

Chicago's First Leader

CCSSR2—clarify the main/central idea of a passage; analyze a passage to identify relationships; support important ideas with examples.

Long before there was a city of Chicago, a brave man moved here. It was tough to live here then. There were no stores. There were no settlers. It was very cold in the winter and hot in the summer. There was a lot of snow in winter, too. So, it was hard to travel. In spring, there was a lot of rain and mud, and that made it hard to travel as well.

Then an early Chicago leader came here. Jean Baptiste Point DuSable was the first non-Native American to choose to settle in this area. This African American leader built a cabin on the Chicago River. He started a business by trading with the Native Americans. He opened a trading post there in the late 1770's. At first, it was just a small home. Jean Baptiste Point DuSable stayed for more than 20 years and added to it. His building became the most important place in the area.

Getting things to Chicago was hard. Chicago was a very small town. It was hundreds of miles away from the closest city. At first, DuSable traded only with the Native Americans and a few explorers. He would trade tools and other goods for things that they grew, hunted, or made. As more explorers came to the area, his trading post became more important. Settlers bought goods as well.

DuSable's trading post allowed explorers to keep going. They could buy supplies at his post and then keep traveling further. That trading post helped start Chicago as a city. When families moved to Chicago to settle, they could get what they needed to live at the trading post.

At the trading post, settlers bought many things. DuSable sold blankets, butter, flour, furs, knives, cloth, hats, guns, and gunpowder. Settlers and Native Americans both traded for these goods or paid money.

DuSable was the first person who helped people to come to Chicago and settle here. So, much later, Chicago declared him the "father" of the city because he made it possible to settle here.

Today there is a harbor and park honoring DuSable. That park is very close to the place he started the first Chicago business. Perhaps the biggest legacy from DuSable is the location of the city. His trading post was the starting point for the building of the town that became today's big city.

Based on what you knew and what you read...

Why is DuSable important to Chicago? Use examples from the reading and your ideas about what he accomplished in your answer.