

Past, Present and Future being examined at Hillary House Thursday

By Brock Weir

Aurora's past, present, and its historical future will be examined closely this Thursday, May 30 at Hillary House with a talk by local historian Jacqueline Stuart.

Ms. Stuart will speak about the creation, growth, and importance of the Aurora Collection which has its roots in 1963, Aurora's Centennial Year.

Lindsay Bontoft of the Aurora Historical Society (AHS) will also explain about digitization of its collections and how the process affects the future of Aurora and the world. To this end, Thursday's talk will feature the official launch of the AHS' first completely digital exhibit.

Featuring fully digitized compilations of last year's exhibits, including photographs of the artefacts themselves, original associated documents, and the stories behind the objects.

This provides a record of the exhibit beyond the walls of Hillary House, says AHS Curator Catherine Richards. By living online, anyone who hasn't been able to visit us during our 150th anniversary last year will be able to take a glimpse at what that exhibit looked like. It also allows us to be accessible to those who might not be physically able to come inside Hillary House and navigate our building.

The idea is we would be creating an online version for every rotating exhibit that comes through Hillary House in the future so we are constantly going to be creating this record. People who want to get a taste of the building before visiting have the ability to look through online. It will be a great tool for school groups because we can actually give them more activities. Once they have visited Hillary House they can use the website as a basis for future research.

As for the regular supporters of the AHS and visitors to Aurora's only National Historic Site, Ms. Richards says the new site will afford viewers the opportunity to see a different side of their regular exhibition work.

Digitization in online communities are the way forward for museums, historical sites and art galleries and there is really a consciousness around being as equally accessible online as you are physically, she says. We're doing our bit to engage in that part of heritage work.

Further activities in store for Hillary House next month include a special evening on Thursday, June 13 with Ms. Richards on caring for your ceramics. Lifting the proverbial carpet on Aurora, local historians will take a look at the archaeological history of the Town in their next Let's Talk lecture. Led by Dr. Katherine Hull of Archaeological Services Inc, they will discuss recent digs in town and what their findings reveal about the history of the area.

For more information on the Aurora Historical Society, visit aurorahistoricalsociety.ca.