



Fall, 2001

Some Figures and Facts:

Pupil attendance for the last school year was:
September 256;
October 520; November 482;
December 319; January 315;
February 364; March 328;
April 455; May 470;
June 374 for a total of 3883 students. Revenue from students was \$19,415.00.
215 volunteer hours resulted in the interior of the schoolhouse being painted over the summer. 4 new sun shelters have been purchased for our outdoor activities.



This newsletter is published by the *Friends of the Schoolhouse* every Fall, Winter and Spring, in an effort to inform its membership, and the teachers of the Peel District School Board of its activities and events.

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Greetings from the Schoolmistress

When I returned to the Schoolhouse on a sunny September morning I was delighted by the sight that met my eyes: the place had been transformed! From the gleaming hardwood floors to the beautiful freshly-painted woodwork, it looked fabulous - and ready for the thousands of young people who would inhabit its classroom this year.

The 2000-2001 school year was a busy one. 3883 students from 55 schools had their studies enriched by spending a day travelling back in time at the Old Britannia Schoolhouse. The coming year looks just as busy. We are fully booked again with over 170 days scheduled. I look forward to each and every one of them.

Each day begins with the sound of the (newly refurbished!) school bell ringing as the children race to line up - boys in one line, girls in another, of course! When I open the door I am greeted by more than twenty shining faces ready to step back in time with me. The girls are wearing dresses and pigtails, the boys have suspenders and 'short pants'. Each child clutches his or her 'dinner', some wrapped in a tea-towel, others carried in a basket or lunch pail. All are eager for their adventure to begin.

Upon entering the schoolhouse there are many *oohs* and *ahhs* as the children take in their surroundings: the big black woodstove, the Union Jack, the old desks and slates in front of them, the maps and charts on the walls, a blackboard full of cursive writing (uncharted territory for

many Grade 3's!) and, of course, a solemn portrait of Queen Victoria. But what they see is just the beginning - it's the students who bring the schoolhouse to life.

After a quick question-and-answer session and a review of the rules they'll need to know to be good 19th century pupils, the real fun begins. Working in role, the children explore a typical 19th century school day, with all of it's drills and lessons - and even the occasional punishment! And what unfolds is often magical. The power of imagination takes over, personalities emerge and an element of fun becomes central to the learning that takes place. There is no better way to learn about history than to live it. The role-play offers students the chance to experience firsthand another time and another place. It often provides those students who may struggle in

their regular classroom the chance to shine. The students' natural curiosity is inspired and the desire to learn becomes apparent.



By using drama in the classroom, students have a chance to improve their communication and interpersonal skills as well as their critical thinking skills. When they put themselves in the shoes of the students of long ago, they can see how much our way of life, and learning, has changed in the last 100 years. Big ideas become tangible and easy to grasp. The programme that the Schoolhouse offers makes our history real and accessible to young learners. And above all else, The Old Britannia Schoolhouse makes learning fun! It is truly a pleasure for me to be a part of it.

Megan Curtis

Brampton Fall Fair

Brampton Fall Fair enjoyed three days of almost perfect late summer weather. Huge crowds attended the event on September 14, 15 and 16, with the greatest numbers being there on the Saturday and Sunday. The Friends of the Schoolhouse were fortunate to be a prime position again this year, near the "Petting Animals" in the Livestock Building.

A very interesting addition to our displays this year was the visual presentation by Joan Reid of her research into the former schools of Caledon and Albion Townships. This was of particular interest to a number of people who had attended (or had a family member who had attended) one of these schools. Several of these one-room schools are still in existence in the area, restored now for different uses.

Again, our reproduction toys were a major attraction. This year saw an increased number of sales of these items over the last several years. No doubt they are being enjoyed now or are awaiting to be opened on Christmas morning.

Children again enjoyed trying to write with a straight pen and ink,

while sitting at one of our old school desks. Though quite popular, neither of our volunteers nor the child's mother were quick enough to prevent a young girl from learning the hard way not to examine the bottom of an open ink bottle!

Chatting with the visitors makes participation at the booth fun, whether chatting with a student and her parent from Herb Campbell P.S. about the child's visit to the schoolhouse earlier that week, or a former Brampton High School student of Jim Potter (the first schoolmaster at The Old Britannia Schoolhouse) or members of the Kalapaca family or the Wigglesworth family who attended S.S.#12 (Britannia School) and will be interested in attending the 150th Anniversary Reunion in May, 2002.

The interest shown by the public in The Old Britannia Schoolhouse, its programme and the Friends of the Schoolhouse events is truly rewarding. Twenty three volunteers helped at the Fair over three days. One or two of these volunteers were rewarded by getting a ride with Ben Madill his 1904 Oldsmobile. All of the volunteers deserve a heart-felt thanks for giving their time at this event.

2001 Ghost Walk

Goin Friends of the Old Britannia Schoolhouse for an evening of old-fashioned Halloween family fun on Friday, October 26 from 5:30 to 8:30 pm.

All the old favourites will be back: mask-making; pumpkin carving; beastly buckets; bobbing for apples; toasting marshmallows; Hallowe'en Bingo; and Sinister Twister.

Hayrides and visits to the Haunted Schoolhouse will again take place. The Haunted Woods and Graveyard have been enlarged and are spookier than ever. The pumpkin pinatas will be swinging waiting for eager bashers and Wartzilla, the fortune-telling witch, has promised to make an appearance.

New attractions this year include Warty Witch, the Scarecrow Toss, Eyeball on a Spoon Race, and the Halloween Marble Throw.

The evening will conclude with a Lucky Draw and a Costume Parade.



Below, left: Joan Reid with her display at the Brampton Fall Fair; Right: Marjorie Madill and Judy Puthrough demonstrate toys at the Fair.



Sales Committee Report

Sales were brisk at the Brampton Fair, better than any previous year. We hope to also do well at the Britannia Fall Fair on Thanksgiving weekend. Then we shall be gearing up for the holiday season.

Our 2001-2001 Illustrated Catalogues are still available (Phone Eva at 905 459 9158 for your copy). We hope to soon have an update page of items added since the printing of the catalogue. The new additions include pewter dice, cute little teddy bears, and a line of interesting reproduction late 19th Century optical toys. These include thaumatrope disks, flip

books, the magic wheel (phenakistiscope) and a kit to make your own zeotrope.

Audrey Caryl, the artist who has produced the beautiful schoolhouse images for our stationery products, is doing two new drawings – one of children inside the schoolhouse and another of children in the schoolyard. These drawings will be made into fine quality note cards as part of our 150th Anniversary initiatives for 2002.

Now is the time to mark your calendars for our Christmas events. The Friends of the Schoolhouse will

be selling their wares in the Atrium of H.J.A. Brown Education Centre on Thursday, November 15, from 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.. Our annual Christmas Open House and sale of wares is on Sunday, December 2, from 1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Remember, if you need a catalogue, or if you wish to purchase items from the catalogue at any time, phone Eva at 905 459 9158.



Heritage Garden

Friends of the Old Britannia Schoolhouse are developing a heritage garden on the Schoolhouse grounds.

During the next five years the Friends will establish both shade and meadowland gardens of native wild flowers as well as a Victorian flower garden. When clearing space

for the meadow garden we came across the metal posts which Ben Madill remembers across this section of the schoolyard during the 1920's and 1930's.

School gardens became very popular during the 1920's. Such gardens were considered to be excellent media for teaching agricultural science. An Ontario Ministry of Education pamphlet in 1929 stated that the school garden "will convince the young mind that the work of the farmer gives scope for intelligence and scholarship and holds out the promise that a life of industry in the country will win rewards of prosperity, independence and happiness".

Ben Madill remembers planting a vegetable garden behind where the present privies are. He recalls coming to the garden during his summer vacation to harvest lettuce. James Proctor stated that his school, Caledon East Union, actually rented a strip of land where students could plant vegetables.



Sometimes the vegetables could be used for hot school lunches during the fall and winter. Carrots and turnips would be stored by families who lived nearby. Eventually the Friends hope to establish a garden of heritage fruits and vegetables.

For further information call Daryl Cook at 905-279-5896 or dcook@echo.on.net or Joan Reid at 905-277-3396 or jem1mma@aol.com.



Newsletter Distribution.

Did you receive this newsletter, yet you are not a member of the Friends of the Schoolhouse? Don't worry! This year, as a trial, we intend to show our appreciation to each teacher who has booked a day at the Schoolhouse by sending the four editions of our newsletter.

Your interest may be expanded sufficiently to decide to participate in some of our other activities, and to send home with your pupils information about our Open Houses, 150th Birthday Celebration and Fête and our Heritage Week displays. Children's visits to these events could be valuable introductions or follow-up to their day at The Old Britannia Schoolhouse.

Enjoy the newsletter. Share it with other teachers on staff. Tell your pupils about our functions. Encourage them to bring their parents. Come along yourself and take part in the fun we have at this unique establishment in Peel.

Any questions or comments may be addressed to the editor at briahols@yahoo.com.

Are You a Grade 3 Teacher?

If you teach Grade 3, and you are looking for materials to assist you in your Pioneer unit, take a look in our Sales Catalogue, where you will find numerous reproduction toys from days of yore.

In her sales report elsewhere in this newsletter, Eva Ardiel described some of the interesting additions that are now available for purchase.

And the prices are very competitive! Similar items were on sale last year at a Kitchener Christmas Festival for as much as double our prices.

Phone Eva Ardiel at 905 459 9158 for your catalogue, or to place an order.

Remember, Christmas is coming, and there are gift suggestions from our catalogue that will not be found in the mall!



Need to speak to the Schoolmistress?



2002 SLATE Conference

Planning is well under way for our hosting of the 2002 SLATE Conference, which will be held at The Old Britannia Schoolhouse.

The committee presented a promotional package at the Selkirk conference in April, and this produced considerable interest amongst the participants.

The Old Britannia Schoolhouse can be contacted directly, by dialing
890 1010, ext. 2911

**We are on the web at
www.britanniaschoolhouse.org**



The Friends of the Schoolhouse wish to thank the following for their support:

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