

# The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959 restored 1982

Summer/Early Fall 2011



## 2011-2012 Schedule of Events

Sept. 16,17,18 Brampton Fair  
 Oct. 28 Hallowe'en Family Fun  
 Nov. 17,18 Christmas Sales,  
 Peel Board office atrium  
 Dec. 4 Christmas Open House  
 Feb. 11 Heritage Brampton  
 June 27 Strawberry Social  
 July 1 Canada Day City Hall  
 July 17 Lemonade on the Lawn

## School Visits

### 2010-2011

3496 children spent a day at the schoolhouse this past year. In addition many children visited with their parents on Open Sundays.

### *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](http://www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org)

## *We Had a Delicious Time*

With thanks to Shirley Hoad for photos and captions



To hull with it!



Dennis is tying one on.



Alms for the Poor?



At last the perfect berry!



Who put that broken cup on the floor?



Just wait until you're my age Eva!



You want lime in your tea?!

*From the Chair*  
Shirley Hoad

Another school year is starting with all of its anticipation and hopefulness. The Friends of the Schoolhouse are also preparing for another year of activities and promotion of The Old Britannia Schoolhouse site and program. At our Annual Planning Meeting in July we reviewed our past accomplishments, and were pleased that our small group had been involved in many events at the Schoolhouse and in the community, as well as supporting the program of the Schoolhouse through the conservation of more maps, and the restoration of an old dictionary for the classroom to name only two. The growth of the Victorian garden, Open Sundays each month with activities available for those attending, and our involvement with the potential development of the Farm Property gave us further opportunities to reach the community beyond the students. When we looked at the minutes of the meeting from the previous year and then reviewed each activity, our core committee could not help but be proud of what has been done.

The departure of our schoolmaster, Dennis Patterson, left us feeling happy for him and his family as they moved on to another phase of their lives, and wondering who would follow him. Fortunately the Schoolhouse program will be led by two enthusiastic and knowledgeable leaders, Chris Chapel and Marc Hogan. They have already made their marks on the program and we know they will continue to provide a worthwhile visit for each class that comes to the Schoolhouse.

You may have read in the local paper that the proposal by a business to lease the front section of the Britannia Farm Property for offices, and the resulting revenue which would have come to the School Board for the development of the property and program has been withdrawn. At this time we are not aware of any new developments, but we will keep you posted as we learn the Board's plans.

The events for the next school year are outlined in this newsletter, and we hope that you will be able to attend at least one of them. We are always seeking volunteers to assist us in these endeavours. If you are interested in being more involved in any of our activities, do not hesitate to contact any of our executive.



The garden bloomed bright yellow against the Madill fence



We treated the trustees and senior administration to a light supper



Visitors looked at but didn't try out the Penny Farthing bicycle

## *From the Schoolmistress*

Christine Chapel

As we move through the dog days of this exceptionally sultry summer, it is hard to imagine how the early inhabitants of Britannia bore the trials of hot days without our modern conveniences.

We've struggled to keep our little schoolhouse garden weeded and hydrated (rather unsuccessfully) using a hose and merely turning a tap to have water. We've been cleaning and organizing the office and Schoolhouse with the aid of a fan to keep us cool and with the knowledge that, should it become unbearable, relief is a two minute walk away in the air conditioned Board office. As we go about our work, lamenting the heat and humidity, one can't help but admire the achievements and fortitude of those who came before us and wonder at how families managed long ago.

While our summer's work causes us to reflect on the past, it is all undertaken with an eye cast to the future. The new school year begins in a mere month's time and we are busily preparing for our first student visitors in September.

After Schoolmaster Dennis Patterson left us in March, Marc Hogan and I were assigned to share the role of new Schoolmaster/mistress. We will spend half of our time at the Schoolhouse and the other half at Jack Smythe Field Centre and the G.W. Finlayson Field Centre. We are not newcomers to the Schoolhouse. Both Marc and I were trained to be Dennis' supply person when he was away and greatly enjoyed those days. We have both been full time employees at the Peel Field Centres for a number of years and have environmental, geography and teaching backgrounds. We have a very strong sense of and interest in history, particularly local history, as we were both raised in Mississauga. As naturalists, we hope to continue Dennis' efforts with the gardens (although our agricultural roots go back a generation or two!) and introduce some new aspects of the historic Nature Studies curriculum into the classroom program as well. We feel our assignment at the Schoolhouse really is the best of both worlds. We are able to spend time in a unique role, guiding children through a day in the life of a student from long ago while continuing to explore the natural world and draw connections between past and present.

So, as the Schoolhouse floors are being polished, slates are wiped clean and lessons prepared, we, like any student or teacher, are looking forward to the new school year with excitement, anticipation and a little trepidation. We relish the opportunity to continue our own learning, make new connections in the community and become part of the history of the Schoolhouse. It is a great privilege to join the ranks of school teachers who taught at Britannia School S.S. No. 12, and we will do our very best to do credit to those who came before and to those who still work so tirelessly to ensure that the Schoolhouse remains a living testament to the past.



Children planted sunflower seeds at the May Open Sunday



Our vegetable garden produced a fine crop for visitors to sample

## *Two Early 20th Century Storytellers and Environmentalists*

Daryl Cook

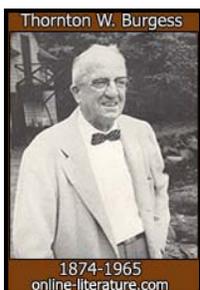
Children love to hear stories. My earliest memories are of wonderful animal tales written by two men, contemporaries who lived in the period 1860—1965. One was an American, the other Canadian though in later life he became a U.S. citizen. Today when I mention these books to people almost no one has heard of them. They are certainly worth reviving.

Ernest Thompson Seton (1860-1946), the Canadian, and Thornton W. Burgess (1874-1965), the American, had much in common. Both were naturalists and early environmentalists. They expressed their ideas about understanding and preserving the natural world through books and articles about animals. Seton during his lifetime published 10,000 articles and 91 books, Burgess published 15,000 articles and 170 books. Each was involved with youth organizations which promoted a healthy outdoor lifestyle. Seton helped Baden Powell form the Boy Scouts and wrote the Boy Scouts Manual. He also founded the Woodcraft Movement. Burgess wrote a three volume book *The Boy Scouts of Woodcraft Camp*. With so many similarities in their careers it would be interesting to know if the two ever met.

**Ernest Thompson Seton** was born in Durham England and came to Canada at age 6. He grew up in Toronto and the Don Valley was his playground. Ernest Thompson Seton Park Trail runs behind the Ontario Science Centre in the area he would have roamed looking for wildlife. Talented in art, he pursued studies in Toronto and France and concentrated on painting wildlife. He moved to his brother's farm in Manitoba and spent his time doing research (counting every feather on the wing of a grackle) and painting. He wrote his first scientific natural history articles in the early 1880's. His first story about a wolf, "Lobo" was published in Scribner's Magazine in the late 1890's to be followed by many others such as "Tito" about a coyote published in 1900. His first book, *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1898), was a collection of these stories, which he illustrated himself.



**Thornton W. Burgess** was born and raised on Cape Cod surrounded by the wildlife of land and sea. As a youth he helped support his family by working for a local farmer. In later years he recalled the wildlife that lived in the fields, pond and stream and wrote stories for his son about the Smiling Pool, the Old Briar Patch, Mother West Wind, the Merry Little Breezes, Peter Rabbit, Jimmy Skunk, Sammy Jay and all the other creatures that inhabited the area. Relatives encouraged him to publish these stories. They were first published in *Good Housekeeping* magazine and later for many years as a column, "Bedtime Stories", in the syndicated New York Tribune newspapers. In 1910 a collection of these stories was published in the book *Old Mother West Wind*. *Mother West Wind's Children* (1911) and *Mother West Wind's Neighbours* (1913) soon followed. His books have been translated into seven languages and are enjoyed world wide. His passion for environmental issues and the protection of wildlife led to a weekly radio show, "The Radio Nature League", that he started in 1924. His lessons about life and the natural world around us are as relevant today as they were in the first half of the last century.



**Interesting websites:** [www.thorntonburgess.org](http://www.thorntonburgess.org) [www.etsetoninstitute.org](http://www.etsetoninstitute.org)

*Here are short excerpts from stories by Burgess and Seton. Each tells a tale about a coyote.*

**The Adventures of Old Man Coyote**  
**Thornton W. Burgess**

A kindly word, a kindly deed,  
Is like the planting of a seed;  
It first sends forth a little root  
And by and by bears splendid fruit.

When Old Man Coyote first came to the Green Meadows to live, he chased Peter Rabbit and gave Peter a terrible fright. After that for some time Peter kept very close to the dear Old Briar-patch, where he always felt perfectly safe. But Peter dearly loves to roam, and Peter is very, very curious, so it wasn't long before he began to grow tired of the Old Briar-patch and long to go abroad on the Green Meadows and in the Green Forest as he always had done, and find out all that was going on among his neighbors.

Of course Peter heard a great deal, for Sammy Jay and Blacky the Crow would stop almost every day to tell him the latest news about Old Man Coyote. They told him all about how Granny Fox had tried to make trouble between him and Prickly Porky the Porcupine and how she had been found out. After they had gone, Peter sat very still for a long time, thinking it over.

"H-m-m," said Peter to himself, "It is very plain to me that Old Man Coyote is smarter than Granny Fox, and that means a great deal to me. Yes, Sir, that means a great deal to me. It means that I have got to watch out for him even sharper than I have to watch out for Granny and Reddy Fox. Dear me, dear me, just as if I didn't have troubles enough as it is!"

**Tito The Story of the Coyote That Learned How**  
**Ernest Thompson Seton**

The golden beams of the early summer sun were leaping from top to top of the wonderful Badland Buttes, when an old Coyote might have been seen trotting homeward along the Garner's Creek Trail with a Rabbit in her jaws to supply her family's breakfast.

Fierce war had for a long time been waged against the Coyote kind by the cattlemen of Billings County. Traps, guns, poison, and Hounds had reduced their number nearly to zero, and the few survivors had learned the bitter need of caution at every step. But the destructive ingenuity of man knew no bounds, and their numbers continued to dwindle.

The old Coyote quit the trail very soon, for nothing that man has made is friendly. She skirted along a low ridge, then across a little hollow where grew a few buffalo bushes and, after a careful sniff at a very stale human trail-scent, she crossed another near ridge on whose sunny side was the home of her brood. Again she cautiously circled, peered about, and sniffed, but, finding no sign of danger, went down to the doorway and uttered a low *woof-woof*. Out of the den, beside a sage bush, there poured a procession of little Coyotes, merrily tumbling over one another. Then, barking little barks and growling little puppy growls, they fell upon the feast that their mother had brought, and gobbled and tussled while she looked on and enjoyed their joy.

*Heigh Ho - Come to the Fair*  
*September 16, 17 and 18*

Eva Ardiel

Friends of the Schoolhouse will be at Brampton Fall Fair again this year. We hope to see you there. As usual we will be in the Livestock Building which is the farthest west building. You can follow your nose to find us! As well as promoting and providing information about The Old Britannia Schoolhouse, we will offer a large number of our items for sale. You don't have to buy,



however, to try out our assortment of old fashioned toys and games. We will be there all day Friday, September 16, Saturday, September 17 and Sunday, September 18.



This year The Region of Peel Agricultural Society welcomes everyone to the 158<sup>th</sup> annual Brampton Fall Fair which makes the fair about the same vintage as Britannia Schoolhouse (1852). The Region of Peel Agricultural Society is a not for profit organization aimed at bridging the gap between rural and urban lifestyles and is dedicated to preserving and operated by volunteers from we are a perfect fit with the

The Fairgrounds is just Lake Road (at Old School something for everyone. So,



maintaining our rural legacy. It is the community. The Friends feel aims of this society and the fair. north of Brampton at 12942 Heart Road) in Caledon. The fair offers come on out! See you there!

*Lemonade on the Lawn*

Daryl Cook

We held our annual appreciation event for members and Peel Board staff in July. Usually people, some with children, bring picnic lunches and enjoy lemonade and cookies on the school especially hot and sunny and we by 12:30. As people finally next door we realized that with was eating inside and coming out ade and cookies. In the end we few more, as in other years. We ryone throughout the year—the members who volunteer at our events and the personnel from the board office who keep the schoolhouse operating effectively and also do a little weeding on their lunch hours.



picnic lunches and enjoy lemon-lawn. This year the weather was wondered why no one had arrived started to come from the offices the hot humid weather everyone for a quick visit and their lemon-had as many visitors, perhaps a do appreciate the support of eve-

*Join Us on Open Sundays in 2011-2012*

- Sept 11      Discovery Day. We will have treasure hunts inside the classroom and outside in the yard. A great way to learn about the history of the schoolhouse and what life was like at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Oct 9        The Autumn Garden. One last tour through the garden before it goes to sleep for the winter. Pick the last of the summer vegetables and learn how to preserve them for the long winter days ahead.
- Nov 13      Remembering the Britannia community during years of war. We will find out what it was like in the village during three periods of war – 1812, the Boer War and World War I.
- Dec 11      Christmases Past. How did people celebrate the Christmas season long ago? We will give you ideas about games to play, ornaments to make, food to cook and toys Santa would bring.
- Jan 8        Story Time. Spend a quiet winter afternoon reading and listening to stories. A collection of children's story books will be available for parents to read to children. A volunteer will be there to read to a group of children and parents.
- Feb 12      Valentine's Day. See the display of old valentine cards. Make a card for your favourite person.
- Mar 11      Family Games Day. We will get out all the old traditional games and toys for you to enjoy. Challenge family and friends to a game of Snakes and Ladders or Checkers. Try your hand at skittles
- April 8      Making Music. We have a collection of instruments that anyone can learn to play: harmonica, flute, jaws harp. Volunteers will demonstrate. Strike up a rhythm band with household items like pot lids and spoons. Some of the instruments will be available to purchase.
- May 13      Mothers' Day. Make mom a little corsage and a card to go with it then serve her tea and cookies.
- June 10     Fathers' Day. Challenge dad to a game of horseshoes and let him win. Get him to try walking on stilts and don't laugh. His reward – juice and cookies.
- July 8        Garden Tour. Our gardens are in full bloom with roses, delphiniums, lupins and many native wildflowers. Wander through the garden and enjoy tea in the shade.
- Aug 12      Summer Games. Lawn games were popular at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the weather was too hot for strenuous activity. Come out and enjoy making bubbles, playing horseshoes, graces and walking on stilts.

## **Halloween Family Fun**

**Friday, October 28, 2011**

**5:30-8:30 pm**

**Admission \$5.00**

**(Accompanying adults free)**

**The Old Britannia Schoolhouse**

**5576 Hurontario Street**

**PARKING: H.J.A. Brown Education Centre.**

**Entry is from Matheson Blvd. West**

**ENTRY TO ACTIVITIES:**

**Matheson Road entrance to Peel District  
School Board**

### **Costume Prizes, Door Prizes**

**Visit the Haunted Schoolhouse and Eerie Acres Schoolyard**

**Talk to Wartzilla, Our Famous Fortune Teller**

**Toast Marshmallows, Bob for Apples,**

**Take Part in Haystack Candy Scrambles**

**Guess the Number of Corn Kernels and Sunflower Seeds**

**Get a Tattoo, Make a Halloween Mask or Greeting Card**

**Put Your Hands in Beastly Buckets and a Mystery Box**

**Play Icey Toes and Halloween Hockey**

**Play Halloween Tic Tac Toe, Bingo, and Sudoku**

**Go Bug Fishing, Feed Ghostie, Play Kitty Catch a Ball**

**Play Penny Toss, Scarecrow Toss, and Pumpkin Toss**

**Pin the Stem on the Pumpkin and Give Warty Witch a Gum Wart**

**Play Our Marbles and Skittles Games**

**Go Ghost Bowling and Enter the Eyeball on a Spoon Race**

**NOTE: Each child will receive a bag of candy when he or she leaves.**

### *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](mailto: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.

**Don't forget to visit us *at*  
[www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org](http://www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org)**