

Father Edward Cunningham, O.M.I. (1865-1920)

Edward Cunningham was born at Fort Edmonton on July 5, 1862, the son of John Cunningham¹ (b. 1815) and his second wife Rosalie L'Hirondelle. The son of Metis parents from St. Albert, Alberta, Bishop Grandin ordained Edward. He was the first Metis from Alberta to become a priest.

Edward was born on July 5, 1862, into a family of eleven children. He began school at St. Albert and took his post-secondary education at the University of Ottawa from 1882 to 1885. He entered the Novitiate of Lachine on August 25th, 1885 and made his profession on August 29th, 1886. He continued his studies at the Scolasticat Saint-Joseph, in Ottawa (1886-1888), and completed his theology studies at Lac-La-Biche, Alberta (1888-1890).

He made his perpetual vows at Fort MacLeod, Alberta, on February 17th, 1889, and was ordained a priest at Saint-Albert, Alberta, March 19th, 1890, by Mgr Vital-Justin Grandin, O.M.I., Bishop of Saint-Albert. He was the first Metis priest.

Most of his service was amongst the Metis and Piegan people of Alberta. He was a renowned speaker who served missions at Onion Lake, McLeod, Beaumont, Hobbema, Saddle Lake and Lac Ste. Anne. He served at various missions: Fort MacLeod and the Peigan mission [Brocket] (1888); Saint-Albert and Lac-La-Biche (1889); Saint-Albert, again (1890-1892); and Onion Lake, Saskatchewan (1892-1897). He signed the register of Long Lake [Gurneyville], Alberta (1895, 1897). He then went to Saint-Albert (1897-1903), entrusted with the small missions in the area and visited that of Beaumont; then, Lac-La-Selle [Saddle Lake], Alberta (1899); Onion Lake (1899); Hobbema (1899); until, in 1900, he settled at Saint-Albert and served Duhamel. He returned to Onion Lake (1903-1917) where he went to the mission at Lac Sainte- Anne, Alberta (1917-1920). He died at Edmonton on July 20, 1920.



References

- Anderson, Anne. *The First Metis... A New Nation*, Edmonton: UVISCO Press, 1985: 379-380.
Dictionnaire de Marie Immaculée au Canada, Volume I, Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1979: 242.

¹ John Cunningham was a clerk in the H.B.C.'s service; he died of smallpox at St. Albert during the epidemic of 1870.



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