

Please
take
one!

Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection
Amherstburg, Ontario

Please
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one!

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Love Letters Discovered...75 Years Later

by Eleanor Warren

“SERENDIPITY: The faculty of happening upon or making fortunate discoveries when not in search of them.” (Webster’s Dictionary)

Serendipity happens often at the Marsh Historical Collection in downtown Amherstburg. Sometimes a person’s name, a place or unusual topic is mentioned and often within a day or so we receive a phone call or visit from someone looking for information on that particular person or subject. In this instance, an internet query seen on the Essex County “Rootsweb” site was the instigator of our curiosity...and serendipity.

In recent months a museum in Haliburton County was given a stack of 31 love letters which had been written in 1934 by a man “in the Windsor area” to a “woman in Toronto.” The letters (with their 2- and 3-cent stamps still intact) were discovered around 1993 at a landfill site by a stamp collector. When natural curiosity caused him to read the letters, he decided that they might be important to family members of the unknown sweethearts, so he turned them over to the editor of the nearby *Haliburton Echo*.

Not able to find a local connection for a story, the letters were placed in a file cabinet and forgotten. Sixteen years later (in 2009) the editor was cleaning out the cabinet in preparation for a move to B.C., when the love letters reappeared after

gathering dust for so long - so she turned them over to the Stanhope Museum in Minden. The museum curator also felt the letters could be important to someone, so she placed an internet query on the Essex County “Rootsweb” and this is where the Marsh Historical Collection detectives got involved.

The only apparent clues were that “Carl” lived in Walkerville and the love of his life, “Dinty” Dickson, lived in Toronto. In the letters Carl wrote about cutting tobacco, harvesting tomatoes, “Aunt Alma” and “Aunt Olive”. Upon reading the query, serendipity began to surround my computer. There might be a local connection and we could probably unravel this history mystery! So I forwarded the query to Jennifer, the Marsh Collection super-sleuth, and within an hour or so she had made some amazing discoveries.

As it turned out, the loving couple were Amherstburg residents for almost all of their married life. They lived first on Sandwich and later Alma Street. There are many folks in this vicinity who will remember Carl and Gertrude “Dinty” Kennedy, as



Valentine card, circa 1930.
Marsh Historical Collection

well as their children - Grant, Vern and Carol.

With just a little more detective work Jennifer found Vern Kennedy living in Scarborough. He had no previous knowledge of the love letters, so was elated to hear of their existence and then proceeded to relate some of the fascinating background of his parents.

“Dinty” was a nickname acquired by Gertrude Dickson while in high school. She was born and raised on a farm near Bracebridge, one of five children of George and Mabel

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Growing Up in the 'Burg

What a Crock of Cranberries!

It was June, 1951, and exams were in full swing. I was in Grade 8 at St. Anthony's School (now the House of Shalom). In those days if you had an average mark of, I believe, 65% in a subject you did not have to write the final exam. You did have to show up at school every morning to see if you had to write that day's exam - if not, you were sent home and appeared again the next morning.

The last exam for the year was writing/penmanship and I was positive that I'd have to stay and do this one. I couldn't believe it when Sister Ellen Agnes said I didn't have to write and I could go home. She also wished me good luck in Grade 9. I can't begin to describe how excited and happy I was to receive this news! The whole summer was now in front of me to enjoy. Swimming, fishing and just goofing off were going to be my lot in life for the next two months!

I jumped on my bike and was pedalling as fast as I could for home to tell my mom the good news.

When I reached the corner of Gore and King Streets, across from the Parish Hall (now Evangelical Baptist Church), the front fender of my bike let go, dropped down onto the front tire and stopped the bike dead in its tracks. I, of course, didn't stop - in fact, I flew through the air and landed very heavily on the pavement. When I finally composed myself I looked at my left arm which was bent at the wrist in a very unusual way. A nice lady in a nearby house heard the noise and came to offer assistance. She called my dad, who came and took me to Dr. Leonard. He quickly deduced that my arm was badly broken and I would have to go to the hospital in Windsor to have it set and put in a cast.

What a fine predicament this was! Here it was, the first day of summer holidays and I was relegated to sit on the sidelines with my arm in a cast and a sling until school started in September. What a crock of cranberries!

- Anonymous

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.**
(Closed Dec. 23-Jan. 4 inclusive.)

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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*



*Winter
Wonderland*

Left: Robert Kitchen in a snow tunnel, Dalhousie Street North, after the big blizzard of 1918.

Courtesy Fort Malden NHSC

Right: Sleigh ride at Fort Malden, 1982.

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Yesterday's News

from the archives of the *Amherstburg Echo*

1879 December

-Lake sailors are now getting \$4 per day.

1880 January

-Andrew Hackett procured timber to build a new lantern for the lighthouse on Bois Blanc. The reflectors were sent to Montreal to be re-fitted to the new frame. The light will likely be 20 feet higher.

1889 December

-Henry Reaume, 25, son of Antoine Reaume of Malden, second mate on the steamer *Anna Smith*, lost his life in a storm on the Great Lakes.

1890 February

-Rev. Thomas Nattress will be inducted to the pastorate of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church on February 6th.

1899 December

-During the past navigation season, 42 vessels were lost on the Great Lakes, mostly due to storms or collisions.

1900 January

-Fifteen old veterans of Amherstburg district will receive Fenian Raid medals.

1909 December

-The D.B.I. & W. Ferry Company has given the contract to the Toledo Shipbuilding company to build a new 196-foot steel steamer, to accommodate about 3500 passengers. Frank Kirby is the designer and the vessel will operate on the Bois Blanc and Belle Isle route.
- Bell Telephone will install a line through McGregor as soon as the poles arrive.

1910 January

-A contest will be held to name the D.B.I. & W. Ferry Co.'s new steamer.
- Fire destroyed the Anglo-American Hotel, southwest corner Richmond and Apsley Streets [now the site of the Amherstburg Public Library - see pg. 8].

1919 December

-William Farmer will move the old Bell Telephone building [northeast corner Richmond and Dalhousie] to his Malden farm, making room for the new Imperial Bank building.

1920 January

-Lieut. J. Earl McQueen was decorated by King Albert for saving four Belgian soldiers from drowning.

1929 December

-Application will be made by the police village of Harrow to be incorporated into a town.

1930 January

-Bylaw #129 states that sidewalks are to be cleared of snow within 10 hours of first snow falling or a fine up to \$50 will be imposed.

- The lighthouse residence at the south end of Bois Blanc Island, built in 1838 for James Hackett, was destroyed by fire.

- It cost the Town \$479.20 to remove the deep snow after a severe storm. Three teams, two trucks and 42 men were employed.

1930 February

-Two auto loads of liquor being taken across to Detroit from Amherstburg broke through the ice just above Bois Blanc and sank to the bottom.

- The new addition to St. Anthony's School was dedicated February 2nd.

- Amherstburg will put up 139 street signs at a cost of \$160 and an inexpensive flashing light at the corner of Richmond and Sandwich.

1939 December

-Over 22,000 vessels, laden with commerce from around the world, passed Amherstburg during the 1939 navigation season.

- The Detroit & Windsor Ferry Company name has been changed to

Bob-Lo Excursion Ltd.

1940 January

-Capt. J. Earl McQueen opened a marine machine shop at the dock in front of the Wigle Flour Mills Building.

- The Supertest Company bought the Botsford lot, northwest corner Richmond and Sandwich Streets, where they will build a service station in the spring [now Naples Pizza].

1949 December

-Wigle Hardware's new store, corner of Richmond and Sandwich Streets, will open Dec. 8th.

1950 February

-A new Separate intermediate school will be built at the corner of Brock and Murray Streets [St. John the Baptist].

1959 December

-During the past year, twelve new homes were built in Amherstburg, at a total of \$128,400.

1960 January

-The Elizabeth Dress Shop on Murray St. is going out of business.

1969 December

-Development has begun on the mobile home park south of town.

- Amherstburg schools raised over \$10,000 in walkathons for the arena campaign.

1970 January

-The Colchester North landfill site went into operation Jan. 2nd.

- The Town has created a new position, Commissioner of Works, at an annual salary of \$12,600.

- A complete renumbering of homes and businesses is underway.

1970 February

-The new Toronto-Dominion Bank on Richmond St. will open Feb. 20th.

