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SKETCH OF THE
LIFE and TIMES

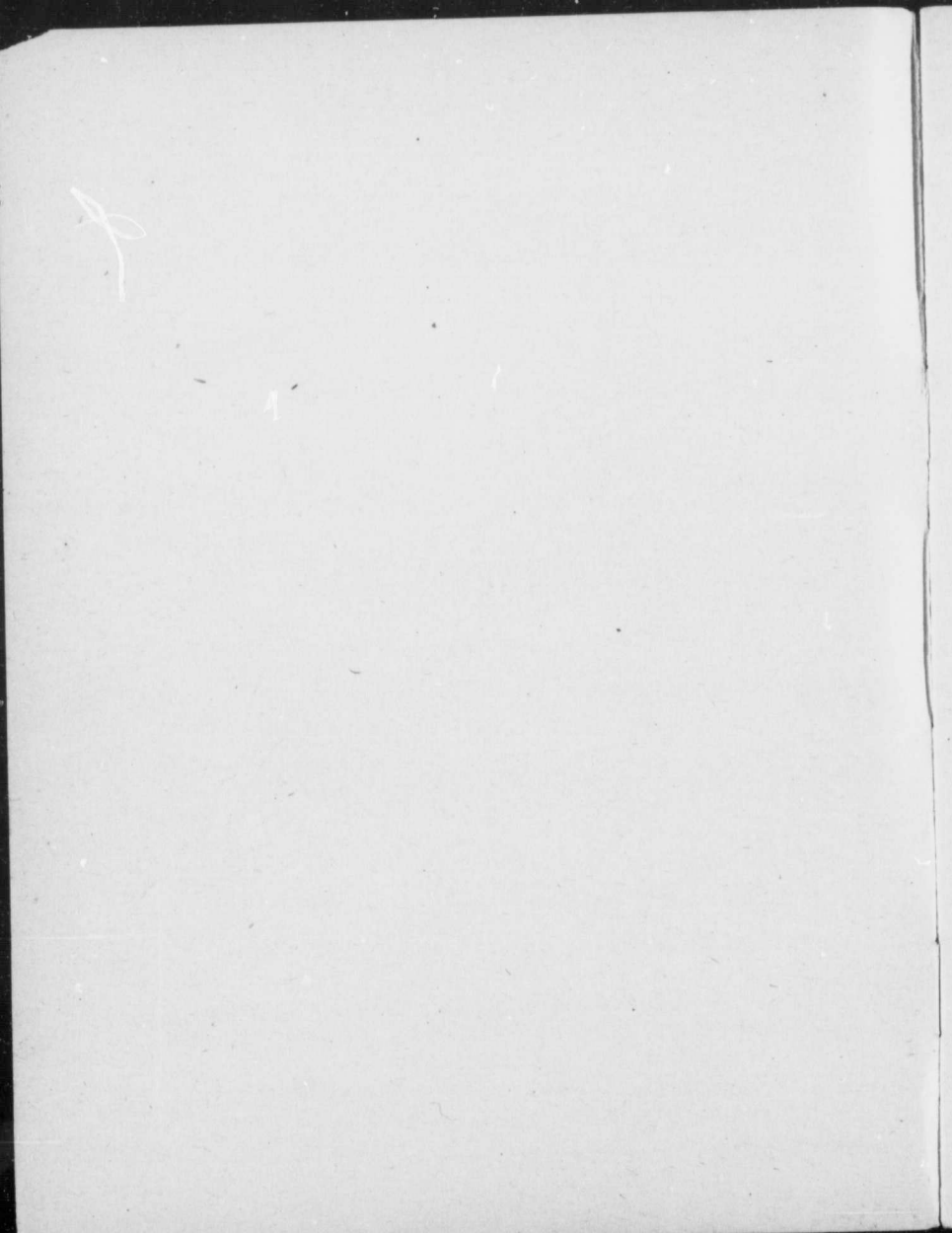
of

JOSEPH CURRAN MORRISON
AND ANGUS MORRISON

Presidents of
ST. ANDREW'S SOCIETY
1850-54



By
ANGUS MacMURCHY, K.C.



*Sketch of the Life and Times of
Joseph Curran Morrison*

President of St. Andrew's Society, 1850-52, and

Angus Morrison

President 1852-54

BY ANGUS MACMURCHY, K.C.

THESE brothers came to Toronto (then York) in 1832 with their father Hugh Morrison, who was an officer in the celebrated Black Watch Regiment and served in the Peninsular War. Joseph Curran was born in the south of Ireland on 20th August, 1816, and Angus was born in Edinburgh in 1819. Hugh Morrison came from Sutherlandshire. He was a warm friend of Sir John A. Macdonald, as in after years his sons became staunch friends and supporters of the old chieftain.

In the year 1832, ever memorable in English history for the passing of the Reform Bill, emigration to Canada from the mother country greatly increased. In that year 52,000 emigrants came to our shores from the Old Country, but cholera broke out, many died in sight of the promised land after crossing the Atlantic in sailing vessels and spending many weeks on the voyage. The ravages of that dreadful epidemic are described by Mrs. Moodie in "Roughing it in the Bush," pp. 65-66.

"In the morning we were obliged to visit the city (Montreal) to make the necessary arrangements for

our upward journey. The day was intensely hot. A bank of thunderclouds lowered heavily over the mountain, and the close dusty streets were silent and nearly deserted. Here and there might be seen a group of anxious-looking, careworn, sickly emigrants seated against a wall among their packages and sadly ruminating upon their future prospects. The sullen toll of the death-bell, the exposure of newly made coffins in the undertakers' windows and the oft recurring notice placarded on the walls, of funerals furnished at such and such a place at cheapest rate and shortest notice, painfully reminded us at every turning of the street, that death was everywhere, perhaps lurking in our very path. We felt no desire to examine the beauties of the place; with this anxious feeling pervading our minds, public buildings possessed few attractions, and we determined to make our stay as short as possible."

Sir John Colborne, then Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, had made great efforts to induce the better classes in the British Isles to emigrate to Canada. Until that time it was generally considered that no one could live long in our country owing to the severity of the climate and its barren soil! Emigration was discouraged by the Home Government which then exercised from Downing Street much control over the affairs of this country.

In his "Lives of the Judges," Mr. D. B. Read tells us that about this time a number of young Irish gentlemen formed an Emigration Society and decided upon Canada for their future home, intending to take up land and carry on farming.

In 1832 in the ship "Anne" of Halifax, with Cap-

tain John U. Ross in command, came the Rev. Dominick Blake and his brother William Hume Blake, afterwards Chancellor of the Court of Chancery in Upper Canada, and father of Edward and Samuel Hume Blake; their mother and sisters; the late Archdeacon Brough, Dr. Robinson, Rev. Benjamin Cronyn, late Bishop of Huron, Rev. Arthur Palmer, former Archdeacon of Toronto and Dr. Skeffington Connor, afterwards Mr. Justice Connor. This vessel was chartered for the voyage, which was accomplished in about six weeks via the St. Lawrence to Québec, whence the travellers proceeded by stage to York.

It was in the same year that our Past-Presidents' father came to Canada with his family. He took up land at Jackson's Point, most of which he owned; his sons' education was completed at Upper Canada College in the new buildings just then erected in the square between King and Simcoe, John and Adelaide Streets, opened by Sir John Colborne, afterwards Field Marshal Baron Seaton, whose names are borne by two of our city streets.

It is hard to form any adequate idea to-day of the appearance of Toronto in these early days, but fortunately we have the following description by Samuel Thompson in 1833:

"In 1833 the population was 8,500. The principal thoroughfares were King, Lot, Hospital and Newgate Streets; Church, George, Bay and York' Streets were almost without buildings. Taverns were pretty numerous; a wooden English church, Methodist, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic churches of the like construction, a brick gaol and courthouse of ugliest description, scattered private houses, a wheatfield where

the Rossin House now stands, beyond, a roughcast Government House, brick Parliament Buildings, uglier even than the goal, and some government offices located in a one storey brick building, 25 feet square, comprised the lions of Toronto of that day."

The Queen's Hotel, where our meetings are held, was built as three private houses in 1844, known as Ontario Terrace. Here Principal Willis and the other Professors of Knox College resided and carried on classes in theology until 1854.

There were no plank sidewalks in Toronto until after 1834, the year of its incorporation as a city; flat stones taken from the shores of the Bay were used on King Street; the streets were not lighted until 28th December, 1841, when the first gas lamp was lit.

A story is told by Mr. Helliwell as given in Robertson's Landmarks (to which I am indebted for much information), of how a man in 1831, driving a load of pork down Yonge Street, was followed by a bear, which was attracted by the smell. It was in the evening and the man did not see the bear. He arrived at Bosworth's Tavern at the north east corner of Yonge and King Streets (long known as Ridout's Corners, or "The Corners") put his horses in the stable in the rear and went to bed in the tavern.

During the night the inmates of the tavern were roused and found the bear in the stall with the horses, making a sensation. In those far-off days there were neither telegraphs nor railroads, the Military roads, Yonge Street, Dundas Street and the Kingston Road were the only means of communication by stage, and the postage on a letter from the Old Country was 5s. 3d.

After many years of agitation the era of railway construction began in Upper Canada in 1851.

On 15th October, 1851, Lady Elgin turned the first sod for the Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Railroad (afterwards the Northern Railway, and later amalgamated with the Grand Trunk Railway), 100 feet west of Simcoe Street, opposite the Parliament Buildings. The first locomotive engine for the railway named the "Lady Elgin," was built in Portland, Maine. It weighed about 24 tons. The second engine, called the "Toronto" was built at James Good's foundry on the north side of Queen Street between Yonge and Victoria Streets. This is said to be the first locomotive engine constructed in Canada, and indeed in any British colony. The passenger coaches were built and painted in car shops at Niagara and then brought across the Lake on barges to the Queen's Wharf.

The Northern Railway was opened as far as Aurora on 16th May, 1853. The first train started from a little wooden shed opposite Queen's Hotel dignified by the name of a station. It was extended to Collingwood in 1856, when Toronto got railway communication with Hamilton by the Hamilton and Toronto Railway and with Montreal by the Grand Trunk Railway.

Thus before any railway reached Toronto from East or West, Toronto had the Northern Railway through the enterprise of its citizens, amongst whom were F. C. Capreol, the originator and organizer of the undertaking, who was ably assisted by J. C. Morrison, President of the Board of Directors of the Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Ry. Co., succeeding Hon. John Henry Boulton. Much of the progress and prosperity

of Toronto was due to the building of the Northern Railway as in later years by the building of the Credit Valley and connecting railways, in which Angus Morrison bore a prominent part, with George Laidlaw.

Mr. W. H. Blake soon gave up farming in the Township of Adelaide where he had taken up land, and came to Toronto where he entered upon the study of law and was called to the Bar in 1838. The next year J. C. Morrison was called to the Bar and entered into partnership with Mr. Blake. The offices of Blake and Morrison were in what had been the old Toronto Club Building where the Mail Building now stands. This partnership continued until Mr. Blake became Chancellor of the Court of Chancery in 1846. They had been fellow students in the office of Hon. Simon Washburn and were always fast friends.

Dr. Connor having joined the partnership, the firm became Blake, Morrison and Connor. They had a large and extensive practice. Angus Morrison entered their office as a student and became managing clerk. Early in his career his uniform courtesy and kindness of disposition made him a general favourite. J. C. Morrison had many friends in Toronto and the surrounding country. He confined himself largely to the office, while Mr. Blake acted as counsel in many important cases and his reputation seems to have been as great as that of his distinguished sons in later years.

Soon after the firm of Blake & Morrison began the celebrated election of 1841 took place. This was the most exciting contest ever held in Toronto during the days of open voting and nothing approaching it has occurred since.

There was only one polling booth, in West Market

Street; the voting lasted for six days from Monday 14th to Saturday 20th March.

The Reform candidates and supporters of the Government were Isaac Buchanan and John Henry Dunn (the father of Alexander Roberts Dunn, V.C., the hero of Balaclava); the Tory candidates were George Monro, then Mayor, and Henry Sherwood, K.C., Mayor for the next three years. They were called the supporters of the Family Compact and the Corporation.

The names of those who voted and how they cast their votes as entered in the Poll Book, classified by occupations, were printed and sold in pamphlet form by Lesslie Brothers, publishers of *The Examiner*, the Reform journal of the day before the days of *The Globe* and George Brown. Besides the names, the pamphlet contains characteristic and bitter comments upon the progress and result of the election, which are still interesting. The total number of votes cast was 1838, and both Reform candidates were elected by a majority of 85. Great pride was taken by the Reform writer of the pamphlet in the "moral" character of the victory. "The Government candidates were opposed," it was said, "by every obstacle which injustice could devise." It was the first election since the unhappy troubles of 1837 and "party spirit was very high between the Reform and Tory faction, who almost indiscriminately considered the former as rebels, to answer a purpose, and every kind of stratagem and unfair means were resorted to by the faction (to poison the minds of the people), which ingenuity or malice could devise, in order to create a bitter feeling against the Reform party and their candidates. The Orange faction and all the high church bigots were also

arrayed against them. The Corporation of the City of Toronto was arrayed with its patronage and influence on the side of the Tory faction. Their special constables were almost all partisans, yet, entrusted with keeping the peace, were the first to connive at its being broken and used the most unfair means against their opponents. For instance, being entrusted with the charge of the hustings, for two mornings, they allowed their own voters to be secreted underneath that they might take possession of the booth in order to take the lead in the polling, which had the effect of keeping back for some hours in the crowd supporters of Dunn and Buchanan." We find from the Poll Book that seven ministers or preachers voted Reform and only one, Rev. George Ryerson, voted Tory. Rev. Dr. Jennings (Bay Street Presbyterian Church), Rev. W. T. Leach (St. Andrew's Church), Rev. J. Harris (Knox Church), and Rev. Dr. John Roaf (Congregational Church), voted for the Reform candidates. Five school-masters voted Reform and two voted Tory. The physicians were four to three in favour of Reform, while the barristers and attorneys were two to one against the Tory leaders. Amongst the majority were Robert Baldwin—after whom a section of the Reform Party was named—one of our most distinguished and public spirited citizens, a statesman whose name will never be forgotten in the history of Canada; W. H. Blake and his partner J. C. Morrison, Thomas Hector, George Ridout, James E. Small and Adam Wilson, afterwards Sir Adam Wilson and Mayor in 1860, when the Prince of Wales visited Toronto. On the Tory side were the names of such well-known men as W. H. Boulton, John Hillyard Cameron, G. T. Denison, Jr., Clark Gamble

and J. M. Strachan, son of Bishop Strachan. 51 servants and labourers voted for Munro and Sherwood, but only 21 for Buchanan and Dunn; 45 tavern-keepers voted Tory and 20 voted Reform.

On the Reform side were such men as F. C. Capreol, Robert Cathcart, William McMaster, John McMurrich, Peter Paterson, Jr., Hugh Scobie, J. Tolfree, Dr. Widmer, Peter Freeland (soap and candle maker), Franklin Jackes, Thomas Carfrae, Collector of Customs, Alderman G. T. Denison, Hon. S. B. Harrison, Vice-Chancellor Jamieson, C. C. Small, Clerk of the Crown, Frederick Widder, Commissioner of the Canada Company; Joseph Cawthra and Jesse Ketchum. Opposed to the Government candidates we notice Henry Rowse, George Bilton, Capt. Hugh Richardson, afterwards the Harbour Master, Dr. Burnside, William Gooderham, miller; R. L. Denison, distiller; Andrew Mercer, distributor of Marriage Licenses; William Proudfoot, President of the Bank of Upper Canada; William Allan, first President of St. Andrew's Society; George Crookshanks, the father of Mrs. Stephen Howard; Angus Cameron, Edward Hooper, John Maughan and Alexander Wood, after whom two streets in Toronto were named. The description of the last scene in this election is unique:—"After the candidates were chaired according to immemorial custom, a procession of citizens with their wives and children in carriages were formed, displaying over 100 banners. It moved in triumph through the principal streets until it reached the corner of King and Church Streets—under the windows of Mr. Sherwood's office it was assailed by groans and hisses from a body of men armed with bludgeons, supposed to be from the country. Repeated

enquiries were made for a coffin in which it was supposed the Family Compact was to be buried—this was a pure Tory invention to inflame the Orangemen and act as a stimulus to a riot. Soon a general attack was made, stones, brick and pieces of ice were thrown, loaded firearms were discharged; one man named Dunn was killed and three others were severely injured; then the military were called out and some of the rioters were locked up and found protection in the Court House on the north side of King Street. During the morning of the chairing, McLean and his son, a Scottish piper, on their way to join the procession, were knocked down and the pipes were destroyed. A gentleman named Maitland on coming up and seeing this assault, went to the City Hall or Police Office, informed the Mayor, George Monro, of what had happened and asked for assistance for the poor man. The Mayor told him to go to the devil and he was politely kicked out after declining to do so, and recommending the Mayor to go to ——.”

A Coroner's jury failed to bring in a verdict as to the cause of Dunn's death. Such was the election in 1841 in Toronto, as described by the Reform writer “when the peaceable triumph of the people was shrouded in gloom in events which evinced the true spirit of the old faction and its faithful allies the Corporation and Orangemen,” and “The atrocities then perpetrated were worthy of a dark age and of the darker purposes of that party and are written in letters of blood on the memories of the citizens.”

Isaac Buchanan, who thus entered Parliament as a Reformer, in later years modified his opinions, and in 1864 entered the Cabinet of Sir John A. Macdonald,

the leader of the Conservative Party. Many of the Baldwin Reformers, and among them J. C. Morrison, afterwards became members of the same party.

The struggle for Responsible Government, precipitated by the Rebellion of 1837, but vindicated by Lord Durham in his famous report of 1840, has long since been won. To-day we enjoy the responsibilities and privileges of self-government, and are sometimes amazed at the bitterness of party strife and the excesses of these far-off days.

In 1845, J. C. Morrison married Miss Elizabeth Bloor, a daughter of Joseph Bloor, whose mill was formerly in the ravine at the head of Sherbourne Street. Bloor Street, originally St. Paul's Road, was named after Mr. Bloor, whose house still stands opposite the Central Methodist Church on Bloor Street. The Morrison family residence called "Woodlawn" stood near what is now Woodlawn Avenue, surrounded by about 28 acres. It was purchased in 1844 by J. C. Morrison from Mr. W. H. Blake, who had built the residence and lived in it. The property extended from what is now Walker Avenue northerly to the top of the hill, westerly to the property of Mr. John Macdonald, now occupied by Miss McCormick, and easterly to Yonge Street. For more than 40 years, during his long professional and political life, Mr. Morrison lived at Woodlawn.

He entered Parliament in 1848 as a Baldwin Reformer, representing the west riding of York, and also represented North Simcoe and Niagara. He became Solicitor General in 1853, but was defeated in South Ontario in 1857 and in North Oxford in 1858. In 1859 he was made Registrar of Deeds for Toronto, and again entered the Government in 1860 as Solicitor General.

He was appointed Puisne Judge of the Common Pleas in 1862, and the following year was transferred to the Queen's Bench. In 1877 he was made a Judge of the Court of Appeal and for many years was senior Puisne Judge of the Province. Besides furthering the material development of the country by aiding in building the Northern Railway, he took a deep interest in its educational advancement. For 28 years he was a member of the Council of Public Instruction for Upper Canada. He was a member of the Senate of the University of Toronto for 25 years and Chancellor from 1863 to 1876. His portrait—an excellent likeness—was presented to the University by his grandson, Mr. Arthur C. Hardy of Brockville, whose magnificent gift in 1914, during the European war, of \$60,000 to the University Overseas Base Hospital, will remain a lasting monument to the former chancellor and his family.

The genial host of Woodlawn often opened its hospitable doors, its beautiful conservatory and splendid library, to his many friends, especially on Sunday afternoons, when the "Sunday-School Class," as it was humorously called, used to meet and was suitably entertained. Then came his friends, such as Hon. William Cayley, Hon. James Killaly, Sir Casimir Gzowski, Sir David MacPherson, James Michie and A. T. Fulton (inseparable during their lives), Stephen Heward, Sir John Hagarty, Thomas Moss, Sir Thomas Galt, Christopher Robinson and John Boulton. When the class dispersed some of these gentlemen carried away flowers in their tall silk hats. While bowing to ladies on their way home, the flowers frequently streamed down upon their shoulders to the amusement of their fair friends.

At 9 o'clock on every 1st of July, a champagne breakfast was given to the Judges at Woodlawn. It was largely attended and deemed an occasion of great importance by the Bench. This function, according to all accounts, differed greatly from the Judges' luncheons at Osgoode Hall at the present day, where the fare is said to be of the plainest.

In 1860, Mr. Morrison prosecuted James Brown for the murder of James Sheridan Hogan at the Don Bridge. Brown was found guilty and hanged.

On the Bench, he presided at the Greenwood trial, which resulted in a conviction and execution. This case gave him many sleepless nights, and it was years before he recovered from the depressing effect of the trial.

From Woodlawn the Judge always walked to and from Osgoode Hall. He disliked street cars, and though he kept horses, preferred to walk, claiming, as his daughter, Mrs. A. S. Hardy says, that he could go as quickly. In these days, people evidently walked more in Toronto than at the present time. The first omnibus line ran from Ridout's Corners or "the Corners," as it was called (King and Yonge Streets), to the Red Lion Hotel just north of Bloor Street, from 1849-59, until rails were laid for street cars in 1859, when Yorkville went wild with excitement to be so closely united to the city. The first car had an elevation built upon it, and from this elevation a band discoursed triumphant strains. Our citizens would go wild with enthusiasm to-day if an elevation were built on the cars to give more room and let every one have a seat—the former days may have been better than these in that respect.

This is not the occasion to attempt an estimate of the judicial career of Mr. Justice Morrison from 1862-1885. In the sketch published at the time of his death in the *Canada Law Journal*, evidently written by a competent authority, he was considered a learned, industrious and painstaking judge. In presiding at trials at *nisi prius* his rulings were almost invariably correct. He was rich in saving common sense, and his familiarity with commercial law kept the Court from going wrong in some important cases. He presided on the Bench with dignity, impartiality and great courtesy. He worthily upheld in his person the best traditions of a long line of illustrious judges, and when he died, a truly sorrowing company of his friends gathered at Woodlawn, and through the avenue of pine trees followed his coffin to Mount Pleasant Cemetery. Both brothers were members of St. Andrew's Church, at the south-west corner of Church and Adelaide Streets, where they attended with their families for many years.

In his early days, Angus Morrison was champion sculler of Canada, in 1840-1-2. He was a great lover of all athletic sports and founder of the Toronto Rowing Club, of which he was President for 20 years. He was Secretary of St. Andrew's Society for 11 years.

At the wreck of the Royal Mail steamer "Plough-boy" in Georgian Bay on the night of 2nd July, 1859, he assisted in rescuing the passengers, among whom were Sir John A. Macdonald, Hon. John Hilyard Cameron and other prominent politicians. Sir John Macdonald presented him with a large silver cup. Another of the passengers, probably Hon. John Rose (afterwards Sir John Rose), also presented a beautiful

silver salver, on which was finely engraved an oarsman leaving the steamer in a small boat, with an inscription reading as follows:

"Presented to Angus Morrison, Esq., M.P.P., Canada, in commemoration of his fearless behaviour and effective services, the admiration of all on board, in saving the steamer "Ploughboy" from wreck on the dangerous shores of Lake Huron in the tempestuous night of Saturday, July 2, 1859."

He was one of the party who accompanied the Prince of Wales on his tour through Canada in 1860.

His wife was Janet Gilmour, daughter of Robert Gilmour of Three Rivers, Commissary General in the British Army.

Angus Morrison was unsurpassed as a candidate at election times and always wore tartan trousers on such occasions. His genial smile and engaging personality were irresistible with voters and especially with ladies. He was extremely neat in his dress, like Hamlet—"the glass of fashion and the mould of form, the observed of all observers."

He represented North Simcoe and Niagara from 1854 to 1875. The village of Angus, in the County of Simcoe, was named after him.

When his brother ascended the Bench, he entered into partnership with John Leys; then with D. A. Sampson. Afterwards he was head of the firm of Morrison, Wells and Gordon. With Hon. William Cayley he controlled at one time the Charter of the Canadian Bank of Commerce; was solicitor of that Bank for 30 years, also of the University of Toronto and other important institutions.

He was solicitor for the Credit Valley Railway

Company, and was associated with the President and promoter, George Laidlaw and the directors, Robert Hay, C. J. Campbell, John Burns, H. P. Dwight, J. S. McMurray, H. L. Hime and W. H. Beatty. The Credit Valley Railway had a checkered career. In its early days it was in the hands of a receiver. It was the nucleus in Western Ontario, with its allied lines the Toronto, Grey and Bruce and the Ontario and Quebec Railways, of the present Canadian Pacific Railway, which has contributed so much to the growth of Toronto.

Angus Morrison was Mayor of Toronto in 1876-7-8. He was present at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876, saw Edward Hanlan win his famous victory and presented a gold watch to the champion. The fountain which took first prize at the Exposition was purchased by the Mayor and presented to the city. It was erected in West Market Street, and after refreshing the thirsty for many years, was removed to the Ferry Dock at the foot of Bay Street, where it still stands, a fitting memorial of a very kindly gentleman.

He first lived at the north-east corner of Queen and Church Streets, where his children were born, and afterwards resided at the north-west corner of Windsor Place and Front Street, now occupied by the Piper Signal Factory. In those days Windsor Street, Wellington, John, Simcoe and Bay Streets were the best residential part of the city. Mr. Morrison had a flagstaff in his grounds and used to hoist the Union Jack when the steamers passed to Niagara through the western channel. This salute, according to a pleasing custom, was returned by the passing ship.

While Mayor he negotiated with the Dominion

Government for the transfer to the city, at a nominal price, of the Garrison Common, where Lord Dufferin opened the first Exhibition in 1876.

He died in June, 1882. His widow survived him for many years. She passed away in 1917 in full possession of her faculties, to the last lovingly tended by her charming daughter, Miss Emily Morrison.

The year 1878 was the last year of the old Provincial Exhibition, which commenced in 1846; then followed the Annual Industrial Exhibition, in which he took a deep interest. In that year Lord Dufferin paid his farewell visit as Governor General to Toronto, and delivered his famous address on the greatness of Canada. He said then: "Canadians, love your country, believe in her, honour her, live for her, die for her."

That stirring and memorable appeal seems to have found a worthy response from the sons of those, many of whom members of St. Andrew's Society, laid broad and deep the foundations of the social and political life of this country.

One hundred years after Hugh Morrison fought against Napoleon for the freedom of Europe, his great grandsons, the grandsons of Angus Morrison, sprang to arms with many thousands of Canadians in August, 1914, at the outbreak of the great European War. Angus Morrison, the son of Mr. Simcoe Morrison, travelled 420 miles from Port Nelson on the Hudson Bay to the railway and enlisted as a private in the 25th Battery, rose to be Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant, was through all the principal battles until he fell at Passchendaele, on 3rd November, 1917. Another son, Simcoe Morrison, enlisted on his 18th birthday, and is still with the Siege Artillery. Gordon

Fraser Morrison, son of Mr. Curran Morrison, went with the first contingent as Captain in the 2nd Battalion, became Lieutenant-Colonel of the 18th Battalion, and received the Distinguished Service Order.

October, 1918.