CONFEDERATION SQUARE

LOCATION AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION - The lands and monuments are known municipally as Confederation Square. All the certain parcels or tracts of land and premises situate, lying and being in the City of Peterborough, in the County of Peterborough and Province of Ontario and being composed of Lots one and two on the south side of McDonnel1 Street and West of George Street and Lots one and two on the north side of Murray Street and west of George Street for the said City of Peterborough.

OWNER - The Corporation of the City of Peterborough.

DATE OF CREATION - August 18, 1884

SITE AND SETTING - The park is situated in the central part of the city directly east of the Peterborough Armouries and Peterborough Collegiate and Vocational School. An iron fence separates those properties from the park. Confederation Square is also bound by Murray Street to the south, George Street to the east and McDonnell Street to the north.

SIGNIFICANCE - Since its Crown Patent in 1825, Confederation Square has remained for public use first as the town's only burial ground (1825 - 1851), then as an agricultural park (1875 - 1877) and finally as a park. With the War Memorial dedicated to the victims of the two World Wars which was designed by famed Canadian sculptor Walter Seymour Allward, the Brown Memorial from the 1885 Northwest Rebellion designed by local architect John E. Belcher and a granite representation of the city's Honour Roll of the World Wars, the park is today a local dedication to the conflicts which made Canadian freedom a reality.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND - Confederation Square existed originally as Peterborough's first cemetery. When Richard Birdsall first surveyed the area in 1825, he was instructed by The Canada Company to allot land to each of the Churches in the area. As a result, he allotted Lots one through six north of Murray and west of George Streets and Lots one through six south of McDonnell and west of George Streets to the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Scotland and the Anglican Church. These churches immediately made the area a cemetery where many of the pioneer settlers and lumbermen from the Peter Robinson immigration of 1825 were buried. Lots one, two and three on each side were reserved for Protestant burials whereas Lots four, five and six on each side were Catholic. The area was known simply as "The Burial Ground". The Crown Grant to the Council of the District of Colborne for January 8, 1849 (Instrument #15094) came from Queen Victoria and gave the land as a burial ground. It was then that Lots one, two and three on each side became the official burial ground "for all denominations of the Protestant faith".

Harsh conditions of pioneer life as described by Catherine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie took a heavy toll of lives) and by the mid 1840's, the original burial ground grew short of space. Town Council then closed the burial ground on August 8, 1851 when the new Little Lake Cemetery became ready for use.

Upon the closing of the burial ground, many of the remains interred on the Protestant side were removed to Little Lake Cemetery or to the new Methodist Cemetery at George and Hilliard Streets. A high board fence was built around the old burial ground which, over the next twenty-five years, became a haven for vandals. During, 1867, part of Lot three north of Murray and west of George Streets was evidently leased to the local militia, although no record of such a lease was recorded at the local Registry Office. A wooden drill shed was built thereon during 1867 and remained there until it was destroyed by fire in 1909.
On June J, 1875, the County and Town Councils leased the Protestant area of the old Burial Ground to the Peterborough Agricultural Society of the West Riding for a period of ten years to be used as an Agricultural Park. For the next three years, the Central Exhibition was held there. Hog and sheep pens were built along Murray Street and cattle and horse barns along McDonnell Street. Main entrances to the park were at the two George Street corners.

Almost immediately, local residents found the high board fence and livestock barns an eyesore in the middle of the town and proceedings began in 1877 to turn the area into a public park. On July 9, 1877, Town Council argued that because the original purpose for the Crown Grant ceased to exist, the County had no legal right to lease it to the Agricultural Society. The lease was then considered null and void and a memorial dated July 23, 1877 was sent to the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario requesting the land for a park. Ontario Statute (1879) 42 Victoria, Chapter 67 vested the area (except for the portion of Lot three containing the Drill Shed) to the Corporation of the Town and County of Peterborough jointly to hold upon trust for the purposes of a public park. On August 18, 1884, Town Council declared that the area be known as "The Central Park" and that the fence and sheds be disposed of. Permission was granted to the Agricultural Society to set up the ground as a park. Money was granted for the purchase of flowers and sidewalks and flower beds were put in.

On May 14, 1886, a memorial drinking fountain was unveiled in the park in the memory of Captain Edward T. Brown, a grandson of Thomas A. Stewart. Captain Brown died at Batoche on May 12, 1885 during the Northwest Rebellion and was the only local militia member to die during that conflict. Upon his death, a volunteer from his unit wrote a letter to the Peterborough Review initiating a movement to erect the memorial. A drive began to raise the necessary funds with Mr. E. B. Edwards as treasurer and Colonel H.C. Rogers, Captain Edwards, J.E. Hammond and Charles Stapleton responsible for collecting donations. Contributions came from such notable citizens as George A. Cox, Robert A. Morrow, George Hilliard, Joseph Flavelle, Robert Dennistoun, George Burnham, James Stevenson, Hon. Robert Hamilton, David Dumble and John Carnegie. Notable Peterborough architect and engineer John E. Belcher designed the monument and the committee hoped to secure the Court House Park for the monument site. However, Town Council turned down this proposal and chose Central Park for the site.

Originally, Mr. Belcher designed a massive structure to be nearly twelve feet in height and constructed principally of white marble. However, when donations ran short, he was forced to alter his plans. He designed a structure approximately six and one half feet high which sat upon a base. Instead of marble, the monument would be of Ohio sandstone on a base of Warsaw limestone. The design was in the Gothic style with one finial atop a centre gable with which the fountain was surmounted. The gable had a boldly moulded coping, relieved by quarter foil panels. Water flowed from a bronzed lion's head attached to the stone in a deeply recessed and richly moulded Gothic panel, the arches of which sprang from dwarfed shafts. There were pinnacled buttresses at each angle of the structure. In the centre of one panel read the inscription: "PRO PATRIA - :APT. EDWARD T. BROWN - FISH CREEK, BATOCH - 1885 - A 'tribute to the Canadian volunteers and to the memory of Capt. Edward T. Brown, of Boulton's Scouts, a native of this county who fell at Batoche on May 12, 1885".

Constructed by Mr. Burgess, the fountain was placed originally in the east central part of the park (see photograph OP - 24 - 19) but was moved in 1929 after the erection of the war memorial. At this time, the limestone base was replaced with the present one of granite. Owing to the weathering of time, the inscription is today barely legible and the drinking fountain has long ceased to flow.
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On February 4, 1907, lot three south of McDonnell and west of George Streets was granted to the Peterborough Board of Education for use of the newly proposed Collegiate Institute. Upon the burning in 1909 of the Drill Shed, Lot three north of Murray and west of George Streets was granted to the Peterborough Armouries for use. However, these lots were to be used for park purposes only. This rule was lifted during the 1920’s and today the lots are used by their owners as a parade square and parking lot.

In 1927, upon the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of Canada’s Confederation, the Central Park became “Confederation Square” by which it is known today.

On June 30, 1929, at a gala celebration entertaining more than half the local population, Sir Arthur Currie helped to unveil the War Memorial and Cenotaph in the centre of the park. Dedicated to Peterborough’s unreturning brave of the Great War of 1914-1918, the Cenotaph had the added value of being designed by famed Canadian sculptor Walter Seymour Allward who had such credits to his name as the War Memorial at Vimy Ridge, France, the noted Baldwin-LaFontaine group on Parliament Hill, Ottawa and the Alexander Graham Bell Memorial in Brantford, Ontario. Peterborough's War Memorial was erected only after a lengthy debate which took place throughout much of the 1920’s. Many residents did not want a memorial which would act as a constant reminder of the atrocities, hardships and losses suffered during the war. Others felt that such a reminder would be insurance that such atrocities would not recur. The Cenotaph was finally erected from the funding subscribed to by the people of the Town and County of Peterborough.

A third monument was unveiled on June 18, 1967 by the ex-servicewomen's branch 452 of the Royal Canadian Legion. Because the names of the war dead had long worn off the base of the Cenotaph, the honour roll in the City Hall remained the only list of Peterborough’s heroes. The monument would invite visitors to view the book in the City Hall Lobby.

The first geodetic bench marker in the city was placed in Confederation Square during the 1930's by the Geodetic Surveyors of Canada. The bench marker lists the city elevation at 673.721 feet and the geodetic elevation at 673.097 feet. The city datum is therefore .624 feet higher than the Geodetic datum. It also lists the city's latitude and longitude.

In 1975, to mark the Sesquicentennial anniversary of the Peter Robinson immigration, a large decorative flowerbed was placed at the front entrance of the park off George Street. Each year, the flowerbed is dedicated to an event or society of local importance and is tended by the Board of Parks Management.

In August, 1978, an organization of local war veterans known as Operation Cenotaph made it possible for the names of war victims which had worn off the base of the Cenotaph to be replaced. A drive began to raise money to pay for large bronze plaques and to have the names inscribed on them. The plaques were placed over the base of the Cenotaph and the dedication ceremony took place on June 24, 1979. At this time, the names of war dead from the Second World War and from the Korean Conflict were added to the Cenotaph.

DESCRIPTION OF PARK FOR DESIGNATION BY-LAW - The War Memorial is located in the centre of the park. There are walks and benches throughout the tree-lined park which has several tastefully designed and arranged flower beds. There are a few evergreen trees and small shrubs distributed throughout the area. A spiked metal fence separates the western side of the park from the Armouries and Peterborough Collegiate and Vocational School.
The Cenotaph sits on a circular, stepped base made of white granite. The pedestals for each of the two bronze figures are also of white granite, the west pedestal being carved on the front and back with the names of war victims from World War I. The four plaques placed over the inside of the western pedestal are of bronze and the names of all Peterborough war dead of the World Wars and the Korean Conflict are inscribed on them in raised gold lettering. A fifth plaque on the eastern side of the east pedestal remains as a dedication. Above the pedestals are two bronze figures of heroic dimensions, one representing the enemy full of rage and fury and the other of a heroic knight representing Canadian chivalry.

The monument erected by the ex-servicewomen has a rectangular base of rough white granite, a rectangular pedestal of smooth white granite and a polished monument of red granite in the shape of the City Honour Book. There is an inscription on the eastern side of the pedestal.

The Brown Memorial, a monument of Ohio sandstone on a base of white granite, was originally a drinking fountain. The base is a two tiered, rough surfaced structure while the monument is in the finely cut Gothic style. Owing to the passing of time, the fountain no longer operates and the inscription on the western side of the sandstone is barely legible.

Prepared by:

Gina Basciano, September, 1982