

## Library's Camera Club puts Hillary House firmly in focus



**By Brock Weir**

Teacher Ronen Grunberg has lived in Aurora for over 20 years, and over the past year he has come to know the Town almost like the back of his hand.

He, and members of the Aurora Public Library Camera Club, put a close lens on Aurora last year as the Town celebrated its 150th anniversary, working with the Aurora Historical Society on a multimedia photo element in a special exhibition held to mark the Sesquicentennial.

There, they combined maps and photos of historic and contemporary Aurora to chart how Aurora had grown and developed over the 15 decades since its inception.

Now, the members are turning their lenses towards one building that has stood proud overseeing each of those 150 years: Hillary House.

The Aurora Public Library will soon take over the Hillary House ballroom in the third annual Art at the Manor exhibition. The APL Camera Club have spent the last few months getting a feel of the building, delving into every nook and cranny, and just about every artefact to find artistic inspiration.

With almost exactly a month left to go before their finished products need to be submitted and prepared for hanging, ideas are quickly coming together.

When we were asked to participate in Art at the Manor this year, one of the questions our club asked was whether we were up for the task, says Mr. Grunberg. It was quickly apparent though that they were interested and excited to represent Hillary House in an artistic way using images and photographs. I think people were initially hesitant because they hadn't done things like this before. Some are new to it, but there are also photographers who are almost professional level. The response was positive and things are coming together really nicely.

Some of the members of the APL Camera Club are examining architectural elements of the house. Some are focusing on medical equipment. Others the grounds. Each are coming up with different ideas on how the house can be represented and, for Mr. Grunberg's part, he has in mind a collage in the style of British artist David Hockney.

If he can bring his idea to fruition, he envisions a collage that would chart the evolution of Hillary House through the ages, whether they are photos done in the style of daguerreotypes or tintypes of the mid-Victorian era, through the sepia of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, through to the megawatt megapixelled images of today.

‘It will show Hillary House is part of Aurora and has been in Aurora for a long time, a fulcrum of this community,’ he says.

Each photographer is generally limited to two pieces in the exhibition, although special consideration will be given if someone does go over the limit. They plan to have their images completed and into curator Catherine Richards by May 3 before the gallery opens on May 10. Meanwhile, residents will have a chance to see some of the talent of the Camera Club ahead of time, as Aurora Town Hall features photographs from their Sesquicentennial Project beginning this week.

Mr. Grunberg founded the Aurora Public Library Camera club nearly three years ago. As the founder of the Library's Philosophy Club, the Don Mills Collegiate teacher wanted a place close to home to share the camaraderie of being behind the camera, a place for like-minded individuals to have fun and learn rather than engage in artistic ‘competition.’

‘The purpose of the club in the first place was to bring people together who have an interest in photography and want to share ideas, who can display their work, and have their work critiqued in a positive way,’ he says. ‘What we're getting out of this is community involvement and learning about being creative with these challenges.’