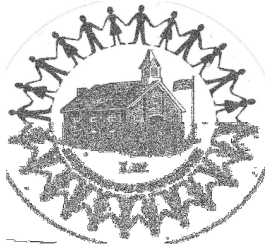


# The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959  
restored 1982

Winter 2012



## 2011-2012 Schedule of Events

Nov. 17,18 Christmas Sales,  
Peel Board office atrium  
Dec. 4 Christmas Open House  
Feb. 11 Heritage Brampton  
June 27 Strawberry Social  
July 1 Canada Day City Hall  
July 17 Lemonade on the Lawn

## School Visits

November 2011 112 students  
December 2011 240 students  
January 2012 266 students

## 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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[www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org](http://www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org)

## Do You Remember When?



Former Britannia students  
Ben Madill and Lis Braun

Our Christmas Open House is a wonderful time for visitors to see the schoolhouse decorated in Victorian finery and for friends to reconnect. We caught these two reminiscing about their school days. Ben Madill and Lis Braun both attended S.S.#12 with Lis enrolling 30 years after Ben had started school. They were obviously enjoying stories of those childhood days. Here is what Lis recalled of the conversation.

*Ben was telling me that it was 90 years ago (Sept. 1921) since he started school at OBS and then I did some mental calculations and said that in January 2012, it would be 60 years ago since I started at OBS. My family arrived from Denmark in early December 1951 so that was why I started in January at OBS. We lived across the road from the Ellis Farmhouse. Because I could not speak English, Miss Robinson put me in grade one instead of grade 3. As I learned the language I gradually caught up with my age group.*

*So, Ben and I were just enjoying a little trip down memory lane.*

Those memories are so important in keeping the history of the schoolhouse alive.

Winter 2012

*From the Chair*

Shirley Hoad

At this time of year the activities at the Old Britannia Schoolhouse have slowed, although the program in the school is busy with daily visits by students. The Friends are busy at a few activities, namely Heritage Day on February 12 and the regular Open Sundays at the Schoolhouse. And at our meetings we are planning for our spring and summer activities which will be upon us sooner than we think.

Perhaps you have noticed several signs on the roadways near the former settlement of Britannia. They feature a picture of Old Britannia Schoolhouse and are placed at the approximate borders of the settlement. They were erected by the City of Mississauga as a reminder of the many small hamlets that grew into the present City of Mississauga. For Britannia, look for a sign westbound on Britannia Road, east of Hurontario, and westbound on Britannia just west of Mavis. There is also a sign on the northbound side of Mavis just north of Eglinton Avenue. Some of the other settlements such as Clarkson, Erindale and Port Credit have been identified with signage. Keep your eyes open and see how many you can spot.

The Friends are happy to recognize the milestones in the lives of Ben and Marjorie Madill. There is more information elsewhere in this newsletter. They are a vital part of our group and we wish them all the best.



Last summer the CBC spent a day at the Britannia Schoolhouse filming for a new TV movie, Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town. At the time I wrote a piece for this newsletter and we had hopes that their effort on that day and beyond would result in a successful series. On Sunday, February 12 on CBC TV the movie became a reality! With an all Canadian cast and using local settings such as Muskoka and Elora as well as our schoolhouse, this should be a must see for all of us if it does become a series.

The outhouse specially built by the CBC property crew for scenes at the schoolhouse.

I hope you will note that we are having one of our monthly meetings in the evening in April in hopes of attracting more of you to come and see what we are planning for the schoolhouse and how you can become more involved. I am looking forward to meeting you.

*An Invitation*

This is a special invitation for members to join the Friends of the Schoolhouse committee. We are always looking for new volunteers with new ideas to help us plan activities that will support and maintain the schoolhouse and its program. We meet on the second Tuesday of every month from 4 to 6 pm. Most of the committee members are able to attend every meeting but this is not required. Some go south for the winter or take trips so may miss a few meetings a year. We can offer you an interesting and rewarding experience along with great light refreshments at each meeting. **Please contact Shirley Hoad, [shoad@bell.net](mailto:shoad@bell.net), to volunteer.**

*From the Schoolmistress*

Christine Chapel

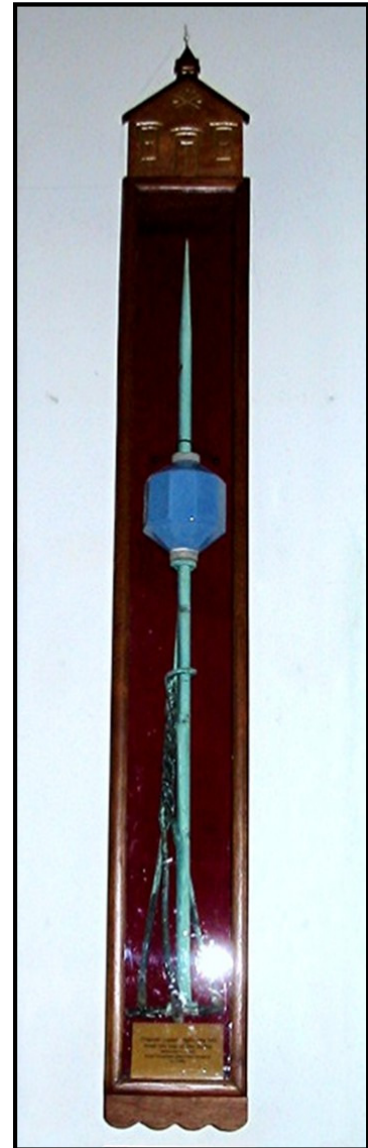
There are many artifacts in the Schoolhouse that are the source of a number of queries from students and other visitors. I thought I would discuss one item that elicits many questions - the “thing that looks like the CN Tower” hanging on the back wall. This is an original lightning rod that sat atop the Schoolhouse roof.

Lightning rods first came into use in the mid 1700’s as a means of protecting buildings from fire started by a lightning strike. Benjamin Franklin first began forming the idea in 1749. His studies on electricity lead him to believe that a pointed metal rod installed on the roof of tall buildings would draw the lightning from the clouds thus giving us a degree of control over strikes. Lightning rods are connected to heavy gauge copper or aluminum wire that runs down the side of a building to a metal grid under ground that diffuses the energy. Although they do not draw lightning from the cloud they do provide a highly conductive means for transferring the electricity.

Franklin’s pointed lightning rod design began springing up on buildings throughout the colonies. His colleagues in England had also been working on prototypes but preferred a blunt tipped design. In fact, blunt lightning rods had been installed on King George III residence. Lightning rods became a political statement. Those in the colonies who had pointed rods on their buildings were seen to be in support of Ben Franklin and modern, innovative thinking. Those who chose the blunt nosed rods were considered to be loyal supporters of the King and his ideas.

Another interesting feature of the rods is the porcelain balls situated part way down the length of the lightning rod. These balls, of different shapes and colours, served as decoration but also as a means of determining whether lightning had struck. If the balls were shattered, it was a sure indication that there had been a strike. This may explain why these balls are so collectable today, and difficult to find. The blue ball on our lightning rod is an early Canadian one that was donated to replace the original.

The Schoolhouse is no longer in need of a lightning rod on its roof. There are many taller objects in close proximity to the Schoolhouse and fire code laws have made it necessary to bring in other fire safety measures . Hanging on the wall as it does now though, the Schoolhouse lightning rod makes for an interesting point of discussion.



*SLATE - So Let's All Talk Education  
...in the one-room schoolhouse*

Eva Ardiel

Several of the “Friends”, as well as Schoolmistress Chapel and Schoolmaster Hogan, are looking forward to attending the annual SLATE Conference and Workshop on April 16<sup>th</sup>, this year held in Prince Edward County.

It is surprising how many restored schoolhouses there are around the province and, as we have discovered, in New York State. Many are a part of a larger museum or pioneer type village while others are a unit onto themselves like our Britannia Schoolhouse. Some provide a role playing programme similar to ours with a schoolmaster or mistress, while others are a portion of a site tour with an interpreter. Some are restored to a specific decade, while others represent a broader timeline. Attending the SLATE Conferences at various locations over the years has been very interesting and enlightening.

**A bit about SLATE and its history:**

The seed for SLATE was sown in 1986 at the new reproduction Century Schoolhouse built by the East York Board of Education. While the appointed schoolmaster waited for the schoolhouse to be ready for class visits, he had a chance to visit a number of other museums and restored schoolhouses (including The Old Britannia Schoolhouse) as he prepared his own classroom and programme. He felt that the opportunity to interact with others involved in similar situations was invaluable to him. He was motivated, therefore, to invite the people he had visited to come to see his new “old” schoolhouse on Monday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1986 and to exchange programme information, materials and concerns. Ten people attended representing nine locations. An invitation was extended to meet the following April at The Old Britannia Schoolhouse and it was decided that others would be contacted who might like to attend.

On Monday, April 13, 1987 Britannia Schoolhouse hosted a “Gathering of Schoolmasters, Schoolmistresses, Museum Personnel and Others Interested In or Involved with Early Education Programmes”. About 30 people attended. At the 1988 gathering at the Oxford County Museum School it was suggested that, when thinking of an artifact most characteristic of early schools, “**slate**” comes to mind. Used as an acronym **SLATE** could suggest **So Let's All Talk Education ... in the one-room schoolhouse.**

So, - **SLATE** we became!

SLATE has continued to meet for a day in April every year at various locations around the province, except in 1997 when no conference was held and in 2007 and 2010 when the group met at locations in New York State. In 2002 The Old Britannia Schoolhouse hosted SLATE again. Attendance after the first 1986 gathering has ranged from 25 to 75 persons. In some cases the number attending is limited by the capacity of the one-room schoolhouse that is hosting.

The purpose of SLATE is to:

- Create a forum for persons involved with one-room schoolhouses (or similar) to communicate, to share information, knowledge, resources and experiences
- Promote integrity and accuracy in schoolhouse interpretation and programming
- Provide the framework to hold an annual conference and workshop

Membership is open to persons who express an interest in the purposes of SLATE and who are associated with a one-room schoolhouse, or similar, in some manner. There is no membership fee. Members are entitled to receive notice of the annual conference and to inclusion in the e-mail communication network.

**SLATE 2012** is on Monday, April 16 at the Victoria Schoolhouse and the Ameliasburg Museum and Pioneer Village in Ameliasburg, Prince Edward County. It is sponsored by Quinte Educational Museum and Archives.

For more information: [www.qema1978.com](http://www.qema1978.com)



*Evening Meeting of The Friends of the Schoolhouse*



On Tuesday, April 10, 2012 The Friends of the Schoolhouse monthly meeting will be held in the evening. In an attempt to attract members who wish to participate in our meetings but find the regular time of 4 – 6 pm. difficult to attend, we will convene at 7:00 p.m. The location will still be The Old Britannia Schoolhouse, and there should be plenty of parking in the Board Office lot by this time.



At our monthly meetings we review events and matters that have occurred since the last get together, and plan our future activities. In April the main discussion point will be preparing for the activities around the schoolhouse in the spring. Of particular importance will be the preparation of our Victorian Garden after its winter rest. The garden has become a highlight for the students attending the class and any visitors who come by. All the work is done by volunteers, and we will be looking to find more willing hands to accomplish this.



Our agenda is always open to New Business if there are any questions which you have. We are always looking for new ideas to keep The Schoolhouse in the eyes of the public.



As always our meetings include light refreshments, and a time to talk to others who are interested in maintaining The Old Britannia Schoolhouse site.



If you are interested in attending this meeting (Tues., April 10, 2012) please contact Shirley Hoad, [shoad@bell.net](mailto:shoad@bell.net) or 905-821-9262, by April 3.



Winter 2012

### *From the Retired Teachers of Ontario*

Dennis Taylor

There are two events that have connected the Retired Teachers of Ontario, District 39 in Peel with the Friends of the Old Britannia Schoolhouse. Many teachers, active and retired, have taken a great interest in the history of Peel and The Old Britannia Schoolhouse.

Last year, the Retired Teachers of Ontario gave a grant to the Friends to assist in the preservation of some of the old school wall maps at Britannia. These maps have been preserved and are displayed at the schoolhouse. On March 15, 2012 at 10:00 a.m. members of District 39 have been invited to the schoolhouse to not only see those maps, but also the schoolhouse itself and to get a glimpse into the program that operates out of the schoolhouse. This visit will take place during the March Break and gives the Friends not only a chance to thank District 39 for the grant, but also a wonderful opportunity to showcase all that is ongoing at Britannia Schoolhouse.

On February 9, 2012 Matthew Wilkinson from Heritage Mississauga made a presentation about the War of 1812 and the involvement of residents in the area in that war. Since the area was just beginning to develop and battles were fought in other places, it is often thought that residents had little or no involvement and even heritage Mississauga thought that there were few residents that would have been veterans of that war. In his initial research, Matthew's list grew from a known seven to over fifty-one who served and distinguished themselves. Most were attached to a militia group and fought on other sites. In his interesting and well developed presentation, "They Also Served" Matthew not only had pictures, but details of the battles and the people themselves. Heritage Mississauga has attempted to not only identify, but to honour those veterans in this the two hundredth anniversary of this conflict. District 39 was privileged to be first group to enjoy this presentation.

### *Heritage Brampton*

Ruth Taylor

On a blustery day, eight hearty volunteers from Friends of the Schoolhouse headed to Bramalea City Centre on February 11 to participate in Heritage Brampton. Many of our old-fashioned toys were on display, as well as Joan Reid's display boards "Architecture of the Schoolhouse" and "The Living Classroom." It was a very busy "hands on" day as the toys, including the skittles game, proved to be very popular, and as the volunteers tried to keep some semblance of order. Eva Ardiel, who dressed in her school mistress costume, added a touch of authenticity.

**Have you renewed your membership for 2012?  
Renewal forms are on our website.**

**Check our website often for the latest information. [www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org](http://www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org)**



*Past Meets Present*

Christine Chapel

The Britannia Schoolhouse is now a Bronze certified EcoCentre! EcoCentres is a program that was designed for education centres like the Schoolhouse. The purpose for its development is to help facilities decrease their carbon footprint by making more environmentally sound choices while modeling environmental citizenship to visitors. Centres work through a number of criteria, for instance waste management , that help them become more aware of their everyday practices and encourage them to adopt behaviours that are considered to be more environmentally sound.

The very nature of the Schoolhouse and its historical theme also makes it an excellent example of modern day environmental thinking. From our rain barrel to our gardens and locally grown food, from the building’s design which captures natural light and heat to the composting of students’ lunch items, the Schoolhouse already was a fine example of sustainable living. We will continue to offer visitors a living history day of life in a bygone era at the Schoolhouse while being modern day examples of sound environmental practice. Past meets present. Our EcoCentres status shows that we are being recognized for the good things we are doing, not only in the name of history but for the health of our planet as well.

*A Madill Celebration*

Shirley McFarlane



Ben and Marj Madill celebrated 65 years of marriage on Feb. 14th and Marj celebrated her 90th birthday on Feb. 22. In honour of these special occasions, they enjoyed a family dinner at the Crossroads Restaurant in Elmira on Sunday, Feb. 19th.

If all goes well, Ben will be turning 97 on his spring birthday, May 20. They are both enjoying life in Fergus and still keeping active.

Marj and Ben celebrating their 60th anniversary.

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*Calling All Gardeners!*  
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We’re looking forward to Spring and another gardening season. The schoolhouse garden is an important—and beautiful—part of our historic site. Though not the sort of landscaping that would have been found in the yard of a one room school, it does represent the kind of cottage garden children might have known at home.

Volunteers are needed to help maintain our gardens. If you love gardening and can give a few hours a month from April to October, we would love to have your help. Contact our volunteer convenor Corina Proeller at [proellers@rogers.com](mailto:proellers@rogers.com) for information.

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### *Christmas Events*



Many friends of the schoolhouse, some who had never visited before, enjoyed our annual Open House and Sale.



Ben and George



Sales were brisk

On Open Sunday visitors were treated to the sights and scents of the season. The schoolroom was draped with fragrant boughs of cedar and pine. A large fir tree was decorated with an assortment of Victorian style ornaments. Opportunities to make an ornament and to try some of the schoolroom games were provided. At both events, everyone enjoyed the Christmas cheer with tea, cider and cookies.

### *Valentine's Day Open Sunday*

Our Open Sunday in February was busy with children and adults alike making valentine cards for a special person. Two children made cards for their grandmother and then were off to deliver them. We displayed samples of old Victorian valentine cards to inspire creativity.



Visitors also enjoyed exploring the classroom and its artifacts. One was a teacher-in-training planning a field trip for students. Another was particularly interested in our old maps which have been preserved.



There is always an interesting program planned for Open Sundays. Please join us.

### *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](mailto: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.

### *Membership Drive*

While the New Year is still young, please consider renewing your membership. Many thanks to those who have already renewed. Your continued support is much appreciated and enables the Friends of the Schoolhouse to carry on their valuable work in preserving and expanding the programs for the students who visit. We welcome new members. **Membership forms can be downloaded from our website: [www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org](http://www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org)**