

**Church Campout**  
**Marie Dorion**  
**8/4/19**

Who are the most famous Indian women in early American history? Sacagawea & Pocahontas. Today I want to look at Marie Dorion, an Iowa Indian, who hasn't gotten the acclaim of Sacagawea & Pocahontas. But before we get to her, we have to set the stage.

When did Lewis & Clark (& Sacagawea) cross the country? 5/1804-9/06

What had a big part in driving the economy in the early 1800's?

What animal has 1 million hairs/square inch?

Who was John Jacob Astor?

New York fur tycoon. He'd determined to expand his fur trading empire beyond the Great Lakes. He made plans to create a company that would control the entire existing fur trade, & to extend it all the way to the Pacific. He wanted a monopoly. However, the British weren't thrilled with that because they had the North West Company & the Hudson Bay Company. It was Astor's plan to trade Western furs in the Orient, receiving cargoes to exchange in England for manufactured goods needed in America.

Astor planned a two-pronged strategy. The overland expedition was to identify locations where fur trading posts could be established that also would serve as way stations to expedite communications between Astor's eastern headquarters & the western trading posts, a forerunner of the pony express. But the overland expedition was only half of Astor's detailed plan. The other half was to send the ship, Tonquin, around Cape Horn, carrying the people & merchandise for the trading post. Tonquin, a strong ship of 290 tons, with 10 guns & a crew of 20 men, was captained by Jonathan Thorn, a navy lieutenant on leave of absence. Tonquin sailed from New York Harbor on Sept 8, 1810 & arrived at the mouth of the Columbia River seven months later, after passage around Cape Horn & a stopover in the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii). By that time, Thorn, who was a strict disciplinarian, was thoroughly disliked by the entire crew. Feelings for him did not improve after he lost 8 of his crew when he insisted on trying to cross the Columbia bar at low tide.

After dropping the Astorians off to build their trading post, Thorn sailed north, making for the Russian colony today's Sitka, to trade for supplies. He stopped on the way at Vancouver Island, where in trade negotiations he insulted an Indian chief. The natives, in retaliation, supposedly boarded the ship to trade but instead attacked, killing most of the crew; one of the survivors blew up the powder magazine, killing himself & 1-200 of the Indians & sinking the Tonquin in the bay; & just like that, Fort Astoria was completely on its own.

Of course, the overland expedition knew nothing of this. In 1810, St. Louis merchant Wilson Price Hunt, age 29, was hired to lead Astor's expedition seeking an overland route from Missouri to the mouth of the Columbia. Hunt's orders were to get the best scouts & translators for the journey by paying more than the Canadian companies. As interpreters, Hunt hired half Sioux, Pierre Dorion, who had married Marie a few years earlier. Between the two they knew several Indian dialects plus English, French, & Spanish.

Next to nothing is known of Marie before this. It's thought she was born in 1786. If she had an Indian name, it's never been recorded. It's possible she was baptized in the Roman Catholic Church early in her life. She also gave Christian names to her sons, Jean Baptiste & Paul. While still a teenager, she married Pierre Dorion, Jr, whose father was French Canadian/Indian from Quebec & accompanied Lewis & Clark on their journey as an interpreter. It's also probably she knew Sacagawea as they were both living in St Louis & their husbands were both interpreters for the fur trade.

Marie, the only woman on the 60-person expedition, probably didn't yet know that she was pregnant. Son Jean Baptiste was around 4 & Paul was a toddler of two when the young family set out on the long, unmapped journey from Missouri to Fort Astoria. Interestingly, Hunt never mentions Marie by name in his journals.

Leaving St. Louis on October 21, 1810 (6 weeks after Tonquin set sail), Hunt & his party was composed of 60 persons, five of whom were partners of John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company, 2 were children, & 1 was a woman. They traveled 450 miles up the Missouri River in three boats

before setting up winter camp a month at the mouth of the Nodaway River just north of St. Joseph, Missouri.

9 days after the Tonquin party established Astoria, they left their winter camp on April 21, 1811. On May 26, Hunt met up with three veteran frontiersmen who were on their way to St. Louis (Edward Robinson, John Hoback & Jacob Reznor). Although they were headed back to Kentucky, Hunt persuaded them to join him & travel to the Pacific Ocean. They in turn persuaded Hunt to change his route. These experienced mountain men suggested instead of following Lewis & Clark's path, he should take a southern route to avoid an encounter with the dangerous Blackfoot tribe. They reached an Arikara Indian village at the mouth of Grand River on June 12.

Hunt's new itinerary called for him to leave his boats there & go overland, but his departure was delayed until July 18, 1811 because of the difficulty of obtaining horses. While needing 150+ horses, he was only able to buy 82, most of which were used as pack animals. Mentioned more than once is that Marie walked. One of the names given her is *Walks Far Woman*, for obvious reasons.

In September 1811, the expedition reached Henrys Fork, a tributary of the Snake River in southeastern Idaho. At that point, Hunt made a nearly fatal error of judgment. Because the Snake River was a tributary of the Columbia River, Hunt assumed the remaining 1,000 miles could be made by water. There the expedition abandoned their horses & constructed 15 dugout canoes of cottonwood trees.

After leaving on October 18, 1811, they made great progress. 60 miles one day. 40 miles the next. Another 50 but the river started getting rougher & rougher. Portages had to be made (they had to carry the boats) along high bluffs. On October 20, two boats were suddenly swamped in the white water. Although their crews escaped, valuable merchandise & provisions were lost, which placed the company in an even worse position for their voyage. The next day, the party came upon Idaho Falls, where the river was *confined between two perpendicular mountains*, allowing for a width of no more than sixty feet at some points. Hunt's men pulled the canoes through the narrow gap in the canyon by lines from the shore. Despite precautions, the canoe carrying Ramsay Crooks & four

others rammed into a boulder, which split the soft cottonwood canoe into pieces. All managed to flounder to shore except the boat's steersman, Antoine Clappine, who was lost in the raging current of the river. Here's how Irving describes it:

*The leading canoe had glided safely among the turbulent & roaring surges, but in following it Mr Crooks perceived that his canoe was bearing toward a rock. He called out to the steersman, but his warning voice was either unheard or unheeded. In the next moment they struck upon the rock. The canoe was split & overturned. There were 5 persons on board. Mr Crooks & his companions were thrown amid roaring breakers & a whirling current, but succeeded, by strong swimming, to reach the shore. Clappine & two others clung to the shattered bark, & drifted with it to a rock. The wreck struck the rock with one end, & swinging round, flung poor Clappine off into the raging stream, which swept him away, & he perished.*

Horrified by the accident, Hunt decided to make a shore camp & scout the river ahead before continuing. If the course of the Snake (they called it the Mad River) continued in this way, another route was necessary. Trudging down both sides of the banks, the scouts came upon a indisputably impossible portion of the river to navigate. Falling swiftly over a small cascade, the waters formed a huge & turbulent whirlpool between the canyon walls, then shot through a narrow slot of less than forty feet in width. The men named this terrifying spot Caldron Linn, after the Scottish word for a whirlpool at the base of a cataract. If you've ever been to Hell's Canyon area, you understand their decision to walk.

Now without horses, it became necessary for Hunt's party to cache a large part of their supplies & continue on foot. They then divided into three groups to increase the chance of obtaining game to supplement their meager supply of food. The factions led by Ramsey Crooks & Wilson Price Hunt (including the Dorion family), traveled on opposite sides of the rocky Snake River. Crooks on the south & Hunt on the north. The 3<sup>rd</sup> group were going to try to retrace their footsteps & retrieve their horses.

After leaving the canoes, Marie & her boys walked. As one person said, she traveled *without a murmur & keeping pace with the rest of the expedition*. Since he was so small, Marie must have carried the younger son on her back most of the time, though she was by then eight months pregnant.

The river banks & surrounding woodlands were mostly devoid of game, & not even the few Indians they encountered could help *as those few were destitute themselves*. All those in Hunt's half of

the group feasted when they managed to kill a wolf that had been prowling around the camp. The others survived on chokecherries & the boiled soles of worn moccasins. Even the *putrid & rotten skins of animals were resorted to in order to sustain life*. Upon being forced to slaughter & eat one of the horses, Hunt wrote, *I ate it reluctantly ... because of my fondness for the poor beast*. Most of the men were becoming emaciated & sick from lack of food. A lack of water was a constant problem as well as the bluffs to the river were unclimbable. Marie was described at this point:

*She was now far advanced in her pregnancy, & had 2 children to care of ... yet she bore all her hardships without a murmur, & throughout this weary & painful journey had kept pace with the best of the pedestrians. Indeed on various occasions in the course of this enterprise, she displayed a force of character that won the respect & applause of the white men.*

Upon encountering a small Indian band on November 17, Hunt succeeded in buying a horse to use as a pack horse. Two days later, he bought a second horse for his personal use. At the next camp, an Indian claimed this 2<sup>nd</sup> horse had been stolen from him. Hunt was forced to give it up, but he was able to buy two others. Pierre Dorion also bought a horse so Marie & the children were able to ride for a time.

Near the end of November, Hunt's party was forced to start killing their horses for food. Dorion resisted all efforts to kill his horse, though it was almost starved. They didn't re-establish communication with Crooks' group on the other side of the Snake River until early December. Finding them in worse physical condition for lack of food, Hunt was forced to spend much time & effort getting some horse meat across the river to them.

Twice in November & December the party stayed with friendly Shoshone Indians for a short time because of heavy snows & lack of food. One time, they came upon a Shoshone camp that had a small herd of horses. For the weary travelers the temptation was too great; they scared the Indians away & seized 5 of them.

After a tough 27-mile ride past present-day Baker City, Oregon, Marie went into labor & her 3<sup>rd</sup> child was born on December 30, 1811 near North Powder, Oregon. Hunt & company kept pushing on. But the next day she & her family caught up with the party. A vote was taken on whether to kill Marie's horse for dinner. The men voted to go hungry which shows some of the respect they must have had for her.

A week later, they found a group of friendly Umatillas in the Grande Ronde Valley. They gorged on deer & elk meat & starchy roots, as the members of the overland party straggled in. The women nursed Marie & her baby, but deprivation took its toll & the infant died. The babies name or sex was never recorded. It was another five weeks before Hunt's party arrived at Fort Astoria on February 15, 1812.

Of the original 60 members of the Astor Expedition, 45 made it to Fort Astoria. Lewis & Clark experienced but 1 death & it was due to appendicitis. A large portion of Hunt's route would later become part of the Oregon Trail.

Astor's entire endeavor to control the northwest fur trade came to an end soon after the beginning of the War of 1812. After news came that the British warship *HMS Raccoon* was approaching, the partners sold Fort Astoria to the North West Company of Montreal. It was renamed Fort George.

That's all pretty impressive for a young mother. But, wait! There's more! In July 1813 the Dorion family left Fort Astoria on a beaver trapping trip. The very next year after she & the other surviving members of the Astorian overland party straggled, starving & exhausted, into Fort Astoria at the end of their epic journey, Marie & her husband, Pierre, were packing their two children up for another journey into the wilderness that had nearly killed them. This time, the plan was to set up a string of trading posts & start collecting beaver pelts.

The party, led by John Reed, established their base of operations for the winter up the Snake River, at the mouth of the Boise River in southwest Idaho. There, the party was divided into smaller units which created several outlying trapping camps during the winter of 1813-1814. Pierre Dorion, Giles LeClerc & Jacob Reznor were assigned to trap along the Boise River. Marie & the children remained at the base camp.

They spent the summer & early fall getting shelters built & establishing relationships with Shoshone tribe members in the area. When winter came, this time Marie & her kids were ready for it. With Reed & several other traders & trappers, they holed up in the expedition's main trading post, well supplied with everything they'd need to get through the winter.

They'd established friendly relationships with most of the Shoshones who lived in the area, but a group known as the *Bad Snakes* persistently harassed the newcomers. In January 1814 a Shoshone warned Marie that a band of Bannocks were going to ambush the remote camps. Marie set out on a horse with her two children to warn her husband. She got there too late. Three days later she arrived at their camp. They'd been killed that morning. Her husband was dead. The only survivor was Giles LeClerc who was badly wounded. Marie strapped LeClerc to a horse & began the frigid three-day journey back to the base camp. Although she desperately tried to save him, LeClerc died. More horror greeted Marie back at the main camp: all the men there had been killed, scalped & mutilated. Marie & the boys were now the only survivors of the beaver-trapping party, & they were on their own, a good 200 miles away from the nearest source of help.

Marie was alone in the wilderness with her 2 sons. Leaving immediately, she headed west hoping to find refuge with friendly Indians she had met along the Columbia River. After 9 days, deep snows stopped her & the boys in the Blue Mountains. They built a crude hut of boughs & skins. When their food ran out Marie killed their two horses. They lived on horse meat & mice & squirrels she was able to trap or snare for 53 days.

When it appeared that spring had come, Marie & her boys set out on foot, only to be caught by another blizzard. When they could go no further, the children's feet bleeding, Marie burrowed a hole in the snow, lined it with furs, stashed Paul & Baptiste inside & went alone for help.

Partially snow-blind, she began crawling towards the camp of the Walla Walla Indians. 1-3 days later, she arrived at their camp. She was befriended & the Indians brought her children to her in the night.

There she was found in April by some of the Fort Astoria group who were on their way back to St. Louis. They took her to Fort Okanogan, a Canadian fur station in Washington state. Marie lived there for several years with a French-Canadian trapper named Louis Joseph Venier. They had a daughter named Marguerite before he, too, was killed by Native Americans.

Jean Baptiste Toupin, a French-Canadian interpreter at Fort Nez Perce, another North West Company trading post, then entered Marie's life. With Toupin, she had two more children: Francois & Marianne. On July 19, 1841 Marie & Toupin were married in a Roman Catholic ceremony.

In 1841 the Toupins & the families of Marie's sons Paul & Baptiste Dorion became the 1<sup>st</sup> settlers of the French Prairie in the Willamette Valley, north of Salem. There she was called *an impressive & admirable woman*. By 1850 Marie & Toupin were living quietly in the nearby community of Saint Louis, one of the oldest communities in the state. Marie Dorion died there on September 5, 1850, just as the great migration on the Oregon Trail was beginning. She was buried inside the original log Roman Catholic Church in Saint Louis, OR.

Marie Dorion's story became well known in her lifetime through the published recollections of Fort Astoria pioneers & through Washington Irving's book *Astoria* (1835). Her son Paul escorted famous writer Francis Parkman on the Oregon trail, while Jean Baptiste went on to a career with the British Canadian fur-trading Hudson Bay Company. Marie Dorion is one of the 158 names of people important to Oregon's history that are painted in the House & Senate chambers of the State Capitol.

Other than an interesting (at least to me) story, what's the tie in for us today? We could easily tie John Jacob Astor in with James 4:13-16. He'd certainly made plans & expected to turn a profit, but it didn't work out that way. Although he did alright for himself.

We could tie Marie in 1<sup>st</sup> as a pioneer, going new places, meeting new people & cultures, & how we're to do the same. Great Commission, Mt 28:18-20. Or we could focus on that Marie became a settler, the 1<sup>st</sup> woman to come from the east & settle in Oregon. Not all of us are called to be pioneers, going to foreign lands with the gospel, but are to do God's work right where we are. & we should.

We could look at setting out for the unknown, as Abraham was called to do. But let's just go simple & think about perseverance. Perseverance is the state of continuing through difficulties & hardship, & having tenacity while doing so. Marie Dorion certainly persevered through some very difficult, stressful, awful experiences. For the Christian, we're to persevere in the faith, despite life's many



obstacles & surprises. None of us have been promised an easy life. If someone tells you Christians should all be prosperous & trouble-free, slap them for me. No, we're promised trials (Js 1:2), tribulations (Rom 5:3), temptations (Js 1:13), & troubles (Jn 16:33). We live in a fallen sinful world where things don't go our way. We face death, loss of loved ones, financial issues, job losses, business failures, problems at school, sickness, & setbacks. Life has a way of throwing us things that collide with our expectations creating disappointments & disillusionment within us. To face this we must be willing to take God's promises as unbreakable & have the tenacity to move ahead, trusting God through it all. Our perseverance is strengthened when our confidence is in Jesus & His character, not in ourselves & our own strength. We can trust that God is always in control. He won't lead us astray or give us anything we can't handle with His help. We're going to just look at a few vss. It's hard to persevere without hope. If there's no hope, there's no incentive to keep going. As Christians, we have the hope of Christ in us. We must know & remind ourselves who we are in Christ. We must look to God for help & keep going.

### **Heb 6:19**

Here hope is called an **anchor for the soul**. Isn't that a great image? The picture of an anchor which gives security & stability to a ship in a midst of a storm. That is what hope does for us & more. We can remain steadfast, trusting God through present difficulties, surprises, hard times, & pains. Why? Because we know the outcome. Only with a secure hope rooted in the faithfulness of God will we be able to weather the storms of life. It's our confidence that Jesus will complete the work He began in us that enables us to persevere over a lifetime of trials. Without hope, people give up. The Christian life must not only be empowered by faith; it must also be sustained by hope, a sure & certain hope. Living by faith is a life of total dependency & availability. We live in total dependency upon the Person of the crucified & risen Christ, & we step out by faith in the truth of His Word, trusting Him for the ability to do what He wills.

### **Phil 3:12-14**

In the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, the final event was the marathon. There was an Ethiopian runner who was the first to cross the finish line & win the race. But about an hour behind

him, there was a man by the name of John Stephen Akhwari of Tanzania. At about 30km, his head began to throb, his legs began to give way, he stumbled & fell over in the middle of the race. The officials urged him to give up. He refused, *Get me some bandages. I need to wrap up my knees & finish this race.* So he did so. He got up & ran another 7.5 miles to finish the race. By the time he got to the stadium, most people had left. He stumbled around the track, crossed the finish line, & fell over the finish line. A reporter asked him afterward, *Why didn't you just give up?* & he said, *My country did not send me to start this race but to finish it.*

That's what the Christian faith is about. We aren't here to just simply start this race but we are to finish this race in the name of Jesus. & Paul gives us a great picture of how we are to do that. He writes Phil 1:6, **I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.** When we put our faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior, He begins a new work in us. He promises He'll finish the work He's started. He promises that that work will one day be complete. So how does one run a race that has already been won for them? With confidence & perseverance!

### **Rom 5:4-5**

Paul is showing us why God brings or allows trials into the lives of His children. It's through the trials, we grow in perseverance, character, & hope. & our hope will not disappoint, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. We can exult in difficult times if we develop God's perspective & keep in mind that tough times don't nullify His love for us. Don't miss the word, **knowing**. This is part of the right thinking we need. As Christians we know that God is using the tribulations to shape our character. We rejoice in suffering because of what we know about God & His plan. We know He's sovereign & that He's using these trials to make us more like Jesus. If our hope is in the right Person, it will never disappoint. He is faithful to do everything He's promised to do, despite how things seem or feel to us.

### **2 Peter 1:4-8**

Peter describes all the salvation promises in Christ as **precious** and **magnificent**, meaning valuable and greatest. These words include all the divine promises for God's children contained in the Old

and New Testaments. Trials test believers' faith, not for God's sake but theirs. He knows if their faith is truly saving faith because He gave it to them (Eph. 2:8–9); however, they learn their faith is real because it triumphs in their trials. In God's sovereign providence, He ordained that believers' trials and difficulties constitute the crucible from which assurance derives (cf. Job 23:10; Rom. 8:35–39). Because of all the **precious and magnificent promises** (4) God has given believers and because they have received **everything pertaining to life and godliness** (3), for this very reason they must respond with perseverance living for Christ. Perseverance, which connotes patience and endurance in doing what is right (Luke 8:15; Rom. 2:7; 8:25; 15:4–5; 2 Cor. 12:12; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:10; Titus 2:2; Rev. 2:19)—resisting temptations and enduring in the midst of trials and difficulties.

Perseverance (*hupomonē*) is a difficult term to express with one English word. Uncommon in classical Greek, the New Testament uses the word frequently to refer to remaining strong in unwelcome toil and hardship (cf. Rom. 5:3–4; 12:12; 2 Cor. 1:6; 2 Thess. 1:4; James 1:12; 1 Peter 2:20; Rev. 2:2–3), the kind that can make life extremely difficult, painful, grievous, and shocking—even to the point of death (cf. Rev. 1:9; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12).

### **Heb 12:1-3**

**Endurance** is steady determination to keep going. It means continuing even when everything in you wants to slow down or give up. The Christian has only one way to endure—by faith. The only time we sin, the only time we fail, is when we do not trust. As long as we are trusting God and doing what He wants us to do, Satan and sin have no power over us. They have no way of getting to us or of hindering us. When we run in the power of God's Spirit, we run successfully.

When we get weary in the race, when our faith runs out and we think God has turned His back, when it seems we will never get out of the mess we are in and we are sure our faith cannot hold on any longer, we should read this verse. Part of the purpose for fixing our eyes on Jesus is the same as that for considering the cloud of witnesses—our encouragement. Those saints were heroes of faith; He is the epitome of faith. Nothing we will ever be called to endure will compare

to that which He endured. He is the divine Son of God, but while on earth He did not live in His own power and will, but in His Father's. Otherwise, He could not be our example.

Eugene Peterson has a book titled, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*. Isn't that what we're all called to do? & that's what we, as believers, need. We need a long obedience going in the same direction, persevering daily, one foot in front of the other. Is your faith lagging? It's okay, keep pressing on. Are times difficult for you? It's okay, keep pressing on. When you look towards the future do you see trouble coming? Financial issues, political strife, whatever it may be? Keep pressing on. The race isn't over. Continue because you know what lies ahead. This isn't going to be an easy road. But the good news is, it's not a lonely one. Jesus is there to help us. He gives us His promises in His Word & one another to help us in the race. How's your perseverance? What's God calling you to persevere in today? No matter how difficult life seems to you right now, persevere. God knows what he's doing. He's in control. Trust Him & keep going.

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