



Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection
Amherstburg, Ontario



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BRICKS-N-BEAMS: AMHERSTBURG'S TOWN HALLS

By Meg Reiner

Given the current conversation surrounding the possible relocation of Amherstburg's municipal building, we thought an article about past town halls would be fitting. The current building is the fourth structure to serve as a town hall, and so public debates like those happening now have occurred before.

Before Amherstburg became an official municipality, meetings were held in a building on the west side of Dalhousie Street, near Murray Street. The space is referred to as "Town Hall" in *The Amherstburg Courier* newspaper throughout 1849, and aside from public meetings, concerts and auctions were also held there.

In 1851, Amherstburg elected its first Municipal Council (five councillors headed by a reeve). Land was purchased on the corner of Gore and Apsley (Sandwich) Streets in 1853 to become the site of a new town hall. The building was set to be complete in May of 1854. By 1875, *The Amherstburg Echo* was reporting on the poor condition of the then twenty-one year old town hall. In one article, *The Echo* referred to the building as a "wretched apology" of a hall, while another article complained of the quality of light: "It is extremely

disagreeable for both speakers and listeners to remain any length of time in a room with just enough light to make darkness visible." At that time, *The Echo* strongly believed the hall was not large enough for Amherstburg, which the paper described as the largest town in the district and "generally regarded as the head-quarters of the South Riding of Essex, and which is likely to be the scene of many meetings formerly held in Sandwich and Windsor." Amherstburg was still three years away from achieving town status and electing its first mayor.

Despite complaints, many citizens objected to a new building due to the costs. When a by-law was brought to Council which would grant authority to raise, through a loan, \$10,000 to erect a new town hall, it was voted down 73-56. Some residents wanted the hall to be located closer to their homes. A by-law came before council again in 1883 "for the purposes of erecting a Town Hall and suitable public offices for the town."

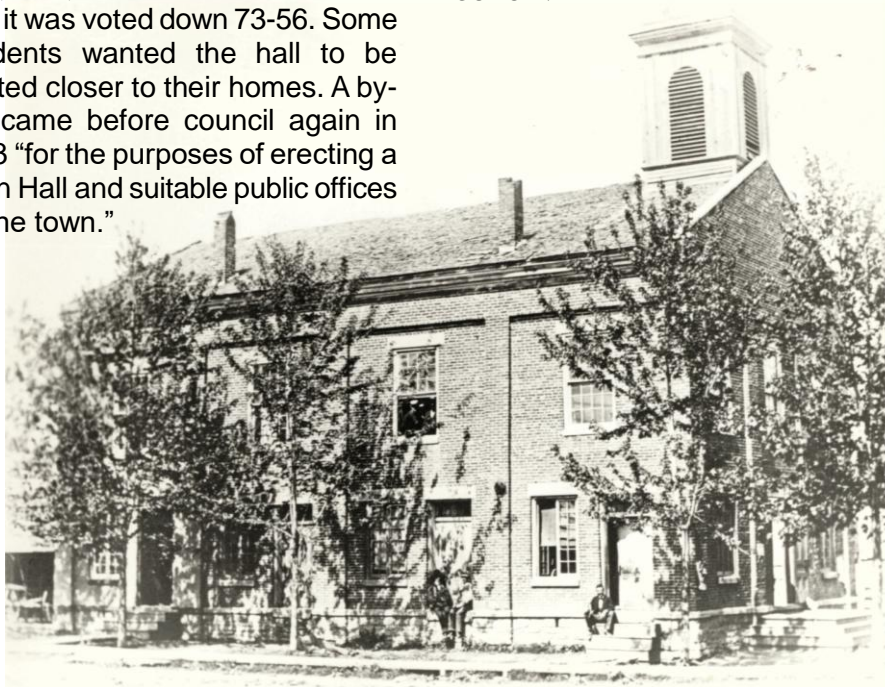
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Leading up to the vote, reports were published in the paper regarding safety issues with the standing town hall, and complete lack of space for public gatherings in Amherstburg. This time, authority was granted by a majority of 118 votes. In celebration of the outcome, supporters discharged firearms throughout town that evening.

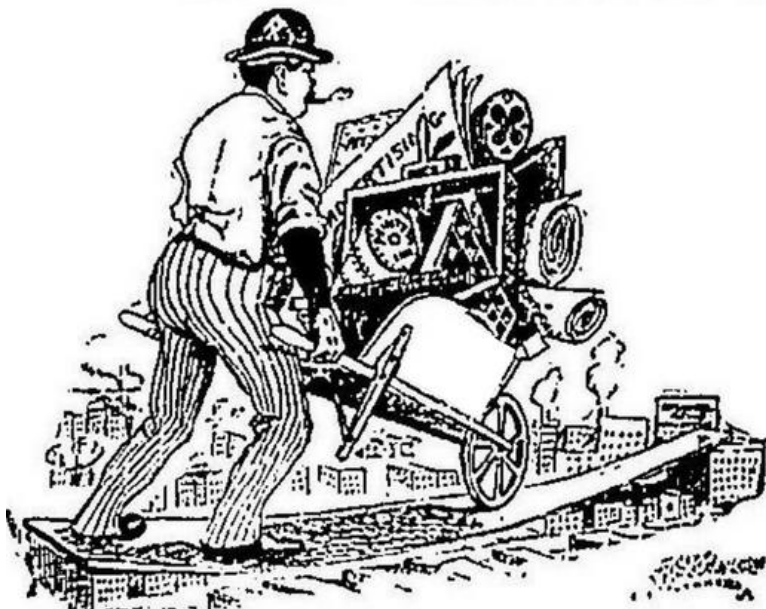
Continued on page 3...

Town Hall 1854-1994
MCS P572



HAPPENINGS AT THE MARSH

WE ARE MOVING !



Reproduced from the Amherstburg Echo, September 24, 1915

We'll be in the same building, but our office is moving to another unit. In order to relocate and set up the new space, the office be closed as of June 20th. Stay tuned!

BRUNNER MOND EXHIBIT



Thanks to the Canada Summer Jobs program, Ryan Delisle will be joining us as a Curatorial Assistant for the summer. Ryan is a graduate of the history program at the University of Windsor, and has begun a career in teaching. As an educator, he is passionate about enabling the further understanding, discovery, and dissemination of historical knowledge.

Ryan will be helping us with an exhibit to commemorate Brunner, Mond Canada Ltd. Brunner Mond was the first facility in Canada to produce soda ash using the Solvay process. Established on the Detroit River in Amherstburg in 1917, this industry became a pivotal economic driver and employer for Amherstburg and Essex County. The enterprise grew and adapted over decades, transitioning to Allied Chemical and later General Chemical. In 2020, the former office building was razed, though the memory of this industry lives on through former employees and in the lasting impact it has left on the community.

Funded by the Government of Canada

Canada 

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 Tuesday- Friday.
(Mondays by appointment only)

Email: research@marshcollection.org

Website: www.marshcollection.org

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

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS



Did you or a family member work for Brunner Mond/ Allied Chemical/ General Chemical? Would you like to share your experience with us for the exhibit? Please get in touch!

If you have photos, records, or objects relating to the company that you would like to donate or loan for the exhibit, please contact our office.



AMHERSTBURG'S TOWN HALLS

...Continued from page 1

Mason & Rice, a Detroit firm responsible for many buildings in Walkerville (including the Canadian Club Brand Centre) were hired as architects for the new structure. The cost was \$14,500. This new town hall included a council chamber, clerk's office, ticket office, firemen's assembly room, lock-up, and large reception hall. A bell was purchased from Buhl Sons & Co. of Detroit and installed in the tower as a fire alarm. Unfortunately, the bell was soon needed to signal a fire in town hall itself.

Mrs. Reaume, who lived on Seymore Street, was in her kitchen at midnight on March 10th, 1890, when she noticed a light shining through her windows. She told Mr. Reaume who ran to wake Captain Lemay. When they arrived at town hall the fire was small, confined to the wood ceiling in the engine room. Captain Lemay tried to put out the flames with a bucket of water, but soon the engine was brought out when more small fires appeared. Though the engine performed well, efforts were stalled when the Gore Street tank ran out of water and the fire was able to spread. In the end the building was severely damaged. Arson was suspected, aimed at both the town hall and the fire apparatus within. The damaged structure was soon rebuilt, the project lead by local architects Alexander Ellis and James Wilderspin.

By 1960, the condition of town hall was described as deplorable, prompting council discussions and proposals for renovations, new builds, and relocation. The council chambers were too small, heating systems inadequate, and the second floor unused due to safety



concerns. The Amherstburg Lions Club actually turned the second floor into a shooting range and organized nightly "Turkey Shoots." Despite how it sounds, participants were not shooting at the birds themselves, but at a target for the chance to win a turkey. This was a fundraiser for the Lion Club Swimming Pool.

One plan to renovate the building was estimated to cost \$67,000, another which involved removing the top storey was quoted at \$35,000, and a new hall was expected to cost \$60,000. In 1962, the Town was in the process of purchasing the former post office at the foot of Richmond Street to be used as the town hall. This fell through when it was decided that the post office building would also require major renovations and so the plan was impractical. Instead, in 1965, the old town hall was razed and cleared for the construction of a new municipal building. W.J. Hilliker, Windsor architect, designed the structure and Aronne Bros. were hired as the contractor. Duby Electric, of Amherstburg, did the heating and electrical work. The cost for this building, our current town hall, was \$120,000.

What will the new town hall look like and where will it be located?



Top right: Town Hall (1884-1965) MCS P4703/ Bottom left: Razing of town hall in 1965. MCS 2021.008.012./ Bottom right: Current municipal building, 1975. Photo by Rev. Theron Brock Buchanan. MCS 2019.036.075.

UPSETTING THE HOUR GLASS



1935

June- During the past week the Dominion Store has been in the hands of carpenters and decorators and has been almost completely remodelled. When the work is completed it will be one of the finest appearing stores in Essex County and one in which the town and district should take pride.

July- This has been a cold, damp summer so far, but in spite of that more people every day are coming to Amherstburg to Bob-Lo, which is more attractive than ever this year. Besides the night dancing is becoming very popular.

August- Amherstburg is now being advertised as a haven for pleasure yachts since a large sign has been painted at Woods' dock. The sign announces in large letters that can be easily distinguished from the Detroit River: "Amherstburg, Free Dockage for Yachts Only."

1945

June- Russel Brothers, Limited, ship builders of Owen Sound, have been awarded the contract to build a powerful new steel tug for McQueen Marine Limited of Amherstburg. The new tug will be one of the most powerful on the Great Lakes and will be powered by an 800 H.P. diesel marine engine.

July- Six Amherstburg soldiers were aboard the Queen Mary when she docked in New York, Wednesday. . . . The boys include Private Murray Deneau, Private Lloyd Saker, Sergeant J.A. Foster, Private Darrel R. Hunt, Private

Robert F. Maitre and Private John A. Mallette.

August- Amherstburg town officials have been assured that the federal order with respect to dogs running at large in the municipality will be administered with discretion and that dogs will not be shot indiscriminately.

1955

June- Frank Parks of Detroit got the thrill of his lifetime while fishing in the Lower Detroit River, Monday morning. He had been hauling in silver bass when suddenly something bit his line and it took him 30 minutes to finally land his catch, which was a 31 pound muskellunge measuring 49-½ inches.

July- Brunner Mond Canada, Limited, announced today that it plans to expand soda ash production capacity at its plant in Amherstburg to meet increasing consumption of the product by Canada's basic industries.

August- First steps towards the construction of Amherstburg's new quarter of a million dollar federal building were taken Monday morning when workmen began clearing the site on Richmond Street.

1965

June- Ledson Darragh, collector of customs for the port of Amherstburg, reports there were 301 small craft that reported into the Amherstburg Customs during the week ending Sunday night. This brought in 1,237 tourists.

July- Mrs. Howard Hodgkinson was a happy person Monday

when a lost pocket-book containing \$163 was turned in to police by two Malden Township teenagers. The pocket-book was picked up along King's Highway No. 18, near Lacey's dock, by Garry and Brian Hutchins, sons of Mr. and Mrs. Si Hutchins.

August- A hundred dollar reward is being offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons who defaced the outer wall of the First Baptist Church, George Street, Amherstburg and also the person or persons who lettered "Home of K.K.K." on signs at the entrances in Amherstburg.

1975

June- Honourable Eugene Whelan, federal minister of agriculture, was honoured by his home town people at a large gathering held at the Verdi Club, Friday evening.

July- A major step towards the preservation of historical buildings in Amherstburg was taken by the town council Monday night when By-law No. 1388 was passed establishing a local architectural conservation advisory committee.

August- The Amherstburg plant Canadian Cannery Limited will start the 1975 season tomato processing operations this week. Keith Clark, manager, told the Echo this is a week earlier than usual. Mr. Clark stated the off-shore labour has started to come in Amherstburg. These men are housed in a company owned camp near the plant.

Amherstburg native Joe Sinasac spent 47 years in journalism and publishing. He recently retired and moved back to Essex County. Thank you to Joe for joining the Marsh Collection Society as a volunteer, and compiling this issue's *Upsetting the Hour Glass* page.

AURELIAN & ROWDY (PART I)

By Al Jackson

This is a story about a former Amherstburg resident and his luck with boats, or should I say, bad luck with boats. The man's name was Aurelian (Rill) Francis Wigle who was born into the Wigle family on March 12, 1915. His mother was Norma Marie Wigle and his father was Forrest Daniel Wigle. They raised five children, two girls and three boys.

Aurelian's bad luck began in the late 1930's as a young man when he was charged with possession of some items that had gone missing from the partially submerged excursion steamer TASHMOO. This passenger steamboat had struck an underwater obstacle in the Detroit River on the evening of June 18, 1936 and was in a sinking condition when it was forced to land at the Brunner Mond of Canada coal dock just north of Amherstburg (but that's another story). The items that were found to be in Aurelian's possession were a small boat, two oars, a paddle, and a life vest. The outcome to the charges is unknown but, in any case, Aurelian and his mother moved to Detroit in 1942. His father, an employee at Brunner Mond, had died the previous year at the age of 58.

While living in Detroit he became a successful stockbroker, spent a little over two years as a Seabee in the United States Navy, and later became a naturalized citizen. Being an avid sportsman with a love for the water, Aurelian purchased, with the encouragement of his mother, a second-hand 65-foot sailboat named ROWDY that he kept at the Bayview Yacht Club in Detroit. This wooden racing yacht was designed and built in 1916 at New York City by the

legendary sailboat builder Nathael Herresoff. This handsome schooner type boat had a single mast and was known by the

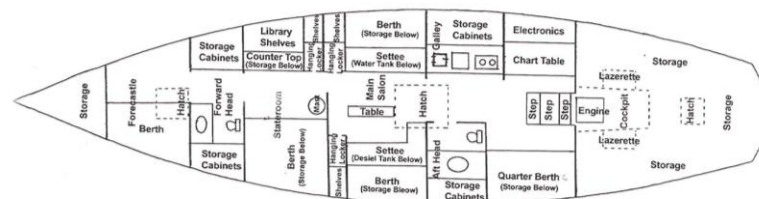


Bayview club members for its leopard skin décor and for the wild parties thrown by the boat's owner. At one point members of the Bayview Yacht Club embedded a memorial stone marker in a flower garden to show their admiration for ROWDY and Rill with the inscription "Old sailors never die they just float away."

Aurelian entered the ROWDY in many regattas and in the prestigious Port Huron to Mackinac Boat Race each year but with no favourable results. This sailboat race was, and still is, the largest and longest-running race on fresh water in the world.

More bad luck followed Aurelian in 1959 when he sued his insurance company in the United States District Court after the company refused to pay for damages to the ROWDY when Aurelian and some of his friends were attempting to lay the boat up for the winter. Aurelian claimed the accidental damage and sinking were caused by "perils of the sea" but the lawyers for the Aetna Casualty and Surety Company said the accident was caused by the sheer negligence of Aurelian and his friends. The district court judge ruled in favour of the insurance company with the result that Aurelian received no compensation.

In 1961, near the end of the sailing season on the Great Lakes, Aurelian decided to take his boat down south for the winter via the Erie Barge Canal and the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway where he might have better luck in the Florida racing circuit. To be continued.



Top Right: Photo of Aurelian Wigle from *The Buffalo News* November 18, 1961. Bottom left: The ROWDY. Bottom right: The layout of the ROWDY.

COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS: PHOTOGRAPHS BY D.H. TERRY

By Meg Reiner

In Amherstburg, one photographer stands out for having supplied us with the majority of surviving portraits of Amherstburg people in the 19th century. His name is D.H. Terry.

Douglas H. Terry was born in Saginaw County, Michigan, in 1854. He learned photography there and eventually made his way to Amherstburg, where he purchased the business of Thomas H. Scott in 1878. At the time, Terry was in partnership with a person having the surname Coy. Their photograph gallery was located on the second storey of present-day 249 Dalhousie Street. Terry & Coy were the third to occupy the gallery, which had first been opened by W.W. Davidson in 1874. The Terry & Coy studio advertised card prints in a set of 12 for \$1.50, and tintypes for 25 cents. Stereoscopic views of buildings or roads were also available. The partnership did not last long, as D.H. Terry was advertising on his own by mid-1879.

Samples of Terry's work were always on display in his photograph gallery on Dalhousie Street. He became known throughout Essex County, and the newspaper would announce when he was available in Harrow, Kingsville, and Essex for sittings. Aside from photos, Terry advertised frames, crayon enlargements, and oil paintings. The obituary of his first wife, Annie Campeau, notes that she was a skilled artist and did many portraits. We wonder whether she was providing this service, as nothing has indicated that Terry himself was a painter.

Most of the prints we attribute to D.H. Terry are portrait photographs, identifiable by his name ornately printed on the bottom or reverse of the card. We know he also captured local scenery and events, because it was reported in the local papers. Terry was responsible for a well-known photo of the April 6th, 1886 blizzard on Murray Street, though the photo itself does not credit him. On July 27th 1907, *The Windsor Star* announced that Terry had been up and about early in the day capturing views of the town to be made into souvenir postcards. As another example, *The Amherstburg Echo* made note when Terry photographed the steamer *City of Dresden* using the new instantaneous process. How many more scenic views in our collection were taken by Terry but have not been linked to him?

Throughout his life, Terry seemed to constantly develop new interests. In his later years, advertisements suggest a shift in focus from photography to his stationery and notion store. He offered services as an optician, having completed an optical course in 1902. Aside from his business, Terry served on the public school board, on town council, for two years as reeve, and was appointed landing waiter of customs in 1913. He is remembered for having built the first roller rink in town, and just before his death he was planning to install a moving picture theatre in his Dalhousie Street building. D.H. Terry died suddenly in 1913 at the young age of 60.



Amherstburg Art Crawl

July 18 - 20 | Open Air



artamherstburg.ca

D.H. Terry is one of Amherstburg's photographers from the past who we will be featuring during the Amherstburg Art Crawl this year. Come and see the town through the lens of its early cameramen.

CHAUTAUQUA

By Meg Reiner

Chautauqua is an Indigenous word that has been translated to “place of mists,” “place of easy death,” or, “where the fish was taken out.”¹ The word became associated with a travelling educational movement beginning in 1874 when a summer school was established on Lake Chautauqua in New York. The intention of the original school was to combine “adult education with morally uplifting recreation.” Though it began in the United States, the Chautauqua movement became popular in Canada by 1917. An article in *The Windsor Evening Record* on November 10th, 1917, announced that the Chautauqua program had come to Ontario after experiencing success in the west. The first local event would be held the following summer in various towns, including Amherstburg.

Chautauquas were held in the summer, in large tents, and lasted about a week. The programs offered lectures, music and performances from professionals, celebrities and experts within a range of fields. In one article the Chautauquas were referred to as “the great travelling university of the common people.” The shows were open to all and often, a junior Chautauqua was held in

conjunction with the main program.

The first Chautauqua in Amherstburg was held from August 31st to September 6th, 1918, in the Town Park. Given the title “Win-The-War Chautauqua,” the program focused on arousing civic pride, using the slogan “inspiration, recreation, education.” The Dominion Chautauqua Company had pledged cooperation with the government to win the war, and proceeds were directed to patriotic organizations. The course included several lectures: “The Camouflage of Kaiserism” by Dr. W.H. Davidson, “Conservation of Food” by Mrs. I.W. Johnston of the Women’s Auxiliary of the Ontario Organization of Resources, and the renowned “Acres of Diamonds” by Russell Conwell. Among the entertainers were: Miss Madge Williamson, a nationally recognized

pianist, the Royal Dragoons Band, and the Danish prima donna Madame Bodinoff. For laughs, “The Comedy of Errors” was performed by the Ben Greet Players.

Additional Chautauquas were held in Amherstburg. In 1921, the Coit-Alber company brought their tour to town. It was held in July on the Richmond Street lot currently occupied by Scotiabank. A big tent was erected there. Season tickets were available for \$2.00 and proceeds were directed to the Brunner Mond Band.

The Chautauqua of 1922 was held at the same location as the previous year but was scheduled at the end of August. The Brunner Mond Band brought the circuit to town. That year, 256 tickets were sold, but it was not enough and resulted in a \$100 deficit. A committee was appointed to determine whether to bring the Chautauqua back the following year. G.N. Comly, E. Patton, Dr. Hutchinson, M. Mullen, S.M. Johnston, E. Harris, and A.W. Marsh were its members. It seems the committee decided against proceeding as there were no reports of a Chautauqua for 1923. It is unclear when the last Chautauqua was held in Amherstburg.

The 1930s saw the end of the Chautauquas as a popular travelling show.

CHAUTAUQUA WEEK

August 31st--Sept. 6th

The Biggest Event in the History of Amherstburg.

6 DAYS OF Inspiration, Recreation, Education

The Keypote of the Whole Programme being toward the Winning of the War.

Have you examined the program which was sent to you a few days ago?

The Ticket Committee is busy and reports excellent results.

Have You Bought Your Ticket?

A TWO-DOLLAR TICKET admits you to ELEVEN Concerts (at about Eighteen Cents each), and is transferable in the owner's immediate family.

DON'T MISS THIS CHANCE to hear and see something REALLY WORTH WHILE.

The Amherstburg Echo August 23, 1918

¹ Translations and origins of Chautauqua sourced from: thecanadianencyclopedia.ca

THEN & NOW: 1430 Front Road South



Ducks on the Roof, 1975
Photograph by Rev. Theron Brock Buchanan
MCS2019.036.227




The Point Wellness Spa
June 15, 2025

CLIPPINGS FROM *THE AMHERSTBURG COURIER* NOTICES PUBLISHED IN 1849

The Amherstburg Courier was the town's earliest newspaper, published weekly from March 10th, 1849 to February 9th, 1850. James Augustus Reeves was the first owner, and Charles Sangster was the first editor.

SUMMER ARRANGEMENTS.




THE STEAM BOAT
SENECA.
W. A. BURY, MASTER,
WILL leave Amherstburg for Detroit during the ensuing Spring every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning at 7 o'clock. After the 1st of June she will leave Detroit for Amherstburg twice a day, at 10 o'clock, A. M. and 5 o'clock P. M. Passage 25 cents.— Freight 12½ cents per barrel bulk.
For freight or passage apply on board or to
THOMAS SALMONI.
Amherstburg, 26th March 1849. 5-3m

June 30th, 1849

Education.
MRS. and the MISSES BRAY, beg to inform the inhabitants of Amherstburg, that they intend to open a **SCHOOL** for **YOUNG LADIES**, in the house lately occupied by Mr. Marie, on Seymour street, on *Monday the 1th of September*, and respectfully solicit a share of public patronage.
August 24th, 1849. 25 5*

August 25th, 1849



NOTICE.
TENDERS will be received at this Office until **NOON** on **SATURDAY** the 21st instant, from such persons as may be willing to furnish
671²⁶₆₁ BUSHELS INDIAN CORN,
of the best quality, to be ready for inspection by the Commissariat, at some convenient Store in Amherstburg, on or before the last day of the month; to be retained by the Contractor and shipped in bulk by him on board such vessel and in such manner as may be hereafter directed, at his sole risk and cost.
Two good and sufficient shroeties will be required for the due and faithful performance of the contract.
Forms of Tender may be had at this office and no others will be noticed.
Parties tendering are reminded that the Duties will not be exacted should the Corn be imported from a Foreign Country.
COMMISSARIAT.
Amherstburg, 12th July, 1849. 19-2w

July 21st, 1849

AMHERSTBURG
TOTAL
ABSTINANCE
SOCIETY.
THE ANNUAL PIC NIC of the A.T.A.S. will be held on the Farm of Henry Wright, Esq., Malden, on Thursday next, 23d August, when the Societies of Gosfield and Colchester, and all others favorable to the cause, are invited to attend.
Several Gentlemen will address the meeting.
The Procession will convene on Ramsey St. at 10 o'clock, A. M., and will march from thence to the Pic Nic Ground.
Music will be in attendance. A collection will be taken up in aid of the Funds of the Society.
ALEX. BARTLET,
Amherstburg, Aug. 17, 1849. Sec'y.

August 18th, 1849

TO LET.
THE BRITISH NORTH AMERICAN HOTEL, Amherstburg, situated in Front street, fronting the docks, is to let for a term of not less than three years. Inquire of G Bullock, owner. 2

August 18th, 1849