

Committee to Establish a Middlesex County Archives

OFFICERS

Chair – Carol Small
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MEMBERS

Ekfrid Community
Museum

Glencoe & District
Historical Society

Komoka Railway Museum

London & Middlesex
County Branch, Ontario
Genealogical Society

London & Middlesex
Historical Society

Lucan Area Heritage
Society

Middlesex Centre Archives

Middlesex Centre
Historical Society

Mossley Post Heritage
& Citizenship Society

Strathroy and District
Historical Society

Wardsville Historical
Museum

Westminster Township
Historical Society

Representatives from all
Middlesex Communities

Report to Middlesex County Council September 28, 2021

Introduction

The *Committee to Establish a Middlesex County Archives* was formed in 2020 to advocate for a central county archives. Our *Committee*, whose members represent all of the municipalities of Middlesex County as well as local historical organizations, has been working to educate municipal councillors, community leaders and the general population on the value and need for a County archives. Several fact sheets and a booklet, *Municipal Archives*, have been sent to you and your colleagues over the past few months. That information package and the Needs Assessment below serve as the foundation for our presentation on September 28.

In April 2021, the *Committee* conducted a Needs Assessment. Surveys were sent to municipalities and the member groups to determine who holds historical documents, the existing volume and current storage of records.

Needs Assessment

Municipal Survey Findings (Response Rate 88%)

- ✓ All municipalities have a Records Retention By-Law
- ✓ Records date from the mid-1800s to present
- ✓ 43% of municipalities store between 40% -100% of their records in municipal offices
- ✓ 57% of municipalities store records off-site in community centres, arenas or garages
- ✓ No municipality uses commercial storage
- ✓ 43% indicate records are in an “environmentally controlled” space, 43% indicate records are not; 14% indicate records are in fire-proof boxes

Less than 3% of municipal records are archival. While that might not seem like much, municipal records like tax assessment rolls, building plans, environmental assessments and historical, cultural and other documents should be considered for placement in the Middlesex County Archives. This will ensure timely, easily accessible search capability in a secure and environmentally controlled facility.

Member Organizations

- ✓ All groups hold historical documents and some hold cultural artifacts. Storage space is an issue for all member groups.
- ✓ Many of these records are stored in environmentally controlled conditions. Some are stored in members’ homes.
- ✓ Some records are being retained for communities that do not have a historical society.

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Member Organizations, cont'd

- ✓ These organizations are all run by volunteers who are maintaining extensive collections that illustrate the culture and history of their respective areas. These documents are invaluable and irreplaceable.
- ✓ Succession planning is a large concern. What happens when the members are no longer able to work and fund their collections? Where will the records go? The legacy of custodianship must be maintained.

Other Community Stakeholders

- ✓ Western University (Special Collections, now the Archives): Many excellent resources were donated to the University when there was nowhere else to accept records and artifacts. Many of these records have been repatriated to local historical societies including Middlesex Centre Archives. Because every organization has storage issues, it is important to note that some information could be lost.
- ✓ London Public Library (Ivey London Historical Room): originally held a lot of material for Middlesex County, but the mandate has recently changed to reflect the City of London. As a result, records are being transferred to the local historical societies or to Middlesex Centre Archives. This is problematic as space is an issue for all members listed in our letterhead side-bar.
- ✓ There are many organizations not active in the committee but support a County archives.
- ✓ Many individuals, companies and area businesses are waiting to donate material.

Summary

Middlesex County, as stewards of our heritage, needs a Middlesex County Archives:

- ✓ To assist municipalities to fulfill their **legal obligations** to maintain certain municipal documents in perpetuity.
- ✓ To hold **records of social, cultural and historic importance**, some of which are currently being stored in suboptimal conditions.
- ✓ To increase **access** to citizens, family historians, researchers and more.
- ✓ To preserve all records securely in proper **environmentally-controlled conditions**.
- ✓ To catalogue the holdings for easy retrieval under the care and direction of a **professional Archivist who will serve as a resource** to both municipalities and community members.

We will elaborate on who, what, why and how a Middlesex County Archives can be achieved in our presentation to Council. Endorsements from organisations, community groups and individuals are attached as Appendix A; the PowerPoint of our presentation is also included with this written report.

Respectfully submitted,



Carol Small, Chair,
Committee to Establish a Middlesex County Archives