



Reflections



Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection
Amherstburg, Ontario

Volume VII Issue 1

Fall 2013

ISSN 1913-8660

The Great Storm of November 9, 1913

from the *Amherstburg Echo*, November 14, 1913

INLAND LAKES ON RAMPAGE.-
Early November Blizzard Brings Death and Destruction to 3 Million Dollars' Worth of Shipping.-Largest Liners to Smallest Lightships Victims of Storm's Wrath.-Shores Strewn with Wreckage and Bodies of Drowned Sailors.-Most Furious Storm in Half a Century.-Several Boats not yet Reported.-Mystery Surrounds Wrecks Floating in Lake Huron.-No Amherstburg Mariners Lost but Several in Wrecks.-The tale of the full extent of the disaster and havoc wrought by the terrific blizzard that swept the Great Lakes Sunday from the upper end of Lake Superior to the lower point of Lake Erie cannot yet be told; for every hour brings news of further disasters, the first intimation of which is only received when wreckage begins to pile up on the shores. When the toll of lives is counted and the cost of damage estimated, it begins to look as if the storm of November 9th and 10th, 1913, will go down in marine history as the most destructive in the history of the Great Lakes' navigation. The story of the rescue of many crews, the privations they had to endure and narrow escapes from the scythe of the grim reaper reads like a thrilling romance. Marine heroism was at its best and it is pleasing to note that when it came to a test, the conduct of Amherstburg mariners will rank in the same category with that of those on the *Titanic*.

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

Among the wrecks coming nearest home to Amherstburg was that of the big steel steamer *J.T. Hutchinson*, commanded by Capt. Walter Lawlor, which was blown ashore near Iroquois Point, Lake Superior, and is reported a total wreck. Among Capt. Lawlor's crew were mate Herman Cornwall, chefs James Kirtley and Albert Wilson Jr., all of this place. They were all saved.

Thursday morning's papers place the loss of life at 94, but this will undoubtedly be increased. The storm developments to that time were as below:

LAKE HURON.-Steamer *James Carruthers*, newest of Canadian freighters, with crew of 30, thought lost following discovery of wreckage near Goderich, Ont.

Overtaken freighter near Port Huron declared by marine experts to be *Regina*. Eight more bodies found.

Steamer *Howard M. Hanna*, on rocks off Point aux Barques, Lake Huron; crew all saved.

Steamer *Matoa*, on rocks off Point aux Barques, Lake Huron; crew supposed all safe. Boat total loss.

Steamer *Northern Queen*, stranded off Port Frank, Ont., crew

safe.

Steamer *Acadian*, Canadian vessel, stranded in Thunder Bay; crew reported safe.

Steamer *J.M. Jenks*, stranded outside Midland; crew safe.

Lumber carried adrift on Lake Huron, reported by several vessels Wednesday; identity unknown.

Wexford, Canadian vessel, missing on Lake Huron; three bodies coming ashore near St. Joseph, Ont., wearing life-preservers bearing her name.

Steamer *Regina*, Canadian ship, probably lost on Lake Huron with all her crew. Bodies of 10, supposed to be from her, found on Canadian shore near Thedford.

Steamer *Rhoda Emily*, ashore in Harbor of Refuge, Harbor Beach; crew safe.

Barge *Dorcas Pendall*, ashore in Harbor of Refuge, Harbor Beach; crew safe.

Steamer *Edward Buckley*, ashore in Harbor of Refuge, Harbor Beach; crew safe.

The steamer *H.B. Hawgood* is aground four miles above Point Edward.

LAKE SUPERIOR.-Steam barge

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Growing Up in the 'Burg

Bob-Lo Boat Adventures

by John Burck

Dan [Schindler]'s memoirs got me thinking just how important that body of water - the Detroit River - was to us. Even when it was at its worst, closed to swimming due to "pollution", that still didn't stop a lot of guys. Despite what the scientists said, that water "looked" OK, especially on a hot, sunny summer day, so the extremely good swimmers would go in anyway. The bravest - well, we thought they were! - would go out to meet the Bob-Lo boat.

The leader of this crew was Leroy Morency. Man, that guy could swim! One day he boldly positioned himself directly in the path of one of the boats, and when close enough he grabbed the stern at the waterline and let the ship pull him through the water. He then shoved off and swam clear. We witnessed this from the Waterworks dock. Man! Talk about guts!

Having been Master of similar-size ferryboats, I can well imagine what the ship's captain was feeling. These ships would be slowly cruising downstream with the current, engine room telegraph reading "dead slow ahead", just enough speed on to maintain steerage way. Here you have a bunch of nuts swimming towards you and you certainly don't want to hurt any of them. You can't take evasive action because you are in confined waters. If you go astern to try to stop your vessel, your wake could suck the swimmers into the screws (propellers). The Old Man, mate and watchman on the ship's bridge would be relieved to see the same number of heads pop up astern

that had swum out to meet them. The worst part was knowing that this was going to happen again and again....!

White Beans, Tapioca and Spitballs

by "Patrick"

In downtown Amherstburg around 1936 there were dramatic end-of-summer changes. Michigan license plates were on two out of every three cars on those idyllic summer days. The biggest change was the downtown streets on a Sunday going from normal to empty. Stores stayed open late on Friday evenings, closed at sundown on Saturdays and by Sunday the downtown was deserted.

On that first Sunday afternoon after Labour Day, a bunch of us were riding our bicycles all around the empty downtown streets and alleys. No cars. No people. The adults were watching baseball at the town park in front of the high school. We kids had the downtown all to ourselves. Whoopee!

We were all experts with both of our favourite weapons, but as downtown was not a safe place to use our homemade slingshots, they were left at home. The other weapon was more fun, especially at school. We were sure we would not hurt anyone, but we knew you sure could annoy somebody with a pea shooter!

We found that white beans and especially large tapioca were better ammunition than peas or spitballs, and much more abundant in our

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.**

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The Marsh Collection gives charitable tax receipts for donations of \$50 or more.

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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homes. In the time it took to manufacture and launch one spitball you could terrorize your target with a dozen white beans or big tapioca.

That year both Amherstburg Public and St. Anthony School had declared war against our pea

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Yesterday's News

from the archives of the *Amherstburg Echo*

1883

September - Council has given the contract for the new town hall to Walter Fairbairn of Detroit.

October - The Amherstburg Cornet Band now has 18 members.

November - The Methodist church has attached folding seats to the outer row along both aisles because there has not been enough seating during evening services, causing people to leave.

1893

September - Rev. Fr. Ryan has called a meeting of the men of St. John the Baptist parish to discuss plans for the 50th anniversary of the church building next year.

October - Many Amherstburg residents are attending the World's Fair at Chicago.

November - Canadian Thanksgiving will be celebrated November 23rd; November 30th in the United States.

1903

September - Adding six new poles to the electric street lighting system has "proved a dismal failure".

October - Cement sidewalks along the north side of Richmond Street have greatly improved the appearance of the street.

November - The Militia Department is being asked to make Amherstburg the HQ of a mounted infantry corps.

1913

September - Capt. Walter Campbell and Architect John Scott have been on Bois Blanc, looking over what is to be done there this Fall.

October - The boys' playground on the town park, left full of ruts and holes after the circus, has been causing injuries during football games.

November - Fred Mickle sold 800 feet of his Malden frontage to Drs. Fred Woodbridge and Alfred Scott of Detroit for \$10/foot. [This became the Amherst Pointe subdivision.]

1923

September - A new telephone cable is being installed along Sandwich Street. This will allow for the installation of several telephones for applicants who have been waiting for some time.

October - The Amherstburg Horticultural Society is meeting to pass a resolution preventing further cutting down of shade trees in Rose Hill Cemetery.

November - An application has been made to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for an act to incorporate as a municipality that piece of land from Turkey Creek to the Malden Road, 2310 acres. It is proposed to call the new town LaSalle.

1933

September - A museum to perpetuate the history of Amherstburg and Fort Malden has been started in the Amherstburg library through the efforts of Major A.W. McNally.

October - Amherst Pointe residents will hold their annual Hallowe'en party at the Blue Bird Hotel there.

November - The Amherstburg Rotary Club has received its charter.

1943

September - Line-ups at the Brewers' Warehouse, which have been problematic all summer, seem to have disappeared.

October - The Rotary Club will sponsor the formation of a community band for Tri-Community boys and girls aged 10-16.

November - The Amherstburg, Anderdon, Malden objective in the 5th Victory Loan campaign was \$400,000. It reached \$430,150.

1953

September - The Bank of Montreal building, over 100 years old, is being demolished so a new bank can be built. Business is being carried on in the Amherst Recreation building.

October - The Rotary Club is planning its annual Hallowe'en party for youngsters in the Town Park.

November - Amherstburg industries and businesses have been writing letters to the Amherstburg PUC, complaining about the two recent power interruptions which have cost them thousands of dollars.

1963

September - Calvin Borrowman has received permission from Malden Council to establish a campground on the Pike Road [now Jellystone Park].

October - The Town has purchased the former post office building but it is unknown what its use will be.

November - Construction has begun on the new St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Harrow.

1973

September - Drivers boycotted the municipal parking lot immediately south of the *Echo* building when parking meters were installed.

October - The restoration of the Park House has been completed and the Rotary Club has turned over the operation of the museum to the Amherstburg Historic Sites Assn.

November - The Ministry of Transportation has turned down Council's request for a four-way stop at the corner of Fort and Victoria Streets.

1983

September - The new mini-mall on Sandwich Street South has been named "Fort Covington Mall".

October - Construction is nearing completion on the new teaching conservatory building for the Sisters of the Holy Names Academy, northwest corner Murray and Wolfe Streets [now Creative Child Learning Centre].

November - "Heritage Square" is now the official name of the mini-mall in the former Dominion Store building, Richmond Street.

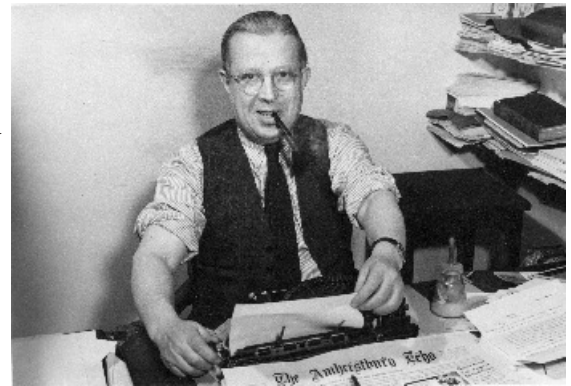
Shipping the Detroit

Amherstburg Lore

The following item appeared in *Ship-Shore News*, June 1962, published by Upper Lakes Shipping Ltd.

John A. Marsh, editor of the *Amherstburg Echo*, is the true riverside type. At home on land or water, he can identify practically any vessel - sandsucker or jumboized T-2 tanker - even at night. A friend of the late Stephen Leacock, he has the latter's keen sense of anecdote. One can learn from him all about Amherstburg marine lore and folklore, including the yarn concerning the parson who complained that a jackass had been found only half-buried. He was told that the rites require a near relative to sanction burial and none could be found for a deceased jackass in Amherstburg.

Amherstburg is a town of spacious parks, unhurried citizens (4400), half a dozen traffic lights and the same number of policemen. The streets are clean, and the well-kept waterfront area has lovely homes to serve as a backdrop to the busy river. The dock receives daily, hundreds of U.S. pleasure craft from across the river. Last year 6500 small boats reported to Customs at the dock in Amherstburg.



John Marsh
Marsh Collection P649

Growing Up in the 'Burg

White Beans, Tapioca and Spitballs

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shooters and we weren't even allowed to bring them to school, so it seemed only natural on that particular afternoon to use our forbidden weapons. Our idea this time was to name our targets, like a store window or a door, something that would make a noise - like the colourful, metallic Orange Pekoe Tea signs! We organized into a fast-moving, follow-the-leader flying squad and then aimed to hit the selected target with our ammo as we rode by at top speed.

Our targets that Sunday afternoon included just about every store on Dalhousie Street from the Bank of Montreal to the glass greenhouses of Stancliff & French

Florists. The section that got the majority of our ammunition was the east side of Dalhousie between Richmond and Murray, which had the very best targets.

Where today there is a brick patio with a wrought-iron fence, there was the William Ayerst Rexall Drug Store. The front door was recessed and the windows on either side of the entrance were at an angle, creating a challenging target. The idea was to have the bean hit three times. If you aimed just right, the bean would hit a side window, then the front door window and then the other side window - bing! bing! bing! really fast.

It seemed like in no time at all the entrance, steps and even the sidewalk were covered in white beans and tapioca. We suddenly realized that we had made a huge mess. We each headed home to get a broom, dustpan and paper bag. That was when we got caught. Somebody decided to be honest about why we needed these things and the jig was up. We were soon cleaning one entire block on the east side of Dalhousie Street. Our parents handed out some pretty stiff penalties and some of us were given extra broom and shovel work at home.

Bricks 'n' Beams

From King Street School to Mount Beulah Church

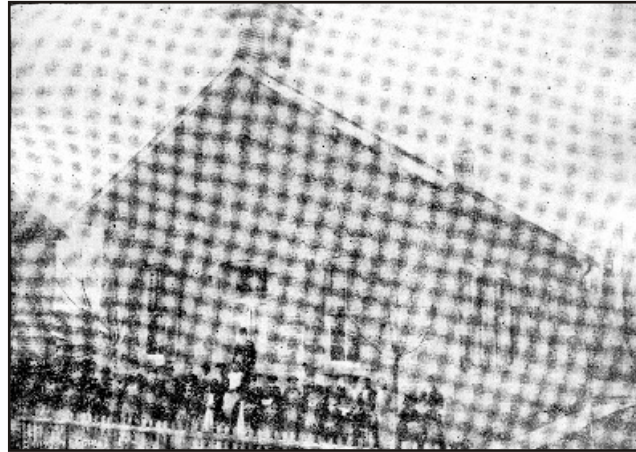
by Eleanor Warren

In January, 1949 a transaction took place whereby Ernest and Viola Harris purchased the land and buildings on Lot 27, west side of King Street, from Ernest Faucher for \$1000. At the same time Mr. and Mrs. Harris granted the property to the Canadian Church of God in Christ under the leadership of its founder, Bishop C.L. Morton Sr. Elder Ernest Harris became its first pastor. After a few years and much remodelling, the church was renamed Mount Beulah Church of God in Christ.

However, the building has a much longer history. In the second half of the 19th century, local Black children had attended lessons in rented quarters called the "Mission School". In 1864 the Board of School Trustees purchased Lot 27 on King Street from Terrence McGuire for \$400. A frame building there became the first King Street School.

In March 1878, trustees agreed that the school was "unfit for use". The Richmond Street Public School was already overcrowded so it was decided there should be a new King Street School. By April, plans were received from A. Ellis and J.O. Johnson, which provided for "a brick building 30' by 50' with a 15' ceiling...to be built of brick with a stone foundation...the main room inside 28' x 38' and two cloak rooms in the rear each 10' x 14'...main entrance in front and separate entrances for the girls and boys in the rear."

By May of 1878 the old building



**King Street
Public School, 1892.**
*Photo in Toronto Daily Mail,
January 9, 1892
Marsh Collection P1127*

Mount Beulah Church of God in Christ, 2013.

Marsh Collection photo



had been auctioned and sold for \$40 to John B. Robidoux, who removed it. Park & Borrowman were already busy working on the foundation for the new King Street School. The July 12th *Echo* announced that the new stone schoolhouse - "one of the finest schoolrooms in the County of Essex" - would be completed by the end of the week and ready in time for school re-opening on August 19th.

In 1912 Black students were

integrated into the new Amherstburg Public School on Richmond Street and the King Street School was closed.

George Pettypiece purchased the property from the school board in 1918 for \$800. There he operated a cement business for several years.

In the 1940s there were various land transactions, the last one being in 1949 when it was purchased for the church. Today Pastor Maynard Hurst is in charge of Mount Beulah.

Great Storm of 1913

continued from page 1

Butters rumored lost with 22 men on south shore, Lake Superior.

Steamer *Leafield*, Canadian ship, ashore on Angus Island, Lake Superior, Monday, is reported to have disappeared.

Steamer *L. C. Waldo*, probably total loss on Gull Rock, Lake Superior; crew all saved.

Steamer *J.T. Hutchinson*, with bottom badly damaged, sunk near Iroquois Point, Lake Superior; crew safe. Boat total loss.

Steamer *F.G. Hartwell*, sunk near Iroquois Point, Lake Superior; crew safe.

Steamer *Turret Chief*, on rocks six miles east of Copper Harbor, Lake Superior; crew safe.

Steamer *William Nottingham*, stranded on reef between Parisian and Sand Islands; three of crew lost.

LAKE MICHIGAN.-Barge *Halstead*, ashore off Green Bay, Wis.; crew rescued.

Barge *Plymouth*, with crew of seven men, feared lost on Lake Michigan, 15 miles south of Escanaba.

Tug *Martin*, previously reported lost, safe.

Grain steamer *Thistle*, ashore near Calumet Harbor.

LAKE ERIE.-Steamer *G.J. Grammar*, stranded outside Lorain; crew safe.

Point Abino lightship *No. 82*, lost on Lake Erie with crew of six men. Messages scratched by doomed men with their jackknives on pieces of board, picked up on shore.

Stories of unidentified derelicts are coming in from many parts of the lakes. Indications are that both money and life totals will be increased as the information becomes more particular.

The greatest mystery of the storm is in connection with the unidentified steamer that floats bottom up about 8 miles off Fort Gratiot Light in Lake Huron. It was at first thought to be the Merchants Mutual Company liner *Regina*, which left Sarnia Sunday morning with a load of package freight for upper lake ports, or the steamer

Wexford, drowned sailors from both of which have come ashore at Port Frank, near Kettle Point; but a survey of the wreck Wednesday by officials of the line have pretty clearly settled that it is neither of these boats, though both appear to have been lost. The wreck is now thought to be the 550-foot Canadian steamer *James Carruthers*. The boat has disappeared and wreckage bearing the name "*James Carruthers*" has come ashore near Goderich. The steamer *James Carruthers*, a bulk freighter, claimed to be the largest of its kind ever constructed in the British Empire, was launched at the yards of the Collingwood Shipbuilding Company on May 22nd. The lifeboat of the *Carruthers* that came ashore was empty, which arouses the gravest fears that both boat and crew of 22 have gone to destruction.

A survey of the Lake Huron shore from Point Edward eastward shows: (1) Steamer upside down. (2) At Kettle Point, steamer *Northern Queen* of Buffalo, lost, but entire crew saved. (3) Port Frank, several bodies from steamer *Regina* washed ashore. (4) St. Joseph, ten bodies wearing "*Wexford*" life-preservers found on shore. The southern end of Lake Huron basin has proved a graveyard for the most serious wrecks.

With an equipment of air compressors, steam pumps and divers, the steamer *J.E. Mills* of the Trotter Towing & Wrecking Co. left Amherstburg Wednesday night to begin the work of raising the sand steamer *Harlow*, which went to the bottom Sunday night off Grosse Pointe after collision with an unidentified steamer in Grosse Pointe channel. The *Harlow* was struck by an upbound vessel, the thickly falling snow contributing to the accident, and sank after Capt. James Mara, her master, had run her over into shoal water. The Trotter Co. expected to have the *Harlow* afloat some time yesterday (Thursday). The tug

Marion Trotter of the same company also left Amherstburg Wednesday night and is reported to be headed for Harbor Beach to work on some of the vessels that were carried ashore in the Harbor of Refuge. The tug *Francis B. Hackett* is reported to have left Amherstburg for the same point.

TERRIFIC BLIZZARD.-The sixty-mile blizzard that swept the Great Lakes Sunday and Sunday night did a million dollars' worth of damage. Many states were swept by a wind which reached a velocity of 80 miles an hour.

The steam barge *Harlow*, used to carry earth from excavations in Detroit to Belle Isle, where land is being reclaimed, was struck by another steamer and sunk. Her crew of 10 men were rescued by the tug *Lohrmer*.

Chicago and district suffer loss of \$500,000 and the city is strewn with wrecked signs, trees, trolley wires and cables.

Four vessels were blown ashore between St. Clair Flats and Amherstburg.

Three vessels ashore and one sunk in the vicinity of Port Huron.

Livingstone Channel, lower Detroit River, closed to vessel traffic by grounding of steamer *Victory*.

Life-saving station above Port Huron demoralized by gale.

Steamer *Mary Elphicke* was released by rising waters after running aground near Bar Point Saturday night.

Steamer *Saronic* of Northern Navigation Co.'s fleet reached Soo after harrowing struggle with wind and snow.

More than 50 vessels, heeding storm warnings, found refuge between Soo and Whitefish Point.

Follow-up articles in the *Echo* can be found in the Marsh Collection's Occasional Paper #1, "The Great Storm of 1913", 17 pages, available for \$2.

Remembrance Day Exhibit

On display late October through end of November

Honouring the men and women of Amherstburg-Anderdon-Malden who served their country in the First World War, Second World War and Korea

**The Marsh Collection
is open
Tuesday to Friday
10am to 4pm.
Free admission.**



Local History Publications

**\$10 Million Ditch:
Building the Livingstone Channel, 1908-12**
\$10

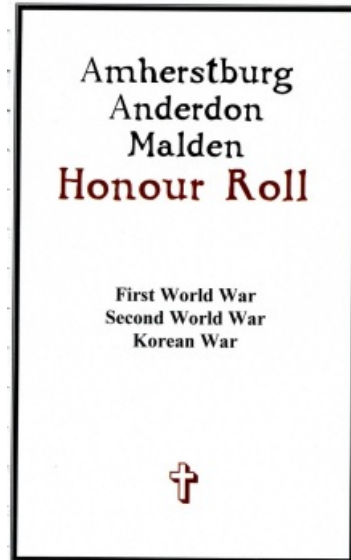
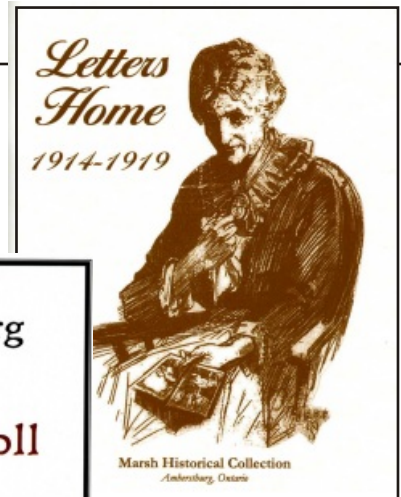
**Cornerstones of Our Community:
Amherstburg's Designated Buildings**
\$10

The Great Storm of 1913
\$2

Know Your Ships 2013
\$18.95

**Summer Dreams
The Story of Bob-Lo Island**
by Pat Livingstone
\$30

**War of 1812
The Marine Art of Peter Rindlisbacher**
\$40

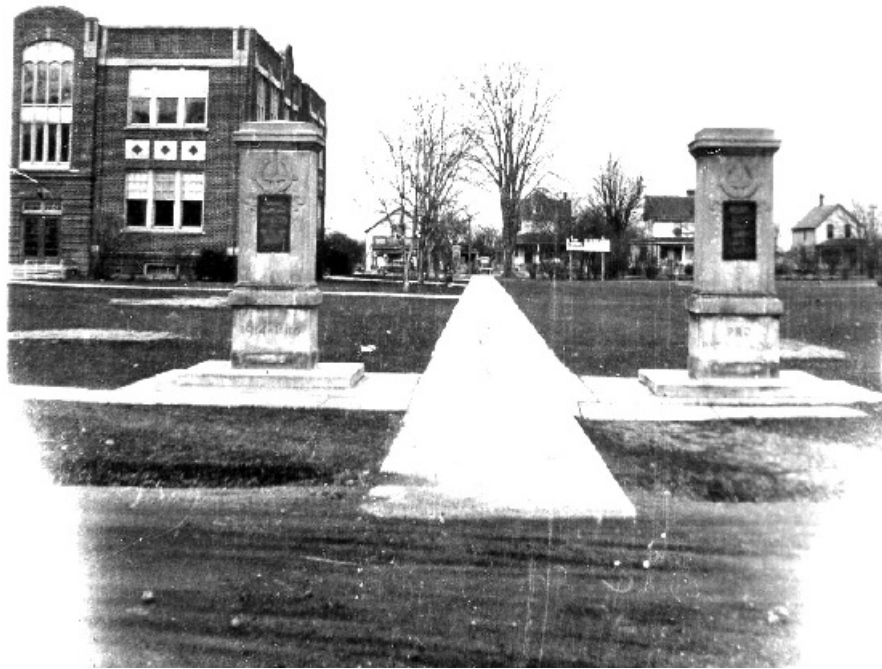


Honour Roll
Obituaries of the men
on our cenotaph
\$5

Letters Home
Written by local boys
overseas in WWI
\$15

Then & Now

East side of Laird Avenue



Above: Memorial pillars erected in 1924 just south of General Amherst High School. This photo is looking east from Laird Avenue. *Marsh Collection P843*

Below: September 11, 2013. *Marsh Collection photo*

