

Aurora Museum & Archives re-opens



By Brock Weir

If you're an Aurora resident of a certain generation, chances are you've heard stories of a once celebrated hockey trophy.

Once the top prize of the now-defunct Metropolitan Hockey League for the Toronto and York Radial Railway, it was a silver cup much coveted by the local Aurora team ? and, of course, their chief rivals in Newmarket.

Established in 1913, the cup was taken by Aurora a number of times in the late 1910s and early 1920s before disappearing off the map in 1922 when it was taken back by Newmarket. The League, as it turns out, folded along with the Radial company, but the cup itself experienced a brief resurgence on the rink in 1949 after being located in a Pefferlaw basement and after a few more wins under its belt, its whereabouts became murky until 1995.

This Thursday, the Allan Moore Trophy takes pride of place among the artefacts charting Aurora's history when the re-established Aurora Museum and Archives re-opens its doors at the Aurora Cultural Centre. Like the Allan Moore Trophy, the Aurora Museum itself has followed a similarly winding path. Now, well over a decade since it shut its doors at the Church Street School, it re-opens to a new era at the same building ? now the Aurora Cultural Centre ? with its inaugural exhibition ?A Legacy of Sport.?

Planned to coincide with the Pan Am Games torch relay, which also passes through Aurora this Thursday, the exhibition is the brainchild of new curator Shawna White, who has been working closely with sports bodies across Aurora, including the Aurora Sport Hall of Fame, to highlight memorable moments from, and individuals who have played a large part in the Town's sporting history, as well as shining a light on some of the individuals, teams and places that have become forgotten over time.

?I am hoping people really see how connected this town is to sport and how it always has been,? says Ms. White. ?Now you enrol your kids in soccer, baseball, hockey and just assume it is what it is, but Aurora has always been running like this. If there wasn't a formal program there was a picnic or an event where they were running races, or there was a football match. There was always some competitive play around sport.

?It is very gratifying this journey has come full circle and the museum is back here where it was before the Cultural Centre was renovated and opened. To have it open just feels like home and where it needs to be.?

A Legacy in Sport will take visitors on a journey through time beginning with ?The Kicking Game?, which showcases some of the earliest sports played in Aurora. ?Play Ball? highlights local developments on the baseball, softball and slow pitch diamonds, while

further showcases examine swimming and hockey, ranging from makeshift games on ponds from Aurora's earliest days to today's rosters of Tigers, Panthers and Oldtimers.

Artefacts from St. Andrew's College are also featured, as is a showcase devoted to skating ? ice and roller.

?The first rink in Town was in 1885 on Machell Avenue and it was a doubled decker with ice skating on the bottom and roller skating on the top,? explains Ms. White, illustrating how this tradition was revived in 1979 with artefacts from the former Canadiana Roller Rink on Edward Street.

Particularly timely, however, is the salute to Aurora's own Pan Am Athletes, including skier Brian Stemmler, who has the distinction of taking on the slopes in the first and only Pan Am Winter Games, current hopefuls including gymnast Samantha Sendel, and some athletes will even be on hand for Thursday's Grand Opening.

?Janice Shepp Jones competed in the 1959 Pan Am games in Chicago and phoned the Town and made herself available,? says Ms. White, pointing out Ms. Jones' medals, bathing suit, and team uniform now on display in the exhibition. ?Once we had Jan, we put the call out [for other Pan Am Athletes] and calls started coming in.?

To see just what resulted from these calls, head over to the Aurora Museum and Archives' grand opening of A Legacy of Sport this Thursday, June 25, from 3 ? 5 p.m. The exhibition runs through the rest of the year.