

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Bell Homestead National Historic Site



Mission Statement

Inspiring discovery and learning through the influential lives of the Bell family that gave rise to Brantford's distinction as "The Telephone City".

Curator's Corner

Brian Wood, Curator

After navigating through two years of unknown territory, 2022 was closer to smooth sailing. Although Covid-19 closed down the Homestead once again at the beginning of the year, and we had to wear masks for a few weeks longer, we opened our doors on February 1st and began welcoming a bit of normalcy...or rather new normalcy. By Christmas, we had seen 27,113 people enjoy the Homestead's tours, programs, special events, and outreach activities. Our guest book once again boasts the names of guests from within the community, across Canada, and around the world. The Bell family and the invention of the telephone continued to draw people to "The Telephone City".

The museum continued to provide full-guided, timed tours, affording guests a far more educational and entertaining experience. The feedback received from the public with this change has been tremendous. With tours capped at 8 people, we know that we are also better protecting the historic homes and the nearly 900 artifacts that they house. Understandably, there was still some public hesitation with in-person visits in the early part of the year. But, by summer, much of this had passed. Additionally, the café opened in May, bringing happiness with home baking, including our famous Apple Dapple cake!

Sarah will provide greater detail about all things educational. But, virtual programs continued to be extremely popular with teachers. In fact, they are now a permanent part of our program offerings, providing an opportunity for classes that cannot visit the Homestead to still connect with the Bell history. We did, however, welcome classes back throughout, May, June and the fall months. Day camps flourished through the summer. All of our special events were back on-track. In addition, the Homestead hosted the City of Brantford's celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the official flag lowering event when she passed away in September. And, we welcomed the opportunity to participate in various community events including Canada Day, Hallowe'en at the Children's Safety Village, and for the first time, the Brantford Santa Claus Parade. Admittedly, getting back into the swing of things was a bit overwhelming at times!



» *Before: The Henderson Home with humdrum white clapboard.*



» *After: The Henderson Home – a house of a different colour! (Clapboard is Benjamin Moore Parlour Gold, Front door is Green Gables.)*

That said, I have to thank an amazing staff and a tremendous group of volunteers for everything they did to make 2022 a success. Sarah Hamilton brought her brilliant creativity, imagination, and leadership to the table once again as our education coordinator. I can't imagine the Homestead without her. Jillian Page proved to be the most brilliant museum assistant we could have, practically taking on anything and everything with a smile. We're sorry to say that her time with us came to an end in November as she embarked on her next adventure with Tourism Brantford. But, she hasn't gone far...we know where to find her! Our summer students, Addison Chupka and Hannah Mills Calnan were just the best at giving tours, helping with programs, and keeping the site looking good. Rarely a day passed without great feedback from visitors about them. Our volunteers are the very best. Many, in fact, are family to us, having been a part of this site for over 20 years. In total they recorded 961.5 volunteer hours throughout the year. There is no doubt in my mind that without them, we couldn't offer the level of programming to the community that we do.



■ *Dr. Bell's encyclopaedias on exhibit for the first time since 1949.*

Without question, our most prized artifacts are the Homestead and the Henderson Home. To ensure their preservation, a condition assessment of both homes was initiated in late 2022. Once completed, it will provide the basis for the development of a conservation plan and the future establishment of a capital reserve fund in order to better maintain the structural and historic integrity of the buildings. In the meantime, the Henderson Home was given more presence with the exterior clapboard painted a deep Victorian yellow and trim surrounding the front entrance detailed to highlight its architectural features. The change has been remarkable. Further changes were made to the overall grounds as well, removing overgrown shrubs and perennials in order to allow for more manageable maintenance by the Parks Horticulture staff. And, Parks Canada reinstalled the National Historic Sites & Monuments plaques on new podiums that are now accessible to all visitors. Homestead members and neighbours often comment that we're always making changes here. I assure them that changes are always for the betterment of the site.

Our museum collection saw great additions in 2022. The two sets of original Bell encyclopaedias, sent to Ubbink Book & Paper Conservation in February, returned in August brilliantly stabilized and restored. They are now happily on the book shelves in Aleck's bedroom – the first time all have been exhibited since donated by Mrs. Elsie Grosvenor in 1949. I cannot thank enough those that financially contributed to this project. In addition, the Eliza Bell paintings donated by David Fairchild returned fully stabilized and ready for framing and display in Mrs. Bell's home.

Over the last 34 years, I've had the privilege of working under the supervision of five different managers, each with their own expertise in the areas of parks and recreation. With the repositioning of the Homestead to the Community Services and Social Development commission, another individual was added to that list. The Director of Community Programs and Social Development, Aaron Wallace, welcomed us wholeheartedly to his portfolio in July. It has been great getting to know him and I can't thank him enough for his support, direction, positivity, and willingness to explore the world of we museum geeks!

So there you have 2022 in a nutshell. This year will be just as exciting! Don't forget to check out our special events and stay tuned as we begin to prepare for the 150th anniversary of the telephone in 2024!

2022 Year in Review

Marty Hahn, Chair - Bell Homestead Committee

I wanted to take the time to thank the Bell Homestead Committee for their hard work and dedication during this past year.

The Committee met five times in 2022 in addition to the annual general meeting in April, working in an advisory capacity in supporting the programs and activities of the museum. Together, the Committee and staff continued working to achieve the goals of the Bell Homestead National Historic Site's Five-Year Strategic Plan.

Despite the challenges we faced during the Covid-19 pandemic, great strides were made in achieving the four strategic goals of the plan, with an emphasis on establishing WiFi internet access on the site. The Committee is extremely grateful to Bell Canada for generously providing the labour and materials necessary to bring Fibre Optic service onto the Homestead property. Valued at \$5,000, this has taken us one step further toward bringing the site into the 21st century.

The pandemic also brought about restrictions and closures and the Committee recognizes the challenges that were faced in 2022 with re-introducing the site's programs and services to the public. We wish to express our gratitude to the Department of Canadian Heritage for the \$22,337 grant received through the Museums Assistance Program Recovery Fund for Heritage Organizations. Additionally, we thank the City of Brantford, Bell Canada, the Ministry of Culture, Tourism & Sport and the County of Brant for their continued support of the Homestead's preservation, conservation efforts and programs.

The Homestead boasts a great group of volunteers including members of the Bell Homestead and Community Outreach Committees, individuals from within the community, the Brant 4-H Bell Homestead Club and high school students working to complete their volunteer time before graduating. Big thanks to all for your hard work and time!

Several members of the Committee had the great opportunity to work alongside Hugh Muller during his time on the Committee. We were saddened to hear of his passing and extend our deepest sympathy to the Muller family and Bell descendants.

Going forward, the Committee is excited to be a part of celebrating the 150th anniversary of Mr. Bell's telephone in 2024. The celebration of the 100th anniversary was huge for the City of Brantford and Bell Canada back in 1974. We look forward to working with both as we put "The Telephone City" in the spotlight with this milestone.

2022
Program Attendance



- Interpretive Tours
- Education Programs
- Special Events
- Community Outreach

2022
Operating Revenue



- Summer Jobs Grant (Federal)
- Donations
- County of Brant
- MAP - Recovery Fund for Heritage Organizations Grant (Federal)
- Community Museum Operating Grant (Provincial)
- Bell Canada
- Site Programs
- City of Brantford

Community Outreach

Adele Gaunt, Chair – Community Outreach Committee

I am happy to report that many of our activities are returning to a version of pre-pandemic normal.

Brian, Sarah and their staff has played a prominent part in our outreach endeavours. A super big thank you to all the volunteers that make our programs possible. We couldn't do it without you. I include the 4-H Bell Homestead Club who also make our programs a great success. In particular, our Hallowe'en Fun Fair had many new fun activities thanks to the creativity of the 4-H members. Special thank you as well to the community groups that participated in our events including the Brantford Memorial Concert Band, Brantford Community Symphony Orchestra, Brant Theatre Workshops, Pleasant Ridge, ALLM+Celtic Musicians, and Fiddlers Belles.

It was great to have the opportunity to offer our special events to the community once again. Here are the attendance numbers for all of our community outreach events and activities:

Program	Date	Participants
Loonie Family Day Program	February 21	38
Eliza's Mother's Day Afternoon Tea	May 8	74
May is Museum Month Open House	May 21	27
27th Annual Barn Sale	May 28	100
Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebration	June 4	100
Summer Music Series:		
Time to Sing	June 5	60
Summer Serenade Concert	June 25	140
Symphony Under The Stars	August 25	215
Coffee House at The Cafe	September 10	30
Brantford Canada Day Celebration	July 1	180
Bell Summer Theatre Festival	July to August 7	445
Grand River Probus Club Presentation	July 25	130
Queen's Passing Flag Lowering Ceremony	September 9	15
Hallowe'en at the Safety Village	October 29	2,500
Hallowe'en Fun Fair	October 30	502
Holiday Bake Sale	November 26	30
Brantford Santa Claus Parade	November 26	15,000
Candlelight Christmas Celebration	December 3, 10, 17	140

A big thank you to the community for supporting the Homestead's programs over this past year and for giving us the opportunity to take the museum on-the-road at so many community events.

Education Corner

Sarah Hamilton

2022 was quite a busy year for education and children's programming at the museum as pandemic restrictions eased. The year started off with a stay-at-home order, so we offered free virtual workshops to schools. Virtual programs remained popular through January to June, although we began charging \$25 per workshop. This was actually a sale price based on what is now our standard rate of \$50 for virtual workshops. Brian and I felt that this was the best way to get schools used to paying for workshops that had previously been free in 2021. On-site programming slowly increased throughout 2022, although increasing fuel costs did make transportation more expensive for schools. We had the most on-site bookings in May, June, and December. During 2022, we delivered programming to 3141 students.



2022 Summer Day Camps

In 2022, our Summer Day Camps filled to capacity almost immediately after going live on www.brantford.ca/Activenet. It was decided to offer two weeks in July and two weeks in August in order to make preparation and delivery easier to manage last year. We had 60 campers over the 4-week period which consisted of 15 children per each week.

Week 1 (July 4 to July 8, 2022) – Over a Century of Connections, 1910s to 1940s

Take a trip through time starting in 1910, when the Bell Homestead opened.

Week 2 (July 11 to July 15, 2022) – Over a Century of Connections, 1950s to the 2010s

Take a trip through time starting in 1950 and finish in the 2010s, as the Bell Homestead begins another century of connections!

Week 3 (Aug. 26 to August 22, 2022) – World Explorers I

World Explorers is inspired by National Geographic Magazine, which was started by Alexander Graham Bell. Explore the world and everything in it, around it, and above it!

Week 4 (Aug. 29 to September 2, 2022) – World Explorers II

World Explorers is inspired by National Geographic Magazine, which was started by Alexander Graham Bell. Explore the world and everything in it, around it, and above it!

Brant 4-H Community Involvement Club at the Bell Homestead

Our partnership with Brant County 4-H continued in 2022, and the Community Involvement Club were an enormous help during a very busy year.

We ran regular club programming in March and April to get the members ready to give tours during the Mother's Day Afternoon Tea in May. We had ten members in total, with some returning members and some new members. They all did a wonderful job giving tours that day.

The club's mascot launch project from 2021 continued this year. They found a source of platypus plush toys for the museum store. Our mini Mellys, as we've nicknamed them, have been big sellers. In fact, many visitors have asked us why we have platypus toys in the store as they are paying for their site admission, so they've been a great conversation starter.

The club also finished their first picture book, *Melly and the Missing Coral*, which is available in our museum store. The club organized a book launch event for Saturday, June 3rd. The launch ended up being part of the City of Brantford's celebration of Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee that day. The club presented their book to dignitaries and the public, and then conducted readings throughout the afternoon. The readings combined a tour of the houses. We had ordered 50 of the books for the initial run and all were sold out on launch day.

The club began to work on ideas for a second book over the summer. This book will focus on Melly learning about Christmas celebrations in the 1870s.

The club reconvened at the Homestead in September to start planning new games for our Halloween Fun Fair event. They came up with all new games for us, constructed any needed parts, helped make signs, and then actually ran the games on October 30th. The club also decided to add a craft station in the visitor centre, which was very well received. In fact, it was our busiest Halloween Fun Fair ever and the public feedback to their games was amazing.

The 4-H members also returned in November and December to help with three more events. They of course conducted tours during the Christmas Candlelight event on December 10th, but they also helped with so much more. In November, the members helped assemble dozens of Empire biscuits for our bake sale. Volunteers Nancy Browning and Adele Gaunt had baked the cookies ahead of time, and Adele came in to help the members to sandwich the cookies together with jam and top with royal icing that she made. Once they got the hang of it, the cookies looked very professional. Also in November, the club helped the Bell Homestead with our very first float for the Brantford Santa Claus Parade. Our theme was “Operator, Get Me The North Pole.” Member Emily Eddy asked her father to loan us a trailer and drive our float in the parade. The members decorated the float with hay bales, Christmas lights, garlands, and trees on the evening before and the morning of the parade. Museum volunteer Marty Hahn joined us with his red truck – we put the replica 1880s switchboard in the back of it and Jillian Page was our operator. Despite some technical glitches with our electric generators, the float was a success.

Partnership with Healthy Kids Brant

In May, Michelle Connor, Manager of Children’s Services and Early Years, connected us with Bethany Letto, the Community Development Coordinator for Community Services. Bethany looks after the Healthy Kids Brant program. Healthy Kids Brant offers free activities around the community for families. Bethany asked the Homestead to host activities run by other community partners, as well as offer one of our own. I ran a kite building workshop for Healthy Kids on August 20th, showing families how to make Bell’s tetrahedral kites. On September 17th, Erica from Raising Butterflies in Brantford ran a workshop called Butterfly School, where she taught families about the importance of pollinators and used our grounds for fun games. On October 15th, the Hamilton Amateur Astronomy Club ran an evening star-gazing event on our grounds, which included outdoor solar system activities and indoor crafts. Our partnership with Healthy Kids Brant continues in 2023.



Brant 4-H Bell Homestead Club officially launching “Melly and the Missing Coral.”



Bell Homestead
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

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