

Planning Ahead Again

On December 7th, 1895 the NWMP purchased the first formal cemetery near Fort Saskatchewan for a sum of \$75 for 25 single plots. When asked why, they said, “Just planning ahead”. At that time a NWMP constable earned from \$1 to \$1.50 per day.

Since that time the cemetery has grown, however, in 2012 Joe Collinson, the Edmonton Veterans’ Association resident specialist on RCMP graves, brought to the attention of our Division, the Cemetery had only 16 grave sites remaining. To resolve the shortage, he suggested a columbarium be installed in an area within the bounds of the cemetery which was not designated for plots. He indicated most families are opting to cremate remains over a full coffin burial service. This addition would alleviate space problems well into the future.



In 2015 it was learned through our RCMP Liaison member that K Division was unsure who had the authority to purchase a columbarium. Therefore, President Jerry Plastow prepared a letter addressed to the Commissioner outlining the current shortage of room at the cemetery and requesting the installation of a columbarium. That letter went through channels to HQ’s Ottawa.

Nothing was heard until 2017 when W.O. Kevin McGillivray enquired about the project. It was learned the Division CO had authority to initiate a non-competitive construction contract up to \$40k.

At this point Kees Kikkert volunteered to take over from Joe Collinson and press on with the project. Matters to consider were; the columbarium size and the type of granite to be used which was intended to match that of the columbaria at Depot.

In April 2018, Kees and veteran Tom Hutchison met with the City of Fort Saskatchewan to explain the plan. The City Manager fully supported the idea to installation a new columbarium within the RCMP area of the Fort Saskatchewan Cemetery.

In May of 2018, the Edmonton Veterans’ Association presented an approved financially cooperative plan to the C.O. ‘K’ Division to purchase a 96-niche columbarium. The plan would share the total cost of the columbarium installation between the RCMP and the Edmonton Veterans’ Association.

Confident in the project proceeding, in June 2018 the Association contracted the columbarium pad installation. We were then notified the procurement plan with two bids attached did not meet the requirements of the National Bidding Process and as such had to be re-bid Nationally. Public Servant Mavis Callihoo worked with the Association toward the desired outcome. Without her knowledge and diligent work, giving the project its final push to the finish line, the project might have failed.

To everyone's delight, the columbarium procurement project ended triumphantly with the Force's purchase of the columbarium. On 2019-09-11 at 09:11hrs the columbarium was put in place at the Fort Saskatchewan RCMP Cemetery along with two granite benches purchased by Edmonton Division. Total cost commitment for the concrete pad and benches to Edmonton Division was \$12,760.00.

Outside of Depot, this is the only other RCMP Columbarium, however, the Battleford, Saskatchewan RCMP Cemetery will soon have one installed there.

The Dedication of the Columbarium was held on the 23rd of October 2019. The Commanding Officer dedicated the installation of the columbarium and our Veteran Chaplin Cyril Gowler blessed the site.

RCMP Veterans' Association
Edmonton Division

