

The Calgary Herald
January 10, 1949

Veteran of the Boer War

Parks Superintendent to Retire January 31

It falls to the lot of some men, as army hospital orderlies, to nurse soldiers. Other men, in horticultural pursuits, nurse plants. Both accomplishments can be credited to Arthur Morris, superintendent of the city parks department, who retires from this position on January 31.

During the Boer War Mr. Morris served with the British army's No. 1 Field Hospital which accompanied Lord Methuen's column across South Africa to the relief of Kimberley.

Mr. Morris was born on an Isle of Wight Farm in 1881 and learned the practical details of plant and animal culture there during his boyhood. He received elementary schooling in Wroxhall and took his senior classes at Sandown. He decided to be a carpenter and apprenticed himself to the building trade on leaving school.

When the Boer War came along he enlisted and served in South Africa for 18 months before receiving his discharge in Cape Town. He recalls arriving in Kimberley on the first relief train sent in to the diamond city and remembers on another occasion when he shook hands with the Boer leader Christian de Wet inside enemy lines.

A British medical detachment was requested by de Wet to take care of some wounded Boer troops and Pte. Morris was a member of the party. De Wet personally thanked the medical orderlies for their work before sending them back through the lines.

On receiving his discharge Mr. Morris took a job in construction of a new Cape Town Hospital. An epidemic of bubonic plague was raging at the time and when a doctor found out Mr. Morris was a trained army orderly he had him fired from the building crew and hired him as a nurse to be in charge of all European males being treated for the plague. In his spare time, to assist

the overworked doctor, the young English veteran inoculated hundreds of Negroes with anti-plague serum and performed a number of post mortems to assist research in causes of the plague.

Six months later he fell ill with enteric fever and spent 16 weeks in bed. Following recovery he sailed for England to re-enter the building trade. In 1904 he was engaged to join a crew to build MacDonald College at Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec, and thus arrived in Canada to stay. He ended up as building superintendent of the completed college and stayed there until 1912. Then an urge to take up a farm in the West seized him and he came to Red Deer [Alberta]. For a few years he farmed near Red Deer before moving to Lacombe, Alberta, to work on the experimental farm.

In 1928 Mr. Morris moved to Calgary [Alberta] and began work with the city parks department. In 1941 he became Calgary Parks Superintendent. He has been in charge of administering the city's 10 horticultural parks, five cemeteries, children's playgrounds and a nursery at Union Park headquarters. His staff consists of 62 persons in addition to extra help taken on during the growing season.

During his tenure as departmental head he has added to the development of existing city parks and supervised planning of new ones. One of the newer projects is Queen's Park cemetery. An extensive city parks development is planned for the future.

Mr. Morris takes pride in the floral displays which Calgary parks provide during the summer despite the shortness of the growing season here. Special varieties of hardy Alpine and other plants have been selected and conditioned to the local climate through the years and visitors from other parts of Canada are struck by the vividness of color produced by blooms here and not matched elsewhere.

The department is one of the city's busiest during the summer season. Besides the seeding, planting, cultivating and designing of plots, there is a lot of work involved in caring for equipment, providing playground equipment, moving and building stands and assisting committees and organizations in improvement planning. As in all other municipal

enterprises parks work revolves around the amount of funds available to spend.

Mr. Morris was pre-deceased by his first wife [Elizabeth Mary Barton of Newport] in 1940. He has one son [Arthur William Morris] and one daughter [Ethel Morris]. His second wife, the former Lilly Findlay, has charge of the Palliser [Hotel] banquet waitress staff.

He is secretary-treasurer of the South Alberta branch of the Last Post Fund and is secretary of the Field of Honor in Calgary. He has been treasurer of the local South African Veterans' Association for a number of years.

As for qualifications for the job of superintendent of a parks department Mr. Morris believes that it helps to be born in as lovely a spot as the Isle of Wight.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

In the above article it says that during the Boer War Arthur Morris served with the British army's No. 1 Field Hospital. In fact, Mr. Morris served with the Van Alen American Field Hospital which was the smallest of the donative hospitals and was formed by a Mr. Van Alen, an American citizen. Mr. Alen agreed to provide all necessary equipment. The British War Office agreed to transport it to South Africa and return it when it was not longer required. The hospital operated in the area near Kimberley. Captain E. Powell RAMC was in charge of the hospital. Mr. Morris was one of sixteen members of the unit that were awarded the St. John Ambulance Brigade Medal for South Africa. There is an inscription on the edge of the medal that says, "334 PTE. A.J. MORRIS ISLE-OF-WIGHT CORPS". Mr. Morris also received the Queen's South Africa Medal with five clasps for Belfast, Natal, Transvaal, Orange Free State, and Cape Colony. There is an inscription on the edge that says, "2ND GDE: ORD: A.J. MORRIS. VAN ALEN AMERICAN HOSP."



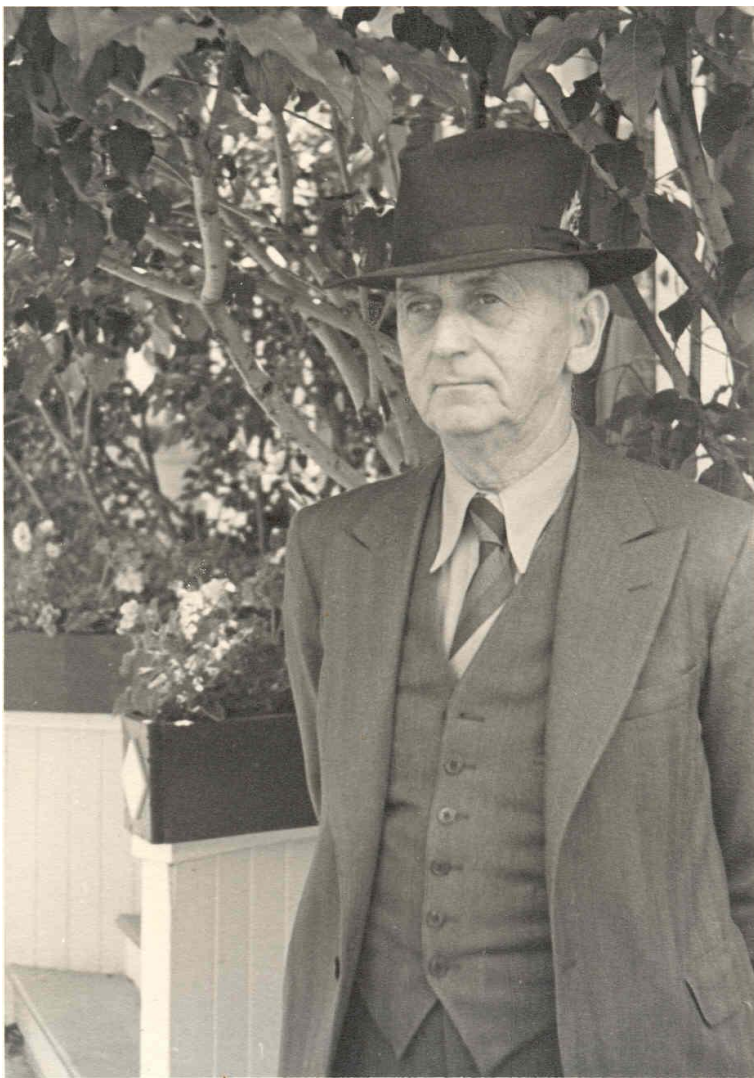
Arthur John Morris

Born: January 1, 1881

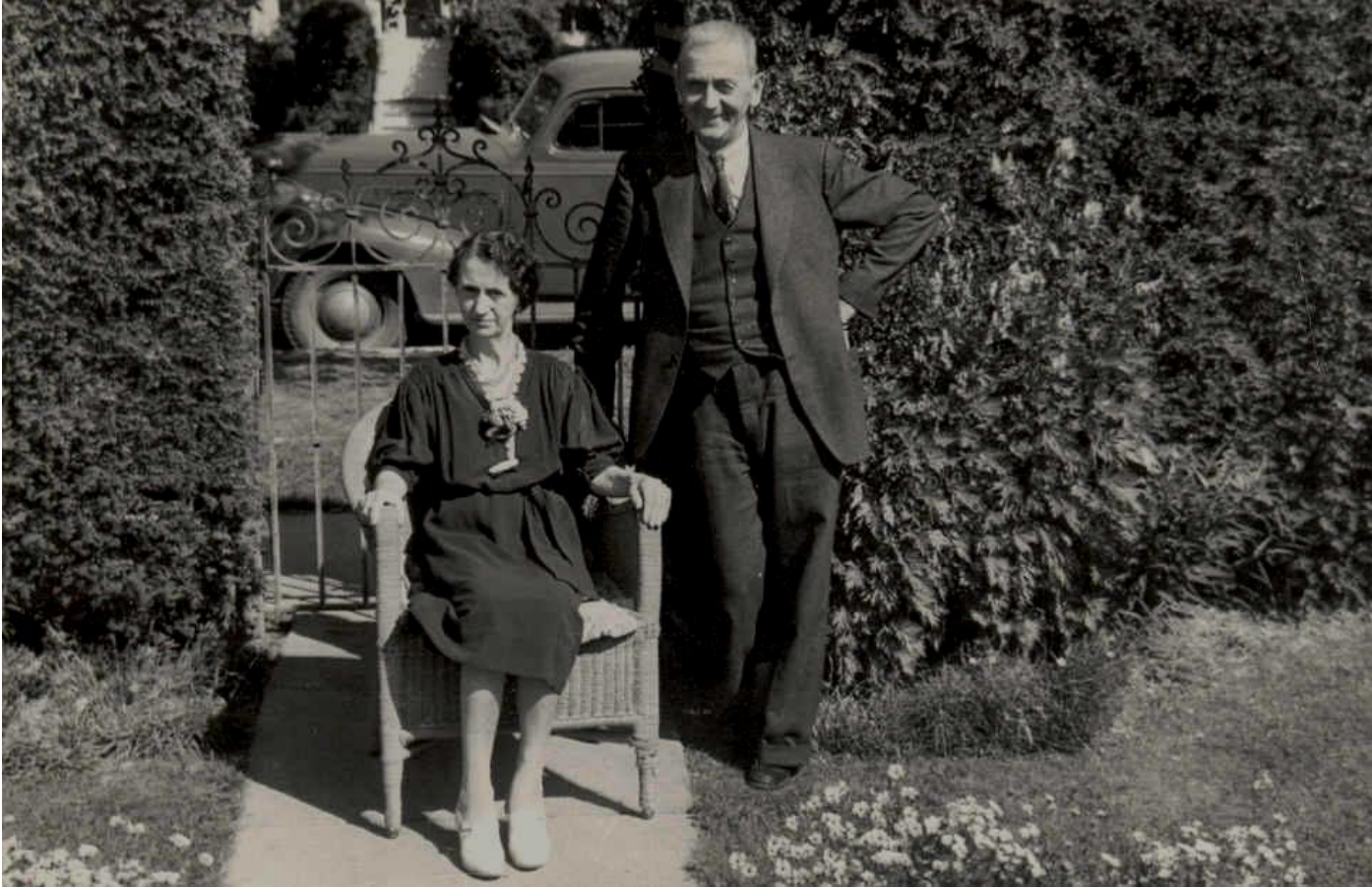
Died: March 21, 1949



MacDonald College, in St Anne de Bellevue, Quebec, under construction in 1906.



Undated photograph of Arthur John Morris



Arthur and his first wife Elizabeth Mary Barton at the front gate of their house on 12 Street N.W., Calgary (house was demolished in 2006). Picture would have been taken in the late 1930's.



Arthur was buried with his second wife, Lilly, in Calgary's Union Cemetery (Lot 2, Block 1, Section Y). His grave site is high on the side of a hill with a great view of Calgary's skyline (that might have been an indirect perk of running the city department that managed cemeteries).