

JOHN McCRAE
1872-1918

John McCrae was born November 30, 1872. He wrote "In Flanders Fields", his famous poem, during one of his military services which began early in his life.

At the age of fourteen, he joined the Guelph Highland Cadets, eventually earning the rank of First Lieutenant. Later he joined the Royal Artillery and in 1899, served as a combat officer in the Boer War. During the First World War he served as a Medical Officer and was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in charge of a medical unit.

John McCrae took his studies seriously while at the GCVI. He earned a scholarship to the University of Toronto at the age of 16 and graduated with honours. He briefly attended the Veterinary College in Guelph, and later studied medicine at the University of Toronto. He later did post-graduate studies at McGill University. This extensive education led him to help save many lives in the Boer War and World War One.

"In Flanders Fields" was written in a dugout in Ypres in 1915. Some say it was inspired by the death of a comrade. By writing this poem, he made the poppy the symbol of remembrance. John McCrae died of pneumonia in Ypres on January 28, 1918. He was buried in Wimereux, France.

In honour of John McCrae, his Guelph home was made into a museum, and an elementary school on Water Street was named after him.

Sarah Nasby
Ieva Lucs
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