

Archdeacon Thomas Vincent, III. (1835-1907)

Thomas Vincent was a Métis born on March 1, 1835 at Osnaburgh House. His father, John Vincent, was a fur trader for the HBC. His mother was Charlotte Thomas of Moose Factory, also a Métis. Thomas' paternal grandfather was HBC Chief Factor Thomas Vincent I; his paternal grandmother was Jane Renton a Métisse. The family left Osnaburgh House in 1840 and settled at Middlechurch (Red River) where Thomas attended parish school then St. John's Collegiate. In 1855, Bishop Anderson took him to Moose Factory to work as a catechist and to teach school. He subsequently worked at Rupert's House and was then sent to Albany as a priest. Thomas married Eliza Gladman, another Métis, in 1861. She was the daughter of the HBC Chief Factor at Rupert House, Joseph Gladman.

In 1863, the twenty-eight year old Thomas Vincent left Albany in February and travelled 1,300 miles on snowshoes to Red River to be ordained as a priest in the Church of England. He returned by canoe. Almost the whole of his ministry was in the Albany area and he had to travel great distances to reach the four churches he set up in the region. His younger brother, James, was also employed by the mission at Albany. Thomas Vincent was made the first Archdeacon of Moosonee by Bishop Horden in 1883 at Moose Factory. In 1893, Thomas was honoured by St. John's College with the granting of an honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree.

In 1899, Thomas retired and lived near Stonewall, Manitoba. He returned to James Bay in 1901 to take the government census and in 1906 to fill a church vacancy. He died there on January 16, 1907.

The agents of the Church Missionary Society of the Church of England were supposed to be mere catalysts who would soon be replaced by Native agents. The case of Archdeacon Thomas Vincent of Moosonee demonstrates that this policy was not carried out in the James Bay region, where men of mixed-race were considered unfit to succeed their European tutors. In John Long's assessment: "By the late nineteenth century the [church] machine itself seemed obsolete, incapable of supplying recruits for the mission field. In rejecting men of mixed race for its highest positions, the church made a bad situation worse and perpetuated a paternalistic outlook" (1983:111).

Reference

Long, John S. "Archdeacon Thomas Vincent of Moosonee and the Handicap of 'Métis' Racial Status." *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1983: 95-116.



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