

The ATTIC

PILGRIMAGES OF REMEMBRANCE, 1920 AND 2024. VISITING THE GRAVES OF THREE AURORA MEN KILLED IN FRANCE DURING THE GREAT WAR

By: *Bill Fleury*

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Aurora War Memorial. In April 1925, Sir William Mulock, the lead donor of funds and land, laid the cornerstone to begin construction. Also present that day was H.W. (Herbert) Fleury, local businessman, past Mayor, and chairman of the Aurora War Memorial Association, who spearheaded an intensive campaign to raise funds for the monument. By October of that year, the war memorial was completed. It stands as a cenotaph to memorialize 71 men from Aurora, King, and Whitchurch, who left to fight in the Great War never to return.

With the help and support of the Aurora Historical Society and the Aurora Museum and Archives, this article traces the memory of three men listed on the memorial who served as soldiers and died in France.

During our discussions, we discovered that beginning in 1920, and again in 1922, 1925, 1926, and 1928, at a time when most communication was still by letter and the cost of passage and spending time in Europe was out of reach for most people, Herbert Fleury made several trips to France. His trips were primarily family-related, as his wife Leila, and daughter, Marguerite were living in Paris, but each time he went to France, Herbert, and at times other members of his household, visited these soldiers' grave sites in northern France.

As a result of these trips, Herbert served personally as a post-war emissary from Aurora to some of its sons buried in France. He often wrote letters to the families of the soldiers and took photographs of the cemeteries, documenting the resting places of their loved ones. This experience, along with the shared grief he felt with many in the community, convinced Herbert of the need to build a War Memorial in Aurora in memory of the soldiers who were his family, friends and acquaintances as well as others from Aurora, King and Whitchurch, who had bravely served and died in the Great War.

I had some knowledge about these trips as Herbert Fleury was my great uncle and my family discovered some of his photos in family papers. Given the chance to follow in his footsteps, in December 2024 I made a similar journey to visit and pay respect to these men.

...continued on pg. 4

SPRING OPEN HOURS



Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm

Come for a tour, see the exhibitions, or find that perfect item in the Gift Shop.

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The Attic is
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CO-CHAIR'S MESSAGE

By: *Geoffrey Dawe & Alan Lambert*

Welcome to the spring edition of the Attic.

It has been a long time coming (spring that is!). With the occasional bit of backsliding. Like the recent ice storm that left many without power for days – indeed there are thousands in Ontario still waiting to be reconnected. (Memories of the old Blues number "You don't miss your water, until well runs dry".) Hopefully all our subscribers made it through with minimal inconvenience.

While the winter may not seem like an overly busy time for us at the AHS, we have been working away at behind the scenes projects, organizing our summer schedule, and we are very pleased with ongoing conversations with the

Archives of Ontario regarding a potential transfer of the Godfrey Collection. We will provide more information on this as we work through the particulars.

We have a number of events coming up over the next couple of months: a booth at the Aurora Chamber of Commerce Home Show, our spring clean-up day; our very popular Mother's Day Teas, Speaker Series, and the Aurora Chamber of Commerce Street Sale. Volunteers always welcome.

Our spring message is a little short this year. We were hoping to have an update for the Membership on our discussions with the Town, but as of the date of this

writing, we are awaiting a response from the Town. It is our goal to provide a proper update by May.

And, finally, our thanks to our dedicated staff and volunteers! Without you we could not do what we do!

Al & Geoff



The Aurora Historical Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to heritage preservation, public education and enrichment. The AHS owns and operates Hillary House National Historic Site.

We are seeking passionate and dedicated individuals to join our volunteer Board of Directors who will use their skills and experience to help the organization move forward in a responsible and relevant manner. Business or volunteer experience in 1 or more of the following areas is desired:

- General Business Management • Fundraising
- Governance • Finance • Property Management
- Marketing • Heritage Preservation
- Museum Management • Community Engagement

Directors are required to be actively engaged in the work of the organization, attend monthly Board meetings, and support special projects.

Please send your resume to: president@aurorahs.com
For more information, you are welcome to contact us at:

905-727-8991
www.aurorahs.com
15372 Yonge Street
Aurora, ON L4G 1N8



Co-Chairs, Geoff & Al.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM HILLARY HOUSE

Have a look at some past events and programs run by the AHS since last Fall! Did you attend any of them?



Volunteers help rake leaves and get the Hillary House grounds ready for winter. Thank you to all of the volunteers!



Santa stands ready to greet visitors to Hillary House at the A Family Christmas event.



Curator/Manager Kathleen and AHS volunteers hand out hot chocolate to attendees at the Santa Under the Stars parade.



Local filmmakers use Hillary House as the set for their upcoming movie "Wild Horses".



Guests of the AHS Wreath-making Workshop show off their creations. The workshop is hosted in partnership with Garden Aurora.



Guests enjoying the Paint Night workshop, hosted in partnership with Royal Rose Gallery.



Hillary House was featured as the backdrop for local business Studio Dialectica.



Guests get creative making a plant holder at the Basics of Macramé Workshop.

Want to be involved at the AHS? Contact us to be a volunteer, intern, or to join our Board of Directors! (Click here)

continued from pg. 1...

The first man we'll discuss is Private Robert Stuart Hillary, a gunner in the Canadian Field Artillery. Stuart was born on June 14, 1896, and grew up at "The Manor", now known as Hillary House National Historic Site. Stuart was the son of Dr. Robert M. Hillary and Edith Howard Hillary (nee. Mussen), and the oldest of nine children. The Hillarys lived across Yonge Street from Herbert Fleury and his family at Inglehurst. As well as neighbours, the families were very close friends. In fact, Stuart was Herbert's godson and Herbert often wrote postcards and letters to the Hillarys while travelling abroad.



*Robert Stuart Hillary,
1896 - 1917.
Image from the AHS
Collection.*

When war broke out, Stuart was working in Toronto as a clerk for the Canadian Bank of Commerce. He enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force on June 15, 1916. Assigned to the 2nd Brigade in France on January 20, 1917, he fought less than three months before he was fatally shot on April 4, 1917, just days before the Battle of Vimy Ridge. He was 20 years old. Stuart was laid to rest in the communal cemetery at Aubigny, near Arras, in an extension where British, Canadian, French and German troops were buried. Stuart's father, Lieutenant-Colonel RM Hillary, was serving as a Medical Officer nearby with the 127th Battalion CEF/ 2nd Battalion Canadian Railway Troops. Despite being close by, challenging communications meant he learned

of his son's death a couple weeks later. Near the end of April 1917, RM Hillary met with the doctor and nurses who had cared for his son and visited Stuart's grave to organize the construction of a large wooden cross mounted on a three-stepped plinth. RM Hillary returned home to Aurora in December 1917.

*Herbert Fleury lays
flowers at the grave of
Stuart Hillary. Aubigny-
en-Artois, France, 1920.
Image from the AHS
Collection.*



On August 4, 1920, Herbert Fleury undertook his first pilgrimage to Araas. Accompanied by his wife's cousin, Emma Jane Campbell and his daughter, Marguerite, they visited Stuart's grave. In a letter to RM Hillary, Herbert wrote that they enlisted the help of the cemetery superintendent to find flowers and placed them at the foot of Stuart's cross, "with a little prayer in my heart." He then declared that he had picked up some of the cut flowers and would press them to bring back with the photos to give to the Hillarys in Aurora.



*Marguerite Fleury (left-back) and Emma Jane
Campbell (right-front) visit grave of Stuart Hillary,
1920. Image from the AHS Collection.*

In October 1923, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission replaced Stuart Hillary's wooden cross with a stone grave marker, engraved with a large maple leaf at the top, his name, and his parents' names and home at The Manor, Aurora. At Dr. Hillary's request, the wooden cross was shipped to Aurora and is still in the possession of Hillary House today.

The next Aurora soldier is Kenneth Leon Taylor Campbell. Born on Christmas Day 1886 in Belleville, Ontario, Ken moved to Aurora with his mother, Emma Jane Campbell, a cousin of Herbert Fleury's wife, Leila, and spent years living in the Fleury household.



*Kenneth Leon Taylor
Campbell, 1886 - 1917.
Image from the AHS
Collection.*

Soon after war broke out, Ken, then farming in Saskatchewan, enlisted on September 21, 1914. By February 15, 1915, he was in France. Over the next two and a half years, he took part in many major battles on the Western Front, was injured twice but remained on duty, received a Military Cross for great gallantry in battle, and rose to be Acting Major of his infantry battalion. Tragically, on April 28, 1917, he was killed in action at the Battle of Arras and was buried at the Écoivres Military Cemetery in Mont-St. Eloi, France. Kenneth was 30 years old.

April 1917 was a tragic time for these two neighbouring Aurora families.

Ken's mother, Emma Jane Campbell, accompanied Herbert Fleury to France and visited her son's grave on more than one occasion. Herbert recorded in his August 1920 letter to Dr. Hillary,

"We came from Paris yesterday, via Arras, arriving here early evening. We are 'billeted' in a house that has suffered much from shot and shell, and to which many wounded were brought, and many officers billeted. Conditions are very hard for the people here and one feels great pity for them... This morning we made a visit to Écoivres cemetery (trying for Mrs. Campbell) where we remained a long time."

*Emma Jane Campbell
visits the grave of her
son, Ken Campbell,
ca. 1920.*

*Image courtesy of
David and Bill Fleury*



*Emma Jane Campbell, Ken Campbell, Marguerite Fleury.
Image courtesy of David and Bill Fleury.*

The last Aurora soldier we know that Herbert visited near Arras was Private Ernest Rose. Ernest was born on April 30, 1889, the son of Andrew Rose, a farmer, and his wife Maria Fairbarn. The family lived at 137 Yonge Street (the current building is 14993 Yonge St) in Aurora.

A farmer, like his father, Ernest was also active with the 12th York Rangers before he enlisted as a Private with the 220th Battalion, C.E.F. in Aurora on July 31, 1916. Ernest served overseas for over two years, but on August 29, 1918, he was killed during The Battle of the Scarpe when an artillery shell exploded in his trench. He was buried nearby at the Achicourt Road Cemetery. Ernest was 29 years old.



*Ernest Rose,
1889 - 1918.*

*Image courtesy of the
Aurora Museum &
Archives.*

Herbert Fleury was acquainted with Ernest's parents, Andrew and Maria Rose. On July 16, 1926, the Aurora Banner reported that Herbert had "visited some of the Aurora boys' graves, bringing home with him a snap and also a flower off Pte. Ernest Rose's grave, which the family were very pleased to receive." Herbert had also visited the year before and brought back some earth and a photograph.

Last December 2024, I followed in my great-uncle Herbert's footsteps and visited the graves of Stuart Hillary, Ken Campbell, and Ernest Rose while I was in France. Although it was December, the damp grass at each cemetery was manicured and green.

A mixture of low red brick and white stone walls with hedges surrounded the cemeteries. Ornamental trees, although bare, softened the skyline with their spreading branches. Sir Reginald Blomfield designed both the military extensions of the cemeteries at Aubigny and Écoivres and W H Cowlshaw designed the Achicourt British Cemetery.

On a grey day, I drove out to the intimate Achicourt British Cemetery on the outskirts of Arras, where I discovered that someone had recently placed a small Canadian flag and photo of Ernest Rose in front of his headstone. In fact, each Canadian soldier had a flag prominently displayed in front of his grave.

The next day I continued my journey. Aubigny, on top of a rise overlooking farmer's fields, and Écoivres, nestled in a valley between a wood-lined road and a tree-spotted field, were both quiet. Alone, I walked through the cemeteries, carefully scanning the gravestones for the Aurora men. Upon finding them, I placed small white crosses with two red and black poppies and photos of the respective soldiers, into the ground in front of the grave markers.

Like Herbert, I took photos of each cemetery to bring back to Aurora. In so doing, I felt we had **connected** both space and time: the long distance from Aurora to Arras, and the century since Herbert Fleury and Emma Jane Campbell had first visited the graves to honour these beloved men. During my pilgrimage, two thoughts came to mind. First, I cannot imagine the grief that the families of these men would have felt, especially Emma Jane Campbell, as she stood, just as I did, beside the grave of her only son. My second thought was a prayer of thanks. Unlike the two generations before me, I was not called to fight a world war. In visiting these cemeteries, I was moved by the willingness of these Aurorans to serve and die so that we who followed could live freely, largely without war. It's a very compelling reason why we should look back, as Herbert Fleury and many others did, every year at the Remembrance Day Ceremony in Aurora, to remember and honour the names of the men (and women) whose names on its War Memorial should, indeed, "live for evermore".



Ernest Rose's grave.

Image courtesy of Bill Fleury.



Stuart Hillary's grave.

Image courtesy of Bill Fleury.



Ken Campbell's grave.

Image courtesy of Bill Fleury.

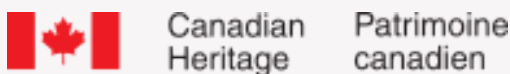
Epilogue

By: Kathleen Vahey, Curator/Manager

I had the pleasure of meeting Bill Fleury last Fall when he stopped by Hillary House one afternoon. Working with the Aurora Historical Society, I am certainly familiar with the Fleury family name but was excited to make a (present-day!) connection with a descendant. When Bill told me about his plans to travel to France where he would visit the grave sites of a few Aurora soldiers, I was inspired. AHS staff and volunteers have been working to organize, document, and transcribe a large number of WW1 letters the Hillary family sent back and forth to each other while Robert Michael and Stuart were serving overseas. These are invaluable primary sources and offer an intimate look into the experiences of the Hillary family, in Europe and here in Aurora on the home front. With the opportunity to recognize and commemorate Stuart Hillary as well as Ken Campbell and Ernest Rose, I was honoured to create small white crosses, with poppies and a photo, for Bill to place at their graves.

While these men lie thousands of miles away from home, I hope this small act helps bridge that distance and provides visitors with a glimpse into who these men were - sons, brothers, nephews, cousins, friends, lovers - who had their whole lives ahead of them but sacrificed themselves for our freedom and peace. We will continue to remember them.

The Aurora Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the support of



UPCOMING EVENTS

Join us at Hillary House for one of our upcoming Spring events. Click on the images below for more information.

The Aurora Historical Society presents...

MOTHER'S DAY AFTERNOON TEA

Saturday, May 10, 2025

Spoil your mom this Mother's Day with:

***INCLUDES A CRAFTING AND COLOURING STATION FOR CHILDREN!**

Assorted tea sandwiches
Freshly baked scones with jam and whipped cream
A variety of desserts
Tea

\$35/adult \$20/child

ADVANCE PURCHASE REQUIRED.

TWO SEATINGS: 12:00PM 2:30PM

Hillary House National Historic Site
15372 Yonge St. Aurora, ON L4G 1N8
Please contact us at 905-727-8991 to buy tickets or by visiting our website www.aurorahs.com

Mother's Day Afternoon Tea

Saturday, May 10th. Two seatings: 12pm or 2:30pm

*with special children's ticket and crafts

The Aurora Historical Society presents...

MOTHER'S DAY AFTERNOON TEA

Sunday, May 11, 2025

Spoil your mom this Mother's Day with:

Assorted tea sandwiches
Freshly baked scones with jam and whipped cream
A variety of desserts
Tea

\$35 per person

ADVANCE PURCHASE REQUIRED.

TWO SEATINGS: 12:00PM 2:30PM

Hillary House National Historic Site
15372 Yonge St. Aurora, ON L4G 1N8
Please contact us at 905-727-8991 to buy tickets or by visiting our website www.aurorahs.com

Mother's Day Afternoon Tea

Sunday, May 11th. Two seatings: 12pm or 2:30pm

*no special children's ticket or crafts

AURORA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2025 SPEAKER SERIES

Bad Advertising from the Past

● ● ● ●

We may squirm and chuckle as we explore these eye-popping, head-shaking, bad advertisements from the past, but it is an important barometer to gauge what social values were important at the time. The world of bad advertising is a humorous look in the mirror of modern thinking and values.

● ● ● ●

This month's Speaker is
Lianne Harris

Lianne Harris is a former Social Studies / History Specialist with the Toronto District School Board, guest instructor and workshop leader for many other school boards in Southern Ontario, and curriculum advisor for Upper Canada College, having taught over 100,000 teachers and students.

Wednesday May 21, 2025
7:00pm to 8:30pm
Hybrid Program

General Admission: \$12.50
AHS Members: \$10.50

REGISTER NOW

www.aurorahs.com 905-727-8991 community@aurorahs.com

May Speaker Series

Wednesday, May 21st at 7pm

PAINT NIGHT

Friday, June 6th
7PM to 9PM

\$30 per person

A fun and casual evening of guided painting! Participants aged 18+ only.
All materials provided.
Light refreshments available.

In partnership with Royal Rose Art Gallery

Paint Night at Hillary House

Friday, June 6th at 7pm.

AURORA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2025 SPEAKER SERIES

The Roosting Box: Rebuilding the Body After the First World War



At the end of WW1, wounded soldiers were returning to Canada in huge numbers. In 1919, near Christie and Dupont streets, a military hospital opened. Join Kristen as she explores how ordinary people dealt with the ways war had changed them, and how the medical community – and the country – grew by leaps and bounds in this fascinating period.

Wednesday
June 18, 2025
7:00pm to 8:30pm
Hybrid Program

General Admission: \$12.50
 AHS Members: \$10.50

REGISTER NOW

This month's Speaker is
Kristen den Hartog
 Kristen den Hartog is a novelist and non-fiction writer whose latest book *The Roosting Box* was shortlisted for the Toronto Book Award. She lives in Toronto and in Lyndhurst, Ontario.

www.aurorahs.com 905-727-8991 community@aurorahs.com

June Speaker Series
 Wednesday, June 18th at 7pm

SPRING CLEANING?

Are you getting rid of items from your house? Donate them to the Gift Shop. We take small housewares, decorative items, teacups, antique items. Reach out to community@aurorahs.com for more information.

I.T. SUPPORT NEEDED


The AHS is looking for someone with I.T. knowledge and experience to assist with various technology related projects. Reach out to community@aurorahs.com if you're interested.

THANK YOU YUNA

The AHS was fortunate to have Yuna, a Grade 11 co-op student from Dr. GW Williams Secondary School assist with researching and creating content for our social media for 2025.

The image to the left is an example of our Freaky Friday campaign. This particular post was about the tapeworm diet. One would consume food or a pill containing a tapeworm egg, allowing it to hatch in the host's stomach where it would eat whatever the host had eaten that day. This would, in theory, allow the person to eat as much as they want while losing weight. Once the desired weight was achieved, the tapeworm would then be lured out via a tube containing food, that was fed down the patient's digestive tract. It is unclear how popular these pills were in the Victorian period; however, a recent resurgence of the tapeworm diet has led many government health agencies to ban tapeworm pills and warn of the dangers of the diet.

Freaky Friday



The tapeworm diet was advertised as an easy way to lose weight in the Victorian Period.

We thank Yuna for all her hard work and contributions to the AHS. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

EXHIBITION EXTENDED UNTIL JULY!

**Friendship, Love & Truth:
Meeting the
Odd Fellows**

September 17, 2024 to
July 11, 2025

Hillary House National Historic Site
15372 Yonge Street
Aurora, ON L4G 1N8

An exhibition in partnership with the
Aurora Historical Society &
Odd Fellows Aurora Lodge No. 148

100F

The Odd Fellows are one of the oldest fraternal societies, with millions of members and lodges around the world. Aurora's own Lodge No. 148 celebrated its 150th Anniversary in September 2024. Visit Hillary House to see the exhibition *Friendship, Love & Truth: Meeting the Odd Fellows*, on display now.



Be our guest

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LUNCH & TOUR

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VOLUNTEER

WITH THE AHS!



VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

- Board of Directors
- Gardens & Grounds
- Collections & Exhibitions
- Facilities & Maintenance
- Gift Shop
- Administrative
- Tour Guides & Programs
- Special Projects
- Special Events

Have a different opportunity in mind? Let us know!

Contact us for an Application Form, or click the image above.



THANK YOU COLLECTIONS VOLUNTEERS!

A big thank you to our AHS Collections Volunteers! In 2024, they contributed over 350 hours to ensure artifacts in the AHS archival collection were properly accessioned, catalogued, and digitized. Over the course of the year, they completed over 1,000 collections records!

AHS Volunteer Hilary, pictured here scanning an archival document, contributed over 100 hours in 2024. Thank you Hilary!

We are social! Follow us for more updates through our social media. Click the logos below.



YOUR DONATIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE



The AHS is a non-profit, volunteer-led organization that has been operating Hillary House National Historic Site as a museum and centre for heritage education for more than 40 years. As a supporter, you can take pride in your meaningful contribution to the preservation of one of Aurora's most significant historic landmarks.

Help us continue that legacy! We need your support.

- Consider Making a Donation by visiting our website and clicking the Donate Now button. Make a greater impact by choosing “Monthly Giving”. You can target your donation to an area you wish to support.
- Purchase or Renew your Membership now for 2025
Visit our website and click Become a Member or fill out and return the enclosed form
- Attend an Event and Shop in our Gift Shop for that hard-to-buy-for person.

RENTALS

Did you know that you can rent Hillary House for your next event? Book your upcoming wedding photos, parties, or meetings at Hillary House. Please contact us for rental rates and packages available year-round.



MEMBERSHIPS

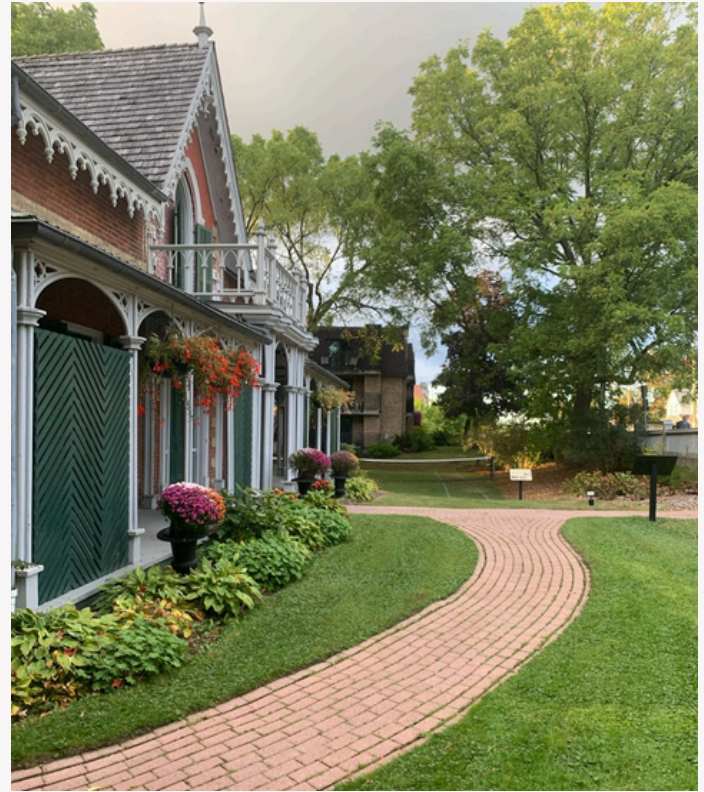
Have you renewed your membership for 2025? When you become a Member of the Aurora Historical Society, your contribution aids in the preservation, maintenance, and operation of Hillary House National Historic Site and its grounds. We depend on donor support to provide relevant heritage programming to all ages.

MEMBER REWARDS

- Invitations to Members-only exhibit previews
- Members rates on rental of the Ballroom, grounds, and other areas
- Discounts on ticketed events
- Regular updates on upcoming events
- Voting rights* at Member meetings, such as the Annual General Meeting

*Individual and Family memberships only

Click for the Membership Form or contact our office.



AURORA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2024

Board of Directors

Co-Chair	Alan Lambert
Co-Chair	Geoffrey Dawe
Treasurer	Dan McGeown
Secretary	John Green
Director	Michelle Primeau

Committees

Grounds Maintenance	Alan Lambert
ToA Heritage Advisory Committee Rep	John Green

Staff

Curator / Manager	Kathleen Vahey
Administrative Assistant	Julie Preston

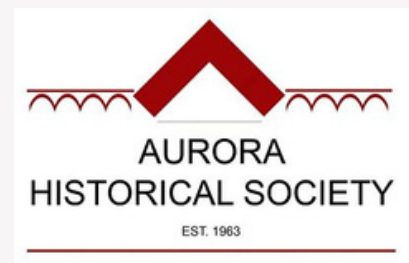
Newsletter Team

Production	Julie Preston
Editor	Kathleen Vahey
Review	Christine McLure

We invite members to submit suggestions for inclusion in the newsletter. Please email community@aurorahs.com

VISIT US

The Aurora Historical Society is an independent, volunteer-led, non-profit organization dedicated to heritage education for all ages. Stop by to see us!



Hillary House National Historic Site
15372 Yonge Street, Aurora, Ontario, L4G 1N8
905.727.8991

community@aurorahs.com

www.aurorahs.com

Open Monday to Friday, 10AM to 4PM