



Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection
Amherstburg, Ontario



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Ambassador Bridge under construction, 1928.
Photo by William (Bill) Roberts.



The Gordie Howe Bridge at the same stage of construction as the Ambassador Bridge was in 1928, taken by Bill's son Frank in 2023.

Photos courtesy Frank Roberts.

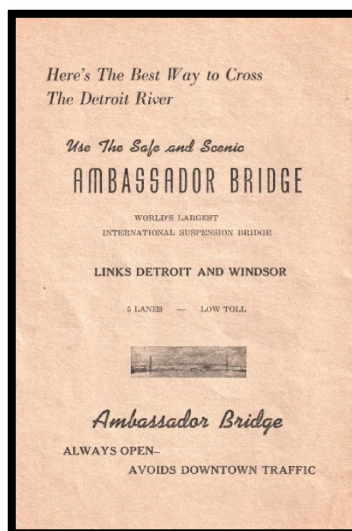
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The Amherst Pointe Association Turns 100

The neighbourhood known as Amherst Pointe is located south of Amherstburg along the lakefront and consists of three streets: Woodbridge Drive, Mickle Drive and Scott Drive. Plans for this subdivision were made by Dr. Fred Woodbridge and Dr. Frances Scott, both of Detroit, in 1916. The subdivision was laid out on part of the property belonging to farmer Fred Mickle. The first residents of the neighbourhood formed a group called The Amherst Pointe Improvement Association in 1923. As stated in the constitution, the object of the association was to promote and advance the interests of the property owners in Amherst Pointe, through encouraging restrictions and regulations in order to maintain high standards, ensure continued use of the property as a private residential area, and to foster community improvements for the benefit of residents.

Most of the early lot holders in Amherst Pointe were from Detroit. The invention of the automobile permitted relatively quick land travel from Michigan, and the lakefront area south of Amherstburg, with its rural appeal and sandy beaches, soon became a summer resort area for Americans. The construction of the Ambassador Bridge further improved access, directly connecting Detroit to Essex County, including Malden Township.



The advertisement at left is from the reverse of an Amherst Pointe Association Annual Community Celebration booklet in 1949. For more information about the Annual Community Celebration see our Summer 2020 issue of Reflections:

<https://www.marshcollection.org/newsletter/>

HAPPENINGS AT THE MARSH

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Thanks to the Canada Summer Jobs program, we were able to hire a student to implement an Oral History Program this summer. Are you interested in sharing your personal recollections relating to Amherstburg? We want to capture and preserve these stories. Please let us know if you'd like to participate. Further details coming soon!

EXHIBITS

VIEWS OF AMHERSTBURG

Coming this September...

Then & now photos of Amherstburg as viewed from the sky. Mike Chase, of Windsor Aerial Drone Photography, will capture current aerial photos for comparison with images from the past.



BOB-LO ISLAND: A BLAST FROM THE PAST

On June 3, 2023 we hosted 'Bob-Lo Island: A Blast from the Past,' an event centered on the amusement park era of the Island. It gave us a chance to showcase many of our Bob-Lo artifacts and pictures. In addition, we had carnival games in the street that mimicked ones you might've seen during a visit to the Park. It was a great day of reminiscing with everyone who attended.

We will have most of the exhibit on display until August.

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 & visitors from 10am to 4pm Monday- Friday.

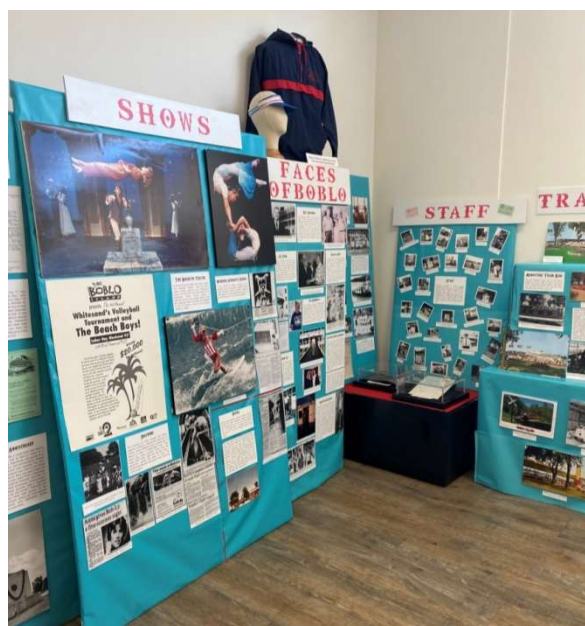
Email: research@marshcollection.org

Website: www.marshcollection.org



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

If you enjoy reading our newsletter please consider making a donation through our website:
<https://www.marshcollection.org/donate/>



THANK YOU

A HUGE thank you to all of our volunteers who helped with this event. We couldn't have done it without you!

We are also grateful to members of the community who loaned items from their personal collections for display. Thank you for helping us create an exciting exhibit!



BRICKS-N-BEAMS

The International Yacht & Country Club



For a very brief time, Amherstburg was home to a prestigious institution called the International Yacht and Country Club. The organization was born through “the common desire of a small group of men for dignified, healthful and varied physical and social recreation on both land and water.” In 1927, plans were published in *The Amherstburg Echo* for a proposed clubhouse which would be built on the former Duff homestead.

Alexander Duff purchased Concession 1 Lot 4 in Anderdon, containing 100 acres, in 1841. He built his home there shortly thereafter, which was located along Front Road North between Brunner Avenue and Duff Avenue. The property became known as “Forest Grove”. Alexander’s grandson Henry Grant Duff had new plans for the family farm in 1927. He was a director of the recently formed International Yacht and Country Club which sought a site to set up their headquarters. The Duff property was chosen as the perfect location due to the beauty of the natural landscape, covered with elm, birch, and maple trees, its waterfront location, and close

proximity to Detroit. One brochure for the club claimed that the average boat could make it to the club from the foot of Woodward Avenue in one hour.

The historic Duff residence was to be remodeled for the clubhouse. Plans were drawn by Arthur C. Keil, who was the architect responsible for the Detroit Yacht Club. The contractor hired for the project was E.G. Morley of Windsor and the cost was \$50,000. The clubhouse was designed in the Spanish style, with a tan stucco exterior and 14 x 16 foot tower. A deck on the flat roof provided clear views of the river and grounds for members to enjoy. The interior

included a large dining room, lounge room with fireplace, lounges for ladies and men, locker and shower rooms, private dining room, manager’s apartment, and kitchen. The flooring, including the dance floor, consisted of waxed, inlaid linoleum.

The formal opening was held on April 20, 1928, with more than 100 guests in attendance. The manager of the clubhouse was S.F. Cooper, of Detroit, and Cuthbert Falls, of Amherstburg, led the entertainment committee. Dancing parties were frequently held, and regular dinners were available for \$1.50. A boathouse and harbour were built for yachters that could accommodate up to 40 boats. The boathouse was of a similar design to the Detroit Yacht Club. Additional amenities included a golf course (which we will cover in the next newsletter), tennis, bridge, quoits, swimming, fishing, and shooting.

By 1929 the club had 300 members. While the majority of members were from Detroit and Windsor, local residents belonged to the club as well. In the beginning, a special concession was created for residents of Amherstburg which allowed them to purchase a limited membership for \$100. *Continued on page 4...*



*Photo at top left:
International Yacht & Country Club,
no date.
(MCS P498)*

*Photo at left:
Interior view of the
dining room.
(MCS P499)*

...Continued from page 3

In 1930, membership cost \$300 plus the purchase of a \$200 bond and annual dues of \$75.

It was not long after a grand gala was held to open the 1930 season that an announcement was published in the local papers regarding a public auction of property belonging to the International Yacht & Country Club. Evidently, the club had been experiencing financial difficulties. A receiving order was granted on behalf of Amherstburg residents who claimed that the club owed them several months' wages. In 1931, the club was made public and the name changed to "Spring Hill Yacht and Country Club." A fire of unknown origin broke out at the clubhouse the morning of November 12, 1931, following the Legion's Armistice Day Banquet. The upstairs rooms were destroyed and the ground floor suffered water damage. This marked the end of the building's use as a clubhouse.

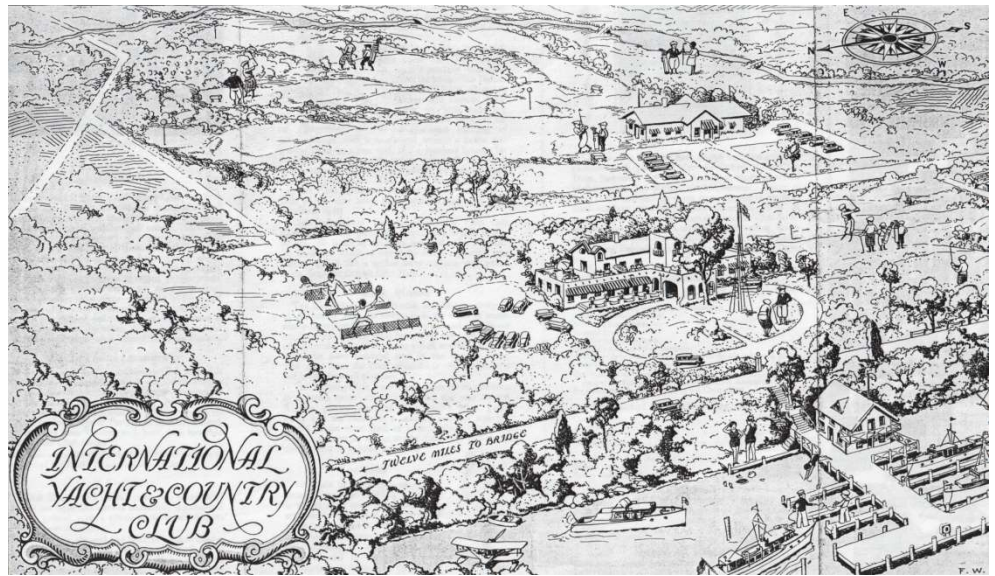


Illustration from a brochure advertising the club (MCS 1993.143)

In 1933, Major Charles Short opened Villa Gardens in the former clubhouse after a bit of restoration work. Villa Gardens was the headquarters of the Young Players' Club, a performance art group for youth. Dances were held every Saturday night at Villa Gardens in addition to special event celebrations. This venture was short-lived as well. In 1937, the structure was completely razed, erasing a building that seemed full of promise only a decade before.

COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS



MCS2016.007



*Bow of the third deck of the Bob-Lo Island excursion steamer Columbia, 1976.
Photo by Terry Hall. (MCS AS2019.044.019)*

Some of the larger items from our Bob-Lo exhibit, including a set of deck chairs, have been put back into archival storage. Unfortunately we don't know exactly which boat these were from, but we know it was either the Ste. Claire or the Columbia. They were made by the company Snyder Chair Co. which was founded in 1919 and in the 1970s became Palmer Snyder. Although this style of chair was made over many years, this set in particular appear to have been built between 1940-1970.



UPSETTING THE HOUR GLASS

1933

June- Mr. Lloyd E. Embree, a well-known summer resident of Glen Eden, located on the Malden waterfront, has completed the building of a most unique fireplace. The stone used was salvaged from the original foundation of the historic Callam home at Callam's Bay on the Malden waterfront.

July- Nude Bathing. Some complaints were registered last week against young lads swimming off the Murray Street dock in the altogether. The police took a look-see, as September morns are not permitted to exhibit their charms at that place.

August- Two good-looking, happy and carefree appearing young men attracted attention on the streets of Amherstburg Saturday forenoon. They were attired in nondescript clothing adapted best to beach-wearing. One's straw hat had no lid on the top, and his hair had an inclination to climb through; while his companion had nothing on his friend when it came to attire, but both could whistle in several keys in a way to make an English lark green with envy. They were totally oblivious of the attention their merry whistling aroused, as they passed up street.

1943

June- For Father's Day Remembrance the baskets of flowers placed by the memorial window in Christ Church on Sunday, June 20, were in loving memory of Dr. W. Fred Park,

Harry Hamilton, and Lieutenant Merle Morgan.

July- Thursday, July 1, will be Canadian Day on Bob-Lo and the large passenger boats Columbia and the Ste. Claire will carry passengers from Amherstburg to Bob-Lo and return.

August- Recently thieves broke the back window of the McKim Auto Showroom, Murray Street, reached in and stole a couple of gas ration books from a drawer in a desk near the window.

1953

June- The Amherstburg chapter of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America held a social evening in the banquet room of the Amherst Hotel recently.

July- An aerial target towed by a plane from the Grosse Isle Naval Air Station broke loose from the plane on Sunday morning and crashed into a field on the farm of H.L. Rebidoux.

August- The Amherstburg branch of Canadian Cannery Limited began accepting tomatoes on Monday and the plant is now in operation for the 1953 season. They manufacture Aylmer Brand Catsup for the Canadian trade and Aylmer Brand Ketchup for export trade.

1963

June- Fifty-four tons of shelled peas are produced each day at the Nicholson Pea Vinery, Fourth

Concession, Anderdon Township.

July- Lack of rain is causing grave concern among area farmers. During the week ending Tuesday morning only 2/100ths of an inch of rain fell on Sunday. This was the first since June 13th. Farmers are beginning to liken this season to the three years in the 1930s when total yearly rainfall amounted to 12, 17, and 19 inches. Average rainfall is over 28 inches.

August- During the middle of the summer the ride "Flight to Mars" was put into operation on Bob-Lo. It was one of two amusements that came from Germany to the resort this summer. It was unloaded from a Saltie at Detroit and brought down to the island on a McQueen Marine Limited derrick scow.

1973

June- Better watch your speed while using Anderdon Township roads. The Anderdon police department has put into operation a muni-quip digital radar which is considered the best and most accurate available.

July- Thirty-four Amherstburg merchants have banded together to hold a sidewalk sale this Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Parts of Dalhousie and Murray Street will be closed to allow for booths and entertainment. Featured will be the Windsor clown band. On Friday evening a teenage street dance will be held.

August- Saturday, August 18th, will mark 60 years of Ray Nicholson "Nick-the-Barber" operating his barbershop on the south side of Murray between Dalhousie and Ramsay.

Prudence

By Al Jackson

It was an extremely busy time during the latter part of the 1950s on the lower portion of the Detroit River with a great deal of dredging activity in the Amherstburg Channel. Not only was this massive deepening operation in full swing on the river, but the exploration for oil and gas under the waters of Lake Erie was underway also. McQueen Marine Ltd. of Amherstburg was playing a major role in these two operations, but they also had a contract with the federal government to maintain all of the "aids to navigation" (buoys) from Pelee Island to the Ambassador Bridge. The company would also be called upon for salvage operations and towing jobs when needed. McQueen's fleet was in dire need of another tugboat at this time.

This dilemma was solved when the general manager of McQueen's put in an offer to purchase a rather large but older tug called PRUDENCE. The asking price for the tug was \$35,000 from Fred Ellis of the Hamilton Tugboat Co. on February 26, 1957. On March 4th, McQueen personnel went to Owen Sound for an inspection where the 135-foot long tug was in winter layup. Everything was found to be okay with the old tug but the insurance company said she was not seaworthy until certain repairs were made to her stern and rudder. McQueen Marine hired Captain Jim Nelson of Owen Sound to outfit her and get the repairs looked after. She was taken to the Collingwood Shipyard where the necessary repairs were made and her

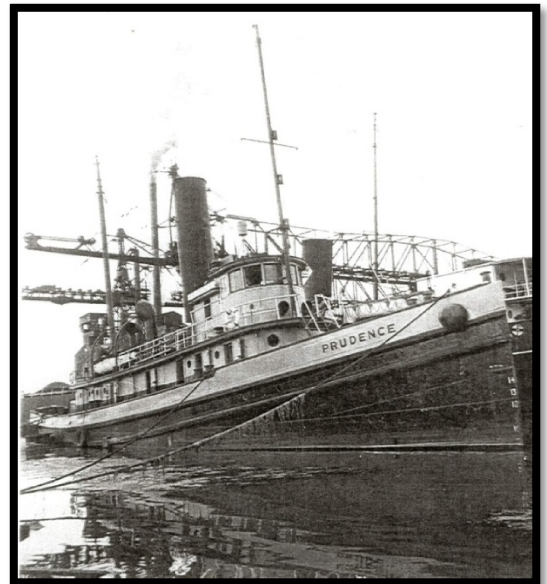


Prudence at Erieau. Photo from the Mark Santavy Collection.

insurance became effective on April 1, 1957.

Once off the Collingwood drydock on April 19, 1957, her first task was to assist McQueen's tug ATOMIC with a towing job for McNamara Construction Co. of two dump scows from Owen Sound to Port Colborne. After that tow her next job was to assist the ATOMIC in towing the burned out hulks of the CITY OF DETROIT III and the GREATER DETROIT from Detroit to the Steel Company of Canada at Hamilton for scrapping. This tow netted McQueen Marine a tidy sum of \$20,000.

Continued on page 7....



Prudence, July 1957.

The PRUDENCE was built in 1900 at Camden, New Jersey with a steel hull and wooden cabins which gave her that classic steam tug look. Her coal fired boiler and triple expansion steam engine (750 ihp) gave her a top speed of 17 knots with lots of black smoke. The rules for the International Tugboat Races on the Detroit River were changed in 1957 so that tugs over 115 feet in length could enter, but she did not participate because of work commitments for Underwater Gas Developers Ltd. on the day of the race.

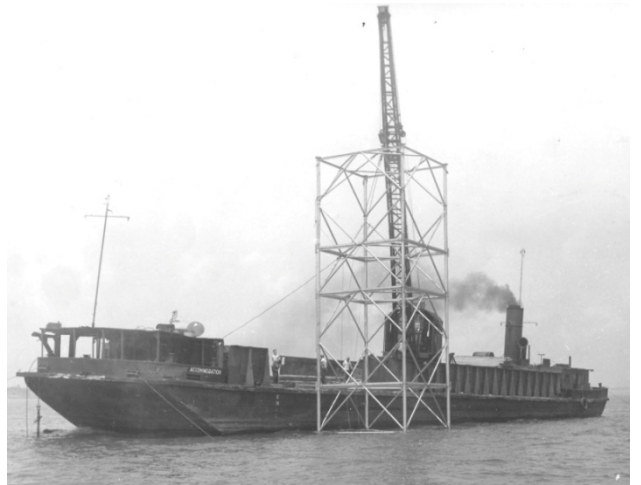
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Upon returning to Amherstburg on May 4th, she began a career working with Underwater Gas Developers Ltd. (UGLD) of Erieau, Ont., in their search for natural gas deposits on the Canadian side of western Lake Erie. She was paired with McQueen's derrick barge ACCOMMODATION and the two were responsible for installing/ disassembling and moving the drilling towers to various drill sites.

On June 15th McQueen Marine sent PRUDENCE to south Chicago to bring back two large flat bed scows and a smaller tug ROEN JR for Marine Operators Ltd., to be used in the Detroit River deepening project. This tow returned to Amherstburg on June 24th. Even though the job was plagued with bad weather and breakdowns of the smaller tug, McQueen still made \$10,480 to put in the bank.

On June 25th she returned to Erieau to resume her UGLD duties with the ACCOMMODATION but on November 20th she was called away again at \$85.00/hour to help free the freighter ALEXANDER LESLIE that had run aground at the entrance to the Erieau harbor.

In early December she and the ACCOMMODATION were used to help remove the large lake buoys from the waters of Lake Erie for the winter. Her last job for the year was to tow a salvaged derrick scow from Southampton to Sault Ste. Marie for \$5,000. She returned to Amherstburg from the Soo on December 5th and laid up for the winter at the Department of Public Works dock.



Top photo: Prudence and Accommodation leaving Erieau, no date. (Mark Santavy Collection)

Bottom photo: Accommodation, no date.

THEN & NOW



On the left is a picture of the Navy Yard gardens in 1996, when the rhododendrons and azaleas were relatively small. The picture on the right was taken this month in the same area. Rhodo Bob (Robert Sutherland) was instrumental in bringing these Navy Yard Park gardens to life. He is pictured above working on them in 1995.

WHAT IS THE MARSH COLLECTION SOCIETY?

By Eleanor Gignac-Warren



Siblings John & Helen Marsh

Most local history enthusiasts know that Amherstburg is one of the most historically significant places in Ontario. However, some may not be aware that there is a popular facility in this community that contains abundant sources for local history and genealogy research. That site at 80 Richmond Street is the home of the Marsh Collection Society, also known as the Marsh Historical Collection. This registered not-for-profit, charitable organization was created in 1983 by the late brother and sister, John and Helen Marsh, whose family owned and operated *The Amherstburg Echo* for 84 years, from 1897 to 1981.

During the 1970s, while employed at Fort Malden National Historic Site in Amherstburg, a significant part of my position involved the cataloguing of its massive collection of artifacts, which included an abundance of old local photographs...especially early Amherstburg buildings, people and activities.

John Marsh was a regular Friday afternoon visitor to Fort Malden. Having been one of the key players in its 1938 establishment, he always maintained a keen

interest in what was happening at "the Fort." During one of those visits John was shown the progression of the historic photograph cataloguing project. An idea for a new weekly *Echo* feature entitled "Those Were the Days", was presented to Marsh, to which he was enthusiastic. His Friday afternoon visits thereafter included picking up a photo to be used in the following week's issue of *The Amherstburg Echo*.

My employment at Fort Malden ended in 1980, but the mutual friendship with John and Helen Marsh continued. We often spoke of what would happen to their personal and important collections of old newspaper articles (*The Echo* Morgue), books of local history, etc. John and Helen pondered the question and discussed the matter with their personal friend and attorney, Richard D. Thrasher, Q.C. After a great deal of thought and discussion, the Marsh Collection Society was organized in 1983, with the provision, insisted by John, that a physical facility would not be opened until after his demise. The Marsh siblings passed away prior to the 1994 physical opening. Helen Marsh died in March 1986; John Marsh lived until February 1993.

On October 12, 1994, Jennifer MacLeod was hired as the first archivist and with myself as administrator officially opened the Marsh Collection Society on the second floor of 235 Dalhousie Street in downtown Amherstburg. By 1997 the facility had doubled in size, both in floor space, holdings and

employees. By 2017, the continued growth of the collections and researchers caused the need for yet more space, so the organization moved into where it remains today at 80 Richmond Street.

The facility contains a large collection of photos, books, documents, artifacts and many other items relating to the Amherstburg-Malden-Anderdon area. The library boasts several shelves of books on a wide variety of subjects, including miscellaneous Amherstburg and Essex County history, Black history, Indigenous history, genealogies, buildings, church, marine and military history, and so much more. Researchers from communities locally and abroad have made great use of the collections since 1994.

Microfilm holdings include census records, assessment rolls, land instruments, local newspapers - including *The Amherstburg Echo* and the *River Town Times*. The Marsh Collection staff has also published for sale a variety of books on various topics of local interest. *Reflections*, this quarterly newsletter, is available at the office and online. The Marsh staff has been and is currently engaged in digitizing the collection which will eventually be made available online.



THE MARSH TURNED 40 THIS YEAR!

