



The Reader Rock Garden

www.ReaderRock.com



Hello Fall

By Diane Dalkin

Summer is fading fast, but the opulent colors and shapes of Fall's palette linger on. As much as I'll miss the carefree, relaxed days of summer, I recall that this year the Garden truly looked spectacular and still does! All the dedicated and skilled efforts from the Head Gardener, *Daniel*, his team and the increased numbers of *volunteers* offering extra hands and sweat equity have had a significant positive impact on amplifying the site's enchanting beauty. So many new plants have been re-introduced back to the garden. *Well-done, once again!* There's still lots of time to visit the Garden, but the Café is scheduled to close for the season on Sunday, *Sept 29th*. So, if you want to have another last chance to sit on the verandah and enjoy the spectacular views with some tasty treats at this special place, then you'll have to get to Reader's Garden Café quickly!

Regretfully, most good things do come to an end, and partings and goodbyes are a reality of change. We said our farewells to *Sydney*, Daniel's right hand person on the City Parks team; she's off to study overseas. Indeed she'll be missed, but her contributions to Reader Rock Garden haven't been unnoticed and we're so very grateful for her hard work over the years. *Thank-you Sydney*, may new great adventures and memorable experiences follow you on your travels!

Dr. Seuss' upbeat philosophy reminds us to take life events in stride and to be thankful for what we've had; he told us: "*don't cry because it's over, SMILE because it happened*". In this simple statement, he evokes the richness of life and the importance of a positive attitude. Similarly, it has been said that "*where there is sadness, love plants a garden of memories*." And so it is, ... we bid a final goodbye to our friend and the FoRRGS first President, *H. David Matthews*, who passed away on June 20, 2019. I wrote a memorial in the Calgary Horticultural Society's recent August-September newsletter, trying to honor this gentleman and his legacy. David's complete obituary is available online at [Calgary Herald Remembering.ca](http://CalgaryHeraldRemembering.ca) dated June 22, 2019. Yet still, I believe that words seem inadequate to capture the depth and breadth of eight decades of a life well-lived. We may never truly fully appreciate his personal journey, but he left us many fond memories and taught us valuable lessons about balancing life's demands with recreation. As a community activist and steward for preserving Nature, he advocated slowing the hectic cadence of our daily lives. Reader's peaceful refuge, the Garden, serves us well to remember David and his concerted efforts to re-establish this unique site.

Just as the seasons change for Nature's rest and likewise the W.H. Davies' poem on Leisure reminds us to slow down, may you find some quiet time for yourself or to share with others, exploring awesome Autumn's beauty:

☞ *What is this life if, full of care, We have no time to stand and stare.* ☞

FoRRGS Team

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A Legacy— A Mark That Can't Be Erased

By Diane Dalkin

Reader Rock Garden is often referred to as a “*Cultural Landscape*” that connects people with their past and tells the story of how communities develop ¹. As most of you know, the narratives are rich at the Garden, a living classroom in many ways. I'd like to share one such example of this historical context. You may have seen this unusual patch of greenery with a solitary chair, tucked away just behind the Café as part of the South Slope. This wonderful quiet refuge is a nice discovery, and beckons one to stop and stare for a while. But admittedly, it seems like an odd location for a lawn. There's got to be more to this than meets the eye ... and there certainly is!



This area is referred to as *Brockington's Lawn*, named after a Reader family friend and prominent Calgarian, who liked to sit there and write his speeches back in the day. *Leonard Walter Brockington* was a well-known individual of his time, described as “*a man of character, with unquenchable eloquence and sharp Welsh wit*”. His list of accomplishments is extensive. Yet, surprisingly Canadian history only hints of his contributions. The most comprehensive account of Brockington's life I came across in my research was by *Edward M. Bredin*, Q.C. entitled “*Leonard Brockington: A Life*”, in the Legal Archives Society of Alberta 2014 (85 pages full of interesting details,

gathered over 30 years of study & collection). Additionally, an April 15, 1953 Maclean's magazine offered insights from people that knew Brock (as he was known to his friends). Both are definitely good reads if you want to know more and are available online; I highly recommend these.

Yet, clearly, there's a limit to how much I can address for current purposes, but here's a glimpse into the busy life of “*Calgary's Silver-Tongued Orator*” ², which also serves as a snapshot of Canadian history :

- ◆ **Leonard W. Brockington** was born on April 6th, 1888 in Wales, oldest of seven children
- ◆ He was educated at the University of South Wales, received a B.A. with distinction in Latin & Greek
- ◆ In Aug 31, 1912, he immigrated to Canada: Port of Departure – Liverpool, England, bound for Montreal, Canada. Sailed on the *Laurentia*.
- ◆ During his sea voyage, he befriended another immigrant, who convinced him to head out West to Edmonton. He accepted the challenge even though he knew nothing about frontier Alberta.
- ◆ May 31, 1913 – he married Agnes (Bea) Neaves MacKenzie at the home of J.J. Duggan. Later, they had two sons: Colin & Lawrence
- ◆ 1915 – They moved to Calgary
- ◆ He was a friend to the **Reader Family** & visitor at **EP Ranch (Edward, Prince of Wales)**
- ◆ 1921 – Took on the prestigious position of City Solicitor (~20 yrs.), aka prominent political personality (locally & nationally), gifted writer, stylish orator, broadcaster & reporter
- ◆ 1924 – Was afflicted with severe rheumatoid arthritis, having a crippling effect for the rest of his life
- ◆ 1929 – He accompanied Churchill on his tour of Western Canada
- ◆ 1936 – Appointed First Chairman of CBC, then moved to Ottawa; became a national figure
- ◆ 1939-42 - Special Wartime Assistant & Advisor to Prime Minister MacKenzie King
- ◆ 1942-43 - Advisor on Commonwealth Affairs to British Ministry of Information
- ◆ Became Legal Counsel at Gowlings law firm, a skilled arbitrator & mediator (*listens too!*)
- ◆ 1947-66 served as Queen's University 10th and longest-serving Rector
- ◆ Travelled the globe and was richly experienced in national & international affairs; gave hundreds of speeches; and remained a much sought after speaker on varied subjects
- ◆ President of Odeon Theatres, supporter of the arts in Canada, President of Calgary Symphony

- ◆ In the circle of distinguished leaders, he gave tributes to Churchill, Ghandi, & other world dignitaries
- ◆ 1966, September 15 passed away in Calgary, at the age of 78

The 1953 Maclean’s article quoted a friend, *William Rowan*, professor of Biology at University of Alberta saying:

*“I honestly believe, that Brockington knows enough about everything under the sun to hold his own with an expert on any subject.”*³

Another colleague who travelled in Brock’s circles noted that *“once Leonard Brockington puts in an appearance... what happened then has been described in some awe”*:

“A tall stooped figure walks in and growls a cordial greeting to everyone. Brockington is one of those rare people who can growl cordially and chooses a comfortable chair in a strategic location. For perhaps twenty minutes he lets the conversation flow around him. Then he intercepts a topic, any topic, and takes over. For an hour or more after that anyone who speaks is interrupting. But nobody seems to mind, because when Brockington holds the floor it’s not so much a monologue as high-level oratory in a conversational tone.”



Yousuf Karsh photo, date unknown

“To Canadians Brockington was the perennial voice of the nation, heard on national and international radio networks in time of war crisis and in time of victory; when royalty visits; when a king died or a prince was born or a monarch crowned; on the festival days of Robbie Burns of Scotland, St. George of England and especially St. David of Wales; on Dominion Day and

*Empire Day and Armistice Day, and at the honoring of illustrious Canadians like William Lyon Mackenzie and William Osler. In her darkest hour Britain borrowed Brockington to speak courage to the nation, and in turn loaned his eloquence to Australia and New Zealand. Brockington had practically a permanent assignment as chief speaker at the annual conclaves of the Canadian Bar Association, the American Bar Association and American Bankers’ Association, and was doggedly working his way through the major American colleges as a commencement speaker. Lincoln’s birthday seldom passed without a Brockington address to one or another Lincoln group in the United States.”*³

Yet, despite the frequent praise and glowing reviews that were bestowed on him and the landmark events he experienced, “Brockington” is not a name synonymous with Canadian, nor Calgary’s history. Bredin attributes this flaw to a lack of substantive documentation, which was lost in time. I would have to agree with this observation, as my research found that information was not very readily available. On another point of interest, and at the time of writing this article, I was not yet able to confirm whether Brockington Road NW, here in Calgary was named after this colorful character. I’ll be delving further into more archives to answer this question in the future.

I hope that this cursory review brings this important legacy back into its rightful place of honor. Next time you stroll through Reader Rock Garden, now you can also visit *Brockington’s Lawn*; sit a while, and remember this quintessential leader and his many historic contributions.

1 - Michelle Reid – Conservation Landscape Architect, City of Calgary Parks

2– Bredin, Edward M., “Leonard W. Brockington: Calgary’s Silver-Tongued Orator “ & “Leonard Brockington: A Life” Legal Archives of Alberta 2014

3-Maclean’s Magazine, April 15, 1953, ... “And now, a few words from by Eric Hutton”



In memory of
H. David Matthews

1933—2019

Founding FoRRGS President



Sincere Thanks to Garden Essentials

For joining us at our June Plant Sale & Stroll. Plus their lovely practical plant supports are used throughout the Garden.



See their website for all their products & services!
www.gardenessentials.ca



Thanks to ALL the special volunteers :

- ◆ Richard Y & his team,
- ◆ plus the recent Master Gardener grads that spruced up the Garden this season!
- ◆ The many Tour Guides for sharing and educating visitors.
- ◆ The unstoppable Board of Directors for the caring & dedication, year after year!



Nana's Garden (Upper Garden adjacent to the Union Cemetery) is **closed for renovations** until next year.

Please respect the gates and barriers to this area and *don't venture in.*

Your cooperation makes the gardeners' jobs way easier.

Thanks kindly!



Interested in **volunteering** with FoRRGS?

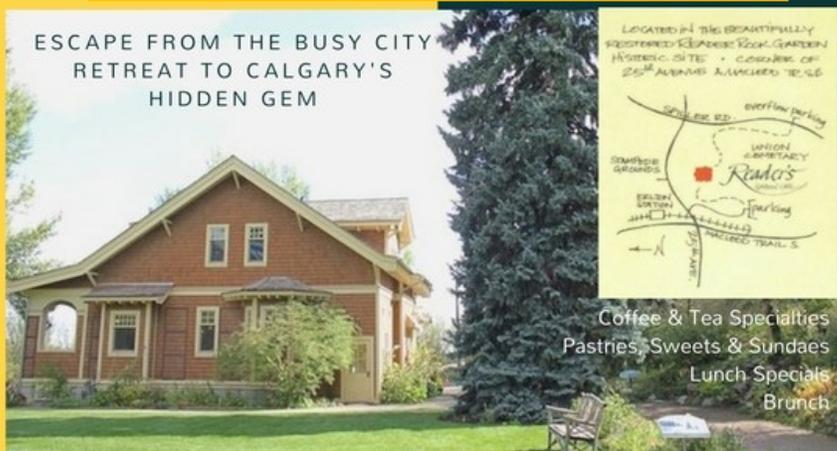
We'd luv to hear from you 😊

Please contact **Diane** at info@readerrock.com



Reader's Garden Café is scheduled to close for the season on Sunday, September 29, 2019.

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RETREAT TO CALGARY'S
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Open from Mid April to mid October

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9:30 am to 3:00 pm
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Reader's
GARDEN CAFÉ

Call 403-234-0065 or see the website:
www.readersgardencafe.ca

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

Always something interesting to take in here! Worthwhile to check this out ...

Thursday, Sept. 12, 2019

**Last Chance Plant Sale
& talk on Pollination**

See: www.crag.ca/events

Their Website has more exciting plans & all the details.

