

DOORS OPEN 2017: Doors are always open at Hillary House!



By Claire Layton

If the first thing that comes to mind when you think of the Hillary House is that "I have passed it a hundred times and never thought to come in," then now is your chance!

The Hillary House National Historic Site is a two-acre gem, tucked-away amidst the hustle-and-bustle of downtown Aurora. Among gardens and green space, sits one of Canada's finest examples of Gothic Revival architecture. Along with its stunningly picturesque facade, the house contains personal possessions of three generations of medical doctors and their families. This unique opportunity provides a glimpse into the history of medicine.

Built in 1862, Hillary House has since been home to four doctors and their families. It was first inhabited by Dr. Geikie, followed 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, who the house is named after, began his practice, which was later taken over by his son Dr. Robert Michael Hillary. The professional lives of these doctors can be seen through tools on display at the house such as American Civil War amputation saws, cupping and bloodletting devices used into the 20th century, and containers of pills and other remedies for several ailments.

Dr. Robert Michael Hillary's descendants occupied the house until 1993 when Nora Hillary, resident curator, passed away. However, with such a lively and rich history filling every room, it is as though they have never left.

The Hillary House will be open to visitors for Doors Open Aurora on Saturday, August 19, 2017. This event will include free tours of Hillary House, its collection which includes the grounds, featuring Aurora's first tennis court!

There will also be a chance to join a walking tour of Historic Yonge, which will start at the Hillary House at 2 p.m. and lead groups through the history of various landmarks, ending at the Aurora Public Library.

As well as exploring the permanent collection at Hillary House, visitors will have a chance to see the recently installed 150 Years Yonge exhibit.

As a celebration of the sesquicentennial, this exhibit features two rooms of artifacts and information about Aurora's history traced through important events and landmarks located along Yonge Street, through the generosity of the Aurora Museum and Archives and the Sharon Temple Historical Society.

Visitors will discover unique artifacts from the 1837 Rebellion, the first sign hung at the Aurora train station and an abundance of historic photos of Aurora. There is also a game room set up with Canadian-centred games and crafts for kids to enjoy.

The Hillary House offers interesting snapshots of Canadian history, through the experiences of one Canadian family. Whether it is

your first time or a frequent destination, Hillary House truly has something for everyone to enjoy. For more information on Doors Open Aurora, please visit aurora.ca/doorsopen.