



Reflections



Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection
Amherstburg, Ontario

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Bob-Lo Dance Hall 100 Years Old

Designed by John Scott

Funtastic Bob-Lo, an exhibit of the island's amusement park - 1898 to 1991 - is now up and running at the Marsh Historical Collection until late summer. Come in and enjoy a trip down memory lane - Tuesday through Friday, 10am to 4pm. Free admission!

During the Fall of 1911 the Detroit, Belle Isle & Windsor Ferry Company's ferry *Papoose* was busily engaged hauling over 500 cords of Amherstburg quarry limestone from the dock at Gordon to Bob-Lo for a new dancing pavilion. The building would be approximately 35,000 square feet with a hardwood floor 104 x 204 feet. Galleries on both the inside and outside of the structure would provide shelter during inclement weather.

By June of 1913 the new pavilion was almost in full swing and thousands glided across the gleaming floor. A "Welte Wotan Brass Band Orchestrian" was purchased for \$4716. Installed in a section of the second storey balcony, the organ was intended "for Sunday concerts and occasionally for dancing."



Photo circa 1916.
Courtesy Fort Malden NHSC

Public censors of dancing were hired to make sure that dancers remained at least six inches apart and followed the rules barring "freak" dancing - which included any "turkey trots, bunny hugs and bear dancing". The two-step, waltz and "society walk" were allowed.

The foregoing is only a tiny bit of a huge amount of research data

at the Marsh Historical Collection about the dance pavilion, as well as the rest of the John Scott buildings on Bob-Lo. Pat Livingstone's book, "Summer Dreams", is without a doubt the most detailed and accurate history of the island ever published. It may be viewed and/or purchased at the Marsh Collection, along with a number of other local history publications.

Our summer exhibit
FUNTASTIC BOB-LO
1898 to 1991
see page 2 for details

What's inside...
Growing Up in the 'Burg.....pg. 2
Yesterday's News.....pg. 3
Shipping the Detroit - *The Amherstburg Connection*.....pg. 4
St. Joseph's Church Cornerstone.....pg. 5
Then & Now - *Southwest Corner Murray/Dalhousie*....pg. 6

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

Growing Up in the 'Burg

Scrap Tow

by River Rat

Back when the St. Lawrence Seaway was under development and the dredges, drillboats and associated equipment were in the process of deepening the Amherstburg Channel to facilitate the passage of large ocean vessels to navigate the upper Great Lakes, two entrepreneurial lads from Amherstburg figured out a way to make a little cash. As the Seaway project progressed and repairs were made on the large equipment, a lot of scrap iron was being cast off onto the dikes along the channel, and these fellows figured it was theirs for the taking. So a 16-foot boat with an outboard motor was put to use as their means of transportation, as well as a towboat on which to haul the scrap iron. The boys made their way around, gathering the treasure, and proceeded to load the second boat to the maximum. When it was finally full, they ventured

out into the river with the towboat following behind.

The south end of the channel can get nasty with the combination of other boats and the wind churning the water, and it did so that day. The scrappers became concerned and kept a watchful eye on their prize. Sure enough, the water started washing over the side of the severely overloaded towboat, causing it to ride lower in the water, slowing their progress. It continued taking on water and started to sink. The two fellows realized they had a problem and did not want to go down with the ship and its booty. They very quickly cut the towline, just in time to see their newfound wealth sink below the waves. They were two very lucky fellows, because it could have been worse if that towline had not been able to cast off from their boat. It was a valuable lesson learned.

Not long after this, the younger brother of one of the "survivors" and one of his buddies decided to try their hand at scavenging as well. They had located a large amount of old hoisting cable, discarded from the derricks and dredges, over on the dikes. They loaded it into their boat and they did succeed in getting it to the mainland. They contacted the local scrap dealer, Abie Philips, only to find out their haul was not worth anything. So they headed back out toward the dikes and heaved the load

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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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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overboard into the deepest part of the river. There was another lesson learned.

We are in need of submissions for "Growing Up in the 'Burg". Stories can be "anonymous" and we are happy to edit grammar and spelling, so don't be shy!

FUNTASTIC BOB-LO
1898 to 1991



**An exhibit at the
Marsh Collection Society**
235A Dalhousie St.
Amherstburg

**Now thru
Aug. 30th**

**Now thru
Aug. 30th**

Open Tuesday to Friday
10 am to 4pm
No admission charge

www.marshcollection.org

Yesterday's News

from the archives of the *Amherstburg Echo*

1883

June - Rev. M. Grayson of Dresden is in this county soliciting subscriptions for a memorial church to be erected in that town to "Uncle Tom", who died recently.

July - Drunken rows at the corner of Murray and Dalhousie Streets are getting to be a common occurrence.

August - The Colchester Reef lighthouse, under construction, has been heavily damaged by a windstorm. Work has been abandoned for the season.

1893

June - The old steeple on Christ Church has been taken down and a neat roof with a pinnacle put on the belfry.

July - The Horsman House [northeast corner Dalhousie and Murray] has been re-opened under the management of **A l b e r t V e r r a l l**.

August - Theodore Langlois has his new 1/2-mile track at his farm, opposite his hotel on the gravel road, in good condition [corner Pike Road (County Rd. 18) and 6th Concession, Malden].

1903

June - The steamer *Chub*, renamed *Papoose*, will be placed on the Amherstburg-Bois Blanc route. Round trip 15 cents.

July - The Lake View Hotel is advertising for kitchen help at a wage of \$3 per week.

August - James Wilderspin has the contract to erect a two-storey brick block for F.A. Hough on Dalhousie Street [now 258-264 Dalhousie].

1913

June - J.G. Mullen's new steel steamer *Alaska* discharged her first cargo of coal here.

- The cornerstone of the new St. Joseph's Church, River Canard, will be dedicated June 15th.

July - The new municipality of Ojibway was officially established July 1st.

August - The Dominion government will purchase Point Pelee for a national park for the preservation of birds.

1923

June - Dr. T.J. Park, the Medical Officer of Health, is reminding residents that they cannot place privies on property that is serviced by a sewer.

July - St. Andrew's Church is undergoing extensive renovations. The edifice will be turned 90 degrees with the long side facing Bathurst Street, and a nine-foot basement will be put under the building.

August - Dairymen who supply Amherstburg are complaining that customers are holding back bottles for chili sauce, and, fearing a milk bottle famine, have adopted the rule "no bottle, no milk".

1933

June - There will be a Roller Skating Party and Carnival on the pavement in front of the *Echo* office.

July - Dedication of the new St. Anthony's Church in Harrow has taken place.

August - A stone memorial to Simon Girty in the form of a broken tree will be unveiled on Labour Day on the Mickle farm, Malden riverfront.

1943

June - A beer shortage has been created in Amherstburg by the number of summer residents.

July - The Amherstburg Rotary Club has asked Council to take steps to

abolish slot machines from town.

August - Due to the large number of youths working on farms, Harrow High School will not open until September 20th.

1953

June - Canadian babies born on Coronation Day, June 2nd, will receive an inscribed souvenir spoon from the Governor-General.

- A war memorial sanctuary will be constructed on the east end of Christ Church.

July - The 6th of Malden is being paved.

August - The Calvert Distillers bottling room has opened, giving employment to 60 women.

1963

June - Lamprey eels have again shown up in the Detroit River.

July - Ray Pajot is the new owner/operator of the former Laframboise Motors, southeast corner Sandwich and Murray Streets.

August - A marina is being constructed on the west side of Bob-Lo Island.

1973

June - The Grand Opening of the Canadian Tire store took place June 7th.

July - The Amherstburg Community Band attended the Calgary Stampede.

August - The arena is open for roller skating Sunday, Tuesday and Friday evenings.

1983

June - The closing of St. Gerard Majella School has been postponed until the 1983-84 school year. Enrolment is currently about 100 students in Grades 1 to 3.

July - "Trading Places" is playing at the Garrison Theatre, Fort Malden Mall. Wednesday night special \$2.

August - The abattoir behind Wayside Frozen Food Centre on Simcoe Street [north side, between Fryer and Pacific] is being demolished.



Wheel from the steamer *Alaska*, now part of the Marsh Collection

Shipping the Detroit

The Amherstburg Connection

by Capt. John Burck

As a kid I worked the summers as a deckhand with McQueen Marine. Often I heard of a vessel (maybe an old ferry) that ran in Lake Erie. I thought it was from the “Sister Islands” off Ohio, then I heard it was from Leamington to Pelee Island. We’ll have to leave it to Capt. Morrison to clear that one up. It was rumoured to have been sold to some outfit on the East Coast. Selling ships! The McQueens sure did a variety of marine jobs.

Many years later I moved to Prince Edward Island. My first job was working on a lobster boat belonging to my brother-in-law. We fished out of Naufrage, on the north side of the Island. One day I was talking to one of that port’s oldest fishermen and, like most Islanders, he was curious to find out all he could about a guy “from away”. I told him I was from Amherstburg, Ontario, and he said he had been there. He had been among a crew of men who

had gone up and brought the old *Erie Isle* to P.E.I.

A few years later I joined Northumberland Ferries Ltd. as Chief Mate of the M/V *Prince Nova*, only to learn that the original (*Prince Nova I*) had been the *Erie Isle*, and that for years she had kept the smokestack insignia of the red war bonnet Indian head with the letters McM in white.

In 1940 the N.F.L. Company had begun looking for a suitable boat to commence a ferry service from southeastern P.E.I. to northern Nova Scotia. They almost obtained one, but she was taken over for use of the British Admiral stationed in Halifax.

Then they managed to buy a better one, an ex-Statens Island, New York, ferry, the *Sankaty*. But before she could start in the employ of her new owners, she was taken up by the Royal Canadian Navy for service as their only mine-layer, laying mine fields for the protection of major

East Coast ports.

After the war, she was returned to the N.F.L. and put into service running opposite to the *Nova I*, which had opened the business in 1941. *Sankaty* was renamed *Charles A. Dunning* after a federal politician who was mainly responsible for this ferry service coming into existence.

In 1958 the newly-built *Lord Selkirk* entered the scene, bigger and better with a 60-car capacity. The old *Nova I/Erie Isle* was no longer needed and was taken off the run. She lay idle at the Government dock in Pictou, N.S., until one night she caught fire and burned to the waterline, heavily damaging the wharf. What was left of her was sold for scrap, thus ending an era.

It goes to show, you just never know where you are going to run into an “Amherstburg connection”.



Erie Isle, circa 1940.
Marsh Collection P1860

McQueen Marine purchased the steamer *Waubic* in 1937. Renamed the *Erie Isle*, it was put on the Sandusky-Pelee Island, Kingsville, Leamington ferry route.

The *Erie Isle* caught fire in January 1938, while at the Kingsville dock, destroying the upperworks, and was rebuilt by Muir Bros. at Port Dalhousie.

In 1941 McQueen sold the *Erie Isle* to Northumberland Ferries Ltd. and its name was changed to *Prince Nova I*. It burned at Pictou on June 7, 1959.

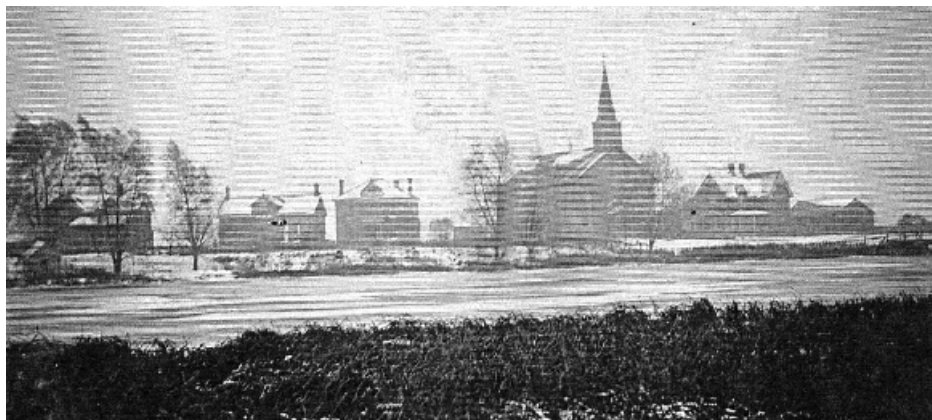
Source: Great Lakes Vessels database, website of Bowling Green State University

100 Years Ago

Cornerstone Laid for New St. Joseph's Church at River Canard

Sunday last was a very important occasion for the people of the Canard River parish, when His Lordship Bishop Fallon solemnly blessed and laid the cornerstone of beautiful new church that is being erected there. The foregoing is only the beginning of a very lengthy article published in the *Amherstburg Echo* of June 13, 1913. It contains an amazing amount of detail and history of River Canard, Loiselleville and the church. This as well as other pertinent River Canard information may be researched at the Marsh Historical Collection.

Prior to 1864, Catholics from the River Canard district worshipped at St. John the Baptist Church in Amherstburg and Assumption Church in Sandwich. By that time settlement around the district was steadily increasing, so a small chapel was built "on the Beneteau place". Around that time Rev. François Marseilles arrived from France. A new wooden church was built and St. Joseph's was formed into a separate parish with Fr. Marseilles as its first official pastor. In the ensuing years a convent, school and presbytery were built under his direction. In 1909 Fr. Marseilles retired to Hotel Dieu Hospital. He was succeeded by the young, energetic Rev. J. B. Loiselle who was known by parishioners as a "live wire". Within a short time he changed the face of the parish by adding more water lots; a new parish house was built, as was a system of sheds which would accommodate 40 teams. The old church was sold, taken down, moved across the bridge and rebuilt on two acres of Monforton property where it would be used as a canning factory.



River Canard convent, school and church, 1895.
Marsh Collection P1853.2

Excavation of a huge basement began immediately. By 1915 services were being held in the completed basement. It would

take several more years of hard work before completion (1916) of the beautiful edifice that stands on the site today.

New publication

Our exhibit commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Livingstone Channel is now available as a 56-page booklet.

\$10 Million Ditch
 Building the Livingstone Channel
 A timeline of the construction of the
 Livingstone Channel
 1908-1912
 as reported in the *Amherstburg Echo*

Marsh Historical Collection
2013

Then & Now

Southwest Corner Dalhousie and Murray Streets



Above: Building owned by D.L. Wigle, *circa* 1896. The south side was Wigle's hardware store and the north side was occupied by F.P. Scratch's dry goods store.

Marsh Collection P4133.2

Below: Photo taken June 2013.

Marsh Collection photo

