

The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959
restored 1982

Winter Issue 2010



Our recent activities

Christmas sales at the Board Office

Christmas Open House at the schoolhouse

Jan. 21– Presentation at Rotary Club luncheon

February 13– Heritage Brampton

Students visiting for a day

In December - 210

In January - 369

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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Winter Games

Daryl Cook

What were children and their families doing for fun on cold winter days in the late 19th and early 20th centuries? Most activities were similar to what we do today though with some differences.

Skating was popular on frozen ponds, lakes and rivers and had, in fact, been an activity from very early times when people made primitive blades out of bones and strapped them to their feet. The local rink was a favourite gathering place. Sometimes music was played to accompany the skaters. At winter skating carnivals people donned costumes for



Winter Carnival about 1916

popular on frozen ponds, lakes and rivers and had, in fact, been an activity from very early times when people made primitive blades out of bones and strapped them to their feet. The local rink was a favourite gathering place. Sometimes music was played to accompany the skaters. At winter skating carnivals people donned costumes for an evening of fun.

Hockey was well established by the late 1800's and was played either for fun as a spur of the moment after school game of "shinny" or as an organized sport. First played by British soldiers in Nova Scotia in the mid 1800's, hockey spread with the migration from the maritimes of Irish and Scottish settlers to Upper and Lower Canada. At first as many as 30 players a side could be on the ice at the same time. In 1875 standard rules similar to today's were set in Montreal.

Sledding and tobogganing were childhood favourites. The T. Eaton Company sold sleds and toboggans through its catalogues and these were popular Christmas gifts. Many sleds were homemade or were just pieces of anything that one could sit on and slide down a hill.

Snowshoeing was often a necessity to travel through the deep snow. It was also a fun way to enjoy a walk in the outdoors.

Skiing in rural communities was also a means of getting around. As a sport it was called Nordic skiing.

Curling was a very old sport developed in the 1700's in Scotland. When played on the community outdoor rink the "stones" were often tin cans of frozen water.

Local and international sports competitions led to the first Winter Olympic Games in 1924. See page 6 for more.

From the Chair

Dennis Taylor

Each time I write as chair, I always read over the previous entry and I am always surprised at the time that has elapsed and the changes of the season and the activities that occur as we move through the year. When I wrote last we were still contemplating our Halloween activity and the activities including the sales in the Peel Board Atrium and at the Schoolhouse.

We are now in the start of a new year and those activities were successful and well attended, but as always our activities are focused on the Old Britannia Schoolhouse. Our activities are more spread out in the winter months. We have one event we will be attending in February, on February 13, at Bramalea City Centre with heritage Brampton. As always the activities are to be found in more detail elsewhere in the newsletter and on our website.

The school presents itself very differently in each season. In the autumn as the days grow shorter and the fall foliage starts to show, the school seems to glow with the bright reds, oranges and yellows as those colours are a part of the school itself. Christmas, although not a separate season, is always special with the school decorated. One can almost see the children getting ready for a Christmas concert on the old platform and the anticipation of presenting something special to parents. In the cold days of winter, if you are lucky enough to see the school after a snowfall the old building stands out in the glistening white that surrounds it. In spring the school welcomes the fresh green new life and the return to longer warmer days. In the summer when the trees are in full foliage and the gardens alive with the care of both adults and children it is almost idyllic.

For those of us who choose to work at the Old Britannia Schoolhouse we often see it not only in a romantic way, but also as a link to the past and that is why we work to add and extend the program so that people may see that as well. As always we are very grateful to the Board and its employees who often go out of their way to take an active role. It is why we continue to add gardens or preserve maps, incorporate other artefacts or discover more of the history. If you think you would like to be a part of that either as a volunteer to assist in some of those special events or to work on the executive please call one of the contacts in this newsletter to find out what that entails.

Please remember, too, that if you would like to visit the schoolhouse informally, the second Sunday in each month, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., is our Open Sunday. We do have an activity for those days planned around a particular theme.



New Map Storage

We have had a number of maps restored but had no way of storing them to ensure their preservation and also to make them available for use with visiting classes. The solution was a beautiful wood frame with hooks which is permanently attached to the classroom wall. Several maps can hang from the hooks keeping them safe and on display.

From the Schoolmaster

Dennis Patterson

Variety being the spice of life; I chose a new reading lesson to teach the grade three students. The piece of writing comes from the second reader (grades 3 and 4) that was in use from 1884 to 1908 and beyond. In the story *Somebody's Mother*, a very kind young man helps an elderly woman across the street after many others pass her by without a second glance. I thought it might be a good moral to pass on to our visiting pupils. Although the reader is grade appropriate to the visiting grade three pupils, there are many words that they do not understand because they are not commonly used. We also see lots of pupils who are using English as their second language at the schoolhouse. Two good examples from this piece that students have trouble with are “throng” and “hastened”.

The schoolhouse does not have a dictionary and I do not use the internet for this type of work so off I went to the Professional Library in the Central Board Library next door. I now have decent definitions of these words from the Oxford English Dictionary.

The librarian and I wondered, 'Did one room schoolhouses typically have a dictionary?' If anyone could answer this question from their experience or research I would greatly appreciate it.

The schoolhouse has a large collection of historic books but not a historic dictionary. I would like to look up words in a dictionary 100 years old or older so the definitions I give to the students are accurate to an early Canadian schoolhouse. If anyone has a big old dictionary in decent shape that they no longer use or want I would greatly appreciate its presence in the Schoolhouse library.

Winter Games Then And Now



Winter Games in the Schoolyard
today



Snowshoe-
ing
in the early
1900's

Membership Drive

If you haven't already renewed your membership in the Friends of the Schoolhouse for 2010 it's time to do so. We welcome new members. Membership forms can be downloaded and printed from our website, www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org.

Members play a vital part in preserving the schoolhouse and maintaining and expanding the programs for children who spend a day experiencing school life of long ago. Members receive four newsletters a year, additional notices of events, and are invited to an appreciation “Lemonade on the Lawn” event in July. In addition there are opportunities to volunteer on committees and at events.

The Three R's

Daryl Cook

The three R's of the nineteenth century school - reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic have become the new three R's - reduce, reuse, recycle. But the mandate to be thrifty and respectful of our environment is certainly not new. We just seemed to have lost our way in the latter half of the 20th century. For generations people reused and repurposed things. Pails became carriers of lunches, clothes of older children or parents were remade for younger children, worn out bedding was cut up for cleaning cloths. Toys were handmade, wooden toys from wood scraps and dolls from leftover material from dressmaking. These toys were often passed down to several generations of children. Joan Reid's article tells more about the 3 R's in our modern schools.

Pointing the Way

Joan Reid

Senior citizens who attended school during World War II (1939-1945) probably remember carrying tins of bacon dripping to school for the fat salvage drives. They may also remember the packets of tin foil and the piles of bones that were destined for salvage. These were their contributions to the war effort to defeat the fascist dictatorships that dominated Europe and the Far East. Pupils at Claireville (S.S.# 5 Toronto Gore) collected milkweed pods whose fluff filled the famous "Mae West" life preservers.

Pupils in Toronto Township participated in the Junior Commando Salvage Drives which collected tons of used paper to be recycled for the war effort. Their mothers probably took a course in remodeling their old clothes into more stylish outfits when they weren't knitting or making bandages for the Red Cross. They also carried food rationing books to the store every time they wanted to buy meat, butter or sugar. Driving the family cars required careful planning by their fathers. Gasoline was strictly rationed. Travel by train or bus or walking or bicycling were the alternatives to driving.

Every family who had a bit of land had a "Victory Garden". Empty lots in the cities were commandeered by residents of the neighbourhood and turned into productive fields. Preserving the produce of these gardens was a way of life. Jam, jelly, pickled beets, stewed tomatoes and canned peaches were staples in every cupboard. Every "cold cellar" had potatoes and turnips. Pupils who did not have to write final exams were excused early in order to be part of the "farm army".

The old cliché "Where there's a will there's a way" was certainly true during World War II. "Making do", "doing without" and growing your own food were patriotic duties then. Today the stakes are even higher. Pupils and staff of the 17 schools in Peel Region who are designated "eco-schools" are committed to a rigorous program of recycling and conservation. They bring "litterless lunches" to school and co-operate with the Region to recycle all materials except organic waste. Schools who wish to compost are encouraged to use vermiculture until the Region establishes a compost program.

Energy conservation is a vital component of the eco-school program. Lights are turned off when rooms are not used. Schools are encouraged to form "walking school buses" at least once a week. Those who hope to achieve a high level of conservation point out that their program of "stewardship of the planet" is open to everyone. There is a part for everyone to play. They hope to channel the kind of will and enthusiasm that pupils and teachers displayed during World War II.

Christmas at the Old Britannia Schoolhouse

Jean Robinson



On Thursday and Friday, November 19th and 20th, the Sales Committee of The Friends of The Schoolhouse held their annual Christmas Sale in the Atrium of the H.J.A. Brown Education Centre. People enjoyed shopping for the unique wares on display resulting in our best sales figures in a long time. It takes lots of coordination, collation and transportation to get all the “sales stuff” ready for this event. Eva Ardiel is the brains and the brawn behind all this activity as she stores, organizes and maintains the inventory with the help of the Sales Committee who meet several times a year to assess the articles for sale, make things that are to be included and generally review and plan. Thanks to all for their hard work, and especially to Eva who is the driving force behind all this activity.

In preparation for our annual Christmas Open House and Sale at The Schoolhouse, a group of “Friends” met on Friday, November 30 to decorate The Schoolhouse for the season. Ken and Jean Robinson hauled in the Fraser Fir Christmas Tree which was set up in the front corner of the classroom. The tree was decorated with antique ornaments, tinsel icicles, small white candles and cranberry and popcorn strings (which are now artificial due to the resident mice who delighted in devouring the edibles before the Sunday Sale). Above all the blackboards we put cedar and pine boughs with red and green paper chains which are de rigueur and were made to Ben Madill’s exacting standards even though Ben and Marjorie could not join us this year. Daryl Cook designed and decorated a wreath for the door. Several willing volunteers decorated urns with dried grasses, osier branches and evergreen boughs. After the Victorian decorations were hung on the tree and all the other decorations completed, we were ready for supper. Joan Moon and Jean Robinson made sure that we were well fed. We sat down to a chili supper with lots of home made Christmas goodies and toasted the successes of the year 2009.



The culmination of the Christmas season for “Friends” came on Sunday, November 29th. Our many dedicated volunteers opened the doors at 1:00pm and welcomed friends and neighbours for the Christmas Sale. There were wooden toys, antique puzzles, optical toys, beeswax candles, some new toys and many, many small stocking stuffers and other items for sale including lavender sachets and teasel creatures made from plants in the schoolhouse garden. We had fewer guests than usual, perhaps owing to the Mississauga Santa Claus Parade held in Streetsville on the same day, but in spite of that our shoppers enjoyed the hot mulled cider and Christmas cookies to keep up their strength and ward off the cold outside. For many people who came, it was their first visit to The Schoolhouse but I am sure that it will not be their last. See you in 2010!

Many Friends helped with these events and our gratitude goes out to all. If you would like to be included as a helper in any or all of these events in 2010, please contact Eva(905 459 9158) or Jean (905 826 3475)

Wishing everyone a Safe and Joyous New Year.

Chamonix 1924, The First Winter Olympics

Daryl Cook

In the Victorian era most people participated in winter sports just for fun. But some, then as now, took their sport more seriously and competitions were held. The first modern era Olympic Games took place in Athens in 1896. The games were held every 4 years and until 1908 consisted mostly of events we now associate with the Summer Olympics, pole vaulting, sprints, shot put, weight lifting, swimming, cycling, target shooting, tennis, marathon and gymnastics. In 1924, over the objections of Pierre de Coubertin who had founded the modern Olympics, an International Winter Sports Week was held over 11 days in Chamonix, France. It was so successful it was retroactively named the first Winter Olympics. Some of the winter sports had actually been events at Olympic competitions before 1924. Here are some highlights of a few of today's popular sports.

Figure Skating dates to 1772 with the publication of a manual for men (women did not usually skate at that time) describing basic forms like circles and figure eights. This book separated figure skating and speed skating. By 1852 both men and women were figure skating and in 1864 the first competition was held in Troy, New York featuring ballet and dance movements on blades. In 1914 the first Canadian championship was held in Montreal. In 1908 at the Olympic games in London, figure skating first appeared as an event. Ulrich Salchow of Sweden, inventor of the salchow jump, won the gold medal. Figure skating returned to the Olympics in 1920. By 1924 at the first Winter Olympics it was a well established event. Canada competed but did not win any medals.

Canada has dominated Olympic **hockey** competition since the 1920 Olympics. It is, after all, a truly Canadian game. Here are some key dates:

1889 or 1892	First women's hockey game
1893	Lord Stanley, Governor General donates the Dominion of Canada Challenge Cup—the Stanley Cup
Late 1800's	Ice hockey is first played in Europe
1920	Ice hockey tournament at the Olympics. Canada wins.
1923	First radio broadcast of a hockey game by Foster Hewitt
1924	First Winter Olympics. Hockey is a medal event

Canada successfully defended its 1920 championship at the first Winter games in 1924. The Toronto Granites played 5 games, won them all and outscored their opponents 110 to 3. Their arch rival the United States won silver and Great Britain bronze.

The only other event Canada entered was **speed skating** and did not win a medal.

Other events at the first Winter Olympic games were bobsleigh, curling, military patrol, Nordic skiing, cross-country skiing, Nordic combined and ski jumping.

You may wonder how ice sports like figure skating and hockey could be included in Olympic games that were held during the summer. Artificial ice was developed early in the 1900's and the first artificial ice rink in Canada was built in Vancouver in 1911.

I wondered what impact those first Winter Olympic games had on Canadians so I asked Ben Madill. Here is what he said. *I don't remember the Olympics of 1924 when I was nine years old. At that time radios were battery operated and had to be recharged periodically and were used very little to save the battery. I did not know anyone with a radio at that time. People in our area did not get hydro before 1926 or 1927. News traveled more slowly in 1924. Perhaps Olympic fever as we know it today didn't come until the era of television.*

Sunday Open House



Open Sunday in December was another chance to enjoy the schoolhouse decorated in Victorian Christmas tradition. Several families spent the afternoon making paper bird and snowflake ornaments.

In January, as usual, we celebrated the birthday of Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister. Schoolmaster Patterson became Sir John for the afternoon and answered questions about Macdonald's life. Of course we had to have a birthday cake. Visiting children helped Sir John blow out his candles and cut the cake. Best of all was enjoying a piece of cake and tea or juice. Most of the visitors were first timers and we hope they will return to enjoy some of our other activities. All were interested in the history of the schoolhouse and the programs offered for students.



Celebrate St. Patrick's Day

You don't have to be Irish to celebrate Canada's Irish heritage and food. There are, however, many Canadians of Irish descent, perhaps one-fifth of Canadians. Immigrants had long been coming to Canada from Ireland and settling mostly in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Quebec and Ontario. But the real wave of immigration resulted from the devastating potato famine in 1831. The starving Irish sought a better life, many only to die on ships bound for North America. In 1846 32,753 immigrants arrived at the port of Quebec, most of them from Ireland and almost all seriously ill. Despite this tragic beginning the immigrants eventually found a home in Canada and became an important part of our heritage.

Why not celebrate on St. Patrick's Day with a treat of Irish cookies. Here's the recipe.

Irish Pebbernodders

- | | | |
|--------------------------|----|---|
| 3 cups all-purpose flour | 1. | Grease cookie sheets. Combine flour, baking powder, cinnamon, ginger and cloves. Beat butter and sugar in large bowl of electric mixer until creamy. Add eggs and lemon peel, mix well. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, mix just until well blended. Refrigerate 2 hours until firm. |
| 1 tsp baking powder | | |
| 1 tsp cinnamon | | |
| 1/2 tsp ginger | | |
| 1/2 tsp ground cloves | | |
| 1 1/2 cups butter | 2. | Cut dough into 16 sections, roll each section in flour and then into 1/4 inch thick ropes 12 inches long. Freeze rolls on cookie sheets until hard. |
| 1 1/2 cups sugar | | |
| 3 eggs | 3. | Preheat oven to 375 F. Slice frozen rolls 1/4 inch thick. Arrange 1 inch apart on prepared cookie sheets. Bake 10 minutes or until lightly browned. |
| 2 tsp grated lemon peel | | |

Two Old Friends



Ben Madill and Bob Cousins are enjoying reminiscing about their days at S.S.#12. Bob Cousins had a 95th birthday party which Ben and Marjory Madill attended. Bob's birthday is Jan. 15, 1915 and Ben's is May 20, 1915. Ben started school Sept. 1921 and Bob moved into the area and started school Sept. 1926. We are so fortunate to have the first hand memories of people who were students at the Old Britannia Schoolhouse so many years ago.

Don't Forget

While the New Year is still young, please consider renewing your membership with Friends of the Schoolhouse. Many thanks to those who have already renewed. Your continued support is greatly appreciated.

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.

For the latest in news, interesting articles and fun and games be sure to check our website. The Current News page is updated monthly. www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org

What Is It?



You shouldn't have any trouble identifying this item but can you guess its approximate age? Answer below.

Moments Over Time

The Field Centres are celebrating their 40th anniversary by hosting a **photo contest** and are offering great prizes and a photo gallery of pictures from the past to the present. Dig out those great schoolhouse photos and submit them.

Categories include:

Vintage (5 years or older)

Action – interactions between nature and participants

Nature (no people)

Discovery – "ah ha" moments

Humour – bloopers, mud covered participants, stilt races

Original Artwork – drawings, sculptures, paintings

Best in Show

Deadline for submission: May 1 2010

Contact Schoolmaster Dennis Patterson (dennis.j.patterson@peelsb.com) for more information.

This, of course, is an early hockey stick. Note the curved blade similar to a field hockey stick. This one was used in the late 19th century.

What Is It Answer