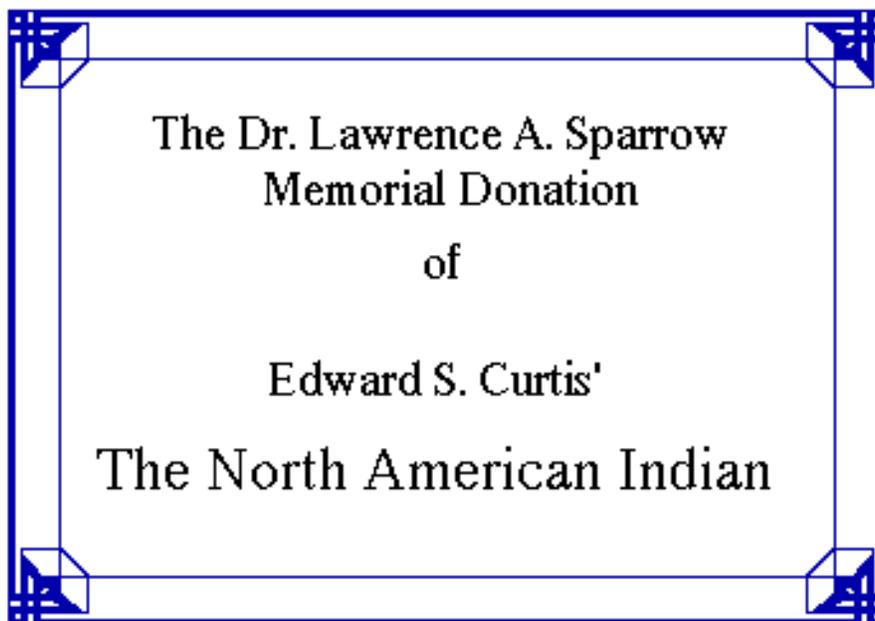




## Special Collections



University of Calgary Library Special Collections Division Occasional Paper No. 5 - 1980

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It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge this generous gift to the University of Calgary and its library. [The North American Indian](#) is a publication of major significance and great rarity.

We are deeply indebted to Mrs. L. (Rae) Sparrow who has made this donation to the University on behalf of herself, Mrs. C. (Patricia) Henman, Mrs. D. (Barbara) Schmeackle and Dr. A.D. Sparrow as a tribute to the late Dr. L.A. Sparrow.

We should also like to acknowledge the assistance of the Cultural Property program of the Government of Canada. The existence of this legislation and its certification program now make it possible to assure the preservation of collections and objects of national cultural significance in Canadian institutions.

The University of Calgary now houses a significant library collection. Through the continued support of the Government of Alberta and the generosity of our friends and donors it is possible for this University to seek a position of excellence among Canadian research libraries. Our sincere appreciation goes to all who have made it possible to dream this dream.

Alan H. MacDonald

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## Edward S. Curtis: A Short Biography

Born in 1868, Edward Sheriff Curtis grew up as part of a poor farming family in Minnesota. His father, Johnson Curtis, was a minister who spent considerable time travelling about his backwoods circuit. When Edward was old enough, he accompanied his father and it was on these trips that he developed an awareness of and identification with the wilderness.

Curtis became interested in photography at an early age and by seventeen had set up his own shop in his community. It was not a success. In order to support the family, Curtis went to work for the railroad. Then, in 1887, he and his father travelled to the Territory of Washington where they began a homestead near Puget Sound. The rest of the family followed in the spring but shortly after, Johnson Curtis died and Edward was forced to support his mother and younger brothers and sisters by whatever means possible. Photography, except for a few rare occasions, was set aside.

In 1892, Curtis married Clara Phillips and once again began his career as a photographer by opening a studio in Seattle. This time his effort was successful and as he acquired assistants to cope with the day-to-day commissions Curtis was able to leave the confines of his studio and to spend time wandering about the city. On one of these trips, he took some photographs of an old Indian woman, Princess Angeline, the daughter of Chief Seattle. His satisfaction with these portraits led Curtis to take more photographs at the nearby Tulalip Reservation. After a couple of years of this engrossing occupation, Curtis submitted three of his Indian photographs to a national photographic exhibition, in which they won both prizes and praise.

More and more Curtis turned to his natural surroundings for inspiration and for subjects. His Indian photographs, sold through his studio as souvenirs of the West, brought in extra income. In addition, Curtis began to photograph the spectacular scenery around his adopted city, travelling through the mountains and forests, down rivers and canyons. On one such trip, he met a group of scientists from Washington, D.C., who were studying Mount Rainier. Curtis became an unofficial guide for the group and through one of them, George Bird Grinnell, he received an invitation to travel to Alaska in 1899 with the Harriman expedition.

In 1900, Curtis again accompanied Grinnell on an expedition to the northwest plains where they encountered one of the last Plains Indians gatherings for a sundance. Struck by the fact that this way of life was rapidly disappearing Curtis resolved to record the culture of the Indians before it vanished.

Curtis devoted almost all his time and energy to his massive project in the years that followed. With the support of such people as Theodore Roosevelt and J.P. Morgan he was able to raise sufficient funds to keep himself and various assistants hard at work, not only photographing but also recording the Indian way of life. Curtis was able to get along very well with his subjects, accepting them on their own terms and never imposing his way of life upon them. In this way, he was able to record events and objects never seen before by outsiders.

The first two volumes of his work, *The North American Indian*, appeared in 1907 and it was not until 1930 that the last one of the twenty volumes was published. Curtis had spent thirty years on his project.

After this, he never settled down with photography again. His wife had divorced him in 1920, and the court awarded his photographic negatives to her as part of the settlement. Curtis remained on good terms with his three children, Harold, Florence and Beth, and one or another of them often accompanied him on his expeditions. For several years after *The North American Indian*, Curtis was interested in mineralogy and by 1949 had decided to write a treatise on "The Lure of Gold". It soon took on the proportions of his earlier project and by 1950 Curtis was planning to travel to Brazil for research. The venture, however, never really developed as Curtis' health deteriorated under the onslaught of arthritis and failing eyesight.

He died on October 19, 1950, from a heart attack. His death attracted little attention. *The New York Times*\*, in a short obituary notice, referred to him as an "internationally known authority on the history of the North American Indian" and only in the last sentence did it state that he "was also widely known as a photographer".

\**The New York Times*, October 20, 1952, p. 23.

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## THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN

When Edward Curtis began his monumental account of the North American Indian at the beginning of the 20th century, he little realized that he would take decades to finish. He began merely as a continuation of his many previous photographic expeditions; within a short time, however, he encountered a number of problems. Although Curtis generally got along very well with the Indians, occasionally he found himself needing more tangible persuasion than words in convincing them to pose. In addition, he needed assistance in his expeditions. Curtis wanted his work to be an encyclopaedic account of the Indian way of life through hundreds of photographs detailing every aspect of their culture. For these and other reasons, Curtis needed financial backing and he found his first patron in Theodore Roosevelt, then President of the United States. Roosevelt, of course, was a Westerner and moreover was familiar with Curtis' ability as a photographer. His endorsement of the project enabled Curtis to forge ahead and in 1904 utilizing this publicity Curtis began to exhibit some of the photographs he had already taken. The exhibitions, in Seattle, Portland, Washington, D. C., and New York City brought praise and some revenue. However by 1905 Curtis was desperately in need of income. In 1906, using a "To Whom It May Concern" letter of praise from Roosevelt, Curtis went to visit J.P. Morgan. J. Pierpont Morgan was one of the wealthiest men in America at that time. More importantly, from Curtis' viewpoint, he was also a generous patron of the arts.

Morgan was greatly impressed with the photographs Curtis showed him and agreed to fund the project, provided they were published in books accompanied by a text covering the languages, legends, art, music, and general culture of each tribe portrayed. It was Morgan who decided that Curtis should write the text and it was Morgan who planned the publication of the work. Curtis asked Frederick Webb Hodge of the Smithsonian Institute to edit the text. Relieved of his financial worries, Curtis returned to the field and in the next few years, together with his assistants, energetically continued to travel throughout the West, recording and photographing a vanishing people. In March, 1907, the first two carefully written and lavishly illustrated volumes were sent to the publisher. Almost immediately, however, a furor developed. Franz Boas, the first great anthropologist specializing in the North American Indian, questioned the validity of Curtis' work largely because of Curtis' lack of formal education, especially in the field of ethnology. No less a person than Roosevelt intervened, appointing a committee of three equally prominent ethnologists: Henry Fairfield Osborn of the American Museum of Natural History, William Henry Holmes and Charles Doolittle Walcott,

both of the Smithsonian. The committee quickly approved and indeed praised Curtis' work and the project continued.



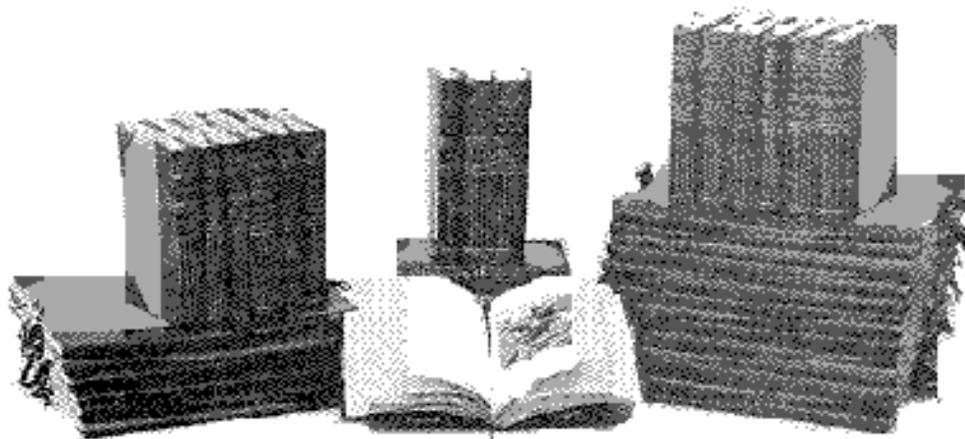
*(Plate 621 - The scene is a riverside grove near Okotoks, Alberta, where a band of Sarsi were awaiting clement weather to begin the prosaic labor of shocking wheat for one of their caucasian neighbors. Edward S. Curtis.)*

The first two volumes, on the southwest tribes such as Apache, Navaho and Yuma, appeared in late 1907, with a foreword by President Roosevelt. They met with immediate success: top men in the field were lavish with their praise. Men such as Frederick Putnam, Curator of the Peabody Museum; W.J. McGee, Head of the Smithsonian's Bureau of Ethnology; Indian Commissioner Francis Leupp and many others lauded the authenticity, depth and sensitivity of both photographs and text.

Over the succeeding years, additional volumes appeared more or less regularly. Curtis ranged further and further afield: his work on volumes ten and eleven dealing with the West Coast tribes took him to the Queen Charlotte Islands and the British Columbia coast. Here again Curtis' ability to make friends stood him in good stead. Much of the information in these volumes came from George Hunt, a Fort Rupert resident, himself the son of a Hudson Bay Company factor, and an Indian woman. The Kwakiutis particularly intrigued Curtis and while in the area he decided to make a motion picture, *In the land of the head-hunters*, which was released in 1914 and published as a book one year later. By 1922 the twelfth volume of the set was published and finally in 1930 came the last volume, dealing with the Eskimo tribes of Alaska and northern Canada. Curtis had finally finished his massive undertaking.

The books themselves were physically a work of art. There are twenty volumes, each accompanied by a portfolio of prints. Only five hundred copies were printed, one hundred and twenty on hand-made paper from Holland and the rest on Japanese vellum. All were bound in brown levant morocco and were rich examples of fine craftsmanship. The subscription price ranged from \$3,000 for the vellum to \$3,850 for the paper set and the list of the earliest subscribers reflects this expense, reading like a "Who's Who" of the time. Among the subscribers were the ambassadors from Germany, France and Great Britain, Henry E. Huntington, J.P. Morgan, President Roosevelt, and such institutions as the Peabody Museum, the Southwest Museum and the Smithsonian. Further sets are housed with the Library of Congress, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland Museum of Art, and the public libraries of Boston and New York City. The libraries of many

prestigious universities also have copies, among them those of Yale, Princeton, Cornell, California, British Columbia, Michigan and Washington. Huntington's set was number fifty-one while the Guildhall Library in London, England received set seven as a gift from J.P. Morgan. The set purchased by Patrick Burns and now donated to the University of Calgary Library is number ninety-four.



During the years 1908 to 1910, when he would have subscribed to the Curtis set, Patrick Burns was already a respected Calgary business man and a nationally recognized financial force. He was born July 6, 1856, one of ten children of Michael O'Byrne and his wife Bridget Gibson. Michael and Bridget had been married in Ireland in 1848 and came to Canada the same year to settle in Oshawa, Ontario. When Pat was nine years old, the family moved to a farm near Kirkfield, Ontario, where Pat grew up and received his small amount of formal schooling. In 1878, he and his brother John travelled to Winnipeg aboard the sternwheeler Minnesota, Pat being listed on the passenger list as "P. Burns". Only twice, on his homestead papers and his marriage license, did Burns use a variation of the family name, signing himself as Patrick Byrne.

After a short time in Winnipeg, the Burns brothers headed for Odanah, Manitoba, where they began homesteading. Within the year, however, Pat had become involved with trading and shipping livestock and by 1885 when the homestead papers were transferred to Burns he was a successful livestock dealer. The next year, he sent to Ontario a shipment of pigs, the first ever from western Canada. In 1899 when he sold his homestead of two quarter sections, Burns was well-established. Working as shipper and dealer, Burns was later awarded a contract to supply beef for the Canadian Pacific Railway. He came to Calgary in 1890 and constructed a slaughterhouse. In the years that followed Burns continued as a contractor not only to the railway but also to Indian reserves and to the interior of British Columbia and the Klondike as well. He branched out into produce but always considered himself a rancher and indeed became owner of one of the largest ranching empires in Canada. A tribute to the esteem in which he was held came in 1931 when the Conservative Government appointed him a Senator.

Patrick Burns married Eileen Ellis in 1901 and they had one son, Patrick Michael, born in 1906. Mrs. Burns passed away in 1923 and Patrick Burns died in 1937, less than a year after the death of his son. The lack of immediate heirs created some problems, and with the Burns estate and many of his personal effects eventually went to various relatives. The forty-volume Curtis set was given to his niece, Mrs. A.C. (Mary Ethel, known as Mollie) Sparrow. Mollie Burns was the daughter of Pat Burns' oldest brother Thomas who had been born in 1848 shortly after his parents' arrival in Canada. He married and farmed in Ontario but later homesteaded in Manitoba where Mollie was born. About 1903 the family moved to Calgary and lived with Pat Burns. Mollie Burns married Albert Costigan Sparrow in 1916.

The Sparrow family were among the original Calgary pioneers. Angus Charles Sparrow (1853-1912) came out around 1882 and his wife, Harriet Ann Mooney (1855-1912), joined him in 1883 accompanied by their daughters, May and Janet. Their third daughter, Hattie, born in 1884, was the second white woman born in Calgary. The Sparrows had another six children after that; Albert Costigan was born in 1887. Albert Sparrow became a livestock buyer for the Burns Company and later a member of the Calgary Stock Exchange.

Albert and Mollie Sparrow had three sons, Thomas "Barney" (who was killed in action during World War 11), Albert and Lawrence, and two daughters, Barbara and Patricia. Lawrence Angus (Larry) was born September 4, 1923, in Calgary. He attended St. Mary's Boys High School and entered the R.C.A.F. shortly after graduation. He served overseas first as navigator and after 1944 as a pilot. At the end of the war, he enrolled at the Veterinarian College in Guelph, Ontario, graduating in November 1951. Upon his return to Calgary, Larry Sparrow set up practice with Dr. S.C. Catley on 17th Avenue, later moving to his own practice on the North Hill before establishing himself at the Alyth Clinic, where he developed the most extensive large animal practice in Calgary handled by a single veterinarian. Dr. Sparrow and his first wife Dorothy had two children, Lawrence and Barbara. He was married a second time in 1976 to Mrs. Rae Henderson (née Greig) who had emigrated from England in 1950. After a year in Toronto, she came to Calgary where she operated boarding kennels first on Anderson Road and later near the Gillespie feedlot and Alyth stockyards.

Dr. Sparrow died suddenly on July 4, 1979. Throughout his life he had been a keen horseman and was always interested in his western heritage. His set of the Curtis volumes were one of his prized possessions and the donation of these to the University Library by his wife Rae is a fitting memorial not only to Dr. Sparrow but to the pioneer members of the Sparrow and Burns families.

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This publication was written by Jan Roseneder and edited by Apollonia Steele.  
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