



Some Figures and Facts:

Students attended the schoolhouse:

February	392
March	383

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.

Co-Editors: Daryl Cook
dlcook@rogers.com
 Dennis Taylor
dwtaylor914@sympatico.ca

Our website is
www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org



From the Chair: Frances Kay

As my term as Chair comes to an end in July, I would like to thank all of the “Friends” who were so willing to give their time to The Schoolhouse, and their encouragement to me.

Our new website is up and running now and our new brochure will be ready this June. I want to offer many thanks to both committees for their hard work.

Over the last few years I have become computer friendly and I am very glad I made the decision to do so. Our monthly agendas were a challenge, at first, but have become much easier. I can now type, delete and print with gusto. Somehow I did manage to lose the “little red schoolhouse” logo off the page. I assume it is somewhere in cyber space. Diana, can you please bring it back for me?

I am looking forward to the Strawberry Social, June 28th 11:30 am to 2:00 pm.

Special thanks to Ruth Taylor, as the secretary. I am glad you were there.



This was one ingenious teacher’s answer to the persistent clock watching by her students. The schoolhouse clock is perhaps one of the most obvious artifacts in the schoolhouse. To learn more about clocks turn to the article on clocks by our resident clock expert, Ben Madill.

Please note how the schoolhouse clock normally appears.



Greetings from the Schoolmistress: Melissa Jacobs

Spring has arrived at the schoolhouse and it seems to bring a new level of excitement and experiences. Not only are students able to experience the unusual look and feel of the schoolhouse. They are also able to enjoy the grounds around the schoolhouse coming to life.

The first day we are able to eat our dinner outside beneath the trees is always a big hit. What a novel idea it must be to many of the students to enjoy the outdoors whenever possible. I'm sure that the lessons and manners they learn in the schoolhouse are extremely memorable. I do however know that it would not be the same if not for the stilts, handmade ropes and old-fashioned swings in the yard. I often hear exclamations of how they have never been able to go so high on a swing or, they were actually able to take one or two steps on the stilts without any help, (a great accomplishment and contest among the visitors to the schoolhouse). The simple act of exploring all the different areas of the yard is also a highlight, especially, if they are able to come upon a snake or two. There definitely is something different about this time of year that makes it one of my favourite of the year.

The problem is that although it is an exciting time of year it is also a signal that the year is coming to an end. Fortunately, this year we will be able to extend it a little further by offering two camps on the Britannia property. We will be offering a low-ropes leadership camp July 3-7, 2006, for campers ages 10-14, as well as an Adventure Camp, July 10-14, 2006, for campers ages 8-10. For those interested in spending part of the summer with us please contact the schoolhouse at 905-890-1010 x. 2911 or britanniaschoolhouse@peelsb.com for more information.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to make this school year a great success. The Friends of the Schoolhouse, students, teachers and visitors have all helped to bring the schoolhouse to life for another year. Take the time to relax and enjoy yourselves this summer!

Strawberry Social

In 1897 the admission prices for a strawberry social were 10 cents for children and 25 cents for adults. A luscious helping of strawberry shortcake as well as entertainment was included in the price. At the time strawberries were selling for 25 cents for three boxes. Later in July raspberries sold for 5 cents a box.

WANTED

In order to complete The Friends picture collection of the early schools in Toronto Township we need the following:

1. Lorne Park – class and building photos,
2. Palestine – class and building photos,
3. Erindale – photo of one-room school.

Contact: Joan Reid 905-277-3396

Heritage Showcase 2006

Friends of the Schoolhouse participated in this year's Heritage Showcase at Square One on February 17, 18, and 19. There were over 35 organizations represented in this annual event.

Ben and Marjorie Madill were present for two days with their wonderful display of clocks.

Eva Ardiel, in spite of her illness, was there all weekend to set up and dismantle our "Sales" items and display. She really appreciated the help and the cooperation of the volunteers.

Joan Reid sent a wonderful display to help publicize the valuable work we do.

Sandy McGowan arranged for period desks to be sent and picked up. Daryl Cook helped to get some very capable student volunteers who assisted all of our adult volunteers.

By George Christian



Photos taken at Heritage Showcase at Square One



New Course of Study Criticized

... this letter appeared in *The Globe and Mail* on Saturday on the New Course of Study in Ontario schools. The author is Miss Mary Baskerville who was at one time a teacher in Brampton at the old Queen Street School, now the Old Countrymen's Club ...

"I am glad to see a few more of the laity joining in the public condemnation of the New Course of Study. For assuredly the tragic blunders of the New Course are the creatures of the negligence of parents and teachers in the past and present...

Had parents and teachers weighed every new idea on the balance scale of common sense, had they spoken and acted in accordance with their common-sense findings, instead of taking the path of least resistance, permitting themselves to be overawed by psychologists, and accepting every fresh encroachment of the extremists, they would not now be at the mercy of this climax of modern educational honest, but blundering, system...

For years it has seemed to me that if a man can only advance some idea in education, directly opposed to common sense practice, the greater the variation of his idea from the perpendicular of common sense, the more certain he is of public approval ..."

The Brampton Conservator - February 13, 1941.

Clocks

I have always been interested in clocks and watches, but everyone has some interest in clocks and watches because our daily living is regulated by time. I was always interested by the mechanical movement of a clock to divide a day into 24 hours with 60 minutes in an hour and 60 seconds in a minute. The world revolves at a rate of 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minute and 46 seconds per year.

When I was about 12 years old a neighbour gave me two old watches. Needless to say they became dismantled never to go again. Later I was given an alarm clock, the one with the bell on the top which made enough noise to wake the dead. It had to be wound every 24 hours. Its ticking was so loud that my mother would hide it.

Clocks were one of the first mechanical items to be invented. There were many different types of clocks invented such as water dripping from a tank and of course, a sundial. The goal was simply to measure time on a consistent basis.

By 1386 a mechanical clock with pendulum was installed in a tower in the Salisbury Cathedral in England. It did not have a dial or hands but struck the hour on the hour. According to history, it told the time for nearly 500 years. In 1790 the clock was moved from its bell tower, a separate tower to the central tower of the Cathedral. There it continued to work until 1184 when a new clock was installed. In 1929 the clock was thoroughly investigated. In 1931 it was cleaned and set up, but not working. In 1956 it was completely repaired and restored to its original condition and put on exhibit. When first installed it operated with a verge escapement and some time later it was changed to a pendulum escapement.

During the same time period, countries such as Germany, France and Switzerland were advancing in the construction of clocks and watches.

During the mid 1800's a low priced clock for 3 to 5 dollars was made in USA. It was a weight driven clock with a pendulum and was about 30 inches high. This clock was referred to as an OG clock, a reference made to the moulding used around the door.

Shortly after the 1850's the USA produced a pressed wood clock about 20 inches high for fewer than 3 dollars. It was called a kitchen clock (today called a ginger bread clock) and was spring driven with a pendulum.

I have a spring driven watch made in England by Upjohn. The dial has a minute hand, an hour hand, a second hand and a calendar dial.

There were many clock companies in the United States and Canada also manufactured clocks. Still many people found that purchasing a clock was a major investment and so sales tended to be limited as each clockmaker sought a way to appeal to the masses.

By 1930 a low priced (2 or 3 dollar) clock resembling a plate started to take over the market and by 1950's the electric clocks were beginning to replace the mechanical

kitchen clock. During the 1970's battery clocks and watches became popular and by 2005 almost all clocks and watches were battery powered, but this was not something entirely new on the market. In 1895 you could order a battery clock from the Sears Catalogue.

The schoolhouse clock was more or less a standard found in most schools. Although the schoolhouse had a book case that contained about a dozen books, it seems like a clock to hang on the wall took preference over books. The treasurer's book mentions a clock repair of \$4.05 to Mr. Muir in 1864 and on April 10, 1884 a new clock was purchased for \$6.50.

The 1889 Eaton's Catalogue lists school clock prices starting at \$3.75. Those extras which would add to the cost included hour and half hour strike, calendar hand or alarm. Each of those would be priced at \$.50 apiece. It would be a spring driven pendulum and would be wound once a week.

School clocks were never equipped with an alarm or strike as that would disturb the class. The last half hour of day passed very slowly, when you were watching the hands move up to the dismissal time of 4 o'clock.

Even without the strike or alarm the old clock would still make a noise. If I close my eyes and I listen I can still hear the steady tick tock of the old clock on the wall.

By Ben Madill



Pictures are from Ben Madill's clock collection. Note Ben and Marjorie beside the clock Ben invented and built from scratch. Note the Madill Barn. That is a six foot diameter working clock on the front of Ben's Barn made from an old arena clock.



SLATE Conference April 2006

On Monday, April 24, eleven Friends of the Schoolhouse wended our way down the Queen Elizabeth Way bright and early to S.L.A.T.E. Conference, 2006, where we joined with 29 other registrants for this one day experience. Our host location was **St. Johns Outdoor Studies Centre at Font-hill.**

S.L.A.T.E. (So Let's All Talk Educa-tion) Conference provides the opportunity for all members who are involved in educa-tion in one room schoolhouses and museum sites to meet annually for an opportunity to show off the host site and to explain what it has to offer.

After coffee and goodies, John Scott, Manager of the Centre welcomed everyone. We were divided into two groups. First session, our group went with Dr. David Hutchinson, Professor of Brock University, while the other group went with Colin Duquemin, former Consultant for Outdoor Studies at the St. Johns Outdoor Studies Centre. Dr. Hutchinson provided a package of pictures dating from the first school at St. Johns in 1804 to present day schools in the Niagara Region. This exercise was an example of what Dr. Hutchinson's students in the Bachelor of Education classes at Brock experience. This provides the opportunity to observe and determine what different aspects the pictures would present to an observer. This also provides an excel-lent historical background of the changes in educational facilities over the last one hun-dred years for perspective educators.

Mr. Duquemin, outlined how the St.

Johns Outdoor Studies Centre, under the auspices of the former Niagara South Board of Education and the Ni-agara Parks and Recreation Commis-sion cooperatively established the pro-gramme at St. Johns early in the 1960's. Today the Centre is operated by a Foundation, which includes the original grouping and the Niagara Separate School Board. Brock Uni-versity has been an important member of the group from the startup. The present set up at St. Johns Outdoor Studies Centre is under the leadership of Randy Lisoy, field technician, and a host of dedicated volunteers. St. Johns Centre is fortunate that many of the local farmers and residents in the area were very supportive and intuitive in the initial set up of this centre. Mr. Duquemin also emphasized the impor-tance of volunteers to run this pro-gramme from the initial set up to the present.

After a delicious lunch, our af-ternoon session included three areas of the St. John programme:

One of the sessions included the 1804 Common School. This is the oldest schoolhouse in Thorold, the old-est of its kind in the Niagara Region and possibly even in the province and maybe in Canada. It still performs its original function of education for ele-mentary children. While the school-house was originally built in 1797 as a temporary home for John Darling and his wife, it served the community as a school for forty years before serving as a private residence, a blacksmith

shop, and grocery store before it was returned to its original purpose of welcoming students to learn “Readin’, “Ritin’ and Ciperin’”: The 18 foot square schoolhouse has been well preserved. Classes that attend this tiny little schoolhouse are instructed by their own classroom teacher who has been provided with background material. No schoolmistress or schoolmaster is required in this programme.

The second session included a visit to the area which houses the Lamb programme. Over 3000 junior and senior kindergarten students visit St. Johns for this programme. The sheep and lambs are provided by a local farmer for six weeks. This year the children have two ewes, two sets of twin lambs and a very friendly ram to observe. In conjunction with this programme, the children have the opportunity to visit the adjacent Log House where a spinning programme helps the children to learn how wool is carded, and spun into yarn from the nearby sheep. Two very knowledgeable volunteers are responsible for this programme.

The third session introduced us to the Pioneer Technology Museum. This programme introduces students, through hands-on experiences, to the relationship between 19th century tools and machines and the seven simple machines of science. While there seemed to be a great deal of responsibility placed on the teachers, parent volunteers and students to accomplish the tasks relating to simple machines, Randy Lisoy, the instructor in this programme was very proud of what he is able to accomplish. The seven working stations (inclined

plane, the wedge, the screw, the lever, the wheel and axle and the pulley) are set up so that the students will gain the most from the programme. Emphasis is placed on safety. No student is able to participate in any activity without the supervision of an adult.

The afternoon session provided an excellent overview of the hands on programme for students at St. Johns. Question and answer sessions were held in each activity. Transportation was provided for those who needed assistance, but most of us had a good workout climbing out of the valley back to the buildings. For our wrap up session, the staff at St. Johns had several handouts about the programmes. Our hats are off to the organizers of this year’s S.L.A.T.E. Conference at the St. Johns Outdoor Studies Centre at Fonthill, ON.

Next year Amherst Museum in upper New York State is hosting the conference. See you there in 2007.

By Cathy Harper



Pictures from SLATE are found here and on the following page from St. John’s Outdoor Centre.



For Your Calendar:

June 2006

11 The old Britannia Schoolhouse is open to the public from 1:00 to 4:00 pm,

28 Strawberry Social: Atrium of Board Offices 11:30 am to 2:00 pm

July 2006

01 Canada Day at Square One

09 The old Britannia Schoolhouse is open to the public from 1:00 to 4:00 pm

August 2006

13 The Old Britannia Schoolhouse is open to the public from 1:00 to 4:00 pm

Need to contact the school?

The Old Britannia Schoolhouse can be contacted directly, by dialing
905 890 1010, ext. 2911

Or

**britanniaschool-
house@peelsb.com**

Heritage Mississauga

can be accessed on the internet at:

<http://www.city.mississauga.on.ca/heritage/>

Or by phoning 905 615 4415

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