

Hillary House welcomes Aurorans to Doors Open



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Set back from the hustle and bustle of Yonge Street sits Hillary House National Historic Site, often described as Aurora's hidden gem.

Where else can visitors enjoy stunning Gothic Revival architecture, while examining 150-year-old doctors' kits full of well-worn tools?

Visitors are welcome to explore Hillary House as we once again take part in Doors Open Aurora.

Guests of all ages are sure to find something at Hillary House to delight and amaze.

On Saturday, August 15 museum-goers will be treated to free tours of the building and collection, including the recently installed Tennis in Canada: From Early Beginnings to Global Success exhibit.



Sponsored in part by the 2015 Pan American Games Community Celebration Fund, this exhibit includes an extensive collection of historic tennis images, balls, racquets, fashions, and more!

Younger history buffs can take part in our Discovery Days for Kids program, and learn about local history while playing games and

creating crafts.

A particularly exciting highlight of the Tennis in Canada exhibit is the newly installed lawn tennis court at Hillary House. Visitors will have the opportunity to watch tennis demonstrations by players in historic dress, and even play a quick rally on the court themselves. Croquet will also be available for visitors to play.

Built in 1862, Hillary House has been home to four doctors and their families. It was first inhabited by Dr. Geikie in 1862 and then by Dr. Strange in 1869. Both men had short careers in Aurora before moving to Toronto to advance their practices. In 1876 Dr. Robert William Hillary, for whom the house is named, set-up shop with his family.

Hillary's son, Dr. Robert Michael, continued to serve the community of Aurora. His descendants occupied the house until 1993 when Nora Hillary, Hillary House's then resident curator, passed away. However, with the family's ephemera still occupying every room, it's as though they've never left.

Through the generosity of the Hillary Family and Dr. Murray Koffler, Aurora Historical Society (AHS) purchased the house and surrounding grounds in 1981 in the interest of preserving the unique and historic building.

Hillary House now serves as the home base for AHS where staff and volunteers work hard to create events and programming that celebrate Aurora's rich and diverse heritage.

Our permanent collection is on display to give visitors a window into the past. Upon crossing the threshold, guests can explore the Dispensary and Consulting Room to learn more about medical practices at the turn of the century.

Antique tools, such as the bloodletting kit and tonsil remover on display, speak to how far medicine has advanced since the time of the Hillarys. Amidst the amputation kits and syringes, the warm glow of family life shines through. Pencil marks on the door frame of the Consulting Room chart the growth of the Hillary children, showing that while this building might have been a backdrop for medical procedures, it was also a warm and inviting space full of children's love and laughter.

From our sprawling gardens, to the carefully collected pieces of fine china, Hillary House truly has something for everyone. Guests are invited to come for a free tour as part of Doors Open Aurora on Saturday, August 15.

To help plan your route, be sure to visit www.doorsopenontario.on.ca to see a full list of participating sites.