



Memorials in the Gardens

As befitting a Victorian garden, the Halifax Public Gardens has hosted its share of memorials, big and small, some controversial, others hardly noticed. HRM has records of over 230 memorials that have been placed in the Gardens at some point during its 153-year history, with 98 of them still found in the Gardens today.

These 98 memorials are in a variety of forms – planted trees, flowerbeds, and carpet beds making up horticultural tributes, while benches and fountains are just some of the built public acknowledgements.

Following the custom in Victorian times, major tributes in our Gardens from the early years mark milestones in Queen Victoria's reign, contemporary military moments, and prominent local citizens. More recent memorials have departed from these constraining customs.



The wrought-iron gates at the front entrance to the Halifax Public Gardens commemorate the services of the Halifax Provisional Battalion in suppressing the rebellion of 1885 in the North-West Territories. Constructed in 1890 and moved to this location in 1907.



Pigeons enjoying a bath in the Swan Fountain in front of Hort Hall.
Photos by Serena Graham-Dwyer.

The last major installation, the Swan Fountain placed in front of the newly renovated Horticultural Hall in 2006, acknowledged the contributions of the Halifax Foundation to restoring the Gardens after the destruction caused by Hurricane Juan. (continued on page 2)

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Photo by Lauren Siteman.

Many organizations and charities, some with a long-standing presence in our community, have celebrated significant milestones by sponsoring a tree or a flowerbed in the Halifax Public Gardens. The Halifax Wildlife Association marked its 150th Anniversary in 2003, their founding pre-dating the establishment of the Halifax Public Gardens! Rotary International celebrated the 85th Anniversary of the 1913 founding of its Halifax branch by planting a Toba Hawthorn tree in the Gardens.

The 50th Anniversary of the March of Dimes in 2001 was honoured by the planting of a White Fir by the Abilities Foundation of Nova Scotia. Perhaps one of the more unusual memorials is the Scouts Canada organization which in 1995 celebrated their 50 millionth tree planted in the Scout Tree Canada Program by, not surprisingly, planting a tree, this time a Northern Red Oak in the Public Gardens.

There have been some poignant ceremonies that have occurred around the establishment of a memorial. In 1994, a Golden Chain Tree (*Laburnum anagyroides*) was planted to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of one of the earliest Multi-Organ Transplant Programs in Canada. Ninety members of organ donor families attended the ceremony.

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Close up of a Golden Chain Tree. Photo by Serena Graham-Dwyer.

Golden tassels (racemes) of donated Golden Chain Trees complement the magnificent Golden Elm near the Victorian Jubilee Fountain. Photo by Serena Graham-Dwyer.

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Some tributes were only intended to last a short period of time in the Gardens and memories of the events are entrusted to visitors and local archives as in both following cases, neither plaque remains and photos are hard to come by.

In May 1976, the 50th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion was celebrated by the planting of a thousand bulbs of special breeds of rare gold tulip that were produced in Holland for the event. That would have been something to see! In 1998, our gardeners created a wonderful carpet bed tribute for the 125th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In that case, the RCMP ended up giving the Municipality a plaque in appreciation! The plaque ceremony included a 12-member marching troop and members of the RCMP Pipes and Drum Band. If members have photos of these events, we would love to have copies!

Lauren Siteman, one of our summer interns in 2020, created a searchable database that documents all the memorials that she could find in HRM's records and is the source for the stories in this newsletter. Lauren organized the memorials into categories (trees, flower-beds, benches, etc.) to make it easier for people to find a particular memorial. Lauren, with help from Board member George Hearn, has also created a map showing the location of the memorials still in the Gardens.

The Memorials database and the map will be available for the public to review on our website after they are completed. We plan to feature more stories about specific memorials in future newsletters.



The Power Memorial plaque and bird baths acknowledge the contributions of Richard Sr. and sons Richard Jr. and George, all Halifax superintendents. Photo by Serena Graham-Dwyer.

HRM's policy on Memorials in the Halifax Public Gardens

Memorial Benches are the only memorial option available to the public under HRM's current policy. This policy has been in place since shortly after the post-Hurricane Juan rejuvenations of the Gardens. The Friends of the Public Gardens advocated for this option and got HRM to commit the donated funds for use only in the Public Gardens.

Find HRM's brochure on our website: HalifaxPublicGardens.ca/Support/MemorialBenchProgram. A few points about this program

- A bench memorial costs \$2000, lasts for 10 years, with option to renew
- A small customized plaque will acknowledge the honoree and HRM will consider the donors' preferences when locating the bench in the Gardens
- Donors will receive a tax receipt, letter of recognition and a location map
- HRM now accepts credit card payments, making the process easier than it has been in the past