

FEATURED EXHIBITION

In addition to the permanent historical exhibits, temporary Featured Exhibitions in the Aurora History Museum highlight unique aspects of our community's history with artifacts and documents from the collections of the Aurora Town Historian's Office and Aurora Historical Society.

This Featured Exhibition, "Happy Birthday, East Aurora," will be on view through June 7.



Happy Birthday, East Aurora!

**The Village of East Aurora
turns 150 years old in 2024!**

In the early 1800s, New York State began allowing higher-populated hamlets within towns to incorporate as villages, to provide enhanced government services, such as sidewalks, street lamps, garbage collection and police departments.

In 1836, the **Village of Auroraville** was incorporated on the eastern end of present-day East Aurora (where Vidler's and the Aurora Theatre are located today). The Village of Auroraville lasted only a few years.

In 1849, the residents of the western end incorporated as the **Village of Willink**, a name that comes from Wilhelm Willink, an early principal of the Holland Land Co.

After the Civil War, a movement to merge the eastern and western ends of the community under one village government began to gain traction.

In January 1874, the boundaries of the Village of Willink on the western end were extended to include the eastern end.

State and county officials then allowed local residents to decide whether to keep the name Willink or reincorporate as **East Aurora**, the name of the post office on the eastern end since 1850.

**By 19 votes, in an election on June 2, 1874,
the residents decided to change the name:**

122 voted in favor of East Aurora; 103 chose Willink.

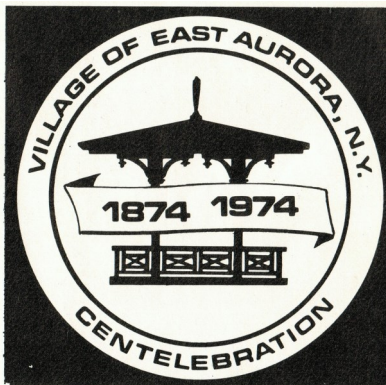
And with that, the Village of East Aurora was born!



With artifacts, newspapers and documents from the archives of the Aurora Town Historian's Office, we take a look back at the "Centelebration" held 50 years ago, in 1974, to commemorate the Village of East Aurora's 100th anniversary.

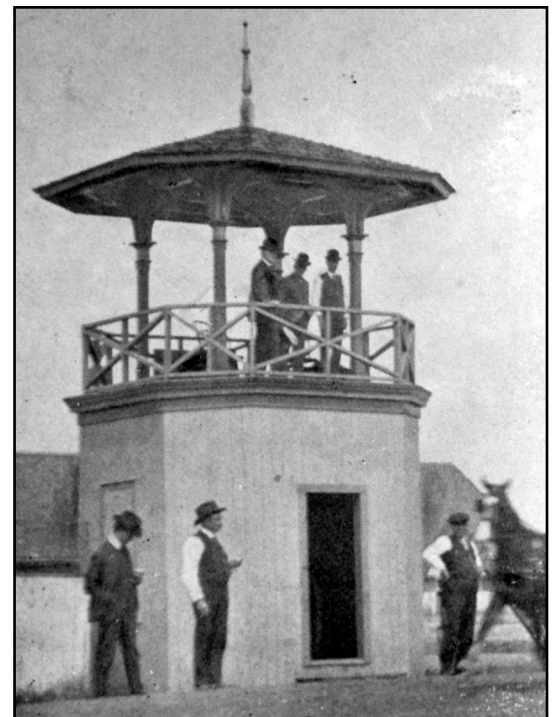
A giant parade, beard-growing contest, carnival, Miss Centelebration contest and other special events were held to celebrate "Five Score in '74."

The Centelebration Logo



Designed by East Aurora artist Rix Jennings, the Centelebration logo seen on many of the items in this exhibit features a silhouette of the Judge's Stand from East Aurora's horse-racing era. The original Judge's Stand was constructed for the racetrack at the East Aurora Driving Park and Fairgrounds, which was located on the north side of South Street, between Olean

and Sycamore streets. After the Driving Park disbanded, the Judge's Stand was moved in 1899 to the racetrack at Cicero Hamlin's Village Farm, which was located where Hamlin Avenue and North Willow Street are today. After Mr. Hamlin retired and closed the Village Farm, the structure was relocated to the grounds of a hotel at the west end of the village. With the demolition of the hotel in the 1960s, the Judge's Stand was moved to the grounds of the nursing home on Main Street, where it remains today under the ownership of the Aurora Historical Society.





**Village logo designed
by East Aurora artist Rix Jennings.**

**A pattern, designed by artist Rix Jennings, to create
your own three-dimensional model of the Judge's Stand.**