



Robert E. Gard Memorial Site Renovation



CLIENT

UW Madison / Wisconsin
Department of Administration

LOCATION

UW Madison Campus
Madison, WI

PROJECT SERVICES

- Civil Engineering
- Surveying
- Landscape Architecture
- Permitting

The Storyteller's Circle, located on a scenic overlook off on Observatory Drive on the UW Madison Campus, honors the work and personality of Professor Robert E. Gard. The plaque at the memorial contains the following inscription: "Robert E. Gard (1910-1992) wrote, spoke, taught, and lived the Wisconsin Idea through community arts development. Convinced everyone has a story to tell, he envisioned a Wisconsin in which everyone wrote, painted, dance, acted, or sang their story. His own writing captured Wisconsin's 'sense of place' and history, and influenced national and international audiences".

Enacted primarily as a replacement for a 1960's-era overlook in disrepair, it also included the demolition of a large early 20th century cistern that was in danger of collapse. The design concept sought to build a similar circular top to the old cistern that was a popular seating area and develop a more intimate space. Elevated seating walls provide a place of contemplation overlooking Lake Mendota, as well as inviting future generations of storytellers.

The project faced several challenges, including extensive re-grading relating to the demolition of the 220,000 gallon reservoir, correction of chronic soil erosion issues due to the site's location on the edge of steep bluff, and incorporating several historic UW 'Class Of' markers at the site. The memorial is constructed of limestone with a compacted crushed gravel level area and a central medallion containing several quotes from Professor Gard inscribed into it. Other components include native plants, a small rain garden integrated around the structure, and a cast concrete handicap-accessible path.

Planning for the project began in the fall of 2009 and construction of the project was completed and dedicated during the Gard Symposium on September 25, 2010.

