



# **BRANT HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**2025 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

Your Board of Directors was elected at the Annual General Meeting in April 2025 and has been busy this year building a foundation for the organization.

The Directors developed for our Strategic Plan action steps for the next three years, and expect to refine those into actions for the next five years in 2026. Fundraising and membership growth have been identified as main areas for attention, and various strategies are being investigated.

At the last Annual Meeting, Michael-Allan Marion completed his term and we thank him for his six year commitment. Garry Burns and city representative Counsellor Mandy Samwell joined the Board bringing fresh ideas and insights to our team.

The Directors acknowledged that we needed to have a member of the Board spearhead or be the spokes-person for the issues we need to address, and the tasks broke down as follows:

- Murray Angus: President, and Fundraising
- Garry Burns: Networking
- Sarah Clarke: Indigenous Relations-Repatriation, Membership, and Wall of Honour

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- Pat Duern: Secretary
  - Bill Hyde: Treasurer, Fundraising, and Networking
  - Leisah-Marie Jansen: Vice President, and Wall of Honour
  - Brian Moore: Collections Management, and Program Events
  - John Utley: Municipal Relations, and Property Management
  - Glad Woodburn: Governance, and Membership

Part of our role as Directors is to ensure there is program and services provided to our members who make the commitment to support us. To that end, the Program Events Committee has made sure there is a series of monthly speakers, arranged a members' barbecue in June and a Christmas Social in December, arranged a special tour to Whistling Gardens in June, and some of the members have organized a regular schedule of community history walks.

This year, after many years of requests, we reprinted the book "The Grand River Navigation Company" by Bruce E. Hill. It has been well received, and is flying off the shelf.

As I wrapup my thoughts, I want to thank the Board Directors, our loyal staff, and our dedicated volunteers for the continuing commitment to both our current and long-term goals for this organization. And as a final thought, I extend a special "thank you" to our volunteer Executive Director, Marion McGeein, who provided almost three years of service after being initially asked to serve "...for a year, or so."

Thank you all, for helping to renew our future!

-Murray Angus,  
Brant Historical Society President

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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Twenty Twenty-Five continued to be an evolving year at both facilities operated by the Brant Historical Society.

At the Brant Museum and Archives, the exhibits shown included: "A Night on the Town: Brantford's Theatres and Opera Houses;" and "Roots and Routes: Black Community Heritage." Our two museums hosted the travelling exhibit "Common Threads: Textile Industries of Brantford/Brant", which was a collaboration with the Paris Museum and Historical Society as well as the Canadian Industrial Heritage Centre. Our Facebook Page has also presented "Photo Friday," routinely.

During the year, the Brant Museum and Archives was the recipient of 46 ledgers from the Brantford General Hospital, detailing Labour & Delivery and Emergency admittance from the John Stratford Hospital, Brantford General Hospital, and the Willet. We also welcomed a collection of 26 pieces of Brantford pottery, featuring a large umbrella stand, dark blue pitcher & ewer, soap dish, and more. Both are valuable additions to our already extensive collection of artifacts and photographs.

At Myrtleville House Museum, there were programs such as: summer day-camps for seven weeks, four P.A. day camps, and a family-focused program over March Break. Myrtleville House also hosted a Good Family Day in February and "Shirefest" in September. Collaborative events with the Myrtleville-Mayfair Neighbourhood Association included the Easter Egg Hunt and Hallowe'en Haunt, which continued to outshine visitor attendance from the previous year's events. There was also a Scotch Tasting event in January designed to be a fundraiser in support of programming at Myrtleville House.

There is continuing developments to the use agreements of both sites. There is a new agreement with the City of Brantford following their purchase of the Brant Museum & Archives property. Further, the agreement with the National Trust for Canada for the use of Myrtleville House Museum has been re-signed for two years. Both of these agreements continue to enhance the contact with the two ownership groups, and we strive to ensure a strong relationship is maintained.

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I want to recognize and thank our three permanent staff, Esther Brouwer, Lillia Dockree, and Brooklynn Hambly for all of the dedicated work they undertake on behalf of the Brant Historical Society. This has included community outreach with “School Bells” programs in classrooms, and site presentations at senior’s facilities, service clubs, and local libraries. I also acknowledge the work that summer staff and high school co-op students have done to enhance the work we are able to accomplish.

Raising our public profile continues getting attention with the reactivated “BHS Quarterly” newsletter, an updated website, increasing use of social media, a significant article in the October 2025 BScene community newspaper, routine articles in the Brant Beacon on-line newspaper, attendance at the Paris Fair, and attendance at local volunteer fairs.

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

In conclusion, I want to thank the board directors, the devoted staff, and our many reliable volunteers for the continuing commitment to develop the success of this organization.

-Marion McGeein,  
Executive Director, Brant Historical Society

### **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: Pat Duern
- Treasurer: Bill Hyde

Directors:

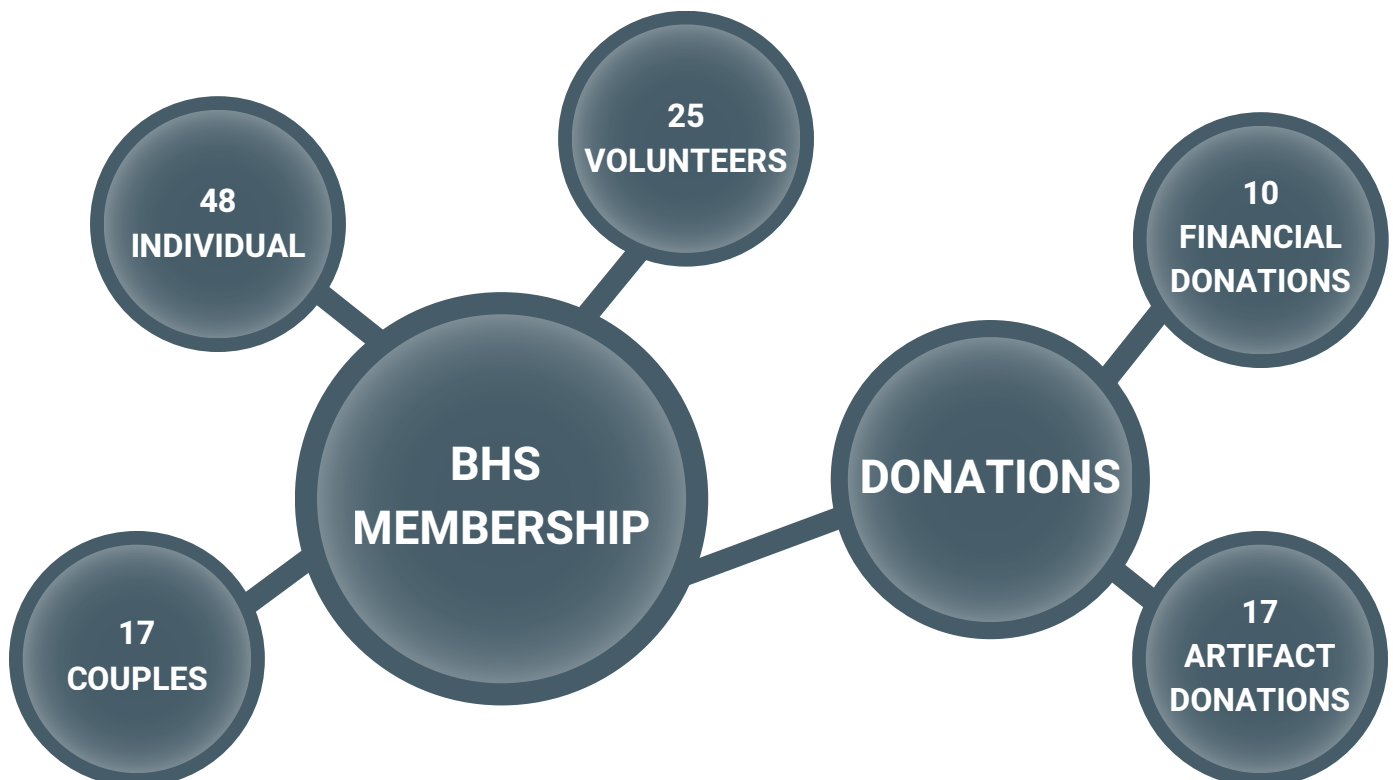
- Garry Burns
- Sarah Clarke
- Brian Moore
- John Utley
- Glad Woodburn

## Executive Director

- Marion McGeein

## Staff

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



# 2025 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 strategy in achieving this goal in 2025 was through community outreach - whether online via email and social media, or in person at community events, exhibit launch events, walking tours, and more. In 2025, we made new connections 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 333 students over the course of the year. 'Good Cheer', our annual on-site Christmas program, was booked by 8 schools this year and brought 287 students through the doors at Myrtleville House Museum. It was another slower December for this program, with teachers again suggesting that the increased price of school bus rentals was the limitation.

On April 8th and 9th, 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 194 campers over the course of seven weeks. The most popular weeks were weeks two (Outer Space!), four (Medieval, Mythical & Magical), and six (Animal Planet). A heartfelt thank-you goes to our summer students Coral Adlam and Kaitlyn Viggers, along with all of the volunteers that helped camp run smoothly.



Campers having fun with the 'Slip-and-Slide' at Myrtleville House Museum

The Brant Historical Society hosted a number of new fundraisers, special events, and exhibit openings in 2025. Thirty-two people attended our 3rd Annual Scotch Tasting fundraiser, hosted once again 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.

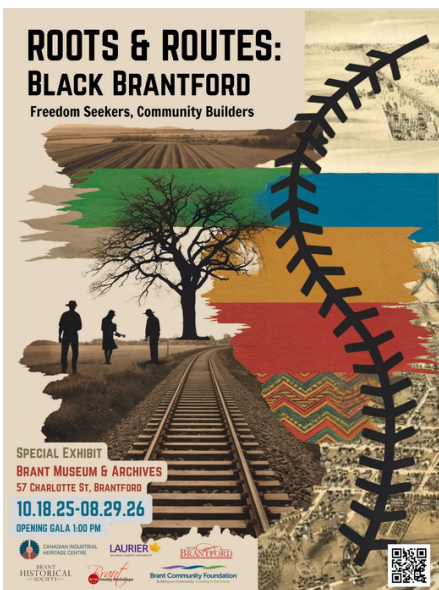


Staff member Esther looking menacing at 'Shirefest'

The Brant Historical Society partnered with The Ontario Paranormal Society (T.O.P.S) for another fundraiser event in August 2025 - held at the Brant Museum and Archives. There were 25 attendees over the course of the evening, participating in guided paranormal investigation of the museum, Ouija board sessions, and more.

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 100 people that stopped in. Our application has been submitted for the 2026 Paris Fair, and we intend to return!

Myrtleville House was host to "Shirefest" again this year - our historic/fantasy faire - which welcomed 117 people to the property to explore local vendors, view demonstrations of blacksmithing and live action role playing (LARP), and participate in games and dance. We will be taking a break from Shirefest in 2026 - due to scheduling conflicts with other local events in September - but look forward to having everyone back in 2027.



Promotional Poster for the "Roots & Routes" exhibit - on display until August 2026

On the weekend of October 17-18, the Brant Historical Society partnered with Brant Theatre Workshops, Canadian Industrial Heritage Centre, and Laurier-Brantford to offer "Roots & Routes," part of Memories of Brantford – Black Community project. The opening event included a formal ribbon-cutting for the exhibition, a walking tour, a dinner provided by the Irie Grill, and more. 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.

# PROGRAM EVENTS COMMITTEE REPORT

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## Guest Speaker Series

- “Archaeology of the Brantford Area” – by Sarah Clarke (Jan. 29)
- “Family Businesses of Brantford: Part 2” – by Murray Angus (Feb. 26)
- “British Home Children in Canada, WWI & WWII” – by Kelly Morrison (Apr. 30)
- “Training of Aircrews During WWII” – by John Bullen of CWPHM at Mt. Hope (May 28) at the Canadian Military Heritage Museum
- “Avro Arrow Jet Interceptor” – by Tim Speed of CWPHM at Mt. Hope (Sept.25) at the Canadian Military Heritage Museum
- “Characters of the Brantford Jail” – by Brian Moore (Oct. 15)
- “The Sargent Family Farm: Life, Loss & Legacy..., 1847-1946” – by Christine Garneau (Nov. 19)

## Significant Members’ Events

- The Barbecue-Potluck this year at Myrtleville Heritage House Museum for 24 people which took place indoors because of threatening rain all week. Entertainment was provided by Sonny Sinclair offering songs of our youth. (Wed. June 18)
- The Christmas Social where 29 members were provided a special thank you, with a program that included refreshments, music by a string ensemble from “The Little Strings Orchestra,” and details about the Victorian custom of telling haunted stories at Christmas. (Wed. Dec. 17)

## Other special events held during the year:

- Thanks to School Principal, Dan Mangiacomo, and Teacher, Carolyn Cresswell, we were offered a repeat tour of the Interior of W. Ross Macdonald School for 13 people (Fri. Mar. 28).
- A tour of Whistling Gardens (Sat. June 7) was arranged, attended by 24 people with a focus on the Spring blooms, especially the peonies.
- A Trivia Night was arranged in collaboration with the Mayfair-Myrtleville Community Association at the Walter Gretzky Golf Course (Mon. June 16).
- Some of the committee assisted staff with SPECIAL EVENTS AT MYRTLEVILLE HERITAGE HOUSE MUSEUM: the Good Family Day program (Mon. Feb. 17), the Easter Egg Hunt (Sat. Mar. 30), Shire-fest (Sat. Sept. 14), the Hallowe’en Haunt (Sat. Oct. 26), and helping decorate the museum (Wed. Nov. 19) for Christmas “Good Cheer” school programming offered throughout December.

Respectfully submitted by: Brian Moore, Chair of the Program Events Committee

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# HERITAGE WALKS REPORT

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Twenty-seven Walking Tours, presenting various aspects of Brantford & Brant County heritage, were scheduled in 2025, though some were cancelled due to rainy or extremely hot weather. Four were cancelled, and a number of others had diminished attendance compared to past years. There were seventeen walks offered on Saturday mornings with the rest offered at various times, such as weekday afternoons, some evenings, and one on a Saturday afternoon.

Three people were involved in delivering these walks. Thanks go to Lillia Dockree and Abbey Angevine (summer staff) who joined me in this venture. There was an average attendance of five persons over the 21 offered walks (not including the special walks outlined below), with a maximum of 10 for the “Greenwood Cemetery” walk and a minimum attendance of 1 person for a rain threatened walk.

Several new walks were developed this year. Six walks focused on our veterans in various neighbourhoods across the city. The “**Terrace Hill & Dundas Streets**” walk was completed and offered twice, as well as the new “**Mount Hope Cemetery**” tour, and the “**Railway Station Neighbourhood**” walk. Thanks to the donation of notes of Ruth Lefler, her “**Greenwood Cemetery**” tour has been developed as two scripts, both being presented this year.

The “**Murder, Mystery & Mayhem**” walk was once again offered as a fundraiser over three evenings but, unfortunately, weather conditions meant it was only offered once to 4 people, resulting in minimal earnings for the museum. On Hallowe’en itself, Lillia offered the “**Greenwood Cemetery**” tour to 5 people who found the time, and the courage that evening.

The “**Black Heritage of Brantford**” walk was scheduled only once during the afternoon of opening day for the ‘Roots & Routes: Black Heritage in Brantford’ exhibit, because it has been offered in the past. There were 13 people who attended that afternoon. This walk will be offered several times in 2026.

On August 20<sup>th</sup> a couple of mid-town walks were offered to 30 managers from across the various campuses of Wilfrid Laurier University as they participated in a symposium on the Brantford campus. Thanks go to Murray Angus and Lillia Dockree for organizing and offering those tours.

If anyone has an interest in offering one or more walking tours, please contact Lillia or myself.

Respectfully submitted by: Brian Moore, Walking Tours Co-Ordinator