

Name of Branch: Sedgewick Women's Institute

Location: Sedgewick

Organized: 1916

Charter Members: n/a

First Executive: n/a

Disbanded: 1967

Activities: Sedgewick WI levied a fee of 25 cents for each member until 1929, when they were forced to raise it to \$1.00. The reason that AWI fees shot up this particular year was that the government grant had finally ceased in 1928. AWI was then in the situation of having to finance all its costs by itself.



The early years of Sedgewick WI were focused on the betterment of the community and on planting trees on the main street of the village. Many of them still stand. Sedgewick WI was deeply committed to its community. The *Sedgewick Sentinel* (p.668) details its activities:

“Prizes were given for school essays, books were donated to the Library, phonograph and records and play ground equipment were purchased, a piano was bought for the school for \$200 and a Delco Generating plant for \$425. Later chairs were bought for the school assembly hall.

The Institute also assisted in the purchase of a Bronze Plate for the War Memorial on Main Street.

In the year 1925, both the Sunshine Social Service and Cemetery work were started. The care of the cemetery was carried on until the Sedgewick Legion took over in 1956.

A rest room was also opened with the Fairdonian UFWA assisting with the furnishings.

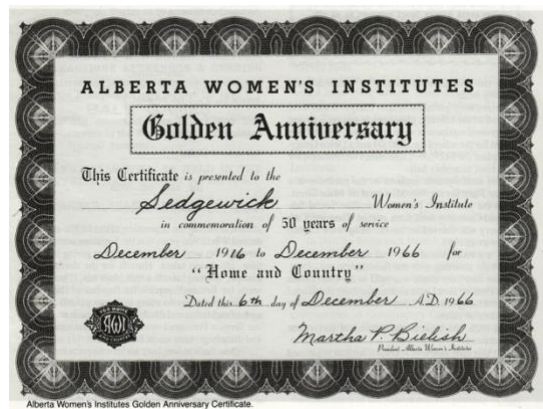
The first baby clinic was held in the Club rooms of the Pioneer Hotel with as many as forty pre-school children being examined and this clinic continued for a number of years.”

The highest membership for the Sedgewick WI occurred in 1928, with 43 members. There was a gradual decline as time marched on. In 1950, the WI had 32 members and in 1960 there were 17. This pattern of decline in numbers is reflected by many other WIs across the province, especially after WWII.

Despite the Great Depression, the Sedgewick WI continued to respond to local needs. In 1932, the WI raised \$62.50 for a bandstand that could be used by the newly formed Boys' Band. At the same time, the WI maintained a rest tent for mothers and children at the July 1st celebrations on the sports ground. In addition, the WI sponsored a music festival from 1935 until the advent of WWII. At that point, the Sunshine Committee of the WI encouraged making Hussifs for the destitute in Europe, and sending layettes, jam and seeds for Britain, and parcels for families bombed out by the Blitz. Sedgewick sent up to 20 parcels, packages of cigarettes and candy each month to troops overseas as well as quilts and ditty bags for the Navy. This work continued for years after the War.

In 1948, the WI branch began to canvas for the Cancer Society and the CNIB until the group disbanded.

The two most important projects engaged in by Sedgewick WI were the establishment of a Community Library and the purchase of an office for visiting doctors. The building was purchased for \$300 and was located on Main Street. The money was borrowed from the Manager of the Alberta Dairy Pool. The Library occupied five different sites, finishing up at the Memorial Hall. After the Community Hall was built, the WI turned its attention to supporting it. A WI member was placed on the Council in order to better plan events there. Over time, the WI paid for new curtains for the stage, and purchased an electric heater for the Library and a propane stove for the Hall kitchen. The WI later cooperated with the local UFWA chapter to purchase dishes for the Hall. Once the Hall was completed, the WI sold the building that held the doctor's office and relocated the doctor's office to the Memorial Hall.



Service for others also manifested in Sedgewick's support for the Unitarian Service Committee. Used clothing, 65 pounds of soap, layettes, sewing kits and knitted articles were sent abroad, especially to war-torn Europe and to Greece. In the 1950s, 15 quilts were sent to Korea. Even with all this work for people overseas, the WI continued to support the Library and a Grade Twelve Scholarship fund.

In later years, the WI worked for the Red Cross, supporting Blood Donor Clinics; in addition, it sponsored the Diabetic Clinic and a chest x-ray clinic. This was the second such clinic held in Alberta.

Despite all this continual work since 1916, the WI found it was increasingly difficult to attract members in the 1960s. The view was that the "work" had been done and that there were now a number of other service clubs in town. With this in mind, the Sedgewick WI disbanded in 1967.

Notable Members:

Book of Remembrance:

- [Nellie Eastly](#) was born in 1887 in Iowa. She moved to the Sedgewick district with her school-teacher husband in 1918. According to her *Book of Remembrance* entry, Mrs. Eastly was an outstanding community member. Indeed, reading her accomplishments, one is tempted to wonder how she managed to raise a family of seven while doing everything else!

She was twice president of the United Church Ladies Aid, a Past Worthy Matron of the Eastern Star, as well as Secretary. She was a member of the Rebekah Lodge, a charter member of the WCTU and WMS. She was made a Life Member of both the Eastern Star and the United Church WA and organized and led the WMS Mission Band for a time.

Mrs. Eastly was President of the Sedgewick WI for three two-year periods, and also served as Secretary and Convenor of various standing committee. She was elected Constituency Convenor in 1941 and served in this capacity for a short time in 1945 and again in 1950.

Sources: *Sedgewick Sentinel: A History of Sedgewick and Surrounding Districts*. Sedgewick, AB: Sedgewick Historical Society, 1982; Photo of Golden Anniversary Certificate, taken from p. 670 of *Sedgewick Sentinel*; 1915 (PR2000.0949/0007) Convention Report; [1928](#), [1930](#) Convention Reports; 1933 (PR2000.0949/0019) Convention Report; *Book of Remembrance* Vol. I; PAA 91.3041/ 10 AWI Branch Listing and Contact 1944-1961 [for Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5].