

Heritage Week continues beyond Monday kick-off with tour, movie screening

Heritage Week might start on Monday, February 16, but there will be more opportunities to take in Aurora's heritage throughout the week.

One of the ways you can do that is through a new self-guided Heritage Tour, which showcases such notable landmarks as Hillary House National Historic Site and several area neighbourhoods and intersections with stories to tell.

"The tour was developed by staff alongside input and review from the Town's Heritage Advisory Committee," says Adam Robb, Heritage Planner for the Town of Aurora. "The tour was conceived as a way of allowing residents to enjoy a self-guided experience during the duration of Heritage Week. Of course, the primary celebration is on February 16, but we wanted to provide further opportunity for residents and visitors to enjoy and experience local heritage throughout the balance of the week (and beyond!)."

"The tour was developed specifically for the Northeast Old Aurora Heritage Conservation District area, as not only is it the Town's only Heritage Conservation District, but this year also marks the District's 20th anniversary, with the District Plan approved by Council in 2006. Points of interest were identified as a collaborative effort with Heritage Advisory Committee members (as some Committee members also live in the District area as well). A focus of the tour was to try and identify properties of varying architectural styles (Edwardian on Fleury Street and Catherine Avenue; 2nd Empire at 37 Spruce Street; Italianate at Horton Place; Gothic at Hillary House, etc.), and also to highlight properties with unique stories and connections, such as to John Bowser or Lester B. Pearson. We also made sure to finish the tour at Hillary House, as the museum is offering free admission for the duration of Heritage Week.

"In developing the Tour, we also wanted to make it as readily available to users as possible. It can be accessed directly as an interactive GIS map, is available for direct download as a PDF map, and also has the tour stops listed in accessible format on the Town's Heritage Week webpage. We have been grateful to develop this tour as part of Heritage Week specifically, but also hope that it can serve as a platform for the continued promotion of the District and local heritage moving forward!"

This is a hope of Aurora Historical Society curator Kathleen Vahey as she looks forward to welcoming guests to Hillary House National Historic Site next week, not only to "step back in time" to see what life was like in an Aurora doctor's home more than 160 years ago and to take in their ongoing exhibition Pills, Poisons and Painkillers.

"With Hillary House being the only National Historic Site in Town, we're very thankful and appreciative to be featured on the tour," she says. "It's one of the best examples of Gothic Revival architecture in Ontario. I hope Heritage Week is just another way for people to engage with heritage in Town and maybe take a walk or a drive. There are multiple historic buildings on the walking tour and different topics that are going to be covered over Heritage Week and it's just a great way to engage with the history and heritage of Aurora in a way we haven't done in at least the past few years.

For a full list of tour stops, and to access the StoryMap, visit aurora.ca/heritageweek.

When you've completed the tour, consider heading back to Aurora Town Square on February 20 for a screening of the movie Night at the Museum starring Ben Stiller and Dick Van Dyke.

Tickets for the screening are on sale now at aurora.ca/whatson and discounts to the show will be given out to those who attend the Heritage Week launch at Aurora Town Square on Monday, beginning at 10 a.m.

By Brock Weir
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