

Sayer, Mary “Sha-gon-aush-equay” (1799-1869)

Mary Sayer was the daughter of John Sayer¹ a North West Company partner who traded in the west Lake Superior area. His mother was Obemaunoqua (Marguerite), the daughter Mamongazida (Big Foot) an Ojibway.²

Mary married fur trader John H. “Ke-che-mo-ko-ah-ke-wenzie” Fairbanks circa 1820 in Mackinaw City, Michigan.³

The United States government made a treaty with the Ojibway of the Fond du Lac region in 1826. It is known as Treaty #133 - Treaty of Fond du Lac of Lake Superior with the Chippewa, August 5, 1826.

Article #4 was written to provide for the Métis members of the tribe and the names of those implicated are listed at the end. Saganoshequa is listed as a Métis in the Treaty of Fond du Lac of Lake Superior with the Chippewa that was signed on August 5, 1826. She is identified as the wife of John H. Fairbanks, and a section of land is granted to her and to each of her children.

Mary and John Fairbanks had the following children:

1. Maria Margaret Fairbanks b: 21 Feb 1821 in Vermillion Lake, Dakota, Minnesota
2. Robert P. Fairbanks b: 21 Sep 1825 in Luch Lake, Minnesota
3. George A. Fairbanks b: 26 Aug 1827 in Sandy Lake, Minnesota
4. John Fairbanks b: 11 Jul 1831 in Vermillion Lake, Dakota, Minnesota
5. Benjamin Fairbanks b: 22 Jun 1834 in Vermillion Lake, Dakota, Minnesota
6. William Fairbanks b: 20 Aug 1837 in Mud Lake, Itaska, Minnesota: in Winnebagoshish, Itaska, Minnesota
7. Albert Fairbanks b: 23 Sep 1840 in Red Lake, Beltrami, Minnesota
8. James Fairbanks b: 28 Jun 1842 in Crow Wing, Crow Wing, Minnesota

¹ In the fall of 1804, John Sayer, a partner of the North West Company and his crew departed from Fort St. Louis, near modern-day Superior, Wisconsin. Sayer originally intended to build a post near Cross Lake, but the location for his wintering operations changed to a site two miles up the Snake River, after he conferred with local Ojibway leaders. The exact period of the post's operation remains a mystery, but recent research indicates the post saw several seasons of operation. Sometime after the post was abandoned it was destroyed by fire. Today, the North West Company Fur Post, a reconstruction of John Sayer's post, is owned and operated by the Minnesota Historical Society. The site consists of approximately 93 acres on the north and south sides of the Snake River, with the historic reconstruction on the south side.

² Big Foot aka Loon's Foot Mamongazida was born around 1727 in Lapointe. His father was No-ka or Nokay and his Ojibwa mother (unnamed) had previously been married to Snow Mountain Wabasha (a Dakota). Mamongazida often travelled to Quebec and had fought against the British with Montcalm at the Plains of Abraham in 1759.

³ John H. Fairbanks: (b.1798, Champlain, N.Y. - d.1880, White Earth, MN.) In the spring of 1818 John, along with Samuel Ashmun went to Montreal where they were hired by Wm. W. Mathews as American Fur Co. clerks for 5 years. They spent those five years in AFC's Fond du Lac Dept. beginning that first winter at Leech Lake. He met the Cass expedition when they arrived at Sandy Lake in the summer of 1820. Not long after that he married Mary Sayer (Saganoshequa) at Mackinac, she was the daughter of former Fond du Lac trader John Sayer. In 1822 he was employed by the American Fur Co., under the late John Jacob Astor. He filled all the positions of trust as chief trader, with profit to his employers and great credit to himself, until the dissolution of the company in 1835. He then entered the service of the Northwest Fur Co., successors to the American Fur Co., and remained in their service until their dissolution in 1848. He was known to every Chippewa Indian in Minnesota, and was master of the Indian languages.

9. Jane Fairbanks b: 15 Oct 1844 in Mud Lake, Itaska, Minnesota
10. John H. Fairbanks b: 10 Nov 1849 in Mud Lake, Itaska, Minnesota



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