

# The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959  
restored 1982

Spring Issue 2009



## *Facts and Figures:*

Student attendance at the schoolhouse:

February	383
March	362
April	398

Friends activities:

February	Highlight on Heritage, Bramalea Open Sunday
March	Open Sunday
April	SLATE conference Open Sunday
May	Peel History Fair Open Sunday

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

## *Maple Sugar Festival*

Daryl Cook

In March nature starts to come awake after a long winter. By April the trees are budding, forsythia is starting to bloom and we are looking forward to seeing tulips and daffodils in our gardens. It is a season of magic and nothing is more magical than the flowing of the sap in the maple trees and the making of maple syrup. Sugar was a valuable commodity for early settlers. Learning from the native peoples how to boil the sap from the maple trees to make a sweet syrup was a great benefit. By mid March and into early April, depending on the weather, workers in sugar bushes are busy tapping the trees and collecting the sap.

This year we had perfect weather for "sugaring off" - below freezing nights and mild days. The sap was flowing well all during the March Break



*The Sugar Shack*

week when visitors were invited to the Jack Smythe Field Centre for the annual Maple Syrup Festival. Visitors followed the woodland trail through the sugar bush to the sugar shack. Along the way children stopped to hand feed



*Tree Tapping*

the chickadees, tried their hand at drilling a "tree" to insert a tap, dipped a finger in a sap pail to taste the sap and helped chop wood for the fire in the evaporator. Inside the sugar shack the evaporator boiled the sap until it was the right consistency of sweet maple syrup. Staff explained the process and later gave everyone a taste of the syrup. It was a great way to celebrate the arrival of spring.

*From the Chair*

Dennis Taylor

I looked out the window as I wrote this article and I realized the great change that has taken place. The last time that I wrote the ground was thickly covered in snow and the cold winter winds howled. This time the sun is shining and the vegetation is growing. Trees are budding, bulbs are sprouting and flowering and even the grass is starting to green up.

At this point in time, the Friends gear up for a busy season ahead and although it might seem there was little activity over the last few months, plans have been made. The gardens will need work and care and some of our activities such as the Strawberry Social will soon take shape. Activities are much easier to stage when the weather is warmer.

We have not been totally inactive over the last few months. On Saturday February 14, 2009 a number of the friends promoted the schoolhouse at an event staged at Bramalea City Centre and hosted by The Brampton Heritage Society. We had an information only table and were kept busy with many interested visitors. The Brampton Heritage Society was very helpful in getting us set up and we appreciate the support we received. It is an event we would gladly take part in, again.

Several members of the Executive attended the S.L.A.T.E. Conference held on Monday April 20 at the Jordan schoolhouse and museum in Jordan. This is an annual event designed to bring together many parties interested in maintaining the history and the sites of one-room schoolhouses. The location of these conferences changes each year and the idea is to share information and ideas about these unique living museums.

We continue to work on the materials at the Old Britannia Schoolhouse. We do have an open house every second Sunday of the month and this year we have themed these days with appropriate activities. In the last newsletter I told you that we had two maps preserved and were pleased with the results. We have gone ahead and sent out three more wall maps and one wall chart to also be preserved and thus protected from the ravages of time. These maps not only fit in with time frame of the school, but also reveal the kind of information taught at that time.

As spring arrives and slowly changes to summer we hope you can attend one of our events or perhaps visit on one of the open Sundays.

*Future Open Sundays*

June 14,2009: Visit our summer gardens in full bloom. How many flowers can you name? Lupins, Foxgloves, Bachelor Buttons and more will be for sale. Explore the classroom. Share a cup of tea or a glass of lemonade and a cookie on the lawn.

July 12,2009: Help make lavender wands and raspberry tarts with produce harvested from the heritage garden. Enjoy a cup of tea or a glass of lemonade with a freshly made raspberry tart.

August 9,2009: Savour our summer vegetables and fruits. Enjoy the taste of freshly picked tomatoes and cucumbers. Try walking on stilts, tossing horseshoes or swinging in the schoolyard.

## *The Good Stewards*

Joan Reid and Daryl Cook

The history of the Britannia Farm goes back almost 200 years to 1819 when an order in council set aside 200 acres of land for the use of the local schoolmaster. In 1833 King William III gave the land to be held in trust by members of the community, at the time trustees Col. William Thompson, Rev. James McGrath and Mr. Joseph Gardner Sr. Income from the land was to be used solely to support the education of children. From the time of those first trustees to the current trustees of the Peel District School Board almost 200 years later, the land has been protected, often under difficult circumstances.



Until about the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century farming was the major commercial enterprise and income from the lease of the land to a local farmer supported the schoolhouse. By the 1960's when S.S.#12 closed its doors, farms were disappearing in South Peel, having been sold to developers who replaced them with subdivisions, malls and business complexes. As they had refused the pressure to land, even refusing to the Ontario government several times in the past, generations of trustees sent have supported the gem even though for erated no money to sup-children though that was To manage to preserve intact for almost two cen-budget constraints and deserves high praise. All the current and past trustees of the board of education who have kept a valuable piece of history alive and continue to do so.



Generations of trustees sent have supported the gem even though for erated no money to sup-children though that was To manage to preserve intact for almost two cen-budget constraints and deserves high praise. All the current and past trustees of the board of education who have kept a valuable piece of history alive and continue to do so.



As they had refused the pressure to land, even refusing to the Ontario government several times in the past, generations of trustees sent have supported the gem even though for erated no money to sup-children though that was To manage to preserve intact for almost two cen-budget constraints and deserves high praise. All the current and past trustees of the board of education who have kept a valuable piece of history alive and continue to do so.

from 1819 to the present need to preserve this many years it has genport the education of the original mandate. this historic property turies in spite of pressure to let it go of us are indebted to

*What is it?*



Answer on page 7

## *Come For A Picnic Lunch*

Daryl Cook



The annual Lemonade on the Lawn event for Board office staff will be held on Tuesday July 21 from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm. Join us in the schoolyard gardens for lemonade and cookies provided by the Friends of the Schoolhouse. Bring a blanket, sun hat and your lunch and enjoy a summer picnic on the lawn. There are also picnic tables available. The schoolhouse will be open for you to visit and you can wander through our Victorian cottage gardens and the vegetable garden.

We will be sending a reminder to staff early in July. It is helpful if you let us know that you will be there so we can be sure to have lots of lemonade and cookies. Last year several staff brought their families for the picnic. Children and spouses are welcome. Just let us know how many will be attending. Hope to see you in the summer.

## *From the Schoolmaster*

Dennis Patterson

Over the winter there was lots of paper moving through the schoolhouse as there were lots of projects being completed. I signed up for Special Education Part One which was online and we worked through the application to have The Old Britannia Schoolhouse certified as an Ontario EcoSchool. Ontario EcoSchools is a fairly new organization dedicated to improving the environmental stewardship of school communities. They have a great website that is found at <http://ontarioecoschools.org/> <<http://ontarioecoschools.org/>>

It was a tricky process to complete the application as the program was designed to be implemented at a school and the schoolhouse does not have a regular class. We described our work at the schoolhouse and how it applies to ecoschool criteria and managed to put a square peg in a round hole.

There was also a call for requests for funds to implement an ecoschools project on school sites so we applied for and received \$500 which was spent on 6 apple and 6 pear trees to create an orchard. Arbour Day (the first Friday in May) we started planting trees and there are now 3 in the ground, the rest await classes with the resolve to dig into the clay and find them a place to grow. As Peel is an urban school board very few students have planted a tree, this is a great opportunity for them to explore the world under our feet and plant a tree which future generations will enjoy. Our EcoSchool application is in, once a group comes to tour the schoolhouse and grounds they will pass judgement and determine if the schoolhouse is worthy of the status of ecoschool, in the meantime we are here enjoying the warming temperatures and the planting of an orchard.

## *Open Sundays*

Shirley Hoad and Linda Kenny



The topic for our March Open House on Sunday, March 8th was the toys of yesteryear. Families who dropped in were able to play a variety of wooden games, and learn what amused the children in the past. Eva Ardiel provided materials for the children to make pin wheels and button buzzers, and Joan Reid was available to answer any questions. Light refreshments were served by Jean Robinson and Shirley Hoad. With a specific topic each month, which is indicated in the newsletter, we are seeing more people dropping in for a visit on the second Sunday of the month Open House. Check this



edition to see what is coming up soon.

Our Open Sunday fell on Easter Sunday in April so we incorporated an Easter Egg Hunt into our planned activities. Daryl Cook brought brightly coloured plastic Easter Eggs that were hidden in the gardens around the schoolhouse. Visiting children were able to hunt for the plastic eggs and then trade them for gummy bunnies in the schoolhouse. The children were eager hunters and retrieved most of the eggs.

The other activity we offered was how to recycle old china cups and saucers by turning them into lovely little floral arrangements. Karen Simmons and Linda Kenny brought cups and saucers, silk flowers, glue guns and Spanish moss to complete the arrangements. Several children eagerly participated in this activity and produced lovely floral arrangements to take home.

Our Open Sunday was very successful. We had 23 visitors and collected a total of \$31.25 in donations. The visitors were treated to homemade cookies, tea and apple juice. Everyone had a good time and thanked us for opening the school. One family in particular stayed for quite a while in the schoolhouse and then proceeded outside to try the stilts, lacrosse sticks, the swings and the baseball bats.

## *Strawberry Social*



*Mark your calendar - Thursday June 26 is our annual old-fashioned Strawberry Social. This is our major fundraiser for Friends of the Schoolhouse. Come to the atrium of the board office and enjoy homemade biscuits topped with mouthwatering strawberries mounded with whipped cream. You will also enjoy tea or coffee or fruit punch. Your ticket will be entered into a draw for door prizes. See the flyer for further details. Take time to treat yourself; come on your own or with a friend or two.*

## *S.L.A.T.E. Conference, Monday April 20, 2009*

By Jean Robinson

Since 1986, a group of persons interested in early education in one-room schoolhouses has met on an annual basis to compare experiences, seek solutions to problems and generally share knowledge about the various museum sites that contain one-room schoolhouses. This affiliation is called S.L.A.T.E. (So Let's All Talk Education ...in a one-room schoolhouse).

This year the S.L.A.T.E. conference was held in the 1908 Schoolhouse at the Jordan Museum and was ably chaired by Helen Booth. Fourteen members of Friends of the Schoolhouse and the Schoolmaster, Dennis Patterson, traveled to Jordan early on a very wet April morning to renew acquaintances and make new friends and contacts.

After a welcome from the Mayor of the Town of Lincoln, Bill Hodgson, two of the Schoolmistresses of the Jordan very enlightening talk on special needs children in the house. Eva Ardiel, who is "the keeper of the records", gave an interesting S.L.A.T.E. from its beginning. She outlined the original group and the reason for its formation. At many sites, the personnel have changed over the years, so it was important to give everyone some background and as one of the few original S.L.A.T.E. members, Eva's knowledge and memories are a priceless resource. Thank you, Eva, for keeping the flame alive!



Delegates pay close attention

Schoolhouse presented a programming concerns for living museum school—"the keeper of the records" on the history of S.L.A.T.E. from its beginning in 1985 to the present. She outlined the original premise for the formation. At many sites, the personnel have changed over the years, so it was important to give everyone some background and as one of the few original S.L.A.T.E. members, Eva's knowledge and memories are a priceless resource. Thank you, Eva, for keeping the flame alive!

During the Annual General Meeting, plans were made for future conferences; for updating the mailing list of participants and museum sites; and for the investigation of topics and speakers of interest to the group. A core committee was struck to oversee the further organization of S.L.A.T.E.

After a short walk along the historic main street of Jordan, we arrived at our lunch spot, a quaint café called Zooma, Zooma. Needless to say, the S.L.A.T.E. group filled the café and the talk was lively and animated. We can recommend this café for a delicious lunch stop if you are in the Jordan area.

After lunch, the guest speaker, Dr. Charles Levi, gave a comprehensive perspective of Edgerton Ryerson and the Standardization of Textbooks in Ontario Schools. The "readers" in use at Britannia Schoolhouse are a combination of The Irish Readers and the Ontario Readers and it was interesting to learn the history of these textbooks from Dr. Levi.

After a short break for locally made ice cream which we ate, while sheltering from the rain, in the drive shed at the museum, we were led in a discussion of crafts used within the schoolhouse programmes. We had fun making paper fans using coloured paper and "old fashioned" glue.

The day passed all too quickly. We look forward to meeting again next April at the 1849 Cobblestone School in Childs, Upper New York State.

## *Highlight on Heritage*

By Eva Ardiel

Friends of the Schoolhouse appreciated the opportunity to be a part of Brampton Historical Society's "Highlight on Heritage" at the Bramalea City Centre on February 14<sup>th</sup>. From 10:00 am to 5:00 pm literally hundreds of people browsed the heritage exhibits set up in the Bay Court.

As well as Brampton Historical Society, other exhibitors included Historic Bovaird House, Peel Heritage Complex, Brampton Heritage Board, Peel Museum, Steve Collie with his pioneer artifacts and Helen Warner with her pioneer "Whatzit quiz" Visitors enjoyed their discussions with these enthusiastic heritage volunteers, most of whom were handsomely dressed in period costume.

The Friends' displays included panels of A Day at The Old Britannia Schoolhouse and of The Old Britannia Schoolhouse's Architectural significance, as well as old school desks and a dunce stool and cap. Of course there was also a collection of old fashioned wooden toys, which attracted young and older visitors alike. We were pleased to see two of the mall visitors at the schoolhouse on the following Open Sunday.

We really enjoyed being a part of this worthwhile event. We have missed the Square One Heritage Showcases of past years. These mall events provide an opportunity to interact with a broad range of people from the community. We have found these experiences both stimulating and refreshing.

We thank Lis Braun, George Christian, Karin Henderson, Shirley Hoad, Mary Light, Ruth and Dennis Taylor, Joan Read and Eva Ardiel for demonstrating toys and chatting about the Schoolhouse with the mall visitors.

A very special thank you is extended to Brampton Historical Society for including Friends of the Schoolhouse in this event (also for helping us carry our boxes and desks in and out) and to Bramalea City Centre who displayed their support for heritage by donating the prestigious Bay Court space for the event. We hope to be a part of "Highlight on Heritage" again on February 13, 2010.

### *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.

### *Reminder*

*Schoolhouse members can choose to have their newsletter e-mailed. Simply send an e-mail to [dcook@rogers.com](mailto:dcook@rogers.com) or [kmooncraney@rogers.com](mailto:kmooncraney@rogers.com)*

This is a butter press. After the cream was churned into butter it was scooped into the butter press. When the handle was pushed down a neat block of butter came out. This was carefully wrapped and stored in a cool place. Many blocks of butter could be made from one churning.

Come out and enjoy an old-fashioned  
**Strawberry Social**  
Thursday, June 25, 2009

11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
in the atrium of H.J.A. Brown Education Centre



**BILL OF FARE**  
A generous helping of luscious Ontario strawberries on a delicious shortcake biscuit... topped with genuine whipped cream!  
Tea-Coffee-Fruit-Cordial-Mints

Come as you are... or "dressed up" for an old-fashioned afternoon tea  
\$8.00 tickets available until June 23rd from  
Friends of the Schoolhouse  
A fundraising project for The Old Britannia Schoolhouse  
(Some tickets available at the door)

Send orders for tickets to FRIENDS OF THE SCHOOLHOUSE, 1/4 THE OLD BRITANNIA SCHOOLHOUSE  
By Courier or Mail: 5576 HURONTARIO ST., MISSISSAUGA, ON. L5R 1B3  
Please order your tickets in advance as only a limited number will be available at the door, FOR INFORMATION: Phone: Eva 905-459-9158

-----  
Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ tickets for the Strawberry Social @ \$8.00 each.  
Enclosed is my cheque for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ payable to FRIENDS OF THE SCHOOLHOUSE

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
PEEL BOARD COURIER LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
OR MAILING ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_

Tickets will be sent out after June 1st.

### Recipes



#### Refrigerator Bread and Butter Pickles

Pickling cucumbers to fill a gallon jar  
3 onions sliced  
4 cups sugar  
4 cups vinegar

1/3 cup plain salt

1 1/2 tsp each turmeric, mustard seed and celery seed

Combine sugar and vinegar in small saucepan over low heat to dissolve sugar. Add spices. Pack sliced cucumbers and onions in jar very tight, add liquid and spices, seal and refrigerate.



#### Strawberry Jam

6 pints strawberries, washed  
3 cups sugar  
1 1/3 cups Homemade Pectin  
Juice of one fresh lemon

In a nonreactive saucepan, over medium heat, combine the strawberries, sugar, pectin and lemon juice. Bring the liquid to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for 25 minutes, stirring occasionally. Spoon the hot mixture into 10 (half-pint) hot sterilized jars, filling to within 1/2-inch of the top. With a clean damp towel, wipe and fit with a hot lid. Tightly screw on the metal ring. Process in a hot water bath for 5 minutes. Using tongs, remove the jars, place on a towel, and let cool. Test the seals. Tighten the rings. Store in a cool dark place. Let age for at least 2 weeks before using.