



Spring 2013

The Spring Garden

Karen Simmons



2012-2013 Schedule of Events

June 26 Strawberry Social
July 16 Lemonade on the Lawn

School Visits 2012-2013

March 33
April 292

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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Our dedicated volunteers hard at work in the Garden

As I write this, the garden is starting to revive, in spite of the cool weather. The daffodils will soon be bursting into bloom. We planted dozens more last year, so there will be yellow everywhere, competition for the dandelions,

which will carpet the lawns. Before long, the other perennials will begin to flourish too. Visitors to the gardens can expect to see forget-me-nots, lupins, foxgloves, violets, and many others. We will be trying to thin out the Bachelor's Buttons, which have become too invasive, and are crowding

out the other perennials. It's a rescue mission for the iris, poppies, lilies, pinks, and Sweet William.

We are monitoring the lilacs along the boardwalk. They suffered some damage last year from either the early spring, or the ice melter used on the walk during the winter. Hopefully some pruning and fertilizer will help.

Chris and Marc are eager to get the vegetable garden tilled up and planted again. We are grateful that they work so hard to keep it going. It's fun to see the produce win prizes at the fall fair.

As soon as the weather is warm enough, our new garden shed will get its second coat of paint, and linoleum flooring. Then we can set it up for growing seedlings, and storing the tools and other garden equipment.

Many thanks to the student and adult volunteers who have worked diligently through Saturday morning clean-up sessions. Without them, we could never maintain the gardens properly.

Spring 2013

Message From The Chair

Ruth Taylor

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ith the arrival of spring, Schoolmistress Chapel and Schoolmaster Hogan are making plans for the vegetable garden. Meanwhile the garden committee and other volunteers have been cleaning up the various flower gardens. In April, several Friends of the Schoolhouse as well as the schoolmistress and schoolmaster attended SLATE, a conference about one room schoolhouses, which was held in Selkirk this year. Schoolmistress Chapel and Schoolmaster Hogan are happy that classes have resumed visits to the schoolhouse after the end of the boycott of extra-curricular activities. We have two events coming up in early summer. The Strawberry Social takes place on June 26 from 11:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. The other annual event is Lemonade on the Lawn which takes place in July. We will not be having an Open Sunday in July or August, but Open Sundays will resume in the fall.

Annual Planning Meeting of Friends of the Schoolhouse

Shirley Hoad
Executive Director

E

ach year the Friends of the Schoolhouse gather to organize the next year's plans and activities. It is held during the first week of July, with the date this year probably being Thursday, July 4. We meet at the Peel District School Board Offices beginning in the morning, and hopefully finished by the time we break for our Pot Luck Lunch. Any member of the Friends of the Schoolhouse is welcome to attend this meeting and take part in our planning. If you wish to receive more details re: definite date and time, and be sent any information in advance, please contact me at your earliest convenience. (E-mail: shoad@bellnet or telephone: 905-821-9262)

Lemonade on the Lawn

Daryl Cook

A picnic lunch on the schoolhouse a Canadian summer day. The his-bloom with roses, delphiniums, lavender plants. You can bring along a blanket. Just be sure to bring your picnic benches. The Friends of the Schoolhouse will supply lemonade and cookies.



lawn is a great way to relax and enjoy toric schoolyard garden will be in full ender and countless other heritage ket to sit on or use one of the picnic picnic lunch. The Friends of the

This summer tradition began several years ago and has become a highly anticipated event. It is the Friends' way of thanking everyone who supports the Old Britannia Schoolhouse and it's program – our members, former students and the helpful staff at the Board Office.

Please join us on **Tuesday July 16 anytime between 11:30 am and 1:30 pm**

Message from the Schoolmaster

May Day

Marc Hogan

W

alking to work this morning, I observed for the first time this spring, lots of bright yellow petals emerging from the grounds around the schoolhouse. Last fall, I planted over a hundred bulbs and I have since been awaiting an explosion of color. I really enjoy seeing the first flowers emerge in spring; their colors seem so exceptionally vivid. I welcome the colors after a long winter!

Of course there are many exciting things happening at this time of year. Fresh maple syrup, hockey play-offs (Go Leafs...) gardening and of course just getting outside more often. Traditionally in many parts of the northern hemisphere at this time of year it is an occasion for a celebration. One very popular celebration over the years has been best known as May Day.

May Day celebrations have a colourful history and go way back to the Old World. All over Europe there have been festivals to celebrate the coming of spring. Many customs were transplanted to North America by immigrant settlers, such as the tradition of dancing the maypole dance. We have even had these dances in the Britannia schoolyard.

The May pole is still standing in the schoolyard and we have the ribbons that are attached to it. Since being a Schoolmaster I have not seen the dance performed. I have heard stories though about how complicated the dance can be. I'm sure it would be a big challenge a group of grade 3's, es- wouldn't have much time day field trip.

I would love to give it was a complete blunder, I symbolism wasn't lost in could have a whole lot of joicing at the return of I would like to learn how make it as historically cor-

With this in mind, I am for dance lessons! And spring day you see the Maypole with a So much to learn –



This vintage image (circa 1907) of little girls, dressed in dainty white dresses, in a field full of daisies, dancing around a May Pole.

to master the dance with pecially given that they to learn it on their one-

a try sometime. Even if it would make sure the the chaos. Surely we fun just dancing and re-spring and summer. Still, to do it properly and to rect as possible.

sending out my request don't be surprised if one

me dancing around class of students! so little time!

A Bird-brained Idea

Daryl Cook

The Victorian era was known for a fascination with nature. Botanists travelled the world to find new plants to bring home to study and propagate. Gardening was a favourite pastime. Home decoration featured all sorts of nature themes including flowers and birds.

It is not surprising, then, that a group of bird fanciers, the American Acclimation Society, dreamed up an ambitious project. They decided to provide the North American continent with every variety of bird mentioned by Shakespeare in his plays and poems. The fact that some of these birds were totally unsuited to the environment didn't deter them. They also had no idea that some, not indigenous to North America, would thrive and become a nuisance.

About 600 birds are mentioned in Shakespeare's works. It soon became apparent that it would be impossible to import all of them. Of those that were, many died in transport and many were unsuited to the climate and died out quickly. Here are a couple of familiar ones that successfully made the transition.

The English Sparrow

Mentioned in Hamlet

"There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow"

Eugene Schieffelin, founder of the society, was a New Yorker. Between 1852 and 1860 he brought English sparrows to New York thinking they would solve an infestation of caterpillars. Before many years had passed they had spread far and wide. It is interesting to note that in 1852, the year the Britannia Schoolhouse was built, no one in the village of Britannia would have seen a sparrow.

The Starling

Mentioned in King Henry IV

*"I'll have a starling shall be taught to speak
Nothing but "Mortimer" and give it to him"*

Of the 110 varieties of starling worldwide, only the European starling lives in North America. Schieffelin brought it here between 1890 and 1891, releasing between 80 and 150 in Central Park. By the 1940's their offspring had reached the Pacific. It was feared they would have a detrimental effect on the native bird population but, except for the sapsucker, this doesn't seem to have been the case. Only humans seem to be adversely affected by the noisy flocks of starlings.

Did you ever think that two of our most common birds would not have existed here in the early years of the Old Britannia Schoolhouse? An interesting project for students might be to discover what kinds of birds children their age would have seen in the late 1800's.

Come out and enjoy an old-fashioned
Strawberry Social

Wednesday June 26, 2013

11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

in the atrium of H.J.A. Brown Education Centre



BILL OF FARE

A generous helping of luscious Ontario strawberries on a delicious shortcake biscuit.... topped with genuine whipped cream!

Tea • Coffee • Fruit Cordial
Mints

Come as you are -- or "dressed up" for an old-fashioned afternoon tea

\$8.00 tickets available until June 21 from



Friends of the Schoolhouse

A fundraising project for The Old Britannia Schoolhouse
(Some tickets available at the door.)

Spring 2013

SLATE ... April 15, 2013

Eva Ardiel

I

his year the annual gathering of folks connected with one-room schoolhouses and programs, SLATE (So Let's All Talk Education), was hosted by the Wilson MacDonald Memorial School Museum in Selkirk, Haldimand County. The museum, housed in the former McGaw school, S.S.#2 Walpole Township, is dedicated to the memory of Canadian lyric poet, Wilson Pugsley MacDonald, who attended the school for a brief time as a boy. The school was built in 1872, closed in 1965 and opened as a 1925 era classroom and museum in 1967.

Dana Stavinga, curator of the museum and host of this year's conference, is the current Chair of SLATE and has been a participating member of the group since 1987. She extended a warm welcome to the approximately 40 people who attended. Eight of us from Britannia were there including Schoolmistress Chapel and Schoolmaster Hogan. Ten schoolhouse/museum sites in all were represented.

The morning sessions were held in the Selkirk Centennial Hall, formerly Selkirk Union School, a continuation school.

Howard Bassindale, from the Selkirk Hall Board, talked about the days from 1917 to 1965 when three elementary and two secondary classes occupied the building, about converting the building in 1967 to a Community Centre and Library and about the work of volunteers and the municipality upgrading and maintaining the facility. It was the hall's volunteer committee that prepared and served our great morning snacks and delicious lunch.

The morning included a presentation by Harvey Sider on Continuation Schools which ended in a lively discussion on the terms continuation, union, composite, consolidated, comprehensive, technical, vocational, collegiate and high schools when referring to secondary education.

A Continuation School was a school with one or more elementary classrooms and one or more high school classrooms (Grades 9 to 12) . Apparently in some cases these schools were referred to as Union Schools. However, usually the term Union School referred to a school that served students from two or more townships.

Karen Richardson, curator of the Haldimand County Museum and Archives, discussed with photos the development of mainly rural schooling, from early Dame Schools until the 1900's, stressing the strong desire of the early settlers to educate their children.

SLATE April 15, 2013(continued)

Paula Whitlow, Museum Director of The Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford spoke about the history of Six Nations Education and showed photos of twelve former schoolhouses that were under the Department of Indian Affairs. She also talked about the first indigenous residential school, the Mohawk Institute Residential School. It was built in the 1830's and served children of the Six Nations and other native communities until 1969. In 1972 it was converted into the Woodland Cultural Centre which preserves and promotes the culture and heritage of the First Nations of the Eastern Woodlands. The present building, the third one, was built in 1904.

After lunch the group moved down the road to the schoolhouse, met outside in the spring sunshine to look at the interesting brick work mural on the museum's addition, and then assembled in the schoolhouse for a brief business meeting, fond memories of McGaw school days by former pupils and a stimulating presentation by Rick Hill.

Rick is the Project Coordinator of the Indigenous Knowledge Centre at Six Nations Polytechnic in Ohsweken . He spoke about the Six Nations participation in the War of 1812 and their goals to preserve the rights to their own lands and to live under their own laws. He brought two replica wampum belts, one a 1677 "covenant chain" between the British king and the indigenous people, the other an 1815 one given by the British crown to all the representatives of the indigenous nations who helped the British in the war of 1812. The treaty restored all rights to the Indian Nations that they had held before the war. Rick suggested that because the native people are still waiting for their treaties to be honoured, the War of 1812 has never ended.



Tug-a-war scene on the School Museum addition wall by Dennis Cocchio of Canada Brick. Dedicated to George Mowat for his many years of volunteer service to the community.

Rick also spoke briefly about the Indigenous Knowledge Centre, a place that encompasses knowledge within an indigenous context. He referred to direct interaction with nature, to creativity, to story telling and to the Waldorf theory of education.

Before we left there was a chance to look around the museum and see the wonderful displays Dana has orchestrated. I'm afraid those of us from Britannia were very envious of the possibilities offered by the modern extension to their old schoolhouse!

It was a very informative and enjoyable day. We appreciate the work Dana and her group put into making the conference such a rich and collaborative experience. We look forward to April 2014 when SLATE will meet at the Cherry Valley Octagonal Schoolhouse in the Backus Heritage Conservation Area. In April 2015 we will visit the Frontenac County School Museum in Kingston.

Tea Biscuits

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his old-fashioned treat is delicious right out of the oven or served with fresh Ontario strawberries and cream.

2 cups all purpose flour (you may substitute whole wheat flour or a bit of ground flax for added nutrition)
4 tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt
1/2 cup shortening
3/4 cup milk



Combine flour, baking powder, salt. Cut in shortening. Add milk all at once, stirring to make a soft, slightly sticky dough.

Turn out onto lightly floured surface and gently knead about 10 times. Roll to 1/2 inch thickness and cut.

Place on ungreased baking sheet at 425 degrees F for 10-12 mins.