



BELLE GROVE PLANTATION



Belle Grove Plantation's staff and Board of Directors send you warm holiday greetings!

As the sun sets on 2023, we are grateful for our hardworking staff and volunteers, partner organizations, and contributors and supporters like you. *Will you make a year-end gift to carry us into 2024?*

On the next few pages, you will read about projects made possible by significant donations and grants. It is exciting to accomplish major preservation and research projects. Visitors frequently remark on how well the property is kept, the depth of the information that Belle Grove has uncovered about the history of enslavement here, and the array of events that are hosted each year. They are unaware of the extent of what happens behind the scenes, from tedious tasks such as trimming along fence lines so that the view of Belle Grove is unimpeded to profound ones like researching and producing online exhibits.

The staff and volunteers are proud to provide an excellent experience to the public, but it takes a strong base of funding to make it possible. Belle Grove is diversified in its revenue streams and strives to maximize each opportunity. This year, admissions fees (except for the student rate)

were raised for the first time in ten years. Belle Grove had a full event rental schedule. The Hite of Excellence Series of Sumptuous Feasts was fully sponsored and the events sold out. While rain hampered the "Of Ale and History" Beer Festival, the Garden Fest and Wine Festival went well. The most recent event, the Kris Kringle Market, broke all records in the number of vendors and attendees. It has grown to be a popular community event as well as source of funding. Festival Coordinator Paige Ulevich adeptly took on the challenges of managing these festivals and is helping them reach their full potential.

Donations from individuals are an essential part of Belle Grove's operating budget. Your gift will help us finish this year strong and set a good foundation for next year.

Thank you for including Belle Grove in your giving this year. Gifts of all sizes are appreciated, and your generosity will be an investment in our future success.

With best wishes,

Wayne *Kristen*

Wayne Sulfridge Kristen Laise
Board Chair Executive Director

How to Donate

- Use the enclosed envelope to donate by check or credit card.
- Click the blue "Donate" button at bellegrove.org to donate via Pay Pal (does not require an account, you may use a credit card).
- If you are over 70 1/2 years old and have a tax-deferred IRA, you may make a "Qualified Charitable Distribution" donation from your IRA directly to Belle Grove without paying taxes on the donated amount, even if you do not itemize tax deductions. Consult your IRA trustee for details. Belle Grove's EIN is 54-1047175.
- Give a stock gift by contacting Bayliss Wealth Management Group of Wells Fargo Advisors at 540-545-7700. Reference Belle Grove Inc.'s account #5697-7377 and DTC #0141.

Belle Grove is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is registered as a charitable organization with the Commonwealth of Virginia. A financial statement is available upon request from the Office of Charitable and Regulatory Programs. Your donation is tax deductible and will be acknowledged in writing.

2023 ACHIEVEMENTS AND 2024 GOALS

While the property was busy with special events, festivals, group and school tours, and wedding rentals, Belle Grove undertook many other projects and initiatives this year.

Collections Preservation



In Belle Grove’s collections is a handwritten book by Isaac Hite Jr. referred to as a “Commonplace Book,” or collection of quotes and records. Material written as early as 1785 includes an impressive 11,000-word transcript of John Locke’s *Second Treatise on Civil Government* regarding war, marriage, parental power, and slavery. It also includes notes written from 1819 to the 1840s on the production and/or use of wool, yarn, cloth, sugar, coffee, tea, meat, poultry, flour, butter, candles, and tallow. It documents provisions given to enslaved people and goods purchased from them, such as chickens. The book is kept in climate-controlled conditions at the Stewart Bell Jr. Archives at Handley Regional Library, but it is fragile. This year, Belle Grove hired Cat Tail Run Bookbinding to take high resolution images of each page of the book and create a custom box to house it. This project was done with funds from the Nancy Lee Comer Fund for Belle Grove Plantation Collections. The photographs make it much easier to access the information in the book without handing the original.

Your gift to support operations at Belle Grove allows us to focus on these exciting projects. Thank you!

Historic Structure Preservation

The restoration of Fort Bowman is underway, thanks to funding from the James L. and Mary Jane Bowman Charitable Trust. Ashby Masonry repointed the exterior of the c. 1771 home this summer. This was a critical project because the mortar was failing in many places, as seen here:



Elsewhere on the building, inappropriate mortars were used to make repairs over the years, causing further harm to the building. Belle Grove had the original mortar analyzed and specially mixed for the repointing project. The building is



now protected from water and moisture. A new gutter system installed this fall will also help. The final exterior restoration project, to repoint the front steps and wall, will be done in early 2024.

Also this year, CIC Interiors designed kitchen and bathroom renovations and the contract for this work is out to bid. A new heating and air conditioning system will be installed in 2024. Anders Skandsen, Building and Grounds Manager, is ably coordinating these projects in addition to his busy workload.



At the Belle Grove Manor House, the window restoration project continues. Thanks to many generous donors, both windows in the nursery and office, two of three windows in the bedroom, and the portico window are restored. The results are stunning. This winter, four more windows will be completed.

The next project to tackle is a restoration of the front porch, including replacing broken balusters, step risers, and the bases of columns. A complete repainting will also be done. The cost has been covered by a gift from Fred and Christine Andreae and matching funds raised through a Giving Tuesday campaign, which brought in more than \$15,000. Thank you!

Education Programs

In addition to school field trips resuming, Belle Grove expanded its educational programming to more homeschool families this year.

Outreach Coordinator, Elizabeth Dalton, introduced a new program, Wild Wednesdays, for 4-10 year-olds. Held monthly starting in July, the program has a theme that is discussed in the Belle Grove garden, such as pollinators, the water cycle, and the harvest. This successful program will continue in 2024.



Research



This fall, Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park installed a new wayside at Belle Grove. It shows what the enslaved quarter may have looked like based on the archaeology conducted in the field the sign overlooks. It is possible to imagine this scene thanks to the extensive research by Dr. Matthew Greer and the team of archaeologists who worked with him., including Dr. David Hixson, who meticulously created the 3-D model and design. The sign is at the trailhead for the new 19th Corps Entrenchment Trail, which has been a great addition to the visitor experience this year.

Dr. Greer is continuing archaeological research near Belle Grove, which will provide important context to his research on the enslaved quarter site. He, along with colleagues Erica Moses and Zach McKeeby, conducted a magnetometer study this summer. The machine detects differences in a magnetic field in the ground. While it took several days to patiently scan large areas around Belle Grove, it is an efficient way to determine which portions have the most promise for future archaeological excavations.

Virtual.bellegrove.org continues to be an excellent way to share the history of the Hite family and the people enslaved at Belle Grove. This information and outreach are making connections to descendants. Belle Grove has begun an initiative to engage descendants in research and interpretation.

STAFF & BOARD UPDATE



There are new faces greeting you at Belle Grove. Zach Richard was promoted to Museum Shop Coordinator, having served as Visitor Services Clerk since May. Jenna Babick joined the staff to fill the Visitor Services role. They have beautifully decked the Museum Shop for the holidays.

Belle Grove is grateful to Kelynn Clem, who was the Shop Manager

for seven years and transformed it in its new location in the Beverley B. Shoemaker Welcome Center. Kelynn took an exciting new position as Visitor Services Manager with the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District in September.

At the end of 2023, Board members Bob Mowery, Matthew Shaffer, and Mike Perry will conclude six years of service on the Belle Grove Board. Each has been exceedingly generous with their time, resources, and talents. Earlier this year, Suzanne Conrad also completed nine years of dedicated Board service and leadership to the organization.

Belle Grove looks forward to working with new Board members Patricia Weichmann Morris, John Fredericksen, Bob Gail, and Wyatt Pearson.

WINTER WHIMSEY AT BELLE GROVE



Belle Grove is decorated with the theme of "Winter Whimsey" by eight area garden clubs and Belle Grove volunteers.

December 1-30, Belle Grove, including the Museum Shop, is open daily, except for Christmas Eve and Day. Guided tours will be held hourly Monday-Saturday 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and Sunday 1-5 p.m. On Friday and Saturday evenings, 4-8 p.m., the Manor House is open for self-guided tours, lit by candlelight and with live music in the parlor.

The Museum Shop is stocked with local products, artisan goods, toys,

books, and a wide selection of holiday ornaments and decorations. Belle Grove members receive 10% off in the Museum Shop in addition to free admission for touring.

The December decorations include a memorial to the 270 men, women, and children enslaved at Belle Grove. LED tealight candles bearing the name and birthdate of each person are arranged in family groups around the "Unearthing Enslaved Lives" exhibit. The candles have timers and will illuminate every day in December from 2-8 p.m.

The quantity of candles and light they produce is a moving testament to the lives they represent.





THANK YOU 2023 SPONSORS AND DONORS

Belle Grove appreciates the many donors who have given time and funds this year. We particularly thank and acknowledge the following exceptional individual, corporate, the Hite of Excellence Series of Sumptuous Feasts and event sponsors, as well as Belle Grove's Madison, Heritage, and President's Society level members.

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STAFF

Kristen Laise, *Executive Director*
 Anders Skandsen, *Buildings & Grounds Manager*
 Elizabeth Dalton, *Outreach Coordinator*
 Paige Ulevich, *Festivals Coordinator*
 Zach Richard, *Museum Shop Coordinator*
 Jenna Babick, *Visitor Services Clerk*

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 *deceased

Belle Grove Plantation is one of the 27 historic sites of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Since 1977, it has been operated and funded by Belle Grove, Inc., a 501c3 non-profit organization.



Belle Grove Plantation is a partner in the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park. The Park was founded in 2002 and is a partnership between the National Park Service, four non-profit organizations, and one municipality.

