

2023

ANNUAL REPORT





President's Message

2023 saw the Aurora Historical Society return to more normal (or perhaps that is the new normal) operations.

Our calendar of events continued to build on the increased engagement that we saw in 2022. In addition to our popular events, our standout event was the newly introduced Children's Teddy Bear Tea – an almost instant sell out! – and one that we will continue to build on. We participated in the Aurora Chamber of Commerce Home Show, the Senior's Active Living Fair held at the Aurora Senior's Centre, and the Chamber's Street Sale. All three events experienced good engagement from the attendees.

However, fundraising continues to be a challenge. We had scheduled a Golf Tournament for June at Westview Golf Club, but unfortunately had to cancel as we did not get enough registrations to run it. We held another Scotch tasting in the Fall and our sincere thanks to the Aurora Whisky Society for all their efforts in putting this on. But we only attracted half the expected number of participants. The Board continues to look for other opportunities for fundraising and for increasing participation in those events.

On a positive note, Claire Smith, AHS Collections Management intern, made a great start on cataloguing the Godfrey Collection. A task that we have wanted to get to for some time now. Claire's position was supported by grants from Young Canada Works/Canadian Museum Association and the Town of Aurora. So far, she has found some fascinating items and we expect the project to be finished early in 2024 with a more detailed report to follow.

In November, with the support of the Town of Aurora, we engaged ERA Architects to conduct an Enhanced Condition Assessment Report, building on the 2017 Condition Assessment report. The Board is acutely aware of our responsibilities to drive to sustainable financing in order to ensure the long-term viability of Hillary House, and we commissioned this study to provide the necessary information to help with our strategic planning as we move forward in 2024.

Last, but certainly not least, our sincere thanks to our staff, (Kathleen, Julie, & Selin), our intern (Claire), our volunteers, and members. Your dedication is very much appreciated!

- AHS Co-Presidents



Geoffrey Dawe



Alan Lambert

Board of Directors

Alan Lambert
Co-President

Geoffrey Dawe
Co-President, Co-Treasurer

Daniel McGeown
Co-Treasurer

John Green
Secretary

Michelle Primeau
Director



Staff Development



KATHLEEN VAHEY

CURATOR/MANAGER

Kathleen joined the AHS in 2020. She continues to oversee the operations of Hillary House including communications, HR, facilities maintenance, funding, collections management, curatorial projects, and programming.



JULIE PRESTON

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Julie Preston joined the AHS in 2020. She is responsible for the AHS office, membership and volunteer management, the Gift Shop, and provides financial management support.



SELIN KAHRAMANOĞLU

PROGRAMMING & OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Selin joined the AHS in 2022 on contract. She develops and implements AHS' public and educational programming, events, and outreach activities in the community.

TEMPORARY POSITIONS



The AHS was fortunate to welcome Samona, a co-op student from G.W. Williams Secondary School for 4 months. Additionally, two summer staff joined the team thanks to the Canada Summer Jobs grant. Sarah Takhar joined as Museum Educator and assisted with program implementation and educational online content. Lena Bethune joined as Assistant Curator and continued on collections management projects and assisted with exhibition development.



CLAIRE SMITH

COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT INTERN

Claire joined the AHS in 2023 on a Young Canada Works funded contract. She is responsible for inventorying and managing the Godfrey Collection.



Restoration

The AHS worked with Parks Canada for several years to have the deteriorating wooden fence that lines the property along Yonge Street replaced. The wood elements were pre-fabricated in Parks Canada’s workshop during the Fall 2022 and installed on site in May 2023. Thank you to Parks Canada for helping the AHS maintain this important part of Hillary House.

The AHS, with the assistance of the Town of Aurora, worked with ERA Architects to complete an Updated Condition Assessment on Hillary House in the Fall of 2023. This document will be used for planning to ensure the preservation of the building.



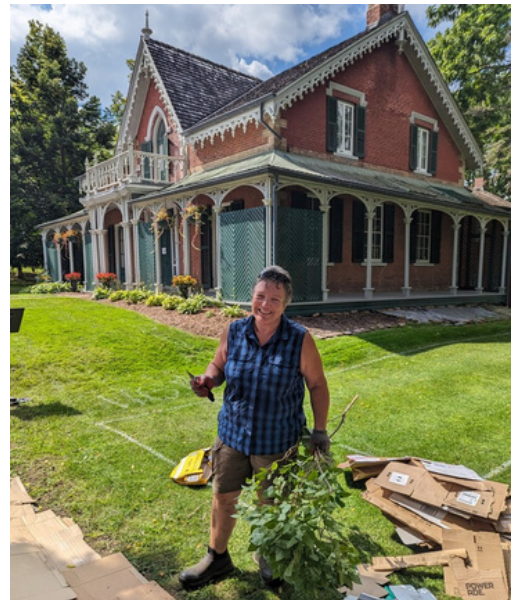
Parks Canada carpenters replacing Hillary House fence.



Maintenance

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

- Replaced batteries and bulbs in emergency lighting systems.
- Upgraded fire extinguishers.
- Replaced CO2 detectors.
- Pest remediation around office.
- Tennis courts and lawns were maintained.
- New landscaping plan - phase one implemented.



Volunteer Donna Lewis gardening at Hillary House.



Curatorial Activities

EXHIBITIONS

2023 featured two exhibitions. The first, ‘Victorian Interior Design: Elegant or Outdated’ was the culminating project for the Youth Mentorship Program and was curated by the high school participants with the assistance of Selin and Kathleen. This exhibit examined the Victorian design elements of each room in Hillary House.

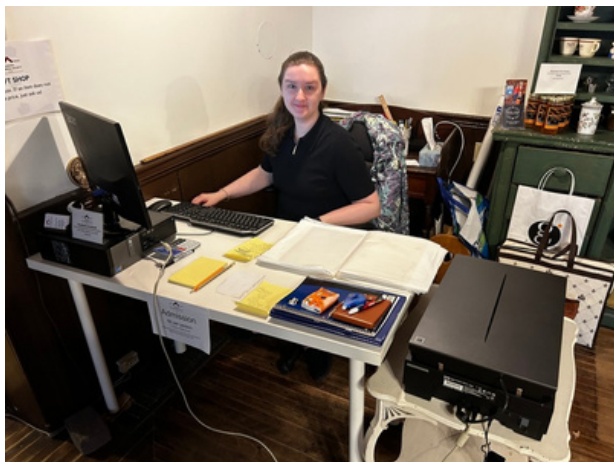


Victorian Interior Design: Elegant or Outdated’ exhibit at Hillary House.

In the Fall, the AHS hosted ‘Beyond Blue and White: Wedgwood Designed for Canada’, a travelling exhibition from King Heritage & Cultural Centre (KHCC). The exhibit showcases 50 pieces of a recent 400 item donation the KHCC received from the Estate of the late Keith Alwyn McLeod (1935-2014). He acquired the ceramics over his lifetime, amassing the most complete collection of Canadian-themed Wedgwood in existence. The exhibit features a sample of these unique ceramic pieces, showcasing landscapes, heraldry, souvenirs, history and commemorative tributes.

ONGOING CATALOGUING

General inventorying and cataloguing the permanent collection continued with help from summer staff and volunteers. Over 900 artifacts and archival documents were properly catalogued, photographed or scanned, and added to the collections database. Additionally, an inventory of the Godfrey Collection was initiated which involved an additional 8,610 items inventoried and catalogued.



Claire inventorying the Godfrey Collection.

DONATIONS

Twenty-eight items from six donations were accepted into the collection.

These artifacts are properly stored, accessioned, and catalogued.



Programming & Outreach

In 2023, the AHS continued to provide program offerings to engage with audiences. We delivered 62 programs & events including:

- 9 Speaker Series presentations
- 2 heritage craft workshops
- 8 themed events including Historic Places Days, Halloween at Hillary House, Culture Days, Wreath Making workshop, and A Family Christmas
- 3 Painting events partnered with Royal Rose Art Gallery
- 2 historic walking tours
- 5 outreach programs with the Aurora Public Library
- 7 camp programs
- 8 Youth Mentorship sessions
- Fundraising events including High Teas and Scotch Tasting.



Selin and the Youth Mentorship group.



Selin and a group of students.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Continuing on past success, a variety of curriculum-based programs were presented to several different classes from St. Andrew's College, Devins Drive Public School, and the Aurora Preparatory Academy.

OUTREACH PROGRAMMING

The AHS has a long history of being active in the community. In 2023, the AHS was represented at six outreach events: the Aurora Home Show, Street Festival, Sr. Active Living Fair, Culture Days/Multicultural Festival, outreach events: the Aurora Home Show, Street Festival, Sr. Active Living Fair, Markham Fair, Culture Days/Multicultural Festival, and Town of Aurora Volunteer Fair.



Marketing & Public Relations



Kathleen at the Multicultural Festival at Town Park.

Three editions of the AHS newsletter, The Attic, were published and made available to members and supporters with updates the status and activities of the AHS during 2023. These communications were supplemented by monthly AHS News updates.

Promotion online and through local media is ongoing, as necessary. The AHS continues to have a great relationship with local newspapers, being highlighted often.

Staff continued to engage audiences online through social media. On Facebook and Instagram where we typically have the most engagement, we saw an increase in followers. Additionally, the continued focus on consistent and varied social media content resulted in 22,964 online engagements.



Volunteers

The AHS Board of Directors remained committed in 2023 with the group providing strategic and practical leadership.

51 volunteers recorded approximately 2,036 hours of work in 2023. We are sincerely grateful for their assistance with many projects.



Staff and volunteers at the Victorian Harvest Tea.



Comparative Statistics

Performance Measure/Metric	2021	2022	2023
Exhibitions	2	3	2
Collections: Accessioned/Cataloged Artifacts and Archival Materials	234	405	9,541
Number of Programs and Special Events	24	41	62
Number of Individuals Reached: Admissions, Rentals, Programs, Outreach, Online	1,287 in person and virtually	2,623 in person and virtually	2,615 in person and virtually
Social Media Followers	9,293	9,279	9,241
Online Engagements	20,600	31,547	22,964
Membership Totals	162	151	146
Total Volunteers	91	80	51
Volunteer Totals (Hours)	2,914	3,176	2,036
Number of Sponsors and Event Donors	68	79	10
Revenue from Fundraising Events (Gross)/Donations/Other	\$88,800	\$104,960	\$32,187
Grants Awarded	7	6	4
Grant Revenue	\$144,500 + \$39,800 in COVID-19 Emergency Funding	\$116,477 + \$44,935 in COVID-19 Emergency Funding	\$122,974



Leena leads a guided tour of Hillary House.



Red Hat Society Ladies pose after a tour of Hillary House.



Financial Management

Unfortunately, our fundraising hopes for 2023 did not come to fruition. Although we did plan for lower revenue compared to 2022, since we did not host a Hillary House Ball, we had counted on a Golf Tournament and a Scotch Tasting to bring in some revenue. The Golf Tournament was cancelled due to lack of uptake, and the Scotch Tasting, once again hosted by the Aurora Whisky Society, generated less than half of the income from the previous year. Fundraising continues to be a substantial challenge for the AHS and we continue to look for opportunities and investigate suggestions (see President’s Report).

Our staff continues to be very prudent in their stewardship of our resources and the Board is grateful for their hard work. Our dedicated volunteers continue in their efforts which is a big help in managing some of our costs, and we are very appreciative!

Once again, we extend our sincere thanks to the Town of Aurora for their significant and continued support.

The Board and staff continue to diligently monitor expenses, and research ways to diversify revenue to ensure the continued financial success of the AHS.

- Geoffrey Dawe, AHS Co-Treasurer & Co-President

SUMMARY

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
Revenue	\$155,161	\$266,368
Expenses	\$214,140	\$298,459
Excess Revenue/Expenses	-\$58,979	-\$32,091
	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
Special Events & Fundraising	11.5%	6.1%
Donations	3%	11.8%
Hillary House Ball	0%	16.8%
Grants	79.2%	60.5%
Memberships	0.8%	0.6%
Sales & Other	5.5%	4.2%



Funding

GRANTS

The AHS received several grants in 2023 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 helped fund two, 14-week positions for the summer season.
- Operating Grant from the Town of Aurora.
- Young Canada Works grant which helped fund a 32-week internship to assist with inventorying the Godfrey Collection.



Kathleen & Selin with newly donated computers and laptops from the Electronics Recycling Association.

DONATIONS

Thanks to a generous membership base and supportive community, we received \$4,733 in donations in 2023.



The Aurora Whisky Society’s Frans, Keith, and Stephen at Hillary House.

WHISKY TASTING

In collaboration with the Aurora Whisky Society, the AHS hosted another successful virtual whisky tasting event. Participants learned about whisky, sampled some great products from India, Ireland, Taiwan, and of course Scotland. The event raised over \$4,000.00!

2024 Planned Activities

STAFFING

The AHS expects to retain the current permanent staffing complement through 2024, a full-time Curator and a part-time Administrative Assistant. The contract for the Programming and Outreach Coordinator will be assessed based on need and available resources. Funding will be sought for short-term 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 2024. Priority will be placed on planning for the long-term preservation of the building and property using the Updated Condition Assessment. Furthermore, phase one of the new landscaping plan will continue under the guidance of the Landscaping Committee.



Hillary House in the Fall 2023.

CURATORIAL ACTIVITIES & EXHIBITIONS

Staff will continue with ongoing collections management projects, including cataloguing the artifacts in the Collections Room and Archives as well as completing the Godfrey Collection inventory.

Three exhibitions are planned for 2024. “Aurora Through the Archives” is a collaborative photography exhibit with the Aurora Museum & Archives on display from May to June. “Pills, Poisons, and Painkillers” will showcase common medicines and treatments that doctors such as the ones of Hillary House used to help their patients. The year will end with a small art exhibition by a local artist.

PROGRAMMING & OUTREACH

In 2024, 50 programs and special events are being planned. The focus for the year is to build on successful programming to engage more visitors as well as increase engagement with audiences that are under-represented in our visitor-ship. The AHS will continue to work with community partners to broaden our reach and develop innovative offerings



2023

Acknowledgements

GOVERNMENT FUNDERS

- Town of Aurora
- Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, Government of Ontario - Community Museum Operating Grant
- Department of Canadian Heritage, Government of Canada - Canada Summer Jobs
- Department of Canadian Heritage, Government of Canada - Canadian Museum Association - Young Canada Works at Building Careers in Heritage

BUSINESS SUPPORTERS

- Backyard Pool and Spa
- Delmanor Aurora
- Electronic Recycling Association
- Highland Gate Developments/ Geranium
- Hurst Bakery
- Lesley's Party Sandwiches & Catering
- Lind Realty
- Summerhill Market
- Tim Hortons - 304 Wellington St. E.
- Westview Golf Club



Selin showcasing an artifact at the Aurora Public Library.

COMMUNITY/HERITAGE PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

- Aurora Museum & Archives
- Aurora Chamber of Commerce
- Aurora Cultural Centre
- Aurora Garden and Horticultural Society (Garden Aurora)
- Aurora Public Library
- Aurora Senior Centre
- National Trust for Canada
- Neighbour Aurora
- The Auroran Newspaper
- Town of Aurora
- Turkish Society of Canada
- Royal Rose Art Gallery



ANNUAL APPEAL & GENERAL DONATIONS

- Agnes Lytle
- Bill and Nancy Newman
- Brittany White
- Cengiz Kahramanoglu
- Dan McGeown
- David Appleyard
- Elizabeth Clarke
- Geoffrey Dawe
- Jacqueline Stuart
- Janet Wilson
- Jeff Walker
- Jim McGuckin
- Joan Gardner
- Joan Patterson
- John and Deborah Smale
- John Greenhough
- John McIntyre
- Julie Preston
- Leanne DiMonte
- Lesley Watterson
- Lorraine Hill
- Marion Hillary
- Martin Watson
- Natasha Primo
- Robert and Angela Grattage
- Ronald (John) Crabtree
- Sharon Nisbet
- Shirley Pattenden
- Stan and Mary Neal
- Sue Miller
- Benjamin Abdi Kharang
- Brenda Snape
- Christina Cannavicci
- Christine McLure
- Cindy Scythes
- Darren Berezowski
- Diego Villarreal Majia
- Donna Lewis
- Emma Zhang
- Evenny WuFeng
- Grace Armstrong
- Isaac Pearson
- Jacqueline Stuart
- Jacob Shafik
- Jennifer Zsolt
- Joan Gardner
- John Bare
- Ivy Hao
- Lesley Watterson
- Linda Blatchford
- Lyanna Yu
- Marjorie Bare
- Mike Norris
- Natalia Villarreal Mejia
- Nikhil Ahir
- Philip Cooper
- Rachel MacDonald
- Samona Nasrullah
- Sandy Bundy
- Shannon Buskermolen
- Shriya Arun
- Sonia Koczekan
- Sonja Rebus
- Steve Scythes
- Shirley Binns
- William Liu

VOLUNTEERS


- Abraham Martinez
- Ahmed Atwan
- Alisa Ruzhynsky
- Amy Norris
- Angela Trevivian
- Anita Jeffreys
- Aranza Martinez



CONTACT INFORMATION

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THANK YOU!