



## **President's Report**

Members of the Brant Historical Society in attendance at this year's Annual Meeting on April 16 were very supportive of the work the Board of Directors had undertaken this past year. Thanks for that support!

I wish to extend sincerest thanks to Michael-Allan Marion for more than six years of service on the Board. Michael-Allan has a strong interest in the success of the Society and its downtown museum as well as the program offerings at Myrtleville House Museum. I have appreciated his willingness to be the Board secretary for many of the past six years. He has also provided his knowledge of communications and Robert's Rules of Order, skills that have helped us to remain on the correct path. Thank you, Michael-Allan!

The Directors welcomed two new voices to the Board. Garry Burns has long had an interest in participating in the leadership of the Society. Mandy Samwell is the city councillor who has become our link to city council and can be instrumental in connecting us with various resources to help us succeed further. Welcome to you both!

Following the Annual Meeting the Directors met to re-elect their President and Chair: Murray Angus, Vice-President: Leisah-Marie Jansen, and Treasurer: Bill Hyde. Pat Duern was selected as our new Secretary. We also re-affirmed our Executive Director: Marion McGeein.

At the following Board meeting the Directors took on various assignments to help us get more work accomplished:

## **BRANT HISTORICAL —SOCIETY—**

Established on May 8, 1908, the Brant Historical Society is an independent registered charity operating two museums uniquely positioned to make a difference in the lives of Brant citizens.

The Brant Historical Society is dedicated to preserving, educating, celebrating, and sharing the unique history, culture, and stories of the Brantford/Brant area, fostering a sense of connection and pride among its residents and visitors.

### **Inside this issue**

- President's Report
- News from Myrtleville
- Call for Submissions
- From the Archives
- Recent Community Events
- Brant Moment
- Upcoming Events

Contact Us

519-752-2483

information@brantmuseums.ca

Fundraising:

Bill Hyde and Murray Angus

Municipal Relations:

John Utley

Governance (and Compliance):

Glad Woodburn

Membership:

Sarah Clarke and Glad Woodburn

Program Events: Brian Moore,

Repatriating \_\_\_\_\_ Indigenous

Artifacts:

Sarah Clarke

Wall of Honour:

Leisah-Marie Jansen and Sarah Clarke.

The strategic plan has been expanded to include action steps with anticipated costs associated with each. But it should be noted, the number one priority for us is still fundraising as we strive to move toward greater self-sufficiency. The Directors are still in the research stage as we search for the best initiatives to raise the profile of the Society and its programs, so that community members feel motivated to help build our financial security.

Have a great summer! I look forward to seeing you in the Fall.

- Murray Angus, President of the Brant Historical Society

Myrtleville House Museum  
34 Myrtleville Drive  
Brantford, Ontario N3V 1C2

519 – 752 – 3216  
esther.brouwer@brantmuseums.ca

Monday to Friday 9:00am – 4:00pm



On Monday, June 16, The Brant Historical Society partnered with the Myrtleville/Mayfair Neighbourhood Association (with assistance from the City of Brantford Parks and Recreation Department) to host our first Trivia Night at the Walter Gretzky Golf Club.

The event had been suggested by the BHS Special Events Committee back in late 2024, but wasn't feasible to be hosted at either of the Historical Society locations. As a result, we approached the Myrtleville/Mayfair Neighbourhood Association, who we've worked with for our yearly Halloween Haunt. Their board jumped on the idea and set it in motion.

Over the past few months, we worked with a representative from the city and agreed to use the Walter Gretzky Golf Club reception hall as our location - it had the restaurant, the bar, and enough space for 150 people if needed! We contacted local businesses for donation of prizes and City of Brantford Parks and Recreation Department provided goodie bags for the first two rounds,

including a Wayne Gretzky signed hockey stick. BHS and the MMNA matched a donation from Zanders restaurant for a gift card that was given to the overall winner.



**Summer Camp 2025**

Registration for summer camp is now open!

Registration forms and weekly camp themes can be found on our website: [brantmuseums.ca/summer-camp/](http://brantmuseums.ca/summer-camp/)

**CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS**

Can you think of a famous Brantfordian that is missing from the BHS Wall of Honour? The Brant Historical Society's Wall of Honour Subcommittee is looking to add members to this commemorative display.

The Wall of Honour serves to recognize individuals and/or groups who have made a significant historical contribution to Brantford, Brant County, and/or Six Nations/New Credit.

Historical contributions include, but are not limited to, dedication to historical preservation, commitment to heritage education, and/or a historically significant achievement. To be considered for nomination, an individual's contribution must have historical significance within the geographical region of Brantford/Brant.

To learn more, please contact Lillia at 519-752-2483 or [lillia.dockree@brantmuseums.ca](mailto:lillia.dockree@brantmuseums.ca)

We had 17 teams join us on the night of the event, with Alison, the President of the Neighbourhood Association, acting as the evening's emcee. The staff at the Golf Club had us covered with good food and drinks as well.

We kicked off the event at 7:00pm and began with a round of 20 general knowledge questions, then a round of multiple choice and musical "Finish the Lyrics", and finally another round of general knowledge to finish the night by 9:00pm. Attendees seemed pleased with the difficulty level, most teams scoring around 75% for rounds one and three, although the music section of round two seemed to trip some up. Requests were made for more "classic rock" for next time - noted!

At the end of the evening there was a room full of smiles and clapping as we thanked those who had made the night possible. Most participants who filled our event survey expressed interest in repeating the event, and many thanked our emcee and organizing volunteers personally for such a great event. In return, we must thank all those who participated - with your enthusiasm we will definitely be having another trivia event!



A full house for our first trivia night!



### Photo Spotlight

This edition's photo spotlight features a 1945 photograph of four young women dressed in Cockshutt Cardinal baseball uniforms standing on a wooden sidewalk.

In the back row from left to right is, Mabel Gillen (second base), Betty Snow (pitcher). In the front row from left to right is, Hazel Anger (third base), "Jo" Gambicart (left field)

The photograph was taken by Donald A. McEhinney who was a photographer working for the Cockshutt Plow Company Limited, 66 Mohawk Street.

Brant Museum and Archives  
Brantford, Ontario N3T 2W6

519 – 752 – 2483  
information@brantmuseums.ca

Tuesday - Saturday  
1:00pm - 5:00pm



If you have visited the museum lately, you will know that one of our longest ongoing projects is the digitization of the archives. Recently scanned were a collection of ledgers from the Brantford Fire Department that date between 1890 - 1932. These ledgers consist of report books, inspection journals, maintenance records, daily logs, ambulance records, and more.

Staff have been working on transcribing the report books - logs of what transpired following a call for a fire alarm to the station. Below are a handful of entries from 1917 that have been transcribed so far!

*Jan. 11<sup>th</sup>, 1917 – Alarm by telephone at 7.20pm for fire at Y.M.C.A building corner of Queen + Darling streets. Four story brick building owned by and occupied as a Y.M.C.A. The fire was in an elevator shaft on the first floor and about the center part of the building, there was no elevator in the shaft and the place was being used for the purpose of storing tools, brooms, rags, etc. There was some oily rags in the room which were used for oiling the floors and it is thought that these rags heated and caused spontaneous combustion setting fire to the contents. The employees of the building quickly got the hose from the stand pipe on the inside of the building working and had the fire well under control when the dept arrived. The inside hose was all that was used to extinguish the blaze, the fire was confined entirely to the contents of the room in which it started. The damage to both building and contents were very small. Water truck + ladder truck from central answered the alarm. Attendance Lieuten[ant] Howarth, A. James + E. Rose. Dept returned to station at 7.50pm. Cause of fire spontaneous combustion.*

Jan. 12th, 1917 – Alarm from box 52 at 12.45pm for fire at 25 Edwin St. 1 ½ story brick dwelling owned + occupied by John Cook. The fire was in a room on second floor at rear end of house it appears that Mr. Cook was using a gasoline torch to thaw out frozen water pipes. The torch in some manner exploded and setting fire to the contents of the room, Mr. Cook's hands and face were quite badly burned. The neighbours ran in and succeeded in extinguishing the fire with a few pails of water the room and contents being only slightly damaged. A small amount of clothing was burned and part of the wood work of the room was slightly charred aside from this no other damage was done to any other portion of the building or contents. Water truck and ladder truck from central answered the alarm, attendance of J. Hartley, S. Buckhenough, A. Kew regular day off but reported for duty. Dept returned to station at 1.10pm. Cause of fire gasoline torch.

Feb. 9<sup>th</sup> , 1917 – Alarm by telephone at 9.15pm for fire at 338 Colborne St, two story brick building under construction but not yet completed. Owned by Hygenic Dairy Co and as yet unoccupied. The building had just been plastered and some salamanders [space heaters] had been placed in the building to dry the plaster. A policeman passing and seeing the smoke + steam from these salamanders thought the place was on fire and turned in the alarm. East end dept + motor truck from central answered the alarm but the services of the dept was not required. Attendance W. C. Hanley absent on sick leave S. Buckburrough + A. Kew absent. J. Hartley regular day off but reported for duty. Dept returned to station at 9.28pm, no loss.

Feb 14<sup>th</sup> – Alarm from Box 134 at 7.55pm for fire at the Verity Plow Co factory, Greenwich St. The fire was in a two story brick building owned + occupied by the Verity Plow Co. ... This building was at the south side and joining the large brick building used as a moulding shop. ...When the dept arrived they found this building in a roaring mass of flames from one end to the other and on both floors. The employees of the company had one line of hose laid when the dept got there the dept laid four additional lines of hose from hydrants on the yard and after a very hard fight the fire was confined to the building in which it started. The dept. did a good piece of work in confining the fire to this building as the large moulding shop building joining was in great danger of being destroyed ... The fire was a very difficult one for to fight owing to the construction of the building which was sheeted underneath the face with heavy galvanized iron. This iron had to be torn off in order to get at the fire and this proved to be a very hard task and a lot of hard work. ...The building in which the fire originated was practically destroyed but the contents being mostly of iron so the loss on contents would not be very heavy. The approach to this building was very bad owing to so much obstructions being in the way. The work of the dept was satisfactory in every way attendance W.C Hanley absent sick leave. J. Stephenson T. Hurley regular day off but reported for duty. Departments returned to stations at 2.30am

As an ongoing project, staff will continue work on transcribing this collection of ledgers, with the ultimate goal being the creation of an exhibit about Brantford's first responders. Stay tuned for more details!

Speakers Series:

The Brant Historical Society's 2024/25 Speakers Series season has officially concluded, and the Events Committee is proud to report that it was another successful and informative schedule of presentations. Over 180 people attended the 7 talks offered for 2024/25, with John Bullen from the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum in Hamilton drawing the largest crowd - 55 people joined us at the Canadian Military Heritage Museum of Brant for his presentation on May 28<sup>th</sup>.

The full list of presentations for the 2024/25 season were:

- September 2024: "The Art of Lawren Harris" - Carolyn Cresswell, Art Teacher at W. Ross Macdonald School
- October 2024: "Brantford's Theatres, Opera Houses, and Arenas" - Murray Angus, President of the Brant Historical Society & local history researcher
- November 2024: "Haudenosaunee Culture and Traditions" - Dr. Darren Thomas, Associate Professor of Indigenous Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University
- January 2025: "Archaeology of the Brantford Area" - Sarah Clarke, Project Archaeologist/Cultural Heritage Specialist, Archaeological Research Associates Ltd.
- February 2025: "Brantford's Family Businesses: Part Two" - Murray Angus, President of the Brant Historical Society & local history researcher
- April 2025: "British Home Children in Canada: WWI and WWII" - Kelly Morrison, PhD Candidate in History, Wilfrid Laurier University
- May 2025: "Training of Aircrews During World War Two" - John Bullen, presenter from the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum

If you were unable to attend any of the presentations in person, most were filmed and will be uploaded to our YouTube channel at a later date. Have an idea or topic that you would like to hear a presentation about? Email your suggestions to [lillia.dockree@brantmuseums.ca](mailto:lillia.dockree@brantmuseums.ca).



Sarah Clarke presenting to a full house, January 2025

Whistling Gardens Tour:

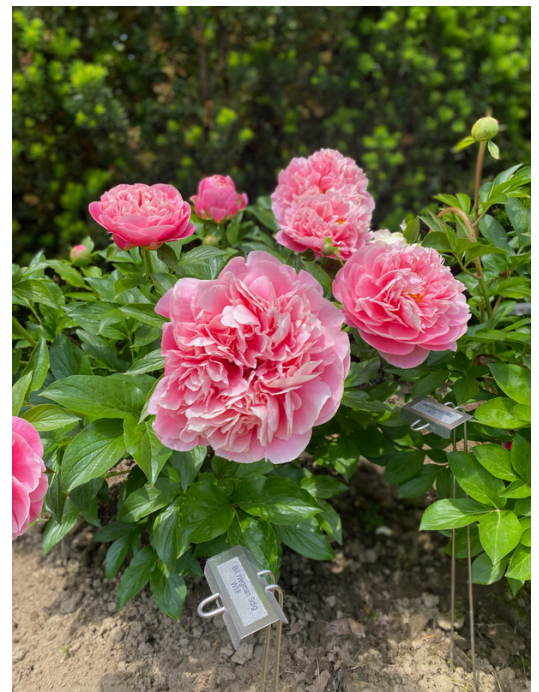
Submitted by: Sarah D'Amato, BHS Events Committee member

On Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 24 Historical Society members and friends ventured to Wilsonville (at the edge of Norfolk County) to explore the stunning Whistling Gardens. Hopeful to learn both how the garden came to be and the history behind some of the buds and blooms, we could not prepare for the wealth of knowledge owner and our tour guide - Darren Heimbecker - had to share. The former cow pasture spans 20 acres, and is home to over 1200 variety of peonies, 8000 perennials, 2000 different conifers (largest collection in North America). These impressive numbers do not do justice to the beauty and calm tranquility of the garden.

Despite this author's ranting and ravings about the flowers, our tour began with one of Darren's side interests: fountain design and show. Inspired by the palace of Versailles and with the latest in German engineering, the 150 jets are choreographed to music (composed by Heimbecker). The presentation showcases the majesty of water and you can see why the kings of France used the medium to show off and dazzle spectators. In the fall, evening showings are offered with the addition of lights and lasers. This presentation is constantly evolving, this winter Darren plans to incorporate projected images taken from recent trips to Iceland and Newfoundland.

Following the fountain show, our group followed the twisting and winding paths of the garden that revealed various zones, each highlighting the variety of gardens possible in Canada. Participants were treated to a traditional English rose garden, a dessert zone, conifer garden, and the formal peony garden. Here and there the group would pause and our guide would point out a particularly rare bloom or the interesting history behind a common plant most of us had in our own gardens.

The Whistling Gardens boasts the largest variety of peony varieties in bloom in all North America. The Events Committee intentionally chose an early June date for our tour in hopes of timing with the arrival of the over 1,200 variations. Fortunately, we were not disappointed. As we explored the property we were treated to flowers in every colour of the rainbow. We were taught the difference between garden (herbaceous) peonies, bush peonies, and the hybrids developed by Dr. Itoh in Japan in 1948. The botanist spent decades trying to cross the stronger stems of the bush peony with the fantastic blooms of the herbaceous variety. Sadly he died before any bloomed. An American researcher in the 1970's found his work and picked it up again. He found success and got the Itoh peony on horticulturalists radar.



Although definitely the star of the show - we did not only learn about peonies on our visit. As a frequenter of the gardens this author learned many new and interesting historical facts behind some of the plants I had walked past on numerous occasions. Some of these facts include:

- The unassuming Norval rose - one you would probably pass by as its flowers only ever bud but never bloom - is a direct descendant of its mother plant found in Josephine Bonaparte's garden in France. A traveling general is said to have taken a cutting and brought it to the new world.
- The oldest tree in the garden doesn't even reach two feet! The 29-year-old Serbian dwarf spruce is wee but mighty.
- The most popular plant in the world is the common juniper plant. It grows in every country in the northern hemisphere. Growing taller in the north and shorter in the south. Its berries can be used to make gin.
- The impressive archway of dawn redwoods boasts ancient roots. Believed to be extinct and exist only in fossils dating back to the Mesozoic era, the tree was discovered growing in a valley in China in 1944. Harvard University worked to get its seed distributed. It now can be found worldwide.
- Ginkgo trees found in numerous varieties throughout the garden are naturally immune to disease and pest infestations. They are also fire retardant and even survived nuclear warfare. Four years after the bombings in Hiroshima the ginkgo's in the national parks began to sprout leaves again.
- Darren's dog, Leggo, (who is never far from his side) is a Swedish Vallhund, not a corgi and the cutest and sweetest dog ever.



With the tour complete, our party sought shade on the picnic area and enjoyed a cool breeze off the pond where Oliver the Swan glides. Feeling that we only touched a small portion of what the garden had to offer, plans are already underway for a follow up visit next year. Follow the Brant Historical Society on social media and continue to subscribe to our newsletter and email lists to learn about future events. We would love to have you join us on another adventure soon!

Upcoming Events:

- **Walking Tours** will return during July and August, offered by our summer student Abbey! Keep an eye on your emails or our Facebook page for more details.
- The **Paris Fair** is taking place from August 28<sup>th</sup> to September 1<sup>st</sup>, and the Brant Historical Society will be hosting a booth! Stop by to take in the festivities, and say hello to the BHS staff members that will be on site.
- The **Black History Speakers Series** returns to the Brantford Public Library on **July 16<sup>th</sup>** and **August 13<sup>th</sup>**. Visit <https://calendar.brantfordlibrary.ca/> for more information.

Join the Brant Historical Society on **Saturday September 13<sup>th</sup>** from **10:00am - 4:00pm** for our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Shirefest at Myrtleville House Museum!

This renaissance faire style event will feature vendors selling historic and fantasy wares, kids games, historic skill demonstrations, a fundraising raffle, and plenty of photo areas for the whole family to make memories. Bring your own picnic and enjoy some music on the front lawn.

This will be a rain or shine event! Admission is \$5.00 per person, or FREE entry for those that attend in costume. Kids 10 and under are free of charge.

If you have any questions, or would like to volunteer, please contact Esther at 519-752-3216 or email [esther.brouwer@brantmuseums.ca](mailto:esther.brouwer@brantmuseums.ca)

Brant Moment: The Returned Soldiers Home

Submitted by: Roger Sharpe, local historian

After the Great-war-to-end-all-wars, the returning hometown boys did not always adjust well to life back in their small towns. In its extreme form Shell Shock could debilitate a veteran to such an extent that immediate reentry into society was impossible. But for those with the less severe forms of what we now call Post-Traumatic-Stress-Syndrome and other illnesses a stable nurturing home was something that went a long way in helping the veteran deal with his return to civilian life.

Even before the bulk of returning troops arrived, people at home recognized the importance of a stable home. They also recognized that not all young men had a home to return to and because of this need, many groups of local citizens decided to create "The Returned Soldiers' Home " in Brantford. The veterans chose the name themselves.

In the spring of 1917 the Women's Patriotic League, a federation of all patriotic women's societies, first suggested the idea. It took root and in the summer they proceeded with the plan. Through campaigns and concerts money was raised for the project and by October the Home was a reality.

On October 24<sup>th</sup> His Excellency the Duke of Devonshire, Governor-General of Canada, officially opened it. Prior to the Home opening, the building had been a hotel called the Butler House at 20 Dalhousie street.

As you approached the front door on Dalhousie street in 1917 a frosted globe above the front door was inscribed with, "The Returned Soldiers' Home". Upon entering you came to a reception hall. Conspicuously placed were four handsome oak panels bearing the names of all Brant men who had made the ultimate sacrifice written in gold letters. The honor rolls were presented by the Kitchener Club of young girls. The hall was finished with the donations of a velvet rug, big tan and brown upholstered leather chairs and Davenports, and a combination writing/library table. Large palms screened the whole hall.

To the left was the canteen and to the right a large assembly room. The assembly room could accommodate 150 people and was furnished and equipped as a lounge. The canteen was run by Mr. Ernest W. Standbridge where hot and cold drinks, sandwiches, chocolates, cigars and cigarettes were supplied.

The Home contained eleven bedrooms on the second and third floors. A unique feature of each of the rooms was their furnishings. Much care and kindness had been taken by the ladies, who matched color schemes and furnishings, so each room was a work of art. An author of the time commented, "There is not a bedroom that has not had much loving thought and care. Each seems prepared as for an honored guest."

The second floor contained a unique den furnished like a military trench. For relaxation the floor had a billiard and pool table. The secretary's office and a writing room were also on this floor. All furnishings and games tables were generously donated. On the third floor were eight of the bedrooms that had been created with so much care.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the Home was the creation of a, "dug out," as a reminder of those never-to-be-forgotten days. You would go down a flight of steps to find a small area with all four walls sandbagged. A meeting place? Perhaps, but reading about this dugout I can't help but imagine those returned young men coming to this dugout as if it was a reminder that many still had one foot caught in the world they had just left. Sitting in the dugout surrounded by friends, the men probably remembered those horrible scenes of carnage. Perhaps it was the Battle of Ypres where Canadians were first gassed or possibly Passchendaele where, after wading waist-deep in mud, they were mercilessly bombed during a violent thunderstorm. Each veteran recalled his own personal hell and as those repressed memories came to the surface, amongst comrades and in a caring Home over time, there might have been a catharsis of the pain helping them to better reintegrate into their day-to-day present. One demon defeated and one man better prepared to reenter civilian life.

Undoubtedly, not all made the readjustment, but that was what the Home was about.

Each membership package comes with the following privileges:

- ✓ Advance notification and special invitation to all our Activities and Events, including Children's Camps and PA Days
- ✓ Free Admission to our monthly Speaker Series
- ✓ Free Admission to our Walking Tours (fee applies to all non-members)
- ✓ BHS Newsletter – all that's new and exciting at BHS
- ✓ 10% off all Gift Shop purchases over \$20
- ✓ Access to, and use of, our Research facilities - 5 hours of research time



Packages:

☐ Student (\$20.00)  
(to 24 yrs with school/college/university ID)  
(One voting membership in all Brant Historical Society membership meetings, including the Annual General Meeting, plus all privileges)

☐ Individual (\$25.00)  
(One voting membership in all Brant Historical Society membership meetings, including the Annual General Meeting, plus all privileges)

☐ Couple (\$40.00)  
(Two voting memberships in all Brant Historical Society membership meetings, including the Annual General Meeting, and all privileges for two individuals living at the same address)

☐ Family (\$80.00)  
(Four voting memberships in all Brant Historical Society membership meetings, including the Annual General Meeting, and all privileges for a family living at the same address)

Payment may be made at or sent to:

Brant Historical Society  
57 Charlotte Street  
Brantford, Ontario N3T 2W6

Please provide the names of all individuals per package and indicate if over 18 years of age for voting membership.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ 18+ ☐

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ 18+ ☐

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ 18+ ☐

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ 18+ ☐

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ 18+ ☐

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ PC: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Donation Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

(Tax receipts will be provided for monetary donations above \$20.00)

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \_\_\_\_\_

METHOD OF PAYMENT

☐ Cash ☐ Cheque

☐ Credit Card: \_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_ MC

Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry date: \_\_\_\_\_