



Hillary House
National Historic Site

The ATTIC

Spring 2023 Issue

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He mea huna ki te titiro¹: Finding the Geikie's in New Zealand

By: Kathleen Vahey, Curator/Manager

As many of you know, one of the most unique aspects of our beloved Hillary House is that it was home to four successive doctors and their families before it became a museum. The original owners, the Geikie family, built the house and lived here between 1862 and 1869. Next were the Strange's who took up residence in the House from 1869 until 1876 when they sold to the Hillary's. The Hillary's called the House home for over 100 years, from 1876 until Nora moved out in 1992. Since the last two doctors to own and live in the House were Hillary's, we have always known the most about this family; however, it has not stopped us from wondering about the previous owners.

This curiosity has led many AHS volunteers and staff to try and find out more about these families. Allan Hally researched and wrote a small book on Dr. Geikie in 1995 titled *Dean Geikie: An Outline* and former AHS Curator Jacqueline Stuart dove into the life of Dr. Strange for her 2017 book *The Story of Dr. Strange: A brief biography of Frederick W. Strange* (both of these books are available in the AHS Gift Shop).

For the past few weeks, I have been researching content for the AHS' social media and trying my hardest to find any new tidbit of information about the families of Hillary

House. To my amazement, I stumbled upon a database record from the Alexander Turnbull Library (part of the National Library of New Zealand) that tagged 'Geikie, Walter Bayne (Dr), 1830-1917; Geological Society of London'. I paused... I had previously had my hopes snuffed by Google searches of the name 'Geikie' that brought up articles on other famous relatives; Walter Geikie, the artist with paintings in the National Galleries of Scotland and uncle of our Dr. Geikie; and Sir Archibald Geikie, a notable geologist and cousin of our Doctor (I could write numerous articles on the Geikie's but I'll leave those ramblings for another time). Could this database record really be of our Dr. Geikie? I poked around on the website a little more and found a link to 'Geikie, Frances Miriam, 1832-1890' and 'Geikie, Ethel Frances, 1867-1946' - Dr. Geikie's wife and youngest daughter. It was at this point that I started to get hopeful. The only thing left to do was send an email off to New Zealand and wait for a response...

Continued on page 4

This issue of The Attic is generously sponsored by:

DELMANOR
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Inspired Retirement Living™

WE'RE OPEN!

Take a tour of Hillary House,
Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm.

While you're here, visit the Gift Shop.
You will find many unique, gently used items as you browse in our Gift shop. You will also find books on Aurora that make the perfect gift.

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Attic!

As most of you will know, long-time Board member, Patricia Wallace resigned at the end of 2022 for personal reasons. So, Alan Lambert and I have been appointed as interim Co-Presidents, until the next AGM. We thank Patricia for her many years of service to the AHS.

2023 is the 60th Anniversary of the AHS and it's shaping up to be a great year!

It looks like we might finally be turning the corner on what has seemed to be the never-ending winter, which of course means there will be a Spring Clean-up at Hillary House. Please consider coming out in April to help! Email community@aurorahs.com for more information.

And, after a few years of diligent work, Parks Canada has committed to rebuilding the fence in front of Hillary House along Yonge Street. Be on the lookout for that which is scheduled to start in May.

If you're out and about, drop by and visit the AHS at the Aurora Home Show on Saturday and Sunday, April 15 and 16 at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex.

And, back by popular demand will be our 9-hole Golf Tournament at Westview on June 23rd and Whisky Tasting scheduled for late September (date to be announced).

Finally, a big thanks to our members and volunteers who continue to be great supporters of the Aurora Historical Society!

Geoffrey Dawe



Co-Presidents Geoff & Al at the 2022 Home Show





**AURORA
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**
EST. 1963

The Aurora Historical Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to heritage preservation, public education, and enrichment. The AHS owns and operates Hillary House National Historic Site.

We are seeking enthusiastic and dedicated individuals to join our volunteer Board of Directors who will use their leadership and management skills and experience to help the organization move forward in a responsible and relevant manner. Business or volunteer experience in the following areas is desired:

- General Business Management • Fundraising
- Governance • Finance • Property Management
- Marketing • Heritage Preservation
- Museum Management • Community Engagement

Directors are required to be actively engaged in the work of the organization, attend monthly Board meetings and events, and support special projects.

Please send your resume to: president@aurorahs.com
For more information, you are welcome to contact us at:
 905-727-8991
www.aurorahs.com
 15372 Yonge Street
 Aurora, ON L4G 1N8

AURORA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2023

Board of Directors 2023

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Co-President | Alan Lambert |
| Co-President | Geoffrey Dawe |
| Treasurer | Geoffrey Dawe |
| Interim Secretary | Geoffrey Dawe |
| Director | Ronen Grunberg |
| Director | Dan McGeown |
| Director | Michelle Primeau |

Town of Aurora

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Council Representative | TBA |
|-------------------------------------|-----|

Committees

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Grounds Maintenance | Alan Lambert |
| TOA Heritage Advisory Committee Rep | John Green |

Staff

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Curator/Manager | Kathleen Vahey |
| Programming & Outreach Coordinator | Selin Kahramanoğlu |
| Administrative Assistant | Julie Preston |

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Newsletter Production | Julie Preston |
| Newsletter Editor, Volunteer | Christine McLure |
| Newsletter Layout, Volunteer | Brenda Snape |

We invite members to submit suggestions for inclusion in the newsletter. Please email community@aurorahs.com.

Upcoming Events

Speaker Series: Intro to Local Historic Sites Panel

Virtual only

Wednesday, March 22nd @ 7pm

\$12.50 for General Admission,

\$10.50 for AHS Members

Get to know local historic sites all around you! Join us for Intro to Local Historic Sites, a panel discussion happening on March 22nd at 7:00PM. We are hosting professionals from Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum & Community Centre, Sharon Temple National Historic Site, and Georgina Pioneer Village & Archives. Learn about their behind-the-scenes work and the daily challenges of running these unique landmarks that are so close to home.



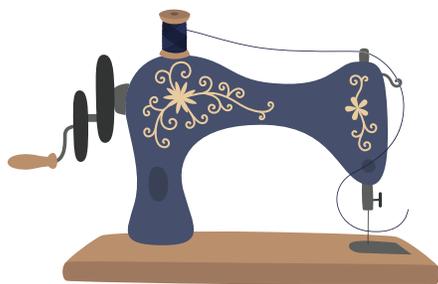
Heritage Craft Workshop: Introduction to Quilting

In-Person

Saturday, March 25th @ 1-3pm

\$25.00 per Person

Learn the basics of quilting at our upcoming Introduction to Quilting Workshop! Our instructor will teach you what you need to know about quilting using hand sewing, and help grow your skill in this popular heritage craft. Materials will be provided, and we encourage you to bring your own tool! Advance ticket purchase required.

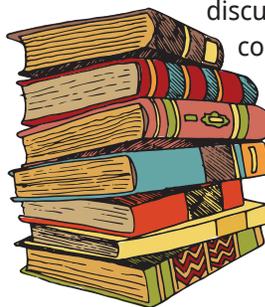


Victorian Era Book Discussion Group

In-Person

Thursdays, April 13th & June 8th @ 7pm

Traveling in horse-drawn carriages, writing intimate letters by candlelight, dancing the night away in elaborate ballrooms... Dive into the world of the late 1800s by joining our new Victorian Era Book Discussion Group, a partnership between the Aurora Historical Society (AHS) and the Aurora Public Library (APL). Read one pre-selected Victorian-themed novel for each month of February, April and June respectively. Meet up at the library for a group discussion of the novel, where conversations will be guided by artifacts from the AHS historical collection. This program is FREE and for adults. Library membership not required.



Speaker Series: "Lester Pearson & the Suez Crisis" with Antony Anderson

Virtual only

Wednesday, April 26th @ 7pm

\$12.50 for General Admission,

\$10.50 for AHS Members



Speaker Series: "The Story of Alfred Lafferty" with Hilary Dawson

Virtual only

Wednesday, May 24th @ 7pm

\$12.50 for General Admission,

\$10.50 for AHS Members



He mea huna ki te titiro¹: Finding the Geikie's in New Zealand

Continued from page 1

To my surprise, a cheerful email from a research librarian at the Alexander Turnbull Library landed in my inbox a couple of days later. He offered to pull the materials associated with the three Geikie's and photograph/scan them for me as research copies. I was over the moon! Another email arrived the next day with digital copies of three photographs and three letters, all related to the Geikie's. I profusely thanked the librarian for his generosity and sent along some basic biographical information on the Geikie's to update their database.



The first image is of Dr. Walter Bayne Geikie as a younger man. Handwriting at the bottom of the image identifies him and his birthdate. He is sharply dressed in dark colours and is posed seated in a chair with a piece of paper in his hands. He is sporting a clean, slicked back hairstyle and his signature 'friendly mutton chops' facial hair style that I recognize from photos of his later years. I was

Courtesy of the Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa

excited to open up the other files.



Next is an image of Frances Miriam Geikie (nee. Woodhouse). I was thrilled to open this as I have never come across an image of her or the Geikie children. Handwriting at the bottom of the image also identifies her and her birthdate. Frances is wearing a light-coloured dress with buttons down the front, black detail, and a belt around her waist. She is also posed seated with a

Courtesy of the Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa

piece of paper in her hands, just like her husband. It was fascinating to finally put a face to the name of the first woman to live in (what would become) Hillary House.



The last image is of Frances and Walter's youngest child, Ethel Frances Geikie. Handwriting at the bottom of the image also identifies her and her birthdate. Ethel is wearing a light-coloured plaid dress with high lace-up boots and a pearl necklace. She is posed seated on a chair (note her feet don't touch the ground!) and is leaning to the right on a side table. Ethel was

Courtesy of the Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa

born in 1867 at Hillary House and although in this image Ethel looks to be around 6 or 7 which would have been after the Geikie's moved to Toronto, it is wonderful to finally have an image of at least one of the Geikie children.

I was giddy at the sight of these new-to-me images, although my ever-curious brain wonders if there are portraits of the other Geikie children out there somewhere just waiting to be found. Now you may be asking yourself, how did these images of an Aurora/Toronto doctor and his family end up in the National Library of New Zealand? I asked myself the same question. The biggest clue is the database record lists the photos as being from an album relating to the Mantell and Woodhouse families. Frances' maiden name was Woodhouse; however, I am still searching for which relative the Geikie's may have been corresponding with. Maybe the letters from New Zealand hold the key. I have sent the scan of the letters off to some trusty transcription volunteers and eagerly await their response. Hopefully, we can find answers there or in other genealogical databases, but for now, it's to be continued...

¹ He mea huna ki te titiro means 'It's hidden in plain sight' in Māori.

Seasonal Programs

*Get some fresh air and enjoy the Spring weather on our Hillary House property!
All programs are in-person and mask wearing remains optional.*

Easter Egg Decorating Workshop

Saturday, April 1st @ 1 to 3pm

\$20/adult, \$10/child

Gather the family and decorate some Easter eggs! Be creative with your design and get a sneak peek of our historic property while you are visiting us. Workshop includes all materials. Pre-registration required. All children require adult accompaniment. Our Gift Shop will also be open for your last-minute gift needs!



Get
Tickets

TICKET

Mother's Day Tea

Sunday, May 14th @ 12:00pm or 2:30pm.

Tickets will go on sale in the beginning of April.



Tickets
TBA

TICKET

Walking Tours

Saturdays, May 27th & June 10th

@ 10:30am to 12:30pm

A partnership with the Aurora Public Library.



Register
Here

TICKET

New Private Booking Programs

You know all about renting Hillary House for your private events like concerts and weddings, but did you know that we have two new private booking program offerings? Participate in any of these specialized programs listed below!

Seniors Programs

In-person, mobile

Get paired up with an AHS youth or adult volunteer for both of these Seniors Programs, and explore local history through engaging activities and exchanging stories with other community members. Play Victorian Era games together, or get hands-on with artifacts from the Hillary House collection. Call or email us to book an outreach program for your group. All programs are designed to come to you!

Learn
More

TICKET

Murder Mystery

In-person, Hillary House main floor

There's been a (fictional) murder at Hillary House! Gather your friends and act as detectives to investigate a mysterious death at our historic property. Search for hints in our historic rooms, decipher clues and solve puzzles to get to the truth, all within a strict time limit. Program start time is 7:00PM. AHS adult volunteers needed for this program, so sign up to assist or register to try the program yourself!



Learn
More

TICKET

Highlights from Hillary House



Volunteers help rake leaves and get the Hillary House grounds ready for winter. Thank you for all your hard work!



Programming & Outreach Coordinator Selin and AHS volunteers keeping warm at the Hot Chocolate on the Verandah event during the Santa Claus parade.



Aurora Cultural Centre Gallery Manager Samantha (left) and AHS Curator/Manager Kathleen arrange artifacts and artworks in the Hillary House Ballroom for the exhibition *Inspirations from of Space of Healing* in November.



Participants at the Wreath-making Workshop show off their creations.



Angela Covert, Community Relations Representative from the Salvation Army Northridge Community Church looks over a display in the exhibition *The History of the Salvation Army in Aurora & Newmarket*.



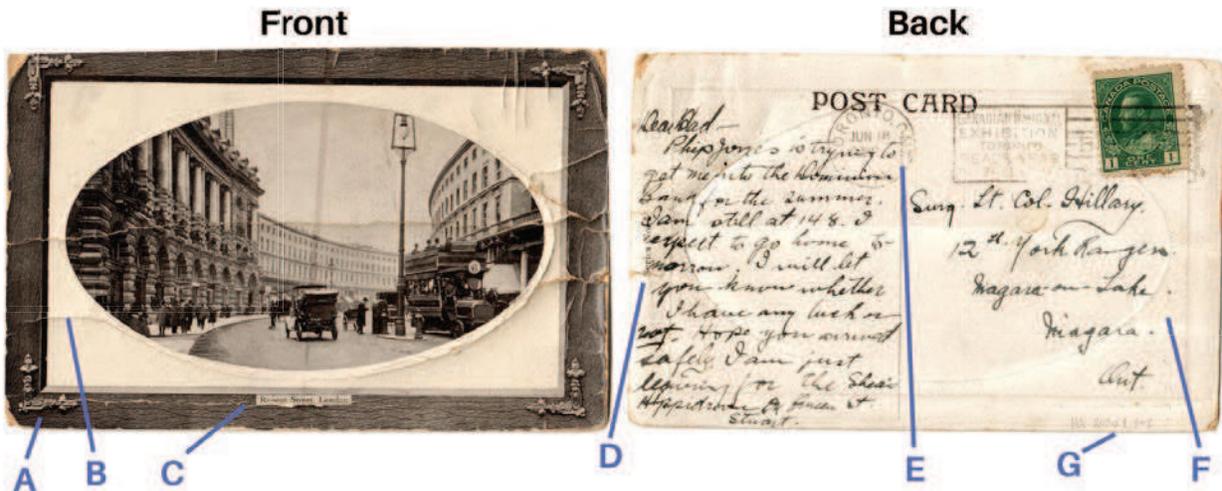
A festive family posing with Santa Claus at our *A Family Christmas* event in December.

Encore! A Dive into the Archives

By Selin Kahramanoğlu, Programming & Outreach Coordinator

February's AHS Speaker Series talk featured an in-depth look at a letter from Hillary House's archival collection, serving as an introduction to Material Culture¹ strategies. Audiences had a taste of how historians usually research artifacts, exploring all the hints that these historical objects offer us and the ways in which they provide meaningful insights into the past.

So, why not do another investigation? We can do a short and simple review of a postcard for this season's edition of the Attic! Follow along in the sections below to join in on the analysis.



A) Front Image

The postcard front is designed to look like a photo within a three-dimensional wooden frame, with some metal ornamental details in the Neo-Baroque style. This design is typical of the Edwardian period (1901–1910), which matches the date that this postcard was likely fabricated. The circular image is lightly embossed, which is most evident when looking at the back of the postcard.

B) Visible Damage

Cracks and curling of the plastic film that is layered over the front postcard are telling of the environment this postcard was kept within. Usually, thin plastic films behave in this way when the material is exposed to high heat and is handled roughly (bent, held with a strong grip, etc.). These hints match up with the postcard being sent in the summertime and to a military camp.

C) Regent Street

The postcard labels the photograph as an image of Regent Street in London, England. Although this postcard was sent and received within Canada, postcards were (and continue to be) bought as souvenirs during travel. Regent Street is still a popular shopping location for tourists, and this postcard might have been bought as a keepsake during a visit to England, bought either by the family or by a friend. With Canada's close ties to England, it's possible that the

postcard was manufactured in Canada too. Here, the postcard finally gets used for correspondence sometime after it was purchased.

D) Series No. 51

The text "Series No. 51" along the left vertical side of the back postcard hints again that this postcard was probably a souvenir. This phrase indicates that several English tourist hotspots were likely photographed and printed into commercial postcards, which could have been sold together as a pack of tourist postcards.

E) Stamps

How exciting! We love stamps because they give historians more confidence in our artifact analysis. Our "it's possible" statements turn into "it's almost certainly" declarations – let's see what this stamp tells us.

This stamp locates the postcard to Toronto, June 16, 1914, and stamped at 10:30 PM. The Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) is advertised on the stamp, which was the site of an amusement park and permanent exhibition space at this point. We also know that Dr. Robert Michael Hillary (to whom this postcard is addressed) and the rest of the 12th York Rangers went to Niagara Camp annually for training, and were there in June 1914. The CNE's theme in 1914 was called the "Peace Year" which is visible on the stamp. This

name is now ironic, considering that international tensions were rising during this time and would only get worse before the CNE could begin. Two weeks after this postcard was written, Archduke Franz Ferdinand would be assassinated, and this event would launch WWI. The green stamp depicts a profile of King George V (1910 to 1936), the monarch during 1914. The stamp cost one cent, which is equivalent to almost 30 cents today.

F) Destination Address

This postcard is addressed to Surgeon Lieutenant Colonel Hillary of the 12th York Rangers, currently based in Niagara-on-the-lake in Ontario. Visible in the postcard's signature and evident by the handwriting, this postcard is sent from Robert Stuart Hillary to his father, Dr. Robert Michael Hillary.

G) Accession Number

HA2020.1.141 - A code used by museums to identify the artifact from its collection. They are usually written in pencil on the object, or on a tag attached to the object, in a way that is reversible (removable from the object without causing a lot of damage).

Written Content

We've done quite a bit of analysis already, even though we haven't even read the postcard yet! Knowing all the information above, we are able to set ourselves up for the environment in which this message was written and place ourselves within the past. The transcription is as follows:

Dear Dad, [Philip]² Jones is trying to get me into the Dominion Bank for the summer. I am still at 148. I expect to go home to-morrow. I will let you know whether I have any luck or not. Hope you arrived safely. I am just leaving for the Shea's Hippodrome on Queen Street. Stuart.

Stuart Hillary is referring to a friend of his (Philip Jones) who works at Dominion Bank, which was located near the

corner of Yonge and Queen Streets in Toronto. Today, the old bank building is a hotel and condo residence, but a great spot usually included in Toronto's historic tours. Dominion Bank evolved into the familiar TD Bank. Spoiler: Stuart did not get a job at the Dominion Bank, but soon found employment as a clerk at the Canadian Bank of Commerce (later called CIBC) in Toronto. In this note, "148" refers to his apartment address, which is 148 Dunn Avenue in Toronto, where he lived with a relative. The address is very close to the CNE. In this message "home" refers to The Manor, his parents' house in Aurora. Stuart is hoping that his father arrived at Niagara Camp safely for routine training. Lastly, "Shea's Hippodrome" is the name of the film and play theatre in Toronto, which opened just weeks before this postcard's date, so Stuart was on his way to see a show! It was located on the corner of present-day Nathan Phillips Square, but was demolished in 1957 when the new City Hall was built. We know that the Hippodrome's opening acts were a theatre series called *A Night in an English Music Hall*, paired with a few silent films, and music by The Invisible Symphony Orchestra. I wonder if Stuart enjoyed the shows?

Well, I had fun with this little investigation and I hope you did too! These artifacts have so much to tell us about history, as long as we know how to listen to them.

¹ Material Culture is defined as any physical object created by a human or a society. Studying material culture allows historians to understand how objects were important to a specific person or group of people. We can learn how communities were impacted by these objects and vice-versa.

² Square brackets are used in transcriptions as editor's notes so that readers know that a modification was made to the original text in order to facilitate reading.

The Aurora Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of:



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Heritage

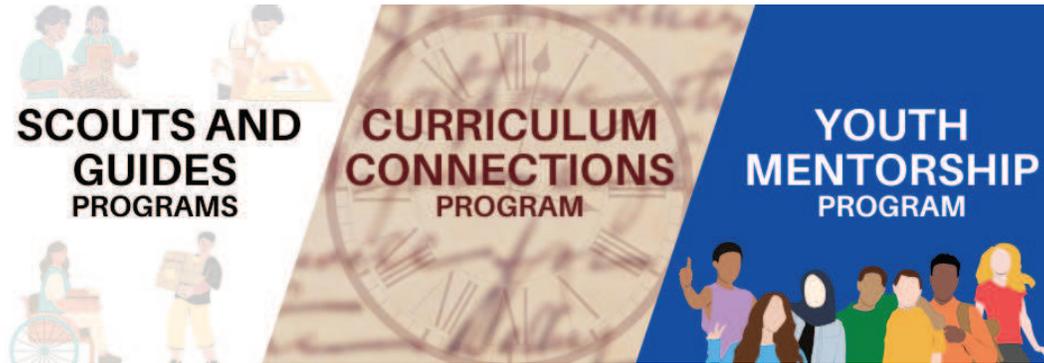
Patrimoine
canadien

Funded by the Government of Canada
Financé par le gouvernement du Canada



New Educational Programs

We've been busy getting some new educational programs prepared for our younger visitors. Check out our website here for some of the interactive and insightful programs available for this year. https://aurorahs.com/education_programs



Curriculum Connections

In-person
Email to book

School groups get to explore fun and interesting programs about art and architecture, local history and landmarks, careers in arts and culture, and much more.

Scouts & Guides Programs

In-person
Email to book

Get out into the community and discover what Aurora has to offer! Earn badges while engaging directly with Canadian history at a historic site in our very own town.

Youth Mentorship Program

Biweekly, Tuesdays from 3:30PM to 5:30PM
In-person

A free program offered exclusively for youth in Grades 9 to 12! Earn volunteer hours while learning about working in the arts and culture field. Explore community hotspots together, and work on a collaborative peer exhibition that will open in Summer 2023. The program has already begun, but we are happy to accept late registration.

Gift Shop

Sales from the Gift Shop are another way of helping maintain and restore Hillary House. You can also help by donating gently used items to our Gift Shop, excluding large items, textiles, and books.

The gift shop is open from Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm. Please enter through the back door at the driveway.



Donate Today

Donations from generous supporters like you help us keep Hillary House open!

From now until March 31st, CanadaHelps is adding an extra one-time donation of \$20 to new monthly gifts of \$20 or more! Commit to year-round support and make your donations go further.

**Donate
Now**

Happy 60th Anniversary AHS

2023 marks the 60th anniversary of the Aurora Historical Society! Founded in January 1963, the AHS' initial purpose was to "arouse interest in the stories of the people and places of Aurora and its adjacent townships; through collecting, classifying and preserving information relating to the area to further stimulate interest in its history."

We want to thank all of the AHS members, volunteers, staff, businesses, community partners, sponsors, donors, champions, and supporters who have helped keep the AHS going for 60 years!

We truly appreciate all you've given and we can't wait to see what the next 60 years holds.

We would love to highlight your stories of the AHS through the years in our upcoming newsletters! Please feel free to share by emailing us at community@aurorahs.com



Introducing Co-op Student Samona!



Hello, I am Samona. I am a Grade 12 student and I attend Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School.

I am doing a Co-op Placement to learn new skills that I can use for my post-secondary education and in the workplace.

I chose Hillary House for my placement because learning research skills and gaining experience in a work environment will help me when I start a Criminology program at university.

Message from Town of Aurora

Do you know someone special deserving of recognition?

Nominate them for a Town of Aurora Community Recognition Award.

Learn more here www.aurora.ca/cra

Volunteer Opportunities

- * Board of Directors
- * Garden Volunteers
- * Tour Guide Volunteers
- * Gift Shop Volunteers
- * Event Volunteers
- * School Programs Volunteers
- * Administration & Special Project Volunteers
- * Collections Volunteers
- * Remote Volunteers
- * Murder Mystery Program Volunteers

For more information contact community@aurorahs.com



Membership Update

By Julie Preston, Administrative Assistant

It is time to renew your membership for 2023!

It's easy. Contact the office, mail in the membership form below, or pay online from our website here <http://www.aurorahs.com/become-member> Your AHS Membership not only entitles you to voting rights at the AGM, but also grants you special **members' discounts** and invites to **members-only events**.

Having a strong membership base allows AHS to successfully apply for grants for operations or capital projects. For example, without the Town of Aurora's annual grant and the annual Community Museums Operating Grant, AHS would not be able to keep Hillary House open to

the public for tours, exhibits, programs, etc.

Annual memberships are valid from January 1 to December 31 of each calendar year.

Please help us in 2023 by becoming a member or renewing your annual membership.

Thank you to all who are Life Members - your continued support is a valued asset.

| Membership Application or Renewal | |  | |
|---|--|---|--------------------|
| Annual Fees (January 1 to December 31) | | | |
| | Membership Fees | One Year | Two Years |
| Name: _____ _____ Address: _____ _____ Town: _____ Postal Code: _____ Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Family | \$10.00 \$30.00 \$40.00 | \$50.00 \$70.00 |
| Payment can be made by cash, cheque, credit, or debit. Please make cheques payable to the Aurora Historical Society. 15372 Yonge Street, Aurora, ON L4G 1N8 (905) 727-8991 community@aurorahs.com www.aurorahs.com | | | |