

Step back to the Victorian Era at Hillary House's Family Christmas



As a family home in addition to a doctor's office for much of its history, Hillary House National Historic Site played host to scores of Christmas celebrations, and kept pace with the times as traditions changed and evolved.

This month, you have the opportunity to step back in time to traditional Victorian Christmas celebrations as the Aurora Historical Society prepares to host A Family Christmas.

Slated to take place throughout the day on Sunday, December 11, the event will include festive crafts and treats, storytelling and a visit from Santa himself.

"We're open all day long and people can just [get a ticket] to come in and do holiday crafts with us, take photos with Santa, and get some festive treats," says Selin Kahramanoglu, Outreach Coordinator for the Aurora Historical Society. "Being a family residence, it's always nice to bring families back into the space and have them all gather here for holiday traditions. The Victorian period was always pretty impressive during Christmastime. We are perfectly suited to host festivities at this time of year."

Those who attended Saturday's Santa Under the Stars parade on Yonge Street got a sneak peek of some of the work that has gone into getting Hillary House holiday ready.

As they visited the veranda for some free hot chocolate ahead of the event, parade-goers were able to take in some of the beautifully natural Christmas decorations created for the house by Garden Aurora (formerly the Aurora Garden & Horticultural Society).

Garden Aurora will return to Hillary House this Saturday, December 3, for a Holiday Wreath Decorating Workshop.

"We're excited to show people how to make their own holiday wreaths to hang on their doors," says AHS Curator Kathleen Vahey. "We decorate Hillary House in a traditional Victorian manner. We have our interpretive rooms and we want people to learn about the history of Hillary House while they're here and of holiday celebrations in the past. It's a way people can come in and learn a craft but in a historic setting. The wreath-decorating workshop uses all-natural materials, so it is very much a heritage-esque kind of workshop. Our Family Christmas is also an open house for Hillary House for people to come in and kind of explore the house and learn."

"It is a family tradition for a lot of people. We see a lot of returning faces and last year being the return coming back from COVID we saw a lot of new faces as well, so it will be a tradition for people. We want to see them come back year after year and we love to see the new faces."

For Kahramanoglu, there is still much to see and explore for new and familiar faces alike.

?The house itself, even when it's not decorated [for the holidays] is already pretty impressive. It's already great to see, especially it being a National Historic Site here in Aurora,? she says. ?During Christmas, we amp it up a little bit and you not only get sneak peeks of the rooms but you also get to engage in activities with us. Get to know a local landmark, get to engage with other community members and neighbours who are coming in, and get to know Aurora while you're here.?

For more information on these and any other upcoming events, visit aurorahs.com or call 905-727-8991.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter