



From the Chair: Joan Reid



Some Figures and Facts:

Students attended the schoolhouse:
 March: 369
 April: 434

This newsletter is published by the *Friends of the Schoolhouse* every Fall, Winter, Spring, and late Summer 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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Our website is
www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org

Friends of the Schoolhouse enjoyed a tour of the newly renovated Dunton House in March. Our knowledgeable guide was Randy Wright, Controller of Planning and Accommodation Support Services for the Peel District School Board. Friends were delighted to see that the beautiful brick fireplace of the winter kitchen was intact and that the original flooring had been retained under the carpet tiles. The original window panes have been saved and the interior has been painted with historically accurate colours. The drainage problem which caused the basement to flood has been corrected and improved heating and air conditioning will ensure that heat and humidity do not cause future damage. Congratulations for a job well done!

In late April twelve Friends will journey to Amherst, New York, for the annual S.L.A.T.E. Conference. We are looking forward to renewing our contacts with the many participants and to touring the one-room schools in the area. Recently we have made contact, through our web site, with the Country School Association of America. We share many concerns with the members of this organization.

May, June, and July will be busy months at the Schoolhouse. In May the annual cleanup of the schoolyard will take place. Plans for the Heritage Garden include expansion of the Victorian Garden and the development of a Three Sisters Garden and a memorial rose garden. In June our popular Strawberry Social will take place in the Board Atrium. On Canada Day we expect to be busy in our booth outside City Hall. Our annual meeting will be held in early July. After that Friends and volunteers will take a well deserved rest for a few weeks during the height of the summer.

Arbour Day

Arbour Day originated in Nebraska, which at one time was almost a treeless state. Sterling Morton, the agricultural commissioner, persuaded the government to set aside a tree-planting day. A million trees were planted in one year, 1872, as a result of his efforts. April 22nd, Morton's birthday, became the legal State Arbour Day. The idea spread quickly... By the 1880's, when the maples were planted in the schoolyard of the Britannia Schoolhouse, many rural schools in Ontario had enthusiastically adopted this annual tree-planting custom.

Climate differences made the establishment of a fixed date impossible but the first Friday in May became the traditional time. In 1953 Arbour Day was held on May 15 in many Ontario schools. *The Brampton Conservator* **urged** all schools to become involved by pointing out what a pleasure it would be, years later, to visit the school of your children and be able to say, "I planted that tree!" The following poem, by an unknown author, was printed in the *Conservator* on May 14, 1953.



Part of the newly restored Dunton House

*Dear little tree that we plant to-day,
What will you be when we're old and gray?
The savings bank of the squirrel and
mouse,
For robin and wren an apartment house.
The dressing-room of the butterfly ball,
The locust's and katydid's concert hall,

The school boy's ladder in pleasant June,
The school girl's tent in the July noon,
And my leaves shall whisper them merrily
A tale of the children who planted me.*

The Dunce Cap

In 1836 an octagonal school was built at Dixie. It was close to what is now the intersection of Dundas Street and Cawthra Road behind the Dixie Union Chapel. T.L. Kennedy, Minister of Agriculture and Premier of Ontario, remembers playing in the ruins of this unique school when he was a boy in the 1880's.

The lore of the "dunce cap" attached to this school was still well-known when Kennedy was a boy. A dunce cap made of tissue paper was kept on the teacher's desk. It had to be put on as a form of punishment. In his papers Perkins Bull quotes Miss M. Graham, an early pupil at this school, who stated that, the "dunce cap" was the greatest sorrow that could come to a child.

The child who had to put it on would always begin to cry and we would do a dance around and laugh at him."

25 Years Ago

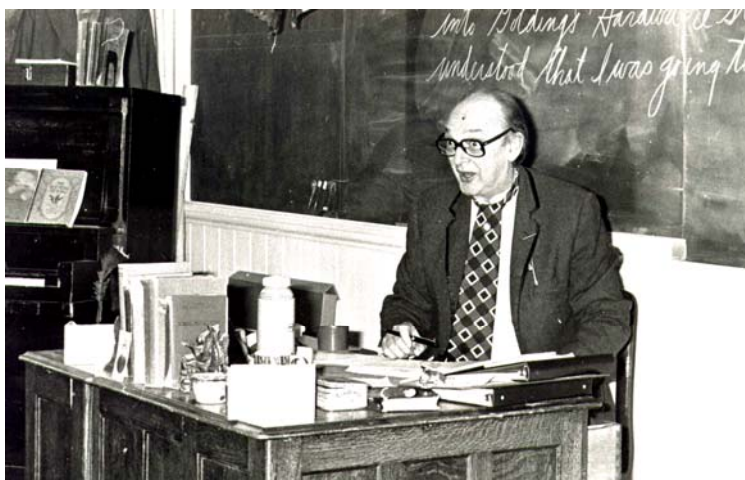
*Backward, turn backward, O Time in
your flight. Make me a child again just
for tonight.*

Jim Potter became the first schoolmaster at the newly restored Old Britannia Schoolhouse when it opened for pupils in the fall of 1982. The official opening was not held until June 1983 so that a large crowd could be accommodated outdoors. Below are some quotations from the speech he gave at this time. The two lines, above, served as the theme of his address.

“I ring this bell and the former students return, from the East Coast to the West Coast, from the farms next door. From every province in Canada graduates have returned to express their elation that the school has returned to life and the laughter of the children reminds them of their student days under the maples at the back of the school.”



Jim Potter with two views of the Old Britannia Schoolhouse which he re-opened 25 years ago



SLATE Conference Amherst Museum April 23, 2007

Twelve members of Friends of The Schoolhouse and School Master Patterson traveled to Amherst, New York, on a warm, sunny weekend, to attend the annual SLATE (So Let's All Talk Education in a one room schoolhouse) Conference held for the first time by our US neighbours at the Amherst Museum.

Jean Neff, Curator of the Museum, chaired the meeting which was held in the main Visitors' Centre. After a warm welcome with coffee and goodies, we learned about the buildings that make up the museum and the history of the two schoolhouses there. All the buildings were brought to the site and reconstructed or restored to resemble a rural landscape. They represent a cross section of the farming era between the late 1700's to the mid 1800's and include a blacksmith's shop, several homes of varying degrees of affluence and size, an elegant bandstand and two schoolhouses, one built in 1847 and the other in 1880. These were certainly different in architecture from the one-room Ontario schoolhouses of that era.

School children from the Buffalo area come for a tour of the buildings spending between 15 minutes to several hours in the school house setting. They tend to include other aspects of the Museum, such as the Erie Canal Exhibit, during their time at the museum which contrasts to the visits of the students of Peel who come to The Old Britannia Schoolhouse for a day of old fashioned school.

After a tour of the museum buildings we heard about pre and post museum visit

strategies from two very enthusiastic local teachers. Their students certainly would have a very rich learning experience with these two exceptional women.

After a delicious lunch and a brief time to view the other interesting exhibits in the main centre we were divided into groups to participate in four interesting activities; Gingerbread in the Pioneer Kitchen; Old Fashioned Toys and Games; Erie Canal Exhibit and a DVD of an 1878 schoolhouse in the Town of Niagara.

When we reconvened in the main room, Eva Ardiel gave a brief history of SLATE and thanked our American hosts for a wonderful learning experience.

All too soon our visit was over. We met many "old friends" and made many new ones. It was gratifying that so many curators and friends of one room schoolhouses in Up State New York attended the SLATE conference. I am sure that many of them will want to come to Ontario when we assemble next year at the Zion School House in North York for the 2008 SLATE Conference.

Jean Robinson

Pictures on the following page are from SLATE in Amherst NY. There are two schools on the site with the newer one being yellow not the typical red schoolhouse we imagine. Respective teachers are with each schoolhouse. Shirley Hoad and Sandra Emerson discussing, educational issues, no doubt!



From the Schoolmaster: Dennis Patterson

Although the 3 degree high for today would tell us otherwise, spring is here and the Schoolhouse is getting ready. Window boxes have been placed on the south facing window sills and by the first of April most of the seeds planted had germinated. Pioneer students knew exactly where their food came from and I hope to instil this in the young visitors to the Schoolhouse. I am now busy transplanting and prepping a plot of land for a pioneer vegetable garden. The goal is to grow some plants to show the students vegetables in various stages and have some pumpkins to carve into jack-o-lanterns. A three sisters' garden is also being planted to show how natives grew beans, corn and squash to supplement their diet. Field to table used to be a short trip in Britannia and hopefully by September it will be once again.

Two of the Best on Each Hand by Eva Ardiel

The October 1896 page of the Record of Corporal Punishment book from Bolton Avenue School lists 24 pupils as having received corporal punishment (the strap) – all boys, although on other pages an occasional girl is listed. The number of “slaps” ranged from 6 to 12. On other pages, however, the range was from 2 to 15. The average seemed to be 6 or 8, that’s 3 or 4, on each hand. As eight different teachers are listed it would seem the pupils were of various ages. The “offences” listed included persistent carelessness, disobedience, idling, talking, chewing gum, falsehoods, neglect of work, and truancy. Misdemeanours listed on other pages included impertinence, stamping in line, pushing in line, laziness, talking in line, throwing snowballs, leaving his seat, eating, laughing, acting ugly, dirty conduct, swearing, saying funny things to those around him, inattention, kissing girls, putting ink on a boy, obscene actions, cheating, etc., etc., etc...A Fred J’s punishment didn’t seem to have much effect as in September 1897 he got the strap two days in a row for stealing apples.

It certainly gives one an interesting glimpse into those classrooms of the past, doesn’t it?

I’m not sure exactly when corporal punishment or the strap, was officially banned in Peel and in Ontario Schools. I know that its use certainly diminished over the years since I was in school in the 1930’s and 1940’s – and since my early days of teaching in Hamilton in the 1950’s and 1960’s.

When I went to the Old Britannia Schoolhouse in 1985 the strap was prominently displayed as an instrument of discipline from the past, - and a motivation for good behaviour. Schoolmaster Potter told me it had been donated to the schoolhouse when it was restored in 1982 by a former pupil (male, of course) who had “removed” it from the teacher’s desk when he went to S.S. #12 in the 1930’s. Visiting students enjoyed this story about the origin of our strap.

Sadly in 1996, I think it was, our strap went missing again! Ben Madill made a replica from a piece of belting, which was satisfactory for the program, but not truly authentic.

In December I told Schoolmaster Patterson the history of the schoolhouse strap. The next week he announced that his father had obtained an authentic strap, on e-bay, - from the Brantford area, I believe. It’s the real thing and appears to have been well used! (No it’s not the re-appearance of our legendary strap – that would be too good a story!) So now – thanks to Mr. Patterson Sr., the schoolmaster can again demonstrate with authenticity “two of the best on each hand” to the visiting students – pretend, of course!



The Dunton Farmhouse has been renovated and is currently being used as offices by the Peel Board

Heritage Mississauga Member's Choice Award

Recently Ben Madill received an award from Heritage Mississauga for his years of giving back to the community. Here are the words used by the president when the award was presented.

Heritage Mississauga's third **Member's Choice Award** goes to **Ben Madill**, a man who has epitomized a life of giving. Ben is well known in the heritage community. We know him for his writing and farming techniques, including the rope making craft that is awe inspiring. He supports the Friends of the Old Britannia Schoolhouse with his own recollection of days as a student sitting behind a school desk. At the heritage showcase he displayed his many

clocks that he and his wife Marjorie, so lovingly care for and he tells wonderful stories of the great farm he still manages today. But there is one other aspect to Ben of which many of us are not fully aware. He is a caretaker, one of those special souls who have chosen to keep the past safe and secure. I speak of course of the Britannia United Church and Cemetery. Ben has been a driving force in the protection of this heritage landmark. He carefully maintains the building and the grounds, and with the members of the trust that protect it, has begun to work towards giving the church a new lease on life.



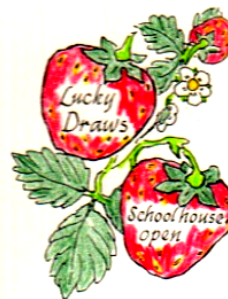
Church from the Amherst New York Museum a, SLATE Conference 2007

Come out and enjoy an old-fashioned
Strawberry Social

Wednesday, June 27th, 2007

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



Another view of the school, a more familiar one. Note the maples which will be replaced.

For Your Calendar:

May 2007

13 The Old Britannia Schoolhouse is open to the public from 1:00 to 4:00 pm

June 2007

10 The Old Britannia Schoolhouse is open to the public from 1:00 to 4:00 pm

27 Strawberry Social 11:30 am to 2:00 pm in atrium of H.J.A. Brown Education Centre—Tickets \$8.00 from Friends of the Schoolhouse

July 2007

01 Canada Day at Mississauga Square One

08 The Old Britannia Schoolhouse is open to the public from 1:00 to 4:00 pm

August 2007

12 The Old Britannia Schoolhouse is open to the public from 1:00 to 4:00 pm

Need to contact the school?

The Old Britannia Schoolhouse can be contacted directly, by dialing
905 890 1010, ext. 2911

Heritage Mississauga

can be accessed on the internet at:

www.heritagemississauga.com

Or by phoning 905 615 4415

We are on the web at
www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org