

# Wolseley Courthouse & Heritage Foundation



by *Dennis Fjestad*

Honourable Nancy Heppner, Kevin, MLA Don Toth and distinguished guests.

I hope today we can finally leave the past of the Wolseley Court House behind us. Even though it is well known as the oldest standing Court House in Saskatchewan it served as a justice facility for the short span of fifteen years. During that time one of the more lurid trials occurred in 1909. A mentally-challenged homesteader was tried convicted and sentenced to be hanged for the brutal murder of six year old Rosa Mohr. An interesting bit of historic trivia is that F. R. Haultain, served as the defence lawyer in that trial.

In 1909 the court moved to Moosomin and the building no longer was used for court cases. Since that time the building has functioned as a jail, a boy's detention home, an annex to the nursing home, and laundry. It became the temporary resting place for the solid, oak benches taken from Regina's CPR station. Its last use was for storage from Lakeside Nursing Home.

In the year 2000 the Wolseley Heritage Foundation was formed to bring back the

swinging bridge. This very successful campaign ended with the dedication in July, 2004. Following the completion of the bridge the Wolseley Foundation looked towards the Court House as its next heritage project. However, due to several factors the project had difficulty getting off the ground. One reason was that the Court House did not share the same emotional connection with local residents as did the swinging bridge or the restoration of the Town Hall / Opera House. For example, on the occasion when the Court House was opened to the public many people commented "I have driven by the building hundreds of times, but this is the first time I've had the chance to go inside." Even so, during this time many ideas were proposed for its use. Several years ago a high school class was given the assignment to think up a new plan for the building. They were to construct models showing their designs. The students were

very creative but not necessarily practical with their ideas. Suggestions ranged from a pool hall, or a movie theatre, or an indoor swimming pool.

The Court House Interpretive Centre, a non-profit group was also formed to explore possibilities for the building. From this group came initial idea to move the town office from its present location into the Court House. This plan would provide a solid, long term tenant for the building. In 2011 town council and the Wolseley Heritage Foundation asked Ed Attridge the Main Street coordinator and Allen Gurtler to develop a financially feasible, long-term proposal to approach the provincial government in the sale of the Court House.

This, of course, is the reason we are here today.

Today we celebrate with great promise and optimism this agreement of sale between the Town of Wolseley and the Government of Saskatchewan. A

significant heritage asset is now preserved not only for our community but also for the province.



*Hon. Nancy Heppner*

