

A Man Named Eliphalet Cramer Pt 1

In the July 2021 issue of the Eagle Historical Society newsletter, is an article titled "The Draper Family Story", about one of Eagle's earliest pioneer families. The article mentions the fact that in 1839, Francis Draper purchased 80 acres of land from Eliphalet Cramer, "a major land owner in Eagle". Who was Eliphalet Cramer, and what was his interest in Eagle?

After the Blackhawk War of 1832, a treaty was signed in 1833 with the Potawatomi, Ottawa and Chippewa tribes to cede the southeast part of Wisconsin, estimated to be about five million acres, to the U.S. government. The tribes were to be given five million acres west of the Mississippi river and given three years to relocate there while the government surveyed the treaty land east of the Mississippi river to make it ready for settlers.¹

In April 1836, Wisconsin became a territory, and with debts to pay, the U.S. government gladly sold land to anyone with the cash to purchase it. Land was usually sold in parcels of 160 acres for \$1.25 per acre. A law in 1820 prohibited the borrowing or use of "credit" for the purchase of government land. It was cash only.

Many of the first pioneers in southeast Wisconsin staked their claim and went to the Land Office in Milwaukee to make payment and record their land deed. In 1839, the US government put all unpurchased land in southeast Wisconsin up for auction at the Land Office in Milwaukee.² The land commissioner made regular public announcements on the steps of the Land Office as to what tracts of land would be auctioned that day. Bidders had to be there in person when the sale took place. The problem was that one never knew which tracts would be up for sale on any day, or what time of day a parcel would be auctioned, so they would have a representative agent buy the parcel when it came up for sale. The agent would then sell it to the farmer with a large profit margin added. Eliphalet Cramer, a Milwaukee banker, offered his services as agent to purchase property for others.³

¹ [September 26, 1833 – Treaty of Chicago - Forest County Potawatomi \(fcpotawatomi.com\)](http://fcpotawatomi.com)

² Gates, Paul W. "Frontier Land Business in Wisconsin." *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 52, no. 4 (1969): 306-27. Accessed August 23, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4634460>.

³ [Early History – The Legacy of Waterford, Wisconsin \(wordpress.com\)](http://wordpress.com)