

# The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959  
restored 1982

Spring 2021



## 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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## Garden Tips

Marg Carson

**G**arden Centres tempt us to get busy but, before you spring into gardening action, take some time to reflect on what you hope to accomplish in the coming season. Now is the time when you can renew or create a new bed. Consider planting a variety of flowers that will provide food for pollinators and birds throughout the gardening season. In the Schoolhouse Garden we have tried to do this. Springtime brings the flowering of daffodils, tulips and lily of the valley. Soon the lilacs, peonies and lupins will be blooming. In Summer beebalm, daisies, roses and daylilies flower. In the Fall sedums, coneflowers, asters and black-eyes susans provide nectar for the bees and butterflies and seeds for the birds. Once you have chosen your plants, you need to prepare the area. Weed the spot. Loosen and turn the soils. Work in compost and mulch around your plants to preserve moisture. Then water the area well to get everything off to a good start. As you work, remember to pace yourself. It's a good idea to do some stretching exercises before, during and after your work. Above all enjoy yourself and have a great gardening season!



## Spring 2021

### From the Chair Margaret Storey

Hello everyone!! Happy Spring! Who would have thought we would still be in this pandemic in May 2021 with our whole province under a Stay at Home order!! I do hope you are all able to make the best from a very tough situation. It is hard not being able to visit with family and friends. But thank goodness for FaceTime, e-mails, ZOOM calls, texting and actual phone calls as well as hand written notes to keep everyone connected.

Hopefully you have been able to enjoy some of the lovely spring weather to get out in the garden, go for walks in the parks or in your neighbourhoods to see some of the lovely spring flowers, shrubs and trees. I thought I would take a look back at some of my spring photos.

The first two are of our own pear tree and plum tree that have been full of beautiful blossoms! We never actually get plums but I have made lots of pear jam, ginger pear jam, brandied pears or pear crumbles in the past!



The next ones are from our gardens at the Schoolhouse. Our Garden Committee does a wonderful job each year keeping all of our gardens in pristine condition!



How we all wish we could be back in our wonderful schoolhouse. We have all

missed our meetings, events and social gatherings!! Our fingers are crossed that some of these might resume in the fall but we will just have to wait and see.

I do want to thank our dedicated schoolmistresses, Chris and Lisa, as well as the rest of the Field Center staff. They have continued to work on programs, have done virtual tours for classes and have even done several virtual tours of our one room classroom!! Not easy to do but they have done it and done it well.

Have a safe summer everyone! If we all continue with the proper protocols, get our vaccinations then perhaps we will be able to return to our normal lives by the Autumn!



## Spring 2021

### From the Schoolmistress

Christine Chapel

Hello from the Schoolhouse...er...the remote Schoolhouse. The definition of remote is, according to Webster's "far removed in space, time, or relation" and "using or involving a network connection between computers or systems in different locations". Both are perfect descriptions of what this school year continues to be.

A few weeks ago, I was at the Schoolhouse doing Spring hikes (remotely) with students. We began our walk sitting in Ben's conversation area discussing the history of the Schoolhouse. We walked through the gardens and the students were oooing and awwwing over the masses of daffodils.



We then walked over towards the barn where the red winged blackbirds were making their unmistakable "konk-la-ree" call as they staked their nesting territory. We continued up the trail towards the woodlot where we saw lots of evidence of coyotes, then crossed Cooksville Creek and meandered along a "trail" beside the water where we found fresh beaver chews. As I walked up the hill from the creek, I looked across the fields and showed the students the wide expanse of the property. They were amazed at how "remote" it looked. A half turn to the left and it was obvious that we were in the middle of a busy city. They were even more amazed that so much wildlife lived in the city. This area remains an "island of nature" and truly gives the students a glimpse of the past.



The Schoolhouse itself and the land it's on allows students to reflect on and understand the importance of these natural spaces, both past and present, and our human impacts on them. It's a real-life illustration of how the land has changed and been changed over time and what that means to plants, animals and people. It's a very powerful lesson when they realize that they are walking in the footsteps of the settlers, and the Indigenous people long before them.

Despite our remoteness, it's good to continue to connect with the students of Peel and for them to be able to make these connections with their community. Saying that, I look so forward to when we can meet in person again. I'm confident that this time next year I'll be looking across the fields with a group of keen fellow explorers by my side!

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## Bringing the Schoolhouse History to Life

Amy Smith

As an intermediate teacher, when I tell my students we will be starting our exploration of Canadian History, I am often met with sighs or comments like, "No!!!!!!!" Although these reactions ache my heart every year, more importantly they push me to change minds and inspire. Teenagers historically do not want to talk about what happened in the past because they often do not see the connection between their lives today and decisions made "way back then."

My goal each year is to get students thinking, wondering, and questioning decisions that were made, whom they were made by, and whom they impacted. I do not focus on names and dates because those details are Googleable and are often the details that stress out a potential history student. I focus instead on these critical thinking strategies: historical significance, primary sources, historical perspective and cause and consequence.

At the beginning of our history journey, I do an activity that explores these thinking strategies and hopefully brings history to life. This article is about what we did this year.

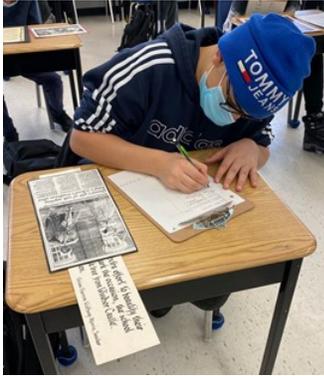
The students entered the classrooms and on their socially distanced desks I had laid out different artifacts. The artifacts were connected to the Britannia Schoolhouse winning the Royal Windsor Oak as part of the Royal Tour in 1939.

The class had already discussed the construction of history and how the person who is telling the story can influence the message. They were then given the task of trying to put together the story being presented to them through these artifacts. I presented the class with this situation: *You are cleaning out a cupboard in a school and find a box containing all of these items. What strategies, questions, and research will you use to discover the significance of the event and why the items have been kept?*



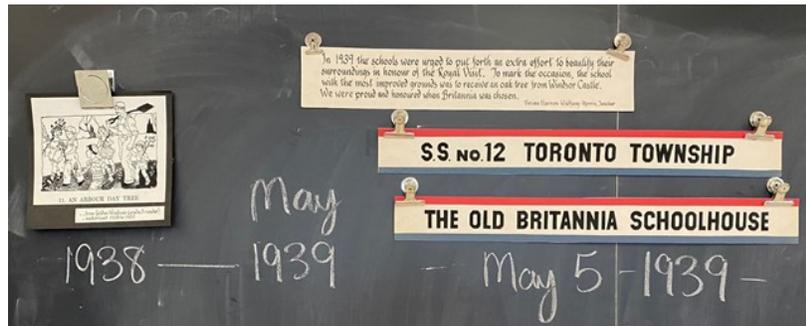
## Spring 2021

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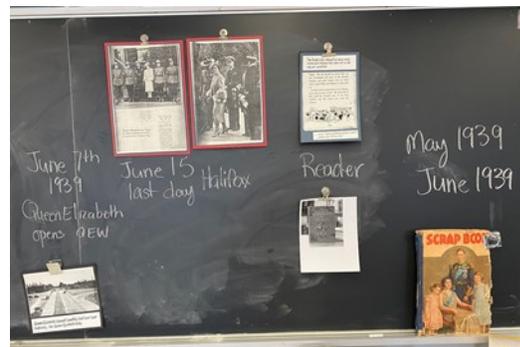
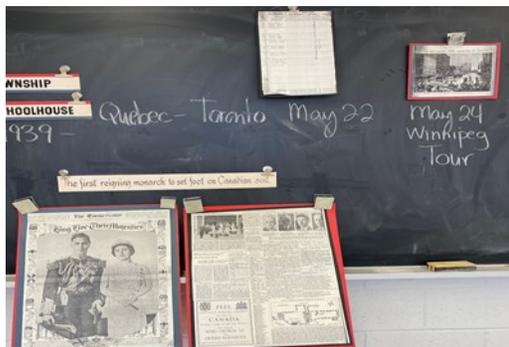


As a class, we brainstormed details we could look for in the artifacts that may be clues to the event and the person who collected them. Suggestions included gender, age, socioeconomic status, race, dates, names, locations, and if there were similarities in images.

Next, students took their clipboards, paper, pens, and critical minds on a timed rotation around the room. At first there was silence as students quietly skimmed and scanned the documents looking for clues. Then, after a few minutes of rotating, the connections started to occur. Students could see similar names, dates, and images occurring in different artifacts. They began to make connections between sources and started to make inferences about what they thought was going on. After the investigation, students were asked to explain the event and to share evidence and explanations. They determined that although there was more than one event happening, the separate events were actually connected.



I asked the students what would help them make connections, and they suggested presenting the artifacts in a timeline. As a class, using the information they collected, we organized the artifacts by date, some of which had to be researched as no date was attached to the artifact. During this process we also created a pile of artifacts we were not sure of - artifacts that didn't connect with any others or didn't fit with any of the timelines we were exploring.



(Cont'd)

Once the timeline was complete, the students were given another opportunity to investigate the artifacts and compare them. Then came the research portion of the inquiry. Students went deep into their investigation of the Royal Tour in 1939 by asking why it was so important to Canadians at the time and its significance of the Royal Windsor Oak. As they went deeper into their investigation, they discovered the name of the school house mistress, Eva Ardiel, whom, I explained to them, I had known. The students asked if they could ask her some questions. As a class, we brainstormed questions that would uncover the historical perspective and emotion of the events. The students were so excited to receive an email in return.

After a week of investigating, asking questions, researching, and having conversations, the students were excited and proud that they had "solved the puzzle." Their dismay about history was replaced with comments like, "That was so fun. Can we do another one?" They had developed research and questioning skills, and they had practised supporting their ideas with evidence and explanation. They had made connections between these historical events and their lives.



The next step involved a writing task in which they put together their learning and developed their understanding of history as a construction. I asked them to imagine they had been hired by a history textbook company and given the task to write about the Royal Tour and the Royal Windsor Oak Tree. "How would you tell this story?" I asked. What happened next is what educators live for. Every student in the class wrote an article based on the research and information they had of the event. They described the perspective of the time and made connections to the significance of the Royal family in today's popular culture. They created timelines of events and included details and images from their research.

The study of history is an action. Going into the past to discover the foundation of the structures and systems we have in place today is an important part of learning about what has shaped our identity as a country. Asking students to look to the past in order to make changes for the future is what makes history a fundamental part of change.

**The History of The Royal Canadian Oak Tree and Arbour Day in Canada**

The exceptional Royal Canadian Oak Tree's roots are planted deep within the Canadian and British ties. Following a relationship with the British Monarch, the Royal Canadian Oak Tree planted in front of the Old Britannia Schoolhouse was a symbol of unity and recognition by the British Empire. As a gift first given by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth after his majesty's coronation, the tree holds multiple long standing traditions and contains history within its roots. Saplings constructed from the astounding Windsor Castle Gardens were delivered to the great Commonwealth Nations as a contribution to schools all around the world in order to commemorate his majesty, the new royal monarch.



Plantation of the Royal Canadian Oak Tree in 1939

During May 1939, their majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth embarked onto their royal trip to Canada, becoming the first reigning monarchs to set foot on Canadian soil. Being a triumphant ceremony for all, schools were told to beautify their surroundings in hopes of receiving an oak tree from the alluring



gardens of Windsor Castle. After being judged by a local politician, a school on Hurontario Street, Mississauga by the name of "The Old Britannia Schoolhouse" won amongst twenty other competing schools and was given the oak sapling to commemorate their majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. The oak tree was planted in the courtyard and became a symbol of unity with Canada and the British Monarch.

## The Royal Tour



On May 17, 1939, Queen Elizabeth and King George VI began their tour in Canada, covering every province, traveling the country by train and crossing twice with an iconic blue and silver royal train. They began their tour in Quebec City from which they arrived on the Canadian Pacific liner Express of Australia. There, they were even formally welcomed by Prime Minister W. L. Mackenzie King. This was the first ever visit by the reigning Canadian monarch, attracting an immense amount of people. All the town folk went to see their beloved Queen and King in the face of their loyalty. The Queen and King were everyone's priority. On May 22nd, they toured the city of Toronto and attended a parade in their honor. Other stops included Winnipeg on May 24th, then Regina, Vancouver, Kitchener and many more. Nearing the end of the tour, on June 7th, 1939, the Queen Elizabeth Way was opened to commemorate majesty. Their last destination in the tour was Halifax, departing on June 15th. Although the purpose of this tour was to engage with the Canadians as part of the monarch, the impending war(WWII) shaped the visit into the securing of Canada's support in war.

KING AND QUEEN VISITS CANADA - 1939

## Spring 2021

### Lemonade on the Lawn

Daryl Cook

It's been a tradition for a number of years that we celebrate summer at the schoolhouse with lemonade and cookies on the lawn at noon. The friends of the Schoolhouse provide the lemonade and cookies and people are encouraged to bring their lunches and have a picnic in the garden. It's also been a way to thank our members and the school board staff for their support throughout the year.



Last year and again this year there will be no Lemonade on the Lawn because of COVID 19 restrictions. No one has been allowed on the schoolhouse property for months. We hope this will change soon as vaccines begin to control the virus, but in the meantime we will need to enjoy our lemonade and cookies at home. If you have a patio or a balcony, here are some suggestions for a relaxing garden treat.

The setting is important. Think of the schoolhouse garden with its colourful abundance of plants and flowers. If you have a garden, pick a shady spot with a good view and set out a comfortable chair and perhaps a small table. A spot on a patio with a view of the garden works too. If you garden on a balcony, try to surround yourself with colourful annuals like geraniums, petunias and marigolds. If the view from your balcony is of grass and trees, even better. A comfortable chair and a place to put your glass of lemonade and plate of cookies is all you need. What to serve? Here are some suggestions.

#### Easy Lemonade

- 1 can frozen lemonade
- 4 cans water
- 1 lemon, sliced thinly
- Ice cubes
- Mint

Put the frozen lemonade in a pretty pitcher. Using the can from the lemonade, add 4 cans of water. Slice the lemon and add to the pitcher. Stir until frozen lemonade has thawed. Add ice cubes. Serve with a sprig of mint.

#### Lemonade from fresh lemons

- 1 cup white granulated sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup lemon juice
- 2-3 cups cold water

For simple syrup combine sugar and 1 cup of water. Heat until sugar has dissolved. Cool. Grate lemon zest and add to simple syrup. Juice lemons to make 1 cup of lemon juice. In a pitcher, combine lemon juice, simple syrup and cold water. Taste after adding 2 cups of water and add more if needed to achieve desired taste. Add slices of lemon.

### Favourite Schoolhouse Cookies

#### *Marjorie Madill's Unbaked Squares*

- 2 cups graham crumbs
- 1/2 cup shredded coconut
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp vanilla
- Mix above ingredients in a bowl
- 2 eggs beaten
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 Tbsp cocoa
- 1 Tbsp water
- 1 cup brown sugar
- Mix above ingredients in a saucepan. Cook over moderate heat until it boils. Boil 1 minute. Remove from heat and stir into the crumb mixture. Pack into an 8" square pan.
- Ice when cool.

#### Fudge icing

- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp milk
- Combine and heat to boil. Boil 2 minutes. Cool. Gradually add 1 cup icing sugar. Stir until smooth.

#### *Frances Kay's Lemon Squares*

- Base: 2 cups sifted flour
- 1/2 cup icing sugar
- 1 cup soft butter
- Mix above ingredients and press into a 9 by 13 pan. Bake at 350F for 20 to 25 minutes.
- Topping: 4 eggs
- 2 cups white sugar
- 1/3 cup lemon juice
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- Beat eggs, sugar and lemon juice until smooth. Add flour and baking powder at low speed.
- Pour over hot crust. Bake at 350F for 25 minutes.

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### The Stereoscope Daryl Cook

Everyone who has two healthy functioning eyes sees stereoscopically, in three dimensions. We call this 3D or depth perception. We can tell which tree is closest to us and which is farther away. A photograph is one dimensional and doesn't show the real three dimensional view. Our brain compensates for this lack and we mentally recognize that the mountains in the photo are further away than the tree in the foreground. However, the true depth perception is not captured in the photo.

We see in three dimensions because each of our eyes sees a separate image and our eyes are a short distance apart. The two images blend and we have depth perception. Charles Wheatstone, a physicist, discovered and demonstrated this in 1838. He developed the first version of a stereoscope. Other versions were developed and in 1864 Oliver Wendall Holmes created a hand held version similar to the one we have at the schoolhouse today. The first stereoscopes, of course, did not use photographs but hand drawn pictures. Holmes model was produced for over a century.



To use our stereoscope we insert a photo in each of the two holders and look through the eyepiece viewer. Each photo is slightly different. Mirrors in the eyepiece blend the images creating a 3D effect.

Students still have fun using the stereoscope even though 3D imaging is now commonplace.



Thanks to Nick Moreau at PAMA who provided this photo and the following information:

If you wanted a bit of an unusual sidenote, right by the younger woman's knee, there's a darker stereoscopic card. It's the William Schroeder tombstone, Ebenezer Cemetery.

I've always found that particularly unusual, they were within a few minutes horse ride from the cemetery, yet they hired a photographer to lug their equipment out, and take a custom image.

### MEMBERSHIP:

At this time of year we would be canvassing our members to renew 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))

### 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!

