

TIME TRAVELER'S DIARY

By Shawna White

Here at the Aurora Museum & Archives we like to think of ourselves as time travelers. Through our artifact, photograph and archival collection we are able to explore different moments and stories from Aurora's history with the goal of bringing them back to life.

Admittedly, we are not actually able to travel through the space-time continuum, but it sure does feel like it once we are down a rabbit hole of research.

As many of you may already know, the Museum is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Temple of Fame theatrical production this coming weekend and what better place to start our bi-weekly journey than 100 years ago ?

The year is 1918; the First World War and woman's suffrage are both reaching a fever pitch. Communities are grieving over their losses from early years of the War and the defining characteristics of longstanding gender roles are being shattered.

Amongst the changing tides, people are coming together, to support one another, fundraise for the soldiers overseas, and empathize with those who are mourning. There were many efforts on the home front to support all those effected by the War and the 1918 production of the Temple of Fame is an example of just that.

At the time, the Town of Aurora had a population of 2,000 people and 77 people took part in the production of the Temple of Fame. For those of you keeping track that is approximately 4 per cent of the population. If 4 per cent of the population contributed to a project today that would be about 2,100 people. I think we can call that a dedicated community.

The play was a fundraiser to help provide much needed supplies for local soldiers fighting in the War and with an all-female cast, it also leant a voice to prominent women's issues of the day. During the play, a cast of characters famous through the world's history would come and plead their case to the Goddess of Fame as to why they should win the Crown of Fame.

Characters such as Frances Willard, Woman of the Next Century, and Tabitha Primrose all speak to certain aspects of women's issues, with Tabitha Primrose being the most explicit when she proclaims, "Woman wants the ballot, the right to make stump speeches, and hold office, and not be confined to matrimony which is mighty uncertain." The 1918 production was a great success and enthusiastically reviewed in the Toronto Daily Star the next day.

Exactly two weeks after the production, some women secured the right to vote in federal elections with the government stating that women earned this right through their contributions to the war effort. However, the eligibility criteria for the vote were highly exclusionary; Asian men and women waited until 1948 to receive the vote, and Indigenous men and women were excluded until 1960.

We look forward to sharing more of our time travelling discoveries, every other week, right here on page 5.

To learn more about the 1918 production of the Temple of Fame visit the new exhibition at the Aurora Museum & Archives, located on the second floor of the Church Street School.