



# Guelph Historical Society

www.guelphhistoricalsociety.ca

October 2005

## NEWSLETTER

### OCTOBER SPEAKER

At the October meeting, Peter Ashton presented his lecture *John Galt: The Novelist*. Ashton provided insight into another interesting facet of Galt's career. For Guelphites, Galt is primarily associated with the Canada Company and the founding of this city. His novels, however, were immensely popular in the early 19th century. Galt was a prolific writer — he wrote over 80 works, including biographies of Lord Byron, Cardinal Wolsey and George III.

Most of Galt's novels are set in Ayrshire in the west of Scotland. His most famous novel, *Annals of the Parish*, was described as "the most intimate portrayal of Scotland during the reign of George III."

Galt wrote two novels about North America — *Lawrie Todd*, *Settlers in the Woods* and *Bogle Corbet*, *The Emigrants*. The former is set in the United States and the third volume of the later is set in Stockwell, the fictitious name for Guelph. The novel is full of colourful characters and closely parallels the founding of Guelph.

Using quotations from the two novels, Ashton described the differences between American and Canadian characters, as found in Galt's novels. Long before the concept of Canadian/American studies, Galt was a chronicler of the unique characteristics of

each country. The United States, born at the height of humanism, had the belief that anything was possible. Ashton

describes Lawrie Todd as the new Adam in the new Eden. He is the embodiment of the American Dream — hard-working, individualistic, industrious, and God-fearing. Nature is new material to be harvested. Canada, however, was born in the age of Darwinism. For the characters in *Bogle Corbet*, nature is the enemy; it is to be feared rather than harvested.

Ashton's lecture revealed Galt as a writer ahead of his time. Galt was an innovator — a regional writer before such concepts existed — and his prose reveals the characteristics of realism and naturalism that would not be considered styles until later in the century. Galt's novels complete the picture of the man who was not only an entrepreneur and founder of Guelph but a writer of great merit and insight.

#### JOHN GALT'S MAIN NOVELS

- 1820: *Ayrshire Legatees*
- 1821: *Annals of the Parish*
- 1822: *The Provost*
- 1823: *The Entail*  
*Ringan Gilhaize*  
*Gathering of the West*
- 1825: *The Omen*
- 1826: *The Last of the Lairds*
- 1830: *Lawrie Todd*
- 1831: *Bogle Corbet*
- 1832: *The Member*  
*The Radical*  
*The Howdie*

"We had from Kingston to Little York several passengers, but few of them bore the impress of any character. They were of a sedate and ruminating habit, much like Englishmen in appearance, but more languid in manners, and less decisive in conversation; not discriminating with so much accuracy the difference between the credible notion and a fact. This, however, is my opinion of the Upper Canadians."

— *Bogle Corbet*, *The Emigrants*

#### RESOURCES

The University of Guelph Archives has a digital collection of the full-text of John Galt's works. The list of titles is available at:  
[http://www.lib.uoguelph.ca/resources/ebooks/galt\\_list/](http://www.lib.uoguelph.ca/resources/ebooks/galt_list/)

### UPCOMING LECTURE: NOVEMBER

#### *Remembrance For the 21st Century: Educating Young Canadians*

**Terry Copp, Professor of History, Wilfrid Laurier University**

**November 1, 2005 at 7:30 p.m.**

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church,  
161 Norfolk St., Guelph**

Terry Copp recently retired from a successful career as a Professor of History at Wilfrid Laurier University. He is the Director of the Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic, and Disarmament Studies. Prof. Copp continues to be a prolific and award-winning writer.

He began his career as a noted labour historian before winning acclaim as a military historian who revitalized academic interest in Canada's military legacy. With co-author Robert Vogel of McGill University he completed a five volume series *The Maple Leaf Route* and won the C.P. Stacey Prize. He won the Stacey Prize again in 1992 for a volume on soldiers and psychiatrists in World War II written with Bill McAndrew. In 1993 he founded and became Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Canadian Military History*.

Copp is an authority on Canadian battlefields in north-western Europe. Prof. Copp has written a regular column for *Legion* magazine and participated in documentaries chronicling Canada's participation in 20th century warfare.

# ESSAY CONTEST

## *Topic of your choice pertaining to Guelph's History — Any Era*

Essays relating to historical events, residents, architecture, etc. can be based on archival documents, personal experiences, interviews, etc.

### CASH PRIZES

**First Prize: \$500                      Second Prize: \$350**

**Third Prize: \$200**

*An extra \$50 is awarded to a first-time entrant prize winner.*

Essays (approximately 3000 words) will be judged on their originality, literary style and research. Must include references to source materials and photos. Essays become the property of the Guelph Historical Society and may be published in its annual publication *Historic Guelph: The Royal City*.

The Verne McIlwraith Award Contest is sponsored by the Guelph Historical Society and is open to all residents of Guelph and area.

**DEADLINE: JANUARY 31, 2006**

Mail one hard copy (double-spaced) and one disk to:  
Guelph Historical Society "Essay Contest"  
Unit B9, 100 Crimea St.  
Guelph, ON N1H 2Y6

*Please note that members of the Guelph Historical Society Board are ineligible to receive cash prizes.*



**GUELPH HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Mailing Address:  
100 Crimea St., Unit B-9,  
Guelph, ON N1H 2Y6

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2005-2006**

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A complete list of Board members is available on the GHS website at:  
[www.guelphhistoricalsociety.ca](http://www.guelphhistoricalsociety.ca)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **SECRETARY NEEDED**

The GHS Board requires a secretary to fill this position on the Board. Responsibilities include taking and electronically distributing Board meeting minutes. There are six Board meetings a year.

For more information, please contact  
Elysia DeLaurentis  
Tel.: (519) 846-8280  
Email: elysia@studiospace.com

### **MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS**

Membership renewals are due by December 31, 2005. Tax receipts will be available at the February 2006 meeting.

## NEW MEMBERS WANTED

The Guelph Historical Society (GHS) invites anyone interested in the history of Guelph and environs to join the Society.

Benefits of membership in the GHS include:

- Attend six general meetings and hear special speakers.
- Read and learn about the history of your city.
- Receive six Guelph Historical Society Newsletters.
- Receive the 80-page *Historic Guelph - The Royal City*.
- Purchase Society publications at a discount.

### **Members Fees**

Single/Institutional: \$25                      Family: \$35  
Student: \$12.50                                      Lifetime: \$175

For more information or to join the GHS, please visit our website at <http://www.guelphhistoricalsociety.ca>