

The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959
restored 1982

Summer/Early Fall 2023



2023—2024 Schedule of Events

No events are planned at this time.

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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Preparing for School, Then and Now

Daryl Cook

One hundred years ago children collected things they would need when school began. Today's children do this too, but the items they collect are very different.

Late 19th and early 20th century



A pencil case



A slate and slate pencil



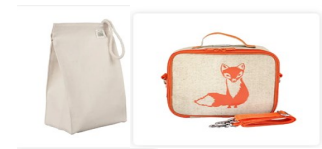
A basket or tin bucket to hold lunch



21st Century



A computer



cloth bag or lunch box



Straps to hold books together



A backpack

Some differences are obvious. The computer has replaced the slate. Both are expensive items. One of the slates displayed in the schoolhouse is very small because the child kept breaking it and since the family couldn't afford to buy another, the father kept trimming the largest broken piece into a rectangle. Each time the slate got broken it got smaller and smaller. Backpacks have replaced the straps and are more convenient for carrying any books and the laptop. One change has been to return to the early years of reusing lunch containers rather than throwing everything away. Baskets and pails for carrying lunch have been replaced by cotton bags, reusable containers and paper bags. What hasn't changed is the excitement of anticipating the first day of school.

Summer/Early Fall 2023

From the Chair

Ruth Taylor

As September approaches, Friends are making plans for their monthly meeting. We did not hold our Annual Planning Meeting, as plans for the Schoolhouse are still evolving. We did, however, hold a social gathering at the Mandarin. You will hear more about this event in a separate article. We will miss having Schoolmistress Chapel at the Schoolhouse. We wish her well in future endeavors, and hope that she can attend some of our meetings, as she will always be a "Friend."

On a personal note, our daughter arranged for Dennis and me to stay with Jessica, Will (9) and Teresa (6) at Elmhirst Inn on Rice Lake. Teresa referred to it as "camping with Grandma and Grandpa." Jessica explained that staying in an air-conditioned cabin is not camping. It's the closest we will get to camping these days. Jessica took the children on adventures, a scavenger hunt with Will and tubing with Teresa. We were quite content watching the lake from our cabin. We did manage to make it to the pool.

Over the last few years, some grapevines have appeared on our property. Since attempting to do some clearing and pruning, I have a new hobby – making grapevine wreathes, five and counting. To paraphrase a familiar saying, when life gives you grapevines, make grapevine wreathes.

Thank you to Katharine Moon-Craney, who has served as co-editor for several years. As she is stepping away from this role, we need a new co-editor to work with Daryl Cook. If any of our members would be willing to help with the newsletter or if you have any questions, PLEASE contact Daryl. You can find her contact information on the front of the newsletter.

Some of our members are channeling their creativity into newsletter articles. We welcome contributions from members sharing school memories, seasonal recipes, travel adventures or hobbies. Everybody has stories to share. I have enjoyed sharing my stories and recipes and hope that others will take the same opportunity.

Peach Custard Pie

Ruth Taylor

4 or 5 large peaches peeled and sliced
pinch of salt
¼ tsp almond extract
1 tsp vanilla
3 eggs

1 cup white sugar
2 tbsp flour
2 tbsp butter
2 tbsp tapioca

Layer peach slices in pie crust. Combine all other ingredients and pour over peaches. Bake at 400 degrees for about 40 minutes.

This recipe is easy to make because you can buy the pie crust. If the crust won't hold all the filling, bake some of the peach slices and filling in a separate Pyrex or oven proof dish.



Summer/Early Fall 2023

From the Schoolmistress Lisa Cafaro

As the beginning of the 2023 / 2024 school year draws near there is much to reflect on. Last year we couldn't see students at the schoolhouse as we focused on revamping the programming in hopes of being able to move forward. This year it looks like that situation will not change and it is a sad time for the field centre staff. In late July we received the awful news that because of budget cuts, 3 of our full-time field centre staff were being let go. We are still in mourning with the news and are feeling a little unsteady as we prepare for the school year ahead without them.

It is with sadness that we said goodbye to Christine Chapel, Billie Jo Ried, and Kimberley Baxter. All who have been with us for over a decade and who have brought so much light and learning to the field centres, the staff who worked with them and to the students of Peel. They were each amazing assets with so much to offer and are wonderful people.

I would like to take a moment to recognize the incredible work that Christine Chapel did not just at the field centres but also at the Old Britannia Schoolhouse. She has a wealth of knowledge and her passion for history and curriculum helped to form much of the schoolhouse programming. She is brilliant, kind, funny, and was an outstanding schoolmistress. Every student who spent time with her knew it too. Chris was integral in researching how we can move in a direction that would be culturally appropriate and ways that we could revamp our programming to keep up with the current climate we are in. Her hard work will not go untouched.

I had the great fortune to work alongside and learn from someone I consider to be a friend first, a mentor second and a co-worker third. After wiping away many tears with the loss of her position I will hold the good times we had working together close. I know when I hear certain birds or see a cool rock or cloud, it will quickly bring Chris to mind.

As for the schoolhouse, we are unsure of what the future holds. We are now on a very tight staff at the other field centre sites which would make it challenging to have a full-time staff at the schoolhouse. We also await word from the board to see what direction they hold for our beloved schoolhouse too.

We will keep you updated as things progress. Until then, I hope all students have had a restful summer and are excited to begin the new school year ahead.



The last students to attend the Britannia Schoolhouse before it closed in 1959. The teacher was Frances Bailey.

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Farewell To Chris

Shirley hoad

Early in July some of the Friends of the Old Britannia Schoolhouse gathered at the Mandarin Restaurant to mark the end of another year of our organization. Although there was little to celebrate as the schoolhouse remains closed, we were glad to recognize Chritine Chapel for her work with the Schoolhouse. After 16 years with the Peel Board, working with the Field Centres and mainly The Old Britannia Schoolhouse, Chris was released by the Peel District School Board due to budget cut along with two other members of the Field Centre Staff.

Her dedication to these valued sites for the students and her ability to convey their importance and value to them always brought positive comments from students, parents and former students who recalled the wonderful day they had spent at the schoolhouse.

She and the Field Centre team developed new ideas and introduced many modern technologies to make the students' experiences meaningful and enjoyable.

In addition to her teaching responsibilities Chris became active in the organization called SLATE (So Let's All Talk Education). It is made up of people interested in and involved with the history of education in Ontario, primarily in one room schoolhouses. Chris served as chair of this group for several years.

The Friends of the Schoolhouse were pleased to present Chris with some reminders of her days with us. A wall hanging made by Karen Simmons was presented as well as a numbered print of Mark Rosser's painting of *Afternoon Reflections*. Chris assured us that she will keep in touch with The Friends and we consider her an honorary member.



Thank You Katharine

Katharine Moon-Craney had been a co-editor of our Britannia Schoolhouse Friends newsletter since 2008. She has produced the Fall and Spring issues each year, always including something new and interesting. The newsletter had been mainly an opportunity to report to the membership on the activities and events at the schoolhouse. When Katharine started as co-editor, she brought new ideas and suggestions for making the newsletter more interesting and informative. The "Look" changed with a different more readable font. Along with information about the schoolhouse and Friends' activities were articles about food and crafts. We all enjoyed the recipes that appeared in many of the issues. Some were Katharine's and some were from members who were encouraged to submit their own recipes.

Katharine was an invaluable help with all four yearly issues. She proof read and offered suggestions to her co-editor for the Winter and Summer/Early Fall issues. Her eagle eye in finding errors was greatly appreciated.

She has decided to hand over her co-editing tasks to someone else. Thank you, Katharine, for your help and commitment to the Friends of the Schoolhouse over the past fifteen years.

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Cursive Writing is Back

Ruth Taylor

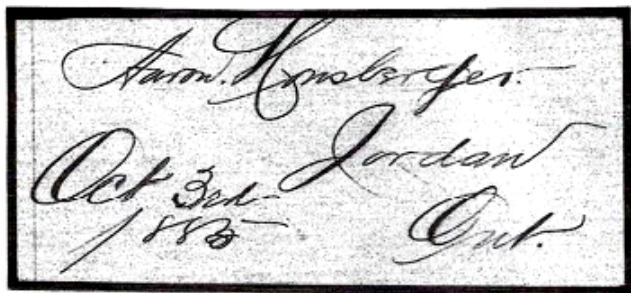
Cursive writing has been an option in the Ontario curriculum since 2006. It was traditionally taught in Grade Three. Now, in the province's "Back to Basics" approach, handwriting will once again be introduced in Grade Three. Students who are not familiar with handwriting will have difficulty reading it.

Many of us have continued to sign our names on letters and cards, and on documents such as driver's licences, cheques, wills, and power of attorneys, and for some purchases. With the widespread use of computers and the acceptance of "electronic signatures," the handwritten signature feels like a quaint throwback for some people.

At one time, good penmanship was valued, and presentation was important. It was often highly embellished. In my grandfather's account books from the late 1800's and early 1900's, he practiced his signature over and over. It almost looked like a work of art. The real value in handwriting is that it makes a connection to the brain, letting it retrieve information later. When typing on a computer you are not developing the neural connectivity.

Graphologist Elaine Charal considers handwriting "as being a paper mirror of our personality." (Toronto Star, January 7, 2023) She feels children were empowered by learning to write their name and adding some individual touches. In years past, children were excited to learn to write as it was part of growing up. I remember being excited to use a fountain pen in Grade Five.

When our grandson was in Grade Three last year, handwriting sheets were given out as homework. I don't know if any teaching was involved, other than that provided at home by his mother, a teacher. Since he had learned to write, I thought it was time to write, not print, on his birthday card this year. He could not read the writing. One issue was that he did not recognize the capital W looking like double V rather than like double U. Apparently, students were not given the opportunity to read handwriting. Cursive writing is back, but will it make a comeback?



This was my grandfather's signature." My grandfather died before any of his nine grandchildren were born. I think he would be amazed at how much we have learned about his life.

Ruth Taylor

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The Royal Bees

Margaret Storey



Honey! Mmmmm- who doesn't enjoy a slice of toast spread with butter and honey? Or perhaps honey on a crumpet is a favourite with the honey dripping down into the many pores. As I enjoyed some honey on toast last week I remembered reading an article last fall about the beehives at the Royal residences.

There are five beehives at Buckingham Palace. They are located on the island in the middle of the lake behind the Palace! The late Queen Elizabeth was very proud of the honey made by the bees at Buckingham Palace. She and Prince Philip paid an official visit to Pope Francis at the Vatican in April 2004. Amongst the gifts presented to the Pontiff was a jar of honey. Prince Philip proudly told the Pope that the honey was from Buckingham Palace. The Queen added that "it is from my garden".

There are two beehives in the gardens at Clarence House. This was the former home of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. Since 2003 Clarence House has been one of the London homes of King Charles and Queen Camilla. It is known that King Charles enjoys a teaspoon of honey in his tea. The two hives here are home to over 90,000 bees and produce about 40 pounds of honey each year.

These Royal bees produce enough honey each year for the personal use by the Royal family as well as by the chefs when cooking and baking for guests. The honey is sometimes used as a filling for chocolates, biscuits such as honey Madelines or in honey and cream sponge cakes. Queen Camilla has bees in beehives at her private home in Wiltshire. This honey is bottled and sold at Fortnum and Mason to raise money for various charities.



At Balmoral Castle in Scotland and Highgrove House in Gloucestershire many bee friendly flowers have been planted in the gardens to encourage wild bees. In the Sandringham estate in Norfolk a number of beehives are situated in gardens which include lavender, heather and even lime trees.

When Queen Elizabeth died last September the Royal Beekeeper, Mr. John Chapple, went to Buckingham Palace and Clarence House to tell the bees that their mistress had died and that their new master was King Charles. He also tied black ribbons onto the hives. This ritual actually stems from an old superstition that not telling the bees of their owner's death might mean the bees would not produce honey and the colony might die. This is an old tradition in Europe as well as in some places in the United States where bees are told about important events in the beekeeper's household such as births, marriages or deaths. There have been many poems written about this tradition. It was also mentioned in the TV series, *Midsomer Murders* as well as in the ninth book of the *Outlander* series by author, Diana Gabaldon, titled 'Go Tell The Bees That I Am Gone'.



A painting by Charles Napier Hemy in 1895 shows a widow in her garden with her son telling the bees that there had been a death in the family!

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NEWSLETTER CO-EDITOR NEEDED

We are looking for someone to volunteer as co-editor of the Friends of the Schoolhouse newsletter. This involves responsibility for producing two newsletters a year.

Tasks include:

1. Obtaining content such as articles, reports, information about coming events
2. Writing
3. Creating the newsletter using Publisher software
4. Proofreading
5. Producing the newsletter in PDF format for emailing and printing

The two co-editors work together on all four issues, each taking responsibility for two issues a year.

If interested contact
Daryl Cook
dlcook@rogers.com

The Old Britannia Schoolhouse as Ben Madill remembered it



This painting was a co-operative effort between Daryl and Ben. Ben provided the descriptive information and Daryl did the painting. The original was given to Ben and a copy hangs in the schoolhouse.

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**

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Our Open Sundays

Our Open Sundays have been cancelled until further notice.
Here are some activities you can do at home instead. They are all on our website.

DATE	For activities go to www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org and look at Fun and Games.
Sept	Back to School Activity Read a Story, Write a Story
Oct	Autumn Leaves Activity: How to press Leaves
Nov	Do Some Cooking Activity: Family Recipes
Dec	Make a Christmas Tree Ornament Activity;y: Victorian Fan ornament
Jan	.Indoor Fun Activity: Make Your Own Button Buzzer ..
Feb	Valentine's Day Activity; Make a Valentine for a Special Person
Mar	Be Creative Activity: Draw What You See
April	Get Ready to Garden Activity: Think Gardening
May	Mothers Day Activity: Decorate a Pot and Fill It With a Plant for Mother
June	Family Games Day Activity: Victorian Summer Games for Children