



# Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection  
Amherstburg, Ontario



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## A Case of Mistaken Identity Bullock's Tavern and The Horsman Hotel



**257-265 Dalhousie Street  
built 1839-40 as Bullock's Tavern**



**269 Dalhousie Street  
built 1867 as The Horsman Hotel**

by Doris Gaspar and Jennifer MacLeod

In 1978 the building at 269 Dalhousie Street, on the northeast corner of Dalhousie and Murray, was designated by the Town of Amherstburg as historically significant. Research done at the time stated that it had been built as a tavern by George Bullock in the 1830s. Since its designation, the building has been known locally as "Bullock's Tavern".

However...it was a case of mistaken identity.

The building in question is located on Lot 9, east side Dalhousie Street, and currently houses The Artisan Grill. George Bullock never owned nor occupied Lot 9...but he DID own Lot 10, next door. Bullock's Tavern was actually located on the property now known as 257-265 Dalhousie Street,

occupied at present by The Royal Sushi House and The Society Shoppe.

### **Bullock's Tavern**

Quartermaster Sergeant George Bullock first appears in Amherstburg records in 1835. Having recently purchased his discharge from the British Army, Bullock was not then assessed as the owner of any land. In 1836 when Bullock petitioned for a land grant to enable him to provide for his large family, his request was denied. This suggests that he was not in possession of any property capable of producing an income. Documents do show that by 1837 Bullock was an innkeeper in a two-storey building.

The following year he re-located his inn to a 1½-storey building. It is not certain where these two buildings were located. It is clear, however, that any event that occurred at Bullock's Tavern during 1837 and 1838 did not take place in the building now located at 257-265 Dalhousie Street.

In 1839 Bullock purchased Lot 10 - the property now known as 257-265 Dalhousie Street. In the *Western Herald* of August 12, 1840, he advertised the opening of his NEW tavern, the British American Hotel. This establishment was also referred to as Bullock's Tavern. He designed the building with the bar entirely

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

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# Growing Up in the 'Burg

## The River

by FGS

To everyone who grows up in the 'Burg, "The River" holds a certain fascination.

For some, it has been a grave; others a swimming hole; and for others a place to explore. For two of my friends and me, the last one was always foremost.

When you are seven years old, your mind can be very imaginative. We thought that we might cross the ice and get all the way to Horseshoe Bay at the north end of Bob-Lo Island. Our take-off point was "The Gully" at the foot of Alma Street. As we got further from shore we could hear the ice moving, so the dream of our destination was gone.

When we turned around, one of my friends, who had very thick glasses, tripped and fell and his glasses fell off. I tried to reach them and stepped on some thin ice and my foot went through. The third member of the expedition party grabbed me and pulled me back to keep me from falling through.

So now we had a person who could hardly see, one soaking wet and one who was okay trying to get back to shore.

When we finally reached safety, there was a gentleman on a bicycle to greet us and scold us for being out on the ice. Not knowing who this person was, we listened to him and then went on our way.

The next day we found out he worked at Brunner Mond with our fathers and had seen us when he was leaving work. Needless to say, the excuses that we had given ("I stepped in a puddle" and "My glasses fell down a sewer hole") were discovered to be not terribly accurate. (Not as accurate as our fathers' aim at our backsides.)

Sometimes now I wonder how, considering some of our adventures, we ever survived to adulthood. Needless to say, we never went onto the river ice again.

## Another River Story

by River Rat

This story is about a neighbour who, like all of us, had his share of boats. First was the old "double-ender" from a story one or two issues back. After that was sold, he acquired a couple of wooden cedar-strip Peterboro boats, but just the mention of wood jogs the memory that if not properly looked after, the dreaded rot sets in. So now it was rebuilding the transom, replacing ribs and planking...wooden boats, ugh!

The next boat was a small 8-foot dingy, but it proved too unseaworthy, as he flipped that one and ended up dunked in Hidden Lake.

On to a new adventure: the U.S. Navy. Alas, his time in the Navy did not allow for the possession of any boats, as he was stationed in the Mojave Desert. At the end of his service he decided to return to Amherstburg, but in three years he had accumulated a lot of "stuff" and the big question was how to get it home. A neighbour had a 16-foot Glen-L fibreglass boat he was willing to trade for my buddy's car, so a swap was made, the boat was hitched up to his other car, loaded up and he headed home.

On his return to civilian life, the California boat was sold to a local fellow and with a mittful of cash he bought a new Chrysler boat powered by a 70 h.p. motor and a new adventure began. He (we) used to travel by boat to Grosse Île and Gibraltar and cruise the canals that intersect the islands. There were numerous bridges crossing over the canals and he traversed them many times with no problems.

One particular day, when the water had risen in the river, he was travelling with the Bimini top up and it made contact with the underside of a bridge and ripped the top off the boat. This boat may have been jinxed, because on a return trip he tangled with a spar buoy

## 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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Amherstburg ON • N9V 1W6  
(519) 736-9191  
[www.marshcollection.org](http://www.marshcollection.org)  
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[research@marshcollection.org](mailto:research@marshcollection.org)

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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just north of the Bru-Mon Yacht Club. He was able to make it into the yacht basin but the craft was written off by the insurance company. A new (to him) boat was acquired, a 19-foot ChrisCraft, but a decision had been made to move back to sunny California and the C.C. was too big to take with him. Back in California he got back into boats, but that's another story for another time.

# Yesterday's News

from the archives of the *Amherstburg Echo*

**1884**

*March* - A penalty of \$100 will be imposed on any captain or mate who sails a Canadian boat without a certificate.

*April* - Soap bubble parties are the latest rage.

*May* - The Building & Cemetery Committee has had 125 maple trees planted in the cemetery.

**1894**

*March* - A concert was given at the Town Hall for the benefit of the Amherstburg Cricket Club.

*April* - Council is beginning to discuss the installation of an incandescent lighting plant.

*May* - On Arbor Day (May 4th) the teachers and students of the public school will spend the day beautifying the school grounds.

**1904**

*March* - A heavy rainfall combined with frozen drains has resulted in many cellars being flooded.

*April* - A by-election will be held to replace the mayor and councillor who were "unseated" and another councillor who resigned.

*May* - Electric lights have been installed in Christ Church.

**1914**

*March* - The Hamilton & Lewitt Knitting Co. has enough orders to keep the factory working at full capacity all year.

*April* - D Squadron, First Hussars, is holding a rifle match on the old Fort grounds.

*May* - Residents are complaining that not one streetlight is functioning along Sandwich Street between Elm and Rankin.

**1924**

*March* - Several people who attended the funeral of smallpox victim Gordon

Deneau have succumbed to the disease.

*April* - The Bois Blanc Lighthouse has been equipped with a stationary light and no longer requires a keeper.

*May* - The I.O.D.E. have raised \$2100 toward the construction of a war memorial, to be located near the high school.

**1934**

*March* - An *Echo* headline reads: "AUDITOR'S REPORT SHOWS THAT REMARKABLE RECORD WAS MADE LAST YEAR IN TOWN FINANCING - Available Assets Placed at \$100,525.20 - Current Liabilities \$91,478.01, And Surplus At \$9047.19 - FACE FUTURE WITH LOWERING TAX RATE, SAYS MAYOR PARK."

*April* - A fire of unknown origin has damaged the roof of St. Anthony's School.

*May* - Five 12-lb. cannonballs have been dredged up from the riverbed at Mullen's coal dock [now the site of King's Navy Yard Park].

**1944**

*March* - The newly-formed Amherstburg Community Band gave their first concert to a packed house.

*April* - Bell Telephone will erect poles at the rear of the properties between George and Brock Streets, north of Gore, removing the poles from the street.

*May* - There will only be three "Canadian days" on Bob-Lo this season, when ferries will operate out of Windsor and Amherstburg.

**1954**

*March* - The garbage dump on Dalhousie Street has been covered and levelled. Only the southeast corner will be used until a new dump site is found.

*April* - Town Council has turned down Daylight Savings Time by a vote of 5-3.

*May* - Two plans for the supply of natural gas to Amherstburg have been presented to Council.

- The new Bank of Montreal building, southeast corner Richmond and Dalhousie, is open.

**1964**

*March* - The town hall is in need of major repairs and there is talk of building a new one.

*April* - Construction has begun on the new Anderdon town hall.

*May* - Ground has been broken for the new Separate school in Malden (St. Theresa's).

**1974**

*March* - Allied Chemical has announced a \$13 million expansion that will increase production of soda ash and calcium chloride.

*April* - Calvert of Canada has requested that Town Council approve the closing of Balaclava Street between St. Arnaud and William Streets.

*May* - Premier Bill Davis will be the guest speaker at a dinner meeting of the AAM Chamber of Commerce.

**1984**

*March* - The Amherstburg Legion has agreed to swap the 4-inch naval gun from the HMCS *Kamloops*, displayed in front of their building, for a 12-pounder so the Canadian Corvette Trust can refurbish the last remaining Corvette, the HMCS *Sackville*.

*April* - Since St. Gerard Majella School (northeast corner Alma/6th Concession) has an enrolment of only 76 students, it will be closed within two years and its students transferred to St. Theresa's in Malden.

*May* - A Windsor developer has proposed the construction of a marina at the foot of Park Street in Amherstburg.

# Shipping the Detroit

## The *Susan E. Peck*

by Al Jackson

The *Susan E. Peck* was built in 1886 at Wyandotte, Michigan, as a 230-foot schooner with four masts, at a cost of \$76,000. She was constructed in such a way that her conversion to a self-propelled steam barge could be easily accomplished and this conversion did take place two years later. Having been built with a composite-type hull (wooden planking with iron frames), she was much lighter than a traditional wooden ship and without cargo the bow would ride so high that she was almost impossible to steer. Perhaps it was this peculiarity that contributed to her meeting with one or more accidents every season.

One of her most infamous accidents occurred in early October of 1891 when she ran aground and sank in St. Mary's River just below Sault Ste. Marie, completely blocking the navigation channel. It was estimated that about 140 vessels were imprisoned in the river before a 600-foot-long cut could be dredged to create a safe bypass around the blockage. The wreck of the *Susan E. Peck* was finally raised on October 30th and the river re-opened to normal traffic.

On November 20, 1892, the

upbound *Susan E. Peck* was involved in a collision with the downbound three-masted schooner *Nelson* at the Lime-Kiln Crossing in the Detroit River just north of Amherstburg. The schooner began taking on water and quickly sank in 21 feet of water just below Bois Blanc Island. The *Peck* escaped with minor damage.

On September 17, 1893, the steamer *Peck*, upbound with 2200 tons of hard coal from Buffalo to Milwaukee, struck an underwater obstruction near Colchester Reef in Lake Erie and stove a large hole in her bottom. The captain, realizing that she was taking on water quickly, was forced to beach her near Bar Point in sixteen feet of water. Her decks remained above water but it became necessary to remove some of the coal from her hold to make room for salvage equipment. The unlucky steamer was finally re-floated with the aid of four large steam pumps that continuously spewed out coal-black water while she was towed by the tug *Saginaw* to Amherstburg. There a diver placed a temporary patch over the hole and she was then towed to Detroit for repairs totalling more than \$15,000.

On May 11, 1894, the name *Susan E. Peck* was changed to *Lewiston* in the hope of giving the vessel a much-needed change in luck. But her unfortunate career of notable accidents continued.

On August 5, 1906, the steering gear of the *Lewiston* broke while coming down the river opposite Amherstburg. In those days, before the Livingstone Channel, both upbound and downbound vessels had to use the treacherous Amherstburg Channel. Not being able to answer her helm, she suddenly veered towards the Amherstburg shore and dug her nose in twelve feet of mud just above the Waterworks dock (now the north end of King's Navy Yard Park). The next day some of her wheat cargo was removed and she was released from her strand by the local tugs *Home Rule* and *Columbia*.

Her last misfortune occurred on April 12, 1923, when she stranded on the southwest point of Kelly's Island in Lake Erie. After being released by the tug *Custodian*, she made her final voyage to Detroit and never ran again. After lying idle at River Rouge, Michigan, for ten years she was towed across the river in 1933 to Sandwich, Ontario, where the 47-year-old vessel was scrapped.

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### From Amherstburg Town Council Minutes as reported in the *Amherstburg Echo* March 18, 1881

A communication from W.M. Reade, solicitor for Patrick Dawson, was read, claiming damages to the extent of \$100 from the corporation, on account of injury done to him by the overflow of water from Sandwich Street onto his premises on Richmond Street, by which overflow of water his wife's health has been very seriously affected, and his hay and other goods injured, and asking that the council's attention be also called to the necessity of some steps being taken in the prevention of a recurrence of the above-mentioned injury to health and property, by the necessary drainage of that portion of the street.

*Patrick Dawson lived on Lot 35, north side Richmond Street, now the site of Rosewood Crescent.*

# Bricks 'n' Beams

## C.M.S. Thomas Drug Store

by Eleanor Warren

The building at 67 Richmond Street will be 129 years old this summer. Although it has been renovated several times - the original block-wood siding has been covered over with modern materials; the windows and doors were changed many years ago; the additions on the south side as shown in an early photo have since been altered to become part of the building - it is still recognizable today as the former C.M.S. Thomas Drug Store.

Charles Merrick Smith Thomas (1855-1927) was a prominent druggist in Amherstburg for 49 years. Born in Oakville, Ontario, son of Charles W. Thomas and Mary Ann Smith, he came to Anderdon Township in 1859 with his parents. Charles Thomas Sr. operated a sawmill there until moving to Amherstburg in 1867, occupying the "old British Treasury house" (the Commissariat, today the HQ of the Provincial Marine re-enactment group). Charles M.S. Thomas was educated in Amherstburg. He later obtained a teacher's certificate and taught for a few years in Malden and Amherstburg public schools. He had previously apprenticed in W.A. Whyte's drug store and graduated with honours in 1878 from the Ontario College of Pharmacy. That same year Thomas established his own drug business on Murray Street, where he remained until 1885 when he built his drug store on the southwest corner of Richmond and Ramsay, which today houses the River Town Times office.

In 1881 Thomas had married

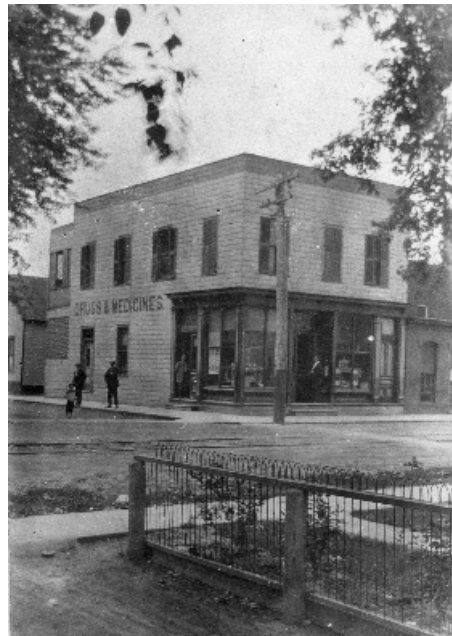
Margaret Heard (1862-1932). By 1890, with the drug store well-established, he built a new home on the north side of Richmond Street, opposite the store, for his family, which grew to include 7 sons and one daughter. Four of the sons served overseas during the First World War. When Charles M.S. Thomas died in 1927, his children were all living except for Albert, who had paid the supreme sacrifice at the 2nd battle of Ypres in 1915.

After Charles Thomas' death, the store was rented out for a few years to a variety of merchants. Max Rubenstein's Dry Goods was there in 1930; Mrs. Thomas was living upstairs, where she died two

years later.

In 1938, while occupied by Peterman's Store, a waiting room was equipped in the building for patrons of the newly-established S.W.&A. bus between Amherstburg and Windsor. In 1945 the building was sold to Clarence and Blondine Giroux for \$3500; they sold it the following year to Victor Nedin for \$4000. The Nedin family owned the property until 1988 when it was sold to Peter Leardi for his popular men's store, 67 Richmond.

The Marsh Collection files contain a great deal of information about the C.M.S. Thomas family. Researchers are welcome to come in and browse through the material.



C.M.S. Thomas Drug Store, circa 1900.  
Courtesy Fort Malden NHSC



March 2014.  
Marsh Collection photo

## A Case of Mistaken Identity

*continued from page 1*

unconnected with the hotel so that “*Tee-totallers or any other class of persons can be genteely accommodated without experiencing the least annoyance whatever.*” There was also “*a well fitted out recess underneath the building*” below the north half.

Oral history relates that the hotel once had an archway cut through to the second storey to allow coaches and horsemen access to the stables in rear of the lot. There is some kind of alcove visible in the photo below. It is unknown when it was filled in.

In 1842 Bullock was advertising in the *Western Herald* that his “new and splendid hotel” was for sale. He continued his efforts to sell the hotel while pursuing a career in local politics. In 1850, Bullock was finally able to lease the hotel to Thomas Hiron Jr. At that time Bullock moved his family to Sandwich and subsequently became the Treasurer for Essex County.

During the 1850s Bullock’s Tavern was partly used for an inn and partly for a store operated by William Duff. In 1857 Bullock conveyed the property to a group of his friends, to be held in Trust on his behalf. Perhaps this was his attempt to protect his property from the coming storm.

By 1860, George Bullock’s life was in ruins. In 1859 he had to resign as County Treasurer when great discrepancies were found in his books. All of Bullock’s lands were seized by his creditors. To escape prosecution, Bullock absconded to Detroit, leaving his eight children living alone in Sandwich - his wife had died in 1860 of consumption.

Because he had defaulted on his mortgage, his hotel was sold by public auction in 1863. The advertisement described the British North American Hotel as follows: “*Part of the building has been occupied as a store, and the basement storey has been let as a saloon.*” James Webber, a former tenant on the property, was the highest bidder and the name of the hotel was changed to the Webber House.

A detailed description of George Bullock’s life can be found in the files at the Marsh Historical Collection.

The former Bullock building has not been historically designated and it retains almost none of its original architectural features.

### Horsman Hotel

The building next door at 269 Dalhousie Street, erroneously described as “Bullock’s Tavern” when it was historically designated in 1978, was built by William Horsman in 1867. Prior to his purchase of the property on the corner of Dalhousie and Murray (Lot 9), the land had been owned by the Furman-Legore family, commencing with William Furman in 1819. It was eventually inherited by Moses Legore, who sold it to Horsman in 1866.

William’s father Thomas Horsman had earlier operated an inn

known as The Horsman House or The White Horse Hotel, which was located where 60-64 Murray Street exists today. The Horsmans had been tenants on that property from at least 1853 and possibly earlier.

William Horsman’s new two-storey stone building was also called The White Horse Hotel or The Horsman House and later The Gun & Duck. His obituary in 1900 states that he “*looked after it personally for some years, maintaining the reputation of the house for good cheer and looking after the best interests of the guests.*” By 1889, liquor licenses for the Horsman House were being issued to different proprietors. In 1902 it became known as the Columbia House under the management of John Fleming.

In the last 100 years the former Horsman building has housed a variety of stores and restaurants. Its current occupant is The Artisan Grill.



### **Webber House, circa 1900.**

The faded words “British North American Hotel” can be seen on the building in this photo.

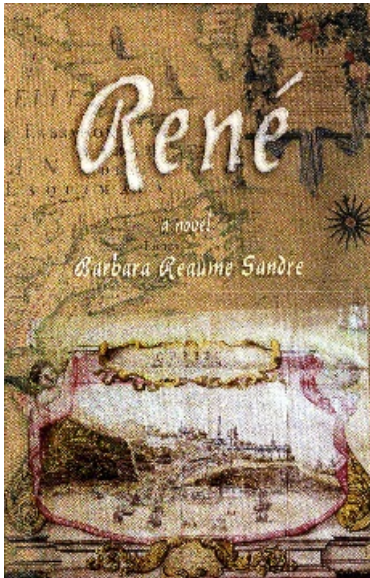
*Marsh Collection P4133.3*

### **Horsman Hotel, post-1883.**

*Marsh Collection P5102*



## New in Our Gift Shop

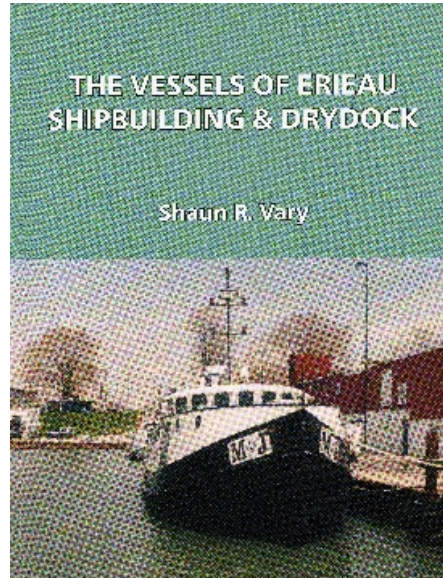


by Barbara Sandre

Historical fiction about René Reaume, who came to Canada in 1663 and is an ancestor of many Essex County families.

softcover, 243 pages

**\$20**



by Shaun Vary

Well-researched information and photos of vessels built at Erieau, 1943-80.

softcover, 171 pages

**\$23**

## SALE!!!

### Conversation Pieces

by Helen Marsh

~~\$10~~ now \$1

•

### Point au Pelee Island

published 1926

~~\$20~~ now \$5

•

### Souvenir Album of Historic Amherstburg

~~\$15~~ now \$5

•

### Souvenirs of the Past

by Wm. Baby

~~\$22~~ now \$5

•

### With the Tide

by John Marsh

~~\$20~~ now \$10

•

### Fort Malden and the Old Fort Days

published 1927

~~\$20~~ now \$5

## Information at the Marsh Collection

The Marsh Collection is a local history and genealogy centre with a focus on the heritage of the Town of Amherstburg and the marine history of the lower Detroit River. Each year hundreds of researchers come to the centre or contact us by e-mail or telephone.

### Materials that are the most often used at the Marsh Collection include:

- information files on all aspects of local history, including schools, churches, businesses, service clubs and much more
- genealogy files on hundreds of local families
  - *Amherstburg Echo*, 1874-2012
- reference books on local history, Great Lakes and other topics
- over 5000 catalogued photographs
- land instruments for Amherstburg and Malden, 1867-1955

# Then & Now

## Southwest Corner Dalhousie and Murray Sts.



**“Wigle” Block, occupied by Wigle Hardware in this *circa* 1900 photo.**

*Marsh Collection P4133.2*

Constructed for John Kolfage in the 1860s, this building was also known at different times as the “Scratch” block, “Shillington” Block and the “Bob-Lo building”. It was razed in 1975.

**Below:** Now part of King’s Navy Yard Park. Photo taken March 2014.

*Marsh Collection photo*

