



AURORA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT
2021

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Patricia Wallace

President, Board of Directors

Having successfully navigated the challenges of another pandemic year, there is much to celebrate for our small non-profit organization with a big responsibility. Our ever-increasing digital presence continues to bring relevant heritage programming to a widening community. This has resulted in a broadening awareness of what we offer, as well as indicators of a related trend in financial support.

During this difficult period, we were able to keep Hillary House open to the public in the summer and fall months, hosting wonderful outdoor events. Indoors, the work continued with our permanent and seasonal staff, and volunteers performing curatorial and administrative tasks and event planning. Thankfully, we were also able to continue to care for the house and property.

The highlight of the year was planning and executing The Hillary House Ball – House Party Edition. Our first-ever virtual major event. What a fun evening that was!

We express our sincere thanks to all of our many funders and donors for your ongoing, generous support, with special thanks to the Town of Aurora. We also appreciate the support and guidance from the Ontario Heritage Trust.

Statement from Ontario Heritage Trust, 2021

“Hillary House is not only provincially significant; it is also recognized as a National Historic Site and is one of the best and most well-preserved examples of Gothic-Revival architecture to be found in Canada. [...] the Aurora Historical Society worked tirelessly to maintain and preserve the site for use and enjoyment by the public and we commend their efforts to conserve this property, especially over the last two years, which have been extremely difficult. We appreciate the Aurora Historical Society’s continued stewardship, conservation, care, and upkeep of this provincially significant property and we hope that you will contribute to their fundraising efforts.” - Thomas Wicks, Manager of Acquisitions and Conservation Services at the Ontario Heritage Trust

Board of Directors

President

Patricia Wallace

Vice-President

Alan Lambert

Treasurer/Secretary

Geoffrey Dawe

Directors

Dan McGeown

Ronen Grunberg

Jan Stainer-White*

Jeffrey Thom*

Martin Paivio

Michelle Primeau

* Jan Stainer-White & Jeffrey Thom resigned from their positions on the Board of Directors for personal reasons. We thank them for their service.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Curator

Kathleen Vahey joined the AHS in 2020 as Curator. In 2021, she continued to oversee collections management, curatorial projects, and programming. She curated the 'A Look Outside Hillary House' outdoor exhibition, revived the Speaker Series in a virtual format, executed eight programs, and represented the AHS at several outreach events.

Administrative Assistant

Julie Preston joined the AHS in 2020 as the part-time Administrative Assistant. In 2021, she continued to oversee the AHS office, membership management and communication, the Gift Shop, and provided financial management support. She remains a key part of the AHS team going into 2022.

Temporary Positions

The AHS was fortunate to facilitate two summer contract positions funded through Canada Summer Jobs. Simone Bevilacqua joined the AHS as the Assistant Curator and worked on collections management projects and assisted with exhibition development. Grace Armstrong returned as the AHS Museum Educator for a second summer and assisted with program development and educational online content.

Additionally, Juliana Marcantonio, a student from Fleming College's Museum Management and Curatorship program completed an internship at Hillary House focusing on collections management and updating procedures.



From left to right: Julie Preston, Kathleen Vahey, Juliana Marcantonio, and Grace Armstrong

MAINTENANCE & RESTORATION

Interior & Exterior Maintenance

Small maintenance projects at Hillary House were completed by staff with assistance from volunteers. Larger projects were completed by industry professionals.

- The Ballroom walls were painted beige and the doors were repainted white.
- Weather-proofing measures were added to exterior doors to facilitate heat retention.
- Gardens around the verandah were removed due to restoration work.
- Tennis court and lawns were maintained.

Large Scale Projects

In 2021, the AHS undertook the restoration of the Hillary House verandah. Work began in August and included structural stabilization and replacement of the verandah underpinnings; complete replacement of the iconic latticework around the verandah; and repainting of lattice and verandah floorboards in-line with heritage reconstruction. The project was completed in early November and will provide improved structural safety to the verandah space, allowing for increased programming space and public access to the museum for years to come.



Hillary House Ballroom, 2021



Hillary House verandah during and after restoration

CURATORIAL ACTIVITIES

Exhibitions

In 2021, the AHS produced '*A Look Outside Hillary House*', a semi-permanent outdoor exhibition on the Hillary House grounds. The exhibition explores the Gothic-Revival architecture and history of Hillary House and how outdoor spaces were used in the 19th and 20th century by showcasing the various activities the Hillary family took part in on their grounds.

Donations

Five items from two separate donations were accepted into the collection. These artifacts are properly stored and catalogued.

Ongoing Cataloguing

Inventoried and cataloguing the permanent collection continued. Over 200 artifacts and archival documents were properly catalogued, photographed, or scanned, and added to the collections database.



Panel from '*A Look Outside Hillary House*'

After moving the collections storage space to another room in order to reveal the Nursery in 2019, it was necessary to conduct a collections inventory in the new Collections Room. This project has focused on developing and following consistent cataloguing practices and procedures, updating artifact locations, improving the documentation of objects that were catalogued in the past, and accessioning 'found in collection' items. Work on this project began in 2020 and continued in 2021.



Photo of Hillary children



Silver pitcher

PROGRAMMING & OUTREACH

In 2021, the AHS pivoted to providing virtual offerings to engage with audiences when the COVID-19 pandemic continued to restrict gatherings, in-person events, and access to Hillary House. The treasured Speaker Series was revived, a How to Care For Your Treasurers at Home workshop series was developed, and a Strawberry Tea at Home was offered. When restrictions allowed, we offered in-person events such as the Victorian Harvest Tea, Wreath-Making Workshop, and A Family Christmas. Over the year we welcomed 615 visitors to Hillary House, engaged with 597 people through virtual programs, and spoke with 75 people through Outreach events.

Educational Programming

Continuing the success of our past educational programs, a variety of curriculum-based programs were presented to several different classes from St. Andrew's College through their Community Giving Program and one Girl Guide group.



Victorian Harvest Tea

Outreach Events

The AHS has a long history of being actively visible in the Aurora community. Although COVID-19 restrictions continued to force the cancellation of most outreach opportunities, the AHS was represented at two outreach events at Town Park in association with Culture Days.



Students from St. Andrews College



Kathleen and Juliana at the AHS Tent at Town Park for 'A Summer of Culture' outreach event.

Social Media

In mid-2020, the AHS began a new social media strategy to engage current audiences and attract new ones. At the end of 2020, the results of the strategy were overwhelmingly positive, and it was continued. In 2021, the AHS had over 20,600 engagements through social media, an 80% increase when compared to 2020. The AHS also participated in the National Trust for Canada's virtual Historic Places Days and were featured on their social media channels in a "take over" which introduced the AHS and Hillary House to new audiences across Canada.



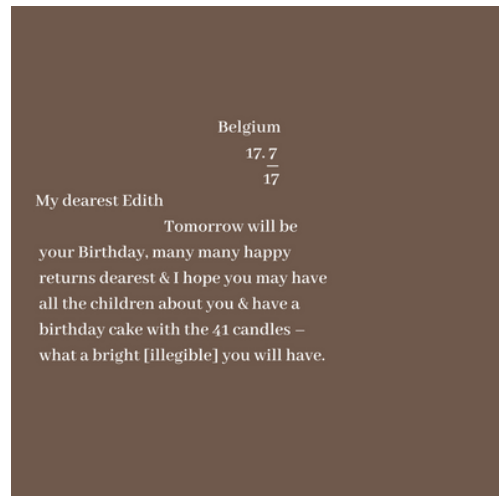
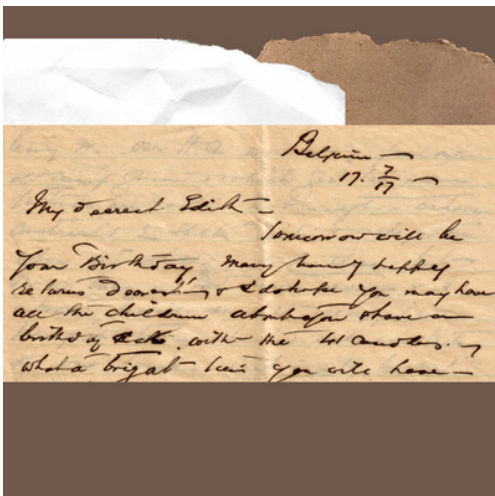
Around Aurora Social Media Post



Throwback Thursday Social Media Post

Transcription Project

The AHS began a transcription project in 2020 to engage volunteers in a meaningful way while Hillary House was closed. Archival letters from the Hillary Collection were scanned and sent to volunteers to transcribe. The project was continued into 2021 with another 70 transcriptions of archival letters completed.



Transcription Project

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Three editions of the AHS newsletter, The Attic, were published and made available to members and supporters to update them on the status and activities of the AHS during 2021. These communications were supplemented by brief monthly AHS News updates.



Exhibition Opening and Ontario Trillium Foundation Grant Recognition

In November 2021, the AHS hosted an Exhibition Opening and Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) Grant Recognition event attended by local Newmarket-Aurora MP Christine Elliot, Mayor Tom Mrakas, Councillor Rachel Gilliland, and OTF Representative Shelley Wister-Smith. The event was the formal opening of the 'A Look Outside Hillary House' exhibition and also to recognize the Government of Ontario and the OTF for two grants the AHS received in 2021.



Garden Aurora volunteers decorating Hillary House



Volunteers at A Family Christmas

Volunteers

The AHS relies heavily on a dedicated group of volunteers for all aspects of operations. The AHS Board of Directors remained strong in 2021 with a capable and committed group providing strategic and practical leadership. 91 volunteers recorded approximately 2,914 hours of work in 2021. This equates to 1.5 full-time employees and reflects the community's deep commitment to heritage.

COMPARATIVE STATISTICS

Performance Measure/Metric	2019	2020	2021
Exhibitions	2	0	2
Collections: Accessioned/Catalogued Artifacts and Archival Materials *	509	458	234
Number of Programs and Outreach Events	32	7	24
Number of Individuals Reached: Admissions, Rentals, Programs, Outreach, Online	3045 in person	349 in person	1,287 in person and virtual
Social Media Followers	9,523	9,430	9,293
Online Engagements	8,541	11,000	20,600
Total Memberships	191	150	162
Total Volunteers	42	65	91
Total Volunteer Hours	4,340	3,260	2,914
Number of Sponsors and Event Donors	61	4	68
Revenue from Fundraising/ Events (Gross) /Donations/Other	\$54,000	\$25,500	\$88,800
Grants Awarded	3	4	7
Grant Revenue	\$103,000	\$106,300 + \$15,500 in COVID-19 Emergency Funding	\$144,500 + \$39,800 in COVID-19 Emergency Funding

* Number of items catalogued each year is dependent on staff and volunteer availability

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Through the hard work and dedication of staff and Board members, we started to get back on track with more normal operations. Once again, we were very successful in receiving a variety of grants, and, more importantly, we organized two very successful fundraising events. With the great assistance of the Aurora Whisky Society, we hosted a Scotch Tasting in September, and in October, Staff and Board members organized a very successful virtual Hillary House Ball. These events were successful on two fronts: fundraising and awareness-raising. We also increased our membership revenue, another very positive sign.

So, while we significantly increased our revenue, we also had a significant increase in expenses (to be expected). But the net result is a projected Excess of Revenue over Expenses of \$70,435, an increase over 2020 of more than \$26,000!

As mentioned in my report from last year, we changed both our accounting system and our bookkeeper in 2021 and I would like to thank Agnes Lytle for the work she did in getting us up and running in QuickBooks.

As we move into 2022, we are very optimistic that we will be returning to a more normal operation!

SUMMARY

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Revenue			
Expenses	\$147,376	\$273,184	\$125,808
	\$103,351	\$202,749	\$99,398
Excess Revenue/Expenses	\$44,025	\$70,435	\$26,410

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Admission & Community Events	0.6%	1.3%
Donations & Fundraising	9.3%	14.9%
Hillary House Ball	0.0%	13.9%
Government	83.1%	67.5%
Memberships	1.2%	0.9%
Other	5.9%	0.3%

* Audited financial statements available upon request

FUNDING

Scotch Tasting

With the assistance of the Aurora Whisky Society, the AHS hosted a hybrid scotch-tasting fundraiser which raised over \$9,000. Participants received a curated package of scotch samples and then joined local Scotch Master Keith Scott on Zoom for a guided tasting experience and virtual tour of Hillary House.

Hillary House Ball - House Party Edition

2021 saw the return of the AHS' annual fundraiser, with a twist. The Hillary House Ball - House Party Edition offered participants a special culinary package delivered to their house, a virtual engaging and informative presentation, and access to an online auction. This event raised \$38,000.

Donations

Thanks to a generous membership base and supportive community, we received \$9,500 in donations in 2021. We sincerely thank all of our donors for their contributions!

Grants

The AHS received several grants in 2021 which were integral to its continued operation:

- Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG) from the Province of Ontario
- Canada Summer Jobs through the Government of Canada. This funded two, 14-week positions for the summer season.
- Operating Grant from the Town of Aurora.
- Capital Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to partially cover the restoration of the Hillary House verandah.

The AHS was also fortunate to be granted emergency funding in 2021:

- Reopening Fund for Heritage Organizations – Museums Assistance Program through the Government of Canada.
- Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy through the Government of Canada.
- COVID-19 Business Support Grant – Energy Cost Rebate Grant through Province of Ontario
- Digital Capacity Funding through the Community Museum Operating Grant.
- Resilient Communities Fund Grant through from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.



Hillary House Ball - House Party Edition

2022 PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Staffing

The AHS will be conducting a staffing review in 2022 to evaluate the current staffing complement and assess the need for additional positions. Funding will be sought for contract employees through granting programs, as has been done in the past.

Maintenance

The AHS will continue to prioritize the maintenance of Hillary House in 2022. Small maintenance projects will continue to be remediated in-house while larger restoration will happen in collaboration with industry professionals. Further investigation into restoration needs outlined in the 2017 Condition Assessment will be completed. Improvements to the grounds and gardens will continue to be made by the AHS Landscape Committee, Board, and Staff.



Curatorial Activities & Exhibitions

Staff will continue to prioritize collections management projects including cataloguing, digitizing the collection, and updating the collections database in 2022. Following the 2021-2026 exhibition schedule, three exhibitions are planned for 2022. The first is a travelling exhibition from the Royal Botanical Gardens celebrating the Year of the Garden: 2022. The second will be Growing Up Aurora, a look at experiences and memories of childhood in Aurora. The last exhibition is an art exhibition hosted in collaboration with the Aurora Cultural Centre.

Programming & Outreach

In 2022, 25 programs and special events are being planned. We recognize that COVID-19 is still restricting in-person gatherings so virtual programming will be offered until it is safe to return to in-person. The AHS Speaker Series will return in 2022 and work will continue to increase the AHS' online presence. The AHS will continue to work with our community partners and develop new relationships offer outreach programs in new ways.

2021 SUPPORTERS

Government Funders:

Town of Aurora
Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport,
Government of Ontario
Department of Canadian Heritage,
Government of Canada
Canada Summer Jobs
Community Museum Operating and Pay
Equity Grant
Ontario Trillium Foundation

Business Supporters:

Aqua Grill
Artistica Dance Studio
Aurora Farmer's Market
Aurora Home Hardware
Aurora Whisky Society
Bazil Developments Inc.
BDO
Benjamin Moore Paints – Klein Paint
Boston Pizza
Brainy Games
Café Alexandra
Canadian Tire
Cassidy Event Management
Cheryl Uhrig
Condor Properties
Delmanor
ERA Architects
Eric McCartney, Century 21
Eye Care Optical
Food In Motion
Gaspare Saracino
Geranium
Gibson Group
Ginger's Bakery
Golf Glen Veterinary Clinic

Groundswell Urban Planners Inc.
Hockley Valley Brewery
Holiday Inn Express
Home Depot
IG Wealth Mgmt
Jackson Events
Kelseys Roadhouse
Kerbel Group
Landscape Ontario
Laurion Law
Levetto
Linton's Farm Market
Magna
Maple Tea House
Market Brewing Company
Mary Hope, Investors Group
McLaren Doors
Metrolinx
New Roots Garden Centre
North South Management
Orchid Thai
Piazza Mercato Aurora
Private Wealth Management
Ren's Pet Depot
Replenish
Roberts & Company CPA
Romy's Restaurant
St. Andrew's College
Story of Love
Sunshine Park Clothing
The Auroran Newspaper
The Country Look
The Patrick House
Thomas Foods International Canada
Tim Hortons
Tina's Grill
Topper's Pizza

Trayvino
Vandenboshe Jewellers
Volvo Financial Services
Westview Golf Ltd.
Yonge Street Winery

Community Groups:

Aurora Museum & Archives,
Aurora Garden and Horticultural Society
(Garden Aurora),
Aurora Sports Hall of Fame
Aurora Chamber of Commerce
Aurora Public Library
Aurora Cultural Centre

Annual Appeal and General Donations:

Arlene Adams
Scott and Barb Allan
Marg Blackie
Jennifer Bulmer
Sandy Bundy
Anne Clement
Alison Collins-Mrakas
Katherine Corbett
John Cosentino
Lawrence and Carol Crump
Lissa Dwyer
Cindy Ewins
Dawn Gallagher Murphy
Joan Gardner
George Gonsalves
Erika Govas
Dianne Grassie
Robert and Angela Grattage
Heather Green
Suzanne Haines
Linda Hauley
Penelope Heath-Eves

Melissa Hillary
Donald Hutchinson
Brian Hutchison
Linda Irvine
Tim Jones
Patricia Koller
Bonnie Kraft
Agnes Lytle
Eric McCartney
Jim McGuckin
Sheila Middleton
Sue Miller
Christina Morris
Carrie Neil
Bill Newman
Ian Nielsen-Jones
Allen Oliver
Pamela Pal
Shirley Pattenden
Suzanne Reiner
Helen Roberts
Hamid Safari
Robb Sanders
Greg Scott
Alan Smale
John and Deborah Smale
Frank Snape
Chris Sorley
Peter Styrmo
Leah Taylor Roy
Paul van Nostrand
Tom Wasley
Jamie Webb
Ron Weese
Klaus Wehrenberg
Michelle White
Janet Wilson
Helen Yielding

Volunteers:

Alisa Ruzh
Marjorie Bare
John Bare
Arshia Ahir
Tarryn Andrews
Shirley Binns
Blair Browne
Wendy Browne
Roy Budd
Jennifer Bulmer
Sandy Bundy
Helen Burlanyette
Phoebe Clune
Allison Collins-Mrakas
Silvano Croce
Geoffrey Dawe
Lissa Dwyer
Joan Gardner
Nadia Gargaro
John Girvan
John Green
Ronen Grunberg
James Hoyes
Guillaume Jean
Sonia Koczekan
Anna Kroeplin
Nathan Lambert
Alan Lambert
Donna Lewis
Sara McFarlane
Dan McGeown
Betsy McIntyre
Christine McClure
Bob McRoberts
Sharon Mitchell
Elizabeth Nisbet

Faygie Noble
Amy Norris
Mike Norris
Owen Norris
Kathryn O'Dwyer
Hilary Oosterhof
Martin Paivio
Pamela Pal
Bernadette Preyde
Michelle Primeau
Kathee R
Helen Roberts
Patti Schneider
Cindy Scythes
Steve Scythes
Nancy Sinclair
Brenda Snape
Jan Stainer-White
Jenny Star
Jacqueline Stuart
Peter Styrmo
Kate Tarini
Jeffrey Thom
Angela Trevivian
Edward van Nostrand
Patricia Wallace
Jennifer Zsolt



Volunteers at A Family Christmas