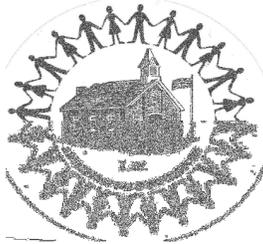


The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959 restored 1982

Spring 2019



Coming Events

Open Sundays:
June 9 Inside and Out
July and August No Open Sunday

School Visits

???

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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Need more information?

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Website
www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org

Garden News

Marg Carson

Spring has finally arrived at the Old Britannia Schoolhouse gardens. Bright yellow daffodils are putting on a wonderful display. Forsythia have flowered as well.

The tulips in the front beds by the schoolhouse are about to bloom. Toad lilies with their spotted leaves are growing. The lilac, blueberry and currant bushes are budding out.

One of our members has donated heritage Oriental Poppy seeds as well as some Black-Eye



Susan seeds. These will soon be scattered along with other seeds including Alyssum, Butterfly Weed, Snapdragon, Foxglove, Marigold, Nasturtium, Four O'Clocks and the "Money Plant"!

Garden clean up took place on May 4 and 11.

During these sessions roses were pruned, raspberry canes removed and compost was added to the beds.

A special thanks goes out to our garden volunteers who have helped out: Jean, Ken, Karen, Kathleen and Joanne.

If you are interested in gardening and would like to join us with caring for the gardens at The Old Britannia Schoolhouse, then call 905-890-1010 ext.2911.

Spring 2019

From the Schoolmistress

Chris Chapel

Spring has sprung...at last! It has been a long cool spring which I frankly like. I'm not a fan of instant summer so have enjoyed the slow greening of the landscape. The Schoolhouse grounds are always humming with spring activity which signals the beginning of the growing season. The perennial garden has a fine showing of early bloomers but I always look forward in early spring to scanning a cool, shady corner of the garden to see if I can spot the first native woodland wildflowers of the season poking through the leaf litter. These understory plants take advantage of the sun's warmth and light allowing them to bloom, attract pollinators and set seed before the leaves flush on the trees and shade the ground below. Often their flowers bloom before their leaves appear. An example of this is the furry stemmed *Hepatica* whose delicate flowers often emerge through the last bits of melting snow in the forest. Their three lobed leaves pop up after the flowers have faded. Loosely resembling the three lobed human liver, they were thought to be useful in treating ailments of the liver (which has proven to be false). *Bloodroot* is another favourite of mine. They have beautiful multi-petaled flowers that are wrapped in their leaves as they push through the earth. If picked or pulled by the roots this plant "bleeds" an orangey-red sap, hence its name.

Small, purple spotted, sword-shaped *Trout Lily* leaves (reminiscent of the colouring of the brook trout) often blanket the forest floor and at the Schoolhouse we're even starting to see them pop up in the grass. The plant must grow for several years before storing enough energy to produce a second leaf and small lily-like yellow flower. Apparently, colonies of trout lilies can be as old as the mature trees they grow under so may be over 300 years old!

May apple is distinct in that its umbrella-like leaves grow to almost knee high and form large patches. Like the Trout Lily, they grow two leaves after several years and produce one lovely white, nodding bloom at the juncture of the two leaves which then produces an "apple". This light yellow coloured apple, although edible in small quantities when fully ripe, can also be highly poisonous. Best to admire the flower and leave the fruit for wildlife!

Trilliums (red and white) can be seen in the Schoolhouse garden and forest areas throughout Ontario. The three leaves, three sepals and three petals of each plant reveal the origins of this plant's name (Tri = three). The provincial flower of Ontario, the white trillium is believed by many to be protected by law, however this is not the case. In May of 2009, former Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Jeff Leal proposed an amendment to the Ontario Floral Emblem Act that would have made picking a trillium subject to a \$500 fine. [While the Ontario Trillium Protection Act passed first reading, it has not gained full approval in the Ontario legislature.](#) A trillium should not be picked. It is another plant that takes years to store enough energy to produce a flower (7 – 11 years). If picked, the entire plant will likely die.

Two other early bloomers you can see in the woodland section of the garden are *Solomon's Seal* and *Virginia Bluebells*, both of which have hanging bell shaped flowers. The resemblance ends there though as Solomon's Seal is a tall plant with compound leaf fronds and small white bells hanging from the underside. Bluebells are self-explanatory - low growing and a vibrant bluish purple they brighten up the dark corners of garden and forest.

These are just a few of the native wild flowers that grow throughout Ontario. I'm thankful to have these beautiful ephemerals in the Schoolhouse garden to announce the arrival of spring and the beginning of another gardening season!

Swiss Chard –The Myth, The Legend

Packed with nutrients, Swiss Chard has made a comeback and is now considered a vegetable. In the 19th Century this vegetable was given its scientific name, (Beta vulgaris) and subsequently named after Switzerland but was oddly enough not indigenous to Switzerland.

It is thought to have evolved in the sands of years ago.

If you enjoy Swiss Chard you should grow some in your garden. It can be harvested in late Summer and then again in late Summer for a Fall harvest. Quite hearty, it can withstand our hot summer and a mild frost.

Eaten raw, it's a wonderful addition to a Spring salad. If you are looking for something a bit more hearty, you might want to try this Barley and Lentil Soup with Swiss Chard.



Chard has made a comeback and is now considered a vegetable. In the 19th Century this vegetable was given its scientific name, (Beta vulgaris) by a Swiss botanist after the scientist's home-land but was oddly enough not indigenous to Switzerland.

It is thought to have evolved from a wild beet though.

If you enjoy Swiss Chard you might consider planting some in your garden. It can be planted in Spring for a summer harvest and then again in late Summer for a Fall harvest. Quite hearty, it can withstand our hot summer and a mild frost.

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 1/2 cups chopped onions
- 1 1/2 cups chopped peeled carrots
- 3 large garlic cloves, minced
- 2 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 10 cups (or more) low-salt chicken or vegetable broth
- 2/3 cup pearl barley
- 1 14 1/2-ounce can diced tomatoes in juice
- 2/3 cup dried lentils
- 4 cups (packed) coarsely chopped Swiss chard (about 1/2 large bunch)
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill

Note: If you prefer to use canned lentils, you can reduce the quantity of broth substantially.

Preparation

Heat oil in heavy large nonreactive pot over medium-high heat. Add onions and carrots; sauté until onions are golden brown, about 10 minutes. Add garlic and stir 1 minute. Mix in cumin; stir 30 seconds. Add 10 cups broth and barley; bring to boil. Reduce heat; partially cover and simmer 25 minutes. Stir in tomatoes with juice and lentils; cover and simmer until barley and lentils are tender, about 30 minutes. Add chard to soup; cover and simmer until chard is tender, about 5 minutes. Stir in dill. Season soup with salt and pepper. Thin with more broth, if desired.

Epicurious.com

Wedding Traditions

Dennis Taylor

W

hen it comes to weddings, we often find a number of traditions that go along with this special day. Although today we follow many of these because they are fun, they were often rooted in some very special reasons.

We tend to think of spring as a time for weddings because it signifies a new beginning, but in the settler days weddings were often held in winter after harvest was over and there was less work needed on the farm. Also, at that time of the year, families often gathered to celebrate.

Wedding dresses were not always white. In earlier days it was often the bride's best or most expensive dress. It wasn't until Queen Victoria's wedding to Prince Albert in 1840 that white became the preferred color. Queen Victoria chose white because it matched her favorite lace.

In modern day the veil signifies the bride's virtue, but it wasn't always so. Daughters were considered a commodity to their family and a marriage was a way of sealing agreements between families and increasing assets. A Bride and Groom would likely meet for the first time on their wedding day, at the altar. The veil was used to obscure the bride's features, only being lifted after the marriage ceremony was completed. This was to keep the groom from backing out of the deal if he didn't like what he saw.

The Origin of "Something Old, New, Borrowed, and Blue" The tradition dates all the way back to the Victorian era, where these old, new, borrowed, and blue items were procured to bring good fortune to the bride, especially when they were all worn together during the ceremony.

Something Old represents the ties to the bride's family and her past

Something New represents a life to come with her husband

Something Borrowed must be an item from someone who is in a successful marriage to pass on the "good luck."

Something Blue stands for faithfulness, loyalty and purity.

And a silver sixpence in your shoe? This is the line everyone forgets, but it symbolizes future wealth.

The tradition of bridesmaids and best man is rooted in superstition. In the past, a bride's attendants dressed similar to the bride to confuse and distract evil spirits trying to spoil the bride's happiness. The "best" in best man once referred to the quality of a man's swordsmanship. When weddings were used as a business transaction rather than a union of love, the groom needed a good swordsman to help either retrieve a run-away bride or fend off a bride's angry family that may not approve of the union. This was also the reason the bride stood to the left of the groom. This was so he could use his right hand to draw his sword in case he had to protect his bride.

The top layer of the wedding cake was traditionally saved by the Bride and Groom to be used at their future child's christening, as it was expected that the bride would be with child in the first year.

Spring 2019

Schoolhouse Reception

Ruth Taylor



On April 23rd a reception was held at the Schoolhouse for the trustees and some of the senior



administration. Friends of the Schoolhouse provided light refreshments before the visitors went to their evening meetings. Our visitors were welcomed by the chair. Our book "Echoes of the Past" was on display and many of the authors were there. We were pleased to have Mr. Joshua, the new Director of Education, and Mr. Cameron, the new Chairman of the Board, in attendance. Both gentlemen addressed the gathering. Mr. Joshua was excited to visit the Schoolhouse and bought one of our books. It was a return visit for Mr. Cameron, who has always supported the Schoolhouse. The relaxed occasion gave Friends of the Schoolhouse a chance to chat with our visitors. They were invited to take a jar of jam on the way out as a token of our appreciation.

From the Chair

Ruth Taylor

Friends were happy to see the last of this past winter's weather. Due to icy conditions at the Schoolhouse we had to cancel one meeting and one Open Sunday. As well we had to move one of our meetings to the board office. Now the weather is slooow-ly warming up. April showers do bring May flowers, as well as more showers! Things in the garden are starting to pop up and some flowers are blooming. The gardeners will be planning clean up sessions. In April, Friends were pleased to welcome the trustees and some of the senior administration to a reception at the Schoolhouse. In June, some of our members will be attending the annual SLATE conference, So Let's All Talk Education (in the one room schoolhouse). Early in July we hold our Annual Planning Meeting to review the past year's activities and look ahead to next year.

Spring 2019

Lemonade on the Lawn

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

Tuesday July 16
Noon to 1:30
In the Schoolyard



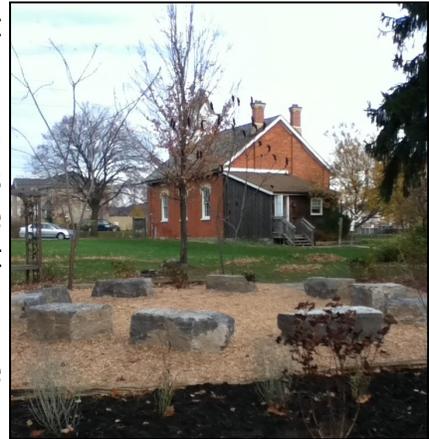
Picnic in the Shade

Every year we celebrate summer at the schoolhouse with a picnic lunch in the schoolyard. You bring lunch and the Friends supply the lemonade and cookies. The schoolhouse is open for visitors.

We also celebrate and thank all who support the schoolhouse and its program throughout the year: the members of Friends of the Schoolhouse and the Peel District

School Board staff.

Families are welcome to enjoy a picnic lunch. There are swings for children to enjoy and historic gardens to wander through. Ben's Corner is a quiet retreat where you can enjoy your picnic lunch.



Ben's Corner

Take a Peek

Every few months we change the display in our showcase in the atrium outside the cafeteria. Right now you will see a variety of old toys and games. You may have played with these yourself. On your way through the atrium take a minute to look at the display and remember the fun of childhood. Soon we will be changing the display for the summer.

Annual Planning Meeting of Friends of the Schoolhouse

Each year the Friends of the Schoolhouse gather to organize the next year's plans and activities. This year it will be held on Thursday, July 4th beginning at 9:30am. We will be meeting in the Albion Room on the third floor of the Board Office. The meeting will be followed by a Pot Luck lunch at the Schoolhouse. Any member of the Friends of the Schoolhouse is welcome to attend this meeting and take part in our planning.

April Open Sunday Fun

Margaret Storey

On Sunday April 14, our theme for the Open Sunday was "Bees and Their Honey". It was a cold, rainy day so we weren't expecting any visitors, but to our surprise 11 visitors braved the elements and came out to see inside the schoolhouse. We had various activities for the children to enjoy: bee books to read, a bee puppet to play with as well as honey for them to taste. Now that was a treat to watch! Of course, playing with some of our wooden toys was also a hit. The adults enjoyed seeing our various artifacts and imagining what it would be like to attend a one room schoolhouse.

Early settlers were always happy to search out a beehive in a tree. It was a special sweet treat available nearby. White sugar was expensive and had to be bought in town. They also used maple syrup but we all know how much work is involved making the sap into syrup or maple sugar.

Barbara Greenwood in her book *A Pioneer Story* tells of a family working in the fall to collect the honeycomb. Using hot coals brought out in a big iron kettle from their cabin and placing wet boughs on top, they would "smoke" the bees to calm them down. The tree would be cut down and everyone scooped as much honeycomb as possible into the crocks. Needless to say, there were a few stings involved but having enough honey for the winter and beeswax to make candles was worth it.



One of the early problems was that once the hive had been emptied, there often wasn't enough honey to feed the bees over the winter so many died. Slowly the settlers learned to keep swarms of bees on their farms using skeps made of coiled straw or "beegums" made from hollow logs. It wasn't until the late 1850s that a hive was invented with sliding frames. This made it easier to gather enough honey for themselves but, more importantly, there would be enough honey left for the bees to feed on during the winter.

Mrs. Greenwood also included the following pioneer recipe using honey. Mix 250mL of honey and 50mL of butter to make honey butter to serve on toast or a tea biscuit. Sounds yummy to me! She also mentions an old fashioned cough remedy. Mix the juice of one lemon and 15mL of honey in 125mL of hot water. Drink slowly to help soothe that cough or sore throat. Pioneers also knew that using honey as a salve or ointment for scrapes and small cuts helped in the healing process. Scientists now know that honey has an ingredient that works like our modern day antibiotics. So, next time you see bees in amongst some flowers, remember how hard they work to make a special sweet treat for us.

Spring 2019

Echoes of the Past

The Rural One Room Schools of Peel County

This book documents the history of all the one room schools that existed in Peel. It covers the period from the early 1800's until the mid-1960's. There are old photos of most of the schools and photos of what the sites look like today. Timelines trace the history of the schools and an interesting – sometimes humorous – “historical gem” is included for each one.

This book is a great gift for a teacher or anyone interested in the history of education.

Written and published by Friends of the Schoolhouse.

Soft cover, full colour, 208 pages.

\$30 plus \$10 shipping

Available at all schoolhouse events and from any member of Friends of the Schoolhouse.

Book Talks

Illustrated talks are available to historical societies and other interested groups. We tailor each presentation to suit the audience and the one room schools that were in their local area.

If your group would be interested in having a presentation, please contact Jean (905 826 3475) jkrob@rogers.com for further information.

**Have you renewed your membership for 2019
Renewal forms are on our website.
Membership forms can be downloaded from our website:**

An Invitation

This is a special invitation for members to join the Friends of the Schoolhouse committee. We are always looking for new volunteers with new ideas to help us plan activities that will support and maintain the schoolhouse and its program. We meet on the second Tuesday of every month from 4 to 6 pm. We can offer you an interesting and rewarding experience along with great light refreshments at each meeting.

Please contact Shirley Hoad, shoad@bell.net

E-mailed Newsletters

If you are not already doing so, why not consider receiving your newsletters by email. This helps us save the cost of paper, printing and postage and also is kinder to the environment. Contact dlcook@rogers.com and put “Emailed Newsletter” in the subject box to make this arrangement.

Thank You

Friends of the Schoolhouse is a non-profit organization of concerned citizens dedicated to assisting the Peel District School Board in the support of the Old Britannia Schoolhouse and its programs. Your donations are much appreciated.

**Check our website often for the latest information.
www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org**