



# **BRANT HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**2024 ANNUAL REPORT**



# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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## MISSION

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.

## VISION

To be a vibrant, inclusive, and educational hub that inspires curiosity, community engagement and tourism through dynamic exhibits, programs, events, and partnerships.

## CORE VALUES

- Inclusivity
- Education
- Stewardship
- Collaboration
- Innovation

The current board was elected at the Annual General Meeting in April 2024.

The main goal for the board has been to stabilize the financial situation of the Brant Historical Society. Discussions were undertaken with the City of Brantford for a new facility or financial support for the current facility at 57 Charlotte Street.

In December 2024, the City of Brantford purchased the building at 57 Charlotte Street. This money will assist with helping to stabilize our financial situation for the museum.

Another undertaking of the board was an updated Strategic Plan. The vision, mission and core values of the organization have been finalized. Fundraising has been identified as a main goal, and various strategies are being reviewed.

In conclusion, I want to thank the board members, the volunteer Executive Director and staff and our volunteers for the ongoing commitment and dedication to the current and the long-term goals of the organization

-Murray Angus,  
Brant Historical Society President

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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2024 was an exciting and evolving year at the two facilities operated by the Brant Historical Society.

At the Brant Museum and Archives, three new exhibits were shown including: the Story of Brantford Gaol; In Remembrance - Stories of Local Veterans; and the Armenian Community of Brantford "Forget Me Not".

At Myrtleville House Museum, summer camps and professional activity camps continued. A new event called "Shirefest" was held in September. There has been enhanced contact with the National Trust of Canada to ensure a continued strong relationship regarding the operations at Myrtleville House Museum.

With staff changes this past year we have two permanent staff and are using part-time staff as we review our staffing needs. Staff participated with displays at the Canada Day celebrations, the Paris Fair, the re-opening of Dufferin Park, and the Conservation Authority's Grand River Heritage Day 30th Anniversary commemoration. The "Quarterly" newsletter has been reactivated, and a grant was received to have our website updated with completion in 2025.

I want to recognize the various community partners including the City of Brantford, the County of Brant, the Brant Community Foundation, the Canadian Military Heritage Museum of Brant, Dr. Christina Han for the continued support.

In conclusion, I want to thank the board members, staff and our volunteers for the continuing commitment and dedication to this organization

## Volunteer Appreciation

Brant Historical Society Staff and Board Members would like to take the opportunity to extend our appreciation to our volunteers that offer their valuable time to projects and events that the Society offers. It truly is a team effort, and your support does not go unnoticed!

Whether it is helping with children's programs, offering assistance in the archives, looking after the lawn and gardens, or other tasks around our sites, we are sincerely thankful for all that you do.

# MEET THE TEAM

BRANT HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD MEMBERS & STAFF

## Board of Directors

- President & Chair: Murray Angus
- Vice Chair: Leisah-Marie Jansen
- Secretary: Michael-Allen Marion
- Treasurer: Bill Hyde

Directors:

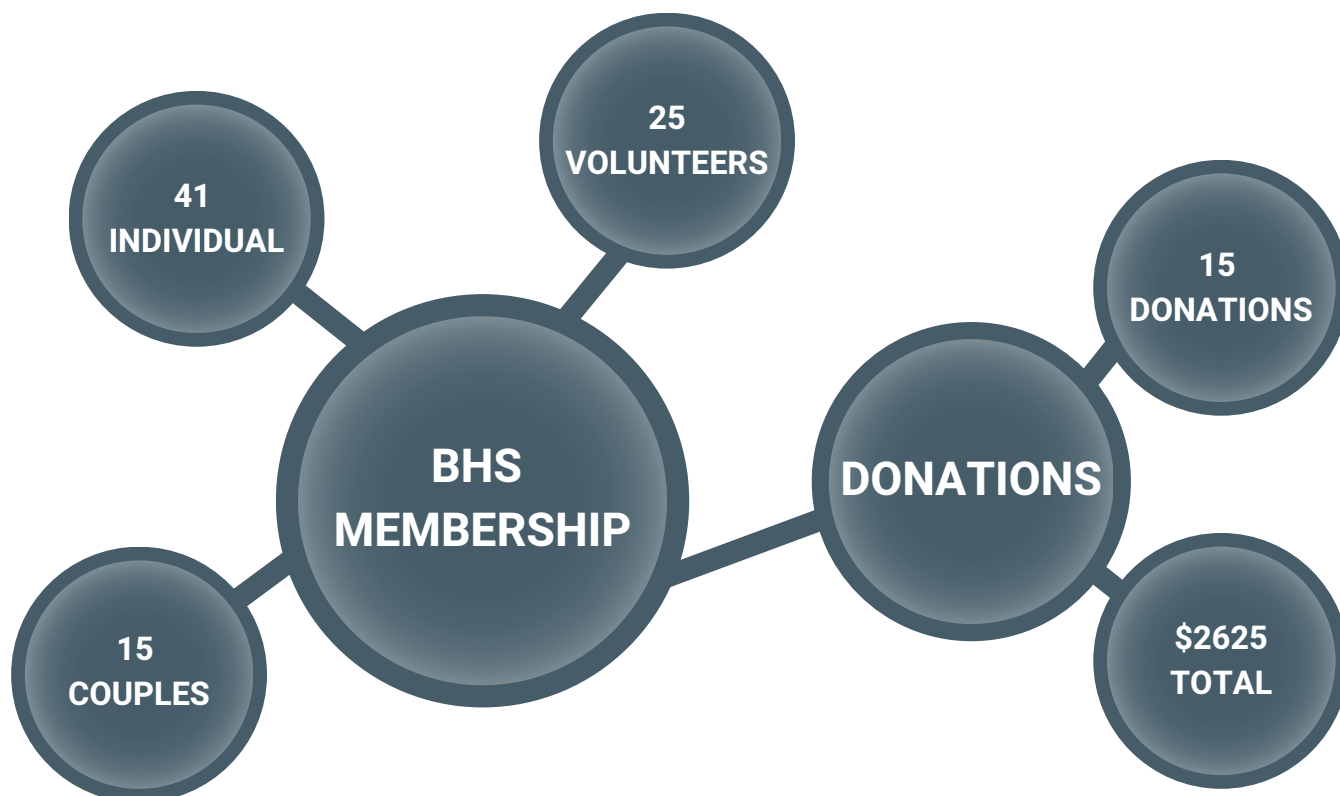
- Sarah Clarke
- Pat Duern
- Brian Moore
- John Utley
- Glad Woodburn

## Executive Director

- Marion McGeein

## Staff

- Esther Brouwer - Education Officer and Guardian, Myrtleville House Museum
- Lillia Dockree - Community Outreach Coordinator, Brant Museum and Archives



# 2024 IN REVIEW

Submitted by BHS Staff

The mission of the Brant Historical Society is to preserve, educate, celebrate, and share the unique history, culture, and stories of the Brantford/Brant area. A key part in achieving this goal is through our education programming - whether the learners are kindergartners on their first museum trip, or seniors in residences reminiscing about their youth. In 2024, we made new connections with our programming, and discovered additional ways to better serve our community.

'School Bells', 'Settler Children', and 'Playful Pastimes' continue to be popular education programs booked by local Kindergarten to Grade Three teachers, reaching a total of 417 students over the course of the year. 'Good Cheer', our annual on-site Christmas program, was booked by nine schools this year and brought 291 students through the doors at Myrtleville House Museum. It was a slower December than in previous years for this program, though feedback from teachers suggests that the increased price of school bus rentals is the culprit.

On April 9th and 10th, Brant Historical Society staff once again took part in Bite of Brant, an annual event held at the Burford Fairgrounds which teaches local fifth grade students about different aspects of the agricultural industry - all relating to the ingredients of their pizza lunch. Over the course of two days, nearly a thousand students learned about livestock, planting crops, and farm machinery. The BHS booth focused on how grain was harvested in the 19th century, using tools from the collection at Myrtleville House as examples.

July and August were busy months at Myrtleville House, as we welcomed 408 campers over the course of those two months. The most popular weeks were weeks one ('Music Mashup'), two ('Animal Planet'), and five ('Settler Week'). A heartfelt thank-you goes to our summer student Kaitlyn Viggers, along with all of the volunteers that made camp run smoothly.



The Brant Historical Society hosted a number of new fundraisers, special events, and exhibit openings in 2024. Thirty-six people attended our 2nd Annual Scotch Tasting fundraiser, hosted this year at the Canadian Military Heritage Museum. The evening included a program of 5 scotch samples, haggis tasting, and highland dance demonstrations by students of the Angus Academy of Highland Dance.

The Brant Historical Society partnered with The Ontario Paranormal Society (T.O.P.S) for two new fundraiser events in 2024 - held in February and December at the Brant Museum and Archives. There were 64 participants over the two evenings, which brought the attendees on a guided paranormal investigation of the museum.



The Paris Fair was one of our big community outreach events this year - staff manned our booth for three of the five days of the event, and chatted to over 150 people that stopped in. Our application has been submitted for the 2025 Paris Fair, and we intend to return!

Myrtleville House was host to "Shirefest" this year - our first historic/fantasy faire - which welcomed 100 people to the property to explore local vendors, sample our tea tent, and participate in games and dance. Many of the vendors and visitors expressed interest in attending again, so stay tuned for our 2025 event date!



On the weekend of September 28-29, the Brant Historical Society partnered with Brant Theatre Workshops, Canadian Industrial Heritage Centre, and Laurier-Brantford to offer "Forget-Me-Not," part of Memories of Brantford – Armenian Community project. The opening event included a formal ribbon-cutting for the exhibition, a walking tour, a play entitled "You, Me and the Armenian", a dinner of Armenian foods, and an evening program of choir and dance performances. Special thanks goes to Dr. Christina Han for curating the exhibit, and to the Memories of Brantford Committee and volunteers for presenting a wonderful weekend of sharing local history.

# Events Committee Report

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## Guest Speaker Series

- “Family Businesses of Downtown Brantford” – by Murray Angus (Jan. 24)
- “Local Women’s Involvement in the Two World Wars” – by Meghan Cameron (Feb. 28) at Canadian Military Heritage Museum
- “The Lancaster Bomber” – by John Bullen of CWPHM at Mt. Hope (Apr 24) at Canadian Military Heritage Museum [Best attended]
- “Black History of Brantford” – by Tracy Cain (May 22)
- “The Art of Lawren Harris” – by Carolyn Cresswell (Sept.25)
- “Entertainment Centres of Brantford” – by Murray Angus (Oct. 30)
- “Haudenosaunee Culture & Traditions” – by Dr. Darren Thomas (Nov. 27)

## Significant Members’ Events

- Barbecue-Potluck (June 19): Held at Myrtleville Heritage House Museum, this gathering welcomed 34 attendees. Entertainment was provided by Ian Bell, who performed traditional Ontario ballads.
- Christmas Social (Dec. 18): A special appreciation event for 32 members featuring refreshments, a performance by The Bell City Strummers (11-member ukulele group), and insights into Christmas influencers of the 1840s.

## 5th Annual Heritage Excursion Day (May 1st)

- The planned City Hall tour and restoration discussion was postponed to May 24<sup>th</sup>, but Dan and Carol-Lyn Brown provided an overview of their work restoring various historic homes, highlighting their latest project, the “Crystal Cottage”.
- Brantford Sgt. Wm. Merrifield Armouries: Participants toured the building inside and out, learned about the military units stationed there and observed a live training session.
- The Brantford Club: Over lunch, Judge James Kent shared the club’s history and led a guided tour of the facility.
- Local History Room, Brantford Public Library: Attendees explored historical collections and learned how to access archival resources.
- Surprise stop – Sanderson Centre for the Performing Arts: The group enjoyed a backstage tour and gained insights into the theatre’s history.

# Heritage Walks Report

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Walking Tours were scheduled in 2024 which included sixteen intended walks offered on Saturday mornings, presenting various aspects of Brantford & Brant County heritage, though one was rained out and another was rescheduled to the fall.

The “Murder, Mystery & Mayhem” walk was once again offered as a fundraiser over two evenings in late October to 39 registrants, resulting in more than \$500 raised for the museums. The “Armenian Heritage of Brantford” walk was scheduled twice during the afternoon of opening day for the Armenian exhibit, to 37 attenders.

New walks were developed of “Gadd’s Alley of Paris,” plus a walk focusing on “The Armenian Heritage” Walk. Research was begun on a “Terrace Hill & Dundas Streets” walk but the script has not been finalized. We were not successful in having a summer staff person to focus on developing and delivering walks this year – maybe better luck in 2025.

Three people were involved in delivering these walks. Thanks go to Lillia Dockree and Nathan Etherington who joined me in this venture. There was an average attendance of eight (8) persons over the 14 offered walks, with a maximum of 20 (for the new “Gadd’s Alley” walk) and a minimum attendance of 2 people.

Respectfully submitted by:

Brian Moore, Events Committee Chair & Walking Tours Coordinator



Our group of attendees at the re-scheduled tour of City Hall, May 24, 2024