

Please  
take  
one!

# Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection  
Amherstburg, Ontario

Please  
take  
one!

Volume III Issue 3

Spring 2010

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## Spring is here!

A century ago, businesses in Amherstburg announced the arrival of Spring.

Ads from April, 1910 issues of the Amherstburg Echo

**Spring is Here**  
and it is time to think of spring necessities.  
We have everything needed for home and garden use.  
We intend carrying a stock of  
**Wall Paper**  
which we would like you to see before choosing.  
No need to say anything about it, except that we are agents for this celebrated paint.  
**RYAN & COMPANY**  
PLUMBING AND TIMBERING IN CONNECTION.

**Hats, Shirts and Footwear**  
Spring has come prepared to stay a while, it is hoped, and every man that is particular about what he wears will be interested in Spring Hats.  
"Hats for the conservative man, or hats for the most young dresser. Our hats are absolutely correct. The world knows we better than the money that the hat is sold."  
**OUR SPECTACULAR SHOWING OF SHOES**  
of New Spring and Summer Footwear will appeal to you at its right. A pair of OUR SHOES will demonstrate the superior qualities of style, comfort and service, which may be had here at very modest prices.  
**WE HAVE SOME SHIRT SPECIALS.**  
Our assortment is complete enough for every man to be fitted to his taste. Spring and Summer undershirts, Old Fashioned, Collared, Opened, and Single in hand samples.  
**J. I. COUSINS**  
DRY GOODS CLOTHING, HATS AND CAPS, BOOTS AND SHOES  
GENTLEMEN'S ATTENDANCE. AMHERSTBURG  
HOUSE BLOCK.

**Your Spring Suit!**  
If ever a man wants smart, stylish clothes it is when the first warm days appear. Nowhere can the most particular man find a finer and more satisfying stock of suits than is here in the present moment. Yet with all the character and style which our good clothing possesses, prices are as low as a casual man could wish.  
**Men's Handsome Spring Suits \$8.00 to \$15.00**  
If you choose to have a SUIT MADE TO YOUR MEASURE our special Order Department can take good care of you—guaranteeing you a fit in every particular—when delivery from a week to ten days and has hundred samples to choose from.  
**Suits \$13.50 to \$30.00**  
**YOUR SPRING HAT!**  
Our stock and showing is complete and beautiful—of everything that is new in MEN'S HATS, black and colors, soft and stiff, all sizes, to suit the day.  
**SHOES AND FURNISHINGS**  
We can more than satisfy your wants with these necessary articles. Complete showing of Men's Fine Suits, Gloves, Neckties, Hosiery, etc.  
**SPECIAL**  
Ladies', Misses' and Children's Shoes, worth \$1.25 to \$3.00, clearing at 50 CTS. per pair.  
**F.P. SCRATCH & Co.**  
AMHERSTBURG.

**AT E. BERUBE'S**  
**SPRING HOUSE CLEANING**  
We are prepared to supply your wants in Carpets, Mattings, Linoleums, Oil Cloths, Rugs, Mats, Lace, Tapestry and Muslin Curtains, Extension, Rods, Curtain Poles, Blinds, Stair Rods and Plates, in fact anything you may need to beautify and make the home comfortable.  
**Carpets**  
Wilsons, Velvets, Axminsters, Brussels, Tapestry, 3 and 2 ply Wool, Unions and Emperors. Import our 3 ply at \$1.00. Our Tapestry at 50c (the talk of the town) and our Unions from 30c up.  
**Rugs**  
in the following sizes: 2-1/2 x 3 yds., 3-1/2 x 3, 3 x 4, 3 x 4, and 4 x 5 x 4; which we handle in Smyrna, Wilton, Velvet, Brussels, Tapestry, Wools and Unions.  
**Linoleums**  
2, 3, 3 1/2 and 4 yds. wide in floral and block designs. Our own importation.  
**Mattings**  
By the yard and room size Rugs as well in endless variety of color, design and quality.  
**The Quality Store.**  
**E. BERUBE.**  
One Price to All.

**Spring Papering**  
Both weather and Alcanar suggest  
**Wall Paper and Spring Painting**  
We have secured the agency for a line of Interior Paints which outlasts anything ever sold in Amherstburg—Call and look over our lines.  
We are also stocking READY-MIXED PAINTS and WINDOW SHADES. Don't make an early date for your work.  
**W. A. MANSON**  
Hartley Block, Murray Street, Amherstburg

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## A Testimonial for Reflections

After receiving back issues of *Reflections* from a relative in Amherstburg, Mike in Florida wrote:

Boy, did I enjoy those. Read them almost nonstop, cover-to-cover pretty much. Great idea. They accentuate the "Tom Sawyer-Huckleberry Finn" aspects of growing up on the river that constituted so much of my childhood. They reminded me of a time that I, along with [others], drifted back from Bob-Lo using T-shirts full of little green apples as personal flotation devices - not really a recommended procedure, but fun.

What did the children of the 60s and 70s do? The Waterworks, the docks, the coal piles, the Corps of Engineers' barges and tugs - so much [has] changed....

The pictures juxtaposed one above the other showing the "Then & Now" stuff was great, too. Very enjoyable entertainment.

If you enjoy *Reflections*, we'd love to hear from you! Send us your e-mail address and we will add you to the growing list of people who receive each issue by e-mail.

research@marshcollection.org

# Growing Up in the 'Burg

## The Afternoon Time Stood Still

It was one of those beautiful late spring days in May. The year was 1950, I was in Grade 7 at St. Anthony's and I was itching for school to finish. I went to school in the morning, came home for lunch and was on my way back to school for the afternoon when the idea hit me: why waste a perfect afternoon such as this sitting in a class? Why not skip school and enjoy the weather? As I was not with any of my buddies who would have talked me out of it, the plan was set.

Amherstburg at that time had a Public Works yard on Seymore Street where the Town kept gravel, sand and things of that nature. There were also some sheds where they stored the graders, etc. I thought this would be the perfect place to hide until school went in, after which I would be free to do as I wanted until school was let out and I could go home with no one the wiser.

The first part of the plan worked. However, I had not figured into the equation the fact that the yard would have workers coming and going, and

if I were discovered I would be whisked off to school and have a lot of explaining to do, both there and when I got home. Furthermore, if I were seen on the streets I would be stopped and asked why I was not in school. So there I sat, hiding, for the rest of the day while visions danced in my head of police officers, truant officers, parole officers, a very angry mother and a whole slew of my buddies laughing and telling me what a dufus I was. This was certainly not one of my brightest ideas. To complicate matters even further, I did not have a watch nor any other means of telling time. It had to be the longest afternoon on record. It was exactly as if time stood still.

When I finally got the nerve to venture from my hiding spot I found out it was 4:30 in the afternoon and school had been out more than an hour. I trudged home, vowing to never, never, ever try something like that again.

*- by an anonymous schoolboy who never tried it again*

## 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  
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(519) 736-9191  
[www.marshcollection.org](http://www.marshcollection.org)  
[research@marshcollection.org](mailto:research@marshcollection.org)

## 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.



Sunday afternoon baseball game in the town park, circa 1950s.  
*Marsh Collection P4078*

## Sunday Afternoons

I remember in the mid-1950s that on Sunday afternoons at the hard ball games in the town park, Rupert Scott would come with his bus and park it behind the backstop. He sold hot dogs, popcorn, etc. He called it "Scotty's Chuckwagon" and it was bright red and black. After the game the kids would pick up the litter and Scotty would give them a bag of popcorn.

In centre field there was a big scoreboard and when there were no games being played, we would climb up on it and run around on the 2x10s that the scorekeeper would walk on.

*- by Kent Wigle*

# Yesterday's News

from the archives of the *Amherstburg Echo*

**1880**

*March* - P. Navin of Amherstburg is making 60 pews for the new church at McGregor [St. Clement's].

- The new steamer *Transport* with capacity to carry 24 cars will transfer all C.S.R. trains between Grosse Île and Amherstburg.

*April* - The town Building & Property Committee has ploughed up the west town park and the first lot of trees, 100 maples, will be set out at once.

**1890**

*March* - A disastrous fire, thought to be the work of a firebug, destroyed the top floor of the new town hall. A reward of \$250 is offered for the arrest and conviction of the guilty party.

- New windows, floors, oak pews, wainscoting and door frames have been installed in First Baptist Church.

- A gang of men is working at T.B. White's quarry, Anderdon, getting out stone for facing the locks at the Soo Canal.

**1900**

*March* - In January, February and the first five days of March, Amherstburg has had 49½ inches of snow.

**1910**

*March* - St. Clement's Church, McGregor, used their new pipe organ for the first time.

- Miss Emma McTavish won the contest to name the D.B.I. & W.'s new steamer *St. Claire*, now being built at Toledo.

- Sullivan's drills *Exploder*, *Destroyer* and *Dynamite* have been brought to Amherstburg to begin work on the river.

*April* - The wireless telegraph is expected to play an important part in lake marine service this season.

- Early risers are rewarded with a view of Halley's Comet in the eastern sky.

- The Buffalo Dredging Company took between 80 and 100 local men this season, clearing nearly every available labourer in town.

- Parishioners at River Canard have begun tearing down the old frame presbytery, making way for a new brick residence for which church members hauled stone, brick and sand during the winter.

*May* - Work will begin in September on the new 8-room Amherstburg Public School. J.B. Wilson, masonry contractor, will remove the old school building.

**1920**

*March* - A Studebaker vehicle carrying 136 gallon jugs of malt whiskey was seized by a police posse at Elliott's Point. When the truck and cargo arrived at Kemp's Garage it was discovered that 1 gallon had disappeared.

- Hon. George Graham presented the Amherstburg Baseball Club with a silver championship cup which they won last year. The names of the players will be engraved on the cup.

- Si Bertrand's estate property on Alma Street was subdivided into 55 lots and a street was laid out and named after him.

*April* - Brunner Mond is erecting a dozen houses for employees in the Ouellette subdivision south of their offices [Brunner Ave.]

**1930**

*March* - The riverfront road from Gore Street to the town limits will be paved this year.

- Dr. E.M. Warren has purchased the dental practice of the late Dr. W.S. French.

- "The Bug", a new ride, is being erected on Bob-Lo.

*May* - The T. Eaton Company will open a mail order branch in the Hadley Block [SW corner Murray and Ramsay].

- The new manager of the Liberty Theatre intends to install "talkies".

- Ty Cobb, former pro baseball player, hosted a group of 18 men at a fish dinner at the Amherst Hotel.

**1940**

*April* - The former merry-go-round building on Bob-Lo has been transformed into a roller rink.

- The old car ferry *Transfer* is on her way to Hamilton for scrapping.

**1950**

*March* - There is talk of an artificial ice rink in town.

- Amherstburg has signed a fire protection agreement with Anderdon for designated areas of the township.

*April* - The cornerstone was laid for the new St. John the Baptist Intermediate School.

- The Post Office Dept. intends to place ten drop-letter boxes around town.

*May* - The new Malden Central School will officially open May 23rd. It is the first of its kind in Southwestern Ontario.

- McQueen's tug *Atomic* is the winner of the 1st International Tugboat Race, held on the Detroit River.

**1960**

*April* - Military St. from Second Concession to Main St. is being opened up.

- A caution light will be erected at the corner of Simcoe and Sandwich Sts.

- Brunner Mond boaters are building their own boat basin on company property near the old Gordon Station site.

*May* - The recently constructed K of C hall in McGregor is ready to open.

- The extension of Victoria St. from Richmond St. to the Pike [Simcoe St.] has been cut through and stoned.

- Texas Rd. is to be paved.

**1970**

*March* - The new Coast Guard cutter *Griffon* has been christened in Ottawa.

- Construction of Western Secondary School is expected to begin soon.

*April* - Seven apartments are being built on the second floor of the Liberty Theatre.



# Shipping the Detroit

## The Infamous *Aquarama*

In the mid-1950s the cruise ship *Aquarama* entered service, sailing between Cleveland and Detroit. The ship was converted from a Second World War troopship named *Marine Star* at a cost of \$8 million. It soon gained a reputation and the nickname "Awkwardrammer", running into breakwalls and swamping boats. Due to its design it created huge wakes even at low speed and was very difficult to handle in close quarters.

My strongest memories of the ship are of a serious accident which happened to one of the crew while crossing Lake Erie in August, 1962.

At the time I was on duty with "Pepper" Brush, Leonard Fox and Garnet Fox at the A.A.M. Rescue Squad. An urgent call came in by ship-to-shore radio stating that an electrician was trapped, seriously injured, in an elevator shaft aboard the ship. The *Aquarama* was entering the lower Detroit River and requested emergency assistance.

We immediately contacted Bob-Lo Island Company and requested the service of the ferry *C.E. Park*. The ship came to a halt in the river opposite Amherstburg. Leaving the ambulance at the dock, the *Park* took us to a large cargo hold on the side of the vessel and we entered the ship. Accompanied by Dr. E.C. LaDouceur, we reached the trapped victim with our equipment.

The man was freed in time and removed from the elevator shaft. Bleeding was stopped and the victim stabilized for transportation. He suffered a crushed foot and severe lacerations to the other leg. Upon reaching shore we radioed Grace Hospital and rushed to the emergency ward.

When we arrived at the hospital we were sent directly to the operating room where surgeons were waiting. It seemed strange to enter such a sterile area, as we were covered in grease and grime from the rescue. We left the man in the

capable hands of the doctors, who saved his life, although he eventually lost his leg.

Later that year our team and the A.A.M. Squad were the first Canadians to be awarded the J.S. Wise Award from the International First Aid and Rescue Squad Association.

*Aquarama* was a very luxurious ship for its time. It was equipped with a movie theatre, dining room, several bars with entertainment and recreation areas. However, it did not make a profit for its owners and was taken out of service at the end of the 1962 season, never to sail again.

The ship was moved to several ports over the following decade. Many plans were made to use the ultramodern ship, but none were successful. In 2007 the *Aquarama* was returned to her original name, *Marine Star*, and towed across the ocean to Turkey for scrapping.

by Vince Spearing



Deckhands on Main Deck, Main Service Deck on Upper Deck



Page from programme for inaugural cruise of *Aquarama*, 1957.  
Marsh Collection 997.3.2



*Aquarama*, late 1950s.  
Marsh Collection P760

### New Issue of *Echo Soundings* now available

After a two-year hiatus, the Marsh Collection is continuing with its popular book series, "*Echo Soundings: Marine News from the Amherstburg Echo*." While previous issues covered the time period 1874-1914, the new volume jumps forward in time and reprints "marine news" from 1935. Work was being done to dredge the Livingstone Channel even deeper than before, and Capt. J. Earl McQueen and his small fleet of tugs were hard at work in the towing and wrecking business on the Detroit River and surrounding waters.

Volume XI is softcover, 64 pages, fully indexed and is available at the Marsh Collection for \$12. Back issues of *Echo Soundings* are still available, priced from \$5 to \$22.

Packed with fascinating information about day-to-day life on the Great Lakes, *Echo Soundings* is a must-read for every marine history buff.

# Bricks 'n' Beams

## The Bathurst Street Buildings of S.J. Johnson

Stephen J. Johnson was born in Windsor in 1857 and moved to Amherstburg with his parents in the early 1870s. As a young man, he opened a small grocery store which was immediately successful and he soon moved the business into the brand-new Kolfage Block (southwest corner Murray and Ramsay). In 1883 he took over operation of the "Central Store," a grocery located at the southeast corner of Bathurst and Murray Streets in the substantial brick block built by Dennis Delisle around 1865. (It is now occupied by Carol's Unisex Hair Designs.) Johnson purchased the building three years later along with the lot adjacent to the south. He added a 17 x 29-foot brick storehouse in 1889.

His business continued to prosper and in 1898 the *Echo* reported that "S.J. Johnson is having extensive repairs made in his grocery store which will add much to its beauty. Enough of the north wall will be removed to allow three plate-glass windows, each 5½ feet wide and 7 feet high, to be put in. Over these

will be put leaded fanlights two feet high...." (See photo on page 8.)

Johnson operated the store from this location until his death in 1907. His obituary states: "He was very ambitious to make the street on which he lived attractive to residents, and to this end purchased a number of lots, built houses thereon and these properties were models of neatness and thrift." Our interest was piqued and we decided to find out which residences on Bathurst Street could be attributed to this savvy businessman.

In 1896 Johnson and his wife Anna hired local contractor Andrew Gibb to build them a fine residence on Lot 22, west side Bathurst (now #270), "one of the prettiest to be found in town." The house featured sliding doors between the parlour, sitting room and dining room; woodwork of Georgia pine; a hot air heating system; and beautiful landscaping. At the same time, Johnson purchased the house on Lot 21

from Leander Benito and remodelled it "so as to be good as new." (This is now the location of Speck's Restaurant, #266 Bathurst.)

The lot next to his store remained vacant until 1901, when he had "a new residence built [there], the main part 18 x 30 feet with a rear kitchen 14 x 26 feet, to be occupied by a tenant." This house is now #261 Bathurst St. The two homes immediately to the south were likely built around the same time, as Johnson had purchased those lots in 1899 and the three houses are quite similar in appearance.

In 1906 Johnson bought two lots on the east side of Bathurst Street between Gore and Simcoe, one of which was the location of the Salvation Army barracks, formerly the Presbyterian manse. He "[tore] down the old barracks and [built] a modern residence there for rent," then had "another dwelling house erected on the old S.A. barracks property" later that year. These homes are now #291 and #295 Bathurst Street.

Stephen J. Johnson maintained quite a presence on Bathurst Street for many years, owning not only a prominent business and a lovely residence, but also building or remodelling at least six other homes.



S.J. Johnson house, Lot 22, west side Bathurst Street (now #270 Bathurst), circa 1900.

Marsh Collection P4133.14

By 1906 S.J. Johnson owned eight lots on Bathurst Street.



# Ancestral Lines

Occasionally we are asked just what the heck we do here at the Marsh Collection! The correct answer to that would be many, many different things - cataloguing artifacts and photographs, indexing local history events, documenting construction dates of historic and other buildings, answering a myriad of unusual (and at times very strange) questions about this area and its people, updating local history and genealogy files - but probably the most time-consuming and yet rewarding of all is assisting folks in researching their family histories.

Since the publication of our Fall 2009 newsletter, we have assisted family historians with information

about the following surnames: Amlin, Barron, Beaudoin, Bertrand, Burns, Cadaret, Courtois, Deneau, Dube, Duff, Gagnon, Gatfield, Gibb, Green, Grenier, Harris, Knapp, Kolfage, Laframboise, Meloche, Monforton, Mulder, Park, Pattenden, Walls and Wright.

In early March we thoroughly enjoyed walking 24 Grade 7 students from Malden Central School through a 2-hour genealogy exercise...one group of 12 in the a.m. and the other 12 in the afternoon. They seemed to enjoy the programme as much as we did, so we hope to have the opportunity to do it again with other classes.



A 96-year-old photograph with some local interest was a recent addition to the Marsh Historical Collection archives. It's entitled "ENGLISH-FRENCH TEACHERS TRAINING SCHOOL - 1914 - SANDWICH, ONTARIO."

In the photo are individual ovals of the principal, D.M. Eagle; assistant principal A. Beneteau; and 14 individual graduates of the program, all females except for one lone male, O. Renaud. The women are:

Beaudin, E.  
Bondy, E.  
Coyle, E.  
Ducharme, L.  
Hewitt, R.  
LeBoeuf, D.  
Lemire, K.  
Mousseau, B.  
Parent, M.  
Renaud, C.  
Trudell, E.  
Roullier, I.  
St. Amant, A.

We have reason to believe that E. Coyle is Edna Coyle (1894-1923), daughter of Patrick and Emma Coyle; Emma entered the convent as Sister Adelle. If any of these names are familiar to you we invite you to come in, view the photograph and perhaps tell us more about these teachers of 1914.



Grade 7 students in Anne Beneteau's class at Malden Central School visited the Marsh Collection on March 3rd and learned about some of the methods and challenges of family history research.

*Marsh Collection photos*





# Recent Donations

Part of the mandate of the Marsh Historical Collection is to collect and preserve items relating to the history of Amherstburg and the lower Detroit River. We often receive donations of objects, books and photographs that reflect the heritage of this area. Below are three of the items which have been donated in the last few months.

## Firemen's Field Day

The story in our Fall 2009 issue of *Reflections* about the popular Firemen's Field Day prompted life-long North Street resident Kent Wigle to bring in a photo taken from his front yard in 1967. As part of this annual event, different fire departments competed to see who could extinguish the barrel fire in the shortest time.

**Firemen's Field Day, 1967.**  
*Marsh Collection P4451*



## Souvenir

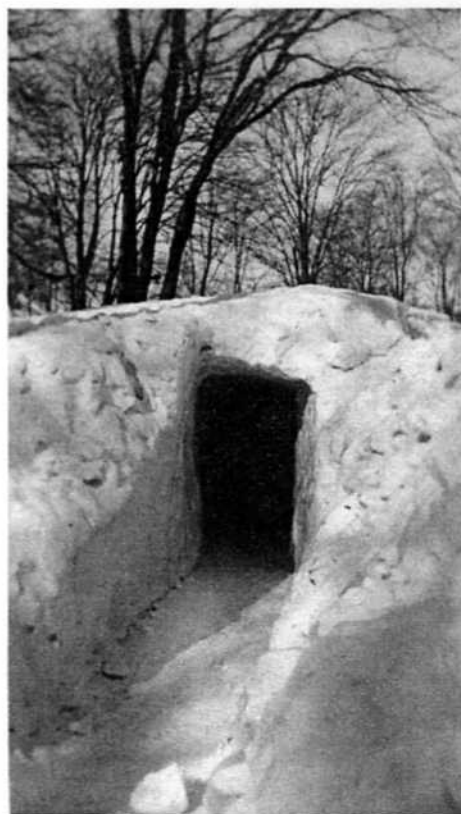


One of our favourite pieces is this adorable ashtray featuring a picture of the Amherstburg town hall (1883-1965). We're not sure exactly how old it is, but it has been suggested that the style is indicative of the turn of the century.

## Snow Tunnel - 1918

It turns out that Kent also had photos of the snow tunnel built by neighbourhood children on North Dalhousie Street in 1918. (We featured a picture of Robert Kitchen in front of the tunnel entrance in our Winter 2009-10 issue.)

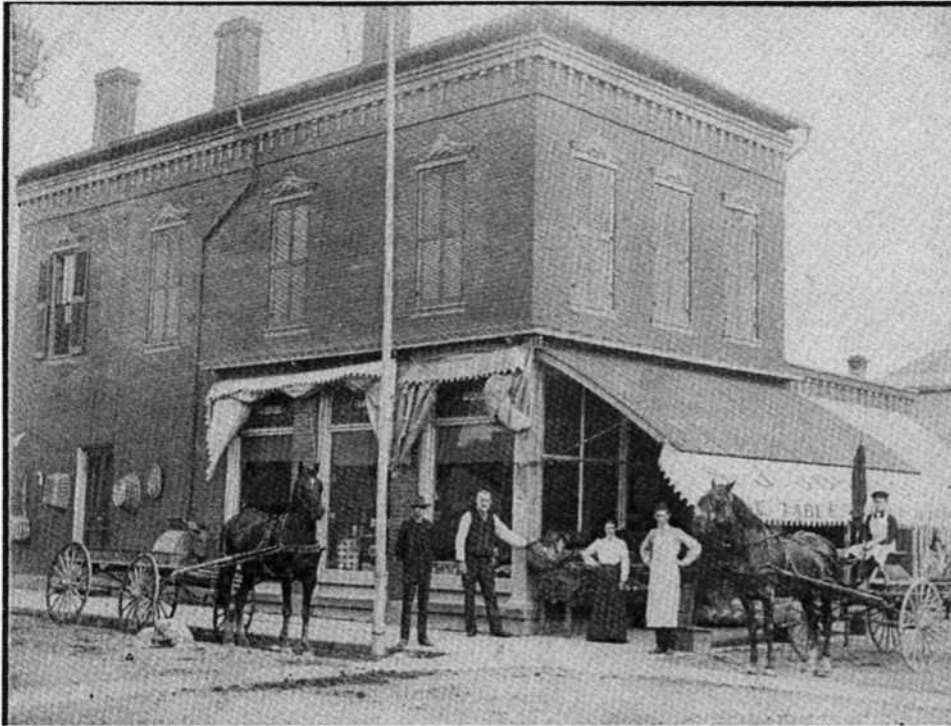
Our old friend Serendipity showed up again as well. While working on the next issue of Helen Marsh's *Conversation Pieces* recently, we found the following comment, written by Miss Marsh in March of 1965: "*The experience of being snowbound in the Banana Belt, as we all were on Thursday, was a new one to many. (Oldtimers like myself remember another snow storm when a tunnel was made through a snowbank on North Dalhousie Street.)*"



**Snow tunnel, 1918**  
*Marsh Collection P4449*

# Then & Now

## Southeast corner Bathurst and Murray Streets



S.J. Johnson Grocery, *circa* 1900.  
*Marsh Collection P3408*



Carol's Unisex Hair Designs, March 2010.  
*Marsh Collection photo*