



Spring 2020



Chair's Message

Ruth Taylor

This will be my last "Chair's Message" and the hardest one to write. We held our usual executive meeting on March 3 and our general meeting on March 10. Little did we know these would be our last meetings for the next few months. Although we have a few younger members, most of us are seniors and in the high-risk demographic. Hence, we are either staying completely at home or rarely venturing out.

I have appreciated the support and help of the executive over the last two years, especially the core executive. Who knew meetings could be that much fun? Perhaps that was because we did not always stay on topic.

To help us keep in touch our Schoolmistress Christine Chapel started a "Checking In" email to bring us some news. People were invited to add their own thoughts and updates. We are now up to Week 6 of this means of communication. Even though we are not meeting, we are certainly keeping in touch. Some people are cleaning and sorting, others are baking and cooking, some are learning new skills or reviving hobbies they used to engage in. Perhaps that is our silver lining. We have appreciated the humour that has shown up in shared pictures, jokes or events. We are certainly getting to know each other better. We are Friends of the Schoolhouse, but we are truly friends.

During the current pandemic, the tragedy in Nova Scotia came to the forefront. Some of you may have family or friends there. Others would have visited there. Even if none of this applies, our hearts go out to our sister province.

Even in these difficult times, we must try to remain hopeful. Some things are proceeding normally. Nature can be comforting. Spring flowers are popping up, the grass is becoming green and the new leaves are starting to appear on the trees. The robins have returned. It is particularly timely that the PDSB "Learning Naturally" website has been released this spring. It will be an excellent resource for educators and parents. It is something that our schoolmistresses, along with other field centre staff worked on. Its timing is particularly appropriate as the season unfolds.

We may never return to the "old normal." Many people have stepped up or gone beyond expectations. Maybe a "new normal" will be better. Perhaps we need to re-evaluate our priorities and decide what is actually important to each of us. Stay healthy and think positively. Written April 27.

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From the Schoolmistress

Chris Chapel

Greetings from the Schoolmistresses! As I write this I am sitting in my at-home "office" amidst cat climbers and craft paraphernalia. There is a window where I can at least see the sky when I'm sitting. Lisa is at her home office, which sometimes includes the parking lot at the local school, in her car, which allows her to get internet service. Yes, these are unusual times.

Citizens have been asked to isolate themselves from friends, family and the rest of the population. Teachers have been asked to stretch their skills and stretch their thinking to way outside and beyond the "box" and bring lessons to students and connect with them virtually. For educators like us who are used to performing our duties in costume in a 19th century schoolhouse or outdoors in the middle of a forest or wide-open spaces it is a new world. We've been working hard to continue to be a presence in the lives of Peel students, their families and teachers. Lisa has written an article about some of the projects the Field Centre staff have been working on since schools closed in mid March. Technology is neither my forte or preferred method of spending time. However, times being what they are I have been forced (yes, forced is the right word) to make technology a greater presence in my life in order to meet work expectations and stay in contact with my family and friends. Words like Zoom, Messenger, Facetime and Twitter have become parts of my vocabulary that have different meanings than they used to. Even I have to admit that it is quite amazing to be able to speak to someone or a group of people and see them and have a conversation when we are all in different locations – even different countries. Technology has definitely brought us closer together in these times when we've been told to stay apart.

Technology has also allowed us to get information about the pandemic instantly. How did people cope in the past without having information at their fingertips? I think of the Spanish Flu and of how different our world is a little over 100 years later. This pandemic and our collective experience is something that will go down in history. Fifty years from now, the children of today's children will be learning about what we experienced, virtually or otherwise – I doubt they'll be reading about it in a book!

But life carries on. The earth revolves around the sun, the seasons change. It is reassuring to see the natural world unfold as it always does. Robins have built a nest under our eaves, perennials are popping up, leaves are starting to flush – despite these last fits of winter we keep getting. The Friends of the Schoolhouse have been staying in touch via email. It's been fun hearing how everyone has been keeping themselves busy and entertained. They have decided to publish the newsletter as they regularly do. More reassurance that there is at least a semblance of "normal" in our lives.

We will get through this together. Just continue to physically distance, wash your hands, find old and new ways to keep your mind active and get outside – the best medicine of all! Use that technology to your advantage – stay connected with friends and loved ones which will surely help us get through these days. Despite my mixed feelings, technology is allowing us to stay in touch with those who the Schoolhouse is meant for, until we can welcome students back to the little red brick building again in person. I suppose anything that facilitates that can't be all bad!

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THE FIELD CENTRES ARE OFFERING SUPPORT FOR LEARNING FROM HOME

In these times when staying safe is the number one priority, it can be challenging to keep a focus on education. We understand that it can be difficult for parents and children alike. The field centres are here to help. We have created a number of resources to help foster learning from home. Perhaps our most comprehensive resource is our website that has activities and lessons for kindergarten to grade 8 that are curriculum based and focus on outdoor learning where possible.

Follow the link below to see what we have in store at [Learning Naturally](#).

Our Instagram and Twitter feeds host a different fun activity each day.

Mindful Monday's are providing activities to help support mental health.

Green Thumb Tuesday's are helping to provide gardening techniques and tips.

Head over to our 'Peel Field Centre's' [YouTube channel](#) to learn how to draw a wildlife creature with **Nature Drawing Wednesday's**.

For **History Mystery Thursday's** we post an artifact from back in time to see if you can figure out what it may be. We'll give the answer and some information on that artifact the following week.








Weekend Wonder Friday's provide a fun challenge to do over the weekend.

Challenges can be answered and shared on your social media with #peelconnected

Our hope is that these resources can guide a focus on learning while having fun in the process.

We are unsure of what the future holds but in the meantime, we hope that many will benefit from what we are working so hard to provide for our students' future.

THE PEEL FIELD CENTRES PRESENT:
DAILY ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT LEARNING FROM HOME
FOLLOW OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES TO JOIN IN THE FUN:

 Instagram	@pdsbfieldcentres @britanniaschoolhouse	 twitter	@peel_fc @PDSBBritanniaSH	
 MINDFULNESS MONDAY'S	 GREEN THUMB CLUB TUESDAYS	 NATURE DRAWING LESSONS WEDNESDAYS	 HISTORY MYSTERY THURSDAYS	 WEEKEND WONDER FRIDAYS

To help stop the spread of COVID-19, while participating in these activities and otherwise, remember to practice physical distancing and stay safe.

**We've Been Here Before
But not for a long time**

Daryl Cook

It's been a hundred years since there was anything like a mass quarantine of the population. Today people talk about the 1918-1920 Spanish Flu pandemic, but there are few alive today who actually experienced it. Like today's coronavirus, it was a worldwide epidemic that killed millions worldwide. People were encouraged to stay home. Theatres closed as well as schools. The quarantine, however, only lasted about three weeks in many places. Historical records recently published by the Mirvish Theatre organization show that the Royal Alexandra Theatre, only a few years old in 1918, was closed for three weeks and soon reopened with full houses.

While researching the one room schools of Peel County for our book *Echoes of the Past*, we found references to local epidemics of various kinds, but interestingly, few references to the Spanish Flu. Two schools that did record it were Finnerty and S. S. 13 Caledon. Finnerty reported "1918: The school was closed for 3 weeks in the fall because of the great world-wide influenza epidemic. It reopened in time for pupils to celebrate the signing of the World War I Armistice". S. S. 13 reported "1919 The school closed for 4 weeks due to a Spanish Flu epidemic." This would suggest that the outbreak occurred at different times in different parts of Peel. Both schools were in the far north of Peel County, Finnerty in the east and S. S. 13 in the west.

It seems that the Spanish Flu did have a positive result since in the following few years there was an increased concern about children's health. Caledon Township was the first one in the county to offer free medical inspection for each pupil in its schools. In May 1922 thirty-three inspections were made at Cataract. Eighteen treatments were recommended including six for poor vision, one for defective nasal breathing, three for anemic appearance and three for decayed teeth. The nurse followed up with home visits and tried to arrange for treatments. Several other schools in Caledon also reported on these inspections.

Spanish Flu was not the first or the last of epidemics noted in school records. Communicable diseases were always of concern. In March 1896 whooping cough had broken out in Port Credit and in 1902 there was typhoid. In 1902 smallpox was visiting Springfield and Cooksville and in January 1903 scarlet fever seemed to have taken possession of the town. In May 1903 there was a serious epidemic of scarlet fever when two children died. In the Spring of 1913 whooping cough reduced attendance from 178 to only 105 at Riverside.

In 1887 Centreville reported an epidemic of diphtheria. In 1911 Dixie was closed because of several cases of scarlet fever. The building had to be disinfected under the supervision of Dr. Sutton. Scarlet fever also struck Creditvale in 1928 and isolation was the only solution. Tullamore reported that at various times the school was closed due to outbreaks of mumps, chicken pox, measles and influenza. The only mention of polio (infantile paralysis) was in a report from Middle Road School in 1937.

(We've Been Here Before... cont'd)

In addition to closing schools and quarantine, other methods were taken to prevent epidemics. In September 1932 children at Creditvale were given inoculation toxoid for diphtheria which had been a such deadly killer in the past. At the Middle Road (Queen Elizabeth) school on January 5, 1949 ratepayers heard a report on the new Ozium process whereby the rooms received a treatment which curtailed the germs. It was revealed that the process seemed to cut down absenteeism and that, along with an insecticide spray during the warmer months, it was doing much to improve the health and general well-being of the pupils.

Organizations such as the Women's Institute and the Home and School Association promoted better conditions in schools to promote the health of the children. An article in the 1926 September issue of the Home and School Federation magazine *The Canadian Child* described at length the common childhood diseases, their symptoms and treatments. They listed common cold, measles, whooping cough, mumps, diphtheria, chicken pox and scarlet fever. The article noted that smallpox wasn't mentioned because "it is assumed that every intelligent mother knows the value of vaccination and has had this done for her children."

Thankfully today we are protected from the diseases that ravaged communities in the past.

Strawberry Social Memories

Ruth Taylor

Eva Ardiel and her friend Beth Morrow originally organized and prepared everything involved in putting on the Strawberry Social. After many years, Jean Robinson took over as Strawberry Social convenor. Shirley Hoad was in charge one year and convinced me to help. I remember juggling strawberries to hand out as we sold tickets in the blitz at the board office. The next year I volunteered to be the convenor along with Karen Simmons. Karen and I continued to work together until the last Strawberry Social. We thought it was time to stop when achy knees prevented us from doing the blitz at the board office, even with a few breaks to rest. Reluctantly, the Friends of the Schoolhouse decided that we should end the tradition of hosting the Strawberry Social. We held our last one in 2018.

The first year I became a convenor was nerve wracking. Although I was given the "Strawberry Social Binder" it was still overwhelming. The atrium in the board office had to be booked. I made lists of "Things to Do" and a timeline of when they should be done. Flyers and tickets had to be printed in May. Contacts had to be made for the suppliers of strawberries and biscuits. We had to arrange with the cafeteria to supply the whipped cream and later the coffee. The custodial staff helped by transporting items from the schoolhouse. People also brought items from home. Some jobs could be delegated but the overall responsibility rested with the convenors. We depended on the executive and arranged for extra volunteers as needed.

Additional supplies needed to be purchased such as coffee, teabags, milk, cream, sugar... and the list went on. Serviettes and cutlery would have been purchased as well. The night before the Strawberry Social we gathered to hull and slice the berries. The cutlery would be wrapped in serviettes and tied with curling ribbon. When it became my job to add the sugar to the berries, I always thought of Marjorie and hoped it was "good enough."

(Strawberry Social Memories cont'd ...)

Once the day of the Strawberry Social arrived, you crossed your fingers that everything would go well. It usually did. For a few years, we had "Job Cards," but after a while most people did the same job and knew exactly what to do. However, over the years there were a few glitches. One year when Jean was in charge, the cafeteria staff in charge of whipping the cream was overwhipping the cream and it was turning to butter. The year our coffee urn did not work, we purchased coffee from the cafeteria and decided that was the easier way to do it. One year we seemed to sense some shaking and subsequently found out there had been a minor earthquake. Occasionally we would find out at the last minute one of our volunteers could not come or even forgot. We excused Lis Braun when she broke her ankle the day before the event. Then jobs had to quickly be shuffled. The last year when the cafeteria mixer was broken, we bought cans of whipped cream since so we could keep our promise of having real whipped cream.

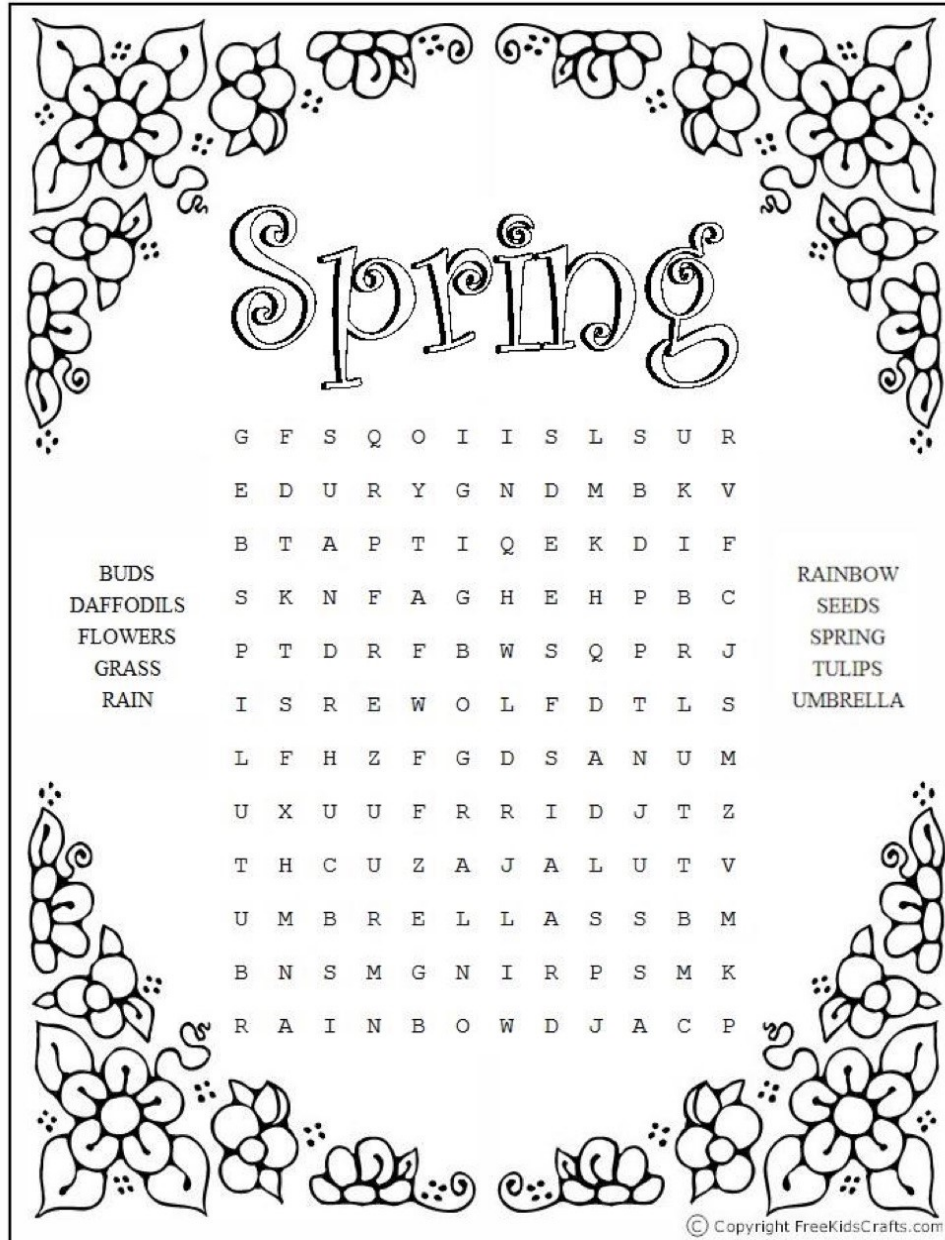
One of the special moments of the Strawberry Social was sitting down relaxing after the hulling. We would sit down with tea or coffee and enjoy some sweets. Another was the setup on the day of the social. People arrived and then the magic happened. Everyone pitched in until things were in place. What a lovely sight with all the fancy cups and saucers and tables decorated with flowers and various strawberry themed items. When the Strawberry Social was over, we could sit down and savour our strawberry shortcake, and breathe a sigh of relief. Then we could cope with the cleanup. The last year Ben and Marjorie Madill came to the social, people clapped when they arrived. It was like greeting royalty, except we did not have to bow or curtesy.

To all the volunteers who helped over the years, I will end by offering my heartfelt "Thank you. Great job."

BACKYARD SCAVENGER HUNT

- ☁ Find 3 kinds of leaves.
- ☁ Find something yellow.
- ☁ Name a bug that is red.
- ☁ Find 2 sticks.
- ☁ Find something that smells good.
- ☁ Name something you see in the sky.
- ☁ Find something that is round.
- ☁ Find something that grows that is green.
- ☁ Find a bird.
- ☁ Find 3 different colored rocks.
- ☁ Find something purple.
- ☁ Find a bug.





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**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:**

www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org

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 “E-mailed 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**