

# The Saga of Maria Callaby

## 1818-1888

by Edward, Don and Ron Guenther



1. Wooden doll of Maria's time

## Part 1: Terrington, Norfolk, England

### 1834

She was a city girl.

Norfolk is the eastern most province of England. They were noted for their good farm land, but the industrial revolution was coming on strong and would be in full tilt when Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837. This changed the face of farming. It disrupted the lifestyle of Norfolk's farming community, never to be the same again. The small farmer was being pressed out, the big farms would take over.



1a. Maria's mother Jane Eyres 1783 1872 Norfolk, England

Some say Norfolk had the best farming in the world, others claim that Germany surpassed them. Either way, our farming ancestors were coming to America from both! They would meet in Oregon, at the mystical valley of the gods where the soil was black and deep, a place called Oregon.

Maria grew up in Norfolk. They lived in town. She was a good girl. Her sister Elizabeth was 4 years older and sometimes acted like a mother to her. She learned a lot from her big sister. Then there were her little sisters Ann and Ellen, 6 and 8 years younger, respectively. Maria in turn taught her younger sisters many things. This was expected and Maria liked helping them learn to become productive women. They all shared a room. Maria loved her sisters. But life was hard in these years in Norfolk. The population had increased, but the work had not. Her father struggled to make ends meet.



2. Beautiful Maria Callaby August 19, 1883



3. William Baldra

Maria's brother Richard was two years older and could sure be a pain but she loved him immensely. Her second baby would be named Richard.



*Stearns*

72. BRIDGE ST.  
CAMBRIDGE



*Gorsuch*

3a Maria's Brother Richard and his wife and on the right a sister of Maria's. Pictures taken in England

William Baldra married beautiful Ann Chapman on May 4, 1834, but she became ill and died within the year. William wasn't a man to let this get him down, and when Maria Callaby, a young 18 year old beauty at church, fetched his eye, he married her on November 8, 1835 at Terrence St. Clement Church.



4. St. Clemente Church, Norfolk, England

The changing times were difficult for William. He understood the common farms of the day, where families shared the farm with other families and marketing was local and simple. The big farms were requiring management with education, they were shipping food around the nation and running big business practices as was fitting in the new industrial age.

William understood knew ideas in farming like crop rotation to renew soil, new plows, and good drainage. But with the new corporate farms there was the national market to contend with, transportation to coordinate, and expensive land reclamation.

It was the age of the conglomerate farms.

William was not trained for these kinds of challenges. He was illiterate. He signed his marriage certificate with an 'X'. This was not uncommon in that day. Up until now a farmer did not need to learn reading and writing.

There is a good possibility that Maria was educated. Women were taking on a new role in English society. Novels were targeted toward them. They were running business affairs. They were encouraged to practice piety due to their naturally generous nature and were heavily involved in church affairs. In a marriage the man went to the field, the woman ran the home. Simple. Women were discouraged from marrying swearing, drinking men because this was detrimental to the home. Maria, at age 18, had landed her man. William knew farming, agriculture was in his blood. Food would be on the table. No more dolls for Maria, she was going to be a married woman!

But there was this Canada/America thing William started harping about. Maybe that is why he married so quickly the second time, to have a wife to take with him to the new land, the land flowing with milk and honey he had said.

William was hearing news about North America and opportunities there. The Hudson Bay Company was recruiting farmers. A business strategy of the Hudson's Bay Company's was to have their settlements be more self-supporting. It would save the company in supply costs. Shipping goods from England was costly and there was no refrigeration. The HBC recruited noted agriculturalists from the Norfolk area. Men that knew how to farm. Norfolk was noted for having the most advanced farming techniques in the world in the early 1800s. Along with Germany of course.

This could be William's big chance. What future was there in Norfolk? Work in the factories? He was a farmer.

He talked and talked with Maria. She was the typical submissive wife of her time, but the idea of leaving family, home, and familiarity behind disturbed her greatly. She knew how to get along in Norfolk, but what would the new country offer? Would they have a home there? Friends? No family for sure. Who would help her with the birth of her children? Who could she talk to? Would there be a church like her church? She had heard that The Hudson Bay Company was a man's world. Their forts in Canada were noted for places fit for slobs, unless they could secure a good woman to run the place.

William listened carefully to The Hudson Bay Company representative. He was assured that his type of farming would be in demand and useful in the new country. The HBC needed old school farmers to run their agricultural needs on their outlying forts running east to west from the Hudson Bay to the Columbia River. Perhaps William already had his eye on Oregon when he signed up with HBC or maybe it was on the HBC ship the Eagle that men started telling him about the possibilities of farming in Oregon. The Eagle, the ship William and Maria sailed the Atlantic in, had serviced the Pacific Northwest for years and the hands were well familiar with Oregon shores. William was

all ears when it came to talk of Oregon. Could there really be a place with better farming than Norfolk?

The Eagle was built right there in Norfolk in 1824. William and Maria may have watched them build it.

Oregon was an almost mystical land where the weather was pleasant and the farming land plentiful. Land, once abundant in Norfolk, had been fenced off and there was now not enough land for a young man to start a farm and bring up a family. Why was he headed to the cold regions of Red River they asked him? At some point Oregon became William's dream. Talk was starting to circulate that there was a valley there with soil a mile deep!

William signed a legal contract with the Hudson Bay Company with his "X", likely for 7-9 years.

There was lots of excitement as William committed to the Hudson Bay Company. They were planning and packing, William seeing the treasure at the end of the rainbow, Maria wondering what would become of the baby she now carried. There were many tears as they made their final goodbyes.

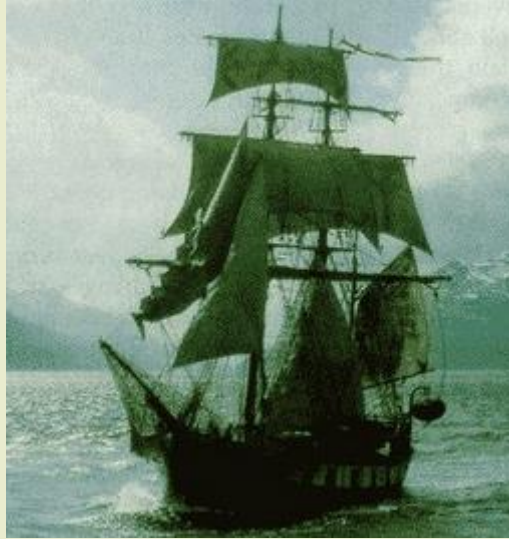
Afterward: Maria's story is not your common story. She traveled halfway around the world to finally get to Oregon. And she did it the hard way, by horse, by a sailing ship, by river boats, and by foot. Here was a woman who did not know what the term 'give up' means. Giving up was never an option. She lived, she prevailed. Prevailed against all odds, against the elements, against disease, and against the very real threat of famine. She submitted to her husband William under the harshest of circumstances. Maria left a legacy for her progeny: no matter how hard life can be never give up! by Ed

## Part 2:

### The Atlantic Crossing

1836





5. Sailing vessels of this era were not the safest travel.

Some 72 ships were lost at sea in the 19th century.

They needed wind but all too often there was more wind than they could handle.

Up with the sails. Down with the sails

August, 1836. Goodbyes said, William and Maria had to travel about 125 miles to board ship on the Thames River. This would be the last they ever saw of Terrington in the province of Norfolk on their first leg to Gravesend. Their contract with The Hudson Bay Company included passage across the Atlantic, but they no doubt had to furnish their own transportation to Gravesend on the Thames River. Maria was 4 or 5 months pregnant. They would have traveled either by horseback or by wagon. Wagon seems likely. Maybe a family member assisted them in the old family wagon.



6. Terrington to Gravesend

By 1836 England had cleaned up the roads for travelers, extinguishing much of the threat of the highwayman. At least this leg of their long trip to America was relatively safe. The Baldras would not have had a lot to offer thieves anyway. They packed light, just a bag.

With little money they camped the nights along the road in the open air, eating food prepared from their own farming efforts, dried meats and fish and bread.

The roads were dirty. Maria could smell the dust. The weather was a bit unpredictable this time of year. Rain, sun, fog, what? They would have made 25 or 30 miles a day, the complete trip taking less than a week. Maria thought of the baby often. William thought of the trials and difficulties ahead. When he signed up with HBC there was an understanding that they would be landing in Canada at York Factory, a place that had been ravaged by some unknown disease going on 3 years. Three of York Factory's 20 inhabitants were dead and others were disabled for life. What in the world had he gotten them in to? And Maria pregnant to boot. Well, there was no turning back now. They had it to do. What was left in Norfolk anyway? Nothing. This was a one way ticket. Who knows, maybe this Oregon he had heard talk about might be in their future. Soil black and rich and deep. What else could a man ask for? Maria was wondering if there would be a woman in sight for the birth of her baby. No doctor for sure. She had never had a baby before.

It worried her that William was tense and nervous, but he was also confident. If half of what he promised was even remotely true there was indeed a pot of gold at the end of this rainbow! Did she really believe that? No matter, she would go where her man went. She had landed her man and now she had it to do.

The HBC had purchased sailing vessels for their trading ventures across the Atlantic. One was the Eagle. It transported cargo and people. Mostly cargo. They were set up to deliver goods to the new country, not furnish fine lodging for travelers. Many sailing vessels went down at sea in the 18th and 19th century. It was risky business for sure. The good thing for William and Maria is they did not have to go through the degradation of immigrants going to America. No big lines to be checked by health inspectors, no huddling in the cargo hold with hundreds of potentially diseased infested people and rats and vomit and you name it. However, the Eagle was no luxury liner. It was rat infested. All sorts of vermin thrived on board. The sailors could be vulgar. Maria may be the only woman on board. Would they stay in bunk quarters with the crew? Probably not. A small area of maybe 10 by 10 feet in the cargo hold would have to be enough. Chamber pots. Lice. Sea sickness. Darkness down there. If the weather was stormy there was no coming on deck.

The crossing would be over 3,000 miles and take about 90 days.

The Eagle left port and sailed down the Thames River in route to the Atlantic crossing. Sails were increased. The Baldras watched as England disappeared in the haze.



#### 7. Typical Brig

Maria wondered if she would die here. Why not? The days were endless, the nights never stopped. Day. Night. It was all the same. The rocking and tipping of the boat, the tumbling about in the rough waters. She had a hard time staying in her bed. Bed? On the blanket. William kept going on deck. She could hardly stand to move. Would they never get used to the rocking of the sea? Would they vomit to their death?

Sometimes Maria wondered if God was even there. And yet, if He was not, there was no hope whatsoever. He must be there. Yes, He was there.

William seemed to know what day it was but Maria lost track. Would the baby live? And if they ever landed, which was doubtful, what about that mysterious plague at their destination, York Factory? What was to become of them? She had heard many stories of Norfolk people lost at sea. This could not happen to her. There was the baby. She would fight for the baby!

There was God. There was the baby. There was the sea. Stories had not done justice to the miseries of this crossing. If there was no God it was just her and the baby. No, this thought was dark and black and to be rejected utterly. There was God and therefore there was hope. But where?

All William's promises blew away in the winds of the sea. And yet, there was hope. God did care for her. She was in a fox hole, all right, but life awaited her. She would live it because that was all there was to do. She would make a place for her baby.

Maria was not aware of sails going up or sails coming down. She just was.

One Atlantic traveler's journal had the ominous entry: "Darkness was falling as we rode the wintry seas, The lights of Ireland fading to become fond memories. The Maud was creaking, tossing, lashed by the wind and rain, And the sea-sickness gripped us, as our stomachs ached with pain. The feeling it was awful as you tried to keep your head, As you rolled about that bloody boat, you wished that you were dead. Murphy in his agony belched and cried and roared, 'Get me absolution quick' says he, 'for I'm jumping overboard.'"

William payed attention to the workings of the ship. It had interesting points, but the sea was not where he belonged. He belonged to the soil. He was a farmer through and through. His father was a farmer and his father before that. He would farm until he dropped. He knew nothing else. Just farming. he had told Maria that this would all come to an end, but would it really? This could be the end for them. So be it then. He had tried to do something different, had tried to make a new start. After all, what was left in Norfolk? There was a bed at least. And a house... but no future. He had to hold fast to that last thought. He had done the right thing, leaving Norfolk. Yes, and he would make a place out there somewhere for Maria and the baby.

William and Maria were among hundreds of thousands of people who sailed the Atlantic in quest of a new start. It was an immigration like the world had never known. It was full of heart ache and joy. Love and loss. It was the age of the American pioneer.



### 8. Atlantic Voyage

Was it day or night, Maria wondered. Did it really matter? Was not this whole thing just night? How could a person continue to vomit when there was nothing left inside? Was it wise to eat at all? She must eat, for the baby. She must not give up.

There was God, the baby, and the sea. Nothing else. She felt alone, isolated. Nothing but water on the horizon. She could not remember her name. The air tasted salty. She breathed.

At last, William told her that their trip was coming to an end. Did she believe him? Yes, she would believe with William. Only, what awaited them in Canada? There was the York Factory epidemic. Would the baby be born there?

The Eagle docked at York Factory in the fall 1836.

The baby boy was indeed born at York Factory. Maria named him Thomas, after her beloved father and brother.

### **Afterward**

by Ron Guenther

I wanted to add a bit to the story about Maria's coming to America. If any of you had seen that movie, Titanic, there were so many things in there that were

all wrong that I could hardly enjoy it. The critical thing is, there was NO mixing of the classes. On none of those ships was it possible for someone to go from 3rd class to 1st class. It simply did not happen.

In the days of sailing vessels, there were three classes, first class which was super, second class which was pretty good and then a class called steerage or in slang, below decks. Those people in steerage never saw any fresh air except for what came through the port holes. There was no deck to get to. Sea sickness must have been horrible as was other sicknesses, they crowded four to six people into a single room. When I took the ship to Germany as a student, we went second class. That was 1959 to 1963 and there was no way for us to get to the first class area and also no way for us to intermingle on their decks. I remember the first day out, they had a big ball and we all dressed up. There was one girl who really caught my eye, she was beautiful and the belle of the ball. Then I did not see her for four or five days and I wondered what had happened to her. One time I went by sick bay. There were about three dozen passengers outside of sick bay. They were all suffering from sea sickness and there was nothing that could be done for it. The men were all unshaven, unkempt, in pajamas and various stages of dress and undress, the women were uncombed, in night gowns and various stages of undress, they all had a greenish hue to their skin, they all felt like they were about to die and in fact, I have been told that such people wished they could die. The funny thing is, as soon as you get out onto solid ground, you are completely cured.

So, here is how it was when my father in law came over in 1905. He was on a steam ship and they had eliminated the below decks class. It was now the 3rd class. They did have a little place, more like a covered patio where you could get some fresh air. He said that he felt rather queasy himself as the days went on. For my crossing, the trip lasted ten days. For him, it lasted just over two weeks. There was no table where they ate. Instead, at meal time, this big giant of a man came out carrying a huge cauldron of spaghetti or soup or whatever, he wore an undershirt, he was sweating and the sweat was dripping into the food, but nobody worried about that, after all, that was third class, a step above steerage. He said he held out for just over a week and then he got so sick he wanted to die. He eventually did reach Ellis Island and was so sick that he landed in the hospital. He was not alone.

Despite that, 3rd class was above steerage, the trip lasted about two weeks as opposed to forty days. It is really a wonder that there were ever any immigrants at all. They were really made of stern stuff. by Ron

PS I forgot the punch line to my story. When I happened to walk by sick bay, there was that girl that I said had been the belle of the ball as the ship sailed out of the harbor. She looked as horrible as the rest. Her skin was green, her hair uncombed, only half way dressed. In this condition, you really do not care who sees you or anything. You just want to die. I avoided going by sick bay from then on and I never saw her again. She was not one of the students. In second class there were almost nine hundred passengers and of those about 250 students. In first class there were something like 21 passengers. They all ate at the captain's table, they all had to dress for dinner, it was all very formal. There was one girl in first class. This had been a graduation present from her grandmother, I still remember that. She was 21 or 22 and really felt left out. The youngest person in first class after her was about fifty five or sixty. She got special permission from the captain to be allowed to come into the second class section and to get there, she had to be escorted by a steward. To get back, she contacted a steward and that one brought her back to the first class. There was absolutely no mixing, but she was a special case. They also disembarked differently from the rest of us. That is just the way it was. By this time, there was no third class, that had been eliminated. Maybe on the huge ships like the USS United States or the Queen Elizabeth or something, but ships like ours did not have a third class. Love, P/B/UR Uncle Ron

## Part 3:

### The York Factory Express 1839



9. Map of the route of the York Factory Express , 1820's to 1840's.

Modern political boundaries shown.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/York\\_Factory\\_Express](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/York_Factory_Express)

Grampa William and Gramma Maria Baldra had been working as farming wards for the Hudson Bay Company at Red River in Manitoba, Canada. Typically, the farming wards served for 7-9 years. The Hudson Bay Company was probably the biggest landowner in the world. They were an English company, but strangely started by two Frenchmen, Radisson and des Groseilliers. In 1670 Prince Rupert granted the company a charter to the vast water shed of the Hudson Bay. They expanded west and in 1821 merged with the North West Company, extending their borders from coast to coast. The company planned and expanded, always ready to adapt to the changes of time, and the HBC exist to this present day. They are one the oldest retail businesses on the planet.

Spending some few months at York Factory, the Baldras were anxious to be on their way, leave the strange plague behind. They escaped it unscathed! Maria had her first son soon after the Atlantic crossing at York Factory. She wished her mother could have been there to help. Or her older sister Elizabeth. Oh, what she wouldn't give to have Elizabeth with her. Baby Thomas was okay, and Maria was probably thankful to one of the Indian women who probably helped her give birth.

Looking out on to the Hudson Bay it seemed cold and lifeless. It represented where they had come from but would not return.

1837. It was upriver several hundred miles on a difficult river route that brought the Baldras to Norway House, their home for the next three years. The trip from York Factory to The Norway House took about 3 weeks, carrying the boat around difficult places, rowers working hard against the fast current. Maria packing little Thomas on her back.

Following river routes were outposts or forts. Each fort was a key point in the fur trade of the HBC. The post consisted of a store, warehouses, shops, stockades and a bastion. There were dwellings, outbuildings, agricultural lands, and pasture. At the Norway House outpost the Baldras ran the farm. This is what they came from Norfolk, England, to do.





10. Norway House 1840

Maria processed foods and did chores as well as care for her son Thomas. She probably also did the book work as William wasn't real educated. William worked long hours, caring for the crops in summer and keeping them warm in winter. Another son was born in 1838, Richard, named after Maria's brother.

William and Maria had witnessed the vast workings of this great company as the annual council meetings were held at Norway House on Lake Winnipeg. All the famous people of the HBC would meet here. The famous Sir George Simpson was governor of HBC at this time and ruled the west. Queen Victoria knighted him in 1839 to ensure his influence in Canada and the west. The company was shot full of strife, trade feuds, and moral problems due to high energy business, but they prospered due to the diligent service of workers like William and Maria.

William was looking for the chance to go further west, toward Oregon. The chance came in 1839.

The Baldras would join the HBC traveling company at Norway House en route west.

1839. Maria would have looked out upon the rivers and pondered where she was, where she was going or might go. Would she ever see her homeland again? Probably not. No, she would not. Her faith would have to carry her through as it did in the old country at her little church. So far away, a life time ago. What would become of her two boys? They could make a home in Oregon maybe. But first she had to get them there... alive. Little Thomas was three, Richard age one.

After three years at Norway House the opportunity to go to Oregon arose. William was ready and Maria wondered if maybe it would be warmer there. It couldn't be colder,

could it? And the trip, could it be worse than the Atlantic crossing? They would travel on the York Factory Express, a river trail connecting up with rivers running east and west. It started at York Factory on the Hudson Bay and ended on the Columbia River at Fort Vancouver. If you started on the Columbia and came east it was called the Columbia Express. 45-70 men would travel the route in a group, one group starting in the east and the other in the west. They would meet half way. On their trip they would pick up furs for the Company and deliver supplies to the outposts.

Reflecting on the first leg of the Express to get to Norway house did not bode well. These rivers were cold and dangerous. It had taxed Maria's strength. Packing around falls and rapids was very difficult, and whoever called these trails? All this with a baby. Now they had a baby and a toddler! Nonetheless, she would go with William. There was a place out there for them, maybe this Oregon that William seemed obsessed with.

William and Maria traveled 2250 miles in 90 days, from Norway House to Fort Vancouver on the York Factory Express . They arrived in October of 1839. They traveled at an incredible speed of 26 miles per day. This is twice the speed of the Oregon Trail travelers! They started in June.

The HBC's boats were dubbed York boats. They were nine and a half meters long and nine meters at the keel with an inside depth of one meter. They were flat bottomed and could carry three tons. The oars were six meters long with 6-8 oarsmen per boat. The oarsmen would stand to push with the oar and sit to pull. Stand and sit. Push and pull. Row day in and day out. They used poles in shallow waters and small sails were part of the rigging. These boats were made to haul furs!



Hudson's Bay Company's scow in Athabasca River, circa 1910

#### 11. York Boat

The Baldra boys watched the rowers, back and forth, back and forth, like a machine. They were mesmerized by the repetition of the action. It became like a sedative. Maria made sure they stayed warm and dry. Even in June the temperatures were cool. By August it was hot.

Their trip started with a crossing of Lake Winnipeg and then up the North Saskatchewan River. They had 2-5 York boats with them. When the falls or rapids were too difficult they packed their boats around them, oftentimes with the help of Indians, whom they paid.

Maria thought constantly of the boys. William helped but he had other work to do too, so the weight of the boys' safety fell mainly on her. On the Atlantic she only had to think of herself surviving. Now, with the boys, she could no longer think of herself. Not ever again. She would live for them. She would help them make a place in this country. IF she could get them through alive. This was a man's journey, and a rare woman, but children?

The river was glacier fed and ice cold. These waters oftentimes brought death. To go down in them was almost certain death for a child, nearly so for an adult. After a few days the boys seemed to live in a stupor. Maria might have had an Indian back pack to carry the one year old. Mornings came before nights ended and days ran together. Would it ever end? Would they make it alive? Eat, sleep, travel. Eat, sleep, travel. It was like a race. More profits for HBC.

Fort Edmonton offered a brief respite and maybe a bunk, but the river waited. Back to the river. Then Fort Assiniboine and on to the Athabasca River, through the famous Athabasca Pass in the Rockies. The river passages became more treacherous. Regularly the men would walk the shores, reigning in the boat with ropes through rough waters.



12. Athabasca Pass, between the two mountains

Maria diligently watched her children. She believed God would answer her prayers. Somewhere there must be a place that Maria could rest her weary head and call home, a place of their own. Darest she wish such a thing? She was probably the only woman in the party, and her hands full with the two toddlers. All the men would have generously helped her where they could. Women of the early west were few and highly valued. But they had their own heavy burdens and could only do so much. Maria was 21 years old and had a strong constitution to be sure.

There was Fort Jasper, and then Boat Encampment.

They came to Fort Colvile. Fort O Kanogan. And finally Fort Nez Perces.

William and Maria and the boys ended up working for HBC on Wapato Island on the Columbia River where they ran the company farm. It was here that they were visited by the famous Joseph Meek, who trapped with Jim Bridger and Jedidiah Smith. His report was that the Baldras, with their scant provisions, were very generous. Ah, yes, with Maria's hard life you would not be surprised to find a generous person, refined in the fire.



13. Columbia River

By 1841 the Baldras were in the Hillsboro area, having parted company with HBC, where our great great Gramma Mary Jane was raised, the first white girl born in this region. Mary Jane was born on Wapato Island in 1840 with the help of an Indian woman. They had come home to Oregon where they lived out their days. Maria is buried in Hillsboro Pioneer Cemetery. The Baldras witnessed Oregon becoming a state in 1859.

Canada thought Oregon would be theirs. They were outsmarted. They thought The Hudson Bay Company was their right of ownership to the territory. They opened it up, but the Oregon Trail was bringing Americans by the droves. The Americans would have

Oregon. William and Maria and the boys would be Americans. Why not be Americans? England was a long ways away. Maria would be American, maybe even in her heart. But her children would be Americans through and through. Our ancestors made a place in Oregon for their descendants to walk and live.

### **Afterward: How the Americans won Oregon**

by Ron Guenther

John McLoughlin was baptized as Jean-Batiste McLoughlin. He was of Scottish background and went to work for the Hudson Bay Company. The Oregon Territory was originally claimed by Spain, Russia, The United States and Great Britain. The weakest claim was by the U.S. John Jacob Astor had set up a fur trading post in what is now Astoria, but that was burned and abandoned in the war of 1812. Spain lost its claim early after Mexico became independent. The Russians had a strong claim. They even had a fort in Northern California, Ross Fort on the Russian River, and it was staffed by native American allies of the Russians, namely, Aleuts. The Aleuts were strong supporters of the Russians and they got a lot of benefits from it. But the British had moved in, the Hudson Bay Company essentially ran the place, it was highly profitable and the British wanted to keep it that way, they did not want settlers. Thus, they were opposed to the way McLoughlin ran the company out West, but he was making money. The British were a highly aggressive country at the time, conquering and holding by brute force a quarter of the earth's surface. But American settlers kept coming and eventually there was a vote. I cannot remember where it was held, but there are two versions, a version we read about in our text books and then there is the truth. You can find this on line. In the vote, the Americans won, but the vote was held with minimal fanfare and advertising in the midst of the American settlements in the Willamette Valley. Nobody else got to vote. Naturally, the Americans won, but the vote was close. My recollection is that they won by one vote. Polk was elected with the slogan "fifty-four forty or fight". The British had muscled the Russians out but they did not want to fight a war and so they simply said, we extend the 49th parallel to the sea; we keep Vancouver Island and you can have the San Juan Islands; this is how it will be. The Americans meekly gave in. Neither side really wanted a war. The British were tied up with problems with Russia which eventually led to the Crimean War which the British won and then there was unrest in India leading to the Sepoy Revolt which the British put down with brutal and terrible efficiency. The Americans had just come out of the Mexican War and there was continued unrest that eventually led to the civil war, so the British plan was accepted. I think you can go to the Canadian version of Yahoo and find out what their own idea is. Incidentally, the Russians at that point reassessed their own involvement in Canada and decided to set up a buffer zone controlled by the Americans who hated the British. The Russians were afraid the British would take over Eastern Siberia, and so they sold Alaska to the Americans for a song. Good short term diplomacy, but bad long term diplomacy. By Ron

## Part 4:

# Rags to Riches: The Oregon Story

1839

17 Oct 1839. William and Maria and the two boys arrived on Wapatoo Island on the Columbia River, shaping up a farming venture for The Hudson Bay Company. For Maria, the climate was more agreeable than northeastern Canada. Women were few and Maria was challenged to keep a semblance of cleanliness and order with the bachelor men. The place was a pig's pen. No wonder William brought her along! It was on Wapatoo Island that their third child, Mary Jane, was born. Maria was assisted by an Indian in the birth, most likely a Chinook, also known as flatheads due to the board used to shape the heads of their babies.



The picture above is of a Chinook mother and her child. The Chinooks traced their clans through the **mother's family**. Children belonged to their mother's **clan**.

14. Chinook Mother

On one of Joe Meek's expeditions, as he mentally mapped out Oregon and its future, he came across the Baldras on the island. He reported that though the supply was poor and scanty, the Baldras, with great kindness, shared with them dried salmon and sea bread. Meek added ducks and swans. Meek had been living on boiled wheat, so this was sumptuous!

In 1941, William transferred from the HBC to the Puget Sound sister company AC.

The PUGET SOUND AGRICULTURAL COMPANY, under the aegis of the HBC, imported to the Northwest 21 families of experienced British Canadian farmers and herders along with superior breeds of sheep and swine. Despite good capitalization, the attempt to found an agricultural colony promptly failed. The "colonists" simply headed south to establish their own farms on free land. A total of 121 arrivals (19 households) went to two stations in 1841: Cowlitz River Landing on the Columbia and another near Ft. Nisqually (both in present-day Washington State).

In 1840, Meek recognized that the golden era of the free trappers was ending. Joining with another mountain man, Meek and his third wife guided one of the first wagon trains to cross the Rockies on the Oregon Trail. Meek settled in the lush Willamette Valley of western Oregon, became a farmer, and actively encouraged other Americans to join him. In 1847, Meek led a delegation to Washington, D.C. , asking for military protection from Indian attacks and territorial status for Oregon. Though he arrived "ragged, dirty, and lousy," Meek became something of a celebrity in the capitol. Easterners relished the boisterous good humor Meeks showed in proclaiming himself the "envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary from the Republic of Oregon to the Court of the United States ." Congress responded by making Oregon an official American territory and Meek became a U.S. marshal.<sup>1</sup>

William and Maria listened intently to Meek's description of the Hillsboro country downriver. A farmer's paradise, land for the taking. Meek himself had laid claim to 640 acres, though Congress had not approved it yet. Meek figured if he could get enough Americans hunkered down in Oregon it could become part of the United States, and William and Maria might be British, but change was in the air. It could be to their benefit to switch to being American! Meek sold them on the idea.

Norfolk was a long way away, Oregon and its rich soil was here and now. This was surely a farmer's paradise! Old style farming, the kind William knew. 640 acres! Could it all be true? Meek was convincing.

1842. William and Maria came home, not to Norfolk, but to Hillsboro, Oregon. 640 acres of the finest land you could find! Unbelievable. Would they get to keep it? Meek figured they would. Nothing ventured nothing gained. What did they have to lose anyway? They had nothing to start with.

William and Maria were land barons, rich beyond their wildest dreams! You bet they became Oregonians, U.S. citizens to the hilt!





William said of the Indians in Washington County in the '40s as being numerous, but not troublesome except by their thieving. William wasn't for pushing anyone out, everyone had a right to stay, a right to live in the best way that they could get along.

The Baldras were falling in love with a whole new way of life, a life of wilderness, of hardship, of love, of challenge, of risk, of adventure. Maria was matriarch of all this! They lived in a great time, a great place. They were a big part of making America strong. They were all immigrants here.

Almost 6,000 miles by land, sea, and river from Norfolk to Oregon and William and Maria were finally home.

At some point William terminated his contract with the Hudson Bay Company, perhaps terminating his allegiance to the King of England as well. After all, he was now a land baron in Oregon! William is recorded in the Wilamette Farmer newspaper as being a protector of his community along with a group of old trappers. These guys knew how to take care of their women folk.

A history account of William Baldra:

"William BALDRA (1810- ): m'd 1835 Maria Callaby. William Baldra was born in Norfolk Co, England in 1810. He and married his wife, Maria Callaby 08 Nov 1835 at Tarrington, Norfolk Co, England. Shortly after their marriage they moved to Canada as farming wards of the Hudson's Bay Company. They landed first at York Factory on Hudson Bay where their first son was born; next moved to Norway House in Canada where their second son was born and then traveled to various Hudson's Bay Company posts until their arrival at Fort Vancouver in 1839. In 1842 they settled on Tualatin Plains, locating three miles north of Hillsboro.

"BALDRA, WILLIAM--Born in England in 1810; came to America in 1836, and lived three years on Red River in Manitoba; came then to Oregon and settled on the Tualatin Plains, locating in 1842 three miles north west of the site of Hillsboro. Had married Maria Callaby in England in 1835. Their children are, Thomas W. and Richard C., and a daughter, now Mrs. R. E. Wiley, the later having been the first white child born in Washington County. Her birth took place August 1, 1840. Mr. Baldra was an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company in the earlier years of his residence in America. He speaks of the Indians in Washington County in the "forties" as having been numerous, but not troublesome except by their thieving." [History of the Willamette Valley by Herbert Lang p.599]

An obituary in the Oregonian newspaper dated November 30, 1907 recorded a

heartbreaking story of Jane Elizabeth Shaw, later to become Mrs. Zina W. Wood. In 1852 on the Oregon Trail her family was wiped out by cholera. Their Oregon dreams did not die though. Jane, 15 years old, survived and made it through to Washington County. There she was taken in by the Baldra family, who by now had a 12 year old daughter Mary Jane. A big sister is a handy thing for a girl and Mary Jane now had one. Jane would teach her things of life, like Maria's big sister had done. Jane Shaw had come home to Oregon!

On Maria's gravestone is written: "Born in Norfolk, Eng. Aged 69 yr 8 mo 10 da. God in His wisdom has recalled, The boon His love had given, And though the body moulders here, The soul is safe in heaven. Come to Oregon 1839."2

Mary Jane was a country girl.

A man named Sewell later bought the Baldra farm and had a clay factory. Today the old farm is a historic site.

## **Afterward**

by Don Guenther

This was no voyage by a Queen. They didn't bath and the sailors were immoral. Both had their birth dates wrong and their names weren't important. The Baldras were one rough couple! I can't imagine she looked like a princess. He was 24 and she was 19. They were viewed as mature adults practically in old age when they left Norfolk, where the life expectancy was maybe 40. It was live now and try to survive. The fact that they not only survived but thrived proved that they were the strongest of the strong. These were pioneers in the strictest sense of the word. I bet HBC was lucky to get anyone to go to York Factory in the midst of their epidemic. To think, a young couple willing to take that kind of chance. This all means life in Norfolk was dismal at best. We have Maria, a city woman, who lived her Christian convictions and stuck with a hardened farmer. A man it appears who was obsessed with getting to Oregon. I think she was sensitive and knew how important it is for a man to provide for his family. William had little future for himself in Norfolk. She could have said she wouldn't go and by doing so she would have destroyed her husband and the family's future. I do not think he forced her into going. She was smart enough to know the value of a good hard working man. I think she was intelligent and a church goer. She followed her Christian beliefs and God protected them. The chance of surviving that journey as an adult aren't good. It appears every time she got pregnant God had her move. What a beautiful Christian woman. Look at what we have, a woman open to Indians (they helped her when Mary Jane was born),

welcoming strangers (Joe Meek), helping orphaned Jane Shaw, going to church, traveling 6,000 miles so her husband could hold his head up high (he was illiterate) and a mother teaching her children to sacrifice for their father's success. Something she'd done all her life.

## Epilogue

**Mary Jane Baldra's interview at age 81(Mrs. Mary Edwards is Mary Jane Baldra)**



16. Mary Jane

### HUDSON BAY DAYS

"Many's the time, when I was a little girl, I have sat on Doctor McLoughlin's lap," said Mrs. Mary Edwards of Portland. "Though he was considered a rather stern man, yet he was so kindly that children liked him. I can remember as a little girl I did not stand at all in awe of him, in spite of the fact that, as chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, he had been virtual governor of the whole Oregon Country. My father, William Baidra, came out from Cambridge, England, in 1833 to serve as farmer for the Hudson's Bay Company. My mother, whose maiden name was Marie Collaby, was also born at Cambridge. My father and mother were married there and until she came to America she had never lived away from the city. You can imagine what a change it was for a

person born and reared in the city to come to the wilds of North America. My eldest brother, Thomas, was born at York Factory, in Canada. My next brother, Richard, who is now, at the age of eighty-three, in the Odd Fellows home here in Portland, was born in the Red River Country, August 21, 1838. I was born on Sauvies Island, August 1, 1840. An Indian squaw took care of mother when I was born. Doctor Barclay, the Hudson Bay doctor, attended her.

"When I was a little child my people moved to Portland. One of the first things I remember was attending a wedding in Captain Crosby's house. Captain Nathaniel Crosby founded the town of Milton, near the mouth of Willamette Slough, in 1846. Two years before this, just at the head of Sauvies Island, General M. M. McCarver and Peter Burnett founded the town of Linnton, while just across from the lower end of Sauvies Island, where the lower mouth of the Willamette flows into the Columbia, Captain Knighton started the town of St. Helens, in 1845. "Captain Nathaniel Crosby was a Cape Cod man. He came to Oregon in command of the old bark Toulon, which came up the river to the village of Portland in 1845. He unloaded his cargo at what is now the foot of Washington Street and sent up the goods to Oregon City in small boats. When he built his house it was the finest in Portland, the lumber having been brought around the Horn from Maine. It was a story and a half house with dormer windows. It was built on Second Street, but was later moved to Fourth Street between Yamhill and Taylor.

"When I was a little girl I was a great favorite with all of the sea captains. Captain Couch was always very good to me. He came to Oregon the year I was born, 1840. At that time he was captain of the Mar yktncl. A wealthy firm at Newburyport, Mass., at the suggestion of Jason Lee, sent him out to establish a salmon cannery on the Columbia River. He brought out with him at that time George W. LeBreton. Two years later Captain Couch came back with the brig Chenamu8. Some years later, when I was about eight years old, Captain Couch came back to Oregon on the Madonna. His first mate was George H. Flanders. Captain Flanders and Captain Couch both settled in Oregon. "When we moved to Portland there were but a few hundred people living here, so everybody knew everybody else. Among the men I remember best in those days were Mr. Wicox, Portland's first school teacher, Mr. Lovejoy, Mr. Lewis, Captain Crosby, Captain Flanders, Captain Couch, Steve Skidmore and Doctor MbLoughlin.

"From Portland we moved to Washington County. Father sowed a little patch of wheat. He harvested the first year or two with a sickle and threshed with a flail. He would take three sacks of wheat to Doctor McLoughlin's mill and have it ground into flour. I remember how eager we children were to eat the bread made from this flour, but mother would say, 'We must save the flour for father; he has to work. Boiled wheat is plenty good enough for the rest of us.' And so, for several years, we ate boiled, cracked wheat.

Doctor McLoughlin used to send us loaf sugar as well as tea.

"The donation land claim act was passed by Congress when I was ten years old. This was in the fall of 1850. This gave a man and wife a full section of land, while an unmarried man could take only 320 acres. Within a few years after the passage of this act almost every girl in the country was snapped up. Sometimes an old man of forty or fifty would marry a girl of twelve or fourteen, so that he could take up a 640-acre claim. A man named Richard Wiley found a fine 640-acre claim in Washington County and, having found the claim, looked around for a wife. He found me, and we were married, July 27, 1855. I was older than some of the girls who got married, however, for I was fifteen. Six children were born to us. After Mr. Wiley's death I married K. M. Edwards.

*History of the Columbia River Valley from the Dalles to the Sea*, p. 988, Volume 1, by Fred Lockley (1871-), published in 1928:

"During the more than eighty years I have been in Oregon I have seen wonderful changes. I was born before there was a single cabin on the site of the present city of Portland. When I was a little girl, if we traveled from fifteen to twenty miles a day, with an ox team, we thought we were making good time, and now my children go that far with their automobiles in half an hour."



### **Thomas Baldra(1836-1876)**

Thomas Baldra was in Maria's womb on the Atlantic Crossing. He was born at York Factory, Hudson Bay, in Canada in 1836. His first love and marriage was Mary Terah in 1858, but they parted ways after two years. Next he married a woman named Aseneth in 1866. They had 3 children before their divorce: William Richard(1867-1948), Thomas E.(1870-1940), and Minnie(1876-1958). Some believe that his pioneer ways were too rough for Aseneth and she only lasted 7 years with him. He died in Washington County in 1876.

**Thomas W. Baldra**

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<p><b>Birth:</b> Dec. 25, 1836, Canada</p> <p><b>Death:</b> Jul. 29, 1876 Forest Grove Washington County Oregon, USA</p> <p><b>Father:</b> William Baldra (1810 - 1892) of Norfolk, England.</p> <p><b>Married and Divorced:</b> Aseneth A. (Ann) ? in Benton, OR.</p> <p>He was born shortly after his parents arrived at York Factory (on Hudson Bay) in Canada.</p> <p>He came with his parents to the Northwest (Fort Vancouver) in 1839 and settled with them in Washington Co. In 1842 the family settled on Tualatin Plains, locating three miles north of Hillsboro.</p> <p><b>Family links:</b> <b>Parents:</b> Maria Gallaby Baldra (1818 - 1888)</p> <p><b>Children:</b> Thomas E. Baldra (1870 - 1940)*</p> <p><b>Sibling:</b> Thomas W. Baldra (1836 - 1876) Jane Baldra Wiley (1840 - 1926)*</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Added by: <a href="#">Stone Branches</a></p> 
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17. Thomas Baldra Grave

### **Richard Baldra(1838-1924)**

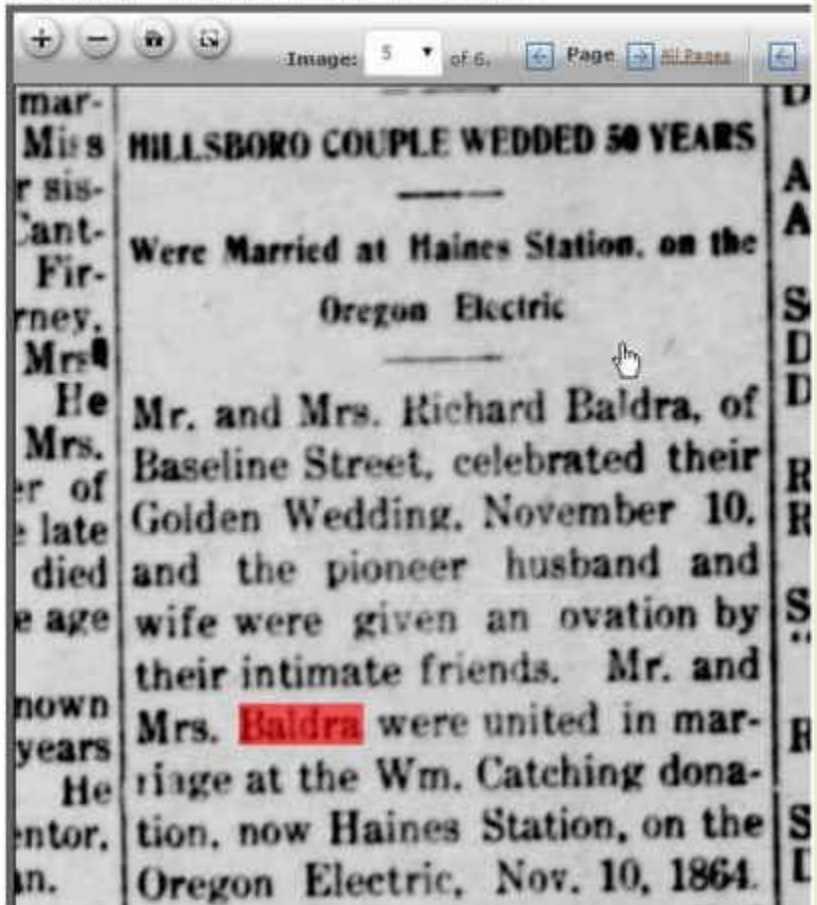
William and Maria's son Richard was born at Norway House in Canada in 1838. He married Sarah Jane Catching(1847-1928). They had 4 children: Millie(1866-1921), Mary(1869- ), Ruba(1877- ), and Carrie(1878-1899).



18. Richard and Sarah Baldra

The Hillsboro argus. (Hillsboro, Or.) 1895-current, November 12, 1914, 1

Image provided by: Hillsboro Public Library; Hillsboro, OR



19. 50th Wedding Anniversary



20. Millie Baldra, belle of 1880



21. Carrie Baldra

**Conclusion:**

Mary Jane married Richard Wiley in 1855 and had three children, their firstborn being Wilbur Wiley, our great great Grampa. See the Richard Wiley Story.

Wilbur Wiley married Corena Landess in 1889. They had three children, including our Gramma Wilda in 1891. Corena divorced Wilbur in 1896. Wilbur was pushed out of his



own home with three little children left behind. In 1909 Wilbur was killed by a train accident in Pasco, Washington. A very sad story.

Wilda Wiley married great Grampa Joe Delsman in 1910. They had three children: Aunt Louise in 1913 who died of polio at age 14; Uncle Dick in 1917 who earned the Purple Heart in WWII; and Geraldine in 1916, our Gramma. Gramma Geraldine was a farmer's daughter and loved to grow things!

Geraldine Delsman married John Guenther in 1935. They had the 14. They lived on the Old Place on the bay, 1965 East Bay Drive. It is here where Ronny, Bobby, Weezy, Dory, Phiddy, Richy, Annie and Anjo, Johnny, Donny, Eddy, Davy, and Mary and Margy grew up.

### **Picture Credits:**

1. 19th Century wooden doll: <https://www.pinterest.com/olga2015p/wooden-doll/>
- 1a. Maria's mother Jane Eyres !783 1872 Norfolk, England: Rebecca Laycock private photo collection
2. Maria Callaby: Rebecca Laycock private photo collection
3. William Baldra: Rebecca Laycock private photo collection
- 3a. Maria Callaby Brother and Sister: Rebecca Laycock private photo collection
4. St. Clemente Church: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrington\\_St\\_Clement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrington_St_Clement)
5. 19th century ship: <http://www.galapagosislands.com/galapagos-history/galapagos-charles-darwin.html>
6. Terrington to Gravesend: Mapquest, edited by Donald S. Guenther
7. Typical brig: <http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/fh/passengerlists/SAShips1836.htm>
8. Atlantic voyage: <https://hallnjean.wordpress.com/seafarers/lecture-transcript-an-introduction-to-the-history-of-aboriginal-sailors-of-hudson-bay/>
9. York Factory Express: [http://www.thefullwiki.org/Columbia\\_District](http://www.thefullwiki.org/Columbia_District)
10. Norway House, 1840: <http://www.tiro.com/>
11. york Boat: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athabasca\\_River](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athabasca_River)
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<http://webpages.charter.net/edkluk/Mountains/Jasper/Jasper.html>
13. Columbia River, pg. 165: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/39465/39465-h/39465-h.htm>
14. Chinook mother:  
[http://www.watertown.k12.ma.us/cunniff/americanhistorycentral/02indiansofnorthamerica/The\\_Chinooks.html](http://www.watertown.k12.ma.us/cunniff/americanhistorycentral/02indiansofnorthamerica/The_Chinooks.html)
15. Baldra land claim: Oregon Donation Land claim records
16. Mary Jane Baldra: Washington County Museum, Portland, Oregon
17. Thomas Baldra brave: Find a Grave
18. Richard and Sarah Baldra: Washington County Museum, Portland, Oregon

19. Richard and Sarah Baldra, 50th anniversary: Hillsboro Argus, Nov. 12, 1914; Hillsboro Public Library; Hillsboro, Oregon
20. Millie Baldra: Washington County Museum, Portland, Oregon
21. Carrie Baldra: Washington County Museum, Portland, Oregon

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