



Historic Gloucester

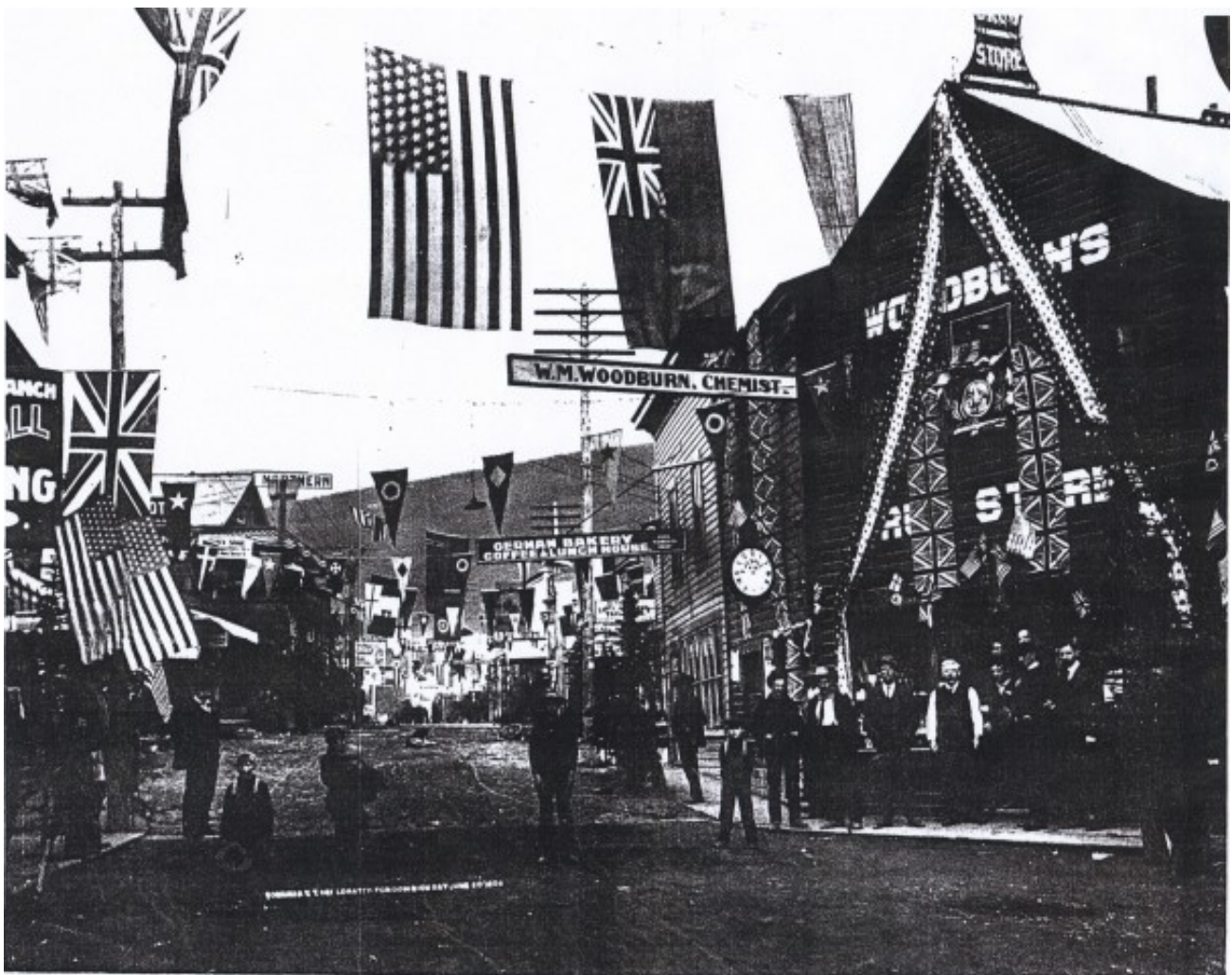
Newsletter of the

**GLOUCESTER
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

www.gloucesterhistory.com

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Walter Woodburn's Drugstore, Grand Forks, Yukon, circa 1901

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THE GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY
WOULD LIKE TO ANNOUNCE
THAT ITS HISTORY ROOM WILL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
ON WEDNESDAYS FROM 10-3 FROM JUNE 1ST TO AUGUST 31ST
AND IS STILL OPEN BY APPOINTMENT AT OTHER TIMES

LOCATION: 4550B BANK STREET (AT LEITRIM ROAD)

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Contact

Mary Boyd at 613-521-2082 or boydmary172@gmail.com

Cover Photo:

The cover photo shows Walter Woodburn at his gold claim in the Yukon during the summer of 1901, at the same time that he operated a drugstore in Grand Forks, Yukon.

Photo: David Mowat

Historic Gloucester is published by The Gloucester Historical Society. It is intended as a Newsletter to members of the Society to provide interesting articles on Gloucester's past and to keep them informed of new acquisitions by the Museum, publications available, upcoming events and other items of general interest. Comments and suggestions regarding the Newsletter are always welcome.



Gloucester Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the City of Ottawa.

President's Report

By Glenn Clark

Spring is here and the first months of 2016 have been busy at the Gloucester Historical Society. This past weekend I led two Jane's Walks, one titled 'Memories of the Village of Billings Bridge' and the other 'The Magnolias of the Dominion Arboretum'. The weather co-operated and the magnolia trees were in full flower and it was a particularly good year after a mild winter. Almost 80 people accompanied me between the two walks.

Our book launch for 'Railways of Gloucester and Beyond' in January was very successful. Over 100 copies of the book have been sold already and we are now preparing a third printing. On that occasion, our speaker, Bill Horne gave a talk on preparing a personal history. More information is provided in this Newsletter.

Our Annual General Meeting took place on April 24th at the Earl Armstrong Arena. Our speaker was David Mowat. He spoke on the Ogilvie and Woodburn family's involvement in the Klondike Gold Rush. It was a most interesting presentation, which was well received by the well-attended event. And for the first time ever, our Annual Meeting Presentation was video recorded and is now available on our website. In addition, the story is also told in this Newsletter. As an aside, David's presentation unexpectedly reconfirmed that the pronunciation of 'Gloucester' has changed. David grew up in Ottawa but has been away for several years and he automatically used the pronunciation 'Gloss sess ter' that was common until quite recently.

We are now preparing for Door's Open on June 4th and 5th from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and we welcome visitors for this popular city-wide event. This will be the only time that the Gloucester Museum will be open to the public this year. Also, the Grace Johnston History Room will be open each Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for the months of June, July and August. Come by anytime with your questions.

I wish you all a very good summer.

Board of Directors for 2016-2017

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*For more information about books for sale by Gloucester Historical Society,
please visit our website at
www.gloucesterhistory.com*

OUR KLONDIKE RELATIVES

by David Mowat and John Ogilvie

Gloucester Historical Society, April 24, 2016

In August 2009, Helen and I took a cruise to Alaska for our 48th wedding anniversary. In both Juneau and Skagway, plenty of fever remains from the famous Klondike Gold Rush of the late 1890s - for the benefit of tourists. In Skagway, we took a marvellous all-day bus tour into the Yukon and received more Klondike hype. I began to wonder about the mysteries of my grand uncle, Walter Woodburn, who was Yukon's first mayor during that era. On the return voyage, in Juneau, I bought Pierre Berton's **Klondike Fever**, and this adventure began!

I didn't have much to go on at the start. No photos or files on Walter existed in the Woodburn family. And all of the second generation Woodburns, including my Mother, had died by then. However, it is amazing how much you can find on the internet.

The Gold Rush in Canada's Yukon was one of the great historical events of the 19th century. People

from all walks of life throughout the world rushed to the Klondike to seek fortune, excitement and adventure after years of struggling through a depression. Pierre Berton, whose father was in the stampede in 1898, described it as the most concentrated mass movement of American citizens onto Canadian soil in our history. "At least one hundred thousand persons actually began the stampede; some thirty or forty thousand reached Dawson. Only about one half of this number bothered to look for gold, and of these only four thousand found any. Of the four thousand, a few hundred found gold in quantities large enough to call themselves rich. And out of these fortunate men only the merest handful managed to keep their wealth" (**Klondike Fever**).

When gold was discovered along the banks of the Klondike river on August 17, 1896, William Ogilvie, John Ogilvie's grand uncle, from Gloucester, was fortunately in the area surveying the Canadian-Alaskan border. He was the ideal government official to be present. In **Klondike Fever**, Pierre Berton speaks often and with a great deal of respect for the utterly and absolutely incorruptible William Ogilvie. Ogilvie surveyed the town site of Dawson City and several gold claims and was responsible for



Walter Woodburn at his gold claim, probably on a Sunday afternoon in 1901



William Ogilvie with two of his sons

his early reports to Ottawa resulted in quickly sending more police and officials for mining claim surveys and records in preparation for an anticipated rush. In September, 1898, he became the second Commissioner of the Yukon during its most romantic and colourful history. Laws had to be created and conditions were without precedent. William Ogilvie was also a gifted explorer, photographer, story teller and author on the Yukon. Thirteen of his books or manuscripts are in the University of Guelph library, including *Early Days on the Yukon*. In June, 1898, the House of Commons voted to give Ogilvie a gratuity in recognition of his distinguished public services with the survey and exploration of the Yukon. The gratuity was \$5,000, about 2.5 times his annual salary. A town, mountain, river and bridge in the Yukon are named after him. All books on the Klondike and early Yukon prominently mentioned Ogilvie (eg. *Frontier Spirit*).

In contrast, the story of Walter Woodburn is little known, but closely intertwined with the Ogilvies. The Ogilvie and Woodburn families were original settlers from Ireland in Gloucester Township in the 1840s. Their school district was called Glen Ogilvie. Walter Woodburn and Morley Ogilvie, William's eldest son, were both born in Glen Ogilvie in

1873 and probably went to the same public as well as high school. Walter graduated from Queens University in 1894 with the Gold Medal. He then apprenticed and graduated from the Ontario College of Pharmacy. He began operating a pharmacy on Bank Street in Ottawa before rushing to the Klondike in spring 1897. Morley Ogilvie graduated from McGill University in engineering in 1895; then spent the next year in the Yukon assisting his father. However, he was back home in Ottawa when gold was discovered.

While gold was discovered in August, 1896, convincing news did not reach the outside world until steamships arrived in San Francisco followed by Seattle in mid-July, 1897, each with a ton of gold aboard. By that time, Walter and several other Ottawa fellows had already arrived in the Klondike (*Ottawa Journal*, July 28, 1897). Probably the Ottawans received advanced reliable news from Morley and/or William Ogilvie. Since he was early arriving in the Klondike, Walter was very confident of obtaining riches and fully intended to return home the following summer. Such was the case with Harold Morton who returned home to Ottawa "wealthy" in September, 1898 (*Ottawa Journal*, Sept. 7, 1898). However, Walter stayed 11 years in the Klondike, came out broke and a different man, and never saw his family in Ottawa again.

Walter Woodburn went to Dawson from Seattle via the over 4,000-mile water (or rich-man's) route and was sent by the Klondike Mining and Exploring Co. The bulk of the newcomers (around 30,000 people) made it from Skagway over steep mountains and down the Yukon River in a fleet of over 14,000 make-shift wooden boats or rafts for 500 miles to Dawson (*Frontier Spirit*). This was an extremely demanding and hazardous route, especially in wintertime, bringing a ton of food and supplies required by the NW Mounted Police to avoid winter famine.





married in Ottawa. This choice of date must have been by design, by Walter. Bertha was born in Seattle in 1884, so was 11 years younger than Walter. There was probably a shortage of attractive proper young ladies in this town and neighbouring Dawson.

Walter Woodburn Jr was the first baby born in Grand Forks, Yukon, on June 22, 1903. His parents decided that the environment was not ideal for a young child and so sent a nanny with the infant to Seattle to raise him for the first 5 years. Walter Jr's family life began in 1908 when his parents and grandparents finally returned from the Yukon.

Dawson, at its peak in 1898, had a population of around 30,000 people, but within a year one third had left. East of Dawson in the heart of the Klondike gold fields was Grand Forks, the second largest settlement in the Yukon with a population of 400 to 5000 people in 1901. At that time Dawson represented the largest city west of Chicago and north of San Francisco "There was never a city in the history of the world like Dawson City—nicknamed the Paris of the North. It was truly unique. Dance-hall girls were paid a hundred dollars a night; town lots were selling for as high as twelve thousand. The saloons of Dawson City were magnificent. A man could get a drink of anything he wanted, providing he had the money. Whiskey flowed faster than the Yukon River and legendary ladies like Klondike Kate Rockwell and Diamond Tooth Gertie were in demand. However, the North West Mounted Police were always in control and no work, of any kind, was allowed on the Sabbath" (**Klondike Fever**).

Walter lived in Grand Forks. Beginning in 1900, he owned and operated Woodburn's Drug Store. He was elected mayor of Grand Forks on December 2, 1901. Moreover, he was manager of the Opera House Theatre as well as Postmaster of Grand Forks. He also joined the Masonic Lodge in Dawson City. When William Ogilvie, Commissioner of the Yukon, was ill which led eventually to his resignation in 1901, he appointed Walter as his lieutenant, or fill in, with powers to decide all duties. This indicated the esteem Ogilvie had for young Walter's abilities and judgement. In addition, in 1901 Walter submitted a gold claim application. In 1903, Walter Woodburn was the returning officer for the Klondike in the forthcoming municipal elections. Obviously, he was more than bright. He was versatile, an entrepreneur, civic minded, a popular man-about-town and initially quite prosperous.

Walter married Bertha Bense on February 18, 1903; the exact same day that his older brother was

In the Klondike, Walter Sr was a "big toad in a little pond" and he found it hard adjusting to being a "little toad in a big pond" in Seattle. He bounced around from job to job, was largely an absentee father and eventually left for California and was seldom heard from again (**Taped Interview of Walter Woodburn Jr.**). It was a tragic plight for someone that showed initially such high promise and obvious talents. And a major disappointment and shame to his staunch family from Ottawa.

How much did his siblings reach out to Walter when they realized he was in difficulty? His two sisters, Janet and Celia, both went to finishing school in Ottawa; then married lawyers and eventually lived in the U.S. However, they maintained close contact over the years with their elder brother Henry and his family on the homestead in Gloucester. Henry was 6 years older than Walter and was a champion in his youth at both tug-of-war and steeplechase, and an expert horseman. He was worldly, progressive and community-minded. Moreover, he had a good sense of humour, loved children and was certainly a gentleman (**The Paul Woodburn Story**). Mother described her father as "perfect". Walter Sr.'s father, James Woodburn, lived for 9 years after he left for the Yukon. However, his mother died in 1895, two years before he left.

Walter Jr.'s German-immigrant grandfather played a major role in his early life; instilling the need for hard work in order to achieve. Walter had a lot of contact with him and admiration. To Walter's great credit his achievements, contributions and volunteer activities were extensive and very admirable. In 1937, he travelled east to pick up a new car in Detroit; then motored on to Ottawa to meet for the first time his Ottawa relatives and visit the roots of his father. From then on there was close, warm and continual family contact with Cousin Walter.

We now have a much greater understanding of the basis for the tragic ruin of Walter Mayne Woodburn Sr. He lost the stability of both parents at an early age and was undoubtedly scared by his exceptionally long stay as well as initial success in the Klondike. As mentioned, he had great difficulty readjusting to ordinary life and retaining a regular job in Seattle. Also, one wonders if Walter conflicted with his in-laws, particularly father-in law, who was a very enterprising, aggressive and prosperous individual. He may have kept very close tabs and control on his young and only child, Bertha, a potential source of conflict with Walter. Moreover, they lived in very close proximity in both the Klondike as well as Seattle. Nevertheless, why did Walter and his young wife stay so long in a declining environment? Maybe the Yukon cast a spell on Walter as it did Robert Service (expressed in his poem, **The Spell of the Yukon**) such that he genuinely loved the beau-

ty, wilderness and lifestyle of the North, like many, and was reluctant to leave until he was broke.

“Thousands looked back on the Klondike adventure for the rest of their days with insistent pangs of nostalgia.... In a sense, the stampede resembled a Great War. It was impossible to emerge from it unchanged, and those who survived it were never quite the same again. It brutalized some and ennobled others” (**Klondike Fever**).

Walter Woodburn Jr and his wife Wilda celebrated his 85th birthday on June 22, 1988, in Dawson, Yukon. Walter returned to the Klondike to show Wilda and to see for himself his birthplace. In addition, he donated a plaque in memory of his father. This gesture suggests that Walter had some admiration, understanding and forgiveness for his father. To Walter's great credit, he was never judgemental or critical of his father.



Ogilvie Family who attended the 100th Anniversary celebrations in Dawson in 1998



"The Keno," one of the last of the Gold Rush Paddle Wheelers



Modern Dawson, 1983, where the Yukon and Klondike Rivers

The photographs in this article were supplied by David Mowat and John Ogilvie, the authors of the article. David is a grandnephew of Walter Woodburn, Senior, and John Ogilvie is a grandnephew of William Ogilvie. Both are originally from Ottawa and are retired professors from the University of Guelph. We thank them for their interesting contribution to the history of the people of the Township of Gloucester.

Bill Horne's Talk on Writing Personal Histories

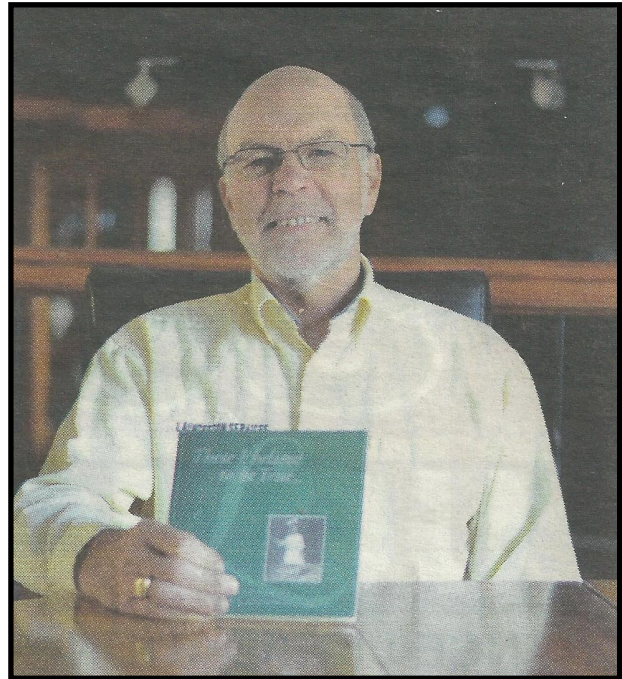
By Joan Scott

On January 17, 2016 the Gloucester Historical Society had a very successful double event at the Blackburn Community Centre. Part of this was the launch of our newest book *"Railways of Gloucester and Beyond"* by Leslie Goodwin, and the other part was a very interesting talk by Bill Horne about writing family or personal histories. In his talk Bill covered many salient points which we will now share with you.

For thousands of year elders of tribes used stories to teach, entertain, explain the world, to share joys and heartaches and to preserve the history of their societies. Personal histories are not a new idea – they have been passed orally from generation to generation throughout the centuries. Hopefully this wisdom and experience will not be lost because of the distractions of our modern lives.

Bill pointed out that preserving the life experiences of family members is one of the most important tasks you can do as everyone's life story is worth sharing even if it is only with other members of the family. These fascinating stories and adventures should be told for the benefit of current and future generations.

You can write your own story if you wish or you may want to have a personal historian do it for you. If you choose the latter route, the personal historian will spend time with you doing a series of interviews, asking questions about your background, ancestors, events and experiences that shaped their lives. These are then compiled into whatever format you desire. It can be a simple Word document, stapled in the corner, or a more elaborate published book with photos and family history charts. This can



be self-published in soft cover or commercially published in leather bound volumes. The choice is yours, but the main thing is to get started and see it through.

While a personal historian would probably produce a more professional result, it is by no means necessary to hire someone to do this. Anyone can write their own story or ask a friend or relative to help them put it together. Stories can be recorded or preserved in audio or video format. There are many organizations such as Family Arc, LLC that can assist in life story preservation. In digital format it can be securely stored for future generations. If you wish to find a personal historian, the Association of Personal Historians, of which Bill Horne is the current president for North America, can be reached at www.personalhistorians.org.

If you are creating a personal history for someone else, the first step is to get the agreement of the subject and then to consider how you will do the interviews. The medium you will use – printed document, audio, video, etc. must be decided upon. All

pertinent existing material should be collected and anyone who can contribute to the story should be contacted. When necessary interviews can be conducted by telephone or skype. Decide if information about deceased relatives should be included. Try to find out if anyone in the family has done a genealogical study as that may provide useful data for you. Organizations such as familysearch.org and ancestry.com may also be helpful. Make a list of topics to cover before the interviews begin. Even if you are recording the interview, it is a good idea to take notes as well to help with any questions or clarifications later. Try to transcribe the interview before the next session so that any points can then be clarified.

Stories can be written in the first or third person. They should balance accounts of events, people, places and things but also include thoughts, feelings and reflections. Good and down times should be included but the narration should be kept on track. While the story is primarily about one person, it does not have to exclude everyone else. You

may get some very interesting material from close friends or relatives. If you wish you can even make it a family history and include all the family members.

Once the manuscript is completed it should be reviewed for factual errors, spelling and grammar, general readability, etc. by someone other than yourself. It should, of course, also be given to the subject so that he or she can read it before any other distribution is made. When photos are included they should be placed near a reference to that person or incident, if at all possible. You may wish to print your own copies of the story or perhaps use a print-o-demand or self-publishing firm. Information on these is available from the internet or from The Association of Personal Historians at: person-alhistorians.org.

At the end of his talk, Bill Horne gratefully acknowledged a number of people and organizations who had assisted him in preparing and presenting his material.

IF YOU HAVE NOT YET RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP, OR IF YOU WISH TO BECOME A NEW MEMBER, PLEASE COMPLETE THE FORM BELOW AND SEND IT IN WITH YOUR CHEQUE. (Membership year runs from April 1 to March 31.)

Membership Form—Gloucester Historical Society/Société historique de Gloucester

Membership/Adhésion - \$20.00 for one year..... \$150.00 for life membership.....

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