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## Aurora Historical Society Golf Tournament



Grab your clubs and join us on the green on June 23rd in support of Hillary House National Historic Site. Enjoy a round of golf at Aurora's popular Westview Golf Course and know that your support dollars will be used to restore Aurora's only National Historic Site!



Register as an individual or in sets of four to play as a foursome.

Registration price includes:

- one round of golf on the tournament day
- refreshments
- cart

Start Time:

This event will be a shotgun start at 2:00pm. Play games and bid on auction items.

Sponsorships are available too!

Contact the AHS at [community@aurorahs.com](mailto:community@aurorahs.com) or 905-727-8991 for more information.

*This issue of The Attic is generously sponsored by:*



## Summer Hours

**Come and visit Hillary House,  
Tuesday to Saturday, 10am to 4pm.**

While you're here, visit the Gift Shop.

As always, we gladly accept donations of new and gently used items such as gift ware, jewellery, home décor, and other household items.

# Welcome to Summer!

(Although the variations in the weather patterns do leave me wondering at times.)

Springtime was very busy at the AHS. We had a successful Home Show, the Mother's Day Tea sold out in record time, and we enjoyed a steady stream of residents at the annual Aurora Chamber Street Festival.

Parks Canada installed a new fence along the front of Hillary House. What an improvement it is! Drop by and check it out.

Summer is looking to be very busy as well.

We just welcomed our two Canada Summer Jobs employees Sarah and Leena who will be assisting with tours, programs, events and collections management. Our Co-op student Samona from Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School has been helping Kathleen digitize parts of the archival collection.

And Kathleen is in the process of hiring an intern who will help us get the Godfrey Collection catalogued. This is a long outstanding project, and we are very pleased that we are finally in a position to tackle this. Thanks to Kathleen for organizing a grant from Young Canada Works as well as the generous assistance from the Town of Aurora for enabling this initiative.

Our monthly speaker series continues in a hybrid mode. You can attend at Hillary House or tune in online. This

hybrid model has allowed us to extend our reach and has been well-received.

We have a Golf Tournament scheduled for June 23rd and you can register online or by calling the office. A virtual Scotch Tasting is scheduled for October 2nd. Again, you can register online or by calling the office.

Finally, a big thank you to our staff and volunteers for all their hard work in support of the Aurora Historical Society and Hillary House.

Geoff, Co-President



Co-Presidents: Geoff and Al

## AURORA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2023

### Board of Directors 2023

<b>Co-President</b> .....	Alan Lambert
<b>Co-President</b> .....	Geoffrey Dawe
<b>Treasurer</b> .....	Geoffrey Dawe
<b>Interim Secretary</b> .....	Geoffrey Dawe
<b>Director</b> .....	Ronen Grunberg
<b>Director</b> .....	Dan McGeown
<b>Director</b> .....	Michelle Primeau

### Town of Aurora

<b>Council Representative</b> .....	TBA
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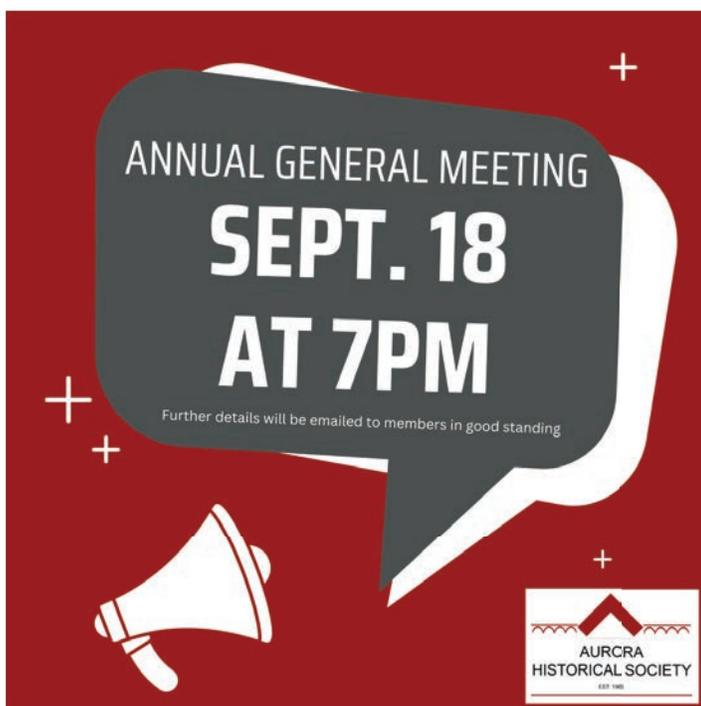
### Committees

<b>Grounds Maintenance</b> .....	Alan Lambert
<b>TOA Heritage Advisory Committee Rep</b> .....	John Green

### Staff

<b>Curator/Manager</b> .....	Kathleen Vahey
<b>Programming &amp; Outreach Coordinator</b> .....	Selin Kahramanoğlu
<b>Administrative Assistant</b> .....	Julie Preston
<b>Newsletter Production</b> .....	Julie Preston
<b>Newsletter Editor, Volunteer</b> .....	Christine McLure
<b>Newsletter Layout, Volunteer</b> .....	Brenda Snape

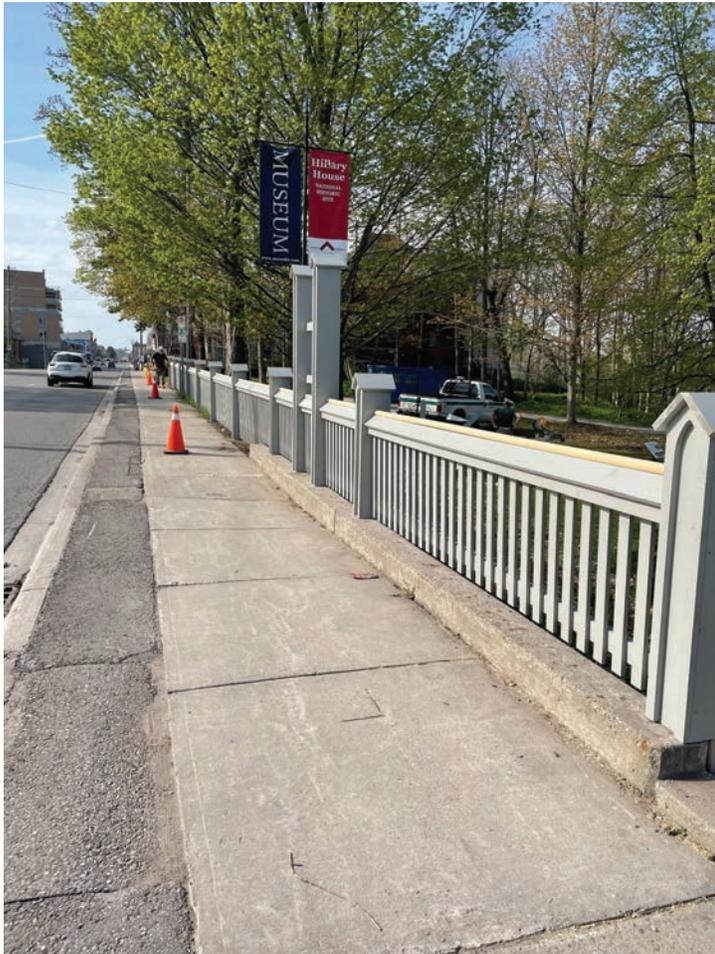
We invite members to submit suggestions for inclusion in the newsletter. Please email [community@aurorahs.com](mailto:community@aurorahs.com).



# A Huge THANK YOU to Parks Canada

In early May, a mighty team from Parks Canada descended on Hillary House to replace the all-important fence that lines Yonge Street. This project was years in the making, with many hours of lobbying from AHS Board Members. The Parks Canada team arrived on Monday, demolished the existing fence, and spent the next three days putting up the new replacement. An incredible amount of work to do in just four days!

We sincerely thank the entire Parks Canada team that contributed to this project and the AHS Board Members who tirelessly worked to get the plan off the ground. The new fence will ensure the safety of pedestrians as they pass by and maintain the historically accurate view of Hillary House from the street.



## GREAT CANADIAN GIVING CHALLENGE!

Donate today to make a BIG difference for your favourite Canadian charity. Every \$1 donated through Canada Helps is a chance to WIN \$20,000.

**Donate Now**

The Aurora Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of:



Canadian Heritage

Patrimoine canadien

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



# Upcoming Events

*The sun is out and so are we! Find us exploring the wider Aurora Community and join the Aurora Historical Society's latest programs.*

## Family Picnic & Author Reading

In-Person

**Saturday, July 8th @ 1pm,  
Author Reading at 2pm**

Families are invited to bring a blanket and a picnic basket and spend time in the gardens at Hillary House. We will have child-friendly outdoor games and free light snacks for visitors to enjoy. Do you know the best part? Long-time AHS volunteer, Kathryn O'Dwyer has authored a new book and wants to share it with all of you! Introducing her debut children's novel, *Ella and Alora and The Secret Drain: The Extraordinary Travels of Two Sisters* is now available in our Gift Shop for purchase. We are so excited to host a special author reading by Kathryn at 2pm. This is a free event. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

Did you know that July 8th is also Historic Places Day? Hillary House National Historic Site will be open all day for free walkthrough visits, so bring some friends with you to share our extraordinary property.



## An Afternoon in the Victorian Era

In-Person

**Saturday, July 15th @ 2pm to 4pm**

As the afternoon sun sets in at Aurora, guests are invited to dress up in Victorian-style clothing and enjoy the grounds of Hillary House. Play badminton and board games, enjoy refreshments, learn Victorian dances, or take photos while reading in our beautiful garden, all on our historic property. Spend an afternoon living in the Victorian period! Photos are encouraged, and some costume accessories will be available to borrow. Tickets are \$20 per person.



## AHS Speaker Series:

### Robert Revington

Hybrid

**Wednesday, July 19th @ 7pm**



In November 2021, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church celebrated its 150th anniversary. This presentation pulls from the church's anniversary museum exhibit with the Aurora Museum & Archives. It will track the church's history from the 1870s to the present, especially the church's memorable fundraising campaigns in 1962 when it opened its new building. Speaker Robert Revington highlights the church's history and how it followed the peaks and valleys of the denominational history of the Presbyterian Church in Canada itself. Tickets are \$10.50 for AHS Members and \$12.50 for General Admission.

## Paint Night

In-Person

**Friday, August 18th  
@ 7pm to 9pm**



You loved it, so we brought it back for a second time! Join us for an evening of creative expression and good times. Guided by our partner Royal Rose Art Gallery, this program is designed to be a casual night of painting, socializing, and enjoying some light refreshments. Caution! Incredible artwork and too much laughter may occur as a result. Register today through our website or by calling us. All materials will be provided.

Tickets are \$30 per person, participants aged 18+.

# Save the Date

*These AHS programs are coming up and will be here before you know it! Add them to your calendars so you are ready to sign up when registration becomes available.*

## Antique Show & Appraisals

In-Person

Saturday, August 12th @ 10am to 4pm

## Victorian Harvest Tea

In-Person

Saturday, September 16th @ 12pm and 2:30pm

## AHS Speaker Series: Rowena McGowan

Hybrid

Wednesday, September 27th @ 7pm

## Heritage Craft Workshop: Basics of Carpet Weaving

In-Person

Saturday, October 14th @ 1pm to 3pm

## A Haunted Halloween

In-Person

Saturday, October 21st @ 10am to 4pm

## AHS Speaker Series: Bill Allen

Hybrid

Wednesday, October 25th @ 7pm

## 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 get to know historic Aurora. Play Victorian Era games together, or get hands-on with artifacts from the Hillary House collection. Explore local history through engaging activities and exchanging stories with other community members. 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 on 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 recommended start time is at 7pm.



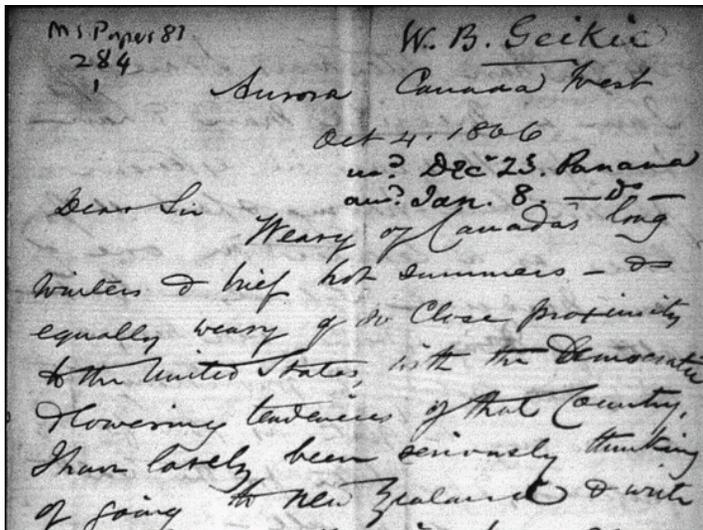
Learn  
More

TICKET

# Yearning for Nicer Weather: Finding the Geikie's in New Zealand

By: Kathleen Vahey, Curator/Manager

As you may remember, earlier this year 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'. This discovery led to us gaining digital copies of three images of the Geikie family and three letters written by Dr. Walter Geikie (Hillary House's first doctor). In the Spring edition of the Attic, I explored the photos as I waited for transcription volunteers to reveal what treasures the letters held. Shortly after writing the piece, the transcription volunteers returned the letters and I have been eagerly waiting to update you on our findings. The first letter is dated October 4, 1866, a mere 4 years after Hillary House was built. Dr. Geikie writes from Hillary House (Aurora, Canada West – as found on the letter) to the Hon. Walter Mantell. We will come back to who this is a little later. Our doctor begins: "Weary of Canada's long winters & brief hot summers -- & equally weary of so close proximity to the United States, with the Democratic flowering tendencies of that Country, I have lately been seriously thinking of going to New Zealand..."

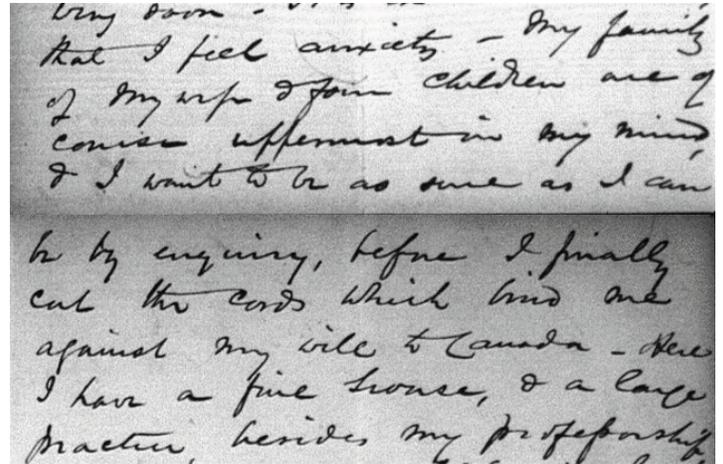


Wow. What a revelation! We did not know Dr. Geikie was so unhappy with his situation in Canada. In the letter, he goes on to describe how they are related, his qualifications as a doctor, and asks many questions about New Zealand and the possibility of moving there. He is interested in the cost of living, the need for trained doctors such as himself, and the availability of good schooling opportunities for his children.

The second letter is dated June 9, 1867, and continues the inquiry into New Zealand. He describes being quite anxious to know if he could successfully start a medical practice in

New Zealand as this would be how he supports his family. He writes:

"My family of my wife and four children are of course uppermost in my mind & I want to be as sure as I can be by enquiry, before I finally cut the cords which bind me against my will to Canada. Here I have a fine house & a large practice besides my professorship..."



He asks about the availability of public appointments, the economy and social life.

Finally, in the third letter dated October 8, 1868, he reiterates that he needs to be sure he can establish a medical practice there, asks if there are publications that give information on New Zealand, and asks about the possibility of continuing as a professor while there.

These letters offer a never before seen glimpse into Dr. Geikie's life. Walter Bayne Geikie was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1830 and moved with his family to Canada in 1843. He trained under Dr. John Rolph in Toronto and received his license to practice medicine in 1851. He opened medical practices in Bond Head, Aurora, and Toronto. Before the discovery of these letters, we did not know about his interest in leaving Canada or his distain for the climate. He frequently comments on how the long, cold winters and hot summers are unhealthy for his family and he'd like to find somewhere more suitable for them. This forms part of what I found most interesting. In each of the letters, he makes it clear that he must act in the best interest of his whole family. He states explicitly that he has to consider their well-being and the likelihood of establishing a successful practice that will allow him to provide for them. He inquires about the city of Auckland as

Continued on page 7

## Yearning for Nicer Weather: Finding the Geikie's in New Zealand

*Continued from page 6*

he'd like his children to grow up in a city and asks about the educational opportunities and prospects for them and briefly explains those that exist in Canada as a comparison. It is fascinating to see what information he was looking for and what questions he thought to ask to help make his decision. Something many would relate to, although our access to Google today makes our quest for knowledge rather instantaneous while these letters are dated over a two-year period.

We find out in the first letter that the man Dr. Geikie is writing to is his wife's cousin – the son of her father's sister. Walter Mantell moved to New Zealand in 1840 and was Superintendent of Military Roads at Porirua from 1845 until 1848. In 1848 he became a government land purchase agent. He was responsible for arranging reserves for local

indigenous groups and convincing them to sell their land to the government at greatly reduced values by promising government-built schools and hospitals. However, the government refused to build the schools and hospitals and Mantell grew unsatisfied. He left his position and spent the rest of his career in politics attempting to fulfill the promises he'd made to the indigenous populations, albeit unsuccessfully.

With a cousin in such a prominent position, it is no wonder why Dr. Geikie thought to write to Mantell with his inquires on New Zealand. For whatever reason (that isn't discussed in these letters) the Geikie's remained in Canada, moving from Aurora where these letters were written to Toronto in 1869 where our doctor would stay until his death in 1917.

## Youth Mentorship Program

Developed by the AHS Programming and Outreach Coordinator, Selin Kahramanoğlu, the Youth Mentorship Program offers high school students volunteer hours while providing opportunities to learn about potential career paths in arts and culture. The program helped students understand the different institutions, work positions, and training needed to pursue jobs that are common in galleries, libraries, archives, and museums through community field trips, basic skill workshops and group discussions. The AHS hoped to provide a safe space for students to learn essential and transferrable job skills, gain insight into the arts and culture field, familiarize themselves with resources in their community, and meet new friends with similar interests.

*Victorian Interior Design: Elegant or Outdated?*  
Located at Hillary House National Historic Site,  
3rd Floor Exhibition Room  
Opening on Wednesday, June 14th 2023  
Included in regular admission

The Aurora Historical Society presents a collaborative peer exhibition *Victorian Interior Design: Elegant or Outdated?* as the final component of the seven-week Youth Mentorship Program. In this exhibition, we will explore a few spaces of Hillary House and their noteworthy Victorian characteristics. Complimented by artifacts in the Hillary House historical collection, get to know the key elements of interior design from 1837 to 1901.

The AHS wishes to thank all the students who showed interest in the program and contributed their time, effort, and delightful ideas to the exhibition. We wish them luck in their next chapter, and welcome them to visit the AHS anytime.

The AHS is currently reflecting on whether this program should return next year. We welcome feedback and thoughts on the Youth Mentorship Program's potential 2024 reappearance.

A Collaborative Peer Exhibition  
from the AHS Youth Mentorship Program

**Victorian Interior Design:  
Elegant or Outdated?**

Opening Wednesday, June 14th



Hillary House National Historic Site  
15372 Yonge Street, Aurora ON L4G 1N8  
905-727-8991 | [www.aurorahs.com](http://www.aurorahs.com)



# Highlights from Hillary House



*A participant hard at work learning basic quilting skills at the Introduction to Quilting Workshop in March.*



*AHS Director Michelle and Volunteer Angela speak to visitors at the Street Festival.*



*Art enthusiasts learn the basic techniques of acrylic painting with Rosa, from Royal Rose Art Gallery.*



*Selin, Programming & Outreach Coordinator leads the Youth Mentorship group through their exhibition planning.*



*Guests enjoy high tea at Hillary House to celebrate Mother's Day.*



*Ladies from the Red Hat Society enjoy a tour of Hillary House.*

# A Look into 19th Century Medical Education

By: Kathleen Vahey, Curator/Manager

In May, the AHS was excited to welcome a group of Hillary descendants for a tour of Hillary House. This visit was made even more special by a handful of artifact donations for our collection. These artifacts included a number of archival documents related to Robert William Hillary, the first Hillary to own the House, which shed new light on his medical education. Let's dive in.

Previous family genealogical research had suggested that Robert William had studied at Trinity College, Dublin (since he was born in Dublin, Ireland); however, no records of his attendance there have ever been found to back up this claim. The only evidence we had that attested to his medical abilities was a receipt from Coombe Lying-In Hospital, Dublin that proved he was a pupil there for 6 months as well as a record from Library and Archives Canada of his license to practice medicine in Upper Canada from 1857. Although it wasn't uncommon for people in the 19th century to practice medicine without a formal education, the new papers fill in some of the blanks when it comes to Robert William and his training.

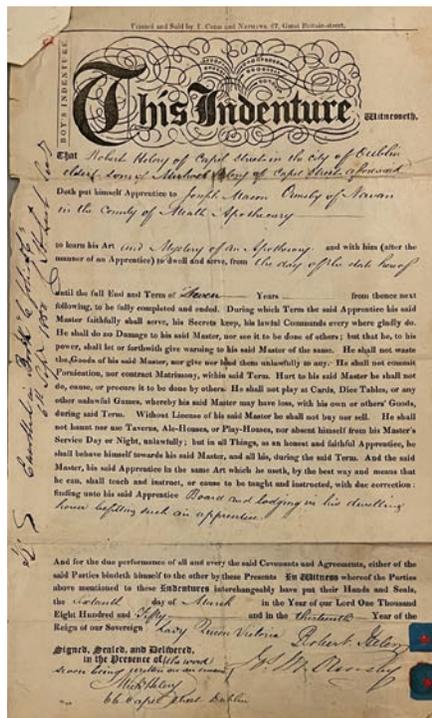
First is a certificate from the Apothecaries Hall, Dublin that confirms he passed the exams necessary to enter into an apothecarist apprenticeship. It is dated March 15, 1850. At this time in Ireland, there were three levels of the medical profession. At the top was the physician, followed by the surgeon, and at the bottom was the apothecarist. The first two were trained at medical schools, namely Queen's Colleges of Galway, Cork and Belfast, the University of Dublin (Trinity College) or the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. The Apothecaries Act of 1791 established the Apothecaries' Hall and also regulated the training of apothecaries, which required an apprenticeship of seven years. The Apothecaries' Hall was not a teaching

body but rather focused on examining and licensing. Applicants had to provide evidence of satisfactory attendance at lectures and clinical instruction before sitting the final examinations.

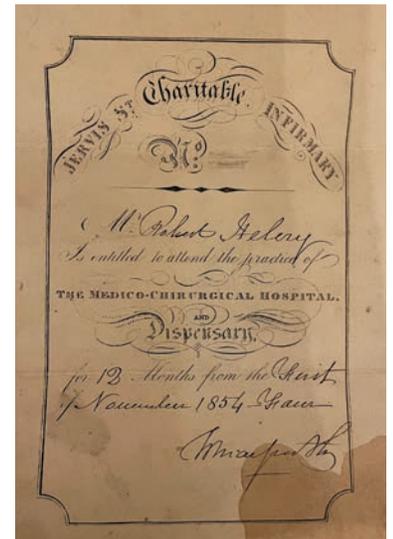
This new donation of papers includes an Indenture Contract from March 16, 1850 (see image) that outlines Robert William Hillary's agreement to be an apprentice of Joseph Mason Ormsby for seven years. Interestingly, there is a note on the back from Mr. Ormsby that Robert only served 3.5 years of his apprenticeship but was an excellent student. Also, among the papers is a 12-month pass from the Jervis St. Charitable Infirmary dated November 1, 1854, stating Robert could attend the practice of Medico-Chirurgical Hospital and Dispensary (see image). Another certificate from the Apothecaries Hall, Dublin dated March 3, 1855, confirmed that Robert had passed another set of examinations and could act as Assistant to the Profession of Apothecary.

From the documents we have now, we know that Robert William was registered with the Apothecaries Hall, served part of an apprenticeship, trained in at least two hospitals, and passed a set of examinations that made him eligible to act as an Assistant Apothecarist, all before he travelled to Canada around 1856. When he arrived, he quickly took the examinations here and obtained his License to Practice in Upper Canada in 1857, another document that was given in the recent donation.

Our ability to research and tell an accurate story of someone's life relies on the resources we have available, which is why it is so important to preserve and maintain historic documents. Not only do these papers give us a better understanding of Dr. Robert William Hillary's medical education prior to starting his practice in Aurora and a glimpse into his experience, they also provide a look into the wider history of medical training in 19th century Ireland.



This photo shows Robert William Hillary's apprenticeship contract.



This pass allowed Robert training opportunities in medicine and surgery.

# Introducing the 2023 Team



The AHS is excited to welcome new staff members Sarah (left) and Leena (right) to the AHS, funded by the Canada Summer Jobs program.

Eileen (Leena) Bethune – Assistant Museum Curator

Leena's background is in archaeology and she has excavated throughout Ontario. She has completed a MA in historical archaeology from Memorial University of Newfoundland and has recently finished a post graduate certificate from Centennial College in Museum and Cultural Management. Leena is passionate about history and artifacts and she can't wait to explore the Hillary House collection.

Sarah Takhar - Museum Educator

Sarah first started working for a museum in 2017. She quickly developed a passion for heritage and facilitating others' exploration of the past. She completed her master's in Museum and Gallery Studies at the University of St Andrews and has worked for multiple heritage and museum organizations in the UK. Originally from Aurora, Sarah is excited to bring her experience in museum education to her local community at Hillary House National Historic Site this summer.

We also want to thank Co-op student Samona who has spent the last 15 weeks working on our archival collection. Samona has digitized over 300 archival documents which will assist the AHS with research and help the preservation of the collection.

Thank you, Samona and we wish you all the best in your future endeavours!



**We're Hiring!**  
Job Position :  
**Collections Management Intern**  
32 weeks | August 21, 2023 – March 29, 2024  
35 hours a week, Monday to Friday, \$18.00/hr  
(Young Canada Works)

Visit [www.aurorahs.com](http://www.aurorahs.com) for more information

**Apply Now** [curator@aurorahs.com](mailto:curator@aurorahs.com)



**Call for Volunteers**  
Help us with the Hillary House gardens!  
Email [community@aurorahs.com](mailto:community@aurorahs.com) for more information.

# 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](mailto:community@aurorahs.com)

National Volunteer Week



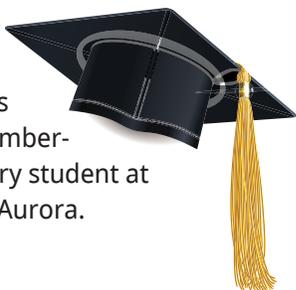
## VOLUNTEER

WITH THE AHS!



## Supporting Future History Students

The Aurora Historical Society is pleased to have presented a cash award as well as a 1-year family membership to a graduating history student at each secondary school in Aurora.



Congratulations to all of the award winners!  
We wish you success in your future endeavours.

## Rental

Are you looking for a small venue to hold a shower or an intimate wedding? Perhaps you are just looking for a romantic location to take your wedding photos? Look no further than Hillary House and its beautiful grounds. Contact us for more information.



## A Big Thanks To...

- Our awesome volunteers who represented the AHS at the Home Show and Street Festival.
- Donna for starting on a new landscaping plan for Hillary House.
- Sonia who ensures that our indoor plants stay healthy, and is a frequent volunteer at our many events.
- John and Marjorie who replaced the mats at both Hillary House doors and are always ensuring our lawns and gardens look fantastic.
- Graham for donating his time and materials to replace a broken window.
- Al, Nathan, Michelle, Mike, and Owen for helping move the Godfrey Collection to Hillary House.
- Our wonderful partner organizations including Aurora Public Library, Aurora Cultural Centre, Aurora Museum & Archives, and Royal Rose Art Gallery.
- Clare, our wonderful cleaner who has been keeping Hillary House spick and span for 15 years!
- The Town of Aurora for lending a bin for our spring clean-up and the lovely hanging flower baskets they provide every year.
- Mike for his pest control assistance.