

## **Reverend Benjamin McKenzie. (1837-1928)**

By Heather Hallett and Lawrence Barkwell

Benjamin McKenzie was born on December 15, 1837 at Fort Vancouver, Washington, U.S.A. His father was Benjamin McKenzie, Chief Accountant for the Hudson's Bay Company, and his mother was Catherine Campbell, the daughter of Colin Campbell and Elizabeth McGillivray. His paternal grandparents were Roderick McKenzie and Angelique Mallotte. Roderick was born at Inverassynt, Scotland, and Angelique was an Ojibwa Indian from the Nipigon district of Ontario.

Benjamin was sent to St. John's Academy in Winnipeg at the age of seven, where he eventually became a teacher. He was living and teaching at Portage la Prairie at the time of his marriage to Harriet Fidler (born 1837) in 1859. Benjamin and Harriet would go on to have twelve children together.

The McKenzies moved to the Settlement of Victoria Mission (east of present day Edmonton) in 1864. Benjamin was employed to teach at the Wesleyan Methodist School under the Reverend George McDougall. This school was one of the first protestant schools west of Manitoba. The family lived there for nine years, until Benjamin was asked to move back to Manitoba to study for the Ministry at St. John's College. By this time, Benjamin was an accomplished scholar and could teach Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and French.

The family lived in Red River until 1876, when they moved to Cumberland House some time after Benjamin's ordination as an Anglican Minister. The family worked as missionaries to the Indians. After five years, they were transferred to minister to the Indians at St. Peter's Reserve just north of present day Winnipeg.

In 1890, Benjamin retired to the Parish of St. Clement's. The family lived there for fifteen years. During that time, Benjamin was in charge of the Mission at Lake Manitoba, St. Andrew's Parish, and the Black River Mission. He then moved to Robinson Spur in 1905, and to Whytewold in 1927.

Benjamin had spent over fifty years in the Anglican Ministry. He died at age ninety-one on May 10, 1928, and was buried at St. Clement's Anglican Church. Harriet predeceased Benjamin on September 21, 1924.



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