

The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959
restored 1982

Summer/Early Fall 2022



2022—2023 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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Mini Quilts

Karen Simmons

I have had a love of miniatures since I was a little girl, when my father built me an eight room doll house, complete with the tiny plastic furniture of the day. I still have the little house, which became a hobby of collecting and making a wide variety of items to add to the décor. That's a story for another time.

I had planned to make quilts for the little beds, and Covid provided me with impetus to do it. I have a booklet of patterns for miniature quilts, and decided to start with one for the baby crib. It is a log cabin design, of red white and blue cotton, and measures 9 cm by 12 cm. There are 108 hand sewn pieces.

The quilt for the larger bed is much simpler, just an assortment of squares of six mini prints, and completed with a lace bed skirt and pillow slips. The tiny throw cushions on the bed are petit point, and were made by my daughter.

I went on to make three more mini quilts. The smallest of these, a pine tree pattern, has 444 pieces, and is 16 cm by 20 cm. The crazy quilt is adorned with embroidery. The blue and white quilt is made of overlapping circles, each sewn on with white cross stitches to a navy blue backing, and finished with white lace.

I have some more patterns that I plan to try, but I hope they won't be Covid projects!



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From the Chair

Ruth Taylor

Our chair for the past two years, Margaret Storey, has kept us informed on many interesting topics. Thank you, Margaret.

Although we were not able to meet in person for over two years, our schoolmistresses Chris Chapel and Lisa Cafaro arranged for occasional Zoom meetings so we could chat and keep in touch. We have now held one in-person meeting outside using the area dedicated to Ben Madill. In addition, we were able to hold a meeting inside the Schoolhouse. Due to modern technology, a former schoolmistress, Eva Ardiel, was able to "sit in" on this meeting. She literally sat in, as the tablet sat on the blackboard ledge.

When I last wrote a chair's message, things had just been shut down due to the developing Covid-19 pandemic and the shooting in Nova Scotia had occurred. Now we are in the seventh wave of the pandemic and the people in Ukraine are fighting for survival.

Since the Schoolhouse program is on hiatus, Friends will not be hosting Open Sundays or planning any Christmas events. We look forward to the time when the Schoolhouse will be welcoming children again.

An Interesting Project

Meg Soderlund

The Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives (PAMA) is searching for local stories to feature in an upcoming exhibition about home, belonging, and community. This exhibition aims to celebrate the diversity and interconnectedness of those living in Peel region. Do you have a story or experience to share? Whether you're new to the area, or your family has been here for generations, PAMA would love to hear from you. The survey can be accessed below. If you would like to follow-up, or have any questions, you can reach out to PAMAmuseum@peelregion.ca.

Link to the Survey

<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=85lvNYadoUeCAztBscsMaMBITBB5XbFFt3K5Z4QxSXIUNVU0VzdQMzM3SkpFWVvk1Ukk2U0U3Nfc2WCOIQCN0PWcu&web=1&wdLOR=c4FE93265-A150-4B80-AA1F-E25BD0A6D625>



Friends
Community
Involvement
Brampton
Fall Fair



The editors would like to thank Cathy Campbell, Joan Honsberger-Siemens, Karen Simmons and Ruth Taylor for contributing articles for this newsletter.

We welcome anyone to submit short items: memories of school days, teaching in a one room school, old family recipes, memories of a visit to the Old Britannia Schoolhouse or anything else that relates to the early history of schooling in Ontario or elsewhere.

If interested or for further information contact: dlcook@rogers.com or kmc@bell.net

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From the Schoolhouse

Since there are currently no children visiting the schoolhouse and thus no stories to tell, let's look back at what we reported in the Summer/Early Fall issues of earlier newsletters. We hope it will bring back happy memories as we eagerly await the reopening of the schoolhouse for children to learn about schooling in Britannia years ago.

Here's what we included 17 years ago.

We took a walk through the farm property and enjoyed the autumn sights of wildflowers and monarch butterflies.



Ten years ago, in 2012, we paid tribute to three schoolhouse friends.

A Tribute to Stalwart Friends

From time to time the Friends of the Schoolhouse recognizes those members who have made significant contributions over a long period of time. A sundial is dedicated to Eva Ardiel and the Teachers' Arbour honours all the former teachers of S.S. #12. In June we dedicated an arbour bench to Joan Reid and the split rail fence to Ben and Marjorie Madill. All three have been long time advocates for the Old Britannia Schoolhouse and its program and have worked tirelessly to preserve the schoolhouse for future generations.



Ben attended S.S. #12 in the 1920's. He and his wife Marjorie lived and farmed in the Britannia community until moving to Fergus several years ago. His firsthand knowledge of local history is invaluable. Both Ben and Marjorie have been members of the Friends of the Schoolhouse committee since its formation. Even though they no longer live nearby, Ben and Marjorie continue to attend events when they can and contribute in many ways to the Friends of the Schoolhouse.

Joan Reid joined the Friends committee on her retirement from teaching. Her history teaching background and love of gardening were invaluable. Joan researched and published historical information about the one room schoolhouses in Peel. She also worked tirelessly to find proof of the correct date for the building of S.S. #12 which is in dispute. All of her detailed research points to 1852 as being the correct date. Joan's love of Hallowe'en led to one of our most successful events of the past few years – an evening of family "spooky" fun. The gardens surrounding the schoolhouse are entirely Joan's creation. Over the past 10 years she spent hours designing, documenting, and caring for these gardens. We were sad to learn that Joan passed away on August 6 after a short battle with lung cancer. She will be greatly missed.



We are pleased to recognize the contributions of Ben, Marjorie and Joan. When you visit the schoolhouse be sure to take a minute or two to sit in the arbour and to enjoy the roses growing on the split rail fence.

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Schoolhouse Memorie

Catherine (Lawrence) Cameron

Our family lived on the Baseline (now Eglinton Avenue). We moved into our new home in 1949. At the time my brother Brian was 8 yrs. old and I was 2 yrs. old. Brian attended Britannia School and was in Grade 4. We walked from the Baseline to the schoolhouse every day even in winter.

In September 1952 Mom and I joined our neighbours taking their children to school for the first time. I was only 5 yrs. old, too young for school, or so I thought. Mrs. Appleton, the teacher, looked at me and said Cathy is as tall as the six year olds so she may begin today. I wasn't too happy at first but my brother was only a few rows away which made it easier to stay in the one-room schoolhouse. Each row of desks represented a grade. It is amazing how much I learned from Mrs. Appleton while she taught grades 1 through 8. I consider myself fortunate for attending a one-room school with its creaking wooden floors, drafty windows, large map of the world and Union Jack flag. I remember playing under the beautiful maple trees at recess and lunch time. Mrs. Appleton would ring the bell to let us know it was time to return to the classroom. As years went by my brother was given the job of sweeping the classroom and stoking the furnace early in the morning so all of us younger kids would be welcomed into a warm environment. A highlight in December was the Christmas concert made up of all the students. I remember a long rope stretching from one side of the schoolhouse wall to the other with sheets used as curtains. We would practice songs, skits and a Christmas play for at least a month before the concert. The schoolhouse was abuzz with activity as our audience, mainly parents and family, crowded the room for the fun. We had a decorated real tree with the heady fragrance of pine. Refreshments were served following the concert and we all went home happy and proud of our accomplishments.

It was a wonderful comforting feeling to be at school with all of my friends and I was saddened to see its doors closing. I then attended Creditview Public School on the Baseline and walked or biked about the same distance from our home as it was to SS #12 (Britannia) from Grades 5-8.

When the official opening of the restored Schoolhouse was planned, in June 1983, many former students attended with their families. Some came from as far as Nova Scotia for this wonderful event. I was honoured to be asked by Ben Madill to give the opening speech of welcome and introduce the dignitaries.

What a joy it was to know that the schoolchildren of Mississauga would attend for a day and find out how the schoolhouse operated in earlier days.

I attended the 150th celebration of Britannia School in May 2002. It was wonderful to reminisce with former students and enjoy looking at our old class pictures. I wondered what was on my hair in one of the pictures and remember being dared to put a maple leaf on top of my head. Well it was a huge leaf and there it is on my head. It makes me laugh to this day.



Cathy at her mailbox on Eglinton Avenue. It was extra high so it wouldn't get buried in snow in winter.

Cathy and Ben Madill



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The Fall Fair

Daryl Cook

Here is the third story about children in a one room school. It follows the Spring story about Will and his friends planting the Three Sisters in their schoolhouse gardens

The children were so excited. All they could talk about was the Fall Fair that would be coming soon. It was early September and school had just started again. but getting back to classes in the little schoolhouse was not nearly as exciting as going to the Fair. Every day they checked their schoolhouse garden plots to see what vegetables might be worthy of displaying, and perhaps winning a prize, this year. Last Spring they had planted a variety of vegetables and had tended their gardens all summer even though there had been no classes. This required considerable commitment since everyone had chores to do at home on the farm.

The annual Fall Fair was a major event in the community. Farm families from all over the district brought the best of their produce and animals to compete for the "Best in Show" awards. It was also a time to socialize after the busy months spent planting, caring for the crops and harvesting. Will and his friends liked the games in the Midway even though it was hard to win the prizes. Knocking down all the bottles with a baseball wasn't easy and none of his friends were strong enough to clang the bell when they hit the base with the big mallet.

Will's mother always looked forward to the baking and quilting competitions. She was famous for her fruit pies and the intricate patterns on her quilts. She usually came home with several ribbons. It was hard for Will to smell those delicious pies baking and not be tempted to try a piece. One year he learned to ask first when a pie was set out on the table. He ate a piece of the competition pie thinking it was just one made for supper. His mother's tongue-lashing was something he never forgot.

Soon it was time for the children to harvest their vegetables and choose the ones they would display at the Fair. There were beets, potatoes, zucchini (sometimes huge), carrots and, of course, the corn, squash and beans from the Three Sisters gardens. All were carefully put in baskets. After cleaning the soil from each vegetable, it was looked at to see how perfect it was. Was it the right shape? The right colour? The right weight? Only the most perfect were chosen to send to the competition. All the vegetables would be designated as entries from their school, not as individual students. Of course everyone would know which vegetable was theirs.

Will had hoped to enter several of his carrots. He had taken special care of them all summer and they seemed to be doing well. He thought he might have some perfectly formed large ones since he had been diligent in watering his garden. The day the vegetables were harvested he was disappointed. Some of the carrots looked fine, but there were many that caused laughter from the other children. When he pulled them from the ground it seemed as if several carrots had grown together and instead of one perfect carrot there was a weird mutant carrot that looked something like a hand. Another was coiled around almost into a circle. He couldn't find any carrot that would pass the test of being good enough for the competition.



What a disappointment after all the care he had given his garden.

When the schoolmistress asked the children to put the vegetables they wanted to take to the fair on the picnic table, Will was the only one with nothing to contribute. He felt none of his crop was good enough. Seeing his disappointment, the schoolmistress asked to see his vegetables. After looking them over she exclaimed excitedly, "Will, you are sure to win a ribbon for your carrots." Will couldn't believe what he was hearing. "But they're so ugly," he said. "That's exactly it," the schoolmistress replied. "There is a competition for the most unusual vegetables and yours are certainly unusual."

The day the produce was judged the children watched anxiously as the judges looked carefully at the submissions. When it came time to judge the most unusual vegetables, they stopped in front of Will's carrots and he could see them smile. He thought perhaps that was a positive sign. Sure enough, when the ribbons were handed out, the weird, ugly carrots won first prize for his school. It was a reminder that something doesn't have to be perfect to be a winner.

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Memories of Jordan Station Public School

Ruth Taylor

The public school I attended had been a one room school when my dad attended. It was built in 1886. However, by the time I went there, two additions had been added. When I was in Grade One, I guess space was an issue. What I think was the original classroom was divided by a wall and each side only had windows along one side. Grade One was on one side and grades six, seven and eight were on the other side. My two oldest sisters were in that class. Although the wall was quite substantial, there was a small hole in the wall where you could peek through to the other side. My "big sister" said she never knew about the hole.

We would walk along the winding farm lane until we got to the road that would take us to school. I was the youngest in the family. My sisters were five, seven and eight years older. I remember one time I was upset that they were walking so fast. I simply sat down on the lane so that they would have to come back for me. I just confessed that to my oldest sister, and she apologized for walking so fast 71 years ago.

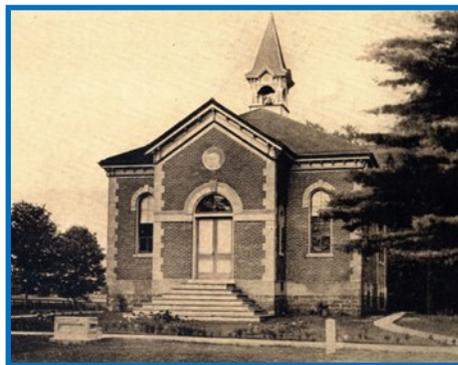
The first day of school each year was only a half day. You were given a list of supplies needed for your grade. Everyone went to the general (only) store to buy the supplies.

I had the same teacher for Grades Two and Three. You could listen to the lessons in the higher grade, so when you got to that grade, you knew a lot of the work.

Again, in Grade Four, space was an issue. The Grade Fours attended class from eight until twelve and the Grade Fives went from one until five. I suppose it was better for the older students to be walking home in the dark in winter. My mother was in the hospital for part of that year. My dad would drop me off at the minister's house after lunch where I got to play with the youngest daughter who was not yet in school. We remained friends, and when I got married, she was one of my bridesmaids.

Again, in Grades Five and Six, I had the same teacher. We developed a close relationship with this teacher. On occasion, she would stay overnight at our house. My mother would pack her lunch as well, and I would get a ride to school.

That's where my memories of Jordan Station Public School end. When I was in Grade Seven the boundaries in the village were changed and I went to Jordan Public School. Instead of a one mile walk to school, it was now a two mile walk. Jordan Station closed in 1992. However, when it was purchased that same year, it became a private school and is still in operation.



Memories of Jordan Station Public School - Part Two

"Big Sister" Joan Honsberger-Siemens

I decided to concentrate on the Grade 6-8 /Grade 1 classes. That room was very large, and there were windows on both the east (Grade 1) side and the west (Grades 6-8) side. That was the class I was in. That room must have been the original school. There was a huge amount of room on the east side which gave rise to the idea of the Grade 1 class going there. I seem to recall that older students were sometimes asked to work with the younger ones. Listening to them read, perhaps? Mr. Bowman was the senior teacher and principal. He used to play John Philip Sousa's marches to get us all into our seats in the morning.

Every year we took shoots from the blooming geraniums in the flower beds and put them in flowerpots where they grew, bloomed and were ready to go into the flower beds in the spring. One year Mr. Bowman decided to plant the whole plant to overwinter. We thought it was stupid – at least I did, and I'm sure others did too. I don't recall that he repeated that next year.

Next to the big room was a room for home economics, but we never used it as such that I recall. On the other side was a hallway, with rooms for Grades 3 and 4 leading off it, and another for Grades 1 and 2. Beside the 1-2 room was an office used by the teachers. The public health nurse used to test eyes in there too.

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Memories of Jordan Station Public School Cont'd

Going downstairs led to the front door and entrance. Below that, another set of steps led to the basement, one large room with windows on the south and west. Smaller rooms off that were for playing and also where the washrooms were located. The boys did woodworking there one day a week, while the girls did paper crafts in the large classroom.

Mrs. Groff had Grades 3 and 4, and organized everything to do with the Christmas concert, which took us about a month to get ready. We must have gone in with Grades 3 and 4 when practices were going on. A large platform was put across the front of the Grade 6 to 8 classroom for a stage.

Grade 1 was my first awareness/exposure to Japanese Canadian people as there were several in our classes. Their parents worked on fruit farms rented by E.D. Smith for his fruit canning business. They all left in the middle grades and moved to Winona. I was sorry to lose them. There were also some Indigenous children in our classes- nothing new there. The Henry family from the Six Nations reservation worked on the farm. Mr. Henry was the minister on the reservation. He came before the rest of the family and stayed with my uncle. When school was out, the rest of the family came and lived in a "shack" in the bush. It had always been called that and was used as a hangout for the boys in the farm family and friends. It had no electricity or running water. It did have a wood stove. We played with the children in the Henry family.

Miss Mary Gillespie was the Grade 1 and 2 teacher for me and was the music teacher. She boarded with the Downings. In Grades 6 to 8 Mr. Hannason came from St. Catharines to do music with us. He was a church organist.

I remember my first day of school. I walked by myself. I was placed in a part of the room where there were Grade 2s, I've no idea why and was given a Grade 2 booklist. In those days, we bought school supplies from the general store in Jordan Station. The next day I had to return them.

Our reader was a hard cover book, "Peter, Paul and Mary." The next year we switched to the Dick and Jane series, continuing with them for years! After that, it was a larger book of both prose and poetry. We read aloud to the class too. I read a lot at school after my assigned work was done. On the west wall was a cupboard built into the wall, not quite floor to ceiling, but high. It was our library. I'm sure I read every book in it before the end of Grade 8 – our public library.

Ruth Taylor Footnote: One time we were invited to attend the church service on the reservation. It must have been an honour. I wasn't very old, but I remember realizing that we were the only non-indigenous people attending the service. Some of the family kept in touch after they stopped working on the farm.

Tweet Tweet!

Follow us on Twitter, @PDSBBritanniaSH. Get the latest on Open Sundays, events and other 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!



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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.

**Check our website often for the latest information.
www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org**

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Our Open Sundays

Our Open Sundays have been cancelled until further notice because of COVID19. Here are some activities you can do at home instead. They are all on our website.

DATE	For activities go to www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org and look at Fun and Games.
Sept	Back to School Activity Read a Story, Write a Story
Oct	Autumn Leaves Activity: How to press Leaves
Nov	Do Some Cooking Activity: Family Recipes
Dec	Make a Christmas Tree Ornament Activity;y: Victorian Fan ornament
Jan	.Indoor Fun Activity: Make Your Own Button Buzzer ..
Feb	Valentine's Day Activity; Make a Valentine for a Special Person
Mar	Be Creative Activity: Draw What You See
April	Get Ready to Garden Activity: Think Gardening
May	Mothers Day Activity: Decorate a Pot and Fill It With a Plant for Mother
June	Family Games Day Activity: Victorian Summer Games for Children