



# EDMONTON CENOTAPH

1 SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL SQUARE NW

## CITY OF EDMONTON HISTORIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Edmonton

### DESCRIPTION OF HISTORICAL PLACE

The Cenotaph is a memorial granite structure adorned with engravings commemorating lives that were lost in the First World War, the Second World War, the Korean War and the War in Afghanistan. It is currently located in Downtown Edmonton's Sir Winston Churchill Square, prominently situated in front of City Hall.

### HERITAGE VALUE

The Edmonton Cenotaph has historical significance based on its value as a monument and its association with long-standing traditions of remembrance for Edmontonians who served in overseas conflicts. The Edmonton Cenotaph's values are further defined by symbolic features that are also represented on other cenotaphs built across the British Commonwealth over the same time period.

The Edmonton Cenotaph was an initiative of a citizens' committee made up of representatives of 32 community groups. In 1929, they first started lobbying for land and fundraising for a memorial to the approximately 3,000 Edmontonians who lost their lives in the First World War. The groups involved in the campaign included several Chapters of the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire, The Red Chevron Club, Ex-Servicemen's organizations, as well as Service Clubs and other dedicated and concerned citizens.

Edmonton architect William Blakey prepared the original plans for the Cenotaph.

The Edmonton Cenotaph was originally erected at 102 Street and 100 Avenue during the brief reign of King Edward VIII. It was unveiled on August 13, 1936, by then-Governor General, Lord Tweedsmuir, 22 years after the outbreak of the First World War. The Edmonton Cenotaph was relocated in 1978 to its current location at Sir Winston Churchill Square at the request of citizens to accommodate growing crowds, particularly as the cenotaph became associated with additional services after World War Two and the Korean War. The relocation reflects the need for a larger space to support the growing number of Edmontonians using the cenotaph for social and cultural ceremonies of remembrance. The current site has contributed towards the development of traditions and commemoration in Edmonton's civic heart for all Edmontonians who served in military conflicts overseas.

The Edmonton Cenotaph is characterized by a number of design features that are significant based on their association with other cenotaphs across the British Empire. Features include the tapered design for aesthetic appeal and engineering purposes by reducing weight. The number three holds a powerful representation on cenotaphs as the smallest number capable of creating a pattern and a combination of brevity and rhythm. Groupings of three represented on the Edmonton Cenotaph include motifs of lions, drapes of the garland, curves of ribbon on each side of the hand holding the wreath. Laurel wreaths of connected branches and leaves of the bay laurel are represented as a symbol of triumph.





The sword typically symbolizes power, protection, authority, strength and courage. A large torch, integrated with a cross, is a prominent feature and symbolizes the famous poem, In Flanders Fields, by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae. Together these features beseech us to never forget sacrifices made during these conflicts and share the stories and the memories of the sacrifices through future generations, to ensure they are never forgotten.

The Edmonton Cenotaph quickly became the location of annual Remembrance Day ceremonies, which usually included a parade of veterans from the Provincial Legislature to City Hall, with a stop at Veterans Park and the Cenotaph itself.

*Designated as a Municipal Historic Resource through Bylaw 19821 in December 2021.*



## CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS

The character-defining elements of the 1936 Edmonton Cenotaph, include:

- + location in Sir Winston Churchill Square in Downtown Edmonton;
- + form, scale and massing of the 22 foot high structure;
- + construction materials, including British Columbia granite, with steel reinforcements;
- + classic cenotaph design, drawing from precedents set by Edwin Lutyens, including a tapering at the top of the structure and the use of groupings of three for commemorative elements;
- + engraved features, including: laurel wreaths (on the south, west and east elevations); a torch/cross (on the south elevation); a garland (on all four elevations of the structure, along the top); lions (on the south elevation); a sword (on the north elevation); and a coffin (on the south elevation);
- + inscriptions, including: the word “REMEMBERED” (on the south elevation); the years “1914 - 1918”, the years “1939 - 1945”, and the words “Korea 1950 - 1953” (on the west elevation); and the words “OUR GLORIOUS DEAD”; and the words “AFGHANISTAN 2001 - 2014” (on the east elevation);
- + display box on west elevation containing laurel wreath from the Edmonton Salutes Committee;
- + six bronze decorative anchor mounts on north elevation; and
- + granite tiered base of the structure.

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