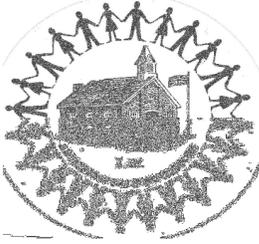


The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959 restored 1982

Summer/Early Fall 2013



2012-2013 Schedule of Events

Sept. 13,14,15: Brampton Fair
 Sept. 28: Doors Open
 Dec. 8: Christmas Open House
 Feb.: Heritage Brampton
 June 25: Strawberry Social
 July 15: Lemonade on the Lawn
 Sept. to June 2nd Sunday:
 Open Sundays

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.

Co-editors:
 Daryl Cook
 dlcook@rogers.com
 Katharine Moon-Craney
 kmooncraney@rogers.com

Need more information?

The Old Britannia Schoolhouse
 phone 905-890-1010 ext.2911
 Website
www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org

A Special Summer Picnic

Daryl Cook



On a perfect summer day in August the Friends of the Schoolhouse welcomed back former schoolmaster Dennis Patterson and his family. Dennis left the Old Britannia Schoolhouse two years ago to move with his wife and newborn daughter to teach in Japan. They have been on holiday in Canada visiting family and friends this summer.

We set up sun shelters and pic-

nic tables on the schoolyard lawn and had an old fashioned pot luck lunch. Former colleagues from the field centres, staff from the board office and members of the Friends of the Schoolhouse came to reconnect with Dennis, his wife Yukiko and daughter Nanami. There was much reminiscing about his schoolhouse years and interest in what life in Japan has been like.

Dennis is teaching English at an international school in Okinawa—a very different assignment from role-playing a schoolmaster of the late



19th century. While at the schoolhouse Dennis initiated a number of projects including developing a vegetable garden. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries agriculture was part of the curriculum. Each student had his or her own garden plot. Dennis involved visiting classes in starting seeds indoors in early spring and later planting in the garden. In the fall vegetables were entered in the Brampton Fall Fair and a number of ribbons were awarded. Apparently his interest in gardening continues in Japan as he informed us his grade 2 class harvested 40 mini tomatoes from one of their plants.



A good time was had by all and we wish Dennis and his family all the best as they return home to Japan.

Summer/Early Fall 2013

From the Chair

Ruth Taylor

Since the last newsletter we had had a number of very successful events. The Strawberry Social took place on June 25. Lemonade on the Lawn was held on July 16 and had record attendance in spite of or perhaps because of very high temperatures. We take a break in July and August from our regular meetings after holding our Annual Planning Meeting in early July. This is when we put plans in place for the upcoming year. On August 1 we held a picnic at the schoolhouse to welcome back former Schoolmaster Dennis Patterson and his wife and daughter as they visited Canada. They are currently living in Japan where Dennis and his wife are teaching English. After rain the previous day and night, the weather cleared and we were able to enjoy lunch at the picnic tables.

In September we will be at the Brampton Fall Fair. We will also be part of Doors Open. Our Open Sundays will resume with activities planned for each of those days. We hope to see you at some of our activities this fall.

Annual Planning Meeting

Each year in early July the Friends of the Schoolhouse executive and committee conveners meet to review the events of the past year and plan for the coming one. This past year, 2012-13, has been a busy one. We held our usual events – Open Sundays, Christmas sales and Open House, Strawberry Social, Lemonade on the Lawn – and continued our efforts to support the living history school program and work on the historic gardens. One sad event was the memorial gathering for Joan Reid who passed away and whose contribution to researching one room schoolhouses in Peel and creating our historic gardens was so much appreciated.

Now we are looking forward to a busy 2013-14. We will continue to participate in community events such as the Brampton Fair, Doors Open and Heritage Week activities. Since everyone is so busy in December, it was decided to hold our annual Christmas Open House on our December Open Sunday date rather than have two events in the same month. In September we will welcome a new schoolmaster, Gary Campbell. Marc Hogan will still fill in from time to time. Marc has been a great schoolmaster with new ideas and always a willingness to lend a hand. We thank him for his help.

Committee conveners will remain the same as last year as will your core executive. Thanks to everyone who works so hard to keep the Friends of the Schoolhouse a successful organization. Be sure to watch our website for information about coming events and schoolhouse news.

The Core Executive

| | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Chair: | Ruth Taylor |
| Past Chair: | Shirley Hoad |
| Vice Chair: | Marg Storey |
| Schoolmaster: | Gary Campbell |
| Schoolmistress: | Christine Chapel |
| Secretary: | Linda Kenny |
| Treasurer: | Liz Braun |
| Executive Director: | Shirley Hoad |

Summer/Early Fall 2013

From the Schoolmistress

Christine Chapel

As I was working in the garden today, harvesting yet another crop of beans and groaning at the sight of ten more huge zucchinis, I considered how our modern perspective on the garden must be quite different than that of the early farming families of Britannia.

The Schoolhouse garden is used as a learning tool, as it was a hundred and more years ago. The difference today is that, for the most part, we are introducing students to the fundamentals of farming; the very basics. We explore soil and its components, plants and their structure and needs and diversity. For many children, it is their first time getting their hands "soiled", planting a seed or pulling a weed. Some children are amazed to see how a carrot grows or how tall corn is or to learn that vegetables have flowers. Many, no, most students have never picked a vegetable and eaten it right off the plant from which it grew. It's a real eye opener for them to realize that what's fun for us modern urban dwellers was a matter of survival for families of the past. The greater the harvest the better, and everything was used. A bumper crop was celebrated, not be-moaned.

We're hoping to have vegetables to enter in the Brampton Fair again this year, in what has become a rite of the autumn season. The garden received a serious dose of nutrients this spring with the addition of a large load of sheep manure. The height of the tomato plants is testament to that!

We've been battling what we considered a scourge in the form of a weed called purslane. A low growing succulent that does well in hot, dry, sunny conditions it was threatening to take over. A little research revealed that this plant is a survivor. Leaving even a little of a root behind will allow it to regrow. Because it's a succulent, it can survive several days outside of the soil. We've also learned though that purslane can be eaten. Considered a "super food", purslane has higher levels of beta carotene than spinach, has high levels of magnesium and potassium and a type of omega-3 fatty acid, shown to lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Historically it was used for treating arthritis, respiratory and circulatory ailments. So, lesson learned, "one man's weed...".

We look forward to welcoming students to the Schoolhouse again this coming school year. Our numbers were much lower than usual in 2012/13 due to the teachers' dispute with the government and resulting job action. April, May and June were almost fully booked though and we ended on a high note. As I write this, we are 70% booked for the new school year – a little lower than usual. We expect that the rest of the calendar will fill once teachers are back to school and settled with their new students.

Having had an opportunity to see the new Social Studies curriculum coming out this fall, we're certain that, more than ever, the Schoolhouse program is relevant and meaningful. We continue to offer a unique experience to the students of Peel. This year we've had several return visitors to the Schoolhouse, young and "old", who have shared their fond memories of their experience as students. We've found their names in the registry that every student signs with pen and ink before leaving the Schoolhouse, and sent them home with a copy and a smile on their face. That kind of positive feedback is the best evaluation there is!

Summer/Early Fall 2013

Past Events

Lemonade on the Lawn

Daryl Cook

It was the hottest day of the summer with temperatures reaching 30 degrees. We wondered if anyone would want to have a picnic lunch in the schoolyard even though we were offering lemonade and cookies. Much to our surprise we had the best turnout ever. Several families brought lunch and blankets and found shady spots under the trees. After eating their lunch the children ignored the heat and played with the stilts and used the swings. Staff from the board office brought their lunches too. Other staff just came to wander through the gardens and enjoy a glass of lemonade and cookies. In all we had 55 visitors. This annual event is our opportunity to thank the staff at the board office and our members who do so much to support the schoolhouse program and the Friends of the Schoolhouse.



Several families joined us for a picnic under the trees



Board staff found a shady spot in the swing



Friends volunteers served the lemonade and cookies

Strawberry Social

Ruth Taylor

The atrium of the board office was a bustling place on June 26 when the Friends hosted our annual Strawberry Social. The delicious biscuits came from Kate's Town Talk Bakery in Streetsville. The scrumptious berries were obtained from Vineland by the Prince of Wales Market in Huttonville. The whipped cream was provide by the cafeteria and freshly prepared on the spot. The tables were covered by crisp white linen tablecloths, gingham overcloths, strawberry themed table toppers and flowers as well! Other strawberry decorations added to the festive atmosphere. We were pleased with the number of guests in attendance, which included many board staff, former schoolhouse pupils, as well as some neighbours from the Dufferin Peel Board office. We hope to see you next year on June 25, 2014.



Summer/Early Fall 2013

Coming Events

Brampton Fall Fair

September 13,14,15

Eva Ardiel

Friends of the Schoolhouse are looking forward to taking part in Brampton's 159th Fall Fair. As usual we will be set up in the Livestock Building which is the farthest west building. As we say, "You can just follow your nose to find us". We have a great location backing onto the ring where the cattle are shown. It is always especially interesting to watch the young 4H farmers proudly showing off their cattle. The fall fair, I'm sure was an exciting event in the lives the children who attended Britannia School and the other rural schools.

The garden produce is also located in our building. We hope the schoolhouse garden will have vegetables there vying for ribbons again this year, - if the rabbits and other critters have not feasted too heartily on the garden all summer.

The Friends will have displays, information pamphlets and our usual array of old fashioned toys and games for trying out, as well as many items for sale. Our tables are always a busy place.

The Fairgrounds is north of Brampton at 12,942 Heart Lake Road (at Old School Road) in Caledon.

Doors Open Mississauga

Cathy Harper

Please join us at the Old Britannia Schoolhouse on **Saturday, September 28** for Doors Open between 10 am and 4 pm. Bring your friends to experience what it was like to be a child of the early 1900's in a one room schoolhouse. The architecture is typical of schools once found throughout Ontario. Only a few still exist. After your visit to the schoolhouse, take time to wander about the school grounds and enjoy the gardens.

Open Sundays

The second Sunday of every month from September to June is a great time to visit the schoolhouse. Activities are planned that will provide fun for all members of the family. **The list of dates and activities is printed on page 8.** Please join us between 1 and 4 pm.



Summer/Early Fall 2013

We are continuing our efforts to organize Joan Reid's vast amount of research and make it available to the public. Since this is a much bigger job than we anticipated, we will print interesting excerpts in the newsletter. Here is Joan's introduction to her scrapbook about the village of Britannia.

Glimpses of a Lost Community A Britannia Scrapbook, Part I 1870-1930 Joan Reid

The articles and illustrations in this scrapbook are taken from *The Brampton Conservator* and *The Streetsville Review*. They paint a picture of a dynamic farming community whose centre was the Methodist (later United) Church at Britannia and the Centre Road.

The original name of the community was Gardner's Corners or Gardner's Crossing. Joseph Gardner and his sons were pioneers here and thus founders of the community and the church. It was not named Britannia until the Post Office was so named in the 1860's. Early records usually refer to Gardner's Church.

The other main institution in the community was the one-room red brick school, known as S.S. No.12, Toronto Township School. It served the community from 1852 to 1959. It replaced a log school which was functioning as early as 1829 and a frame school built in the 1830's.

Britannia had a blacksmith shop, a post office, and, eventually, a gas station. There is no record of a retail store or community hall. I found one reference to a "hotel" but there is no corroborating evidence. Britannia had a Loyal Orange Lodge but no lodge hall. L.O.L. meetings were held in the Streetsville Hall. There was a temperance organization but no Sons of Temperance Hall. Temperance meetings were held in the Church.

At the church there was an active Sunday school, an Epworth League, and a Ladies Aid although there was no Women's Institute. Britannia women belonged to neighboring institutes.

Social activities centred on the church and Sunday school. Concerts, picnics, box socials, and garden parties were very popular. The latter were always held at the homes of church members. There were several Roman Catholic families in the community who always participated in these social activities. Special celebrations were held at the church for Thanksgiving, Easter, and Christmas. The church was always decorated by a corps of volunteers.

Skating and sleighing were perennial winter favorites. In the 1890's bicycling became extremely popular. The community also organized football, hockey, and baseball teams which played the teams of neighbouring communities such as Meadowvale. I found no record of a Britannia lacrosse team but Britannia inhabitants did play for the Brampton team.

Weddings and receptions usually took place at home. The Methodist minister always officiated. Niagara Falls and New York City were popular honeymoon destinations.

A demonstration farm operated at Britannia during World War I but very few details are available about this project. Many farmers became well-known breeders of poultry, cattle and horses. They were also known for their excellent crops of corn and wheat. Milk production was a major activity.

As time went on, many farmers supplemented their incomes with activities such as road work, threshing and insurance sales. They patronized Fall Fairs and agricultural organizations. The only commercial farming company came later with Leaver's.

Inhabitants were well aware of events beyond their own community. Several Britannia men served on the Toronto Township and Peel County Councils and the Liberal or Conservative bias of each family was well-known. During the 19th Century inhabitants visited places as diverse as Texas, The Klondike, and Chicago. Events such as the American Civil War were well-known to them. The outpouring of patriotism during the Boer War (1899-1902) and World War I (1914-1918) is clearly reflected in their activities. I am aware of five men who were serving overseas in 1918.

Although the articles frequently describe mundane events such as the arrival of "La Grippe" and visits to the city, a concern for friends and neighbours is a constant theme.

I hope that this will supplement the books written by Ben Madill and the land records compiled by him. When time permits I hope to gather the articles for Part II, 1930-1960. Future plans also include an index for both parts.

Summer/Early Fall 2013

The Summer Garden

Karen Simmons

Whenever we are working in the garden during the week, employees from the board office often wander through while on a break. They always comment about how great the garden looks, and how much they enjoy it. That makes all the hard work seem worthwhile. The roses and sweet peas bloom vigorously, and the annuals add lots of colour to the east of the perennial garden. There is quite a change from week to week, as different perennials come into bloom.

We have had an ongoing battle with the weeds, particularly thistles and burdock, which seem to develop faster than anything else, and were drowning the roses and berry patches. Next year we will try to recruit a larger group of volunteer weeders, each to care for just a small section on a regular basis. More about that next spring.

We are sad to report that a casual visitor has picked all the blueberries and black currants. This is a disappointing repeat from last year, when not only the berries, but many of the vegetables and orchard fruits also disappeared. As a result, visiting school children were deprived of the experience of harvesting and sampling the garden produce.



This summer we have a new garden shed. It stores all the tools that used to share the "outhouse" with the squirrels. Working in the garden is now much easier with quick access to equipment. With its bright south facing window, the schoolmistress and schoolmaster will be able to start seedlings in the spring with the visiting students.

E-mailed Newsletters

If you are not already doing so, why not consider receiving your newsletters by email. This helps us save the cost of paper, printing and postage and also is kinder to the environment. Contact dlcook@rogers.com and put "Emailed Newsletter" in the subject box to make this arrangement.

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.

**Check our website often for the latest information.
www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org**

Summer/Early Fall 2013

Our Open Sundays

Here is our schedule for the coming year. Please note there are no Open Sundays in July and August.

| DATE | WHAT'S HAPPENING |
|----------|--|
| Sept 8 | Back to School! Experience the fun of a one room schoolhouse. Write on a slate, take part in a Spelling Bee, learn the punishments for misbehaviour! |
| Oct 13 | Harvest Time! We will check out the school veggie garden. Make a cornucopia filled with vegetables (paper ones!!!). |
| Nov 10 | Canada Remembers! We are proud to honour our many Armed Forces men and women. See our display of medals, photos and newspaper articles about these brave soldiers. |
| Dec 8 | A Victorian Christmas!_Open House & Sale! See the schoolhouse decorated in its Christmas splendor. Make a Christmas ornament to decorate your home. There will be a limited amount of our items available for sale– toys, notecards, beeswax candles etc.! |
| Jan 12 | Sir John A. MacDonald! Come and learn about Canada's First Primeminister. Help to celebrate his birthday January 11!!!! |
| Feb 9 | Valentine's Day! Learn about the history of Valentine's Day, read and listen to some Valentine stories, then make a card for your special Valentine! |
| Mar 9 | Think Green! Celebrate everything Green from Shamrocks to the green grass sprouting (we hope!) Do you have a green thumb? |
| April 13 | Spring is in the Air! Can you see anything in our garden yet?Do you see any insects? Make a daffodil or a lily to decorate your home! |
| May 11 | Mother's Day! Take your Mom for a tour of theSchoolhouse Garden. Then learn about the meaning of some of our flowers. Plant a seed for your Mom. |
| June 8 | 2014 Father's Day!! Bring your dad to the schoolhouse for some fun. Play horseshoes, try the stilts or any of our other Victorian games! |