

Veronique Marie Dumont. (1864-1913): Adopted daughter of Gabriel and Madeleine Dumont.

Veronique was born and baptized at Big Lake near St. Albert on April 17, 1864. Her Godparents were Antoine Dion and Angelique Brabant. Veronique was the daughter of Jacques Dumont (b. 1838, the son of Gabriel Dumont Sr.) and Marianne “Annie” Bruneau (b. 1839 at Lac la Biche). Veronique’s mother, Marianne, died on November 24, 1865. Jacques and his second wife Marianne Breland died in the smallpox epidemic in the fall of 1870. Thus, Veronique was left an orphan at age six.

Veronique also lost her 17 year old brother Ambroise Dumont to this epidemic. When Veronique was released from the Grey Nun’s orphanage at age 14, Gabriel and Madeleine Dumont adopted her as one of their own since she was the daughter of his first cousin. Gabriel always called Vernie “Annie” because she looked like her mother Marianne “Annie” Dumont. Later, the multi-lingual Annie Dumont was hired by Richard Hardisty, HBC Factor at Edmonton and put in charge of all trading goods at the store. Veronique married William Hamilton on December 11, 1888.¹

William Hamilton (1849-1941) was born in a covered wagon at Princeton, Missouri. His father John was killed in the Civil War at the Battle of Pea Ridge in 1862. After that an Osage-French Metis by the name of Louis Labrosse took care of the family. He taught William and his brother how to fiddle, jig, and step dance. William also became proficient as a square dance caller. Thus, although William’s parents were from the lowlands of Scotland, most people considered him to be Metis. In 1875, William became one of the first ox-team drivers for I.G. Baker Company hauling supplies from Fort Benton, Montana to Fort Calgary. Later he worked independently hauling cargo from Fort Macleod, Fort Calgary, and Fort Edmonton. It was at this time he became a good friend of Jerry Potts.

During the 1885 Resistance, William Hamilton took a job with Major A. John Perry (N.W.M.P.) as a scout to guide a section of the Alberta Field Force out of Fort Macleod.

Meanwhile, Veronique’s adoptive family was caught up in the fighting at Batoche. After the fighting at Batoche, Veronique reported:

He (Gabriel) wasn’t afraid, and didn’t understand why anyone else would be afraid either, after going through hell... and coming out alive! To him, it was exhilarating to be unafraid, but terrible to have fear. He had a hole in his head and various bullet holes all over his body, but at Batoche, he only worried about us. The kids.²

¹ The information on Veronique was provided by Lloyd Hamilton of Calgary, Alberta, a grandson of Veronique (personal communications, 2007).

² Chuck Thompson, *Red Sun: Gabriel Dumont the Folk Hero*, Winnipeg, author, 1995, p. 237. Based on an interview with William Hamilton. An earlier version of this book entitled *Home Song* was produced in 1977. Also, Chuck Thompson personal communications with the author in 2009. In 1962, Thompson was commissioned by Elie Dumont Jr., Gabriel’s nephew to do Gabriel



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After 1885, William was based in Edmonton and that was where he met and courted Veronique. They were married in 1888, although they already had a child, Marie Claire. They then moved to the Duhamel Metis Settlement near Camrose Alberta, then in 1890 moved to farm at Wolf Creek near Ponoka, Alberta. William next went to work for Robert Logan at the Beaver Lake Stock Ranch near Lac la Biche. Vernie set up housekeeping at Beaver Creek. Tragedy struck them in 1892 when their home was accidentally set on fire by their two children while Vernie went to the nearby store to fetch their other daughter. One of the boys, William died and George, suffered third degree burns. The family was then forced to live in a small shack near the Edmonton high-level bridge after they lost their home.

The family next headed for the Porcupine Hills to ranch in the area near Buffalo Head-smashed-In Jump. From there, they frequently visited Jerry Potts at Fort Macleod until his death in 1896. William worked for the CPR, building the line through the Crowsnest Pass. In 1898 he returned to ranching. During the severe winter of 1899, Vernie had a condition which simulated death (a suspended animation). William prepared a coffin lined with a Metis quilt, her body was placed in the coffin set on two kitchen chairs for viewing. Little George Ray, age eight, stood on an apple box to view his mother when he saw her eyes blink. She sat up, wondering what was happening to her.

Following Vernie's death in 1914, William moved to Fort Macleod then headed north to Calgary. He was living common-law with a woman called Isabel when he died of bronchial pneumonia in January 1941.

This information was provided by Lloyd Hamilton of Calgary, Alberta, a descendant of Veronique Dumont Hamilton. Lloyd is a member of the Metis Nation Alberta and the Metis Veterans Association. This article is an excerpt from the book *Women of the Metis Nation*. (Lawrence Barkwell, Ed., Winnipeg: Louis Riel Institute, 2010.) ISBN 978-0-9809912-5-3



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