



Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection
Amherstburg, Ontario



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All I Want for Christmas

By Phyllis Chant

The most difficult question that comes up at this time of year is "What do you want for Christmas?" There is a moment of panic when you hear it or, even worse, when you have to ask it. My spouse and I sat and stared at each other a couple of days ago, and neither one of us had an answer.

I thought that possibly at work, where I look at copies of The Amherstburg Echo almost every day, I might be able to find the answer to this age-old question. Looking back to 1874, the first year The Echo was in publication, there were no ads for Christmas shopping per se. I needed to jump ahead to 1900 to see Christmas business advertisements. Starting at the beginning of that century, I will share some of the gift ideas suggested by local businesses.

1900: "Difficulties Removed".

Here are some ideas for the man in your life: neckties, gloves, handkerchiefs, night robes and suspenders. Prices from 25 cents to \$1.80. This shopping venture would have taken you to Windsor's Bartlett & Macdonald store on Ouellette Avenue.

1910s: F.P. Scratch & Co. (Amherstburg) offered to assist the shopper with a long list of sensible

items for winter wear. I'm sure every child was mortified to see this list completely void of all toys. But the Jud. Smith store in town delivered on every tot's dreams with a splendid assortment of dolls, toys, and candies! It also offered cigars

and pipes. Also, stop by Lovegrove & Scratch to pick your Christmas tree and wreaths!

1920s: Wigle Hardware's gift list featured sensible gifts which would make modern women cringe: dishes, silverware, Pyrex, and the final suggestion for the 1928 housewife – an "electric washer".

On the bright side, Finlay's Cafe (Murray Street) was offering Christmas dinner for \$1. This included soup, lamb chop, ham, turkey, duck or chicken with potatoes, peas, plum pudding, pie, coffee, tea and Christmas cake. If that wasn't enough, you could pop into W.F. Fitch (across from the CIBC building) and pick up all your Christmas sweets.

Continued on page 2...



Christmas Toys and Post Cards.

We are ready with a complete line of Christmas Goods. Splendid Assortment.

Dolls
Toys
Post Cards
Bo klets
Calen-dars

Station-ery
Candies
Cigars
and
Pipes

The variety is great and the prices right.

JUD. SMITH.
AMHERSTBURG, ONT.

GIFT Suggestions

Folks, do you realize that you will have only two more full weeks to complete your Christmas shopping? Two very busy weeks for the average person. So there is no time to lose.

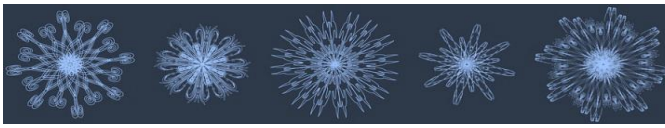
Make your gifts practical and useful, such as a CARVING SET, PYREX WARE, SILVERWARE, DISHES, ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES. Then for the Children a BICYCLE, KIDDIE CAR or JOYCYCLE. Why not make Mother happy with an ELECTRIC WASHER?

WIGLE HARDWARE CO.
"THE HIGH STANDARD STORE"
AMHERSTBURG - ONTARIO

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Top Ad: December 23, 1910
Bottom Ad: December 14, 1928



*Merry Christmas
&
Happy New Year*

from the
Marsh Collection Society
We will be CLOSED as of December 21st
And will REOPEN January 7th

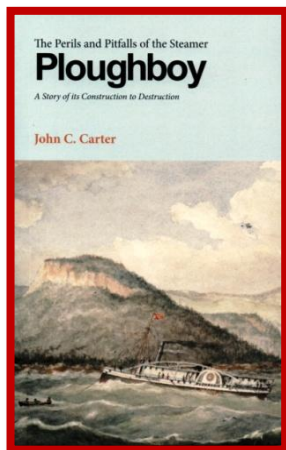
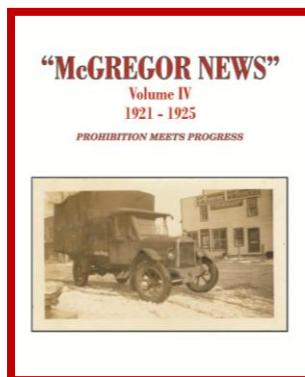


Gift Shop

*If you're looking for a gift for a local history buff,
or would like to add to your own library,
the Marsh Collection offers a variety
of publications, prints and notecards.*

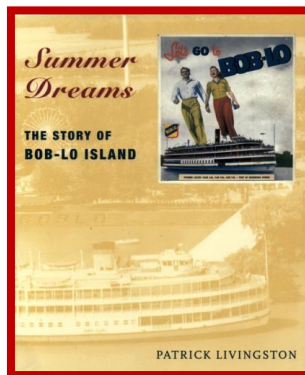
Reproduction Vintage Christmas Cards \$1.50
Matted Photographs of Historic Amherstburg \$10

McGregor News
Ind. Priced or
4-volume set for
\$85



Ploughboy \$15

Summer Dreams \$40



All I Want for Christmas (Con't)

1930s: Finally there was hope! Duffield's Jewelry Store (Murray Street, next to Jones' Soda Shop – Jones' is now the Lord Amherst) offered luxury items. Ladies had a choice of watches, diamond rings and lockets. For the gents, pocket watches, signet rings and cocktail sets. Over to the Dominion grocery store for turkeys, geese, candy, mixed nuts and oranges. Leslie's Confectionary also had special Christmas ice cream bricks! The C.H. Smith Co. (Amherstburg and Windsor) offered the traditional gifts of pyjamas, ties, gloves, shirts and suspenders for the fellas. For the ladies, there were silk hosiery, towel sets, embroidered pillow cases, or how about a "smart" handbag!

1940s: Of course, these are the war years and Tommie's Market on Dalhousie Street asked for donations to the "Overseas Smokes Fund" of the Amherstburg Chamber of Commerce. Each local soldier was sent 300 cigarettes per month. The Shillington Bros. ad asserted that "successful Santas" give these: C.C.M. hockey skates, tricycles, wagons and sleighs. Prices from 85 cents to \$14.95. Toasters, irons and coffee makers also available.

1950s: Kendall Hardware's ad had a woman saying, "Pssst – Santa Claus, these are the gifts I really want!" Yup, you guessed it: waffle iron, electric mixer, toaster and a carving set. But the big gift for ladies was the Spiralator Washer. Down at Drayton & Young Jewellers, Christmas shopping was "easy", as one dollar would hold any Bulova watch until Christmas. Gift rings started from \$16.50!

**MAKE HER CHRISTMAS
A BIG ONE WITH AN**

**EASY Spiralator
WASHER**

- No finer washer at any price
- Exclusive EASY Spiralator
- World's finest, fastest washing action
- Giant Titanium Enamel Tub
- Safe-o-matic Wringer
- Automatic 60-second Pump
- Precision Mechanism
- 5 Year Guarantee

Small Down Payment
EASY TERMS
On The Balance

Up to \$70.00
Trade-In
Allowance



**MORE EASY WASHERS SOLD
THAN ANY OTHER MAKE**

*The
Amherstburg Echo,
November 8, 1956*

1960s: The Wigle Hardware ad headlined "Gifts that say Merry Christmas" included electric saws, sanders, lazy susans, wagons and bicycles. Hamilton Furniture & Appliances' Christmas special was a GE 23" Console TV. Only \$228.88 with a trade-in.

Judging by that survey of over 70 years of Christmas advertisements in The Echo, I guess the question "What do you want for Christmas?" has been a timeless one. It was amusing to see that many of the gifts that we give today have been standards over the past century. Pyjamas, socks and gloves will always win. Luckily for me, I have already made those purchases for my family. Please keep my secret. I, of course, am hoping to see a smart handbag or Spiralator washer under the tree.

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**



Then & Now

Jones China Shop, 273 Dalhousie

George H. Jones was very active in municipal affairs, having served as mayor of Amherstburg from 1928-1931, Justice of the Peace, town clerk, and treasurer. He is also remembered for his popular shop which operated at the corner of Dalhousie and Murray, now the Lord Amherst Pub. The confectionery and china shop was opened in 1913 as when Jones took over Judson Smith's business. The shop was often praised for the quality of sodas and ice cream available. On July 26, 1942, *The Windsor Daily Star* published this piece about the shop:

“Jones’ shop has two distinctions in Amherstburg. One is that it stocks only the finest of chinaware and the other is that G.H. Jones is the former town clerk and mayor of this town!”

Located near the ferry dock for the boat to Bob-Lo, the shop is a mecca for tourists to the famous amusement island on Canadian holidays. It is one of the very first places in the town which American tourists seek out in Amherstburg. The success which has attended Mr. Jones’ business undertaking has attracted much attention in the town

as it has characterized him with the same ability for efficiency as he displayed in municipal affairs. The shop serves the public with an ice cream fountain as well as stocking china.”

George H. Jones died in 1956, but the shop continued on for many years. In earlier years the shop was called “Jones’ Soda Shop” but eventually the china became the dominant part of the store, resulting in the name change to “Jones China Shop” as seen in the above photo.



Above: Jones China Shop, c.1975 MCS 2019.036.044
Below: Lord Amherst Pub, present-day





Upsetting the Hour Glass

1929/30

December- The Amherstburg Goodfellows are asking the good citizens of Amherstburg and vicinity to be liberal in their contributions this year, so that no kiddie will go without a Christmas.

January- The new 1930 markers for your automobile can now be obtained at Cooper's Novelty Store. As it is necessary all cars should have same- get yours now.

February- There will be a dance at the Malden Town Hall, February 11th. Dancing 9-11. Everybody welcome.

1939/40

December- When Santa Claus visits Amherstburg this year he will find it all dressed up to welcome him. Through the efforts of the Business Men's Association the main streets of the town have been decorated with streamers of laurel leaves and coloured lights.

January- Something new and different will be offered at the Rotary Club skating carnival. Numerous prizes will be given for the best and funniest costumes as well as for the race events.

February- Bright new enamel street signs are being put up on all the corners in Amherstburg.

1949/50

December- The Lions Committee in charge of the Santa Claus parade announces the route will be from Laird Avenue at the High School to North Street, to Sandwich Street, south to Gore Street, west to Dalhousie, north to Richmond, east to Sandwich and turn north to the Town Park.

January- Official notice of the formation of Local 1628, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers has been received by both the Amherstburg Town Council and the Amherstburg Public Utilities Commission.

February- The new ladder truck for the Amherstburg Fire Department will arrive in town the middle of next week. In addition to ladders and other firefighting equipment, the new truck will carry 500 feet of 2 ½ -inch hose.

1959/60

December- Short wave radio sets will be used by members of the Amherstburg Police Department in the execution of their duties. Provision for the purchasing of the necessary

equipment was authorized by the Board of Police Commissioners. Also authorized was the purchase of a riot gun.

January- Police Chief Hannah reported the town property committee had made an inspection of the town lockup and found it in poor condition.

February- Smith Bishop Inc. of Detroit wants to purchase Belle Vue for a nursing home. The township (Malden) acquired part ownership in the property at the tax sale last fall.

1969/70

December- Continental Can Co. Of Canada has announced it has made an offer to purchase all of two classes of shares of S.K.D. Manufacturing Co. Ltd.

January- River buffs saw both tugs Amherstburg and Atomic in action over the weekend. These McQueen Marine Limited icebreakers went through the thick ice in the Amherstburg Channel like a hot knife through butter.

February- The Book Shelf is a new store, Dalhousie Street, which was opened last week. The Book Shelf will take over the downtown sales of the Echo.

100 Years Since Massive Storm Hits Town

The Amherstburg Echo, December 5, 1919:

"At stated intervals throughout the last quarter century Essex county has proved the gateway for Mississippi-born gales that have swept the Province of Ontario, but not in years has it been forced to open its portals to a more destructive wind storm than that which at 75 miles an hour swept everything before it Saturday night, causing millions of dollars' destruction over a widespread area, no community from the Detroit river to Toronto escaped the wrath of the invading storm and in some districts more exposed than others, the destruction resembled that which lies in the wake of a hostile army."

The Amherstburg Echo and Border Cities Star both reported on the damage in Amherstburg and district. Electric light and power was lost, along both the telegraph and telephone systems. As a result of the loss of communication, anxiety rose among residents and rumours spread.

The Border Cities Star reported "never in history has Amherstburg suffered to such an extent from a storm. Old river captains stated that the barometer just before the big gale swept the river fell lower than they had ever seen it." A 7-foot drop in water levels was reported. The whitefish crates at the head of Bob-Lo Island were dry and the fish were moved to boat crates to be kept alive.

On the water, vessels were thrown around. The Mullen Coal Co. derrick was thrown off of the tracks against the coal chutes. The steamer Alaska, also owned by Mullen Coal, was in Lake Erie making the journey between Toledo and Sandwich, and managed to make a safe landing. A crew of eight men working on a dredge in the Livingston Channel were stranded and forced to spend the night aboard the dredge.

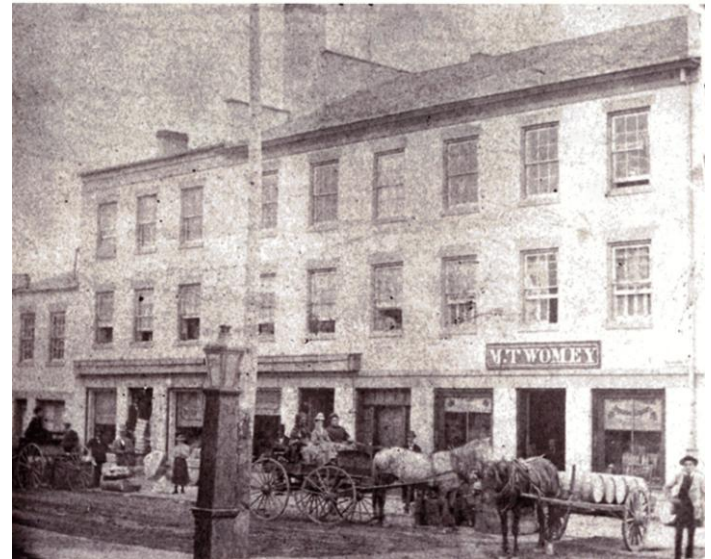
On land, trees were down everywhere, some torn out at the roots. Chimneys and roofs were torn from houses, telephone poles broken. At Brunner Mond, the tile roof on the west end of the store department and boiler room were lost. The windows on the west side of the Lake View Hotel (Dalhousie Street) were all blown in.

The last Sandwich Windsor & Amherstburg railway car to leave town was the 5:15 run by motorman Ed Thorn. On its journey the car was caught on the Canard bridge. The car lost its vestibule door, the windows caved in, and when the roof flew off passengers escaped to the home of Mrs. A.H. Gignac. Miraculously, no fatalities were reported and not one fire alarm was turned in.

Heritage Lost

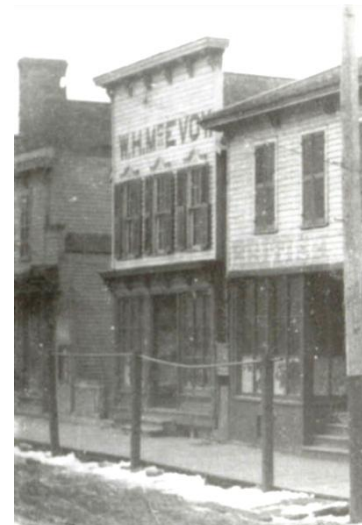
This series looks at some of the heritage buildings in Amherstburg that are now gone.

DALHOUSIE STREET Between Richmond & Murray



Salmoni Building

Same footprint as the Salmoni Place, foot of Richmond
Built: 1849
Razed: 2004
MCS P3741



McEvoy Store

Vacant lot on the south side of Downtown Espresso Cafe
Built: c.1870s
Razed: 1978
MCS P4133.3

Lakeview Hotel

Northwest corner Dalhousie/Murray
Built: 1876
Razed: 1976
MCS P2423



Bricks-N-Beams- Southeast Corner Richmond & George



By Eleanor Warren

When this photo was used on our Facebook on September 26th, it created quite a stir. The picture was taken in 1975 when the building was for sale and housed "Duke's Confectionery." In 1976 it was taken over by Joe D'Alimonte, who operated a grocery store there until later that year when he moved into his new building, known today as Lynne's Variety Store. Around 1976-77, the former Dominion Hotel, then over 100 years old, was razed to make space for a parking lot.

Facebook viewers - mostly the 'boomers' - shared their childhood memories on Facebook, most recalling when it was 'Becky's', owned by Sylvester Pouget. The 'millenials' remember it as Leo Grondin's Grocery Store. We attempted to research other businesses which were there after 'Becky's' but found it a daunting and very time-consuming task - perhaps for another day.

Delving into the building's earliest history proved to be much simpler and far more rewarding. In our extensive research, mostly thanks to the old files of The Amherstburg Echo, we discovered that the corner in question was Crown Land, obtained in 1844 by one Jean Baptiste Bernard, where he and his wife, Marguerite Meloche, settled and raised a large family. By 1861 there were two one-storey log houses on the property, one being occupied by J. B. and his wife, Margaret (nee Meloche), the other by their son Antoine Bernard (1833-1900). Some time between 1866 and 1870 Antoine improved his property, then valued at \$550. Two years later his holdings were assessed



Left: Duke's Confectionery, 1975.
Photo by Rev. T. Buchanan
MCS2018.036.042

Right:
Advertisement in
The Amherstburg
Echo, June 4, 1875

at \$1,050, which is likely when his Dominion Hotel was raised to 2 storeys.

Bernard ran a very successful hotel and livery business there for many years. In 1874 he began running a much-needed stage line between Amherstburg and Windsor, leaving at 7:30 a.m., and returning at 8:30 p.m. One of the annual and much anticipated events held at the Dominion Hotel was a muskrat supper. (It likely didn't hurt that he also had a wine and beer license!)

After Antoine's death in 1900, his son Edward Bernard operated it for a few years. In 1906, retired Great Lakes Captain James Tormey purchased the building where he operated a grocery store until 1918 when Leo Grondin purchased the business and property. Grondin soon made improvements, first by building an additional storeroom and later by improving the apartments on the second floor of the store. After his death in 1942, Mrs. Grondin continued to reside in one of the upstairs apartments until she passed away in 1974.

Unfortunately, time and space do not permit us to include in this article much of the information discovered in our research. Funny, I keep hearing Joni Mitchell singing "They tore down paradise and put up a parking lot."

Collection Highlights

Items Relating to the Burk Family Enterprise

Elizabeth Burk (nee Ward) began operation of a grocery and bakeshop on the southwest corner of Gore and Seymour (159 Gore) in 1868. Two years later, her husband J.D. Burk left a career as captain on the lakes to take over the mercantile business she had started. The business grew swiftly and eventually they needed to expand. Additions were made to the west end of 159 Gore.

A new brick store on the opposite corner (now 266 Seymour) was announced in The Amherstburg Echo in 1875: "The elegant new store just completed by Mr. J.D. Burk, on the corner of Gore and Seymore Streets, was finally completed and occupied by him last week, and it certainly deserves more than a passing notice. The inside of the building is 70 feet long by 26 feet wide, with 13 feet ceiling, the rear part being occupied as a Dry Goods Store with a Boot and Shoe Department....Considerable credit is given Mr. Burk for the energy and enterprise he has shown in erecting a finer store than has been put up in Amherstburg for some years." In 1879 a two-story addition was made to the brick block and the Burk family moved above the store in the newly renovated space.

On more than one occasion The Echo described the success and scale of the Burk enterprise using phrases like "the shopping centre for the whole district" and "as large a trade is done as that by any merchant in South Essex". J.D. Burk even had wagons on the road selling and delivering goods.

Continued on page 8...



Left: Elizabeth Hannah Burk (1839-1903) and Right: Captain Joseph D. Burk (1830-1887). Photos taken in 1876 by W.W. Davidson, whose studio was located on the east side of Dalhousie (now 249 Dalhousie).



J.D. Burk Hardware Store, n.d. The structure to the left with a gable roof still exists (159 Gore) but the west-end additions in the foreground of this photo have been razed.

MCS P2596

At BURK'S :::

WE will, to introduce our Grand Mammoth
Stock of

General Dry Goods (Fall Goods),
Boots and Shoes,
Hats and Caps,
Gent's Furnishings, Carpets, &c.

For Fifteen Days only (15 Days)

COMMENCING ON MONDAY, OCT. 16th,

Give all purchasers . . .
of the above goods

A DISCOUNT OF 20 PER CENT



80c will buy \$1 worth of goods

\$4 " 5 "
8 " 10 "

AND YOUR TICKET PUNCHED.



We never Advertise a Bargain
unless we intend to give it.
No reserve! Spot cash!

Corresponding Bargains
in our

Grocery and Hardware Departments.

J. D. BURK, Amherstburg.

Your Ticket in our Gift System good for any trading done
with our Peddling Wagon.

In 1879 the Burks left and rented the buildings at 159 Gore to tenants. By 1884 J.D. Burk Sr. took over the tin and hardware business that had been occupying the west-side additions to 159 Gore. He continued to operate the hardware business there until 1886 when the family left for Dakota. Joseph David Burk, his eldest son, remained in Amherstburg to operate the business. Mrs. Burk had been experiencing poor health and was instructed by her doctor to go to the west. In Dakota, J.D. Burk Sr. began developing a community which he called "Burkmere".

A year later, while in Dakota, J.D. Burk Sr. died unexpectedly. After his death the family continued to operate both businesses. Elizabeth died in 1903 and through her estate John Alexander and Henry Ward Burk, two of her three sons, received the grocery and dry goods store which they sold in 1906. J.D. Burk Jr., received the hardware business. He continued to operate the Central Hardware Store "Next to Town Hall" until his retirement in 1910.

Left: Flyer for J.D. Burk's. While the flyer is undated, similar advertisements appeared in *The Amherstburg Echo* in 1899.



The J.D. Burk Grocery and Dry goods store (266 Seymour).
MCS P2792

Based on the tower visible on Town Hall behind the store, this photo likely dates to c.1890s.

More information about local businesses is available in the Marsh Collection reference files. The files contain newspaper articles, photos, advertisements and copies of items preserved in the archival collection.