

## PORCH TALK #1

ELY PARKER was very family-oriented. He treasured his kinship with parents, siblings and ancestors. He personally believed that learning of one's "Roots" was essential to understanding one's "Self". He was especially proud of his kinship through his Mother, ELIZABETH PARKER, with two of the most well-known Iroquois. Accordingly, he chose to model the goal of his "Porch-talks" by speaking of RED JACKET and HANDSOME LAKE. His hope thereafter was that other members of the Tonawanda community would likewise avail themselves of opportunity to share information about their personal "Heritage"- be it Person or Place.

RED JACKET was a Seneca chief of the wolf-clan who distinguished himself as an Orator. As an elected Sachem he represented his people in major negotiations with the U.S. Government. He vociferously defended the rights of the Iroquois to retain ownership of their lands. His best remembered "gesture of protest"- according to Ely - came at the Big Tree Council of 1797 when he personally terminated the Treaty Negotiations by "kicking out the ceremonial Campfire" following an impassioned speech opposing cession of Seneca lands in the Genesee Country.

As was generally the case, the Orator's words were as "dust in the wind"! At Big Tree he was ignored and perhaps humiliated. During the Revolution he

had sided with the British who following their defeat offered him little in the way of material reward as they did for his rival, Joseph Brant, who received a large land-grant in Canada. In 1792, when he represented Native Peoples in their negotiations with the U.S. Government, all he was given was a large silver plate-like Medal as recognition of his efforts.

It was this Medal that eventually became Ely's most prized possession. When, at Age 23, he too became a Sachem, he vowed to carry on Red Jacket's defense of Seneca Rights. He wore this symbol of his Heritage at all official ceremonies where he was better able to make himself heard and understood by virtue of his facility with the English Language.

ELY likewise vowed to emulate his ancestor HANDSOME LAKE as "Defender of Iroquois Culture". This Seneca Leader was best known as a Prophet who was instrumental in preserving the identity of his People. Based on a Vision he personally experienced HANDSOME LAKE developed what eventually became "a Code of Conduct" to enable woodland People to retain their uniqueness from the detrimental effects of Caucasian Culture. Principal among these "Evils-to-avoid" was the use of Intoxicating Spirits which had long been the bane of Native Americans including both RED JACKET and HANDSOME LAKE himself.