



The Reader Rock Garden

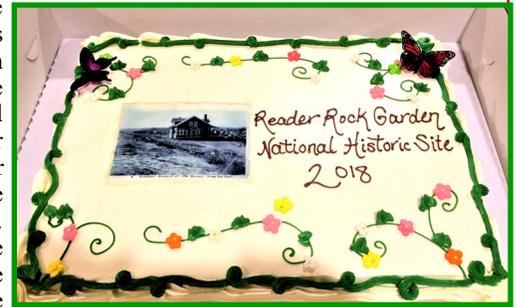
www.ReaderRock.com



More Celebrating!

By Diane Dalkin

Last year we reveled in the “sesquicentennial”, Canada’s 150 . This year, the celebration arrived at our doorstep ... Reader Rock Garden received **National Historic Designation**. I’ll share more about this rousing development in the feature article. We planned some extra festivities to acknowledge this prestigious honor at our Annual Garden Stroll on June 10th. A party was in order! The beautiful cake arrived; Megan, our singer was ready to perform; all the Tour Guides were eager to share their knowledge; generous donors added to our 1st ever Silent Auction; the Plant Sale was prepared and the Café’s yummy refreshments were ready to entice... but regrettably the weather didn’t cooperate. The soggy rain-laden grounds hampered our event, so the limited space indoors necessitated that we cancel the Book Sale and the Botanical Artists in the Garden.



Disappointing, yes indeed, but there still were a lot of smiling faces in-attendance. Thank-you to all the volunteers who assisted in making this event worthwhile and also to the brave visitors that joined us, despite the rainy conditions. Such resilient troopers!

Our usual pre-season activities included Seedy Saturday at the Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Centre. Again we were invited to present at the Calgary Retired Teachers’ Association Conference in April. Of course, we took part in the Calgary Horticultural Society’s Garden Show at Spruce Meadows. “Thanks” to the many volunteers for making these events such a success.

In early May, we shared in the Calgary Foundation’s initiative, the city-wide *Jane’s Walks*. The late start to Spring saw snow drifts at the Garden up until a few days prior to the Walk. Luckily the intense approach of warmth rapidly melted the pathways for sight-seeing. It was a good time to visualize the base foundation of the Garden, before it evolves into the colorful, fragrant and overflowing floral retreat it later becomes in the season.

On May 6th, our Annual General Meeting was held. We whole-heartedly welcome the new Board Members: *Lindsey Boida—Board Secretary, Karen Hogan—Membership Director, and Leora Cohen – Social Media & Website*, who raised their hands to volunteer with our team. *Thanks* for coming on-board! And, our trustworthy long-term, dedicated folks that continue with the team, year-after-year, deserve accolades too. Your efforts are commendable and appreciated! Thanks a bunch!!

However, I would like to point out that the Vice-President position remains vacant on our Board (listed below), which might appeal to you? Perhaps give this some thought; we’re always looking for fresh perspectives and new energies. Share your talents with us!



This year our regular scheduled events at the Garden were completed earlier, but we’re still available to offer private group tours. We aim to provide a memorable and educational experience for all. We’d be delighted to discuss this possibility with you; please contact us at your earliest convenience. The tours we’ve had so far have been loads of fun.

Until we meet again at the Garden ... hope your days will shine even brighter during this wonderful season ... *stay safe & happy! Smile Its Summer !!*

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FoRRGS Team

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- Secretary - Lindsey Boida
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Such An Honor:

By Diane Dalkin

In the quiet, still, cold air of March 27th 2018, something exciting was going on at the corner of 25th Avenue SE and Macleod Trail. Although the snow covered hillside in our local community remained unassuming as usual, the Government of Canada released an important news release about this special place.

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Minister responsible for Parks Canada, *Catherine McKenna*, announced the designation of 12 new nationally significant persons, places and events that helped define Canada's history. These new designations reflect the rich and varied history of our country. They bear witness to our country's defining moments and illustrate its human creativity, evolving values and cultural traditions.

This new designation includes Calgary's own **Reader Rock Garden**:

"I am very proud to recognize some of the persons, places and events that have shaped our country. Designations can recall moments of greatness and triumph or cause us to contemplate the complex and challenging moments that helped define Canada today. By sharing these stories with Canadians, we hope to foster better understanding and open discussions on Canada's history."

The Honourable Catherine McKenna Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Minister responsible for Parks Canada

This once barren, wind-swept hill started off in 1913 as the private residence of Calgary's Superintendent of Parks, Cemeteries & Recreation. **William Roland Reader** and his family lived there for almost 30 years, carefully crafting their surrounding landscape into the verdant lush oasis it is today. This three-acre garden has a rich history, and these details are well documented at www.ReaderRock.com. The legacy garden was named in Mr. Reader's honor, upon his passing, and became a park, open for the public's enjoyment since 1944.

Parks Canada has specific criteria that must be met before such honorary merits will be recognized. This application process commenced in December 2014, with a detailed 100+ pages document submitted for consideration. Parks Canada then did its own due diligence and extensive research, ascertaining the virtues of the candidates. Fortunately, for all of us Calgarians and for future visitors, Parks Canada acknowledged the heritage importance of Calgary's



"Brockington's Lawn" - part of the South Slopes

Reader Rock Garden: *"Its aesthetic and scientific values as one of Alberta's premier public gardens and a significant botanical testing ground were chief components in this process."*

It is also significant for its association with the garden's designer, internationally known horticulturalist, botanist and landscape designer – **W.R. Reader**. It is a remarkable marriage of artistic and scientific interests. Furthermore, it possesses the *"unique or remarkable characteristics of style(s) or type(s) which speak to an important period or periods in the history of Canada or of horticulture"*.

Reader Rock Garden demonstrates many unique attributes: A distinctive expression of multiple horticultural styles, gardening trends and botanical diversity; his garden displays characteristic of the Edwardian Arts and Crafts style, the influence of British gardening trends and also of English rockeries traditions. His design incorporated intricate series of gardens, dividing it into five distinct micro-climates. The use of irregularly shaped beds tended to conform to the topography rather than follow straight lines and he deliberately grouped plants for all-season, successive blooming effects. He made his garden a test ground for challenging western growing conditions and cultivated an astonishing diversity of plants from around the world.

Many of these plants were rare at the time and not



previously found in Western Canada. Moreover, he also emphasized the use of local native plants and materials into his designs, which he acquired on his forays into the mountains of Canmore and Banff.

Since he was formerly a teacher, educating the public and outreach were natural extensions of his abilities. He had a regular column in the local newspaper (for many years), wrote articles in several other publications, gave lectures, and provided tours of the garden, thereby constantly sharing his knowledge and expertise with inquiring minds. The quality of his plants and seeds were much sought after and he exchanged these with numerous groups, such as Kew Gardens (London), Royal Botanical Gardens (Edinburgh), and the Botanical Gardens at Harvard, to mention but a few. Furthermore, his depth of plant knowledge is also evident in the countless detailed writings he left as part of his legacy. For example, he logged extensive notes on no fewer than eighty varieties of campanulas he cultivated in his garden (covering thirteen pages). Regretfully, yes, the dreaded, invasive Creeping Bellflower, *Campanula rapunculoides* was among them. At the end of the day, mistakes are the stepping stones to wisdom, right?

Reader was also an early active member of the Calgary Horticultural Society (CHS), serving as the Board of Directors Secretary for several years. He and the CHS worked collaboratively to promote the local horticultural possibilities and highlighted the need for Calgary's beautification efforts and encouraged civic pride. This helped to support a better understanding of the frontier's untapped growing potential and crop viability to arriving new settlers, making Calgary a desirable place to call home, with abundant gardens (both public & private).

As Superintendent of Parks, Cemeteries and Recreation, a position he held for almost three decades, this official role afforded him immense influence on the entire growing City. The scope of these accomplishments is beyond this current article; however, suffice it to say, his beloved garden is probably *the jewel in his crown* of impactful endeavors. From its humble beginnings in 1913, Reader Rock Garden stands as a lasting testimony to his abilities, vision, and passions. We are the lucky recipients, inheriting this extraordinary public place in our community, a gift to cherish indeed!

Such a long-awaited honor touches many of us, here in Calgary, but also across the miles. Reader's great grandson, *David Peacock* (located in Newmarket, Ontario) was elated to hear the news, as were other members of Reader's extended family (some residing in BC):

"When I heard of the National Historic Designation of Reader Rock Garden, I immediately thought of my father, the late Bill Peacock (grandson of William Reader); and of my father's stories of living with, and carefully collecting flowers and seed specimens while on hikes with 'Granddaddy Reader'. My father had tremendous respect for this pioneering Parks Superintendent and I can imagine the immense pride Bill Peacock would be feeling upon this wonderful recognition of Canadian heritage."

Reader's granddaughter, *Betty Rose Harrington* recently visited the Garden (from BC) and I was fortunate to have shared some time with her, as she reminisced about earlier Reader family days on-site.



May 2018

The Family eloquently echoed our reflections: *"Most of the time plants just grow silently. It is lovely that in the Reader Rock Garden plants are currently growing much more loudly with newspaper articles and television coverage of this honor."*



Parks Canada usually provides a notable plaque or some sort of commemorative occasion in this regard, but we haven't heard of any such plans yet. All things considered, we should personally take the time to celebrate this realization. Perhaps this should be the year to finally explore the Garden or revisit it again. May we all bask in the warmth of this good publicity.



Sincerest Thanks to our long-time Donor & Supporter

Shawnessy Home Depot



For enhancing our booth with your spectacular flowers and the generous door prizes for our special events



Just a Note ...

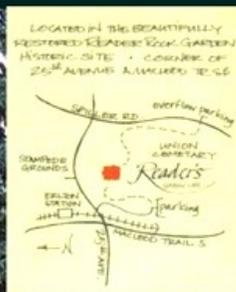
- ◆ Even though our regular scheduled events are completed early this season, we're still available for private garden tours.
- ◆ Email us at Info@ReaderRock.com to get all the details.

See you at the Garden!



Did you know ... Reader's Garden Café now offers High Teas, on certain weekends. Their website has all the details

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Reader's
GARDEN CAFÉ

Reservations (403) 263-0210
readergardencafe@telus.net

The Calgary Rock and Alpine Garden Society (CRAGS)

2nd Thursday of each month
(Jan-June and Sept-Nov)

Lakeview Community Association Hall

6110 34th Street SW.

6:30 pm Social & Refreshments

7:00 pm Q&A

7:30 pm Presentation

Thursday, **Sept. 13, 2018**

Speaker: Chris Gardner

Topic: *Alpine Plants of the Silk Road*

See: www.crag.ca/events

