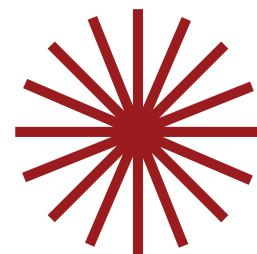




Annual Report

2024

Co-Chair Message



We are very pleased that the upward trend in 2023 continued into 2024. While we are not out of the financial woods – yet! – we are making progress and are looking forward to a year of positive cash flow. (Please refer to the Treasurer’s report).

Staff have worked diligently on diversifying our programming and increasing our outreach initiatives. This has resulted in fewer events, but a much more meaningful engagement process. A few examples:

- Built on afternoon teas – all 4 sold out!
- Increased outreach events – The Aurora Chamber Home Show; the Aurora Chamber Street Festival; partnerships with the Aurora Public Library; Youth Volunteer Fair: Senior’s Centre; Town of Aurora Summer Camps; and the opening of Aurora Town Square.
- Collections digitization project utilizing new volunteers and the completion of the Godfrey Collection inventory with assistance from intern Claire. Discussions with the Archives of Ontario regarding the future of the Godfrey Collection are ongoing.
- Successfully joined Richmond Hill Hall Charities Association, participating in Charitable Gaming assignments at Bingo World Richmond Hill, which has resulted in a boost to our revenues.
- Partnered with Aurora Museum & Archives for exhibition “Growing Up Aurora” featured in the Contact Photography Festival and with the Aurora Oddfellows for the exhibition “Friendship, Love, and Truth: Meeting the Oddfellows” celebrating the Oddfellows 150th anniversary in Aurora.
- Filming location for a student documentary, as well as a local filmmaker’s horror film and connected documentary
- Special Members’ Meeting in Feb 2024 – discussions with Town – survey results and delegations.

It never ceases to amaze us the activity that our small but very dedicated staff – Kathleen, Selin, and Julie, along with our volunteers – organize and run every year. Unfortunately, the Programming & Outreach Coordinator position reached it’s completion in September 2024 and we said goodbye to Selin, but we wish her all the best in the future.

And, of course, a big thanks to our volunteer Board! And no Chair’s report would be complete without letting our members know that volunteers are always welcome!

- AHS Co-Chairs

Geoffrey Dawe

Alan Lambert

Board of Directors

Alan Lambert
Co-Chair

Geoffrey Dawe
Co-Chair

Daniel McGeown
Treasurer

John Green
Secretary

Michelle Primeau
Director

Our Team



**Kathleen
Vahey**

Curator/Manager



**Julie
Preston**

Administrative
Assistant



**Selin
Kahramanoğlu**

Programming &
Outreach Coordinator

The AHS maintained its permanent staff complement with Kathleen Vahey as Curator/Manager and Julie Preston as Administrative Assistant. The temporary contract for Selin Kahramanoğlu, Programming & Outreach Coordinator, finished in September 2024.



**Claire
Smith**

YCW Collections
Management Intern



**Shannon
Buskermolen**

Education &
Programming Intern



**Lia
Payne**

CSJ Museum
Educator



**Warren
Littleproud**

CSJ Assistant
Museum Curator

Claire Smith, Collections Management Intern (funded through Young Canada Works) completed the inventory of the Godfrey Collection in March 2024. Shannon Buskermolen, Education & Programming Intern from Centennial College Museum and Cultural Management program, joined the AHS for 14 weeks in the Spring and assisted with social media and program planning. Two summer staff joined the team for 9 weeks thanks to the Canada Summer Jobs grant: Lia Payne, Museum Educator - assisting with program implementation and social media content and Warren Littleproud, Assistant Curator - continued with collections management projects. Additionally, Yuna, a co-op student from G.W. Williams Secondary School assisted with social media and programming implementation in the Fall.

Restoration

The AHS worked with local company, Hudeck Contracting Ltd. to repair damages to the wooden fence that lines the property along Yonge Street resulting from a motor vehicle collision.



Damage to Fence, May 2024



Repaired Fence, August 2024

Maintenance

Small maintenance projects at Hillary House were completed by staff with assistance from volunteers. Attention was placed on planning for future maintenance projects.

- Pest remediation around House.
- Tennis courts and lawns were maintained.
- Landscaping plan - phase one continued.



Volunteers at the annual Fall Clean-up.

Curatorial Activities

EXHIBITIONS

2024 featured three exhibitions. The AHS partnered with the Aurora Museum and Archives for 'Aurora Through the Archives: Growing Up Aurora', a nostalgic exhibition that showcased photographs and stories from the 1940s to the 2000s by people who live or lived in Aurora. It was featured in the 2024 CONTACT Photography Festival.

'Through the Hillary Lens' used archival photographs from the Hillary House collection to provide a glimpse into the life of the Hillary children from the 1880s to the 1920s to evoke familiarity and exemplify a universality of the childhood experience.

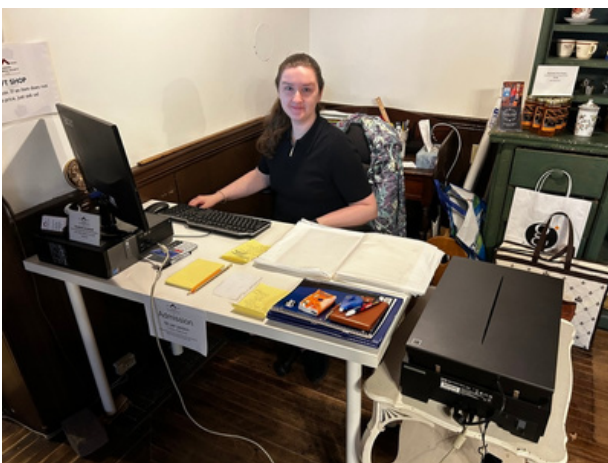
Finally, in partnership with the Aurora Odd Fellows Lodge No.148, the exhibition 'Friendship, Love, & Truth: Meeting the Odd Fellows' was developed to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Aurora Odd Fellows Lodge in 2024.



'Aurora Through the Archives: Growing up Aurora', Hillary House.

ONGOING CATALOGUING

General inventorying and cataloguing the permanent collection continued with help from summer staff and volunteers. Over 1,025 artifacts and archival documents were properly catalogued, photographed or scanned, and added to the collections database. Additionally, the inventory of the Godfrey Collection was completed which involved an additional 12,320 items inventoryed and catalogued, totalling 21,268 items in the Godfrey Collection.



Claire inventorying the Godfrey Collection.

DONATIONS

19 items from 1 donation were accepted into the collection.

These artifacts are properly stored, accessioned, and catalogued.

Programming & Outreach



In 2024, the AHS continued to provide program offerings to engage with audiences. We delivered 51 programs & events including:

- 8 Speaker Series presentations
- 2 heritage craft workshops
- 3 themed events including Historic Places Days, Culture Days, Wreath Making workshop, and A Family Christmas
- 3 Slow Museum Days
- 2 Painting events partnered with Royal Rose Art Gallery
- 2 historic walking tours
- 11 programs with the Aurora Public Library
- 4 camp programs
- 5 Youth Mentorship sessions
- 4 Afternoon teas
- 4 Murder Mystery events.



Local author Ted Barris at the September Speaker Series event.



Cubs from Scouts Canada at Hillary House.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Continuing on past success, a variety of curriculum-based programs were presented to several different classes from St. Andrew's College, St. Anne's School, Homeschool groups and several Girl Guides and Scouts groups.

OUTREACH PROGRAMMING

In 2024, the AHS engaged in increased outreach activities. The AHS was present at 22 outreach events where we engaged with over 1,050 people.

Rentals

In 2024, the AHS hosted several rental groups, including local filmmaker Sean Cisterna, who utilized Hillary House as the location for his newest short horror film, 'The Rug', and upcoming documentary, 'Silver Screammers'.

Hillary House was also the backdrop for weddings, parties, a third-party summer cooking camp for children, workshops, and photography.



Local filmmaker Sean Cisterna filming at Hillary House.

Marketing & Public Relations



Artists plein air painting at Hillary House.

Three editions of the AHS newsletter, The Attic, were published and made available to members and supporters with updates on the status and activities of the AHS during 2024. 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 also began contributing to the

Time Travellers Diary column in the Auroran, and implemented the Aurora Then column in the online Aurora Today news website.

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 14,085 online engagements.

Public Consultations

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. Based on a review of the Enhanced Condition Assessment and in consideration of the AHS' current financial situation, it became clear to the AHS Board that the obligations of maintaining/preserving Hillary House were exceeding the AHS' ability to raise the necessary funds required to meet those obligations.

The AHS Board called a Special Members' Meeting in February 2024. The result of that meeting was a Motion, duly moved, seconded and carried, that authorized the Board of Directors to enter into formal discussions with the Town of Aurora to see what options for the future sustainability of Hillary House would be available.

Over 2024, the Board worked with Town staff to create a public engagement survey "to help discover the public's view and desire for the Hillary House's sustainability". The survey results were presented to the Aurora Town Council during the Committee of the Whole Meeting on December 2, 2024, in a report by Robin McDougall, Director of Community Services. Co-Chair Geoffrey Dawe delegated at that meeting in support of Director McDougall's report.

Results Summary

- 165 Respondents (51 non-resident, 114 resident)
- 89% **agree or strongly agree** that the Town should acquire and preserve Hillary House.
- 79% **strongly disagree** that the Town should not acquire the Hillary House and instead encourage the AHS to seek alternative solutions, which may include selling the property on the open market.
- 79% **somewhat disagree or strongly disagree** that the Town should acquire the Hillary House but then repurpose or lease the property for potential commercial use within the strictures as set out in the agreement with the Ontario Heritage Trust.
- 86% **somewhat agree or strongly agree** that the Town should acquire Hillary House and continue to provide programming within Hillary House.
- 85% **somewhat agree or strongly agree** that the Town should provide additional funding to the Aurora Historical Society to maintain and continue to provide programming within the Hillary House.



Guests enjoying afternoon tea at the Victorian Garden Party, 2024.
Photo by Glenn Rodger Photography.

Volunteers

The AHS Board of Directors remained committed in 2024 with the group providing strategic and practical leadership.

The AHS has been focused on its volunteer development. 65 volunteers recorded approximately 1,751 hours of work in 2024. We are sincerely grateful for their assistance with many projects.

Contributions Based on Area of Volunteering

Board of Directors Management = 565 hours
Garden & Landscape Maintenance = 504 hours
Collections Projects = 441 hours
Event Assistance = 166 hours
I.T & Newsletter Assistance = 75 hours



Collections Volunteer Hillary contributed over 100 hours in 2024.

By-laws & Articles Update



Wedding photography at Hillary House, 2024.

Ontario's Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA) replaced Ontario's Corporations Act on October 19, 2021.

The AHS has been working on reviewing and updating our Constitution and By-laws and Articles of Incorporation before the deadline of October 18, 2024 .

These changes were approved at the Annual General Meeting in early October 2024 and the necessary documents were filed through the Ontario Business Registry.

Comparative Statistics

Performance Measure/Metric	2022	2023	2024
Exhibitions	3	2	3
Collections: Accessioned/Cataloged Artifacts and Archival Materials	405	9,541	13,345
Number of Programs and Special Events	41	62	51
Number of Individuals Reached: Admissions, Rentals, Programs, Outreach, Online	2,623 in person and virtually	2,615 in person and virtually	2,383 in person and virtually
Social Media Followers	9,279	9,241	9,255
Online Engagements	31,547	22,964	14,085
Membership Totals	151	146	150
Total Volunteers	80	51	65
Volunteer Totals (Hours)	3,176	2,036	1,751
Number of Sponsors and Event Donors	79	10	2
Revenue from Fundraising Events (Gross)/Donations/Other	\$104,960	\$32,187	\$43,957
Grants Awarded	6	4	4
Grant Revenue	\$116,477 + \$44,935 in COVID-19 Emergency Funding	\$122,974	\$123,530



Programming & Outreach Coordinator, Selin, leading the Art of Letter Writing Workshop at the Aurora Public Library



Paint Night at Hillary House, March 2024. In partnership with Royal Rose Gallery.

Financial Management

In keeping with the famous dictum “don't bury the lede”, the AHS had a good year in 2024! While we ended the year with a deficit of \$22,501, this was an improvement over our projected deficit of \$27,603, and a vast improvement over the 2023 deficit of \$58,979.

This was achieved through the unfortunate necessity of not renewing the Programming & Outreach Coordinator contract, careful management of our expenses, generous donations, and diversifying our revenue - namely joining the Richmond Hill Hall Charities Association and participating in Charitable Gaming assignments at Bingo World Richmond Hill.

We were also very fortunate to receive a \$10,000 donation from Dr. Leslie and Mary Jeanne Oliver! We thank them for their continued support of the AHS.

The Board and staff continually strive to increase revenue while acting prudently to keep costs down. Our sincere thanks to all involved in moving our operations into the black.

For 2025, we have budgeted an operating surplus of \$2,500, and with some additional fundraising opportunities we are investigating, our goal is to improve on that number.

Respectfully submitted, AHS Co-Treasurers



Geoffrey Dawe

Daniel McGeown

SUMMARY

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
Revenue	\$169,565	\$155,161
Expenses	\$192,066	\$214,140
Excess Revenue/Expenses	-\$22,501	-\$58,979

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
Special Events & Fundraising	6%	11.5%
Charitable Gaming	6.2%	0%
Donations	8.1%	3%
Grants	73%	79.2%
Memberships	1.1%	0.8%
Sales & Other	5.6%	5.5%

Funding

GRANTS

The AHS received several grants in 2024 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, 9-week positions for the summer season.
- Operating Grant and Community Partnership Grant from the Town of Aurora.
- Additional Funding through Young Canada Works grant which helped fund a 32-week internship to assist with inventorying the Godfrey Collection.



Dr. Leslie Oliver, founding President of the AHS

DONATIONS

Thanks to a generous membership base and supportive community, we received \$3,707 in donations in 2024. Additionally, the AHS was fortunate to receive a \$10,000 donation from Dr. Leslie and Mary Jeanne Oliver! We thank them and all of our donors for their continued support of the AHS.



Holiday Wreath-making Workshop, 2024.

CHARITABLE GAMING - RICHMOND HILL

Looking to diversify our revenue streams in 2024, we applied and successfully received a lottery licence through the City of Richmond Hill and OLG, and began participating in Charitable Gaming assignments at Bingo World and Gaming - Richmond Hill. Thanks to our volunteers who represent the AHS during the assignments, this resulted in \$10,435 in revenue in 2024.

We plan to continue this in 2025.

2025 Planned Activities

AHS BOARD & GOVERNANCE

The AHS will focus on recruitment to bring the Board up to a maximum of 9 Directors. The Board and Staff will also begin the process of re-evaluating and updating the Strategic Plan.

STAFFING

The AHS expects to retain the current permanent staffing complement through 2025, with a full-time Curator/Manager and a part-time Administrative Assistant. Funding will be sought for short-term contract employees through grant opportunities.

MAINTENANCE

The AHS will endeavor to complete small-scale maintenance of Hillary House in 2025. Furthermore, phase two of the new landscaping plan will commence under the guidance of the Landscaping Committee.



Rosa Calabrese-Teal leading Paint Night.

CURATORIAL ACTIVITIES & EXHIBITIONS

Staff will continue ongoing collections management projects, including cataloguing the artifacts in the Collections Room and Archives.

Staff endeavors to advance conversations with the Archives of Ontario and other institutions regarding the future of the Godfrey Collection.

At Hillary House, the exhibition “Pills, Poisons, and Painkillers” will showcase common medicines and treatments that doctors, such as those who practiced at Hillary House, used to help their patients in the 19th century. The AHS is also partnering with the Aurora Museum & Archives for the 100th Anniversary of the Aurora War Memorial and “Aurora’s Historic Places,” an exhibit at Aurora Town Square highlighting Hillary House and other historic buildings in Aurora.

PROGRAMMING & OUTREACH

In 2025, 30 programs and special events are planned. With a reduction in staff, focus will be placed on evaluating offerings and prioritizing programs that reach more visitors and have the greatest impact while operating within our limited resources. The AHS will continue to work with community partners to broaden our reach and develop innovative offerings.

2024

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

- Delmanor Aurora
- Electronic Recycling Association
- Hurst Bakery
- Lesley's Party Sandwiches & Catering
- Tim Hortons - 304 Wellington St. E.

COMMUNITY/HERITAGE PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

- Aurora Chamber of Commerce
- Aurora Garden and Horticultural Society (Garden Aurora)
- Aurora Museum & Archives
- Aurora Odd Fellows No. 148.
- Aurora Public Library
- Aurora Senior Centre
- Aurora Today
- National Trust for Canada
- Neighbour Aurora
- The Auroran Newspaper
- Town of Aurora
- Royal Rose Art Gallery



Tennis Court at Hillary House.

ANNUAL APPEAL & GENERAL DONATIONS

- Glenn Bonnetta
- Len Bulmer
- Mary Cragg
- Lawrence and Carol Crump
- Geoffrey Dawe
- Joan Gardner
- Marion Hillary
- Denise Hughes
- Christine and Donald Hutchinson
- Agnes Lytle
- Darlene Mathews
- John McIntyre
- Sharon McMorine
- Bill and Nancy Newman
- Kathryn O'Dwyer
- Leslie Oliver
- Shirley Pattenden
- Karen Pimm
- Brian Porter
- Dan Revington
- Cindy Scythes
- Yafang Shi
- John and Deborah Smale
- Jacqueline Stuart
- Angela Trevivian
- Lesley Watterson
- Donald Webb
- Meagan Whitehorn
- Janet Wilson
- Terry Brewitt
- Roy Budd
- Sandy Bundy
- Shannon Buskermolen
- Christina Cannavicci
- Larry Clayson
- Silvana Croce
- Michela Crombez
- Jacob Dalal
- Geoffrey Dawe
- Evan Domingues
- Paige Eadie
- Joan Gardner
- Nadia Gargaro
- John Green
- Ronen Grunberg
- Izzy Kelly
- Sonia Koczekan
- Alan Lambert
- Donna Lewis
- Dan McGeown
- Betsy McIntyre
- Christine McLure
- Alison Mills
- Mike Norrie
- Amy Norris
- Hilary Oosterhof
- Layla Pasdernick
- Isaac Peterson
- Michelle Primeau
- Sonja Rebus
- Cindy Scythes
- Steve Scythes
- Brenda Snape
- Jacqueline Stuart
- Tannaz Toyserkani
- Angela Trevivian
- Lesley Watterson

VOLUNTEERS


- Jasmine Bain
- Marjorie Bare
- John Bare
- Darren Berezowski
- Shirley Binns
- Linda Blatchford
- Kate Brewitt



CONTACT INFORMATION

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THANK YOU!