



**Summer/Early Fall Issue 2005**



**2005-2006  
Schedule of Events**

- Sept.16-18 Brampton Fall Fair  
Brampton Fair Grounds
- Sept. 17-18 Doors Open
- Oct. 8-10 Britannia Fall Festival
- Nov. 13 Bassoonist Concert
- Nov. 17 Christmas Sales, Peel  
Board office atrium
- Dec. 4 Christmas Open House
- Feb. 10-12 Heritage Showcase  
Square 1
- Feb. 19 Heritage Day Brampton
- June 28 Strawberry Social
- July 1 Canada Day City Hall

***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:  
Dennis Taylor  
dwtaylor914@sympatico.ca  
Daryl Cook  
dlcook@echo-on.net

***Need more information?***

The Old Britannia Schoolhouse  
phone 905-890-1010 ext.2911  
Website  
www.britanniaschoolhouse.org

**The Schoolhouse Gardens**

The gardens around the schoolhouse are thriving thanks to the loving care they get from a group of dedicated volunteers. We are trying to be faithful to the Victorian style of gardens. Surrounding the “formal” gardens are areas of native plants that would have grown in this location. This newsletter highlights gardening in Victorian times.



teasel

For more information visit these websites.  
[www.victoriana.com](http://www.victoriana.com)  
[www.britainexpress.com](http://www.britainexpress.com)

A good book: Weishan,M.& Roig,C. *From a Victorian Garden*. Penguin.

**From Schoolmistress Jacobs**

At the schoolhouse we are getting ready to welcome a new year's worth of excited and curious students. It's always a great pleasure to see the students' reactions to the schoolhouse when they first walk in. There is a sense of awe and nervousness. What is the new place? What will the day hold? Will there be any punishments? There is nervous chatter and in some cases silence while they await their travels back in time. By the end of the day there is constant laughing and chatting about all they have discovered and experienced. Lots of requests for more punishments and role playing, as well as many, many questions about the past.

We think that it would be great to get to answer all the students questions and musings. As much as possible this is done through research of the time and some information we have gathered about Britannia School over the years. We would like to add to this knowledge base with accounts from past students of their time at the schoolhouse. We have started an exciting project. Read more about it on page 7.

## From the Chair

Frances Kay

Great summer weather was enjoyed in Ontario this July and August. Georgian Bay was registering 28 degrees when I leisurely swam on that lovely July day.

The Friends of the Schoolhouse have planned our Fall and Winter schedule. The first event will be the Brampton Fall Fair, September 16, 17 and 18 held as usual at the Brampton Fair Grounds. The same weekend Doors Open will be held on September 17 and 18 at The Old Britannia Schoolhouse. **For a complete listing of all the great events planned for 2005-6 see the sidebar on page 1.**



On August 2nd Eva Ardiel, Linda Kenny and I attended an evening of entertainment, including a delicious dinner called a *Maanjidowan Feast*. The feast was held by Heritage Mississauga to celebrate the signing of Treaty 13A between the Native Mississaugas and the British Government of Upper Canada. The signing took place at the Credit River on August 2, 1805. On Saturday August 6 the celebrations continued at Saddington Park at the mouth of the Credit River close to where the original treaty signing took place. Native crafts, dancing and music were the highlights of the day which included a dawn ceremony attended by over 200 people.

We hope you will join us at our special events throughout the year. Remember that the schoolhouse is open for visitors on the second Sunday of every month from 1 to 4 pm.

## Strawberry Social

Jean Robinson



Angelo takes treats for the Maintenance Staff

It is always such a delight to see so many people enjoying our annual Strawberry Social. The berries this year were sweet and juicy, as always, the biscuits delicious and the refreshments much appreciated on such a hot day.

The Strawberry Social is just one of the events organized by The Friends of The Schoolhouse as a fund raising activity. However, this one is one of the most lucrative and we appreciate the support of all our Friends who make this event possible, both by volunteering and by attending. Many of the people who attended also had the opportunity to visit the Old Britannia Schoolhouse just along the path and over

the stile.

Thanks to all the volunteers who make this event possible and to Ray Hosty, our violinist, whose lively music added so much to the ambience. Spread the word to your friends and neighbours and encourage them to attend **the next Strawberry Social** to be held in the Atrium on **Wednesday, June 28, 2006.**



My first Strawberry Social

## The Victorian Garden

Daryl Cook

Gardens in the Victorian era tended to be of two main types, the formal and the romantic. Both were characterized by fussy, overgrown plantings of colourful, often exotic, plants mimicking the fussy over-stuffed design of the house interiors. Formal gardens were laid out with rigid lines and geometric designs. Romantic gardens were more natural and unspoiled although this didn't mean that indigenous plants and trees were not ruthlessly removed and replaced.

Prior to the Industrial Revolution and the reign of Victoria private gardens were only enjoyed by the wealthy upper classes both in England and North America. Gardening for the masses developed for a number of reasons: the growth of a middle class with the Industrial Revolution, the invention of suburban living, increased leisure time and more diverse and cheaper plant stock. A major influence on gardening in North America was Andrew Jackson Downey, landscape gardener, who promoted the ideal of a rural life believing it contributed to morality and virtue. This belief was reflected in the extensive development of public gardens (Kew, Central Park) in the hope that gardens would reduce drunkenness, improve the manners of the lower class and decrease social unrest. London's Kew Garden was opened in 1841 over the protest of Queen Victoria who didn't wish to lose her private place to exercise.

Plant collection mania coincided with the expansion of the British Empire. The search was on for new and exotic plants from all over the world. Even the goldenrod—that detested weed in North America—was introduced to England and is a favourite of English gardens to this day. Methods of laying out gardens were also introduced from far off places. The Aztecs used “carpet bedding” choosing plants of equal height and many colours to form designs. The Victorian gardens adapted this form particularly for formal gardens.

Gertrude Jekyll and, strangely, a large number of parsons challenged the overdone exotic garden style. Jekyll designed gardens with a natural look using herbaceous borders, creepers, ramblers, hardy shrubs and bulbs. The Parsonage Garden, also a reaction to the exotics and formal style, was a 1 to 3 acre mixed garden of traditional plants.

Rural and village gardens like those that would have been found in the village of Britannia were more practical than decorative. Vegetables and fruits would have supplied important food staples. Herbs were grown for flavouring and medicinal use. Flowers would have added a spark of colour and beauty in the cottage garden.

There were **a number of essentials** in a Victorian garden. All had a **lawn** to be used for games such as croquet, lawn bowls, tennis. They were the basis of the outdoor parlour where picnics, afternoon teas and garden parties were held and were made possible by the invention of the push lawn mower. Unlike today's monoculture lawns, the Victorian lawn was a mix of many grasses and included clover and dandelions which would withstand drought. **Trees** were important to shade the house and provide shelter for the social gatherings. For those who could afford them trees with unusual shapes or leaves were favoured. **Shrubs** were used to mark property lines, paths, or hide unsightly views. The outhouse was frequently surrounded by lilacs and the picket fence that we think is quaint and attractive today would have been hidden by shrubs. **Fencing and gates** in urban properties were most often of decorative cast iron. Country homes tended to use rustic wood. Just like the interior of the house the garden needed **ornaments** for decoration. Urns, sculptures, fountains, sun dials, gazing balls, bird baths and ponds were common. Our current concept of “garden rooms” is certainly not new. Without air conditioning much of summer life was spent outside. **Seating** was usually cast iron, wicker or rattan placed on the lawn under trees, in gazebos and on porches. Guests took afternoon tea sitting in the shade served by the hostess from the finest china tea service set on a wrought iron table covered with a linen cloth.

We are trying to be true to the characteristics of the Victorian era in designing our schoolhouse gardens. Although no mid 19th century rural schoolhouse would have had gardens as elaborate as ours, we hope to show what gardens were like at the homes of the children who attended Britannia.



# The Old Britannia S

## Lawns

Our lawns are much like those of the Victorian era—a mix of grasses and dandelions. Children make good use of the lawns for games. On special occasions we get out the croquet set and the horseshoes. Set in the lawn are the swings, a popular spot for all ages.

## Trees

Unusual and decorative in the schoolyard garden. were planted over a hundred years ago and still provide shade for children. In the Fall the brilliant leaves is spectacular.



trees do not have a place. However several maples were planted over a hundred years ago and still provide shade for children's activities today. In the Fall the brilliant leaves of the trees is spectacular.

## Shrubs

Keeping with the Victorian tradition to hide unsightly buildings and objects with attractive shrubs, we have large lilac bushes growing around the "privies". Drive through the country today and watch for lilacs growing in odd places and wonder what they might have been disguising. Shrubs were used to line drive-ways and paths. Our circular drive has a similar group of shrubs, much larger now than they once were.



## Fencing

In keeping with the Victorian use of wrought iron we have installed a wrought iron arbour and gate at the stile on the path leading into the schoolyard. Future plans are to put a picket fence where it once was along the front of the schoolhouse property. Remnants of the original farm fence were found on the west side of the school- of the meadow garden.



ri- an use of wrought iron we have installed a wrought iron arbour and gate at the stile on the path leading into the schoolyard. Future plans are to put a picket fence where it once was along the front of the schoolhouse property. Remnants of the original farm fence were found on the west side of the school- of the meadow garden.

When complete the schoolhouse garden will contain: native woodland perennials, a Victorian Cottage or Parlour garden, native plants, a heritage fruit plot, Iroquois "Tadpole" garden, and a children's garden.

The Friends of the Schoolhouse have planted maple trees and the circular hedge around the schoolhouse to commemorate the 1939 visit of Queen Elizabeth. No other trees or shrubs were planted during the period before 1959 when the schoolhouse was built. The will be the lilacs, day lilies, the Windsor, and the Winesap at Windsor and the 150th commemoration.

Future plans include a maze of garden paths, a picnic area and more picnic tables.

The Woodland Gardens now have a variety of plants which include trilliums, Virginia bluebells, and a blue in-the-pulpit, may apple, wild ginger, and wild radish.

The Meadow Garden contains a variety of plants (such as cone flower, bee balm, and black-eyed Susan and aster).

The main project for 2005 was the restoration of the area was planted with lavender, yarrow, hollyhock, feverfew, iris and poppies. A variety of clematis.

It is our policy to avoid pesticides.

## Ornam



Decorations in the schoolhouse garden include a sundial, a bird bath, urns of geraniums, and a stone garden ornament.

## Seating

Our garden does not yet have benches with a Victorian style. Picnic tables provide an inviting place to sit and have lunch.

To volunteer in the gardens contact...



# Schoolhouse Gardens

garden will have several compo-  
nitive meadow perennials, Victo-  
ve herb garden, heritage vegetable  
Three Sisters" garden and a chil-

ntend to preserve the century old  
which was planted by Britannia  
sit of King George VI and Queen  
are known to have survived from  
chool was closed. Preserved also  
dsor oak from the Queen's garden  
rative oak planted in 2002.

ravel, bird houses, rustic benches

ve over 500 plants of 20 species  
uebells, violets, columbines, jack-  
r and ferns.

pproximately 300 plants (19 spe-  
n, pearly everlasting, brown eyed

e Victorian Cottage Garden. Half  
er, foxglove, sweet William, hol-  
The Teachers' Arbour has two

and chemical fertilizers.

## Plants



garden are definitely Victorian. A  
ms and an iron garden arch.

## Paths

Rustic flagstone paths lead  
around each side of the school-  
house and across to the arbour  
and the stile.

Contact Joan Reid at 905-277-3396

## Plants in the Garden

There is not space to list all the plants commonly used in Victorian gar-  
dens. Some of the favourites which are still loved today are roses, snap-  
dragon, columbine, cornflower, foxglove, daylily, lavender, iris, bee balm  
and peony. Clematis and wisteria were popular vines. Ferns were so desir-  
able both for outdoor gardens and indoor terrariums that fern collecting be-  
came a passion and an all day social outing. Many species were threatened  
with extinction and eventually laws were passed to ban taking ferns from the  
wild.

Here are some of the plants you will see in the schoolhouse garden.



Aster



Foxglove



Clematis



Love Lies  
Bleeding



Elderberry



Bachelors Button



Wild Rose  
Rosa Rugosa



Bee Balm



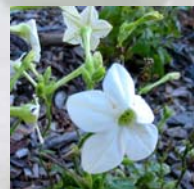
Sweet William



Heritage  
Hollyhock



Purple Coneflower



Nicotine

## A final Word

Many have offered their time, talents and resources to help our gardens grow. We  
thank them all.

Joan Reid who is the inspiration for the garden and Friends of the Schoolhouse members  
who help dig, plant, weed and water.

Staff at Sheridan Nurseries Burnhamthorpe Branch who give advice and encouragement.

Davey Tree Service volunteers who provide wood chip mulch and pruned the old maples.

Streetsville Horticultural Society for providing the 150th Anniversary oak.

All those who have donated plant material.

## Britannia Farm Study

Daryl Cook

The Peel District School Board has hired Urban Strategies Inc. to do a thorough study of the 200 acre Britannia Farm property, collect ideas from the public about possible land usage and prepare a report with recommendations for the Board to consider. During the Spring of 2005 several community meetings were held. Since the Old Britannia Schoolhouse occupies one corner of this property, members of the Friends of the Schoolhouse attended every session. Although public attendance was small, a number of good ideas were presented.

This 200 acre property was given in trust to the community of Britannia in the 1820's by the British crown to be used for the education of children. Over the years it has passed to successive boards of education and is now owned by the Peel District School Board. It is unique and the consensus at all meetings was that it needs to be preserved intact. For those of you who haven't had the opportunity to walk the farm we've included a few photos here and may do a more complete article in a future issue.



The Britannia Farm property extends from Hurontario Street on the east to McLaughlin Road on the west and from Bristol Road on the south to a line running along the rear of the buildings on Matheson Road on the north. Along Hurontario Street are the schoolhouse, the Dunton House, and the original house where the schoolteacher once boarded. Beyond that are open fields that you can see in the photo on the left. Today a walking trail, The Wayne Hulley Trail, takes you through the farm property.

A creek winds through the property from north to south. The remnants of a farm road with a small bridge allow access across the creek. There is evidence of birds nesting along the creek side.



A tree covered rise of land is on the west side of the property and it is here that the maple bush and sugar shack are located.

The Friends group made several suggestions for using the property: a tree farm/arboretum, a commercial garden centre focusing on heritage plants and seed production, activity trails (fitness, handicapped accessible), demonstration farm, heritage farmhouse museum and visitor centre, children's garden and several others. We will continue to keep you updated as further information becomes available. We are committed to preserving this treasure for the future.



## Friends Celebrate Canada Day at Square One

Cathy Harper

Friends of the Schoolhouse helped Canada celebrate its 138<sup>th</sup> birthday at Square One on July 1, 2005. Some of us arrived early to set up our booth and display of toys and sales items. The day was bright, hot and sunny with some strong gusts of wind. Our booth drew good crowds all day long. Many young and old alike enjoyed playing with the old fashioned toys. Several individuals indicated an interest in visiting the schoolhouse during one of our Open Sundays. All in all our group felt it was another worthwhile venture. Special thanks are extended to Eva Ardiel, Earl Bonner, George Christian, Marg Carson, Frances Kay, and Joan Reid who helped with this event. We were most appreciative of George and Earl's brawn. In other words, our tent might have flown away.



Crowds surrounded our booth most of the day as children played with the old-fashioned toys

## Searching for the Past

Melissa Jacobs

We have begun an exciting project. During the Strawberry Social in June we gathered a small group of past students together for a video-taped conversation of their memories of the schoolhouse and the area when they were young. I think we all had fun learning and reliving some old school time memories. There were visions of past Christmas concerts, horses being ridden up to the teacher's desk, and memories of formidable teachers. That day, we discovered how wonderful it would be to capture more of these types of conversations on video or paper for present and future generations to enjoy. We are hoping to put together a resource of experiences of past students, including school, home and play. We would like to hold a few more get-togethers with students that attended Britannia School, or any one-room schoolhouse, to discuss their recollections of their school days. We would love anyone interested in participating in this project to contact the schoolhouse, so that we can arrange a few more times for past students to reunite and reminisce.

For those who are unable to travel back to the Britannia area we would be equally pleased to have you write a few of your memories down and send them to the schoolhouse. Any little memory will do, even those that don't seem so exciting may be just what some little student has been bursting to know more about.

So, think back to your time in the one-room schoolhouse, or two-rooms for those that came a little later on, and think about your lessons, punishments, pranks, games played, holidays and concerts, rules, teachers, school grounds, daily routines, and anything else you may dream up. Please help us make the past come to life for our current and future visitors!

**To participate contact Melissa by phone at 905-890-101- ext.2911; by email at [melissa.jacobs@peelsb.com](mailto:melissa.jacobs@peelsb.com) or by regular mail at The Old Britannia Schoolhouse, 5576 Hurontario Street, Mississauga, ON L5R 1B3**

**The 2005-6 Executive**



L-R standing: Liz Braun, Joan Reid, Cathy Harper, Eva Ardiel  
L-R seated: Ruth Taylor, Frances Kay

**What Is It?**



Here is another mystery item for you to identify. We'll give you a couple of clues. It came from our gardens and was popular with children. See answer below.

Did you guess that this is a hollyhock doll? Hollyhocks were common flowers in Victorian rural gardens. There were likely some in the schoolyard garden then as there are now. Children made dolls using the flowers and buds of the plant and threading them on toothpicks.

**Annual Meeting Report**

The 2004-5 Annual Planning Meeting was held on Thursday July 8 at the schoolhouse. We began at 9:30 in the morning and finished at 3:30 in the afternoon with a break for a great pot luck lunch at noon. The photo on the right proves we didn't go hungry.



The treasurer, executive director and conveners of each committee reported on the activities of 2004-5 —a very busy year as usual. A highlight was the restoration of the schoolhouse with new chimneys, mortar repairs and a new flagstone path on the south side of the schoolhouse. The Friends appreciate the support of the Peel District School Board in funding and managing this project. The schoolhouse looks wonderful and should last for many more years. Another highlight was a celebration of Eva Ardiel's many contributions to the Old Britannia Schoolhouse and The Friends. Many Friends and family joined to honour her and witness the unveiling of the Eva Ardiel Sundial. Other popular events were the Christmas Open House and the Strawberry Social in June. The sales committee reported good returns from sales at various events during the year. The Catering Committee hosted a number of receptions. These also generate funds to assist with the schoolhouse program. Plans to develop our own Friends of the Schoolhouse website are proceeding slowly and efforts will continue in the new year.

After reviewing the events of the past year we began planning for the 2005-6 year. A number of new ideas were presented. As you can see from the list of events on Page 1 we will have another busy year full of exciting activities for you to enjoy.

The new executive was elected. Frances Kay remains Chair for another year and Liz Braun takes over as Treasurer. Other positions remain in the same capable hands as last year.