



Reflections



Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection
Amherstburg, Ontario

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Amherstburg Library is 100 Years Old

“Amherstburg’s new library is a classy building and will endure as a monument to its architect and builder.”

On April 9, 1913, “the opening of Amherstburg’s beautiful new public library building...was one of the most important events in the old town for many years...”

Construction had begun in the Fall of 1911 under the direction of local contractor Joseph B. Wilson, using plans drawn by Leamington architects Crane & Pennington. American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie donated \$10,000 for a library building, provided the Town agreed “to maintain a Free Public Library at a cost of not less than One Thousand Dollars a year, and provides a suitable site for the building.”

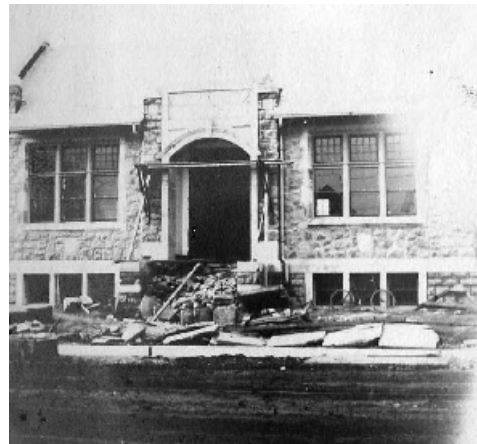
The southwest corner of Richmond and Apsley had been acquired by the Town in the Spring of 1911, and 75 cords of stone from the Anderdon Quarry were purchased shortly thereafter at the cost of quarrying and placed on the site. Construction was delayed for a few months while plans were being submitted and approved by Carnegie, but by the end of October the excavation of the basement was complete and the first stone had been laid. Work progressed more slowly than expected, due at first to a scarcity of masons and later a delay in the delivery of the front doors, but the building was completed by the end of 1912.

In January, 1913 the *Windsor Evening Record* reported that the new library was “a very creditable structure [with] an imposing appearance.” There was “ample shelf room for books and...a commodious auditorium in the basement.”

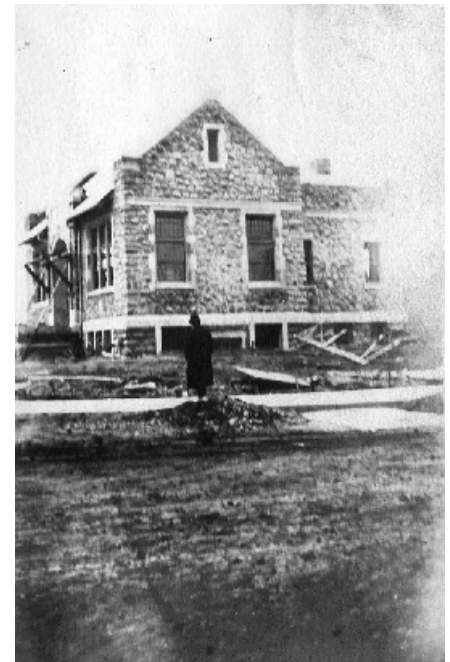
The official opening ceremonies on April 9th included an afternoon of speeches by members of the Library Board and municipal officials, and the presentation of a piano by the IODE. A musical and recitative program in the evening attracted crowds too large

to be accommodated by the auditorium. “Those who have seen it declare [the new library] cannot be outclassed in architectural beauty, convenience of arrangement, heating and lighting anywhere in the Province.”

A century later, the Amherstburg Public Library - the only Carnegie building in Essex County still being used as a library - gives, as Mr. Carnegie had hoped, “everyone coming to Amherstburg...a good first impression of Amherstburg.”



Construction of Amherstburg Public Library, 1912.
Marsh Collection PA60



If you enjoy Reflections, please let us know! We welcome your comments. Reflections is also available in PDF form by email - just send us an email asking to be added to the list.
research@marshcollection.org

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Growing Up in the 'Burg

"Anonymous" Revealed

by Butch Fox

Reflections, the monthly newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection, is a thoroughly enjoyable read. All aspects of it bring back notable history of our Town of Amherstburg and delightful stories of some of our local characters.

A favourite of many is "Growing Up in the 'Burg". This column gives locals the opportunity to recall, in print, some of the many experiences they had in days gone by. The author of many of these adventures signs his stories as "anonymous". Most of the eloquently written and humorous writings by "anonymous" take us back to the 1940s and '50s. Anonymous writes truthful stories about himself and his friends, whom he refers to as a group of "ragamuffins". Most of us "ragamuffins" can identify ourselves or our friends in these ramblings where names are never used. If we weren't part of the story, we certainly can appreciate all of his experiences while growing up in the 'Burg.

For those younger readers who didn't live without iPods, cell phones and multiple TVs, it gives them a good insight into how kids with very little money and few material items entertained themselves in war and post-war times. Amherstburg has always been a great place for kids and young adults to venture through maturity. "Growing Up in the 'Burg" keeps the memories alive in those "warm and fuzzy" places within us.

The "Growing Up in the 'Burg" column will continue in *Reflections*, but unfortunately the last story authored by "anonymous" appears in this issue. Dan Schindler passed away December 14, 2012. Speaking for all the "ragamuffins", Dan, as a friend and story-teller, will certainly be missed. Dan hadn't physically lived in Amherstburg since the '60s but was always involved in the town. Whenever he was asked where he was from, he proudly stated, "The 'Burg".



Dan Schindler
1938-2012

Bob-Lo's North End

by anonymous

Back in the day, the north end of Bob-Lo Island was what the Vikings would call "Xanadu", especially if you were into exploring and discovery. Here you could let your imagination run wild. One minute you were an explorer in the wilderness and the next you were an archaeologist discovering underwater wrecks. There was a small bay to the immediate north of the island and north of that was Horseshoe Bay. Horseshoe Bay at one time was physically part of Bob-Lo but a small cut someone had dug allowed you to get to the Amherstburg side of the island without having to go all the way around. Swimming through this cut when a freighter was passing was an adventure in itself. The current would whip through there with a speed that made you think you were surfing and if you weren't careful you were out in the big current of the river before you knew it. By the way, the cut has since been filled in and once more Bob-Lo and Horseshoe are one entity.

Archaeology took a couple of forms. The finding of a couple of arrowheads alerted you to the fact that you were travelling the same land that had been home to the First Nations, including the famous Chief Tecumseh. Abandoned ships at the head of the island were something else to pique our curiosity and exploring what was left of these boats was another adventure. As far as we were concerned, there was treasure in these ships, but it was always just beyond our reach. I did some research on Google Earth and it looks like there are three ships lying there. Further searching shows that these boats were placed there in the early 1940s and the name of one of them is the *City of Detroit*, abandoned and burned there in 1940*. She was built in 1878 and

*see *Shipping the Detroit*, page 4

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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was 234 feet long. I think I heard somewhere that she had been used as housing for the men working on the Livingstone Channel when it was built circa 1910. Whether this is fact or not, I don't know.*

Not too far up the bank from where we beached our boats was an old gnarly pear tree and in season it had the best

continued on page 4

Yesterday's News

from the archives of the *Amherstburg Echo*

1883

April - The corner of Dalhousie and Richmond has been selected for the new Customs House and Post Office. Petitions are being circulated proposing that the site be farther back from the river.

May - Amherstburg ratepayers will vote on a bylaw to authorize council to borrow \$10,000 for 20 years for the purpose of erecting a new town hall.

1893

April - Amherstburg's population is 2279.

1903

April - The population of Anderdon Township is 1921.

May - One of the greatest sights to be seen in Amherstburg, which hundreds of people have never seen the likes of - thrilling moving pictures - will be shown at the town hall. Tickets 25 cents and 35 cents.

1913

March - The nationalizing of Old Fort Malden has been shelved for a time. Prime Minister Borden says they are too busy this session to deal with the proposition.

April - The official opening of the new Amherstburg Public Library will take place April 9th.

May - Work on the new dance pavilion on Bob-Lo is nearing completion.

1923

March - According to government statistics, the average cost of a family's weekly groceries is \$10.52.

1933

March - Discussion at the recent Town Council meeting centred on taking action concerning excessively heavy blasting in the Livingstone Channel work.

- The steamer *Arizona* will be used as a floating boarding house for the men working on the Livingstone Channel.

April - The Fox livery barn on Richmond Street, originally one of the frame barracks at Fort Malden, has been razed.

1943

March - The name of Amherst Distillers Ltd. has been officially changed to Calvert Distillers (Canada) Ltd.

April - H.M.C.S. *Fort Malden*, the name chosen for a new Canadian Naval vessel in honour of Amherstburg, was accepted by the Naval Board. The vessel is not yet built but will likely be a corvette or minesweeper.

May - Martin "Wimpy" Boufford, Royal Canadian Navy, won the middleweight division boxing crown for Canada in Scotland recently.

1953

March - Malden Twp. has given notice of intention to close the 4th Concession Road south of Hwy. 18 [County Rd. 20].

- Parking meters will be installed downtown, despite the reeve's protests that this will drive business out of town.

April - A federal-provincial housing project will be established on the former Bell Farm, bounded

by Alma, Second Concession, Fort and Victoria Streets.

1963

March - The Amherstburg Community Band will open the season by participating in the St. Patrick's Day parade in Detroit.

April - The town clock on the old post office building was put back in working order. Town council had stopped the clock but had it re-activated following protests from taxpayers.

May - Grand opening of the new, modern Duffy's Tavern will take place May 22nd.

- Sod-turning ceremonies will be held at the site of the new Wesley United Church May 12th.

1973

March - Tenders have been called for the construction of a new bridge on Hwy. 18 [County Rd. 20] over River Canard.

April - Four Seasons Bowl will open this month.

May - Construction has begun on a 27-unit apartment building on Dalhousie Street south of Bella Vista Apartments.

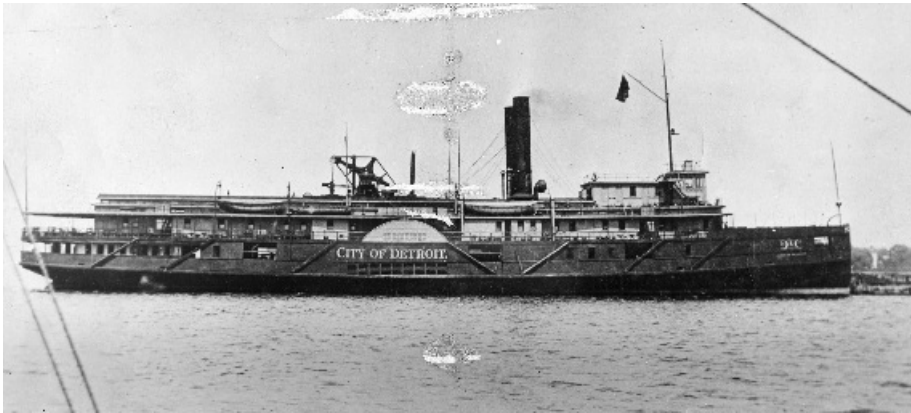
1983

March - A new shopping plaza is under construction on the southeast corner of McCurdy and Sandwich.

April - The Kingdom Hall for Jehovah's Witnesses was erected at the corner of Hwy. 18 [County Rd. 20] and Lowes Sideroad in two days.

May - Nearly 800 Robert Bateman fans gathered at General Amherst High School to meet the noted wildlife artist.

Shipping the Detroit

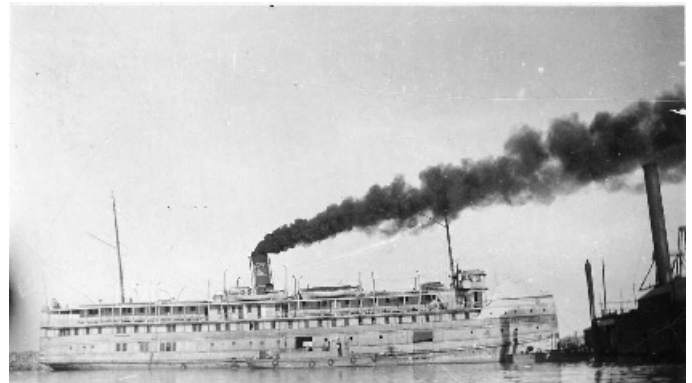


Steamer *City of Detroit*, undated.
Courtesy Fort Malden NHSC

The *City of Detroit* was built in 1878 for the Detroit & Cleveland Steam Navigation Co. It was abandoned in 1940 while under the ownership of the Nicholson Transit Co. The “engines [were] reportedly removed in 1948; hull abandoned at head of Bob-Lo Island, Detroit River, where it burned at a later date.” (Source: *On-line vessel database of Bowling Green State*)

The propeller *City of Racine* was built in 1889 by Burger Bros. at Manitowac, WI. It was renamed *Arizona* in 1909. During channel work on the Livingstone Channel in the 1930s, the *Arizona* was used as a floating dormitory for workers, under the ownership of Geo. Mills & Co. of Detroit. It was dismantled at Toledo in 1937. (Source: *On-line vessel database of Bowling Green State University*)

Another propeller, the *Indiana*, was also used to house workers on the Livingstone Channel project. Like the *Arizona*, it was built by Burger Bros., in 1890. It was converted to a floating dormitory in 1930 and used during the West Neebish Channel construction before being brought to the Detroit River. (Source as above)



Propeller *Arizona*, mid-1930s.
Marsh Historical Collection P4205

Growing Up in the 'Burg

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pears that could be found anywhere. Pears were not my favourite food (probably because somebody told me they were good for me) but I would stop at this tree and have my fill. I've often wondered if this was one of the trees brought from France by the Jesuit Missionaries and planted by the thousands along our waterway.

About five hundred feet further inland there was a gully about fifty feet long, twenty-five feet wide and three feet deep. The dirt that had been dug to form this depression had been neatly piled all around the perimeter. On top of this some sumac trees were growing and their branches intertwined to form a complete canopy over the whole thing. From the outside it appeared to be just another stand of scrub trees but inside it was our castle. We had a little campfire ring in the middle and some rocks for chairs. It didn't matter if it was 90 degrees outside, we always had a little fire going anytime we went there. I have no idea who originally dug this gully or what was the intent, but it sure served as a major rung on our imagination ladder.

Bob-Lo was at one time divided by a fence that effectively cut the island in two. The south end contained the amusements and restaurants and the north was left to run wild. Before this fence was installed, everyone had access to all. There was a bridle path or horse and buggy trail that circled the north end of the island and sweethearts could rent buggies for a slow trip around the island. By the time we discovered this, the path had long grown over, but there was still evidence of its existence. I remember a small building, possibly a way station to get out of inclement weather, or maybe it was an outhouse situated next to the trail. It was small and carved on one of the walls by some lovelorn gent was a heart inscribed with “John loves Gertie” and was dated July 1909.

In a nutshell, this describes my adventures on Bob-Lo and I'm sure there are many others. As I've said before, we grew up in the best of times and I wouldn't trade those days for anything.

Bricks & Beams

**Ure's Country Kitchen & Variety Will Be 25 Years Old in June!
And In The Middle Of Their Enlarged Facility Is The Structure Which Was Built As A Grocery Store
Exactly 100 Years Ago**

by Eleanor Warren

It was a simple question that turned into a complex research project. In February the Marsh Historical Collection once again displayed its collection of Valentine cards from the 1920s. Included in the exhibit was a copy of a flyer from the *Amherstburg Echo*, January 15, 1926, which advertised "Chateau La Danse, the new dance hall and cafeteria built by George Sellars at Malden Centre." One of our visitors upon seeing the flyer asked, "Where at Malden Centre was that?" Well, that did it! Now that our curiosity was piqued there was nothing left to do but start digging. What we found was both historically and genealogically significant.

In 1902 Amos E. Wood moved his family from Kent County to a farm on Lot 34, 4th Concession of Malden. The Wood children were at that time as follows: Joseph, age 17; Reginald, 15; Harry, 13; Guy, 11; Willie, 2; and Lydia Jane, 1. Four more children were born in Malden: Charles, Mary, Ponty and Robert.

Reginald Wood, the second-eldest son, had always been frail and wasn't able to work the farm with his brothers, so in 1913 Amos purchased four acres on the southeast corner of Hwy. 20 and 6th Concession from Fred Squire for \$500. Here he erected a wood frame

structure so that 26-year-old Reggie could operate a grocery store. In September, 1920 Reg Wood married Rosa Beaudoin and together they eked out a living running the little store. Unfortunately, by late 1921 Reginald's chronic heart condition worsened and he passed away the following January. In April, 1922, Amos sold the Malden Centre property to George A. Sellars, who built a "two-storey frame house of the Brunswick type...adjoining the store". Sellars evidently enlarged the place to accommodate the new dance hall and cafeteria mentioned in the 1926 ad. (Incidentally, Amos signed his name "Wood", not "Woods".)

Milton Cornwall was the next proprietor of the grocery store. In May of 1927 he leased the business and moved his family into "the adjoining house". Nineteen years later, in March 1946, the Cornwalls sold the place to Reginald Bonnett and John Hiser for \$16,000. By then gas pumps had been

installed but dates for additions and renovations allude us at this time. However, an item in the *Echo* of April 6, 1950 mentions that Reg Bonnett "enlarged his store at Malden Centre and opened a recreational centre".

We haven't been able to determine how long Bonnett was there, or how James and Marjorie Cameron became the owners of the property, but in 1953 they deeded the property to Elmer "Digger" Bondy for \$1.00 "and other considerations". Following Elmer's death in 1962, his wife Albertine operated the business for an undetermined period of time. After that there were Pashleys, Eichenbergers and Kings in charge of the operation, and perhaps others whose names are not known to us.

On June 15, 1988 along came the hard-working, energetic Randy and Laurie Ure, who with their family have turned Ure's Country Kitchen & Variety into a household name. Gas pumps, groceries, ice cream cones, gift items and Laurie's kitchen - especially Laurie's kitchen - are all available at Ure's, and all with friendly service and a free smile. If you haven't had breakfast at Ure's, you haven't had breakfast! We congratulate Randy and Laurie on their 25th anniversary. Well deserved!



Milton Cornwall store, circa 1930.

Marsh Collection P440



Wood family, circa 1915.

Front : (left to right): Bob, Joe, Harry, Mary
Back: Charlie, Guy, Reg, Lydia, Amos, Bill, Eliza, Ponty
Courtesy Eva (Wood) Brown



Ure's Country Kitchen, February 2013.

Courtesy Pat Warren

Then & Now

Dalhousie Street



Marsh Collection P879



Marsh Collection photo

Dalhousie Street, looking north between Richmond Street and Rankin Avenue.
Left, circa 1920. Right, March 2013.

ODds
AND
EndS

from the
Marsh Collection

An exhibit
celebrating miscellaneous items
in our artifact collection

On display now till May 2013

Free admission
Open Tuesday to Friday
10 am to 4pm