

New exhibitions showcase art, food, and health



By Brock Weir

The Aurora Historical Society is putting the finishing touches on three new exhibits, one on the "delicious" side which might cause a few tummy rumbles and another well, for those whose stomachs might be a bit stronger.

The new exhibitions "Delicious! 1940 - 1960", "Medical Practices Caring for the Community", and "Art at the Manor" open Saturday, May 18 at Hilary House to mark International Museums Day.

All three have been labours of love for the AHS' Catherine Richards, Nicola Jago, and Alexandra Reccio.

First up is "Medical Practices: Caring for the Community", a first-of-its-kind exhibition created in collaboration with the AHS and Southlake Regional Health Centre showcasing the many antique medical implements which have a storied history with the Hillary family. These items, including brass double-headed syringes, medicine jars long since sealed by the hands of time containing trace amounts of arsenic and cocaine - both perfectly reasonable medical treatments at the turn of the century - and saws that made fast work of many a local limb. They are displayed alongside their contemporary counterparts courtesy of the local hospital.

"I really love the syringes," said Ms. Richards, the AHS' curator, of her personal highlights of the medical exhibition. "They are just so beautiful in the way they are shaped, the different materials and the craftsmanship and time that would have gone into making just a single syringe.

"As for the Southlake material, I was really quite fascinated by the wound care. To me, that is something I had never heard, that there was such a specialist realm of bandaging and wound management."

Ms. Richards added she hopes people take away from the exhibition not just a comparison of health care from the 1860s through the turn of the century right onto 2013, but also to have a renewed appreciation for the work Southlake does in the community.

"They are just such an incredible facility and the services they provide and the reach into the community is just incredible."

If one starts their visit to Hilary House by first taking in the medical exhibition in the top floor exhibition space, moving back down to the second floor, visitors to the ballroom will encounter the work of three different artists participating in the second annual Art at the Manor exhibition.

This show brings together the work of the artists who came to Hilary House looking for inspiration. When artist Elena Yim visited

the National Historic Site at the beginning of spring to seek her inspiration, she found it in Old Dr. Hillary's medicine chest, complete with vials of long-since-grey herbs and still pungent sulphur -based remedies. An artist With a passion for both oils and acrylics, but also microscopic images, she combined both into an interactive exhibition inviting people to get up close and personal with traditional medicines and also her interpretations of various images from cross-sections to the more pedestrian.

Finishing up on the ground floor, visitors will be treated to 'Delicious!' which was put together by Ms. Jago. Bringing together artefacts from the Hillary family's collection of post-war boomer cooking implements, some might find this the most accessible exhibition in that many of the things on display will be familiar to many people of a certain age.

'I wanted it to showcase more modern-ish objects because it speaks to the public more,' said Ms. Jago. 'If you can say, 'my grandmother had one of these!' or 'we used it while helping mom make some dinner!' it brings everything back to you and gives you a more personalized experience than simply admiring something from the 1800s. It brings them back to themselves.

'When I was going through to find artefacts, I was very, very impressed first with this coupon file,' she added, pointing to an intriguing, retro-looking rectangle in a showcase along with other interesting implements like hand-cranked food mills to various community-produced cookbooks. I know it looks very modern, and it is, but it still actually has all the coupons inside of it. There are no expiry dates for the coupons, so I wondered if they still work!

'September is our cooking themed month so we're going to have Liz Driver come in and she's going to be giving a talk on the heritage cooking. We're even going to do a recipe swap, so we're going to invite people to come in and swap recipes and we're going to have some of the recipes. We have a lot of cookbooks and we're going to have them go through then they can choose recipes they can try out.'