

Wolseley Courthouse Interpretive Centre: Bringing the Past and the Present Together for the Future of Canada

NOVEMBER 5,
2010 will mark
a decisive turn-
ing point in the
history of the
Wolseley
Courthouse.



Occurring almost one month after the 115th anniversary of the building's grand opening, it marks the day of a historic symposium and fundraising banquet for a new project committed to the restoration and rehabilitation of Saskatchewan's oldest court building, one of the last surviving territorial courthouses in Western Canada.

Entitled "Historic Places: Connecting the Fabric that Links Us", and taking place in Wolseley's quintessential restoration project, the Town Hall/Opera House, the event hoped to emulate the "Grand

Political Rally" initiated by Senator William Dell Perley that opened the building for the public on October 6, 1895, though perhaps in a more non-partisan manner. Like that event, "Historic Places" gathered key figures in the local, governmental, legal, and historical restoration communities to mark the beginning of a new era in Canadian history.

They gathered in one venue with one common goal: to restore the Wolseley Courthouse not only into a functioning court of law, but into the Wolseley Courthouse Interpretive Centre, a public legal education

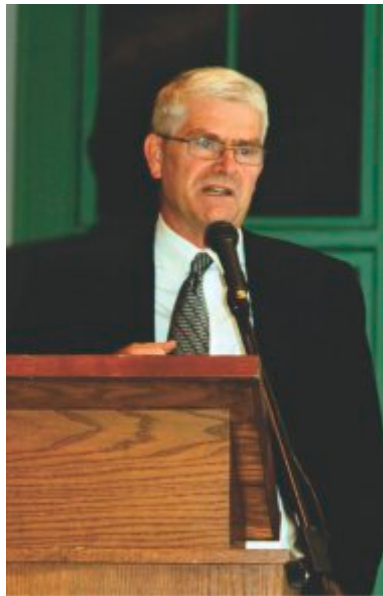
and interpretive centre, the first of its kind in Canada.

Yet, despite the popularity of Perley's "Grand Political Rally" in 1895, the courthouse managed to only stay in use for fourteen years in its original legal capacity. Since its closure in 1909, the building has served many functions, most recently as an under utilized and under appreciated storage facility, housing the unwanted remnants of restoration projects on surrounding buildings. Never once – save for the restoration of the exterior in the 1980s – has the building been the subject of its own restoration.

However, because of the overwhelming success of the fundraising banquet and symposium, the courthouse

has joined its fellow buildings and has become the subject of restoration. This is a restoration Ross Keith, Saskatchewan Governor of the Heritage Canada Foundation, calls the last major restoration project in Wolseley, a town that prides itself in its ability to consistently restore important heritage buildings.

But unlike past restoration projects within the town, the Wolseley Courthouse Interpretive



Ross Keith (upper left), Saskatchewan governor of the Heritage Canada Foundation, Mr. Justice Ronald Barclay (upper right) spoke at the celebration attended by many local lawyers (below).

Centre will reach further past the town's boundaries than perhaps any of the residents can imagine.

The footsteps of not only the celebrated, but the forgotten Canadians who walked the halls of the Wolseley Courthouse and courthouses across Canada will be retraced. The memories of the great Canadians (like "forgotten statesman" Sir Frederick Haultain) who traversed the floors of the building and the Saskatchewan legal field will be preserved within the brick and mortar of the walls.

The old courthouse in Wolseley is the oldest courthouse in Saskatchewan in continuous use.

Built between 1893 and 1895, of brick construction, the stone basement contained two cells for prisoners, a spare room, furnace room, fuel room, mess room, and two bedrooms. Upstairs was the courtroom, a room each for the judge, jury, sheriff and clerks.

It was used as a courthouse until 1909 when the courthouse was moved to Moosomin.

The North West Mounted Police used the building as a jail until 1915. From 1915 to 1921, it was used as a Detention Home for Boys, with a wooden building being added to the west as a school-room. This has been demolished.

Like founder of the Leader-Post Nicholas Flood Davin did on October 6, 1895, the Honourable Mr. Justice Ronald L. Barclay ended the evening by remarking that the Wolseley Courthouse Interpretive Centre will be instrumental in educating Canadians on the sometimes forgotten, but always important, aspects of our local, provincial, and national history. The Wolseley Courthouse Interpretive Centre is important not only for the legal and historical communities, but for Canadians at large. ■■

• *By Jonathan Petrychyn*