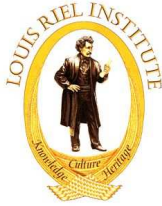


Lake Pepin Half-Breed Tract



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By the treaty of Prairie du Chien, July 15, 1830, land was set aside for a Half Breed reservation in Minnesota. These were set aside as the Lake Pepin Half Breed Tract: At the time the American government was negotiating the Dakota land cessions in the Minnesota Territory, a tract of land along west side of Lake Pepin (part of the Mississippi River) south of St. Paul, near Red Wing, Minnesota, was set aside for the Dakota Half Breeds. In 1830, during the congress of tribes at Prairie du Chien, the M'dewakantonwan Dahkotas made a treaty which conveyed to their Half Breed relatives a portion of land around Lake Pepin which became known as the "Half Breed Tract." The boundary began just below the village of Chief Red Wing, running back 15 miles, then in a line parallel with Lake Pepin and the Mississippi for 32 miles to a point opposite the Au Boeuf River, then 15 miles to the "Grand Encampment." This area is in what is now known as Wabash County.



Wabash county and the town of Wabasha were named in honor of an Indian Chief of the M'dewakantonwan Dahkotas, Chief Wa-pa-shaw. This group of Indians' principal camping ground was in this valley on the Mississippi River. Chief Wapashaw had a nephew, Augustin Rocque, who was the first Metis settler in this area. Rocque's Indian name was *Wahjustahchay* or the Strawberry. His father, Joseph Rocque, was a Frenchman and his mother was the sister of Chief Wapashaw. Augustin was born in Prairie du Chien sometime about the year 1795. Both Augustin and his father Joseph

were fur traders and both were Indian interpreters in the service of the British. At the conclusion of the War of 1812, called the Blackhawk War, and between the years 1817 and 1823, Augustin, accompanied by a government appointee named Long, came up the Mississippi River and established his home with Wabasha's trading posts on the upper Mississippi River, extending his operation from the foot of Lake Pepin, up the Chippewa River as far as the Falls and down the Mississippi River into Turkey River and cedar River Counties in Iowa. At about the same time another Metis called Duncan Campbell arrived. Both settled in the extreme western part of Wabasha on the Mississippi River.

At treaty of Prairie du Chien the Indian tribes represented were four bands of the Sioux, the Sacs, Foxes, Iowas, Omahas, Otoes, and Missouri Indians. They 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 M'dewakantonwan Dahkotas bands in council asked that they might have permission to bestow upon the half-breeds of their nation the tract of land beginning at a place called the Barn, below and near the Village of Red Wing Chief and running back fifteen miles; thence in a parallel line with Lake Pepin and Mississippi River; thence fifteen miles to the Grand Encampment opposite the Au Boeuf River. 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. Certificates were issued to many Half-Breeds and there was much speculation in these certificates and litigation over them in subsequent years. In time "Lake Pepin" Half-Breed certificates became very valuable to the holders. 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.

Another treaty with the Chippewa at Fort Snelling July 29, 1837 allowed whites to settle on the west side of the Mississippi River. General Dodge requested the Indian agent Taliaferro to select a delegation of Dakota Sioux and proceed to Washington to finalize terms of the treaty. Augustin Rocque accompanied the chiefs in consort with Alexis Bailly, Joseph LaFramboise, and Francois LaBathe. Along with them were H.H. Sibley, Alexander Rocque, and Alexander and Oliver Faribault representing the fur traders' interests.

The result of this treaty was that the government set apart 450 square miles of territory for the benefit of the Half-Breeds. In 1836, Duncan Campbell build a shanty near that of Augustin Rocque and in the fall of 1838 Oliver Cratte was the first white man to settle in the area of the village of Wabasha. Cratte came down from Fort Snelling to open a government blacksmith shop on the levee. Joseph Buisson came a few weeks later and Pierre Hortobese, a nephew of old Chief Wapashaw, also built a shanty on the south side of the Zumbro River.

An elderly man named LaBatte, a skilled carpenter and riverboat pilot, put up a shanty for Alexis Bailly in the 1840s. All of these men were connected with Indian trade or were employed by the U.S. government to assist the Indians and Half-breeds.

Augustin Rocque lived continuously within what is now the town of Wabasha since 1826, however it is the U.S. government records of what was called “The Second Treaty of Prairie du Chien” (1830) that establish conclusively Wabasha’s heritage as the oldest town in Minnesota.