

Cemetery Bankruptcy Leads to Exhumation

On 27 April 2018 the Wetaskiwin Branch of AGS received a query via our website from Julia D. Her request was: "**My father Charles James Hughes died 1964 in Wetaskiwin. I would like any information you might have for him. An obituary or memorial card would be wonderful.**" A simple request. At least, so I thought.

The AGS Cemetery Database recorded that Charles was born in 1922; and died or was buried on 31 December 1964 in the Wetaskiwin Old Cemetery in plot 3-16-2A. In the remarks section it said: "Father transferred from **Roselawn Cemetery.**"

On Ancestry.com Charles James Hughes showed up in the Alberta Death Index for 1964. Here it said that Charles died on 26 March 1964. Why had it taken 9 months for him to be buried? My interest in this case increased.

In the Find-A-Grave index Charles' birth date is shown 30 May 1922 with Sedgewick, Alberta as the birth place. His death date is 26 March 1964.

On the Provincial Archives of Alberta website, the death index confirmed his birth and death dates as previously reported.

The Cemetery Plot Schematic for the Wetaskiwin Old Cemetery states that Charles was re-interred 31 October 1966, with the following remarks: "Body transferred from **Roselawn Cemetery in Camrose**, AB and reinterred on Oct. 31, 1966. Plot 3-16-2A in Old Wetaskiwin Cemetery. Permit to reinter did not indicate date of death nor age."

A trip to the Wetaskiwin Old Cemetery produced this memorial on Plot 3-16-2A.



Father - Charles J. Hughes
1922 - 1964
Mother - Vivian K. Hughes
1925 - 2010
Son - James A. Hughes
1948 - 1999

Photo taken 30 April 2018

The City of Wetaskiwin Archives provided the sought after obituary. Charles died in Wetaskiwin on 26 March 1964. His funeral took place in the First United Church on 28 March 1964 and his interment at **Roselawn Cemetery in Camrose**. Funeral arrangements were done by Baker Funeral Chapel, Wetaskiwin.

The second document found at the archives was a Permit to Reinter a Dead Body, that of Charles James Hughes, from the **Roselawn Cemetery in Camrose**. The permit was dated 18 October 1966 by the Director of Vital Statistics for Alberta. On the back of this permit was written the

name, Bugar Funeral Home, Camrose. The city archivist said that was the party that did the exhumation.

So to recap, four documents show the cemetery of interment as the Roselawn Cemetery, three of which stating that the said cemetery was in Camrose. Two burial dates confuse the issue; 31 December 1964 and 31 October 1966, with both burials happening at the Wetaskiwin Old Cemetery.

The Roselawn Cemetery in Camrose did not surface in any search for it, either city or county of Camrose. The Camrose Branch of AGS was contacted, as well. No one there had ever heard of this cemetery.

Discussion with Baker Funeral Chapel in Wetaskiwin led to a name index book and then the ledger for 1964. Although Charles Hughes was registered there, it only showed that the interment happened in Camrose. The Baker employee called Bugar Funeral Home in Camrose and they also did not know of a Roselawn Cemetery.

Julia D. was contacted and asked if anyone in her family knew the location of the Roselawn Cemetery, as no one seemed to have ever heard of it. Her is her reply:

"My dad was buried east of Camrose, just off Hwy 13, a new cemetery, in fact named Roselawn. A salesman had come to visit at our house and Dad and Mom purchased a double plot, don't think it was too much before he passed away. At the time of the funeral, there were others buried there and the sign, a black metal arch, had the name Roselawn Cemetery. We visited the site often and after a time the place started to look unkept, a big upset to my Mother. So we took on the task from time to time. She received a letter a few years after the internment, from?, assume lawyer, stating the cemetery had gone bankrupt and there would have to be a new site chosen. I didn't hear anything else about this except that there had been a few unnamed graves and Mom was concerned what would happen to these bodies."

Julia suggested that maybe land records would be able to provide the location. The Alberta Government was contacted through the website, AlbertaConnects@gov.ab.ca, asking for the location of the cemetery and whether all interred had been re-buried elsewhere. A reply was received within 24 hours. It stated:

"The cemetery you are enquiring about, the Roselawn Cemetery, is known to Service Alberta. It is identified in the Service Alberta Cemetery Registry as **Roselawn Memorial Gardens**. The history of this cemetery is unique and our department has written confirmation that there are no remaining graves located at the Roselawn Cemetery site."

Now the official name was known.

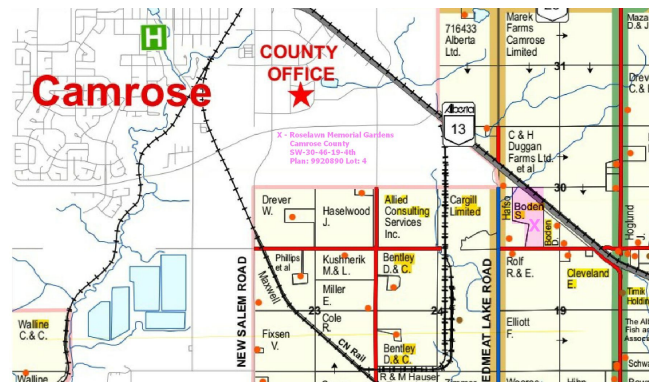
It was suggested that the question of location could be viewed on the website SPIN2 at <https://alta.registries.gov.ab.ca/SpinII/logon.aspx>. Instructions as to how to navigate this site were supplied.



From this website it was discovered that the cemetery in question had been owned by Roselawn Memorial Gardens Ltd. and that the location was SW 30-46-19-4th, Plan 9920890 Lot 4, which is about 2 km east of the City of Camrose's east boundary. A map was also available to view

(see green X).

A current County of Camrose map online shows that the property is now owned by S. Boden (see pink X).



Now the actual location of the cemetery was known.

The reply also suggested contacting the Director of Cemeteries of Alberta for any further discussion. From this office was received the following:

" The unique situation appears to be that 59 bodies were disinterred from the Roselawn Memorial Garden cemetery some time prior to November 1966 and moved to another location. It is unclear if they all went to the same place, but all the dis-interments were done with the consent of the next of kin for each decedent. It appears that the cemetery owners could no longer care for the cemetery and a court appointed liquidator confirmed that all decedents interred in that space were moved."

Now the last bit of information was available to successfully close out the research project. The two funeral homes were contacted with the proper name of the cemetery and the legal land description for their future use. The City of Wetaskiwin Archives was also given this information. The Camrose Branch of AGS was contacted so that they didn't waste any time on searching for information on this cemetery.

The final communication with Julia D. stated, in part:

"I am writing to you this morning, more to give your Mom, & maybe you, too, closure to your concerns about the unmarked graves." The Director of Cemeteries' comments were quoted.

Julia replied:

" Right , a closure for sure. Thank you.... You have done me a wonderful service and I appreciate all your effort."

In closing I would like to say that I had never ever given a thought to a private cemetery as being a "for profit" enterprise. I did discover one in Alberta and it obviously filed for bankruptcy. No doubt it caused much un-needed anxieties for the next of kin who had to go through the ordeal of relocating their loved ones. So, watch out for salespeople coming to your door selling you cemetery plots.



Here is what the Roselawn Memorial Gardens looks like today, complements of GOOGLE Maps (see red X).

THE END!