

# 2023

## ANNUAL REPORT



ELDON HOUSE  
HERITAGE SITE AND  
GARDENS

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# STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Eldon House is a community Museum dedicated to the preservation, presentation, and interpretation of London, Ontario's "oldest home," through the lens of four generations of the Harris Family. Eldon House has a commitment to acquiring, conserving, researching, interpreting, promoting, and exhibiting material culture that best illustrates the history of Eldon House and London, the Harris Family, and the people who worked in the house, from the period of 1834–1959. The unique Harris collection and accompanying archival material provide an authentic link to Canada's past, representing an irreplaceable legacy. The heritage resources of Eldon House are held in the public trust and aim to provide meaningful and enriching engagement, serving a diverse audience of visitors. As well as education and research, the Museum interprets and promotes local, regional, and national history.

# A MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR, MIKE DONACHIE

It remains a huge honour for me to chair the Board of Directors of Eldon House and to share my thoughts in the annual report for another year. It won't surprise anyone to hear I consider it an eventful time and a testament to our resilience – and commitment to preserving the heritage gem that is our beloved Eldon House.

I extend my sincere appreciation to Don Millar for stepping into the role of Vice Chair with such enthusiasm. Your passion for our mission is truly inspiring, and we are fortunate to have you on our team. As we welcome Don, we also pay tribute to our retiring Vice Chair, Rebecca Griesmayer, whose contributions to Eldon House were invaluable; we wish Rebecca all the best in the future.

I must also commend our entire Board for their fierce advocacy during the City of London's multi-year budget process. Your voices were heard loud and clear, and I appreciate your dedication to ensuring we are properly funded and maintain good relations with the City. Thank you to Bruce





Duncan, Doug Fleming, Megan Halliday, Louanne Henderson, Devinder Luthra, Bryan McClure, and Joe O'Neil.

To each and every volunteer and visitor who has lent their time and talents to Eldon House, whether through guiding tours, preserving artifacts, supporting our events, or more I extend my heartfelt gratitude. We simply couldn't do it without you. The people make this place work.

And, on that note, to our remarkable staff team, led by the incomparable Curator-Director, Tara Wittmann, I offer my deepest thanks. Your tireless efforts, creativity, and resilience in the face of challenges have been extraordinary for so many years.

As we look ahead to the future, we remain determined to preserve Eldon House as a place where our community comes together to tell its stories. I've always loved telling stories and that's a major part of why I loved Eldon House. I hope you'll come and join us here soon.

# STRATEGIC PLAN

The Eldon House Strategic Plan, which was created in 2017, officially expired in 2020. The importance of a strategic plan is to determine the directives of the Museum, and to establish goals to achieve them. While this document is important, the Board determined that during this uncertain era of COVID-19, Eldon House should create an Interim Strategic Plan to see the Museum through the pandemic, and to the eventual 'new normal,' rather than draft one that would have shifting priorities. The Interim Strategic Plan was drafted by several members of the Board of Directors and outlines the objectives for Eldon House:

**Vision:** Knowing ourselves by experiencing our heritage.

**Mission:** We are a distinctive community heritage destination, committed to empowering our visitors and participants to:

- a) Explore and preserve our local and Canadian history through the life and times of the Harris Family
- b) Escape to a unique oasis in downtown London
- c) Engage in learning, fun and lived experiences

**Principles:** We believe in:

- a) Authentic visitor experiences
- b) Valuing our past
- c) Celebrating our diversity
- d) Honouring the Harris women
- e) Collaboration
- f) Innovation
- g) Accountability

**Strategic Directions:**

- a) Preserving our valued heritage resources
- b) Achieving visitor growth through diverse experiences



c) Creating a year-round downtown oasis

d) Building our capabilities to deliver



# A MESSAGE FROM THE CURATOR DIRECTOR, TARA WITTMANN



2023 has been an exciting year for Eldon House Heritage Site and Gardens. As ever, the Board of Directors and Staff at the Museum are motivated to engage diverse audiences to enjoy the site and stories of Eldon House, while preserving the collection for future generations. We have enhanced several areas of our services and operations in 2023 and further explored the needs and wants of the community that we serve. We have continued to strive to break down barriers for our visitors and have improved technological and physical elements of the site in reaching that goal. 2023 saw a diverse mix of exhibitions, public programs, tours, and

activities that attracted varied audiences and added to the accessibility, both physically and technologically, of the Museum's offerings for our diverse community. It also ushered in new programming and partnership initiatives aiming to strengthen our existing relationships in the community and extend the scope of the historical narrative and enlarge its cultural scale.

I would like to extend my most sincere thanks to the many individuals and groups who have made this year such a success. This includes our key stakeholders, the members of the Eldon House Museum Board, Staff Team, Volunteers, and the Community for their extraordinary efforts over the past year. The following report offers just a taste of the year's achievements, all of which help us meet our mandate and vision of 'Knowing ourselves by experiencing our heritage.' I hope that, as you read on, you will come away with a greater sense of the passion, vision and innovation that the Museum team demonstrates in everything they do, which will carry us into 2024, when the museum marks the 190th anniversary of historic Eldon House.



# EXHIBITIONS

Presenting captivating exhibitions is one of the keyways that Eldon House shares the site and Harris Family history with our visitors, while also exploring local, national, and international themes, stories and cultures. As a Historic House Museum, Eldon House inhabits over 8000 square feet of permanent exhibition space, which is regularly refreshed and conserved. In addition to the historic home itself, there are four permanently mounted cases which display curated exhibitions that expand thematically on the “life and times” of the Harris Family as outlined in the Museum’s mandate.

The pandemic encouraged us to find new ways of engaging with and reaching our exhibition audience and we have been delighted with the innovations that have been developed by necessity. In 2023, we were able to offer a mix of “in-house” and digital exhibits, and going forward will continue to create a variety of exhibitions that will inhabit several communication platforms. The exhibits that were featured in 2023 explored the ongoing themes of domestic life, tea traditions and cultural exploration, while also naming a wider interest as we explored “A Year of Fashion” in our various exhibits, public programs, and engagements:

## THREAD COUNT: FABRICS AND FASHION



Through 2023, Eldon House celebrated a “year of fashion” through its exhibitions and programming. This exhibit featured the component pieces that support fashion, including fabric swatches, lace, embroidery, beadwork, and thread. The textiles on display were drawn from the Eldon House Collection including many hand-made embellishments attributed to the Harris Family as well as exotic fabrics brought back from their international travels.

# FASHION FOIBLES



Milly Harris ca. 1900. Courtesy of Western Archives and Special Collections

Fashion can change a lot over a century, and in the Victorian to Edwardian eras, this is especially true: moving from bustles and leg-o-mutton sleeves to the short and boyish dresses of the 1920s. The Harris Family who inhabited Eldon House from 1834–1959 took thousands of photographs chronicling their lives. The collection is now housed at Western University Archives and Special Collections as part of the Harris Family Fonds. This exhibition explored this collection, alongside period advertisements and illustrations that show some of the interesting “Fashion Foibles” of the past.

## FLAPPERS TO FROCKS: FASHION IN THE 1920S

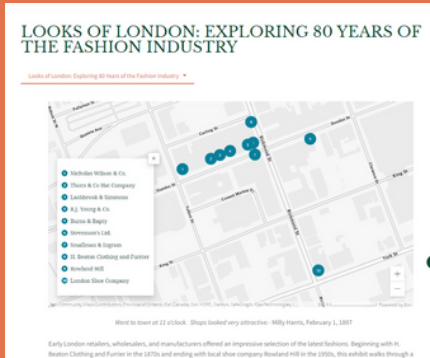


This exhibit was a key feature of the Year of Fashion and highlighted changing fashions and fads of the Roaring Twenties. The Flappers and Frocks exhibit took place on both floors of the main house, and was themed per room, focusing on topics such as daywear, evening wear, sports clothing, and Egyptomania and Orientalism in fashion.

It showcased over 25 beautiful pieces on loan from the Fashion History Museum in Cambridge, Museum London, and Eldon House. Eldon House staff would like to thank Curators from both Museum London and the Fashion History Museum for their loans, as these pieces allowed for an immersive and comprehensive visual timeline.

The garments were enhanced by three case-exhibits that contextualized the history of Fashion from the Eldon House perspective. This exhibit ran from May until September and was viewed by over 2600 people.

# LOOKS OF LONDON: EXPLORING 80 YEARS OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY -ONLINE



This exhibit, which was authored by Research Assistant S. Pointer, focused on textile and garment production in London, ON from the mid-1800s to the 1940s. This exhibit looked at old photos and catalogs from some of the big names in London's textile scene, and their proximity to Eldon House and overlap with the Harris Family.



# TAKING TEA



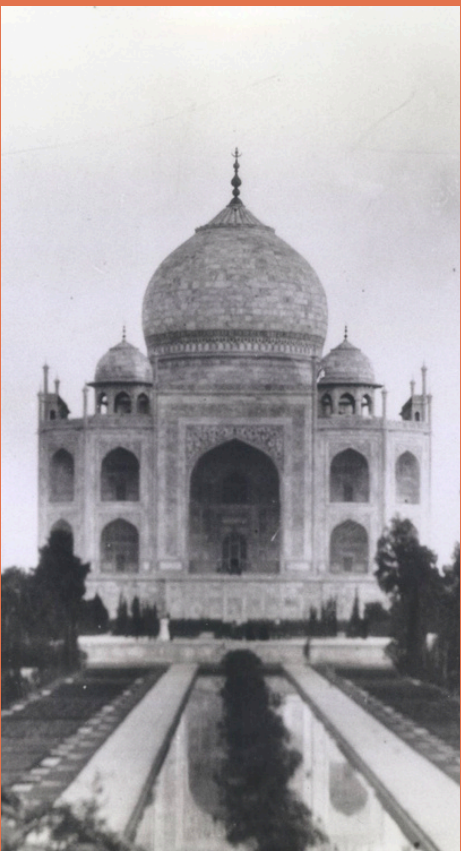
Harris Family at tea ca. 1898.  
Courtesy of Western Archives and  
Special Collections

The Harris Family of Eldon House frequently refer to “taking tea” in their letters and diaries as it was an important staple for their diets and social lives. Three generations of Harris women refer not only to tea, but also to the interesting discussions and practices that resulted from the occasion. This exhibition explores the tea practices of a variety of cultures and how the inhabitants of London, Ontario integrated the customs practiced in Britain into their own lives.

Artifacts from the Eldon House Collection illustrated the vast paraphernalia used in enacting

elaborate teas and were accompanied by first person accounts of Londoners during the Victorian period.

# ORIGINS: INDIA



Taj Mahal ca. 1897. Courtesy of  
Western Archives and Special  
Collections

The aim of the “Origins” series exhibition is to explore the stories and significance of cultural objects within their own original context. What did these items mean to the peoples who created them, and how did they come into being? This series contextualizes some of the objects that were collected by the Harris Family of Eldon House, on their various travels, and how the artifacts fit into the historical trend of colonial collecting. In this inaugural exhibit, viewers visually traveled to India, where the Harris Family visited in 1897, collecting a plethora of items, and recording their thoughts and observations of their trip- in journals and letters. The artifacts on display allowed viewers to explore their own stand-alone history - of their creation, significance and original context.

This segment focuses on the Indian subcontinent including religious objects.

# VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS



Front Hall. Courtesy of Joe O'Neil

Through the month of December, Eldon House annually celebrates the season with a museum-wide exhibit on Victorian Christmas. This year, our partnership with the Garden Club of London who traditionally created much of the greenery and dried flower arrangements was suspended. This year, the wonderful arrangements that were featured throughout the Museum were made by Eldon House staff and volunteers.

# CHRISTMAS CURIOSITIES



Many of the Christmas celebrations we enjoy today can be linked to traditions started in the Victorian Era: from Christmas trees to giving presents. However, there was a darker side to Victorian Christmas, where ghosts and devils appeared to punish the undeserving. This exhibit illustrated some of the Christmas "curiosities" by reproducing graphic Victorian postcards.



# RESEARCH, COLLECTIONS, AND CONSERVATION


The Eldon House staff team, internship students, and Curator Director are committed to and engaged in various historical research projects. As part of the Museum's mission, the "life and times" of the Harris Family is the historical reference point for the myriad of happenings on the site: our public programming, educational and interpretational programming, as well as our exhibitions and publications. With generations of family archive material including letters, diaries, and photographs available for research at Western Archives, Western University, the Harris Family Fonds is an invaluable collection of primary source documents.

## TRANSCRIPTIONS

All full and part-time Eldon House staff contribute to ongoing transcription projects, as time permits. Milly Harris (1862-1959), as one of the most prolific family writers, has been the diarist we have been following, through her girlhood, travels, and later life.

In 2023, several new diary transcriptions





progressed, related to the Harris Family travels. We continue with this project, now moving into the (literal) “last leg” of the world tour and into the next century. Several original diaries were photographed at Western Archives, which are visually reproduced for staff to work from as they record and decode the diary entries. After these several years of work, we aim to formalize the transcriptions in a publication so that Milly Harris’ story can be shared with a larger audience!

## RESEARCH

Through 2023 Eldon House staff explored several directions of research that aimed to elaborate on the Harris Family narrative and museum collection. Working toward thematic exhibitions ensures that curatorial staff can undertake fresh investigations into expanding our knowledge of the site, and in 2023 two key areas were explored: the world of fashion, especially rooted in the 1920s, and early London settlement, informing the work being done in preparation for the 190th Anniversary of Eldon House in 2024. Eldon House is fortunate to be able to work with external researchers and, as such, takes every opportunity to share and learn. In 2023, curatorial staff were able to liaise with several researchers, and make international connections with academics and curators who learned of Eldon House’s unique collection through online platforms and published articles. Concentrated research went into learning more about the origins, manufacture, and distribution of the various late-Victorian Japanese wallpaper in

the museum. This interest brought together academics from three continents, sparked great enthusiasm, and better grounded the Museum's understanding of the unique nature of the papers, as well as the circuitous route that they took from Japan to Britain then London, Ontario!

## COLLECTIONS, CONSERVATION, AND CARE

Eldon House is committed to the highest standard of collection management of its artifacts and facility. An active "preventive conservation" program is continually in rotation through the site, ensuring regular treatment and assessment of artifacts. In addition to this, several professional conservation projects are undertaken each year, funded by the "Lucy Little Endowment Fund."

Eldon House applies best practices to all activities associated with preserving the Museum's collections; this includes monitoring the museum environment and ensuring high standards in exhibiting, storing, and transporting its objects. In addition, curatorial staff undertake treatments on all objects to be displayed or loaned and conduct research both on the collections and on conservation issues. The Eldon House Collection has enjoyed intensive attention through 2023, where over 185 artifacts were formally catalogued, conditioned, and photographed as collection







records were updated in the PastPerfect database.

The largest conservation project undertaken in 2023 was the continuation of a successful “glass partition” project, the first phase of which was completed in 2016. The purpose of the project was to reduce the deterioration of the historic anaglyptic wallpaper in high-traffic public areas of the museum. Following best conservation principles, the partitions were installed with a minimum of anchor points and are entirely removable. They act as a valuable barrier, but also allow for conversations with our guests about museum conservation practices and the work of preservation.

Every year, the Collections and Policy Committee enjoys the opportunity to consider a broad range of artifacts and archival materials that have been offered by generous donors to its permanent collection. As a rule, very few pieces are absorbed into our collection, with some exceptions that are set out in our Collections Policy. One class of artifact that is an ongoing acquisition priority at Eldon House are pieces that have a primary connection to the Harris Family. We delight in bringing artifacts back “home” to further our mandate to share the stories of the Harris Family and their life in London, Ontario. Additionally, Eldon House seeks to further our engagement by accepting certain hands-on artifacts into the collection, which can be used for public and educational programming. This year, Eldon House was pleased to accept some hands-on artifacts into our collection that better demonstrate the life of Londoners.

# STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Eldon House staff continued to grow and change in 2023 with the introduction of a Gardens and Grounds Coordinator, K. Davidson, and the retirement and hiring of several Historical Interpreters, summer students, and research assistants.

The division of the Facilities and Garden's role occurred during the pandemic, when administrative staff saw a benefit in having specialized knowledge in each area. The position of Facilities and Maintenance Coordinator had previously been filled by G. Neves Lopes, and we were excited to welcome K. Davidson as our Gardens and Grounds Coordinator in April 2023. K. Davidson is a graduate of Fanshawe's Horticultural Program and has extensive experience with heritage plants and site planning. During the 2023 season, she transformed the gardens and created a lovely space for visitors. We are excited to have her return in the 2024 season.

2023 saw a change in our Historical Interpreter team. Two Historical Interpreter's left their positions: C. Hudson, who is now working as a Curator in Huron County, and our longest serving Historical Interpreter, C. Luke. C. Luke had been employed by Eldon House since the 1970s and was one of the main knowledge keepers for the Museum, responsible for pivotal research on the servants of Eldon House. She has formally retired, though continues to correspond with Museum staff. We wish both C. Hudson and C. Luke the best and hope to see them as guests. Eldon House hired two new Historical Interpreters to the team, G. LaBelle, and A. McKenzie. G. LaBelle has a background in History from King's University College and also works with other heritage institutions in London. A. McKenzie is also a History major from Western University and has been involved with local museums and the public library for nearly a decade. During their time at Eldon House, both have proved to be wonderful assets to the Museum and bring an expert level of knowledge and enthusiasm to the role.

During the summer months, Eldon House received funding from the Canada Summer Jobs Grant for four student positions. Funding from Canada Summer Jobs allows Eldon House to work with youth to host our annual Summer Tea Program, and work in other areas of the Museum. We were fortunate to have three students working as part of our Summer Tea Program: R. Ashraf and D. Awogbemi, students from Western University, and C. Grzyb-Reed, a University of Toronto student. All three attended to guests coming for tea during July and August. A fourth student, J. Belan, worked with our Garden and Grounds Coordinator in maintaining the site, and assisted with Summer Tea on busy days. We would like to thank these students for their contributions this summer and wish them the best.

Eldon House was also fortunate to continue our partnership with Western University in receiving Research Assistants. It has been nearly a decade since we began partnering with the Public History Master's Program, and in the 2023 season, there were three students at the Museum. S. Pointer was at Eldon House for the 2022–2023 school year. S. Pointer previously studied at Mount Royal University with a degree in History, a minor in Business, and a minor in Indigenous Studies. During her time at Eldon House, she worked on various collections and research projects, and developed an affinity for conservation work and interpretation. She graduated from the program in the fall of 2023. For the 2023–2024 academic year, Eldon House was lucky enough to have two students interested in Research Assistant positions. K. Kennedy is a graduate of Carleton University, studying music, and medieval and early modern history. D. Walls is a graduate of Huron's History department with a minor in English and cultural studies. Both Research Assistants have been busy working alongside full time museum staff and are extremely interested in museum conservation and collections maintenance. Additionally, they are working on projects related to social media engagement, interpretation, and exhibition preparation, providing them with a well-rounded resume.



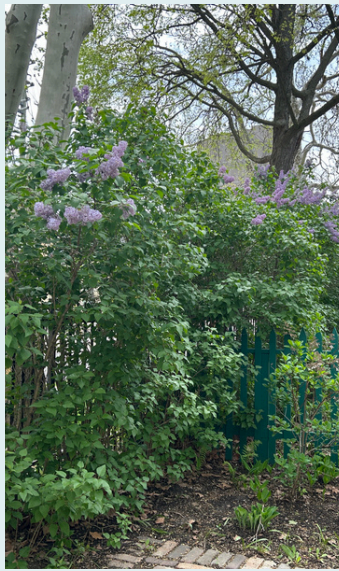
# FACILITIES AND GROUNDS

Maintaining a 189-year-old house involves partnerships with multiple sectors of London's municipalities, and many hands onsite. Eldon House staff would like to thank our partners at the City of London for their involvement in maintaining our heritage house. Special thanks go to the Culture Office led by R. Armistead for her advice and investment in the Museum. We would also like to thank our Heritage Planners under the supervision of K. Gonyou for helping us plan for the future and preserve the buildings and its grounds. Maintenance of the site would not be possible without the work of City Facilities, whose staff are very patient with our staff and understanding of our site's quirks. We would like to acknowledge their hard work and support. And finally, a thank you to City Security and Fire Services, who are responsive to the site and the sensitive nature of heritage.



Our day-to-day site maintenance is the responsibility of various museum staff. Everyone does their best to ensure that the site and the collection are well taken care of, and that the site looks presentable for our visitors. Special credit goes to G. Neves Lopes, our Facilities and Maintenance Coordinator, who

focuses on the public and private areas of the buildings. G. Neves Lopes has been working as our Facilities and Maintenance Coordinator for the past three years and takes great pride in his responsibilities. We would like to thank him for his extraordinary efforts.

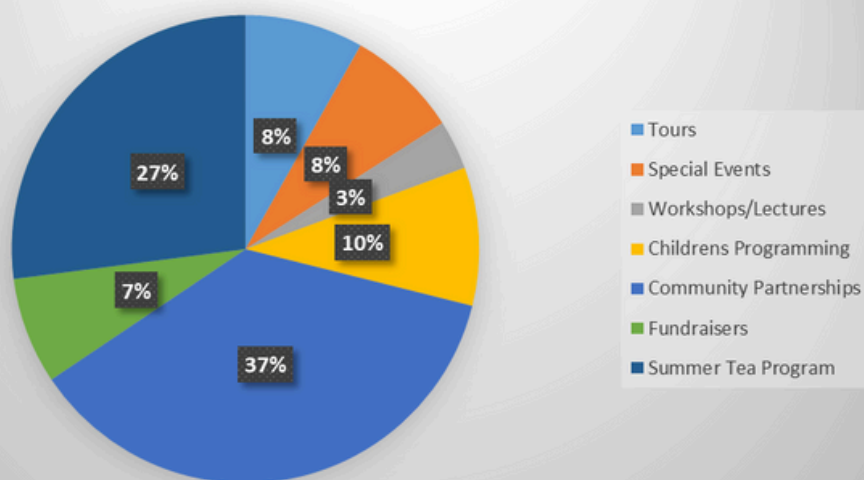


This year was K. Davidson's first year as our Garden and Grounds Coordinator. K. Davidson has a background in horticulture from Fanshawe College and experience working with various growers in and around the city. During her first year, she was responsible for maintenance and care of the grounds and led a large initiative to redesign the herbaceous border for the spring of 2024. Over the course of the spring and summer she worked alongside our incredible Gardens Volunteers to create a beautiful and colourful garden that attracted the attention of visitors. There was no end to positive feedback on the state of our grounds and many images shared over social media this year highlighted the wonderful gardens. The fall saw the last of the lovely blooms, and K. Davidson along with the volunteers worked to prepare the gardens for the coming winter and return of spring. We would like to give special thanks to our garden's volunteers: L. Beaujot, M. Hoffmann Chase, B. Keenan, C. Lynch, M. Pflieger, and B. Rutledge for their amazing work this year. Staff are excited to welcome back the volunteers and K. Davidson in spring 2024 and see the lovely blooms once again.

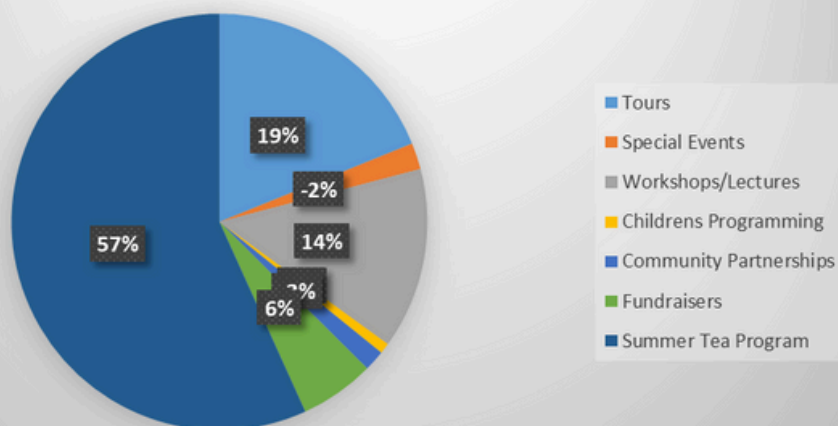
# PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

Programming throughout the 2023 season on a whole was a great success! We have truly seen ourselves out of challenging times, specifically regarding lack of attendance due to COVID-19 in 2020 through 2022. With a guarantee of audience participation, more programming and special events were able to take place. Eldon House hosted countless specialty tours, thematic workshops, fascinating lectures, exciting children's programs, and enacted several brand-new programs along with the return of annual events. The Program Coordinator was sad to closeout the 2023 Year of Fashion, but is excited to celebrate Eldon House's 190th Anniversary in 2024!

### Public Programming Attendance 2023



### Overall Most Financially Profitable Public Programming by Categories 2023



Eldon House hosted many special events and tours, children's events, workshops, lectures, and community events in 2023. In total, 39 events occurred which, in total, spanned over 51 days (excluding all of December during Victorian Christmas.) A total of 2,793 adults and 694 children under 12 participated in said events totaling 3,487 patrons.

# TOURS



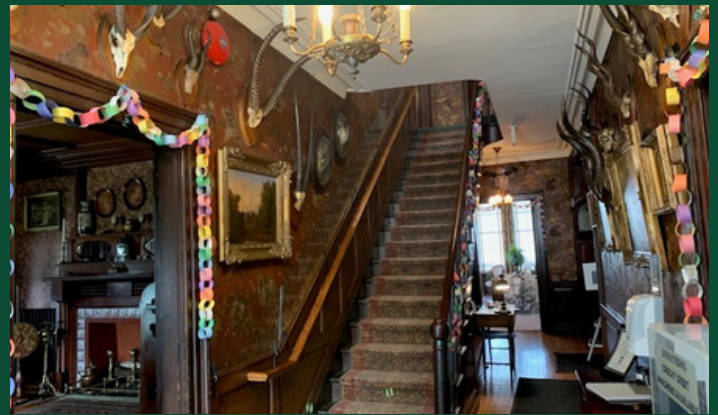
Eldon House hosted a total of 9 specialty tours throughout the 2023 season. These included: the greatly anticipated Behind the Ropes tour in which guests eagerly explored the attic, basement, and unseen nooks and crannies of the bedrooms and servants wing; the Upstairs, Downstairs delving into the duties and lives of the Victorian servant; the Cupping and Cocaine reflecting on one-hundred years of health and wellness of a Victorian woman; and the Flappers And Frocks: Fashion In The 1920s touring the temporary 1920s fashion exhibit; Garden Tours in the summer, as well as several spooky tours including the ever popular Curses, Crimes, and Haunts evening walking tour of downtown London; a historical walking tour of Woodland Cemetery; our nighttime October tour The Morbid and Macabre, which focuses on Victorian traditions surrounding death, dying, and mourning; and to kick-off the holiday season The Ghost of Christmas Past tour discussing the impact author Charles Dickens had on the Christmas season. In total, 372 people participated in these tours.

# SPECIAL EVENTS

Eldon House hosted 4 distinct special events. The first of the year was the New Year's Levee, a Harris Family tradition of inviting people into the home at the start of the year. 2023's Levee was well attended and gave visitors their final chance to see the Christmas decorations. In February, the Museum celebrated Amelia Harris's 226th Birthday on February 19th. This event involved unveiling the bust of Amelia, which had been in storage and then offsite for conservation work.

The summer started with our Canada Day celebration on July 1st, sponsored by Celebrating the Communities of Canada grant. We utilized the grounds and gardens as a performance space for local artists including Latin singer David Rayo, English folk singer Sam Hornby, and Bollywood and salsa dance company BRDRLESS Dance. Visitors enjoyed self-guided tours of the Museum, Victorian games on the front lawn, sat to enjoy the live music and learned how to dance to Bollywood music or a simple salsa step.

The year ended with the Museum being open in December for our Victorian Christmas along with having a selfie station on the front grounds with our Father Christmas Standee.





# CHILDREN'S EVENTS

Throughout 2023 the Program Coordinator test-piloted a new initiative workshop series titled: Victorian Crafting for Kids. This six-part series spanned February through November, excluding the summer months, in which children and their parent or guardian participated in a one-hour workshop learning about a unique and hands-on Victorian handicraft. The initiative sought to encourage younger generations to engage with local history and heritage through crafting such as flower pressing, cyanotype photography, corking (inspired by the Year of Fashion), quilling, and more.

The Victorian Crafting for Kids workshop series ran alongside staple Eldon House programs including Kids 1st Day in June facilitated by Investing in Children, the Teddy Bear Picnic at the end of August, Spooky Gourd Painting as part of the Downtown Candy Crawl in October, and Victorian Christmas Crafting for Kids in December! In total, there were 525 participants, in which approximately half were children, and, thus, the next generation of Eldonians!



# WORKSHOPS AND LECTURES

Eldon House hosted a total of 9 workshops and 3 lectures totaling 159 participants. Eldon House welcomed Susan Hickey of the Canadian Embroiders Guild to host an embroidery workshop in May; yoga in the garden was instructed by practitioner Kim Fulton in July and August; the Museum's Grounds and Gardens Coordinator Kendall Davis hosted two Bouquet Building Workshops in August and September utilizing Eldon House's gardens and fresh cut flowers; and in October Nyxx Noir and Melanie Pierce guided guests into the history and art of tarot pulling and card reading during the Age of Tarot workshop.

November kicked off the holiday season with three seasonal workshops including quilling paper ornaments, making pulp into paper with artisan Ashley Ranger, and Grounds and Gardens Coordinator Kendal Davidson instructed two dozen participants in making a holiday wreath using fresh cut greenery and holly.

The Museum Coordinator facilitated three separate lecture series: Fit For a Queen: A History Of Drag Fashion; What We Wore: 1920s; and What We Wore: 1890s. These lectures tied directly to the Year of Fashion and partnered with local drag artists Nicki Nastasia and Miss Edie Violet and YouTube seamstress and historical costumer Christina van Hardeveld. Each lecture delved into historical fashion, the trends of then and now, and historical costuming dos and don'ts.



# FUNDRAISING

In 2021 Eldon House launched its first Summer Market to great success! Since then, the annual Summer Market has developed into a fundraising venture with profits directed towards the Interpretive Centre kitchen construction project. A portion of the donations and vendors fees made on June 18th go towards this long-term goal. This project was initiated in 2019 and put on hold throughout COVID-19 but has re-emerged with gusto! The approximately 500 visitors came to support local artists and entrepreneurs and Eldon House can not wait for the next one in 2024!

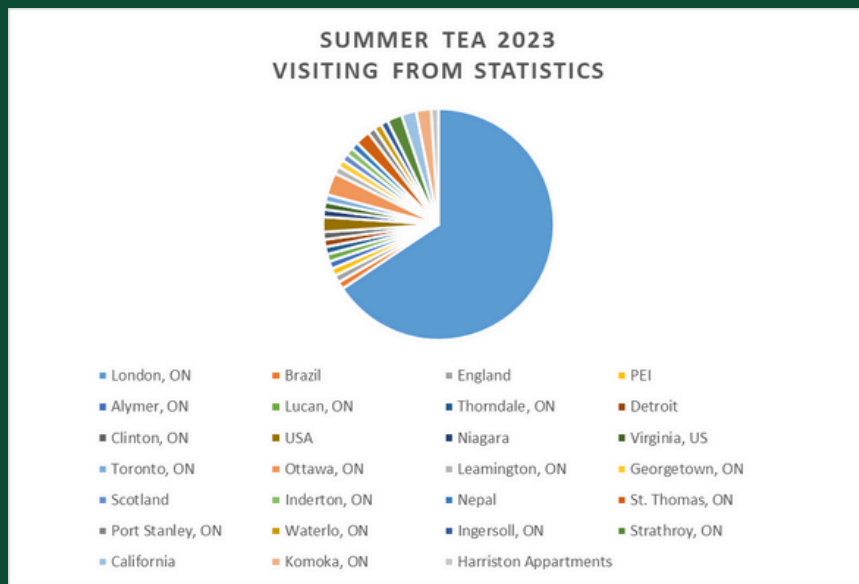
Thank you to the vendors who came out and participated in this wonderful event!

## List of Summer Market Vendors:

- 1.Hopes & Dreams Pottery
- 2.Medowlark Market
- 3.BiiVii Creative
- 4.Purely Wicked
- 5.Gnolia Designs
- 6.Forgive Me Knot Macrame
- 7.Purple & Peridot
- 8.Halington Art
- 9.Heavenly Beads
- 10.Olliviatuckco.
- 11.Pixie Paintthings
- 12.AlterEden
- 13.Artful Design
- 14.Grandma's China Cupboard
- 15.The Artistry Snug
- 16.Turtle Works



# SUMMER TEA



The 2023 Summer Tea Program was once again a great success! Generally, inquiries about the upcoming menu and registration start as early as January! In total, this highly anticipated program saw 1,263 participants which included 1,219 adults with 44 children under 12 years of age. All catering was provided by Grace

Restaurant located on 215 Dundas St, London, and the tea by The Tea Haus on the second floor of the Covent Garden Market.

Both the Full Tea at \$45.00 and the Light Tea was \$20.00 included 2 scones with clotted cream and homemade jam, fresh fruit for garnish, 2 mini lemon lavender madeleines, 1 berry shortcake, and a selection of one of our loose-leaf teas. The Full Tea also included 3 savoury tea sandwiches (egg, cucumber and radish), a dark chocolate brownie with Earl grey icing dusted with dried rose petals and a crumbly lemon tart.

Live music was preformed every Sunday afternoon provided by the London Arts Council as part of London Arts Live.



"The scones and mango fruit tea were delicious. The scones especially were soft inside but flaky outside, they went so well with the clotted cream."

"We love the mini lavender cookies, the scones, and the tea. Overall, the service was amazing, and the gardens were beautiful."

## Summer Tea at Eldon House

July 2-August 26  
Wednesday-Sunday  
\$20.00-45.00

Register online



# EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING



Throughout 2023 Eldon House hosted over 200 students and 80 teachers/chaperones on guided tours of the museum, outdoor walking tours, and unique and exciting activities and workshops. In total this accumulated six separate schools and institutions including Thames Valley District School Board, Catholic District School Board, Fanshawe College, private schools, and homeschool groups.

Our annual December Victorian Christmas Tours and crafting workshops were sought after along with our historical outdoor walking tours. Specifically, we hosted River Adventure Walks or the Neighborhood Walking

delving into the uses of the Antler River/Thames River, the Indigenous persons use of the water and surrounding land, European settlement, and the growth of London from a village to a town, and finally to the city we know today.

Lastly, Eldon House was one of several heritage site presenters at the Thames Valley Regional Heritage Fair, hosted at the Fanshawe Pioneer Village, which saw approximately 100 students and teachers at the elementary level, between the grades of 4 through 8, participate in a competitive history fair. The day was filled with project judging and interactive workshops hosted by fellow museums and heritage sites. Schools within the Thames Valley region select their top students and their historical or social studies projects to be adjudicated based upon their research, comprehension, and presentation style. The top students then move forward onto provincial and then to national competitions. Eldon House once again was one of the presenters that hosted a short workshop on Victorian parlor games and etiquette.

## MUSEUM SCHOOL

December saw the conclusion of the 2022–2023 Museum School season! Eldon House hosted six weeks of Museum School, funded and coordinated by the London Heritage Council which is made possible by the generous support of organizations like Canada Life, the Thames Valley District School Board, the London District Catholic School Board, the





City of London, the Kiwanis Club of Forest City, and the Kiwanis Club of Middlesex. For an entire week the Museum is the classroom, the Interpretive Centre is the art class, lunchroom, and activity space, and our gardens are the recess playground for a few lucky students, their teachers, and chaperons.



In total we hosted 8 classes ranging from grades 3 through 8, approximately 19–27 students each day, and their teacher and two to six chaperons. In total, approximately 845 students and 148 adults visited the Museum, each student and chaperon visiting between 3–5 days each, as part of the Museum School program spanning the 2023 year.

## PRIVATE TOURS



In total Eldon House hosted 11 private tours, sometimes including light refreshments or self-catered refreshments in the Interpretive Centre or the grounds. The 151 participants of said tours included organizations such as LUSO, Community Living London, Camp HooHa, Northwest London Resource Center, Senior Center and private or corporate groups.

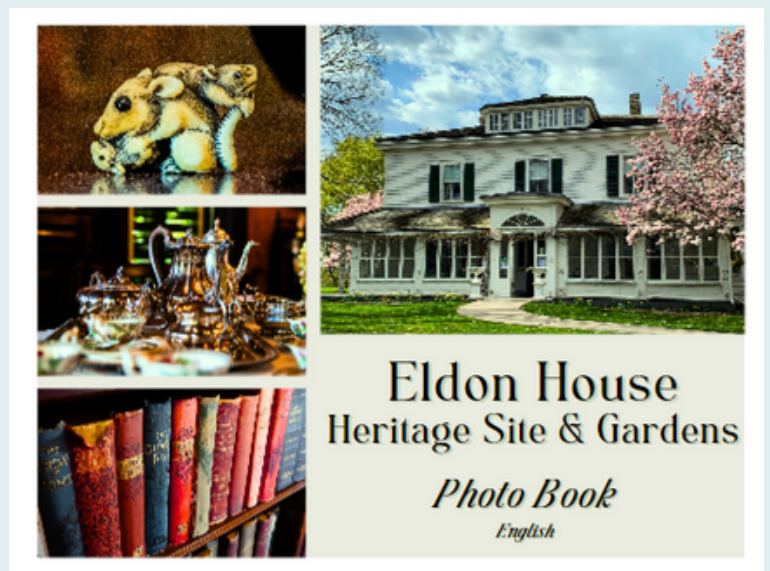
# OUTREACH

Eldon House's Memory Lane Program has been possible due to the funding provided by the New Horizons for Seniors Program Grant. This outreach program is designed to engage seniors in long term care homes through conversation about local history and traditions using artifacts, photo books, and conversation with Eldon House staff and to encourages seniors with Alzheimer's, dementia, and cognitive impairments to share memories and stories.

Throughout the 2022–2023 fiscal year Eldon House enacted 18 outreach programs and 4 onsite tours/workshops. In total, 8 sites participated, and we reached 327 seniors across London and the surrounding area. This year, staff and volunteers participated in a training session hosted by the Alzheimer's Society of London to better understand what those with Alzheimer's and dementia see, feel, and hear. This is to improve our overall understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of our patrons and, in turn, improve our programs and their delivery to increase participation and enjoyment.

Sites that participated:

1. Kensington Village (Sharon Village Care Homes)
2. Maple View Terrace
3. McCormick Home
4. Middlesex Terrace
5. Oakcrossing Retirement Living
6. Parkwood Institute
7. Richmond Woods by Sifton
8. Strathmere Lodge





# BY THE NUMBERS

Number of Days Open to the Public and for Private Tours	289
Number of Days the Gates were open	265
Number of Operating Hours	1336

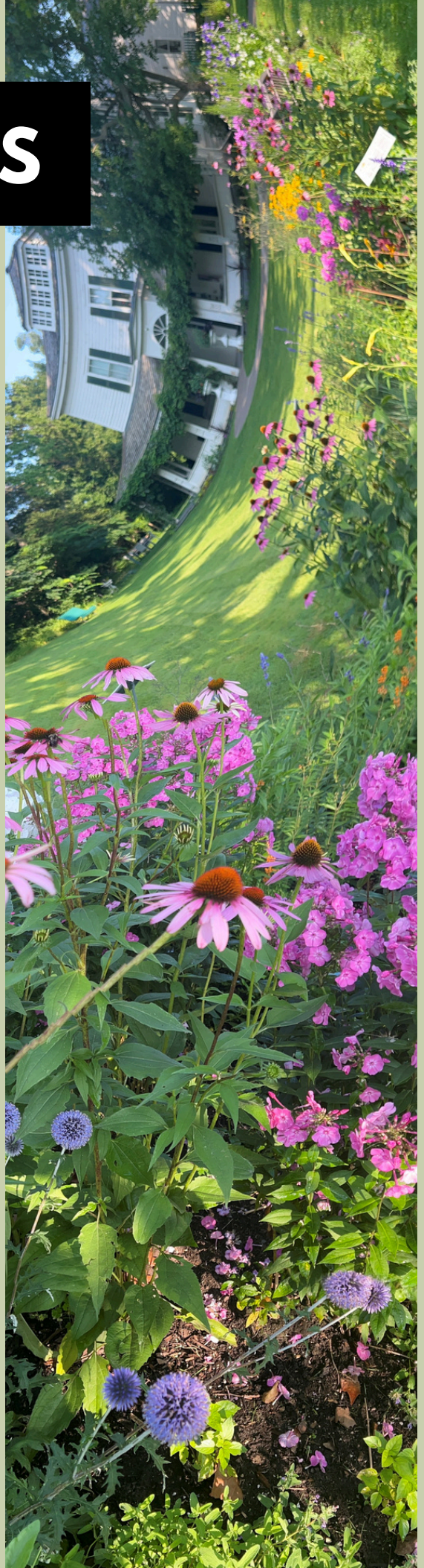
Number of General Attendance including grounds visitors	5310
Number of Tours Participants	1472
Number of Special Events Attendees	2352
Number of Tea Visitors	1201
Number of Outreach Attendees	1392
Number of Rental Visitors	409

Total Number of Visitors	11537
Total Number of Visitors 2022	7235

## Social Media Numbers

Facebook	2460
Instagram	1906
TikTok	679
Twitter	1384
YouTube	46

Website Numbers	26000
Number of Volunteers	13
Number of Volunteer Hours	497



# MARKETING

In 2023 Eldon House moved almost exclusively to digital media, as it is the fastest growing way of reaching potential patrons. The main tool for digital media has been our website, run by our partners at Kreadiv House.

Eldon House saw an increase of around 2000 users in website traffic compared to 2022. Around 26000 users viewed the website, with the average usage time of over 1 minute per session. The majority of our users found us through an organic search, meaning that our website was viewed after a general search in a search engine. The second highest was a direct search, people specifically typing in 'Eldon House' or our web address into the search engine. Social media was the third most common way people found us, with an increase in people searching through social media from 2022.

Jan-Mar

Country	Acquisition		Behavior			
	Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration
	4,935 % of Total 100.00% (4,503)	4,838 % of Total 100.00% (4,537)	6,210 % of Total 100.00% (6,216)	37.49% % of Total 37.49% (0.80%)	3.07 Avg For View 3.07 (0.00%)	00:01:52 Avg For View 00:01:52 (0.00%)
1. Canada	3,926 (79.62%)	3,822 (79.00%)	5,081 (81.82%)	31.23%	3.35	00:02:07
2. United States	623 (12.64%)	606 (12.53%)	656 (10.56%)	64.02%	1.83	00:00:44
3. China	82 (1.66%)	82 (1.69%)	82 (1.32%)	98.78%	1.01	00:00:01
4. United Kingdom	48 (0.97%)	48 (0.99%)	53 (0.85%)	56.00%	1.83	00:00:21
5. (not set)	41 (0.83%)	41 (0.85%)	41 (0.66%)	90.24%	1.10	00:00:03
6. Ireland	30 (0.60%)	29 (0.60%)	30 (0.48%)	60.00%	1.63	00:00:09
7. Philippines	24 (0.48%)	24 (0.50%)	28 (0.45%)	25.00%	4.39	00:04:18
8. Germany	21 (0.42%)	19 (0.39%)	25 (0.40%)	72.00%	3.28	00:01:09
9. India	16 (0.32%)	16 (0.33%)	29 (0.47%)	41.38%	2.83	00:01:38
10. Australia	13 (0.26%)	13 (0.27%)	14 (0.23%)	85.71%	2.86	00:02:03

Apr-Dec

Country	Users	New users	Engaged sessions	Engagement rate	Engaged sessions per user
	22,168 100% of total	22,067 100% of total	19,326 100% of total	61.33% Avg 6%	0.87 Avg 6%
1 Canada	19,441	19,339	17,880	63.17%	0.92
2 United States	1,634	1,532	823	45.85%	0.50
3 United Kingdom	228	223	132	51.76%	0.58
4 China	180	156	20	10.81%	0.11
5 Germany	89	82	33	34.74%	0.37
6 Ireland	75	52	43	55.84%	0.57
7 Sweden	54	34	26	46.43%	0.48
8 India	48	49	63	79.75%	1.31
9 Netherlands	47	39	24	47.06%	0.51
10 Australia	45	44	22	70.21%	0.73

Our user demographics for the year were also interesting. Unlike previous years where demographics based on gender, age, and location were broken down, changes to Google Analytics tracking meant that we are only able to see visitor locations. We can determine that people from Canada were the most avid users. Within Canada, most of the searches came from Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, and Nova Scotia. Internationally, the United States, the United Kingdom, China, Germany, and Ireland were our top users. International searches this year were quite different, with visitors from the Philippines and Sweden being in the top ten, which has not occurred in many years.

Additionally, the health of our website remained strong, with a score of 88 out of 100. This measures the readability and effectiveness of the site, which has continued to improve over the past five years. Ecommerce on the site was also amazing, with a 42% increase in sales from last year. Part of the increase was due to the plethora of events offered, as well as an increase in online marketing. In 2023 advertising for the Victorian Crafting for Kids, Summer Tea, and Morbid and Macabre tours were run online with social media and Google ads. There was a great level of return on these ads, with over 18000 impressions.

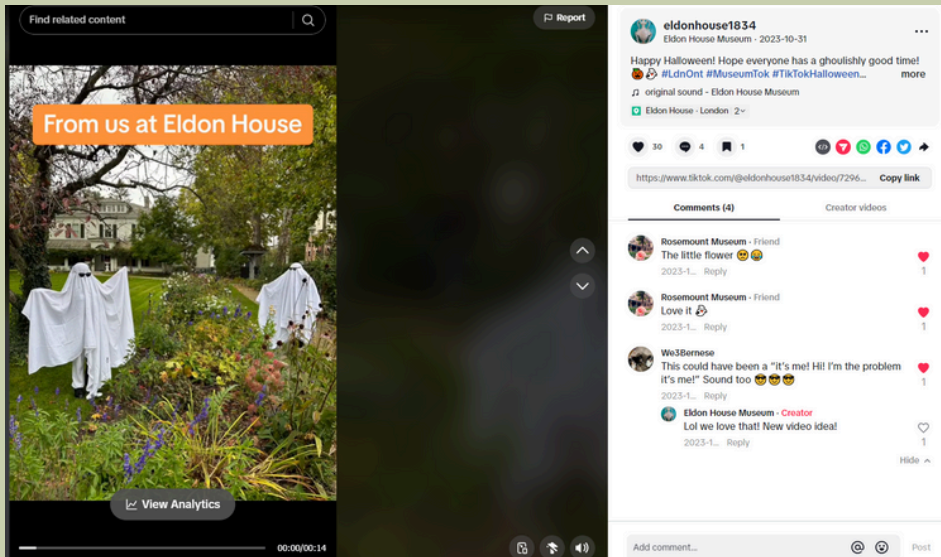
Social media has also been instrumental in reaching new audiences. Over the past several years, staff have put additional effort into social media and have seen a wonderful return on engagement. Eldon House has five social media platforms including: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube.

Facebook is the oldest form of social media for the Museum and has the most established audience. In 2023 a total of 2460 people followed the Eldon House page, and the page had over 220,000 impressions! The Museum also ran digital ads through Facebook and Instagram promoting several events including the Summer Tea, Victorian Crafting for Kids programs, and the Summer Market. Marketing through social media has been very successful with these ads directing people to our website. The upturn after posting these ads was substantial, and social media marketing will increase in 2024.



Instagram remained a favourite marketing tool for museum staff, as Eldon House is of course photogenic! Like our other platforms, Instagram was used to share photos of the Museum and promote our special events. Ad campaigns that were run on Facebook were also run on Instagram and received

great engagement. Many creators also shared their own images of the Museum, tagging in us photos and stories. We also noticed a trend in independent travel vloggers coming to Eldon House and sharing their experiences online, all which were positive. Eldon House's highest engaged content revolved around our Pride events, Christmas and Halloween décor, and our specialty Fashion exhibit. Overall, we received over 6000 likes, and a follower increase of 16.8%.



TikTok is the newest social media platform for the Museum, having been added at the end of 2022 in an attempt to connect with younger audiences. Despite staff feeling less confident about creating these videos, it has been one of the most successful social

media platforms, with a follower increase of 77.7% between 2022 and 2023. The demographic of followers on this platform is indeed younger, but museum staff have also received follows from several museums globally and have had great engagement with other museum professionals. This has marked an important change for museums, where social media has become the main source of marketing and an affordable way to create partnerships.

Twitter followers maintained stability this year despite the change from Twitter to 'X' in July 2023. The changeover did mark a slight drop in followers originally as more people boycotted the purchase of the social media platform, but Eldon House finished off the year with 1384 followers, a 1.17% increase from 2022. Twitter was used to promote various events and share images and facts about the house. There was a good number of engagements, and over 66,500 impressions.



## Christmas Crafting for Kids

Sunday, December 10  
1:00-4:00  
Register for a time slot  
\$10.00

In 2021 and 2022 our YouTube channel was useful for sharing information about Eldon House with longer videos that could not be put on other social media platforms. It was also a great creative outlet for staff, as it allowed us to explore various parts of the collection and create content about some interesting Harris pieces, including our cookbook. In 2023, as more people came into the Museum, staff focused more on shorter videos and image content. Only 1 video was released in 2023, despite that it was a well viewed video and subscribers to the channel remained steady. In 2024 staff hope to release more video content.

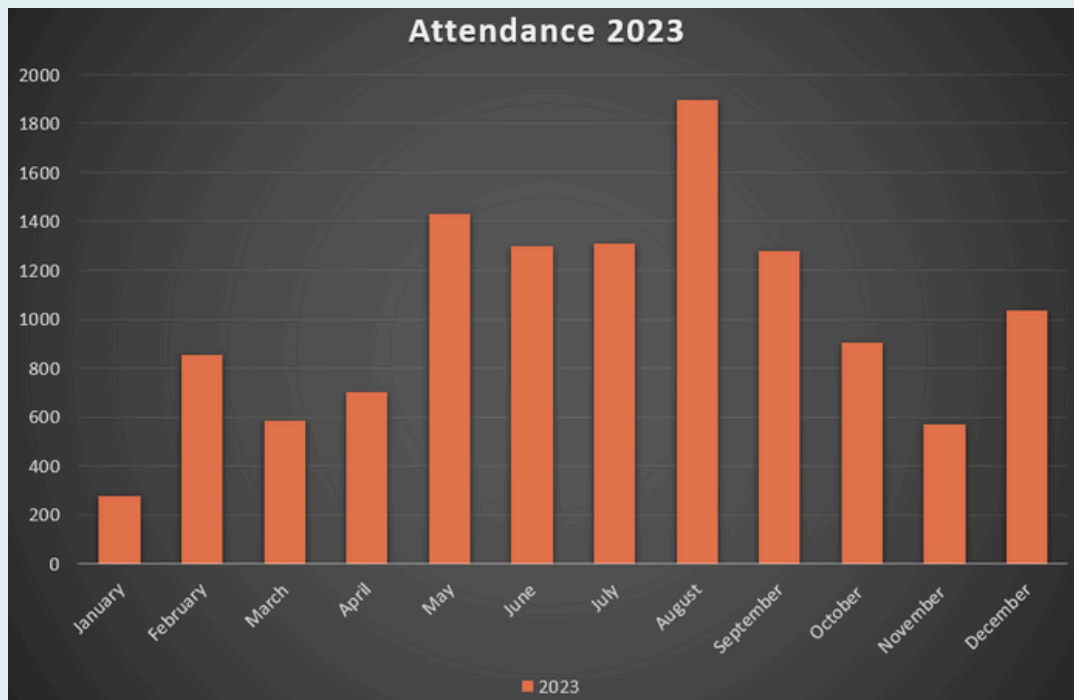
Marketing and social media was overall successful in 2023. Museum staff were able to put out engaging content and create marketing campaigns that were successful in promoting Eldon House and its events. Museum staff look forward to using all our platforms to continue sharing information and garnering attention for our heritage site.



Photos shared by our Eldon House fans!

# VISITOR STATISTICS

Eldon House staff were excited to see an increase in visitor numbers after COVID-19 was no longer declared a world health emergency. In 2023, 11,537 people attended Eldon House events, toured the Museum, viewed the grounds, and participated in outreach programs. This was a 59.6% increase from the previous year, with a 329% increase in outreach visitors, and a 125.7% increase in tour participants.



Data collected by our staff at the door of the Museum and from self reporting in the guest book determined that around 3900 visitors were first time patrons, and around 1350 visitors were repeat patrons.

The percentage of new and returning patrons was on par with 2022, about 2/3 of visitors being new. The aim of museum staff is to see as many new patrons as possible, and we are happy to continue welcoming guests from all over the world.

Eldon House received visitors from 48 countries in 2023. Unsurprisingly, the majority of visitors came from Canada, with 596 visitors indicating they were from Ontario. Within Ontario we had visitors from 60 different communities, many within a couple hours radius from London. The top five Ontario communities, aside from London, that visited the Museum included: Toronto, Ottawa, Mississauga, St. Thomas, and Hamilton. As usual,

Londoners came out in droves to see the Eldon House, resulting in 57% of Ontarians being from London.

The highest out of province visitors came from Alberta and British Columbia. Alberta and British Columbia are traditionally the highest out of province visitors, though 2023 also saw an increase in visitors from Saskatchewan, and staff were happy to welcome visitors from the Yukon to the Museum, as we have not had a visitor from this territory since 2019.

Internationally, the five countries with the most visitors were: the United States, Brazil, South Korea, France, and India. Many of our international visitors came from May to December, and large numbers came as part of tour groups or with family and friends. Eldon House translations were put to good use this year, as many groups visiting were interested in the site and wanted additional background information and something to keep as a souvenir.



Though majority of our international visitors came as part of a tour experience or with family and friends, our guestbook indicated that most visitors came to Eldon House after seeing posts online. Eldon House staff have been working hard to promote the Museum and events using digital means, and it is clear that an increased online presence has resulted in greater visibility in the community. Additionally, the many programs and

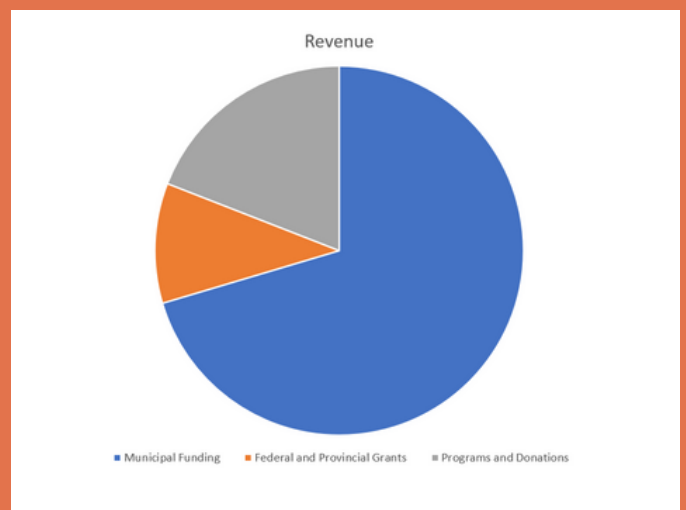
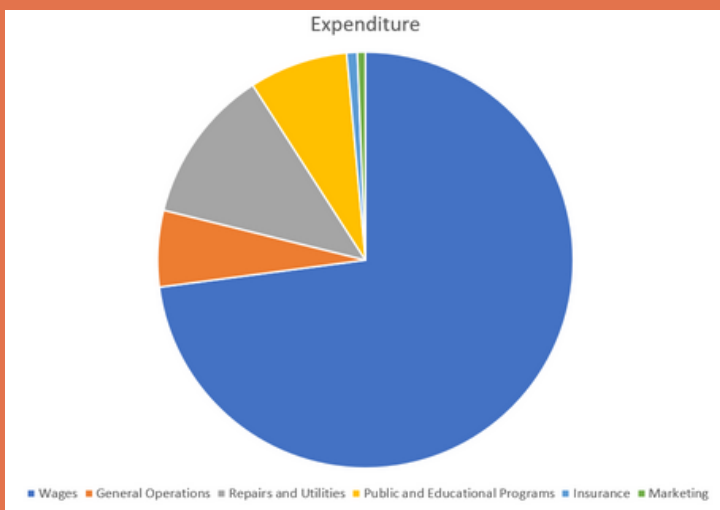




# FINANCE REPORT

Eldon House posted a loss of just under 45 thousand dollars for the 2023 fiscal year but still finished the year with a strong cash position with more than 170 thousand dollars in cash and GIC investments. The loss was primarily attributed to higher salaries, maintenance expenses and vacation and sick leave accruals.

The multi-year budget process began in 2023 and culminated in a four year budget that was recently approved by city council. The approved budget provides for higher salaries and maintenance related expenses.



## GRANTS

Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG)

Celebrate Canada, Celebration and Commemorating Fund

New Horizons For Seniors

Canada Summer Jobs Program



# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Eldon House participated in five community events. These included: London's Heritage Fair hosted and facilitated by the London Heritage Council at the central branch of the London Public Library; the City of London's yearly environmental initiative titled London Clean and Green preparing the Museum gardens for spring; on the May long weekend Eldon House was a great presenter at the Fanshaw Pioneer Village's Victoria Day Celebrations engaging the public on finite rules and etiquette of a traditional Victorian tea time; on May 21st we joined Museum London, London Symphonia, City of London, and the public to commemorate and honour those approximately 200 passengers that died May 21st, 1881 on the steamship Victoria which today is known as the Victoria Day Disaster; and lastly we joined London Heritage Council as part of Doors Open London in September. In total, 1,714 persons participated in these events and learned about Eldon House, London's oldest residence.

## 2024 Performers/presenters:

Instructor	Susan Hickey
Performer	Sam Hornby
Performer	David Rayo
Performer	Anchal Dahiya of BRDRLESS Dance
Instructor	Kim Fulton
Performer	Kattina Mitchele
Instructor	Nyxx Noir and Melanie Pierce
Instructor	Ashley Ranger
Instructor	Nicki Nastasia
Instructor	Miss Edie Violet
Instructor	Christina van Hardeveld





# ELDON HOUSE TEAM

Eldon House could not exist without the many dedicated contributors to its success, from the Board of Directors to its Staff and Volunteers.

## ELDON HOUSE VOLUNTEER TEAM

Eldon House is extremely thankful to the wonderful volunteers who continue to support us with their time, energy, and positive attitude. We thank them for their continued involvement and understanding during these challenging times.

Liz Beaujot  
Ash Donachie  
Penny Finneron  
Al Green  
Shelia Green  
Stephen Harrott  
Merrilee Hoffmann Chase  
Barbara Kennan  
Kathy Kozell  
Cathy Lynch  
Marianne Pflieger  
Betty Rutledge  
Andrea Tonkovic



# ELDON HOUSE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mike Donachie, Board Chair

Bruce Duncan, Director (May 2023)

Doug Fleming, Director (May 2023)

Megan Halliday, Director

Louanne Henderson, Director

Devinder Luthra, Director (May 2023)

Bryan McClure, Director (October 2023)

Don Millar, Director (May 2023)

Joe O'Neil, Treasurer

Maureen Spencer Golovchenko, (Past Chair  
2013-2016)



# ELDON HOUSE STAFF TEAM

Tara Wittmann, Curator Director

Brenna Ardiel, Program Coordinator

Nicoletta Michienzi, Museum Coordinator

Bernie Keim, Finance Manager

Guilherme Neves Lopes, Facilities and Maintenance Coordinator

Kendal Davidson, Garden and Grounds Coordinator

Alexa DiCecco, Historical Interpreter

Christi Hudson, Historical Interpreter

Gillian LaBelle, Historical Interpreter

Cathy Luke, Historical Interpreter

Audrey McKenzie, Historical Interpreter

Becca Ricciardi, Historical Interpreter

Ally Vouvalidis, Historical Interpreter





*Eldon House. Winter*

Eldon House ca. 1866 Image courtesy of J. Saddy

## ELDON HOUSE HERITAGE SITE AND GARDENS

481 Ridout Street North  
London, ON  
N6A 2P6

519-661-5169  
[www.eldonhouse.ca](http://www.eldonhouse.ca)  
[@eldonhouse1834](https://www.instagram.com/eldonhouse1834)

