



# Reflections



Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection  
Amherstburg, Ontario

Volume 12 Issue 3

Spring 2019

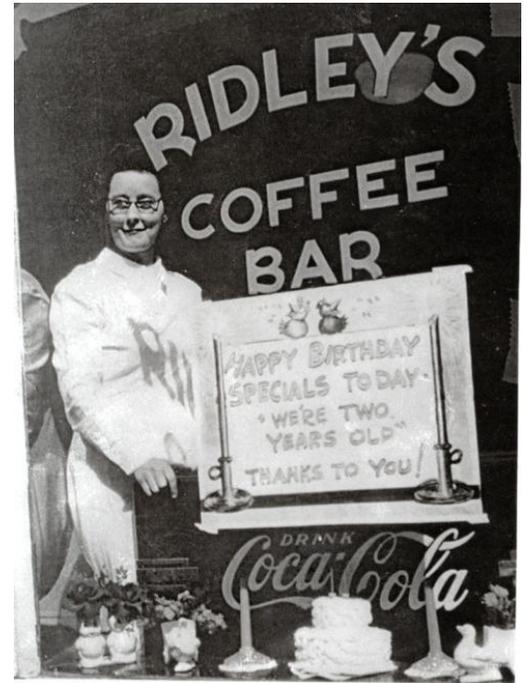
ISSN 1913-8660

## Then & Now

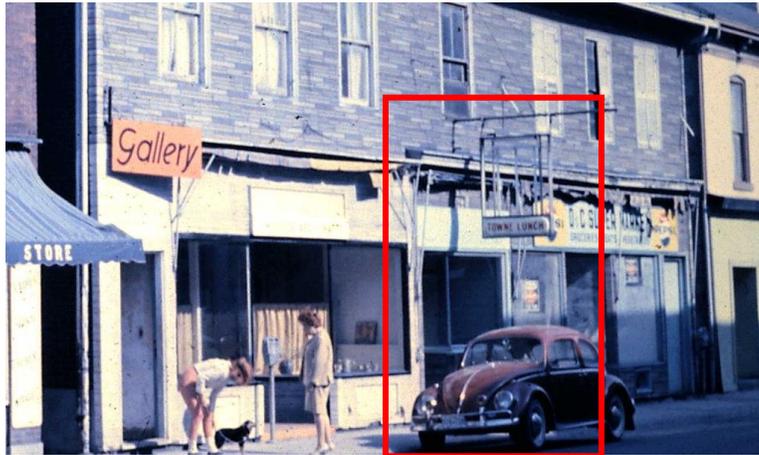
### Ridley's Coffee Bar Dalhousie Street



Ridley's Coffee Bar Grand Opening after Remodel, 1950  
Les Hudson Collection B130



Ilah Ridley with a "Happy Birthday" sign to mark 2 years of operation, MCS Photo P2237



View of 257-265 Dalhousie with the former Ridley's Coffee Bar section at centre, 1968, MCS Photo P4169.3



Ridley's Coffee Bar was located between present-day 259 and 263 Dalhousie Street

## WHAT'S INSIDE

Happenings at the Marsh.....	2
The Amherst.....	3
Bricks-N-Beams.....	4
Upsetting the Hour Glass.....	5
Ancestral Lines.....	6
Headlines from 100 Years Ago.....	7
Collection Highlights.....	8

Owned and operated by Mrs. Donald (Ilah) Ridley from 1946-1956, Ridley's Coffee bar was a downtown social centre. The photo at top left shows the long and narrow interior, with Ilah Ridley standing to the right of the counter. Aside from a cup of coffee customers could order home cooked meals including Sunday dinners. In 1950, Ridley's was remodelled and a Grand Opening was held in June that year. Further improvements were made to the exterior in 1952. By 1956, the Echo reported that there was a new proprietor of Ridley's Coffee Bar and that Ilah was moving to Windsor.

# Happenings at the Marsh

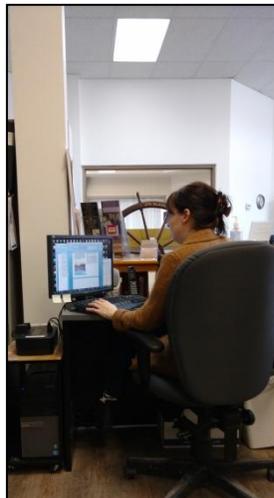
So far this year we've had a mix of local and out-of-town visitors, and genealogical inquiries from as far as Missouri. In the past, researchers have come from England, and various parts of the United States and Canada to access the collection.

Why visit the Marsh Collection? Visitors come in to use our reference library, look through local history files, newspapers on microfilm, and our photograph collection, check out displays, and browse new publications in the gift shop.

Many visitors come in for genealogy research. Some of the names researched recently include: Jubenville, Girty, Elliot, Mallott, White, Bridgen, Mickle, and Fitzpatrick. If you are interested in learning about the history of your family in this region, come visit us! We have compiled individual files for local family names that you are welcome to dig through. We also have church records, census records, directories, indexes to birth, marriage, and death notices, and more.

We receive a number of inquiries weekly (in person and by email) relating to local businesses, events, marine vessels and more. Lately we have had a number of property research requests from owners of houses in town as well as the former Malden and Anderdon Townships. In order to put together a property research package, we consult land instruments, assessment and collector's rolls, newspapers, insurance policies and many other sources to put together a timeline for the property.

Aside from assisting researchers, staff continue to enter catalogue records into our collections management program which will eventually allow us to share these records online. Researchers will be able to access our collection via the Marsh Collection website, and search by keyword, subject, people etc. Up to this point, 1152 books, 213 objects, 259 archives, and 1333 photos have been entered. This is a long and tedious project, but will be well worth the time spent when finished!



## What's In the Collection?

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

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

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

**The Marsh Collection is open  
to researchers and visitors  
from 10am to 4pm Tuesday through Friday.  
Email: [research@marshcollection.org](mailto:research@marshcollection.org)  
Website: [www.marshcollection.org](http://www.marshcollection.org)**



# KNOW YOUR 2018 SHIPS

The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition of *Know Your Ships* will be available this April. Call or email to reserve a copy.

## WANTED

We are always looking for more photographs, maps, plans, and other documents relating to the history of the Amherstburg, Anderdon and Malden. If you have items you might be interested in donating to the Collection please contact Meg Reiner at [megreiner@marshcollection.org](mailto:megreiner@marshcollection.org) or 519-736-9191. We can also make arrangements to copy items and return the originals to you. Thank you to all of our past donors for your contributions to the Collection.

# The Amherst

By Al Jackson

During the early years of the Second World War Captain J. Earl McQueen of Amherstburg saw an opportunity to increase the size of his marine contracting business with the purchase of a small steamship called the PETER KOENIG from a coal dealer in Detroit. This small 170 foot vessel was launched in 1912 as a sandsucker for the Lake Sand Co. of Chicago but was converted in 1925 to carry coal for the Koenig Coal Co. of Detroit.

The saga with McQueen Marine began in April of 1940 when McQueen Marine was contracted to refloat the KOENIG which had sunk in a slip along the Detroit waterfront during the previous winter. Vandals had stolen much of the brass fittings from the engine room and had managed to damage the seacock which allowed water to fill the engine room and eventually put her on the bottom. The actual salvage job was a "piece of cake" for the McQueen crew since there was no real damage to the ship. Captain McQueen convinced the insurance company and owner that the vessel was in such bad shape that it was now just a piece of junk. He then offered to buy the ship, at a discounted price of course, and use the vessel as a salvage barge in his marine operations. The little ship had a self-contained steam derrick (crane) that would be handy for any marine work. The only stipulation for the sale was that the steam engine had to be removed so that the boat could be registered in Canada as a barge. The barge would be towed by McQueen's tug HENRY STOKES. Once the deal was made Captain McQueen changed her name to AMHERST and removed the engine which was then carefully stored on his property at the foot of Park Street.

At the same time he signed a contract with the city of Detroit to haul their rubbish from the city's waterfront to a downriver dumping ground in the Detroit River at Grassy Island. This rubbish consists of cinders, ashes, cardboard boxes, brush, etc. that had been cleaned from the alleyways and streets of Detroit and then trucked to the waterfront near Jefferson Boulevard for disposal. This operation would work well with Glen McKenzie as the derrick operator along with Bob Crowder and Sammy Bridgen as firemen to tend the derrick's boiler. Also on board was Glen's dog "Euchre" who took on the job of chief rat catcher.



McQueen Dock, April 1940. The PETER KOENIG is in the background on the right, and Glen's dog "Euchre" in the foreground.  
*MCS Photo P3946*

While they were loading the rubbish onto the barge at the foot of Orleans Street in Detroit the dog would go ashore to explore the surrounding territory until one day the dog catcher caught him. Luckily Euchre had a dog tag with the name of the barge engraved on it and the officer returned Euchre to the boat. After several more encounters with the dog catcher they became friends and Euchre rode around with the officer helping him to catch other stray dogs. When the barge was loaded and ready to depart for the dumping ground Glen would blow the steam whistle and the officer would bring him back to the boat, put him into the bucket of the derrick and Glen would hoist him back on board. If Euchre refused to jump out of the bucket Glen had no choice but to dump him onto the top of the huge garbage pile. After sliding down the side of the pile the dog would find Glen and bark continuously to show his great displeasure.

Near the end of the war Capt. McQueen saw another opportunity to make some more money by replacing the carefully preserved steam engine back into the boat and selling her to Coastalake Tankers Ltd. of Montreal at considerable profit. In 1943 the vessel was rebuilt in Port Dalhousie as a tanker and renamed TRANSBAY for use in the petroleum trade on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. On August 7, 1972, a gale swept the Gulf of the St. Lawrence and TRANSBAY foundered with a cargo of liquefied asphalt. This small but versatile vessel survived for sixty years with a short career at Amherstburg but now lies on the bottom in 700 feet of water not far from Sept Iles, Quebec.

# Bricks-N-Beams

## 58 Richmond (Precision Jewellers)

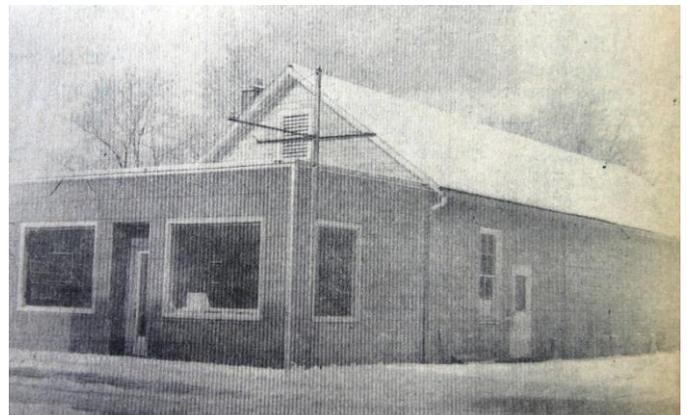
Our last issue of Bricks-N-Beams covered the early history of structures that occupied 58 Richmond Street (present-day Precision Jewellers). This had been the site of the Alfred Fox Livery and Feed barn since 1889. After the Fox Livery property was purchased by Ben L. & John H. Shillington in 1932, the barn was razed and the property cleared in 1933.

In 1942, it was announced that a cold storage plant was to be built here. This was to be carried out by Reeve Lester H. Hamilton, A.H. Stevenson, and Sol Goldman, who purchased the property in July of that year. Originally, the plan was to erect a new building on the site for this purpose. Wartime restrictions prevented them from doing so, and instead a building would be moved to the lot. The chosen building was the former Union Sunday School of Malden Township. Originally located on Concession 4, adjacent to S.S. No. 2, this was often the hub for events in Malden Township. Many meetings and fundraisers including chicken dinners and ice cream socials were held at the Union Sunday School. The school building dates to 1887 when an article in the Amherstburg Echo on November 11 describes a tea meeting in aid of the building fund for the new Union Sunday School. The article reports that the meeting took place in the "new building" indicating that the school was recently erected. Before being acquired for the cold storage plant, the building was used by the Red Cross Society for a time.

Once moved to the lot on Richmond Street, the school structure underwent some renovations, keeping within the spending limit set by the government. The Echo reported that the building would have a quick freeze unit, chill room, and several hundred storage boxes. By July 30, 1942, A.H. Stevenson announced: "we are now taking reservations for boxes", although construction was still underway at that time.

In 1946, Clarence Flood, formerly the manager of the meat department of the Dominion Store, was appointed manager of Amherstburg Cold Storage. A new retail meat market was opened in 1948, still under his management. Evidently the meat market operation was a success, and in 1954, a new addition was constructed on the south side for expansion purposes. In December of that year, Mr. & Mrs. William Bryksa put an advertisement in the paper thanking customers for attending their opening. This must be in reference to the opening of the new expanded meat market. William Bryksa operated many different enterprises over the years, starting in the meat business in 1944.

Stanley Nicholson purchased the property in 1966 and two years later, the Toronto Dominion Bank made an offer to purchase the property from him. This deal was completed on February 1, 1969. In June of that year, the former Amherstburg Cold Storage was razed and cleared for the construction of a new building for the Toronto Dominion Bank. The official opening of the new building took place on February 20, 1970, with Rudy Penner as manager. This building still stands at 58 Richmond today.




---

Top Photo: Union Sunday School (left) and S.S. No.2 (right) on the 4<sup>th</sup> Concession of Malden, c.1910

*Photo Courtesy of Fort Malden National Historic Site*

Below: Amherstburg Cold Storage, 1960

*Photo printed in the Amherstburg Echo February 6, 1969*

# Upsetting the Hour Glass



1929

**March-** The Amherst Produce Company shipped three cars of hay during the past week to New Jersey.

**April-** Rum runners are having a merry time these days dodging the U.S. coast guards, who with four heavily armed speed boats are able to overhaul the fastest of them.

**May-** Get ready for the circus at Amherstburg, Wednesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

1939

**March-** The icy conditions and the weather have contributed to a very small catch of muskrats.

**April-** Mr. and Mrs. Charles Fleming held open house Saturday for a large number of guests to celebrate the opening of their newly-enlarged and remodeled Amherst Hotel.

**May-** A great event in the history of Amherstburg took place Saturday when the cornerstone of the new museum at Fort Malden was officially laid.

1949

**March-** Plans have been completed for the visit of Prime Minister Louis S. St. Laurent and his official party to Amherstburg next Sunday morning. The group will arrive in town at nine-o'clock, breakfast with the patients at Bellevue Veteran's Home and return to Windsor in time to attend services at Holy Rosary Church.

**April-** The portion of the King's Highway No. 18 from the northern entrance of the town, down Sandwich Street to Richmond Street to Dalhousie Street may be resurfaced this year.

**May-** Pitching like a veteran, Sid Hinch, young Amherstburg south-paw, turned in a fine performance for the Amherstburg Cardinals on Sunday afternoon.

1959

**March-** A St. Patrick's Day Tea was held on Tuesday by the St. Andrew's Ladies Auxiliary in the Christian Education Building.

**April-** The St. Lawrence Seaway will open for navigation April 25. Original expectations had been that shipping would start moving through the downriver channels April 20 but severe ice conditions delayed the start.

**May-** There has been an especially good show of tulips in town this spring in the Sandwich Street gardens planted by the Fort Malden Horticultural Society.

1969

**March-** It is expected that construction of the new Bob-Lo Wharf, Highway No. 18, Malden Township, will begin in the very near future.

**April-** Monday was the last day before the rise in liquor prices came into effect. As a result the Amherstburg L.C.B.O. store did a land office business.

**May-** Through the energetic work of members of the Fort Malden Guild of Arts and Crafts, the former Amherstburg Railway Station, Richmond Street east is being converted into a cultural centre.

# Ancestral Lines

By Phyllis Chant



Malden China and Woolen Shop  
*Sutherland Slide Collection*

One of the many jobs at the Marsh Historical Collection is cataloguing photographs. Sometimes it's a straight forward job because the photo has names written on it, or someone can help with identifying the people or location. Other times, it is a bit of a challenge. The photo of this little shop, called the Malden China and Woolen Shop, had me stumped. The day I was working on cataloguing it, there was no one around to ask.

Later, with help from staff and volunteers, (people who have lived here longer than I have), it was revealed that this little shop was owned by Grace and Edna Smith in the 1950s. All of a sudden, more photos came out of the Marsh files of these sisters. It was time to discover more about Grace and Edna.



Grace & Edna rug hooking  
*MCS Photo P393*

**“A picture is worth a thousand words”.**  
– Unknown

These two ladies were the daughters of Alfred C. and Margaret (nee Barron) Smith. Alfred and Margaret were married on December 24, 1872, in Malden Township. Alfred was born in Ontario, but lived in Michigan, and was a sailor at the time of their marriage. Margaret was living in Malden Township at the time of her marriage. All four of their children were born in Michigan: Sina (1875), Edna (1877), Grace (1880) and Homer (1882). The family lived in different locations in the Detroit area, but, Alfred's occupation was always listed as sailor or sailor/captain.

Sina and Homer both married, but Grace and Edna focused on their careers. Edna's work information was found in Detroit City Directories. The earliest listing was 1906, and through to 1916, with her being listed as a teacher at Western High School, Detroit. Through Amherstburg Echo articles written about Grace, we were able to see that she was also a teacher. She taught at Western High School with her sister, and at South Eastern High School (both schools located in Detroit). Her subjects of expertise were Latin and English. Also to Grace's credit, she was a University of Michigan graduate in the class of 1903. In 1978 at the age of 97, she attended her class reunion. Edna appears to have also attended the University of Michigan, but her date of graduation cannot be confirmed.

On April 13, 1912, Edna and Grace purchased the home at 563 Dalhousie Street, Amherstburg from Frederick Reaume. At this time, Dalhousie Street would have been Front Road in Malden. This residence is also known as the Thomas Boyle Home. Originally constructed in 1882 for Boyle, it was designed by John A. Maycock. It is a basic farmhouse floor plan in the Italianate style. The ladies leased it in May of 1913 to their parents. Alfred and Margaret may have stayed at the home until Alfred's passing in 1925. Margaret is listed as living with her daughters in Detroit in 1930 at the age of 80. Edna and Grace were 52 and 49 respectively. The 1940 United States Federal Census shows Edna and Grace as retired, but boarding with a couple on Charlevoix Ave. in Detroit.

Sometime between 1940 and 1950, the ladies were living full-time at their Amherstburg residence.

*Continued on pg.7...*

...Continued from pg. 6

Also, at this time, the ladies' china and woolen shop starts to advertise the springtime opening of the store. Advertisements were usually in the form of classifieds, showing their opening or closing dates for the shop. From photos, it appears that the shop was the building to the side of the main home at 563 Dalhousie Street.



Grace & Edna at 563 Dalhousie  
MCS Photo P5456

From Amherstburg Echo articles, Grace and Edna were busy women, holding meetings of the Malden United Church and visiting family. More exciting was the fact that they were world travellers. The Echo noted in October 1956 that the two were heading for a trip around South America. At that point, the ladies would have been in their 70s.

Edna passed away in early August 1970, with her obituary published on August 11, 1970. Grace continued to live at the Dalhousie Street home, and celebrated her 95<sup>th</sup> and 100<sup>th</sup> birthdays there. On March 18, 1983, Grace passed away at her home at the age of 102.

In the 1975 Amherstburg Echo article regarding Grace's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday, she is remembered as, "having a wonderful outlook on life...is a nice person to know because of her happy disposition. Miss Smith has a wide circle of friends, old pupils, as well as friends made on their many trips abroad and those in this community".

What a wonderful way to be remembered. And it was even better to have a sister with you along the way.

## Headlines from 100 Years Ago

### The Amherstburg Echo.

#### Drinking Washed Water

Amherstburg First Town in Canada  
to Enjoy this Privilege

"Amherstburg is now being served with purified, filtered water by the Brunner, Mond, the purification plant having been put in operation Wednesday for the first. Both waterworks and purification plant are working perfectly, and danger of typhoid through our domestic water supply is now reduced to the minimum. Changes by which the Brunner, Mond is supplying Amherstburg with street lights until their own 25-cycle transformer arrived, were completed Friday and the old town since that time has had uninterrupted street lighting of first class quality. Friendly cooperation between the town and the B.M. has resulted all the way through in getting for us privileges that no other town, not fortunate enough to have a big friendly corporation at its doors, can accrue. The mutual friendly relations that exist between the town of Amherstburg as a whole and the Brunner, Mond is directly attributable to the desire of the citizens to do all in their power to advance the interests of the Company and the democratic broad-minded policy carried out by Mr. Rutherford and the capable staff of men associated with him in the management of the Brunner, Mond."

#### Destructive Storm

March 17

#### Lower Detroit River

#### Improvement

April 4

#### Amherstburg Soldiers

#### Return

April 11

#### First Battalion Home

May 2

#### Street Railway Strike

May 9

# Collection Highlights

## Musical Moods Record by the Amherstburg Community Band

In 1956, The Amherstburg Community Band was formed with Peter Allan as bandmaster. Their first practice was held April 3, 1956. At this time the average age of band members was 13. Funding for uniforms, a total cost of \$2500, was raised by parents and the Lions Club. Their first concert in uniform was held in November of 1958 at General Amherst. By 1959, a majorettes group was added with Nancy Grondin as instructress. A flag and banner for marching were donated by the Legion Branch 157. In 1965, a colour party was formed by Jack Jones Jr. and Tom Ouellette.

By the early 1960s, the band had 70 members and the organization continued to grow, gaining members and recognition. In 1967, the ACB was invited to play at Expo '67 in Montreal as well as the Calgary Stampede. The band often won first place at the Windsor Music Festival and also won the Thiele Trophy at the Toronto National Exhibition for best musical performance. In the summer, the band would participate in tattoos and festivals throughout Essex County. Annual band tattoos in Amherstburg could attract up to 7000 spectators.

The first recording by the Amherstburg Community Band, *Musical Moods*, was released for sale on May 11, 1969. The songs included were local favourites over the years. An original composition by Peter Allen entitled "Fort Malden" is featured on the record.

In 1980 membership had decreased significantly and the organization was disbanded.

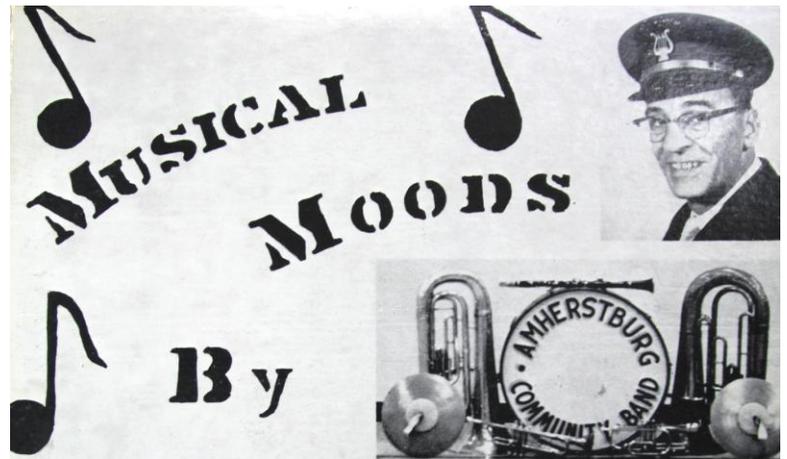
### SONGLIST

#### Side 1

1. Colonel Boogey
2. Selection "E Minor Symphony"
3. Copa Cabana
4. Bless This House/ Leo Probe Jr. Soloist.
5. The Storm King

#### Side 2

1. Deep River
2. Serenade/ J. Jones Jr. Soloist.
3. Fort Malden
4. Amparita Roca
5. Hootenany



### BAND PERSONNEL

The members of the Band are as follows:  
 Bandmaster and Director of music: Mr. Peter Allan.  
 Assistant Bandmaster: Mr. Jack Jones Jr.

#### Band Members:

Gwen Carnahan, Robert Campbell, Karen Carmichael, John Carnahan, Tom Deslippe, Carl Delmore, Becky Dennison, Kathy Duffy, Danny Deslippe, Becky Dennis, Debbie Delmore, Aldo Debiase, Ron Deneau, Paul Ewaschuk, Kevin Fox, Clem Foreman, Clyda Foreman, Dennis Gazarek, George Hannah Jr. Julie Henry, David Hayman, Cheryl Haselhurst, Tommy Jaber, Terry King, David Longlade, Jerry Leskiw, Elaine Litster, Helen Leskiw, Alice Leskiw, Eric Litster, Pat Laferte, Pat McWade, Roger Miller, Joy Mallott, Ann Moore, Wayne McKinnon, Leo Probe Jr., Gay Probe, Ted Rice, Robin Ransome, John Ransome, Rosemary Recchia, Carmen Simone, Jim Smith, Michael Sipila, Robert Thrasher, Don Warren, Susan White, Ted White.

More information on the history of bands in Amherstburg can be found in *Amherstburg 1796-1996: The New Town on the Garrison Grounds Vol. II*, available in our Reference Library.