

The Old Britannia Schoolhouse

1852-1959
restored 1982

Winter 2022



Coming Events

No events are being held during the COVID 19 crisis

School Visits

No students are currently able to visit the schoolhouse

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?

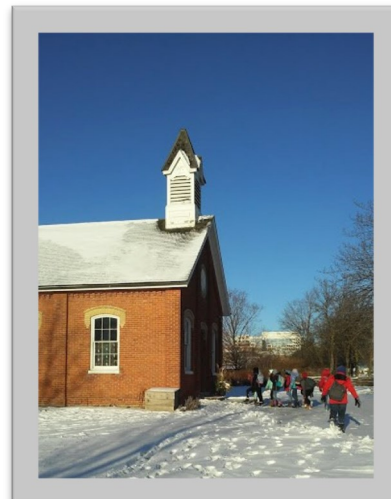
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Winters Past

This winter of 2022 has felt like an old-fashioned one when the cold lasted for weeks and the snow piled up and stayed. Heritage Mississauga recently shared a photo taken by Ben Madill sometime in the 1920s. Looking north on Hurontario Street we see someone trudging along between massive drifts of snow. One wonders how many children made it to the Britannia schoolhouse that day.



Here's a look at a snowy morning as children arrive for a day of learning about going to school long ago.



From the Chair

Margaret Storey

Hello everyone!! I hope you continue to be safe and healthy as we live in this ongoing pandemic era! Even though the Friends have had no events again this school year and nothing to plan for, we still wanted to put together a newsletter for our members. We all eagerly await the day when we can be back in the schoolhouse for our meetings. We are also eager to be planning events once again so that the general public can also enjoy a visit to our historic site. That could be sometime in 2023 at this point.

We certainly have had some very cold weather this winter and a lot of snow. But a few days of temperatures just above 0C make us think that spring can't be too far around the corner. Spring, of course, means maple syrup days. Ontario maple syrup producers are well known for making some of the best maple syrup in the world. They are also recognized for managing their sugar bushes in an environmentally sustainable way. As well as using very modern methods such as a tubing system joining many maple trees together to collect the sap, many still use the old fashioned methods to show visitors how our First Nations people and early settlers would have gathered the sap to make into maple syrup and maple sugar.

First Nations knew that during the sugar moon the sap would start to run. Making a long slash across the trunk, a piece of flat wood would then be wedged into the cut. The sap would drip down into a birch bark bowl on the ground. They may have thickened the syrup by dropping red hot rocks into the containers full of sap.

Our early settlers depended on maple syrup as a sweetener. Cones of white sugar were far too expensive at that time. Sap was gathered, then boiled and boiled. Some syrup would be ladled into jugs. Some syrup was stirred until it finally turned into sugar which was then stored into wooden boxes or tubs for use later. Imagine the delight of tasting that sweet treat later on in the year.

Hopefully many of our local sugar bush farms will be open during March for families to experience a day in the sugar bush. Many have various special events on weekends so it would be a wonderful day out for families. Check out your local sugar bushes and support their endeavours if you are able. Soon you could be enjoying a stack of pancakes with Ontario's sweet treat - maple syrup!!



Winter 2022

From the Schoolmistress

Lisa Cafaro

We have been doing much planning and revamping to enhance our programs with a focus on Black, Indigenous and People of Colour in Peel.

In late September we did a field trip of our own to the Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society where we met Dorothy Wright Wallace. She was a wealth of knowledge and an amazing tour guide who indulged us in a historical walking tour of her hometown Chatham. Dorothy is something of a local celebrity as we soon learned. While walking, people would wave, honk their horns and even shout from their cars "we love you Dorothy". We loved her too! She shared so much insight into the past and has helped provide some stepping stones of information to share with our students.

We then headed to the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum. It was a terminus to the Underground Railroad and tells the history of life in the Buxton Settlement and the journey to freedom that many took to get there. Schoolhouse #13, which the first generation of freed people built, still stands tall. It is the only known Underground Railroad school to exist in Canada and served many generations after that. A superior education was given at the Buxton schoolhouse and students can experience its history in person today.

We recommend their website for interactive lessons and a glimpse into Black history in Canada: <http://www.buxtonmuseum.com>

We hope to continue to revisit and build our schoolhouse resources and programming ideas and look forward to sharing more with you in person. And of course we can't wait to see students sitting at their desks again, taking part in the living history of the Britannia Schoolhouse.



Schoolhouse # 13 Buxton



The Old Britannia Schoolhouse now



The schoolhouse in session soon we hope

The Three Sisters

Daryl Cook

Young Will was confused. As he trudged down the farm lane he noticed his dad ploughing the field ready for planting. There would be corn in that field this year. But he wasn't really thinking about planting crops. He was puzzling about something strange the schoolmistress had said yesterday. She told them that today they would each be working in their little schoolyard garden plots and planting the three sisters. Will had three sisters and he couldn't imagine why he would want to plant them in his school garden or how on earth he would do it.

The school bell began to ring. Will began to run toward the little one room schoolhouse set in the one acre clearing. He was sometimes late for school because he would find interesting things to explore as he walked through the fields and along the banks of the little stream. Today, however, he wanted to be on time so he could find out what planting three sisters was all about. He joined the line of children waiting for the door to open. Soon the schoolmistress appeared and asked the girls to come in first and then the boys. Although it was a mild Spring day, many of the children wore jackets. These were hung on hooks at the back of the classroom.

The day began as usual with what the schoolmistress called "Opening Exercises". They all sang *God Save the Queen* as they looked at the portrait of Queen Victoria hanging at the front of the room. She was a very old lady now. After saying a prayer, the schoolmistress checked each of the children to make sure they had clean hands and nails. Will wasn't sure why this was important. He always had to wash his hands before he ate, but at the beginning of the school day there was no food offered.

Will hoped the schoolmistress would tell them right away about planting the three sisters. Instead it was a mental arithmetic lesson followed by a spelling test. It wasn't until after recess that she talked about the schoolhouse garden plots. The children had been asked to prepare a list of vegetables they would like to grow in their garden. Tomatoes, carrots and zucchini were popular choices. The kind of vegetables they were used to seeing in the family kitchen garden. Then the schoolmistress asked if they had ever wondered what the people who had lived on the land long before their families had arrived might have planted. The children were surprised. They had thought the indigenous peoples just hunted animals and used plants they gathered in the woods.

They soon learned that these early peoples were clever farmers. They grew vegetables that would store well like corn, beans and squash. The schoolmistress told them that this year, along with the vegetables they had chosen to plant, they would also plant corn, beans and squash in their garden plots. Starting after lunch they would begin preparing the gardens and by next week it would be warm enough to plant the seeds.

Garden preparation followed the usual routine. The soil was dug and weeds removed. Their plots were quite large and it took most of the afternoon to prepare for planting. Will thought of his dad ploughing several acres with the horses and plough. Small gardens seemed to take a lot more effort. By the end of the school day the gardens were ready. The children were instructed to bring their seeds the following Monday and if the weather was good they would do the planting. As he left for home Will had still not learned how to plant his three sisters.

Monday dawned clear and warm, a perfect day to plant. The children gathered beside their little plots. Before they began to plant, the schoolmistress told them there would be a very special part of their gardens. She reminded them of the vegetables the indigenous peoples planted. They would plant these too. First, they had one more task to do to prepare the garden. Each child had to build a big mound of dirt in the centre of their plot. When this was done, the schoolmistress gave each one three corn seeds. These were to be planted carefully at the top of the mound. Next, around the side of the mound, they planted bean seeds

The Three Sister cont'd

Then they were given five squash seeds to plant at the very base of the mound, making sure they were evenly spaced.

When all the planting was done and the children had planted their own seeds, the schoolmistress asked them to imagine what the corn, beans and squash would look like when they were fully grown in the Fall. Will was the first to answer. The corn would grow tall in the centre of the mound. The beans needed something like a trellis to grow on, so they would use the corn stalk as a support. He wasn't sure about the squash. The schoolmistress asked what squash leaves looked like. One child remembered the pumpkins growing in her mother's garden and said that maybe the squash leaves were very large. Were they vines that would curl around the base of the mound and shade the soil? Her guess was right.

The three plants worked together to support each other, just like members of a family. The indigenous farmers called them the three sisters. When the schoolmistress explained this, Will breathed a sigh of relief. He wasn't going to have to plant his sisters after all, but every time he looked at them he would think of the corn, bean and squash growing in his schoolhouse garden.



Your membership for 2022

Please note that membership fees will not be collected for 2022. The COVID 19 pandemic has meant cancelation of all schoolhouse events until further notice.

We are continuing to publish our quarterly newsletter and maintain the monthly Current News page on our website in order to stay in touch with our members.

Donations to support the schoolhouse are always welcome.

Membership forms can be downloaded from our website:

www.britanniaschoolhousefriends.org

Winter 2022

Life Hacks

Katharine Moon-Craney

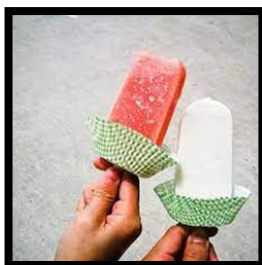
Use a plant hanger to hold a cook book open. Simply hook the hanger from the knob of an upper cupboard and pinch the two ends of the hanger to the open ends of your cook book to hold it



Cut open empty toilet paper rolls to cuff wrapping paper and keep it from un-rolling.



Use a paper muffin cup to catch the drips from a popsicle. Just push it up the stick to the bottom of the popsicle. A foil muffin cup works even better.



Use a hanging shoe rack to store cleaning supplies.



- * Freeze grapes to chill white wine without watering it down.
- * Use empty toilet paper rolls or paper towel rolls to store your tangled cords.
- * Soak a sponge in water and place in a zipper bag. Freeze it to make an ice pack.

Long Ago Life Hacks

In our grandmother's and great-grandmother's time life hacks were known as "household hints". Magazines and newspapers published helpful ideas to make the housewife's life easier. Here are some from the late 1800s and early 1900s.

- ♦ To remove stains and encourage a white colour, mix ashes and urine to make lye.
- ♦ Grate flakes off a bar of soap and use in the wash water to make a lather.
- ♦ Rub new tinware with lard to prevent rusting.
- ♦ 1887: For a cold on the chest, lay a flannel rag wrung out in boiling water and sprinkled with turpentine on the chest.
- ♦ Place the phone in a dishpan on the floor. The ring will be amplified and heard anywhere in the home.
- ♦ 1907: To remove a splinter, fill a wide-mouth bottle nearly full of hot water. Hold affected part over the mouth. Press slightly and the steam will draw out the splinter.

Do you remember any wise household hints your mother or grandmother passed on to you? Do you still use them?

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Vegetable Chowder

Katharine Moon-Craney



Ingredients

4 slices bacon, diced
1 cup diced onion
½ cup diced celery
½ cup diced carrot
1 cup diced zucchini
1 cup broccoli florets
1 cup cauliflower florets
½ cup diced red bell pepper
2 Tbsp unsalted butter
3 Tbsp all-purpose flour
2 cup chicken stock
2 cup 2% milk
1 cup fresh or frozen corn kernels
2 Tbsp chopped fresh thyme
2 Tbsp chopped fresh oregano
1 bay leaf
1 cup peeled and diced Yukon Gold potato
salt and pepper

Directions

1. In a medium saucepot, cook bacon over medium heat until crispy. Remove bacon, leaving fat.
2. Add onion, celery and carrot and sauté until onions are translucent, about 5 minutes. Add zucchini, broccoli, cauliflower and red bell pepper and sauté 3 minutes more. Remove vegetables from pot and set aside.
3. Melt butter and add flour to pot over medium heat. Stir constantly until a nutty aroma is noticeable, about 5 minutes.
4. With a whisk, stir in chicken stock a little at a time. Whisk in milk in a slow stream. Return vegetables to pot, add corn, thyme, oregano, bay leaf and potatoes and bring up to a simmer. Cover and simmer soup until potatoes are tender, about 20 minutes. Add bacon and season to taste. Remove bay leaf before serving.

Note: I have often modified this recipe to suit various nutritional needs. It is very versatile.



SUGARBUSH DAYS AHEAD

Lisa Cafaro



As the days begin to get longer and the temperatures start to get warmer, we know that spring is coming soon. This also signifies the beginning of the sugarbush season at the field centres.

The Peel Field Centres have two sugarbushes - one at the Jack Smythe Field Centre in Terra Cotta and the other on the west side of the Board office property, known as the Britannia Sugarbush.

Typically, the sugarbush programs would see kindergarten to grade 3 students along with some special needs groups. Students who visit would learn of the history of making maple syrup and the advancements in technology through time to current day practices. Before leaving the sugarbush for the day, we always show gratitude to the trees for the gifts they provide.

In pre-pandemic times, the Jack Smythe Field Centre would host an open house over March Break. The gates were open to the public to enjoy a day with family and friends in the fresh air of the sugarbush. In 2020 the site was closed as it was the beginning of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, staff offered virtual programming as a way of exploring the sugarbush with classes. Who would have ever thought that the historical timeline would include teaching from a cell phone on a selfie stick?

Now, in 2022 restrictions are finally starting to lift in Ontario. For the field centres, this is an exciting time as we begin to welcome back students in person to both sugarbush sites.

The Britannia sugarbush will see mostly small groups of ASD and IGLD students. Jack Smythe will be opening up to English language learners and smaller designated groups. It will be the relaunch of in-person learning at the Field Centres. This is especially exciting for the Schoolmistresses as spring may see us offering in-person visits to the Schoolhouse again!

Unfortunately the sugarbushes will not be open to the public this March break as an extra precaution as we slowly wind back up, but our hopes are high that next year we will begin to welcome visitors back for our Sugarbush Days in March.

If you are looking to explore the natural wonder of maple syrup this March Break, there are some options to check out at <https://todoontario.com/maple-festivals/>. Keep in mind that some events will be tentative and safety measures will be in place while you visit.

We hope to see you next year under the maple trees! Have a safe and wonderful March Break!

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 "E-mailed 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**