

A Temple in the Cemetery

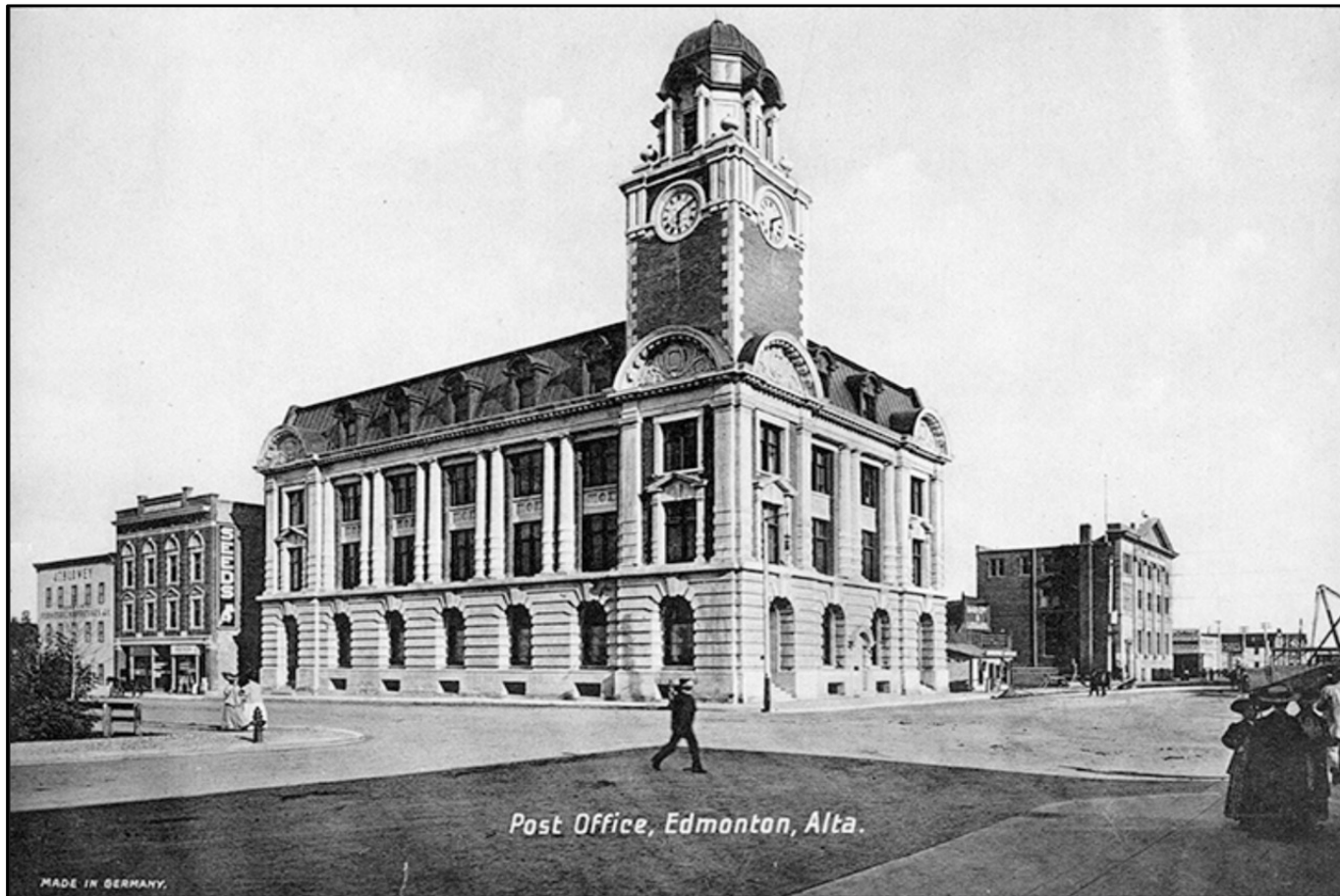
at Evergreen Memorial Gardens, Edmonton



HERITAGE MEMORIAL

THE STONE IN THIS MEMORIAL WAS
QUARRIED IN TYNDALL, MANITOBA
AND BUILT IN TO THE MAIN POST
OFFICE OF EDMONTON IN 1919 UNTIL
IT WAS DEMOLISHED IN 1972.

PARTS OF THE CLOCK TOWER
CAN STILL BE SEEN.



The 1910 Edmonton downtown post office was demolished in 1972. Many of the exterior features were salvaged. Some were purchased by Evergreen Memorial Gardens with the intention to use them at their Edmonton cemetery.

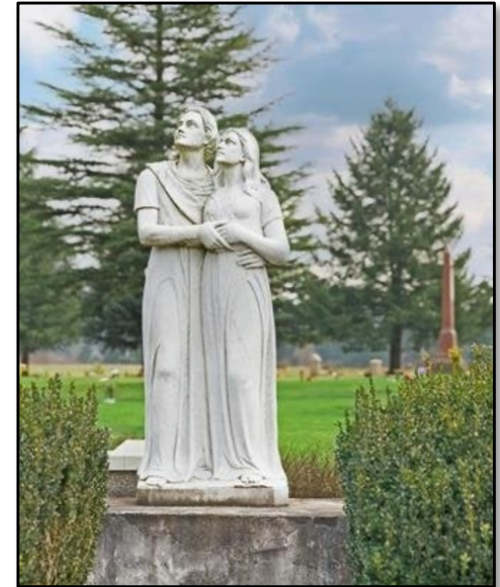


This is a photo I took in 1968, my first year in Edmonton. The Post Office building was an important downtown landmark.

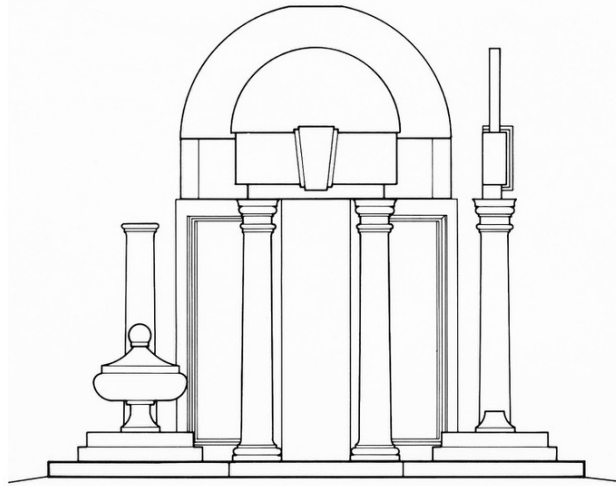
In 1975, Karen Wilkin, then head curator at the Edmonton Art Gallery, was approached by Evergreen Memorial Gardens to provide advice on how the salvaged post office stones could be used to create a new centerpiece for one of the cemetery's plots. I was working at the architectural office of Rick Wilkin, as was my colleague, David Lieberman. Karen approached us with the challenge.

The cemetery objective was to create new, non-denominational centerpieces that were not prone to vandalism, as were the traditional Carrera marble pieces. They were interested, at the same time, in preserving some of Edmonton's heritage.

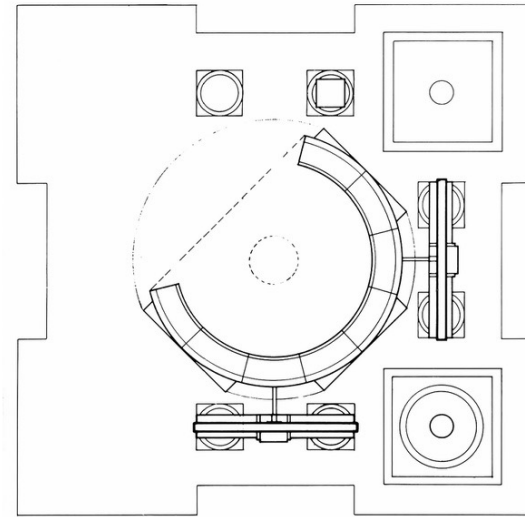
David and I accepted the challenge to prepare ideas and sketches for a suitable centerpiece memorial constructed from the salvaged stones of the old post office.



A traditional marble cemetery centerpiece

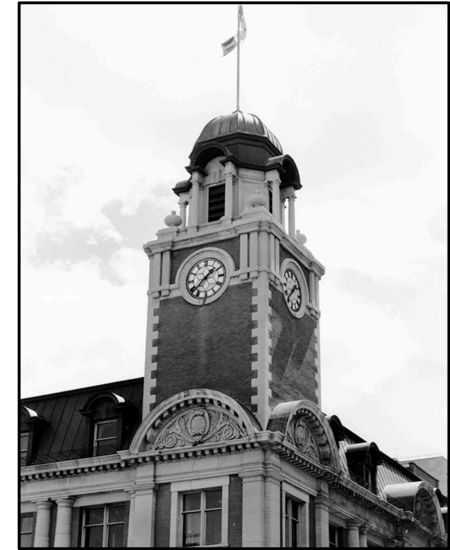
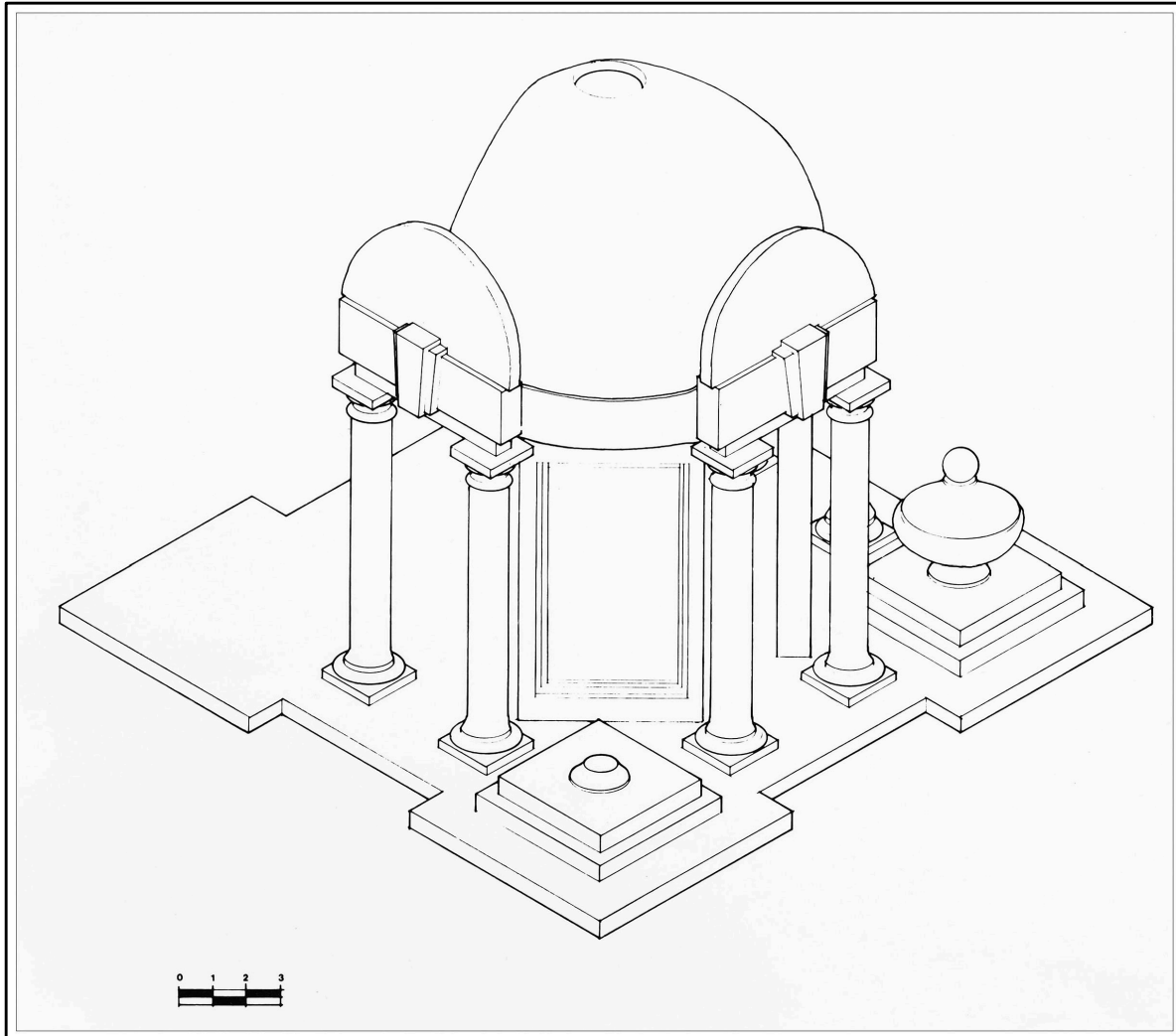


Evergreen Memorial Gardens Monument Elevation



Evergreen Memorial Gardens Monument Plan

Of all the sketches we prepared, the chosen scheme was the idea of a timeless ancient temple monument, partly intact and partly missing – as would be the case from centuries of weathering and scavenging.



The circular clock enclosure became the base of a new concrete dome, with an oculus.

The pediments under the original dome, resting on Doric columns, became the main elements of the composition.

The stone bowls were positioned as they were in the original tower.

Why were we interested in creating an historical allusion?

The stone remnants, salvaged from the Beaux Art influenced Edwardian Classicism of the Post Office, suggested a strong historical connection for any new design using these stones. Modernism was the predominant design theory after WW2. It didn't seem to fit how we felt about this particular design challenge.

Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, a "Gentle Manifesto", had been published in 1966, challenging modernist purism by advocating for an architecture that embraces historical references and linguistic richness - **the visual language of the Monument**.

I had taken a great of interest in studying historical Western architecture at university and felt comfortable exploring how we could apply this historical language.

Finally, developing a design that would symbolize timelessness, as an appropriate language for a cemetery, using the materials available, led us to the design of the Monument. It is a serious but light-hearted design that is intended to be intriguing, inviting, non-denominational and more or less vandal-proof.

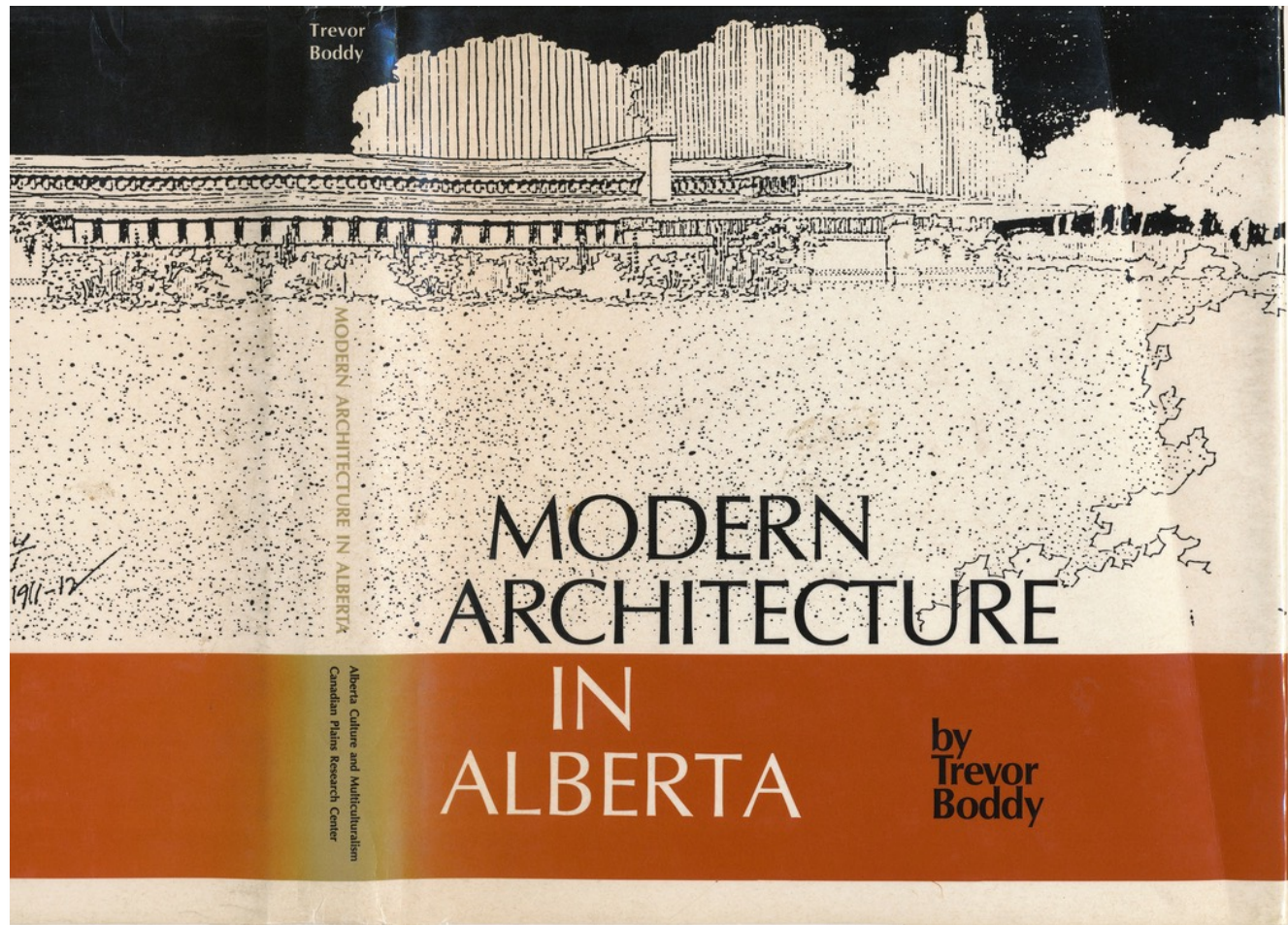
A Temple in Evergreen Memorial Gardens









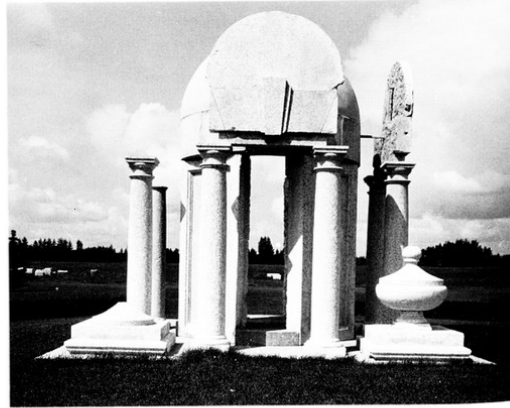


Author Trevor Boddy featured the Monument in his 1987 published thesis, *Modern Architecture in Alberta*, “...surprisingly noble and wistful monument...”



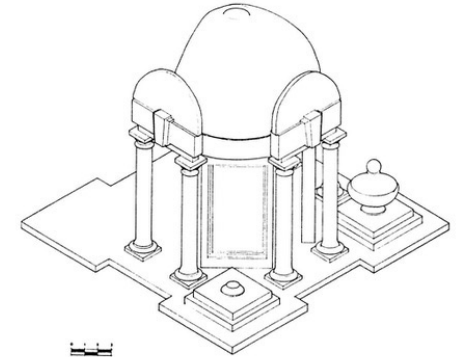
Edmonton Post Office, designed by Dominion Public Works architect David Ewart. Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary.

Alberta architecture comes full circle with a return to Victorian historicism in an intriguing project by former R.L. Wilkin associates David Murray and David Lieberman. Evergreen Memorial Gardens, located northeast of Edmonton, wanted a suitably non-denominational memorial for the graveyard there. The firm had acquired elements of the limestone and brick clock tower of the former Edmonton Post Office designed in 1911 by David Ewart, Dominion Public Works architect but, sadly, demolished. The city had planned to rebuild the highly decorated clock tower in front of the Plaza Hotel, but salvaged elements were misnumbered, costs escalated, and a hulking, rusting steel frame designed by an Edmonton Planning Department employee was erected instead to house the clock works. Murray and Lieberman have taken carved limestone decorative elements salvaged from Ewart's noble tower, combined them with a new cast-concrete frame and dome (complete with oculus), to create a surprisingly noble and wistful monument for Evergreen Memorial Gardens.

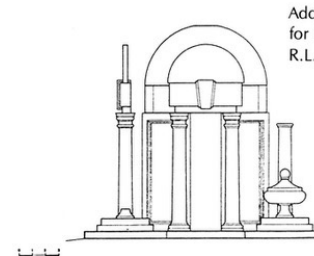
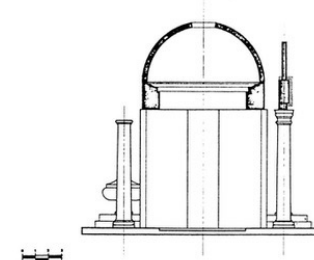
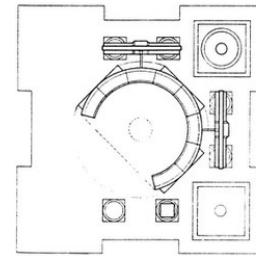
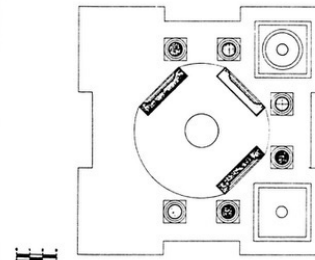


The Funerary Memorial for Evergreen Memorial Gardens.

In all these buildings, an Alberta, prairie, or even distinctively Canadian architectural character is only faintly outlined; a silhouette becoming a sketch, but not yet a rendered drawing. The internationalism of Modern architecture, enforced by business organization, global technologies, and the infusion of a mass-media dominated culture lingers on and an architectural regionalism seems unattainable. Another of Alberta's great building booms is over, and with it the last great chance to mould the province's cities to reflect the current self-perception of its people. An Alberta architecture, should one emerge in the next decade, is likely to remain but a ripple on the expansive grid of Modern architecture in Alberta.



Axonometric drawing of Funerary Memorial for Evergreen Memorial Gardens, near Edmonton, by R.L. Wilkin associates David Murray and David Lieberman, 1977. Courtesy R.L. Wilkin, Architects, Edmonton.



Additional drawings of the Funerary Memorial for Evergreen Memorial Gardens. Courtesy R.L. Wilkin, Architects, Edmonton.

The next generation

June 28, 2018



Ripley and Lola



Monument depicts new theme

Historical artifact to live full life in local cemetery

By JAN McMILLAN

The massive mottled stone pillars and ornamental shapes, reminiscent of ancient Greek ruins, look as if they've always stood serenely on the grassy expanse.

But the unique stone structure, composed of remnants of the clock tower on Edmonton's old post office, was only erected this spring in a new area of the Evergreen Memorial Gardens just north of the city.

The new monument is a sign of cemeteries moving away from their traditional religious themes, evident in the hand-carved marble statues of Jesus in other areas of Evergreen.

"We've found people aren't as interested in that anymore," explained Nowell Hinch, manager of the garden cemetery, "so we decided to try preserving historical artifacts in the cemetery. We felt it was an appropriate thing for us to do — it will be here forever."

Evergreen's move to preserve a piece of local history follows the example set in Hamilton, Ont., where pillars from the old city hall were turned into a focal point in a similar cemetery.

When Edmonton's old post office building at 100th Street and 101A Avenue was demolished in 1972, only the clock and its works from the building's high tower were preserved. It had originally been planned to preserve both the clock and its tower, and reconstruct it on the site, now occupied by the Edmonton Plaza hotel.

Mr. Hinch said the cemetery "made a kind of exchange" with the demolition company to acquire the mass of stone that made up the clock tower.

For six months, starting last summer, David J. Lieberman and David Murray, associated with R.L. Wilkin Architects, worked on a design incorporating the stones.

The designers studied photographs of the old clock tower to see how the pieces of stone had been used, and their sizes, "then we used them in a totally new way."

Only the precast dome of the monument, designed in consultation with structural engineers, was not part of the original tower.

The ring on which that dome sits had held the clock face, with the pillars and rounded shapes adorning the cupola atop the tower.

In May, workers for A.V. Carlson Construction pieced together the stones over a four-week period, using traditional stone construction techniques that haven't been needed for years.

When the structure was completed, the heavy, sturdy tyndal stone, from a Manitoba quarry that's still functioning, was sandblasted to clean it and bring out the darker markings created by fossils in the stone.

"We suppose it's something every architect dreams about," said the designers. "As students, you're schooled in antiquities. This was an opportunity to build a stone structure, on a small scale, in the traditional way."

The monument was designed, they explained, to look incomplete or unfinished. "We wanted to get that feeling of history, that sense of timelessness. It would have been somehow disrespectful," they said, "to recreate the tower itself."

They feel they've helped preserve not only "a bit" of Alberta heritage, but also "some architectural heritage. Most of the old structures here have been destroyed."

And they added, "we hope this might inspire more interest in architectural history in the community. It could set a precedent for other things people could do."

Both the designers and the cemetery management are interested in making use of the remaining stone, still lying at the back of the cemetery site.

"We want to do more of this," said Mr. Hinch. "We've put out feelers to let societies and groups know we're interested in preserving artifacts, and that we'll provide space for them here."

"It's a matter of acquiring something suitable to the site and worth preserving."

In the meantime, a dedication ceremony will be held, Sept. 26 for the non-denominational heritage monument, which incorporates a common burial ground for cremated remains in its base.

Historical artifact to live full life in local cemetery

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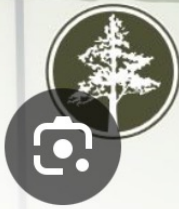
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Evergreen Funeral Home & Cemetery

by Arbor Memorial

16102 Fort Road, Edmonton, AB · 780-472-9007 · www.evergreenmemorial.com

- LEGEND**
- A Main Entrance
 - B Cemetery Office ★
 - C Funeral Home
 - D Reflections Columbarium
 - E Service Building
 - Water Barrels
 - Washrooms
 - P Parking
 - ★ Please proceed to Cemetery Office for assistance.

Opening Ceremony at Evergreen Memorial Gardens

September 1976





David Lieberman and Rick Wilkin



David Lieberman and Karen Wilkin



Credits

Owner: Evergreen Funeral Home And Cemetery, Edmonton

Architects: David Murray and David Lieberman
R.L. Wilkin Architect

Structural: Massimiliano (Max) Berretti

Originator: Karen Wilkin

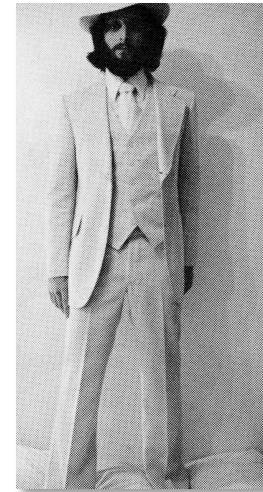
Contractor: Carlson Construction (1976)

Photography: Christl Bergstrom

1976



David Murray with architect
Bertie Richards



David Lieberman



Rick Wilkin