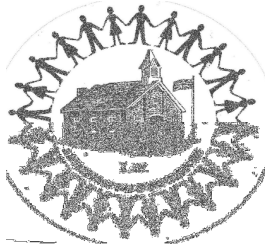


The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959
restored 1982

Winter 2015



Coming Events

Open Sundays:

March 8 Quilts
April 12 Games
May 10 Mothers' Day

School Visits

December 2014 243
January 2015 388

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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Some Special Visitors

Shirley Hoad

As part of our outreach to the community, last November the Friends of the Schoolhouse received a group of adults from the Alzheimer's Society Daycare Centre. Arriving in their own bus, and bundled up against the early cold weather, the group with their two care givers came to The Old Britannia Schoolhouse for the morning. With the guidance of three of the Friends, the ladies and one gentleman were given a tour of the classroom and had an opportunity to sit in the desks and become students again. A spelling bee and a bit of mental arithmetic were enjoyed, as well as a chance to reminisce about their school days. Coming from several countries, they could recall memories of their childhood days in their schools.

Although quiet when at the Schoolhouse, one of the attendants told us later that they couldn't stop talking about their trip when they returned to the Daycare Centre for their lunch. It is hoped that future visits can be arranged particularly when the weather will be warmer and the gardens at their prime.

Ben's Corner



The body goes through three stages in a life time. First the growing stage, next the productive stage and then the aging stage of life. By the age of 65 years, the body is reaching the end of its productive years. Some people are blessed with excellent health and have a long retirement and others are not so fortunate. I think I have been one of the fortunate ones. Although not as active after 65, it was not until after 80 years of age did I start to realize that the clock was beginning to tick slower.

From The Chair

Margaret Storey

I had planned to write something about winter for this newsletter. Well, Monday, February 2 turned out to be just the right sort of day to be thinking of winter -25 cm of snow overnight, schoolbuses cancelled for a number of areas and schools closed too. Now, that doesn't happen very often. It was really a beautiful winter wonderland. The trees were laden with snow and everything looked fresh and white.

I love this quote by Carew Papritz, author of *The Legacy Letters: His wife, His Children, His Final Gift*. "In reality, Little Ones, there are two winters. One made for kids; the other for adults. The one made for adults is always too cold and always too long. The one made for kids is perfect. A kid winter is an endless and wild snow carnival where all the rides are free!" How true is that. I think my seven year old grandson would agree. It didn't matter, though, how cold it was when we were kids we were outside all the time. My brother and I were talking about this two weeks ago when I went to visit him near Penetang for a few days. I had said that I do seem to remember that we always had a ton of snow. Was that just from a child's perspective? I can picture, though, one winter very clearly, when the milkman, with his metal crate of milk bottles, had to walk on top of the snow past our house to get his deliveries done. This was in Oak Ridges, so just outside of the now GTA. The road must have been ploughed or at least passable to our house, perhaps because there was a church opposite our home. Alan and I both commented that we don't remember seeing snowploughs but I suppose there must have been, at least for the main roads.

We did skate on a number of ponds nearby, after school and sometimes even after dinner as well. The older boys, always with shovels in hand, were ready to clear off the snow for the rest of us. We shovelled our driveways ready for our dads coming home from work, built snowforts, had snowball fights and yes, we did toboggan down a few hills, no helmets then!! We were just kids having fun outside in a good old-fashioned Canadian winter.

So, I will tell you that Monday afternoon, after shovelling our pathway of all that snow, I couldn't resist that lovely pristine snow on the lawn. I made a snow angel!!!

We're never too old to have a bit of fun!!!



Margaret's Snow Angel



It was a long, cold walk to the outhouse in those early years

From the Schoolmistress

Christine Chapel

February 2nd marks the halfway point between the shortest day of the year (winter solstice) and the spring equinox. During pre Christian times, candles were lit on this day (Imbolc) to celebrate the increasing hours of daylight and the renewal of life. Nature was observed for symbols of renewal, which is how the tradition of watching for a groundhog's shadow began. Should it see its shadow, six more weeks of winter. The custom was adopted by the early Christians (Candlemas Day) and brought to North America by the European settlers.

When one considers how tied we humans are to the weather, it makes sense that long before the advent of hourly weather reports and radar and satellites, people looked to the natural world for indicators and predictors of the weather. Many sayings and expressions are evidence of the attempt by people to try to understand the weather in order to plan for the future, long term and short term, particularly in the farming community. These expressions and beliefs were created over many years of observation.

Consider these expressions and their reference to plants and animals, the sun and moon:

"If March comes in like a lamb, then it will go out like a lion"

"April showers bring May flowers"

"When halo rings the moon or sun, rain's approaching on the run"

"If the rooster crows on going to bed, you may rise with a watery head"

In 1792 the first issue of what became the Old Farmer's Almanac was published in Boston under editor Robert B. Thomas as a useful and entertaining guide. Using natural cycles and his observations, Thomas created a "secret formula" for predicting weather. With its weather predictions (reportedly 80% accurate) tide tables, planting charts, articles, recipes and anecdotes, the Old Farmer's Almanac has been a trusted reference for generations. Despite the fact that modern day scientists scoff at the accuracy of the weather predictions and forecasts (claiming in fact that the Almanac has a mere 50% accuracy rate) many swear by the Almanac's forecasts and argue that even with their modern day equipment and models, meteorologists today at times don't seem to do much better.

For us at the Schoolhouse, we always walk an interesting line between the past and present. We absolutely look to nature for guidance but check on the local forecast on the radio or tv or internet before leaving home each day. One thing for certain tells us the arrival of spring is on our doorstep – the arrival of the seed catalogues! The first one arrived a few weeks ago. So, until I look out the window and see that the snow and ice are melting, the red winged blackbirds have returned and the crocus are in bloom, I'll curl up inside with a nice, hot cup of tea, poring over those catalogues. And remember...

Whether the weather be cold,
Or whether the weather be hot,
We'll weather the weather,
Whatever the weather,
Whether we like it or not!

Celebrating Sir John A. Macdonald's Birthday!

Margaret Storey

Our first Open Sunday of 2015 was held on January 11 which just happened to be the 200th birthday of Canada's first Prime Minister, The Right Honourable Sir John A. Macdonald. He was born in Glasgow, Scotland and at the age of five was brought to Canada with his parents. They settled in Kingston, Ontario. He received a good education and in 1830, at the age of only 15, he began to article in a lawyer's office in Kingston. He was, himself, called to the bar on February 6, 1836 where he began his great career. He served as Prime Minister from 1867 - 1873 and again from 1878 - 1891, a total of 19 years. Look for his face on our \$10.00 bill.

At the schoolhouse we had various newspaper articles and photos on display for our visitors. As well, the children were able to make a Sir John A. Macdonald bookmark to take home. One family came at the request of their daughter. She had been a visitor with her class and teacher, Mr. Jeff Little, from Willow Way the previous week. She had thoroughly enjoyed her day of role playing and all the activities Schoolmistress Chapel had planned for the class. Her father told me that she was so excited to tell him everything she had seen and done at the schoolhouse and wanted to bring the family back for the Open Sunday. What a great recommendation!



Our other volunteer, Ellen Christensen, helped her make a bookmark. Ellen's sister, Lis Braun, is our treasurer. Our visitors were very impressed to learn that Ellen, her brother and sister attended the Old Britannia Schoolhouse as students when they first came from Denmark. Their father was a farm manager on a farm directly across from the schoolhouse. They could walk to the schoolhouse. Hard to imagine now with the subdivision, restaurants, offices and a busy highway that surround the area. She told us that she really enjoyed her years at the schoolhouse as that was where she also learned to speak English. She could even show our visitors

where she sat, starting with the little desks.

Ellen remembers that one of the teachers would read the students a chapter in a good story book every day, right after lunch. and they all looked forward to that. Interesting to remember too, that there were pupils from Grade 1 to Grade 8 in the classroom. Another story was that if a student was talking too much and too often to the child behind them. the teacher would come up behind them and smack her book on the desk beside them so they would jump and stop talking. I bet it did! They also knew that when the teacher rang the bell and they were at the far end of the yard, they had to be quick to get back in time. Guess some things don't change.

Ellen enjoyed her afternoon volunteering at OBS as it brought back many fond memories. Our visiting students now also have fond memories of being at the schoolhouse. What more could we ask for?

Don't forget we are open for visitors the second Sunday of the month, weather permitting, except July and August. Check out our website to see what the theme is for each Sunday.

Winter 2015

Winter Garden News

Shirley Hoad

Snow! Snow! Beautiful snow! While most of us hope it will soon go away, gardeners realize its benefits. Our new garden area is covered in a white blanket but we know our newly planted shrubs are being protected with this insulating layer. Spring will bring a host of blossoms from the Mock Orange, Fragrant Viburnums, Dogwoods and Service Berries to name a few. Our daffodils should add a touch of colour too.

Plans are underway for a dedication ceremony for our new outdoor teaching area. The date and time for this will be reported later.

We are also looking for interested garden volunteers (adults and students). This is an excellent opportunity for students to acquire volunteer hours. Four Saturday mornings, usually in May, are set aside for tidying up the gardens. We look forward to seeing both novice and experienced gardeners who'd like to join us. If interested please contact Karen Simmons at karsim@rogers.com.



Heritage Brampton

Ruth Taylor

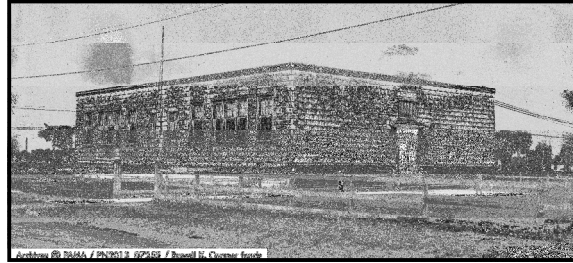
On a cold February Valentine's Day, volunteers from Friends of the Schoolhouse travelled to Bramalea City Centre to participate in Brampton Heritage Day. This year we had a new location at the Target/Old Navy end of City Centre. There are no sales at this event. We showcased our old-fashioned wooden toys. Children are always intrigued by the toys and enjoy trying them out. For some parents and grandparents, it brings back memories of things they played with in the past. We had a display highlighting the schoolhouse and a brand new one prepared by Eva Ardiel outlining the history of the Canadian flag. It was particularly pertinent since our flag is now 50 years old, as of February 15. We have paper flags to hand out, as well as flag pins and flag outlines to colour. There were a lot of smiles from the (mainly) children we presented with flags. Heritage Brampton gives Friends of the Schoolhouse a chance to publicize the Schoolhouse and Open Sundays to a steady stream of visitors. It is a worthwhile event.

It Was a Very Merry Christmas Season at the Schoolhouse



Winter 2015

One of the most unusual schools Joan Reid discovered in her research was the Victory School in Malton. It was not a one room schoolhouse but is still an interesting part of the history of Peel County.



VICTORY SCHOOL

Sandra Emerson

In January 1943, a four-room school was completed by Wartime Housing Limited on Victoria Crescent in Malton where 208 new houses were being built for the families working in local war industries. It was located across the Sixth Line (now Airport Road) from Malton Village School in Toronto Gore Township. Before that, the 40-pupil Malton Public School was trying to operate with three classrooms in its basement.

The new school remained vacant for several months while financing for its operation was being negotiated. Eventually, it was agreed that the Department of Education, Wartime Housing Limited, and Victory Aircraft would share the expense. The Councils of Toronto Gore and Toronto Townships were involved in the negotiations, but the school was not under their jurisdictions or of the three Trustees for the Malton Public School. Victory School had no taxation base in either Township. Three independent Trustees were appointed to hire teachers, purchase equipment, and supervise the day-to-day operation of the school. When the fire-resistant school finally opened in September of 1943, there were four classes: two grade-ones and two grade-twos. There were cloak-rooms, washrooms and large grounds. The enrollment was 135. Premier Drew, who was also Minister of Education, Gordon Graydon, M.P., and the Hon. T. L. Kennedy were present at the service of dedication.

Soon, additional classes had to be held in the Community Hall (known as 'The Annex' also built by Wartime Housing) and in two adjacent houses.

By 1946, the five teachers at Victory Public School were notified that there was no money to pay their salaries. The Trustees had no authority to levy taxes and were unable to obtain bank loans because they had no collateral in the form of a tax base. Eventually, the Wartime Housing Authority sent a cheque for three thousand dollars in lieu of taxes, and grants were made by the Ontario Department of Education. The issue was complicated because Victory Aircraft had been sold to a private company, A.V. Roe. who did pay taxes, but these were turned over to the Malton Board who had no authority to run the Victory School. The Inspector tried to restore confidence by pointing out that grants would continue to come from the Provincial Government.

A Home and School Association was established shortly after the school opened in 1943 and remained active with monthly meetings and numerous special events. They sponsored musical entertainments, sports gatherings, and hobby shows for the whole community. Pupils from Victory School did well in all the inter-school activity and field days, which were often held on its grounds. In 1949, approximately 700 pupils from seven other schools in the area participated in a field day.

Winter 2015

In March of 1951, a lengthy discussion took place in the Toronto Township Council Chambers in Cooksville about Malton's school accommodation problem. A spokesman from Central Mortgage and Housing stated that if the 200 wartime houses could be sold, they would be willing to sell Victory School for one dollar along with its five-acre site. They also offered an outright payment of \$40,000.00 toward a new school. Malton Public School officials decided that a new 6-room school with a kindergarten would be built for the village.

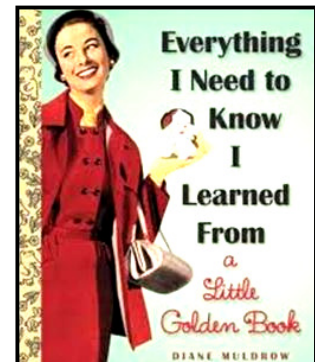
On January 1, 1952, Toronto Township School Area # 1 came into existence by order of the Ontario Municipal Board. Soon, the school area included all schools in the township north of the Baseline, what is now Eglinton Ave.

Our Adventures At The Fair

Julie Dippelhofer

At the end of January, Amy Smith and I attended the Toronto Gift Fair at the International Centre. This is Canada's largest one-stop buying venue and had over 1800 exhibitors. Eva Ardiel has gone for many years to purchase items to be sold at our sales. This is the first time Amy and I had ever attended such a venue and were thankful Eva got us all set up prior to the event. When we arrived, the space was overwhelming. There was one million square feet of displays and we were unsure where to begin. We knew we wanted to explore the storeworks "retro revival" area. It focused on blasts from the past. Vintage. Nostalgia. Retro.

We walked through numerous halls and stumbled upon a display that had exactly the items we were needing. The storekeeper looked at our badges and said "Friends of the Schoolhouse! Where's Eva!" Amy and I were so impressed with Peter's customer service. With that first sentence we knew this is someone we wanted to do business with...he knew our schoolhouse and he remembered Eva. Patience, being relatable, caring, having good product knowledge is important in customer service and Peter had all of those qualities. We shopped, stocked up on items we were getting low on and also ordered some new items. Stock should arrive in a few weeks and we look forward to sharing them at the next monthly meeting and adding them to our sales table for the Brampton Fall Fair and our Annual Christmas Open House and Sale.



Another popular booth at the Fair was Penguin Canada. Anyone attending the fair was offered 40% off the prices of books. Amy and I decided to purchase a few and we will have a book display that will also include the books by Ben and the books by Jim Chapel. In this digital age, parents still value printed books and as friends of the schoolhouse we too see the value.

Winter 2015

Open Sundays
A fun way to spend a Sunday afternoon

March 8 - Keeping Warm Quilts were very important for the early settlers. Come and see our display of quilts, some old and some newer ones. Design your own using wooden blocks.

April 12 - Victorian Games Learn about the Victorian games families liked to play both indoors and out. Try skittles, crockinole, checkers, stilt walking, hoops and more.

May 10 - Mother's Day! Take your Mom for a tour of the Schoolhouse Garden. Then make your mom a pretty posy.

Have you renewed your membership for 2015?
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

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