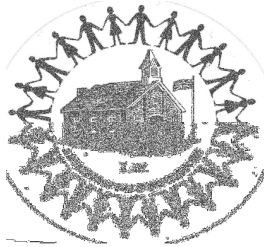


The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959
restored 1982

Winter 2017



Coming Events

Open Sundays:

March 12 Maple Sugar

April 9 Bees and Honey

May 14 Spring in the Garden

School Visits

November 2016 113

December 2016 125

January 2017 272

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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The Three Pence Beaver

Margaret Storey



Did you know that Canada's first postage stamp was called "The Three Pence Beaver"? This early stamp and early post offices were the themes for our Open Sunday in January.

The stamp was designed by a young Sandford Fleming. He was later knighted by Queen Victoria in 1897 for his work with the Canadian railway system as well as for inventing Standard Time, still used throughout the world today.

The British Crown early in 1861 had transferred authority to the Province of Canada to manage its own postal system. James Morris was appointed the first Postmaster General. He was so enthusiastic that within two days he had asked Fleming to design a stamp. Morris expected Queen Victoria to be featured on this stamp, but Fleming had another idea.

He chose the beaver because it is known for its industriousness, its building skills and its tenacity. He thought it was the perfect representation for our nation as our forefathers were building a future in a land that was virtually undeveloped. This was the first stamp in the world to portray an animal instead of a monarch. The beaver appears hard at work building a dam near a waterfall and a field of trilliums. The VR monogram of Queen Victoria is prominent near a crown at the top of the stamp. Canada's first stamp for domestic mail was issued on April 23, 1851.

Sandford Fleming also created two other stamps in 1851 for international mail. One was a six pence stamp featuring Prince Albert and the other was a twelve pence stamp with a portrait of Queen Victoria.

Only 250 000 Three Pence Beaver stamps were issued, so check out those old stamp albums you started way back when or keep an eye open at flea markets and antique sales. You never know what you might find.

From the Chair

Karen Simmons

As I write this in a mild late January, I am worrying about the tulips coming up too early, and that the cold that is bound to come later might ruin our Canada 150 display at the front of the Schoolhouse. The unfavourable weather has meant a more than usual number of snow days for our schools in a short time. A cancellation of buses also means that classes don't get to the Schoolhouse and other field centres. Sometimes a rebooking is possible, but at other times those children have lost a great opportunity. It's too bad, but safety is more important. During my days teaching in southern Peel, heavy snowfalls didn't happen very often. I can recall only one instance when we just couldn't drive anywhere for a couple of days. Most people stayed safely at home, and if they had children, kept them home too. I know a few teachers who waded through the snow to the nearest school and offered to help with those children who did arrive. That's dedication!

I can't help remembering my childhood experiences of winter. I lived in a small town in northern Quebec, where winter lasted from October until late May, when the ice would finally go out of the lakes. The temperature stayed well below freezing for months, sometimes as low as -40 or so. The snow had a wonderful squeak when walked on, and moisture from breathing would freeze around our nostrils. The use of snow melters was unheard of, but some sand was sprinkled at the street corners to provide a little grip. The snow was plowed to the sides of the streets, where the banks grew higher and higher. We used to enjoy running along the tops of the snowbanks, pretending we were on a dangerous mountain trail, or something like that! At school, we would play a tag game in the snow, which involved stamping out a large circle with 6 or 8 spokes into the centre. Everyone had to stay on the spokes or the outer rim, and if you met someone, one of you had to turn around and go the other way. The very centre was a 'safe' spot. It was a good way to stay warm at recess. On very cold days, we would gather in a large clump next to the school wall to play 'Keep warm, Pile on'. Rocking our bodies together helped to preserve body heat, especially for those in the middle of the pack.

The Schoolhouse Friends hosted a very successful Christmas Open House and sale in December. Our Marketing committee for our "Echoes" book have been out doing talks to groups and have more booked for the future. In April, we will host the annual SLATE conference, when we expect many visitors from around southern Ontario who also operate one room school programs. Perhaps our tulips will bloom about then!



From the Schoolmaster

Gary Campbell

Here we are in the middle of February. It seems that just yesterday we were talking of decorating good old S.S.12 of Toronto Township for the Christmas open house. But alas Valentine's Day has just passed, the sun is noticeably higher in the sky, the south windows of the schoolhouse are noticeably brighter and the sap in the maples is running. Yes boys and girls that's what I said. "The sap in the maples is running".

To explain, yesterday while making snowmen with Mrs. Woodsworth's Grade 3's from Worthington Public School, we noticed that a crack in a branch was leaking sap and the sweet tasting liquid was running down the side of the tree all the way to the ground! I understand too that the sugar bush over on the west side of the farm is ready to go and looking forward to the syrup season.

I've been pruning our orchard apple and pear trees in preparation of this year's growing season. Two years ago they were hit hard with an extra accidental pruning but have recovered nicely with the exception of one which we lost. The trees are once again showing many solid fruit spurs and if we get a solid pollination this spring we should have a fine crop.

Next week Schoolmistress Chapel and I are going to begin germinating some milkweed seeds in order to support the Monarch butterfly population. Milkweed leaves are the only food source for Monarch caterpillars and without it they perish. I hope we can be successful helping them to once again be prolific as they were when I was a boy. We'll keep you posted on this in a future update.

Britannia



Farm



Sugar

Bush



**SLATE – So Let’s All Talk Education
.....in the one room schoolhouse
Eva Ardiel**

In April this year The Old Britannia Schoolhouse and the Friends will host the 31st gathering of schoolhouse and museum folks associated with restored one-room schools and the history of education in the past.

Back in 1983 or 1984, when The Old Britannia Schoolhouse first opened and Schoolmaster Potter was putting the visiting classes through their paces, a number of other jurisdictions visited the program, including a group from the East York Board of Education who were planning to build a replica 19th century schoolhouse adjacent to their administration building. Although the building was not completed by September 1985, a schoolmaster was appointed. This gave the new schoolmaster the opportunity to visit other schoolhouses and programs. He felt these visits very valuable in helping him design his program. He was motivated, therefore, to invite the people that he had visited to gather at East York’s Century Schoolhouse on Monday, April 28th, 1986 to see his new “old” schoolhouse and to exchange program information, materials, ideas and concerns. There were ten of us at that meeting representing nine locations. It was decided that day to meet again the following year at The Old Britannia Schoolhouse. In April, 1987 about 30 people attended Britannia representing several additional locations.

The decision was made in 1988, when this now enthusiastic group met at the Oxford County Museum School, that these gatherings should continue annually and that we should call ourselves **SLATE** (an appropriate symbol of schools in the past), an acronym standing for **So Let’s All Talk Education ... in the one room schoolhouse**. Each year, except in 1997, the group, now called **SLATE**, has met at various schoolhouse and museum locations across the province and in New York State. Attendance has ranged from the original 10 to about 75 people. Britannia also hosted **SLATE** in 2002.

The purpose of **SLATE** has been defined to:

- Create a forum for persons involved with one-room schoolhouses to communicate and to share information, knowledge, resources and experiences
- Promote integrity and accuracy in schoolhouse interpretations and programming
- Provide the framework to hold an annual conference and workshop

Several of the Friends attend SLATE every year and find these one or two day excursions very informative, stimulating and enjoyable. It is great to get together with the folks we see each year as well as to meet newcomers. It is also very interesting to explore another part of the country.

The Friends are putting together a program for Monday, April 24th that we hope our guests will find valuable as well as enjoyable. We are looking forward to sharing our Britannia Schoolhouse, the gardens and The Mississauga Room next door with others from across Ontario and New York State who have an interest in one-room schools and schooling in the past.

Let’s hope for a lovely, warm spring day like the one we had last year when the group met at the Oxford County Museum School. We hope that by then the schoolhouse gardens will be aflame with yellow daffodils and red tulips to welcome everyone.

Winter 2017

A Beaver Tail

Katharine Moon Craney

I often take a walk on the path behind my home. The path follows the perimeter of a marsh (it's actually a storm water reservoir) but our family affectionately refer to it as 'The Pond'. Late Fall, I noticed that the landscape was changing ever so slightly; some of the trees were disappearing. It appeared as though they were being chopped with a machete. I thought perhaps someone was chopping them down for a festive urn on their porch. Day after day, all that remained were shreds of wood lying around a stump. My curiosity got the better of me and I decided to get a closer look at one of the stumps. The wood was pointed and looked like it had tooth marks running across it. Fast-forward to a few walks later and it became apparent that we had a resident beaver! I have been keeping a watchful eye on the incredible lodge it has constructed. It would appear to be a lone builder.

Although beavers are primarily nocturnal, this young one was late building in the year and has continued to build and construct, day and night, during the winter months. While I am thrilled to see a beaver and entertained by its industrious nature, I am left to wonder why it is here and where it came from. While I am no scientist, this pond does not appear to be an optimal environment for this young beaver. However, I am hopeful that it will further adapt and enjoy it's new home.

I have lived in this neighbourhood for over ten years and I have seen many changes to the environment around me. In fact, I have watched the City change dramatically over the past four decades. I grew up in South Mississauga and I now live in the North-West corridor. As a child, I remember taking drives with my dad to the 'Britannia Landfill Site' on random Sundays in the Spring. I enjoyed those drives. Land as far as the eye could see and no airplane noise! There was one corner that I awaited eagerly to see because if we had significant rainfall, a small pond would appear and we were sure to see Mallards frolicking.

I know the Old Britannia Schoolhouse stirs the same feeling for most. With changes to the landscape on the horizon, the preservation and integrity of what the site represents, will continue to be upheld by the Friends, for the benefit of us all.

Remembering Two Wonderful Volunteers

Sandra Emerson

Friends of the Schoolhouse were saddened to lose two stalwart members this past fall. Earl Bonner and George Christian were men who willingly responded to any request for assistance.

Earl could be found contributing to such various activities as helping in the heritage garden, transporting colleagues to meetings, driving the tractor through the Britannia farm property to the sugar bush and manning our displays at various public events. His quiet calm demeanor was valued by all who knew him.

After George retired from active teaching in Peel, he offered his experience to the working committee of the Friends. When his other obligations prevented him from attending regular monthly meetings, George continued to volunteer at special events and attend SLATE conferences. He particularly enjoyed the Strawberry Social where he loved doling out the gallons of strawberries onto the prepared biscuits.

Both men will be sorely missed and fondly remembered.

Winter 2017

Book Talks

Jean Robinson

Since the book, **Echoes of The Past**, was published in May 2016, the writers have been giving illustrated PowerPoint talks to various historical societies and other interested groups about the book and some of the schoolhouses featured in it. We cannot cover all the schools as the talk would be too long, but we tailor each talk to suit the audience and the area of Peel.

In October of 2016, we gave a talk for the Albion Bolton Historical Society, and later that month, for a Streetsville United Church Women's Group.

In February, we spoke to the Retired Teachers of Peel District at one of their AM Specials, and to the Erindale United Church ladies at their meeting.

If you or your group would be interested in having "the Group of Seven" give a talk, please contact Jean (905 826 3475) jkrob@rogers.com for further information.

Christmas Events

The visiting children who come in December enjoy a classroom decorated in Victorian style. They are excited to see a fir tree loaded with hand made ornaments, strings of "fake" popcorn and cranberries, swags of pine and red bows over the doors and Crepe paper chains adorning the blackboards and windows. Containers of evergreens, dried weeds and birch branches greet visitors at the door. It is a special, festive atmosphere made possible by the volunteers who spend an afternoon decorating the classroom. Their efforts are rewarded with a chili, salad and dessert supper.

Decorating the schoolroom is done before the Annual Christmas Open House and Sale, this year held on December 4. There were many visitors who shopped for last minute gifts of preserves, lavender sachets, wreaths, tea cup gardens, toys and our book, *Echoes of the Past*. Two vendors joined us with barn board and alpaca items. Hot cider and cookies were enjoyed by all. It was a very successful afternoon and all proceeds will be used to enhance the program for children. Thanks to all who helped out and to our visitors for their support.



Heritage Brampton

Again this year we had a display at the Heritage Day celebrations in Brampton. We join other local heritage groups to promote the preservation of our history. It was a busy Saturday with many visitors who were interested in our research on rural one room schools. As usual, the toys attracted children and adults alike. Thanks to the volunteers who staffed the booth.



Celebrating Canada 150

Daryl Cook



Each issue of the newsletter in 2017 and each month on our website we will feature interesting events that happened in the year of Confederation. We hope you will enjoy— and perhaps be amazed at— this reminder of our history.

The Britannia Schoolhouse, S. S. No. 12, which stands today was already 15 years old at Confederation. There had, of course, been schooling much earlier in the community, the first likely in someone's home, then a log schoolhouse followed by a frame building. Our brick schoolhouse was built in 1852.

Here is some trivia from January, February and March 1867.

January 1867 Trivia

Jan. 9: Montréal, Québec. Banquet given to honour the returned delegates to the London Conference.

Jan. 9: London, England. British North America Act given first reading in the British House of Commons at Westminster.

Weather:

Highest January daily temperature (C):6.1 on January 31

Lowest January daily Temperature (C): -23.3 on January 18

February 1867 Trivia

First week of Feb: Final text of the bill establishing Canadian confederation completed by delegates in London, England.

Feb. 1 Bricklayers start working 8 hour days.

Feb. 11 Bill to create confederation submitted to Queen Victoria.

Feb. 12 Confederation bill read in the House of Lords. The bill passed quickly through first, second and third readings in the House of Lords during the month of February.

Feb. 13 Johann Strauss' "Blue Danube" waltz premieres in Vienna

Feb. 16 Prime Minister of Canada John A. Macdonald (52) weds Agnes Bernard (30) at St George's Church in Hanover Square, London

March 1867 Trivia

Mar 5 Israël Landry founds *Le Monitor Acadien* the first Acadian newspaper

Mar 7 New Brunswick legislature rejects Confederation; angling for better terms, and the Intercolonial Railway.

Mar 8 British House of Lords gives final reading to the British North America Act; the Act breezes through Parliament with few changes; few MPs and Lords attend to vote; more rush in after to vote against a more contentious bill to place a tax on dogs.

Mar 27 British North America act receives royal assent from Queen Victoria

Mar. 29 BNA act proclaimed

Source for some of this information: Today in Canada. Northern Blue Publishing website



Winter 2017

Echoes of the Past

The Rural One Room Schools of Peel County

This book documents the history of all the one room schools that existed in Peel. It covers the period from the early 1800's until the mid-1960's. There are old photos of most of the schools and photos of what the sites look like today. Timelines trace the history of the schools and an interesting – sometimes humorous – “historical gem” is included for each one.

This book is a great gift for a teacher or anyone interested in the history of education.

Written and published by Friends of the Schoolhouse.

Soft cover, full colour, 208 pages.

\$30 plus \$10 shipping

Available at all schoolhouse events and from any member of Friends of the Schoolhouse.

Book Talks

Illustrated talks are available to historical societies and other interested groups. We tailor each presentation to suit the audience and the one room schools that were in their local area.

If your group would be interested in having a presentation, please contact Jean (905 826 3475) jkrob@rogers.com for further information.

**Have you renewed your membership for 2017
Renewal forms are on our website.
Membership forms can be downloaded from our website:**

www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org

An Invitation

This is a special invitation for members to join the Friends of the Schoolhouse committee. We are always looking for new volunteers with new ideas to help us plan activities that will support and maintain the schoolhouse and its program. We meet on the second Tuesday of every month from 4 to 6 pm. We can offer you an interesting and rewarding experience along with great light refreshments at each meeting. **Please contact Shirley Hoad, shoad@bell.net,**

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 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.

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