

EDMUND MORRIS AMONG THE SASKATCHEWAN INDIANS AND THE FORT QU'APPELLE MONUMENT

By Jean McGill

In 1872 the government of Canada appointed Alexander Morris the first Chief Justice of Manitoba. The same year he succeeded A. G. Archibald as Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba and the North-West Territories.

Archibald had already acted as a commissioner of the federal government in negotiating Treaties Nos. 1 and 2 with the Indians of Manitoba. Morris was commissioned in 1873 to carry on negotiations with Indians of the western plains and some Manitoba Indians not present at the first two treaties. By the time Alexander Morris's term of office had expired in 1877 he had negotiated the signing of Treaties No. 3 (North-West Angle), 4 (Fort Qu'Appelle), 5 (Lake Winnipeg), 6 (Forts Carlton and Pitt), and the Revision of Treaties Nos. 1 and 2. Morris later documented the meetings, negotiations, and wording of all of the treaties completed prior to 1900 in a book entitled *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories* which was published in 1888. He returned to Toronto with his family and later was persuaded to run for office in the Ontario legislature where he represented Toronto for a number of years.

Edmund Morris, youngest of a family of eleven, was born two years before the family went to Manitoba. Indian chiefs and headmen in colourful regalia frequently came to call on the Governor and as a child at Government House in Winnipeg, Edmund was exposed to Indian culture for the Indians invariably brought gifts, often for Mrs. Morris and the children as well as the Governor. As an adult, he recalled those early days and retained an empathy for the Indians.

Edmund grew up in Toronto, studied art in New York City and Paris and became one of a group of landscape artists who in the early twentieth century were enthralled by the Quebec landscape.

He had painted a few portraits of deceased Indian chiefs from photos, one of whom was the famous *Crowfoot*, when the Ontario government perhaps through the political connections of his late father, commissioned him to travel through northern Ontario with a Treaty Party in 1906 and paint portraits of chiefs and headmen of the tribes they met. This journey marked the final negotiations and signing of Treaty No. 9 with the James Bay Indians.

Impressed by the portraits Morris painted on this assignment, the Ontario government further commissioned him in 1908 to travel through Saskatchewan and Alberta searching out remaining chiefs and headmen who had participated in the Treaties negotiated by his late father. Edmund consulted his cousin, Murney Morris in Winnipeg as to where he might find a source of information on the western Indians. His cousin suggested a visit to Colonel A. G. Irvine, then warden of the Stoney Mountain penitentiary north of Winnipeg. Irvine had been present at the signing of Treaties Nos. 6 and 7 as Assistant Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police and had known Alexander Morris well. Edmund went to Winnipeg in 1907 to see Irvine whom he found a fund of information on the earlier days of the northwest, the Rebellion, and the different tribes of Indians. Irvine also was able to provide him with names and addresses of Indian agents and inspectors as well as



Manitoba Archives, 1981-123

Edmund Montague Morris, 1871-1913.

missionaries who were living near or on Indian reserves and who could help him in his search.

One of the first agents Morris wrote to was William Graham of the Qu'Appelle agencies at Balcarres who suggested that he go to Lebrét where the Reverend J. Huggonard who ran the Industrial School and who had been present at the signing of the Qu'Appelle Treaty could assist him. Another source of information was the Reverend J. Matheson, missionary at Onion Lake, Saskatchewan, an "oldtimer," knowledgeable on the subject of Indians, past and present. Matheson told him that the best representatives of the Cree could be found near there. He named one *Thunder Bird* — "a fine type of Cree Indian, mentally, morally and physically." Matheson added: "They all knew your father at the time of the Treaty of 1876 (Fort Pitt) . . . I do not know in Canada where you can find a purer specimen of the Cree tribe. They have not been contaminated by contact with the white man as in too many other places."

Other contacts were made relating to Indians in Alberta where much of Edmund's work was done.

By July 1909 he had painted sixty portraits for the Ontario government representing tribes of Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta. He offered to do a series for the Saskatchewan government. Writing to the Honourable Walter Scott, then premier, he suggested a series of portraits for the new parliament buildings to be built in Regina.

"No time should be lost," he wrote, "as the Indians who went on the warpath and hunted the buffalo are fast disappearing from the scene, and the younger generation are losing their identity." He proposed to visit the Saskatchewan tribes again that summer and said that he had "become deeply interested and would like to

continue this important work, the value of which from a historical, ethnological as well as artistic standpoint is very important." The Saskatchewan government accepted the proposal and ordered fifteen portraits for the new legislative building which was to open in Regina in 1910.

Camping by the lake at Fort Qu'Appelle, Morris met the Chief of the Muscowpetung Reserve and a group of his Saulteaux kinsmen. The Chief told him that their treaty had been broken by the government and most of his band had been persuaded to sell a portion of their reserve, a tale Morris heard many times when painting among the Indians.

Still searching for pure Cree types, he wrote to W. J. Chisholm who was the Inspector of Indian Agencies in Northern Saskatchewan. Chisholm replying from Prince Albert in November 1910 directed him to areas where he might find some of the older chiefs of that district, commenting that most of the local Indians showed too much admixture of white blood for the distinct types Morris was seeking. "Yet," he wrote, "there are a few individuals who have the salient points, in my opinion, of the Cree character rather well expressed in their features." He thought Morris might find a good specimen of the Stony characteristics at the reserve south of Battleford. Chisholm was gratified that some action had been taken by the provincial governments "to preserve the features of the primitive races of these regions before they have quite disappeared, for each generation brings a marked change and very soon no examples will remain of the Plains Indian as he was before he entered into treaty relations."

It is interesting to note that in December 1910, Chisholm mentioned having written the Indian Affairs Department at Ottawa, some time previously suggesting that it would be fitting if the graves of those killed at Frog Lake in 1885 and other scenes of that year could be marked in an appropriate way. This, he said, had recently been done. Edmund was then proposing to mark the signing of the Fort Qu'Appelle Treaty and this was much approved by Chisholm.

In March 1911 Morris shipped off five portraits to the Honourable Walter Scott. In acknowledging the safe receipt of the portraits Scott said that as the legislative chamber was not yet complete, they had been temporarily hung in the offices of the Minister of Education and the Minister of Public Works.

As he travelled among the Indians and saw the extreme poverty under which many of them lived and listened to their unhappy stories of what had happened to them since the signing of the treaties of the previous century, his sympathy for their cause grew and periodically he defended them by writing letters to newspapers. He had also developed a plan for a memorial to commemorate the signing of the treaties at Fort Qu'Appelle, Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt. He intended the memorial to be in recognition of the Plains Indians as well as the work of his late father who had negotiated the signing of these treaties and who was remembered with respect by the Indians.

In order to get the memorial built Morris began by organizing a committee to raise money through the Saskatchewan Branch of the Western Art Association for a Fort Qu'Appelle memorial. The committee was composed of Miss MacDonald, President of the Saskatchewan Branch of the Association, and Messrs. Edmund Morris, W. M. Graham, J. S. Court, Barnet Harvey, and C. Spring-Rice. In Toronto, Edmund approached his friend, Walter Allward, a well-known sculptor, to design the memorial, and John Pearson to act as architect.

Edmund had found a sacred carved stone used for rituals by the Crees and

offered to purchase it as his family's contribution to the memorial. Writing to William Graham in August 1912 Morris said that Pearson had arranged to have the memorial stone transported free from Toronto. The Indians, he added, were interested in the memorial.

In launching their appeal for funds, the Saskatchewan Branch of the Western Art Association, prepared a brochure stating:

It is proposed that the Memorial should take the form of a slab of native rock with names of Signatories to the Treaty carved upon a Bronze Tablet which will be let into the face of the stone. This enscribed stone will then be erected on the Site pointed out by Mr. Archie MacDonald and the Reverend Father Huggonard of the Mission, who were both personally present at the signing of the treaty.

The Committee hope to be able to mark off a Plot of Ground around the Memorial Stone with a suitable enclosure . . . Like the Maisonneuve Statue in Montreal, it will mark forever, we may hope, the spot where the Western country entered on its new and wonderful development.

Edmund, however, had drawn up a more elaborate design in which the sacred stone was to be flanked by two stone pillars representing the two races and at the top the pillars were to be joined by a slab of granite symbolizing brotherhood. On the memorial would be inscribed the names of all participants.

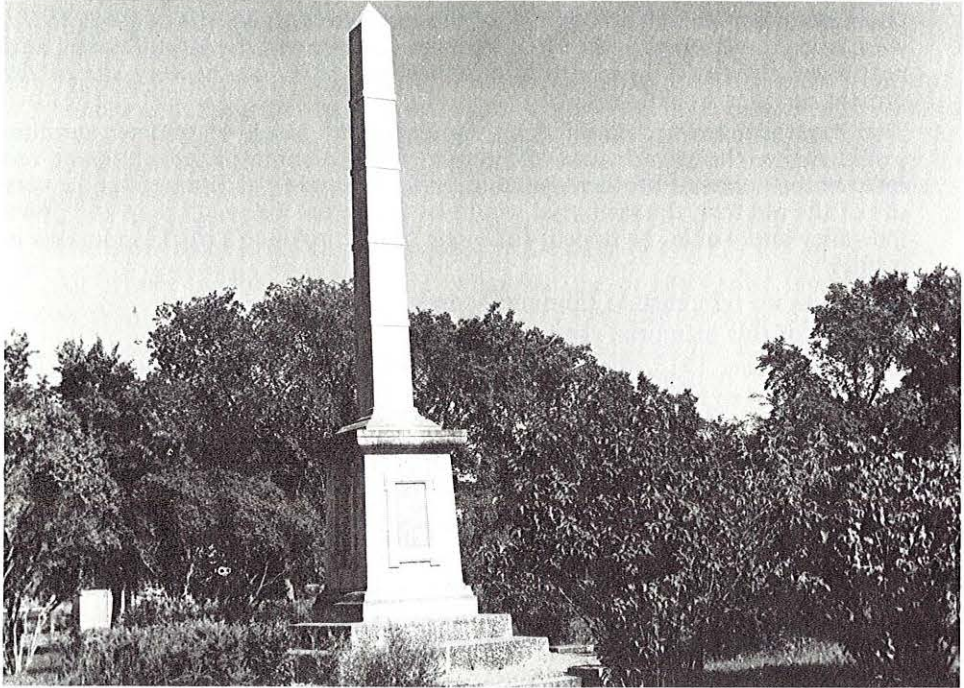
Not content with commemoration of the three treaties, Edmund was urging what was probably the forerunner of the commemorative historic plaques we now see from one end of Canada to the other placed by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. For this to become a workable plan, he sought the help of Sir Edmund Osler, influential financier and patron of the arts, in Toronto. As early as April 1912 he was writing to Osler regarding ancient landmarks in the northwest urging him to do something about their preservation because of Osler's "great interest in the west." Later in the year in another letter, Morris said he was preparing a report for Osler regarding certain ancient monuments of the aborigines, their old forts and the few Hudson's Bay Company posts left, as well as spots where treaties were negotiated and the major battlefields, all of which should be marked appropriately.

In order to get the latter under way, he suggested a committee composed of: The Governor, Sir D. S. Cameron, Sir E. Osler, Colonel Irvine, Sheriff Inkster, Colonel Sam Steele, Captain Gautier, Charles Mair, T. W. Tyrrell, Father Morris, Agnes Laut, T. C. Wade, D. R. Wilkie, D. M. Graham, and himself. Some of these were already working for the Qu'Appelle memorial as fund-raisers.

In October 1912 Spring-Rice of the Saskatchewan Branch of the Western Art Association wrote to Morris saying that he had no idea that the memorial stone for Fort Qu'Appelle was to be so decorated and wanted a brochure to be prepared explaining the meaning of the Indian ideographs on the base of the stone. "We would try later to have a bronze relief of your father's head and a typical Indian Chief's," he added.

Replying to Spring-Rice, Morris reported that T. C. Wade was busy promoting the project in England. Morris wanted the village of Fort Qu'Appelle to lay out a public park and place the monument in it. He spelled out the inscription he desired:

Treaty made and concluded 15 September 1874 between Her Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria, and the Cree, Saulteaux and other Indians. Commissioners: The Hon. Alex. Morris, Lieut-Governor, the Hon. David Laird, Minister of the Interior, Wm. J. Christie, Esq.



Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-B5370

Treaty Memorial, Fort Qu'Appelle.

Indian Chiefs and Headmen who were party to the Treaty:
(list of Indian names)

The stone on this pedestal was carved by ancient aborigines. The Crees regarded it as sacred and were wont to journey north of the Red Deer River to Berry Creek where on a hill the rock stood. Here they assembled in large numbers and went through certain religious rites.

Subscriptions for the memorial came in from as far west as Vancouver and from eastern Canada as far as Quebec. Also from England. However, before the eventual monument could be completed, Edmund Morris drowned accidentally on 21 August 1913, while on a sketching holiday at Port-Neuf, Quebec, along the St. Lawrence River.

Regarding the Fort Qu'Appelle Memorial a curious anomaly exists. A report in the *Regina Daily Province* for 17 October 1912, describes the unveiling of the sacred stone which was to become the centre of the memorial as Morris had designed it.

The report related that a memorial ceremony was held marking the site where the first treaty with the Indians of the North-West Territories was signed in 1874 and that the Governor General the Duke of Connaught was to unveil it but was unable to attend. It goes on:

The town was suitably decorated and a large number of people gathered to witness the ceremony. . . . the members of the association . . . decided to request Mr. Archibald McDonald, the last Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company who assisted the Commissioners in negotiating the treaty and whose connection with the company dates back to 1854, to perform the ceremony.

Rev. H. A. Lewis opened the proceedings . . . the stone itself was one of great historical interest, being a sacred stone held in great reverence by the Indian tribes and used as their meeting place for many generations. It had been

purchased from them by the family of the late Governor Morris of the N.W.T., who, in conjunction with the Hon. William Christie and the Hon. David Laird negotiated the treaty in question in September, 1874, on the very site of the present Fort Qu'Appelle. . . .

Two great columns, connected by another great block of unhewn granite, would shelter the sacred stone and thus typify the union of the white and red races in the bonds of brotherhood under the imperial flag. Situated on the very site of the old fort, the memorial would be visible for many miles up and down the valley and would, he hoped, form one of the province's chief landmarks in history.

There was no reference to Edmund Morris.

The fate of this memorial remains a mystery.

On 9 November 1915, the Regina *Leader-Post* carried a news story entitled: "Treaty Memorial to be Unveiled by His Honor Lieutenant Governor Lake Today at Fort Qu'Appelle."

It stated that the Treaty Memorial had been erected on the old school site in the village of Fort Qu'Appelle, the original site of the signing of the Treaty.

The memorial was described as a monument of Tyndall stone thirty-four feet high on a base eleven feet square. It was in the form of an obelisk. It is the memorial that stands there today.

A brochure prepared by the Saskatchewan Branch of the Western Art Association for the occasion stated that "the Village [Fort Qu'Appelle] has agreed to keep the grounds in order as a park. The monument is composed of Tyndall stone from the province of Manitoba, with four granite panels from the Province of Quebec on which the inscriptions and Coats of Arms are shown."

The Coats of Arms, one on each side of the monument above the panels, represents the different forms of government under which the country has been administered in the past and present — Great Britain, the Hudson's Bay Company, the Dominion of Canada, and the Province of Saskatchewan.

The names of the commissioners, Indian Chiefs and witnesses and dates and places where the Treaty was signed are inscribed in the granite panels.

No mention was made of Edmund Morris's part in the memorial concept either in the brochure or the newspaper report of the unveiling despite the fact that the newspaper gave considerable space to the occasion and included the extent of the territory ceded to Her Majesty's government. The news report reads in part:

The territory ceded by the Indians extended from a point on the United States frontier south of Moose Mountain, thence north-easterly to Lake Winnipegosis, through Fort Ellice, thence in a southeasterly direction to the source of the Qu'Appelle river and to the mouth of the Maple Creek, thence west of the Cypress Hills, south to the International boundary, thence east along the boundary to the point of commencement; a territory comprising the greater part of the present province of Saskatchewan.

The monument was erected through the efforts of the association and by individual subscriptions from members and others interested in different parts of Canada, as well as the United States and England . . . [and] with substantial contributions from the Dominion Government, the Provincial Government of Saskatchewan, the Woman's Canadian Club at Winnipeg, and a number of Chapters of the Daughters of the Empire.

The treaty was signed by twenty-one Indian chiefs and the three Indian commissioners, the Hon. Alexander Morris, Lieutenant-Governor; Hon. David Laird, Minister of the Interior, and afterwards Lieutenant-Governor, and the Hon. William Christie. There were thirty-six witnesses to the treaty of which

there are only seven alive today. All the Indians and the commissioners who signed have passed away. . . .

The Department of Indian Affairs has arranged for two delegates from each band within the treaty to be present at the unveiling. A large number of Indian children will be present from the Indian industrial school at Lebret, with the brass band of that institution. Several hundred Indians are expected to be present also from the various reserves throughout the province but more particularly those reserves in or near the Qu'Appelle Valley.

The monument is the first of its kind in Canada . . .

All efforts by the writer to find what became of the earlier memorial have proven fruitless. Perhaps a reader of *Saskatchewan History* may offer a clue or could suggest an explanation. The Western Art Association has long since been disbanded and the writer has been unable to find records beyond those extant in the offices of the Saskatchewan Archives Board from which the information on the present monument came.

Of the fifteen portraits painted by Morris for the Saskatchewan government, six were Algonquin Crees. Of these *Pimotat* (The Walker) and *Kah To Kope Chamakasis* (Tying Knot) were from the File Hills Agency. *Walter Ochapowace* was from the Ochapowace Reserve ten miles northwest of Whitewood. His father was chief and a son of Loud Voice, the principal chief of the Crees, who had signed the Qu'Appelle Treaty. *Piapot*, Chief of the Piapot Band living thirty miles north of Regina in the Qu'Appelle Valley was the only one who had participated in signing the Fort Qu'Appelle Treaty. One of the portraits was of the famous Chief Poundmaker, *Pitikwahanapiwiwin*, who had sided with Riel in the 1885 Rebellion. Another chief whose band had caused the government a lot of trouble during the 1885 rebellion was *Mistahimaskwa* (Big Bear). Some of his band had been sentenced to hang and he himself spent a term in the penitentiary. *Peeaysaw Musquah* (Thunder Bear), an Algonquin Ojibway Saulteaux, who lived in the Qu'Appelle Valley was another subject. The Saskatchewan government possesses the only known portrait of Thunder Bear. Big Darkness, an Assiniboine from Carry the Kettle Band living south of Sintaluta along with a chief from the same band, *Chakagin* (Carry the Kettle), a Dakota Sioux, were also among the portraits painted by Morris. There was also one of Medicine Man, *Pahnnap*, a Cree from the Sakimay Band in the Crooked Lakes Agency and of *Acoose*, Chief of the same reserve. Of all those painted for Saskatchewan, only *Piapot* had been present at the signing of the Qu'Appelle Treaty.

The Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto which has the sixty Indian portraits Morris painted for the Ontario government, inherited from him a collection of Indian artifacts many of which were acquired by his father. Although this collection includes relics from a much earlier Indian culture, the sacred stone which formed part of the first memorial at Fort Qu'Appelle appears not to be among them.

Its disappearance along with the other parts of the memorial is as yet a mystery.



For further information on Edmund Morris painting among the Western Indians, see article: "The Indian Portraits of Edmund Morris" by Jean McGill in *The Beaver*, Summer, 1979.