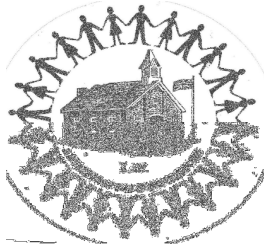


# The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959 restored 1982

Winter 2013



## Coming Events

Open Sundays: March 10  
 April 14  
 May 12  
 June 9

## School Visits

November 2012 271 students  
 December 2012 61 students  
 January 2013 97 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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## Heritage Gardens

Karen Simmons

Winter gives us a holiday from weeding and pruning, but gives us plenty of time to plan for next gardening season. It will be fun to organize our new garden shed. We will put down an easy-care flooring, and put up shelving and hooks to store supplies and tools.

The garden had such a good clean up in the fall, that there will be less to tackle in the spring. We still plan to have Saturday morning work sessions in late April and early May. Hopefully we will be able to continue to regenerate the perennial gardens with more clearing and new plantings. Anyone who wishes to help is more than welcome. We usually have a good crew of both adults and students. Closer to the time, we will send out notices to those already on our volunteer list, and post information on our web site.

Meanwhile, in the spring, watch for bursts of yellow everywhere from all the daffodil bulbs that have been planted. They will compete with the dandelions in the lawn!



The shed base is done



The new shed awaits Spring

## Join us in the Garden

Winter is still with us and Christmas is a distant memory (more about Christmas later), but we have already started planning our garden activities. We gaze out the schoolroom windows at our new shed and imagine working in the garden with tools organized and easily accessible. No more digging through an overcrowded outhouse to find the spade. The gardening committee would be delighted to have you join them. Contact Karen Simmons (simmonska@aol.com) if you are interested.

## Winter 2013

### From the Chair

Ruth Taylor

The Christmas season was a busy one for Friends of the Schoolhouse as we held sales at the board office and schoolhouse. The schoolhouse had been festively decorated with a Fraser fir tree festooned with Victorian decorations, as well as with evergreen boughs and crepe paper chains and window twists.

We have now had our Open Sundays for January and February. We participated in Heritage Brampton at Bramalea City Centre on February 9 with our display of old-fashioned toys.

From the schoolhouse window we can see the snow blanketing the yard and gardens. But Warton Willy has assured us that we will be having an early spring. So we can start to think ahead to the flower gardens awakening and plants starting to poke through the soil warmed by the strengthening sun. As well Schoolmistress Chapel and Schoolmaster Hogan will be pouring over the seed catalogues in preparation for planting the vegetable gardens. As the seasons change, the focus of our activities will change.

### Sales Committee: Annual Sale of our Wares

Eva Ardiel



Chris wrote a Christmas message for the Open House

The Friends' "clearance of our merchandise" was very successful! On Thursday, November 22 and Friday, November 23 we set up nine sales tables in the atrium at H.J.A Brown Education Centre. All items were marked down in price and business was brisk, - resulting in record sales. All of the remaining merchandise was offered for sale at the annual Open House at the schoolhouse on Sunday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Again sales were excellent.

After these two "clearance" events our inventory has been reduced dramatically and most items are no longer available. However, we have saved a number of great toys for showing and trying out at our various events, as well as for possible use at the schoolhouse.

Thanks are extended to everyone who helped with the sales tables at the Board Office and at Open House. Special thanks go to Jean Robinson and Karen Simmons for helping to transport all the boxes, to Joan Moon for helping with the Saturday set-up for Sunday's Open House and to Margaret Storey and Karen Simmons for making more candles and angels in time for Open House.

We sincerely thank everyone who has supported the schoolhouse by purchasing our merchandise over the years. We truly appreciate the enthusiasm shown for our collection of old fashioned toys, games and other unusual items.

The Sales Committee will still have a few items for sale. How extensive an inventory we will offer has yet to be determined. The committee will meet soon to determine what our new direction will look like.



Marc serenaded as we decorated

## **From the Schoolmistress**

Christine Chapel

Over the past several months there has been a marked decline in the number of students that have visited the Schoolhouse. The dispute between teachers and the Ontario government led to, amongst other things, the cancellation of all field trips. As a result, the Schoolhouse attendance numbers are down significantly.

Schoolmaster Hogan and I have not been sitting idly though. We have put this time to good use reviewing our existing programs, creating in-school presentations and checking off numerous items on our long to-do list.

This break has also allowed us time to dig into a little historical research, which we both enjoy doing. The passing of Sir John A. Macdonald's birthday January 11 and Robbie Burns Day on the 25<sup>th</sup> gave us the impetus to read more on the lives of these men. Women's suffrage, the origin of Valentine's Day, life in Canada immediately pre and post WWI, some local history and the Britannia Schoolhouse itself have all been topics of inquiry and discussion. We even delved into the history of teachers' unions in Ontario!

Interestingly, it was several women's teacher organizations that had formed, beginning in the late 1800's, that came together in 1918 to form the Federation of Women Teachers of Ontario (FWTAO). The Ontario Public School Men's Teachers' Federation (OPSMTF) formed in 1920. These two groups joined forces with the secondary teachers in 1935 to establish the Ontario Teachers' Council (OTC). In 1944 this became the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF).

Great strides have been made over the years to improve what had at one time been quite appalling working conditions for teachers. Improvements have reflected shifts in societal attitudes towards education, teaching as a profession and women in the work force.

As always, learning opportunities arise out of just about any situation in life. This period of job action has allowed us to explore more about the history of the world around us which ultimately informs our attitudes, opinions and beliefs in the present.

## **A Christmas Story**

Christine Chapel

The week before Christmas break the Schoolhouse was visited by unexpected and most welcome guests. Two of Santa's elves came to call in the hopes of fulfilling the Christmas wish of a little girl.

Brooke came to the Schoolhouse with her class in November. As always, during recess, just as the students from long ago, the children had an opportunity to start up a boisterous game of baseball, swing on the swings, use the trundling and graces hoops and, often most exciting of all, try walking on stilts. This, as it turns out, was Brooke's favourite activity; so much so, in fact, that stilts was the only item she put on her Christmas wish list.

Legendary toy makers that they are, the elves felt that it was paramount to make Brooke's stilts to the precise specifications of those used at the Schoolhouse. We were delighted to show the stilts and allow them to take photos and measurements to take back to the workshop with them. They left happy and full of assurances that Brooke's Christmas wish would indeed be fulfilled.

Winter 2013

## Joan Reid's Research

Eva Ardiel

Joan Reid worked for several years researching the one-room schools and school sections in the five townships of Peel. Her plan was to publish a book or books on these former schools in Peel. Friends of the Schoolhouse now have her files of researched material and are determined that her work is not lost and that it can be available to the public in some form.

A committee was formed to this end which included several Friends of the Schoolhouse, Eva Ardiel, Lis Braun, Daryl Cook, Cathy Harper, Shirley Hoad, Jean Robinson, Margaret Storey, Schoolmistress Chris Chapel and Schoolmaster Marc Hogan as well as Kyle Neill from Peel Archives and Matthew Wilkinson from Heritage Mississauga. The committee met in January to assess what material there is, consider possibilities and begin a plan of action.

We have Joan's boxes with the files of material she collected on each of the school sections in Toronto Township, Toronto Gore Township, Chinguacousy Township, Caledon Township and Albion Township.

In addition we have the material she had ready, or almost ready, for publishing. This included all but one or two of the former schools in Toronto Township, Toronto Gore Township and Caledon Township, - 56 schools and almost 2000 pages of material in all.

The committee decided that our first task should be to make sure the material Joan had ready, or almost ready, for publishing is secure. It was therefore decided that two copies be made of the material on those 56 schools. These copies would be kept secure at the Peel Archives, one copy of which the Friends could have access to at any time. It was decided later that we should get the material digitized. Therefore, as well as the two copies, we are having digital files made from which we can make prints or edit by whole page if desired. We will also have a digital file of the print only which can be edited.

The committee will meet again in March to consider our next action.

The donations that Friends of the Schoolhouse received in memory of Joan are appreciated very much and are assisting us with this worthwhile project.



Joan's Book Committee with her boxes of research material. Left to right: Lis Braun, Jean Robinson, Eva Ardiel, Daryl Cook, Marg Storey, Cathy Harper, Kyle Neill, Shirley Hoad, Matthew Wilkinson

## Christmas Decorating at the Old Britannia Schoolhouse

Jean Robinson

At the end of November every year, some Friends of The Schoolhouse get together to decorate The Schoolhouse as it would have looked when The Schoolhouse was an integral part of the Britannia village community.

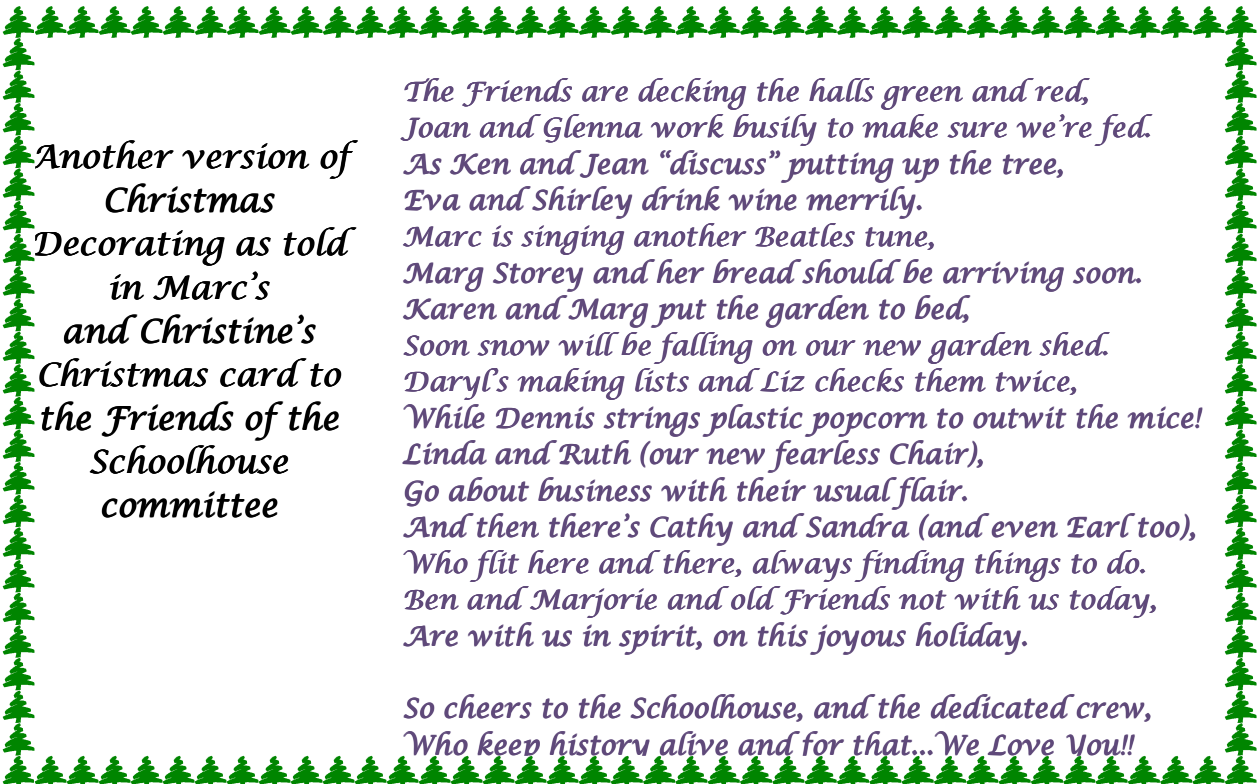
We haul in a fragrant fir tree, not from the woods in back of The Schoolhouse, but from a local garden centre and decorate it with paper ornaments that, in bygone times, would have been made by the children of the school, but are now lovingly prepared by talented Friends. Many years ago, we had to abandon the fresh popcorn and cranberry strings that used to adorn the tree and settle for a non-edible variety that is not so tasty to the little meadow creatures that make their home in The Schoolhouse once the cold weather arrives.

The blackboards are topped with pine and cedar swags draped with red and green paper chains. The windows are decorated with red and white streamers. We hang a pine and cedar wreath on the inside of the classroom door and place urns filled with evergreen boughs and native grasses on either side of the outside doors.

After all the hard work we sit down to a bowl of chili with lots of salads, followed by home-made sweets, because, as one recent visitor to our monthly meetings remarked, "The Friends always follow up work with food!"

The Schoolhouse looked very festive and provided inspiration for lessons about Christmas traditions in the Victorian Era. Many thanks to all who participated in this event, your hard work and dedication is always appreciated.

If you wish to be included next November, please contact me (905 826 3475) and let me know what you are prepared to do.



*Another version of  
Christmas  
Decorating as told  
in Marc's  
and Christine's  
Christmas card to  
the Friends of the  
Schoolhouse  
committee*

*The Friends are decking the halls green and red,  
Joan and Glenna work busily to make sure we're fed.  
As Ken and Jean "discuss" putting up the tree,  
Eva and Shirley drink wine merrily.  
Marc is singing another Beatles tune,  
Marg Storey and her bread should be arriving soon.  
Karen and Marg put the garden to bed,  
Soon snow will be falling on our new garden shed.  
Daryl's making lists and Liz checks them twice,  
While Dennis strings plastic popcorn to outwit the mice!  
Linda and Ruth (our new fearless Chair),  
Go about business with their usual flair.  
And then there's Cathy and Sandra (and even Earl too),  
Who flit here and there, always finding things to do.  
Ben and Marjorie and old Friends not with us today,  
Are with us in spirit, on this joyous holiday.*

*So cheers to the Schoolhouse, and the dedicated crew,  
Who keep history alive and for that... We Love You!!*

## The Old Britannia Schoolhouse at Heritage Day in Brampton

Jean Robinson

Friends of the Schoolhouse participated in the Heritage Day at the Bramalea City Centre on Saturday, February 9, 2012.

The old fashioned wooden toys and interesting pastimes such as the flip books and other early animation devices and the skittles game are always a fascination for the visitors.

Our display boards this year featured the families of Britannia, including the Madills and Duntons as well as others, the history of Britannia Schoolhouse with lots of colour photographs of the schoolhouse and its surroundings, and the schoolhouses of Chinguacousy which features many of the schoolhouses close to Bramalea City Centre.

The skittles game is a very early form of bowling played with small pins in a wooden "alley" on a table. Instead of a ball as in ten pin bowling, a small tack-like wooden striker is hurled down the "alley". The object of the game is to get the highest score by knocking down the pins. Each pin sits on a numbered circle. The origins of skittle games seem to go back to the monks in Germany. It is said to have been played in pubs in England, mainly in the west, north west and the midlands and like most pub games seemed to involve a wager or two.

In preparation for writing this article, I "googled" skittles and found much interesting information including a site where you can order you own skittles game on line! Who knew!

Our skittles game is a beautiful wooden one which many people enjoy. We will probably have it set up for play at the Open House at the schoolhouse on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1 to 4 pm when we feature old games and give visitors an opportunity to play them.

It is always fun to visit the north of the county and to meet people interested in the heritage of Peel. Thanks to all the dedicated volunteers, including two amazing student volunteers, who disseminated information about the schoolhouse and its program, explained and played the skittles game, chased escaping marbles and generally represented the schoolhouse in the best possible way. Your help is always appreciated.

(Weather Person, please arrange NOT to have a snowstorm on or the day before Heritage Day next year!)



The skittles table



You just hold the peg and pull the string—not so easy!

## News from Japan

Former schoolmaster Dennis Patterson keeps in touch with the Friends of the Schoolhouse from his family's home in Okinawa, Japan. He and his wife Yukiko and their daughter Nanami are enjoying their new life. Dennis is teaching elementary school in a quite different atmosphere from being schoolmaster in a living history schoolroom. Living among palm trees and walking ocean beaches is a nice change from cold winters and shovelling snow.

When he was schoolmaster Dennis introduced a number of new activities which the current schoolmaster, schoolmistress and members of the Friends are carrying on. The vegetable garden he started grew larger each year. Students had the experience of seeing some of the plants started from seed on the schoolroom window sills, then grow to seedlings big enough to plant in the garden. Dennis, we're sure, would be envious of the new garden shed/greenhouse that Chris and Marc will be using this year.

We enjoy hearing from Dennis and hope that sometime he and his family will travel back to Canada to visit us.



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

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)**

Winter 2013

**Some Interesting Statistics**

Christine mentioned in her article (page 3) the research she and Marc have been doing. Here is some information about teachers during the Britannia Schoolhouse years.

**Full Time Teachers in Ontario  
Elementary and secondary schools  
During the Britannia Schoolhouse years**

Year	Male	Female	Total
1959	14,434	30,937	46,971
1950	7,919	18,238	26,202
1940	6,460	15,369	21,829
1930	3,777	15,989	19,766
1920	2,101	13,266	15,457
1910	2,145	9,871	12,016
1900	2,648	7,126	10,073
1890	3,039	6,781	8,820
1880	3,709	3,920	7,620
1870	2,859	2,870	5,729
1867	2,905	2,381	6,286

***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, to volunteer.**

***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**