



# Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection  
Amherstburg, Ontario



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## Say it With Flowers

Florists, Stancliff & French  
And Gray's Greenhouses

Harold M. Stancliff and Philip G. French, employees of Brunner, Mond Limited, doubled as enthusiastic horticulturalists in their spare time. This hobby eventually grew to become a thriving florist business. Together, they began cultivating bedding plants. It wasn't long before they became the local supplier and needed to grow in order to maintain the demand.

Their first greenhouse was erected in 1921 on Stancliff's property, east side of Dalhousie Street, between Murray and Gore. The 17' x 50' steel frame structure, with hot water heating throughout, was built by the Lord & Burnham Company. On the west side of Ramsay Street, directly behind the greenhouse, was a large building which had, from 1874-1915, housed the original *Amherstburg Echo* newspaper. In 1930, French left Brunner, Mond to take over operation of the greenhouses. (Stancliff remained in his position at Brunner, Mond until retiring in 1952). The following year Stancliff & French purchased and razed that old building in order to build two new greenhouses.

By 1941, according to *The Echo*, the company had 9 greenhouses on their property and their products were being shipped throughout Canada. In addition to wholesale of plants and bulbs, they specialized in orchids, cut flowers, and floral design work. An outdoor display garden on Dalhousie Street exhibited potential to the local gardener while displays of blooming flowers decorated the store and added colour to the town. Among those employed at Stancliff & French over time were Charles Morgan, Fred Beekhuis and James Pouget, who later opened his own shop called Jimmie's Flowers, which operated for many years in Amherstburg.

Philip G. French died in 1943. Three years later the business was sold to John Gray and his son, Ted Gray and it was continued successfully under the name Gray's Greenhouses. In 1959 *The Echo* reported that "orchids from Gray's will grace the table of Queen Elizabeth on the Royal Yacht Britannia when she leaves Windsor."

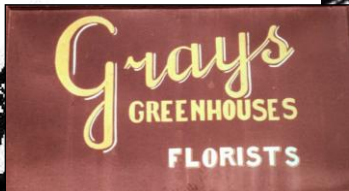
In 1961 a disastrous fire destroyed the greenhouses and in 1971 the remains were razed and cleared away.

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Interior of Gray's, n.d.



# Happenings at the Marsh

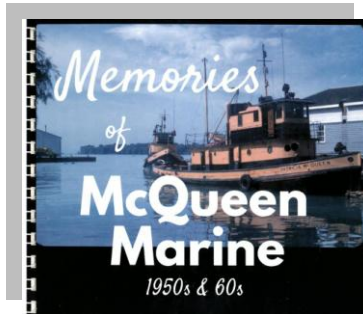
## What's new?

### Computer Program

We are busy entering information into our new collections management database. Information about each artifact, book, or photograph in our collection is being put into the system, and will eventually be available online. This process involves digitization: photographing objects and scanning documents and photos. We are working to improve access to the collection, while ensuring its preservation. Stay tuned for progress updates!

### Publications

With the help of our volunteers, we have recently published *Memories of McQueen Marine*, which depicts the activities of the former McQueen Marine Limited in the 1950s and 60s through photos captured by employees at the time.



The 16<sup>th</sup> volume of *Soundings*, a compilation of marine-related news from the Amherstburg Echo, is coming soon. This issue spans the years 1930-33 and includes many reports on the lower Detroit River improvement projects. The *Soundings* issues are an excellent source for genealogy.



### *It's Our Pleasure*

.....to introduce Phyllis Chant, the newest member of the Marsh Historical Collection staff. Phyllis has been committed to Amherstburg – its history and its vibrant activities – since moving to the community in the early-1980s.

A graduate of the U of Windsor's Fine Arts programme, her working career has been highly diverse. Since moving here, Phyllis has been employed at different times as an interpretive guide at Fort Malden, an office assistant at the Amherstburg Echo newspaper, ten years as a teacher's aide at the John McGivney Centre, and a decade at Daimler-Chrysler. In addition, she worked for several years in the Recreation Department of Richmond Terrace Long Term Care, following volunteer service in the same role.

Even during those decades of full-time employment, Phyllis remained very active with a number of Amherstburg agencies and institutions; the Amherstburg Public School reading program, Park House Museum's Board of Directors and as a volunteer guide for the museum's school program; as a partner in the Mudpuppy Art Gallery and as a photographer for Amherstburg 'Car Crazy' and the Gibson Gallery. She is also active as a volunteer member of St. John the Baptist Church tour guide group.

Phyllis originally joined the Marsh Collection as a research assistant on a part-time basis in September 2016. Her chief task has been reviewing and analyzing library books and photographs in the Collection, and entering data into the new PastPerfect program.

Please join us in welcoming Phyllis to the Marsh Historical Collection!

The Marsh Collection is  
open 10 am - 4 pm Tuesday through Friday  
Phone 519-736-9191  
email: [research@marshcollection.org](mailto:research@marshcollection.org)  
website: [www.marshcollection.org](http://www.marshcollection.org)

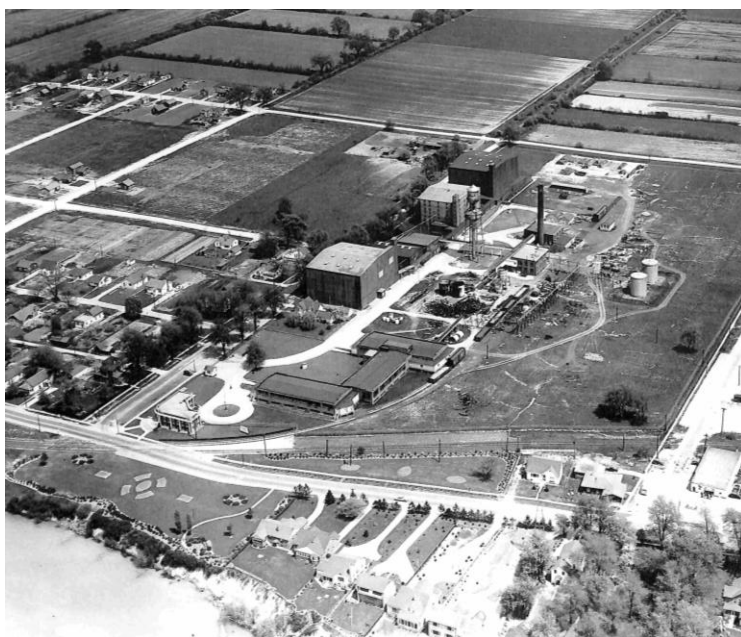




## 1951 Amherstburg Aerial Views

### Ongoing Exhibit

This interactive exhibit is now on display at the Marsh. Help us to identify streets, homes, businesses etc. in any of four enlarged views of Amherstburg. Come in to see what you can spot in the photographs!



### What is the Marsh Collection Society?

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

This registered, non-profit organization was founded in 1983 by the late John and Helen Marsh, whose family published the Amherstburg Echo for over 80 years. Our funding comes from various foundations and private Individual donations which are welcome. A receipt for income tax purposes can be issued for any monetary donation of \$20 or more.

## Wimpy's Tales

*The late Martin Bouffard- known as either "Dick" or "Wimpy" to most who knew him- was one of Amherstburg's great storytellers. One of his favourite subjects was Art Taylor, another well-known Amherstburg character and jokester. Art drove the Amherstburg-Windsor bus for many years during the 1930s and '40s.*

### Art Taylor Story No. 2

*As told by "Wimpy"*



Left: Art Taylor Right: Martin Bouffard c.1940s

I was driving a dump truck for Sterling in Windsor. They had a contract to add two feet of asphalt to each side of 18 Highway from the 'burg to Sandwich. When it would rain the runoff on the Canard bridge was working away the earth there, so they wanted asphalt dumped at each end to stop this. So I was told to take my truck with 7-1/2 tons of asphalt and dump half on each side at the end of the bridge.

I was able to do the one side okay. But on my blind side the super for Sterling said he'd back me up. He kept backing me up and up. The next thing I knew, the bank gave way. Both me and the truck in the Canard! As we were going down I'd had the door open. Next thing I'm floundering around among all the water lilies and marsh weeds. Lo and behold, the Amherstburg bus stops. Art's in the stairwell, all the bus windows are open. He yells out: "What's doing marsh rat?"

# Upsetting the Hour Glass

1927

**March-** Plowing has become quite general through Essex County. Some farmers were on the ground as early as March 8<sup>th</sup>. All signs point to spring having arrived.

**April-** A force of men will be put to work next Monday cleaning up Boblo, and they will be very busy from now until the summer excursion season opens.

**May-** The playground equipment was set up in the park Monday, and has been in constant use ever since.

1937

**March-** The Horticultural Society has as part of its program this year, an extension of their window boxes beautification on Dalhousie Street.

**April-** The Rotary Ladies' annual rummage sale is to be held Friday and Saturday April 9 and 10 in the Thomas Block, Richmond Street.

**May-** When the improvements now being made at the Liberty Theatre are completed Amherstburg will have one of the most modern theaters in the province.

1947

**March-** Freak storm hits district. The storm was accompanied by a 60-mile gale which soon piled snow up on the roads and made many of them impassable.

**April-** Anderdon ratepayers went to the polls in a special election Monday and voted in favor of allowing the sale of liquor in the municipality.

**May-** Dance at the Brunner Mond Club every Friday evening- from 8:30 pm. – 12:00mid.- Bring your friends to the Young People's Dancing Parties- Admission: 25¢.

1957

**March-** To Take Out - Blue Bird Restaurant - Chicken in the Basket 85¢ - Phone RE 6-4009.

**April-** Plans to create a park area in the vacant property west of Victoria Street between Fort and Richmond Streets did not materialize at a meeting of owners.

**May-** On corner lot, 2 storey brick veneer, centre hall, living and dining rooms, kitchen, full basement, three bedrooms, sewing room, full bath. Price \$10,500. Owner will carry mortgage.

1967

**March-** Amherstburg retail merchants are exploring the idea of closing their stores all day Monday and doing away with the mid-week Wednesday half-holiday.

**April-** The Centennial maple trees will be distributed this coming Saturday. The trees will be given out free of charge to Amherstburg, Anderdon, and Malden residents.

**May-** The Fort Malden Branch of the Canadian Legion has agreed to locating the war memorial on the Centennial Park.



# Treasure Unlimited

By D. Hamilton

Not sure how many of us Detroit River explorers still remember the old Amherstburg Government dock that is now the Canadian Coast Guard station. In the 1950's it was home port to the McQueen Marine Ltd. fleet. It was a busy place with large working tugs, derrick scows, steam dredges, cranes and an assortment of small tenders. Lurking in a far corner, back then, was an ominous looking ship painted entirely black with thin red trim and red hand railings. I don't recall a name on it, but we knew it as the—"TREASURE." That made it even more mysterious and irresistible.

As young river trekkers, we occasionally did some trespassing on the property to swim, fish or just watch the river. The barges and small workboats made excellent diving platforms. It was rare to be chased out of the yard. However, being caught on the "TREASURE," earned you a quick removal from the premises.

As for myself, I had no idea why this boat was there. It never moved. But it was strictly off limits. Apparently, a few of the older-guys knew something about it being a "Treasure Hunting Vessel," ... yeah right, I thought.

Sometime later, this vessel "disappeared" and was not seen again. End of story...out of sight...out of mind...until just recently.

I was prompted by one of the "older-guys" who still remembers this spooky old hulk with the nice clean office up on the bridge, and he confirmed it was part of a treasure-hunting scheme. So, along with some of my fading memories, I began some investigating into what that boat was all about.

Here's the real story —

This ship started out as the passenger/car ferry, HALCYON. Built at the Great Lakes Engineering Works in River Rouge in 1926, for the Walkerville & Detroit Ferry Co. fleet. In 1941 it was sold to the U.S. Coast Guard and renamed, CHAPARRAL. After that, in 1946, it went to Pelee Shipping Co., Ltd. and was known as CANADIAN HOLIDAY. But it was never registered, or ran, under that name. In 1952 it was next purchased by a group of investors: McLean, Harrison, Moore & Smith as Guy Underwater Exploration Ltd.; Peter McLean, of St. Thomas Ontario being the head of the business. The

vessel was renamed, TREASURE UNLIMITED. McLean's idea was indeed to turn this 134-foot-long hulk into a treasure hunting venture. He even invented an underwater viewing glass to search the shallow bottom of Lake Erie for his fortune.

The newly purchased vessel was laid up in Port Stanley and Mr. McLean had Captain J. Earl McQueen tow it to Windsor with the tug ATOMIC.

Mr. McLean was reputed to be looking for investors, to share all this wealth under Lake Erie waters.

I know now, where the peculiar and well-illustrated chart that I was recently shown originated. McLean states in his book, *"Confessions of an Eccentric Dreamer,"* that he carefully researched and produced treasure charts that indicated on them the exact positions of sunken ships that held gold bullion in their safes and that, selling them through mail order, a decent profit was made. These charts featured actual pictures of the wrecks and where they sank.

With ample funding, McLean felt he was ready to get the project and the ship underway. But that was held up by the Government until the vessel met specific requirements for sailing. She needed extensive mechanical repair and several other fixes.

At that point, he concluded he could no longer afford the undertaking and the project was abandoned.

*Continued on page 6.*

**FREE SUNKEN SHIP  
TREASURE FOLDER**

**MILLIONS OF  
DOLLARS IN  
TREASURE**

NEW Guy Underwater Exploration Club Sunken  
Treasure Folder is yours for the asking.  
No man knows the true value of the millions  
of dollars worth of sunken treasure lying on  
the bottom of the Great Lakes.  
The Guy Underwater Exploration Club will at-  
tempt to recover a portion of this vast treasure,  
using the new, improved waterscope that will  
be mounted on the Club's 2000 ton salvage  
ship, "Treasure Unlimited". Don't wait. Mail  
coupon below. No obligation.

**GUY UNDERWATER EXPLORATION CLUB**  
602 Ford Bldg. Detroit 26, Mich.

Please send me without obligation, new sunken  
treasure folder.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ Zone \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_



The TREASURE UNLIMITED was never registered or sailed with that name.

A short while later, it came to the Port of Amherstburg, [date unknown].

McLean also states in his book that Captain McQueen cut it down to the main deck for scrap, and found the bilges had been poured full of lead. Cap' McQueen was able to recover all of his expenses with Guy Underwater Exploration Ltd., with the lead and scrap salvage value of the hull and was okay with that.

McQueen later disposed of the hull to Kingston in 1959. From there, in 1961, it went to Levi Trading Company Ltd., Quebec, and was rebuilt from the waterline up.

With a diesel engine installed, new pilothouse at the stern and renamed NEWFOUNDLAND CRUISER, she became a coastal freighter in the Arctic regions.

In September 1963, the NEWFOUNDLAND CRUISER was blown ashore and wrecked on Baffin Island, abandoned in place with no loss of life.

*Sources:*

—Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio.

—*Confessions of an Eccentric Dreamer*: Peter James McLean, iUniverse books 2016.

—Illustration; *Mechanics Illustrated* 1953.

## Collection Highlights

### Prayer Book

The *Catholic's Pocket Manual or Guide to Jesus* printed in 1896 by J. Steinbrenner in Winterberg, Germany. This tiny book measures 10cm x 7cm x 1.5cm (4"x 2 ¾"x ¾"). The front and back covers are made of celluloid, off-white in appearance with grain-lines running throughout designed to imitate ivory. At the center of the front cover is ornate copper inlay, with the intertwining letters "M" and "A" fastened on top. The book is kept shut by a brass clasp, which reveals the gold leafing along the edge of the text block.

The original owner of this prayer book was Marie Henriette (Hattie) Auffret, born 1879. She lived on Apsley Street with her mother Elizabeth (nee Morin) and her father Captain John Francis Auffret. The book then passed to Mary J. Harris, who was Hattie's cousin. Mary married Arthur W. Pettypiece in 1914 and they moved to the 4<sup>th</sup> Concession, Anderdon Township. The last two signatures in the book dated 1949 and 1956 belong to Mary's daughters: Kaye and Shirley.



Hattie M. Auffret  
June 8. 1890.

Mary J. Harris  
March 25  
1911.

Henriette M. Auffret -  
Amherstburg Ont.  
June 8. 1890

Shirley Pettypiece  
Nov. 25, 1949.  
Amherstburg  
Ont.

Kaye Pettypiece  
Nov. 28, 1956  
Amherstburg  
Ont.



## Shops & Stops in the Salmoni Building

This structure, razed in 2004, was built in 1849 by Thomas Salmoni as a hotel and general store. Over the years the Salmoni Building saw several commercial enterprises come and go. The advertisements below, extracted from the *Amherstburg Echo*, represent only a sample of the businesses that occupied 252 Dalhousie at one time or another.

**FREE**  
Your Child's Portrait



In vivid color  
*Don't miss this  
"gift of a lifetime"*

NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY  
Just drop into our store during the days and hours listed below.  
Your lovely gift picture will be taken FREE by a professional children's photographer. One gift portrait to a family which may include groups.  
It's our way of saying "Thank you" to our regular customers, and "Welcome" to everyone else.

**WED — THURS  
FEB. 18 — 19  
10 — 5:30 p.m.  
TWO DAYS ONLY**

A gift to you from  
**STEEDMANS**  
AMHERSTBURG


**"Here Comes the Bunny"**  
WITH A WORLD OF  
EASTER TOYS AND GIFTS  
SEE THEM AT  
**The DIME STORE**



1953

1937

**Navy  
Yard  
Restaurant**




252 DALHOUSIE ST.  
AMHERSTBURG

*Very Simply, a Great Place to Dine*

OPEN DAILY 736-6174

1981

**Andrew Balla**  
Announces Special Showing of  
**TIP TOP  
TAILORS**  
WOOLLENS AND  
STYLES  
BY  
Mr. Chas. R. Durek  
Tip Top Tailors Special  
Representative  
ON  
**TUESDAY, MARCH 30**  
BE SURE TO COME IN  
AND MEET HIM



Those who appreciate rich quality fabrics will be intrigued by the infinite variety of Tip Top Suitings and Topcoatings shown by their representative.

**ANDREW BALLA**  
Mullen Block Amherstburg

1976

1877

**TWOMEY'S BLOCK**  
**DRY GOODS**  
The Largest Assortment, Lowest Prices, and Latest  
Styles of NEW SPRING GOODS, at

1909

The Quality Store

E. BERUBE.

One Price to All



# Then & Now - 209 Victoria (AMA Arena)



1977



1997



Demolition, March 14, 2017