



# Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection  
Amherstburg, Ontario



Volume 9 Issue 4

Summer 2016

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## LET THE GAMES BEGIN



### PRESENTING:

Sports History  
in Amherstburg

*Summer Exhibit at  
the Marsh Collection*

**top left:** circa 1922 -Malden Centre Athletic Club  
Baseball champs.

**top right:** 1923 - General Amherst High School Girls'  
Basketball team.

**middle:** circa 1910 – Amherstburg Lawn Bowlers

**bottom right:** 1923-1924 - General Amherst High  
School Hockey Team (County Champs)



## Meet the New Staff!



left: Jacklyn Bezaire, right: Meg Reiner

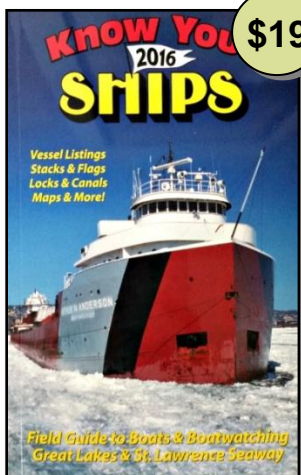
This Spring, Amherstburg locals Jacklyn Bezaire and Meg Reiner joined Eleanor and Liza as the newest staff additions to the Marsh Collection Team.

Jacklyn is a graduate from Western's Master of Library and Information Science program and has plenty of experience in administration, marketing and community programming.

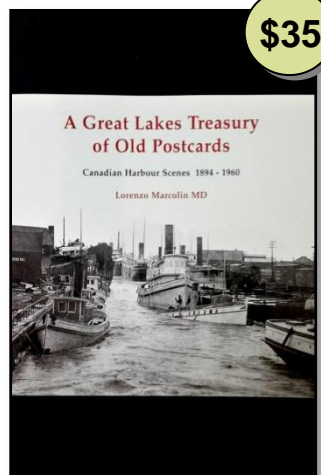
Meg graduated from Carleton University with a degree in History & Theory of Architecture and has a post-graduate certificate in Cultural Heritage Conservation & Management. She has experience working with historical collections both as a volunteer and as an intern.

Together they look forward to diving into the extensive collection and sharing Amherstburg's rich history with you. They will also be working on some technological upgrades to the collection in order to increase accessibility. Jacklyn and Meg are excited to meet and interact with the history lovers of Amherstburg, so please be sure to stop by and say hello!

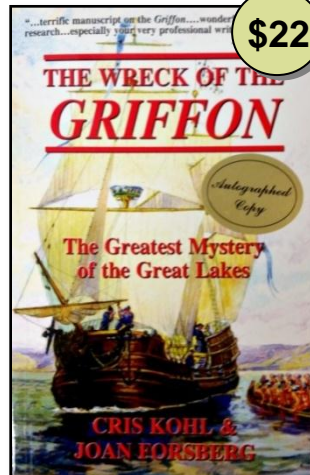
## Latest Additions to the Gift Shoppe



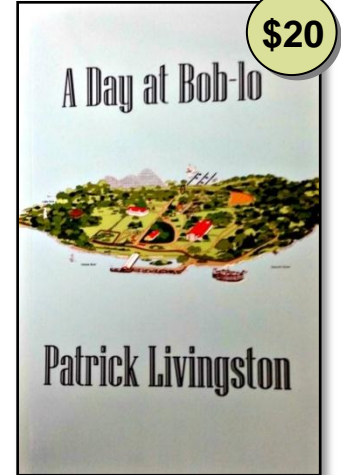
Latest Edition of the Annual Field Guide - containing a wealth of information and statistics on the ships passing through the Great Lakes.



A window into Canadian History as shown through a collection of old postcards containing Great Lake harbour scenes (over 300 postcards!).



The mystery surrounding the first ship to sail on the upper Great Lakes - covering its history, disappearance and where the wreck likely lies.



A historical fiction of a 24-hour day at Bob-lo island in the mid-60's - following many characters including crew members, entertainers, island employees and patrons.



# Upsetting the Hour Glass



## 1966

**June**—Fun in the Sun! Coppertone is selling for \$1.75 - \$3.25 at Moffat's Pharmacy.

**July**—Last week was a busy one at Holiday Beach Provincial Park when 12,151 visitors were clocked in and 133 campsites registered.

**August**—A fine new beer warehouse is nearing completion at the corner of Dalhousie and Park Streets.

## 1956

**June**—Miss Clara Riggs, a missionary on furlough from India, spoke to the pupils at the Malden Central School, on Friday morning.

**July**—Six loaded iron ore freighters were anchored in the Detroit River Thursday because of the steel strike.

**August**—Another expansion program began at the Dime Store, owned by John N. Cooper and his son Ronald.

## 1946

**June**—The tug Patricia McQueen left Amherstburg on Saturday for Sorrel, Quebec and had in tow a minesweeper.

**July**—Stanley Nicholson, catcher for the Kemp's Furniture softball team, had his leg broken in 3 places when he was hit by a runner at a game with the Lakeshore Team.

**August**—More than two thousand people gathered at the Town Park, Thursday, August 1<sup>st</sup> for the annual Emancipation Celebration

## 1936

**June**—A yachting party of 17 came to Amherstburg from Cleveland and had dinner at the Lakeview Hotel.

**July**—Street Fair – Tuesday and Wednesday on the Echo lot and street in front. Many attractions including keno, horse races, wild animals, aeroplanes, many games of skill, candy, hot dogs, fish ponds, fortunes, aprons. Excellent orchestra and dancing. Admission to the Fair is free.

**August**—A gang of tire and wheel thieves is active in the Amherstburg district.

## 1926

**June**—The Hadley block front has been greatly improved by a coat of paint.

**July**—St. Alban's Church will hold their annual Sunday School picnic at Bois Blanc next week.

**August**—Threshing of fall wheat is general throughout Essex County. The crop is turning out from 25-30 bushels to the acre.

## 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.

### Open

Tues - Fri: 10am – 4pm  
235 A Dalhousie Street,  
Amherstburg  
(519) 736-9191

[www.marshcollection.org](http://www.marshcollection.org)



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# Collection Highlights

A Look at What's Inside the Archives at the Marsh Collection.

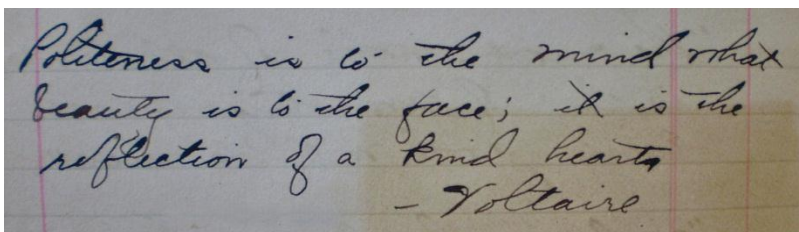


A Trifari wild rose brooch that once belonged to Bessie Marsh. Delicate, cream-coloured petals create the flower atop a metal stem with a gold finish. At the center of the rose is a clear rhinestone. The type of maker's mark on the reverse of the pin indicates that it was produced sometime during the 1940s through 1960s.



Bessie (Hicks) Marsh, pre-1899  
Marsh Collection Photo

Bessie (Hicks) Marsh was born October 20, 1876 in Colchester Township. In 1899 she married Arthur W. Marsh, co-editor of the Amherstburg Echo. Together they had two children, Helen and John, who eventually took over ownership of the local paper. Bessie was an avid reader. For a time she was a member of the Amherstburg Reading Circle, which met to discuss and review literature from around the world. In *Conversation Pieces*, Helen Marsh recounts evenings spent reading outdoors with her family. Helen also mentions that in her later years, Bessie developed an interest in hockey, describing watching the game as "a real treat". Bessie, known by many as "Miss Bessie", died August 4, 1968 at 91 years of age.



A quote by the philosopher Voltaire, extracted from Bessie's notebook, pre-1899: "Politeness is to the mind what beauty is to the face; it is the reflection of a kind heart."

## Trifari

A costume jewellery producer in the United States founded by Gustavo Trifari in 1910. The company was well-known for its innovative designs imagined by Alfred Philippe, the chief company designer from 1930 to 1968. Trifarijewellery was glamorous and exquisitely crafted, attracting a vast clientele.

"Trifari took a petal'd flower, set it blossoming on a golden bower, touched it with the morning dew and so fashioned "Wild Rose" just for you!"

- Trifari Advertisement, 1955

# A Typical Summer Day on the Detroit River in 1909

An embellishment of a true event that took place during a hot July summer day in Amherstburg, 1909 and appeared in the *Amherstburg Echo*.

by David Hamilton

On a hot muggy Sunday morning in July, 1909, a steamer captain making his way up the Detroit River through the dirty haze used his megaphone to hail the Amherstburg docks that there was a steamer with its tow aground out in the lake and it needed assistance.

Barely had the words been spoken when the crews of the wrecking tugs, *Abner C. Harding* of the Great Lakes Towing Co., and the *Marion E. Trotter*, of the Trotter Wrecking Co., sprang into frenzied action. Lines were cast off. Four quick pulls on the engine room signal bell, relayed the captain's order, "all ahead full!" Draught fans roared to life. Steam drains were opened wide and threw hissing white plumes of moisture into the atmosphere. Billows of ash and sulphurous black fumes came from the smoke stacks as the two steeds set out. Drillboat crews and dredge operators out on the river momentarily stopped work to urge on the competition with hoots and hollers as the tugs churned away from the dock.

Leaving a trail of swirling mud and dead fish, they steamed off down the river, darkening the sky with enough smoke to start another ice age. Mop headed boys diving and fishing off the pilings looked on with delight, while ol' Mrs. Jones down the river was cussin' over the soot left on her freshly hung sheets. Both crews, hot for action, exchanged "friendly" insults as the tugs sped past Bar Point light. They were last seen zig zagging out on the lake, like hounds sniffing out a hare. With the *Trotter* slightly in the

lead, they disappeared in a black smudge past Colchester Reef and steamed their way down toward Southeast Shoal and on to the old Dummy Light.

It was there, the two old warhorses with "bones in their teeth" found their quarry. The steamer *Harvey H. Brown* was indeed aground with her consort, *Geo. Hartnell*. The tug Captains demanded every ounce of steam from the boilers. Down in the hellish heat of the stokehold and engine room, exhausted coal passers threw their weight behind every shovelful. The watchful, cigar chomping engineer, adjusted the valve links on his throttle for the last extra 'rev'. Intently listening for the dreaded thump of a loose wrist pin and giving a spat of 'baccy juice' into the crank pit for good measure. The *Trotter* kept her lead and managed to tie her cable to the *Brown* first, thereby winning the contract.

After all, she did have, "that new fangled water-tube boiler installed in her last spring. That's whut done it!"

The pent up excitement of tug crews' eager for work and the loser's letdown of a missed contract afterward. Young river rats, proudly heading home at sunset with their strings of fish trailing in the dust, and bringing tales of excitement home with them. Drillmen coming ashore on Saturday nights, spending as much on fines for disorderly conduct as they did on the alcohol they drank. A local wag once said, "The chief of police comes in to work wearing a new suit every Monday morning."

Such was the action on the waterfront back in "those days."

# Ancestral Lines

Some time ago on our Facebook page we used a 1916 era photo of the former Dr. Wm. McBride house on Dalhousie Street. This old picture stirred a bit of interest and a few comments so we thought readers might like to know a little more about the prominent veterinarian.

William John Henry McBride was born in Malden Township on August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1873, the eldest of three sons born to John McBride and Philomena Caldwell. In 1893 he graduated from the University of Toronto as a Veterinary Surgeon. On October 18<sup>th</sup> of that year McBride married Phoebe Brown, of Amherstburg, daughter of Archibald Brown and Phoebe Racicot. After the ceremony they *"spent the day with relatives at his parents' residence in Malden, returning to their own residence on the corner of Gore and Bathurst, which was fitted up for their reception."*

Three years later Dr. McBride purchased John W. Gibb's Livery on *"Apsley Street next to the American House,"* where he began operating his *"Livery Stable and Veterinary Infirmary."*

In the 1911 Echo, Dr. McBride's office and residence were advertised as being at *"George Levergood's Farm, 4<sup>th</sup> Con., Malden."* Later that year he moved to the *"Shepley Farm"* – 110 acres, part of Lot 27 on the Pike Road (east of 3<sup>rd</sup> concession) – which he bought from Fred & Hattie Bertrand. Before the year ended Dr. McBride was advertising his veterinary service, office and residence there at *"Hickory Hill Farm, Pike Road, Malden."*

In 1915 he purchased about 3 acres of what was known as the Caldwell property, south Dalhousie Street, where he would build a residence for his family "on the hill." His further plan was to fill in and drain the low spot and to subdivide the property into building lots.

In May of that year Dr. McBride sold his 90-acre farm on the Pike to David Mahoney of Pelee Island, and part to James O. Deslippe for

his dairy farm. By August, the house on the hill was being built; a 2-storey fireproof garage was to be added on the south end of his lot. The McBride family moved into their new residence in December 1915 and in January 1916 Dr. McBride was operating from his *"Office and Residence on Dalhousie Street South, near Wigle's Mill."* In May of that same year, A.M. Brown added a 9 x 28 foot "fancy verandah" to the house.

It may be interesting to note the following article from the Amherstburg Echo, October 18, 1918: *"Dr. McBride has a big force of men and teams at work taking the black loam from the marsh at his subdivision, South Dalhousie Street, and putting it on the hill. Several modern residences will be built. A large concrete tile will be put from the Park marsh to the Government supply slip, and his part will be leveled and a handsome place made of it. Edward Davies is having brick and hard heads put on the ground and will commence at once to build a handsome bungalow on the McBride lot where the big sign now stands."* In 1930 he sold a half interest in his river front property to Neil McLellan of Detroit, all except the lot on which his house stood. McLellan was influenced in the deal expecting the street to be paved that summer.



*Photo taken post-1915, from the roof of Wigle's Flouring Mill.*



# Bricks-n-Beams

## Speck's

266 Bathurst Street

Speck's is a longtime restaurant and gathering place for Amherstburg locals. Both the business and the building itself have a long history that marks the site as a town fixture.

The single-storey construction at the front of the building is a later addition to a two-storey frame house that was built somewhere between 1851 and 1861. Leander Beneteau was the original owner, who used the building as his home and blacksmith shop. In 1896, Stephen J. Johnson purchased the property and remodelled the existing residence.



Stanley Sprague standing outside of Speck's, mid 1970's.  
Photo courtesy of Sarah Beaudoin and Lenora Richardson.

From that time, the property passed through several owners until Carlos G. Bates, the neighbourhood milk man, purchased the property from Gordon F. Breeze in 1955. In 1961, Bates hired Orville Deslippe and his son Vic Deslippe to build an addition at the front of the home. This would become the location of Speck's Snack Bar and Confectionery, the name of which seemingly inspired by Carlos' nickname "Speck". Along with snacks, sweets and some general grocery items, the shop had a few tables for customers to enjoy menu items like coffee and sandwiches.

The Sprague family took ownership of the home and confectionery in the early 1970s. Through an ad in the Amherstburg Echo, Carlos and Gladys expressed their thanks to customers for years of patronage, and also encouraged continued support under the new ownership.

Stanley and Irene Sprague, along with their daughters Lenora and Sarah, lived in the

original family home behind Speck's. They kept the name of the business, and carried on popular practices established by the original owners. This included annual Christmas greetings in the Amherstburg Echo. While retaining some traditions, the Sprague's also transformed Speck's into a proper restaurant with home-style cooking in a casual and friendly atmosphere.

In 2000, Lenora and Sarah took control of Speck's, carrying on the family business. They celebrated the restaurant's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2011 amongst family, friends, and regular patrons. Recently, renovations have been made to expand the restaurant interior. The seating area was extended into the living room of the original home.

Despite several changes in ownership and use throughout the long history of the building, evidence of the 19<sup>th</sup> century house facade is still visible from the interior of the restaurant.

# Then & Now – 80 Richmond Street



**Dominion Grocery Store, 1981**



**Heritage Square, 2016**