

Etienne Olivier "Oliver" Crête (Cratte) Sr., an Historical Profile



Oliver Cratte was born "Etienne Olivier Crête" on 4 Oct 1801 at Pointe-du-Lac, Quebec, Canada.¹ He was baptized on 20 Nov 1801 at Pointe-du-Lac.^{2,3} His mother died in 1805 when he was 4 years old and he and his sister Brigitte were raised by one of his mother's brothers; whose last name was Labbé. He was trained in Montreal as a blacksmith.⁴

At the age of 23 he left Quebec to go west and was hired by the American Fur Co. for \$700/yr (excluding board and room), to build traps and other tools at Prairie du Chien, Crawford, Wisconsin, USA.^{5,6} In 1829 Oliver was hired by the US Government to work exclusively with the Indians and in 1836 he was named "Armourer" [sic] for the Agency at St Peters (Mendota) at a salary of \$360 and later \$600 per year because of his ability to repair guns as well as his normal blacksmith duties. At that time there were seven Indian villages under his supervision: Wabasha, Red Wing, Little Crow, Old Black Dog, Old Pinishon, Sikz, Purcelin Lake and Calvon Lake. For the next many years he went from village to village repairing rifles, knives and making traps and other tools for the Indians.⁷

He married Sarah Mary Graham, daughter of Captain Duncan Graham and Susanne Istagiwin Ha-za-ho-ta-win Pennishon, on 4 Oct 1831 at Mendota, Dakota, Minnesota, USA. This union resulted in the birth of three girls and one boy.^{8,9,10} On 16 Aug 1837 he was a signatory to a petition sent to the president of the USA for restitution for lands they had settled between the falls of St Anthony and the mouth of the Minnesota River, which were to be taken for military reserve.¹¹

On 10 Jul 1839 Oliver, in his capacity of Blacksmith was officially transferred to the Wabasha area where he built a shop and a house on the banks of the Mississippi River. This place was known as 'Cratte's Landing' and retained that name until the town of Wabasha was officially named some four year later in 1843.^{12,13,14,15,16,17} After Sarah died he married Teresa Rocque, daughter of Augustine Rocque, circa 1843 at Wabasha, but she died within one year.¹⁸

He then married Harriet Jane "Jenny" Campbell, daughter of Duncan Campbell and Josephine "Therese" (Sioux), on 17 Apr 1846 at Lake Pepin, Goodhue, Minnesota, USA, with whom he had 14 children.^{19,20} On 11 Oct 1853, he was elected to the first Board of Commissioners for the County of Wabasha.²¹ Between 1854 and 1855, Oliver served as Chairman of the Board of Commissioners for the Wabasha County.²² He along with Joseph Buisson laid out the streets and lots and created the original town plat for the town of Wabasha, MN in Jul 1854.²³

The USA census' shows that between 1850 and 1880 he lived in Wabasha where he worked and raised his family and during that time owned a great deal of land in the area. However he placed all his land in a Land Association and was far too honest to enjoy the profits of this association and ended with nothing. In his later years his eyes failed and died poor and nearly blind. He was always very active in the Catholic Church and Father Trobec on introducing Oliver, said 'this is one of the best Catholics in my parish.'^{24,25,26,27} He died on 22 Apr 1884 at Wabasha, Minnesota, USA, at age 82.^{28,29,30} and was buried on 24 Apr 1884 at St Felix Cemetery in Wabasha.³¹

Endnotes

¹Interview with Oliver Cratte (Wabasha, Minnesota), by Mr Meinier-Journalist- Montreal-Quebec, June 1871. Research Notes , W. Fuller (Canada). Y Crête supplied an English copy of a newspaper article written by Mr. Meinier and published on 28 Nov 1872 in the French version of L'Opinion Publique, Bio in Montreal. Meinier describes a trip to Wabasha in 1871 to visit his father and while there interviewed Oliver Cratte several times and wrote this newspaper article about Oliver's life.

Y Crête supplied this information to the editor of an online version of The History of Wabasha County published 1884, to correct the birth place mentioned in the 1884 publication and supplied a copy of this newspaper article about Oliver's life.

The online version of the 1884 book is located at: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mnwabbio/wab1.shtml#book#book>

You will find this information in the Biography section of Oliver Cratte.

²Ibid., Yvon Crête says this date is from the parish records.

³Quebec Provincial Government, *Vital Records, Quebec, Canada; Bibliotheque et Archives nationales du Quebec (BANQ)* (475 Boulevard de Maisonneuve, Montreal, Quebec, Canada: BANQ also YourFamily.com, Published: ongoing, also Compiled from Church Records). Hereinafter cited as *Vital Records, Quebec, Canada*.

⁴Interview, Oliver Cratte, June 1871.

⁵Ibid.

⁶W. H. Mitchell and U. Curtis, *Wabasha County, Geographical and Statistical Sketches of the Past and Present Together with a General View of the State of Minnesota* (Rochester, MN, USA: Federal Union Book and Job Printing House, 1870), Page 64 says: "Sometime about 1810 the American Fur Company established fur trading posts along the Mississippi, their headquarters being Prairie du Chien". Hereinafter cited as *Wabasha County Past & Present 1870*.

⁷Minnesota Historical Society, *Minnesota History A Quarterly Magazine, Volume VIII, 1927, "New Light on Old St Peter's and Early St Paul," written by M.M. Hoffmann, Columbia College, Dubuque, Iowa.*

(St Paul MN: Published by Minnesota Historical Society, 1927, page 27). Hereinafter cited as *MHS, "New Light on Old St Peter's and Early St Paul," MN History, Volume VIII, 1927.*

⁸Ibid., Page 43 states:

"Since there was no minister in the country, Major Taliaferro frequently officiated as justice of the peace, and united many. Among those he married were Oliver Cratte and James Wells to daughters of Duncan Graham."

⁹Oliver Cratte & Sarah Graham marriage, Jan, 24, 1876, in Marriage Document (The Wabasha Herald, January 24, 1876 published this copied from the original marriage document. quote:

The following is the marriage contract:

To whom it may concern: - Articles of arrangement signed and sealed in the presence of witnesses between Oliver Cratte on the one part and Sarah Graham on the other part and this 4th day of October 1831, at St Peters. It is understood that the above named persons having after mature deliberation consented and agreed to become man and wife before man and in the eyes of the law. This obligation will on the part of both be carried more fully into effect hereafter by a regular license had for that purpose from the clerk of the County Court of Crawford in the Territory of Michigan, may on or before the 1st day of June 1832. In testimony whereof we have individually and confidentially signed this contract.

Oliver (his X mark) Cratte

Sarah (her X mark) Graham

Witnesses: L.W. Tallinferro, M.R Jonett, E.Y. Langian, Jefferson Vasel, J.R. Brown, Alexander Farribault, J.B. Farribault, Alex Bailly.): Reprinting of the Marriage Document, Wabasha City Library, 168 Allegheny Ave, Wabasha, Wabasha, Minnesota, USA, The marriage was at St. Peter which is now Mendota and would have been in the Territory of Iowa at that time. Hereinafter cited as Reprint of Marriage Document.

¹⁰Early Days in Minnesota, *Newspaper Article, Wabasha Herald*, Wabasha, Minnesota, January 24, 1876. Hereinafter cited as Newspaper Article, Wabasha Herald.

¹¹Minnesota Historical Society, *MHS, "New Light on Old St Peter's and Early St Paul," MN History, Volume VIII, 1927.*

¹²Francis Talbot et al, *History of Wabasha County, 1884* (Chicago, Illinois, USA: H.H.Hill and Company, Published 1884 (also see the 1920 book by Cooper)), A biography states: "Cratte, Oliver, (biography gathered from pages 593 & 937), was one of the original proprietors of the town of Wabasha. He was the first white man to build on the present site of Wabasha He came here from Fort Snelling in 1838. Mr. Cratte was sent to this place by the government and located as blacksmith for the Wapashaw band. He was born in Liverpool, England [we know this s/b Canada] in 1801. He was early left an orphan, and he and his sister came to Canada when he was a mere boy. He learned the blacksmith's trade at Montreal, and after completing it he came west as far as Mackinaw, where he remained about a year. He then went to Prairie du Chien in company with some traders, and was there employed by the United States government. In 1828 he was sent to Fort Snelling, where he remained until he came to Wabasha in 1838. Mr. Cratte has been married three times. His first wife was a daughter of Alexander [s/b Duncan] Graham, by whom he had five children, and his present wife is a daughter of Scott Campbell, who acted as interpreter for the chiefs and braves who visited Washington in 1837 for the purpose of ceding their lands east of the Mississippi to the United States. Mr. Cratte is still living and is the oldest living white man of his time. He is entirely blind, yet his memory is good, and it is like reading history to hear him recount the scenes of this long and varied experience. The old man is poor, which renders his blindness still more pitiable. He has, in his day, been far beyond want; but loaning gold and, in his own honesty of purpose and heart, trusting the word of those who came to him in need, taking no proper security, he has thus, in his old age, become reduced to poverty and sorrow. Coming here in the fall of 1838, he built a shop of logs on the levee, chinking it with mud and sand, and occupying it that winter for shop and dwelling. In the spring following he added a "lean-to" and sent for his family, they having remained at Fort Snelling during the winter. This dwelling was the first ever built by white man at this place. [edits by wlf]. Hereinafter cited as *Book, History of Wabasha County, 1884.*

¹³Minnesota Historical Society, *MHS, "New Light on Old St Peter's and Early St Paul," MN History, Volume VIII, 1927, NOTE: His Obituary and the 1884 History of Wabasha County as well as several other historical documents state that he settled and build a shop and house at Wabasha in 1838. We know that his job took him out among the Indian tribes and we assume that the 10 July 1839 was just the official transfer date making official something that had happened in 1838. wlf 2008.*

¹⁴Obituaries, *Wabasha Herald*, Wabasha, MN, 23 April 1884, He was "acting under contract with the USA Government to do blacksmith work for the Wacootas and Wapashas bands of Sioux Indians, he came to Wabasha and built a house and shop". Hereinafter cited as Obituary, Wabasha Herald.

¹⁵Oldest Resident of Wabasha Dies, *Minneapolis Journal*, Wabasha, MN, 30 March 1919, page 14, It says: "Mr Cratte came to Wabasha, then known as Cratte's landing, in 1839 with his parents and made his home here almost continuously". Hereinafter cited as Obituary, Minneapolis Journal.

¹⁶W.H. Mitchell and U. Curtis, *Wabasha County Past & Present 1870*, Page 64 says: "In 1838 Oliver Cratt came down from Fort Snelling and built a Blacksmith shop on the Levee."

¹⁷"Research Notes and Data from Charles Edward Cratte", Received March 7, 1984, Charles Edward Cratte (102 Seashore Manor, Biloxi Mississippi, 39530), to J Ward (Canada), Reference to Cratt's Landing in this newspaper article; Research Notes , W. Fuller, Canada. Hereinafter cited as "Research Notes, Charles E. Cratte."

¹⁸*Obituary, Wabasha Herald*, 23 April 1884, The Obit says that his first wife died in 1841 and: "A year or two later he married 2nd wife Teresa daughter of Augustine Rocque who died in childbirth within a year."

¹⁹Research Notes and Data from the MN Genealogical Society (MN, NW Territories and French Subgroup)," Minnesota Genealogical Society (St Paul, MN), to J Ward (Canada); Minnesota Historical Society and State Archives, 345 W Kellogg Blvd - 55102-1906, St Paul, Ramsey, Minnesota, USA, 651-259-3000. Hereinafter cited as "Research Notes, MN Genealogical Society."

²⁰Obituaries, *Wabasha Herald*, Wabasha, MN, 11 April 1901, Her obituary shows marriage date of 1844. Hereinafter cited as Obituary, *Wabasha Herald*.

²¹W.H. Mitchell and U. Curtis, *Wabasha County Past & Present 1870*, At the bottom of page 50 it reads: " The first election in the county was held at the house of Augustine Roque in what is now the city of Wabasha the 11th day of October 1853. At that election the following named gentlemen were elected to County Offices: Christian Shively, Oliver Cratt and Peter Larrivierre, County Commissioners; Alex P. Bailey, Register of Deeds; Christian Shively, Treasurer and Coroner, and Levi Murphy, Sheriff."

²²Ibid., The bottom of page 54 reads: "Christian Shively, Oliver Cratt and Peter Larrivierre were elected [Commissioners] in 1853. Shively was elected Chairman, and was the only member of the Board that could either read or write. They held several meetings in the Spring of 1854, but Shively and Larrivierre served but a short time. Refusing to present themselves at regularly appointed meetings, Alex P. Bailey and Joh McKee were appointed in their place, and Oliver Cratt was made Chairman of the Board. This new Board consisting of Oliver Cratt, Alex P. Bailey and John McKee held their offices until the close of 1855."

²³Registrar of Deeds, *Original town Plat, Town site of Wabashaw, MN* (Wabasha, MN: Town of Wabasha, 1854). Hereinafter cited as *Map, 1854 Plat, Wabashaw*.

²⁴Interview, Oliver Cratte, June 1871.

²⁵US Federal & State Census Summary, *USA Federal & State Census Summarized by Census Year for the Oliver Cratte Family* (Canada: Summarized by W Fuller, 2008), The spreadsheet summarizes Federal Census for 1840,50,60,70,80, 1900,10 as well as State Census for 1857,65,75,85,95. The Oliver Cratte Family lived in Wabasha per the census except the 1840, was said to for Pepin Lake area, but the area must have included Wabasha. This 1840 census does not give the names of the people only the number of males and females in age groups. We can account for 6 of the 9 people recorded, leaving 3 males unaccounted for. One in each of the 5-10; 10-20; 20-30 classes, with only the first being of an age that could be a child of Oliver and Isabella. Copies of each census are available in the book. Hereinafter cited as *Census data for Oliver Cratte family*.

²⁶Dakota Indian -- Treaties, *Lake Pepin Half Breed Land Tract, information and records related to the lands set up by the 1830 Treaty of Prairie du Chien*. (Call Number: M550: Manuscript Collection, 1854-1856), The roll of claimants was compiled by Commissioners William Ashley Jones and Harvey H. Johnson and listed by roll and affidavit number. Lake Pepin Half-Breed Land Tract

A

Half-Breed Tract

was a segment of land designated in the western states by the United States Government in the 19th century specifically for people of American Indian and European ancestry, known as mix bloods or half-breeds. The government set aside such tracts in several U.S. states, including Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Minnesota

Wabasha county and the town of Wabasha, in Minnesota were named in honor of an Indian Chief of the M'dewakantonwan Dahkotas, Chief Wa-pa-shaw, by Duncan Graham, a Scottish fur trader, whose wife was the granddaughter of Chief Wapashaw I. Wapashaw's band along with the children from European and French Canadian fur traders and their native wives, camped along the Mississippi River in this area.

At treaty of 1830 Prairie du Chien, the Indian tribes represented were four bands of the Sioux, the

Sacs, Foxes, Iowas, Omahas,

Otoes, and Missouri Indians surrendered all of their claims to the land in Western Iowa, Northwestern Missouri and especially the country of the Des

Moines River Valley.

The M'dewakantonwan Dahkotas, Wabasha's band, had a special article (no.9) inserted in the treaty for the benefit of their half-blood relatives.

"The Sioux bands in council have earnestly solicited that they might have permission to bestow upon the half-breeds of their nation the tract of land within the following limits, to wit: Beginning at the place called the Barn, below and near the village of the Red Wing Chief, and running back fifteen miles; thence, in a parallel line with Lake Pepin

and the Mississippi, about 32 miles, to a point opposite the river aforesaid; the United States agree to suffer said half-breeds to occupy said tract of country; they holding by the same title, and in the same manner that other Indian titles are held."

The United States agreed to allow these half-breeds to occupy this tract of country, holding title in the same manner that other

Indian titles were

held (a Reserve).

The Second Treaty

of Prairie du

Chien (1830) was approved by

U.S. Senate in February 1831, allowing these Metis to settle permanently and legally in the area specified.

Relinquishment

The half-breed or mixed-blood Sioux relinquished their rights to their Reserve on the west side of Lake Pepin, which was set up by article 9 of the Treaty of Prairie du Chien. In return for this relinquishment, the individual Indians, as provided by an Act of Congress of July 17, 1854, (10 Stat. 304) were allowed to select land allotments in the Reserve Area based on their family history and given Land Certificates entitling them to the land selected.

These Land Certificates were issued to claimants based on US Government qualifying affidavits in the years of 1854-56, however there was much controversy, speculation and even litigation over these Certificates in subsequent years.

In time

"Lake Pepin"

Half-Breed Certificates became

very valuable to the holders and although a good idea at the time, many were traded

for very little value or invested in unscrupulous land dealings.. Hereinafter cited as *Lake Pepin Half Breed Land Tract set up by the 1830 Treaty of Prairie du Chien*.

²⁷Claimants for Land Certificates in the Lake Pepin Half Breed Land Tract, *Affidavits as evidence of Sioux Indian claimants for Land Certificates in the Lake Pepin Half-Breed Land Tract as set out in the 1830 Treaty at Prairie du Chien*. (Washington DC: National Archives, 1854-56), Oliver Cratte was a Claimant for Pepin Lake Reserve Land Certificates

Affidavit #29 – Oliver Cratte

I Oliver Cratt of Wabashaw do solemnly swear that my wife Jenny is a daughter of Duncan Campbell, a half breed. My wife's mother was a full blood of the Medawakanton band of the Sioux. My wife is therefore a half breed of said band and is now about 31 years of age. We have six children ie: Oliver aged 6 years; Lucy aged 8 years; Franklin aged 4 years; Josephine ages 3 years; & Daniel & Leuvina (twins) aged about 1.5 years. They are Quarter Bloods. I have also one other son, David Cratt, by my first wife, whose maiden name was Sally Graham. She was a sister of Nancy Graham, who now is the wife of Joseph Buisson and was a half breed of the said Medawakanton band. She died some sixteen years ago. I have also by my said first wife Sally, three other children, ie: Louise aged 22 years who is now married to Antoine Dion & resides at Traverse des Sioux; Scholastic aged about 20 yrs is married to Timothy Fuller & resides at Traverse des Sioux; Isabella aged 17 yrs is married to Joseph T. La Chapelle & resides at this place.
[Wabashaw] Witness Wm Ashley Jones, Oliver (his X mark)Cratt Oliver Cratte Family Affidavit-Family Affidavit Nos. 47, 29 & 30

No. 61 – Jenny Cratt - $\frac{1}{2}$

No. 62 – Oliver Cratt $\frac{1}{4}$

No. 63 – Lucy Cratt - $\frac{1}{4}$

No. 64 – Franklin Cratt - $\frac{1}{4}$

No. 65 – Josephine Cratt - $\frac{1}{4}$

No. 66 – Daniel Cratt - $\frac{1}{4}$

No. 67 – Leuvina Cratt - $\frac{1}{4}$

No. 605 – David Cratt - $\frac{1}{4}$ (affidavits 29 & 30)

Therese Campbell swears (Affidavit #47) that she is a full blooded Medawakanton Sioux and married Duncan Campbell a half blooded Sioux by whom she had Jenny, the wife of Oliver Cratt who is now living and aged about thirty one years.

Oliver Cratt swears (Affidavit #29) that his wife Jenny is a daughter of Duncan Campbell and a half breed Medawakanton Sioux, that they have six children ie; Oliver, Lucy, Franklin, Josephine, Daniel & Leuvina who are quarter bloods.

Alex Bailly swears (Affidavit #30) that he knows that the statements made in the above Affidavit of Oliver Cratt, to be true.

Oliver Cratt of Wabashaw swears (Affidavit #29) that by his first wife whose maiden name was Sally Graham, a half breed Medawakanton, he has a son, David Cratt.

Alex Bailly of Wabashaw swears (Affidavit #30) in corroboration of the above Affidavit of Oliver Cratt, to be true. (Affidavits 47 & 251 are erroneously reported to be applying to this case.)

No 61. Jenny Cratt.

Oliver Cratt, husband of Jenny, swears (see Affidavit No 29) that his said wife, is a Half breed of the Medawakanton band of Sioux

Alex Bailey (see Affidavit No 30) swears to the truthfulness of the Affidavit of said Oliver Cratt.

Therese Campbell swears (see Affidavit No 47) that she is a full blood Medawakanton Sioux; that she married Duncan Campbell a Half blood Sioux by whom she had Jenny, the wife of Oliver Cratt, and that her age at date of Affidavit, was about thirty one years. These affidavits are from persons claiming Land Certificates in the Lake Pepin Half Breed Land Tract, as provided by article 9 of the Treaty of Prairie du Chien of 1830. Hereinafter cited as *Affidavits, Lake Pepin Half-Breed Land Tract Claimants*.

²⁸Oliver Cratt, Death Registration Book A, Page 199, Line 4 (Date filed: 25 Nov 1884), Wabasha County Records Department - County Court House, 625 Jefferson Ave, Wabasha, Wabasha, Minnesota, USA 55981, The record shows that he died of old age (age 83) and that his birth place was England. Hereinafter cited as Death Registration Oliver Cratte.

²⁹Official Church Books and Official Cemetery Records entry, Death and Burial Records, St Felix Catholic Church, Wabasha, MN, Wabasha, St Felix Catholic Church, 117 - 3rd Street West, Wabasha, Wabasha, Minnesota, USA, (651) 565-3931. Hereinafter cited as Death and Burial Records, St Felix Church.

³⁰*Obituary, Wabasha Herald*, 23 April 1884.

³¹Death and Burial Records, St Felix Church, Cratte, Oliver, Family Plot Section F, Plot 9

OFFICIAL Interments 'bur.' per the St. Felix Church Books

1. Olivier Crête (Cratte); d. 22 April, bur. 24 April, 1884; b. Canada; aged 84.5yrs; of old age; Priest: James Trobec, Bur: St. Felix.
2. Harriet 'Jenny' Campbell (Mrs. Oliver Cratte) - 2nd wife; d. 6 April, bur. 8 April, 1901; b. Mendota, MN; aged 78 yrs; Priest: Max Wurst.
3. Mary Crête(Cratte)d.13 May, bur. 14 May, 1873, b. Wabasha, aged 14yrs, d. Typhoid fever, Priest: James Trobec.
4. Frank Crête(Cratte)d. 5 Dec, bur. 7 Dec, 1873, b. Wabasha, aged 25 yrs, of Spinal Disease, Preist: James Trobec.
5. William Crête(Cratte)d.11 May, bur.,13 May, 1881, b. Wabasha, aged 21 yrs, of Consumption, Preist: James Trobec.

OTHER INTERMENTS per St. Felix Cemetery Records (we can identify)

1. Sarah Graham Cratte-first wife (841)
2. George Cratte - [no dates listed] (814)
3. Oliver Cratte, b. 1847 d. 3 April 1927 (804)
4. Theresa Cratte-third wife (957)

OTHER INTERMENTS per St. Felix Cemetery Records (we can Not identify)

1. Daughter, Cratte, b. Jan 1892, d. 18 Feb 1893
2. Illegible, Cratte [no dates]
3. Jenny or Jane Cratte d. 1841
4. Taylor Cratte [no dates]
5. William Cratte, b. 1860 d. 11 March 1881.