

Please
take
one!

Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection
Amherstburg, Ontario

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Amherstburg - A Baseball Town

Baseball has been around this community at least since the official incorporation of Amherstburg as a town in 1878. It was probably played here on a smaller scale in earlier times, although cricket was then the more popular sport.

In browsing through our old *Echo* files back to November 1874, we find that a variety of baseball teams played on the "town park," although they were not as organized as today's games.

In a July 1877 game, the "Amherstburg R.A.R.'s" beat the "Muffers" of Petite Côte. That team consisted of four fellows from Sandwich, four from Petite Côte (LaSalle) and "one College player," while seven on the Amherstburg team were ringers brought in from the "Shamrocks" of Wyandotte. In August the Vereker "Union" club was beating the Malden "Bruisers" 42 to 28 when that game was called in the 7th inning due to darkness.

In August 1881 there was still no regularly organized club, so the 'Burg boys got up a team but were whipped 42 to 11 by the Empire Baseball Club of Essex. It was then decided to get serious, organize and practice regularly. On that team were three Hamilton brothers, Alex and Bill Brown, George Johnson, James Sullivan, John Ellis and James Wilkinson.

By 1886 there were several teams, but still nothing strictly organized. However, it appeared to be a dangerous game at that time, which may have accounted for the lack of participants. An article in the *Echo* of August 6th that year describes the following incidents, rather injurious to the health of some players: "*During the first inning, Capt. Brown, who was*



**The Echo Champion
Baseball Team of 1889**

Front (left to right): Calixte Laframboise (pitcher), Gus Maloney (right field)
Second row: Ernest Brown (2nd base), Leroy Wigle (centre field), Alex Ellis (left field), Frank Salmoni (3rd base)
Back row: James Taylor (shortstop), Vincent Bertrand (1st base), Thomas Salmoni (centre field)

catching, got a crack on the hand with a bat, breaking a small bone of his hand...R. Hamilton had a cord of his leg injured, the first run he made...Thos. O'Rourke nearly dislocated his ankle and Capt. McEvoy had one of his fingers dislocated while attempting to look through a mask and catch at the same time...S. Kolfage got knocked out while endeavouring to stop a hot one behind the bat, and several other players met with misfortunes and had to retire...If the players survive there is no doubt but the 'Burg has the stuff for a good baseball team."

Those were the days when the catcher wore no chest protector, shin guards or padded mitt; the fielders weren't allowed to use gloves. Baseball spikes were likely unheard of, but in a game in 1888 a very prominent feature was "*the appearance of J.D. Smith and F. Lemay in new slipper pumps.*"

By 1889 baseball was permanently ensconced in Amherstburg and the regular practice paid off. That year the *Echo* team was champion, having gone through the entire season without a defeat. They had met all the teams in the county as well as some from Detroit and Grosse Île.

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Growing Up in the 'Burg

The Good Old Days

by anonymous

As we had already seen the movie playing at the Liberty Theatre, we hitchhiked into Windsor to see one there. When it was finished we felt it was way too early to head back to the 'Burg so we pooled our thoughts on what to do next. The decision was made that a trip to Detroit would be in order. To do what, we had no idea, it just seemed like the right thing to do. How to get there was the next order of business.

Back in those days you could readily cross the border with not much more than a library card for identification. A taxi or other form of transportation other than foot power was out of the question, as we had blown our resources on the movie. The Ambassador Bridge would be our means of getting there and this decision was based on the following criteria: first, a nice leisurely walk across the bridge to take in the scenery (yes, they allowed you to walk across the bridge in those days); and secondly, the bridge was the cheaper was to go. Tolls at the bridge were considerably less than the tunnel. I remember asking why this was the case and the man at the bridge said it was because the bridge had less overhead. Another lesson learned: Don't ask questions unless you already know the answer.

Off we went. It seemed like forever for us to get to the middle of the bridge. Once there we stopped to watch a few freighters pass below us. They seemed really big from that height. We continued on with our adventure, admiring the scenery as we went. When we finally reached U.S. Immigration it

dawned on us that we did not have a story for them, other than that we felt like walking over the bridge. This apparently was not reason enough to allow us into the United States and, as they heard we liked walking, we were escorted back onto the bridge and pointed toward Canada.

The trip back seemed much longer than on the way over and we weren't sure for a while that we would make it. The return scenery no longer held the same appeal and the freighters were just that - freighters, something that was readily available for viewing in Amherstburg. We were now also concerned that Canada would give us the same welcome we received in the U.S. and send us back in that direction. Visions of spending the rest of my days walking back and forth on the bridge did cross my mind.

Not to worry, though. The kind Immigration Officer in Canada accepted our story and told us to get home. It was getting late and home was Amherstburg and we still had to hitchhike. We were fortunate that one of the first passing cars picked us up and dropped us in the 'Burg just before dark. It sure was comforting being back on home ground.

The above illustrates just how much things have changed. Hitchhiking today is just not done and to even think of trying to get into another country without a passport and pledge of your firstborn is sheer folly. Bring back the good old days, as that's just what they were.

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.

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COMING SOON!

Brunner Mond Highlights

In the early 1920s a lengthy column appeared in the *Amherstburg Echo* each week, highlighting news from the Brunner Mond - items of interest about the activities of the staff, bowling league, Boy Scout troop and B. M. band. The Marsh Collection is compiling these columns into a book, full of entertaining tidbits about life in Amherstburg and the influence of a large corporation on a small town.

Watch for more details in future issues of *Reflections*.

Yesterday's News

from the archives of the *Amherstburg Echo*

1881

June - J.D. Burk is planning a two-storey addition on the north side of his dry goods store, corner Gore and Seymore.

July - Amherstburg merchants have agreed to close their stores at 7:30 p.m. every evening except Saturdays. The bell of Christ Church will be rung at that time to enable stores to close promptly.

- A horse belonging to James Wright walked into George Brantford's house, causing quite a panic before being evicted.

August - Residents of Richmond Street have asked council to clean out the ditches and to build a bridge and crossing opposite Wolfe Street.

1891

June - A fire in McGregor has destroyed several buildings. It is thought to have been started in Fred Reaume's barn by boys setting off firecrackers.

- Thirty men have begun work at the Anderdon Quarry, getting out block stone for the Soo Canal.

July - 90 cords of stone have been taken to the Colchester Lighthouse to fill in the cribs which were placed in position last fall.

- Dr. Hopley's house is the first to have pipes laid to connect with the new waterworks mains.

- The population of Amherstburg is 2279.

August - Park & Borrowman's "Dolly Varden" house, corner Dalhousie and Rankin, will be cut into three parts, one moved across the street, and all will be fitted up as residences.

1901

June - Mrs. Andrew Hackett has been appointed keeper of the Bois Blanc Lighthouse.

- Brickwork on the new electric light plant is completed and the dynamo and engine have arrived. Amherstburg now has one of the finest incandescent plants in Ontario.

- Ed and John Biddle, formerly of Anderdon, have been convicted of first-degree murder in the killing of grocer Thomas D. Kahney in Pittsburg.

July - Two new windows are to be placed one on either side of the sanctuary of St. John the Baptist Church. J.G. Mullen is donating the stained-glass for one side and Mrs. John Bray the other.

August - The Public Library has moved into

its new location opposite the *Echo* building on Ramsay Street [now #273 Ramsay]. The electric lights are being installed and the library should be open in a few days.

1911

June - The cornerstone of the A.M.E. Church was laid at Central Grove (Harrow).

- The new passenger steamer *Put-in-Bay* passed down on her trial trip.

July - The Public Library Board is purchasing 75 cords of stone from the Anderdon Quarry for the new library about to be constructed.

August - The contract for the six new piers on which to construct the light for the new Livingstone Channel has been let to John Ginzel of Wyandotte.

1921

June - Vernor's of Detroit is installing a ginger ale plant on Bois Blanc and on the Bois Blanc boats.

July - The Great War Veterans' Assn. put on a Dominion Day celebration, the first in Amherstburg in many years.

- The High School Board is receiving tenders for construction of the proposed new high school.

August - Lieut. J. Earl McQueen and his Scottish bride will arrive home soon. He has been overseas for over five years.

1931

June - Stancliff & French are having two new greenhouses built facing Ramsay Street on the former *Echo* lot [west side Ramsay, south of Murray].

- Summer residents of Amherst Pointe are holding their 4th annual Field Day.

July - A "cleaner backyard competition" is being held in Amherstburg.

August - During the 1930 season, 17,438 freighters passed the Westcott Marine Reporting office [Anderdon].

- Council has agreed to sell the Two-in-One Auto Factory building to Canadian Cannery.

1941

June - The Tri-Community's Victory Loan objective of \$165,000 was exceeded by 50%.

August - Capt. McQueen is almost

finished remodelling the Jarmin house and will move in soon.

- The SW&A buses run 15 return trips per day between Amherstburg and Windsor.

- Hamilton Park, northwest corner Balaclava and Richmond, was officially opened with a ball game between the Wyandottes and the Iroquois of the Amherstburg Youth Centre Softball League.

1951

July - Graeme Hutchinson was the first customer at the new Simpson's order office on Dalhousie Street.

- The Swiss Chalet Shop, corner Sandwich Street and St. Arnaud, will open July 28th.

1961

June - Tenders will be called for the new R.C.S.S. #11, Anderdon, northeast corner Townline and Concession 6 [aka St. Gerard Majella School; razed 2008].

August - The *Innstein* is the first ocean vessel to take on cargo at the Port of Amherstburg - 154 tons of catsup.

1971

June - A tornado in McGregor caused thousands of dollars in damage, including part of the roof on St. Clement's Church.

- Gray's Greenhouses on Dalhousie Street are being razed.

- Construction of services for the new Venetian Garden subdivision has begun.

- Construction has begun on a new showroom on Simcoe Street for Murray Kennedy Motors.

August - Construction is rapidly proceeding on the large addition to St. Bernard's School.

1981

June - Names of Amherstburg soldiers killed overseas will be used in renaming streets that became part of Amherstburg due to annexation.

- The Brunner Mond Club will close June 30th.

August - The former abattoir on Pike Road will be demolished.

- The 4 million gallon per day capacity Area Water Treatment Plant goes "on stream" this month.

- The *Echo* has been sold to John and Linda James of Bowmanville.