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BRANT
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
Your History Matters

NOTE FROM THE BOARD

Special Meeting Report

The Brant Historical Society's Board of Directors hosted a Special Meeting on July 27, 2015 at the request of its membership for information about the challenges the Society is currently facing. Christopher Greenlaw (Vice President) delivered a thorough analysis that identified key issues affecting the Society and reported on the actions taken by the Board to address them.

A corporate history of the Society and a complete audit of programming, finances, and staffing, were shared with the more than 30 members in attendance. Sustained managerial ineffectiveness, recurring failures in reporting practices to the Board, poor fiscal management, a growing lack of community engagement and neglect of the volunteer base, as well as poor administration of marketing initiatives, fundraising efforts, and technology management, were noted and illustrated. The Inventory Project was identified as the single most resource-intensive event over the past three years, exceeding the budgeted amount for both salaries and material. To date, the Inventory Project has cost the Brant Historical Society \$178,944.36 and is 85% complete. Of note, the Inventory Project has also been responsible for cataloguing well over half of 28,353 inventoried records, bringing the museum's collection much closer to being properly appraised.

The Board has taken numerous steps to address many of these issues, hiring a CPA to review the finances and ensure that any bookkeeping irregularities are rectified and expenditures are under control. The deaccession process is underway following a policy review during the June 2015 board

meeting. Community engagement through events like Canada Day, Summer Camps, Seniors Programs, Educational Outreach efforts, and Brian Moore's Walking Tours continue to be actively supported by the Board and staff, as do upcoming events like the bus trip to the Ontario Archives, the "Doors Unhinged Tour" as part of Culture Days, and a Lawren S. Harris temporary exhibit.

All responsibilities associated with CMOG are fulfilled and up-to-date for this fiscal year despite not having a full-time curator on staff. The Board is now investigating several options including a part-time curator and/or sharing curatorial services with another museum, both of which would meet the requirements of the CMO Grant. The Board's intention is to stabilize the operation of the Society before hiring an Executive Director. This includes developing a plan that will position the museum as a relevant community resource for contemporary times.

Negotiations with Laurier Brantford to lease enough space in Market Square to house the entire collection, archives, with room for exhibits and a gallery, a reading and research room, offices, and a large common room are underway. This site is climate controlled, secure, and will suit the Museum's needs for at least the next ten years. Potential connections to Laurier through new history programming and research/library space address various needs that have been identified and gone unfulfilled, such as: relevancy within the community, attracting younger patrons, improved educational outreach, and sustainability.

Michael St. Amant
President

Board Executive

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Sarah Thomas
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OPERATIONAL REPORT



Over the past couple of months, we have celebrated many successes at the Brant Historical Society. We have hosted our locally famous Walking Tour Series, participated in Canada Day, and are in the process of organizing an amazing event for Culture Days to re-engage our connections with the community. We have had a few additional volunteers over the summer who have been working with our summer students, Carissa White and Lindsey Columbus. We have also been in contact with several community members to engage with new collections opportunities.

Throughout the summer, our long-standing volunteer Brian Moore has continued to offer his well-researched and informative Heritage Walking Tour Series. So far this year, we have increased attendance from an average of 8 people a walk to 18 people. These events also have grown in the number of community members participating resulting in two new members. These events showcase the valuable work that our volunteers contribute to the Brant Historical Society.

At Canada Day, we set up our "Made In Brantford" display showcasing a number of artefacts that have never been on

display at the Museum. We also had a children's activity where they could make a thaumatrope of a Canadian Flag. This event allowed us to reach about 150 people and complete 80 children's crafts.

Our summer students, courtesy of Young Canada Works, assist with daily museum operation at our busiest time of year for visitors. Carissa has continued to work on cataloguing objects with the collection, focusing on the ledgers and organizing our hat collection. Lindsey has been very helpful assisting museum visitors and responding to research requests.

Finally, we have reached out to the Brantford General Hospital and the Brantford Police Service who have been interested in making donations to the museum from their collections. This would be a long-term project that would require additional volunteers and is something we will explore over the next couple months.

*To learn more about programs and volunteering opportunities at Brant Historical Society, please contact **Nathan Etherington** at 519-752-2483 or nathan.etherington@brantmuseums.ca*

A Member Who Will Be Sadly Missed!

Sadly, Brantford and the Brant Historical Society lost a great friend and supporter of the community with the passing of Robert Deboer on July 29th, 2015.

Robert, a retired police staff-sergeant, devoted much of his retirement researching and writing about our local history including *A History of the Brantford Pottery* and a history of the Wellington Memorial Methodist Church. His attention to detail was most evident in his *Brant's Ford: A History of its Memorialization* which is available in the Museum's library. This work, however, was part of a remarkable story in which he devoted fifteen years to having a plaque placed at Lorne Park not far from the actual location of Joseph Brant's crossing of the Grand River. It was only in April of this year that he saw the results of his labour.

Robert's involvement with the Brant Historical Society was an active one. In 2002, he finished *A History of the Brant Historical Society* which traced the evolution of the Society

and its members from inception. He served as the Society's President in 1997 and 1998. From 2003 to 2005, he once again served on the Board of Directors, this time as Secretary. He and his wife, Anne, attended most of the functions offered by the Society.

Perhaps his most significant contribution was the advice he would offer when discussing matters of the Society. It was always measured and grounded in fact, much like the way he wrote about local history.



Robert Deboer, Marion Weir, IODE Life Member and Michael St. Amant

SUMMER AT MYRTLEVILLE HOUSE



Summer vacation is in full swing here at The Myrtleville House Museum! We are very happy to have welcomed back our wonderful campers for another summer of fun! This year we have a fabulous team of councillors and volunteers, guest visitors and enrolment is higher than ever!

Some of the highlights this summer so far were the reptile week in which we had The Traveling Reptile Show visit camp. The campers enjoyed petting a variety of creepy crawlers including a 7 foot albino python named Marshmallow! A theme that we revisited each year is pioneer week where the campers go back in time to the early settler days and experience the way life was back then. Making beeswax candles and writing with homemade berry ink and quills was popular as well as a tour of the house by volunteer and BHS member Brian Moore.

Enrollment this year for camp has been remarkable. We

have reached our capacity on more than one occasion this year. There are still a few spots available for this summer. If you know someone who would enjoy crafts, games, baking and more call Myrtleville House today for availability.

The Myrtleville team would like to thank our wonderful volunteers for their assistance this summer. Camp would not be the same without you! In particular we would like to thank our junior volunteers who (as young as 12 years old) have been assisting with setting up crafts and running games and activities.

If you, or someone you know would like to know more about camps, special events, education programming or volunteering at the Myrtleville House Museum please contact Sarah Thomas at 519-717-3216 or sarah.thomas@brantmuseums.ca.

FROM OUR COLLECTION

In 1835, residents of the village of Brantford had a massive snowball fight – with a fire. Although this technique was surprisingly successful, this technique forced the town to recognize that it was in need of a much more reliable fire extinguishing operation. So in 1836 the first fire brigade was formed. Consisting of 40 -50 volunteers, the brigade was known as the Goose Neck company in reference to their strange looking box and nozzle water apparatus that they used to fill up their leather buckets. Over the years, several more fire brigades popped up around the city.

This particular helmet was worn by John T. Wallace - a grocer on Nelson Street by day and a volunteer firefighter when needed. He was a member of the Undaunted No. 1 Hook and Ladder Company which, according to Wallace upon donating his helmet, operated in the 1860s before the Brant Hose Company was formed. As the only artifact in our collection associated with this lesser known company, this helmet is a great piece of Brant's early firefighting history.



While firefighters were drawing water to fight local blazes, Brantfordians

were also using local water ways as the main source of transportation for the period. Goods were transported on barges and steamships allowed more comfortable travel to different cities. The Queen was a well-known steamship that took passengers from Bunnell Wharf in Brantford to Buffalo, Port Dover, Hamilton and Simcoe. You may recognize the name, as an ode to the boat is currently providing tours up and down the Grand River.

Here at the museum, we have a great archival source - the original wage book for the Steamer Queen which tracked workers who helped out on the Brantford to Buffalo line for the years 1852-1853. The book names Mr. George H. Wilkes as the clerk who was in charge of recording the information. Pictured is a poster for the Steamer Queen which provided details on arrivals and departures (c. 1850s). (Images: 2009.66.009, x986.86.1)



Carissa White, Inventory Project & Collections

SURVEY FEEDBACK



Our recent *Special Meeting of the Membership* identified that our members would like regularly scheduled Members' Meetings. As promised, the BHS is committed to offering these four times a year, identifying September, November, February and May for 2015/2016. Last week's Survey, to which we had 28 respondents, confirmed that Wednesdays are indeed the best day, working for almost 82% of responding members (Mondays were next at 63%). Consequently our first **MEMBERS' EVENT** of the year will be **Wednesday September 23rd at 7:00 pm** at the Charlotte St. Museum. We shall discover one of the many histories of

Brantford with the evening's presenter, Rev. Paul Tinker, Farringdon Independent Church, and will include a Report from the Board and social time.

The survey was also very helpful in identifying numerous topics for future speakers or presentations, including among many suggestions: significant happenings in Brant and surrounding areas, persons of interest in the County, County businesses through the ages, local changes over the years, archeological and architectural themes, updates on museum collections and projects, as well as plans for the BHS going forward.

BHS CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TIME
WALKING TOURS			
Sat., Sept. 26 th , 2015	Victoria Park Walk Learn about significant activities and personalities of Brantford	Brant Museum and Archives, 57 Charlotte St.	10:30 am
Sat., Oct. 24 th , 2015	Murder, Mystery & Mayhem Walk Learn about mysterious past of Brantford	Brant Museum and Archives, 57 Charlotte St.	10:30 am
Sat., Nov. 7 th , 2015	Monuments & Memorials Walk Learn about commemorative memorials in Downtown Brantford	Begins at <i>Jubilee Terrace</i> next to the Armouries and Lorne Bridge	10:30 am
ADDITIONAL EVENTS			
Wed., Sept. 23 rd , 2015	Members Meeting Join us for an evening with Rev. Paul Tinker, Farringdon Independent Church, discovering a little more of our local history!	Brant Museum and Archives, 57 Charlotte St.	7:00 pm- 9:00 pm
Weekend of Sept. 25-27 th , 2015	The Doors Unhinged Tour a part of Culture Days A day full of events for young and old alike. Visit us as your first stop of the Tour!	Brant Museum and Archives, 57 Charlotte St.	10:00am – 4 pm
Tue., Oct. 20 th , 2015	Ontario Archives Bus Trip A perfect opportunity to complete that research you've been putting off. \$45 for BHS members and \$55 for non-members to attend.	Bus leaves from the Brantford Tourism Centre at 8 am. Sign up at the Brant Museum and Archives.	8:00am – 5:30 pm
Weekend of Oct. 23 rd , 2015	A Life & Art Retrospective of Lawren Harris	Brant Museum and Archives, 57 Charlotte St.	TBA

For more information on upcoming events, please contact
Nathan Etherington at 519-752-2483 or nathan.etherington@brantmuseums.ca