



Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection
Amherstburg, Ontario



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The Old Home Town

(Printed in *The Amherstburg Echo* November 21, 1924)

It doesn't matter much, be its buildings great or small,
The home town, the home town, is the best town after all;
The cities of the millions have the sun and store above,
But they lack the kindly faces of the few you've learned to love,
And with their pomp and riches and with all the teeming throngs,
The heart of a man is rooted in the town where he belongs.

There are haunts of charm and beauty where at times it's good to be,
Still the beauty of the old town is dearer far to see,
For the humblest little hamlet sings a melody to some,
And no matter how they travel it is calling them to come.
Though cities rise to greatness and are gay with gaudy dress,
There is something in the home town which no other towns possess.

The home town has a treasure which the distance cannot gain,
It is there the hearts are kindest, there the greatest friends remain.
And it's there a mystic something seems to permeate the air,
To set the weary wanderer to wishing he was there,
For be it great or humble, it still holds mankind in thrall,
And the home town, the home town is the best town after all.

-Edgar A. Guest

Collection Highlights

Canadian Cannery Crate

It's that time of year! As *The Echo* once stated quite accurately: "For a few weeks every year, if the wind is right, living in Amherstburg is rather similar to living in a can of tomato soup." The canning factory on Fort Street opened in 1907 and began manufacturing products from locally-grown tomatoes. A new ketchup plant was completed in 1947, one of only two in Ontario. That year thousands of cases of ketchup were produced in Amherstburg. According to the local manager, Keith Clark, ketchup was the main product of the plant. In 1970, an average a 250,000 bottles were produced per day. The factory was ordered to close in November of 1982, to the dismay of the 16 full-time workers and 150 seasonal workers employed at the time.



Happenings at the Marsh

The Marsh Collection office remains closed to the public.

We are working behind-the-scenes cataloguing & digitizing the collection, and answering research requests.

CONTACT US

If you have any research questions or other inquiries, staff can be reached by email or phone.

NEWSLETTER

If there are topics you would like to see included in future newsletters, please let us know!

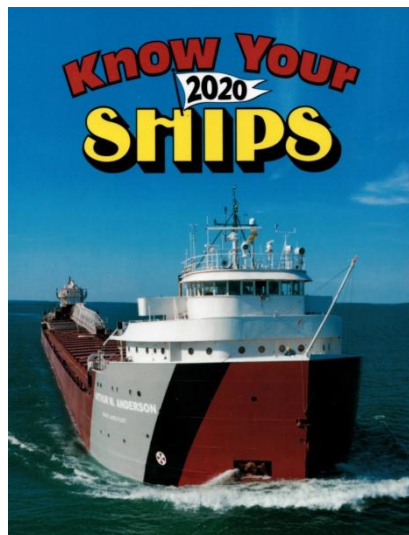
Gift Shop

Looking for some reading material?

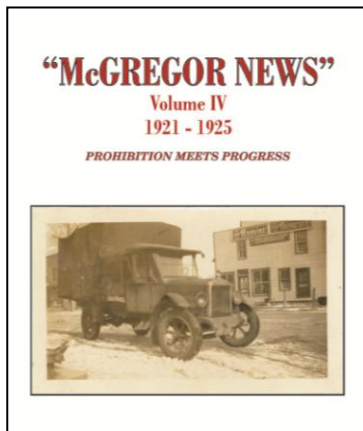
Books can be purchased by calling 519-736-9191 or emailing research@marshcollection.org. We will schedule curb-side pickup or arrange for shipping.

Here are a few of the books available. For a more detailed listing, visit:

<https://www.marshcollection.org/gift-shop/>



Know Your Ships 2020
\$22



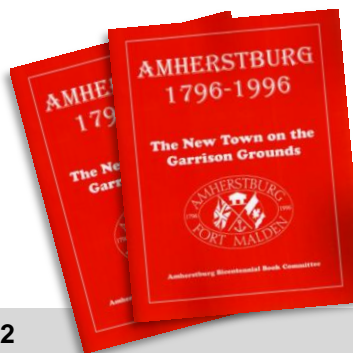
McGregor News
Vol. I 1875-1900 \$22
Vol. II 1900-1915 \$25
Vol. III 1915-1920 \$20
Vol. IV 1921-1925 \$27



Letters Home
1914-1919
\$15



Letters Home
1940-1945
\$20



Amherstburg 1796-1996
The New Town on the Garrison Grounds
Vol. I \$35 Vol. II \$40

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.

Phone: 519-736-9191

Email: research@marshcollection.org

Website: www.marshcollection.org



Loose Planks From Wooden Sidewalks to Silex Stone



We are all very used to the smooth concrete paths that line the roadways throughout town. Back when sidewalks were made from wooden planks, the journey by foot could be quite unpredictable. The following appeared in *The Amherstburg Echo* April 20, 1877:

"This is the time of year when the unwary pedestrian steps on a loose plank in the sidewalk and immediately the other end jumps up and deposits him at full length with severe injuries to his shins and sundry exclamations. Another cause of suffering is the nail protruding about half an inch above the sidewalk against which the toe strikes with violence, and which is productive of almost as many expletives as the other disaster. Builders also are in the habit of leaving loose planks around over which one stumbles in the most promiscuous manner on a dark night."

C.W. Cadwell, of the Cadwell Silex Company, addressed Amherstburg Town Council in March of 1896 on the matter of stone walks in town. He offered to put a walk around town hall at a rate of 13 cents per square foot and guaranteed the work for five years, noting that a walk put down properly should not require repairs for 20 years at least. Council debated the necessity of stone walks, some arguing that plank walks could last a decade, others complaining that planks required replacement annually. It was decided that property owners would pay for their own walks through a frontage tax system and local improvement bylaw. Property owners wishing to have a silex walk would enter a petition and if granted the town would cover 1/3 of the cost.

Later that year, the first walk was laid on the east side of Dalhousie from Richmond to Murray Street. From then on, stone walks started going in quickly. In December of 1897, it was reported that C.W. Cadwell had put in nine blocks of walk that season, equaling 20,000 ft. An article in 1898 noted that the days of the plank sidewalk were numbered. The Provincial Road Commissioner at the time stated that planks were not an economical material for sidewalks, and that the best material was artificial stone. According to him the average life of a plank walk was 7 years.

George D. Pettypiece is remembered for having laid several of the town's stone sidewalks. He was foreman of the Cadwell Silex Company in 1896 when the first walk was laid. By 1903, his own company, The Pettypiece Silex Co., had received a contract for laying walk on Richmond Street. Petitions for stone walks continued to come in, several completed around the downtown core in the following years. By 1911, stone walks were being laid as far as Alma Street.

In 1932, an article in *The Echo* marked C.W. Cadwell's 75th Birthday. On this day, he walked to Amherstburg from Windsor, the article noting his company built many of the original sidewalks in town. He said he had a free pass on the "Foot and Walkers' Line".

The Pettypiece Silex Stone Co.

GEORGE D. PETTYPIECE, Manager.
Amherstburg, : : : Ontario.

<p>Silex Stone Sidewalks A Specialty</p> <p>Cement Curbs Straight or with Gutter.</p> <p>Cement Building Blocks and Bricks</p> <p>Barn and Basement Floors</p> <p>Bridges and Abutments</p> <p>Cement Floor Tiling</p> <p>Sewer Crock All sizes, from Six to Thirty-Six inches. (Round or Egg Shaped.)</p> <p>Grave Markers and Tomb Stones</p> <p>Well Curbs</p> <p>Cement Fence Posts</p> <p>Concrete Foundations and Walls</p>	<p>DURING THE SEASON OF 1906 WE LAID:</p> <p>150,000 feet Silex Walk at Moose Jaw, Sask.</p> <p>80,000 at Sault Ste. Marie</p> <p>60,000 at Midland</p> <p>45,000 at Beamsville</p> <p>30,000 at Amherstburg</p> <p>50,000 at Comber</p> <p>We built a 13,000 block cement power house at Kingsville.</p> <p>Block addition to Colin Wigle's mill. Beside several private homes. Write for prices.</p>
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The Amherstburg Echo December 7, 1906

Photo (Above): Sidewalk Repair, c.1890s by Ben Lapierre
Marsh Collection Society P3287

Upsetting the Hour Glass



1930

September- The canning factory at Amherstburg is going strong these days and nights. The tomatoes are ripening well and some two thousand cases a day are being put out.

October- The William Livingstone Memorial Lighthouse was formally dedicated Friday afternoon at the extreme head of Belle Isle. The edifice, constructed of Georgia marble stands 58 feet high and throws light that can be seen for 15 miles.

November- There are a number of scarlet fever cases in town.

1940

September- On Monday September 16, the High Schools of Amherstburg will have their doors wide open. Principal Sidey has been receiving registrations this past week and the outlook for a large attendance at the General Amherst High is good.

October- The Corn Borer Inspector for the County of Essex has been making rounds of the rural sections warning corn growers that a thorough clean-up must be made this fall. The Inspector told The Echo that "If it hadn't been for a good clean-up last year the damage

caused by the corn borer this year would have been untold."

November- Plans have been completed for the Remembrance Day Service in Amherstburg. The parade will leave town hall and will proceed to the Pillars.

1950

September- For the first time in the history of Bob-Lo Island the island will remain open after Labor Day and will continue to be open to the public until September 10.

October- McQueen Marine Limited has been awarded the contract to refloat the 400 foot freighter, Sullivan Brothers, which sank at the dock in Ecorse Michigan. The ship carried 8,000 tons of coal.

November- Several bottles of whiskey and money from the cash register were stolen from the Bob-Lo Tavern. Entrance was gained by breaking the lower panel of the door on the north side of the building. Constable A. B. Dobie took the cash register to Windsor to check for fingerprints.

1960

September- More than a thousand attended the horse show staged in Amherstburg Sunday afternoon by the Trail

Riders Club on the St. John the Baptist Church grounds.

October- Local winos lost another jungle haven this past week when the board of works department cleaned up the jungle at the rear of some of the stores on the west side of Dalhousie Street.

November- Names of citizens lodging complaints with the Amherstburg Police Department are never divulged.

1970

September- It took less than three minutes to clear nearly two thousand students out of the General Amherst High School during a surprise fire drill called by the Amherstburg Fire Department, Monday noon.

October- The site for the Fort Malden Motel, Highway No. 18, Malden, south of Amherstburg, is being readied for the eight prefab units which will be brought to the site. The owner told the Echo he hopes to have the motel in operation by mid-December.

November- There was a fair amount of snow throughout the area over the weekend. It started to snow on Saturday afternoon and continued most of the night. The ground was covered Sunday morning.

A Prime Minister, a Medium and a Town

By Phyllis Chant

This history “dig” all started with one sentence written by Helen Marsh in her “Conversation Pieces” column from The Amherstburg Echo in the 1970s. She was writing about Canada’s tenth Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, his letters, and how he had been a practicing spiritualist while he served our country. She felt that his writings should have been kept private, but the spiritualism part certainly interested her.

Miss Marsh also mentioned that King had a medium named Mrs. Wright (sic) from Detroit who helped King to contact the dead. She also wrote, “This was the same Mrs. Wright who gave séances in the Lake View Hotel in Amherstburg for believers here – no names.”

In a 1952 MacLean’s magazine article entitled “The Secret Life of Mackenzie King, Spiritualist”, King’s introduction to spiritualism is detailed. He was introduced to it by the late Marchioness of Aberdeen. Lady Aberdeen told King of a Mrs. Etta Wriedt, an American professional “direct-voice” medium who was quite famous for her séances. King, a confirmed bachelor, had a fixation on his deceased mother. He participated in numerous séances during which he spoke to her and other family members. He also communicated with his dogs, living and dead; and famous figures such as Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Theodore Roosevelt and Leonardo da Vinci.

In “Anatomy of a Séance: A History of Spirit Communication in Central Canada”, author Stan McMullin wrote: “King’s first séance appears to have taken place in 1932 in Brockville, Ontario where he was visiting the Fulford family. The medium in attendance was Etta Wriedt. Four séances were conducted in Brockville, and then Mrs. Fulford and Mrs. Wriedt were to lunch in Ottawa with Mackenzie King and Joan Patteson. There followed séances at which King’s mother, his brother Max, and Sir Wilfrid Laurier, among others, manifested. Mrs. Wriedt returned from Detroit later in the year, meeting King at Kingsmere, his summer home in the Gatineau Hills. More visits occurred in 1933, with both King going to Detroit and Mrs. Wriedt coming to Ottawa.” King kept his dealings with the spiritual world very private. The first time reporters started to enquire about this was when King was sick in London in 1948. Two British mediums were seen visiting him, and it was then that King’s secret came to light.



Etta Wriedt, 1926

But Etta (nee Henrietta Knapp) Wriedt was just as interesting a person as King, if not moreso. Born in 1862 in Oswego County, New York, very little is known of her childhood years. She married Phillip Wriedt on August 1, 1889 in Montgomery, Ohio. From the 1910 U.S. Census, Phillip and Etta were shown to be living in Detroit (now Royal Oak). Etta, with a Grade Eight education, appears to have been a medium throughout her entire adult life. Quickly her talents became well known. Wriedt was studied and validated by researchers Sir William Barrett, Sir Oliver Lodge, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the physician who created Sherlock Holmes. Interestingly, on one stay in London, England, Wriedt stayed on Baker Street, the famed residential and office location of Sherlock Homes.

The first time that Mrs. Wriedt visited England was in 1911 at the invitation of W.T. Stead, a British newspaper editor, when she held séances at Julia’s Bureau. The Bureau was a public institution founded by Stead in 1909 in London for communication with the “beyond”. Etta was among five mediums doing sittings there. E.K Harper, W.T. Stead’s secretary, recorded nearly 200 sittings by Wriedt. Sometimes “luminous forms” glided around the room in darkness, other times dogs materialized and barked, sitters were often sprinkled with water or felt wafts of cool air pass over them. W.T. Stead, who died in the sinking of the R.M.S. Titanic on April 15, 1912, frequently communicated during séances and gave many particulars of his tragic passing.

Continued on page 6...

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With the death of Etta's husband in 1925, she continued her visits to England. The last one took place in approximately 1929. In 1932 and 1933, she began doing séances for Mackenzie King. In the April 28, 1933 issue of *The Amherstburg Echo*, it is noted, "Mrs. Etta Wriedt, of Detroit, spent Monday visiting friends in Amherstburg." The friends were not identified. As Helen Marsh noted in her column, Mrs. Wriedt was giving séances at the Lake View Hotel for believers. Although there is no mention in those 1930s-era *Echo* issues which specifically detailed Wriedt's services, it was very possible that they could have taken place at the hotel. The Lake View was an extremely popular hotel in its day. Sir John A. MacDonald visited during an election campaign and spoke to the citizens of Amherstburg from the hotel's second floor balcony. The Marx Brothers also stayed at the hotel during their early years.

In the September 24, 1942 issue of *The Amherstburg Echo*, it is sadly noted: "Well known in Amherstburg, Mrs. Etta Wriedt, 80 years of age, died in Detroit on Sunday, September 13. It is not generally known that this mild, kindly lady was in her day the Number One spiritualist medium of the world. Amherstburg friends attended the funeral service ..."

In the next issue of the newspaper, John Marsh mentions with regards to the passing of Mrs. Wriedt, "(It) brings back memories of séances to which some went out of idle curiosity and others with firm belief that they could communicate with dear ones who had departed this life ... These séances took place in Amherstburg years ago and we well remember hearing about them from some who attended ... We had known Mrs. Wriedt for a number of years and always found her a charming woman. Although we knew she was a spiritualist — she never talked about her powers as a medium."

So, perhaps we will never know who was sitting at the table with this world-renowned medium during her visits to Amherstburg. Maybe it is just meant to be a deep, dark secret that Etta Wriedt has taken to her grave.



Lake View Hotel, c.1920s
Marsh Collection Society P43

Halloween Ads

from

The Amherstburg Echo



HALLOWE'EN SUGGESTIONS

FALSE FACES.....1c to 50c
PARTY FAVORS, LANTERNS, DECORATIONS

NEW BOOKS IN OUR LIBRARY

"Robbers' Roost" — Zane Grey; "Dona Celesti" — Ethel M. Dell; "Master of Jalna" — Mazo de la Roche.

Cooper's Novelty Store
Amherstburg Ontario

Hallowe'en

DANCE

At the Old International Yacht & Country Club
River Front, Anderdon.

Saturday, Oct. 29

Under the direction of Major Shortt, formerly of Young Players' Club

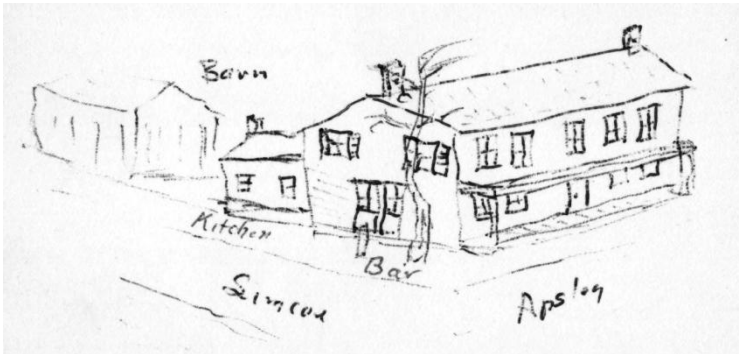
Spacious accommodations
Continuous dancing with three peppy orchestras

ADMISSION---35c couple

The Amherstburg Echo October 27, 1933

Bricks-N-Beams

Union Hotel



Several ads for the Union Hotel pop up in *The Amherstburg Echo* in 1916 under the proprietorship of Cam Davidson. This was the hotel's final year of operation. By 1955, the once popular inn building at the corner of Apsley and Simcoe was condemned. According to the article in *The Echo* at the time of its demolition, the hotel was built by William Bungey as an "Old Time Inn", and at the rear was a large driving shed and stable which could accommodate 25-30 horses. Farmers would leave their horses here while they shopped through town. In 1938, the last hitching post in town was located in front of this building.

Research has shown that the inn dates to before Bungey's time. William Bungey, local carriage and wagon manufacturer, purchased the property in 1878. An advertisement for the Union Hotel in 1879 states that Wm. Bungey "purchased the hotel property" and will "re-furnish it, and fit it up in good style for the convenience of farmers and the general public." So, the hotel was already here by 1879.

Let's go back a bit further. A Crown Patent for the property was issued to Henry G. West in 1852. The following year, West sold to Henry Middleditch Sr. Henry operated the Middleditch Foundry on Dalhousie Street. During his ownership, a building exists on the property at the corner of Apsley and Simcoe and Henry appears to be residing there. In the 1860 Collector's Roll Henry is listed as a freeholder and householder on this lot valued at \$48, and the Census in 1861 indicates that he and his family are residing in a frame 2-storey structure. The first time there is any indication of an inn on the

property is in 1866 when John Williams is listed as a tenant and his occupation is Innkeeper. Henry Middleditch Sr. dies in 1870 and through his Will the property passes to his son, Henry Middleditch Jr. During Henry Jr.'s ownership he is listed as an Innkeeper on the lot. After his early death in 1875, his wife Jane sold the property to Charles Renaud.

Charles Renaud put an ad in *The Amherstburg Echo* on December 17, 1875, for the Union House: "The subscriber having purchased the above property and opened on the temperance principle, he has spared no expense and pains to make the travelling public comfortable, that may favour him with a call. Attached to the premises are a large yard, barn, and sheds. Good stabling. Hay and oats always on hand. A few good boarders can be accommodated. A good home for Farmers. Terms: Live and let live."

...Continued on page 8

Top Left: A sketch by unknown artist. The artist notes that the building had shuttered windows, clapboard siding, a bar room at the Simcoe Street end and double doors to the bar room. An early insurance policy indicates that the barn was located 45 feet west of the hotel.

Amherstburg Hotels

Did you know that in 1846 Amherstburg had nine hotels? As a garrison town and busy port, the town was equipped to provide food and lodging for the many travellers passing through. Over the years several hotels have come and gone. Some of the buildings still stand and have been repurposed, others were razed. In past issues of *Reflections* we have looked at some of these inns & taverns, and we will continue to research and write about these establishments in future issues.

Articles in previous issues:

- Wilcox Hotel (Fall 2008)
- Duffy's Tavern (Winter 2013-14)
- Bullock's Tavern & Horseman Hotel (Spring 2014)
- The Amherst Hotel (Spring 2015)
- American House (Spring 2018)

Email us at research@marshcollection.org to request a digital copy.

...Continued from page 7

As mentioned earlier, Wm. Bungey took ownership in 1878. He added a second storey to part of the structure in 1881, and made changes throughout. An insurance policy from 1886 describes the property as having a 2-storey frame and shingle roofed hotel with additions, and a frame and shingle roofed barn. In 1890 Bungey sold to W.H. Maloney, and in 1896 it passed to J.N. Richard. John Thrasher took possession in 1898 and had the house newly furnished and renovated. An old shed on the north side was pulled down, high board fence removed, a portion of the yard sodded and shade trees planted. Under his proprietorship, the hotel was also known as Thrasher House. In 1903, he built an addition consisting of 6 bedrooms and a kitchen. When John retired in 1904, his son Charles left his position at the American House to take over. Charles continued to operate the hotel until he sold the property in 1915 and Cam Davidson became the last proprietor.



A barn being moved south on Apsley Street about to turn east onto Simcoe, c.1930. Visible in the background is the northern end of the former hotel and part of the new residence to the north created by T.W. Crowe in 1917.

In 1917, T.W. Crowe divided the building into multiple dwellings. A comparison of Fire Insurance Plans suggests that he removed a northwest portion of the structure and turned it into position facing Apsley Street just north of its original location.

Then & Now

McQueen Marine Office

Dalhousie Street



Office built by Harvey Boussey in 1957. Razed in 2015. Present-Day. Parking lot for Bob-Lo Island Ferry.