

WESTMOUNT HERITAGE PLAQUE PROGRAM

In 2018, the Westmount Community League, in collaboration with the City of Edmonton, launched the Heritage Plaque Program in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of our community. Between 2018 and 2020 over 185 plaques were distributed on a cost sharing basis. As of September 30, 2020, the City will no longer cost share and 100% of the cost of a plaque will be the responsibility of the applicant.

Westmount's Place in Edmonton's History

The purpose of this initiative is to celebrate the history of Westmount and highlight to residents and visitors alike how it contributed to the growth and diversity within Edmonton over the last century.

In 1904, the City of Edmonton came into being and its western boundary was defined by what is now known as 127 Street. Groat Estate (immediately east of Groat Ravine and north of the North Saskatchewan River valley) was annexed in 1904 and then another section in 1910 and is part of the Westmount neighbourhood. Great West Land Company sold most of the lots available and homes built in Westmount at the time were, for the most part, built between 1912 and 1925 and many are architecturally significant. This was because of a stipulation that, depending on the location, homes could not be valued less than \$3,000 - \$5000, a considerable amount at the time¹. In 1952, 700 city-owned lots west of 127 Street were sold in the wake of renewed prosperity post WW11 and the community expanded to what it is today.

How can I obtain a heritage plaque for my home?

To qualify for a heritage plaque, the following criteria must be met:

- You must own a home that lies within the Westmount boundaries:
 - 111 Avenue in the north, Groat Road in the west, River Valley in the south, and 124 Street (south of Stony Plain Road) or 121 Street in the east (north of Stony Plain Road);
- Your home must be built pre-1970; **AND**
- You must provide required information including the year the home was first occupied, the name of the original occupant(s) and the occupation(s) of that person(s).

To acquire the above information, you will have to research your home's history using the sources noted below. Your main cost to getting this information will be your time.

Please contact the Westmount Heritage Committee at wclheritage@gmail.com for information about this or other initiatives related to heritage in the community of Westmount.

¹ Westmount/Inglewood Historic Resources Inventory. Final Report, August 2012 (available from the Historic Committee)

What does the Plaque look like?

Community members were invited to contribute to the overall shape and design and a principal of “best practice” in sign making, was applied.

- The sign itself will be ~31 cm x 46 cm (12 x 18 inches) and is white with black letters. This size will make the sign legible from the street. The sign is made of durable material that is weather resistant.
- The wording on the plaque will have four components.
 1. **Date:** The date the house was first occupied will have the largest font, with high visibility.
 2. **Name of the original owner(s)** of the house excepting that the current owner may make an argument based on circumstances to use the name of a later owner (see application form). Best efforts should be made to include the name of a spouse in the instance of a couple.
 3. **Occupation of the original owner(s)**, including, where available, the company name.
 4. **Branding:** The words, “Westmount Heritage” will be on the bottom of all plaques.

A drawing of a Westmount Heritage plaque can be found on page 4.

The intent of this initiative is to have a common look and approach to all signs. Any exceptions to the above components would be considered on a case by case basis by the Heritage Committee, in consultation with the current homeowner.

How much will the sign cost me?

The Heritage Committee has worked with the sign company to negotiate the best price for each sign. Applicants must pay a fee of \$ 150 to be paid at the time the application is submitted; please note prices are subject to change as availability of material may require price increases. The sign becomes the property of the homeowner with the commitment to display the plaque so it is viewable by the public.

Where should I post my plaque?

The homeowner shall decide where the plaque is posted on their property and shall be responsible for all maintenance. Examples from other communities include displaying in a main floor window, on a decorative post/rock/pillar in the front yard or on the outside wall of your home facing the street.

Who is overseeing this Program?

The program will be managed by the WCL Heritage Committee under the direction of the WCL Board. The Heritage Committee will have the discretion to name one or more persons to have primary responsibility. The homeowner is responsible to provide appropriate documentation for the house to establish eligibility. The Committee will provide advice on sources for documentation (e.g. Henderson’s Directory) and will assess and approve or deny any application. An approved application will require the sign off by the applicant before printing occurs.

How Do I Apply?

The WCL website (www.westmountcommunityleague.com) has the application form for the Heritage Plaque Program. Look under the “About” tab and scroll down to “Heritage”.

Print and complete the application form (and required documents) and return to the Westmount Heritage Committee representative noted on the form along with a cheque/cash.

Applications are being received on an ongoing basis.

Example of a Westmount Heritage Plaque



STEPS TO RESEARCH YOUR HOME: An Introduction

Start close to home

It's a good idea early in the process to ask neighbours what they know about the history of your property. They may also know of long-term residents in the area who may remember former owners or tenants of your home. This is a great way to get to know your neighbours and to also find some unique facts about the previous occupants of the building itself.

City of Edmonton Archives

The *City of Edmonton Archives* is located in the Prince of Wales Armouries Heritage Centre. Here you will find many useful resources for your research including records, publications, photographs and other information. Staff cannot conduct research for you but they can assist you to identify and locate the resources you need. Don't forget to check out the fire insurance maps to see what your house was made of at the time and to see what other houses were already built on your block. Limited photocopying is available but you can take photos with a camera or phone (no flash allowed).

City of Edmonton Archives

Address: 10440-108 Avenue, Edmonton, T5H 3Z9

Reference desk phone: 780-496-8711

Web: Edmonton.ca/archives

Henderson's Directory

Henderson's Directory was a commercial directory published annually until 1987. Organized by address and neighbourhood, it lists names, addresses, and other information about residents and businesses in a city. *It will be the primary source of information for most applications.*

The Directory comes in two formats depending on the year:

- **Hard copies** for 1907 to 1987 are available at the City of Edmonton Archives. The Stanley Milner library has a limited number of years available. During library renovations, the directories can be accessed at Enterprise Square, downtown.
- **Online:** The University of Alberta makes the directory available online for the years 1908 to 1953 at <http://www.peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/2962.html>

Check the volume for the year in which you believe your home was built. Scroll through until you find your street and cross street then look for your address. If you find it, see whether it was built earlier than you thought by going back into a directory from a few years prior, until the address no longer appears, then move forward. Once you've found the earliest entry and discovered the occupant's name, look for that name at the back of the volume for such information as the occupant's employer, occupation, spouse's name, other occupants at that address, and ownership status. Names are listed in alphabetical order.

The Henderson's Directory is a great resource but please note there could be spelling errors, transposed street and avenue numbers, and the listed occupant is not always the owner. You may not find your

house in a given year due to errors in the directory. As such, if you don't find your house in a particular year, you should still search a few years prior before concluding that the house was built after that year.

In 1914, the City of Edmonton adopted a new street numbering system and some historic named streets and avenues were renamed. The following is a *sample* of street name changes that occurred in Westmount and may be relevant in your search:

122 Street = Notre Dame Street	130 Street = Third Street
123 Street = Saint James Street	131 Street = Fourth Street
124 Street = Edward Street	132 Street = Fifth Street
125 Street = Saint Catherine Street	107 Ave = Short Avenue
126 Street = Groat Street	108 Ave = Coot Avenue
127 Street = Park Street	109 Ave = Green Avenue
128 Street = First Street	109A Ave = Saint Lawrence Avenue
129 Street = Second Street	110 Ave = Albany Avenue

Building Permit

The City of Edmonton Archives also has microfiche that can be manually searched for the date a building permit was issued. This can be a tedious, time-consuming process! It should be noted that the date of issuance does not mean the house was built at that time. It may have taken months or years before a house was ready for occupancy. It does however, tell you the type of permit requested and the value of the work to be undertaken. While it lists who applied for the permit and who the builder was, City archivists have related that these are not always accurate.

Telephone Historical Centre

Also located in the Prince of Wales Armouries is the *Telephone Historical Centre* (main floor). This telecommunication museum is dedicated to preserving the history of the telephone in Edmonton. Along with examples of phones and switchboards from the last century, they have telephone directories that give resident names (alphabetically), address, and phone number. This is another way to verify who lived in your home in its early years and to enjoy seeing how far we've come!

Land Titles Search

If you want to verify the year your home was built, you will need to do a Land Titles search. There are two ways to do this:

- Go online: <http://www.servicealberta.ca/588.cfm>. Only the last two land titles are listed for purchase so unless your home has only been owned by yourself and one other, this might not be useful for this purpose.
- Edmonton's *Land Title Office*: located in the John E. Brownlee Building at 10365-97th Street, the Land Title Office can pull all titles. There is a fee per title search. You will need the lot number of your home which is usually associated with your real property report when you buy your house or on your yearly tax assessment the City sends out in January.

Provincial Archives

The *Provincial Archives of Alberta* (<http://provincialarchives.alberta.ca/>) (located on the south side of Roper Road) may also be a source of information – particularly if someone associated with your home served in public office, etc. The Provincial Archives has a great collection of photographs and maps as well as Henderson’s Directory for Edmonton.