

Rideau Township Historical Society

Preserving and Promoting Local History for the Former Rideau Township

NEWSLETTER ~ June, 2018

Editor: Ron Wilson (rideauarchives@ottawa.ca)

Note: Editor Ron Wilson was unable to prepare the Newsletter this month. This slightly different – and temporary – format is the result of other volunteers stepping in to assist.

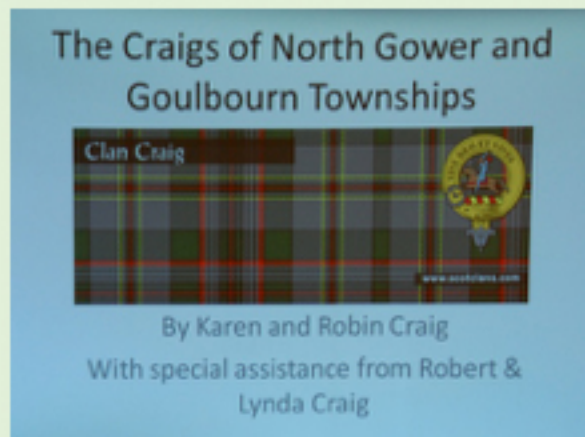
MAY MEETING PRESENTATIONS

Summary by Scott Cameron

The May meeting featured three presentations by RTHS members.

The Craig Family

Karen, Robin, and Robert Craig, detailed the history of the Craig family, and their journey from Scotland which eventually brought them to North Gower.



The family line begins with two brothers, given names unknown, emigrating from Ayr, Scotland in the 1700s to Enniskillen, in County Fermanagh, Ireland with their families. In 1760 one of the Craig brothers moved to neighbouring County Cavan in the Townland of Monesk, in Killinagh Parish, in Barony with his wife and two children Thomas and Elizabeth.

Thomas Craig (I) would marry and settle on a rented farm in Monesk with his wife and nine children. This is where the connected line of Craigs begins.

A son, Thomas Craig (II) would marry Elizabeth Moffatt in 1815, and continue farming in Monesk until the Irish famine prompted him, along with his 8 siblings to emigrate.



The Craigs, all children of Thomas (I) would leave Ireland in two waves, both departing from the town of

Sligo in Sligo County. The first wave, leaving Friday, May the 2nd, 1834 aboard the *Richardson*, included Hugh Craig, his wife and seven of their nine children, three of whom had families of their own, for a combined total of twenty-nine.

After several months of ocean and river travel, the Craigs arrived in Brockville. From there, they made their way to Goulbourn Township through the forest by wagons and oxen.

The next wave of Craig emigrants, departing Sligo April 1st, 1840 on the ship *Industry*, consisted of Thomas (II) with his wife and their eleven children.



Their party also included several members of the Moffatt family, relatives of Thomas's wife Elizabeth. Upon arriving in Montreal the travelers followed the Ottawa River to Bytown, where they were met by Hugh Craig's son James. From there they reached North Gower Township.

Thomas's family lived three months with a cousin, Robert Graham, before settling on a plot of their own for one year, then permanently moving to Lot 13, Con. 2, North Gower Township.

An interesting family tale was recounted concerning an American sea captain who came seeking the hand of Thomas's daughter Charlotte. Upon hearing of the suitor's imminent arrival, Thomas sent Charlotte to hide in the neighbouring Mitchell farm. When the captain arrived, he was told that Charlotte had left. Charlotte would ultimately marry the Mitchell family's son Thomas.

Robert then explained the direct link that he has to Thomas (I) through a numbering scheme used by James Beverly Craig in his book *The*



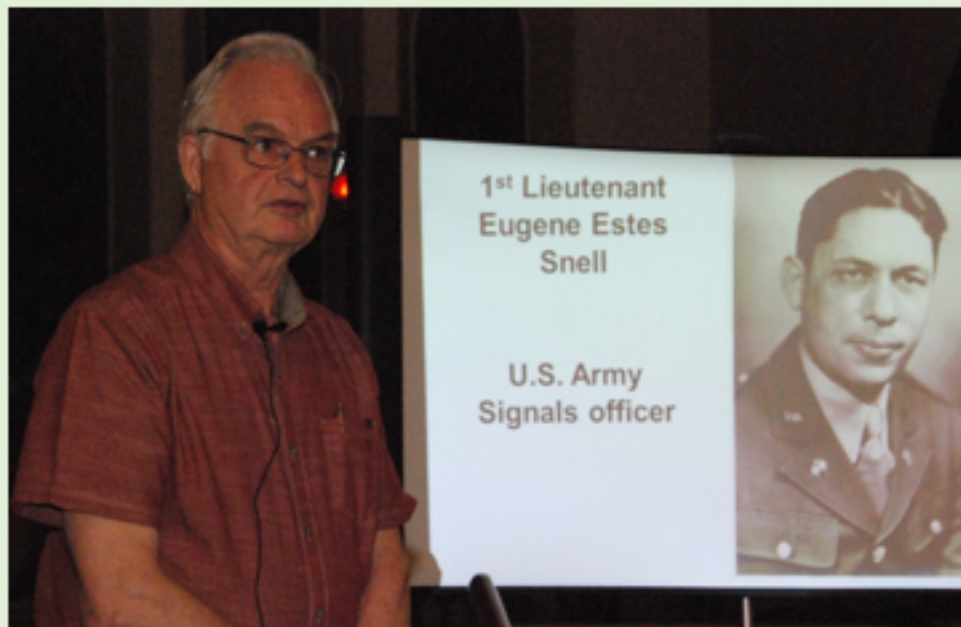
Craigs of Goulbourn and North Gower by delineating which ancestor in the family tree you are related to based on their order of birth. A poem written by Thomas (II) was read by Karen.

The Life and Tragic Death of Pilot Officer Tommy Watterson of Carleton County

Presented by Owen Cooke

Thomas Albert Kidd Watterson was born on March 13th 1912 in Ottawa to Dr. J. Watterson and Jesse Watterson (nee Fallister). Thomas attended Percy Street Public School, and graduated from Lisgar Collegiate in 1933.

The family moved to a farm on the corner of First Line and Century Road, an intersection now known locally as Watterson's Corners. Thomas joined the Militia at age 23, serving in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps. He then joined the Marine Section of the RCMP as a Seaman in 1937, enrolling in the Commercial Mates Course. In July of 1940 he joined the RCAF and was trained in St. Eugene, Ontario on the Finch Fleet biplane, graduating as a sergeant pilot.



In 1942 Thomas was sent to Dartmouth to serve in No. 11 (Bomber Reconnaissance) squadron. Flying a Lockheed Hudson, he was tasked with protecting convoys, and while he flew many sorties and fought in the battle of the Atlantic, he never sighted a submarine. He was eventually moved to the No. 145 (BR) Squadron in St. John's, Newfoundland. In December of 1942, Thomas was commissioned as a Pilot Officer.

On the night of February 13, 1943, Watterson was tapped to fly a navigation exercise and transport from St. John's to Dartmouth in poor flying conditions that included freezing drizzle. The crew included Wireless Operator Flight Sergeant James Robin Stick of St. John's Newfoundland, Navigator Flight Sergeant Robert Cecil Rolfe of Huntingdon,

Quebec, and passengers Flight Lieutenant John Thomas Hook of Brockville Ontario, Flight Lieutenant William Hector Thompson from Ottawa Ontario, and American 1st Lieutenant Signal Officer Eugene Snell of Arkansas.

Contact with the plane was lost during the flight. While an RCMP officer claimed to have heard the plane circling over Cape Breton air space, the wreckage was ultimately found by hunters in November 1944, eleven miles from Dartmouth. The plane had run out of fuel.

The skulls of the survivors were identified by the families, with Watterson being identified by his epaulet. Although Watterson had been recommended for the Air Force Cross before his disappearance, the award could not be awarded posthumously. Consequently, he was mentioned in Despatches of December 11th 1943. His remains were returned home, and he now rests in Elmview Cemetery in Kars, Ontario.

The Exploits and Tragic Passing of Former County Reeve William Cowan

Presented by Dr. Bill Tupper

Born in County Leitrim, Ireland, William Cowan received formal training as a teacher. Immigrating to Canada in 1845, he settled in North Gower, where he taught school for five years.

William married Caroline McCrea in 1850, and purchased four lots for them to farm in North Gower Township.

Cowan first served as the Militia Captain of the 5th battalion in 1855. He was Councillor for the area from 1858-1869, and County Reeve from 1865-1869. He was named Warden of the County in 1866, and served as County Clerk from 1870-1872.

In 1873, he was appointed Treasurer of the County, and in 1878 Clerk of the Divisional Court, holding both positions until his death. His service also included Waterworks Commissioner for the City of Ottawa.

On Saturday, January 7th 1899 tragedy struck. On that day, Cowan set out with his son Holmes, and



the driver of his two-horse carriage to pay his respects at the funeral of friend Charles O'Gara. The drifting snow caused the horses to be nervous, and as the carriage approached the train tracks, the oncoming train sounded its loud whistle, further frightening the horses, who bolted directly into the train.

William and his son Holmes both died, but his driver survived. Upon hearing of the tragedy, the O'Gara family covered the entire cost of the funeral. The Cowans' funeral service was held at St. John's church on Bell Street on January 9th 1899. He left behind a widow and seven children. Along with his extensive involvement in Municipal Government, William Cowan was also an Episcopalian, a Free Mason, and an Orangeman.

NEW EXHIBIT AT RIDEAU ARCHIVES

The Ties that Bind; North Gower, Marlborough and the First World War, 1914-1918 by Owen Cooke

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War – the Great War to its participants.

Over the past few years the Rideau Archives Branch, City of Ottawa Archives, and the Rideau Township Historical Society have attempted to identify and document our lost soldiers and airmen from the First World War. Now we have developed an exhibition to highlight the experience of the soldiers, many of whom never came home.

The exhibition opened at Rideau Archives Branch for Doors Open Ottawa on 2-3 June 2018. It will continue until May 2019.



"The Ties that Bind" Exhibit at the Rideau Branch of the City of Ottawa Archives – North Gower

We have identified 45 soldiers, airmen, and one nursing sister associated with old North Gower and Marlborough Townships who were killed or died

on service. Not all enlisted here, but all had an association with the area.

This exhibition includes not only what we know about our war dead, but also brings together archival documents, photographs and letters, combined with original objects from the First World War to highlight both military and civilian service during these traumatic years.

For the Doors Open weekend, we were fortunate to be able to augment the exhibition with Doug Culham's quarter-scale, radio controlled flying model of a First World War S.E.5A single-seat bi-plane fighter. The model was very popular with visitors and we thank Doug for the loan.

We are most grateful to Paul Henry, City Archivist, for his support for the mounting of this exhibition. Stuart Clarkson, our professional archivist and RTHS member, and Rod Brazier, also RTHS member, contributed ideas and transformed them into an exciting exhibit. We owe them our thanks for all their work.

Private Cecil Meadows a Home Boy living in North Gower Township who enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1914. He died at the battle of Passchendaele in 1917, but his body was never found



RTHS at the Mayor's Rural Expo

RTHS was well-represented at the Mayor's Rural Expo, held recently at Ottawa City Hall.

The Expo provides a great opportunity for urban dwellers to get a glimpse of life "outside of the Greenbelt," by promoting understanding and appreciation for rural communities and events.



The Society's booth, ably staffed by Sue Gibson and Sandy McNiece, highlighted the communities of Becketts Landing, Burritts Rapids, Carsonby, and Pierces Corners, and also featured a pictorial display of barns in the former Rideau Township.

Dickinson House

By Brian Earl

Dickinson House opened for the season on the 16th of May. The special display for this year is titled "Meadows and Measures," a two-part display covering farming, and the scales used to measure the crops.

Many thanks to Melanie Hayes for organizing and setting up the display. Thanks also to Bill and Georgie Tupper for the variety of scales.



The RTHS has hired two university students for the summer, Nicole Jackson and Alicia Torrington-Smith, who will be with us until the end of August. In addition, we have also hired four high-school students, who will begin working on July 1st.

The Dickinson Days weekend, combined with Doors Open Ottawa, was very successful. Over 1200 visitors went through the house, and left many appreciative comments in the Visitors Book. Our next major event will be a Celtic Tea on July 14th.

North Grenville Historical Society Announcement

The June meeting of the North Grenville Historical Society will be June 13, 7:00 p.m. This event will include a tour of the former St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 61 Water Street, Oxford Mills, now a comfortable home. Owner Dan Spring will describe the transformation process, the challenges, the surprises, the rewards. Meet at the former church at 7:00 p.m., talk to start at 7:30 p.m. Lots of parking across the road at the Oxford Mills Public School. Refreshments. All welcome.

RTHS – The Year in Review

By Susan McKellar

Once again, the RTHS has had a successful year. Highlights include:

- several interesting well-attended programs
- Dickinson House welcoming many visitors from Manotick, Barrhaven, Ottawa, and around the world
- three books working towards publication
- appearances at a variety of community and historical events
- successful applications for municipal, provincial and federal grants
- an excellent monthly newsletter and website
- a dedicated executive
- a growing membership.

Have a good summer, everyone, we'll see you in the fall. In the meantime, don't forget to visit Dickinson House, especially the new Meadows and Measures exhibit, the new exhibit at the Rideau Archives on The Ties that Bind (open every Tuesday), and our display at the North Gower Farmers' Market on Saturday, August 11th.



Rideau Township Historical Society Minutes
Wednesday, May 16, 2018
Holy Trinity Anglican Church, North Gower, ON

President Sandy McNiece opened the meeting by welcoming approximately 57 members and guests.

Moved by Maureen McPhee that we adopt the minutes of the April 18th meeting as circulated in the Newsletter. Seconded by Sue Gibson. Carried.

Reports

Finance: Sue Gibson gave a brief financial report and stated that our finances are in order and are in accordance with our budget.

Membership: Director Gary Bagley commented that we now have a total of 90 members, including 86 paid-up members and 4 complementary memberships.

Program: Director Dorothy Gray handed out sheets outlining our June 9th excursion which will involve a trip to Pinhey's Point Historical Site with a guided tour of the house/museum, the ruins of the original Horaceville church and the surrounding cemetery and then on to St. Mary's Church followed by a short trip to Girl Guide Camp Woolsey to view Pinhey Cottage. This will be followed by lunch at The Glen in Stittsville. On the return trip we will visit St. Clare's Mission on Dwyer Hill Road. The cost of excursion will be \$20.00 plus lunch. A sign-up sheet was circulated. Departure is from North Gower Client Centre at 9:15 sharp. There will be no meetings during the summer.

Communications: Maureen McPhee's communication committee has met and are working on an integrated approach on social media.

Publications: We are still looking for someone to take on the position of Publications Director and Sandy McNiece has asked for anyone interested to come forward.

Dickinson House: Brian Earl informed us that Dickinson House will be opening this weekend and the Meadows & Measures exhibit is established on the 3rd floor. Two University students and 3 high school students have been hired for the summer months. Brian Earl also asked for help to man the RTHS tent for Dickinson Day on June 2nd, and circulated a sign-up sheet.

Grants/Funding: The Province of Ontario grant will be applied for this June.

Youth: Scott Cameron has made presentations at St. Mark's and South Carleton High Schools to try and create interest in RTHS. He is assisting the communications portfolio in integrating social media.

Other Business

Owen Cooke informed members of The Ties That Bind exhibit which is being presented at the Rideau Archives in North Gower, and which highlights the sacrifices of local heroes and their families during the First World War.

Bill Tupper asked for interested participants to assist on the RTHS float for Dickinson Day. The parade will take place on Friday, June 1st, and will meet at the Arena at 6:00 p.m.

Presentations

Sandy McNiece then introduced and thanked our guest speakers in turn: Karen & Robin Craig (assisted by Robert Craig) – The Craigs of North Gower & Goulbourn Townships, Owen Cooke – The Life and Death of Tommy Watterson, and Bill Tupper – William Cowan.

Following a brief question & answer session, the meeting adjourned and we enjoyed a social time and some delicious snacks graciously provided by Melanie Hayes.