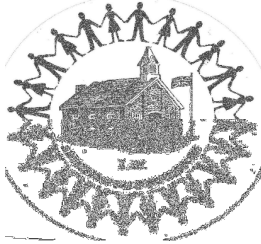




Spring 2015



2015

Schedule of Events

June 24 Strawberry Social
July 14 Lemonade on the Lawn
July 07 Annual Planning Meeting

School Visits

February: 308
March: 336
April: 357

This newsletter

is published by *The Friends of the Schoolhouse* every Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer to inform members and the teachers of the Peel District School Board of activities and events organized by The Friends.

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Website

www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org

Heritage Gardens

Karen Simmons

The gardening season is underway! Saturday work sessions with volunteers have always been an important means of getting the property ready for summer, and for winter at the end of the season. We depend on the efforts of the younger helpers to do some of the more strenuous work such as cutting dead weed stalks, turning soil and spreading mulch. We thank all of them so much.

All the shrubs and grasses that were planted last October around the new conversation area, Ben's Corner, have wintered successfully. We will continue to improve that part of the garden at the western edge of the property. The original section of the Victorian perennial garden needs to be renewed. The trees around it have grown so much that we now need to use plants that are shade tolerant. For a start, we will relocate the lavender to a sunnier spot, and add some hostas.

Of course, the weeds will soon demand more attention than we want to give, but that's all part of gardening. Anybody is welcome to stop by and lend a hand. There are some

next door at who do during their Even a little now and much appreciate to who loves



take on the care of the rose garden, dead heading, and perhaps pruning. None of the garden committee has enough expertise in that area.

Even if you can't help with the work, you are all welcome to visit. Come during June and July to enjoy the abundant colour of the perennial gardens.

women from the Board office some weeding lunch hour. bit of time spent then adds up to ciated help. We find someone roses enough to

Message From The Chair

Margaret Storey

Spring - Finally!!

Hasn't it been a pleasure to be able to enjoy some lovely warm Spring days after such a long cold winter? What a treat to see wildflowers such as trilliums, violets, Mayapples and marsh marigolds as well as the many blossom trees! One weekend I was taking photos of our plum and pear blossoms and the apple blossoms were out in all their glory. Watching the spring bulbs and perennials coming up in the garden has almost made me forget about winter's freezing temperatures!!!

Victoria Day made me think back to when we were children. How many remember chanting, "The 24th of May is the Queen's birthday! If we don't have a holiday we'll all run away"? While doing a bit of research I came across an article by Garry Toffoli that states this chant originated in the 19th Century when rumours were abound that schools might not be closed for the Victoria Day holiday! He also points out that perhaps this was Canada's first student protest movement.

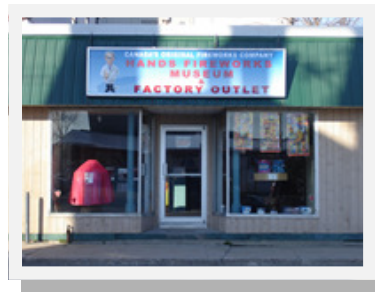
Victoria Day has been celebrated in Canada since 1845, even before Confederation. Canada is the only country that commemorates Queen Victoria with an official holiday. Today we celebrate both the birthday of Queen Victoria who was actually born on May 24, 1819 as well as our present monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, on the Monday before May 25. This long weekend is seen as the unofficial start of the upcoming summer season. Many gardeners use this date to begin sowing seeds or planting annuals in their gardens, cottagers are eager to open their cottages, and many outdoor attractions are opened for the season!

Of course no discussion of Victoria Day would be complete without talking about fireworks! Many communities have spectacular displays complete with colourful rockets, Catherine wheels and Roman candles! As a youngster I remember that my dad and other dads on our street bought boxes of fireworks and together we had a great street celebration. I also remember my brothers playing with the packets of little red firecrackers all strung together. But what we enjoyed most were the sparklers and, of course, the finale, the Burning Schoolhouse. This is a real Canadian specialty, devised and manufactured in the 1930s by Hands Fire-



works Inc. founded in 1873. The Roman candle is set in the cardboard red brick schoolhouse and when ignited, the "chimney" bursts into red illumination and then into flames, as smoke pours out the windows and burns to the ground. How we all cheered! Great memories.

So, if you are near Prescott this summer, go to the Hands Fireworks Museum and Factory Outlet. It is filled with old awards, fireworks, memorabilia as well as safety tips for your own fireworks display. Oh, and it is free!!

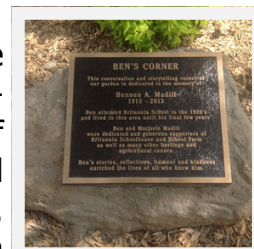


Ben's Corner Dedication

Daryl Cook



Sunday, May 24 was a special day in the historic gardens of the Old Britannia Schoolhouse. During the past year, the Friends of the Schoolhouse have been creating a special corner of the garden dedicated to Ben Madill. The schoolhouse was a part of Ben's life from the time he attended in the 1920's until his



death. His daughters attended the school until it closed in 1959. After the school and even rescued some of the old registers that had been left in the school. He and Marjorie were actively involved with Friends of the Schoolhouse. Ben's love of storytelling the history of the school and the garden seemed no better way of honouring his contributions and his memory create a quiet corner in the where children could sit and



tried to hear stories of long ago and where others could have a few minutes of quiet contemplation. Ben's family and friends gathered on a perfect summer day to officially open Ben's Corner. His wife Marjorie and daughters Shirley and Bessie unveiled a plaque and ceremoniously planted a shrub. We think Ben would have enjoyed the symbolism. We were standing almost on the spot where he had his schoolhouse garden in the 1920's.



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Annual Planning Meeting of Friends of the Schoolhouse

Shirley Hoad

Each year the Friends of the Schoolhouse gather to organize the next year's plans and activities. It is held during the first week of July, with the date this year being Tuesday July 7th at 9:30am. We meet at the HJA Brown Education Centre beginning in the morning, and hopefully finish by the time we break for our Pot Luck Lunch. Any member of the Friends of the Schoolhouse is welcome to attend this meeting and take part in our planning.

Slate Conference

Sandra Emerson

This year's conference was held in Kingston. Chris Chapel, Garry Campbell, Eva Ardiel, Sandra Emerson, Cathy Harper, Earl Harper, Jean Robinson, Karen Simmons and Margaret Storey drove to Kingston on Sunday April 12. They were welcomed by members of the conference planning committee at Sir John's Public House near the hotel. The first of several dramatic re-enactments of historical personages was presented here. Lady Macdonald came looking for husband John A. who was known to frequent such establishments.



The next morning, after registration at the Fort Henry Discovery Centre, participants were treated to another mini drama and a video prepared by students from a LEAP program (Limestone Education through the Arts Program). The video showed students participating in the Frontenac County School Museum classroom compared with students in a modern day classroom.

Following a coffee break, Ann Blake described a "Beyond Classrooms" program in Kingston where teachers can enroll their class in a week-long experience during which they can visit a variety of sites including galleries, museums and civic offices. They are encouraged to interact with all the staff in each location and journal their reactions to each experience.

Before lunch there was a lovely presentation by Millie Morton, author of the book *Grace* which describes the life of her mother who was a teacher in one room schools and witnessed the changes in education in Ontario through the decades.



A representative of the Fort Henry Discovery Centre led a tour of the interactive exhibits and everyone had an opportunity to explore them.

Following lunch and a brief business meeting, participants drove to the Frontenac County Schools Museum. In addition to a classroom, there was a very interesting display of educational artifacts and archives accompanied by a final dramatic skit. "Lady Macdonald" showed the card of condolence she received signed by the members of parliament on the occasion of Sir John's death in 1891.

The 2016 SLATE conference will be hosted by Oxford County Museum in Ingersoll.

Spring 2015

Lemonade on the Lawn

*A special event for Board Office staff and members of
Friends of the Schoolhouse*

Tuesday July 14

11:30 till 1:30

*Bring your brown bag lunch and enjoy an old-fashioned Victorian
"dinner" on the schoolhouse lawn.*

The Friends of the Schoolhouse will provide the lemonade and cookies.

Visit the schoolhouse and wander through the gardens.

Everyone welcome. No charge.

A Reunion

Margaret Storey



Shirley Clarkson (Morris) was pleased to see Marjorie Madill and her daughters, Bessie and Shirley at the recent dedication of "Ben's Corner" at The Old Britannia Schoolhouse.

Shirley Clarkson's family farm was located on the 1st Line East. That road is now known as Kennedy Road. Her family's farm and the Madill farm were part

of the Britannia community and they all went to Britannia United Church. She has many fond memories of the Madill family and Ben's many stories!

Shirley is a great supporter of the Old Britannia Schoolhouse and has been bringing her classes here for a day of roleplaying for the past 18 years! She started with her Grade 7 classes when she taught for four years at Beatty Fleming Public School. She had her students prepare a story ahead of time to explain to the schoolmaster why they were late for class! Some great imaginative stories were told, I am sure!

For the past 14 years she has taught at Homestead Public School. Her Grade 3 students have been very eager and knowledgeable participants in all the activities provided by the schoolmistress or schoolmaster. She is so thankful that Ben had the vision for the renovation of the schoolhouse so that now the students of Peel can have a wonderful opportunity to experience a day in this one room schoolhouse, just like he did so many years ago!

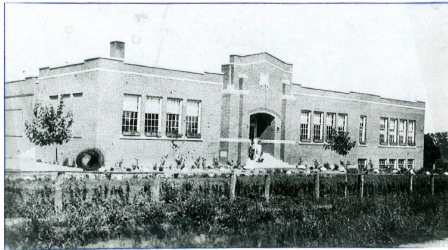
Thanks, Shirley, for your ongoing support of the schoolhouse and its programs!

Cooksville Public School—More from Joan Reid's Research

Cooksville was a village at the intersection of The Dundas Highway and Centre Road, often called the Four Corners. Named for its founder, Jacob Cook, who laid out the village in 1830, it became an important coach stop on the highway between York and Hamilton.

Nothing is known about the very earliest school in the village. An advertisement in the *Christian Guardian* in the **1830's** suggests that there was a school in the area at this time.

In 1850 a tax levy imposed upon the residents stating that they were liable for the sum of 26 Pounds, 5 Shillings, to aid in erecting a suitable fence and other conveniences about the schoolhouse makes it clear that a school was functioning. A school appears on the Tremaine Map (**1859**) on the east side of Centre Road just north of Dundas Street.



Public and Continuation School Cooksville. Taken by a used and stamped Post Card, 1927. Courtesy of David Mills.

The first school for which we have detailed information was a two room brick building opened in **1873**. The 1877

Atlas of Peel describes Cooksville as a very neat and trim village with a fine large two story brick school employing two teachers.

In earlier days water had to be obtained from the house of Mrs. Edway Walterhouse nearby. If you wanted a drink you raised two fingers. If you did not drink all the water in the dipper you poured it back into the pail. No wonder there were so many outbreaks of disease. Measles returned in 1910. There were scarlet fever outbreaks in 1903 and 1908. Cooksville school was closed in both February and December 1915 because of scarlet fever. Mumps and then la grippe spread through the community in 1907.

In 1904 and 1910 there were many sleighing parties. The sleighing was good on Dundas Street in January. Pupils dragged their sleds up Centre Road (Huronario Street) as far as the railway tracks and then slid downhill right past the school.

In 1912 there was still one school with two teachers. Cooksville had a population of 500 and was a popular destination for city automobiles and motor cycles from Toronto that were out for a Sunday drive.

In May **1920** the new three room public school for Cooksville was making satisfactory progress. The old school had been taken down. The bricks were to be used for the new school. Classes were being held in the Township Hall. Not all ratepayers were happy with the new building. Some felt that the increase in taxes was unacceptable and that the cost of \$13,000 per room was too much. Soon two more rooms would be required. To some the school was already a "white elephant". Rapid population growth during and after World War II presented the trustees with a continuing challenge. The school had become very over crowded by September 1944.



S.S. No. 2, Toronto Township, Cooksville Public School was built in 1873 on the east side of Centre Road just north of Milton Street which was a block north of Agnes Street. Milton Street no longer exists and Centre Road is now Huronario. This view is from 1915. Note the picket fence and the unpaved road. Courtesy of Heritage Mississauga.

In September **1947** a new addition was ready and the 280 public school and 78 continuation school pupils could all be accommodated.

In January **1952** construction began on a new five-room addition which would contain three classrooms, a kindergarten, a playroom, a new teacher's room, a complete health room, and a stage and kitchen facilities intended for the entire community.

In **1978** the school closed and in **1981** the school was demolished.

Ben's Corner

This will be the last edition of Ben's Corner where we have published excerpts from Ben Madill's writings. May 20, 2015 would have been Ben's 100th birthday.

I was here when-

By 1915 (my birth year) many people (not all) would have an automobile. A car was a luxury not a necessity. I saw the end of the horse and buggy era which had been a means of transportation since, possibly, the settlement of the white man in Canada.

I witnessed the tractor replace the horse which had been a faithful servant and tilled the soil for many years.

I was here when the little one room school which had served the area for over 100 years succumbed to the larger consolidated schools and school buses.

I have seen the change from mud roads to gravel then to pavement and cement.

I was here before snow plows and snow blowers and before farmers had hydro electric power in the house and barn and before refrigerators, deep freezers, vacuum cleaners, electric washing machines, electric stoves, toasters, mix masters, electric clocks, oil burning furnaces and air conditioners. Electric pumps replaced the wind mill for pumping water on the farm.

I was born before mail delivery to the farmers in this area.

I was here before radios, televisions, camcorders and the V.C. R.

I saw the change from silent movies in theatre to, as we called them, the talking movies (or talkies).

I witnessed the city of Toronto build the Toronto Malton Airport in 1936. Then aeroplanes replaced the trains as a means of public transportation.

I remember when wood was the main fuel used by farmers for heat and cooking. Many farmers would go to town for a wagon load of coal to help out for winter heat. Wood would be used for cooking and baking all summer. I well remember the heat in the kitchen on bake day on a hot summer day.

I was here when Russia was the first country to put a sputnik in orbit to circle the world and later when Russia was first to put a man into outer space and circle the earth once every 90 minutes circa 1963 and on July 20 1969 when the U.S.A. was the first country to put a man on the moon.

I was here before quartz watches and computers which replaced book keeping and our minds. Now we have internet. I don't understand either one.

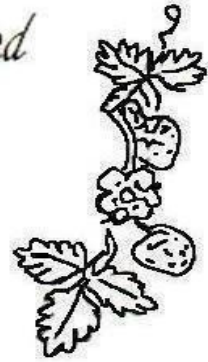
I was also here before cellular phones and when the dollar coin (loonie) replaced the dollar bill in 1987 and when the two dollar coin replaced the two dollar bill in February 1996.

I've seen the area make a complete change from farm land to development (houses and industry) and a change to a diverse population.

Can the next generation expect to see as many changes?

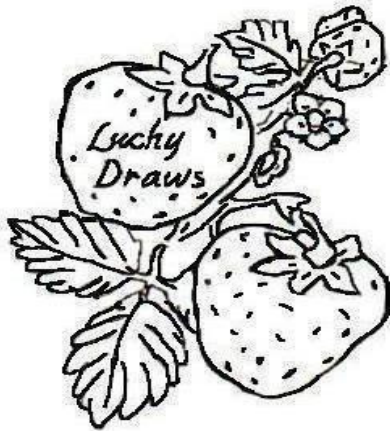
Come out and enjoy an old-fashioned
Strawberry Social

Wednesday June 24, 2015



11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

in the atrium of H.J.A. Brown Education Centre



BILL OF FARE

A generous helping of luscious Ontario strawberries on a delicious shortcake biscuit.... topped with genuine whipped cream!

Tea • Coffee • Fruit Cordial
Mints

Come as you are -- or "dressed up" for an old-fashioned afternoon tea

\$8.00 tickets available from



Friends of the Schoolhouse

*A fundraising project for The Old Britannia Schoolhouse
(Some tickets available at the door.)*

If you would like tickets held for you at the door, please contact Ruth Taylor at either

905 457 8804 or

rtaylor914@sympatico.ca