In December, Dave Mowat presented his talk “The Klondike Gold Rush, 1892: A Canadian Story with Local Connections”. He was joined by John Ogilvie, the grand-nephew of William Ogilvie. Both Mr. Mowat and Mr. Ogilvie are retired professors from the University of Guelph.

In August 2009, Mr. Mowat and his wife Helen went on an Alaskan cruise and as a side-trip they took a bus into the Yukon. The trip was a highlight and it inspired Dave to delve into the history of the Gold Rush and his family’s personal connection – his great-uncle was Walter Woodburn, the first mayor of Grand Forks, Yukon.

Gold was discovered in the Yukon on August 17, 1896. There was a Depression in the 1890s and the news of gold brought people from all walks of life to seek their fortunes in the Yukon. The Stampede began in earnest in August 1897. The bulk of people went over the mountains starting in Juneau or Skagway and used the Chilkoot Pass. According to Canadian author Pierre Burton, at least 100,000 people started the trek and of this number, only 4,000 found gold and only a handful made money and managed to retain it.

William Ogilvie and Walter Woodburn

The Ogilvie and Woodburn families were early settlers in Gloucester Township near Ottawa. William Ogilvie was a Dominion Land Surveyor. At the time of the Gold Rush, he was surveying the Canadian/Alaskan border. His son Morley and Walter Woodburn were both

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Centenary of the Death of Lt. Col John McCrae

St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church hosted a service on January 28, 2018 to commemorate the centenary of the death of Lt. Col. John McCrae. St. Andrew’s was the home church of the McCrae family.

The 11th Field Regiment provided a colour guard and piper Henry Muth led the procession of dignitaries.

Tributes to Lt. Col. McCrae were given by: Mayor Cam Guthrie on behalf of the City of Guelph and Guelph Museums; HCol. Michael McKay on behalf of the 11th Field; and Dr. Debra Nash-Chambers on behalf of the Guelph Historical Society.

HCol. McKay spoke of McCrae – the man, the poet, the student, the teacher, the doctor and the soldier. He expressed that McCrae contributed so much to the world beyond the poem.

Dr. Nash-Chambers spoke of “Jack” McCrae born and raised in Guelph. Nash-Chambers remarked that St. Andrew’s was an appropriate venue for the commemoration service not only because it was the McCrae family church but also because John McCrae was a man of sustained faith. It was his faith that was the foundation of his life. During World War I, McCrae officiated at burials when the Chaplain was unavailable. And as we know, he officiated at the burial of his friend and former student Alexis Helmer. The next day May 3, 1915, McCrae wrote “In Flanders Fields”. As Dr. Nash-Chambers said, the poem conveys the fatigue and raw emotion of a seasoned doctor and soldier grieving the loss of his friend.

McCrae died of pneumonia and meningitis on January 28, 1918 at Number 14 British General Hospital for Officers in Boulogne, France.

After the “Act of Remembrance” – Pipers Lament performed by Henry Muth, and the Last Post and Reveille performed by trumpeter Christina Kuepfer – Rev. Borthwick presented the 11th Field Regiment with a commemorative plaque.

Thank you to Rev. John Borthwick, Anne and John Holman, Charlie Toth and the congregation of St. Andrew’s for organizing and hosting this wonderful event.

Musical Performance

In the afternoon, the commemoration of John McCrae continued with a musical performance, “John McCrae: His Life in Words, Images, and Song” at the River Run Theatre. Written by Hugh Brewster, this tribute was performed by the Elora Festival Singers.
Jack McCart, a fourth-year University of Guelph history and philosophy student presented an excellent lecture, entitled, “Making a ‘Royal City’: Civic Identity Formation in Late 19th Century Guelph”. That Guelph is the “Royal City” is well known and the moniker is commonly used in the names of Guelph business – Royal City Realty, Royal City Nursery, Royal City Brewery, etc. Jack guided us through the evolution of the name “Royal City” and the conscious creation of Guelph as the Royal City.

The founding of Guelph is the stuff of local lore. John Galt felled the first maple tree and on the stump he mapped out the formation of the streets in the pattern of the palm of his hand. Galt chose the name Guelph for the newly established settlement. It was in honour of George IV who was the British monarch at the time Guelph was founded.

In 1714, Queen Anne died without heirs and the closest non-Catholic relative to inherit the throne was George I of the House of Hanover. It was not for another 50 years after the founding of the Guelph that residents adopted the Royal City as its name.

Guelph: The Scene at Mid-Century

In the mid-19th century, local businesses, known as boosters, promoted economic growth. When the settlement of Guelph reached a population of 3,000 people, it was incorporated as a town. On January 1, 1856, Guelph achieved incorporated status.

Imperial ‘belongingness’ was a sense of pride. There was a fond and loyal attachment to the Crown and it was central to building civic identity. In 1860, Edward Albert, the Prince of Wales visited Canada. Every town with a railway line jockeyed for the Royals to stop in their town. Guelph only learned ten days before the Royal visit that the Prince of Wales would come to Guelph. Ten thousand people from Guelph and Wellington County attended. While the visit only lasted 20 minutes, it lingered long in the memory of residents.

The Making of a “Royal City”

When Guelph reached a population of 10,000 it was entitled to become incorporated as a City. On April 23, 1879 Guelph was incorporated. It was envisioned as a second founding. Mayor George Howard presided over the inauguration and christened the city as the Royal City.

In preparation for the town’s incorporation as a city in 1879, town council designed a Coat of Arms. The design includes: an axeman representing John Galt, the image of Britannia, the Royal Crown and a shield with a white horse that represents the Hanover family.

In 1878, Marquess of Lorne, the Duke of Argyll, was appointed Governor General of Canada. His wife was Louise, daughter of Queen Victoria. In September 1879, the Marquess and Louise visited Guelph. They spent several days in the City. A triple arch was erected on Wyndham Street. The arch illustrates the three main ethnic groups – the Scots, the Irish, and the English – in Guelph at the time. Although it was a vice-regal visit, the newspapers treated it as a Royal Visit. The Governor-General and his wife stayed with Charles Raymond.

In the 20th century, Guelph continued to identify with the Royal City. The moniker Royal City featured prominently in civic celebrations. An iron crown hung over St. George’s Square. Today, the crown adorns signs within the City.

Footnote

1 The House of Welf became the Duchy of Brunswick-Luneburg, which became the House of Hanover.
March 6, 2018
Mapping Guelph’s Heritage: Galt’s Plan to GIS
Stephen Robinson, Senior Heritage Planner, City of Guelph

Stephen Robinson will give an illustrated talk on how the use of Guelph’s historical maps and plans improve the way it can present and track the city’s built heritage resource and cultural heritage landscapes using Geographic Information Systems technology.

April 4, 2018
Victor Lytwyn, “Traditional Knowledge of Indigenous People”

May 1, 2018
Douglas McCalla, “Consumers in the Bush” general stores in early settlements”

All lectures are held at 7:30 pm at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, 161 Norfolk St.

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2018 Memberships
2018 membership renewals are now due. Our membership year is from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018.

born in Glen Ogilvie in 1873.

William Ogilvie was well-respected in the Yukon. He sent early reports to Ottawa that there was a need for more police and officials to oversee the mining claims and records. He surveyed the town site of Dawson. At the peak of the Gold Rush in 1898, Dawson had a population of 30,000.

As claims were staked, Ogilvie was trusted to resolve the many disputes. He was Commissioner of the Yukon from 1898-1901. Ogilvie was a good explorer, photographer and writer. In the University of Guelph library there are several books and reports written by William Ogilvie, such as Early Days of the Yukon and the Story of Its Gold Finds and Down the Yukon and up the Mackenzie 3,200 miles by foot and paddle. A town, mountain and ridge are named after William Ogilvie. His name is mentioned in many accounts of the early days of the Yukon and the Klondike Gold Rush.

Mr. Mowat’s great-uncle Walter Woodburn left Ottawa for the Klondike when he hear from William Ogilvie or his son Morley that gold was discovered. Walter had studied at Queen's University and operated a pharmacy in Ottawa before he left in the spring of 1897.

East of Dawson was Grand Forks, the second largest community in the Yukon during the Gold Rush. Walter Woodburn lived in Grand Forks and became its first mayor. Woodburn operated a drug store, was the manager of the Opera House Theatre, was the Postmaster and a member of the Masonic Lodge. When William Ogilvie was ill, he appointed Walter as his lieutenant.

After Walter left the Yukon and moved to the United States, he had difficulty adjusting to life away from the North.