



Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection
Amherstburg, Ontario



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Plucky Essex Soldiers

An excerpt from "Letters Home 1914-1919", which is a compilation of articles that appeared in the Amherstburg Echo during the First World War, as well as letters written from soldiers overseas to their families back in Amherstburg.

Amherstburg Echo, September 17, 1915

"Of the 77 men enlisted for the First Canadian Contingent by Major Balfour at Amherstburg, all but three have been either killed or wounded. Two Amherstburg boys who enlisted with the Canadian forces are now in hospitals in England, incapacitated after serving in the trenches in France. They are Harry Aikman and James Grant, both of whom showed remarkable bravery, and one of whom, Aikman, has been recommended for the Victoria Cross. Aikman was in a trench with his companions when they were attacked by a German company, all Aikman's companions being either killed or wounded. Single-handed he met an attack by nine Germans, seven of whom he disposed of, and the other two surrendered. Aikman escaped without a wound, but later contracted a cold which settled in his lungs, and he is now confined in a hospital with consumption. Grant, who was handling a machine gun, continued shooting same until he was wounded three times, and even then had to be dragged away from his post by officers, who praised his work. Grant has recovered from his wounds in an English hospital and is likely back at the front now."



Our Remembrance Day Exhibit will be on display November 1st.

Unique Books in our Gift Shop

To Save a Life
*The Making of a Volunteer
Ambulance Squad*

From the Vault

René
(Historical Fiction)

Wreck of the Griffon
Letters Home 1914-1919

--Plus many more!--



What is the Marsh Collection Society?

Our mandate is to collect, preserve and encourage research into the heritage of Amherstburg and the lower Detroit River district.

Established in 1994, this registered non-profit organization was founded in 1983 by the late Helen and John Marsh, whose family operated the Amherstburg Echo for over 80 years

What's in the Collection?

The resource centre contains photos, books, documents, postcards, artifacts and many more items relating to the area. An extensive library boasts several shelves of books on a wide range of subjects - church records, Canadian, Ontario and Local history, Black and First Nations history; Marine and Military, Prohibition, Railway, WW1, 2 and 1812 - and more. Microfilm holdings include census records, the Amherstburg Echo and Assessment rolls.

The Texas Road Ghost

& other Hauntings *as reported in The Amherstburg Echo*



The Haunted Mill

October 17, 1879

"The old saw mill on the River front, in Anderdon, has been this week, the scene of considerable excitement on account of spirits and ghosts. For several nights, lights were seen in the mill, and the sounds of chains, hammers, &c., could be distinctly heard. Each night parties living in the neighbourhood tried to ascertain the cause, and one night as many as fifty persons were there, but on entering the mill the lights disappeared and the sounds ceased and the more superstitious of the people became greatly alarmed. When the "ghosts" were discovered it was found that a large pile of sawdust under the mill, which had become crusted over, had been dug out, and several of the "boys" with a lantern and some chains, had been the cause of the scare and as they always hid in the saw dust when anyone came near it, it was some time before they were discovered, even when a thorough search was made."

Ghosts at Wyandotte Cemetery

April 1, 1932

"Wild and weird stories are afloat about uncanny doings by ghosts which have been glimpsed at the Wyandotte cemetery. Tall forms robed all in white garments are said to arise spectral-like from the tombs, sit on the tombstones and then uttering unearthly cries chase after lads who are passing there these nights. Some of the boys are said to have been frightened out of a year's growth."

"Haunted House" in Anderdon Burned

March 10, 1939

"The only haunted house in the district was destroyed by fire Wednesday morning. That's the brown frame house belonging to the Annie L. Cunningham estate that stood on the corner of Texas Road and No. 18 Highway, Anderdon. There was no evidence of anything supernatural about the building until Fred Morencie and family moved there. They had been pestered with playful ghosts in Windsor that disturbed the Morencie slumbers by shaking their beds vigorously. They decided to move to a quiet countryside but the ghosts apparently decided to seek a more secluded field for their pranks too.

No sooner were the Morencies settled in their new home than the ghosts began to raise a nocturnal clamor that kept everyone on pins and needles. The very first

night Mr. Morencie lay awake half the night listening to ghosts, that must have been iron-shod, galloping from one end of the house to the other. They sounded as though they were on horseback. The noise was ear-splitting but not a thing was visible.

But that was only a preliminary. Every one of the family at one time or another saw ghosts. There was a beautiful one that was clad in white with golden hair falling in curls down her back who used to perambulate up and down stairs and sit on the children's bed. Then there was a rough fellow who wore a red sweater who took an unholy delight in ripping off the shutters and pounding on the doors and walls with them. Another one, an invisible one, who would not let bread be placed on a certain shelf. If it were put there, he or she, would throw it onto the floor. When a blood-spot appeared on the floor in one of the upstairs rooms the Morencies decided to move again – and fast. That move broke the spell and neither the Morencies nor the house have been bothered with ghosts since."

Many Gather in The Hope of Seeking a Ghost

July 18, 1968

"There is a story going round that the ghost of a woman beheaded several years ago, appears near midnight on Texas Road west of the Third Concession in Anderdon Township.

Just where the story started is not known but it has gained such circulation that larger and larger crowds are gathering along the road each night. On Tuesday evening Chief Eric Hooper of the Anderdon Police Department stated that between 75 and 100 people assembled and waited patiently for the appearance of the ghost.

Chief Hooper told the ages of the ghost seekers ranges from 18 to 30. He said they were orderly and didn't cause any trouble. From an investigation it is revealed that the story was started several years. Not only local people but those from out of the township came in hopes of seeing the apparition."



Growing Up in the Burg

The Wigle Maternity Home

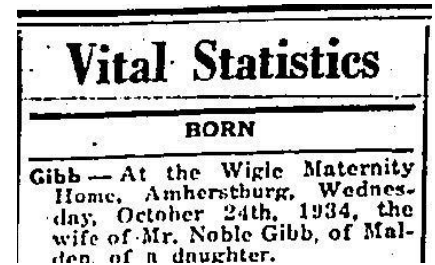
Throughout the years Amherstburg has had its share of privately operated, short-term nursing and maternity homes. One of these such homes was the Wigle Maternity Home, run by Mrs. Norma (Sinasc) Wigle, where many of Amherstburg's residents born in the 1930s saw their first light of day.

An article from the Amherstburg Echo in 1933 reported "Being a practical nurse, the need for a maternity home in Amherstburg was realized by Mrs. Wigle. Local medical men also suggested the establishment of the institution so that mothers could be given the proper attention at a moderate fee. The nearest hospital where they could be given professional attention was Windsor, and the distance was great in special cases. That the institution has been successful is proven by the many expressions of appreciation which Mrs. Wigle has received from her patients. Cool, bright and cheerful rooms help the patients in their convalescence and a friendly interest helps the babies to thrive. Since she has been a practical nurse, Mrs. Wigle has assisted at the birth of 70 babies. Her establishment can accommodate three patients at one time, and there have been times that it was taxed to capacity. The institution is not only a credit to Mrs. Wigle, but a fine asset to the town."

In 1934 she moved from her Sandwich Street home to the former Mullen house (now the historic Gordon House) on Dalhousie Street. The Echo reported "Here, in quarters that are larger and provide better accommodations for her patients, she is managing a work that has grown considerably since residents of Amherstburg have come to realize and appreciate comforts and conveniences provided by the establishment of such an institution in the town. From the wide-paned windows a spacious lawn can be seen sloping down from a paved courtyard to the blue waters of the River Detroit: a lawn where convalescents might rest and enjoy a quiet scene while inviting the health-building rays of the sun."

The Wignes then moved to Laird Avenue in October of 1934 and Mrs. Wigle continued to operate the Home from their new residence. Later in the 1930s the tendency to give birth in the modern hospitals in Windsor became more the fashion than having babies at home and the Wigle Maternity Home eventually closed.

Do you have a family member that was born at the Wigle Maternity Home? Stop in at the Marsh Collection to read through the list of names we have in our files of those who had their babies there.



Frederick Rolette

New Vessel To Be Named After Local War of 1812 Hero

It was announced in the Windsor Star on July 17th, 2015 that "one of the Canadian Navy's six new Arctic and offshore patrol ships" would be named after Frederick Rolette, who was involved in the Battle of Lake Erie. Being familiar with the name, we did a little digging and found his marriage record here in Amherstburg. On April 11th, 1812, Rolette was married to Lucy Bouchette at St. John the Baptist Catholic mission chapel on Bathurst Street. (That chapel served the local Catholic community from 1802 until 1844, when the new church was built on Brock Street.) The register was signed not only by Rolette and his bride, but also by other locals prominent here during that era – i.e. Robert and Catharine Reynolds, William Elliott, Edward Dewer, and others whose signatures are not as legible.

Our curiosity naturally necessitated further investigation into his life. We found that Frederick Rolette was born on September 23rd, 1785 and christened the next day at Notre Dame de Quebec, son of Jean-Joseph Rolette and Marie-Angelique Lortie. He died in Quebec in 1831 at age 44 and was buried there on March 19th that year. Lucy (Bouchette) Rolette died in Nicolet County in 1860 and was buried from the Cathedrale St-Jean Baptiste on February 1st.

Signatures from the marriage record of Frederick Rolette and Lucy Bouchette, St. John the Baptist Church, Amherstburg April 11, 1812

Shipping the Detroit

New Adventures on an Old Barge

by John A. Burck



McQueen Marine dock, undated Marsh Collection photo

To enlighten the “landsmen”, a barge is a vessel with no propulsion equipment, which is towed from place to place, usually by a tug. Some were built that way, while others were old ships that were unable to pass safety inspections, etc. Such was the case of the barge “Accommodation”. She started life as a shallow draft sand sucker. Her engines, navigating equipment, and other parts were removed while her boilers were retained. The steam operated her deck winches and an old ex-railway crane was mounted on the portside amidships, giving her a permanent list. This made her a troublesome tow, as she would sheer from side to side. In dire need of paint, which she would never get, and as ugly as she was, she would still get the job done. Little did I know when I joined her that you would almost think she had it in for me.

I had joined McQueen Marine of Amherstburg, Ontario (my home town). That summer I was working in the machine shop, scraping grease off an old crane that was being overhauled. I was anxious to get on the tugs and finally it happened. I was to go down to Eriau, about a hundred miles down Lake Erie. The tug “Atomic” was towing the “Accommodation” there.

Leaving port, I was to let the mooring lines go on the dock, and then climb aboard the barge. Simple enough, but the barge didn’t know that. Once the line was off, she swiftly started to swing away from the dock, as the five knot Detroit River current got a hold of her. I was about to be left behind! No Way! Foolishly,

I made a flying leap for her and landed half aboard and half hanging above the racing river. I tried to swing my legs aboard, but I was wearing a stiff, new pair of Levi’s that would not allow me to do so. I hollered for my pal Stan Ferriss, who was somewhere nearby. When he showed up he got the greatest kick out of me hanging there and when he was finished laughing, he pulled me aboard. I should have taken this as some sort of an omen. Not a good way to start a career at sea!

The passage down the river was smooth and the dinner was delicious. I even got a chance at the wheel, which was exciting. When we got into the lake I was introduced to seasickness. This is a humorous malady, unless you are the one who has it. I was afraid I was going to die, then more afraid that I wasn’t. What a wretched feeling. I could hardly wait for us to make port because I was getting out of there. I was going home, even if I had to walk! As it turned out, we didn’t go into port but moored on the job site for the night. The next day was a lovely summer morning. There was no prettier place to be and the seasickness was forgotten. Let’s get on with learning the job. Was this some kind of warning?

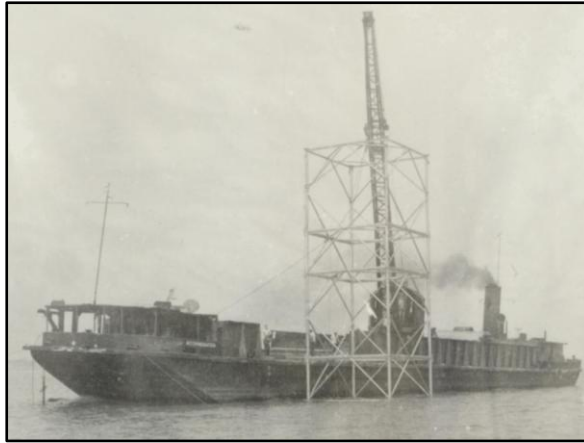
It was a fine calm day, so I can’t blame the weather for what happened. I just wasn’t paying attention. There was no guard rail here and a lot of nuts, piece of iron sticking up on the deck, made for hazardous walking.

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Shipping the Detroit *continued*

My boots must have caught something and before I knew it, I was plunging ten feet below to the waters of Lake Erie. I was in big trouble as no one saw me go over and by the time I was missed, I would have drowned. I saw the hull passing me at about eight knots and an old, ratty truck tire, used as a fender, hanging over the side. I had to grab it, and it was the only chance I would get. I made it! Once again, I shouted for Stan and fortunately he heard me. After he finished laughing, he went and got one of the stokers to help pull me up. That was a close call! (Any message there? I didn't think so.)

A hard act to follow you might say, but I managed to do so. We were down at Erieau moving gas-drilling rigs. We were loaded up, and I was on the stern deck of the barge operating a mooring winch. We were down to the last wire, as the workboat "Mascot" was hooked up and under running the wire, and the crew called for more slack. I was down to the last wrap on the winch drum. "Sorry, that's all I have", I told them. As I looked up, I was stunned to find boat and crew gone. But just as quickly they were back. They broke the surface like a submarine, and the crew was still aboard. The boat made another "dive" but this time the three men stayed on the surface, just barely. None were strong swimmers.



The barge Accommodation, undated Marsh Collection photo

One was clearly drowning. The barge was swinging, so I ran to the bow to keep them in view. Somebody do something! No one else was there, so that left me. I grabbed a life ring and jumped in. They had Stan aboard the tug and would soon reach Julius. He would not have lasted much longer. I swam over to the young French guy and told him to take hold of the ring with me. We fought our way to the bow of the barge where a line was dropped and the fellow was hauled up. As I waited, I noticed the tug had fallen astern and they had given her a "kick" ahead. The Captain was on the bridge wing while the Chief Engineer was on the deck outside the engine room. The tug was aimed right at me. I feared being squeezed between the tug and barge. The slowly upturning prop was terrifying. I shouted and the line followed. I was one half the ways up, and then lost my grip, dropping into the water. I made it on the next attempt.

Luckily, no one was lost. What had caused this incident? It was due to a breakdown of communications. There were no two-way hand radio sets available. The Captain was using that last mooring line to swing the tug and barge onto the new heading. We were supposed to hang onto that wire and the workboat was not to be hooked up at that time. When the strain came onto this line it drove the boat to the bottom. It was recovered and soon back into service. Life was seldom boring on the "Accommodation."



Amherstburg Echo Office, undated photo

New Echo Office Opens

*The Amherstburg Echo
began publishing from its
new building on Dalhousie Street
October 1st, 1915.*

DOORS OPEN & CULTURE DAYS

**Visit us on
September 26th and 27th
12 pm – 4pm**

**Original Drawings of Tugs
by Cliff Morrison**

Sinking of the Tashmoo display

"Peeking Thru the Porthole" display
Pleasure Steamers of Yesteryear

Permanent Marine Exhibit and Artifacts
includes Livingstone Channel and McQueen Marine Trophies

Yesterday's News

1915

September – Mr. Watkins' offer to let the Bois Blanc Shetland ponies out for winter is being eagerly snapped up by farmers all around Amherstburg, and nearly the whole bunch has been disposed of. Outfits go with the ponies so the children of Anderdon and Malden will have the time of their lives until the excursion season opens again next year.

October – Reeve W.T. Wilkinson is installing a new hot water system in the Imperial Bank and his residences.

November – The rural public and separate school Truant Act is now strict, and every child between the ages of eight and fourteen will be reported to the inspector if not in attendance for 80% of the teaching time in the month.

1925

September – Amherstburg will be entitled to elect a deputy reeve at the next municipal election. Before a deputy reeve can be elected from any municipality it must have more than a thousand municipal voters. This year the total number of municipal voters in Amherstburg is 1150.

October – Mrs. P. Meloche of Anderdon, while driving north on Sandwich Street Monday afternoon, attempted to hand the baby to her sister, who was riding with her, when the horse bolted and ran into Dr. Hutchinson's car, parked on the pavement in front of his office. The

rig was somewhat damaged, but the car escaped without injury.

November – N.A. Marra, the enterprising merchant, has built a large addition to his bake shop, Murray Street, but still he has too little room. Mr. Marra now has four trucks on the road selling his much-in-demand bread and it looks like he will have to move into larger premises sooner.

1935

September – The Wigle Maternity Home equipment is being moved from the Mullen house on Dalhousie Street to the Hamilton house on Laird Avenue. Mr. & Mrs. F.D. Wigle will also take up residence there on October 1st.

October – Mrs. J. I. Ouellette and family have moved from the Hadish house, Pike Road, to the McLean house on Seymour Street, which she recently purchased and the Edward Renauds have moved from there to the place vacated by Mrs. Ouellette.

November – Colchester South flue tobacco purchase price 2 cents to 7 cents higher than expected. The highest price in the Colchester South district was received by Thrasher & Russell, who were given 32½ cents per pound for their crop by the Imperial Tobacco Company.

1945

September – Recently the board of the General Amherst High School entered into a contract with Jones

Brothers of Anderdon to supply bus service to bring to and from school, pupils from Malden and Anderdon.

October – Each blind person in Amherstburg will be presented with a Wonder Wheel, a new guide for blind people which was invented by a former Amherstburg resident, Harry J. Deneau, now of Monterey Park, California.

November – Calvert Distillers (Canada) Ltd. hold the honour of being the first Essex County plant in the payroll savings division to go over the top in the Ninth Victory Loan drive. Within 24 hours after the start of the loan their quota of \$28,000 had been reached and purchases are now well over \$40,000.

1955

September – A ticklish marine salvage job was completed Thursday when a 200-ton crane was hoisted aboard the scow Colleen Rhue owned by Dunbar and Sullivan Company. The crane was lost last November when the scow sank off Colchester Light while enroute from Point Pelee to the Dunbar yards at Stoney Island.

October – The Ontario Department of Highways has refused permission for the Town of Amherstburg to install traffic lights at the corner of Sandwich and Richmond Streets. A survey showed the traffic did not warrant a light.

November – A large addition is being constructed to the office of the Conklin Planing Mills Limited, Dalhousie Street South. The present office has been moved to the west and in front will be built a showroom 40 x 58.

1965

September – Several hundred visited the all-electric model home on Fort Malden Drive over the weekend and saw the latest in electrical heating and home building. The house was constructed for Mr. & Mrs. Earl McWhinney and family.

October – The Amherstburg Council voted in favour of the establishment of an Essex County Library at its regular meeting Tuesday evening.

November – The town offices have been moved to the former federal building, corner of Dalhousie and Richmond Streets. Demolition of the old municipal building will begin this week to make way for the new \$120,000 structure.

1975

September – Ninety-four homes will be constructed in the second phase of the development of Park Place, Malden Township. Park Place is located east of the Amherstburg limits.

October – The Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee will ask the town council to pass a bylaw designating the Park House, Kings Navy Yard, North American

Black Museum and the Gordon House as being of historical and architectural value to the Heritage of the Town of Amherstburg.

November – BABUS (Business Association Bus) went into operation and from indications, the bus will serve a useful purpose in transporting area residents to the business section of the town. The total cost of the service is borne by the recently formed Amherstburg Business Association. Six trips are made each day. The route covers six miles.

1985

September – What used to be the Canadian Conservatory of Music on Simcoe Street is now "Musicland" on Richmond Street. The new business opened a couple weeks ago and sports everything for the experienced or aspiring musician, including instrument sales and instruction.

October – The old IGA store on Sandwich Street is in the midst of an interior and exterior facelift, as it is prepared to house a Loblaw's Valu-Mart grocery.

November – Helen and John Marsh, the former publishing-editing duo of the Echo, have been named the 1985 recipients of the Father James Martin "Citizen of the Year", by an AAM Chamber of Commerce selection committee.

1995

September – Residents and board members at the Wesview Apartments celebrated the building's fifth birthday last Saturday.

October – Boblo Island owner, John Oram is forging ahead with plans to develop the island. Oram announced that 52 lots on the northern edge of the island will hit the market and be offered for sale October 21st.

November – Mary Hall received her 40 years service pin from the Canadian Cancer Society in recognition of her hard work at their annual meeting.

2005

September – An estimated 6500 visits occurred during Saturday's Doors Open Amherstburg. It was a chance to see the 24 homes and businesses that allowed visitors inside.

October – Town council hosted a public meeting Thursday night to discuss potential impacts if one of the three sites in Amherstburg is chosen as the new route of an international crossing.

November – The Verdi Club's third annual Gala for a Cure was another sold-out success with over 440 people attending the fundraiser. Over \$14,000 to aid the fight against cancer was raised.

Bricks-n-Beams

The Historical Home of Dr. William Fred Park

A Look into the Cultural Heritage Value of 100 Gore Street

by *The Amherstburg Heritage Committee*



Preserving Our Past, Enriching the Future

Historic properties are models and capsules of both the tangible and intangible heritage of a place. The preservation of such assets is an exercise in community building, assisting to develop an appreciation for the culture and history of the area. Improving quality of place is conducive to cultural and economic prosperity.

The town of Amherstburg is rich in historic structures that contribute to, and help reflect quality of place. The house at 100 Gore is one such property that embodies aspects of the cultural heritage of the town in which it resides.

To date, 53 properties in Amherstburg have been designated by the municipality under the Ontario Heritage Act. Designation serves to recognize and increase awareness of the importance of the property,

as well as protect the heritage value. 100 Gore is a 'listed' property. This means that it has been identified as possessing cultural heritage value and has been added to the municipal register, but has not yet been designated.

To determine whether a property possesses cultural heritage value, one follows Regulation 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The property must meet one of the following criteria:

- Design/Physical Value
- Historical/Associative Value
- Contextual Value

100 Gore possesses both associative value and physical value, and is therefore of cultural heritage significance to the Town of Amherstburg.

A Local Idol

In 1899, Dr. William Fred Park and family moved into the house at 100 Gore. This became the family home for him and his wife Amanda, along with daughters Myrcil, Sybil, and Marjorie. Doctor Park graduated from the University of Toronto in 1893 with a degree in Medicine and a license to practice pharmacy in Ontario and Michigan. In subsequent years Dr. Park would prove himself to be not only a dedicated physician, but an innovative leader and model citizen. All accounts of the life of Dr. Park attest to his hard working nature and devotion to civic betterment.



The Historical Home of Dr. William Fred Park *continued*

As a physician, Dr. Park was dedicated, travelling by various means of transportation and braving obstacles to reach his patients. He even went so far as to build his own car out of parts from the bankrupt Two-in-One Auto Company in town. He is said to have delivered over four thousand babies throughout Essex County. Dr. Park was known to be charitable, caring for those who could not afford care. His remedies are remembered by past patients: "...I still have a bottle of his black salve that cured everything from toothache to lumbago-25¢ a bottle..." Dr. Park was instrumental in overcoming outbreaks of typhoid in Amherstburg, a disease that caused five to six deaths per annum. He fought for a new system to filter the contaminated water responsible for the outbreaks.

His concern for the people of the town led him to a career in politics. In 1911, Dr. Park was elected mayor of Amherstburg. He remained in office until 1929. During his time as a civic leader Dr. Park's accomplishments were many. These are some of his achievements, the outcomes of which are still evident in Amherstburg today:

- Considered the "Father of Sandwich Street", responsible for converting the muddy route to a paved highway
- Encouraged the opening of General Amherst High School and Amherstburg Public Library
- Planned a new system for garbage disposal
- Advocated for Fort Malden to be named a National Historic Park
- Became the first president of the Amherstburg Historical Society
- Pressed for a welfare system and became head of the Welfare Commission
- Fought for the establishment of Brunner Mond (Allied Chemical) which became one of the largest employers in the area
- As a Dahlia Culture enthusiast, he assisted in beginning the Amherstburg Horticulture Society

Despite battling illnesses, Dr. Park never refused tasks stating: "I'm in the harness, and let me die in it if necessary". Such was his wish and his fate. In 1936, he died at work shortly after signing the death certificate of friend Dr. T. James Park. All of the town and county attended his funeral. Dr. Park left his impression not only on the Amherstburg of his time, but his work helped make Amherstburg what it is today.

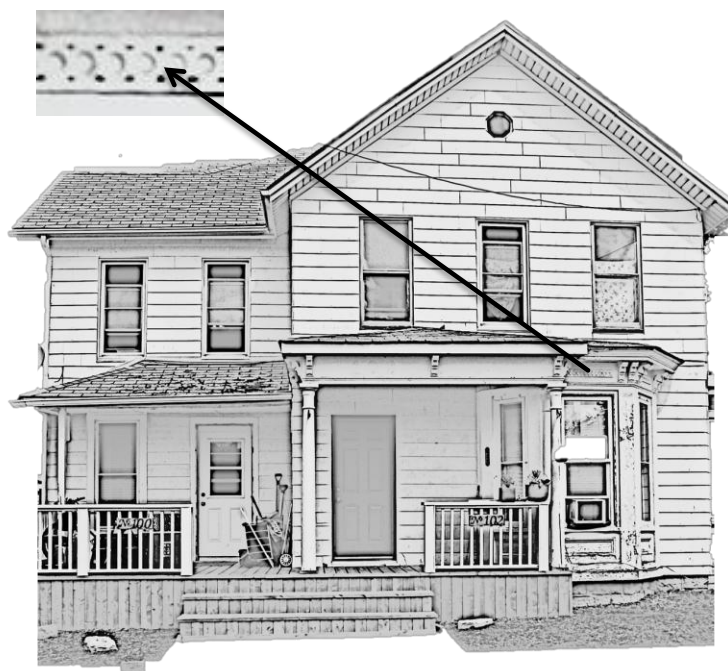
Architectural Attributes

Built between 1881 and 1882, this two-story timber frame structure is an example of the vernacular style in Ontario homes of the late 19th century. While additions have been made to the original structure, many features have been retained.

Key heritage attributes:

- Elements of Victorian architecture
- Raised surface ornamentation
- Bay window
- Double hung slender windows
- Decorative brackets on soffits
- Gable with hexagonal window
- Underlying clapboard

*If you are interested in learning more about Cultural Heritage Properties in Amherstburg, please visit:
<http://mapamherstburg.ca/heritage/>*



Then & Now

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, corner Simcoe & Bathurst



In 1925, renovations were completed to St. Andrews, which included turning the building to face Simcoe Street and adding a basement. The addition on the east side of the building was completed in 1958.

