



Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection
Amherstburg, Ontario



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Amherstburg Boys Join Essex Scottish

By Jeanne McKay

This article was inspired by a collection of letters shared with the Marsh Historical Collection by the family of Roy Wigle.



Roy Wigle, 1939.
MCS AS2023.055.004

On July 5, 1940, the *Amherstburg Echo* listed the names of 10 young men from Amherstburg who had eagerly and patriotically signed up to join the fight against the German Reich in France and Britain. For many, the links between Amherstburg and Great Britain were strong because they still had family there. Those soldiers, stationed in England, took the opportunity to visit relatives when on leave from the army. Defending Great Britain was akin to defending home and community.

Roy Wigle was not among the first 10 to enlist. He enlisted on September 17, 1939, just days after Canada officially entered WWII. He joined the Essex Scottish Regiment of the Canadian Active Service Force. Roy and others trained in London, Ontario and Camp Borden. Letters tell of their escapades during training, hitchhiking home on weekends. Reality began to set in when they went to Halifax to board a ship headed for England and their final destination of Aldershot.

The significance of mail on the morale of the troops was emphasized in Tyler Perry's 2024 movie "The Six Triple Eight". The people of Amherstburg understood the importance of

keeping the connection with their boys overseas. There were times when Roy thought the mail may have been lost at sea because they had not received any Canadian mail in a month. Other times, after a drought of mail, he would receive a pile of letters and packages and feel the pressure of responding, but he was very grateful for the connection and support from home.

Roy was a prolific writer and his letters were kept by his mother, Muriel, and his sister, Harriet McKenna. Roy received many thoughtful letters and packages sent to him by people in Amherstburg.

Here are some short clips from his letters:

Your package arrived, thank you for the cookies and jam. Please tell Mrs. P that the packages do arrive. How are Gran and Grampa W? I will send my lacrosse stick to Dave. I received three Christmas packages today. Received your letter this morning along with the Star (Windsor Star) and the Echo..thanks a lot for the papers, it sure is swell to get them.

For young men sitting in cold, dreary England, packages from Amherstburg were a reminder of hot summer days under sunny skies. Roy shared the cookies, cakes and other food with everyone. At times it sounded as though he had to claim his share!

In the collection of letters, there are journal pages listing Amherstburg townspeople and the contents of the packages they were sending to soldiers. Perhaps the most impressive item, in terms of quantity, was cigarettes. Roy received 1,000 cigarettes, in one

parcel, from someone at home. The soldiers found Canadian cigarettes superior to British ones. Cigarettes became a bond between soldiers, a stress and boredom reliever, and in some cases bartering currency.

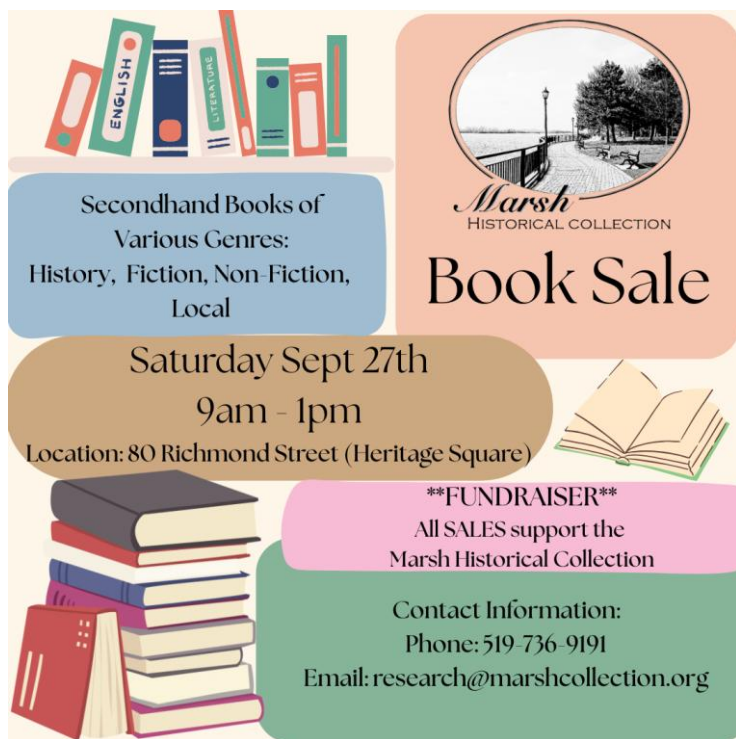
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HAPPENINGS AT THE MARSH

UPCOMING EVENTS



Secondhand Books of
Various Genres:
History, Fiction, Non-Fiction,
Local

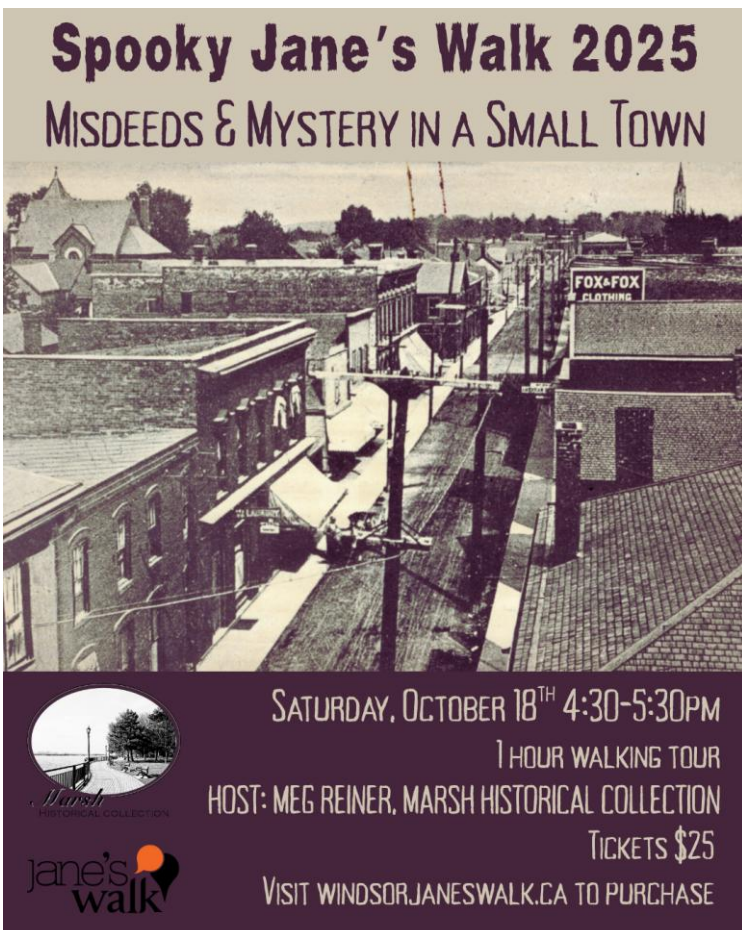
Book Sale

Saturday Sept 27th
9am - 1pm

Location: 80 Richmond Street (Heritage Square)

****FUNDRAISER****
All SALES support the
Marsh Historical Collection

Contact Information:
Phone: 519-736-9191
Email: research@marshcollection.org



Spooky Jane's Walk 2025
MISDEEDS & MYSTERY IN A SMALL TOWN

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18TH 4:30-5:30PM
1 HOUR WALKING TOUR
HOST: MEG REINER, MARSH HISTORICAL COLLECTION
TICKETS \$25
VISIT WINDSOR.JANESWALK.CA TO PURCHASE

What's In the Collection?

The Marsh Collection Society 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 & visitors from 10am to 4pm Tuesday- Friday.
(Mondays by appointment only)
Email: research@marshcollection.org
Website: www.marshcollection.org

If you enjoy reading our newsletter please consider making a donation through our website:
<https://www.marshcollection.org/donate/>

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS



Co-op Students

If you come by the Marsh office during the remainder of the year you'll notice two new faces. We thought they deserved a little introduction. See page 5 for an article and intro to our Collection Assistant, Brooke MacLeod. Also with us is Halle Mailloux, who is compiling information about Amherstburg's transportation history. Here is a note from Halle: *I'm a second-year student at the University of Windsor in the Communication, Media, and Film program. Currently, I'm a co-op student working to help put together an exhibit for the Gibson Gallery. I'm looking forward to learning more about Amherstburg's rich history and beautiful community!*

AMHERSTBURG BOYS JOIN ESSEX SCOTTISH

...Continued from page 1

Among the people of Amherstburg mentioned in Roy's letters are Rev Enos Hart (who had a chaplain locate them in England), and a school teacher, Miss Abbott who became Mrs. Bessette. Popular places to spend time with friends, such as Jones Soda Shop and Pouget's (likely the Green Lantern), are also mentioned in the letters.

The Amherstburg soldiers who were part of the Essex Scottish relied on each other, their bond was strong. In a letter dated February 1941, a soldier writing from hospital to Muriel Wigle said he would rather be sick and be with his Essex Scottish boys than stay in sick bay. Sam George was another close friend of Roy's who wrote to Muriel Wigle. Sam openly wrote about how much he missed Roy and Pat when they were on leave.

Roy Wigle and William "Pat" Patterson had been friends in school in Amherstburg. Pat considered himself part of the Wigle family. The friendship between the two men helped them get through the initial hard times. Pat wrote to Muriel Wigle that she shouldn't worry about them because they had each other's backs. At one point when Roy was ill, Pat wrote home for him to let Muriel know that he was taking care of Roy and that they would help each other get home so they could finish painting the basement of Kemp Furniture.

Not all Amherstburg soldiers were part of the Essex Scottish. By 1942, Roy was mentioning trips to London where he would run into friends from home. He met Mac Reynolds at a dance and they sat and talked into the wee hours.

As the war wore on, there was the continual hope that they would return to Amherstburg to celebrate Christmas. Roy worried about his father's business, Kemp Furniture, and whether his brothers could take his place helping out. He regularly

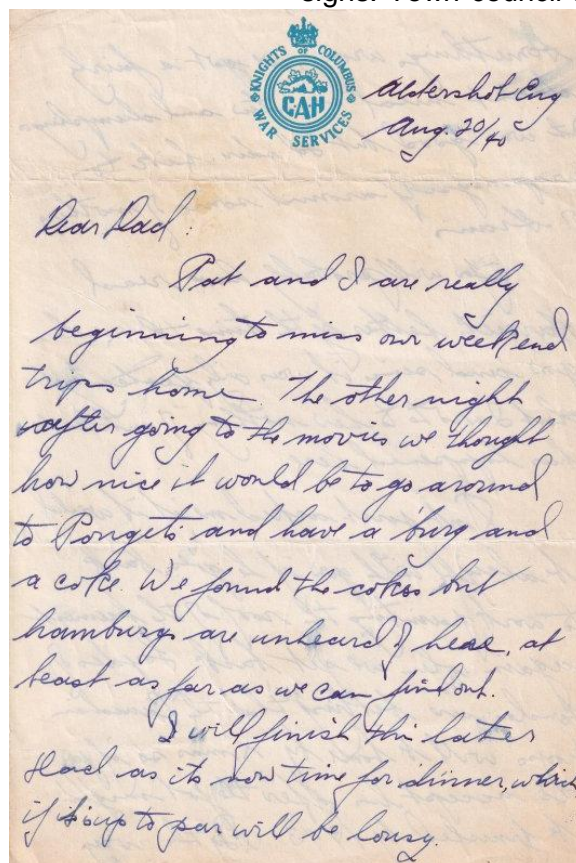
encouraged his brothers to complete their schooling, asked about their sports and told them not to join the army. His thoughts of home included concern for his grandfather and how his grandfather would manage the annual trip to Florida.

Newspapers are a great way to keep in touch with your home community. Roy sent messages to Helen Marsh thanking her for sending copies of the *Amherstburg Echo*. Copies of the *Windsor Star* were also eagerly read and shared. As the years of the war wore on, the newspapers didn't come as frequently.

Roy Wigle's letters demonstrate how Amherstburg supported its soldiers and veterans. The soldiers who went off to war had their community behind them. Roy Wigle was killed at Dieppe on August 19th, 1942, along with three other of the Essex Scottish Regiment soldiers from Amherstburg. He was listed as missing in action, and thought to be a prisoner of war, until his death was confirmed several months later in a telegram to Muriel dated December 5, 1942. The loss of Roy was very hard on his friends and fellow soldiers.

A story in The Rivertown Times of February 13, 2024 reads: "Amherstburg town council has unanimously supported a plan to have poppies placed on street signs. Town council agreed to add poppies to street signs named after veterans. According to a report from manager of roads and fleet Eric Chamberlain, there are 36 streets in Amherstburg named for 44 fallen soldiers."

When you see the poppy emblem on street signs, pause to remember the sacrifice of people who lived and walked in our community and were willing to go to war to maintain freedom. Also remember the importance of those who kept sending letters and packages to soldiers overseas as life continued on at home without them. War requires commitment from soldiers, their families, and their communities.



Centre: A letter from Roy to his father. He mentions missing "Pouget's" aka the Green Lantern restaurant.

UPSETTING THE HOUR GLASS



1935

September- Capt. James McGuire, a well-known captain in Great Lakes shipping, died this month. Born in Detroit, he had moved at the age of 5 to Amherstburg with his parents. At age 13, he joined the crew of the tug Kae Williams and began a career that lasted 44 years, sailing on many freighters in the Great Lakes, covering the transition from wooden to steel vessels.

October- The CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, predecessor to the NDP) held a rally in Amherstburg, with numerous speakers drawing attention to its advocacy on behalf of workers and farmers. According to the Echo report, the speakers called for the "socialization of natural resources of Canada and the nationalization of the banking system."

November- Amherstburg became host to a new branch of the international service organization, the Moose Lodge. Lodge 359 was founded with the installation of officers: Past Dictator Charles Fleming; Dictator Capt. J. Earl McQueen; Vice-Dictator Dr. E.M. Warren; Treasurer Joseph Michel; Prelate Malcolm Shaw, Sergeant-at-Arms Orville Hunt; Outside Guard Bruce Mickle; Inside Guard Arthur Brown and Secretary Devere Thrasher.

1945

September- An early morning fire caused considerable damage to the reading room of the Brunner Mond Club. The blaze was reported by a passing motorist who noticed flames creeping up the walls of the building. Firemen believed the fire started in a leather chesterfield, likely due to a lit cigarette.

October- Beckett's Grocery, corner of Alma and Sandwich streets, earned the dubious honour of suffering a record five break-ins and attempted

break-ins during the previous year. The latest incident occurred on a recent Sunday morning when someone broke a large window in the store, but was frightened away. The worst incident happened months earlier when a truck backed up to the front door and thieves made off with several hundred dollars worth of merchandise.

November- Amherstburg, Anderdon and Malden residents gathered three tons of used clothing to send to the European victims of the Second World War. The clothing was packed carefully by size and shipped to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration for distribution.

1955

September- The beginning of a new month brought no relief to a strike of the workers on the Sandwich, Windsor and Amherstburg Railway Co. The workers walked off the job a week earlier to protest the firing of one of the drivers who was accused of giving out transfers in opposition to company rules. Despite being busless for a week, the Amherstburg Echo noted, Amherstburg residents "do not seem to have suffered much inconvenience."

October- The SKD Manufacturing Co., one of Amherstburg's largest employers, was sold to a group of investors headed by Masters, Smith and Co. of Toronto. At the time, SKD had been producing parts for cars, trucks and farm equipment in its Amherstburg location since 1947.

November- The Amherstburg customs office reported that 3,964 pleasure yachts and 577 large foreign ships visited the town during the 1955 sailing season.. All the yachts were from the U.S. and many of them stopped at the docks in front of Duffy's Tavern, where a special customs officer was stationed to handle the activity.

1965

September- Hunter Bernard of Anderdon brought in a record catch from the Lower Detroit River. It was a 7.5-pound pickerel, measuring 28.5 inches in length and 14 inches in girth.

October- The Lions Club pool in Amherstburg reported a busy summer. It offered swimming lessons to 300 children, who came to the pool 7,922 times. Another 6,981 adults and children came for recreational swims. Some 55% of the visitors were from Amherstburg with the remaining 45% coming from Malden and Anderdon.

November- A Malden township landmark, known locally as "Lucier's Hotel" met the wrecker's ball this month.

1975

September- Amherstburg resident Remo Mancini began his political career with a convincing win in the recent provincial election. Mancini became the Liberal member of provincial parliament, replacing Liberal Don Patterson in Essex South riding.

October- Residents of Lakewood Beach used the Echo to thank Wigle Hardware for its kindness in covering the cost of water service for the small rural community on Lake Erie. The free service at the corner of Gore and Sandwich streets had previously been supplied by the Amherstburg Public Utilities Commission. When it was discontinued, Lee Deneau of Wigle Hardware offered to pick up the tab to continue the service.

November- A new bus service to cover parts of Amherstburg, Anderdon and Malden began service Nov. 20. The service, called BABUS (Business Association Bus) is a project of the Amherstburg Business Association. The first schedule was published in the Echo.

Thank you to Joe Sinasac for compiling this issue's *Upsetting the Hour Glass* page.

COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS

Walton Clock

By Brooke MacLeod

The Waterbury Clock Company was established in 1857 in Waterbury, Connecticut. The manufacturing of clocks and watches popularized the company across the country. They were Connecticut's largest producers in the late 19th century and manufactured over 20,000 clocks per day. The Waterbury Clock Company faced many challenges during the 1900s, including the Great Depression and bankruptcy. Through the partnering and support of many different corporations, the Waterbury Clock Company is now the Timex Group USA Inc.

The Walton Model Waterbury Clock was made in the years 1909 and 1910. The Walton is an eight-day, spring-driven wall clock, standing at 41 inches tall and 15 inches wide. The clock instructions are found on the back label which describe the general resetting of the clock, clock regulation, and setting alarms. Additional directions to attain both a calendar clock and a striking clock can be found on the backside inscription. The Walton has an elegant design of concentric circles carved into the top corners of the oak casing. It is

a subtle design that does not draw the viewer's attention from the clock but still adds to the collective beauty.

The Walton wall clock at the Marsh Historical Collection first belonged to Dr. William S. French and his family. Dr. French received his Honours graduate degree from Dental College in connection with Toronto University; soon after, in 1897, he moved to Amherstburg. Two years later, Dr. French married Josephine Auld and had one son named Charles French born in 1901. The Walton clock was hung on Dr. French's office wall; located on the southeast corner of Ramsay and Richmond Streets. Dr. French worked until a week before his death on February 6, 1930, ending his 33-year-long career. The Walton clock was inherited by his son Charles, who gave it to Charles Kelly in the mid- to late-1950s. It was donated to the Marsh Historical Collection by Richard "Dick" Kelly, the son of Charles Kelly, in February 2025. Dick Kelly was a frequent visitor to the Marsh and shared this piece of Amherstburg's history with us before his death on August 3, 2025.



Author Note:

My name is Brooke MacLeod, and I am a second-year History with Co-op Honours student at the University of Windsor. I am completing my first placement at the Marsh Historical Collection as a Collection Assistant.

Top image: Walton Clock. Middle image: Detail of maker's mark. Bottom image: Dr. French stands outside of his office and residence. MCS P328.



A FIGHT FOR WORKERS' RIGHTS

By Ryan Delisle

Most workers today have benefits and rights through their job – sick days, vacation time, anti-retaliation laws, and more. While we may think of these things as normal or even expected now, this was not always the case. No, it was the workers and union members of the past that fought for these rights so that we could have them today. Brunner Mond Canada Ltd. was one company that, at least in its infancy, worked with its employees to give them good working conditions. Offering workers eight-hour work days instead of 12, sick days, and medical insurance among other benefits, the company was a pinnacle of workers' rights. However, as time progressed, this changed.

The United Auto Workers union (UAW) was formed in 1935, with its Canadian branch opening in 1937. Workers at Brunner Mond Canada Ltd. created the Local 89 chapter in 1942. Together, these union members fought for workers' rights and fair treatment, offering support, insight, and solidarity when it was needed. The UAW supported Brunner Mond workers in 1946 with their first major strike. Brunner Mond Canada Ltd. transferred to Allied Chemical Canada Ltd. in 1958, and, with the amalgamation, came a change in leadership. Eventually, clashes between the unionized workers and plant management arose.

In 1964, the plant dealt with one of its longest strikes. For 17 days, workers of the Local 89 UAW picketed the company for pay raises and better job security, along with fixing numerous loopholes the company could use to take advantage of workers in their contract. Over 300 employees protested the company not agreeing with their demands. Three workers suffered minor injuries as a train attempted to bring materials into the plant, which only served to stoke the strikers' fury even

more. In an historic move, Essex County Judge Lawrence A. Deziel issued an injunction to restrict picketing near the train tracks for four days – the longest injunction that had been issued in the Windsor-Essex area at the time. The union made ready to take their case to the Supreme Court if the restraint on picketing was extended, though they never had to go this far with it. This served only to heighten tensions, with workers and local police almost coming to blows on several occasions.

In the end, on February 28th, the strikers succeeded in their goals. Workers were given a 14 cent raise per hour, the right to bargain on new or changed jobs during the life of the contract, increase in sick and accident insurance to \$50 a week, jury duty pay, and 3 weeks of vacation after 10 years in addition to anything that had been agreed upon in prior protests and strikes. It was, at the time, a major victory for the workers, and helped to enhance a proud tradition of the United Auto Workers of fighting for the rights of its members. Later strikes would add to these workplace conditions with better health insurance, higher wages, and bereavement leave for siblings-in-law, among other benefits.

Through the Canada Summer Jobs program we were able to hire Ryan Delisle as Curatorial Assistant for the Summer of 2025. Ryan worked on the development of the Brunner Mond exhibit through research, writing, and gathering materials. Thank you to Ryan for all of his work this summer!

Funded by the Government of Canada

Canada



GROWING UP ON A FARM

Excerpts from "Remembrances of Days Long Past" by David Paul Iler

Note: The Iler farm was located at the south end of town along the waterfront. Iler Creek runs through the former farmland. The Iler family consisted of parents John and Hazel, and children David, Harvey, Harold, Elmer, Melvin, Ilene, Allen, Geraldine, Jack, and Shirley.



DAIRY: "Growing up on a farm on the banks of the Detroit River at Amherstburg. A farm with ducks, chickens, horses, hogs, and cattle still being milked the old fashioned way (by hand). My dad and older brothers doing the milking, and I in the summer switching flies off the cattle with a long corn stock. I never got to the do the milking. I remember my mother pouring the milk into bottles (after straining and cooling) and again one of my older brothers delivering it (raw) to our many customers and neighbours in Amherstburg and area. All the delivering was done with a pony (Bo-Peep) and a four wheel cart."

THRESHING BEES: "What a time to be a young boy down on the farm: I remember Mr. Steve Trimble (J.N. Trimble) with his threshing machine and a fair size A.C. tractor moving on site to do the job. I remember one year a pig managed to get to the exact spot where the straw was being blown. Since no one noticed this, that animal had a home for the remainder of the summer, the fall and the winter. Next spring when he emerged from that straw house he was one thin hog."

TRACTORS: "It is hard for me to understand to this day how that man, my dad, found the time to do so many things, teaching me about farming, hunting, catching frogs, we both liked frog-legs fried in butter, yummy!! And still found time for small off farm jobs in the winter. About this time dad decided to retire the horses, and purchased a new farm tractor around 1939-1940. A Ford Ferguson System Model. If there was such a thing as loving a tractor, I fell in love with that one! We only had it a short time, and while coming up from the field one day I said to dad, when are you going to teach me how to drive this machine? His answer was 'Right now.' I couldn't believe it. What a thrill for me, a boy about ten-eleven years old, and driving our tractor. A bit later driving all the way to Harrow Farmers, (almost a mile- mile and a half) for chop for the cows. I'll remember it always."

THEN & NOW Detroit River Light Station



In 1885, construction began on a lighthouse 6 ½ miles South of Bob-Lo (Bois Blanc) Island. The stone foundation was 85 x 45 feet with four stories and a basement, the watch tower on top. In 1939 it was renamed the Detroit River Light Station. It is still in operation today.

Left: View of the lighthouse, pre-1939.

Right: September 1, 2025 by Kara Folkeringa.



AURELIAN & ROWDY (PART II)

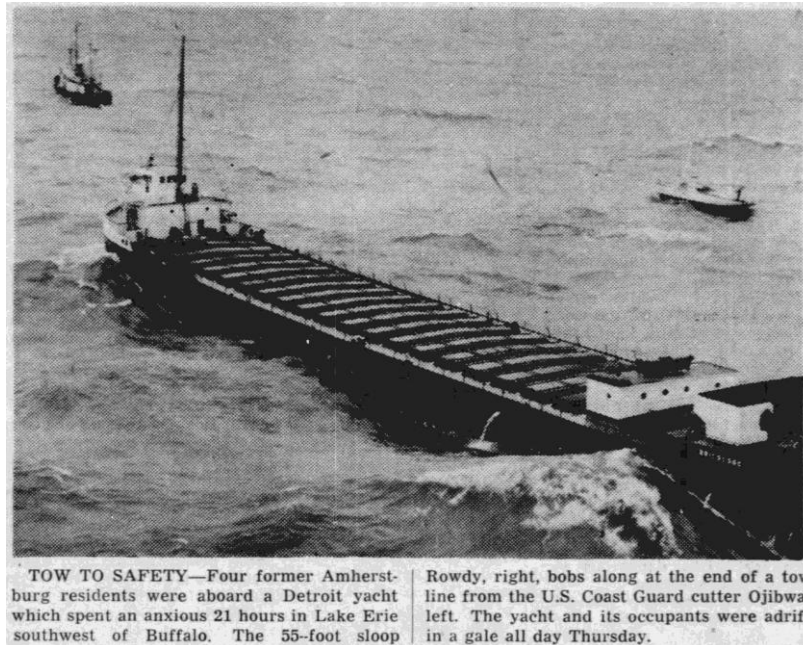
By Al Jackson

The ROWDY set sail from Detroit on the morning of November 16th, 1961, with a small crew consisting of Aurelian Wigle, 45, as skipper, his mother Mrs. Norma M. Wigle, 68, and his brother and sister-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Wigle, both 33. After a short stay in Amherstburg they sailed across Lake Erie to Fairport, Ohio, where they spent the night. The next morning, they set sail again to continue their trip down the lake to Buffalo, N.Y., and the Erie Barge Canal. As luck would have it however, they ran into gale force winds and were forced to anchor but the anchor wouldn't hold. The auxiliary engine was started and they proceeded under power down the lake until the engine quit because of water in the fuel.

A distress signal was sent out over the wireless set which was heard by several lake freighters in the area and the U.S. Coast Guard Station at Erie, Pa. The Coast Guard sent their 36-foot motor lifeboat out to rescue the ROWDY'S crew but while trying to locate the disabled sailboat the lifeboat ran aground in the dark on an offshore reef. The three-man crew had to use a life raft to safely reach shore where they were treated for exposure and a few minor injuries. The next day the abandoned lifeboat washed ashore

and had to be lifted up a 70 foot cliff to salvage the boat.

Meanwhile, out on the open lake a Canadian lake freighter, the BRICOLDLOC found the ROWDY but was unable to transfer the yacht's crew to the safety of the freighter due to the high winds and 25-foot waves. The freighter tried several times to get a towline attached but these actions only broke the bowsprit off the ROWDY and pulled a winch from the deck of the sailboat.



TOW TO SAFETY—Four former Amherstburg residents were aboard a Detroit yacht which spent an anxious 21 hours in Lake Erie southwest of Buffalo. The 55-foot sloop Rowdy, right, bobs along at the end of a tow line from the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Ojibwa, left. The yacht and its occupants were adrift in a gale all day Thursday.

With the loss of their 36-foot motorized lifeboat, the Coast Guard then sent a larger tug the OJIBWA out from Buffalo, N.Y., to perform the rescue. The tug arrived in the early morning of Saturday, November 18th, and secured a towline to the disabled yacht and began a slow tow to Buffalo with the BRICOLDLOC standing nearby to offer some protection from the high waves. The ROWDY had been slowly taking on water and the four occupants had to endure two feet

of ice-cold water and broken dishes that were sloshing around in the cabin. Once inside the safety of the Buffalo breakwater the sailboat's exhausted crew were given a hot meal and some well-deserved rest aboard the OJIBWA.

After the necessary repairs were made to the ROWDY the sailboat left the harbour in search of the entrance to the Erie Barge Canal. However, Aurelian made a wrong turn and began to motor down the Niagara River until he was alerted to the fact that if they continued on this course they would end up going over Niagara Falls. ROWDY was quickly turned around and Aurelian eventually found the proper entrance to the canal where the mast and rigging of the ROWDY were laid on the deck to provide enough clearance to go under the many low bridges of the canal.

While in the canal more bad luck found them when the propeller came loose and fell off. After a lengthy delay a new prop was installed and they were able to continue on their way until they ran aground near North Tonawanda, N.Y. while attempting to refuel. This caused another unfortunate delay. It is unknown if any other mishaps occurred during their southbound journey to the warmer waters but there must have been quite a celebration when they finally reached their destination of Fort Lauderdale, Florida. *To be continued...*