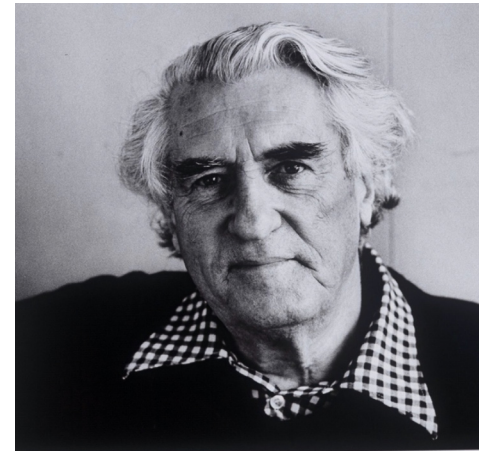


Humphrey Stephen Mumford Carver

Editor's Note: *From time to time, the Rockcliffe News will profile famous residents who have helped shape our community. In this issue, we are featuring Humphrey Carver, CC, who designed the Centennial Garden, and whose name graces the Caldwell-Carver Conservation Area which skirts along the edge of MacKay Lake and the Pond. Susan and Tom d'Aquino lived across the street from Humphrey and Anne Carver for 18 years until he died in 1995. Susan had the following to say about her dear friend: "Humphrey was a warm and witty bear of a man, full of life, with outlandish eyebrows. Rockcliffe Park was his beloved community – it inspired him. He worked hard to ensure it 'never lost its woodland character' with its houses 'tucked in between the trees.'"*



Humphrey Chooses Canada

Humphrey Carver was born in Birmingham, England in 1902. He grew up amidst contrasting landscapes – the open-cast mines, heavy industries, soot and air pollution of the "Black Country," and the forested Clent Hills. He resolved to work towards a better shaping of the man-made environment, and graduated from the Architectural Association's School of Architecture in London, where he had the good fortune to study under the great Geoffrey Jellicoe. But he had no ambition to pursue rich clients – as he explained in his autobiography,* he had gone into architecture "for a social purpose and now I could see no way out of the barriers that seemed to be enclosing me." His solution was to emigrate to Canada, in 1930.

Carver's Philosophy

One of Carver's defining principles was his commitment to sustainable design. In an era when environmental awareness was still taking root, he was already advocating for practices that were conscious of, and conscientious about, ecological impact. He believed that access to green areas was essential for the well-being of city dwellers, and his influence in urban planning circles led to the incorporation of parks, greenways and pocket gardens in metropolitan areas.

A Social Reformer

In 1934 Carver became one of the founding members of the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects. Carver was a strong advocate for a federally funded public housing program, to be implemented on the local level by municipalities, non-profit associations or co-operatives. He devised the rent-to-income system that became the basis for public housing rents across Canada.

In 1968 he was made a Fellow of the Canadian Institute of Planners, in 1988 awarded the Order of Canada, and in 1989 an honorary degree by the University of Guelph. He served at the Canada Mortgage and Housing Association, first as Chair of the Research Committee, then Chair of the Advisory Committee, although he reported feeling like "an environmentalist lost in a crowd of mortgage lenders."* He now stands as a pivotal figure in the world of landscape architecture, renowned for his groundbreaking approaches that seamlessly meld nature and human design. Carver spoke and wrote of "cultural landscape" before others in his profession, and in this regard led the way to understanding the historic and ongoing relationship of people and the land.

Influence on Rockcliffe

In 1949 he came to Rockcliffe Park, where he purchased a home on Lansdowne Road, and helped to shape the Village. He was an advocate of protecting and making available the natural environment for all residents to enjoy. A walk through Rockcliffe Park gives a sense of his meaningful contribution and legacy here; the Village (as it was called pre-amalgamation) owes its many 'snickelways' to Humphrey, as he proposed connections allowing pedestrians to continue their walks without the interruption of dead end streets. Some examples: Juliana to Lakeview, Maple Lane to Maple Lane E, Fernhill to Cloverdale, and the steps joining upper and lower Wood Avenue.

The Village Green

In 1967, for Rockcliffe Park's celebratory project of Canada's Centennial, Carver – with input from local architect Andrew Hazeland and specifications from landscape architect Don Graham, and in consultation with the community – designed the Centennial Garden, in the area north of Mariposa Avenue and east of Springfield Road, in a vacant area of the 'Village Green.' His body of design work in the Village Green over the years knitted together four distinct areas, attesting to his skill. To the west, his design of a circle, the Centennial Garden (1967), to the east, his redesign of a square on the site of a former bowling green, the Jubilee Garden (1977). The boundaries of these two areas were defined by a cedar hedge with a generous opening to permit views and access between them. To the south, his integration of the grove of existing Acacias, with its beckoning narrow path winding through the trees, skirted Centennial Garden and the Jubilee Garden, providing them with a natural setting. The grove and open area were where one entered the Village Green informally, before entering the circle or the square, which are clever complements of geometry. The whole represents a mastery of craftsmanship, is an excellent example of Modern Landscape Architecture, and has heritage significance, but is in need of significant restoration work.

The Canadian Society of Landscape Architects is seeking to have Humphrey Carver designated as a person of National Historic Significance in recognition of his contribution to the profession and all his work. The process is underway.

Edited by Jane Panet, with contributions from Linda Dicaire, Kay James and Susan d'Aquino

*Humphrey Carver, *Compassionate Landscape: Places and People in a Man's Life*, published 1975.