

### *Historian's Report Follow-Up 6/18/2025*

What the "legacy partnership" with HWS means in practice is poorly defined. The Wells website states "Some of the materials, such as those pertaining to the history of Aurora, will be given to the Village of Aurora." The letter some of us received last week referenced "the agreed-upon materials."

The Wells Board has petitioned the Cayuga County Supreme Court to make the transfer. Note that these are the items marked out for transfer to HWS and do not say anything about materials to be given to the Village: "Historical records of Wells College including 569.5 linear feet of documents on Wells History. Other items as agreed by Wells College and HWS."

Who determines the dividing line(s) between Wells history and Aurora history? Let me give you one of the simpler examples. There are two large file cabinets of records of buildings owned by Wells College, both on and off campus. They are part of Wells history, true. But they are not only part of Aurora history, and staying here regardless of ownership; they are documents related to the dual Village of Aurora/Wells College Historic District, and that remains in force. Someone needs to say "those stay here."

I remind you that your request for the Wells Archives back in December rested entirely on that long documentation I sent to you all & the AG almost a year ago (June 26, 2024). Without that there is no basis on which to request anything or to get a seat at the table. Your December letter could not have been written without it. Aurora's stake in this involves *\*specific\** resources: files, books, catalogued boxed collections and the like. I have worked with these resources for years. That is why Tom needs my help to identify and request what is important to Aurora and why.

I think at one time you had a response from the College that was dismissive of your request because you could not, at that moment, accommodate the materials. However, the Historical Society has offered its help and currently has in hand a dedicated \$46,000 to support housing these resources in Aurora. Furthermore, for immediate housing, work is underway with the South Central Regional Library Council, and both Binghamton and Cornell are offering space.

So this is the moment, I think, for you to assign the Village lawyer to follow through at the County Supreme Court to get the Village a seat at the table - the "Archives" table. This might very well strengthen your position with other requests.

Now, to answer a question I had from one of you, why must the Village do this, and not a private individual or a group like the Historical Society? The Village is the named entity. The December letter is from the Village. And it is a matter of standing. A municipality does not automatically have standing, but it does in this case because not having a substantial part of the Archives, and even perhaps some other of the materials named, is potential harm to the Village.

Two of us, maybe three, are also aware that the day after the “legacy” announcement, four representatives of the WCA - the alumnae/i association - announced that it too was becoming part of HWS and the 2026 Wells reunion and all those going forward will be in Geneva. How big a part of Aurora’s commercial activity was Reunion, I don’t know, but I think it was not negligible. Not everyone roomed on campus. Some met for meals elsewhere in Aurora. They golfed. I saw boat trips with Matt pictured on Facebook. In short, the WCA’s action felt to a member - which all graduates are - something like the famous headline: “College to Village: Drop Dead.”

My point is, Aurora needs to retain a reason for Wells graduates and their families to return, and a strong representation of Wells College in the Village Archive is one such reason. You know from my reports that I get queries from everywhere in the US and points beyond; in the last two days alone I heard from Virginia and Vancouver. Some of these are scholars who visit. They rent a room or buy a meal.

That is why I am asking you, publicly, to take the next step to acquire as much of the Wells College Archive as possible: talk with Tom Blair as to how to take advantage of the County Supreme Court case to make your case, our case, and allow me to assist him with the facts he needs.

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