

# Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection  
Amherstburg, Ontario

Please  
take one!

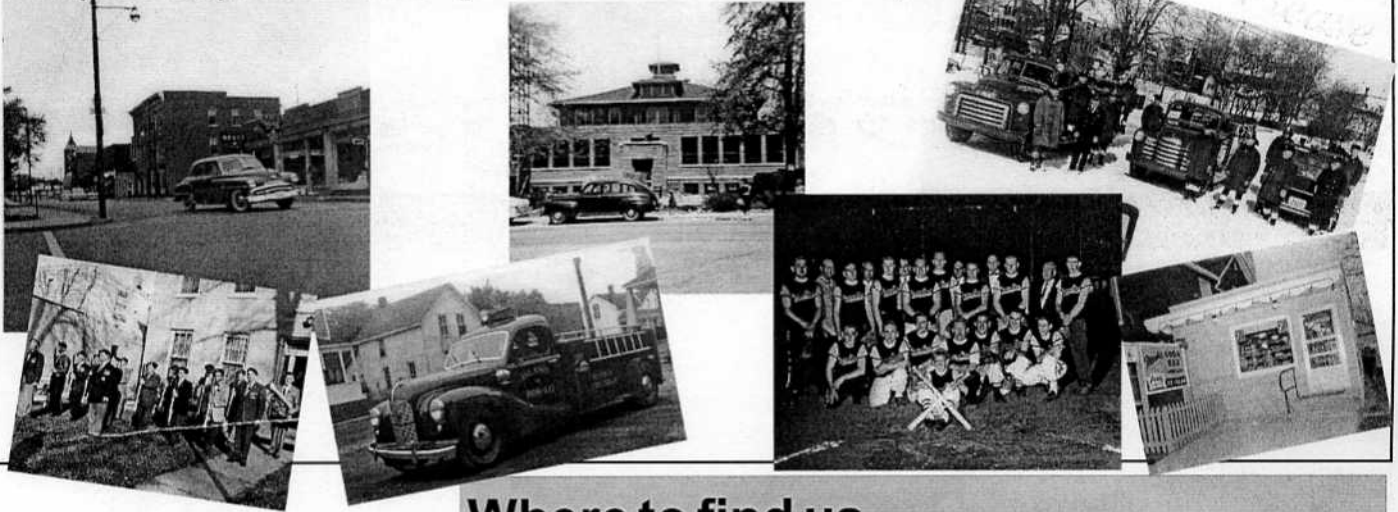
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## Amherstburg in the 1950s Summer Exhibit at the Marsh Collection

This summer the Marsh Collection presents an exhibit of photos and artifacts from 1950s Amherstburg. Remember the '50s? C'mon in and take a walk down memory lane! We're open Tuesday to Friday from 10am to 4pm and admission is absolutely free!



### 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.

### Where to find us

The Marsh Collection is located at **235 Dalhousie Street** on the upper floor - across from the *Amherstburg Echo* building.

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

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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 Amherstburg

## Furniture Shopping on the Detroit River

*by a former "river rat" who now likely acquires his furniture by other means*

Swimming off the Waterworks Dock was the place to be during the long hot summer. Just about every kid in town who could swim was there. We played every game there was and a few we made up. Those brave enough tried different types of dives from the tower at the end of the dock and those less experienced just dove off the dock.

One of the highlights of the day was when the big Bob-Lo boats, the *Columbia* and the *Ste. Claire*, arrived from Detroit loaded with people on their way to a fun-filled day on Bob-Lo. As the boat had to

make a turn to dock facing upstream towards Detroit, it came in really close to the Amherstburg side of the river. This meant that they passed very close to our swimming hole and people would line up on the side of the boat to watch us swim.

Now I don't know who first thought up the idea (but it sounded good at the time) that we swim out to meet the boat, much to the chagrin of the captain. There was many a time that he stood on the boat yelling and shaking his fist at us, worried that he might run over us. It scares me now to think of how dangerous that was, but we were young and danger was our middle name.

Anyway, I digress. The idea we had was to swim out to the boat with water pistols concealed in our

bathing suits and when people came over to the side of the boat to see us we would let them have it. Now some on the boat thought this was hilarious, but there was the occasional spoilsport who didn't like getting wet. It was from these spoilsports that we got our furniture, as they would sometimes throw a deck chair at us. Thankfully their temper wrecked their aim and nobody got hit. Between my friend and myself I think we acquired four chairs that year.

It all stopped, though, when the captain alerted the local authorities, who quickly read the Riot Act to all of us and made us promise that the impromptu showers would end. This didn't pose a problem, since by then my room was furnished with some pretty neat wooden folding chairs.

## Amherstburg in the 1950s

### Name That Year!

Can you match each event with the year it took place (1950-59)?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Construction began on a rack warehouse for Calvert Distillers, 180 ft. x 120 ft. x 82 ft. high.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The new Simpson's Order Office opened on Dalhousie Street.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The new Ontario Hospital Insurance went into effect January 1st.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. A new R.C. intermediate school was built on the southeast corner of Brock and Murray Streets.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The O.P.P. left town and Amherstburg hired its own police force.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The new Anderdon Central School officially opened.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The *Edmund Fitzgerald*, the largest ship ever to sail the Great Lakes up to that time, was launched.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Warren Park, a small subdivision of rental houses on Fort and Main Streets, was officially opened.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The new Dominion Store opened in the former Amherst Rec building on Richmond Street.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A fire at the garbage dump on Dalhousie Street South prompted town council to investigate other methods of garbage disposal.



**Answers:**

5. 1957	1. 1955
4. 1950	2. 1951
9. 1956	3. 1959
8. 1954	4. 1950
7. 1958	5. 1957
6. 1953	6. 1953
10. 1952	7. 1958
	8. 1954
	9. 1956
	10. 1952

# Yesterday's News

from the archives of the *Amherstburg Echo*

**1879**

*June* - The Amherstburg Cornet Band led the procession to the laying of the cornerstone of the new Separate school, corner Gore and King. Park & Borrowman are the contractors. [This was also used as the R.C. parish hall and is now occupied by Evangelical Baptist Church.]

*August* - J.H.C. Leggatt's new brick block, northwest corner Murray and Ramsay, is ready for occupancy.

- Plans have been drawn up for a proposed new R.C. church, 30 x 60 ft., at McGregor Village. Estimated cost is \$1300.

- Wm. Johnston, the well-known druggist, has bought the lot and old store, southeast corner Murray and Dalhousie, from the Menzies estate. He will fit it up as an elegant drug establishment.

**1889**

*June* - Duff & Gatfield have had two towers for range lights erected, one 80 ft. high at Sandwich and St. Arnaud, and one 50 ft. high on the riverbank. The lights can be seen for 12 to 15 miles.

*July* - Some townspeople should be reminded there is a by-law about allowing their geese or pigs to run at large.

**1899**

*June* - Dredging operations at the Lime-Kiln Crossing, in progress for nearly 25 years, may take another 5 or 6 years to complete. A small army of men is at work there.

*August* - The Anderdon and Malden Agricultural Society is seeking tenders for the erection of a 48 x 96 ft. two-storey agricultural building on the east town park.

**1909**

*July* - The new steel tug *Francis B. Hackett*, built at Ferrysburg for the Hackett Towing & Wrecking Co., made a trial trip to Amherstburg.

- A unique monument to sailors will be erected on Bois Blanc. A mammoth anchor, salvaged from an old schooner wreck by Capt. Pete Baker, will be placed on a large concrete base.

*August* - The new school to be built near the R.C. church will be of stone to conform with the other buildings on the church property [St. Anthony School, now the House of Shalom].

**1919**

*July* - Brunner Mond officials have postponed the opening of their new plant owing to the depressed condition of the alkali market in Canada.

- A local branch of the Great War Veterans' Association was organized by returned men of Amherstburg at the home of Mrs. H.A. Bailey, Regent of Fort Malden chapter I.O.D.E.

*August* - The new Liberty Theatre opens August 18th with a full picture programme. Adults 22 cents, children 16 cents.

**1929**

*June* - Simon Bertrand still has 31 lots for sale in his subdivision between St. Arnaud and Alma Streets.

*July* - Pioneer Distillers are building a warehouse 100 x 200 ft.

*August* - Amherstburg will become the most sign-ridden town in the county unless an ordinance is passed to limit this kind of advertising.

- Plans have been filed and it is expected that work will start in a couple of weeks on the Anderdon-Grosse Île bridge. The Canadian end is on the George L. Mickle property.

**1939**

*June* - Bob-Lo Lines purchased a 73-foot cruiser to be called the *Kawandag II* which will replace the *Papoose* running between Amherstburg and Bob-Lo. It will carry 100 passengers.

- Town council has called tenders for the paving of Rankin, North and Dalhousie Street North.

*August* - Donald Bailey is getting ready to build a slaughterhouse on his farm, the former William Braun place, Pike Road.

**1949**

*June* - Charles Drayton and Robert Young have purchased the Lalonde Jewellery Store on Dalhousie St.

*July* - Max Rubenstein recently purchased the entire block, south side of Murray Street, from the Hadley estate. He is converting the section formerly occupied by the Amherst Dairy Bar into a store.

- Large lots in the Flynn King Street Subdivision, 50 x 150 ft., are priced as low as \$300, \$50 down and \$10 per month. Mortgages are as low as \$26 per month, paid off in 20 years.

- Bell Telephone will build a \$60,000 dial office on Sandwich Street.

*August* - James Pouget will open his new flower shop on Simcoe Street, formerly operated from his farm in Malden.

**1959**

*June* - Construction has begun on the new Verdi Club hall on Texas Rd.

- Sod was turned for the new \$40,000 Lions swimming pool on the Bell Farm.

- Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Deslippe bought the first load of stone quarried by Amherst Quarries for commercial purposes.

*July* - Thousands watched the parade of boats as Her Majesty's yacht *Britannia* passed Amherstburg upbound to Windsor to pick up Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip.

*August* - The new diversion of Hwy. 18 from Park St. to the Lowe Sideroad was opened to traffic over the weekend.

- The last dynamite blast in connection with the Amherstburg Channel dredging, which began in May 1957, was fired at 1:15 a.m. Saturday from the drillboat *Hornet*.

**1969**

*June* - The Dash Drive-in on Hwy. 18 south of town is now open.

*July* - The old hydro substation, corner Simcoe and Bathurst, is being demolished. For years all the power to the Amherstburg area came to this substation.

*August* - Construction of a \$3.5 million bottling room and office complex is under way at Calvert's.

- A 17-unit apartment building is rising on Dalhousie Street [Bella Vista].

- 12 portable classrooms will be used at General Amherst this September.

# Shipping the Detroit

## Rolling Over a Scow

by Capt. Cliff Morrison

I used to hear the older men talking about "rolling over" the old wooden and steel dump scows in the river in order to fix leaking bottoms, and then roll them back. They said it was "easier to work on them" and they didn't have to go to dry-dock.

Dave Findlay, who worked over at Stoney Island for Dunbar & Sullivan Dredging Company, used to tell all sorts of stories about "rolling over those old scows."

In the fall of 1971 McQueen Marine needed a flat-top scow for a crane to sit on, so they came up with the idea to convert one of their two dump scows. Dump scows are sort of odd-looking things with open sections in the middle (we called them "pockets") to hold mud, sand, stone etc. to be loaded by a dredge, towed away and dumped at a dumping

site.

Dump scows have watertight compartments at the forward and after ends and on both sides. The plan was to widen out the scow and weld plates on the bottom and top after she was cut apart and separated. After all the steel was removed around the pockets they cut her from one end to the other, right down the centre and down to the water-line.

My job was to use the tug *Amherstburg* to take the scow out into the deep channel and turn her over so they could continue to cut her bottom apart. They flooded one side of her so it put her side under water and put heavy cable around so I could pull with the tug.

Out we went with the scow behind us and when we were in the deep channel (near the ferry dock) I worked the big tug up to about half-speed and

the wash from her propellers went back on the scow. She came over like there was nothing to it. Dave Findlay was right. We took her back to the yard and the crew had her pumped out and finished cutting her bottom apart. When she was in two sections they pulled her apart and welded new plates on her bottom.

After that was completed we had to roll her over again and they finished the top deck. We really did have some clever men down at McQueen's. The scow was later outfitted with spuds and portable sleeping quarters built by Dave Lowe. By increasing her width to 40 feet she could hold a big crane with no trouble and was used on a lot of jobs.

Rolling over scows was really something to have seen and been a part of. There were talented men there who were not afraid to tackle something like that.

## Lighthouse Wrecked - Two Ships Go Aground

### In Two Marine Accidents in Fog on Thursday

*Amherstburg Echo* September 11, 1952

#### Marine Reporter Nearly Loses Life

The Livingstone Channel Lighthouse was damaged beyond repair, two large lake freighters went aground and an employee of the J.W. Westcott Marine Reporting Agency nearly lost his life in two marine accidents between 7 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. on Thursday (this) morning while a heavy fog completely enveloped the Lower Detroit River.

The Westcott Marine Reporting office is located on the Livingstone Channel Lighthouse at the upper junction of the Amherstburg and the Livingstone Channels. All downbound traffic takes the Livingstone Channel and upbound traffic the Amherstburg Channel.

#### Warns Ship

J.E. McGuire was on duty at the Westcott office and at 7:10 a.m. he

noticed that the *George R. Fink*, 532-foot freighter owned by the National Steel Corporation, downbound with 10,200 tons of iron ore, had taken the wrong channel. He called this fact out to the captain. McGuire remained outside his office and manually kept ringing the large warning bell on the lighthouse.

At 7:30 a.m. he looked up and saw that another large freighter, the *E.J. Kulas*, 580 feet long, carrying 11,700 tons of iron ore, owned by the Wilson Transit Company, was headed for the light. He ran towards his office and in the matter of a few moments found himself in the river.

"When I came to I found that I was in the water and inside the floating office," McGuire told the *Echo*. "It seemed like hours before I could get out and when I did I swam toward the light. Nearing the light I looked up and saw

that it was leaning towards me and I waited a few minutes before going on and finally made the light."

Irving Kelly, manager of the Amherstburg Westcott office, was going on duty at the time of the crash. H. Grant Duff, whose boathouse is along the river, had been listening to the ship-to-shore phone conversations and when he heard that McGuire was in the water, set out in search. Mr. Kelly went along in his own boat. They found McGuire on the light and brought him back to the Duff boathouse where he was treated for shock. In the crash he lost two front teeth and suffered bruises...

*Further Echo articles relate more about the vessels and how they were rescued. If you are interested in reading more about this accident, come in to the Marsh Historical Collection.*

# Bricks 'n' Beams

## 187 Dalhousie Street

Renovations at the corner of North and Dalhousie Streets caught our eye early this month and we looked up the information we'd compiled about the property a few years ago.

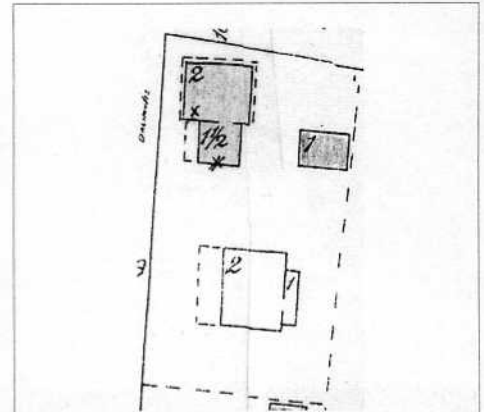
The house at 187 Dalhousie Street is on Lot 15 of "The Park," the official name of the subdivision made up of North Street and Rankin Avenue, which was laid out in 1869. That year the developer, Arthur Rankin, sold Lot 15 to Mary Rankin (likely no relation) for \$160.

The next piece of information we found was the \$350 mortgage that Mary and Matthew Rankin took out on the property in 1875. The assessed value for that year was \$675, quite a bit higher than the value of a vacant lot. This evidence points to 1874-75 as the likely date of construction of the home.

In 1888 Dr. Andrew Fisher "moved to the Rankin residence, corner North and Dalhousie." Fisher had been the superintendent of the Malden Lunatic Asylum from 1859-68 and later went into private practice. He died in 1898 but his widow continued to reside in the house for several years.

In 1908 the residence was purchased by the Hackett family, who used it during the winter when the lighthouse on Bois Blanc Island was not in operation. Miss Margaret Hackett, daughter of Andrew and Agnes (McGregor) Hackett, lived there until just before her death in 1961.

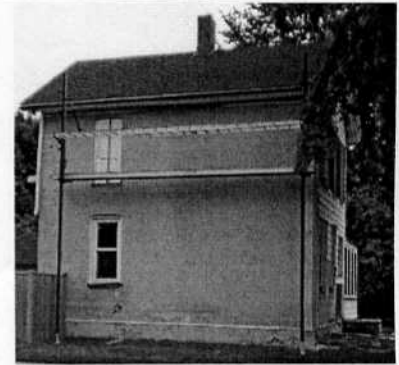
Although for many years the house has been covered by yellow siding, a peek at the insurance plans in our collection indicated that it was in fact of cement block construction. The recent renovations not only exposed the blocks, but also revealed an exterior door on the second storey, as well as a window on the Dalhousie Street side which seems to have replaced the original main entrance.



1913 insurance plan showing Lot 15 (southeast corner North & Dalhousie). Note the dotted line which indicates a porch or balcony, likely the explanation for the second-storey door (see photo below). The house to the south on the same lot (now #191 Dalhousie) was built by Capt. Charles Hackett in 1911 - he was the official owner of the entire lot but the corner house was occupied by his mother and siblings.



Photos taken June 3, 2009



## "Doors Open" returns to Amherstburg

### Saturday, September 19, 2009

After an absence of a couple of years, this popular event returns to town for one day only!

"Doors Open Amherstburg" is part of the larger "Doors Open Ontario" which takes place in different municipalities throughout the year and is coordinated by the Ontario Heritage Trust.

Complimentary Doors Open Ontario booklets are available at the Marsh Collection, or you can check out [www.doorsopenontario.on.ca](http://www.doorsopenontario.on.ca).

The local event will run from 10am to 4pm on Saturday, September 19th and is free of charge. Some sites have participated in the past, while others are brand-new to the tour.

#### Participating Sites 2009

- Bondy House Bed & Breakfast - 199 Dalhousie Street
- Commissariat - 224 Dalhousie Street
- Fort Malden NHSC - 100 Laird Avenue
- Gibson Gallery - 140 Richmond Street
- Honors' Country House B & B - 4441 Concession 4 South
- Loretta Rose Tea Chest - 219 Dalhousie Street
- McGuire's Agricultural Collection - County Road 18
- North American Black Historical Museum & Nazrey A.M.E. Church NHSC - 277 King Street
- Park House Museum - 214 Dalhousie Street
- Rindlisbacher Residence - 6790 County Road 50
- Royal Canadian Legion - Branch 157 - 281 Dalhousie Street
- St. Joseph's R.C. Church - 9399 Townline Road
- Willoughby Residence - 73 Rankin Avenue

# Ancestral Lines

## Search for 1812 Ancestors

Were your ancestors living in the Amherstburg-Anderdon-Malden district in 1812? Can you prove it? Would you like to try?

If you're interested in tracing your lineage back to that 1812 ancestor, come into the Marsh Historical Collection library/archives between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. any day between Tuesday and Friday. Jennifer and Eleanor will be glad to answer your questions and/or teach you how to start the genealogical process. It's almost guaranteed that once you begin the journey of tracing your family, you'll be hooked! AND if you hope to prove your lineage to 1812 ancestors, read on.

Throughout the years 2012-2014 - less than three years away - there will be local observances and commemorations of the War of 1812, a time of national significance. Soon we will be hearing more about events in 2012 which will honour part of our 200-year history. Folks at the Marsh Collection are ruminating about gathering family histories which date back to that period and the possibility of publishing them in the future.

Hoping that a few folks will be interested in searching for and verifying their 1812 ancestor, we compiled from early records just a few names of families who were in

the Amherstburg-Anderdon-Malden district at that time....Barron, Beaudoin, Brush, Caldwell, Cornwall, Dowler, Duff, Elliott, Girty, Graveline, Kemp, Langlois, Meloche, Morin, Pouget, Reaume, Splitlog, Warrow, White and Wright. There may be many more....so all of you family historians and wanna-be genealogists have to come out of the woodwork. Stand up and be counted! Let us help you to gather and publish the stories of your Amherstburg-Anderdon-Malden ancestors. Isn't it time they were given a place of prominence in our history?

## Recent Donation to Marsh Collection



Yvonne Gibbs (left) and Marsh Collection Resource Manager Jennifer MacLeod

Mrs. Yvonne Gibbs of Windsor, a genealogy buff for many years, recently donated her extensive collection of *Windsor Star* obituaries to the Marsh Historical Collection. What began in 1976 as a "hobby" soon became an avocation and by April of this year her collection had blossomed into 42 huge 3-ring binders, organized both alphabetically and chronologically. As is evidenced in the photo, the obits began to take over Yvonne's house so she decided that a new home must be found for the collection.

We first met Yvonne and her husband Don Gibbs in the mid-1970s. They had come to Fort Malden initially to research Don's Wyandotte background. With them were Lil and Bob Splitlog from Michigan. Don Gibbs' grandmother was the former Annie Splitlog; Bob's grandfather was Annie's brother Israel Splitlog. Annie and Israel were children of Wyandotte chief Alexis Mathias Splitlog who died in 1872 while living on the Wyandotte Reserve (Anderdon Township).

Following that initial meeting 30 years ago, the Gibbs and Splitlog families made many trips to Amherstburg, researching not only their Aboriginal ancestry but also the Gibbs clan and other connections. Yvonne continues to be involved in genealogical research and is certainly no stranger to the Marsh Collection. She was happy to find a home for her work here, and we are very pleased to have this valuable addition to our collection, which will be well-utilized by family researchers. Thanks to an on-line index of *Windsor Star* obituaries which can be found at [www.windsorpubliclibrary.com/obits/index.php](http://www.windsorpubliclibrary.com/obits/index.php), our new acquisition can be easily accessed and it has already come in handy many times for our own research.

