



Winter 2023



Coming Events

No events are being held during the COVID 19 crisis

School Visits

No students are currently able to visit the schoolhouse

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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A Springtime Treat

Marg Carson

Spring is on the way. Warmer days (above 4 C) and cold nights (below freezing) will help to bring in the first harvested crop of the season - maple syrup.

My great uncle had a huge cast iron kettle on his farm. He would take his team of horses out to his sugar bush to collect the sweet sap and then boil it up in the kettle to make maple syrup.

Reducing the sap down to syrup takes a lot of time and a lot of sap. Five gallons of sap will produce about 475 ml of syrup. In Ontario about 4,000,000 + litres of syrup are produced each year.

Maple syrup can range in colour and taste. Light golden syrup has a delicate taste while the darker syrups have a more robust flavor.

There are many ways to use this sweet treat besides pouring it on pancakes. It can be used in glazes, sauces, pies, cookies, cakes, and drinks.

My grandmother had a recipe for maple syrup tarts. I recently tried making them. They were delicious!

So let's celebrate the coming of Spring by enjoying this sweet liquid gold.

Nana's Maple Syrup Tarts

1 cup of maple syrup (dark)
2 tbsp. of flour
1 egg (well beaten)
1 tbsp. of butter - melted
1tsp. of vanilla
unbaked tart shells (10 -12)

1. Preheat oven 375' F
2. In a bowl beat egg
3. Whisk in syrup, flour, butter, & vanilla
4. Fill tart shells and bake for 20 - 25 min. or until tarts are golden
5. Allow to cool

Variation - add chopped walnuts

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From the Chair

Ruth Taylor

Friends last met at the Schoolhouse in October. At present classes are not coming to the Schoolhouse and we are not hosting Open Sundays. We declined the invitation to take part in the heritage event in February at Bramalea City Centre. As our members mature, we find it harder to take part in outside events.

We did have a small informal social event at Daryl Cook's in December. We were able to keep up one tradition we usually had at the Schoolhouse. We decorated a Christmas tree, although it was an artificial one, and much smaller than what we would normally have had at the Schoolhouse. We even had our traditional chili dinner after the decorating.

We do hope to meet in April when we come out of hibernation. Wiarion Willie promised us an early spring, although he does not seem to be keeping his promise. We are keeping in touch with our members through our newsletter.

Talk About Inflation!

Ruth Taylor

My grandfather, Aaron Honsberger, kept very detailed account books outlining earnings and expenses on the farm in Jordan Station. Many of his account books were kept in the roll-top desk that we inherited. I have chosen to share some of his records from 1923.

- January 3: Paid Ina (for) 3 lbs lard
- January 24: Bot (sic) 2 furrow plow for \$17.00 on note for 9 mos
- February 15: (Received) For 4 Bus(hels) corn \$1.75
- March 12: Telephone rent \$1.54
- March 17: Horseshoeing \$2.15
- April 11: Suit – Eaton's \$15.45
- April 18: Paid for Dr. Addy \$4.00
- May 11: Received from Melvin for 500 vines (grapes) \$25.00
- May 11: Paid to church \$25.00
- June 1: For 6 Bus(hels) potatoes (sold) \$5.40
- June 12: Ball binder twine 95 (cents)
- June 20: Paid Burness (my dad) \$10.00

I added some things in brackets for clarification.

From the Schoolmistress

Christine Chapel

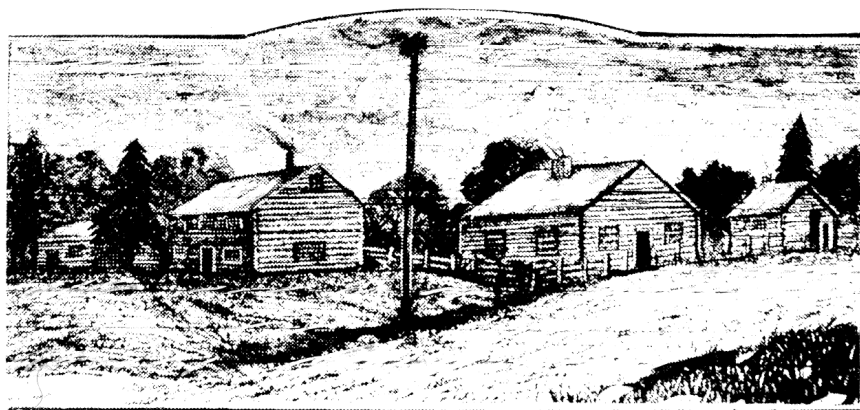
Snowy greetings from the Schoolhouse! As I write this, Britannia Schoolhouse programming is still on hold.

As some of you may be aware, the Schoolhouse has not been hosting field trips this year in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and the Ministry report on anti-Black racism within the Peel District School Board. Progress has been made though in that the Schoolhouse team is now working with the Social Studies team at the Board to create, or rather revise, our programs to be more inclusive. Specifically, we are currently working on programming for grade 8 students. The inquiry based program which we wrote several



years ago is our focus now. This involves students using primary documents to investigate an interesting aspect of Peel history and education. In reviewing the program, we know there are gaps. Peel has an incredibly diverse history. We have to dig deeper to include stories of those whose stories typically were not heard - specifically Indigenous and Black people. Not only will these stories give a more truthful and realistic picture of life in 19th century Peel but all students, we hope, will be able to relate to the history of where they live because they see themselves in these stories. It is our job, our duty really, to insure that all students have a positive experience when they visit any of the Peel Field Centres, including the Schoolhouse. We will do the hard work and our due diligence towards meeting this goal.

We will continue to update you on our progress and welcome any questions or insights.



Mississauga of the Credit had their own school in their village on land which is now the site of the Mississauga Golf Club.

Life in Early Britannia

Shirley Hoad

It was dark and cold when Edith awoke that morning in February 1893 in her room in the attic of the farmhouse. She had lived and worked here since the day she arrived to work as a servant for the family at the Might farm north of the small village of Britannia. Born in England in 1874, Edith became a ward of Barnardo House in London on February 10, 1882 after the death of her parents. She was sent to a country home to learn the skills needed to be a housekeeper. Within a year she emigrated with 15 other girls and a matron by ship to Canada, arriving on July 21, 1883, at the age of 9. Following several placements in Toronto, cleaning offices, and farms in the area, she was returned to the local Barnardo Office in Peterborough, Ontario.

A request from Mr. Might for a helper for his wife and children brought Edith to their farm. It was later purchased by Mr. Ben Madill for his family and now there is little that remains. In modern Mississauga, the farm would have been located on the north-west corner of Hurontario St, and the 401 Highway. But back to February, 1893..... Edith quickly dressed in her warmest clothes and threw a shawl over her shoulders as she prepared for her day. Although she could hear the family beginning to stir, she wanted to start the fire in the kitchen stove to cook a hot breakfast for the Might family. But what is Edith going to do for the rest of her day? There was always washing, ironing, cleaning, mending and sewing, and preparing meals for the family and anyone else working at the farm. Seasonally there would always be outdoor chores in the garden. But one of the tasks that Edith had was to walk the Might Children down Hurontario Street to The Old Britannia Schoolhouse.

This was no small task as the distance from the farm to the school is at least a mile and Edith walked the children there, returned to the farm for the day and then walked back to pick them up and return to the farm in the late afternoon. Imagine, if you will, Hurontario Street is a dirt road, probably two lanes wide as it was the main route from Port Credit, through Cooksville to Brampton and beyond to Lake Huron.

Horse drawn wagons and carriages travelled along frozen ruts in the winter and mud "up to the axles" when it rained, throwing snow, ice, mud or dust into the path of any pedestrians. As the children grew, they probably didn't need to be escorted but there were always events at The Schoolhouse which the families and hopefully Edith would attend. Edith remained at the Might Farm from the time of her arrival in October, 1893 until December 1908. At the age of 24 she left the farm and was married to William Robbins, a local handyman from Streetsville, at the Streetsville Methodist Church on December 23, 1908. They lived in Streetsville over a store near Queen and Thomas Streets, and had two children there before they moved to Toronto. How do I know all of this? My mother, Edna, was the daughter of Edith and William Robbins, and Edith is my grandmother. Although I never had an opportunity to learn of her life before she passed away in 1958, I have since discovered the story and sorely wish that I had been able to talk to her about her early life.



Admission photo, Barnardo House, 1882



Edith, 1908



Edith and William, Toronto

Canadian Fireworks

Margaret Storey



Victoria Day will be here before we know it!! How many remember chanting as a child, "The 24th of May is the Queen's birthday, if we don't get a holiday we'll all run away"? Victoria Day has been celebrated in Canada since 1845, even before Confederation. We are the only country that commemorates Queen Victoria with an official holiday. This long weekend is seen by many as the unofficial beginning of the upcoming summer season.

Of course, Victoria Day means fireworks! Many communities have spectacular displays with colourful rockets, Catherine Wheels and Roman candles. I remember that my dad and other dads on our street bought boxes of fireworks. All the neighbours gathered for a great street celebration. But what we enjoyed as children were our own handheld sparklers. I still enjoy a sparkler today, trying to write my name in the air before it goes out! The finale was always the Burning Schoolhouse! How we shouted and cheered when the flames exploded out of the roof!! Not sure why as we all loved going to school.

The Burning Schoolhouse is a Canadian specialty, devised in the 1930s by Hands Fireworks Inc. founded in 1873. Mr. William T. Hand, a celebrated pyrotechnic artist, came to Canada from Hereford, England in 1873. He set up a fireworks manufacturing company in Thorold that year.

On the evening of May 25, 1874 in St. Catherines, Professor Hand put on a marvellous fireworks show in Montebello Garden. This was the first fireworks display in Canada and celebrated Queen Victoria's 54th birthday. The admission to this event was 25 cents and people came from miles around by foot or in carriages. It was a great success. The following day the newspapers praised this special event. I can just imagine the excitement of everyone, never having seen anything like this before!

The factory has been in many locations in southern Ontario over the years. In 2016 Lidu International, a Chinese Fireworks manufacturer, purchased Hands Fireworks outright to compete with a growing fireworks market. Hands International Incorporated operating as Hands Fireworks is based out of Toronto with warehouses and distribution locations in Toledo and Frankville, Ontario.

As far as I can find out the Hands Fireworks Museum in Prescott is still there! They had a manufacturing factory and store there up until 2016. What a history they have had for over 150 years!! A truly Canadian company!

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Karen's Dollhouse

Karen Simmons



A few months ago, I mentioned my dollhouse when I wrote about the mini quilts that I had made for the beds in it. The dollhouse has its own story, that I am happy to tell.

My Father made the little house for me when I was about 6 years old. It has eight rooms, four on each side, which I will detail later. Originally the house had a wooden roof, and large wooden doors on the sides which opened to allow access to the interior. A string of 8 Christmas tree lights, one bulb in each room, provided lighting. The plastic furnishings were pink and blue for the children's room. And brown and white for everywhere else. By the time my own children were grown most of the furniture was often mended or broken beyond repair.

I decided a refurbishing was needed. This soon became a favourite hobby. If you have been following the TV series "Best in Miniature" you might understand how one could get absorbed in working with miniatures. I soon learned that there are several options available to furnish a dollhouse. Items that are manufactured by someone else are detailed and beautiful but tend to be expensive. I did acquire some, such as the bathroom fixtures and most of the small items. Also available are kits to build your own furniture. I spent many hours assembling most of the furniture, which involved cutting, glue and wood stain. These pieces have drawers and doors that open, and tiny accents such as metal hinges and door handles. Some even involved upholstery.

Many of the accessories were gifts that turned up in my Christmas stocking. My daughter Pamela went to work to make petit point pillows, pictures, chair seats, and even a rug. I often found some little item to bring home from a trip, such as a little jug from Greece, a violin from Vienna, and a cuckoo clock from Switzerland.

Then Dad got involved again. He decided that the house itself needed updating. He took it off to his workshop and did a remarkable renovation. He replaced the wooden side doors with plexiglass, rewired the house with a real dollhouse electrical system, added a "front yard" with turf, and put the whole structure on a swivel base. The final touch was a new roof. He cut a block of cedar into hundreds of pieces, so now the house has a cedar shake shingled roof, with a TV aerial on top. However there is no television set inside!

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The house is pictured here decorated for Christmas, with snow on the front yard, evergreen trees, and winter toys. The living room also has a Christmas tree with presents underneath. The summer scene has garden furniture, flower boxes, a bicycle built for two and a croquet set. Another picture shows a few of the pieces that I particularly like from inside the house. The playpen and potty chair are two of the original pieces. (Remember when toddlers played in their playpens while mother got her housework done?) There is a toolbox and tools, a toothbrush and toothpaste, and a real oil painting. On the tea wagon is a genuine Delft tea set.

I'll mention a few things about each room.



The bathroom fixtures are ceramic, with old fashioned pull the chain toilet and claw footed tub. The laundry hamper is an original piece. The upstairs hall is also a sewing room. It has a sewing machine, ironing board and iron, a dressmaker's form, measuring tape, pattern and scissors.

The downstairs hall with its grandfather clock and stand for hats, canes and umbrellas also has a tiny mouse and mousetrap under the stairs.

The kitchen has many food items, cans, boxes, pots and frying pans, even bottles of Coke in the fridge. I decided that the kitchen

needs to be redecorated to get rid of the seventies décor. It will have new flooring and countertop and stainless steel appliances.

The children's room has some child sized chairs and a desk. A rocking horse, and even a dollhouse!

The main bedroom with its canopy bed has a warming pan and a chamber pot under the bed, as well as a dresser set with brush, comb, mirror, and cosmetic items.

The dining room extras include tiny salt and pepper shakers and sterling silver cutlery. The living room has its original fireplace, with an electric fire added. A Royal Doulton figurine sits on a table. Mother is holding her knitting, which was crafted by Pam with two straight pins and a length of red thread. That's about it!



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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.

Your membership for 2023

**Please note that membership fees will not be collected for 2023.
The COVID 19 pandemic has meant cancelation of all schoolhouse events until further notice.**

We are continuing to publish our quarterly newsletter and maintain the monthly Current News page on our website in order to stay in touch with our members.

Donations to support the schoolhouse are always welcome.

Membership forms can be downloaded from our website:

www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org

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**