



Fall 2017



2017-2018 Schedule of Events

Dec. 03: Christmas Open House

February 10: Heritage Brampton

June 20: Strawberry Social

July 17: Lemonade on the Lawn

Sept. to June (2nd Sunday of each month): Open Sunday

School Visits

Sept. 81 in 4 days

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

The Garden

Karen Simmons

It is so pleasing to see our gardens thriving under the dedicated care of our volunteers. Margaret and Kathleen, with Joanne and Cathy, have spent hours every week weeding, pruning, planting and watering. Although hampered with an injured shoulder, William has been able to keep the planters of geraniums watered. The schoolhouse staff tended the vegetable garden and again produced some prize winning samples for the Brampton Fair. We are grateful to all of you. The shade garden has been refreshed with new plantings of perennials and flowering shrubs. The sun beds have also had new perennials added. Now the display of blooms extends right through the summer because of a wider variety of species.

Some plans for the fall include repairs to the horseshoe pits and pruning of the shrubbery near the boardwalk to the parking lot. Fall clean up sessions for student volunteers will be organized for some Saturday mornings, the dates to be announced later. Watch for the dates on our website and via the Board's news broadcast. Anyone is welcome to join the work crew.

Don't Delay

How quickly the year comes to a close. Before it does, please give some consideration to renewing and/or starting a membership with "The Friends of the Schoolhouse."

Your membership funds help to contribute to the schoolhouse experience. With membership support, The Friends have been able to: restore artifacts, e.g. maps and charts, provide sports equipment; research and publish a book on Peel Schoolhouses of the past, and maintain the gardens.

Our quarterly Newsletter will keep you up to date on our many community activities.

Membership forms can be downloaded from our website:

www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org

Membership forms will also be mailed out next month.

Marg Carson, Membership Convenor

Message from the Chair

Karen Simmons

We are off to a good start to the new school year with the usual schedule of events in the planning stages. Open Sundays will occur on the second Sunday of each month, except December, which will be combined with Christmas Open House and Sale on December 3. We hope a good many of you will be able to attend. The Schoolhouse will be decorated in traditional Victorian style, and refreshments will be served. Many hand crafted items will be for sale along with the usual old fashioned items, books and cards of our regular stock. Two or more visiting vendors will also have items on offer. There will be a silent auction of a framed Scott Taylor print of the Schoolhouse donated by Mike Harmer.

We have been honoured by being nominated for a Heritage Mississauga award and Eva Ardiel for a Lifetime Achievement award. Winners were announced at the annual Credits awards banquet on October 12, which several of us attended. Although we did not win, we feel thrilled to be considered!

In a recent perusal of the archived books in the Schoolhouse, I found a 1903 publication by Clifton Hodge, "Nature Study and Life". One chapter is about home and school gardens. The author discussed at great length the importance to children of having an opportunity to grow fruits, vegetables, and flowers in order to foster an interest in the natural world. For this reason, a school garden was particularly needed for children who did not grow things at home. Mr. Hodge pointed out that in Europe at that time there were 81 000 school gardens, and that in 1887, a decree was passed in France which required a school to have a plan for a school garden. Our Schoolhouse gardens, especially the orchard and vegetable garden, help to provide exposure to nature and wildlife for the visiting children. While planting or harvesting, they may also learn about soils, wildlife, and food sources.

We are sorry to bid farewell to Sandy McGowan who retired on October 3. Sandy has been our liaison with the Alternative Programs department for many years, has attended all our meetings and provided much assistance to us. We will certainly miss her, but wish her happy times to come. Perhaps she might come back for special events! On the flip side, we welcome Lisa Cafaro, who will share the role of Schoolmistress with Chris Chapel. Although Lisa has worked with the Field Centres for several years, this is her first assignment to the Schoolhouse. We are sure she will enjoy the experience. Schoolmaster Gary Campbell, alias Farmer Gary, has served us well for a couple of years and may occasionally fill in when needed. We hope he will be able to continue caring for our orchard as he has much expertise in this area.

Decorating the Schoolhouse

The decorating of The Schoolhouse takes place on Friday, Nov. 24th at about 3:00 pm. After decorating the tree, making paper chains and evergreen swags for the blackboards and setting out the decorated urns at the front door, we sit down to a chili, salad and dessert dinner. Please RSVP to 905 826 3475 .

Fall 2017

From the Schoolmistress

Christine Chapel

It's interesting how times change. It's a constant theme at the Schoolhouse. This was brought sharply into focus this past week when we had classes of students in for the Soils and Plants program. When visiting the Schoolhouse on these days we don't role play but instead spend most of our time outdoors in the garden and school grounds. Students explore the components of soil, compare soil types and really get their hands in the earth. They help harvest the last of the vegetables, pull weeds and prepare the garden for planting next year.

This year we've enlisted their help to create a pollinator garden. We've marked out an area in the field and the students dug, weeded, removed rocks and discovered all sorts of living things and some interesting remnants of the past as well (pieces of old fencing). They had a great time doing it and we now have the foundation of a new garden ready to go.

Over the next few weeks, we'll have students help us plant milkweed during recess. And here's how attitudes have changed drastically. Up until 2014, common milkweed, a plant native to Ontario, was considered a noxious weed here. It spreads through wind blown seeds and rhizomes. This allows it to be a very aggressive and successful competitor in open fields. It was considered harmful to agricultural crops and to livestock when eaten. Farmers and people living close to land being used for agriculture were told by the Ministry of Agriculture to eradicate the plant. The campaign worked.

The beautiful orange and black monarch butterfly is a well-known favourite of young and old. Its life cycle depends on the milkweed. The adult drinks the flower nectar and lays its eggs on the leaves. The larvae feed solely on the leaves and pupate on the plant as well. Over the last decade, scientists monitoring the monarch population have noted an alarming decline in their numbers. This has now been attributed to habitat loss, severe weather events and the loss of the monarch's food source (milkweed) due to widespread use of herbicides. The butterflies are now considered a species of special concern in Ontario.



In a complete turn around, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has taken milkweed off the noxious weed list and citizens are being encouraged to plant milkweed. And that's what we're doing. Over the last several years we've allowed milkweed to grow in the vegetable garden. And we've seen monarch caterpillars every year! True to its characteristics, it has flourished. It has now become necessary though for us to reclaim that garden space, hence the new pollinator garden.

Attitudes and societal expectations and "norms" change over time as we learn more and as we see the impacts of our choices of the past. This is true not only for environmental concerns but human ones as well. By examining history, learning from our mistakes and having a willingness to move forward with a different attitude or perspective we can collectively bring about positive change. Let's hope the monarchs benefit from our new attitude toward the milkweed – a beneficial wildflower rather than a noxious weed.



25 Years and Counting

by Eva Ardiel

It is hard to believe that Friends of the Schoolhouse is 25 years old! It is a long time since 1992 when the impact of drastic budget cuts threatened the closure of the programs at the Schoolhouse, the Field Centres and the Farm. It was in response to that crisis that staffs from the 3 locations plus a number of concerned supporters met to consider options and a plan of action. Friends of the Schoolhouse, Friends of the Field Centres and Friends of the Farm associations were formed. They were dedicated to ensuring the continuation of the programs, through advocacy, soliciting support, fundraising and working with the Board to find solutions. By the end of the year, Friends of the Schoolhouse had sold over 650 memberships. 650 "friends" were wearing "I am a Friend of the Schoolhouse" buttons and T-shirts. Support from teachers, schools, parent groups and the public was encouraging.

In spite of the Friends' and the Board's best efforts, in June 1993 the programs at all of the centres were closed and everything was packed up. There was, however, a glimmer of hope when, at the end of June, Jim Gollert at Community Education (later the Centre for Education and Training CET) was given the challenge of exploring a foundation or some other means of getting the programs up and running again.

Although worried, we were not deterred. It was during these times that, as well as working with Community Education, advocating for the schoolhouse and raising money, we got Ben Madill's book, *Britannia School and School Farm - and My School Days* published, a series of 26 photos of A Day at the Schoolhouse framed and installed prominently at the Board Office and in the spring of 1993, set up the classroom again to host The Early Canada pavilion for Carassauga. More than 130 volunteers helped with that event.

Then there was good news! In September 1994 the three programs reopened on a more cost recovery basis with a program director and a program facilitator at each site. Since that time Friends of the Schoolhouse have worked closely with the schoolhouse staff, with Community Education, CET and later with the Alternative Programs Department when the schoolhouse again became a part of the Field Study Centres' programming. For more than 20 years Sandy McGowan has been our primary liaison with the School Board and has helped us tremendously in many ways. Sandy has just retired and we are realizing how much we miss her!

It has been a pleasure to work with and support in any way we can the schoolmistresses and masters who have diligently and enthusiastically delivered the schoolhouse programs since 1994. We appreciate their willingness to share the space and sense of ownership with us. As well as providing funding for costumes, program and site extras, artifact repairs, etc., the Friends have been a valuable source of information and knowledge related to the former schoolhouse program, the restoration of the building, the artifacts and their significance, the former Britannia community and the history of education and one room schools. Also the Friends have developed strong relationships with other Peel heritage and historical groups and with SLATE (the association of people involved with restored one room schoolhouses and programs in Ontario).

25 years and counting (continued)

At a presentation to the Board of Trustees in 92-93 Friends of the Schoolhouse promised that if the schoolhouse were kept open we would do all we could to help. We have tried hard to keep that promise ever since.

The Friends' newsletters and annual reports for the past 25 years are on file at the schoolhouse and the newsletters from 1999 are archived on our web site. I glanced through these before I began this article to refresh my memory of all of the activities, projects, events, acquisitions, etc. from over the years, to remember all the dedicated people who at one time were part of the executive committee, to appreciate again all of the volunteers who have come out to help with events or in the gardens. The lists were very long! We have worked hard and done a lot!

The Friends are fiercely protective of this beautiful little schoolhouse from the past, which like so many of its kind, was the centre of the rural community. We appreciate the recognition, assistance and support we have been given by the Peel District School Board.

One problem not yet solved is the need for an appropriate and convenient location for the collection of old school books, artifacts, archival material, display boards, etc. which are now stored on pallets at a Board warehouse or in the basements of several of our committee. We keep hoping!



The Executive Committee at this year's Strawberry Social

Jean Robinson, Lis Braun, Glenna Zdebiak, Karen Simmons, Kathleen Jay (volunteer) Marg Carson, Eva Ardiel, Dennis Taylor, Shirley Hoad, Sandra Emerson, Ruth Taylor, Cathy Harper. (Not in the photo are Daryl Cook, Julie Dipplehoffer, Linda Kenny, Katharine Moon-Craney, Amy Smith, Margaret Storey, Barb Sturton, Elaine Thorne)

Most of our group have been with the committee since the earliest days. We are thankful, however, to have had a number of new recruits in past few years.

We also cannot forget all of the others who have worked on the Executive Committee over the years. They include the late Ben Madill and his wife Marjorie, the late Joan Reid, the late George Christian, Joan Moon and Frances Kay, as well as Karen Barber, John Dowkes, Margaret Draper, Wayne Freeman, Shirley Haslam, Brian Holstein, Marilyn Jones, Nancy Jones, Tom Kirby, Rosanna Moody, Hugh McPherson, Katherine Prosak, Corina Proeller, Wilf Ramey, Kay Robbins, Connie Rusynyk, Angus Scully, Julie Shannon, Michael Walmsley and Paula Wubbenhorst.

Here's to many more years for the Friends, for The Old Britannia Schoolhouse and for the student programs there!

Brampton Fall Fair

Karen Simmons

Once again, the Friends set up our displays, toys and items for sale at the Brampton



Fall Fair in September. The weather was perfect, and the visitors enjoyed the many events and displays that make up a country fair. Although Friday was a bit quiet, Saturday and Sunday were both busy. Some children, whose families participate in livestock competitions or other events, seem spend hours playing with our old fashioned toys.



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As well as our usual array of new little games and toys. sharpeners that are shaped always sell many of these, Manning our booth for three 30 volunteers, who each do a you, and hope you will con- in years to come.



Our winning kale

items for sale, there were some The most popular were pencil like cars, barns, airplanes, etc. We and have to reorder frequently. days requires the help of almost 3 to 4 hour shift. We thank all of tinue to make this event a success

A Visitor with a Schoolhouse Story

Daryl Cook

At one of our recent meet- schoolhouse and sat at a who he was and in the him. His name was interesting history to tell us tended Cooksville Public to Britannia. Many years and was responsible for the front of the school- thinks it was planted in tree. It's nice to know we year old maples that were down a number of years ago.



ings a gentleman came into the desk at the back. We wondered usual Friends fashion welcomed Gordon Freeland and he had some about the school. Mr. Freeland at- School but does have a connection ago his father worked for a nursery planting the maple that grows at house by the circular drive. He 1937 so we have an 80 year old still have one old maple as the 100 planted by students had to be cut

We never know when more of Britannia's history will come to light and it's always exciting when it does. We enjoyed talking with Mr. Freeland and will think of him and his father every time we pass the old maple – and especially when we tap it for a maple sugaring demonstration in the spring.

September Open Sunday

Margaret Storey



These two young ladies had a great time at our Open Sunday in September. They loved looking at all the artifacts in the schoolroom and playing with the toys. Making and decorating a hat like a little pioneer girl might wear was fun. They also enjoyed making their own slate with the help of our volun-

teer, Eva Ardiel! Shaelin had visited the schoolhouse with her grade three class last year and was excited to show her Dad where she had sat and tell him more about their visit. Emma is hoping to convince her teacher to arrange a visit for her grade three class this year.



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 1800s until the mid-1960s. 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.

Tweet Tweet!

Follow us on Twitter, @PDSBBritanniaSH. Get the latest on Open Sundays, events and other news. We also post pictures of the school, grounds and gardens. If you visit the schoolhouse be sure to tweet a picture or message so we know you were there. Tweet you later!

Fall 2017

Victorian Open House & Sale at the Old Britannia Schoolhouse



When: Sunday Dec. 3rd, 2017 1- 4pm
Where: Britannia Schoolhouse
Hurontario and Matheson

We have something for everyone at our December Open House and Sale. Wonderful products for sale including natural items from Osprey Bluffs Honey Company and a huge selection of home preserves. Grand Valley Fibre will have alpaca yarns and felt products, along with a wonderful array of vintage toy replicas, cards, books and holiday items. Come and see the schoolhouse decorated for an old-fashioned Christmas and you will complete your holiday shopping.

Complete your holiday shopping with unique and beautiful gifts!