

Wetaskiwin Genealogical Society
A Branch of Alberta Genealogical Society
c/o Alice Hoyle, President
RR3,
Wetaskiwin, AB T9A 1X1

To: City of Wetaskiwin:
Mayor, Tyler Gandam
Councillor Dean Billingsley
Councillor Pamela Ganske
Councillor Alan Hilgartner
Councillor Kevin Lonsdale
Councillor Patricia MacQuarrie
Councillor Wayne Neilson
Dave Burgess, City Manager

Re: City of Wetaskiwin Archives

We note with grave concern, the FOR SALE sign in front of the old City Hall. Our concern lies with the fact that the Archives is located in this building. It is our understanding that the City does not have a concrete plan for what is to be done with the Archives and the valuable documents and photos which are housed within, should such a sale proceed.

The history of Wetaskiwin and surrounding area is secured within the walls of the Archives and the temperature/humidity-controlled vault keeps documents and photos safe – documents and photos that are more than 100 years old in some cases, and certainly irreplaceable.

As a Genealogical Society, we know how important it is to have the records of our ancestors preserved for future generations. In addition to the records within the Archives being an irreplaceable source of information for anyone interested in finding out more about their ancestors who came to this area, they are a vital link for future generations. When your children or grandchildren want to find out information about Wetaskiwin in years past, they can always search in the Archives – if there is one!

The City of Wetaskiwin Archives is a valued source of reference material: local history books, obituaries, newspaper records, Church records, Rural School Registers, City records (cemetery, burial, Council minutes, etc.), photos, information about the early businesses in Wetaskiwin and the people who started those businesses, information on events that challenged the citizens of Wetaskiwin – the list could go on forever.

Are you familiar with who uses the Archives? The 3-volume “Siding 16” books which chronicle the history of Wetaskiwin and area, were created based on information obtained by the author(s) looking through all the old records and newspapers housed in the Archives. When the local Wetaskiwin Co-op celebrated their 100th Birthday in 2017, they searched the Archives for information that would help them with the task of recording their history. The 2017 WCHS Reunion, Sports groups, Royal

Canadian Legion, family history researchers are just a few of the groups that have relied on the historical data available by visiting the Archives.

The Wetaskiwin Genealogical Society receives research requests from various parts of the world; requests for information about ancestors who settled here. Our volunteer Research Committee searches the data housed in the Archives as one of the sources of factual historical information. We have been able to provide ancestral information to people from Scotland, Holland, various locations in the USA and Canada – all of which have highlighted “Wetaskiwin” and area pioneers. Our research has resulted in Scottish visitors arriving here to check out the land where their ancestors lived. The Dutch researcher is writing a book that will be published; and included in this book is a write-up of the Wilkins family – again, information that was found in the City Archives!

The list of groups that rely on the City of Wetaskiwin Archives for information about years past is probably too long to include in this letter, but we would anticipate that the City, itself, relies on the documents and photos housed within the Archives for archival information.

Then, there are the organizations, families, churches, etc. who have entrusted their historical documents and photos to the City of Wetaskiwin Archives, trusting that these items would be safe for future generations to view. Our research at the Archives Society of Alberta indicates that when the City of Wetaskiwin Archives accepts items from donors, the City of Wetaskiwin has a contract with the donors to keep the records secure.

We feel that the City Administration has underestimated the public’s support for the Archives and the important role this facility plays in the preservation of the culture and history of Wetaskiwin and surrounding area. Surely the general public should have some input into your decision regarding the future of the Archives and the historical records therein.

Our members care about the stories of our ancestors – how they came to be in this region of Alberta, how they got here, what hardships they had to overcome in order to emigrate and start a new life in a strange land. We place great importance on the preservation of historical records, photos, local history books and other documents that ‘tell the story’ of our ancestors, and of this region.

We hope that even if you don’t have a family history in this region, you will acknowledge that those of us who do, feel very passionately that the Archives must remain a viable entity within the City of Wetaskiwin framework.

Yours truly,

Alice Hoyle, President
Wetaskiwin Branch, Alberta Genealogical Society