



# Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection  
Amherstburg, Ontario



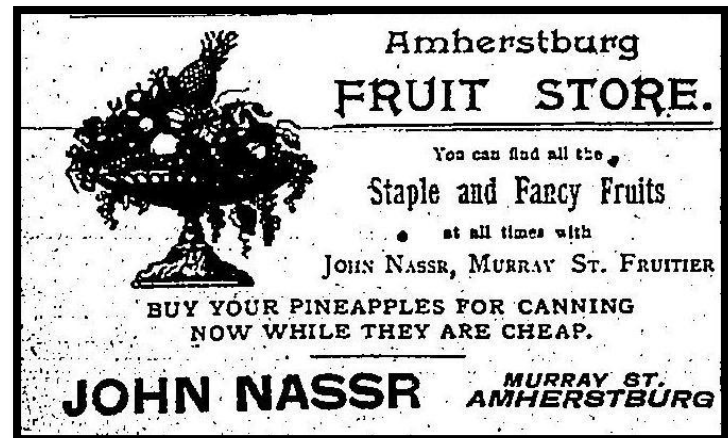
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## Collection Highlights

One of our staff recently came across an advertising calendar for the year 1911 listed for sale at Legacy Auctions in Leamington. The calendar was produced for "J. G. Nassr Wholesale and Retail Dealer in Foreign & Domestic Fruits, Candy, etc." It arrived at the auction house within the drawers of a bedroom set.



In 1908, John George Nassr was the proprietor of a wholesale fruit and retail store in the Hadley Block on Murray Street (now 63-71 Murray). Born in Lebanon, he moved to Windsor in 1902 and opened a fruit store there. He established a branch in Amherstburg a few years later. One of the advertisements from 1908 indicates he was in partnership with Zakoor, another name associated with the local fruitier industry. The obituary for Joseph Zakoor in 1940, reports that he was the first Zakoor to settle in Canada, coming to Amherstburg 45 years ago and opening a fruit store in a building on Apsley (Sandwich) Street. Frank and Joseph Zakoor were operating out the Hadley Block in 1907, so it is likely John Nassr went into business with them.

The Echo wrote that Nassr was "one of the most highly respected merchants in Amherstburg and expects to extend his trade to other towns in the county." He briefly had a stand on Apsley Street, which he opened in October 1910. It was run by his sister who came down from Sault St. Marie. The shop was destroyed by fire in early 1911. Around the same time, Nassr went into partnership with Charlie Hallett in the Murray Street store. Nassr & Hallett announced that they were adding another counter in their store and [would] branch out into ice cream, soft drink and lunch business during the coming season. Early advertisements announced the sale of bananas, oranges, grapefruit, and "Every southern delicacy in season".

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In June of 1912, Nassr put a notice in The Amherstburg Echo that he was not leaving town, as he had stock in both the auto and knitting factories. It seems he had left by 1914, but continued operations in Windsor. By the time John George Nassr passed away in 1943, his sons Joseph and George were co-owners of the Nassr Fruit Company. This was a well-known business in Windsor through the 1970s.

Advertisement: The Amherstburg Echo June 4, 1909

# Happenings at the Marsh

## VIRTUAL PRESENTATION

In March, we gave a virtual presentation hosted by the Ontario Ancestors. We talked a bit about the resources available for genealogical research in the Marsh Historical Collection and Nancy Brown gave a presentation on the history of McGregor. This video, and many other interesting presentations are available for viewing on the Essex OGS Youtube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCz5H4yr8DSbrnoRglmHmvww>

**A detailed list of our reference collection holdings is available on our website.**



## DOORS OF HERITAGE PODCAST

Due to launch at the end of March, this podcast features the heritage & history of Amherstburg. We were asked to join as guest speakers for the first episode which discusses the history of the Echo Building. Further information and updates available here:

[https://www.elevatepodcastco.com/podcasts/heritage?fbclid=IwAR1K8sooPllqAZKLEFUt\\_24gEphMjfXNLk2GC3KTnCFgJrD1va0uuzBiEQ](https://www.elevatepodcastco.com/podcasts/heritage?fbclid=IwAR1K8sooPllqAZKLEFUt_24gEphMjfXNLk2GC3KTnCFgJrD1va0uuzBiEQ)



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Lawrence Seaway  
**\$22**



## 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.

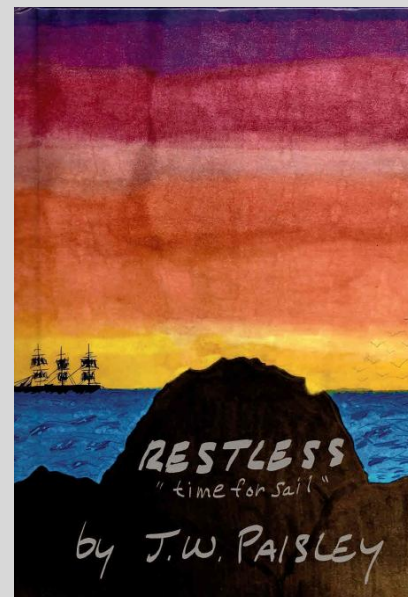
**The Marsh Collection is open to researchers and visitors from 10am to 4pm Tuesday through Friday.**  
Email: [research@marshcollection.org](mailto:research@marshcollection.org)  
Website: [www.marshcollection.org](http://www.marshcollection.org)



## GIFT SHOP

### NEW BOOK

**Restless**  
**"time for sail"**  
A historical fiction  
covering the  
story of Captain  
Thomas Westray  
Paisley, by his  
grandson  
J.W. Paisley  
**\$26**



## 100 Years Ago

### New High School Meeting

*As printed in The Amherstburg Echo on March 18, 1921:*

"The movement for a new High School in Amherstburg received a decided Impetus at a joint meeting of the Board of Trade and High School Board, called in the Public Library auditorium Monday evening to consider competitive plans submitted by various architects. F.W. Haas, President of the Board of Trade, presided; there was a large attendance. Dr. Abbott, chairman of the High School Board, outlined the steps that had been taken so far to obtain a new High School building that either had to be built or the cause of secondary education in Amherstburg abandoned. He reviewed the various meetings with High School Inspectors and the Department, and following that the discussion became general. A motion was unanimously passed going on record as favourable to and pledging the support of the Board of Trade to the project. Various members voiced their opinions as to the special features the school should have. Sketches of four architects- Messrs, Pennington, Gilbert, Mr. Evers and McPhail, were tabled, and the three latter spoke briefly, after which it was moved by F.A. Hough, seconded by C.A. Cuddy that the chairman appoint a committee of fifteen to co-operate with the High School Board in choosing the best plan. After considerable more discussion, Mr. Haas announced the following committee: Mayor Park, Reeve Crimmins, Rev.'s Wright, Ryan, Donnelly and Moore, A.J. Burns, C. Dark, C.A. Cuddy, W.W. Trimble, W.S. Falls, S.M. Johnson, F.A. Hough, W.T. Wilkinson and G.N. Comly. The meeting unanimously voted that Mr. Haas should also be a member of the committee, increasing the number to 16. It was arranged that the committee should meet next day for organization and then take up each architect's plan at separate meetings to be held during the next week."

## Then & Now

Northernmost part of the King's Navy Yard Park  
Looking east toward Rankin Avenue



**View c.1920**

The old waterworks tower and buildings are visible on the left. The house on the corner of Rankin Avenue and Dalhousie (now 42 Rankin Avenue) is shown in the background, as well as the Fox Family residence on the west side of Dalhousie Street.

*Photo MCS 2019.041.005*



**Present-day view.**

This land is now part of the King's Navy Yard Park. The waterworks tower & buildings, as well as the Fox family residence no longer exist. Park House Museum is visible on the left.

# Upsetting the Hour Glass

1931

**March-** A new show room has been completed at Walter Boxall's garage on Richmond Street, where the new Chevrolet Six will be displayed.

**April-** Quite a number of public schools have adopted the plan of providing milk for school children at certain hours of the day, free in the case of those who are unable to pay, and at a very low rate for those who can pay.

**May-** There seems to have developed a real movement towards the beautification of Amherstburg this spring, and gardeners everywhere are building rock gardens or flower beds for private citizens.

1941

**March-** At the government dock home base for Captain J. Earl McQueen's large fleet, the air resounds to the noise of a hammer on steel and the sun glistens on bright red paint as the navigation aids are prepared for another year of service.

**April-** We are having favourable weather for cleaning up corn fields and fires may be seen on most all farms.



**May-** The Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring a tag day to be held Saturday May 21, to raise funds for buying cigarettes for the soldiers.

1951

**March-** Ten street letter boxes will be placed at strategic points in Amherstburg. There will be two collections each day at 7AM and 2:25PM.

**April-** The Fort Malden Branch of the Canadian Legion has appointed a committee to collect funds for the Canadian Cancer Society. This campaign will be conducted this month.

**May-** St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Amherstburg, celebrated its 123<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary on Sunday last. On Monday evening the anniversary was brought to a close by a fine turkey dinner served in the church basement.

1961

**March-** Progress in communications has spelled the doom of the Canadian National Telegraph office in Amherstburg. It will be closed at the end of the month.

**April-** The Canadian Seaway Authority has announced that the St. Lawrence Seaway may not be open until after April

15<sup>th</sup> because of abnormally heavy ice.

**May-** Enlargement and renovation of the Amherst Hotel, Richmond Street, commenced Monday. The building will be extended the full width of the property west of the present building to allow for a larger lounge to accommodate 150.

1971

**March-** Riverfront residents report seeing a large number of white swans on the river. Nearby on shore were gathered hundreds of red winged black birds on their annual migration from the south. Several residents report seeing robins.

**April-** The Anderdon Council has approved of the purchase of a \$20,000 King-Seagrave combination tanker and pumper for use of the Anderdon Fire Department.

**May-** The Amherstburg area is in for updating of mail service on May 17<sup>th</sup> when door to door delivery becomes operative. The service will cover all of Amherstburg, Anderdon north to Edgewater Beach, Texas Road and Hwy 18 to Malden south to and including Amherst Pointe and a small section of the Pike Road.

# Ancestral Lines

By Phyllis Chant

If you were born or lived in Amherstburg for most of your life, you have probably heard the surname "Semeniuk". Working at the Marsh, I knew the Semeniuk family as the owners of the Tea Garden Restaurant. Imagine my surprise when my husband shouted out this last name as we were watching an episode of "Cosmic Vistas" on The Smithsonian Channel. "Ivan Semeniuk" was the name cited, and my husband said he hailed from Amherstburg.

Ivan Semeniuk is the son of Olga (1921-2013) and Nicholas Semeniuk (1909-1964), the owners of the beloved Tea Garden Restaurant. Prior to their arrival in Amherstburg, Nicholas was a chef at Windsor's well-known Mario's Restaurant and Olga was a waitress. They were married in 1938, and it appeared that their career destiny had been sealed. By 1946, Olga,

age 24, and 36-year-old Nicholas were the owners of the old stone Borrowman house located at 98-100 Richmond Street. This hard-working couple converted it into the Tea Garden.

The couple also had four children: Stephen, Alexandra

"Alice", Mary Ann and Ivan. Unfortunately, Nicholas passed away suddenly on April 18, 1964, shortly after Ivan was born.

Olga kept the restaurant until 1969. The July 10, 1969 edition of The Amherstburg Echo's "Conversation Pieces" noted that Olga was selling the business. It was mentioned that Olga's older children were all university graduates; but Ivan, who was only five years old, would live with his mother and

grandparents, Alexander and Paraskevia Zin on R.R. #3, Amherstburg.

By 1970, Olga had earned her Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Windsor, having pursued her studies while she was still running the restaurant. She went on to earn her Bachelor of Education from Queen's University in 1971. Olga's second career was as a dedicated – and now fondly remembered – teacher at Harrow District High School and at General Amherst High School. She retired in 1987.

Ivan would go on to follow in his mother's footsteps, but in a slightly different direction. He has said that "astronomy was his first love", due to visits to the planetarium as a child. By 1988, he had his Bachelor of Science degree in Physics and

Astronomy from the University of Toronto, and a Masters degree in Science Journalism from Boston University.

*Continued on page 6...*

Top: Nick Semeniuk and Dolly Musyj at the Tea Garden Restaurant Counter, c.1960

Photo Courtesy  
Museum Windsor  
P11713

Bottom: Tea Garden Restaurant, c.1978

Photo by Harvey Webster



The Tea Garden Restaurant site is now part of the grounds of the Richmond Terrace Nursing Home.

...Continued from page 5

He went on to work as an instructor/researcher and astronomy expert at the Ontario Science Centre, and as a producer/columnist at Discovery Channel Canada (1995 -2005) – including and writing and hosting the TV series “Cosmic Vistas”. He was also a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Knight Fellow in science journalism (2007-2008), and was nominated for a Gemini Award (2008) for his documentary “Hubble’s Canvas”. In 2008, Ivan was the U.S. Bureau Chief for The New Scientist, the world’s leading science and technology magazine.

Semeniuk has received numerous awards and honours, including the 2015 Laureate of Sanofi Pasteur Medal of Excellence in Health Research Journalism and the 2016 Sir Sandford Fleming Medal. This

latter award has also been bestowed upon such luminaries as astronaut Chris Hadfield and environmentalist Dr. David Suzuki. The Fleming Medal is presented annually by the Royal Canadian Institute for the Advancement of Science “to a Canadian who engages the public in issues related to science and technology and helps to foster a scientifically literate and well-informed public” (University of Toronto News).

Since 2013, Semeniuk has been the Science Reporter for The Globe and Mail. As a science journalist, he covers everything from astronomy and space exploration, to the environment, to technology, to some of our more pressing issues regarding COVID-19. He is also joining the Ryerson University School of Journalism for the Winter 2021 semester to teach health and science journalism – an increasingly

important specialty in the media field.

Sadly, Nicholas Semeniuk did not have a chance to see his son’s achievements. Olga, however, had a chance to see their son following in her footsteps of education – indeed, to witness Ivan’s fascinating career as the science teacher of millions of mass-media viewers and readers.



Ivan Semeniuk  
*Staff Photo- The Globe and Mail*

## A Familiar Greeting from the River

The Ralph S. Caulkins was built in 1902 by the American Shipbuilding Co., as the J.M. Jenks. She was renamed the R.R. Richardson in 1915, and became known as the Ralph S. Caulkins in 1941. Henry L. Caulkins, the owner, named the vessel after his son. The Caulkins was a self-unloader measuring 414’ in length with a 50’ beam and 28’ depth. Amherstburg’s own Captain Walter Callam was skipper. Several local men were also members of the crew. Walter Callam, known as ‘Cal’, was a third generation lakes captain. His father was Captain Alexander Callam, and his grandfather was Captain David Girardin. Cal’s wife Eva was herself a reporter at the lower Wescott Marine Reporting office. Their family resided along the riverfront in the now-restored Commissariat Office situated in the King’s Navy Yard Park. *Continued on page 7...*



Freighter Ralph S. Caulkins  
*Photo by Claude Lockwood MCS P2759*

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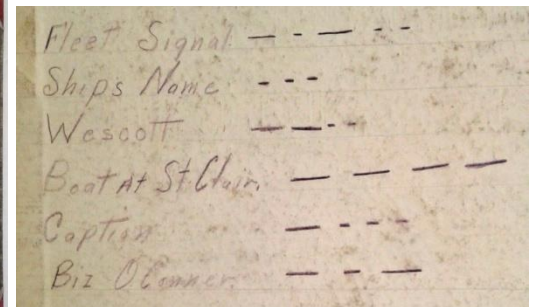
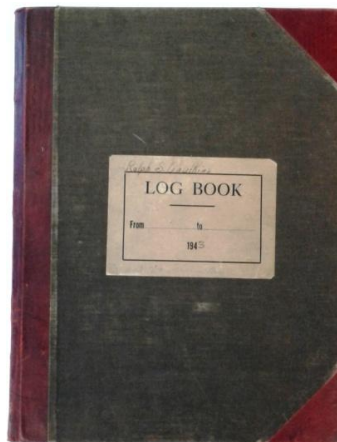
As John Marsh wrote in *With the Tide*, the salute of the Caulkins was a familiar sound along the river in town: "upbound as it came to the southern tip of Boblo Island the whistle would wail one long and three shorts. The word of its passing would rapidly get around. Friends and relatives would go to the river and wave to local crew members." In an article by Cliff Morrison in the Spring 2009 issue of *Reflections*, he notes that Captain Walter Callam was known as one of the best captains back in the days before radar and GPS. In November of 1948, The Echo reported that a Radio Marine radar was to be installed aboard the Ralph S. Caulkins. 327 Radio Marine units had been installed on ocean, lake, and river vessels in the previous 19 months.



Top Right: Image of the Ralph S. Caulkins passing in front of the Belle Vue Veteran's Home in 1949.

Bottom Right: A log book from the Ralph S. Caulkins for the year 1943. A reference for signals/whistles is written on the inside cover.

MCS 2000.020



## Bricks-N-Beams -255 Bathurst Street

*With thanks to Doris Gaspar for her research on the early history of this property.*

The building presently occupied by Carol's Unisex Hair Design at the corner of Bathurst and Murray Streets was constructed between 1865 and 1869 for Denis Delisle. The builders were Alexander and William Bartlet, who were also responsible for the construction of the Pensioners Cottages. Denis Delisle was a saddler and harness manufacturer, as well as boot and shoe manufacturer and dealer. Denis passed away in 1872, a few months after selling the property to Michael Twomey. Michael Twomey was the proprietor of a large commercial block on Dalhousie Street (Salmoni Building), so he rented the block at the corner of Bathurst & Murray to tenants. The first was Turville & Bro., offering "family groceries, and liquors, new teas, new fruits etc."



Murray Street looking east prior to the fire of 1875. The roofline of 255 Bathurst is visible.

MCS P218

...Continued from page 7

In 1882, E.P. Delmore of Anderdon took over what was known as the Central Store, formerly run by Thomas Fitzpatrick for about a year. By 1883, S.J. Johnson was the manager. Johnson was already a successful grocer by this time, having operated for several years out of the Kolfage Block (63-71 Murray Street). Under his proprietorship, the business continued to thrive and he was able to purchase the property from Twomey in 1886. Three years later he completed a brick storehouse adjoining the block, measuring 17' x 19', with a cellar. The building was described as being "frost-proof". He made further improvements in 1898: "enough of the north wall will be removed to allow three plate glass windows, each 5 ½ feet wide and 7 feet high, to be put in. Over these will be put leaded fan lights two feet high." A metal ceiling was also installed at that time.



Top: S.J. Johnson Grocery, c.1901 MCS P3408

Bottom: 255 Bathurst, c.1976 Photo by Harvey T. Webster

Some time prior to 1901, the business became known as The Table Supply House. Johnson operated the grocery until his sudden death in 1907. A month later, the property was sold by his Executors: "William D. Atkinson, of Malden, has purchased the S.J. Johnson property on the corner of Murray and Bathurst Street, together with the grocery stock and good will of the business. He will take possession tomorrow (Saturday) morning. This is one of the best business stands in town, and is handsomely fitted up. Mr. Atkinson is well known, has a very large connection in the district, and no doubt will make a success of this long established business."

Atkinson ran the business for five years, selling to George F. Girardin in 1912. Girardin successfully operated a grocery here for 18 years. The Echo described his store as having been "one of the finest in the county." In 1930 Girardin moved his store to another location and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario set up shop. The first manager of the store was Leo Grondin, followed by Arthur J. Burns and later Devere Thrasher. In 1946, the Echo Reported that the Amherstburg Outlet of the Liquor Control Board had its busiest day since it was established here. There were lines all day with customers from Harrow, Kingsville, and Leamington. At that time, Amherstburg had the only outlet in Southern Essex County, and it was in this block. The Amherstburg Outlet for the Liquor Control Board remained here until a new building was constructed across the street in 1957.

The first floor of the building was renovated in 1961 by owner William J. Cherrie who purchased the property from former mayor N.A. Marra. New windows and a permastone front were installed. The article about the renovation noted that Canadian Tire had occupied the building for a time. If this is correct, it would have been sometime between 1957 and 1961. Does anyone remember this?

Let us know!

### The Bathurst Street Buildings of S.J. Johnson

Not only was S.J. Johnson's business on Bathurst Street, but he resided there as well. He wanted to develop and beautify the neighbourhood, and set out to do so by purchasing a number of lots and erecting houses. For more information on this, see our Spring 2010 issue of Reflections, available on our website.