



Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection
Amherstburg, Ontario



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Above: c.1924 MCS P1588

Below: Present (2018)

Then & Now

General Amherst High School



On September 5, 1922 the new General Amherst High School opened with 73 pupils and four teachers. Norman Davies was Principal. Following is a description from The Amherstburg Echo, July 21, 1922.

"The lower floor is devoted to vocational purposes and the upper to academic. The former consists of a Manual Training Room, Forge Shop, Art Room, Domestic Science Room, Gymnasium, Principal's Room, Lady Teachers' Room and Boys and Girls Toilets...

The upper floor consists of five classrooms, four large and one smaller for an advanced form. One of the large class rooms is

allotted to commercial work and has a typewriter room at one end separated by a glazed partition so that is under direct supervision from the Commercial classroom. Another of these classrooms is for Science Laboratory work and has a small apparatus room off it.

The basement accommodates boiler plant, ventilating unit, coal room and storage space."

It may be interesting to note that in its first year evening classes were established in Bookkeeping, Shorthand, Typewriting, Sewing, French conversation, Chemistry, Shop Math and Motor Mechanics. The same teachers who taught during the day also ran the evening classes. In one of the

many articles it is noted that the Dominion War Trophies Commission at Ottawa sent a collection of trophies, machine guns, helmets, enemy rifles and much more. These items were to be placed in one room of the new school to be "fitted up as a museum." A large cannon was also forwarded by the Militia Department, which was "mounted on the school ground facing Sandwich Street."

Harold McEvers, Architect, of Windsor, designed and supervised the construction of the building for a total cost of approximately \$68,000. It was said to be "an ideal working example of a Vocational Academic high school."

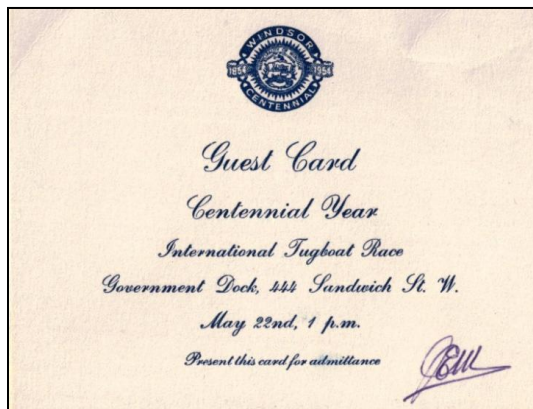
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Collection

Highlights

Guest Card, International Tugboat Race

The 1st International Tugboat Race was held on the Detroit River on May 20, 1950. Thousands of spectators lined the banks to watch. The tugs raced from the Belle Isle Bridge to the Ambassador Bridge, a distance of approximately 4 miles. McQueen Marine Ltd.'s tug Atomic won this race, finishing in 18 minutes. This tug became famous for its performance in many races thereafter.



The above guest card for the 1954 International Tugboat Race belonged to Captain J. Earl McQueen and bears his initials in the lower right corner. McQueen was the owner of the tugs Atomic and Patricia McQueen, both participants in these races, and was president of McQueen Marine Ltd., a well-known marine salvage and wrecking company in Amherstburg. The 1954 event saw the biggest crowd yet, and the Atomic took its third win, finishing four lengths ahead of the second place vessel. Captain Jake Penner was skipper of the tug for this race and Joe Fox was engineer. The Patricia McQueen came in fourth, finishing first in her class, skippered by Captain Angus Morrison. When the tugs returned to Amherstburg they were met by a large crowd at the McQueen Dock, and a celebratory parade followed.



Tug Atomic
MCS P1756

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
Website: www.marshcollection.org**



Exhibit

This September marks the 25th anniversary of the closing of Bob-Lo Island Amusement Park. Beginning in **July**, photos, souvenirs, and other memorabilia will be on display at the Marsh Collection for visitors to view. *Free admission.*

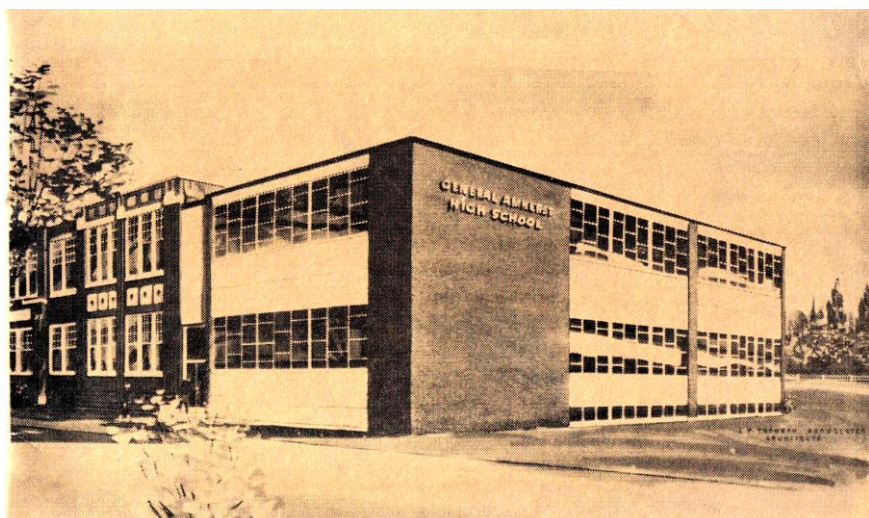


Bob-Lo Scenic Railroad MCS P4340

Then & Now

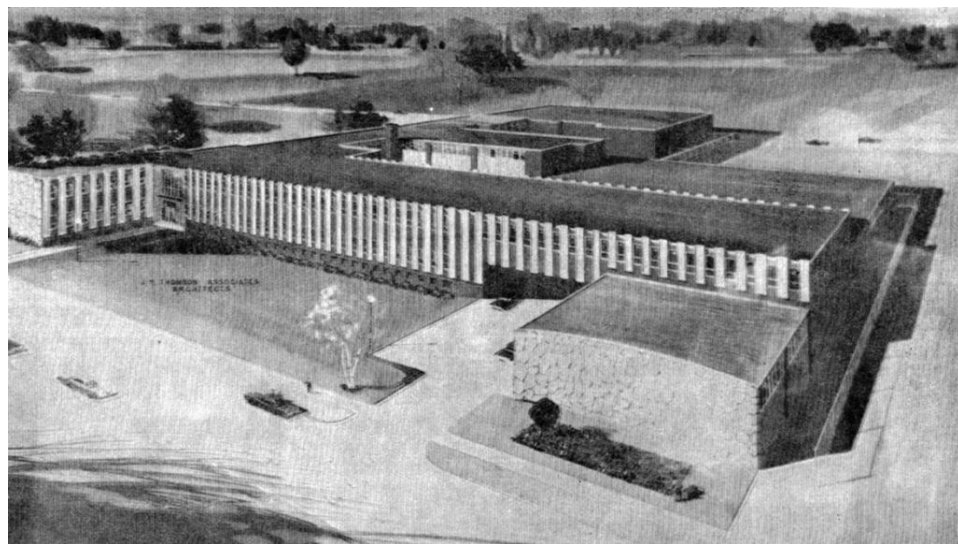
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By 1928 enrollment had increased from 65 to 150 students and the gymnasium was too small to be useful. J.C. Pennington Windsor architect, was engaged to prepare specifications and by the fall term General Amherst students had a new 65' x 35' gym. In 1934 the school basement was enlarged, the work being accomplished by about 40 men who were on "welfare." The Marsh Collection files contain so much information about the new school- possibly a good project for a history student?



Opening of new addition May, 25, 1960

If you would like to receive an electronic copy of our quarterly newsletter by email, please contact us at 519-736-9191 or research@marshcollection.org. You can also access the newsletter on our website.



Opening of new addition November 17, 1967

Yearbooks

We have a collection of local high school yearbooks that visitors are welcome to access. The following is a list of available years:

St. Rose High School

1950-53, 1955-57, 1959-66

General Amherst High School

1961-87, 2000

St. Thomas of Villanova High School

1987-94, 2001-03

If you have a yearbook that you are interested in donating to help us fill in the gaps, please contact us at 519-736-9191. Or if you are interested in lending a yearbook for scanning, we will return the original book to you.



Finding My Past: DNA Testing *Part II*

By Phyllis Chant

You might remember, from a story in the Spring edition of this newsletter, that I was prepared to send my DNA to Ancestry.ca, to further track my personal genealogy. You might also recall that I mentioned that I had been adopted as an infant, and had discovered my maternal side of my birth family about a decade ago.

How much further back in time could the DNA analysis take me, and how many more “roots and branches” of my family tree might it reveal?

Those answers arrived on my Ancestry page approximately two months after I mailed off my saliva sample to Ancestry.ca. Evidently, that tube first travelled to Ancestry’s clearing house in Dublin, Ireland; then was forwarded to genetic testing labs in the United States. There, three things were analyzed and identified:

1. My “geographic genetics” (where in the world all my ancestors came from- presumably from the Stone Ages);
2. How I got from there to here (the major migration pattern of my ancestors); and
3. My very-much extended family- in the form of quite distantly located relatives who, conveniently, had previously done the Ancestry DNA testing. Matches of long stretches of DNA markers allows the pinpointing of “cousins-several-times-removed” and including a way to contact these relatives via Ancestry email.

The initial glance at my “geographic genetics” (Ancestry’s official term is “Ethnicity Estimate”) was somewhat confusing, because it stated that 45% of my DNA hails from Great Britain. I know, for certain, that I am French/French Canadian. My previous Ancestry research led me to my maternal eighth-great-grandfather living in France from 1625 to 1696. The explanation for the confusing dates back to the Norman Conquest of Great Britain in 1066 and subsequent events as The Hundred Years Wars (1337-1453). England and France have interacted politically, militarily, socially and genetically for so long that, apparently, “British Isles” appears as the chief ethnic geo-marker.

My next most significant “ethnicity estimate” was

“Iberian Peninsula” (so, apparently, my ancestors spent some time in Spain/ Portugal before moving to neighbouring France); then Ireland/ Scotland/ Wales and “Europe South”. My four percent ethnicity from “Finland/ Northwest Russian”, I believe, explains why my favourite television show is “Vikings”.



Ethnicity Estimate Map

My ancestor travelled “from there to here” quite early on. My seventh-great-grandmother, Christine Regnier, migrated from France to Quebec at the age of 16 in 1661. Subsequently, my genetic forefathers and foremothers spread out from their St. Lawrence River settlements throughout Quebec, eastern Ontario, the Maritimes, and the original American colonies.

Sometime between 1750 and 1800, they headed westward- as far as Wisconsin and Minnesota and points in between, including the Tecumseh area of my direct maternal ancestry (the Lesperances).

For me, Ancestry.ca has identified 1,000 fourth cousins or closer. Most of these appear to be on my maternal side. Also identified were a number of relatives on my paternal side which I had not previously researched. I had been given a possible French last name, unique to the Essex County area, by a maternal family member. Sure enough the name appeared on the Ancestry list. I have made initial contact with this cousin and have already received possible paternal ancestry background. And so my search will continue.

This exercise in “genetic genealogy” was personally fascinating. And I think it may be both extremely useful and, interesting to both new and experienced genealogists- as a first step, a final step, and an excellent tool to find or confirm both the roots and branches of family trees.

Upsetting the Hour Glass



1928

June- Keep your automobile license plate clean, or your clock will be cleaned by the police.

July- The Steamer Aragon unloaded a boat of gravel at the Mullen dock, foot of Richmond Street, to be used by the Premier Construction Company in the town line pavement.

August- Farmers are having a serious time of it harvesting their oat crop which was knocked down and badly tangled by recent storms.

1938

June- The first excursion of the season is being run to Bob-Lo this Thursday from Windsor, the occasion being the King's birthday.

July- Glorious weather on the "Glorious Fourth" brought throngs of visitors from across the border to Amherstburg Monday and throughout the day local stores were kept busy catering to the needs of summer cottagers and tourists.

August- Fun for all at the Amherstburg Rotary Carnival-Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings, August 18, 19, 20. Admission free.

1948

June- Wanted- Two waitresses. Steady employment. Apply Tea Garden Restaurant, Amherstburg.

July- The Amherstburg Council on Monday evening approved the request of the Amherstburg Recreation Commission to build a softball diamond on the southeast corner of the town park.

August- Patients of the Belle Vue Veterans' Home in Amherstburg were the guests of the Originals Club, Windsor, on Wednesday afternoon. A special bus was sent to Amherstburg to take them to Briggs Stadium in Detroit to see the ball game which was called off on account of rain. They will be taken on another occasion.

1958

June- The writers and business men of today would not know how to get along without the typewriter. Yet it is a fairly modern invention, and most men of seventy years ago knew little of it.

July- Revenue from parking meters in Amherstburg has taken a drop. The take, this summer, is considerably less than last year.

August- Thieves failed to crack the safe at the Regent Oil Company office, King's Highway No. 18, Anderdon Township through the night Thursday. They used nitro in trying to break the heavy door but only managed to blow off the dial and a couple bolts.

1968

June- A smash and grab thief broke the window at Koenig's Jewellery Store, Richmond Street, at 3:15 Monday morning and escaped with four thousand dollars worth of rings, diamonds and wedding sets.

July- The first of the 1968 crop of peaches was picked in the orchard of the Research Station, Harrow, Monday. This is the earliest variety developed by the Station.

August- The sidewalk sale of merchandise will feature the Carnival of Values event to be staged by 30 downtown merchants. Most stores will be open from nine in the morning until nine in the evening.

Bricks-N-Beams

Mac's Service Station

This building was originally the residence of Louis Marié, built in the mid-1840s. His daughter, Marguerite Marié, married Vital Lemay in November 1846 "in the R.C. Church when it stood on Bathurst Street" and they immediately moved into the Marie family home with their parents. Marguerite's obituary in 1909 Amherstburg Echo reads "they took up their residence in the place where she died, and where they raised four sons and four daughters."

Vital Lemay operated a blacksmith shop on the property, where he died in 1881. His son, Louis Lemay, also an early Amherstburg blacksmith, operated at his residence on Seymour Street. In 1889, he sold his house and property there to Fred Bertrand and moved his family to the Richmond Street house, where he continued in the blacksmith trade. His wife, Mathilde Primeau, was the daughter of another early Amherstburg blacksmith, Francois F. Primeau.

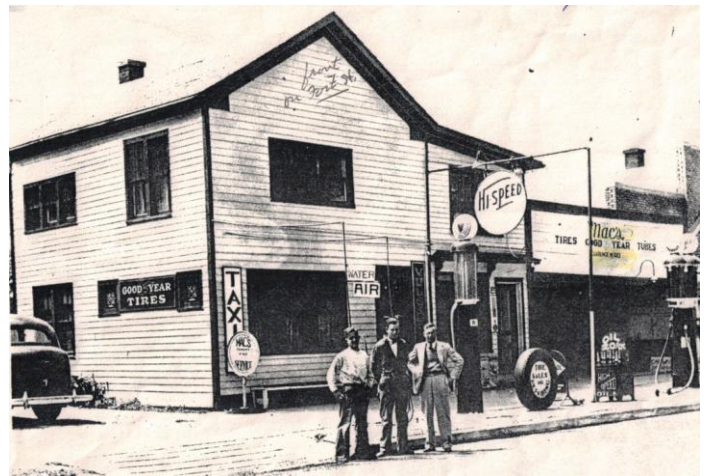
Russell Brownlee purchased the Lemay property in 1920. He remodelled the mid-1840s residence and built a tire vulcanizing business there. In March 1921, The Echo ran his first ad for the "New Service Station." A year later, Brownlee built a large repair shop addition at the rear of his residence, which was for the first two years called The Willow Service Station. By that time, with the extensive use of the motor car as a means of conveyance, gasoline, oils, and accessories were added to this garage. In late 1924 Brownlee built a new warehouse to store his tires and also converted the west side into a show room. Thereafter the business was called Brownlee Tire Shop and Brownlee Garage.

Brownlee leased his service station in 1936 to Clarence McGee, who re-named the business "Mac's Service Station". He and his brother, Bob McGee, operated the place for about two years. A variety of lessees ran the garage for several years thereafter.

In 1941 the former Brownlee property was sold to Jay Kenyon, who made extensive changes to the interior of

the residence. It was said that when the workmen were fitting in hot air registers, they found that the beams were all black walnut.

In April 1945, the Echo announced that Nick Marra had purchased the Richmond Street property, which he then sold to the Shell Oil Company. Soon the Brownlee/ Kenyon house was moved to the north side of Fort Street, where it remains today.



Mac's Service Station (c.1936-7) formerly the Russell Brownlee Garage and residence, south side of Richmond Street, adjacent to Amherstburg Public Library, today the site of Lube+. Left to right: W. Mayville, H. Spearing, and C. McGee.



Present-day on Fort Street.

Parks Named after People

Angstrom Park 989 Front Road North

This park is named after Lawrence Carlton Angstrom, former owner of the property and prominent citizen of Anderdon Township. Angstrom served in WWI and along with his wife fostered British children during the Second World War. At his property known as Hazelwood farm, Angstrom developed a herd of Belgian purebreds described as one of the most significant in Western Ontario. He was also a director of Anderdon Township's Canadian Federation of Agriculture. A large part of his land eventually became Pointe West Subdivision, the main street being named after him.

Austin 'Toddy' Jones Park 50 North Street

This land was originally known as 'West Town Park'. While in use as a recreational space even before 1875, the parkland was not formally developed until the 1920s. Early on this was the site of the Amherstburg Lawn Bowling Club bowling green as well as an outdoor skating rink in the winter. In 1928, Malcom McGregor funded construction of a children's wading pool. In 1985, the name was changed to Austin 'Toddy' Jones Park. Austin Jones served on Municipal Council from 1975 to 1982 and during this time also served on the Recreation and Parks Committee. Jones also served as Council's representative on the Arena Board for five years.



Lawn Bowling in 'West Town Park'
MCS P3133.1

Bill Wigle Park 84 North Street

This space south of General Amherst High School was originally the parade grounds for Fort Malden and later came to be known as 'East Town Park'. It was the site of the Amherstburg, Anderdon, and Malden Agricultural Society buildings and the Fall Fair. East Town Park was renamed Bill Wigle Park by Bylaw No. 1881 passed by Town Council in 1985. Bill Wigle was a well known baseball player who signed a Minor League Contract with the Detroit Tigers and served seven years on Municipal Council during which he advocated for the improvement of recreational facilities and activities in Amherstburg. He owned multiple sports-related businesses including Bill's Sports Shop, Imperial Bowling Lanes and Four Seasons Bowling Lanes.



Sunday baseball game in 'East Town Park'
MCS P4078

H. Murray Smith Centennial Park

209 Victoria Street South

This land which originally comprised part of the Bell Farm was acquired by the town in 1933. Eventually this grew to become the largest recreational park in Amherstburg. In 1977, the same year in which Murray Smith was named 'Citizen of the Year' by the AMA Chamber of Commerce, the name was officially changed to H. Murray Smith Centennial Park. Smith served as Mayor from 1965-1978, during which he was instrumental in the construction of the Community Centre Arena and development of Centennial Park.

Continued on next page...



Mayor Garnet Fox & H. Murray Smith (right) cutting ribbon for the opening of the S. Ralph McCurdy Track & Field Complex
MCS P4480

Jack Purdie Park 609 Richmond Street

This park was named 'John (Jack) Purdie Park' through bylaw no.2274 passed in 1992. Jack Purdie was recognized for his devotion to many minor sports teams in Amherstburg and for 40 years of service to the Royal Canadian Legion, part of which as zone commander and district chairman and 11 years as president. Purdie fought with the Essex Kent Scottish Regiment in WWII. He served as Town Councillor for 8 years and was Chairman of the Parks & Recreation Committee for four years.

Larry Bauer Park 3295 Meloche Rd

This parkland was purchased by the Town in 2003 and named in the memory of Larry Bauer who passed away in 1994. Bauer, a resident of Anderdon, was dedicated to the community and had a particular interest in athletics. He is remembered as being a prominent Labour Leader, having occupied several positions including president of Local 444 C.A.W. from 1990-1994. The C.A.W was a major contributor toward the development of this park. Larry was also involved with many community service groups including the United Way and Downtown Mission.

Leo N.J. Beaudoin Park 265 Hyde Park Rd.

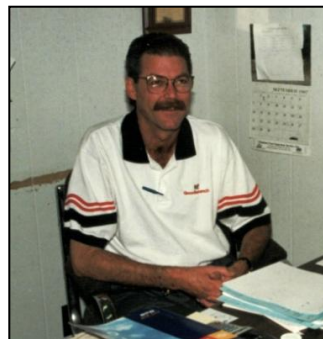
This neighbourhood park in the River Canard Subdivision was named after Leo N.J. Beaudoin who passed away in 1978. He had a 22-year career in municipal politics in Anderdon Township and was Anderdon's first deputy reeve. Leo Beaudoin also served on the board of Harrow Farmers Co-Operative for 12 years.

K. Walter Ranta Marina Park 1500 Front Rd N

This public park occupies land formerly owned by Walter Ranta, who was the owner of Ranta Enterprises. He studied engineering and started out as a foreman at Brunner Mond, later owning Ranta Enterprises and becoming well-known in his field. Ranta contributed to a number of worthy causes and was a member of Thistle Lodge #34 AF-AM as well as the Amherstburg Lions Club. He passed away in 1982 and the marina park was opened in 1985 as public recreational lands.

Pat Thrasher Park 70 Knobb Hill Dr.

Dedicated in 2013, this park is named in the memory of Pat Thrasher, a well-loved community activist and well-known leader in the fight against Multiple Sclerosis who passed away in 2001. Pat Thrasher served on Town Council for six years, was president of the MS Society's Windsor-Essex Chapter, and also chairperson for the Amherstburg/Essex County Chapter of the United Way. Thrasher was a minor league sports coach in town and was Chairperson of the Recreation Committee from 1983 to 1988.



Pat Thrasher, 1997
MCS P3470.3

Scodeller Park 511 County Road 10

This park is named after Louis Scodeller an influential local figure who founded Pointe West Golf Club in 1989. Scodeller was involved in the early stages of the wine industry in Essex County, and helped found the Fogolar Furlan Club in Windsor. This park was dedicated to the children of Anderdon Township on June 25, 1994.

Warren Mickle Park 164 McDonald Street

This park is located in Amherst Pointe, and is named after Warren Mickle, a well-known local nature photographer and lifetime resident of Malden Township, who lived and worked in the area of the parkland.