



## REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Councillor Dominique Giguere and  
Councillor Mike Hentz

Mike Baker, Manager of Museum and Archives

**DATE:** November 28, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Elgin County Museum 2023 Annual Report

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### RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the report titled “Elgin County Museum 2023 Annual Report” from Councillor Dominique Giguère and Councillor Mike Hentz and the Manager of Museum and Archives dated November 28, 2023 be received and filed.

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### INTRODUCTION:

Below is the 2023 annual report of the Elgin County Museum submitted on behalf of County Council’s 2023 representatives on the Elgin County Museum Advisory Committee, Councillor Dominique Giguère and Councillor Mike Hentz.

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### BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

The Museum Advisory Committee met three times during 2023. The following are issues and reports brought forward to the committee during this period:

#### Membership

The Museum Advisory Committee is currently composed of:

Amanda Vanden Wyngaert, Chair (County Museums representative)

Donna Lord (Women’s Institute representative)

Charlie Jenkins (Agricultural representative)

Joan Mansell, Secretary (Women’s Institute representative)

Kim Teuscher (At-large member)

Councillor Dominique Giguère (Elgin County Council representative)

Councillor Mike Hentz (Elgin County Council representative)

Jennifer Beauchamp (County Museums representative)

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### Staffing

The museum employed Anna Lise as a summer student funded in part by the Government of Canada's Young Canada Works program. Much of the work involved on-going cataloguing and preparing archival material for transfer. In the fall, a museum research assistant was employed on a short-term contract to complete the collections review.

### 2023 Exhibitions

#### *Cycling: An Unspoken History*

##### *Selections from the Rick Wolfe Collection*

February 20 – September 2

The exhibit was based on 16 bicycles from the 1870s to the 1910s representing the key stages in the evolution of the bicycle. A period work shop was created in part of the space to showcase tools of the 1890s along with a fully-restored 1902 Lamson motor bicycle. The exhibit also featured trophies and medals, period posters and advertising novelties, and many accessories such as oil lamps, horns, and costume.

Considerable media interest was generated by the show, culminating in a feature review in the *Globe and Mail* and an interview with Rick on CBC's Fresh Air. A record seven booked tours of the exhibit were all led by Rick Wolfe himself.

#### *Port Stanley: Canada's Coney Island*

September 30 – February 19, 2024

This exhibition is based on Port Stanley's historic hotels, illustrated through post card reproductions. It included souvenir memorabilia and a number of selections from the recently donated Heritage Port Collection including two oar handles from the official lifesaving boat. Mackie's, the sole surviving occupant of the old boardwalk, was represented by its large, c. 1930, popcorn machine on loan from a private collector.

### Off-Site Exhibitions

A series of monthly exhibitions on different themes were presented at the Southwold Township Library, Shedden.

Toy cars and trucks from the collection were on view at the John Kenneth Galbraith Library, Dutton during the summer along with reproductions of period vehicle images from the archives.

Reproductions of historic hotel post cards were installed in the Port Stanley Library in August.

Selections from Tom Stanley's Dairy Collection and Joanne Erickson's Miniatures Collection were installed at Elgin Manor.

Assistance was provided to the producers of Lawrence Station: The Crash of American Airlines Flagship Erie in creating a display in the Keystone Complex in Shedden for the run of the play.

In November, a panel recounting the history of the 91<sup>st</sup> Battalion CEF was installed at the Armouries to mark the interment of the colours.

### Programmes

Family Day (opening day for Cycling) – 105 attended

Joint with Elgin Historical Society - Wartime Garden, Feb. 22 - 25 attended

Vimy Lecture, Blair Ferguson, April 5 - 43 attended

Cycling exhibit tour with Rick Wolfe, August 24 -18 attended

Paul Allen, baseball book, August 29 - 23 attended

Paul Allen, tobacco book, October 18 - 9 attended

### Tour bookings

Seven tours of the Cycling show were booked mainly by heritage organizations.

### Schools

A total of 10 schools booked the Grade Four Medieval program this year bringing 495 students and attendants to the Heritage Centre. The school program is almost entirely staffed by volunteers many of whom have been with the museum for many years. Two new volunteers joined the team this year.

### Facility Bookings

Several community groups book space regularly at the museum for meetings

Kettle Valley Pioneers

Elgin Historical Society

Women's Institute Elgin County Executive

Rogers Cable booked the space for a taping of Next Week Today; both the curator and Rick Wolfe were interviewed.

The museum's rug hooking group meets regularly in the Heritage Centre.

The Heritage Centre was a stop on the 7 Days in May - annual pancreatic cancer awareness bicycle tour – 30 cyclists participated.

### Events

Ride The Whistlestop! Bike Event, May 27

The event was planned to draw an audience to the exhibition as well as to create an awareness among residents and the cycling community of the Whistlestop Trail, which runs from St. Thomas to Port Stanley along Sunset Drive.

Participants could obtain a printed guide at either the Railway City Tourism office or the Port Stanley Visitors Centre, produced by the Elgin County Museum, highlighting various historical sites and natural features along the trail and illustrated with images from the Elgin County Archives.

The event was held in the parking lot in front of the Heritage Centre and on the adjacent, grassed-in area between the Centre and the County Building.

The exhibition's guest curator Rick Wolfe, rode his Columbia high wheel in costume and provided guided tours of the exhibit.

Several bike-related businesses set up booths.

The museum and the Elgin County Library and St. Thomas Public Library co-ordinated on craft-making tables.

A jazz trio entertained on the lawn.

The Elgin County Archives shot 33 green screen photos during the day.

Elgin County Tourism, Community Paramedicine, Elgin Detachment OPP all had booths.

The event was organized by the museum along with the St. Thomas Public Library, Railway City Tourism and two volunteers from the Railway City Cycling Club. Some sponsorship was received by Doug Tarry Homes and Edward Jones Investments.

Attendance totalled 127; another cycling event is being planned by the committee to take place in St. Thomas in 2024.

### Visitor Statistics

Attendance has rebounded this year to near pre-pandemic levels. Attendance to date is just under 3000 and is the result of a combination of a popular exhibition which ran for most of the year, a record number of school visits and a number of museum programs.

Targets set early in the year in all areas of the museum's operations have been met or exceeded with the exception of booked tours. (See attached detailed attendance report.) Most group bookings were from heritage organizations, the museum's traditional audience. A greater effort will be made next year to identify potential groups possibly in partnership with other museums.

### 2022 Attendance

The museum was closed for four weeks – Jan. 5 - Feb. 1

Walk-in exhibit attendance (to October 26) - 690

Programs and Tours - (to October 26) - 527

Total Attendance for the full year – 1,537

### 2023 (to November 14)

Museum programs	506
Edukits (7)	85
Group tour Bookings (7)	119
Off-site programs (7)	411
School visits (10)	495
Facility bookings (19)	165
Walk-ins	1080
Total attendance	2861

### Permanent Collection

The museum processed 49 donations in 2022.

Highlights include the uniform of a station police officer from #4 Bombing and Gunnery School at Fingal and the flag of the commanding officer of Technical Training School #1 (the present County Administration Building).

### Social Media

Facebook followers – 1,026

Twitter followers - 711

Instagram - 305

The museum posts information on artifacts and exhibitions at least three times a week.

### Gift Shop

2022 net income      \$1,676.16 (to Oct. 26)

2023 net income      \$2,002.00 (to August 31)

### Admissions


2022 Admission donations      \$545.00 (to Oct. 26)

2023 Admission donations      \$1,884.00 (to Oct. 14)

### Bushell Bequest Projects

#### *Murals*

Funding through Bushell Bequest has been provided to the Oneida Nation of the Thames through their Language & Cultural Centre to create a mural for the wall of the Heritage Centre. The subject is a graphic representation of the route followed by those members of the Oneida Nation that came to Upper Canada in 1840. The map will be framed with representations of the Oneida culture and its traditions. The location on the exterior of the Heritage Centre will be the southern portion of the west facing wall which is a change from the initial location reported to Council which indicated the northern portion.



### Collections Review and Storage Consolidation

Nearly all of the remaining unprocessed material in the 4th floor storage area was assessed this year and a number of items identified for removal. They will be offered to other museums first in a disposal process.

This summer several boxes of archival material (approx. 150 pieces) had their database entries updated and were then transferred to the Elgin County Archives.

The transfer of approx. 30 pieces of agricultural equipment now on exhibit at Backus-Page House has been completed.

Additional works of art have been identified for transfer to the St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre.

### Outlook for 2024

A semi-permanent exhibition will be mounted on the east wall of the Heritage Centre drawn from the permanent collection. Selections will be made to highlight aspects of the County's history and to represent, where possible, the individual municipalities.

Collections work will focus on re-shelving the collection and updating location entries in the database.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

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Not applicable.



## ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Serving Elgin	Growing Elgin	Investing in Elgin
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ensuring alignment of current programs and services with community need.  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exploring different ways of addressing community need.  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engaging with our community and other stakeholders.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning for and facilitating commercial, industrial, residential, and agricultural growth.  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fostering a healthy environment.  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhancing quality of place.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ensuring we have the necessary tools, resources, and infrastructure to deliver programs and services now and in the future.  <input type="checkbox"/> Delivering mandated programs and services efficiently and effectively.

## Additional Comments:

## LOCAL MUNICIPAL PARTNER IMPACT:

Not applicable.

## COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS:

Not applicable.

## CONCLUSION:

2023 saw the museum return to pre-pandemic attendance levels thanks to a very popular cycling exhibit and a record number of schools booking the Grade Four Medieval program.

2024 exhibits and programming will rely more on the permanent collection and focus on the highlights of the County's history.

Completion of the comprehensive collections review and storage consolidation will allow for continued improvements to be made in accessing the collection.





All of which is Respectfully Submitted

Councillor Dominique Giguere and  
Councillor Mike Hentz

Mike Baker, Manager of Museum  
and Archives

Approved for Submission

Don Shropshire  
Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk

