

## **Dumas, Marguerite (Caron). (b. 1843)**

Marguerite Caron was a heroine of the 1885 Metis Resistance.

Marguerite Dumas was born on November 22, 1843 at St. Vital, the daughter of Michel Dumas Sr. and Henrietta Landry. Her nephew Michel (“le Rat”) was one of the men who travelled to Montana in 1884 to get Louis Riel and bring him to Batoche. Marguerite married to Jean Caron Sr. at St. Boniface on February 5, 1861. They had ten children. Both her husband and sons Jean Jr., Theophile and Patrice were involved in the Resistance.

Marguerite recalls the battle of Duck Lake:

“When the shooting started,” said Mrs. Caron, “I had just begun to wash my floor; I continued, although I was quite worried because my husband was over there; it was all over before I had half the floor washed.”<sup>1</sup>

It was Marguerite Caron who motivated the men at Batoche to go and rescue the Metis men who were surrounded and out of ammunition at Tourond’s Coulee.

During the battle at the coulee, Jean Caron’s wife wasn’t at the camp near Batoche, but she had stayed at Pierriche Parenteau’s home. Caron’s wife had heard the shooting like the others. Her husband and her sons were at the coulee. She came to the houses to get the news, and when they arrived ‘How come you are here?’ She asks of Riel. ‘Do you have news?’ – ‘No news- Are you going to get some?—They aren’t all dead since we can hear them firing. Aren’t you going to see!’ Another soldier arrived, Maxime Poitras—‘Where are your people? Are they coming? Oh no! They are surrounded like that in the coulee (making a circle with her thumb and index finger) ‘What are you picking up here?—Ammunition?’ She said to Riel: ‘Why aren’t you going to see? Who will bring them ammunition? Not just one young man. What are you all doing here?— A gang who passes their time looking around. Go find them. You would do better to go yelling on the other side—you would get strength.’ Riel said—‘Do not get angry without reason; you would do better to pray for them—go up to the chapel and pray.’ She answered: ‘I don’t want to pray the way I am now, I’m too angry.’ The people from the Council were there—she said to them, ‘Get dressed to go help them. You were more ready to charge ahead and loot stores than going to help our people that are in risk there. If you don’t want to go, tell me, I will go to see if they are alive, yes or no.’

Jean Dumont’s wife (Domitilde Gravelle) offered her wagon to Jean Caron’s wife and also offered to accompany her.

Old Pierre Parenteau said: ‘Go home—I will go see, me.’ ... and many went to the rescue of those surrounded in the coulee.<sup>2</sup>

The Council minutes of April 27, 1885 show a motion that “Madame Caron be

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<sup>1</sup> SHM, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Journal of Abbé Cloutier typescript , Vol. 2, p. 21, translation by Rose-Marie Carey, Parks Canada, Batoche Historic Site.

rewarded and receive a yearly salary for her services and cooking, and that the sum be \$28.” (Carried unanimously)

After the battle of Duck Lake Marguerite kills their seven dogs to maintain absolute silence. Prior to the battle of Batoche the family left their house after the Sunday Mass which preceded the battle. The priests told Marguerite to leave the holy pictures on the walls to protect the house.

“Alas!” said Marguerite, “When I went home, I found nothing but a basement with only scraps of iron and stoves broken to pieces lying in it.”<sup>3</sup>

Wiebe and Beal give the following account of Marguerite’s assertiveness.

During the battle and even several days later, the women would change places constantly so as to avoid the fire of the enemy. They would hide behind trees or in damp holes.

A few days after the surrender of Batoche, Jean Caron and his family were at Azarie Garneau’s in Bellevue just east of Batoche. As an English column passes through, Mrs. Caron recognizes one of her best mares, which had been left some distance away, is now ridden by a medical officer. She goes straight up to the horse, unsaddles it and seizes it. The English, dumbfounded, do nothing.<sup>4</sup>



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<sup>3</sup> Fonds société historique métisse. Boite 1346, chemise 066: 35.

<sup>4</sup> Wieb and Beal, 1985: 132.