

# The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959  
restored 1982

Fall 2020



## 2020-2021 Schedule of Events

Due to COVID 19 no events are planned at this time

### *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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## Christmas Concerts

Daryl Cook

A highly anticipated event of the year in any rural school was the Christmas concert. There would be days of planning and rehearsals. Children would practice choral selections and individual recitations of poetry. The schoolroom would be decorated with evergreen boughs and colourful handmade ornaments. A curtain would be strung across the front of the teacher's platform to serve as a stage. On the evening of the concert the whole community would crowd into the schoolhouse.

My mother taught in a small rural community in Muskoka in 1917. The little one room school was some distance outside the village on a one acre clearing in the forest. There was no piano in the school and a Christmas concert had to have music. Mom managed to persuade the parents to bring a piano to the school from the village. How they managed this is a mystery. The roads were rough and, having experienced the moving of a piano myself, I know how heavy and awkward it is. Even today most regular movers won't tackle it. In any case, she got her piano and by all accounts the concert was a success. I'm sure there are many similar stories from those early one room school days.

Here is a photo of the school where she taught in Purbrook and the children who participated in the concert.



**From the Chair**  
**Margaret Storey**

Merry Christmas! Happy November 22nd, it has been backdrop for writing about was out for four hours this afternoon a different Christmas things having been changed, cause of COVID-19! I hope safe and healthy. We are all differently and still be effective. This week would normally be would gather at the school-cember classes!! The school-ty with members decorating ornaments, making swags from real greenery and ribbons, red and green paper chains being made and hung on the blackboards as well as a beautiful Christmas planter for the front doorstep. Afterwards we would always enjoy a delicious chili dinner with contributions from everyone!



days!! As I write this, on No-snowing all day! What a perfect Christmas even if our power ternoon!! We certainly are expect season this year with so many postponed, or cancelled be- you have all been able to stay learning that things can be done tive!!

the week that The Friends house to decorate for our De-house would be a hive of activi- the real tree with homemade



The classes loved seeing and smelling the schoolhouse as well as hearing about some early Canadian Christmas traditions from our school mistresses!!

Our tradition for the schoolhouse tree was to top it with two Union Jack flags! That just seemed appropriate!! What is your tradition for topping your tree? Perhaps it is a star, an angel or a beautiful big bow! Perhaps it is something that has been handed down through your family!!

Did you know that a tree topper is called a "finial d'arbre"? I only learned that after watching a Christmas movie last year called

'Christmas at the Plaza'. An a Christmas display to hon- the basement archives she from years past. I won't give been shown yet this season! at The Plaza Hotel in New ty, though, was filmed in here for the Canadian Film So, no matter how we are traditions will stay the inside and outside. We may family members for a tradi- maybe new traditions will be made too just out of necessity!! Remember the real meaning of Christmas, a time to show our love for one another, to help our neighbour, to support a friend whatever that support may be and know that we will come through this pandemic in time!! We are optimistic that we will be able to eventually reopen the schoolhouse next year and welcome schoolchildren and guests as we have always done!! Wishing you all the very best for 2021!!



historian is asked to create our the history of the hotel. In finds boxes of 'finial d'arbre' anymore away as it hasn't Some of the filming was done York City . The majori- Winnipeg so just a little praise industry!

celebrating this year, some same. We will still decorate still be able to have a few tional Christmas dinner! But

**From the Schoolmistress**  
**Lisa Cafaro**

**A Pandemic Holiday Season**

As the end of December draws near, I know we are anticipating the well needed break ahead of us in this year of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

For many folks the Christmas break is a time to spend with friends and family - gathering around the table for food and laughter.

This holiday season things will be dramatically different. With restrictions in place, traveling to visit loved ones will put you on the naughty list. So, we must stay positive and find new ways to celebrate "together".

Thankfully we live in the technology age and we can connect with each other through online platforms. That means you can keep your Christmas pajama bottoms on all day and no one will even know. You could even change your background to be at the beach!!

If you need a safe outing, you could fill a thermos with hot chocolate and take a drive with your family to see local Christmas lights and window displays in your city.

There are things you can do to help share the holiday cheer with others. Let's take a page from the mid 1800's when sending Christmas cards became popular. In 1840 in the British Empire, the first pre-paid postage stamp was created, known as the Penny Black (as it cost a penny and was printed in black ink). This made it possible to send a card through the mail for only a penny, regardless of distance. It featured a cameo type silhouette of Queen Victoria which remained on British postage until her death in 1901.

Although sending mail for a penny is not a reality any more, it's always nice to receive actual mail from people we love. So let's take the time to write and send a letter or card with words of love and hope. That's a sure fire way to brighten someone's day.

No matter what your holiday time may look like, enjoy the break. Connect with friends and family in a safe manner, and remember to share words of love and positivity with those around you.

Have a wonderful Holiday Break!

Warm wishes from the Schoolmistresses

Lisa Cafaro and Chris Chapel



Horsley, sent to Henry Cole  
Created: 1843 (reprinted c.1945)  
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Reproduction of the Christmas card designed by John Callcott  
Penny Black Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penny\\_Black](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penny_Black)



## Festivals and Celebrations

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY, EVA!



On October 31 Eva Ardiel celebrated her 90th birthday with her family in Kingston. The Friends of the Schoolhouse surprised her with a floral gift from all of her "Friends".

Although the celebration was limited, our founder enjoyed the day. Anyone who was born on Hallowe'en must enjoy a good trick or treat. We think her treat took the form of cake!



### Diwali – Hinduism November 14

Diwali, or Dipawali, is India's biggest and most important holiday of the year. The festival gets its name from the row (*avali*) of clay lamps (*deepa*) that Indians light outside their homes to symbolize the inner light that protects from spiritual darkness. This festival is as important to Hindus as the Christmas holiday is to Christians.

Over the centuries, Diwali has become a national festival that's also enjoyed by non-Hindu communities. For instance, in Jainism, Diwali marks the nirvana, or spiritual awakening, of Lord Mahavira on October 15, 527 B.C.; in Sikhism, it honors the day that Guru Hargobind Ji, the Sixth Sikh Guru, was freed from imprisonment. Buddhists in India celebrate Diwali as well.

### Chanukah – Judaism December 10-18

The eight-day Jewish celebration known as Hanukkah or Chanukah commemorates the rededication during the second century B.C. of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, where, according to legend, Jews had risen up against their Greek-Syrian oppressors in the Maccabean Revolt. Hanukkah, which means "dedication" in Hebrew, begins on the 25th of Kislev on the Hebrew calendar and usually falls in November or December. Often called the Festival of Lights, the holiday is celebrated with the lighting of the menorah, traditional foods, games and gifts.

### Christmas Day – December 25

Christmas is celebrated on December 25 and is a sacred religious holiday and a worldwide cultural and commercial phenomenon. For two millennia, people around the world have been observing it with traditions and practices that are religious and secular in nature. Christians celebrate Christmas Day as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Popular customs include exchanging gifts, decorating Christmas trees, attending church, sharing meals with family and friends and, of course, waiting for Santa Claus to arrive.

### Kwanzaa – African American culture December 26-January 1

The name Kwanzaa is derived from the phrase "matunda ya kwanza" which means "first fruits" in Swahili. Each family celebrates Kwanzaa in its own way, but celebrations often include songs and dances, African drums, storytelling, poetry reading, and a large traditional meal. On each of the seven nights, the family gathers and a child lights one of the candles on the Kinara (candleholder), then one of the seven principles is discussed. The principles, called the Nguzo Saba (seven principles in Swahili) are values of African culture which contribute to building and reinforcing community among African-Americans.

Kwanzaa also has seven basic symbols which represent values and concepts reflective of African culture. An African feast, called a Karamu, is held on December 31.

[www.history.com](http://www.history.com)

[www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com)

### The Pincushion Daryl Cook

How many of you have one of Mine was passed down to me for as long as I can remember. Pin turies to safely hold pins and Many were in the shape of ap- with cotton fabric, often red, wool, horsehair, or sawdust. also be used as a way to Sometimes the emery was in Victorian times they took on a wives' tale said that a tomato house brought good fortune. an apple or tomato was a good made good Christmas gifts for Here is a photo of mine. Why see if you have one too.



these in your sewing supplies? from my mother. She had it It may even have been given cushions have existed for cen- needles in a convenient way. ples or tomatoes and covered and filled with either cotton, An abrasive like emery could sharpen the pins and needles. an attached "strawberry". In little more significance. An old placed on the mantle of a new A pincushion in the shape of substitute. I suspect they also little girls in Victorian times. not look in your sewing kit to

### #KitchenLifehacks

- \* Freeze green curly kale for use in smoothies. When put in the blender frozen, kale virtually crumbles. It will add substantially to the colour of your smoothie, but keep to greens and it will be amazing!
- \* Egg substitute for use in baking: mix 1 tbsp chia seeds with 2.5 tbsp water in a bowl and set aside for 10-15 mins. This will create the equivalent of two eggs. You will see the mixture become very gelatinous and take on the consistency of raw egg.
- \* As I mentioned in the ginger article, I like to use a grapefruit spoon to peel ginger. Any spoon will work, however I find a grapefruit spoon particularly effective. Set it over a paper towel and scrape the spoon against the ginger root, away from you. If your recipe calls for grated ginger, a hand held grater works well after the root has been peeled.



\*\*\* I would like to continue to include Likehacks in the newsletter. If you have any that you would like to share, please email them to me at: [kmc@bell.net](mailto:kmc@bell.net)  
I would love to hear Lifehacks on any subject!

### **'Tis the season for Ginger**

*'They gave to her the nutmeg, And they gave to her the ginger; But she gave to them  
a far better thing, The seven gold rings off her fingers'*

Your thoughts may go to Gingerbread cookies or Gingerbread houses however ginger has been used for coughs and colds for centuries. It was literally worth its weight in gold. This spice occupies a place in our kitchen and our medicine cabinet. Extremely versatile it can be ground, sliced, dried, crystallized, or preserved in syrup. Ginger is said to have antimicrobial properties that may help fight viral and bacterial infections as well as anti-inflammatory properties that could help ease a sore throat. There has also been evidence of its efficacy to reduce digestive issues and as an anti-nauseant. Scientific research continues to determine the range of benefits of ginger.



The Romans were the first to abundantly use ginger in cooking. There are boundless uses for ginger in many recipes.

#### Ginger Pumpkin Soup

3 cups pumpkin (canned or your own, cooked and mashed)  
3 cups chicken or vegetable broth  
1 tbsp butter  
1 tbsp flour  
3 tbsp brown sugar  
Salt, pepper, ginger to taste  
1 cup milk or light cream  
Combine and bring to just below the boil and serve immediately.

#### Ginger Salad Dressing

3 tbsp vinegar (preferably wine vinegar)  
1/3 cup olive oil  
2 tbsp brown sugar  
1/4 tsp celery seed  
Ground ginger or fresh ginger to taste (I peel fresh ginger with a grapefruit spoon and grate it with a hand held grater directly into the recipe)  
Salt to taste

This dressing is especially good on a salad with cooked beets. I poach beets often and I am so happy that there is a rainbow of beet colours to play around with. If you haven't tried golden beets, I highly recommend them (and your hands will not be stained!) and there are red and white striped beets available sometimes. Very festive and aptly called Candy Cane beets. I poach the beets with skins on and wipe them with a dry paper towel once they have cooled. It is a very effective way to remove the skins.

### Cherry Chews Ruth Taylor

1 cup flour  
1 cup rolled oats  
1 cup brown sugar  
1 tsp. baking soda  
¼ tsp. salt  
½ cup butter  
2 eggs  
1 cup brown sugar

½ tsp. almond extract  
2 tbsp. flour  
1 tsp. baking powder  
½ tsp. salt  
1 cup coconut  
1 cup well-drained maraschino cherries  
(halved)  
½ cup pecan halves (or sliced almonds)



Heat oven to 350. Mix 1 cup flour, oats, 1 cup brown sugar, soda and ¼ tsp. salt. Add butter and mix until crumbly, first with fork, then with fingers. Press mixture into a greased 13 x 9 x 2" pan. Bake 10 minutes.

Beat eggs, stir in 1 cup brown sugar, and almond extract. Mix 2 tbsp. flour, baking powder, ½ tsp. salt and stir in. Add coconut and cherries and stir to

blend. Pour over first mixture and spread evenly. Sprinkle with pecans (or almonds). Bake 25 minutes until lightly browned. Cool and ice with Cherry Almond Icing. Yield: 2 dozen 1 ½ x 3" bars.



### Cherry Almond Icing

3 tbsp. soft butter  
2 cups icing sugar

2 tbsp. cherry juice  
¼ tsp. almond extract

Blend butter and icing sugar. Add cherry juice and almond extract, using enough juice to make icing easy to spread. Stir until smooth.

***Note: I usually make these at Christmas as they look very festive. They are quite sweet.***



## Fall 2020

### MEMBERSHIP:



Photo by Kelly Cook  
Board Office Employee

At this time of year we would be canvassing our members to re-new for next year.

Due to the COVID19 pandemic, we have decided to extend your membership for 2021 FREE OF CHARGE. As you know since last spring all the events that Friends attended or hosted have been cancelled and this will hold true for the foreseeable future.

Our Newsletter Editors, Daryl Cook and Katharine Moon-Craney, will continue to publish a newsletter every few months although it will only be available electronically. If you usually receive a printed copy and wish to receive an electronic one via email, please contact Daryl Cook. ([dlcook@rogers.com](mailto:dlcook@rogers.com))

### 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](mailto: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.

### Tweet Tweet!

Follow us on Twitter, @PDSBBritanniaSH. Get the latest on Open Sundays, events and their news. We also post pictures of the school, grounds and gardens. If you visit the schoolhouse be sure to tweet a picture or message so we know you were there. Tweet you later!



**Check our website often for the latest information.**  
**[www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org](http://www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org)**