



Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection
Amherstburg, Ontario



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Then & Now

100th Anniversary of the Opening
of Liberty Theatre (221 Sandwich St. S)



Top Image: Liberty
Theatre, undated

Bottom Image: 217
Sandwich Street South,
present-day

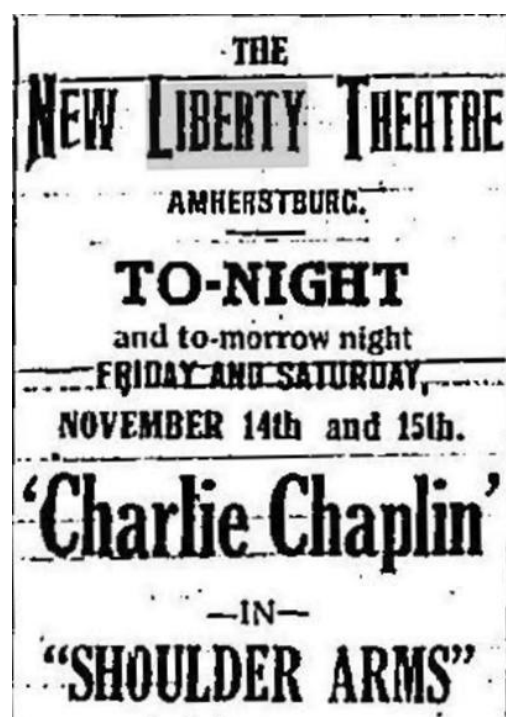
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The Amherstburg Echo, August 15, 1919:

"Workmen have been spending twenty-four hours a day putting the finishing touches on the "Liberty Theatre" and Mr. Marra has arranged to hand it over to Mr. Brown in time for opening with a big picture next Monday night. Mr. Marra, the proprietor of this beautiful theatre, has spared neither time nor expense in putting up one of the finest buildings of its kind in the Province outside of Toronto.

The auditorium, which is finished in beautiful soft tone colors, is 90' x 40' and has a seating capacity of 600. The flat above, which will be occupied by Manager Brown and his wife, is convenient and beautiful in all its appointments. The vestibule and ladies' retiring room leave nothing to be desired to add to their completeness, and Mr. Marra is to be congratulated on giving the town such a beautiful and modern picture house."



The Amherstburg Echo, November 14, 1919

Happenings at the Marsh

Now through September 29th - Exhibit

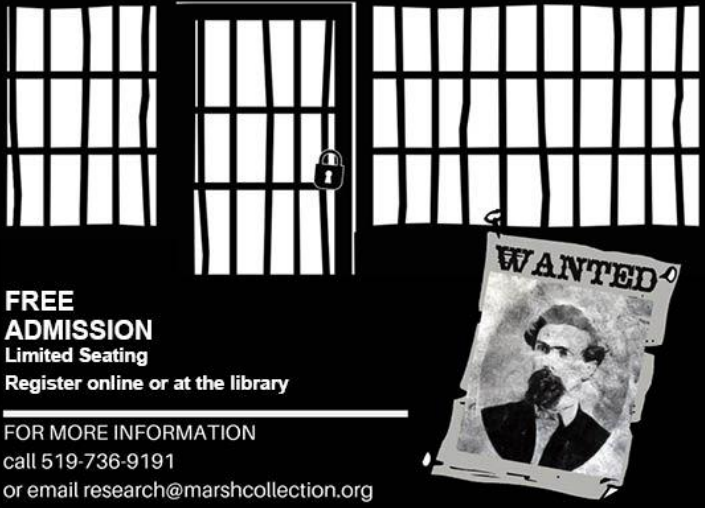
Stop in at the Chimczuk Museum to see *The Many Faces of Heritage*, an exhibit featuring the organizations that make up the Southwestern Ontario Heritage Council. The Marsh Collection Society is included in this exhibit which runs until September 29th.

October 3rd - Public History Talk

The Amherstburg Library & Marsh Collection Society
PRESENT
**"Into Canadian Arms":
The Reno Gang in Windsor (1868)**

A Public History Talk
by St. Clair College Professor Chad Beharriell

**Thursday, October 3rd at 7:00 pm
AMHERSTBURG LIBRARY**



**FREE
ADMISSION**
Limited Seating
Register online or at the library

FOR MORE INFORMATION
call 519-736-9191
or email research@marshcollection.org

AMHERSTBURG LIBRARY



Ph. 226-946-1529 ext 240
www.essexcountylibrary.ca



Month of November- Exhibit

Our remembrance day exhibit which includes information on Amherstburg's Honour Roll, women who served in World Wars I & II, and efforts on the homefront will be on display.

What's In the Collection?

The Marsh Historical Collection mandate is "to collect, preserve and encourage research into the heritage of Amherstburg and the lower Detroit River district."

The facility contains a large collection of photos, books, genealogical records, maps and reference files on a variety of historical topics, plus microfilm of The Amherstburg Echo from 1874 to 2012. There is also a small gift shop which contains various publications about local history.

Funding comes from various foundations and private individuals. While ADMISSION IS FREE, donations are most welcome. A receipt for income tax purposes will be issued upon request for any monetary donation of \$10 or more.

The Marsh Collection is open
to researchers and visitors
from 10am to 4pm Tuesday through Friday.
Email: research@marshcollection.org
Website: www.marshcollection.org



Plaque Project

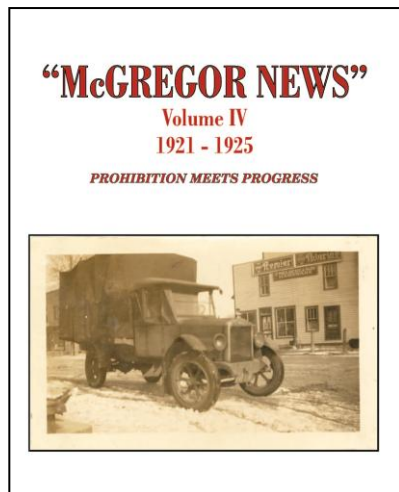


Two new plaques commemorating Amherstburg's fallen soldiers are set to be revealed at this year's Remembrance Day Ceremony. Special thanks to Chris Gibb for leading this project in partnership with the Amherstburg Legion and Marsh Collection Society.

The plaques contain a photo and background on the first six soldiers (alphabetically) who died while serving the country in WWII. Two plaques recognizing the six men on the cenotaph from WWI were installed last November.

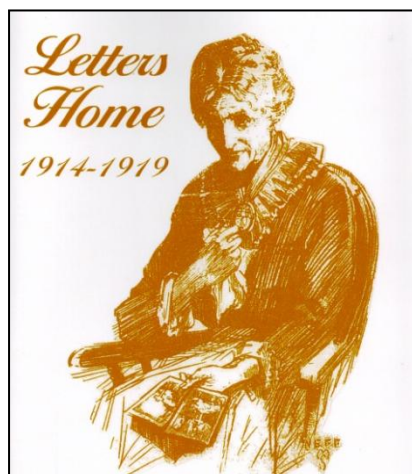
Publications

McGregor News Vol. IV \$27



The final volume of McGregor News is complete! This volume covers the years 1921 through 1925.

Letters Home 1914-1915 \$15



Letters Home 1940-1945 \$20



"CANADA HELPS"

- Giving Made Simple -

The Marsh Collection Society has received several monetary donations recently through "Canada Helps". We are so grateful to the kind donors who wish to assist us in continuing our mission, which is *"To collect, preserve and encourage research into the heritage of Amherstburg and the lower Detroit River district."*

"Canada Helps", is a one-stop shop where giving is made simple. You can donate online to any registered Canadian charity, whether it be in tribute, in memory, a special occasion or any other reason. A receipt for income tax purposes in any amount is received immediately online by the donor.

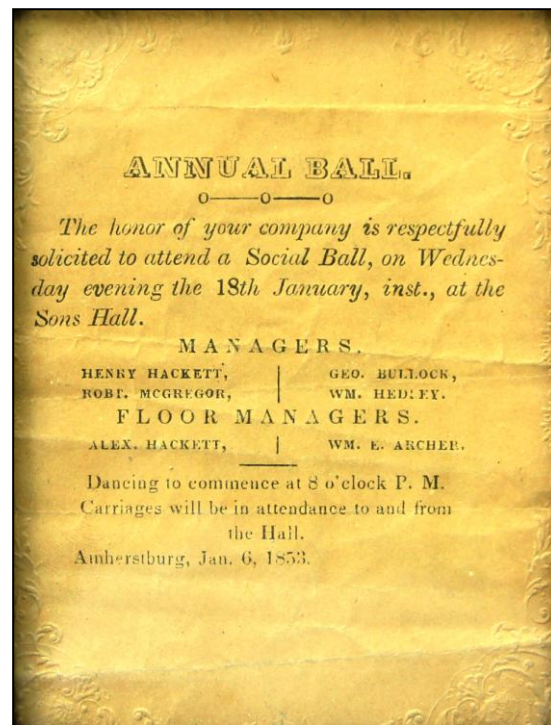
For further information about the organization, with listing of registered Canadian charities, just go to <http://www.canadahelps.org>.

Collection Highlights

An invitation to attend the Annual Ball
at the Sons of Temperance Hall on January 6, 1853.

The Sons of Temperance Hall was located on the west side of Ramsay Street south of Murray in the same building as the first home of The Amherstburg Echo. Temperance organizations developed early in Amherstburg, one visitor noting that a society had been in operation for some time by around 1844. In 1846, the village of Amherstburg had 10 taverns to service a population of about 1000. Alcohol was seen as an obstacle to self discipline, and these groups formed in an effort to control consumption.

Early temperance organizations in Amherstburg included the Sons of Temperance and



their affiliate the Daughters of Temperance (Mayflower Union No.54), as well as the Cadets of Temperance, and the Amherstburg Total Abstinence Society. Many more organizations formed later on.

Upsetting the Hour Glass

1929

September- A heavy frost swept Essex County yesterday (Sept. 20th) morning and did a great deal of damage to tobacco still in the field. Corn was whitened and tomato plants frozen stiff.

October- You are invited to the chicken supper (with pumpkin pie), Patron's Hall, October 15th, 6-8 p.m., 50 cents a plate. Dancing extra.

November- While the official opening of the Ambassador Bridge will be on Friday, November 15th, there will be a dedicatory service Thanksgiving Day, Monday, November 11th.

1939

September- The Liberty Theatre, in common with all other theatres throughout the Dominion, has installed an auxiliary lighting system so that in case of failure of power the theatre will not be blacked out.

October- Waves of prosperity are sweeping up and down the Detroit River, where navigation has reached the highest peak in a 20 year period.

November- Smith's Amherstburg store has a chiffon hose sale this weekend.

1949

September- The High School Board was informed that over 120 students use bus transportation to attend the high school.

October- The Knights of Columbus are holding their Columbus Day Banquet at the Lake Shore Hotel, on Tuesday, October 11th, in honour of their patron Christopher Columbus.

November- A Royal Canadian Navy Fairmile will winter at the McQueen Marine Limited dock in Amherstburg. The ship arrived in port on Sunday afternoon from Sorel, Quebec.

1959

September- Amherstburg tourist records were broken during the month of August when 13,009 registered visitors were accounted for in addition to the thousands of other tourists who come to town to use the facilities in the Town Park or to cross over to Bob-Lo.

October- Both senior and junior Amherstburg Bands are in full swing preparing for the winter concert season.

November- A hit and run thief broke a large glass in the door of the Louis J. Fox Men's Store, Murray Street, early Sunday morning, entered the store and took a size 42 coat.

1969

September- The Amherstburg, Anderdon and Malden Chamber of Commerce has pledged one thousand dollars to the tri-community arena.

October- Petitions protesting alleged blasts at the Amherst Quarries, Pike Road, Malden, have been sent to the Department of Mines in Toronto.

November- Good progress is being made on the construction of the 18-unit apartment building, Dalhousie Street south. The owners say this will be ready for occupancy in December.



Death's Doings

By Phyllis Chant

The book "Death's Doings" by Richard Dagley (1826) was more than likely the reason newspapers started using these two words for passings: "natural" or "tragic".

Before newspapers began carrying death notices, people relied on church records and personal writings to keep track of their family history. When The Echo launched publication in 1874, the public could then read about the passings of local residents as part of keeping up-to-date on local news. Today, these obituaries provide people who are conducting genealogical explorations with invaluable information. In 1869, the provincial government also started the official Registry of Births, Marriages and Deaths. An ad in The Echo in 1879 reminded people to register deaths within ten days. There was a \$20 fine for not registering a death.

Disease, illness, drownings, alcoholism, horrific accidents and suicide were some of the common causes of death in the 1880 and 1890s – and none of conditions were kept from the public's eye in the newspaper. Sadly, there are reports in The Echo of individuals being "crushed by being run over by a loaded flax wagon", "death by fire from a lighted coal oil lamp", and death due to cold caught "in a draughty car". In the early 1900s, The Echo ran an article entitled "How to Keep Well" by the provincial Board of Health, to encourage the public to help reduce the number of deaths from illness and disease. This article stated that "one-fifth of all babies born will die before they reach the age of one year, about one-third of all deaths are deaths of small children. One-half (of) the adult deaths are due to consumption (tuberculosis), pneumonia, and colds." This article also emphasized that "Pasteur treatment for rabies, smallpox vaccine, anti-meningitis serum, tetanus, and typhoid vaccine are supplied free to the public", and encouraged the public to take advantage of these pioneering preventative measures.

Newspapers, including The Echo, covered the circumstances of deaths in great – almost lurid – detail. Today's obituaries usually cover the basics of the deceased: their spouse and children's names, their

occupation and hobbies, and the date and time of the visitation and funeral.

"Death's Doings" in late-19th/early-20th century Echo gave more detail than would ever be considered acceptable by today's standards. More space was allotted for people of stature such as well known residents, politicians or religious leaders. But with virtually all passings, information was included about how they died. Descriptive phrases such as "found cold in death by hotel employees", "nothing could be done to ward off the hand of death", or "the light of a bright and vivacious life was darkened when she passed into the Great Beyond" introduced the story, followed by extensive detail about the life and family of the deceased. One aged couple who passed away within days of each other in 1912 included this description: "It was truly a sad sight to see this aged couple, with their storm-beaten and time-worn features, lying helpless side by side".

Sometimes entire columns of the newspaper were dedicated to a passing. Of course, tragic passings of a resident due to accidents or murder would become front page material. The 1892 Amherstburg murder of Martha Veney by her husband Anderson was covered as far away as Toronto's Daily Mail. The Echo account of the sad demise of Mrs. Veney included every graphic and shocking detail of her horrific murder, including eye-witness accounts. This information would probably never be public knowledge in today's news.



Bell Family Monument
by William S. Wright

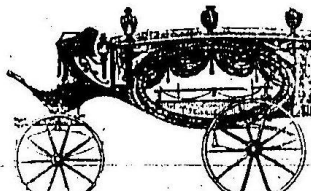
As the town grew, separate grave-yards came into being, to replace or augment those immediately adjacent to churches (because they were becoming filled). On January 9, 1855, Amherstburg's municipal government acquired eight acres of land for Rose Hill Cemetery. In 1864, St. John the Baptist Cemetery was established on a smaller piece of land beside Rose Hill. Instead of a farm burial, families could now purchase plots for their loved ones. Tombstones were the next purchase for the deceased. The earliest

Continued on next page...

tombstones were made of white marble. Marble was easy to carve, and many of these old tombstones had symbols and lengthy epitaphs on them. William S. Wright established Amherstburg Marble and Granite Works in 1883. One of Wright's most impressive monuments was for the Bell family, and still stands in Rose Hill. On the back of the monument is Wright's name (see photo on page 5).

Amherstburg also featured undertaking services in the last quarter of the 1800s. Park & Borrowman, the lumber proprietors, offered coffins, caskets and funeral services. An 1887 Echo ad for the company asserted that it could manufacture everything from lumber, lath, shingles, coffins and a "good hearse for hire". David M. Kemp and L. Bertrand, both in what is now downtown Amherstburg, were furniture stores and undertakers. It was not uncommon to have both services in one location.

UNDERTAKING.



PARK & BORROWMAN

Have commenced the manufacture of all kinds of

COFFINS AND CASKETS

They also keep constantly on hand a full supply of UNDERTAKERS' GOODS.
Funerals furnished on short notice and in first-class style.
We manufacture the finest Walnut Casket ever shown in Essex.

A GOOD HEARSE FOR HIRE.

We can furnish a funeral throughout for from \$5 upwards.

A FULL STOCK OF LUMBER, LATH & SHINGLES

kept constantly on hand.

PARK & BORROWMAN.

The Amherstburg Echo, October 28, 1887

W.D. Balfour's funeral in 1896 was the epitome of a Victorian funeral. Balfour and John Auld were responsible for establishing The Amherstburg Echo in 1874. Balfour also served as a member of Amherstburg Town Council, Warden of Essex County, and a member of the provincial Legislative Assembly. The sad death of Balfour at the age of 45 was a huge loss to the community and province. Of course, his death and subsequent funeral was extensively covered on the front pages of two issues of The Echo. His funeral was an elaborate Victorian farewell to a well-loved and respected resident, businessman and

politician. The funeral cortege passed through the major streets of the town, and people along the route draped their residences. The government buildings through town were also draped, and every "telegraph pole" along the road from the town to the cemetery had a black bow tied with a white ribbon. Rev. T. Nattress conducted the funeral services. The "procession formed, headed by the Leamington band, a large number of Oddfellows from all parts of the county, members of the O.M.B.A., the Amherstburg Fire Brigade, the town council, the school board, members of the County council and followed by the largest number of vehicles ever gathered together in Western Ontario." The photo of the horse-drawn hearse for the Balfour funeral was taken by Benjamin Lapierre.



W.D. Balfour Funeral, August 1896
MCS P782

Burial practices have changed drastically over the past 200 years. Then, some died at home and were being buried on the homestead. Today, most pass away in a hospital, followed by final arrangements made in conjunction with a funeral home. Now cremation has become a very popular alternative to burial. (This is, still, a relatively modern phenomenon in North America. In the middle of the 20th century, less than five percent of the deceased were cremated. Today in Canada, approximately 65 percent of burials involve cremations.) A relatively new service also now being offered allows ashes to be sealed in biodegradable urns which will allow a family to spread their loved ones' ashes on local lakes. Yes, it is legal to scatter cremated remains on Crown Land – which includes the Great Lakes.

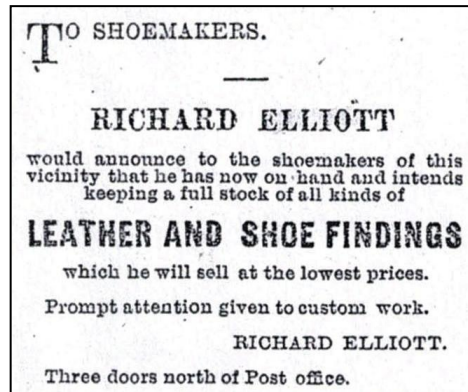
Even though some end-of-life customs are changing, obituaries, newspaper articles, and cemetery record-keeping will allow those searching their heritage to gather important information for generations to come.

Bricks-N-Beams- 247 Dalhousie

This peculiar structure measuring 10.5ft. x 33ft. is nestled right in between two large commercial blocks on Dalhousie Street. The building has housed a number of businesses since its erection in 1876. The original owner was a Margaret Keefer who resided in Thorold with her husband George and rented the space to tenants. She inherited the property from her first husband Alexander McGregor upon his death in 1830.

The earliest occupant was S.J. Johnson. S.J. Johnson's father was the proprietor of the Johnson House, a brick hotel which shared a party wall with the north side of the smaller structure. It occupied the space where the Bank of Montreal is now located. In August of 1876, S.J. Johnson began advertising his new confectionery and oyster saloon "Next door to the Johnson House". A note at the Marsh Collection indicates that S.J. Johnson's father had the smaller building erected for his son. This is possible although the Johnsons did not own the property, they were renting from the Keefers. By December of 1877, S.J. Johnson put a removal notice in *The Amherstburg Echo*, announcing that he had left the "old store" and moved to "Kolfage's New Block" (now 63-73 Murray Street). Johnson would become a well-known grocer in town. His obituary recalled the beginnings of his career at this location on Dalhousie, writing that he had "bought stock of candies and fruits and opened a little store".

In 1880, the Keefers sold this portion of the lot to Eliza Elliott, wife of Richard Elliott, who immediately made improvements to the store.



The Amherstburg Echo, September 1, 1882

Richard Elliott was a shoemaker, and used this space to conduct his trade from about 1880 to 1897 when he became "caretaker of the public building".

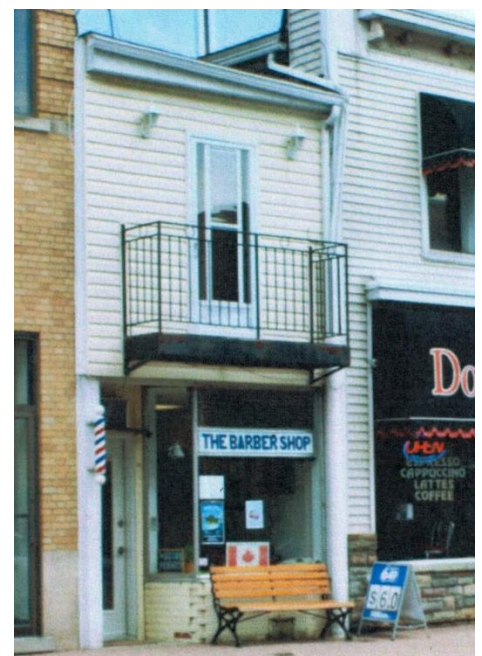
The Elliotts made an application for insurance on March 1, 1882, and indicated that the building was about five years old. It appears that estimate was close, but 6 years would have been more accurate.



Shows the building with a large white awning c.1911-1912 during the tenancy of A.G. Taylor, Jeweler
MCS P3189

In 1905 Richard Elliott passed away. The property remained in the Elliott family until 1943 and was rented to a number of different tenants. One such tenant was John Gant, known locally as "Professor John Gant". Gant conducted a barber shop in town for almost 50 years, and this was one location. On April 30, 1909, *The Echo* reported that "Mrs. Elliott had her store on Dalhousie Street repainted, and Prof. John Gant is very proud of the barber shop with a bright red front."

In 1943, Eva Elliott sold the property to George H. Wilkinson who passed away 6 years later. The executors of his estate sold the property to Joseph & Mary Kitka. This became the Kitka Family home and site of "Joe Kitka Shoe Repairing" for many years.



247 Dalhousie Street, c.2014
Photograph by Doris Gaspar

Tug Maudie

Follow-Up

In the last issue of Reflections we wrote about a tug called Maudie, named after Maude Jariett Gurak (1915-2019). The Maudie ran from Amherstburg to Bob-Lo and was responsible for transporting everything over to the island. We were able to trace where the tug ended up (in Ojibway Park) but did not know much about its origins. Thanks to the help of our local marine history buffs, we are able to share a bit more...

Before her time servicing Bob-Lo, the Maudie was owned by John Goodchild, and was called the "Bobby G". John Goodchild, a lifelong mariner, began employment with McQueen Marine, a towing and salvage company in Amherstburg, in 1937. He worked for the company as an engineer and underwater diver until his retirement.

Special thanks to David Goodchild for sharing information and the below photo of the Bobby G. docked at Amherstburg.



The Bobby G was one of the earliest boats John Goodchild owned. In the late 30s/ early 40s John took a loan from Captain J. E. McQueen, owner of McQueen Marine. Before John was able to pay back the loan McQueen sold the tug to Bob-Lo. This is how the tug became the Maudie.

Heritage Lost

This series looks at some of the heritage buildings in Amherstburg that are now gone.

DALHOUSIE STREET Between Rankin & Richmond



Post Office

At the foot of Richmond Street

Built: 1886

Razed: 1968

MCS P3629



Section of the "Dolly Varden House"/ Jaber Residence

Across from Waterfront Ice Cream

Built: 1873-74

Razed: 1983

MCS PA10



Waterworks Building

North end of the King's Navy Yard Park

Built: 1891

Razed: 1973

MCS P3415