



Reflections

Please
take
one!

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection
Amherstburg, Ontario

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“New” Treasures, thanks to Burt!

We recently came across a box of negatives in our collection that we have had for some time and got curious to see just what we had on our hands. They were the work of Mr. Burt Johnson, a former Amherstburg resident who was a photographer for the Windsor Star and later worked at McQueen Marine.

Thanks to modern technology, we were able to digitize the images and now have two photo books available for viewing. We have identified some of the individuals in the photos, but are asking for your help in identifying the rest. If you think you can help us out, please drop by and have a look at our Burt Johnson Photo Collection.



Photographer Burt Johnson with his 1947 Plymouth.



A Charette Family celebration



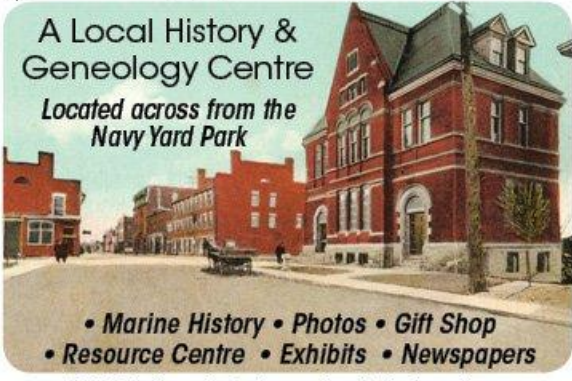
An evening at Girardin's Snug Harbour



Unidentified ladies promoting the popular Bob-lo passenger steamer Columbia

Marsh Historical Collection

A Local History & Genealogy Centre
 Located across from the Navy Yard Park



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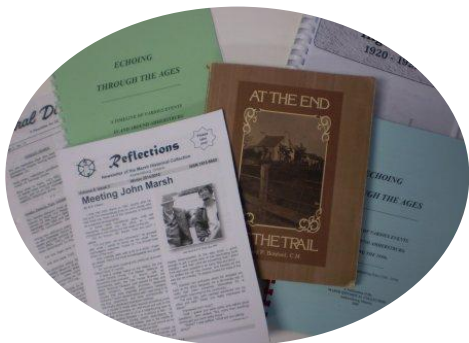


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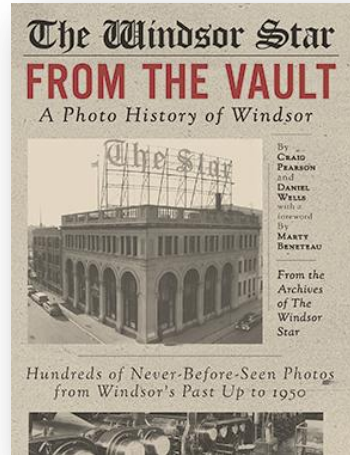
We now have a number of publications available on our website.
 Check it out!
www.marshcollection.org/onlinepublications



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FROM THE VAULT
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Know Your Ships contains everything you need to know about the ships that pass our shores. In addition, it contains valuable information about locks, canals, cargoes, museums, tons of photos and more.

Growing Up in the 'Burg

Memories

by Paul Karrow

We recently received a letter from a gentleman, recalling his brief time spent in Amherstburg. Below is his letter, reprinted with his permission.

When I was a child (about 1932-1937) we lived in Amherstburg. In that time we lived in four houses. First was on the north side of Richmond Street. We were not in a corner house, but were near the intersection with Dalhousie Street. The Echo newspaper head office was near that corner. Across the street (Richmond) was a church with a side yard used for outdoor activities. I remember my mother leaving me to fall asleep watching the activities in the church yard one night. That was the end of the electric railway to Windsor, which more than once we took to visit my uncle and his family in Windsor. I don't think we lived there long.

Second was a bungalow on the north side of Brunner Ave. I remember having afternoon naps to the sound of steam engines at the Brunner Mond quarry north of us. Then we moved to a two story house across from (north of) a park on the northwest corner with Laird Avenue. From there I started grade 1 (no kindergarden) at the school I walked to on Richmond. The school was later converted to a home for the aged. I also started using the public library at the corner of Richmond and Sandwich Street. I had borrowed a book but was late returning it and the librarian said to keep it as I was late because I was sick and she didn't want the contaminated book returned. Fort Malden was just north of our house but hadn't been renovated for tourists yet. As the town was very flat, we used to say the earthworks there was the only hill in town to sleigh ride on. Our house was across from the high school too, and I used to see the students there playing lacrosse.

The last house was on the east side of Laird Ave., north of the third house and across from Fort Malden.

While we lived on Brunner my mother took ill with tuberculosis and went to hospital in Windsor for nine months. My father took ill with pneumonia and couldn't look after me, so I went to live with the Stevensons farther along Brunner. He was a lawyer and later became the mayor of Amherstburg.

His wife, who I knew better, was named Duffy. We attended a Presbyterian church in the south east part of town.

We moved to Sarnia late in my grade two. My grade one teacher was Miss House and my grade two teacher was Miss Marsh. She later stopped teaching and went to work at the family business at the Echo. As my father was with the RCMP, his office was in the post office, between the newspaper office and a hotel on the west side of Dalhousie Street.

More than once, my mother and mother's friends Mrs. Knapp (daughter Joyce) and Mrs. Moffat (daughter Helen) took the ferry to Bob-lo Island to entertain us kids. Ivan Knapp worked at a brewery and Tom Moffat had a drug store. A girl at school was Sue Sutton whose family business was a funeral home. Johnny McQueen was in my class and his father had a tug boat. I think there was another classmate Gordon Hutchinson whose father was a doctor. Our family doctor was Harris.

I was along with my father on his 1955 revisit which helped catch us up on the happenings in Amherstburg since we left in 1938. He retired from the RCMP in 1957 and died in 2007 at 99 here in Kitchener, his boyhood home. I became a geologist and retired from the University of Waterloo in 1999.



Paul Karrow, second row, far right; Amherstburg Public School, c. 1937.

If you can identify any of these youngsters, please give us a call. (519) 736-9191.

Growing Up in the 'Burg



Sights, Scents and Sounds

by *Jeanne Deslippe*

Growing up in Amherstburg during the 1950's, 60's, and 70's, the town was different in some ways and, in others, not at all. Back then, the town had a distinct odour, and my favourite was the powerful smell of whisky that you couldn't miss if you were anywhere near Calvert's Distillery...now the Diageo plant. My Dad worked there so that's probably why I liked it. I had one of those purple velvet bags Calvert's used to package Crown Royal, which I loved and in which I kept my marbles.

In the summer, the scent of stewed tomatoes let us know that Canadian Cannery on Fort St. was up and running for the season. Farmers delivering their loads of tomatoes would often crawl by our house on Balaclava Street, their tractor pulling a flat-bed trailer upon which were stacked baskets galore full of tomatoes. It was a time when there were loads of kids around and we all played outside from morning until dusk. One time, one of these tomato wagons tipped over in front of our house and all us kids swarmed around picking up tomatoes to help re-stack the truck, while the farmer fumed and cussed. We kids were indignant that the farmer continued on his way without a word of thanks to us, so we didn't feel at all guilty that we'd kept some tomatoes to throw at one another after he left.

The smell of the Detroit River always reminds me of being a kid and playing at Amherstburg Beach, across from the Blue Haven Motel, as well as down at the Waterworks, sight of the present Navy Yard. If you lived along the river anywhere from the Waterworks to Alma St., my brother John and I were in your back yard at some point. We would travel along the river bank, climbing over break-walls, as far as we could go and trespass like crazy.

Another distinct memory is of Marra's Bread. Marra's located in downtown Amherstburg, gave off all kinds of yummy odors. They had a small retail outlet where you could buy day old pastries cheap.

In the summers, the sounds of music and announcements could be heard coming from Bob-Lo Island Amusement Park. It was easy for students to get a summer job on the Island, and fun too; the employees would let one another ride the rides for free after our shifts ended ... bonus! ... although we had to keep one eye on the lookout for old Mr. Capstick as this was not allowed. One summer my job was to push people down the giant slide. I'd hand them a burlap bag, they'd sit on it, I'd give them a shove to get them started and they'd zip down the slide. The job was pretty boring, so my co-worker Yolanda and I looked for ways to liven things up. If any of the kids were rude to us they got a particularly generous shove, which is what got us hauled before old Mr. Capstick after one kid somersaulted down the slide and his dad took it personally. We got read the riot act and were put to work on different rides. I miss Bob-lo; it was such a fun place to have a summer job.

The Amherstburg Echo was the weekly newspaper located on Dalhousie Street. Kids delivered The Echo door to door. My friends Jean and Jane rode their bikes all over town delivering the weekly news which is probably how they got to know everyone in town, as did a lot of other people. That was the one thing I didn't like about the 'Burg in those days: you couldn't get away with anything because if anybody caught you, chances were that they knew at least one of your parents and would squeal. For all of the 50's, 60's and 70's, I am sure the population on the Town sign read 4,400 and most of those 4,400 knew one another.

My grandparents lived on George Street across from the Baptist Church. One day, while I was at my grandparents in the mid to late 1950's, a man on a horse, pulling a wagon, stopped out front and rang a bell. Mim went outside for a bit and when she came back I asked who that man was and she told me "That's the sheeny man", which naturally required an explanation for me. Mim told me the sheeny man sharpened your knives and scissors and took any old items you didn't want off your hands.

Although the town was much smaller back then in terms of population, it was livelier, in my memory. It was more self-contained and more of its residents worked in the town. Today, the town seems quieter and more laid-back than the Amherstburg of my youth.



Shipping the Detroit

Marine related articles from The Amherstburg Echo, April 16, 1926

- The steamer **Pelee** had a bucket placed on her wheel here, Thursday of last week, by the Trotter Wrecking Co. It made her several hours behind her schedule.
- Capt. Frank J. Hackett's fish tug **Harry H. Boyd**, which was purchased from the Keystone Fish Co., Cleveland, arrived here Tuesday. The tug is a wooden hull of 36 gross tons. The house around her cabins is being taken off.
- Capt. J.S. McQueen brought the hull of the well-known steamer **City of Dresden** to this port last week, and will convert it into a lighter. The engine and boiler out of the hull has been placed in Al Herring's new tug **Earl Bess**, which passed down the river last week.
- Capt. Edward Tobin has been appointed mate on the steamer **Francis Butler**, of the Hutchinson fleet, of Cleveland.
- Capt. John McQueen will remove the boiler and engines from the steel tug **Leroy Brookes** during the dull season and place them in a new steel, for the purpose of an ice breaker. The boiler and engines from the tug **W.B. Aldrich**, now on the mill dock, will be installed in the **Brookes**, which will make a fine craft.
- The steamer **Frank E. Kirby**, of the Ashley & Dustin line, in command of Capt. Fred Pauls, passed down the river on her initial trip of the season Monday, opening up navigation between Detroit, Put-in-Bay, Sandusky and the other American Lake Erie islands. The **Kirby** was given a welcome when she passed here, by all the river crafts.
- The steamer **James H. Prentice**, bound from Cleveland for Marine City with lump coal, was the first freighter to stop at this port this season.
- The steamer **E.A. Shores, jr.**, of the Mullen fleet, loaded her first cargo of lump coal Monday and discharged a big portion of it at this port for the dredges and river craft.
- The steamer **Bulgaria**, which has been laid up all winter at the foot of Richmond Street, has been sold by Capt. F.H. Hackett, who purchased her last fall at Marshall sale, Detroit, to Capt. Theodore Emig, of St. Clair, and a crew is now fitting her out to take her to dry dock at Port Huron.

What a Neighbour!

by River Rat

I was always playing with boats and someone gave me an old cedar strip canoe. Now I knew it was too far gone to repair, so I offered it to a young neighbor of mine, and he decided to try his hand at boat repairs.

It did not take long for him to realize it was fruitless, so he ended up cutting the canoe in half and keeping the "good" end, to which he fabricated a new transom. Well, this attempt failed, as more water seeped in than he could bail out. The poor old canoe was eventually done away with, either burned on the beach or cast adrift into the river, as in the children's story "Paddle to the Sea". The end result eludes me right now.

The neighbourhood river gang never tired of trying a new adventure and one fun thing this fellow did was to swap his 5 HP Johnson outboard for his dad's 20 HP Mercury and put it on his 12' aluminum boat. (Talk about a fast craft!) That boat was the fastest little craft on the bay. And his dad never found out about the switch.

Now this young lad figured if a 20 HP engine could make his boat zip along, how about a more powerful motor, so a used 40 HP Mercury was purchased from the local Mercury dealer, Bezaire Marine. The 12 footer was strengthened with aluminum tubing etc., but the big motor literally twisted that poor boat like a prezel, and it was finally scrapped. A sad ending to his 12' Feathercraft aluminum.

Now I don't know whether he was part of this other adventure, but after a long fun filled day at White Sands, a group of fellows arrived at Duffy's boat ramp in their boat and loaded it on the trailer. They proceeded up the hill to Dalhousie Street, turned left and headed up the street toward home. Well, after a full day at the "Sands", the driver kind of miscalculated his speed and in turning right onto North Street, he succeeded in dumping the boat and its contents: empty bottles, life jackets, gas cans – you name it – all over the intersection. While the boys were assessing their situation, one of Amherstburg's finest police officers happened along, and after making sure no injuries had occurred, all that he said was "Just clean it up guys" and drove away with no more said. I guess it was just their lucky day!

Yesterday's News

1915

March – Four hundred and four clerks of the Bank of Commerce in Canada have enlisted in the war.

April – Chicken fanciers cleaned out Arthur Jarriett's hen house Wednesday night, taking 7 out of 8 and getting away with it.

May – There are 250,000 words in the English language and most of them were used last Sunday by a lady who discovered, after coming out of church, that her new hat was adorned with a tag on which was written, "Reduced to \$2.75".

1925

March – The Irish drama "Erin Go Bragh" is being performed March 17th at the Town Hall. Admission is 50 cents.

April – Lights on bicycles- Lights for the front and red reflectors for the rear must form parts of the equipment of every bicycle hereafter unless the owners desire to engage in costly flirtation with the law.

May – Malden – Seeding has been completed, all but corn, which will be delayed until the weather warms up. Spring grains, which got an early start, are not showing a healthy growth.

1935

March – It makes one shiver to hear of boys taking a dip in the Detroit River so early, but that's just what Allan Hutchinson and Billy Wige did last week. Their

stay in the water was of short duration, but it was long enough to entitle them to the prize for being the earliest swimmers of the 1935 seasons.

April – The charter of the Amherstburg Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star was relinquished on the decision of the members owing to the lack of interest in the organization.

May – Every once in a while, cannon balls are hoisted from the bed of the river near Mullen's Coal dock, Amherstburg, and are kept as souvenirs by those who are lucky enough to find them.

1945

March – The muskrat trapping season in Essex County opened March 4th. There is no limit to the catch.

April – Captain J. Earl McQueen was appointed as Chairman of the Amherstburg Postwar Planning Commission. Captain McQueen only recently returned to civilian life after spending several years in the Royal Canadian Navy.

May – A meat shortage developed in Amherstburg Monday afternoon when the wholesale house failed to make their usual Monday deliveries to town. Tuesday was not only V-E Day, but a meatless day in many Amherstburg homes.

1955

March – The Bois Blanc Lighthouse is being changed over

from gas to electricity and will be in operation before the navigation season opens.

April – Customs and excise collections for the Port of Amherstburg for the year ending March 31 neared the two million dollar mark according to figures released by Raymond Duby, Collector of Customs.

May – The large freighter E.A.S. Clarke, of Interlake Fleet and operated by Pickands Mather and Company of Cleveland went hard aground on the west bank of the Amherstburg Channel early Sunday morning when her electrical generating equipment failed.

1965

March – The Brunner Mond Canada Limited, the aluminum chloride, calcium chloride, and soda ash producers on Sandwich Street will now be known as Allied Chemical Canada Ltd.

April – Reeve Ashley Martin and the members of the Malden Township Council invited the Grade 7 and 8 pupils of Malden Central and St. Theresa to attend their council meeting in the Malden Township Hall, Monday afternoon.

May – The annual cadet inspection of General Amherst High School will take place on Monday, beginning at 10 am with a ceremonial drill.

1975

March – All businesses in Amherstburg have received notification that one dollar is due to the Town to cover business license for 1975. Business licenses are required by most businesses in the town.

April – A lot of young people are bowling at the 4 Seasons Bowl, Sandwich Street South these afternoons. They are mostly from school groups from Amherstburg, the Townships and the Harrow area.

May – The Amherst Spring Prom was a big success. The high point of the evening was the crowning of the year's Queen of the Prom, Elaine Deneau. Her court consisted of Margo Johnson, Cathy Nye, Lynda Goggin and Gail Duby.

1985

March – On Wednesday, March 20, Vintage Court's Tuesday morning racquetball league played hostess to women on the

Northridge Racquet Club. It was designed strictly as a day of fun and camaraderie between the two teams.

April – The new Chairman of the Amherstburg Chamber of Commerce, Bob Sutherland, is so far sighted that he will turn our lovely old town into a spot of beauty if his rhododendron project catches on as it seems to be doing at present.

May – All but one store at the Fort Malden Mall is rented.

1995

March – A total of 25 street signs from various locations around the town were reported missing March 9.

April – Amherstburg Arena is the only one in the county to allow smoking in the spectator area.

May – Former Amherstburg Echo publisher, Terry Carroll, has had his first novel published by a group in Stratford. *No Blood*

Relatives is available locally through Tempest Books on Dalhousie.

2005

March – Amherstburg could soon be getting a new drug store and medical clinic. The proposed development would be located on Sandwich St. South, just north of the Sobeys development.

April – Town council has approved the formal name changes for two streets in town. The changes will see the 500-foot stretch known as Old Front Road between Lowes Side Road and Front Road South be changed to Dalhousie St. while Fox Road will be changed to Concession 3 North.

May – Students at St. Thomas of Villanova kicked off the Essex County Walkathon Against Cancer with a bang by raising approximately \$18,000 in their annual walkathon held Friday afternoon.

**Amherstburg Echo Typesetters
late 1890s**

**Rear: Eva LaFerte, Loretta
Reaume and Lois Pickering**

**Front: Belle Lawler
and Mary Rocheleau**



Bricks-n-Beams

Some Still Call it The Amherst

by Eleanor Warren

Today, the west half of the main floor is the home of ***Kin Folks Family Eatery*** and the east side



Photo c.late 1930's
Marsh Collection photo

of the 131-year-old building contains the headquarters of the local Liberal party candidate, but to anyone born before the 1980s, this 131-year-old structure at 61 Richmond Street is still referred to as ***'the Amherst.'***

Before this building was erected in the summer of 1884, there was a frame hostelry on the site which had been purchased in 1855 by a widow, Mrs. Charlotte Brown. After her death in 1865, Charlotte's son Ellis Brown operated the tavern, known then as the ***Brown House***. In August 1881, Ellis received tenders for a 3-storey which would be known as the ***Western Hotel***, but it was 1884 before the contract was awarded to Bailey & Wilderspin and work began. There was to be a ***"first storey Sitting Room in front, Bar Room and Washroom in rear, Bed Rooms, Parlour and Sitting Room on the Second storey...and Bedrooms only on the third floor. A 2-storey frame kitchen located behind the hotel measured 24' deep by 33' wide."*** Ellis Brown died two years later, leaving operation of the hotel to his widow Catherine (Clancy) Brown. She kept the business going until 1903, at which time Catherine conveyed the hotel property to Eugene Jolie. He sold it a couple of years later to George Holmes, who re-

named it ***"Amherst House."*** Records on file at the Marsh Collection show that over the next two decades a variety of owners and businesses occupied space in the building. In 1918, Charles Clifford opened a ***"restaurant and soft drink department."*** Later that year Tony Charlie purchased the site from the McManemy Estate and remodelled the eastern downstairs portion into a modern fruit store. Then he changed his mind and leased it to A. J. Burns for his furniture and undertaking business.

In 1926, Charles and Bertha Fleming purchased the Amherst House and immediately began a programme of improvements



Marsh Collection photo, 2015

throughout, which turned the place into a first class establishment. Some details of the renovations and photos are in the Marsh Collection files, far too much information for this space.

In 1937 Fleming changed the front exterior of the building with a facing of ***"green vitrolite with a black border."*** At that time a large sign was installed which introduced the ***"Amherst Hotel."*** Their restaurant on the east side featured ***"Whole Fried Chicken Dinners for Seventy-Five Cents"*** as a grand opening special. Charles and Bertha Fleming operated this very popular establishment until 1948 when it was sold to John Vrede, Joseph and Wilfred Brockman. We will continue the story of the Amherst Hotel from that point on in the June issue of 'Reflections.'



Ancestral Lines

Along with an ever increasing collection of local genealogical reference materials, we have on our shelves a set of marine-related books called "Soundings" which date from 1874 to 1914 and another set from 1935 through 1939. These are exact copies of the former "Marine News" column which ran for many years in the Amherstburg Echo. They contain not only a vast amount of information regarding vessels and other river-related events, but also included (and indexed) is a plethora of genealogical information – names of folks whose careers involved working on the river, which vessels they sailed, etc. If your ancestor worked in the marine industry, don't forget to have a look through "Soundings" when doing your family research.

Echo SOUNDINGS

MARINE NEWS of 1905-1906

Excerpts from the
Amherstburg EchoVolume VI
Spring 2004

A publication of the Marsh Collection Society, Amherstburg, Ontario



Just a reminder that in addition to publications for sale in our gift shop, we have a wonderful resource library that visitors are encouraged to utilize.

Some of the topics include:

- **Local History**
- **Military**
- **Prohibition**
- **Black History**
- **First Nations**
- **Genealogy**
- **Ontario/Canadian History**

Odds'N'Ends

From the Amherstburg Echo

March 4, 1881

A short time ago, Joseph Bastien of Anderdon, found one of his pigs in the pen, apparently dead, and the carcass was put in a stable and covered with straw, as it was intended to make soap grease of it. Eleven days after, the pig woke up and broke through a two-inch door. It was put back in the pen and is now doing well.

April 23, 1926

For the first time in its history, Bois Blanc Island is to be inhabited by squirrels. For some unknown reason there never have been any squirrels on the island and last year when Capt. Fred. J. Simpson, general manager of the Detroit & Windsor Ferry Co., went there to plan new entertainment features for the park, he set to work to remedy the situation. A large shipment of black squirrels have just been received from the Rondeau Provincial Park at Blenheim, and in a few days the friendly little animals will be set free on the island. Despite the absence of squirrels on Bois Blanc, they abound in profusion on the other islands of the river.

May 22, 1925

In some newspaper offices, on rare occasions, the "galleys" of type become mixed. A few lines of a fire story were thrown in this way into an obituary notice. The obituary reads: "The pallbearers lowered the body into the grave. It was consigned to the flames. There were few if any regrets for the old wreck had been an eye sore to the town for years. Loss was covered by insurance."

Then & Now - #74 Rankin Avenue



Thomas Lukes house, c. 1880



2015