

Anne Thomas Christie. (b. 1795)

Anne Thomas was one of the Metis “First Ladies” of Upper Fort Garry during the time that her husband was in charge and rebuilding the Upper Fort in the 1830s. At the same time he was supervising the building of Lower Fort Garry.

The marriage of Anne Thomas and Alexander Christie (1792- 1872) was confirmed by the Church of England on February 10, 1835 at St. John’s Red River. Like many company employees, Christie and Sarah Thomas had married according to “the custom of the country”. Two of the couple’s sons, Alexander (b. 1818)¹ and William Joseph² (b. 1824), and a grandson, Alexander, entered the Hudson's Bay Company's service. Their son-in-law, John Black, married to Margaret Christie was a chief trader at Red River.³

¹ Alexander Christie Jr. entered the Company's service as an apprentice clerk at Lachine, where he served from 1834 to 1837. In 1838 he was apprentice clerk at Esquimaux Bay, becoming clerk at the same place the next year. In 1840 he was clerk at Lachine Depot, transferring to the Northern Department in 1841. With the Northern department he served in the Mackenzie River District 1841 to 1843 at Fort Frances, Rivière aux Liards and Fort Halkett, before he was allowed to retire in 1844. In 1845 he was rehired as clerk and served at Fort Garry 1845, Carlton in the Saskatchewan District in 1846, at Red River 1847, at Edmonton 1848-1849 and 1853, at Lesser Slave Lake 1850-1852 and at Fort Chipewyan 1854-1856, at Dunvegan 1857-1859 and at Fort Pelly, Swan River District 1860-62. He took charge at Fort Chipewyan in the Athabasca District 1863-1866, and after a year's furlough went to Portage La Loche 1868-1869 and Rapid River 1870, both in the English River District. He was listed as a commissioned officer in that District until 1873. He was appointed Chief Trader in April, 1858. On 4 August 1849 he married Miss Caroline Isbister at Norway House.

² In 1849 at York Factory William Christie married Mary Sinclair, the daughter of William Sinclair. William Joseph Christie was educated in Aberdeen, Scotland. He returned to North America in 1841 and soon entered the service of the HBC. After a first posting to Lake Superior, he became apprentice clerk at Rocky Mountain House in the Saskatchewan district, and then was transferred to York Factory under Chief Factor James Hargrave. Christie was sent in 1848 to take charge of Fort Churchill. Christie had done so well that in 1852, though still only a clerk, he was put in charge of the Swan River district, with headquarters at Fort Pelly. Promoted chief trader in 1854 and chief factor in 1860, Christie was sent in 1858 to Fort Edmonton to take charge of the Saskatchewan district. He served there for 14 years, travelling extensively. In 1872 Christie was appointed inspecting chief factor in the HBC, a new post that placed him second in command after Chief Commissioner Donald Alexander Smith. Unhappy with Smith’s policies and unable to influence change Christie retired in 1873 to Brockville, Ontario. Subsequently he was named a commissioner for the negotiation of Treaty No.4 at Fort Qu’Appelle in and for Treaty No.6 at forts Carlton and Pitt in 1876.

³ In 1845, John Black married Margaret, daughter of Alexander Christie, then the governor of Assiniboia. From 1850 to 1852 Black served as chief accountant of the

In 1817, Christie was in charge of the company's Eastmain business and made his headquarters at Rupert's House. One of his major duties at the time was the supervision of the company's whale fishery business. At the time of the union of the HBC with the North West Company in 1821, he was listed in the Deed Poll as a chief factor. Christie was on furlough in 1824, and in charge of Moose Factory from 1826 until 1830 when he was transferred to York Factory. Three years later he was placed in charge of Red River and appointed governor of Assiniboia.

While he was in charge at Red River, Alexander Christie supervised the building of Lower Fort Garry, which had been begun about 1831 some 20 miles north of present-day Winnipeg; he also began construction of Upper Fort Garry on the site of an earlier company post of the same name at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers. Between 1839 and 1844 he was in England on furlough and at Moose Factory.

During his second term as governor of Assiniboia – from 1844 until his retirement in 1848 – Christie took strong measures against free traders in the Red River Settlement who challenged the HBC's right to a fur trade monopoly.

As a result of HBC requests to the imperial government a force of approximately 350 men of the 6th Royal Regiment of Foot was sent to Red River in 1846 under Colonel John Folliot Crofton. These troops were replaced in 1848 by 56 army pensioners under Major William Bletterman Caldwell. This latter group proved ineffective, and free trading continued, culminating in the trial of Pierre-Guillaume Sayer in 1849.

Upper Red River District. After his wife's death in 1854 he went to Scotland and Australia, returning to Red River in 1862 to become recorder and president of the General Quarterly Court of Assiniboia. Black had acquired some legal training in Scotland; his procedures in the court were Scottish rather than English. In 1862 he joined the Council of Assiniboia. He was still in office when the Red River Resistance began. He kept a moderate course. He was elected English delegate from St. Andrew's to the Convention of Forty in 1870 and was chosen as its chair. On 4-5 February he spoke at length against the immediate creation of a province and the continued use of an appointed council. He was subsequently chosen as a delegate of Louis Riel's Provisional Government to the Canadian government to negotiate terms of entrance into Confederation. In Ottawa he was less enthusiastic than his colleagues about a large land settlement for the Métis. He left Ottawa for the United Kingdom before the agreement with Canada had been fully implemented.



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