

# The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959  
restored 1982

Winter 2025



## Coming Events

No events are being held

## School Visits

The Living History Program for students has been cancelled

## *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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## *Need more information?*

[www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org](http://www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org)



**Eva Ardiel**  
**1930 - 2025**

The Friends of the Schoolhouse are sad to announce the loss of our friend and mentor Eva Ardiel. We will forever be grateful for Eva's friendship, knowledge, enthusiasm and dedication to preserving the history of the Old Britannia Schoolhouse. She was an inspiration.

Eva will always be the "face" of the Friends of the Britannia Schoolhouse. She had the vision and the determination to keep the schoolhouse as a living history classroom for the students of Peel.

Eva was the schoolmistress at the Britannia Schoolhouse for many years, recreating the life of children in a one room schoolhouse in the late 1800s. Students came for a day to role play a school day of a hundred years ago. Eva developed a program for them that was interesting, exciting and so different from what they were experiencing in their 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms. Following her retirement, she supported and guided the schoolmistresses and schoolmasters who followed in her footsteps.

Eva was the driving force that established the Friends of the Schoolhouse organization and she continued to advocate for the preservation of the schoolhouse and its program for children. She was actively involved in all the Friends activities until she moved to Kingston several years ago. Even then she stayed in touch and was always willing to offer help and advice when asked.

Eva will be greatly missed. The Friends are dedicated to carry on her efforts to preserve her beloved schoolhouse.

## **From the Chair**

Ruth Taylor

In January we lost our beloved former Schoolmistress Eva Ardiel. She was the driving force behind Friends of the Schoolhouse. We are sharing some of our memories of Eva in this newsletter.

Friends last held a Christmas sale pre-pandemic in 2019. This was one of Eva's initiatives. We decided to revive the sale on a smaller scale, without inviting any outside vendors. People checked their basements to unearth what had been tucked away. Many handcrafted items were found as well as purchased stock. We imported some jams and relishes. The weather cooperated and we had a steady stream of visitors. We felt the event was worthwhile as it gave the public a chance to visit the Schoolhouse, and as well, we made a modest profit.

Our February meeting presented some challenges. We assumed the front of the Schoolhouse would have been cleared. Wrong! My husband pulled into the area in front of the Schoolhouse. I gingerly picked my way through the snow in my not-so-sturdy running shoes. After I unlocked the front door, I found a broom to clear the steps. When I opened the back door, I could see that others had parked at the back where the parking lot had been cleared. I cleared the back porch and steps with a shovel I found. I thought that these were tasks earlier schoolmistresses might have done. People still had to trudge through the snow along the boardwalk and make their way up to the steps. Although the start of our meeting was delayed, we did survive the adventure. I was told that the outside contractor should have cleared the snow. My parting advice is that if you think you should wear your boots, you probably should have.

We will resume Open Sundays for April, May and June.

## **My Memories of Eva Ardiel**

Dennis Taylor

I have many memories of Eva from the time she was the schoolmistress at the Old Britannia Schoolhouse to when she headed up the Friends of the Schoolhouse.

I first met Eva when she became the schoolmistress. I took a grade 7 class to the schoolhouse on a field trip. Eva had visited my classroom before we went to help prepare them. She was easygoing and tried to answer their questions. When we arrived, by bus, at the schoolhouse my students were very talkative. We waited at the door, then Eva stepped out, in costume, complete with a stern look. My students immediately settled down and lined up in two neat lines. The mood had been set for the day, and they certainly got a lot out of the visit.

Later on, I went to work with others in a group called the Old Britannia Schoolhouse Committee as we helped Eva put together materials that the students would be able to use in the schoolhouse. We put together games and samples from old readers so that the children would see what students long ago would have used. She had some of the old readers and contacted the publishers who were still around about making copies of some of the material found in the books. The books had been out of print for many years and Eva was able to convince them to let her make copies of some of the material. She spent hours with a copier machine making copies so that the students would have the best possible copies, and we spent hours assembling and stapling the booklets together. It was not all work. Eva and the ladies in the group fed us well. We had a fun group even if Eva referred to us as the Old BS Committee.

After Eva retired, she formed the Friends of the Schoolhouse to help keep the school running. After we retired my wife and I joined the Committee. At one point Eva was honoured for all of her work. There was a ceremony and a presentation at the school. A sundial was placed in the garden area in her name. My wife and I went to her house beforehand to help delay her and her daughter until the limousine, as a surprise, arrived to take them to the schoolhouse. Eva was dressed, as they used to say, to the nines and was excited and nervous. What made us smile was when she told us she had taken a small nip of Scotch to settle her nerves. The day was a real success, and Eva was in her delight meeting with people from the Peel Board, friends and neighbours.

## Schoolhouse Musings

Lisa Cafaro

### The Great Canadian Maple Syrup Heist: A Sticky Situation

As someone who makes maple syrup at the field centres, I have a deep connection to the process of making maple syrup, the connection to the land, and sharing this rich Canadian tradition with students. Recently, I watched a show called "The Sticky," a dark comedy series loosely based on the 2011–2012 Quebec maple syrup heist. The show was great! It made me want to know more about the realities of the heist. Here is what I found:



#### The Heist

In 2011 and 2012, Quebec experienced one of the most infamous thefts in Canadian history—the Great Canadian Maple Syrup Heist. Thieves siphoned off 9,571 barrels of syrup, worth \$18 million, from a warehouse used by the Quebec Maple Syrup Producers (QMSP). They replaced the syrup with water and smuggled the syrup out in trucks, disrupting the global maple syrup market.

#### The Impact

Quebec produces over 70% of the world's maple syrup, and the stolen amount represented 12% of the province's annual supply. This caused price fluctuations and exposed security weaknesses in the industry. In response, stricter regulations, better tracking systems and increased security were introduced to prevent future thefts.

#### The Investigation & Aftermath

Authorities arrested 26 people. The ringleader was sentenced to 8 years in prison and fined \$9.4 million. The heist also brought attention to Quebec's Global Strategic Maple Syrup Reserve, often called the "Fort Knox of Maple Syrup." Located in multiple facilities across Quebec, the reserve holds up to 100 million pounds of syrup to stabilize global supply and prices, much like oil reserves. Since the heist, security has tightened, and Quebec's syrup industry remains strong. While the theft was a major crime, it also showcased the immense value of Canada's liquid gold—a resource worth protecting.

#### **Upcoming GTA Maple Syrup Festivals**

If you are looking for a family outing to explore the magic of the maple syrup season, several sugarbush festivals are scheduled for March 2025:

- **Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival:** Hosted by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, this festival runs from March 8 to April 6, 2025, at Bruce's Mill Conservation Park and the Kortright Centre for Conservation. Attendees can enjoy demonstrations, activities, and, of course, real maple syrup. Special family-fun activities are available on weekends and during March break.
- **Maple Syrup Festival at Kortright:** Taking place from March 8 to 16 and on weekends from March 22 to April 6, 2025, this festival offers family-friendly activities and maple syrup demonstrations. Festival hours are from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- **The Elmira Maple Syrup Festival:** On April 5, 2025, featuring family-friendly activities such as a pancake breakfast, craft and collectible show, and live entertainment including a pancake flipping contest. The festival runs from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

## Remembering Eva

Members of the Friends group fondly remember Eva and all that she meant to each of us and to the schoolhouse. Here are some thoughts we want to share with you.

Margaret Storey

Eva will always be the "face" of the Friends of the Britannia Schoolhouse. She had the vision and the determination to keep the schoolhouse as a living history classroom for the students of Peel. She was an inspiration to all of us.

Her many after school workshops helped us create beautiful Victorian decorations. Many of these decorated the real Christmas tree we would put up in the schoolhouse every December. The visiting classes loved seeing all the old fashioned ornaments. Her creative side showed up in all the various events we held at the schoolhouse.

Many of us remember taking art courses from Eva years ago. There was always a practical activity that we could take back to our classrooms the next day. We also remember her teaching us how to make letters for bulletin board displays. That is something I still use today. We also loved her calligraphy for signs or notes. Such talent.

She loved her role as the schoolmistress and she was a wonderful resource for the schoolmistresses and schoolmasters who followed in her footsteps. I know they were always so grateful for the help she gave them to make sure the program was accurate and interesting.



I remember one summer when The Friends painted all the wainscoting in the schoolhouse. Eva made sure we had the correct colour green as would have been in a one room schoolhouse. Lots of laughs. I am sure some of us ended up with paint on our clothes but by the end it looked perfect.

I often pull out the little recipe booklets we made as a fundraiser. It is fun to look through and try the old fashioned recipes. Eva explained the history of Sweetmeats and that years ago they were often given to guests in small handmade baskets. Yes, Eva showed us how to make those too. Eva's schoolhouse fudge is delicious as is her Coffee Cake. We were always excited when she would bring her dainty Empire Cookies for a meeting or an event. Fiddly, I am sure, but so tasty.

Eva inspired us, encouraged us in all we did for the schoolhouse and the schoolhouse program. She was a true friend. She will be greatly missed.

Shirley

I met Eva many years ago when we both worked as resource teachers for the Peel Board of Education. I was at the Board Office for a meeting and at some point I needed to find a washroom. When I went in, I found an older lady looking in the mirror, adjusting her wire-rimmed glasses and checking her grey hair. Her long skirt and shawl were not appropriate for a hot June day. Not knowing who she was, I ignored her but then she said my name. It was Eva!

I guess I looked puzzled until she informed me that she was applying for the position of Schoolmistress for The Old Britannia School after the retirement of James Potter, the first schoolmaster of the reopened Schoolhouse. She joked that she thought she would have a better chance for the job if she showed up in character.

I am sure none of the other applicants had a chance! Eva became the Schoolmistress until her retirement.

Karen



Eva's birthday was October 31st. We used to do a big community event for Halloween that took many volunteers to make it a success. Eva's assignment was to dress in flowing gown and be a fortune teller. As I was usually involved with outdoor activities, I didn't get to see her in action, but I always heard how successful her performance was.

Ruth

Although most people associate Eva with the Schoolhouse, I met Eva in a different setting. Many years ago, I was taking a Departmental Art course. Eva was teaching the section on bulletin boards. She supplied patterns to make templates for letters to be used on bulletin boards. I used them for many years in my classroom. I spent many hours cutting out letters.

I always admired Eva's beautiful calligraphy. She used it for signs on sale items and for posters advertising events like the Strawberry Social. Eva liked things to be neat and tidy. If she was present, we made sure to keep items organized with the signs in their proper place.

ET

We all knew it had to come. It's hard to imagine that any activity the Schoolhouse is involved with isn't going to feel the sting of the loss of the knowledge, wit, enthusiasm, and wonderfully spirited soul of dear Eva. Besides Julie and Chris, Eva was the first person who welcomed me into the fold. She always had a smile, and had the most incredible memory. Like Julie, I have been reminded of Eva as I set Christmas cards aside on Monday. I thought how incredibly strong her handwriting, and it never failed that a seasonal card would always arrive, like clockwork. I can only imagine her as the schoolmarm so many years ago, teaching penmanship. I never experienced the concept of Eva being stumped by a question or idea. Her presence had already been shown even when she moved to Kingston. Losing her is bittersweet because she set a very high standard for the rest of us.





Chris Chapel

I have so many memories of my dear friend and mentor Eva.

As schoolmistress I always looked forward to sharing stories from the Schoolhouse with Eva and knew, as former schoolmistress herself that she delighted in hearing them. I was equally entertained by her tales and often used her stories as inspiration when teaching. I fondly remember a day spent together with a visiting class. It was such a treat to see Eva reprising her role as schoolmistress then reviewing the day together and receiving valuable, and kind, feedback. Eva was always willing to share her wealth of knowledge about history in general and more specifically about education in Ontario and of the Schoolhouse and Britannia area. Her memory for all things was incredible and I knew that I could rely on her for an answer whenever a puzzling question arose. Inevitably our Schoolhouse chats would lead to longer discussions about many other topics. Eva was never shy to share her opinions and frustrations. She was fiery but diplomatic. I learned so much from this artistic, creative, dedicated professional who believed strongly in learning from the past but also accepting change. Her detailed documentation and tireless dedication to rooting out factual information have been invaluable in contributing to what has become a comprehensive archive of Britannia Schoolhouse and the surrounding community that is a legacy to future generations. It was a great privilege to know and work alongside this wonderful person and I miss her.



Lisa Cafaro

I remember the first time I met Eva. It was long before I became the school mistress. It was Halloween, and the Friends were organizing a haunted walk at the schoolhouse. Eva was dressed as a cat, delighting in seeing all the children enjoying the fun. It was also her birthday—how perfect!

A few years later, I had become the school mistress and learned about Eva's time in the same role and how she helped form the reenactment program with James Potter. I was initially intimidated to talk to her. She was incredibly intelligent and informative, but the fear was all in my head. As I got to know Eva, I discovered what a kind and loving person she truly was. Her wealth of knowledge about the schoolhouse and past programming was awe-inspiring. She was never shy about sharing stories, information and a warm hug.



I often think about the incredible life she lived, witnessing so many important changes over time. She once told me a story about having a Model A Roadster with a rumble seat. She and her girlfriends would go out for wild rides in it until her father caught wind of it and put a stop to their adventures. She giggled as she recounted that story, and it made me laugh too, as I currently have a Model A Roadster, though the rumble seat has been converted into a trunk. I can picture a spry Eva having a ball in it!

My heart is heavy with the loss of such an incredible woman. I feel privileged to have known her and basked in her light.

Eva will be dearly missed by all who were fortunate enough to have known her.

**Winter 2025**

Julie Dippelhofer

Thirteen years ago after hearing my 7 year old twins sing O Canada at the Hershey Centre (now The Paramount Fine Foods Centre), I was heading south on Hurontario and saw the sandwich board advertising the Victorian Open House and Sale at the Britannia Schoolhouse. With a busy life with two daughters I had yet to visit the Britannia Schoolhouse even though my sister was one of the Schoolmistresses. That day we entered and I immediately fell in love with the beautiful building and all the treasures inside. Eva had all the toys at a reduced rate and was no longer going to be running the sales, they were selling out. After hearing this news I knew it had to continue, so myself and my friend Amy Smith become the new Sale Convenors. Of course, one needs two people to fill Eva's shoes. Eva continued to mentor us as we attended trade shows and bought new and always loved items for the sales.



It was easy to feel wonderful in Eva's presence, her intelligence was sharp, her creativity was boundless, and her humour was infectious. Eva was so wise, and her youthful spirit made our age difference seem nonexistent.

When Covid hit in 2020 our monthly meetings came to an end, we still would meet over zoom, and my sister and I did visit Eva twice during the lockdown. Once when we were all masked up and another beautiful visit in her backyard, the sun beating down, and such wonderful conversation. I loved Eva, and will miss her greatly.

**Don't forget to renew your membership**

Your 2025 membership is now due. If you haven't already done so, please renew it so we can continue our work to support and preserve the Britannia Schoolhouse. Why not invite others to join too.

Friends of the Schoolhouse Membership Renewal

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

I want my correspondence and newsletters sent by: \_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

OR \_\_\_ Canada Post Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in joining the Organizing Committee of The Friends to continue our support of The Old Britannia Schoolhouse. \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in volunteering at Friends' events. For further information please contact Shirley Hoad (905-821-9262/ shoad@bell.net)

MEMBERSHIP FEE ENCLOSED Annual Membership Fee: \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_ (January 1 to December 31) Please make cheque for membership payable to Friends of the Schoolhouse.

**DONATIONS**

1. Cheques: The Peel District School Board provides registered charity receipts for income tax purposes for donations of \$100.00 or more. Your cheque must be payable to Peel District School Board and designated in the lower left corner: For "Friends of the Schoolhouse" \$ \_\_\_\_\_

2. Electronic Donation: The Peel District School Board provides registered charity receipts for income tax purposes for any amount made through their website. Website: www.peelschools.org 1. Select "our board". 2. Select: Make a donation. 3. Complete Donation Form (You will need a valid credit card) 4. Message to School Board Box: for "Friends of the Schoolhouse".

Please send your application and all cheques by Canada Post to: Friends of the Schoolhouse, 6586 Treviso Terrace, Mississauga, Ontario, L5N 4K3 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## From Sap to Syrup to Sweets

Lisa gave us an account of the stealing of huge quantities of maple syrup that caused a bit of a sensation a few years ago. It revealed how valuable this "liquid gold" is. Not something we think about when we pour it on our pancakes. If you are lucky enough to have a sugar maple on your property and have the patience to tap the tree and boil the sap, you can make your own syrup. Until it was cut down in preparation for the LRT construction on Hurontario Street, we had a sugar maple at the front of the schoolhouse that children tapped every year.



There are other ways to use the syrup. Here is a delicious suggestion from Margaret.

### Maple Syrup Cookies

Margaret Storey

1/2 cup butter, softened to room temperature  
1 cup of dark brown sugar  
1/2 cup maple syrup  
1 large egg  
1 tsp. vanilla extract  
2 cups of all purpose flour  
1/2 tsp. baking soda  
1/2 tsp. Salt  
3/4 cup chopped walnuts



1. Mix butter and sugar together until light and fluffy in one bowl.
2. Add vanilla and egg and mix well, add maple syrup and mix well again.
3. Whisk flour, baking soda and salt together, slowly add to butter mixture and mix just until it is all incorporated.
4. Fold in walnuts.
5. Cover with plastic wrap and chill for 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees

Place spoonfuls on parchment paper lined cookie sheet.

Bake for 10-12 minutes until lightly browned.

Transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

These cookies could be dusted with icing sugar or drizzled with a thin maple syrup icing.

**Check our website often for the latest information.  
[www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org](http://www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org)**