

The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959
restored 1982

Summer/Early Fall Issue 2008



2008-2009

Schedule of Events

Sept. 13 Streetsville 150
Sept. 27 Doors Open Meadowvale
Nov. 13,14 Christmas Sales, Peel
Board office atrium
Nov. 30 Christmas Open House
Feb. 15-17 Heritage Showcase
June 25 Strawberry Social
July 1 Canada Day City Hall
July Lemonade on the Lawn

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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Arbour Day Celebration



Director Jim Grieve and students unveil a plaque dedicated to former S.S. #12 students
(Photo by Angus Scully)

Arbour Day in the early years of the Old Britannia Schoolhouse was always an exciting occasion. Students welcomed Spring with the planting of a tree on the schoolhouse grounds. This year's celebration on May 2 was a special celebration. Friends of the Schoolhouse, former students, representatives of the Peel District School Board and the students who were visiting for the day gathered to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the restored schoolhouse and to dedicate the four new maples planted to replace those planted over 100 years ago.

Though cool and cloudy, the rain held off as the Fairwinds Elementary School band entertained us. Each tree was then dedicated to a person or group who had been involved in the restoration of the schoolhouse. After a short dedication address students unveiled each plaque. Students from James Potter Elementary School who were visiting for the day buried a time capsule and received a framed photograph for their school of James Potter, the first schoolmaster of the restored Old Britannia Schoolhouse. Refreshments followed in the welcome warmth of the schoolroom.

From the Chair

Dennis Taylor

As I sit down to write this, I am becoming aware of this new job I have taken on and what it entails. It is rather daunting when I look at the people who have preceded me and what they have accomplished. I am also aware of how much each person contributes to preserving the Old Britannia Schoolhouse. It is strange to be prompted to meet the deadline for a newsletter. That was my job for the last four years.

If you arrived at the Schoolhouse you probably would not notice what has been accomplished unless you had visited the Schoolhouse several years ago or talked to a number of the members who have worked on the executive for several years. At one time when the Peel Board was limited in what support they were allowed to give to such a facility, the committee was formed to try and preserve the building and its program. That has changed slowly over the years and the board has been very supportive in maintaining the building and have allowed the friends to help and suggest ways to improve the facility. They saw to it that the chimneys and brick work were repaired a few years ago and more recently saw to it that the interior lights were replaced with ones more in the tradition of what would have been found in a period schoolhouse.

When I look out at the schoolyard I see the changes that have taken place. The board replaced the old maples which had become dangerous with new maples and supported a very successful Arbour Day Program that brought together many people to dedicate these new trees, including students who also provided a very skilled band. A number of former employees, students and supporters shared in the day with one another.

When I look out into the yard I see a fence provided through the generosity of Ben and Marjorie Madill that is slowly weathering and becoming a part of the overall plan. There are gardens teeming with all manner of plants including the vegetable garden planted by the schoolmaster, Dennis Patterson. I also see the gardens filled with flowers easily at home in the same time frame. A few years ago when I looked out at the weed infested ground and heard Joan Reid, former chairperson, talk of what was to be, I wondered if it would ever come to pass. Joan was as good as her word and better. The flowers pack the grounds in a multitude of colours.

The Strawberry Social, which is our major fundraiser, was very successful thanks to the dedicated work of so many. It has become traditional for this to take place in the last week of June in the Atrium at the Board Office. In July there was also Lemonade on the Lawn, a much smaller and more casual event, but just as successful. It is our way of showing the Board employees our appreciation for all of the help they provide in so many ways.

On Saturday, September 13, the Friends will be present to help Streetsville celebrate their one hundred and fiftieth year and we will participate on September 27 in Open Doors Meadowvale.

There have been some changes within the executive; some positions have changed as you will notice. After serving for many years as executive director, Eva Ardiel has stepped down and Joan Reid, the chair for the last two years, has agreed to take over the role. This does not mean Eva is finished with the executive. Eva has always been one to multitask and so there are other responsibilities she agreed to accept.

As always we are very grateful to all of our members and to the board and their employees for their continued support of all our endeavours.

The Slate Conference

SLATE stands for So Let's All Talk Education (in a one room school), or as one witty person suggested, being truly Canadian, So Let's All Talk Eh! And talk we did with a fair degree of listening too. Each year for a day in the spring people involved in working or volunteering in living history one room schoolhouses get together to exchange ideas and learn from each other. We meet at a different schoolhouse location each year which gives everyone the opportunity to experience how living history is presented in a setting different from their own. This year we met in Toronto at the Zion Schoolhouse.

Our sessions began at the Gibson House which has more convenient facilities for lectures and lunch. Adrianna Prosser, an energetic actor and historical interpreter, led us through an interesting exercise in building a character using historical background. Schoolmasters/mistresses need to portray a character consistent with the time period they are representing. We attacked the exercise with enthusiasm as various groups attempted to develop characters for Charles Darwin, Queen Elizabeth I and a Grecian lady. Next Pennie Cookson, a stage director, gave us techniques to save our voices when our work involves talking non-stop all day.

Following lunch we traveled the short distance to Zion where Diane Gallinger, a costume historian, explained the fashions for women of the Victorian age. Since many of the living history schoolhouses portray the late 1800's it was interesting to learn more about the fashions of the time, though the extravagant fabrics and styles would likely have been toned down a little for the schoolmistress. One late 1800's dress Diane brought as a sample was a maternity dress which would never have been worn in a Victorian schoolhouse. Married women were not allowed to be teachers, let alone one who was pregnant.

It was a great day and we all look forward to meeting next in 2009.

Open Sundays 2008-09

1 to 4 pm

Something new every month with light refreshments

Sept. 14	Heritage garden. Sample our fresh produce with tea and cookies	April 12	Learn to recycle your china tea-cups by making attractive craft items.
Oct. 12	Workshop: making lavender sachets and teasel dolls	May 10	Enjoy a tour of our spring gardens. See our trilliums and Virginia bluebells.
Nov. 9	Remembrance Day	June 14	Visit our summer garden with lupins, foxgloves and bachelor buttons in full bloom. A variety of plants will be for sale.
Dec. 14	Make Victorian Christmas decorations and paint pine cones collected from the schoolyard.	July 12	Make lavender wands and raspberry tarts from produce harvested from the heritage garden.
Jan. 11	Celebrate the birthday of Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. Sir John will be there!	Aug. 9	Taste our summer vegetables and fruits.
Feb. 8	See a display of Victorian valentines and other vintage greeting cards.		
March 8	A display of indoor games and toys. Play a game of skittles.		

June—The Strawberry Social

Shirley Hoad

The 2008 edition of the Strawberry Social was held in the Atrium of the H.J.A. Brown Education Centre on Wednesday, June 25. Early (at least for retired folk!) on a sunny morning a crew of willing volunteers came to transform the Atrium into a Victorian café complete with pastel table cloths and summer flowers in vases on the tables.

The evening before there had been the traditional “hulling of the berries” hosted by Ben and Marjorie Madill at their farm. While we worked around the kitchen table, we reminisced of strawberry socials past and checked that all was in readiness. Leaving the berries in the coolness of the back kitchen for the night, we knew we were ready for the next day.



Everything came together that morning from the Madill farm, the Old Britannia Schoolhouse and the homes of volunteers who loan us their serving dishes. Our team prepared the bowls of strawberry shortcake, raspberry cordial, tea and coffee in readiness for our guests. The berries were ripe and juicy, the buns were sweet, and the whipped cream was just right!



The almost 200 people who attended were able to relax and chat with friends while they enjoyed their repast with Shirley McFarlane tinkling the ivories on the baby grand piano in the background.

All too soon it was over, and time to return the Atrium to its normal function, and clean up our materials. With the help of the Maintenance Department and their tractor, everything arrived back at the Schoolhouse ready to be stored away for another year.

As one of our most successful events on behalf of the Friends of the Schoolhouse, the organizers and volunteers appreciate the efforts of the employees of the Peel District Board who attend, and our faithful members who attend annually. We will see you next year ... Thursday, June 25, 2009.

Plants Find Good Homes



Our gardens were bursting with new plants so at the Strawberry Social we offered a variety of small potted plants to any gardeners who wished to take them. Many thanks to those who left a donation in exchange for their plants.

Communities in Bloom

The city of Mississauga has entered the national Communities in Bloom contest. The Friends of the Schoolhouse were invited to set up a display of our gardens at a breakfast reception for the judges at the Bradley House in July. We joined Heritage Mississauga and the Museums of Mississauga in promoting our heritage. Joan Reid took wonderful display boards with photographs of many of the flowers in our gardens. The judges spent considerable time looking at the photos and asking questions about the schoolhouse, its program and the gardens.

Annual Meeting

Daryl Cook

At the end of a busy year the Friends' committee meets to plan for the events of the year ahead. As usual, 2007-08 had a number of exciting events, some traditional like the Christmas Open House and the Strawberry Social,



Joan Moon, Cathy Harper and Lis Braun hard at work

and a few special celebrations. After reviewing what had worked well and what we might improve on, plans were made for 2008-09. Check the list of events on page 1.

New this year will be participation in Streetsville's 150th anniversary celebrations and the Open Doors program in Meadowvale. Since these events are in the early Fall we will not be at the Brampton Fair this year. We will also expand the monthly Sunday afternoon Open Houses with a special theme and activities each time along with light refreshments.

The new executive was appointed. Dennis Taylor takes over as Chair, Shirley Hoad as Vice Chair, Joan Reid as Executive Director. Lis Braun continues her duties as Treasurer and Linda Kenny as Secretary.



As usual, all our efforts were rewarded with a great pot luck lunch in the schoolhouse.

The new executive with Schoolmaster Patterson
L—R: Lis Braun, Treasurer: Shirley Hoad, Vice Chair; Dennis Patterson, Schoolmaster; Joan Reid, Past Chair and Executive Director; Linda Kenney, Secretary; Dennis Taylor, Chair

Lemonade on the Lawn

Daryl Cook

We held our collective breaths on the morning of July 22. The day dawned cloudy with promise of rain. Undaunted we arrived at the schoolhouse to set up the table with a lemon-patterned table cloth, lots of jugs of lemonade and plates of home made cookies. At 11:30 the sky cleared and the sun shone brightly. Close to 50 people from the board office brought their lunches and enjoyed a picnic in the schoolhouse gardens. Many visitors wandered through the gardens trying to identify the various flowers bursting with colour. At 1:30 everyone was back at work and we packed everything away. Just as we finished the dark clouds returned and the rain poured. We don't know who has the direct line to the weather gods, but we certainly appreciated the help. It was a great way to show our thanks for the support the folks at the board office give us throughout the year. Next year, we plan to include our members in this little "thank you". So be sure to renew your membership this year.



Walking in the gardens



Linda serves lemonade and cookies

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.

Don't forget to visit us at
www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org

The Friends offer ideas for farm buildings relocation

Daryl Cook

If the plans for leasing part of the Britannia Farm property are implemented, the original farmhouse, the Dunton House and the Conover Barn will need to be relocated. In June a small working committee researched possible locations. The committee walked the eastern part of the farm property and took photos. The following were considered to be important issues in the decision of where the buildings should be relocated:

1. How will the buildings be used? Is easy access for students important?
2. What environmental impact will there be and how can this be minimized?
3. Should the placement replicate what a real farm would look like?
4. What could be done to “isolate” as much as possible the schoolhouse from the commercial area?

The committee is suggesting two possible sites.

Site 1:

West of the overflow parking lot is a line of trees running north to south. Beyond this height of land the creek is located in a valley. The three buildings could be located on this height of land which provides a good view of much of the 200 acre property. It is accessible currently along the Wayne Hulley trail which runs along the north side of the property from the overflow parking lot. The buildings should be oriented with the front facing the creek. The Dunton House could be located to the north with the barn and farmhouse clustered further south with the barn behind the farmhouse. The line of trees provides a visual barrier from the activities along Hurontario Street. This location would be relatively convenient to the board office and The Old Britannia Schoolhouse.



Tree line from ridge



Looking east along Wayne Hulley Trail



Looking west toward creek



View southwest toward barn

Site 2:

The west side of the farm is little used except for the sugar bush which is susceptible to vandalism and garbage dumping. The buildings, if relocated in this area, would establish a presence on that part of the property and make supervision of the sugar bush easier. Although the committee did not walk this part of the property, aerial and satellite photos indicate that there are several suitable sites that could be considered. Preservation of the old radial rail line is vital.

These suggestions were sent to members of the trustees and administration along with recommendations that the old windmill, orchard, rain barrel and rugosa rose bushes also be moved and preserved.

Recent Visiting Groups

Eva Ardiel

Brampton Historical Society

All of the desks were occupied on Thursday evening, April 17th, when Brampton Historical Society held its monthly meeting at The Old Britannia Schoolhouse. Schoolmaster Patterson described and demonstrated the schoolhouse programs. The visitors proved to be obedient and diligent pupils! Following the presentation Dennis Patterson and Eva Ardiel answered lots of questions about the schoolhouse and the property. The evening concluded with tea, coffee and snacks prepared by Joan Moon. The Friends were pleased to have the opportunity to host this very interested group.



Dennis talks about some of the teaching tools of years past



Social Sciences and Humanities Heads' Group

After school on May 29th, Dennis Patterson hosted Ian Pettigrew, Social Sciences and Humanities Co-ordinator, and the secondary school Social Science heads at the schoolhouse. Dennis gave a short outline of the schoolhouse program and snacks were provided by Joan Moon.

Ian Pettigrew, back to camera, meets with the Social Sciences Heads

Salad Days at the Schoolhouse

Joan Reid

The heritage vegetable garden at the Schoolhouse is the source of many ingredients for a tasty salad. The resident bunny brigade heartily agrees.

In July *Iceburg* lettuce, *Red Globe* onions, and *Chantenay Red* carrots are available. When mixed with some almonds and crumbled goat's cheese these make a delicious salad tossed with poppy seed dressing and garnished with parsley from the Victorian garden.

Beets and white turnips are also ready to pick in July. The *Detroit Dark Red* beets are delicious pickled or served hot. *Purple Top White Globe* turnips are delightful served hot, mashed with butter. I personally like them cut thin and served raw in salads.

In August tomatoes, green peppers, and cucumbers are abundant. The salad possibilities are limitless. Tomatoes may be stewed and preserved for winter use but most of us enjoy them freshly picked and served raw.

September brings *Golden Bantam* Sweet Corn, *Small Sugar* Pumpkins, and two kinds of potatoes. Some potatoes are good for baking, some are better served boiled or mashed.

Some of this produce is sent to the Board Atrium, and some is offered to local food banks and community kitchens. The rest is enjoyed by those who tend the garden – Friends of the Schoolhouse and board employees who are garden volunteers.

Evergreen/Toyota Visit



Joan Reid answers questions about the gardens.

On June 17 our friends from Evergreen, Dixie Toyota and the Toyota Canada head office visited the schoolyard gardens to see how we had used the grant we received. We toured the Victorian garden, examining the roses, clematis and other plants that were just coming into bloom. Schoolmaster Patterson then took his class and our visitors to the heritage vegetable gardens which Evergreen/Toyota sponsored.

It was an overcast day, perfect for planting corn seeds. The girls took their turn first, lining up along their row, carefully pulling any stray weeds, then poking holes for the seeds and carefully planting them. The boys were next along with two of the visitors. After seed planting we all walked through the garden and learned what vegetables were planted there. For many children it was their first time to see how vegetables are produced. They don't magically appear at the supermarket.



The boys and guests from Evergreen and Toyota plant seeds

We thank Evergreen and Dixie Toyota for their support.

Of Raspberry Tarts and Lavender Wands

Joan Reid

July is the best time to make luscious raspberry tarts from berries picked from the many wild bushes which surround the schoolhouse. July is also a good time to make lavender wands from fresh lavender harvested from the schoolhouse garden.

A full measuring cup of freshly picked raspberries makes six medium tarts (lip diameter 3 inches). Add sugar to taste, a dash of lemon juice, and a thickener such as tapioca or corn starch. Put a heaping spoonful of the berry mixture into each unbaked tart shell. Bake at 375 degrees for approximately 20-25 minutes. Fresh raspberries, sweetened to taste, are delectable on ice cream.

Lavender wands make fragrant closet accessories. To make one you need at least 12-15 stalks of flowering lavender approximately 12 inches long and a yard of colourful half inch ribbon. Secure the stalks under the flowers and tie with string or thread. Turn upside down and bend stalks down over flowers. Weave ribbon through stalks to create a cage of woven ribbon. Secure and tie with a bow. These wands also deter moths.

Detailed instructions for lavender wands can also be found on the *Fun and Games* page of our website at www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org.

Wish List

Do you have bone china cups and saucers you no longer use? We need more for our collection to serve tea and coffee at the Strawberry Social. To donate contact Joan Reid: 905-277-3396.