



Winter Issue 2008



Our recent activities

Christmas sales at the Board Office
Christmas Open House at the schoolhouse
Parent Council meeting at the schoolhouse
TV program featuring the schoolhouse on Rogers TV
Students visiting for a day
 In November - 369
 In December - 252
 In January - 358

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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The Past Has A Future

Joan Reid

In the 1880's the Ontario Department of Education promoted the beautification of school grounds by encouraging the planting of trees and shrubs. The stately century-old maples which graced the schoolyard at S.S. # 12 until 2006 were probably planted ca. 1885 according to the study of tree rings conducted when these trees had to be removed.

In the Spring of 2007 the Peel District School Board replaced the trees with similar sugar maples. On May 2, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the re-opening of the school-house, these trees will be dedicated to several groups and individuals who worked hard to promote the restoration of the historic school now known as the Old Britannia Schoolhouse. (*See invitation on page 8*)

School fairs that flourished in Ontario in the 1920's and 1930's provided a showcase for the produce from school gardens. Pupils from S.S. # 12 (Britannia) were active participants in the school fairs for Toronto Township. Ben Madill remembers the school gardens which once bloomed in the space behind where the privies are now.

A grant from the Evergreen Foundation will allow visiting pupils to plant heritage vegetables and fruits as well as an Iroquois "Three Sisters" garden. Several species (Chantenay Carrots, Golden Bantam Corn) are the same as those promoted at the school fairs in the 1930's.

By maintaining the links between the past, the present, and the future it is hoped that public interest in and support for the Schoolhouse and its unique program and setting will be enhanced.

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.

From the Schoolmaster

Dennis Patterson

"Help one another," the snowflakes said,
As they cuddled down their fleecy bed;
"One of us here would quickly melt;
One of us here would not be felt,
But I'll help you and you'll help me,
And then what a big, white drift we'll see."

Primary Reading Teaching Manuel 1920

The snow in Britannia has come and gone and come again. Grade Three's do not care if there is snow or not, they excitedly head out for recess each day. The Schoolhouse is rather bare once again after being beautifully decorated for the Christmas season but we are not without events. On January 11th we sang Happy Birthday to John A. MacDonald. He would have been in his fifth term as Prime Minister in 1888. Robert Burns Day will be the focus until the 25th of January and then we move on to St. Valentine's Day.

I took a quick tour through the major events that took place in 1888 (the year we will portray at the Schoolhouse this year) to see what could be incorporated into the program. Much of the credit must go to www.Wikipedia.org, which makes researching such things very easy. These historical tidbits will not be of much use in the Schoolhouse but they are interesting none the less.

It happened in 1888:

- the first personal deodorant was developed
- Jack the Ripper killed several women in London and was never caught
- Vincent Van Gogh cut off his ear and presented it as a gift

An Invitation from the Editors

Many organizations these days are distributing their newsletters online. This has several advantages. Costs are kept down since less is spent on postage, paper and printing. Online distribution is also more environmentally friendly, saving trees and reducing gas consumption by post office vehicles. Aesthetically, it allows for full colour newsletters. The cost of printing in colour is prohibitive for a small organization. If a hard copy is desired one can be printed from the email.

The Friends of the Schoolhouse are offering to send members their newsletters by email. If you would like to receive yours this way, it's easy. Just send an email request to Daryl Cook at dlcook@rogers.com. Put "Online newsletter request" in the subject box. To be sure we have your email address correct, please give us your name and email address in the body of the email.

The choice is yours. We will still send newsletters by Canada Post to those who prefer to receive them that way.

Remarks from the Chair

Joan Reid

Friends of the Schoolhouse celebrated the end of 2007 with a very successful open house on December 2. Jean Robinson and her helpers did a superb job transforming the schoolhouse with a multitude of hand-made Victorian decorations. Eva Ardiel and her sales committee did a wondrous job assembling a variety of handmade toys and objects for sale. Congratulations to all who participated in this popular annual activity.

The next few months promise to be very active ones for the Friends of the Schoolhouse. Friends are grateful to the Evergreen Foundation for a grant to support our food garden project. The grant will allow pupils to plant a wide variety of heritage fruits and vegetables. This will provide a variety of hands-on activities to supplement grade 3 pioneer studies and will enhance awareness of the importance of agriculture to the hamlet of Britannia. It is hoped that this will enlarge community interest in and



Ben Madill shows a young visitor how to solve a puzzle



2006—The hundred and twenty year old maples are removed.

support for the heritage garden activities in the schoolyard.

On May 2 at 1:00 p.m. in the schoolyard, we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the restoration and formal reopening of the Schoolhouse. To mark this very special occasion the four replacement maple trees, provided by the Peel District School Board, will be dedicated to some of the many individuals and groups who helped to preserve and restore this community treasure. We invite you to join us in this celebration.



2007—New maples are planted.

The Message From Evergreen

Here is part of the email we received in response to our application for a Toyota Evergreen Learning Grounds grant.

We are pleased to inform you that your request for Toyota Evergreen Learning Grounds funding has been approved for the amount of \$2000. Your project goals and connection to learning clearly showed us how dedicated you are to this project, your school, and your students. What an interesting project that truly does connect the past with the future.

The Friends of the Schoolhouse are deeply grateful to The Evergreen Foundation for this support.

Christmas At The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

Jean Robinson

On Thursday and Friday, November 15 and 16, 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.

In preparation for our annual Christmas Open House and Sale at the schoolhouse, a group of



We enjoy supper after decorating the schoolroom.

Friends met on Friday, November 30 to decorate for the season. Ken and Jean Robinson hauled in the Christmas tree which was set up in the front corner of the schoolhouse. Red and green paper chains are *de rigueur* and Ben Madill made sure that we made them to his exacting standards. Cedar swags with cheery red ribbons decorated the blackboards and Daryl Cook designed and decorated a wreath for the door. After the Victorian decorations were hung on the tree to suit Eva's artistic eye, we were ready for supper. Joan Moon and Jean Robinson made sure that we were all well fed. We sat down to a chili supper with lots of home made Christmas goodies and toasted the successes of the year 2007.

The culmination of the Christmas season for the Friends at the schoolhouse came on a snowy Sunday afternoon on December 2. After wading through the snow, the volunteers opened the doors at 1 PM and welcomed friends and neighbours for the Christmas Open House and Sale. Perhaps you saw the delightful picture in the *Mississauga News* of a little girl enthralled with the toys. There were wooden toys, antique tin icicles, puzzles, optical toys, beeswax candles, some new tin ware toys and many, many small stocking stuffers and other items for sale. There were even lavender sachets made of lavender from the schoolhouse garden. In spite of the weather we had quite a few guests. They 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'm sure it will not be their last.



The old toys fascinate the young folks

Many Friends helped with these events and we want to thank all of them. Wishing everyone a safe and joyous 2008. We look forward to seeing you on Open Sundays and at our other 2008 events.

More Thanks

So many people give their time and energy to help the schoolhouse, often without realizing how much their efforts contribute. It was the day of one of our biggest yearly fund-raising events, a Sunday in busy December, and the snow was falling thick and fast. Would we have to cancel our event? When we arrived we found the Board staff had the parking lots and driveways ploughed out, the paths shoveled and everything ready for visitors.

At the November sales event at the Board office, custodial staff were equally helpful, moving tables and chairs.

Our grateful thanks to all who helped. Your efforts don't go unnoticed

The Village Blacksmith

Joan Reid

*Under a spreading chestnut-tree
The village smithy stands;
The smith, a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands;
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.*

The American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, immortalized the village blacksmith in the opening verse of his famous 1839 poem.

The blacksmith played a vital role in a pioneer community. His shop was the hardware store of its day. He not only shod horses but he also made or repaired the essential iron tools and household utensils of a farming community. These might include wagon wheels, ploughs, axes, knives, hinges, saws, chains and hooks. Broken or worn objects were far too valuable to discard. Some blacksmiths became skilled gunsmiths. Until approximately 1800 all nails (called square or wrought iron nails) were hand-made by a blacksmith. I am assured that they last much longer and rust more slowly than today's wire nails.

The term smith comes from the word "smite" which means to hit. A blacksmith is a person who hits black metal especially iron. The metal of choice was wrought iron, meaning that the carbon content of the metal was less than .25%.

A blacksmith creates objects from iron or steel by "forging" the metal that is by using hand tools to hammer, bend, cut and otherwise shape it in its non-liquid form. The ideal heat for most forging is the yellow-orange colour known as "forging heat". A smith needs something to heat the metal, something to hit the metal on and something to hit the metal with. His basic tools were the forge (fireplace) heated by charcoal, coal, or coke, the anvil, and the hammer. The skills of the blacksmith seem deceptively simple but they were learned over a long period of apprenticeship with a skilled master craftsman.

The advent of the horseless carriage and the age of mass production made the skills of most blacksmiths unnecessary. By the time Ben Madill started attending S.S. # 12 in the early 1920's the blacksmith shop at Britannia had closed, but 10 year old Ben was fascinated to see the sparks fly as he watched a blacksmith in Streetsville as he pounded out a horse-shoe to fit. It was placed on the horse's foot when it was hot enough to burn the hoof to fit the shoe. It did not cause any discomfort to the horse but it sent up a cloud of smoke. Longfellow captures the child's sense of awe in the verse below.

*And children coming home from school
Look in at the open door;
They love to see the flaming forge,
And hear the bellows roar,
And catch the burning sparks that fly
Like chaff from a threshing-floor.*

The Blacksmiths of Britannia

Joan Reid

The first reference to a blacksmith appears on the *Tremaine Map* (1859). A blacksmith shop is shown on Lot 5, Concession I East. In 1843 Joseph Gardner sold ½ acre from the western half of Lot 5 to Isaac Whitfield for 20 pounds. In 1854 Whitfield sold the land to Joseph Muir for 75 pounds. We do not know if either Whitfield or Muir were blacksmiths.

In *Lynch's Directory, 1873-74*, George Harris is listed as the blacksmith for Britannia. Greevins and Arthur (Lot 5, Concession I East) are listed as general blacksmiths of Britannia in the *Atlas of Peel County, 1877*. On Lot 6, Concession I East the words "Corp Shop" appear. This may have been the location of a wagon shop. In the early 1880's Michael Readman, the former blacksmith from Cooksville, briefly operated a blacksmith business on Centre Road, Britannia. He gave the business up to become a full time farmer.

In 1882 ¼ acre of land on the southwest corner of Lot 6, Concession I East was sold to Joseph Foster who sold it in 1886 to James Arthur Greenius who served as the blacksmith for Britannia until 1900.

Greenius' ledger for the Archives of the Peel Heritage a first-hand look at the work time. He made shoes for bolts, hinges and plates for buggies, cultivators, pumps, his clients were W. Madill, Matthew and James Dunton. the 1890's.

Most blacksmiths supplement their incomes with other work. Greenius was in demand for sheepshears and repair harnesses and bridles. *Phineas*, the *Conservator*, reported in 1888 that he was doing a roaring business with his grain crusher. Wilmer and Reuben, went to Mrs. J.A. Greenius house on 1/3 acre of land and a good blacksmith business for William Sawdon. native of Britannia, Isaac Waite, who settled on the northeast corner of the Centre sideroad.



The Greenius Family of Britannia ca. 1900
Back: left Reuben Osbourne Greenius
right Arthur Wilmer Greenius
Front: left Ida Greenius
middle Janet (Muir) Greenius
right James Arthur Greenius

1880's and 1890's (now in the Complex, Brampton) gives us done by a blacksmith at the horses, troughs, whippetrees, stoves. He repaired sleighs, mowers and binders. Among Jos. Foster, Fred Gardner, H. A new horseshoe cost 50 cents in

mented their incomes with other to sheer sheep and repair harnesses correspondent for *The Brampton* that he was doing a roaring business. Two of the Greenius children, S. S. # 12. On July 10, 1900 offered her good frame land and a good blacksmith sale. It was sold to Mrs. Greenius was a the grand-daughter of tled on the northeast Road and the Britannia

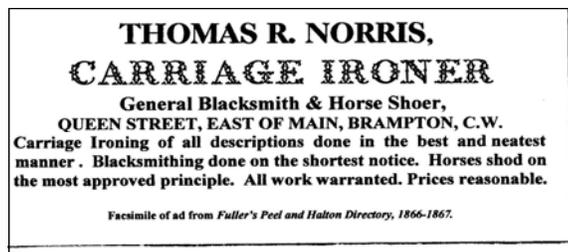
In December 1902 *The Brampton Conservator* noted: "W.J.H. Sawdon, our Britannia blacksmith, put on 40 shoes in ten hours last Monday, a very good day's work for one man". A few days later the paper reported that Sawdon had his watch purloined by a young customer who was waiting for his horse to be shod. The young man denied the theft until his father "got the rawhide to work". The watch reappeared the next day.

Sawdon was a very popular and enterprising member of the community. He had a fine driving mare called *Britannia Girl* and improved his house by building a conservatory. As a side activity he ran the small Britannia Post Office. In 1907 his grateful neighbours presented him with a chair and set of dishes to show their appreciation. He also bred chickens. He had a *wooden hen* (incubator) which he used for this purpose. It was said that he could get as many eggs from ten hens as most farmers could get from one hundred.

Four of the Sawdon children – Edith, James, Charlie, Willie– attended S. S. # 12. One year James Sawdon won the highest number of points for the school at the Toronto Township School Fair in Cooksville. A fifth child, a toddler Elizabeth Gertrude, died in a tragic accident in 1911 when she tumbled into a well and drowned.

Sawdon operated his blacksmith business until 1920. He disposed of his tools by auction and sold the house and lot to John Davey. In October 1920 the ladies of the community had a farewell party for Mrs. Sawdon

. On March 31, 1927 *The Brampton Conservator* observed: “The service station idea has spread to Britannia, and the old blacksmith shop, closed for several years, has once more opened its doors for business. Not this time, to fit shoes of iron on the feet of faithful *Dobbin* and *Ned*, but to fit rubber shoes on the feet of prancing *Henry* or *Lizzie*, or their more pretentious relatives in the motor world”.



In *Lynch's Directory, 1873-74*, George Harris is listed as the blacksmith for Britannia. The importance of the blacksmith at the time is shown by the following chart of the blacksmiths in the surrounding communities in 1873:

Community	Population	No. of Blacksmiths
Britannia	80	1
Burnhamthorpe	100	2
Brampton	2317	12
Churchville	200	6
Cooksville	400	2
Dixie	200	3
Grahamsville	100	2
Malton	300	1
Meadowvale	300	1
Mt. Charles	100	1
Springfield (Erindale)	250	4
Streetsville	617	9
Summerville	100	1
TOTALS	5064	45

Coming Events

**The Old Britannia Schoolhouse
25th Anniversary Celebration
and the dedication of four sugar maple trees**

**Arbour Day – May 2nd, 2008
12:30 p.m. in the Schoolyard**

You are invited to join Friends of the Schoolhouse and the Peel District School Board to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the restoration and re-opening of the S.S. #12 Toronto Township School, now known as The Old Britannia Schoolhouse, as a living history classroom

and

to take part in the dedication of four sugar maple trees planted in the schoolyard by the Peel District School Board to replace the 125 year old sugar maples which had to be removed for safety reasons.

The trees will be dedicated to four groups or individuals instrumental in the process of preservation, restoration and re-opening of this community treasure:

First, the children who attended Britannia School from 1852 to 1959, including Ben Madill, the last former student to live in the area.

Secondly, Streetsville Secondary School's Britannia Restoration Club.

Thirdly, the Peel Board of Education including the Britannia Restoration Committee and the Field Study Centre staff.

Fourthly, James C. Potter, Esq., the first schoolmaster in 1982.

Grade Three pupils from James Potter Public School will assist with the dedication of one of the trees and will plant a time capsule at the tree's base.

The band from Fairwind Senior Public School will provide lively music for this auspicious occasion.

Light refreshments will be served after the formal part of the program.

In case of inclement weather, please bring an umbrella.

What Is It?



You really should know this one. Answer below.

Open Sundays

Explore the schoolroom, sit in one of the old desks and practice your printing on a real slate. Bring your camera and take a picture of a family member wearing the dunce cap

1PM—4PM

March 9, April 13,

May 11, June 15

This lethal looking object is a can opener. Food "canning" was invented in England around 1910. When William Parry explored the Arctic in the 1920's, canned food helped them survive. Early cans were made of tin-coated wrought iron and often weighed more than the contents. Opening them was a challenge and various methods were used: hammer and chisel, bayonet, rifle fire! In the 1850s lighter cans were made and this simpler, if not always safer, instrument was invented. This model has a corkscrew as well as the device to puncture and cut the top of the can.