



Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection
Amherstburg, Ontario



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One Hundred Years Ago, This Town was Hopping!

New buildings were constructed in Anderdon Township for S.S. #10 (Middle Sideroad near Front Road) and S.S. #11 (west side Concession 5 between Texas Rd. and Middle Sideroad).

Work on the new Carnegie Library (southwest corner Apsley and Richmond Sts.) and the Bob-Lo dance hall was progressing well.

The Amherstburg Canning Factory was re-opened. Established in 1907 on the north side of Fort Street near Sandwich Street, it had been closed in 1910 owing to the inability to obtain tomato contracts. The plant operated until 1982.

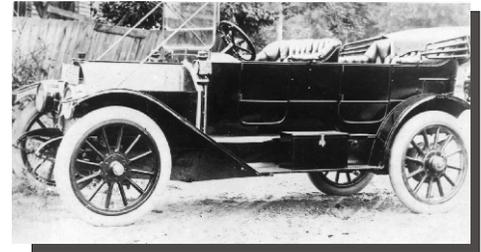
The Two-in-One Auto Co. proposed constructing a factory in Amherstburg to produce a touring car that would convert to a truck. Council passed a by-law granting the company a \$10,000 loan and free water and taxes for ten years. A 150 x 73-foot building was designed for a location on the east side of Sandwich Street just north of Fort Street. Two cars were produced in Detroit and tested that summer and the Amherstburg factory was begun. By

autumn, however, the agreement between the town and the company was in dispute and construction of the factory came to a halt.

The Livingstone Channel, the new route for downbound vessels in the lower Detroit River, was opened October 19th after more than four years of construction.

Work began on the new Roman Catholic church at River Canard. Material from the old church was moved to the north side of the river and rebuilt as a canning factory.

C.E. Lewitt purchased one of the former Middleditch Foundry buildings (northeast corner Dalhousie and Park Sts.) and fitted it up for a knitting factory to produce hosiery, sweaters and underwear. The factory operated for only a short time.

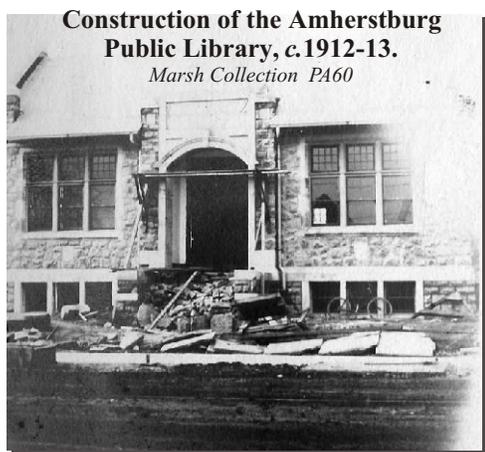


The "Amherst 40", produced by Two-in-One Auto Co., 1912.
Marsh Collection P692

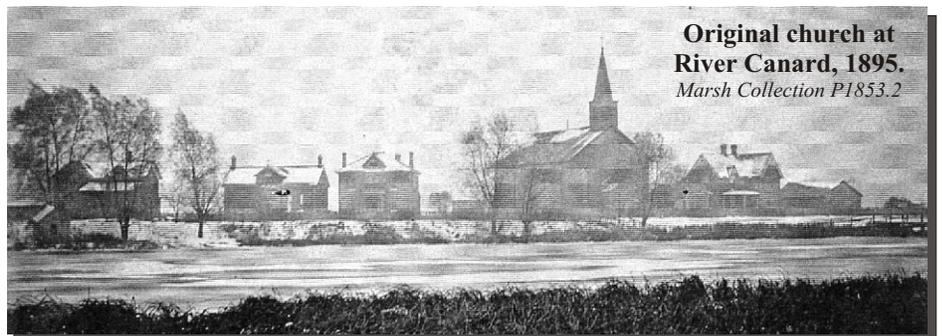
The new Westcott Marine Reporting office at the north end of the Livingstone Channel was ready for operation by August.

Christ Church underwent extensive renovations, including wall decorations, new furnaces, pews and belfry and the removal of the dropped ceiling.

William Menzies purchased the Randall property on the north end of Bob-Lo Island and opened a resort which he called "Point Bob-Lo".



Construction of the Amherstburg Public Library, c.1912-13.
Marsh Collection PA60



Original church at River Canard, 1895.
Marsh Collection P1853.2

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Growing Up in the 'Burg

The Fish Hook

by anonymous

If you grew up in the 'Burg you knew about fishing and hunting. This episode is about hunting.

A friend of mine decided that we should go duck hunting over by Spider Mountain in Crystal Bay one Saturday night. We did not have our own boat so we went up to Duff's Boat Livery and rented a boat from Mr. Duff.

As we loaded our four decoys (I don't think any duck would recognize them) and ourselves into the boat, our final instruction from Mr. Duff was, "Have this boat back before dark!"

We got over there and spent about three hours shivering and never saw a live duck anywhere, but we fired our guns a couple of times just to make it sound like we were hunters.

Before we knew it, daylight was disappearing rapidly, so we decided to pick up the decoys and head home "before dark". As we picked up the last one a gust of wind spun the boat around and the propeller hit the rocks and we sheared the pin on the propeller. What do we do now? We did not have another shear pin with us and darkness was fast approaching. I could just see Mr. Duff pacing the dock. Not being mechanically inclined, I thought for sure we were going to spend the night on Spider Mountain, until my friend said, "Here's a fish hook, let's try it for a shear pin." So we took the prop off, put the fish hook in and reinstalled the prop.

"If you have ever prayed for something to work, now is the time," my friend said. The motor started and he put it into gear very gingerly and we moved forward. We sighed with relief, but we still had to get across the river. I swear neither of us took a breath until we got back to the marina, where a very upset (to say the least) Mr. Duff greeted us with a stern lecture on being prepared and what could have happened to us.

We paid him, loaded our stuff and thanked him for not cleaning out the boat.

Who says fish hooks only catch fish? Sometimes they get suckers out of trouble too.

The Journey

by anonymous

It was the best of times. No, better yet - it was the *very best* of times. My journey began in Amherstburg in the early 1940s. Times were tough with the war in Europe occupying everyone's thoughts. We were a bunch of ragamuffin kids bound together by the common thread of friendship. Alliances began then and were cemented, the mortar of which still holds us together today. We grew up together, hunted, fished, skated and swam together and sometimes we did all this at the same time. Just ask anyone who fell through the ice at Iler's Creek. Membership in this elite group was automatic. All you had to do was grow up in Amherstburg.

We continued on our individual journeys and each of us led our lives, some in the 'Burg and others far and beyond, but the beauty of all this is we never lost contact with one another. We monitored each other's whereabouts and were genuinely happy when something good happened and genuinely distressed when something sad came along. At a recent social gathering of this group I sat back for awhile and watched and listened. Here was a bunch of guys and gals who knew each other before school years, during school years, through their careers and families and were now sitting here reminiscing about old times and just thoroughly

Where to find us

The Marsh Collection is located at **235 Dalhousie Street** on the upper floor.

We are open **Tuesday to Friday from 10am to 4pm.**

235A Dalhousie Street
Amherstburg ON • N9V 1W6
(519) 736-9191

www.marshcollection.org
e-mail:
research@marshcollection.org

If you enjoy Reflections, please let us know! We welcome your comments. Reflections is also available by e-mail - please contact us for details.

What is the Marsh Collection?

The Marsh Historical Collection is a local history/genealogy centre located in the heart of Amherstburg. Researchers, genealogists and history buffs utilize our information files, books, photographs, maps, genealogy files and other items. Even if you have no specific research purpose, come in to see our exhibits on Detroit River history and other aspects of Amherstburg's rich heritage. We also produce and sell a variety of local history publications and notecards.

The Marsh Collection takes its name from its founders, the Marsh family, who owned and operated the *Amherstburg Echo* for over 80 years.

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enjoying each other's company.

Topics centred mainly on how we entertained ourselves back in the day and what we had available in the 'Burg to provide a venue for our explorations. Most conversations started with "Do you remember the time we...?" One of

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Yesterday's News

from the archives of the *Amherstburg Echo*

1882

September - Capt. Westcott of Detroit tested a patent elastic felt mattress intended for use on steamboats. It floats on water like a cork.

October - About 1000 people assembled at the river near the foot of Dalhousie Street to witness the baptismal services of the First Baptist Church.

November - Corn husking bees and dances are the rage in Anderdon.

1892

September - Each Friday evening the steamer *Telegram* runs a moonlight excursion from the MCR Station dock to Des-Chree-Shos-Ka [a resort on Fighting Island].

October - The sea serpent was seen at the mouth of the Detroit River where Detroit garbage scows deposit their cargoes. Witnesses say the monster is about 50 feet long with 20-foot jaws.

November - The schooner *Maple Leaf* delivered 365 bags of wheat for Wigle Bros. and some hickory nuts from Pelee Island.

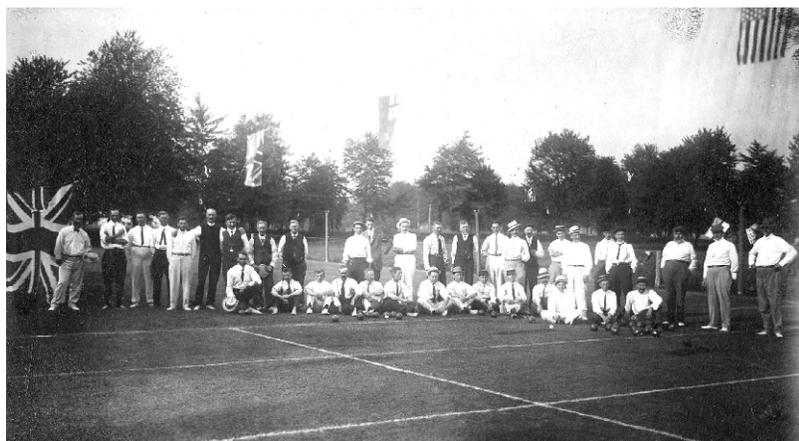
1902

September - Plans are ready for the new stone church to be built at McGregor. It will cost \$15,000.

October - The newly-furnished Anglo-American Hotel, southwest corner Richmond and Apsley, is now under management of J.J. Mailloux, proprietor.

1912

September - Amherstburg Lawn Bowling



Amherstburg Lawn Bowling Club, 1912.

Marsh Collection P36

Club held the first tournament on the new greens. The ground were tastefully decorated with bunting and flags.

October - Joseph Maheux of the Amherst House purchased the first auto turned out by the Two-in-One Co.

November - D. & A. Ouellette's fine herd of 85 Berkshire and Hampshire hogs had to be slaughtered and cremated due to swine plague. The pen floors were also burned according to departmental regulations.

1922

September - The Adolescent Act now in force requires all children between 14 and 16 to attend school unless permission is secured from the attendance officer.

October - Two giant steel freighters, the *James E. Davidson* and *Arcturus*, collided near the Mamajuda Light, eight miles above Amherstburg.

November - A branch of the Dominion Stores Ltd. will open in the Hadley Block on Murray Street.

1932

October - Beachcombers are finding a good deal of firewood at the Livingstone Channel cut dam. This driftwood makes for cheap firewood.

November - The Amherstburg Merchants Assn. decided that stores in town will close at noon on Friday, Remembrance Day.

1942

September - "The Shadow" begins its

sixth consecutive year over Mutual and CKLW on Sunday from 5:30 to 6 pm.

October - A former Anderdon man, Lance-Corporal Milton Sinasac, was decorated for bravery as a hero of the recent Dieppe Raid.

November - Whooping cough is prevalent in the county and parents are urged to consult a physician at the very first sign of a cold in their children.

1952

September - Local police are enforcing the 1950 Children's Protection Act provisions by checking on children without adults on the streets after nine o'clock.

October - The Rotary Hallowe'en Party will again be held on October 31st, beginning with a parade at 7:30 from the town hall to the town park.

November - 80 building permits have been issued so far this year - 17 were for new homes at a total value of \$94,500; a Sunoco gas station; Canadian Cannery warehouse; Marra's Bread garage; several new stores and alterations.

1962

September - Poisoned beads, Jequirity beans, made into necklaces and sold in the Midland district have been turning up in Amherstburg.

October - Alex Callam has been named business manager of the Detroit Tigers. Employed by a Detroit accounting firm, he has done the Tigers' audit since 1958.

November - The Amherstburg Public School Board has received letters from the Pentacostal and Presbyterian churches objecting to the town band practising in the school auditorium on Sunday.

1972

September - Council renamed Waterworks Park as the King's Navy Yard.

November - The former Bob-Lo ferry *Charles E. Park* sank at its moorings at the Bob-Lo marina.

1982

September - About 5000 people attended Art By The River, at which there were 60 exhibitors.

October - The Bank of Nova Scotia opened its first branch in Amherstburg.

Shipping the Detroit

Amherstburg Echo
October 25, 1912

The enormous volume of traffic being transported up and down the lakes this fall has called into commission all the old-time wooden boats, many of which were discarded years ago as obsolete. Old-time barges are now appearing each day on the river and it is safe to say that they have not been in commission for at least fifteen years. Barges that were rotten long ago are being placed in dry-docks and repaired to fit them for a few more trips on the lakes. Sailing boats that have not used canvas for a

long time are being rigged out with a new outfit and will soon be carrying freight again to the head of the lakes. Never before, the lake captains report, was there so much freight to be handled in so short a time. Nowhere, they state, can you see a decent boat lying idle unless it is for want of a crew, which are also becoming very scarce. The lack of coal at different ports is being relieved by the use of the small boats and steam barges. It is a familiar sight now to see on the river here eight or nine big freighters upbound with several coming down, all at the same time.

The shippers are already feeling the result of some of the unsafe boats tying up before the bad weather sets in. In the past month the demand for sailors of all ranks has been growing stronger and many who know naught of the angry November gales are taking positions. The list of vacancies extends from the captain and engineer down to oilers and deckhands. This scarcity is caused by many "summer sailors" leaving the lakes as soon as the fall gales begin to blow. This demand for men is the same every year, but the demand this year is greater, as there are many more boats in commission.

Growing Up in the 'Burg

The Journey

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the places I remember was Conklin's Lumberyard on Dalhousie Street with the old warehouse buildings on the river from which untold quantities of beer or liquor were shipped by rowboat to exotic places such as Cuba with the delivery boats returning in a few hours, empty. The mill part of Conklin's was on property between Dalhousie and Ramsay Streets. When the construction bug hit us we would go there and endlessly hound Mr. Brush, the milling machine operator, for scraps of wood in order to build the project of the day. How that man put up with us, I'll never know.

The Waterworks Park was another prime location for all of us during the summer. With its long dock and a tower at the end, we had it made. It was especially exciting when the Bob-Lo boats would come by and we would wave to everyone or, to the captain's chagrin, some would swim out to see the boats up close. One of the more memorable individuals swimming there was Nitchy Sawyer. Nitchy had

one leg but could out-swim the lot of us. When he was underway, that one leg was like the tail of a whale propelling him through the water.

Winter had us skating at either Iler's Creek or the Town Park. Mr. St. John would spend endless hours at the park flooding and maintaining the outdoor ice rink as well as stoking the stove in the warming shed. It was especially beautiful at night when he would turn on the lights. Skating at the creek was a little more work as we had to maintain the ice ourselves and skating at night was out of the question. For the more adventurous you could skate from Amherstburg all the way to Lake Erie as long as you didn't mind climbing a few fences or dodging cattails and muskrat houses. It did have a good side in that there were plenty of duck blinds you could stop at to get out of the wind and warm up a bit.

The lot where the Beer Store now stands was vacant and there were numerous small sinkholes on the

property. Someone mentioned that these holes were dug by pirates who stashed their treasure in the myriad tunnels that we were told lay just below the surface. This was never proven as nobody had the intestinal fortitude to check it out. Who knows, that treasure may still be there today.

Marra's Bread was another locale. Marra's was bounded by Richmond on the north, Ramsay on the west, Murray on the south and Bathurst on the east. Sometime a gaggle of us would stand by the door just to get a good whiff of freshly baked bread. The two quarries in town, one at the Brunner Mond (Allied Chemical) and the other where Amherst Quarries is located, also made excellent swimming and fishing holes.

I won't elaborate on the river, as that is a topic for another day. Suffice it to say that growing up in the 'Burg in that era was the best journey that could happen to anyone and to have this same group some seventy years later still get together to talk about those times is more than one could ask.

Bricks 'n' Beams

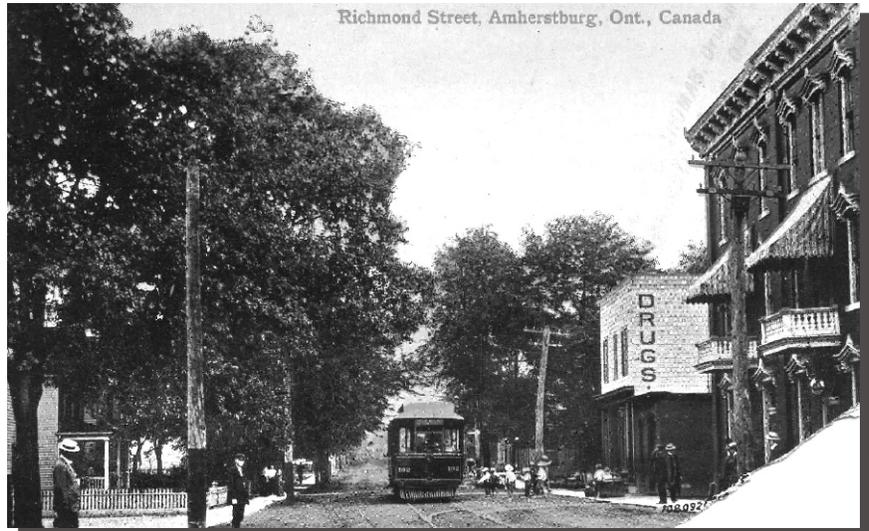
Sandwich, Windsor & Amherstburg Railway Company Waiting Room

by Eleanor Warren

While looking through a March 1957 *Amherstburg Echo* recently, an article entitled “Former Railway Station Being Moved to Face Ramsay Street” appeared. This, of course, piqued my interest. I wondered how many local folks would know the history of this little building or that it was once the waiting room for the S.W.&A. Electric Railway. Or even that there was a “streetcar” that ran between Windsor and Amherstburg from 1903 to 1938. It also occurred to me that some folks might want to know more about it, so on went my local history research hat. After many hours of delving into land records and years of *Echo* issues, following is a brief summary of our discoveries. (It should be noted here that S.W.&A. was owned and operated by the Detroit United Railway Company and its successor, the Hydro Electric Power Commission of Ontario.)

There is a plethora of information in the Marsh Historical Collection files about the actual building of the electric railway which ran from the corner of Ouellette Avenue and Sandwich Street to Ojibway and eventually to Amherstburg. Although planning and discussions had been taking place for nearly fifteen years, it was 1903 before the streetcars began running between Windsor and Amherstburg. Almost 200 men were employed in the project and many obstacles had to be overcome in laying the roads and the rails, not the least of which was the building of bridges over the Canard River and the M.C.R. rails at Amherstburg (still referred to by locals as the “Brunner Mond Bridge”).

On May 15, 1903, the *Echo* announced that “*Amherstburg was brought into direct connection with the whole county Saturday last by the opening of the S.W.&A. railway extension...Sunday was a banner day as it is estimated that 700 people travelled over the road. There has been only one*



mishap so far. Sunday morning a car downbound ran off the track about a mile below Sunnyside. The passengers received a severe jolt but no other damage was done to their feelings.” It was also announced that Walter Brault was employed as motorman. According to the first schedule, cars left Amherstburg at 6:35 a.m. and 8:35 a.m. and every hour thereafter until 8:35 p.m. Cars left Windsor every hour from 7 a.m. till 8 p.m. and at 11:48 p.m. The trip one way took an hour and a half, 30 cents one way and 50 cents round trip.

In June 1902 it had been agreed (in By-Law 197A to authorize the issue of debentures) that “*the Company shall provide and maintain continuously Waiting Rooms for the*

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Photos (top to bottom):
Richmond Street looking east, circa 1910.
Courtesy Fort Malden NHSC

Amherst Hotel and S.W.&A. Waiting Room, early 1950s.

In Amherstburg Echo, February 10, 1993

Former S.W.&A. Waiting Room, August 2012.

Courtesy Pat Warren

Ancestral Lines

The Day the Music Died: The Adventures of the Florey Family

While Marsh Collection staff was looking through our "Richmond Street" file recently, an interesting piece of paper came to light. On March 28, 1921, Miss Frances Florey submitted a bill to Town Council for \$10.00 for damages done to her window and piano by an accidental gunshot fired by the town's nightwatchman.

This was too good not to follow up, so we headed for the *Amherstburg Echo* microfilm. Sure enough, on March 25th the paper reported:

About three o'clock Friday morning, a bullet crashed through one of the front windows of the Florey residence, Richmond Street. Chief Wharton was at a loss to detect who fired the shot, after exhausting every device known in criminal investigations, and the affair was about to pass into the realms of undiscovered mysteries, when Night Watchman Joe Cabana confessed that it was his gun which did it. He was passing down Richmond Street, making his rounds, with his right hand grasping the handle of his Colt, when just in front of the Florey residence he was overcome with a desire to sneeze. As he bent over, he involuntarily pulled the trigger, the gun went off and the bullet ricocheted on the sidewalk and struck the window. Fortunately it did no other damage.

The Florey house was located on the north side of Richmond Street, just west of the present Heritage Square building.

George Florey (c.1836-1921) was a native of St. Catharines. He married Elizabeth Scott (c.1837-1908) at Thorold and had three

Amherstburg To
 & March 28/21

To the Mayor
 and Councilors of the town of
 Amherstburg

Gentlemen The following is my bill for
 damage done by Night Watchman
 while on duty firing through
 window of residence on Richmond St

To replace window \$4.50

Damage to piano
 Marring Case & putting
 out of Auto \$5.50

\$10.00

Franc. L. Florey

children: Frances (c.1860-1936); John Henry Rolls (c.1865-1936); and James Herbert (c.1868-1962), who lived most of his life in Montana and died in Amherstburg.

In 1871 the Florey family was living in Paris, Ontario, where George worked as a miller. The household included a governess and a female servant.

Around 1875 the Floreys moved to Amherstburg where George opened a grocery store at



Frances Florey, circa 1900.
 Courtesy Fort Malden NHSC

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Ancestral Lines

The Day the Music Died

continued from page 6

the corner of Murray and Ramsay Streets, later relocating to the Oddfellows Hall on the south side of Richmond Street (between Bathurst and Ramsay). A fire in 1887 destroyed that building and two others. Florey's grocery moved several times over the next few years, finally settling around 1896 on the east side of Dalhousie Street in the Webber Block (between Richmond and Murray). George served on Town Council for several terms and was mayor in 1900.

Frances Florey was an accomplished musician, teaching piano as well as acting as accompanist for concerts and organist for the Presbyterian and



Frances Florey and her music students,
circa 1905.

Marsh Collection P3215

United churches. Her obituary states, "All in all, she was a very useful woman."

After George Florey's death in 1921, his son Henry took over the

business, leasing it to Dominion Stores around 1930.

Bricks 'n' Beams

S.W.&A. Waiting Room

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accommodation of passengers and freight within the limits of the Town of Amherstburg." A petition was circulated in town asking council not to consider the bonus to S.W.&A. unless the company located a waiting room and station at or near the town hall. Well, that didn't happen!

In July 1903 the *Echo* announced that S.W.&A. was having a building 30x16 feet erected "on the Delisle property to be used as a waiting room and freight shed." That would have been around what is today the east side of Scotiabank.

In 1905 the railway was extended westward on Richmond Street as far as the (former) post office. It soon became obvious that a larger, more convenient structure was needed. In June 1906 the Delisle waiting room was moved to Ramsay Street for use as a freight shed and later (1924) as the CN Express office (it was torn down in the 1930s). At the same time the S.W.&A. closed

the deal for the small brick office and property further west on Richmond Street, formerly occupied by lawyer Henry Clay. The building and property were owned at that time by Mrs. Catherine Brown of the Brown (later Amherst) Hotel. The brick building which became the passenger Waiting Room was moved several feet eastward up against the Thomas Drug Store, placed on a new foundation and improvements made to the interior.

When the electric streetcar gave way to new modern S.W.&A. buses in 1938, the Waiting Room building and property on Richmond Street were sold to Mike and Nancy Fedchyna. In June 1939 W. Stubbings rented the building for his "radio service" and later bought the property from the Fedchynas. Stubbings sold it in 1950 to John Morris' "General Insurance & Real Estate"; then Morris sold to Vic Nedin. Horton Electric then occupied the little brick building for a time. In

1952 Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Balla opened the Elizabeth Dress Shop there.

In March 1957 the *Echo* announced that the "Former Railway Station" - ie, the Waiting Room - was being moved around the corner to face Ramsay Street. It was occupied for several months by Marontate & Duby, Electrical Contractors, until they moved into the new store which landlord Vic Nedin had built on the newly vacated property between the Amherst Hotel and the former Thomas' Drug Store on the corner. Since that time there have been numerous businesses in the 110-plus-year-old brick building. Since January 1990 it has been the home of Critique Hair Salon. It would be interesting to document the businesses that have occupied the place between 1957 and 1990. If you have information to share, please contact us at the Marsh Historical Collection, 736-9191.

Then & Now

Callam House / Commissariat

224 Dalhousie Street



Above: Callam residence, 1978.
Marsh Collection PA19

Below: Building restored to its original appearance as the Commissariat.
Photo taken August 2012.
Marsh Collection photo

