

EST. 1963

Hillary House National Historic Site

# The

Fall 2023 Issue

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

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#### Welcome to Fall!

We have some great events coming up to match the great weather we have been having. More information on those events can be found on page 3 in this newsletter as well as on our website. Please check them out.

I would like to thank everyone who attended our recent AGM. Although a little later than normal, we were able to present our audited, rather than unaudited financials. We recognized those Directors who left the Aurora Historical Society in 2022, Martin Paivio, Patricia Wallace and Ronen Grunberg, and thank them for their many contributions to the AHS over the years. If you missed the AGM and would like to view the recording, it is available on our website.

And, we are happy to welcome John Green back to our Board of Directors!

We were very pleased to have Sarah and Leena as our two Canada Summer Jobs employees, and our Dr. G. W. Williams Secondary School co-op student Samona at Hillary House. They provided a lot of assistance over the summer with our programs and with the ongoing task of cataloguing and digitizing our collection. A process that will allow us to extend our reach!

We were also excited to welcome our intern Claire, who is doing a great job on inventorying the Godfrey Collection.



A project that we have wanted to tackle for a long time. We have already found some very interesting items, which are highlighted on page 9. And our thanks to Young Canada Works and the Town of Aurora for helping us to support this initiative.

And last, but certainly not least, a big thank you to our volunteers (too many to name) and our staff at the Aurora Historical Society: Kathleen, our Curator/Manager; Selin, our Programming & Outreach Coordinator; and Julie, our Administrative Assistant. They are the well-oiled machine that keeps us going!

#### Geoff, Co-President



Co-Presidents: Geoff and Al

#### **AURORA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2023**

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Co-President	Alan Lambert
Co-President	Geoffrey Dawe
Co-Treasurer	Geoffrey Dawe
Co-Treasurer	Dan McGeown
Secretary	John Green
Director	

#### **Committees**

<b>Grounds Maintenance</b>	A	lan Lambert
TOA Heritage Advisory	Committee Rep	John Green

#### Staff

Curator/Manager	Kathleen Vahey
Programming & Outreach Coordinator	Selin Kahramanoğlu
Administrative Assistant	Julie Preston
Collections Management Intern	Claire Smith

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**

Thank goodness it's November! The Aurora Historical Society is enthusiastically tackling this season's jam-packed schedule. Check out the events happening up until the end of the year.

#### **Hot Chocolate on** the Verandah

In-Person, drop-in

Saturday, November 25th at 5:30pm Free hot chocolate (with a little treat) during the Santa Under the Stars Parade.

## **Holiday Wreath-Making** Workshop Tickets

**In-Person** 

Saturday, December 2nd, 10am to 12pm or 2pm to 4pm

Guided program using greens from around the Hillary House property (and some shiny additions).

#### **Free Speaker Series Talk: Jennifer Lee Jones**

Virtual

Wednesday, November 29th at 7pm

On the subject of improving ones mental health by using a resource very close to you - the museum!



#### A Family Christmas

**In-Person** 

Sunday, December 10th, timed-ticket entry

between 10am and 4pm

Annual event with family-friendly activitie that welcome all of the Aurora community and a chance to meet Santa!



## **Programming Sneak Peeks**

We want to give you an insider look at what is coming up in early 2024. Save the date!

#### **Speaker Series: Deirdre McCorkindale**

Wednesday, January 31st at 7pm

On the topic of *The Underground Railroad and Free Black* Communities in Canada West.

#### **Heritage Craft Session**

In-person at the Aurora Public Library Wednesday, January 31st at 6:30pm to 8pm A casual session to socialize and work on your craft projects.

#### **150 Years Ago in Aurora**

In-person at the Aurora Public Library Saturday, February 10th at 10:30am to 12:30pm

Brief tales of Aurora's history, featuring the Hillary House Collection.

#### **Speaker Series: Asha Frost**

Virtual

\*Saturday, February 24th at 11am

On the topic of *Living by the Medicine Wheel.* 

\*Special program date and time.

#### **Seniors Programs**



Designed to come to you.

#### Murder Mystery



For private groups.

#### Artists in the Garden



Get inspired by our lovely property.

#### Guides & Scouts Programs



Engaging activities for young audiences.

## From Col. Hillary's Collection – A Generous Donation

By: Kathleen Vahey, Curator/Manager

Some of the most exciting parts of working at a small museum happen at unexpected times. In late September, I received an interesting email from Don Doiron, a past York Region resident about a photograph they had recently purchased online. The image was described as the first known photo of The York Rangers from 1868. This piqued my interest as I knew many of the Hillary House residents were involved in the local militia. I read on... The back of the photograph held the most intriguing information. Written on the back of the image were a few lines including "from Col Hillary's collection" and "little boy in white (with man) is Col R.M. Hillary. 4 yrs old". I was over the moon. It is always exciting when we find a direct connection to a Hillary House family and I know both Robert William and his son Robert Michael Hillary were heavily involved with the York Rangers. The email ended with an offer to donate the photograph to the AHS for future preservation.

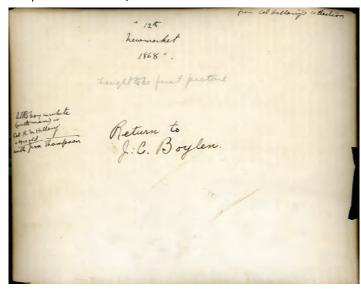


This photograph of the 12th York Battalion of Infantry was offered as a donation to the AHS. Note the small white figure on the left side by the fence that is identified as young Dr. R.M. Hillary.

After reading the email, I reached out to our friends at the Aurora Museum and Archives (AMA). I had never seen a photo like this before at Hillary House but I had a hunch that someone at the AMA would be familiar with such an important image. And indeed, a couple days later I received an email back from Jeremy, the AMA's Museum Assistant. Not only is he incredibly knowledgeable about Aurora generally, but he also is involved with the Queen's York Rangers Regimental Museum (QYRRM). Jeremy helped clear up a few guestions I had.

This image is well-known and significant to the regiment. It is the first known picture of the 12th York Battalion of Infantry (later the York Rangers) and was taken in the fairgrounds in Newmarket in 1868. This regiment originated in 1866 with the amalgamation of several volunteer companies and had headquarters in Aurora. The AMA and the QYRRM both have copies of the image in question in their collections.

The other significant writing on the back of the photograph reads "Return to J.C. Boylen". Jeremy explained that J.C. Boylen was the Adjutant and War Diarist for the 127th Battalion throughout WW1, which consisted of many volunteers from the York Rangers, including R.M. Hillary. Boylen was instrumental in gathering photos and ephemera from the war and earlier artifacts from York County. He is actually credited with donating the version of this photo that the QYRRM has in their collection.



The back of the photograph bares writing which leads to many questions.

Both of the versions of the photograph at the AMA and QYRRM corroborate that the small figure in white in the top left-hand corner of the image is Robert Michael Hillary, the last Hillary doctor to own and work out of Hillary House. The biggest mystery with this photograph is its provenance or history of ownership. If you look at the top edges of the photo on the front, you can see slight inconsistencies in the border which leads me to think it is a copy or print. Furthermore, on the back of the photo in very faded ink is the repeated word "Velox". This is a big clue.

Continued on page 8

#### Thank you to Our Summer Staff

The AHS was fortunate to have two emerging museum professionals join our team for the summer season, thanks to a federal grant from Canada Summer Jobs.

Leena joined the AHS team as the Assistant Museum Curator. She spent the summer accessioning and cataloguing artifacts, digitizing archival documents, updating the database, and doing preliminary research for upcoming exhibitions.

Sarah joined the AHS team as the Museum Educator this summer and spent her time creating our engaging social media content and assisting with the various events and youth programming. She was also the primary docent, leading our guests on extraordinary tours around Hillary House.

We thank Leena and Sarah for all of their hard work during the summer and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

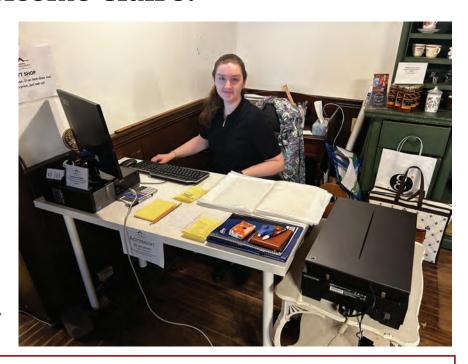


Sarah and Leena pose in front of Hillary House.

#### Welcome Claire!

Claire, the new Collections Management Intern, is a recent graduate from the Master of Museum Studies (MMSt) program at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Information. In addition, she holds a Master of Arts (MA) specializing in Art History from the University of Toronto and an Honours Bachelor of Arts specializing in Art History from the University of Toronto Mississauga. During the summer of 2022, Claire had the opportunity to learn first hand about the heritage and historical importance of the town and the people of Aurora while working as the Aurora Museum & Archives' Summer Student. Claire is excited to join the Aurora Historical Society team and to delve into the Godfrey Collection.

Claire, a recent MMSt graduate joins the AHS as the Collections Management Intern until March 2024.



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





#### A Much Needed Donation

As a small non-profit operating on a modest budget, we have to keep a sharp eye on our expenses and are always looking for new or innovative ways to reduce costs. In this increasingly technology driven world, we have been somewhat constrained by limited and aging equipment. With this on our mind and an upcoming busy season on the horizon, we applied for a donation from the Electronic Recycling Association in April.

The Electronic Recycling Association (ERA) is a non-profit organization founded in 2004 to address the growing problem of e-waste and the increasing 'digital divide'. With a focus on recovery, refurbishment, and reuse, ERA continuously supplies charitable groups with donated IT equipment while securely managing the retiring IT assets of organizations and individuals across Canada.

In August, ERA granted the donation and we received two computers, two laptops, and a monitor with another two computers on the way. This donation helps empower us to not only streamline essential museum tasks and continue offering our innovative programming, captivating exhibitions, and unique events but it also improves our overall office ergonomics.

We are so grateful to ERA for this donation and encourage you to visit their website here www.era.ca to learn more



Kathleen and Selin at the ERA Toronto Facility with the new-to-us equipment.

about how you can get involved, whether that is through volunteering, hosting an e-waste fundraiser, or donating your pre-loved electronics.



#### In Memoriam

Penney, Robert David (Bob) - January 21, 2023

Bob tuned pianos in Newmarket and surrounding areas for 50 years. The AHS was fortunate to see Bob on a yearly basis tuning the piano situated in the ballroom of Hillary House, and he will be greatly missed.



greatly missed.

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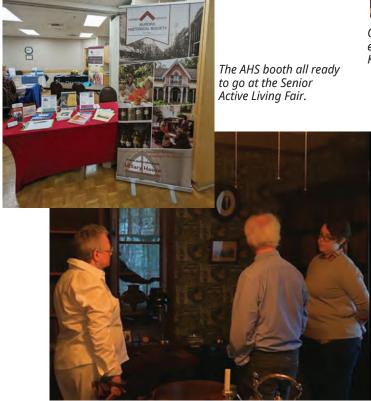
## **Highlights from Hillary House**



Curator/Manager Kathleen at the AHS booth during the Multicultural Festival.



On Historic Places Day, participants at our Author Reading & Family Picnic event, listening to a storytelling by author and long-time AHS volunteer Kathryn O'Dwyer.



Curatorial Assistant Leena, giving a tour to visitors.



Guests enjoy the perfect weather in our back gardens during the Victorian Harvest Tea.



Donna Lewis leads volunteers on garden improvement projects in the summer.



Instructor Katelyn, from the Royal Rose Art Gallery, guides participants through a Paint Night.

## **Highlights from Hillary House**





A group of students wrap up the school year with a trip to Hillary House.

Young guests with their event souvenirs at our very first Children's Teddy Bear Tea.



Programming & Outreach Coordinator Selin instructs participants at the Basics of Carpet Weaving Workshop.

Collections Management
Intern, Claire, and
Programming &
Outreach Coordinator,
Selin, running the AHS
outreach booth at
Markham Fair.



#### From Col. Hillary's Collection – A Generous Donation

Continued from page 6

Velox was the first photographic paper that could be developed under artificial light and also the first to be commercially successful. It was created and manufactured by Dr. Leo Baekeland in 1894 and sold in 1899 to George Eastman of the Eastman Kodak Company. The type of simple back printing embellishment seen on our photo was used by Kodak on papers manufactured in the USA from the late 1920s to the late 1940s. Since R.M. Hillary passed in 1936, I am assuming this copy was made sometime in the late 1920s or early 1930s. As for the ownership of the photo, there are no clear answers. There is also no straightforward timeline for when the writing was added on to the back of the photograph which causes the most confusion. The writing all seems slightly different so each grouping may have been added at different times.

I can think of four possibilities of varying probability:

a) Hillary owned the original image and made copies but wanted people to know that the original was from his collection (hence writing "From Col Hillary's collection") and

this copy belonged to Boylen who at one point loaned it out (explaining the "Return to J. C. Boylen).

b) Hillary owned the original image and Boylen borrowed it to make this copy but wanted to retain the information that the original was from the Hillary collection, then at one point he loaned it out.

c) Boylen owned this photograph and loaned it out, but it somehow ended up in Hillary's collection and was later misplaced.

I could spend hours speculating on the history of this particular photograph; however, it will remain a mystery. For now, the photo will be accessioned and tucked into an acid-free folder with other Hillary documents in our archives. Our most sincere thank you goes out to Jeremy at the AMA and Don who saw the name Col. Hillary and reached out and generously mailed the photo to us all the way from New Brunswick. We look forward to using the photo to tell the history of Aurora and the Hillary's.

## An Exploration into Medical History: An Update on The Godfrey Collection Inventory Project

By: Claire Smith, Collections Management Intern

My name is Claire Smith and I am the new Collections Management Intern with the AHS. My position is a full-time internship funded by the Young Canada Works Building Careers in Heritage program, the AHS, and the Town of Aurora. Over the next several months, I will be assisting Kathleen and the rest of the AHS team in the creation of a comprehensive overview of the Godfrey Collection as well as assisting with planning for the future of the collection. The Godfrey Collection is a significant collection of books, journals, papers, and artifacts relating to the history of medicine and social history of early Ontario that were previously part of the personal collection of the late Dr. Charles Godfrey, an American-born physician, professor, and politician from Durham Region.

I am currently in the first phase of this collectionsorientated project which primarily consists of organizing, inventorying, and researching items in the Godfrey Collection and digitizing select items that may be of particular historical importance. For the last few weeks, I have been examining the documents that make up the smaller archival sub-collection within the larger Godfrey Collection. These archival documents include letters, notes, journals, papers, brochures, pamphlets, corporate documents, newspaper clippings, and photographs that were originally owned by Dr. Godfrey.

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A letter written by William Osler in ca. 1885 to Beatrice Bath Francis.

The contents of the first 5 boxes from the **Godfrey Archival** Collection, have been organized, inventoried, and researched. These boxes contained a total of 2,858 items, of which 215 items were scanned. There are 7 more boxes of archival items to work through before the inventory of the book and artifact sub-collections of the Godfrey Collection can commence.

I have found a wide variety of documents

that are associated with an even wider range of themes and topics. These themes/topics have included

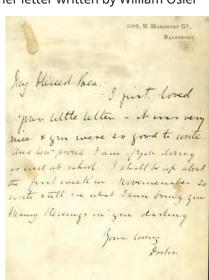
rehabilitation medicine, physiotherapy, rheumatoid arthritis, pain management, and prosthetics to list a few. Among these archival documents, there have been a few items that stand out from the rest. Both of the items are directly associated with the personal history of famous Canadian physician, Sir William Osler.

Sir William Osler (b. 1849 – d. 1919) was one of the founding four professors of Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, and is credited with helping to develop the residency program used in medical schools today. Osler also had an interesting and noteworthy personal life. His wife, Grace Linzee Revere Osler (married William Osler in 1892), was the great-granddaughter of the famous American Revolutionary Patriot, Paul Revere, and his friend, noted American neurosurgeon, Harvey Williams Cushing, served in WWI alongside Osler's son, Paul Revere Osler.

The two items that I want to highlight from the Godfrey Archival Collection reveal personal moments from Osler's private life that not everyone gets the opportunity to see. The first item is a letter written in c.1885 by William Osler to Miss Beatrice Bath Francis, in which he addresses her as, "My sweet little chicken." In the letter, Osler writes: "My sweet little chicken. Did you tumble down stairs on Monday? I am so sorry. [...] Be careful! Go down stairs slowly. I will be home soon again [...]." Osler concludes the letter with, "Your loving [...] Osler."

The second item is another letter written by William Osler

to Miss Beatrice Bath Francis, in c.1890/1891, on a piece of paper with a personalized letterhead, which reads, "209, W. Monument St. Baltimore,". In this letter, Osler writes: "My Blessed Bea. I just loved your little letter it was very nice & you were so good to write. And how proud I am of you doing so well at school. I shall be up about the first week in November so write &



A letter written by William Osler in ca. 1890/1 to Beatrice Bath Francis.

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tell me what I can bring you. Many blessings on you darling. Your loving Osler."

Given the informal style and content of both letters, one could make the argument that Miss Beatrice Bath Francis could be a distant familial relation of William Osler. After researching the Osler family tree, I was able to conclude that Miss Beatrice Bath Francis was the first cousin once

removed of William Osler. Uncovering these two letters showcase a glimpse into the private life of a man most known for his professional accomplishments.

As I continue to work through the Godfrey Collection, I look forward to seeing what new treasures I will find and in turn share with the Aurora Historical Society.

## Beyond Blue & White: Wedgwood Designed for Canada

On display at Hillary House NHS from October 30 - December 20, 2023

Think you already know about Wedgwood? A new travelling exhibit, created by the King Heritage & Cultural Centre (KHCC), may give you a new perspective! This exhibit is now at Hillary House National Historic Site.

In late 2016, a collection of over 400 Canadian-themed pieces of Wedgwood was donated to the KHCC by the Estate of the late Keith Alwyn McLeod (1935-2014). He acquired the ceramics over his lifetime, amassing what is arguably now the most complete collection of Canadian themed Wedgwood in existence.

Beyond Blue & White: Wedgwood Designed for Canada explores the growth of Wedgwood and its expansion into

the North American market. The exhibit includes over 50 unique ceramic pieces, showcasing landscapes, heraldry, souvenirs, history, commemorative tributes and more. Canadian artists who worked for Wedgwood and



Visit Hillary House between Oct 30-Dec 20 to view these pieces and many more.

different types of ceramics are also profiled.

## An Around the World Whisky Tasting

Geoffrey Dawe, Co-President

On Tuesday, October 3rd, the Aurora Historical Society, in collaboration with the Aurora Whisky Society, hosted another successful whisk(e)y tasting event. A big shout-out to the gang at the Aurora Whisky Society for their support in putting this together. The event was led by the AWS' Keith, Frans and Stephen with support from Vern and Brian.

We held this event in a virtual format again this year which yielded two major advantages – first we were able to increase the number of participants (the seating in the ballroom is limited); and a virtual tasting event is much safer (no drinking and driving worries!). We learned about whisk(e)y, sampled some great products from India, Ireland, Taiwan, and of course Scotland, and raised over \$4,000.00! It was a fun evening.

(Bonus points are available to the first person to email me – geoffrey.dawe@aurorahs.com – with the reasoning behind my spelling of "whisk(e)y"!)

Our sincere thanks to: our Gold Sponsor, Geranium; our Silver Sponsors: Westview Golf Club, The Lind Realty Team, Delmanor Aurora; the gang at the Aurora Whisky Society; and of course all the participants!



AWS' Frans, Keith, and Stephen.

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### Diggin' the Gardens

If you've visited Hillary House or even just walked by over the past few months, you've probably noticed changes to the grounds. AHS and Garden Aurora volunteer Donna Lewis has graciously offered to take the lead on planning the rejuvenation of the grounds and gardens with a focus on historical accuracy, ease of maintenance, and aesthetic look. The first phase of this project started in the spring and continued through the summer. The goal was to remove the shrubbery, flowers, and invasive species from along the Yonge Street fence line and around the large maple tree and mulch the areas to prevent regrowth. These areas will stay mulched until we are ready to move onto phase two, which will see reduced garden beds with new plantings. We want to thank Donna for the incredible amount of time and work she's put into this project so far and we are so excited to see what next year brings!

We would also like to thank all of the volunteers who joined us on August 26th and 27th for the Mulching Days and our terrific garden and grounds volunteers for helping keep

Hillary House looking great. Also, a shout out to ChipDrop, a service that matches people/ organizations who want free wood chip mulch with arborists and tree companies who are trying to get rid of it. We received many loads of mulch from companies around York Region. Thanks!



A ChipDrop mulch delivery arrives at Hillary House.

#### A message from our friends at the Aurora Seniors Centre



## Contact Us: Thank you for supporting our fundraising event.

## A Big Thanks To...

- Kathryn O'Dwyer for partnering with the AHS to host an author reading during Historic Places Days in July. Kathryn's new book Ella and Alora and The Secret Drain: The Extraordinary Travels of Two Sisters can be purchased from the Hillary House Gift Shop.
- Katelyn and Rosa from Royal Rose Art Gallery & Gifts for helping with the Paint Night.
- Summerhill Market for donating the desserts at the Children's Teddy Bear Tea and Lesley's Party Sandwiches for supplying the sandwiches.
- A huge shout out to the volunteers who assisted with the Historic Places Day, Paint Night, Children's Teddy Bear Tea, Victorian Harvest Tea, Multicultural Festival/Culture Days, and the Carpet Weaving Workshop who helped make these events run seamlessly.

## Membership Update

By Julie Preston, Administrative Assistant

It is time to renew your membership for 2024! 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.

A strong membership base is extremely important to successful grant applications. 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 2024 by becoming a member or

renewing your annual membership.

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

#### 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 Application or Renewal**

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	AURORA	
	HISTORICAL SOCIETY	
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Annual Fees (January 1 to December 31)		HISTORICAL SOCIETY		
Name:	Membership Fees	One Year	Two Y	ears
	☐ Student	\$10.00		
	Individual	\$30.00	\$50.00	0
Address:	Family	\$40.00	\$70.00	0
Town:	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Payment can be made by cash, cheque, credit, or debit. Please make cheques payable to the Aurora Historical Society.		
Postal Code:	Please make cheques	s payable to the	e Aurora m	Storical Society.
Telephone:	15372 Yonge Street, community@aurora	,	G 1N8	(905) 727-8991 aurorahs.com
E-mail:				

#### We Need Your Support!

When you donate or become a member of the Aurora Historical Society, your contribution aids in the preservation, maintenance, and operation of Hillary House National Historic Site and its grounds.

We depend on donor support to provide relevant heritage programming to all ages.

#### Membership Rewards:

- Invitations to Members-only exhibit previews
- 15% discount on rental of the Ballroom, grounds, and other areas
- Discounts on ticketed events such as our Speaker Series
- Regular updates on upcoming events
- Voting rights at Member meetings such as the Annual General Meeting \*Individual and family memberships only

#### **Donate Today to Support Local Heritage**

YES! I would like to donate.

All donations \$25.00 and over will receive an income tax receipt.

Name:	
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nonc.	

#### Donation Amount: \$

E-mail:\_\_\_\_

Donations may be made by cash, cheque, credit, debit, or through our website:

www.aurorahs.com

Please make cheques payable to the Aurora **Historical Society** 

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