

# The Reader Rock Garden

www.ReaderRock.com



NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF READER ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

## Reader Rock Ramblings



### President's Message:

By Diane M. Dalkin

The last vestiges of summer followed along into this awesome Fall. The current warm weather is a nice mild transition ... but, the "Season of mists & mellow fruitfulness" is definitely upon us. Time to wrap-up some outdoor activities, harvest seeds & edibles, plant Fall bulbs, divide plants, admire the blazing colors and prepare for winter.

The summer of 2024 will be remembered as challenging in many regards: the City team of gardeners and volunteers did their best without the leadership of a Head Gardener; the imposed water restrictions stressed out all our gardens; the suspicious fire on the porch which appeared to be deliberately set and plant theft seemed to be an unfortunate growing trend. None of these were easy feats to tackle, but alas, at least Mother Nature assisted with rain; and large tanks of non-potable water were also introduced, so the Garden endured some of these tests.



Several large water tanks were brought in to help with the water restrictions.

The City Parks job posting for a new Lead Head Gardener finally arrived on Sept 20<sup>th</sup>, so we're really hoping that this vital role will be filled expeditiously. We'll keep you posted once this person is hired. Stay tuned...

Once again, our "private, members-only" Plant Sale & Stroll event was a success this year! The Silent Auction was also well-received with a sizable donation for the unique handmade table, which was an important part of our annual fund-raising initiatives. A huge "thank-you" to all our volunteers and supporters for making this a reality! What will happen with next year's plans remains to be seen; it's pending the new hire's transition. But we will do our best to ensure a smooth realignment.

Please note that important changes are also in-effect for our Membership Fees; page 4 includes the details. If you have any questions or concerns about this, email us at our website.

The Café closes for the season on Sunday, Sept 29<sup>th</sup>, reopening next Spring.



As Summer fades and Autumn brings its own beauty and respite, let's embrace Nature's quieter pace and be grateful for all the good. Thank-you for your continuous support!

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#### FoRRGS Team

President - Diane Dalkin  
Vice-President - Vacant  
Treasurer - Victoria Arling  
Membership - Lena Cordell  
Secretary - Catherine Ranger  
Webmaster - Vacant  
Directors - Marcy Carlson, Bruce Dunlop,  
Colleen McCracken, Magdalena Muir, John Percic,  
Social Media - FoRRGS



## Union Cemetery Chapel - Update

By Diane M. Dalkin

Way back in our *Winter 2014* newsletter issue, I wrote an article about the fire at the Union Cemetery Chapel which adjoins the Reader Rock Garden. It was entitled “*Opportunity from Ashes*” and reported on the damage from the *March 29, 2014* suspicious fire onsite. I also referenced Michael Platt’s article from the Calgary Sun since it aptly echoed my outrage with this malicious desecration and also that this amazing building was at that time being used as a “*glorified garden shed*”.

Given that a decade has passed since this incident, it was time to offer an update.

Firstly, let’s start with the background:

In **1885** an application was made to the Dominion Government of Canada to set aside land at Shaganappi Point (which is the current golf course as of 1915) for a public cemetery. This was supposed to be the first Protestant cemetery, but conditions were less than ideal; bridges were not in-place, caskets and mourners had to be ferried across the river; the steep hill incline was an arduous task to traverse; and most importantly the site’s soil was very rocky to hand dig graves.

By **1890** a new site was chosen; this time in the south (current location - Union Cemetery). This was the Carney family farmland; they sold ~65 acres at \$70/acres (\$4550) to the Town of Calgary. *Augustus Carney* (1<sup>st</sup> Stampede President) remained on-site as the first cemetery groundskeeper between 1890-92.

Following this, during **1899-1934** *James Galloway* was the caretaker at Union; he interred ~12,000 bodies, *all hand-dug graves* – a monumental task indeed!

The relocation of graves from Shaganappi to Union took some time; 75 bodies were moved in **1892** and more over several years until **1911**. Rumors continue to swirl that not all the earlier burials were moved, yet I was not able to locate any evidence to that effect. Just makes for a good spooky Halloween tale.

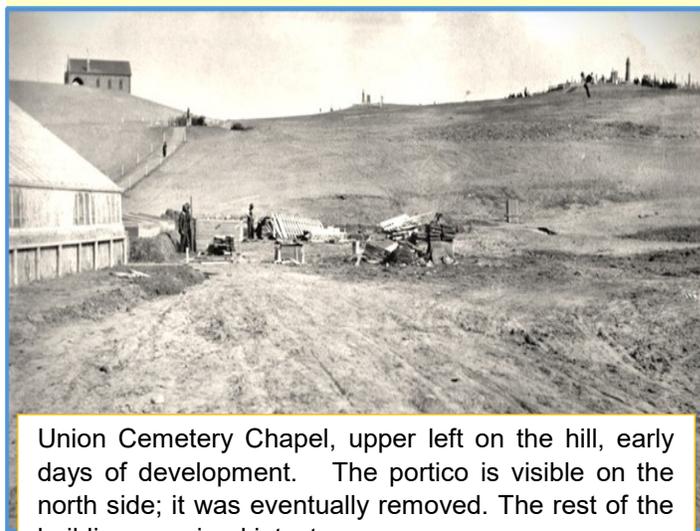
It is interesting to note that the majority of early graves were aligned east-west orientation, with heads placed westward. This was to honor the rise and setting of lives well-lived.

The Union Cemetery was initially called “*Calgary Cemetery*” and was considered outside of town limits until annexation in 1907. This ~20 ha / 49 acres

area pre-dates the Reader Rock Garden development.

Another lesser-known area at Union Cemetery is **Potter’s Field**. There are no grave markers here, yet ~1000 of early Calgary’s homeless, destitute, unwanted, executed, buried remains were placed there.

In **1908**, the Union Cemetery Chapel was constructed in the *Gothic Revival* architectural style as evident in the pointed arch openings for doors and windows. The unique formed concrete blocks were made in the pattern of stone, adhering to the **1886** fire-resistant ordinance for all public buildings. The exposed wood beam roof trusses added to the sense of a large space overhead. A trap door in



Union Cemetery Chapel, upper left on the hill, early days of development. The portico is visible on the north side; it was eventually removed. The rest of the building remained intact.

the middle of the aisle was used for lowering the caskets to the basement. This building was constructed mainly to address the problems of winter burials; it allowed for graveside services and storage of bodies in the basement crypts. Given Calgary’s harsh winter months, it was virtually impossible to dig graves in the frozen ground by manual efforts. The Chapel’s designer was R.E Speakman and the rest of the cemetery was typical of Victorian times, with 19<sup>th</sup> century symbolism in grave markers. The cost to build the Chapel was \$2,965, a lot of money back in the day.

Only a year later, in **June 1909** a “violent gale” damaged the building, but it was promptly repaired.

Calgary’s second Parks Superintendent: *Richard Iwersen (1911-13)* was not a fan of the design. He noted that “*Our chapel, although located in a bare and bleak spot, will have to do for a year or so. It does not conform with the most modern ideas, but I shall make provision for locating a new spot where a combination of crematory, vault and chapel, ac-*



...ording to the newest ideas for the future.” Fortunately, he was not around long enough to inflict damage by changing or demolishing this stately building.

By 1913 William Reader became the Superintendent of Parks, which later evolved to include Cemeteries & Recreation too. He changed the “bare & bleak spot” and championed a different perspective, “the evidence of death ought not to be allowed to be repulsive; we need to honor the fallen.” He was a strong advocate for the City Beautification Movement.

In 1948-49, the original portico was removed, presumably to facilitate larger vehicles access to the front of the Chapel; other renovations took place too in 1950. However, with the advent of mechanized grave digging, the original purposes of the Chapel became obsolete. By the 1960s, the last services were held onsite; the pews were removed and placed in-storage at the City. This building was almost forgotten thereafter and languished as a gloried garden shed for many years.

Fast forward 54 years later, on March 29, 2014, the Chapel made the news again, but for all the wrong reasons. There was a “suspicious fire; arson was being investigated”. Was this random vandalism or malicious desecration? Pentagrams and other symbols were found inside at the time of this incident and a huge hole was burned in the floor. The damage was estimated to be more than \$100,000.

Despite this building’s unfortunate neglectful demise, the 2014 fire had silver linings. This near catastrophe brought to the fore the potential loss of this heritage building.



Recently, on Sept 7<sup>th</sup> at our Volunteer Appreciation event, our team was granted the rare opportunity to see the interior of this historic monument.

Now restored, the Chapel is no longer languishing but has been sympathetically returned to a beautiful space, respecting the historic provenance of this once sacred site. Many pioneer citizens’ lives were celebrated here and the current peaceful state respects its significant history.



This 116 yr old building is NOT protected by any historic designation, yet if these walls could talk, what rich stories they would tell!

If you’re interested in knowing more about the Union Cemetery, Volunteer City Guides offer free historical cemetery tours until October 20, 2024 see the link below:



<https://www.calgary.ca/parks/cemeteries/tours.html>



**Special Visitors:**

By Diane M. Dalkin



Summer is a great time to reconnect with old friends and have the pleasure to make new ones. Such was the case this past June when these special visitors dropped by to experience their family legacy at the Garden.

Sheila Harrington and Don Harrington are great grandchildren of the Readers; shown left & right of this photo. Don's kids, Kaylm Atkinson-Harrington and Kory Atkinson are – great, great grandchildren of the Readers, in the center of this photo. Sheila travelled from British Columbia and made time to visit Reader Rock Garden, accompanied by her brother and nephews.

Sheila is an author, sailor, and environmental advocate with a thirty-year career in the conservation

field. Her current new book chronicles coastal conservation movements in "Voices for the Islands: Thirty Years of Nature Conservation on the Salish Sea." Just like her distinguished grandfather, Mr. Reader, Sheila advocates to communicate the importance of nature and to help protect it.

The last time Kory and his Dad were at the Garden, Kory was still in a stroller – obviously many years ago. Nonetheless, its always an honor to welcome supportive Reader Family descendants back to the Garden and learn more about their heritage. *Thanks for coming by to the Garden*; it was delightful to meet you!



**Important Notice:**

This is the **first time** we've had to do this in **21 years** and it isn't done lightly ... But at our May AGM, the Board of Directors presented a new Motion, which was unanimously approved, to increase our **Membership Fees, effective January 1, 2025.**

As you can appreciate, over two decades, keeping pace with technological advances and other operational expenses have risen for everyone, including Non-Profit Organizations like us. The new increase of \$5.00 will hopefully cover our costs for many more years to come.

However, if you'd like to take advantage of some savings, we will continue to offer a 3-year membership deal.

Also, you may want to *renew your membership prior Jan. 1, 2025 to benefit from the old pricing*, if this new cost increase stresses your budget.

The old category of "Family Membership" will be discontinued too, for a variety of reasons. Going forward there will only be an "Individual Membership" option.

Either way, we **thank-you** for your continued support of the Garden!

***New Membership Pricing - Coming Jan 1, 2025:***

**Individual :**

*\$15.00 / annually, Or \$30.00 / for 2-years, Or \$40.00 / for 3-years / savings here!*



**Until We Meet Again:**

*By Diane M. Dalkin*



We take this opportunity to wish a special long-term FoRRGS volunteer a Heartfelt Au Revoir as she moves on to new adventures in Ontario. **Sharon Graddon's** presence at the Garden was always a welcoming beckon of optimistic energy! Sharon helped us as a Tour Guide, a Hands-On Gardener, a Content Provider for our newsletter and an events' Ambassador for many years. Besides handling any task that came her way, with the utmost professionalism, Sharon also offered a sincere friendliness and thoughtfulness that went above and beyond. Rarely did Sharon show up without some delicious homemade baking to share with the team. Her enthusiasm was contagious, and her genuine caring was evident in everything she did. Her gardening knowledge was also well-versed from extensive experience. Although Sharon was usually quiet and demure in her ways, she impacted the Garden positively and the entire Team will remember this special lady fondly.



A heartfelt **Thank-You** for ALL your efforts & support Sharon! And, ... the very BEST of LUCK in your new home out east. We miss ya already!



**THANK-YOU ... Bruce Dunlop,** for your fun "mystery gift bag" draw prize at our **Volunteer Appreciation** event on September 7th. Turns out that the bees from Mountain View Honey Farm provided a 3kg bucket of their golden nectar for this surprise!



*Bruce, you're always ssssoo thoughtful & considerate!*



**Fond Farewell Dianna Drummond** and **thank-you** for your noteworthy efforts!

Dianna was one of the exceptional City Gardeners at Reader's, but she's decided to follow other career opportunities to BC. **Good luck** in your new home and enjoy coastal living.

*Our BEST regards go with ya!*





Happy Fall



Grateful THANKS to *The Naked Leaf*, purveyors of fine teas from around the world for providing a gift bag with their alluring house blend tea. — Naked Blend.

*Heather*, one of our dedicated volunteers and winner of this prize, can now savour this special select natural tea.

If you'd like to experience a heavenly cuppa, head on over to :

**The Naked Leaf** at  
1130 Kensington Road NW Calgary  
Phone: 403-283-3555  
Email: [info@thenakedleaf.ca](mailto:info@thenakedleaf.ca)

♥ Tasting tea bares your senses to this unique exhilarating experience ♥

**Check out their Fall sales:**

ALCLA



Native Plants

**Website:**

<https://www.alclanativeplants.com/>

**Email:** [info@alclanativeplants.com](mailto:info@alclanativeplants.com)

**Phone:** 403-889-4795

Plus, the added savings are a bonus!

**Fall Deals are Here!**

**Website:** [www.gardenretreat.ca](http://www.gardenretreat.ca)

**Email:** [sales@gardenretreat.ca](mailto:sales@gardenretreat.ca)

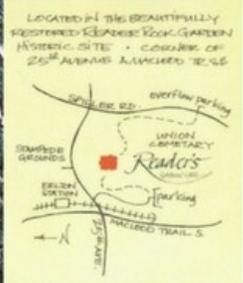
**Phone:** 403-255-7097



**Reader's Garden Café** is scheduled to close for the season on Sunday, **September 29, 2024**. See you next year!



ESCAPE FROM THE BUSY CITY  
RETREAT TO CALGARY'S  
HIDDEN GEM



Coffee & Tea Specialties  
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Open from Mid April to mid October

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Wednesday to Sunday  
9:30 am to 3:00 pm  
Monday, Tuesday Closed  
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Weddings & Functions  
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Reader's  
GARDEN CAFE

Call 403-234-0065 or see the website:  
[www.readersgardencafe.ca](http://www.readersgardencafe.ca)

**The Calgary Rock and Alpine Garden Society (CRAGS)**

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

**Lakeview Community Association Hall**  
6110 34th Street SW.

**Oct 17 - "Utrecht Botanic Gardens - Holland" @7:00 pm . Check their website for an up-to-date listing.**

See: [www.crag.ca/events](http://www.crag.ca/events)

