

Aurora Historical Society to mark 100th anniversary of ?The Great War? with new exhibitions

By Brock Weir

Panoramic black and white photos, some faded with age, and others in the same pristine ?glorious black and white? in which they were originally taken, now dot the walls in what used to be bedrooms at Hillary House.

In the years before the photographs were taken, boys who were destined to take up arms for King and Country, slept there blissfully unaware that such a colossal event could ever take place. Yet, when it did, they were ready.

The Aurora Historical Society aims to showcase the fighting men, and the women fighting on the home front, who made up the prominent Hillary Family in a new exhibition which opens at their family home on Saturday, May 10, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

?The new exhibition really highlights some pieces that have never been seen,? says AHS curator Catherine Richards. ?In honour of the 100th anniversary of World War I, we have quite a few panoramics on display.?

In an adjacent room, medals earned by family members during the First World War are on display alongside everyday items enjoyed by the family during this era, illustrating the contrast between the war in Europe and the war here at home.

?They are a very strong military family and we want people to recognize this particular anniversary this year,? she says. ?Hopefully we will be able to do some more programming in tandem to the war, with some talks or additional public programming that is not exhibit-based.?

Mixed in with the war items, are simple family snaps and other artefacts that illustrate the Hillary Family in peacetime. Some items are excerpts from family albums showing the Hillarys ? and member of many of Aurora's founding families ? at play, but one of the highlights are excerpts from the detailed diaries kept by Dr. Robert Michael Hillary in the 1920s and 30s highlighting both the major international stories of the day, and some gossip little items that were of interest to the then-small community of Aurora.

?It is really a neat glimpse into the daily Aurora happenings,? says Ms. Richards. He will comment on the family and their comings and goings, their holidays and birthdays, but then he will also comment on international news.

?It is interesting that there was a consciousness of an earthquake that happened in Japan. We wanted to show the Hillary Archives blending in and allowing a glimpse into the bigger issues of what was going on in the world.?