

## Monthly Update

November/December 2022



Photography by Andrew Spearin

### President's Message

Clayton Spears | Cottonwood Mansion Preservation Foundation

I have always maintained that every cloud has a silver lining, and I recall a quote I heard many years ago; "Sometimes when things are falling apart, they actually may be falling into place", and this adage came to fruition in November of this year. The heating in the mansion is serviced by two furnaces and the unit in the servant's quarters has been inoperable for several years, which pushed the unit in the main portion of the house to its limit. Also, it did not have a functioning humidifier, which we learned was one of the major causes for the numerous plaster cracks throughout the house. An inspection was done on this latter unit on Monday, November 21st with the result being

that it was ordered to be shut down. Naturally, with two sold out events taking place at the end of this particular week, a panic situation arose and this is when the silver lining started to appear. Iona contacted a company which, when it learned Cottonwood Mansion Museum is a not-for-profit entity, pulled out all of its stops to replace both furnaces under very affordable terms and conditions. To further augment the company's willingness in stepping up to the



Brand new smaller furnace unit with humidifier

plate to help, a lawyer's confirmation was received on the Friday of the same week confirming that Cottonwood is named as one of the beneficiaries in the will of a deceased patron, and the amount declared is substantially greater than the cost of replacing both furnaces. We will outline details of this bequest at a later date.

In closing, I recently spent some quiet personal time at the Mansion and I couldn't help but feel a positive ambience as I visited each room. While I appreciate the fact that there are several structural undertakings that must be addressed in the immediate future, I am confident that Cottonwood Mansion Museum will continue to be a major historical site in Haldimand County for many years to come.

Clayt Spears, *President*



Brand new larger furnace unit with humidifier



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## Past Events

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For the first time ever, Cottonwood ran public Ghost Walks this past October, and they were a resounding success. Over 90 tickets were sold to this event, which ran for 3 evenings in late October. This event was run alongside Spirit Hunters Ontario, who completed a private rental investigation in June 2022, and became intrigued with the site and its history. After much demand for public ghost events, Cottonwood approached the group to see if a partnership would be possible to offer Ghost Walks to the public, and the group zealously agreed, and spent many hours preparing for and executing this event. A big thank you to the Spirit Hunters Ontario team who care deeply about Cottonwood and have greatly contributed to this event's success!

The holiday season has been a busy one for the mansion! All six evenings of Candlelight Tours and three Christmas Afternoon Teas have completely sold out. Two of the Cottonwood by Candlelight tours are admission by donation of a new unopened toy for a child in need, and the first Toy Drive night raised 12 toys! We are looking forward to our second evening and seeing how many toys we can donate to those in need in our local community.

Since our last newsletter, Cottonwood has raised over \$8000 between events and private rentals. We are also getting many wedding bookings, with 5 weddings for 2023 and 2 for 2024, with more to come. We are going into the new year feeling optimistic and excited for our new events and initiatives!



Visitors on the Cottonwood Ghost Walks



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## Updates

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Back in September 2022, Cottonwood Mansion was successful in its application for Haldimand County's "Great to Grand" Growing Tourism Experiences program. This grant program, funded by FedDev Ontario, provided Cottonwood Mansion with a 12 week course on hands-on experiential tourism, over \$15,000 in development resources, and connected us with local partners throughout the region to help us create our very own sensory based, hands-on tourism experience. From this program, our newest initiative was born: The Victorian House Guest Experience. Guests attending this experience will be transported back to the 19th century and treated as house guests welcomed to Cottonwood Mansion. Guests partake in Victorian entertainment, cooking, and leisure activities, a white glove experience with the museum's collection items, as well as a full meal accompanied by live music. This 4-5 hour hands-on experience was piloted with industry professionals on December 7th, and it was a big success. We received overwhelmingly positive feedback, and are getting ready to go to market with this experience early in the new year.

In addition to this exciting news, Cottonwood's Victorian House Guest Experience is now being nominated for a 2022 Innovative Experience of the Year Award through Ontario Southwest Awards. The nomination alone is a great honour, and we would like to say a huge thank you to the county who supported this program, and to KLB Marketing who helped us every step of the way.

Stay tuned for some awesome promotional materials on the Victorian House Guest Experience that will be released to our website early 2023!



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## Updates Continued

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Cottonwood Mansion officially opened the doors to it's Gift Shop in November! The Gift Shop at Cottonwood Mansion has been a hit with visitors attending events, and since it's opening, we have had over \$800 (gross profit) in sales.

The Gift Shop aims to raise funds for the mansion, provide visitors with take homes that are unique and connected to the site and our county, and support small local businesses. You can purchase Cottonwood Mansion branded goods like mugs, postcards and cards, keychains, and our Cottonwood Heritage Tea Blend. We are also very pleased to be working with several small businesses, and currently we also have goodies from Muddy Lane Maple Syrup from Selkirk, Bonnieheath Lavender Farm and Winery goods, Jelly Brothers regional maps, Dried flower wreaths



from Concession Road Garden in Jarvis, and a candle company that makes beeswax candles from authentic 19th century candle molds. We are still reaching out to more local businesses for more handmade goods.

Stay tuned for some exciting new items that will come to our gift shop in the new year!



## Upcoming Events

### Christmas Afternoon Tea: Sold Out

Saturday, December 17th, 2022

\$60 per person

1:00pm

Enjoy a beautiful Afternoon Tea setting at Cottonwood Mansion all dressed up for the holidays. Learn about Victorian Christmas traditions and enjoy a delightful afternoon tea meal with some added Christmas goodies.



### Clayt & Helen Spears' 60th Anniversary Celebration

Sunday, December 18th, 2022

2:00-4:00pm

Our very own Clayt & Helen are celebrating their 60th Wedding Anniversary at Cottonwood Mansion. Come out and celebrate with them! Donations to the mansion are appreciated.



### Volunteer Appreciation Event

Sunday, January 15th, 2023

1:00-3:00pm

All volunteers and prospective volunteers are invited to attend our Volunteer Appreciation event. Food, awards and reflecting on volunteer contributions for the 2022 year are sure to make this event memorable! RSVP by Jan. 9th. to [cottonwoodmansion@gmail.com](mailto:cottonwoodmansion@gmail.com)

### Valentine's Day Afternoon Tea

Saturday, February 11th, 2023

\$60 per person

Timing TBD

Is there anything more romantic than a delicious Afternoon Tea in a Victorian house setting? We think not! Come out for a full serving of Afternoon Tea goodies and a romantic Valentine's Day themed tour.



## From the desk of the Museum Manager



I imagined that the fall and winter months would be a bit slower for Cottonwood Mansion, however it has been quite the opposite with all of the new initiatives, grant applications, and events we've been able to carry out. Apart from the new Gift Shop, our new Experience in the works, and all of the events, private bookings and wedding bookings in the past few months, I've been busily working on updating our site Policies & Procedures Manual. It now includes a site Conservation and Collections Policy, which is a big step forward for Cottonwood, ensuring a plan to keep the collections safe, and enabling the collections to be viewed by visitors for years to come. We also had both furnaces and our humidifier replaced, ensuring the site's airflow is clean and ensuring the plaster work will not deteriorate as quickly. All of these positive steps forward have set us up for success in the new year!

We have quite a list of events planned for 2023, including but not limited to: a Murder Mystery

event, a local foods and drink pairing dinner, a Wardian Case Workshop, a MayDay Celebration, a Queen's Commemorative Tea, Cottonwood's Classic Car Show, a Victorian Garden Party, Fall Harvest Maker Market, Ghost Walks, Ghost Hunts, holiday events and so much more. Make sure to check out our website for the most up to date information on events!

We have also submitted several grant applications and we hope to hear regarding these applications in the new year. These include the Canada Summer Jobs grant, the Ontario Trillium Fund Resilient Communities Fund, the FedDev Tourism Relief Fund, and I'm pleased to share that we were successful with the Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Program and the From Great to Grand: Growing Tourism Experiences in Haldimand County.

We are planning to begin educational programming with local schools and children's groups in 2023. I am so excited to get a new generation of historians and explorers connected to the history of Cottonwood.

Lastly, I wish you all a merry Christmas and Happy Holidays, and hope to see you at events and experiences in the new year. 2022 has been a momentous year for Cottonwood; we have hosted over 25 events, 15 private bookings and weddings, and have had over 1500 visitors onsite. I look forward to seeing what 2023 will bring!

*-Iona Whatford, Museum Manager*

Coming soon to the January/February 2023  
Cottonwood Crier: *From the Archives*



Rediscover stories from Cottonwood's archives alongside Researcher and Trustee Andrew Spearin as he unearths forgotten tales of Cottonwood's history.



Cottonwood Mansion is now booking weddings  
for the 2023, 2024 and 2025 seasons!



For more details on Cottonwood's wedding packages, visit  
us at [www.cottonwoodmansionmuseum.com](http://www.cottonwoodmansionmuseum.com) or view us on  
WeddingWire!