

## ***ECHOING THROUGH THE AGES***

A Timeline of Various Events

In and Around Amherstburg During the 1960s.

Extracted from The Amherstburg Echo (1960-1969)

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### **1960**

**William Murdoch, M.P.P.** was chosen Speaker of the House for Ontario in January. He was, in fact, the third person from this district in that position. The first was **William D. Balfour**, co-founder of the Amherstburg Echo; the second was **Rev. M. C. Davies**.

A Detroit firm expressed interest in purchasing the former **Bellevue Veterans' Home** for a nursing home. Malden Township had acquired ownership of Bellevue in a tax sale the previous fall.

In March, **Allan J. Goodchild** was appointed Clerk of the Town of Amherstburg, succeeding the late **L. J. Pettypiece**.

In the spring of 1960, following the death of an elderly man at the corner of Simcoe and Sandwich Streets, a coroner's jury recommended that a **traffic light** be installed there.

**Brunner Mond** boaters were building their own **boat basin** on company property near the site of the old **Gordon Station**.

Several hundred people visited the new **Verdi Club "Open House"** and in May the Verdi provided the setting for the 16th annual **St. Rose High School "Rose Ball"**.

**W. K. Sidey**, principal of **General Amherst High School** for 34 years, retired in June 1960. **Holiday Beach Provincial Park** was officially opened in July and a **traffic light** was installed at Richmond and Sandwich.

In August, **McQueen Marine** razed an Amherstburg landmark, the **Riverside Flouring Mill** on Dalhousie Street South, to provide more space for business.

Construction of the new **Kinsmen Scout Hall** was being rushed along in September. At the same time the **Amherstburg Recreation Committee** suggested that council put aside part of the **Bell Farm on Victoria Street** for a future recreation area.

### **1961**

In February, **Tom Kilgallin** was hired as assistant town clerk, succeeding **Marilyn Deneau** who resigned.

The **C. N. Telegraph** office closed in March. Amherstburg had telegraph service as early as 1855.

**H. Murray Smith** took over complete control of **Amherst Quarries** which had been formed two years earlier by himself, **John Marentette** and **Eugene Labadie**.

In April a fire destroyed the north elevator building of the **Harrow Farmers Co-op** in Amherstburg.

Amherstburg was growing and more schools were needed. In June a contract was let for \$3,748 to build **St. Philomena (now St. Bernard) school**, northeast corner Victoria and Richmond.

A landmark near the **Brunner Mond** office, used as a **hospital** when the plant first opened, was torn down. (This was the former Reaume house.)

In July 1961 Amherstburg council passed an **anti-noise by-law** prohibiting shouting, ringing bells (other than church bells), blowing horns, or causing disturbance by engine, tire or other unusual noise.

In August, ceremonies marked the arrival of the **Innstein**, the **first ocean vessel** to take on cargo at Amherstburg. She loaded 154 tons of local **ketchup** for the West German market.

By the end of September 1961 six thousand small craft had reported to **Canada Customs** at Amherstburg, bringing with them over **21,000 visitors** so far that year.

That December the **Amherstburg Goodfellows** distributed 160 Christmas baskets to the needy in the tri-community.

## 1962

1962 brought many more changes to the district. Local **Ukrainian Catholics** held services for the first time in their new chapel in the former **Bellevue Veterans Home**.

**McQueen Marine** bought 260 feet of river frontage 200 feet deep from **W. D. Conklin** and tore down three of the former export liquor warehouses on the former **Woods dock**.

With **Harry Spearing** as chief; **Phil Smith**, captain; **John T. Hamilton**, lieutenant; **Wilson Brush**, second-lieutenant and **Doug Goodwin**, sergeant, a **volunteer ambulance and rescue service** for the district was instituted. Their first headquarters was in the **Venice Car Wash** building on Sandwich Street.

In May the **Amherstburg Community Credit Union** received its charter. Two months later town council authorized the purchase of the old **Post Office building** on Dalhousie Street from Crown Assets for \$7,500.

By mid-summer, construction of a large **marina** had begun on the west side of **Bob-Lo**, expected to handle over 400 small craft. **Wesley United Church** purchased 4.5 acres of property in the **Flynn Sub-division** in July 1962.

In August 3500 gallons of 69 proof whiskey went down the sewer at **Calvert Distillers Limited** when a large tanker trailer tipped over.

**Mrs. Ruth (Brown) Hamel** retired from **Bell Telephone** in August, having been with the company since 1914 when the office was in the former building on the CIBC corner.

Then in September 1962 the new **A.A. & M. First Aid Squad** was put to the test when the **Aquarama** cruise ship hove to in the Amherstburg Channel while members of the squad and **Dr. E. C. Ladouceur** rescued one of her electricians from the bottom of an elevator shaft.

Preliminary plans for construction of a **75-foot marina** were presented to council by Messrs. **Kralovensky**, owners of the **Lakeview Hotel**.

**Murray Kennedy** purchased the former **Esso Service Station**, corner Richmond and Bathurst, in September. The building was being dismantled and a new garage 40' x 57' was later erected there.

**Alex Callam** was named business manager of the **Detroit Tigers**.

An exhibition of paintings by the **Group of Seven** was displayed at the **McGregor House** by the **Fort Malden Guild of Arts and Crafts**.

A little Amherstburg girl was in a coma for 48 hours after eating seeds from a weed called **Thorn Apple**.

In November 1962 **Drifford Bertrand's Taxi Service** was sold to **Marvin Bondy**.

**Steve Temesy** whipped up a lot of interest in **basketball** and had 100 players on teams in the town league.

According to last year's (1961) census, there were more homes with **TV sets** than with bath tubs.

The **Amherstburg and District Pistol Club** moved to winter quarters in **General Amherst High School**. And to end the year, it was announced that the total **deficit** for the Town of Amherstburg for 1962 was \$968.84.

## 1963

277 hospital trips were handled by the **A. A. & M. District First Aid Squad** between March and December last year.

In February, **Lenson Motors** announced the opening of their new and used car lot, corner Gore and Sandwich.

**McQueen Marine** finalized plans for construction of the \$600,000 salvage tug **Amherstburg**.

**Carl Imeson** took over operation of the **Texaco Station**, corner Richmond and Sandwich, in March. The **Firestone Store** at 101 Dalhousie was closing its business.

A local **Imperial Lanes** bowling team - **Bill Callam, Bob Deslippe, Allan Goodchild, Lou Jaber, Bill Wagle** and **Sandy Balint** - competed in the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual **Bowling Congress** at Buffalo.

In April, several tons of **carp** were taken out of **Big Creek** and shipped alive to Toronto and New York markets, where it is smoked and becomes a delicacy.

The **CNR Express** office closed in June and appointed **Kendall Hardware** as sub-agent.

**Calvin Borrowman** received permission from Malden Council in September to establish a **camp site** on the Pike Road.

Postal clerks were wanted at the **Amherstburg Post Office** - \$3,330 to \$4,380 per annum.

**William Haselhurst** of Oakville purchased **Ayerst Pharmacy** on the east side of Dalhousie and **Ray Pajot** bought the **Pontiac-Buick agency**, southeast corner Sandwich and Murray, from **E.T. Laframboise**.

In October, **Brunner Mond Canada** announced a multi-million dollar expansion program which would include additions to the **soda ash** and the **calcium chloride** departments.

Some excitement was generated locally in December when world-famous race car driver **Sterling Moss** and a group of experts surveyed **Bob-Lo Island** with a view to holding **Grand Prix** racing there.

And to end the year, creation of a **Yacht Basin** and central **customs reporting station** were once again hot issues at Monday night council meetings!

## 1964

The present **Amherstburg Municipal Building** is in need of major repairs. There is talk of building a **new town hall** if centennial grants become available.

**Glen Belyea** purchased the **Busby house** on Fort Malden Road and moved it to Balaclava Street.

In February, Emerson and Irene **McGrath** purchased **Bell's Lodge** from **Fred Wesenberg**.

**W. S. Woof** sold the **Liberty Theatre** building to **Earl Burstyn** of Essex. The last movie shown there was **Ben Hur** in December 1961.

Roving packs of **killer dogs** destroyed a number of sheep in Malden.

**N. A. Faucher Door & Sash Company** made its first export shipment of wooden picture frames to the United States.

An unusual loss to the community occurred in April when four of the town's leading businessmen died during the same week. Many here have memories of **Raymond Duby, 57**, Collector of Customs; **Nicholas Semeniuk, 54**, proprietor of the **Tea Garden Restaurant**; **Charles Merlo, 62**, underwriter for **London Life**; and **Aurel Bornais, 54**, owner of the **Bornais Garage** for thirty years.

In May 1964 **McQueen Marine** sold three tugs - **Buoy Girl, Buoy Boy and Aqualand** - to the government of **West Samoa**.

Ground was broken at **Malden Centre** for the new **St. Theresa's** elementary school.

In July the **Island of Boblo Company** purchased the **Scratch Block**, sw corner Dalhousie and Murray. **Troy Browning** bought the **Jones China Shop** building and remodelled the second floor for his office.

Council was investigating the possibility of using an **\$8,800 Centennial grant** to develop a **recreational park** on the **Bell Farm**, Victoria Street, and in September a by-law was passed authorizing its establishment as a **1967 Centennial Project**.

During the summer of '64 **Joe Lacey** landed a 26 lb., 9 oz. male **sturgeon** while fishing off his Malden river front dock.

**Balla's Dry Goods Store**, in business since 1929, was sold to **Harry Burke**.

Over 6,000 enjoyed the **Eighth Annual Festival of Bands** on the town park.

The old **Thomas Borrowman** grove on the Pike Road opened as a quiet campground.

In August **Ledson Darragh** was appointed **Collector of Customs** for the Port of Amherstburg, succeeding **Ray Duby** who died in April. Darragh entered Customs service in 1928.

**J. W. Westcott Marine Reporting Agency** closed its Amherstburg office after keeping track of vessel movements on the Detroit River for 52 years.

Artist **John Oliver** finished the heritage motif **murals** on the west wall of **General Amherst High School**.

Construction began on **Dr. Leonard's** new home office, southwest corner Murray and George.

In October a retail outlet of the **St. Vincent de Paul Society** was opened in the former **Burns Grocery** building on Richmond Street.

Rev. John Burkhart was inducted into the pastoral charge of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December, and the Amherstburg Goodfellows delivered 101 baskets to needy of the area on Christmas Eve.

Bringing 1964 to a close, election fever hit the community. Forty-eight nominations were filed at a meeting at General Amherst High School. Councillor H. Murray Smith aspired to be elected to the Mayor's chair while Deputy-Reeve George D. McCurdy announced that he would end his distinctive municipal career after 14 years' service to the community. Seventy-one percent of the voters turned out and Smith became Amherstburg's new mayor.



*Former Town Hall*



*254 Ramsay*



*Farmer  
Gray's Greenhouse*

## 1965

The year 1965 began on the chilly side and then got worse. The **Harrow Research Station** in early January recorded seven degrees below zero one day with 6.8 inches of snow having fallen during the week. But that was just a teaser compared to a month later when 16.2 inches of snow fell in one day at the end of February. The snow piled up so quickly that makeshift quarters were set up in the plant lunchroom for out-of-town **S.K.D.** employees who couldn't go home. It took two Echo employees two and a half hours to reach their homes at Edgewater.

**David Botsford**, curator at Fort Malden since its inception, retired. He was also custodian of the Marine Historical Society's collection which had been displayed at the fort; upon his retirement the collection was moved to the **Bacon Memorial Library** in Wyandotte, Mich.

In April it was decided that **Kinsmen Park** on Victoria Street would be turned into 24 building lots and recreational facilities there would eventually be moved to the new **Centennial Park**. **Anderdon Township** was also planning a Centennial Park, a four-acre section adjacent to the Municipal building there.

Amherstburg's first outdoor café became a reality in the spring of 1965. **Otto Nissen**, proprietor of the **Seaway Café** on Dalhousie Street and famous for many miles around for his German pastries, fenced the lawn south of the establishment and placed tables there in readiness for his summer patrons.

**Tom Bratt** donated a lot 100' x 200' on Highway 18, Malden as a site for the future headquarters of the **A.A.M. First Aid & Rescue Squad**. Sod was turned in July.

Amherstburg rocked with the occurrence of a **murder**, attempted murder and suicide in May, all happening within a few minutes at the **Lakeview Hotel**. It was the last straw for that once-famous and prominent establishment which had been going downhill for some years.

In the summer of '65 a terrible accident on **Bob-Lo** claimed the life of a 17-year-old Detroit youth and 9 others were injured when a car on the '**Bug**' plunged to the ground.

The '**frug**' was the latest dance craze.

Over 75,000 Ontario residents would soon be eligible to receive the **Old Age Security** pension at age 69.

Mr. and Mrs. **Dick Reid** retired after 29 years in business and **Bill Bryksa** took over the popular **Reid's Confectionery** on Richmond Street.

**Constable R. E. Rice** joined the **Amherstburg Police Force** which then had a chief and five constables.

In November, **Allied Chemical's** new three and a half million dollar **genetron plant** was nearing completion.

As the year came to a close **McQueen Marine's** new salvage tug "**Amherstburg**", built at Erieau Shipyards, arrived in town with her skipper **Capt. Cliff Morrison** at the helm.

The 81-year-old **town hall** had been a contentious issue for a while. There were some who thought it should receive badly needed repairs and those who thought it too costly, best to tear it down and build a new one.....the latter won.

The **Wm. J. Williker** architect firm reported to town council that it wouldn't be feasible to remodel the former Dalhousie Street **post office** into offices for town administration. However, town employees were housed there until a new administration building was erected the following

year.....even the old **Post Office clock** was put back into service. In November the 1884 town hall was razed and the new \$120,000 **Amherstburg Municipal Building** was under construction by mid-December (completed the following July).

## 1966

In February 1966 Amherstburg attorney **Hugh Fleming, Q.C.**, sold his law practice to **Grant McCready** and his building on Dalhousie Street to the **Brond Credit Union**. Fleming then moved to Bowmanville.

There was talk of a **hospital** for Amherstburg when Ontario Hospital Services Branch advised Mayor Smith they were enthusiastic about the project.

There were 47 teachers and 900 students at **General Amherst**.

The **Amherstburg Community Band** was invited to play at Expo '67 in Montreal.

**Dunbar & Sullivan Dredging Co.**, in business on the Great Lakes since 1844, and **Merritt-Chapman & Scott** who began in 1860, amalgamated.

**St. Rose High School** on Richmond Street (built 1879) closed in June.

In July 1966 it was announced that **Reflex Corporation**, a subsidiary of **International Tool**, would build a plastic moulding operation at the north end of Victoria Street.

The **Christ Church Garden Tour & Tea** brought hundreds of visitors to town.

**By-law 1127** was passed prohibiting the keeping of fowl or animals except dogs, cats, horses and mules within town limits. **By-law 1128** limited the height of fences, walls and hedges to 36 inches.

In August council received an offer of \$14,000 for the old **post office building**, conditional on the purchaser being permitted to use it for apartments, offices or stores.

Towards the end of 1966 a **major restoration** was under way at **St. John the Baptist Church**. The project included re-coppering of the steeple and repairing the roof as well as the installation of a new heating system in the **1844 landmark**.

It cost **3 cents to mail a Christmas card**. Grade "A" turkeys cost from 39 to 49 cents per pound; Maxwell House coffee was 79 cents lb; Sunkist navel oranges, 69 cents doz., and bulk mincemeat containing pure rum was 29 cents per pound.



## 1967

Entering Canada's 100th anniversary of **Confederation**, Amherstburg was a hustling, bustling town and many folks were anxious to be involved in events to celebrate **Canada's Centennial year**.

In his inaugural address from the **new Town Hall**, **Mayor H. Murray Smith** stated "the town is big business and I propose we operate it as a big business." He announced that an **Official Plan** would be produced by the **Murray V. Jones Associates** which would help in planning and urban renewal.

**Centennial Year** was officially ushered in on New Year's Eve with the lighting up of a large **Centennial Plaque** on the library grounds. The symbol was emblematic of the provinces and territories of Canada. **Mayor Smith** pointed out that Amherstburg was incorporated as a village in 1851 and as a town in 1878, and that "*We in Amherstburg are older than Confederation.....the very first incorporated community is Essex County.*"

Unseen by the crowd in front of the library and turned on by an automatic switch at approximately the same time, an eleven foot long **Canada flag** containing 392 lights was illuminated on the south wall of **General Amherst High School**.

In February of the previous year a **Centennial Planning Committee** had been organized. **Rev. M. C. Davies** was chairman; **John A. Marsh**, vice-chair; **Tom Kilgallin**, secretary; **Walter Grondin**, treasurer; **Ralph McCurdy** represented town council; **Reeve Ashley Martin** and **Mrs. Ward Turner** of Malden, **David P. Botsford** and **Mrs. Ralph Gibson** were also on the executive.

At a January 1967 meeting the **Centennial Committee** announced some of the activities which would take place during the year. **Jerry Beneteau's** committee received approval to place **75 flower baskets** on Sandwich, Richmond and Dalhousie Streets. **Tom Kilgallin** announced that 36 men had entered the beard-growing contest.

Over 400 people attended the **Centennial Ball** at the **Anderdon Tavern** under the auspices of the **Beta Sigma Phi Sorority**. **Sharon (Mrs. Tom) Kilgallin** was crowned Queen; she would reign until July 1st.

**McQueen Marine** announced its own Centennial project. **Stanley Dupont**, head of the company, was acquainted with **Father Bernard Brown** who ran a mission outpost at **Colville Lake, Northwest Territories**. He told Dupont of the need for **modern equipment** so that the **60 native families** living there could have better results from their fishing. Two boats, 16 and 18 feet, five outboards and other gear was crated at McQueen's shop and shipped to Colville Lake 4,320 miles from Amherstburg.

Two **Canadian naval vessels - H.M.C.S. Porte St. Louis** and **H.M.C.S. Porte St. Jean** - visited Amherstburg in May.

**Phil Smith**, chairman of the July 1st celebration committee, outlined the extensive program for that day which included a massive parade, games, races, a band concert, beauty contest and fireworks display.

**Mrs. Frank Bezaire** of **Beta Sigma Phi Sorority** chaired the '**Centennial Ball**' committee and **Old Home Week** was handled by the service clubs.

**Melvin Simpson** announced that the members of the **Nazrey A.M.E. church** would erect a building adjacent to the church for a **museum** to house local Black history.



In April the **A. A. & M. First Aid Squad** received a new Super-Pontiac ambulance, capable of carrying four patients at one time.

**Mayor Smith, A. J. Goodchild, Grant Duff and Tony Tiefenbach** met with a member of the Development Council, St. Clair Region, to discuss the proposed **International Bridge between Amherstburg and the U.S.**

The **1877 school bell, made by the Buckeye Bell Foundry**, was moved from the Richmond Street public school to the new school on Wilkinson Court. The old school closed on June 29<sup>th</sup>. Grade 8 students **Laura Hutchinson and Jari Stromberg** brought down the flag as the bell rang for the last time.

**Swimming off the end of Murray Street** was prohibited due to the coming and going of the **Boblo ferry Windmill Point.**

Foundations were poured for the 32-unit town houses being built north of the **Scout Hall** on Victoria Street.

Test runs were being run on the new **A. A. & M. Sewage Plant.**

The **Amherstburg Community Band and Majorettes** were a big hit at Expo 67, being called upon for several encores at each concert.

The **Amherstburg District High School Board** created a parking lot for 80 to 100 cars behind **Maria's Restaurant.**

**Gray's Greenhouse** on Dalhousie Street was destroyed by fire in October.

## 1968

**Postal clerks** were needed at the **Amherstburg Post Office**....salary range \$4685 to \$5735. Graduation from elementary school is required.

A meeting to arouse interest in **Amherstburg's historic buildings** took place in March.

**George McCurdy, Jr.** was appointed Human Rights Administrator for the Federal Department of Labour at Ottawa.

In April, **Joe and Hazel Lacey** sold their 21-year business called "**Hazel's Snack Bar**" below Amherstburg.

The **Cadet Corps** at General Amherst High School was revived; **Cadet Lt. Col. H. Kwasnicki** is Commanding Officer.

14,500 people went to **Bob-Lo** last Sunday, 6,000 of them crossing at Amherstburg.

**Mrs. Astrid Campbell** purchased **Jones' China Shop**, se corner Murray and Dalhousie in July.

The former **Allied Chemical** property was suggested as a possible **garbage disposal site.** It was approved by health officials but met opposition from area residents.

**Dr. John Greenaway** was appointed to the professional staff of the Amherstburg Medical Centre.

Council voted to demolish the old **post office**, Dalhousie at Richmond. Lawrence Baker purchased the 1884 cornerstone from the wreckers, only to have it stolen.

The **Island of Bob-Lo Company** purchased the **Patton farm**, riverfront, Malden in August and planned to move the ferry dock there in 1969..

The **Amherstburg Cardinals Bantams** won the Ontario Championship at Perth.  
**Calvert of Canada** asked council to close parts of Balaclava and William Streets.  
**Allied Chemical retirees** formed an organization called the **Retired Workers of Local 89**, with **Fred Risk** as chairman.

## 1969

Effective January 1<sup>st</sup> the general **minimum wage** was increased from \$1.00 to \$1.30.

**Glen Murray, Jr.** was in Cornwall playing Junior A **hockey** in the Montreal league.

The **Amherstburg Cold Storage** building on Richmond Street was razed to make way for the new **Toronto-Dominion Bank**. Once the site of the **Fox Livery Stable**, the building had been moved there from the 4<sup>th</sup> of Malden where it once housed the **Union Sunday School**.

Members of **Town Council** were sporting new maroon blazers with the town crest on the pocket, and grey slacks. Each member paid for his own outfit.

**Sam Bronfman** announced that a three and a half million dollar bottling facility and main office for **Calvert** would begin in May.

**Bella Vista**, Amherstburg's first major **apartment building**, 17 units, was under construction on Dalhousie Street in August.

The **DASH DRIVE-IN** south of town was opened.

The world watched as **Commander Neil Armstrong** walked on the moon.

Nearly 100 **O.P.P.** in full riot gear were called in when **violence** erupted on the picket line at **S.K.D.** in August.

**Mrs. Roy Wigle** was the first resident when **Richmond Nursing Home** opened the first week of September.

The **Amherst Cleaners** building was torn down and the **Masneys** did an excellent job of renovating the **historic stone building** which was left standing.

