

## Bi-Monthly Update

March/April 2023



### President's Message

Clayton Spears | Cottonwood Mansion Preservation Foundation

An old adage that I often quote is; "There is always a light at the end of the tunnel" and this well known saying has again proven its worth. The aura of positivity that has taken place at our beloved site during the past three years is creating a noticeable uptick in interest from private individuals, the tourism sector, business entrepreneurs and Haldimand County.

The above positives would not have moved forward so rapidly without the tenacity of our former curator; Brittany Van Dalen, our current manager; Iona Whatford, a supportive group of trustees, a dedicated group of volunteers, plus the ongoing financial support from our benefactors. However, like all entities of this

nature, it is an ongoing battle to keep the Mansion up to the condition that prevailed in 1870. When one problem is dealt with another one raises its ugly head and unless the matter is dealt with in a timely fashion, pretty soon a major crisis arises. Fortunately, because of the above mentioned support, our long range planning is on a straight course. The one area of concern which our board is currently addressing centres around dwindling membership and this drastic decline is certainly not unique to Cottonwood. Many groups have been forced to close because, like Cottonwood, attrition has taken its toll and they are unable to entice a newer generation of men and women willing to get involved. Having said this, Iona and our board have been discussing various perks that would substantiate a person's desire in becoming a member. The one thing which I should mention is our attractive gift shop in the Pettit Parlour which features several pieces of antique cabinets plus a period side board sales counter. A large selection of Cottonwood souvenirs plus quality items from local vendors are for sale in this room and members can look forward to a discount on items purchased. *continued next page--->*



With a full slate of events and private bookings taking place in 2023, and some bookings even confirmed for the next two years, I look forward to the future at Cottonwood Mansion Museum.

-Clayt Spears, *President*

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*We are looking for more local goods to sell in our gift shop!*

If you are a local vendor or maker, and would like to sell your goods out of Cottonwood Mansion's gift shop, please reach out to us at [cottonwoodmansion@gmail.com](mailto:cottonwoodmansion@gmail.com) for more information! We have flexible consignment options and want to support local makers that create quality and unique goods.

## Past Events & Updates

### Board & Volunteer Workday

On March 18th, a group of dedicated volunteers and board members got together to do a deep clean of the site. Our main goal was to clean out and organize the basement and get it ready to house our new equipment. We completed this goal! Thank you to everyone who contributed!

### Architecture Exhibit Reception

We had a very successful Architecture Exhibit Reception on March 24th. Trustee Andrew Spearin dove into the research methods behind the exhibit, and explored the conclusions of his research and the implications for Cottonwood. Thank you to everyone who attended!

### Wardian Case Workshop

Cottonwood ran its first Wardian Case Workshop on April 15th. Some beautiful, fern-filled cases were created! Guests learned about the history of the Wardian case, and the Victorian fern craze, known as Pteridomania. Each guest learned how to build their wardian case from start to finish. The workshop was a success, and we hope to run more in the future. Thank you to all who attended!

### Public Paranormal Investigation

On April 15th, Cottonwood ran its first set of Public Paranormal Investigations. Similar to the Ghost Walks we ran in October, these investigations equipped guests with more equipment, access to more spaces, and the opportunity for independent investigations. We had a lot of activity onsite! Many guests were new to the mansion and hope to come back. Our next public Paranormal Investigation will be July 29th.



We had 10 guests attend our Wardian Case Workshop. Some of the materials were donated by local garden centre Eising Greenhouses. Thank you Eising!



We had 35 guests attend our first Public Paranormal Investigation!

## Upcoming Events

### Annual General Meeting

Saturday, May 13th, 2023

10:00am

All members are invited to join us at our Annual General Meeting. Meet the board members and hear about some very exciting updates!

### Mother's Day Afternoon Tea

Sunday, May 14th, 2023

11:00am & 2:00pm

\$55 per person

Celebrate mom this Mother's Day with a beautiful Afternoon Tea at Cottonwood! Enjoy the live music by our talented Harpist while you partake in a delicious set menu of sandwiches, scones, and desserts, with your choice of tea options including our signature Cottonwood Heritage Blend!

### Cottonwood Tree Planting Celebration

Saturday, May 27th, 2023

10:00am

We are getting back to our namesake by planting a Cottonwood Tree on the grounds of Cottonwood Mansion! This free event will include a tour of the mansion and free wildflower seeds to all who attend.

### Queen's Commemorative Afternoon Tea

Saturday, June 10th, 2023

\$65 per person

11:00am

Celebrate the life of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at Cottonwood Mansion's Queen's Commemorative Afternoon Tea. Each ticket includes a 1 hour dressage show on the grounds of Cottonwood, access to the Queen's Royal Exhibit, and a full Afternoon Tea meal including an assortment of sandwiches, scones, desserts and tea.



## From the desk of the Museum Manager

### The Intangible Value of Events

Events are often seen as revenue generators, but they can have other, less tangible benefits as well. In this article, we'll explore some examples of how events can help build connections and create intangible value for our museum.

One such example is the Architecture of Cottonwood exhibit, created by trustee and researcher Andrew Spearin. This exhibit attracted local history enthusiasts and heritage restoration specialists, providing an opportunity for these like-minded individuals to connect and share knowledge. By fostering these connections, the exhibit helped support our restoration efforts in ways that go beyond simple revenue generation.

Another example is our recent Wardian Case workshop, where guests were able to assemble their own Wardian case with plants. Not only did this event provide a fun and engaging experience for our visitors, but it also attracted students studying restoration practices for heritage buildings. These connections will help us to add to our network of people with skills and knowledge relevant to our mission, which can ultimately support our efforts to preserve the mansion.

Private rentals and weddings are another unexpected source of connection for our museum. By renting out our space for private events, we are able to attract guests who might not otherwise plan to visit. These guests can

become interested and connected with our site, ultimately becoming advocates for the museum and spreading the word about our events and programs. Repeat visitors, can help build a community around our museum, fostering a sense of belonging and support for our mission. By creating a sense of community, we can engage more deeply with our visitors and build relationships that last beyond a single event, and maybe even beyond a single generation.

Ultimately, events are about more than just making money. They can provide valuable opportunities for connection and community building that can support our mission and help us achieve our goals. By considering the intangible value of events when planning museum programs and events, we can ensure that we are creating experiences that benefit both our visitors and our museum in the long run.

-Iona Whatford, *Museum Manager*



## *From the Archives*

by Andrew Spearin



Servant's Quarter's Bedroom

Entering the recently opened servant's quarters bedroom at Cottonwood Mansion, we delve into the lives of Thomas Sheppard and Alice Day, a young couple who built a family within these walls.

Tom, a young Englishman with a humble past, was sent to Canada as a "Home Boy" by the National Children's Home in London. Mary Steward, who cared for him, appealed to Lillian Holmes on his behalf, describing Tom as a "fine, active, cheerful little fellow." In the mid-1890s, Lillian granted Tom permission to work as a sharecropper at Cottonwood Mansion, saving him from a bleak future in the workhouse and allowing him to build a life and family in Haldimand County.

Tom's life took a significant turn when he married Alice Day, the daughter of Edmond Day and Isabella Bartlett of nearby Cheapside. The marriage record from January 22, 1900, at Jarvis, Ontario,

states: "Thomas SHEPPARD, 28, farmer, England, Rainham, parents not known, married Alice DAY, 24, Walpole, same, d/o Edmond DAY & Isabella BARTLETT, with - Richard SPEARING of Selkirk & Mary DAY of Cheapside."

Together, Tom and Alice lived and worked at Cottonwood Mansion, raising their first child, Verna Mabel. Tom's sharecropping agreement with Lillian Holmes allowed the family to establish themselves in the community.

Over the years, Tom and Alice's family continued to grow. They left Cottonwood to sharecrop for J. Sherk and welcomed two more children: Charles Edmond and Gertrude Isabel. Their journey led them to purchase a 75-acre farm in Walpole, where they raised their youngest children, Elizabeth Grace and Ivan Day Sheppard.

As we explore the Servant's Quarters bedroom and uncover the story of Tom Sheppard and Alice Day, we are reminded of the resilience and determination of those who came before us. Their story is an integral part of Cottonwood Mansion's history, a testament to the lives of the working class who helped shape the community we know today.

We extend our gratitude to Marilyn Culver Lauer, whose contributions have ensured the preservation of Tom Sheppard and Alice Day's history.



**FARMER'S & MAKER'S**  
**MARKET**

AT COTTONWOOD MANSION MUSEUM  
740 HALDIMAND RD. 53 SELKIRK, ON



**SEPTEMBER 23RD**  
**11-3PM**



FREE MANSION TOURS, FOOD TRUCKS, KIDS  
ACTIVITIES, AND LOTS OF LOCAL VENDORS!

VENDOR PLOTS (10 X 10 PLOT) AVAILABLE FOR  
\$55. TO REGISTER, VISIT  
[COTTONWOODMANSIONMUSEUM.COM](http://COTTONWOODMANSIONMUSEUM.COM)