wintering grounds, Magdelaine and her two children were undoubtedly with the group.

As it turned out, the fort was taken without a shot. The American Commandant, knowing he was greatly outnumbered with only sixty-one men, offered no resistance and the group was permitted to march out of the fort with the honors of war.³⁵ Astor's goods were secure, no civilian lives were lost, and the British retained the fort. The American fur trade, though set back by the war, continued on. Within three years, at the Treaty of Ghent, the British relinquished it for the last time to the United States, in 1815. That treaty changed the face of the fur trade. The United States Congress passed an exclusion act in 1813, excluding all foreigners from trading on American soil. Only those foreigners who were given exemptions by either the president himself and later, Indian agents and territorial officers, were able to continue trading. Astor was favored by the legislature and president to exempt many French Canadians, whom it was thought were the only ones able to withstand the rigors of the trade.³⁶

Magdelaine's fur trading business directly competed with the new AFC. Her trading area near Grand River was a prime spot needing only the large efficient bateaux boats to do the hauling. She understood what motivated the Indians to trap and then trade their peltry. She did not avoid using liquor to bring and keep native trappers loyal to her. Though it was prohibited, its use was poorly regulated until after 1817. Magdelaine was so successful in wielding this trade item that in 1818 Ramsey Crooks complained in a letter to Astor that she had seriously damaged their trade by the "clandestine introduction of spirituous liquors."³⁷ It is no surprise then that the Company bought out Magdelaine and gave her a license to trade for the company the same year.

There were other competing companies that were absorbed by the American Fur Company. The Montreal-Michillimackinac Company, which had been a combination of Dickson and Company, was run by a group of well-known traders: Joseph Rolette, Robert Dickson, James Fraser, Murdoch Cameron, and the powerful McGill and Company. This interest was absorbed by Astor's company and in 1811 named the Southwest Company. Many of those agents went on to either become employees of the American Fur Company or traded with it in years to come. Rolette and Dickson held stock in the Company as well.³⁸ Both of these men became important to Magdelaine's young son Joseph, Jr. in subsequent years in different capacities. Rolette became a co-worker within the AFC, and Dickson became Joseph's father-in-law.

Astor gave his traders different options for trade with the AFC. Each trader made his own arrangements about buying goods and selling furs through the company as best he could, according to the conditions surrounding him. Those conditions might change from year to year calling for a different contract agreement. The first was a joint account with the AFC in which the company would "furnish whatever may be required for the Trade at cost and charges with 5 per cent commission on disbursements and supplies for the business, the concerns being chargeable with the same interest the company pays- You will [furnish] storage...for the business and you will devote your whole time... to the interest of the joint concern. You will be allowed a reasonable compensation for your individual Board and Lodging and any men required to aid and assist you. The Furs and Peltries or returns of every kind to be brought annually ...and there be delivered to the Agent of the American Fur Company...[who will have] them sorted and inspected after the customary manner...and the Company will allow the concern for the different kinds of skins the market price at the time. The accounts will finally be settled once

a year-The dividends after charging every expense will then be declared, and you will be allowed half of the profit, or will pay one half of the loss which may accrue on the business.”³⁹ This was the company’s preferred contract type. It afforded Astor the benefit of sharing a possible loss but encouraged the trader to do his best in an effort to share in a profit. It also allowed Astor to share in the benefits of unexpectedly good returns during any given year.

Another option was for the traders to trade on their own account and risk. Local traders who were well established bought supplies from the company at a standard mark-up and conducted their business entirely at their own risk, even dealing with company competitors if they so chose.⁴⁰ The third was on the Account and Risk of the American Fur Company. With this option the trader was an employee of the company receiving a set amount each year for engaging in the trade no matter what the final tally of furs was at the end of the year. This was the safest for the trader to avoid loss, due to a poor fur crop or intense competition, but also limited profits as well. It was the option that Magdelaine chose. “In 1818 she was listed as an employee of the Company with the designation that she had been engaged at Mackinac and employed at Grand River.”⁴¹ Magdelaine accommodated her trade to Astor’s. She was employed as such until 1822 when in her last year of operation she traded at her own risk in conjunction with trader Rix Robinson who then bought out her business.⁴²

Magdelaine used the business profits to make sure her children were prepared for the new Americanized world they were increasingly surrounded by. Magdelaine spared no expense on the education of both her children. Josette went to Montreal to attend school. Upon her return to the Island in 1816, met and fell in love with the dashing Commandant of the Fort, Captain Benjamin Pierce, whose brother later became President of the United States. Their wedding in June of that year was held at the home of her Aunt Therese Mitchell and was a lavish affair with

all the cultural trappings of both her native mother and the Catholic Church. Historian Keith Widder offers that this marriage between an American officer and métis woman afforded Josette the acceptance into the American society that her mother had never enjoyed.⁴³ Magdelaine, however, had a full social life with satisfying relationships across ethnicities. It is doubtful that she ever truly worried about American acceptance. Her status as a matriarch of the island was established. The marriage of her daughter to the captain of the army post only enhanced that status. From her new son-in-law, Magdelaine received a large home to replace the common log cabin she resided in.



Figure 2: Magdelaine LaFramboise house, late 1800's. Mackinac Island Historical Society.

The new couple's wedded life was short however. Josette died in 1820 leaving behind a small daughter, Harriet, and a son who died soon after his mother's own death. Magdelaine spent time raising Harriet. Taking on the care of a grandchild may have been what spurred Magdelaine to sell out her business in 1822. Perhaps as a replacement for a daughter who would never grow old, Magdelaine doted on Harriet. Certainly her granddaughter remembered her loving ways after leaving Mackinac. In a letter sent to Magdelaine in the spring of 1835, Harriet remembers her early childhood on Mackinac. "I have always loved to dwell with fondness upon the scenes of my childhood, when it was you, who nursed me with care, and left not a wish unsatisfied: scarcely a thought had I but what it was realized; I remember the many, many little acts of kindness, you were wont to do for me. Do you remember our rides across the Lakes in winter? How you used to delight in making me candy? I could fill my paper with other incidents that my memory still cherishes."⁴⁴

Magdelaine, as a mother, saw to the education and upbringing of her only son with the same attention. Joseph, Jr. went to the Huron Mission School in Montreal in 1815, at the age of ten. There he lived with Alexis LaFramboise, his cousin and father's nephew. On May 8, 1819, Alexis sent a letter to Magdelaine telling her that Joseph was ready to take his First Communion later that month. "Oh what a beautiful day for him. How much he must thank God to keep him such a good mother who does everything in order to procure his happiness."⁴⁵ Though Joseph's grammar was never good, as an adult he could read and write French, speak English, Odawa, Ojibwa, and different Dakota dialects. His Catholic religious training was as important to Magdelaine as his literacy. She nurtured Catholicism on the island and offered a tract of land beside her home for the construction of a new St. Anne's Church. Her only request was to be

buried beneath the altar, a wish granted by the local priest when she died. Her daughter, Josette, and infant grandson were also buried there.⁴⁶ Figure 3 below shows the LaFramboise home sited directly to the left of St. Ann's Church.

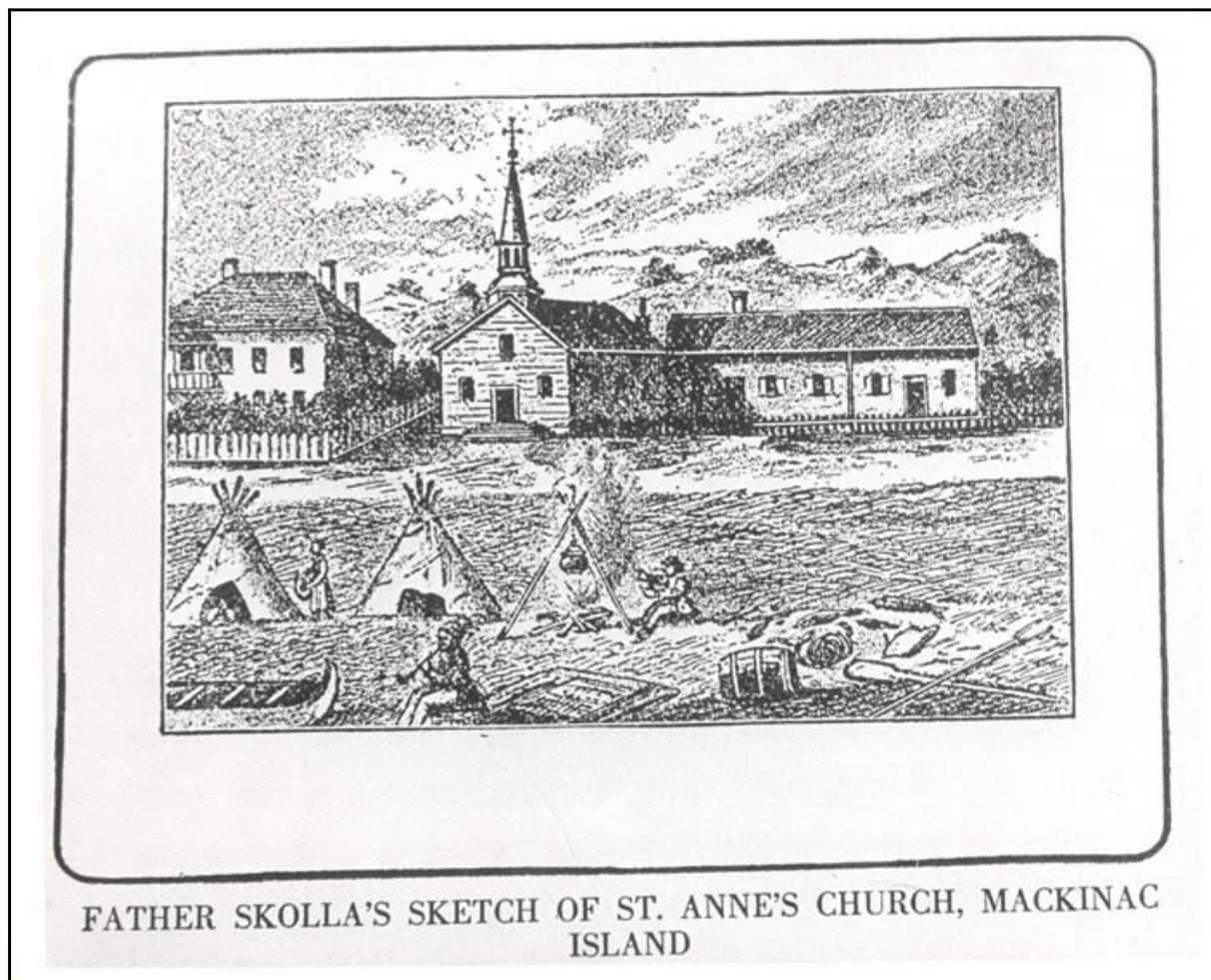


Figure 3: From St. Anne's Church History. Note the LaFramboise house to the left.

It maybe that Joseph, Jr. helped his mother in her trading business in the ensuing years between 1819 and 1822, learning as he went and meeting many influential people with whom he would later work in his own right. He may have lived with the Odawa or Potawatomi, as a later note to his cousin Eliza Baird suggests. In the note he offered the date 1820 as the time of his first trading experiences.⁴⁷ Whatever he did during the ensuing years he no doubt became familiar with the American Fur Company's managers. At this time the right hand man to Astor on Mackinac Island was Ramsey Crooks. Crooks was the main agent who negotiated the fur trade between Astor in New York and his traders as far field from Mackinac as the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains. Crooks became a close personal friend of the LaFramboise family. In a letter dated October 29, 1835, Ramsey writes to Magdelaine "I was very much disappointed on my return here [Mackinac] to find you had left the Island- I however avail myself of this opportunity to thank-you in my wife's behalf for the presents you were so kind as to leave with Mr. Abbott [a main agent for the American Fur Company] for Mrs. Crooks, who I am happy to inform you is quite well, as are all of our dear little ones. In a letter lately received from my Emilie she requests me to offer you her best wishes and to inform you that at last she had the happiness of meeting your granddaughter."⁴⁸ From this letter and others, the close personal bonds between the fur trade families is evident, as is Magdelaine's status within the Company. This may be the reason that when Joseph, Jr. did become an employee of the American Fur Company in 1823, he entered, not as an engagée or a voyageur, but as a young bourgeois clerk working under a seasoned trader.

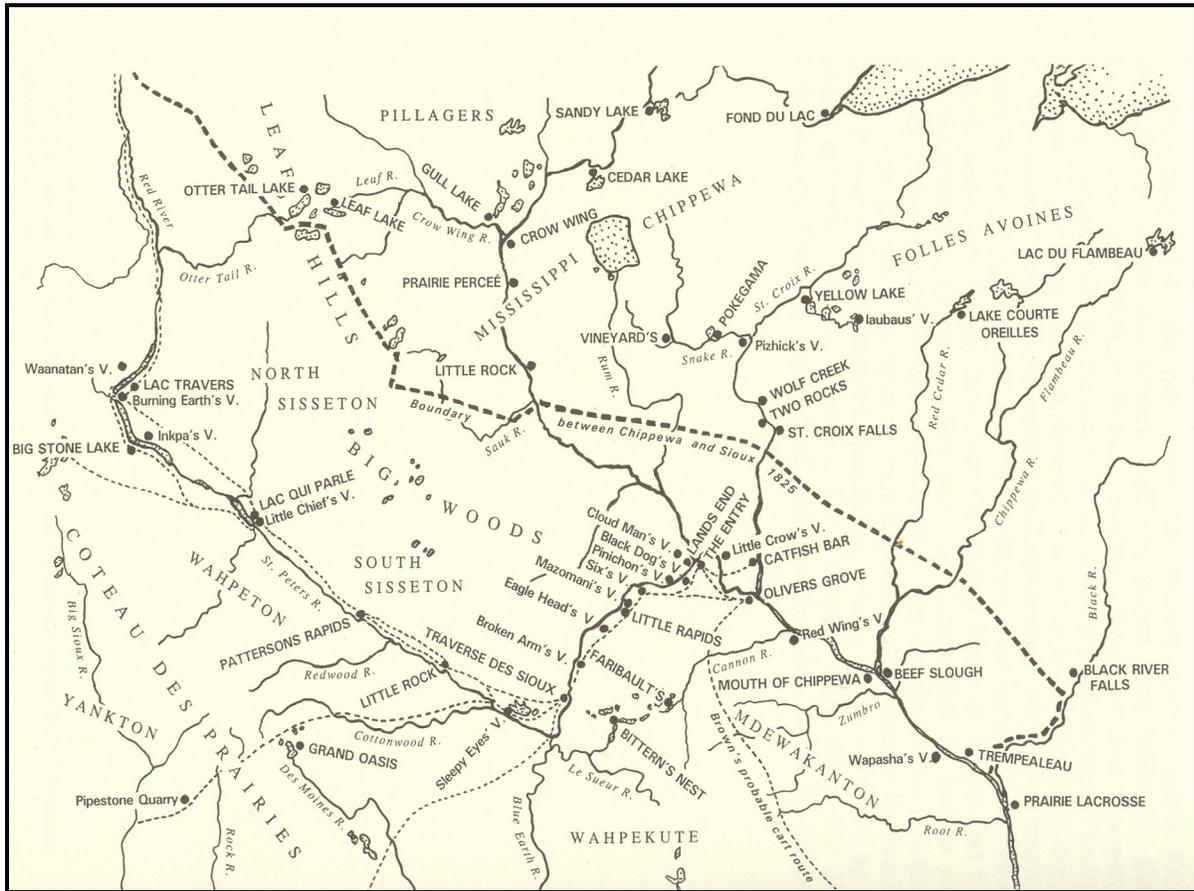


Figure 4: Regional map showing trading posts and native villages around 1830. ⁴⁹

At the age of nineteen LaFramboise was issued a license to trade along the upper St. Peter's River (now the Minnesota River) in the farthest reaches of the Old Northwest. He was beyond the cultural influence of Mackinac and barely within the economic reach of the fur trade. Keeping in touch with his family made LaFramboise even more aware of the differences between his lifestyle and the one he left behind. Mackinac Island was becoming Americanized as historian Keith Widder explains, "In order to carry on the role played by their parents as cultural mediators or the people in between, Métis children required an American education...In a society where the English language, American systems of government and law, and American entrepreneurs were bound to become more prevalent, these men [fur traders] could see that their children needed preparation to meet the coming challenges."⁵⁰ A protestant school was established on the island and Americans were increasingly moving to the area with rigid ideas of race. These ideas, in opposition to the previously established middle ground, stratified society by ethnicity rather than kinship. LaFramboise, on the St. Peter's, was far removed from those changes.

One of the earliest personal letters available written by LaFramboise to his mother is dated May 2, 1824. The letter was written from the Big Stone Post near Lake Traverse. In 1823, Hazen Mooers was licensed to trade there and Joseph was hired as an assistant.⁵¹ He tells his mother that the first time he saw Mr. Rolette he was shy to talk with him, denoting his youth and inexperience at the time of his hire. He was in the company of Mr. Mooers and said he had made nineteen pacquets. A pacquet is a pack of prepared pelts, either one hundred beaver to a pack or one thousand muskrat. The letter doesn't explain the type of furs packaged, but most likely by this time they were mainly muskrat. He tells of the miserable winter from January to March, that

he had spent at the post. (At many posts by May much of the food had run low and residents lived on rationed amounts of food until spring hunts began and the rivers broke open so supplies could be shipped in. Some traders shared food with the Indians who may have been in dire straights as well, depending on the harshness of the winter.) In any case, Joseph was homesick and he wrote in a hurry to be able to send the letter with someone, apologizing for its poor quality. He asked that she write to him and sent his love to her and his little niece, Harriet, who's mother had died two years prior. He was obviously a young man far from home and wanting to hear news of family and friends.⁵²

Though Joseph, Jr. spent the rest of his life in territory far from his home on Mackinac Island, he maintained strong bonds to his relatives and visited as often as his chosen path allowed. As the main staging areas for the fur trade moved west from Mackinac Island to Prairie du Chein, St. Louis, and Mendota, LaFramboise did most of his travel to those cities, but he managed to go home to the Island almost every year while his mother was alive and later to Green Bay to see his cousin Elizabeth Baird.

In a note to his mother on September 11, 1825, LaFramboise told her he had just come down from St. Peter and was staying at Prairie du Chein for a few days before returning to his wintering spot with his fall trade outfit. His quick note simply told Magdelaine that he was in perfect health and hoped she was the same. He sent his regards to the rest of the family and signed off quickly.⁵³ Often there was a boat or some travelers heading off to Green Bay or Mackinac Island from Prairie du Chein and a hasty note was sent along in hopes of arriving eventually. It may have changed hands many times before reaching its intended recipient.

That same year, 1825, LaFramboise was issued a license to trade at a spot called Fort Confederation in what is now north-central Iowa.⁵⁴ This was an area held by the Eastern Dakota

tribes. Advancing white settlement had edged the Mesquaquee tribes out of southern Wisconsin and across the Mississippi, pushing them into areas traditionally hunted by the Ho-Chunk, the southern Sisseton Dakota, and southern Yankton Lakota tribes. A treaty was signed in 1825 between the Mesquaquee tribes and their rivals, drawing a boundary line between their hunting regions in an effort to end the bloodshed.⁵⁵

After the treaty was signed the American Fur Company situated Fort Confederation at the confluence of the two branches of the Des Moines River near present day Humboldt, Iowa.⁵⁶ The Treaty was poorly written, however, and the Dakota and Mesquaquee tribes had differing opinions about where the boundary line ran. Fort Confederation sat on contested ground and both sides continued to carry out raids all the way north to the Lake Shetek area. LaFramboise held a license to trade at Fort Confederation for three of the five years between 1825 until 1830.⁵⁷ He had spent one year trading near Lake Traverse with the Wahpeton and northern Sisseton bands and would have been well suited to deal with their southern counterparts. LaFramboise, no doubt, traveled up the Des Moines and over to Okoboji and Spirit Lakes, the Talcott Lake area, and as far north as Lake Shetek to trade with the Dakota. How much time he actually spent at Fort Confederation is not known.

During that time LaFramboise traveled to the Dakota settlement French travelers called Grande Lisiere du Bois in southwestern Minnesota, later the place was called Great Oasis. Trader Philander Prescott had traveled through Grand Lisiere in 1831 and found it to be a prime area for the trade stating, “We got to what is called “the Big Clump of Woods. It is an island, the cause of there being timber because fire could not get at it... This point is the head of the river Des Moines. It is a large and grassy lake and a great place for muskrat and waterfowl, and consequently a great place for Indians, as there is no timber for a long distance to the south and

west. At this place I halted and almost made up my mind to winter here.”⁵⁸ Prescott moved on, but in 1833 LaFramboise was given a license to trade at a place called Crooked River, the name given the Big Sioux. Instead he came to the Grand Lisiere area to set up a permanent post. It was only forty miles from the Big Sioux and accommodated Yankton, Sisseton, and Wahpeton bands.⁵⁹ He stayed at this post only five years but during that time he affected the lives of his Dakota relation, opened the region to the imagination of a developing America, and informed its exploration.

Islands on the Prairie

Grand Lisiere du Bois, also called Grande or Great Oasis, was a hardwood forest about a mile and a half square surrounded by four lakes and many wetlands. It was a unique area, an island of wood on an ocean of grass. There were few wooded areas that could withstand the prairie fires that burned hot and swift. Only an area surrounded by water, could continually nurture trees and bushes, berries and vines. These were areas that the Dakota called *tchan-wita*, “wood islands.” They were scattered thinly across the prairie and the Dakota had named them all. *Mdehabetchi* or “Where the Pelicans Are” now called Lake Shetek, *Tchanarambie*, “Hidden Woods” now Lost Timber, and *Hamahu Witta* or “Walnut Grove.”⁶⁰ They were all important to the native population that called this area home. The Dakota name for Grande Lisiere was *Tchanptaye Tanka*, which also meant “great band of woods”.⁶¹ Grande Lisiere sat at the heart of a once marginal area lying between the peripheries of the great western grasslands and the eastern deciduous forests. Here the tallgrass prairie blanketed the hills slowly rising, almost imperceptibly, onto the western horizon. These slow rising steps were what the French called the *Coteau des Prairie* or “highlands of the prairie.”

The Coteau is an expanse of high land roughly the shape of a flatiron. It ascends near the Ocheyden Mound area, in northwest Iowa, runs northwest cutting diagonally across the bootheel of Minnesota on into the northeastern corner of South Dakota where it narrows in width and comes back down near the lower border of North Dakota. Standing from 400 to 700 feet above the surrounding land, it was a distinguishing point of reference for all who came this way. High on the slopes of the Coteau is a landscape of small swamps, sumps, and artesian springs that seeped out of the ground summer and winter. A pirouette of prairie creeks tumbles down the east side to dance with the Minnesota River or off to the west to run with Missouri waters. The Des Moines River starts here, running south into the Mississippi. Its northern region dumps water into the Red River of the North. The river sheds are narrow and in times of high water spill over into each other. Its waters scatter to the four directions. As the dividing line between the Mississippi and Missouri watersheds, it truly is a headwaters area. (See Figure 4.)⁶²

LaFramboise was an inland trader at Grande Lisiere du Bois. There were no dependable navigable rivers running to either the Minnesota or the Mississippi Rivers without long arduous portages. His furs were prepared and sent by wagon or ox-cart via a trail along the Cottonwood River to the Minnesota River where they were loaded aboard bateaux to complete the journey to Mendota. With no river access, there were few, if any, casual visitors besides the Dakota families who traded there and an occasional voyageur sent on errands to the Entry (another name for the main office of the American Fur Company at Mendota). By 1830 the Dakota bands had been trading with Europeans and later Americans for almost one hundred years. Still, the hegemonic culture was Dakota. Within the next twenty years that changed drastically.

LaFramboise had married into the Sisseton-Wahpeton bands by this time, marrying the daughter of Ishtahkba, Chief Sleepy Eye. Samuel Pond describes Ishtahkba as, "...the only man

recognized as [Wahpeton] chief between St. Lawrence [a village on the Minnesota River between Shakopee and Carver] and Lac qui Parle...He appeared to be a thoughtful, prudent man, of placid temper and good understanding.”⁶³ The large territory overseen by Ishtahkba was open for LaFramboise’ trade once kinship ties had been solidified. The marriage was *a la facon du pays* and never sanctified by a priest.⁶⁴ It is hard to determine the actual date of the marriage but by LaFramboise’ own estimate it might have been as early as 1822.⁶⁵ Like his father and maternal grandfather before him, LaFramboise began a mixed heritage family, another generation of cultural mediators.

In the spring of 1833 LaFramboise rolled into Grande Lisiere with his Dakota wife, young son, four voyageurs, and eleven horses.⁶⁶ He made it his temporary home for the life of the post, roughly six years. It is misleading to call this post his home. He was often gone checking on other trading areas, traveling to Mendota, the main entry point for the American Fur Company, and annually went back to his family’s home on Mackinac Island. His wife spent time with her family, probably following seasonal rounds with their son, Joseph E. The short span of time LaFramboise’ post was extant belies its importance as a factor to later settlement. Explorers retraced the overland routes established to the post. They later became pioneer routes heading west to homestead. New explorations and incursions by Americans to the region built up a bank of knowledge about the Coteau. Grande Lisiere became, for a short while, a gateway between American civilization along the Mississippi River Valley and the wilderness of the “Great American Desert.”

CHAPTER 1 - Leading the Pathfinders: LaFramboise as Guide to the Coteau des Prairies

*"We arrive with the storm at the post that Mr. J.P. LaFramboise, our guide and interpreter, occupied for several years as agent for the American Fur Company. It is situated near the last isle of woods we are to encounter for three or four days. In the environs of the district there lived, until a few months ago, 30 lodges of Sisseton, of Tizaptan, and of Warhpekutes."*⁶⁷ Joseph N. Nicollet diary, 1838

One of the first explorers to open up the region and the lives of its original inhabitants to the imagination of the American mind was George C. Catlin, artist and ethnographer.

LaFramboise was an informant to Catlin's queries about the quarry. His was not the first incursion by America into the Dakota landscape, but it was an important one. On the heels of Catlin was cartographer, Joseph Nicollet, whose exploration in 1838 and 1839, led to a detailed map of the resources and landscape of the upper Midwest between the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. As a guide to Nicollet, LaFramboise' local knowledge informed the surveyor whose map was the basis for all subsequent maps of the west.⁶⁸

At Grande Lisiere LaFramboise established his trade with different villages of the Sisseton-Wahpeton, and possibly with Yankton band members from the middle Lakota tribe as well. Being only a day's ride from the Pipestone Quarry was an advantage of the Grande Lisiere site. Long familiar with the quarry, LaFramboise dug pipestone to supplement his trade, making pipes, or sending back stone to Mendota for use there. In an 1834 letter to Henry Sibley, he apologizes for having no more of the "red rock" as he had broken his crowbar.⁶⁹

Grande Lisiere was constructed similar to other posts of the era with a high stockade built around the perimeter. Inside the walls was a two-room building constructed of native hardwoods from the island grove, one for trade and one was the living quarters for LaFramboise

and his family. There may have been other small outbuildings for horses or stock. There was a hand made fur press to prepare the pelts for shipping. Many posts included areas for stock to keep them safe from theft or occasional revenge killings. Horses were especially coveted and loss of one could mean not getting the year's merchandise to market in a timely manner. The voyageurs and their families lived in lodges or tipis within the stockade as well. At times there were as many as three hundred Dakota camped near the post and the métis population within might have reached as high as ten or fifteen. When Henry Sibley took over the Sioux Outfit for the American Fur Company in 1834 there were a few changes instituted. Many posts had been engaged in gardening and small farming operations. Joseph R. Brown had grown a few acres of wheat and corn at Lake Traverse.⁷⁰ Sibley encouraged gardening at each post to decrease the need for food shipments. LaFramboise had a garden, raising crops like corn, squash, watermelon, onions, potatoes, beets, turnips and beans. In letters to Sibley he requested seeds and potatoes for spring planting. In 1836, when George Catlin and John Wood visited Grande Lisiere on their way to the Pipestone Quarry, LaFramboise regaled them with the many types of foods he could provide. He could supplement the produce from his garden with exotic meats like beaver tail, buffalo tongue, Sandhill Crane, and young swan, attesting to the bounty of the prairie and a very Dakota style of hospitality.⁷¹

The area was a lucrative spot for trade. Because of the myriad potholes and sloughs, it was brimming with muskrat but also close to the buffalo herds along the Coteau. In 1834 Sibley contracted LaFramboise for a salary of \$500 dollars, an increase over Bailly's price. At the end of that trading season LaFramboise shipped 7,200 muskrats, 60 otters were stored in his warehouse, and one Indian had brought him 650 muskrats in one month. Sibley's whole

Western Outfit sent 293,288 furs down the Mississippi River the next year and 95 percent of those were muskrat.⁷²

Rarely did LaFramboise fail to make a profit at Grande Lisiere. On occasion, though, his personal account credits were overdrawn. At the end of 1835 he owed the company \$130.23. His purchases ranged from things like French prints, ear bobs, and fancy soap, presumably for his wife, to dolls and toys for his son, then six years old.⁷³ LaFramboise himself was fond of rum and though it was illegal to trade it to the tribes, he was known to bring it to his posts for personal consumption. Sibley did his best to cut back the amount of liquor coming into the trade, understanding how detrimental it was and also how opposed to it Indian Agent Talliaferro was. At one point in time Sibley caught a keg of rum being sent along with some of LaFramboise's usual goods. As a lesson he had the keg emptied, re-filled with plain water and sent it on. He could only chuckle at what the response was at the other end of the trip when LaFramboise tapped the keg for his first draught of river water.⁷⁴ It was one of many jokes between the men.

Sibley and LaFramboise had an amiable relationship. Sibley described him years later in his memoirs. "Joseph LaFramboise, who died several years since, was a capital mimic, spoke with fluency four or five different languages, and he was withal an inveterate practical joker. He and Alex Faribault were wont to amuse themselves at the expense of LaBathe, who was a simple minded, honest sort of man, and by no means a match for his tormentors."⁷⁵ Sibley goes on to recount the infamous tea party the three attended at the home of a Captain at Fort Snelling. It was one of those sultry Minnesota summer nights and the three were served copious cups of hot tea. Sibley writes,

"It should be premised that Indian etiquette demands on all festive occasions, that the visitor shall leave nothing unconsumed of the meat or drink placed before him. The large cup

filled with tea was handed to LaBathe and the contents disposed of. The poor fellow at that time could speak nothing more of English than the imperfect sentence “Tank you.” When his cup was empty, Mrs. G., who was at the head of the table, said in her suave and gentle manner, “Mr. LaBathe, please take some more tea.” LaBathe responded, “Tank you, madam.” Which being interpreted by the waiter to mean an assent, he took the cup and handed it to the hostess, and Mr. LaBathe was forthwith freshly supplied with the hot liquid...Seven great vessels full of the boiling tea were thus successively poured down his throat, LaFramboise and Faribault meantime almost choking with suppressed laughter. For the eighth time the waiter approached to seize the cup, when the aboriginal politeness, which had enabled LaBathe to bear up amid his suffering, gave way entirely. He leapt to his feet and exclaimed in French, “LaFramboise, for the love of God, tell Madame I do not want any more tea!”⁷⁶

It was an ongoing joke at LaBathe’s expense for years to come. LaFramboise’ humor and his playfulness ingratiated him to others in the company and everyone he dealt with. It helped him accommodate to unfamiliar settings and he was not adverse to laughing at himself as the situation required. In one story found among the William Fletcher Papers at the Minnesota Historical Society, an unknown author tells of another mealtime where LaFramboise himself was the butt of the joke.

“In 1847, the Steamer *Argo*,-Capt. Blakeley in command, was coming up(or going down) river. A number got on at Wabasha to [go] ? to court. Jo. Laframboise was among them. He was well saturated with liquor. When the first dinner bell rang, Jo. eat[sic] dinner. Then pulled his chair back and went to sleep. In a few moments the 2nd bell rang. Jo waked up, and forgetting he had eaten, got a 2nd meal, and went to sleep again. This happened twice and Jo eat 3 dinners that day. It made immense fun for the crowd. They had a trial of Jo before Judge Dunn which was an uproarious old time.”⁷⁷

LaFramboise’ ability to amuse others and his sense of fun and storytelling garnered appreciation from other noteworthy historical figures. Artist and ethnographer, George Catlin was very impressed with LaFramboise. They met in 1835 at Prairie du Chein where Catlin inquired about his knowledge of the Pipestone Quarry. LaFramboise knew the area so well that he drew out a detailed map of the quarry for Catlin. The artist kept the drawing and had it with him when he stopped at Grande Lisiere the next summer. Catlin recounts in an 1836 letter, “This gentleman [LaFramboise], the summer previous to this, while I was in company with him

at Prairie du Chein, gave me a very graphic account of the Red Pipe Stone Quarry, and made for me, from recollection, a chart of it, which I yet possess, and which was drawn with great accuracy.”⁷⁸

LaFramboise hosted Catlin and his companion John Wood for two days, offered fresh horses, and then accompanied them on to the quarry. Catlin writes about this in his typical romantic style but his verbal depictions of LaFramboise give us a rare glimpse of the man. Catlin tells of the good humor he found in LaFramboise.

“We spent a day or two very pleasantly with this fine and hospitable fellow, until we had rested from fatigue of our journey; when he very kindly joined us with fresh horses, and piloted us to the Pipe Stone Quarry, where he is now encamped with us, a jolly companionable man, and familiar with most events and traditions of this strange place, which he has visited on former occasions. LaFramboise has some good Indian blood in his veins, and from his modes of life, as well as from a natural passion that seems to belong to the French adventurers in these wild regions, he has a great relish for songs and stories, of which he gives us many, and much pleasure; and furnishes us one of the most amusing and gentlemanly companions that could possibly be found.”⁷⁹

Catlin was obviously taken with LaFramboise and his capacity to keep a vestige of civility beyond the edges of the Euro-American social structure and in the middle of a culture as foreign to Catlin as the Dakota. LaFramboise seemed to have at his disposal people to work for him, a stable business, a relatively secure lifestyle, plenty to eat and share, and time to spend, as a gentleman of any Eastern social circle might, in leisure discussion and sport. This was the romantic view given to a reading public back East, and hid a more truthful view of the difficult life that was typical of LaFramboise’ everyday existence. Catlin offered a rare glimpse of LaFramboise in his description of the trading house and the surprise of the Indians at seeing white faces among them. LaFramboise’ speech pattern was reproduced as distinctly French. Whether Catlin wrote his exact words or not, joy at seeing someone from beyond the veil of the frontier is apparent in his words.⁸⁰

Catlin is credited with being the first white man to visit the quarry, though he stated that LaFramboise was very familiar with the place and had been there many times. What Catlin did that made him remarkable in the history of the quarry, was take some of the rock and give it, later on, to a mineralogist in Boston by the name of Dr. Jackson. The rock was analyzed and pronounced a new and previously unknown mineral compound. In honor of the one who brought it into the spotlight, the substance was called Catlinite.⁸¹

Of equal significance to the history of this region are the written and visual depictions Catlin brought to the outside world of the vanishing Dakota culture. His art gave Euro-Americans their first glimpse of the unknown Coteau de Prairie and the Dakota inhabitants. “Catlin was among the painters who made the tribes of the Plains synonymous in the popular mind with all American Indians and assigned them larger-than-life attributes of bravery, stoicism, and physical endurance.”⁸² Catlin’s illustration in Figure 5, shows the quarry with an exaggerated but beautifully detailed ridge of red rock behind it and the Dakota stone workers skin tinted exactly like the rock. His intention was to portray the old legends of the rock as the flesh of the red man. His stories published in book form in London in 1841, were part of the epistolary travel journalism genre and “originated as a series of reports from western outposts published by the *New York Commercial Advertiser*.”⁸³

Catlin described Grande Lisiere at its zenith. The next year found the overland fur trade in shambles and the Dakota decimated by disease. In 1837 economic panic struck the nation, the price of muskrat furs dropped to an all time low of seven cents each. Sibley made a decision late in the season to withdraw his traders from the outlying posts. He ordered LaFramboise to move his entire invoice of goods to the Little Rock post on the Minnesota River and serve the balance of that year’s contract there. (See Figure 4.) On May 21, 1838 a final invoice for \$3,211.41 was

transferred officially to the Little Rock post and pelts to the value of \$1,099.95 were credited to the American Fur Company books.⁸⁴ If the majority of those furs were muskrat, which undoubtedly they were, at seven cents per pelt there may have been as many as 15,000 muskrat furs shipped to Mendota that spring.

Lack of fur bearing animals was not a problem but a lack of hunters and trappers was. A wave of smallpox engulfed the Dakota in 1837. According to Nicollet, the native population of Grande Lisiere was reduced to a fraction of its original number and the remaining members chose to move closer to their relatives in the Minnesota River Valley for fear of an attack by roving bands of Mesquaque. Joseph Nicollet reported in 1838 that 30 lodges of Sisseton and Wapekute had lived there within the previous eight months.⁸⁵

Other changes were wrought for the Indians that year in the form of a treaty signed by the Dakota, Chippewa, and Winnebago tribes that gave up all lands east of the Mississippi. The 1837 treaty provided funds to the American Fur Company for assumed debt of the tribes to the tune of \$325,000. It was a windfall that kept the Northern and Western Outfits of the Company afloat from earlier losses.⁸⁶ It also whetted the appetite of the American Fur Company for more annuity dollars to replace increasing losses from the fur trade.

In 1835 LaFramboise' old companion from the Big Stone Post, Hazen Mooers, had moved to the Little Rock post on the Minnesota as an independent trader. By 1838, "Mooer's and his son-in-law, Andrew Robertson, at their post downstream at the Little Rock had grown tired of losing money and were preparing to leave the deteriorating fur trade altogether."⁸⁷ After a brief period at the mouth of the Cottonwood River to the south of Little Rock, LaFramboise moved to the Little Rock Post. During the summer of 1838 LaFramboise was engaged as guide for the Joseph Nicollet expedition and headed back onto the Coteau des Prairies.

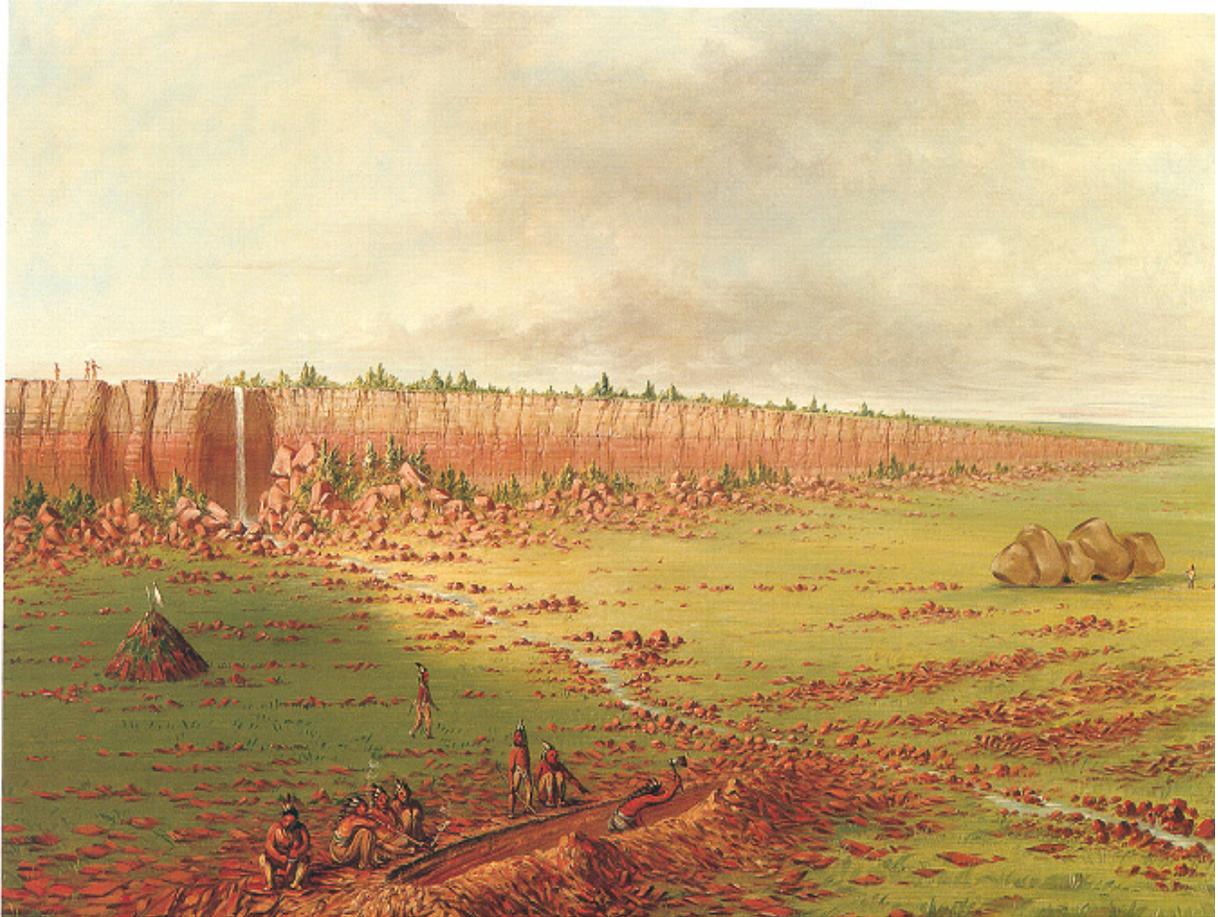


Figure 5: Catlin's Rendition of the Red Pipestone Quarry, 1836.⁸⁸

On June 18, 1838, Joseph Nicollet, a cartographer for the United States Corps of Topographical Engineers, his young assistant John C. Fremont, and a long convoy of various wagons, voyageurs, and guides headed west from Traverse des Sioux, now St. Peter, Minnesota. Their mission was to explore and map the land between the upper stretches of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. The route took them west to places like Lac du Cygnet, Coteau de Prairie, Lac du Chetek, Grande Lisiere du Bois, and the Great Pipestone Quarry. Some of those names have been lost from memory but the places are still there. All would be fairly unrecognizable to the eyes of those early explorers, buried now under a modern accumulation of roads, shade trees, towns, wind generators, highline wires, and drainage ditches. The very presence of this group heading out onto the prairie in 1838 has a direct correlation to all the modern detritus that now sits on the landscape. By achieving their mission, they paved the way for white settlement on the land, changing it forever.

The collection of this group of explorers brought together the many different agendas of indigenous tribes, government officials, independent scientists, businesspeople, and adventurers. It was an eclectic crew gathered from as far away as Europe and as local as the very land to be explored. Nicollet was a leading French astronomer who, after being bankrupt, left Paris in disgrace for America in 1832. Here he found a great need for his talents and his love of physical geography. “He saw himself following in the footsteps of Humboldt, whose procedures in barometric determination of heights and astronomical determination of locations were the heart of his own work.”⁸⁹ Nicollet was the first to use these techniques in determining exact locations in North America. In the six years between his arrival in America and the 1838 expedition, he had proven his invaluable worth by adding greatly to the exacting knowledge of latitudes and longitudes of the new country. His exploration of the Mississippi to its source in 1836 re-defined

the understanding of its upper lengths. That work on the upper Mississippi River brought him a job offer to lead the 1838 expedition. Nicollet had spent the winter of 1835-36 with Henry H. Sibley at Mendota where they became fast friends. He also created a friendship with Lawrence Taliaferro, the Indian agent at Fort Snelling. Those friendships connected Nicollet with Joel Poinsett, then Secretary of War, “who believed strongly that the future of the United States lay in peaceful and orderly exploration and settlement of the West.”⁹⁰

In June of 1837 Taliaferro sent Poinsett a letter describing the extensive work that Nicollet had performed and suggested that his service would be very useful to the government in understanding the “vast territories.” Poinsett was appreciative of Nicollet’s scientific work, done at his own expense over the past five years. In the winter of 1838 Poinsett offered him the lucrative position as leader of an expedition under the auspices of the newly created Corps of Topographical Engineers. “Nicollet, a Frenchman and a civilian, was thus a transitional figure in the history of American expeditions.”⁹¹ The government was forthright in its reasons for such an expedition. The treaties of 1825-1837 had given over millions of acres of Indian land in Wisconsin and Illinois territories for settlement and the wave of pioneers was extending west beyond the Mississippi River. A better understanding of the resources of the region was needed.

The American Fur Company had involved itself three years earlier with Nicollet and the expedition. Pierre Chouteau, sole partner in the Western Outfit of the American Fur Company had been enticing Nicollet to explore the region since their first meeting in St. Louis in 1835. Part of the goal of the expedition was to reach a point called Devil’s Lake in present-day North Dakota. This was a spot of great interest to the American Fur Company who wanted to expand trade to the west and needed more information about the area and its native population. The AFC became the provider for the expedition “The result was that the expenses of Nicollet’s expedition

could be charged at any American Fur Company post, and the company would be reimbursed by the government.”⁹²

Henry Sibley took it upon himself to find voyageurs to outfit the party. It proved no small task. This was a time of great upheaval in the Dakota lands with smallpox ravaging the bands and border wars being fought with the Mesquaque to the south and Ojibwa tribes on the north. Some of the AFC traders had been attacked by the Dakota. Joseph Brown had recently been wounded and run off his post at Lake Traverse.⁹³ Two guides were chosen for the trip, Joseph LaFramboise and Joseph Renville, Jr.. LaFramboise was stationed at the Little Rock post along the Minnesota River by this time. He and Renville were married to women of the Sisseton tribes, which gave them the best chance of negotiating with any hostile band members they might encounter. Their wives went along, possibly for added negotiating power. LaFramboise knew the southern part of the route like the back of his hand having lived and traveled that area for a dozen or more years. Renville had grown up in the northern part of the route where his father had engaged in the fur trade and created a sort of barony among the Indians near Lac qui Parle on the upper Minnesota River. Both men were fluent French speakers and Nicollet would have had the added benefit of receiving information in his native tongue.

For his services as guide, Renville received a horse and a forty-dollar double-barreled shotgun.⁹⁴ This seems a low price compared to what LaFramboise was paid. On a voucher dated September 1838, from the U.S government to the American Fur Company, LaFramboise received two dollars and fifty cents per day as guide and interpreter for seventy-eight days giving him a total of one hundred and ninety dollars. He was also paid for the use of his horse. The horse got one dollar per day, which was the same amount the voyageurs received for their work.⁹⁵ At some point in time LaFramboise also furnished a calf for the party and was

reimbursed ten dollars.⁹⁶ Obviously, LaFramboise was considered an important member of the party. In a note to Sibley, Nicollet writes, “I also take James Clewitt with me; I think he will confirm the good opinion which you have of him. It is not too much to have at least one honest and intelligent man on whom we can depend-after my State-Major [Joseph LaFramboise].”⁹⁷

Second in command on this trip was a very young John C. Fremont. Not yet the great “Pathfinder,” he was twenty-five years old and just learning the skills a cartographer would need to create new knowledge of a region. He had become acquainted with Joel Poinsett during his time in Charleston, North Carolina. Poinsett had recently been assigned as Secretary of War under President Martin van Buren. He assigned Fremont to this expedition as a civilian assistant.⁹⁸

Fremont was charged with keeping the books for the trip and supplying the expedition. In April 1838, John J. Abert, chief of the Bureau of Topographical Engineers under Poinsett, sent Fremont a letter of assignment; “Mr. Nicollet is now on his way to St. Louis, Missouri. You will repair to that place without delay and report to him for orders. With the view of relieving him in his important duties from all unnecessary details, you will act as disbursing agent to the expedition, but you will make only such expenditures, as he shall authorize. For this purpose a requisition for one thousand dollars will be this day made in your favour. Additional funds will be supplied on your estimates and will be sent to such places as you shall indicate.”⁹⁹ For his services Fremont received four dollars per day and ten cents per mile of travel.¹⁰⁰ Fremont ultimately got more than he gave to this explorative trip. From this and a subsequent trip with Nicollet in 1839 he learned the skills of a cartographer, astronomer, and a geographer. They were skills that served him in his treks over the Rockies and along the West Coast. In a letter to Poinsett on the eve of the expedition Fremont extols the knowledge he is gaining daily from

Nicollet. “Our preparations are at last completed and tomorrow we follow the steps of the Pilgrim of Science into the Prairie Wilderness. I can scarcely tell you how delighted I am in having been placed under him in this Expedition. Every day- almost every hour I feel myself sensibly advancing in professional knowledge and the confused ideas of Science and Philosophy where my mind has been occupied are momentarily arranging themselves into order and clearness. I admire Mr. Nicollet very much, not only for his extraordinary and highly cultivated capacity but for his delightful manner- in his delicacy and his almost extravagant enthusiasm in the object of his present enterprise which he seems to think the sole object of his existence.”¹⁰¹

This expedition was all about science. Nicollet not only came prepared to study the geography of the region, but the geology and the botany. He hired and paid a German botanist named Geyer to accompany the group. His interest in the ethnography of the indigenous people led him to take extensive notes on place names, Dakota words, habits, and customs.¹⁰² He asked constant questions of LaFramboise and Renville about the places they were passing and what in the distance might be of interest, often sending riders out from the group to investigate them. “Later Nicollet was to write: The reconnaissance of the country traversed each day, or rather the survey of our route, by land or by water, was made by making the magnetic bearing of every point, by estimating distance, and making, as we went, a connected sketch or bird’s eye view of the whole, and very often including distant points of importance, indicated to us by the guides, to which one of us always went to take note of.”¹⁰³ Nicollet specifically mentions a time where near the Cottonwood River LaFramboise’ knowledge of the area helped them decide which fork of the river was its source.¹⁰⁴ Their survey equipment included a telescope, a chronometer, an artificial horizon complete with quicksilver, mountain barometers, a sextant, thermometers, magnetic compass, a microscope, and magnifiers. To study the geology they brought along

hammers, chisels, a punch and a large knife. For Geyer and his botany collection they ordered eight reams of paper for preserving plants. No money was spared in purchasing cases for the equipment for safekeeping. One item listed in a voucher sent to Nicollet is a charge paid to a watchmaker for a chronometer box, "...to secure a valuable chronometer that belongs to the U.S."¹⁰⁵ His was a single-minded purpose based in the acquisition of knowledge. LaFramboise's local savvy informed the geographer's maps and texts.

The purpose of other members of the group is not as clear. There was a 17-year-old named Eugene Flandin, who Nicollet agreed to take along as a favor to a friend. Flandin's family had asked Nicollet to take the young man West for some adventure and experience. Two other individual adventurers accompanied the group as well. Viscount de Montmort, was attached to the French legation from Washington, and Captain Gaspard de Belligny of Lyons paid his own way on the trip for forty days of it. Not much is known about these independent attachments to the survey party or even how long they stayed with the group. Nicollet never reports in his notes whether or when they may have left the group. Eight voyageurs were hired for the trip as common laborer. These men hunted, prepared the meals (which pre-required a hunt for wood or buffalo chips to start a fire), cared for the horses, and kept the wagons in running order. They drove some of the wagons and set up and broke down camp on a daily basis. At night they took turns guarding camp, particularly the horses from being stolen, as their loss would have put a quick end to the whole survey trip. They each received a dollar per day for their toils. Nicollet insisted that he be their only leader asking LaFramboise to leave them alone.¹⁰⁶ As a trader for the American Fur Company, LaFramboise was familiar with being in charge of voyageurs, having men at his posts on a regular basis to do general labor. It would have been natural for him to begin bossing them around. Nicollet would not allow it and treated

them more kindly than LaFramboise was accustomed. Fremont later noted that under Nicollet's kind leadership the men soon became extremely loyal to him.¹⁰⁷

The route that brought them across the prairie from Traverse des Sioux was the trade route that LaFramboise used from Grande Lisiere. It took them five days to get to what is now Murray County. The map on the next page (Figure 6) depicts the Nicollet party's route across southwest Minnesota. They stopped at *Mderhabetchi* "Lakes where the Pelicans Nest" which the French translated to "Lac du Chetek," today Lake Shetek. At Lake Shetek the party stopped for several days to rest and map the region. Near the headwaters of the Des Moines River, it was important to get accurate readings.

During their stay disaster was averted for young Fremont. Nicollet sent Fremont and LaFramboise to the southern end of the lakes to explore the outlet there and take notes. They were gone for an inordinately long time and the whole camp became worried that something tragic had happened. Nicollet wrote, "Messrs. Fremont and LaFramboise did not return until 9:00 in the evening. I was very uneasy about them. An accident had befallen them in crossing la Riviere des Moines that flows into Lake Shetek. They found a muddy bottom, the water chest deep. The wagon became mired. They attempted to push the wheels, but Mr. Fremont, who had just eaten, had a cramp because of the water. He lost consciousness and just missed drowning. They returned exhausted."¹⁰⁸ Had it not been for LaFramboise' rescue, the "Great Pathfinder" might have perished at the bottom of Lake Shetek.

After three days of rest and exploration the party moved up and out of the Shetek basin and on to Grande Lisiere by a longer route to find a place to ford the east fork of the Des Moines River. Nicollet spoke of Grande Lisiere as the “Great Oasis.” He was the first to call the place by this name. They stopped overnight at the recently abandoned post. It had been burned to the ground. Nicollet blamed “Sioux marauders” for the destruction.¹¹⁰ However, the American Fur Company had burned the post at Lake Traverse that summer and this may have been part of company policy to destroy outlying posts. At the site of the charred post they doctored an ailing horse and one of the men who had punctured his foot. The following morning they made their way through the woods onto the “island” as it was the only high way through the lakes, then up to the top of the Coteau. From the description of the trip it is easy to believe that LaFramboise’ knowledge of the area brings them important information about sites along the ridge. Nicollet writes of a spot on the high prairie that for all purposes was totally concealed. “This little river follows a deep ravine, its sides wooded since they are protected against fire. But the tops of the trees are not visible above the level of the prairie, and as wood is so rare, knowledge of it is precious; the Sioux name this tchan narabedan-the hidden wood.”¹¹¹ Only someone like LaFramboise with intimate knowledge of the area would know of its existence.

The group rode into the “famous valley of the red stone” on June 29, 1838. They stayed eight days, becoming acquainted with the Warpekute families working the quarry. These families were familiar with LaFramboise and had more than likely traded at his post. A few of the voyageurs helped with breaking up the quartzite, sometimes even blasting the stone with dynamite to ease the task. Not only did the native workers get stone to work into pipes but the voyageurs took stone along as well. Nicollet spent his evenings taking astronomic readings and days exploring and taking notes. At one point he gathered the natives together and vaccinated

them from the dreaded smallpox. LaFramboise spent time carving his initials in the stone at the top of the rock ledge.¹¹² The initials of the whole party appear together, as depicted in Figure 7 on the next page, and it is likely from the style that he may have carved them all. They are a lasting symbol of the party's presence.

The Nicollet expedition in 1838 and one more trip in 1839 initiated change on the Coteau. Though LaFramboise did not guide during the 1839 adventure, he did take time to meet them for a few hours near a stop at Clear Lake (South Dakota) to greet his old friends.¹¹³ The map, along with Nicollet's extensive notes on the natural resources of the region, informed an American government already intent upon expansion west. Within five years the most accurate map of the region was produced, and all subsequent maps of the west would be built from its accuracy.¹¹⁴ By then Nicollet was dead, his life and work cut short by illness, and Fremont was on his way to becoming a great explorer. LaFramboise settled at Little Rock Post on the Minnesota River and continued to affect regional change in less dramatic ways.

J.N.Nicollet.
C.F.
C.A.G
J.L.
J.E.F.
J.R. 8.3.1.
Expedition

NICOLLET'S PARTY, 1838, AT THE PIPESTONE QUARRY.

Figure 7: Copy of Inscription at Pipestone Quarry, 1838.¹¹⁵

CHAPTER 2 - The New Fur Trade: Treaties as an Economic Replacement for Furs

*“I had thus already determined to come and stay with you this summer and remain if the treaty terms had been satisfied. I just received note that it is not completed [ratified] which is a great concern to me and all who I deal with...I don't know what we'll do to subsist... they [furs] have no value. If I had known things would turn out as they now have I would have abandoned the whole affair.”*¹¹⁶ Joseph LaFramboise.

The despair was clear in this note, written in 1842 by Joseph LaFramboise to his cousin Elizabeth Baird, who lived “back East” in Green Bay. The 1840 Doty Treaty with the Eastern Dakota tribes, referenced in his letter, was signed for two years but never ratified by Congress. With the treaty's failure, LaFramboise' immediate hope for a more secure life went with it. Like many mètis in the Old Northwest in the first half of the nineteenth century, LaFramboise was the product of two hundred years of mixed-heritage family history. Yet, his was a unique American life shaped by his multi-cultural upbringing within a dynamic frontier environment. As a person of mixed heritage and a son of the Mackinac fur trade, Joseph learned how to negotiate within and between cultures using skills acquired from both. A significant lesson for him was the economic advantage that could be gained as a “mixed-blood” through treaty negotiations.

LaFramboise used his multiple identities within both Indian and Franco-American cultures to survive and thrive, socially, economically, and emotionally, during a politically unstable period. His life-long employ in the fur trade, and more specifically, within the American Fur Company, was natural given his mother's successful fur trade business and his experience growing up in a mixed-heritage family surrounded by the fur trade milieu that was

the heart of the Mackinac economy. His business relationship with the American Fur Company, his Odawa heritage, and later his Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota kinship ties, allowed him leverage within the treaty system to provide extra earnings for his immediate family. His experiences with treaties from 1830 to the final treaty he was involved with in 1851 gained him and his family the rights to land, half-breed scrip, and money paid outright for trader's debts. The Dakota bands LaFramboise traded and lived with relied upon his translations and advice to supplement their power in negotiations. As the power and influence of the Dakota declined, Joseph allied himself more closely with the encroaching white culture.

Historian Kathleen Way Thomas, in her 2005 dissertation about the Marcotte family, (LaFramboise' mother, maternal aunt Therese Fisher, and cousin, Eliza Baird) describes the importance of identity within the quickly changing political situation of the Northwest Territory in the wake of the War of 1812. "In all three cases, [French, British, and American control] identities and categories mattered because they determined access to resources and made access appear natural rather than constructed."¹¹⁷ Furthermore, Thomas posits that the criteria and expectations for "mixed-bloods" depended upon their physical appearance, their adherence to either "white" or native ways, and their rate of adaptation to individual ownership of land and personal property. Because these families were along the path of adaptation "mixed-heritage peoples thus had "wobble-room."...and could emphasize other features or behaviors to suit their audience, White or Indian..."¹¹⁸ Magdelaine utilized her "whiteness" to gain access to the power of the American Fur Company as a trader for the company. She used her "Indianness" to gain access to benefits offered by the American treaty polity being used to bring about a "European style" order to the landscape of the Northwest.

The 1821 Treaty with the Odawa, Potawatomi, and the Ojibwa was a governmental effort to order the landscape on the eastern side of Lake Michigan, thus gaining access to the region for mining, forestry, and possible agriculture. The tribe was allowed some reservation land but mixed-heritage family members of those tribes were also allowed land from this treaty. Way Thomas suggests this was meant as a zone to buffer the two cultures against one another. However from Magdelaine LaFramboise' standpoint, and her sister Therese Schindler, who was also involved in the fur trade, this treaty had affected their livelihoods and they felt it was proper to receive some redress for that. Magdelaine and Therese may have lost close access to some of their extended family members but certainly profits to their fur trade business were threatened as a consequence of moving the Odawa and Potawatomi off their territory. When the Treaty of 1821 was signed, Joseph's Aunt Therese received a section of land along the Grand River from the Odawa. An older cousin, also named Joseph LaFramboise received land from this treaty, through relatives of the Potawatomi tribe.¹¹⁹ The LaFramboise trading family blended into the Odawa, Potawatomi, Ojibwa, and Dakota tribes making them eligible to draw benefits as "mixed blood" relatives of each respective tribe. So common was this blending of cultures that "...By 1832, approximately one out of seven people living in the Lake Superior country were "persons of the mixed blood".¹²⁰

None of the tactics used by Magdelaine and Therese were lost on Joseph, Jr. as he grew up in this multi-tribal, multi-cultural atmosphere. His childhood experiences included living at the outpost on Grand River, the family home on Mackinac, and a few years of education in Montreal at the Huron Mission School under the care of his older cousin Alexis LaFramboise. Schooled as a Catholic there, Joseph took his first communion at the age of fourteen in 1819.¹²¹

In each setting a different set of values, traditions, and behaviors were expected of him and he learned to navigate within their parameters.

The Catholic religion was important to Joseph's mother, evident in her battle against the Protestant incursion of Presbyterian missionaries at Grand River. Magdelaine, in an effort to thwart the construction of a Protestant mission on tribal land, used American property laws to hold land given by the Ottawa tribe to her and members of her family.¹²² Besides the signed affidavit giving the land, there is no evidence that the land was ever deeded to the family; however it does offer insights into Magdelaine's understanding of personal property and her ability to utilize American laws to her benefit.¹²³ That same year, Joseph entered the fur trade himself as a junior trader for the American Fur Company. He took many of these multi-cultural lessons with him to navigate a new frontier. As a Catholic, however, Joseph fell short. It was a constant irritation between him and his mother when he chose to marry *a la facon du pays* and neglected to have his first two marriages sanctified. When his oldest daughter, Julia, decided to become a Presbyterian, Joseph gave his consent claiming whatever would make her happy, pleased him. The Presbyterian missionaries, such as Thomas S. Williamson and Stephan Riggs, served the Dakota community much as the Catholic priests had in the Superior country and were the only source of education for both *métis* and Dakota children.

Joseph's new home on the far western edge of the Northwest Territory, lay just beyond the cultural and economic reach of Mackinac, and just beyond the political reach of the American government, temporally. It took another five to ten years before their influence was felt in the Minnesota River Valley and out on to the Coteau des Prairies beyond. This region was home to the western bands of the Eastern Santee Dakota. The Seven Council Fires of the Dakota were broken into seven bands that utilized the resources from the Mississippi River to the

Missouri River east to west, and ran north to south from what is now central Minnesota and southern North Dakota to southern South Dakota and northern Iowa. The Dakota bands ranging from east to west were the Mdewakanton, the Wapekute, the Sisseton, the Wahpeton, the Yankton, the Yanktonai, and the Teton Dakota, which itself was broken in many different bands. The territories were mutable and members of bands gathered and split according to seasonal needs. During his time on the plains and in the river valley, LaFramboise traded with almost all of the local bands at one time or another, but the band he dealt the closest with and married into, were the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands.

In 1805 the Mdewakanton Dakota, first ceded land by treaty for the construction of Fort Snelling. An 1830 Treaty was signed with the Mesquakie and Mdewakanton Dakota for a small tract of land between the Mississippi and Des Moines Rivers.¹²⁴ The government evolved plans to civilize and assimilate the tribes by means of agriculture, education, and Christianization. This treaty offered money for blacksmiths and agricultural tools as well as yearly annuity payments. The Treaty of 1830 also included provisions for a tract of land to be set aside for the mixed-blood members related to the tribe. This turned out to be an important element for the Joseph LaFramboise family.

This tract ran along the western shore of Lake Pepin, a large lake where the upper Mississippi River widened. Perhaps set as a temporary buffer between the encroaching white settlers and the Dakota tribes, this land was never opened to settlement by the “mixed-bloods”. The land remained inaccessible due to delays and misjudgments. It was twenty-five years before the dispute was settled with the families who were qualified by descent to receive scrip in return for their share of the land, which then was opened for settlement by whites. “Mixed-blood scrip” referred to legal tender that those who could prove at least one quarter Dakota blood could

receive and use to purchase other land outside of the reservation.¹²⁵ Though Joseph had no interest in the treaty at the time of signing, his three children by his first two Sisseton wives were eligible for scrip in lieu of land, as was his oldest son's family, Joseph's grandchildren. Joseph and his last wife, Jane Dickson, who was one-quarter Mdewakanton Dakota, had three children who qualified to receive scrip in lieu of the land as well. Most of their children, and all of the grandchildren were born long after this Treaty was signed. Julia, LaFramboise oldest daughter, arranged to sell her scrip through a third party to whoever would purchase it, and used the money for her education, a full thirty years after the treaty.

In 1833, the Potawatomi and Odawa tribes ceded more land along the shores of Lake Michigan. By this time the American government had eliminated personal reservations for mixed heritage members of the tribe. In lieu of this land, family members were allotted money outright in relation to their ties to the tribes. Magdelaine and her son (assumed to be Joseph) received \$400, Therese Schindler received \$200, and Joseph's older cousin Alexis and his family received \$1,200. Besides family payments, this treaty was one of the first to allow direct payment of tribal debts to the American Fur Company. Trade deficit payments received by Company members Stewart and Abbott amounted to \$20,000, a tidy sum for a struggling company.¹²⁶ The next year J. J. Astor stepped away from the fur trade to pursue more lucrative businesses. The company was purchased by two of the principle interests in the company. Ramsey Crooks, who owned approximately five percent of the company with Astor, purchased the Northern region and retained the company name. Cadet Chouteau, of B. Pratte, and Company, purchased the Southern region. Ramsey Crooks set about hiring a new generation of administrators to add to long-term employees like Joseph Rolette and Alexis Bailey. Newcomers, Henry H. Sibley and Hercules Dousman brought a new era to the fur trade. They were less dependent upon kinship ties to tribes

and more complicit with the American treaty making policies to sustain the Company's profits. Under their administration the Company would profit from annuities as well as from furs.¹²⁷

LaFramboise benefits as a mixed heritage relation of the Odawa, though small, would inform his involvement with subsequent treaties with the Dakota bands. Following in the footsteps of a least three generations of his family, LaFramboise married into the tribe with which he traded and took advantage of those strong kinship relations to further his business. Like his mother before him, he also used those ties to take advantage of the American treaty polity to supplement his livelihood.

The Company Connection

LaFramboise' knowledge of the diverse goals of the U.S. government, the agenda of the American Fur Company, and the realities of the Dakota bands allowed him to broker personal advantages when treating with the Dakota tribes. As he moved up in responsibility, he garnered the trust of company leaders like Henry H. Sibley. LaFramboise also gained the trust of his Sisseton relations. His marriage to the daughter of Sleepy Eye, chief of the Sisseton band, assured him a place within their kinship network. In 1832 they had their first and only child together, Joseph Eduard.¹²⁸ In 1838 LaFramboise continued the close relationship with Sleepy Eye by marrying another of his daughters and having three more children.¹²⁹ Relatives like The Thunder Flute came to him to ask who should be made leaders in the band.¹³⁰ Many expected his generosity in trade and he knew the temperament and integrity of each of his native kin.¹³¹ Though at times LaFramboise complained bitterly of how he was treated by different bands, he continued his business with them, claiming losses for credits not satisfied by incoming pelts. In 1837 he participated actively for the first time in a treaty negotiation where he benefited directly

from his business relationship with the American Fur Company as well as from his kinship ties with the Dakota.

It had been a tough year for the Dakota and the American Fur Company, as well, but for different reasons. In the summer of 1837 smallpox swept across the plains taking many members of the band that LaFramboise had traded with at Grande Lisiere du Bois post. The remainder left to join relatives along the Minnesota River. They were too few to protect themselves against the Fox and Sauk bands that continued raids across the southern border of the Dakota's territory. For the Company, the economic Panic of 1837 had cost them a good share of that season's profits. The price of muskrats, which was the majority of the trade at the time, fell from twenty cents each to seven cents and later became almost worthless. Building on their experience with the 1830 treaty, where the company received seventy thousand dollars for debts from the Mdewakanton, the Company representatives battled against the will of Indian Agent Lawrence Talliaferro to again receive several thousand dollars toward the Ojibwa's debt in a treaty with them in 1837. Talliaferro was determined they would not duplicate that in the treaty with the Dakota tribe. He hustled a group of Mdewakanton chiefs onto a boat and headed for Washington City followed closely by a group of determined American Fur Company representatives, LaFramboise included.¹³²

The trip was especially fruitful for the traders. In the end the Mdewakanton ceded a small portion of land east of the Mississippi, land that had already been vacated by the bands. Besides annuities, the Mdewakanton were promised agricultural tools, blacksmiths, farmers, and schools to begin the process of civilization that was deemed important to the government agenda. One hundred and ten thousand dollars was set aside for the Mdewakanton mixed blood relation.¹³³ The traders, after pleading their case, received ninety thousand dollars for incurred

debts. It was almost a year before the treaty was ratified, and even longer before payments were forthcoming. This treaty affected many subsequent events for the Dakota and the traders.

Due to the difficulties in carrying out the treaty provisions, Lawrence Taliaferro finally resigned the job he had committed a good portion of his life to. The trader's money, if any of it came to LaFramboise, went right back into Company hands for debts incurred by the traders for personal purchases and unpaid Indian debt. The treaty money fortified the American Fur Company through an economic depression.¹³⁴ The Company leadership was even more complicit in making the next treaties with the Dakota. For the Mdewakanton, this treaty was one of a long line of treaties that was either broken or only half-heartedly followed by the American government whose attention turned away from the Dakota as soon as each subsequent parcel of land was ceded.

LaFramboise benefited from the 1837 Treaty through his business relationship with the American Fur Company. He may not have received payment directly, but the Company stayed in business and he continued working as a clerk and merchant. "In 1838 two commissioners, W.L.D. Ewing and S.J. Pease came to the upper Mississippi River Valley and took testimony, eventually coming up with a list of 200 mixed-bloods which had been submitted to the tribe for its approval. After a few names had been stricken, the list was approved."¹³⁵ The list reads like a list of Who's Who of the fur trade with names like Campbell, Faribault, Provencalle, and Renville. The list includes Joseph LaFramboise, though he had been found to belong to a different tribe and was stricken from the list. His sons, Joseph, Jr. and Alexis, are included in the list.¹³⁶ Inclusion in this process shows LaFramboise' close identification with the Dakota bands and his effort to utilize that relationship for the benefit of his children, if not himself.

Though LaFramboise had figured how to navigate within the treaty system, America's national political environment was one variable that he could not control. He used his own power and influence within the Sisseton band to broker advantages locally but he was forced to put his faith in the law of the U.S government and the political power of the leadership of the American Fur Company. Both lay beyond his sphere of influence. Doing so put him, as well as his Sisseton relation, at the mercy of national political debate and mediation. Policies were developing far beyond the borders of the Old Northwest based on a different agenda and understanding of native tribal needs and mixed heritage families.

President Jackson's policies of removal during his tenure had devastating and long lasting effects. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 targeted the South as a way for Jackson to repay his debt to strong Southern supporters for his presidency.¹³⁷ The southern tribes, forced to immigrate to desolate areas of the Southwest along the now famous "Trail of Tears," experienced the failure of presidential promises for self-rule, lack of substantial financial help for the emigration process or to establish the tribes in their new territory.

In his eagerness to promote removal, Jackson's administration failed to do any long-range planning for the process that resulted in an "extraordinary diffusion of power that shifted decision making from Washington to the local areas."¹³⁸ The promise of an Indian Territory where eventual suffrage might be given met with intense opposition whenever it was considered, being compared to the idea of giving slaves the vote. The ensuing debacle for the Five Civilized Tribes was a strong lesson for Tennessee legislator John Bell who was a proponent of removal but became an anti-Jacksonian. Bell charged "that all of the "embarrassments" suffered by these Indians resulted from...the administration's over zealously in bringing Indian land to market."¹³⁹

To avoid such mistakes in the creation of a Northwest Indian Territory, Bell, as the Secretary of War in 1840 advocated for a territory for the northern tribes where no white incursion would be tolerated, with a provisional government would rule until the tribes could prove their ability to self-rule, promise of citizenship, and the tools of “civilization” would be promptly provided for those who chose agriculture as a way of life. Bell chose the newly elected governor of Wisconsin Territory, James Duane Doty, to broker this sweeping treaty with the Dakota. Doty was an obvious candidate. He had worked closely with J.J. Astor as the company’s attorney and was familiar with the influence that members of the American Fur Company had with the Dakota. However he gave them little time to prepare allowing them only a month’s preparation to gather the tribal members together for a Treaty.¹⁴⁰

On June 25 1840, LaFramboise wrote from Prairie du Chien to his cousin, Eliza Baird, telling her that he and Sibley had been readying to go to St Louis when they received word from Gov. Doty asking them to wait back at the St. Peter’s River, no doubt at Traverse des Sioux, to help negotiate a Treaty. LaFramboise was to be an interpreter for the negotiations and be paid five dollars a day for his services. There must have already been some communications as to what the Treaty would contain for the mixed-bloods and the traders associated with the Company. LaFramboise suggested that if all went well he might be Major LaFramboise by the time he visited Eliza the next year.¹⁴¹

This last comment directly corresponds to the concessions that Doty promised the traders for their extensive help in securing a solid and efficacious treaty. To Sibley he promised the governorship of the new Territory and to LaFramboise a position as an Indian Agent.¹⁴² LaFramboise references the title Major, which was a military title bestowed upon the civilian agent’s position. This advancement would have increased his status within the white culture,

giving him a title and greater responsibility. It would also have increased his status within the Dakota kinship network. His relations would expect him to show generosity and favor in turn allowing them greater ability to show favor.

The Treaty was negotiated and signed in short order at Traverse des Sioux on July 31, 1841 with few in attendance, just members of the Sisseton, Wahpeton, and Wapekute bands of the Dakota, some of the traders from the American Fur Company, a few dragoons, and Doty. What was promised the Dakota besides the provisions written into the treaty is unclear, but there may not have been any suggestion that other tribes would be moved onto this land with them. It could have seemed to the Dakota that they were selling their land to the United States for their own possession. They expected a Dakota territory where they could govern themselves, one that was large enough to continue the hunt as well as farm if they so desired, and free from the incursion of white settlers. It would have been an acceptable, if not palatable, situation for a tribe who had already lost so much to disease, disruption, and cultural destruction. Figure 8 shows the region where the thirty million acres were ceded to create a Northwest Indian Territory. It takes up essentially the whole Eastern Dakota Territory.

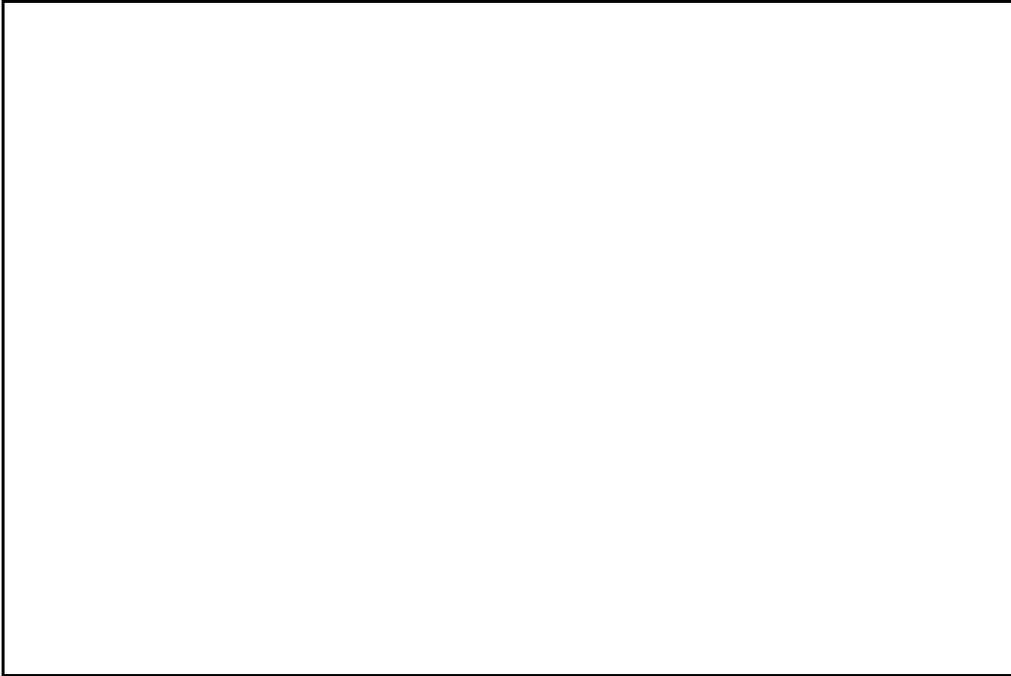


Figure 8: Note that approximately the upper third of the shaded area to be ceded was territory overseen by Chief Sleepy Eye, LaFramboise' father-in-law.¹⁴³

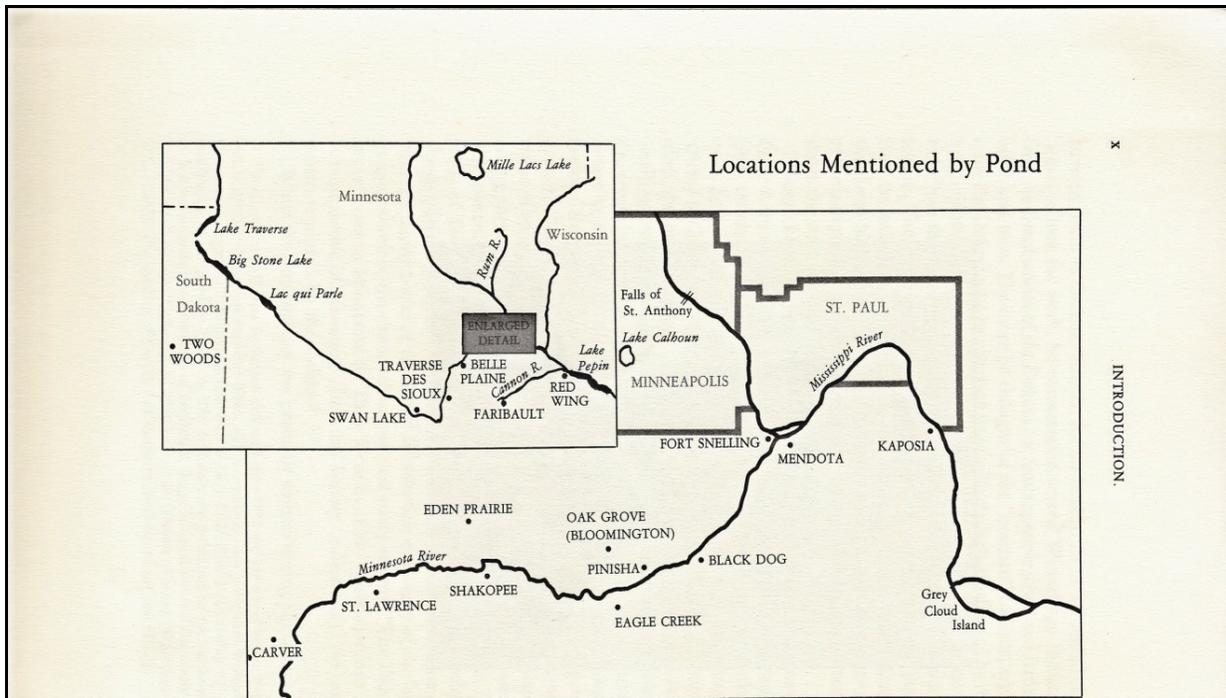


Figure 9: Map of Minnesota River region¹⁴⁴

There is little doubt that LaFramboise had extensive influence with his Sisseton and Wahpeton relatives at this time. He had traded and lived with the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands for close to twenty years and recently married the youngest of Sisseton chief Sleepy Eye's three daughters, continuing a close kinship bond with the band. His lobbying for the treaty would have had influence with his father-in-law. According to missionary Samuel Pond, Sleepy Eye was the only recognized chief of a group of loosely organized Wahpeton and Sisseton villages between St. Lawrence and Lac qui Parle, roughly the whole elbow area on the northern bank of the Minnesota River. (See Figure 9.)¹⁴⁵

LaFramboise had responsibility for a trading area that included a post at Little Rock, very near the Swan Lake village, all the way to Two Woods, and south to the Spirit Lake area, that is located in present northwestern Iowa. By comparing the two maps on page 56, it becomes apparent how widespread LaFramboise' influence was over the greater part of the area to be ceded. Getting the treaty signed, however, proved the easier task than getting it ratified. It was in this arena that LaFramboise had to rely upon the influence of the American Fur Company leadership and the hope that the legislature would agree that the benefits of the treaty outweighed any concessions given in the process of its signing. LaFramboise' friend and manager, Henry Sibley, took the lead on lobbying for the passage of the treaty, spending much of the next year in Washington trying to negotiate its path.

The treaty did not want for high profile supporters. Secretary of War John Bell introduced the treaty and sent letters of support. Robert Stuart, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Michigan Territory, (and prior employee of the American Fur Company) was won over by Sibley. Poor timing and some formidable opponents were perhaps the greatest obstacles for this agreement. The death of President Harrison and replacement by John Tyler that summer

created strife within the Whig Party and by summer's end, "all of Tyler's cabinet had resigned in protest, including the secretary of war. One of Bell's last acts as secretary was to send the Doty treaty to the Senate with a recommendation for speedy ratification."¹⁴⁶

Though timing was against the treaty, it had an even greater opponent in Senator Thomas Hart Benton who argued against it on a Constitutional basis, claiming "The purchase of land and the terms of the purchase are proper objects of a treaty, but the disposition of the land, the establishment of a government, and the formation of laws for that government, belong to the Legislative Department...Congress has heretofore repeatedly refused to establish an Indian Territory and government; so that this treaty undertakes to do a legislative act, which the legislature has refused to do."¹⁴⁷

Historian Rhoda Gilman expresses the belief that the constitutionality of the treaty, despite the poor timing, was what kept it from final ratification. That, and an unstated fear of "the treaty's threat of admitting racial and cultural pluralism to the governing institutions of American society. At the end of the congressional session the treaty was tabled and despite a long year of lobbying for it, amendments to it, and continued support for it, the Doty Treaty was defeated resoundingly in the next session, 26-2.¹⁴⁸ The government, upon which Joseph had pinned his hopes, had failed him.

During this long period of uncertainty, the American Fur Company continued with previous plans to sell out to Chouteau and Company, in St. Louis. That is where LaFramboise and Sibley had been headed the previous spring when they received word of the possible treaty negotiations. The Company had struggled with financial problems since the Panic of 1837 and had never recovered. Its agents, moving into the more lucrative opportunities of land speculation,

timber sales, and mining, knew the end of the fur trade was impending with the loss of a free roaming native work-force.

The Doty treaty would have positioned the sub-agents handsomely in government jobs and allowed the northern branch of the company to die a quiet death to incorporation.

LaFramboise understood what the loss of the treaty meant to him when he wrote to Eliza Baird in October of 1842. "I had thus already determined to come and stay with you this summer and remain if the treaty terms had been satisfied. I just received note that it is not completed [ratified] which is a great concern to me and all who I deal with...I don't know what we'll do to subsist... they [furs] have no value. If I had known things would turn out as they now have I would have abandoned the whole affair."¹⁴⁹ The bitterness of LaFramboise's disappointment was apparent in his tone. The blame for that bitterness, he put solidly on the government. "Dear cousin, a person of your means cannot conceive of the affliction that a man like me must endure and not be paid through the law."¹⁵⁰

Though disappointed by this set back, LaFramboise continued his trade as an independent trader buying his goods from Sibley's store in Mendota that was, for the most part, run by William Forbes and supplied by the Chouteau Company. The American Fur Company was gone, all except the name. The traders that continued working with the Dakota did so under their own auspices without the company's monopoly to protect them from competition. At Petit Roche Trading Post (Little Rock), near the elbow of the Minnesota River, LaFramboise adjusted his trade to the new environment. A list of his trade outfit goods for 1848 still included many of the items he had traded for twenty years; wool blankets, glass beads, vermilion, cotton material, and pots. Some items reflected the changes in the Dakota lifestyle. Garden hoes, scythes, axes, mules and harness are listed for trade to provide more for agricultural needs and less for the hunt.¹⁵¹

Because the trade was based on credit, the Dakota knew very well how to manipulate the system, getting credits from one trader and then selling pelts to another if his prices were higher. The laws of kinship reciprocity kept many from taking greater advantage of this fact. As alcohol was introduced more and more by settlers squatting around the forts and unscrupulous traders, reciprocity and kinship traditions began to break down.

LaFramboise complained to Forbes and Sibley about other traders accepting furs that should belong to him and the problems alcohol was creating for his relatives and hunters. In 1845, LaFramboise wrote to Sibley, "I am vexed to learn that David [perhaps Faribault] has begun to trade with my Indians; if not directly he gives the goods to his father-in-law who trades in his name. The Iron Door's brother-in-law has already got 400 rats. The Red Circle's youngest brother proposes to start in a few days to go and get his trade, which is promised to him; he tells me that two Indians cannot do great harm...It is well known that it is impossible for me to fight an opposition like this..."¹⁵² These statements are good examples of the extensive family networks that LaFramboise was familiar with and understood intimately. He was forced to balance his trade within those networks while attempting to compete with local traders. The addition of alcohol sharpened competition between traders and the situation became more uncertain.

In October of 1848, LaFramboise reported "I told you that my Indians do not care for liquor but the Indians from below are continually carrying some up...Ta-sha-ka has bought some horses during my absence and the Quill [Plume de Quillon] a sauvage belonging to Olivier [Faribault] is here with much liquor...all these things do not show much prosperity for the coming year, as I do not give them credit, all this is not much encouragement for the Indians, who are already badly inclined."¹⁵³

LaFramboise used the term “sauvage” derogatorily in this letter. For him the “sauvage” was a term taken directly from the French-Canadian, meaning one who lived outside the law, as well as outside of the respectability of native kinship traditions. An Indian was a relative, a trusted hunter and business partner, a savage, whether white or native, worked against the peace and prosperity of the people in general and against LaFramboise, in particular. Increasingly LaFramboise’ world looked “sauvage.”

The 1840’s were years of disarray and confusion for the Eastern Dakota. The decade after 1837 saw the loss of many Dakota chiefs to disease. The bands felt pressed by white settlement, pressured with alcohol, and hemmed by competing tribes on the north and south. They struggled along keeping what they could of the traditional lifestyles but game was increasingly scarce. In the winter of 1849 Minnesota as a territory was established. That winter also brought starvation conditions to the Dakota and a new call for their land. LaFramboise was involved with both feeding his relations and encouraging them to participate in a treaty.

As part of the tribal kinship network, LaFramboise was expected to share what he had with his relations. By the spring of 1850 LaFramboise wrote in haste to the store at Mendota, “...we are very short of provisions this year as it has been a great fast among the Indians...but anyway it is gratifying to get some news, especially about the treaty; we have not heard of it since last fall.”¹⁵⁴

The next treaty did not hold promises of an Indian Territory of the Northwest, nor self-rule. LaFramboise looked to the prospect of a treaty anxiously to ease the burden of debt he had built up over the decade since the Doty Treaty. To his estimation the Dakota bands owed him almost \$11,000 dollars. When the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux was negotiated in 1851, LaFramboise was more than interested in the negotiations and ready to assume the identity of

interpreter and mediator to bring his Sisseton relation to the bargaining table. And they did come. As a testimony to his influence with them, over 200 Sisseton attended the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux. LaFramboise was not an official government interpreter for the proceedings. More likely he worked behind the scenes explaining the options to the chiefs, cajoling, and encouraging their cooperation.

He did his job well. Before signing the treaty document, LaFramboise' father-in-law, Chief Sleepy Eye, was well versed on what this document would mean for his people. At the very end of the negotiations, after the offer had been given and, the government officials thought, it had been accepted, "Sleepy Eye arose to the great annoyance of the commissioners, and said, without concert with any of the chiefs, many of the young men and soldiers ...thought that the country the Great Spirit had given them was worth three and one half millions of money. That the Commissioners, finding them in difficulty, had come to ask it of them for less than its real value."¹⁵⁵ Sleepy Eye was disappointed in his request for a higher sum, but he showed an understanding of land values and that need could encourage a quick sale. LaFramboise may have been his source for the land estimate. If the Dakota had gotten a higher price, a trader's agreement would have taken a smaller percentage of that amount or the traders may have been able to ask for more compensation. Whatever the reasons behind the speech, it failed to open the treaty for re-negotiation and garnered only contempt by the white delegates.

This treaty, and the subsequent traders agreement, that gave two hundred ten thousand dollars off the top of the payment directly to the traders of the now defunct American Fur Company, was a contentious act. LaFramboise is listed as being owed eleven thousand dollars.¹⁵⁶ The money deducted from the Sisseton Wahpeton portion of the treaty was eventually sent to the assigned supply officer, Hugh Tyler, who deducted fifteen percent for his efforts, and

gave over the rest to Henry Sibley to distribute among the traders and mixed-bloods.¹⁵⁷ There has been no documentation found to show LaFramboise collected that money or not. It is, however, entirely possible that he owed money to the now defunct American Fur Company and Sibley's company store at Mendota, so much of this windfall would have gone back into Sibley's pocket. "A receipt in the Sibley Papers shows that the company alone took in \$105, 618.54, which was divided into four nearly equal shares...Sibley, Dousman, McLeod, and Ramsey Crooks were the beneficiaries, but Sibley and others close to him also had private debts that were collected from mixed-bloods and other traders."¹⁵⁸

In the spring of 1845, some six years before the Treaty, LaFramboise shared with his cousin, Eliza Baird, the difficulties and debt his business was developing. She had evidently suggested he move back east to be near her in Green Bay. "You told me I should come away and come stay with you. That is entirely my desire, but it requires the arrangements of the company, which doesn't want anything to do with me. It is thereby necessary for me to sell all my affairs and my properties, everything. With the Indians, their debt is mounting. I believe, without exaggerating, eight to nine thousand piastres [dollars] and that is if they have a treaty quickly."¹⁵⁹ This letter indicates that LaFramboise was in some trouble with his distributor as well as holding Indian debt on his accounts. This was debt that he hoped would be assumed by the U.S. government upon the settlement of a treaty contract. Two years later in 1847, he was still expecting a government bailout of the increasing Indian debt. "...it is quite doubtful I will be able to make any agreements with the Company. I haven't a single hope, but if the Sioux make a treaty with the government to attempt to meet my claims that are up to eleven thousand dollars now."¹⁶⁰ Indeed, things were getting tight for LaFramboise. Writing to William Forbes, the clerk of Sibley's store in Mendota, in February of 1847, he offered up the problems of the trade during

this time. “I am mortified to learn that the band of Red Circle starts tomorrow morning for St. Paul with the little furs they killed, during my absence. You remember I told you they have been on a spree for a whole month. He owes me \$50 and his brother \$100. I am very much discouraged: that is the reason I want to get rid of them, [cutting them from his trade workforce] I pray you write to me...if you have anything for me to do down there or any other place for I must provide for myself and my family. Take my place for an instant and you will see how disagreeable it is.¹⁶¹ LaFramboise was ready to take on any other job to support his family rather than continue the trade where he was. His only respite, he believed, would come from a treaty.

The signing of the trader’s agreement, according to Minnesota historian, William Watts Folwell, “...did more than any other single action on the part of the white men present at the treaty to engender bitterness among the Indians afterward.”¹⁶² One thing is certain, though the original amount of that trader’s agreement was drastically reduced by approximately half, LaFramboise’ total reimbursement remained exactly what he had believed it to be in 1847.

The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, with its subsequent trader’s agreement, allowed LaFramboise to benefit from his mixed heritage and enabled him to mediate between cultures to provide for his family. But it had also forced him to choose between his Dakota relatives and the mounting debt he ran up with Sibley’s company. The new fur trade went from pelts to government annuities. This was the last treaty LaFramboise was involved in. His Dakota kin were forced from the land onto a narrow reservation along the Minnesota River and suffered the consequences of government inattention and apathy. LaFramboise’ trade continued, but more and more his merchandise was traded to the immigrant settlers moving in and the soldiers occupying newly built Fort Ridgley, just a few miles away. Little Rock, so named for the long stretch of hard granite that extended out into the river, increasingly became a stopping point for

bateau and steamboat alike. A new era had come to the river valley. LaFramboise, with his understanding of the white American culture, was positioned to take advantage of it.

CHAPTER 3 - Cultural Adaptations in a Changing Landscape

“I could come find you and live as a Christian with my children, not that I would be happy since for that I cannot be. It does not please my mother that the life I led with the sauvages since 1820 and the small education that I received makes a contrast that my mother cannot understand. It would take a year or more to assimilate, to learn the ways of managed society again.” JLF, 1845

During the late 1840's, and more so after the signing of the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux in 1851, LaFramboise's relationship to the Dakota tribes became less of an economic partnership and more of an economic burden. The pressures of white settlement on the Dakota bands became more apparent through the late 1840's and continued to increase past LaFramboise's death in 1856. Ready access to alcohol was harder to regulate, fur-bearers and buffalo became scarce and hunters had to go farther afield to gather the goods needed to trade and meat needed to subsist. Hunger and fears of starvation raised the expectations that LaFramboise would share what he had with his kin. Moving the Dakota onto the reservation after 1851 proved to be an extended process that hindered the trade but raised expectations of annuities supplanting furs. As the influence and power of the Dakota bands declined, LaFramboise began to identify more with the needs of the developing white settler movement and less with his Sisseton Wahpeton relatives. It was a rational response to the disintegration of the trade he had grown up in and called his own. This shift was also, in part, a reaction to his mother's ongoing expectations that he return to his “civilized” upbringing. Finally, it was an acknowledgement of the changing cultural landscape he found himself surrounded by as more and more American settlement occurred. The tug of expectations, American, French Canadian, and Dakota, were realized on a daily basis in the lives of LaFramboise and his family in their choices and decisions. Those decisions reflected the

distinctive character of a man used to living in a world where individual choice was based in circumstance and the immediate cultural situation.

The Sisseton-Wahpeton Connection

Throughout the 1820's and 1830's LaFramboise was busy forging new ties to the Dakota and strengthening his economic relationship to the American Fur Company, becoming a middleman that bound the two together. His position as arbiter was made possible by his marriage to two daughters of the Sisseton-Wahpeton chief Sleepy Eye. These women exchanged their traditional role in Dakota society for a new set of standards in the fur trade society. Sylvia Van Kirk, in her book *Many Tender Ties* suggests, "In reality, the Indian woman may have enjoyed an easier existence at the fur trade post, but she sacrificed considerable personal autonomy, being forced to adjust to the trader's patriarchal views on the ordering of home and family."¹⁶³ As difficult as it may have been for his Sisseton wives to adjust to LaFramboise' culture, the Dakota would have expected him to fit into what Dakota anthropologist Ella DeLoria called "A scheme of life that worked."¹⁶⁴ To be successful, traders had to live up to the Dakota standards of family relationships, a complex set of kinship laws that ruled every day existence. DeLoria writes, "...I can safely say that the ultimate aim of Dakota life...was quite simple: One must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative...In the last analysis every other consideration was secondary-property, personal ambition, glory, good times, life itself."¹⁶⁵ LaFramboise, to bind himself economically to the Dakota had to bind himself relationally, not an easy task when his business relied on a market economy with a people who favored a more communal one. LaFramboise had to maneuver within two sets of expectations to be a good employee and a good relative. Again, his multi-cultural background helped him adapt

successfully to the Dakota culture. As the fur trade era concluded followed by the subsequent treaty and reservation era, the LaFramboise family cut new ground to manage the changes.

LaFramboise married two of Chief Sleepy Eye's daughters *a la facon du pays*. He may have been following more specifically the custom of the Dakota. Dakota historian Amos Oneroad, in his discussion on Sisseton Wahpeton customs, explains, "A man who married the older sister usually married the others as they became of age, so they would not be separated."¹⁶⁶ There is some genealogical confusion as to whether LaFramboise' first wife died before he married the second. It was very possible for him to have been married to them both. Neither of their Dakota names has been preserved and neither marriage recorded, which may illustrate the charge by LaFramboise' mother that he was living a "savage" life. Magdelaine's response to LaFramboise' news of a wife and child was "...he showed a lot of pretension for a man who has a concubine."¹⁶⁷ Historian Kathleen Way Thomas commented on Magdelaine's view. "Her response reveals the distance between her own experience as a young fur trade bride and her current position as a pious Catholic widow."¹⁶⁸ It also revealed the distance between her current experience at Mackinac and that of her son on the northern prairies.

A winterer like LaFramboise spent many days away from his post. In the 1830's as he was building his trading business at Grande Lisiere, he was often gone to other trading areas, like Lac qui Parle, Spirit Lake, and the Big Sioux River. LaFramboise' wife might have chosen to live within her *tiyospaye*, "a group of families, bound together by blood and marriage ties, that lived side by side in the camp circle."¹⁶⁹ Child rearing was a function of the Dakota *tiyospaye*. Joseph Eduard, born in 1832, more than likely, spent much time with his mother's family. Joseph Eduard's first language was Dakota, and he often used a translator as an adult.¹⁷⁰

LaFramboise made sure that his son was baptized at St. Gabriel's Church in Prairie du Chein, in 1840, at the age of eight.¹⁷¹

LaFramboise' letters during this time period displays a man at odds with the expectations of others and the reality of his situation. In the winter of 1840 he told Eliza Baird "Last summer, Mother told me I was a Child of Nature. No. Quite the contrary. There is no day that passes without me thinking about it. Who's brutal enough to undertake this mean world without parents or friends?"¹⁷² At the same time he longed for a social connection with the Euro-white culture, he was having children with a Sisseton woman. He kept the Sisseton relationship yet talked of marrying someone from the Euro-American culture. In the same letter he told Baird, "I started a partnership with Alex Faribault, a very respectable young lad, and I think we will do great with our Sioux this year. If Sibley is still in commerce next year, Mr. Faribault and myself will be employed in his company. As you can see, I will be ready to get married in a couple of years."¹⁷³ The following fall he wrote, "Now for the present let's talk about my loves. Oh, how in love I am since I left the Bay. You are quite aware that I traveled with Miss Jones. I can't sleep without dreaming of her. I believe she cast a spell on me."¹⁷⁴ He must have spoken of Miss Jones to his friend Sibley. In 1841, Sibley scratched a joking note in the middle of a letter LaFramboise was sending to Baird. "I pray you not to believe more than half of what this wild cousin of yours tells you, for I know he is somewhat given, like other old Sioux Indians, to story telling. I do all I can to keep him straight, and succeed generally pretty well, but I fear that his visit to Green Bay and Mackinac last season, did not do him much good, for he came back with the idea that he was handsome, and could get any young lady in the country to fall in love with him. He grieved much about Miss Eliza Jones, now Mrs. Clark. He

was certainly partly in love with her!”¹⁷⁵ Though Sibley wrote in jest, LaFramboise certainly had it in mind to re-connect to an Americanized culture through marriage.

LaFramboise’ second son Alexis George, was born during this period, at Little Rock, to LaFramboise’ second wife, who’s Christianized name is listed as Magdelaine Julia.¹⁷⁶ Born four years after LaFramboise’ trip to the Pipestone Quarry with Catlin, the baby may have been named to honor his friend, as there is no previous George in the LaFramboise ancestry. Alexis’ first name honored LaFramboise’ cousin from Montreal. In December of 1842, his first daughter was born, Julia Ann. Her mother, Magdelaine died possibly in childbirth.¹⁷⁷ This death marked a break with the Sisseton Dakota as formal relatives but certainly not as trading partners.¹⁷⁸ LaFramboise’ choice for his third and last wife suggested his movement away from a relational tie to the Sisseton and a closer tie with the Euro-American culture.

Soon after the death of his second wife, LaFramboise married Jane Dickson who was fifteen years his junior. She was the mixed- heritage daughter of fur trader, William Dickson, who had a post near Traverse des Sioux. Jane was one-quarter Mdewahkanton, and one quarter Ojibwa.¹⁷⁹ William Dickson was the son of Captain Robert Dickson, long time Scottish fur trader and British supporter. Jane Dickson’s marriage to LaFramboise was touted as the first “Christian” wedding in Nicollet County.¹⁸⁰ Though presided over by one of the missionaries, it is questionable how much the bride understood of the ceremony. By one account Jane knew so little English that she had to be prompted by LaFramboise to reply to the pastor during her marriage vows. ““Han ayah wo!” “Say yes, I tell you!””¹⁸¹ The family heirloom shown on the next page is recorded as the marriage blanket Jane wore at her wedding. A blanket worn over the head or around the shoulders was a strong cultural symbol for Dakota bands and stood as an icon of native tradition.



Figure 10

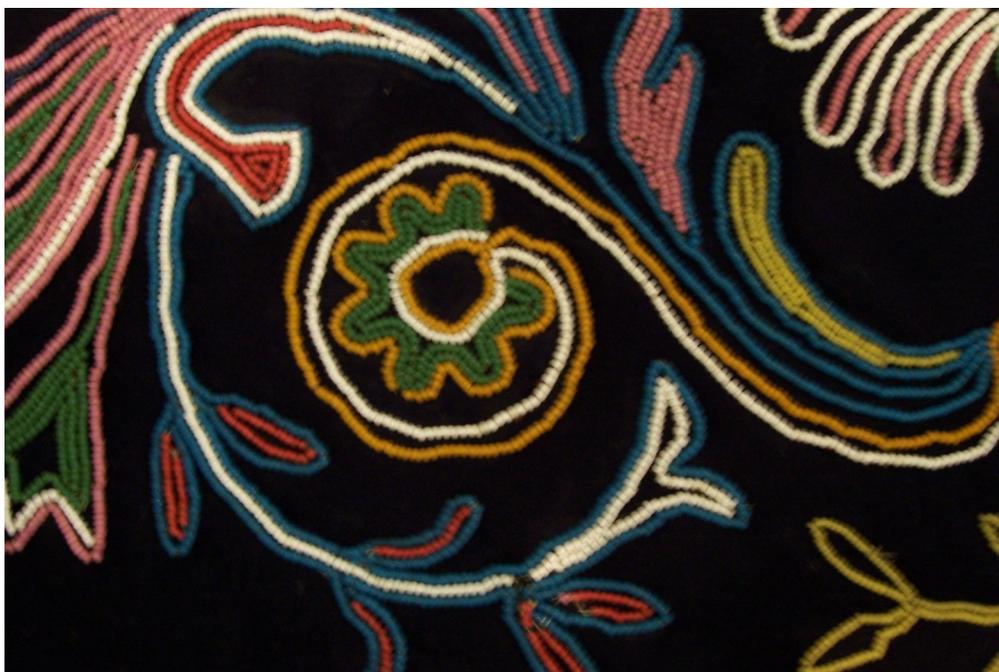


Figure 11: The Jane Dickson LaFramboise blanket is now held in the Minneapolis Institute of Art. Photos by Janet Timmerman

Joseph and Jane's sanctified marriage may have soothed over some of Magdelaine's fears. She lived long enough to know that her son might have returned to the faith that meant so much to her. A few years later Magdelaine Marcotte LaFramboise died and was buried under St. Ann's altar.

Upon her wedding, Jane took over the care of LaFramboise' three children, though Joseph, Jr. was a young adult by that time. Jane was the only mother that Julia and Alexis ever really remembered. Still, the three oldest LaFramboise children were influenced greatly by their Sisseton relations. With Chief Sleepy Eye's band close by at Swan Lake, all three of the LaFramboise children grew up with an intimate understanding of the Dakota culture and language.

Though LaFramboise felt he was poorly educated, traveler Martin McLeod offered a different opinion of LaFramboise' abilities; "to the kindness of my friend Monsieur Joseph LaFramboise I am indebted for the complete History of England in 9 vols. which is quite a feast in this dull spot and will enable me to pass the rest of my time...pleasantly and rationally."¹⁸² The fact that a man, a French Canadian no less, would keep the complete history of England in an outpost like Little Rock, confirms the importance that education held for LaFramboise, and he was a proponent of education for his children. His oldest son, Joseph E. had no opportunity for local schooling, growing up in the region before any missionary schools were available. When Julia was nine years old and Alexis was twelve, their father sent them to school at the Presbyterian Mission School at Traverse des Sioux, run by Rev. Robert Hopkins. Though LaFramboise considered himself Catholic, education took priority over religion. Setting precedence for him, his mother, Magdelaine, had established the first school on Mackinac Island by housing an Episcopal minister willing to teach the mètis and Indian children there.¹⁸³

Julia and Alexis were sent to live with the Alexander Huggins family in Traverse des Sioux to attend school. Huggins came to the region as a representative of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1835 to help Thomas Williamson set up missions at Lac qui Parle and Lake Harriet. The missionaries met with some success in a school set up at Lac qui Parle. “The school at Lac qui Parle, for which attendance records exist for the years 1839 and 1844-46, had no fewer than 236 students annually...In all, more than four hundred Sioux and mixed bloods had received some basic education by mid-century.”¹⁸⁴ The school at Traverse des Sioux offered mixed-heritage families like LaFramboise’ the first local opportunity for education. Rev. Robert Hopkins’ part in Julia’s and Alexis’ education was short lived, for he drowned in the Minnesota River during the gathering for the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux the next summer.

Mary Huggins Kerlinger, one of the Huggins children, remembered the day Julia came to stay with them the winter of 1850 and 1851. “... Mr. LaFramboise brought his little daughter Julia and asked to have her taken into the family and taught. The missionaries had generally been quite shy of the traders, but once in going past, mother had been sick and stopped at his house for the night. Mr. LaFramboise was much pleased and did all he could for them...He was now engaged in trade with the Sioux and spoke three languages fluently. Julia’s mother was the daughter of noble Chief Sleepy Eye and when grown [Julia] had somewhat the bearing of a chieftain. She would be noticed anywhere. She lived with us more than five years and ...I loved her like a sister. That was a merry winter. We were a family of 13 for Mr. LaFramboise had brought his son Alexis also, a nice pleasant boy.”¹⁸⁵ The Huggins family was paid to keep the children at a rate of seventy five cents each per week. They went to school in one of the settlement’s abandoned houses, learning to read and write. They practiced writing by opening a

school post office and wrote notes to one another each day. During that first year with the Huggins family, four of the girls, Julia included, had what Kerlinger called, “a great work of grace,” and asked permission of their parents to join the Presbyterian Church. “Mr. LaFramboise gave his consent, although he was a Catholic.”¹⁸⁶ It seemed Julia’s path was set on religious education and mission early in life. Julia’s father came to take her home for a few weeks about twice a year where she re-kindled ties to her stepmother and the Sisseton families that lived nearby. While at the Huggins home she was involved in their family functions. All remembered her as a mixed blood girl who Rev. Stephan Riggs called “more white than most white women he knew.”¹⁸⁷ Alexis stayed the first year with the Huggins family but after a gun accident that disfigured one hand, he did not return to the school. Julia remained for five more years.¹⁸⁸ LaFramboise’ choice to send his children to live with American missionaries assured them an education that he hoped would prepare them for the quickly changing social environment in which they found themselves. That they would never learn the Catholic catechism, was secondary.

LaFramboise’ family continued to grow. Jane and Joseph had five children together. Two died as infants.¹⁸⁹ The surviving three children grew up with different cultural influences than their older siblings. Their maternal family ties were different and the surrounding cultures were quickly changing. In 1847 William Robert was born, named after his Scottish grandfather and great grandfather Dickson. Two more daughters followed; Justine, in 1849, and Eliza (Elizabeth) in 1855. Eliza was no doubt named for her father’s cousin from Green Bay, Eliza Baird, with whom he kept close ties. These three children were listed as one-eighth Mdewahkanton on the U.S. rolls for claimants of mixed blood scrip in 1855. By the 1850’s their experiences were infused with a greater cultural flux.

In 1846, LaFramboise was still operating a thriving fur trade with the Sisseton bands. Accounts from that year show the Little Rock Post brought in over 28,000 muskrat pelts, but he was also still purchasing a number of buffalo robes (sixty-five in 1846) harvested from the diminishing northern buffalo herds.¹⁹⁰ In 1848 the Dakota reported to LaFramboise that the “there are no more buffaloes; they have all gone north.”¹⁹¹ Though LaFramboise’ trade continued, the social effects of the strain on the Dakota’s limited food sources increased. The growing number of whites moving to the region and supplying large amounts of alcohol frayed the cultural foundations of the Dakota and strained relationships with traders like LaFramboise.

In 1848 LaFramboise complained bitterly of the alcohol coming into the area making it difficult to trade without using it. The Dakota themselves brought in cheap alcohol to purchase horses and then took them south to sell at a profit.¹⁹² He cut off credit to the men he traded with, causing hard feelings between he and former Dakota relatives. Writing to H.H. Sibley in October of that year, LaFramboise says, “I would give anything to have you here to hear my wife’s conversation on all the bad reports the Indians have made [to her] which they said they heard the whites say. They told my wife to take all my goods and to go away, as I was not coming back anymore; but nevertheless they have some respect for my family and men; if not, their wives would not appropriate half my potatoes and wheat. All these things do not show much prosperity for the coming year, and as I do not give them credit, all this is not much encouragement for the Indians, who are already badly inclined.”¹⁹³ By 1849 LaFramboise reported drunken fights between some of the Sisseton men where serious injuries were incurred. In one letter he described housing a young Indian who had been shot in an altercation and was dying at LaFramboise’ home. He asked Sibley to send the man’s parents for him.¹⁹⁴ Where

alcohol might have been a contributing cause of death among the men, disease and starvation were carrying off the women and children of the Dakota.

In the hard winter of 1850 the band's provisions ran extremely low and LaFramboise shared what he had with the bands around him. His daughter, Julia was very ill that winter as well.¹⁹⁵ In 1851, he wrote to his cousin Eliza, that almost forty women and children of the area had died that winter.¹⁹⁶ In 1852 LaFramboise' canoe "disappeared," and was used by some of the tribe to go to Traverse des Sioux for provisions.¹⁹⁷ Upon returning to his post on August 18, 1852 he found his root cellar and stables had been broken open and his stores of potatoes and turnips diminished.¹⁹⁸ This was the year following the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux and the bands had assembled in the area along the Minnesota River for their first annuity payment. LaFramboise did not know where the payment was to be located, but was making preparations for it nonetheless.

The establishment of the nearby Lower Sioux Agency in 1852 affected the lives of the LaFramboise family in several ways. In the first years of the reservation's establishment, few Dakota stayed within its boundaries, choosing rather to continue the hunts and seasonal rounds that kept them from starvation. Though their travels brought in furs, feathers, and buffalo robes for the continuation of a meager fur trade, that trade slowly diminished over time. Also there was a growing white population at the Agency. Eventually there were over 150 white residents at the Agency with boatmen, skilled workers, and general laborers transferring in and out of the area.¹⁹⁹ This meant that LaFramboise increasingly saw steamboats at his riverside post with accompanying travelers, trade goods, and agency and military personnel. One of the agency personnel that affected LaFramboise' life was the new surgeon, Asa Daniels.

When he was fourteen, Alexis LaFramboise suffered a trauma in which both elder medicine men and a white doctor were called to help. The juxtaposition of a new medical technique and ancient native medicine arts within this event demonstrates the multi-cultural influences that informed LaFramboise' decisions during this crisis.

In a letter to Henry H. Sibley on July 10, 1854, LaFramboise writes "Dear Sir, since my arrival there has happened a great misfortune for me. My son Alexis fractured his right hand with a pistol, and there is so little of it left that the Doctor concluded to cut it at the joint. He suffers much and I am very much afraid the consequences will prove fatal."²⁰⁰ The story is expanded by an interview given in 1905 with the Mankato Review, by Dr. Asa Daniels. In it he recounts the story of his use of chloroform during an early surgical procedure. Daniels had come to the Minnesota River Valley to be the surgeon at the newly established Lower Sioux Agency in 1853. In the summer of 1854 he was called to the home of Joseph LaFramboise at the Little Rock Trading Post, not far from the fort. LaFramboise' son had suffered a gunshot wound to his hand after a gun had fired prematurely. When Doctor Daniels and the hospital steward arrived at the home, it was surrounded by Indians, "in a great state of excitement." He had LaFramboise send the Indians out of the house, but three wary medicine men stayed to watch what the doctor would do. The doctor examined the wound that had been bound with cloth and determined that the hand was beyond saving. He told LaFramboise he could give the child something to breathe that would make him sleep during the operation. The Doctor administered the chloroform. When the boy did not move as the first incision was made, the medicine men told his mother that he was dead. She immediately set up a wail and ran from the room. Soon all the Indians on the outside of the house took up the wail. LaFramboise told the Doctor what the medicine men had said. Daniels assured him the boy was not dead and would come awake as soon as the surgery

was over. After he had dressed the wound, he began the procedure to bring the boy out of his slumber. When Alexis started to move, a cry went up that he was living and that “the Doctor was Good!” Doctor Daniels assured the reporter many years later that he had been very anxious during the operation listening to all the wailing and with the three medicine men looking over his shoulder. He was relieved when the boy came to as soon as he did, fearing that the “horde” could have made it very interesting for him had the boy not survived. The news of a white doctor who could perform powerful medicine traveled as far as the Missouri River that year.²⁰¹

While the new technique had saved Alexis from pain during the surgery, there was little to help his suffering upon re-awakening. In actuality, the Dakota medicine men could have done as much without the chloroform. Samuel Pond wrote of the Dakota in 1834, “They believed in the efficacy of medicines and made great use of them. For external injuries they made external application of such things as they had learned to value through experience, and for internal diseases they administered medicines as we do. They had learned the medicinal qualities of a great many plants, roots etc., which they held in high estimation;”²⁰² LaFramboise chose to include the medicine men and allow Dr. Daniels to administer chloroform. He was willing to adopt the most efficacious aspects of both cultures. On July 20, 1854 LaFramboise tells Sibley “You will have the kindness to tell Bruce that I did not think to have the sacks made for the feathers, for my wife and I are too much occupied in caring for Alexis, who is sinking little by little.”²⁰³ There is no way to prove whether medicine men continued to treat Alexis after the surgery or not but he recovered and went through the rest of his life adapting to the disability.

LaFramboise and his family at Little Rock also continued to adapt economically after the 1851 treaty. He staked a claim for land in 1852 and expanded his economy to farming.²⁰⁴ While still keeping a trade going with his local bands of Dakota, LaFramboise increased the land he put

into production from a simple garden to farming and supplying the area with produce and occasionally meat. Those goods increasingly went to newcomers who were surrounding the post. The list of goods that LaFramboise ordered from St. Paul included fewer items like vermilion and more goods that supported agriculture, such as plows, hoes, scythes, and oxen yoke.²⁰⁵

With the Agency also came the new Fort Ridgely military post, established in 1853. The boundaries of the military reserve came within shouting distance of LaFramboise' post and Little Rock was a point of contact for the development of the site. (See Figure 12.) "In the fall of 1852... Colonel Frances Lee, then in command at Fort Snelling, [was] ordered to select a suitable site for a new fort, "on the St. Peter's River above the mouth of the Blue Earth." In the latter part of November, with an escort of dragoons from Fort Snelling and after a three days' march in the snow, the officers reached LaFramboise' trading post, at the Little Rock. Five miles above the Rock, on the crest of the high bluff on the north side of the Minnesota, the site was fixed."²⁰⁶

The development of the military reserve next door with a corresponding trail to the Fort from LaFramboise' post increased his opportunities for trade with the military personnel. By this time he was farming the river-bottom land around the post and no doubt supplying produce to the Fort. Until a river port could be established, most of the supplies for the Fort were brought by bateau to Little Rock and taken by wagon to the Fort. The map shown in Figure 12 shows the prominent spot held by the Little Rock Post along the border of Fort Ridgely military reservation. Another map of Fort Ridgely, drawn three years later, deletes the post from the border suggesting that it is no longer the supply center for the fort.

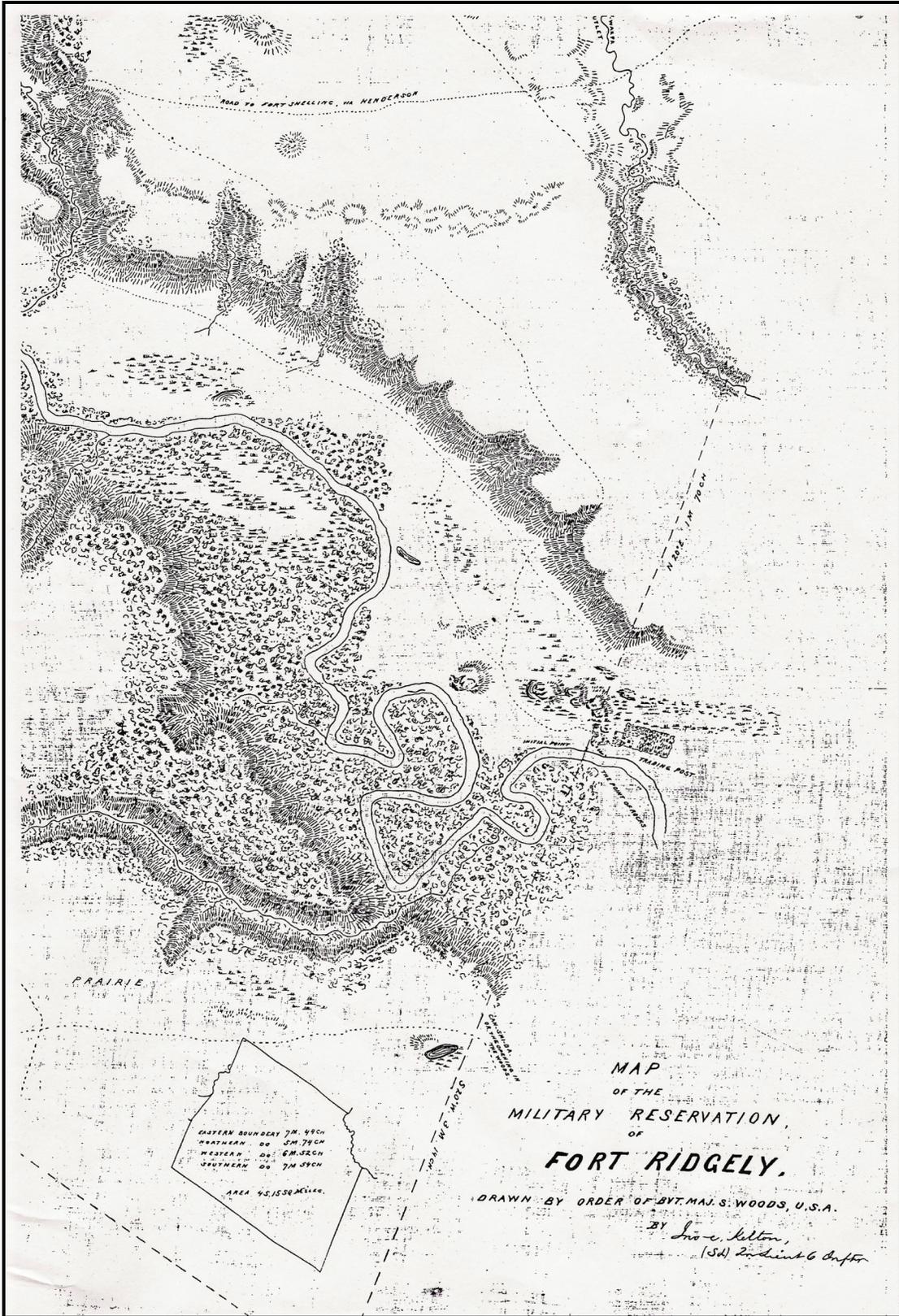


Figure 12: Hand drawn map by Kelton, around 1853. Note the trading post at the center right. ²⁰⁷

Though later overland trails brought military supplies, the river was still bringing newcomers to LaFramboise' door. Travelers on steamboats began coming up the Minnesota River on a regular basis by the 1840's. Rarely did they venture as far up as Little Rock. The Minnesota was never a great steamboat route, with low water and snags deteriorating the course, but Little Rock afforded steamboats a perfect landing area with its hard granite rock sloping slowly into the river. (See Figure 12) In 1853, the steamboat *West Newton*, chugged up the river to Little Rock and beyond. John Owens, a traveler on the boat recorded an intimate look at the post and its owner.

“We reached LaFramboise' then, at three o'clock P.M., distant from the fort five miles by land and fifteen or twenty by water. The site of Little Rock is a bold point forming the extreme inner angle of one of the great bends of the river, and is skirted on either side with level rich prairie land, extending back half a mile to the bluffs. The point is covered with huge granite rocks, some the size of medium dwelling houses. Some two hundred yards back from the river, Mr. LaFramboise had his dwelling, trading and store houses, and other accompaniments to a post of this character-the whole enclosed with high and formidable pickets. The worthy old trader...came down with his entire household to welcome us, greatly elated that his favorite wish was at length gratified by having a steamboat at his door. His situation is one of the most beautiful and imposing on the river. The land about it is of the best quality, and no farmer in Minnesota has raised finer crops than Mr. LaFramboise at Little Rock. He intends having his place laid out as a town site, shortly, when those desirous of going into the very *highest* speculation upon the Minnesota River can take hold. There will be no town above it for many years, as the new military reserve approaches within half a mile.”²⁰⁸

Owens' discussion of “the worthy old trader's” hopes for Little Rock proves that LaFramboise had added a farming operation to his trading business and was expecting to take advantage of land speculation, upon the opening of the Dakota lands. The Dakota, now confined to a ten-mile wide reservation along the river, no longer held any power to broker. New opportunities were moving in with the settlers and with the 1851 Treaty finally settling his debt to the American Fur Company, LaFramboise was free to speculate on land. He no longer needed to move back East to readjust to a Euro-American civilization; it was coming to his doorstep.



Figure 13: Insert from Kelton map showing LaFramboise' Little Rock Post. Note the surrounding farm ground and trail to Fort Ridgely

In the late fall of 1854, a group of German immigrants from Chicago under the direction of Frederick Beinhorn came west to search for a suitable place to found a town. According to historian Alice Tyler, after finding a place along the Minnesota river that suited them, “Small parties in search of winter quarters were sent out, and members of one group, befriended by Joseph LaFramboise...about eleven miles up the river from the site selected, found temporary housing in a deserted Indian village...the Indians, who seem to have left their village because of a death to smallpox, returned and tried to evict their unwelcome tenants, but were placated and turned away by LaFramboise.”²⁰⁹ With LaFramboise working as a cultural broker, the Indians, more than likely a band very familiar with him, allowed the Germans to stay within the village through the winter. A new town site nearby opened even more opportunities for a market for his goods. The town of New Ulm sat very near LaFramboise’ old Cottonwood Post site.

LaFramboise was now surrounded by, “settlers, soldiers, and Sioux.” Throughout his lifetime he had learned to navigate the turbulent waters of a multi-ethnic landscape. As those waters diverged to form two rigid streams, LaFramboise chose to move with the flood of Euro-American settlement. He did not live long enough to see dreams of his own townsite come to fruition. In November of 1856, lying on his couch, he breathed his last, surrounded by his wife and children.²¹⁰ He was buried outside the walls of his trading post. It would be left to his children to reconcile the multi-ethnic world by which they had been surrounded. Within six years, the Dakota U.S. War would force each child to choose whether they were Euro-American or Indian based on the construct of race. There was no room for the Minnesota River Mètis once the conflict began.

The Rock in the River-A Conclusion

During his lifetime Joseph LaFramboise lived on the margins of greatness in a time of American expansion. The changes his life brought to the story of that expansion is like the changes made to a river's current by unseen rocks. Called "sleepers" by kayakers and canoeists, these rocks create eddies and movement of the water in subtle but strong ways. So Joseph LaFramboise' story is a "sleeper." His experience was similar to other mixed heritage fur traders, like Joseph Renville, yet it is unique in the outcome. Historian Gary Clayton Anderson described the "bicultural" relationships that Franco-Indians like Renville and LaFramboise developed.

"Confronting pressures from the dominant culture, some elected to move away from their heavy reliance on Indians. They sought to adapt by assimilating into American society, to work with historical currents rather than against them...a third group remained committed to an ethos of biculturalism. Convinced of the benefits of understanding and working with both Indian and American societies, they struggled to confront and to surmount the changes they were experiencing"²¹¹

Anderson clearly puts Renville in the latter group as having a true bicultural ethos. I believe that is where Renville and LaFramboise differ. Though their lives reflect very similar experiences, they took differing routes. LaFramboise fits into the former category by assimilating more into the American society, but can't be ruled out as someone who believed in the benefits of understanding the Indian and American societies. The difference becomes clear in their choices at the end of the fur trade's influence. Where Renville chose to continue his commitment to Dakota kinship traditions, LaFramboise moved away from his responsibilities to his wives' band while staying committed to his primary family members; wife, children, mother, aunt, and maternal cousins. His choice reflected a stronger tie to American society and its market capitalism, but also a strong tie to his mother's family, an Odawa kinship tradition.

Renville actively participated as a Dakota leader within his mother's family. LaFramboise was unable to achieve that level of influence having married into the band. LaFramboise was influential in negotiating for them and gained their trust in other ways. Still, he

continued to gain financially and would have followed in Faribault's footsteps, or Joseph R. Brown's in plating towns, speculating in land or other capitalist ventures had death not stopped him first. Renville chose to spend his financial capital building social capital among the Indians.

The children of these two trader's had more in common than their fathers since their children were maternally tied to a Dakota band. In LaFramboise' case, his older children chose to remain committed to their mother's Sisseton bands, living with them after the Dakota U.S. War of 1862. The children born to LaFramboise' last wife, Jane Dickson grew up almost completely influenced by the American society and had few ties to the Sisseton.

Perhaps the 1862 Dakota U.S. War was the watershed event that forced these multi-generational mètis to choose the society they would belong to. The mètis place in between the cultures was no longer tolerated once the violence ended and swift retribution descended upon all the Dakota, innocent and guilty alike, and swept them from their homeland. Still, LaFramboise' influence was felt during the conflict almost six years after his death. Philander Prescott, another long established trader who had also married into the Dakota tribes, was killed and beheaded. Many trading posts were burned to the ground, and mètis families killed or scattered. Through it all, LaFramboise' Little Rock Trading Post, only a few miles from the heart of the fighting at Fort Ridgley stood intact. It was a symbol of the respect the Dakota held for a man they had once taken as one of their own.

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- ¹³⁷ Ronald N. Satz, American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era (2002) pg. 64
- ¹³⁸ Ibid., 64.
- ¹³⁹ Ibid., 86.
- ¹⁴⁰ Rhoda Gilman, "A Northwestern Indian Territory-The Last Voice," Minnesota History 39, no. 1 (January 2000)
- ¹⁴¹WHS, Baird Collection, Joseph LaFramboise, (1841)
- ¹⁴² (Gilman 2000)
- ¹⁴³ (Gilman 2004, 80)
- ¹⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁵ (Pond 1986, 6)
- ¹⁴⁶ (Gilman 2004, 86)
- ¹⁴⁷(Gilman 2000, 19) Directly quoted from a letter, Benton to President Tyler, Sept. 18,1841. Office of Indian Affairs, NARA, Register 75.
- ¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 21.
- ¹⁴⁹ WHS, Baird Collection, Joseph LaFramboise to Eliza Baird (24 October 1842)
- ¹⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁵¹NARA Record #75. (Sibley, Henry H, 1849)
- ¹⁵² MHS, Sibley Papers Collection, Joseph LaFramboise to Henry H. Sibley (16 August 1845)
- ¹⁵³ MHS, Sibley Papers Collection , Joseph LaFramboise to Henry H. Sibley (4 October 1848)
- ¹⁵⁴ MHS, Sibley Papers Collection , Joseph LaFramboise to Henry H. Sibley (10 May 1850)
- ¹⁵⁵ Thomas Hughes, *Old Traverse des Sioux* (St. Peter: Nicollet County Historical Society, 1929) pg. 76
- ¹⁵⁶ (Kappler 1904)
- ¹⁵⁷ Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (1997) pp. 196-199
- ¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 198.
- ¹⁵⁹WHS, Baird Collection, Joseph LaFramboise to eliza Baird (25 May 1845)
- ¹⁶⁰ WHS, Baird Collection, Joseph LaFramboise to Eliza Baird (7 June 1847)
- ¹⁶¹ WHS, Baird Collection, Joseph LaFramboise to Eliza Baird (21 February 1847)

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- ¹⁶² William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota, Vol. I* (1956) pp. 282-283
- ¹⁶³(Van Kirk 1983, 7)
- ¹⁶⁴ Ella Deloria, *Speaking of Indians* (1998) pp. 24-74
- ¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 25.
- ¹⁶⁶ Amos Oneroad and Alanson B. Skinner, *Being Dakota: Tales and Traditions of the Sisseton and Wahpeton* (2003) pg. 98
- ¹⁶⁷ (Way Thomas 2005, 171)
- ¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 171.
- ¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 48.
- ¹⁷⁰ Gary Clayton Anderson and Alan R. Woolworth, *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862* (1988) Personal testimony given by Joseph LaFramboise, Jr. after the U.S. Dakota War indicates his use of a translator.
- ¹⁷¹ Ron Ohlfs, "Fafard Dit LaFramboise Family Genealogy," (9 July 1997)
- ¹⁷² WHS, Baird Collection, Joseph LaFramboise to Eliza Baird (28 February 1840)
- ¹⁷³ Ibid.
- ¹⁷⁴ WHS, Baird Collection, Joseph LaFramboise to Eliza Baird (18 November 1840)
- ¹⁷⁵ WHS, Baird Collection, Joseph LaFramboise to Eliza Baird (1841)
- ¹⁷⁶ Ron Ohlfs, "Fafard Dit LaFramboise Family Genealogy," (9 July 1997)
- ¹⁷⁷ MHS, Henry H. Sibley Papers Collection, Provencalle to Sibley, (20 December 1844)
- ¹⁷⁸ "A Roll of Sioux Mixed Bloods, 1855-56," no. 7 (May 1987) These dates are taken directly from a deposition taken in 1855 for qualification for scrip. The dates are often confused and this source, taken directly from personal testimony seems the most likely. The testimony was used to create a roll of mixed blood names eligible for scrip.
- ¹⁷⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁸⁰ A. Andreas, "Historical Atlas of Minnesota," *County Histories* (1874) pg. 242
- ¹⁸¹ Ibid.
- ¹⁸² Grace Lee Nute, "The Diary of Martin McLeod," *Minnesota History Bulletin* 4, no. 7-8, pg.429
- ¹⁸³ (Widder 1987)
- ¹⁸⁴ (Anderson 1997, 170-171)
- ¹⁸⁵ MHS, Alexander Huggins Collection, Mary Huggins Kerlinger, "Reminiscences of Missionaries Among the Dakotas," n.d.
- ¹⁸⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁸⁷ Riggs, Stephen R. *Advance Supplement*, Good Will, Neb. Thursday, December 21, 1871
- ¹⁸⁸ MHS, Alexander Huggins Collection, Huggins Kerlinger.
- ¹⁸⁹ MHS, Henry H. Sibley Collection, Joseph LaFramboise to Henry H. Sibley (19 May 1848) "I lost my little girl Madelaine, the 26th of April. She suffered a great deal. May God's will be done."

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- ¹⁹⁰ Fred Sibley, "Account of Joseph LaFramboise, Little Rock, 1846," Account Ledger of Henry H. Sibley (1 July 1846) file 271
- ¹⁹¹ WHS, Baird collection, Joseph LaFramboise, to Eliza Baird (4 October 1848)
- ¹⁹² WHS, Baird Collection, Joseph LaFramboise to Eliza Baird (18 September 1848)
- ¹⁹³ MHA, Sibley Papers Collection, Joseph LaFramboise to Henry H. Sibley (4 October 1848)
- ¹⁹⁴ MHS, Sibley Papers Collection, LaFramboise to Henry H. Sibley (3 April 1848)
- ¹⁹⁵ MHS, Sibley Papers Collection, LaFramboise to Fred B. Sibley (10 May 1850)
- ¹⁹⁶ WHS, Baird Collection, Joseph LaFramboise to Eliza Baird (1 March 1851)
- ¹⁹⁷ MHS, Sibley Papers Collection, LaFramboise to Fred B. Sibley (14 July 1852)
- ¹⁹⁸ MHS, Sibley Papers Collection, LaFramboise to Fred B. Sibley (18 August 1852)
- ¹⁹⁹ MHS, Lower Sioux Agency Records.
- ²⁰⁰ MHS, Henry H. Sibley Papers Collection, Joseph LaFramboise, (10 July 1854)
- ²⁰¹ "Indian Days in Minnesota: Dr. Daniels of St. Peter, Pioneer Physician, Tells of First Experience in the Use of Chloroform in Minnesota Valley." *Mankato Review* (29 August 1905)
- ²⁰² (Pond 1986, 160)
- ²⁰³ MHS, Henry H. Sibley Collection, LaFramboise to Fred Sibley (20 July 1854)
- ²⁰⁴ MHS, Henry H. Sibley Papers Collections, LaFramboise to Fred Sibley (14 July, 1852)
- ²⁰⁵ MHS, Henry H. Sibley Papers Collection, Fred Sibley, "Inventory of Joseph LaFramboise of Little Rock, 1851," Daybook for Henry H. Sibley (1 July 1852)
- ²⁰⁶ Return I. Holcombe, *Minnesota in Three Centuries, Volumn Two* (1908) pg. 327
- ²⁰⁷ This copy of the map was given to the author by LaFramboise relative, Greg LaFramboise. The copy written source is unknown. It was created by a serviceman named Kelton the first year of Fort Ridgely's establishment under the direction of Major S. Woods. Willouby Babcock, in his publication *Minnesota as Seen by Travelers*, identifies the source of one copy written map in the manuscript history of Fort Ridgely, Minnesota.
- ²⁰⁸ John P. Owens, "Up the Minnesota Valley in 1853," 2, no. 2 (June 1930) pg. 175
- ²⁰⁹ Alice Felt Tyler, "William Pfaender and the Founding of New Ulm," 30, no. 1 (March 1949) pg. 30
- ²¹⁰ WHS, Baird Collection, Julia LaFramboise to Eliza Baird (30 November 1857)
- ²¹¹ Gary Clayton Anderson, "Joseph Renville and the Ethos of Biculturalism" Being and Becoming Indian: Biographical Sketches of North American Frontiers (1993) pg. 63
- ²¹² Ibid. pg. 59
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