

TIMBER AND TIN: Church Design and Construction in the James Bay Mission, 1850-1890

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EMILY TURNER is a PhD candidate in architecture at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Her research focuses on the development of physical infrastructures in Christian mission stations in Northern Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Since the early French presence in North America, missions to Canada's indigenous peoples have been a key aspect of European expansion into the territory. The second half of the nineteenth century, in particular, was of note for the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the evangelical branch of the Church of England's missionary programme, which focussed its efforts on Canada's North and West, as part of their larger evangelistic enterprise across the British Empire. Although focussed primarily on preaching and conversion, the presence of missionaries was most effectively denoted through the construction and growth of churches and mission stations. Five of these stations were located on the shores of James Bay, with the specific focus of evangelizing the James Bay Cree.¹ The churches erected at these stations, in particular those at Moose Factory, which became the seat of the newly created Diocese of Moosonee in 1872, and at Fort George, demonstrate two key approaches to church design and construction, which, when examined in light of the CMS's policy on ecclesiastical infrastructure development, clarify the important limitations and conditions faced by these remote stations as regards their approach to architecture.

The five mission stations in this region were located at the Hudson Bay Company posts of Moose Factory in the south; Rupert House, Eastmain and Fort George on the eastern shore of the Bay; and Fort Albany on the western shore. Churches were erected at all of these stations, but very limited information about them can be found; only one, St. Thomas', Moose



FIG. 1. ST THOMAS' CHURCH, MOOSE FACTORY, 1856-1864; 1884, EXTERIOR. | ALGOMA UNIVERSITY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, SHINGWAUK RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS CENTRE, JOHN EDMONDS FONDS, 2011-060-001.