

## Virtual whisky tasting will help AHS maintain National Historic Site

Pack away your white tie and tails for the year and? dust off your kilt?

This fall, the Aurora Historical Society (AHS) and the Aurora Whisky Society will join forces to host a Virtual Scotch Tasting.

The virtual tasting event, which is slated for October 3, will take the place of the Hillary House Ball as the fall signature fundraiser to help maintain the architecturally-renowned National Historic Site.

The event will include a tasting package of ?five carefully selected premium whiskies, a guided experience by a master taster from the Aurora Whisky Society, a unique tasting glass, and a virtual presentation from Hillary House National Historic Site,? say organizers.

Proceeds will benefit the upkeep of Hillary House, the Town's only National Historic Site, which is owned and maintained by the AHS through fundraising, and grants from funding bodies, including governments.

?We partnered with the Aurora Whisky Society back in 2021 to host the first virtual scotch tasting and we're coming back to it this year as it was highly successful, and this year we're focused on some new whiskies and scotches,? says AHS curator Kathleen Vahey. ?A big part of it is to integrate the history of the House as well. Even though it's virtual and we're not on site, you're still going to get your little bit of history in there. You're not only learning about whisky and scotch, but about Hillary House and the history of Aurora.?

Both Societies collaborated on their first virtual tasting at the height of the global pandemic, but even though public health restrictions have loosened, they're sticking with a tried-and-true format for several reasons.

?Staying virtual really does allow us to offer it to a wider group of people, as well as geographically, and they don't have to worry about getting a ride after because they're at home and they can enjoy the scotch at home without having to worry about having to get back, so it is safe for everyone involved,? says Vahey.

Scotch and whisky are potables which, she says, can be appreciated by a wide audience, including those who might not have previously had any connection with the AHS. It's an opportunity to blend distinctive beverages ?and sneak a bit of history in there.?

?Hopefully we hook them, they become more interested, and they're more involved with the organization. It's a different perspective on museum fundraisers and museum events ? doing events that might pull in an audience that wouldn't have seen themselves associated with the museum. If you can attract them with something they are already interested in like scotch, and then we can pull them in and get involved with other things ? it's all about education as well. Not only are we educating them on the intricacies of scotch or history, I think people will be really surprised with how riveting the tasting could be and it opens up other interests they would not have explored before.?

For more than a decade, both in-person and virtual, the Hillary House Ball has served as the AHS' signature fundraising event. While it is being put on ice for this year, the AHS has not ruled out relaunching the elegant event down the road.

?The Ball has been an incredible event and we're very grateful for the support we have received,? says Vahey. ?We're trying to shift gears a little bit and redirect resources. We have no definitive answers on the future of the ball or any other fundraiser; we're a small organization and fundraisers take a lot of resources from us. We're trying to redirect and give some options for people ? maybe people are more interested in this type of event than a ball. We're broadening our horizons to see how things go and offer a different kind of fundraiser for people.?

For more information on this fall's virtual scotch tasting, including event tickets and sponsorship opportunities for businesses and

individuals, visit [aurorahs.com](http://aurorahs.com).

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter