



Some Figures and Facts:

2001 has started well with activities at the schoolhouse:

Sales of Ben Madill's book has topped the **1000** mark. The profit from these sales has reached **\$5000**, **10** Friends of the Schoolhouse attended the S.L.A.T. E. Conference in Selkirk, again making ours the largest contingent present; it looks as if we will surpass the **3000** hours of volunteer work that was recorded in 2000; **692** students visited the schoolhouse during February and March.



This newsletter is published by the *Friends of the Schoolhouse* every Fall, Winter and Spring, in an effort to inform its membership, and the teachers of the Peel District School Board of its activities and events.

Editor: Brian Holstein
briahols@yahoo.com



Queen Victoria Fête Expands its Activities

Queen Victoria will again be celebrating her birthday (this year she is 182) at The Old Britannia Schoolhouse on Saturday, May 26.

Festivities are scheduled to commence at 11:00 a.m., and will include role playing and spelling bees inside the schoolroom, a mid-way of turn-of-the-century games (if indeed milking a cow was considered a game!), horseshoes, ice cream making, a sales tent and a food booth.



As well, guests, both young and old, can try their skills with stilts, hoops, skipping and old-fashioned races. A pick-up game of baseball will be played at 11:00 a.m.

Former Britannia pupil Ben Madill will again be assisting visitors to make their own skipping ropes with one of his many rope-making contraptions, some of which are his own inventions.

Hayrides will again operate from the school board parking lot, taking passengers on a tour through the Britannia Farm to the sugar bush at the rear of the property. A smaller ride will be offered by John Zwicker as he uses his antique tractor to convey people around the schoolyard.

While older children and adults may try their skills using a cross-cut saw or playing horseshoes, tots will be able to make giant bubbles at a special area reserved for them!

Queen Victoria, accompanied by her Lady in Waiting and her Aide de Camp, will arrive in time to be entertained by schoolchildren during a special programme commencing at 1:30 p.m.

The children will sing and recite Victorian songs and verse, while others will perform a traditional Maypole Dance for Her Highness.



Following her cutting of the birthday cake, the queen will invite the audience to take tea with her in the H.J.A. Brown Atrium, and to view the work of the artisans who will be demonstrating their crafts throughout the day. Similarly, tea and refreshments will be served in the Atrium from shortly after 11:00 a.m.

Her Majesty will be asking some of her guests to join her for tea. Dress Victorian, or simply wear a Victorian hat. You may catch the queen's attention.

An original porcelain Victoria doll, dressed as the young queen by Springfield Farm Studio, is being raffled, and the draw will be made later in the day at the fête. Tickets will be available at the Fête, or from any of the Friends executive. The value of the costumed doll is estimated to be \$200.00.

The organizers are still in need of people who are willing to give part of their day as volunteer help on May 26. If you are available for the day or for a few hours, please phone Kay Robbins at 905 890 4506.

Whether as a volunteer or a visitor, make sure that you come to The Old Britannia Schoolhouse on May 26. Along with your camera, bring your children or grand-kids. Let them experience the fun that was had in yesteryear.

Executive Committee News

Friends of The Schoolhouse have had a very busy winter planning the activities for this spring and beyond. At the Annual Awards Night Dinner on Heritage Day, February 19, 2001, The Friends of The Schoolhouse Association was given a Members' Choice Award from the Mississauga Heritage Foundation for the work we do in protecting, preserving and promoting The Old Britannia Schoolhouse and its programme for the children of Peel. As members and volunteers of "Friends", I hope that you will take pride in this accomplishment, too. It was a fitting climax to the Heritage Week Celebrations. Thanks to the many people who volunteered their time, the Friends of The Schoolhouse Heritage Display at Cityside, Square One was a huge success. George Christian, Joan Reid and Daryl Cook did an outstanding job of collating and displaying much information about former teachers and students of The Old Britannia Schoolhouse and organizing the display for Heritage Week. It was a very interesting few days listening to the wonderful storytelling of the various guests. Eva and our two student volunteers Noora and Dahlia modelled the vintage clothes during the Fashion Show on Saturday. Thanks also to Kay Robbins for contacting volunteers for the Heritage Showcase and to all who participated in this event and a special thanks to George, Joan and Daryl.

We now have a new school hand bell thanks to the kind donation of Helen Graham Savage and her husband. We are so fortunate to have "Friends" such as these who help to augment our growing number of artifacts at The Schoolhouse. Many Thanks!

At The Schoolhouse in early April, Ian Bell provided a fun filled afternoon of stories and songs about Ontario's History. He is always a delight and those in attendance at this event will never think of Canadian History as a dull subject or in quite the same light again.

Ten members of the Executive Committee attended the SLATE Conference in Selkirk on April 9th. It is heartening to learn of so many facilities that offer children and adults an opportunity to learn more about the past by participating in a day at school long ago. Donald Macdonald, nephew of William Pugsley Macdonald the famous Canadian poet, presented a video about his illustrious ancestor whom many of you may have heard recite his poems at your high school, college or university. The old schoolhouse in Selkirk, which Macdonald attended and is now a museum in his honour, is a wonderful place to visit if you are in the Port Dover area in southern Ontario this summer. Friends of The Schoolhouse will be hosting the 2002 SLATE Conference, April 15th at The Schoolhouse and the HJA Brown Centre. If you would like to help in any way with this Conference please contact Kay Robbins or Jean Robinson.



The Year 2002 will be a very significant milestone in the history of The Old Britannia Schoolhouse. It marks the 150th year since the building was constructed; the twentieth year since the restoration of the Schoolhouse and the instigation of the present program of class visits; and the tenth anniversary of Friends of The Schoolhouse. Naturally we are planning a number of events to commemorate this Year of Celebration of which you will hear later. We need your help in contacting former pupils of S.S.#12 (Britannia Schoolhouse) for a School Reunion we will be hosting, probably in May 2002. If you were a pupil of S.S.#12 or know of any others who were, please give us a call so we can include them in the planning stages and invite them to the Reunion.

This year's Queen Victoria Fete promises to be the best ever. Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, is looking forward to her chance to have tea with you on the occasion of her birthday. There will be many interesting and amusing things to do so please come and enjoy the festivities. Brian Holstein, Margaret Draper and Hawley Johnston have been working all year organizing this event and it will be a huge success, especially if we see you there. Volunteers are always welcome, so if Kay hasn't heard from you give her a call and join the fun. (905 890 4506)

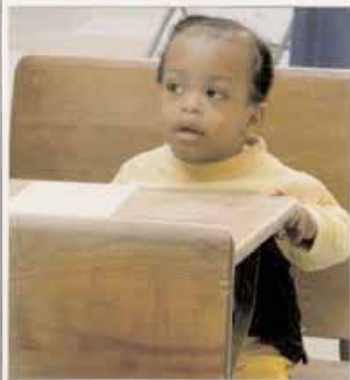


Our final event of the year is the very popular Strawberry Social to be held in the Atrium of the Board Office, Tuesday, June 26th. Be sure to get your tickets early to insure a place at this event. Call Kay Robbins for reservations. At the unchanged price of \$5.00, it must be the best bargain around.

An organization such as Friends could not operate without the many hours of volunteer time expended by many people. If you have thought about joining the Executive Committee and have put it off waiting for a formal invitation, well here it is. You are invited to join our hard working crew giving what time and expertise you have to a very worthwhile cause. Call Jean (905 826 3475 or Eva (905 459 9158) and we will be glad to give you any information about our work.

Have a safe and happy summer!

Jean Robinson



From a Heritage Week display in Mississauga to a S.L.A.T.E. Conference in Keswick, Ontario, the friends of the Schoolhouse have been busy promoting The Old Britannia Schoolhouse amongst local residents and with groups from across south-western Ontario. The Old Britannia Schoolhouse will be hosting the 2002 S.L.A.T.E. Conference.

A Teacher From the Past Visits The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

A very special couple visited The Old Britannia Schoolhouse on Saturday, April 14. The family of Luella and Allen Johnson arranged the visit as part of their parents' 60th wedding anniversary celebration. Britannia School was a significant place for them.

Luella, then Luella Paisley, taught at Britannia School from 1939 to 1941. The Johnsons lived on a farm at the south-east corner of Britannia Road and Hurontario Street. One day, after four o'clock Allen Johnson, one of the fine-looking Johnson boys, walked with intent down the road to the schoolhouse where his younger siblings were taught by Miss Paisley, the pretty young school teacher. He asked her for "a date". She accepted. It seems to have been "love at first sight", because on April 12, 1941 they were married. Allen said that many of their dates had to be "on foot" as there were nine in his family and they only had one car.

On this 60th anniversary celebration Allen and Luella, their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren filled the old desks at the schoolhouse. Allen's brother John and his wife Mary also attended. As Mary is Luella's sister, that walk that Allen took down the road to the schoolhouse in 1939 also benefited his brother John.

Luella's beautiful handwriting in the schoolhouse's Visitor's Book certainly indicates that she must have been an excellent model for her pupils back in 1939 to '41, when the quality of handwriting was highly valued.

We congratulate Luella and Allen Johnson on their special anniversary and extend to them our very best wishes. We thank their family for their very generous donation to the Friends of the Schoolhouse. It was an honour to open the schoolhouse for this visit.

Schoolmistress's Report

Spring has sprung at the Schoolhouse! It started slowly, with the birds singing in the morning and the lazy ladybugs crawling across the floor, and the desks, and the slates. Now the sun is shining, the forsythia is in full bloom and the windows are open to let the warm breeze float through the room. It seems like only yesterday that there were big fat snowmen in the yard, and puddles from dripping boots in the cloakroom. What a difference a season makes!

Every now and then I receive a special package of letters from my "pioneer" charges reminiscing about a recent visit. Most are filled with thank-you's and talk of the fun they had with the old fashioned toys or the silts. Occasionally though, I do come across a line worth sharing, such as:

"Thank you for going back in time, Schoolmistress."

"I'm glad I got to meet you. You must be the only pioneer left."

"I really thought there was a dungeon."

"Perhaps you would like to visit Middlebury onDay and see a modern school."

What is most striking, though, is the abundant curiosity that each class brings to the Schoolhouse. Each day I am faced with a myriad of questions, and it is this energy and enthusiasm for learning that I find constantly refreshing. The Old Britannia Schoolhouse gives visiting students the opportunity to be active learners - to learn by doing, rather than watching a video or reading from a book. This unique approach and stimulating environment often requires skills that are different to those of the students' usual classroom routine. As a result, the programme gives many children - who might normally retire to the fringes - a chance to shine. By actually living through a school day of long ago, not only do they learn about the lives of children in rural 19th Ontario, they also have the chance to learn something new about themselves as well.

Megan Curtis.



Brian Holstein rings the bell that brought children from the far north Lucensland into their classroom. At the time that this school operated, children would ride their horses many miles—bareback, and with several siblings on the same horse. The teacher kept a close eye on the weather, as most children would have to ford creeks that would be prone to flooding.

Most teachers were from England or Ireland, and their lessons would focus on their homeland, rather than on Australia.

For Your Diary:

May 8 at 4 p.m. Friends of the Schoolhouse Meeting

May 13 The Old Britannia Schoolhouse is open from 1:00 to 4:00 PM

May 26 - *The Queen Victoria Fête*

June 10 The Old Britannia Schoolhouse is open from 1:00 to 4:00 PM

June 12 at 4 p.m. Friends of the Schoolhouse Meeting

June 26 from 11:30 to 2:00 p.m. - *Strawberry Social* in the Atrium of the Peel District School Board.



One-Room Schools in the Australian Outback.

During my recent visit to Australia, I had the opportunity to visit two one-room schoolhouses - one by design, as it was where I spent my first six years of school, along with my siblings before and after me.

This was a disappointing visit. The school had been sold, turned into a weekendер by an owner who visited rarely. Gone were the cricket pitch, the old outhouses, the school gardens that we tended almost daily, but especially every Friday afternoon. The once open cloak room was now a covered - and locked - storage room.

The teacher's residence was also in private hands, and her hospitality allowed me to look through several documents from the Wallarobba P. & C. (Parents and Citizens). Most interesting were the results of several picnic events. One of my sisters was the winner of a broom throwing contest with a throw of 75 feet! Pity her husband!

While driving through outback Queensland, I discovered another one-roomer. This one, at the Workers' Heritage Centre in Barcaldine, had been transported from the north - from the Gulf Country. It was entirely different in its nature. Yes, Royalty looked down at the pupils, the maps of England and Ireland covered the walls, rules of good conduct were in constant view. But the windows! This school came from an area where hot and dry were the constant weather descriptors. (The school holidays coincided with most of the wet season). Two walls were windowed almost in entirety, and a huge doorway opened onto a spacious verandah.

Also interesting were the school desks. Such furniture was supplied by the community, and no two schools had similar accommodations for pupils. At this school, the locals had built long desks and seats



The 1930's Britannia School Yell.

(As remembered by Aileen Johnson)

Fuzzy wuzzy, hurdy gurdy, six boom bah
We are the kids from Britannia,
Do we love it?
Well, I guess,
Britannia, Britannia,
yes, yes, yes!

The Heritage Garden Project.

The Friends have recently initiated a project to establish a heritage garden. School gardens were an important part of a child's education in the early 1900's and many people who are now in their 70's and 80's will remember digging, planting, weeding and harvesting in their schoolyard gardens. We plan to create a garden of native plants at The Old Britannia Schoolhouse that children of this generation can experience and enjoy.

Currently we are in the early planning stages and have been encouraged and assisted by staff from the Mississauga Branch of Weall and Cullen Nurseries.

Partners and supporters

We are grateful for the support of Weall and Cullen in providing in helping us to realize our dream. We welcome any enthusiastic gardeners who would like to help us create and maintain our heritage garden. If you are interested in becoming involved please contact one of the following people. Your help will be greatly appreciated and we can guarantee that you will have lots of fun.

Joan Reid 905 277 3396
Jean Robinson 905 826 3475 jeanrob@hotmail.com
Daryl Cook 905 279 5896 dcook@echo-on.net

that would seat eight pupils.

What a vision - rows of barefooted kids seated and learning, while outside cicadas sang in the searing heat of the Australian bush.

I can hear it, I can picture it still.

Luella Edith Paisley

Luella Edith Paisley taught at Britannia School from 1939 to 1941. Prior to that, she had taught at Bloomingdale for five years for \$500 per year. When she taught at Britannia, her salary was \$800 per year, with room and board at the school farm with the Ellis family.

After her first year at Britannia School she received a raise to \$900 per year, in 10 payments of \$90 per month.

Luella Paisley married Allen Johnson on April 12, 1940, at her parents' home in Bloomington. Allen and Luella met while she was teaching his younger siblings at Britannia School.

Luella stopped teaching after she was married, and she found a teacher friend to finish the year at Britannia.



The Johnson Children at Britannia School.

The Johnson children attended Britannia School from 1930 to 1944. John and Allen worked together as caretakers of the Britannia School for a wage of \$50.00 per year. (At that time a hired man would work a 10-hour day for \$1.00.) Their job included sweeping the floor daily, washing and oiling the floor in the summer, cleaning the windows and starting the fire so that by 9 a.m. the classroom would be warm during the winter. When John and Allen graduated, they passed the job on to their younger brothers and sisters.

The Johnson children worked together as a family, and held the position of caretaker from 1930 to 1944. When Bill and Florence took over, the yearly salary went up to \$75.00 per year. After Bill graduated, Florence took over the job by herself. With her 475.00, she bought her first horse.

Their father, Merrill Clifton Johnson, was a school trustee at Britannia School from 1934 to 1941.

Need to speak to the Schoolmistress?



The Old Britannia Schoolhouse can be contacted directly, by dialing
890 1010, ext. 2911



Memberships

Membership renewals for 2001 are now due. If you are one of the few Friends who has not yet renewed, please take the time to rectify this today. If your mailing label has a "01" on it, then your membership is already up-to-date.

**We are on the web at
www.britanniaschoolhouse.org**

Friends of the Schoolhouse gratefully acknowledge the generous donations of the following people and organizations:

The following have made donations to the Friends of the Schoolhouse since the last Newsletter was published:

Myrtle Laishley
Mississauga South Historical Society
Audrey Baird
Amy Wilson
Kay Robbins

Opari Mudalige
Win Giguere
Anne Reycraft
Sheila Northover
John & Mary Johnson
Family of L. & A. Johnson

Kingswood Dr. School Council
Dorothy Woods
Alba Falconi
Karen Simmons