

Please take one!

# Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection  
Amherstburg, Ontario

Please take one!

Volume III Issue 4

Summer 2010

ISSN 1913-8660

## The Dance

by a General Amherst High School alumnus, Class of 1958

The highlight of the social calendar at the high school was always the Cadet Dance, the culmination of the Cadet Inspection Week.

The preparation that went into this event was a sight to behold. The students in charge were usually the Grade 13s and some Grade 12s, along with members of student council. Preparations and set-up usually took Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights from after school until 10 or 11 o'clock. The same crêpe paper streamers were used from year to year - yes, they were rolled up and saved - this was not a throwaway operation!

The local merchants were very supportive, lending us things for decorations and also donating prizes for the "Queen" and "Princesses."

As one entered the gym one saw the false ceiling made up of hundreds of streamers all curled and gathered at one point and hung from the steel rafter in

the middle. At the door was the patio where parents - yes, parents! - usually the mothers - sat along with the judges.

The patio stones were from Jimmie's Flowers and the grass was from Sutton Funeral Home. Chairs came from everyone's houses.

The last year of my tenure with this, we were lamenting that we needed some live flowers to set the whole thing up perfectly. The one problem was that there was no money to purchase any. As I walked home on the Thursday night, I kept trying to figure a way to get flowers, but to no avail.

The next morning when I got to school, I had two people usher me into the gym and lo and behold, behind the curtains on the stage were four or five large buckets filled with cut tulips.

Obviously my next question was, "Where did they come from?" and the reply was, "Ask us no questions and we won't have to lie." I didn't ask.

Dance time arrived, Friday night from 7:30 to 11 o'clock. We couldn't afford to pay the "orchestra" for longer.

The ladies were resplendent in their formal gowns with the corsages that their dates had purchased for the occasion. The guys if they were Amherst students had to wear those cadet uniforms that were lined with itching powder, while visitors from other schools could wear a suit.

The highlight of the evening was the Grand March, led by Mr. & Mrs. W.K. Sidey and the staff. This was when the judges picked the five queen candidates. These ladies were called up on stage and a name was pulled out of a hat - this was the Queen of the Dance!

At 11 o'clock the dance was over. As my date and I left to go to a house party, we drove north on Laird Ave. to Alma St. to Sandwich St. and back down to the Tea Garden Restaurant, and it struck me that there were not as many tulips in the Horticultural Society beds along Sandwich Street as there should have been. I guess the question had been answered.



Grand March,  
General Amherst Cadet Dance, 1958  
Marsh Collection P4467.1



General Amherst High School Cadet Inspection, May 1958.

Marsh Collection P4467.5

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# Growing Up in the 'Burg

## Setting a Speed Record

It was late spring and I was 11 or 12 years old. I checked my agenda and found nothing on it, so I decided to do some exploring. I jumped on my trusty bike and headed out. Amherstburg at that time wasn't nearly as large as it is today.

I pedalled down Alma Street, heading east. In those days the first thing of interest you came across, other than farms, was Rose Hill Cemetery. It wasn't the cemetery that had my curiosity piqued; the fact was, I tried to avoid those places. I was after the small creek that passed under the bridge near the cemetery. I figured that at this time of year it would be full of turtles, frogs and maybe even the occasional snake.

I parked my bike, looked over the side of the bridge and decided it was safe to have a look under it, as the water was very low. Down the bank I scampered and when I stopped to look under the bridge I heard a faint rattling sound. I slowly turned and there, no more than four feet away, all coiled up, was a rattlesnake.

Most people would freeze in such a situation. Not me. I don't even remember getting back on my bike but when my heart stopped racing and I regained my sanity I was at least a quarter mile from the bridge. I must have covered the first hundred feet of ground without even touching it. I gingerly rode my bike back to the

bridge to look over the side to see if I could spot the snake, but it was nowhere to be seen. I don't know if he was as scared as I was and took off, or whether he was still there. I can tell you this: I did not spend any time looking for him!

To this day, every time I cross that bridge, I wonder if the snake is still there waiting for me.

*- by an anonymous person with a healthy respect for snakes*

# Ancestral Lines

by Eleanor Warren

Since our last *Reflections* there has been a very noticeable increase in visits by family historians to the Marsh Collection. It could be the renewed interest in genealogy since the TV programs *Who Do You Think You Are?* and *Faces of America*. Back in 1977 the television mini-series *Roots* stirred many families to investigate their own ancestry. Or perhaps the increase in visits was simply because Spring had finally arrived and folks were anxious to get out and about. In any case, it has been an interesting and rewarding three months in our genealogy world.

Our visitors and other inquiries (email, phone) came from many places (including Essex County) - British Columbia; Texas; Halifax; Port Huron and St. Clair Shores, Michigan; and

Montreal, to name a few. Some were researching the history of Anderdon Township and the Wyandotte families who had lived there. Others were looking up the following surnames: Abbott, Archibald, Baldwin, Bertrand, Brault, Bush, Caldwell, Carpenter, Chapman, Clark, Coleman, Courtois, Durocher, Gatfield, Gordon, Halstead, Lane, Marion, Marontate, McQueen, Mumford, Nichols, Odien, Palmatier, Parker, Ramsay, Rankin, Smith, Wilcox and Wright.

If you're interested in researching your family's ancestry and just don't know how or where to begin, come in or give us a call and let us help get you started. Bring along what you do know and we'll lead you through the simple process. It's really painless. Honest!

### Here's what some of the Malden Central Gr. 7s had to say about their visit to the Marsh Collection back in March...

*...It really let us see how cool history can be!  
...The Marsh Collection is a great historical place with lots of knowledge. It's really worth dropping by!*

*...We were amazed by all the artifacts, pictures and books.  
...Thanks again for this amazing, wonderful adventure into the past.*

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

## 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.

# Yesterday's News

from the archives of the *Amherstburg Echo*

## 1880

*July* - Snapping turtles from the marsh have been eating John Ridsdale's piglets.

- George Middleditch bought the foundry lot, northeast corner Dalhousie and Park Sts.

## 1890

*June* - The steam barge *Africa* and her consort, the *Severn*, are at the M.C.R. docks loading 1600 tons of stone on each for the Sault Canal.

## 1900

*June* - Measurements have been taken for the proposed Dalhousie St. sewer. The filth now emptied from private houses above the waterworks intake will be conveyed into a sewer and emptied into the river below.

*August* - Work has begun at the old C.S.R. slip on the new Pelee Passage lighthouse cribs.

## 1910

*July* - The new ferry *Ste. Claire* made her first trip to Bois Blanc.

*August* - The U.S. Engineers working on Detroit River improvements are proposing the construction of a permanent dam between Stoney Island and Bois Blanc Island. This is causing quite a stir locally. [see story on page 5]

- Blasting on the Detroit River has caused damage to nearly every building in Amherstburg.

## 1920

*June* - The newly-organized Brunner Mond Band will give concerts every Thursday evening this summer on the waterworks lawn.

## 1930

*June* - A County Board of Education member has resigned as he is absolutely against the recent hiring of a teacher who is a married woman with a "perfectly good able-bodied husband."

- The dance hall on Bob-Lo is now using an orchestroscope, a glorified electric automatic phonograph.

- A.K. Duff's new café above the Bank of Commerce will be known as the Deerhead Inn.

*July* - "Talkies" have been introduced at the Liberty Theatre.

## 1940

*June* - A recruiting office for the Essex Scottish has been opened in the C.R. Lalonde jewellery store.

- It is rumoured that a brewer's warehouse will be built at the southwest corner of Bathurst and Murray Sts.

- County Council is considering the formation of an Essex County Library Association.

*July* - Ferry service between Amherstburg and Bob-Lo will be discontinued except for carrying Canadian employees, due to a new immigration ruling.

*August* - High schools will not open until October 1st so the boys can work on farms.

- The lawn bowling greens are in better shape than ever.

## 1950

*June* - The graduating class of St. Rose High School has printed the school's first yearbook.

*August* - The distillery building at Calvert's was destroyed by fire.

## 1960

*June* - The buildings at the United Church camp and retreat near Gesto are nearing completion.

*July* - Holiday Beach Provincial Park has officially opened.

- A traffic light is being installed at the corner of Richmond and Sandwich Sts.

*August* - The old Riverside Flouring Mill building, Dalhousie St., is being razed.

## 1970

*June* - A multi-million-dollar water treatment plant will be built on Highway 18, Anderdon.

- A daycare centre has been opened by Essex County Family & Social Services in the Amherstburg library as an experimental project.

- Sod has been turned for the new Tri-Community arena to be built at Centennial Park.

- Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau visited Amherstburg.

*July* - Fire destroyed one of the two remaining 1839 blockhouses on Bois Blanc Island.

- John Goodchild has placed the pilothouse of the former C.N. car ferry *St. Clair* in front of his Dalhousie St. home, converting it into a recreation room with a river view.

- Six thousand people attended the 13th annual Festival of Bands at the town park.

- The tug *Patricia McQueen* has been sold and will be converted into a pleasure craft.

*August* - A 14-unit motel called the Fort Malden Motel will soon be built on Hwy. 18 south of the Dash Drive-in.

