

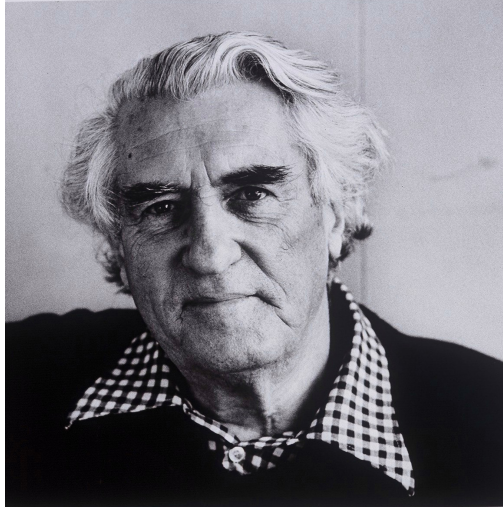
## THE CENTENNIAL GARDEN: HUMPHREY CARVER

*A couple of talented creative minds have been busy looking at what needs to be done to restore the Centennial Garden to its former grandeur. Landscape Architects Linda Dicaire and Gerald Lajeunesse, decided the best place to start was to find out more about Humphrey Carver, the person who was the moving force behind the design of the garden. Rockcliffe Historian Martha Edmond graciously obliged by producing the following biography. It has been abridged for publication in the newsletter. The complete version may be found on the Centennial Garden page on the Rockcliffe Park Foundation website ([www.rockcliffeparkfoundation.org](http://www.rockcliffeparkfoundation.org)) – Jane Panet.*

*by Martha Edmond*

### HERITAGE

*This is the third article in a series on the once magnificent and commemorative Centennial Garden. Located in the Village Green (the park area bounded by Springfield Road on the west and Mariposa Avenue on the south), the Centennial Garden, also known as the Stone Circle, was officially opened by G.G. Roland Michener in 1976 to celebrate Canada's centennial. The circular flagstone and river rocks paved space, anchored in the centre by two boulders, and ringed by maple trees, has unfortunately fallen into a state of disrepair.*



Humphrey Carver was an internationally acclaimed architect, planner, and author. Born in England in 1902 he came to Canada in 1930 and became a major force in public housing policy, helping to guide the federal government's revival of Canadian community planning and transformation into a suburban nation.

By 1937, he had emerged as one of Canada's leading advocates for housing reform and a national housing program. He gave numerous speeches, ran a CBC Radio series, and organized conferences on housing and planning, including the ground-breaking 1939 Housing Conference.

His prolific writing career took off in 1948 with the publication *Houses for Canadians*. That same year he came to Ottawa to work for the Central Mortgage Housing Corporation. From 1955 to his retirement in 1967, he headed up its Advisory Group where he advocated for an interdisciplinary approach to urban problems, and oversaw programs that funded the establishment of planning schools and scholarships, with millions of dollars made available for planning research and studies. In those years, Canada's housing policy and community planning achieved an international reputation.

For many years, Carver lived in the Village of Rockcliffe Park, which he discovered by accident one day on a walk along the Ottawa River. He would develop a strong attachment to the community. As described in his memoir, *Compassionate Landscape* (1975), it was a place he felt had "never lost its woodland character" with its houses "tucked in between the trees." The Village provided him with inspiration, a perfect retreat for contemplation and reflection. In turn, he provided advice on its conservation and development, designing walkways and paths, analyzing its distinctive cultural heritage landscapes, and creating urban spaces and parkland — areas that embodied many of his thoughts on the role of landscape in an urban setting. He returned to a renewed love for the natural landscape, and the relationship between suburbs and nature became a persistent theme for Carver later in life.

His work has been acknowledged with many awards, among them the Order of Canada (1988). He died in 1995 in his beloved community, where his name is honoured in the Caldwell-Carver Conservation Area. The Centennial Garden, a surviving work of Carver's, is accessible to the public and can still be seen and appreciated today. It is a lasting symbol of the man and his vision, and a legacy with which we are now entrusted.



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