

Please  
take  
one!

# Reflections

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection  
Amherstburg, Ontario

Please  
take  
one!

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## Hickory dickory dock...

## We now have the post office clock!

Just in time for the Winter issue of *Reflections*, the Marsh Collection has acquired a handy piece of Amherstburg history - the large clock which overlooked the downtown core from its perch in the tower of the post office for nearly 30 years. In the spring of 1939 two clocks were purchased from the International Business Machines Co. for the Amherstburg post office, located on Dalhousie Street near the end of Richmond Street. The master clock was housed inside the main room and connected to it was a secondary timepiece, mounted high on the east exterior wall of the building. The *Echo* of April 21, 1939, described it as having "a dial which measures four feet six inches and can be seen distinctly from many parts of the town. The frame is cast in one piece of rust-proof steel. The dial is made of vitrolite material and the 369-candle-power light which illuminates the clock at night makes it a beacon which can be seen for miles. The clock weighs 375 lbs...[and] will enable all business places in town which heretofore had their own time to have the same standard time."

In 1956 a new Federal building was constructed on Richmond Street and the post office was relocated. The old building was left unheated for several months before it was rented by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The oil in the clock's gears had congealed in the cold, but



Post office, circa 1967.  
Marsh Collection P4170.1



Marsh Collection photo

the Engineers soon had it running again.

Eventually the old post office was purchased by the Town and was razed in 1968. A contractor acquired the clock and a few years later it came into the possession of N. William Baksi, a Windsor lawyer who was an avid clock collector. The timepiece was a focal point in his

home for many years and was inherited by his grandson Nikolas in 1998.

Earlier this year, Nikolas' parents sold their home, where the clock had been stored for over a decade, and he decided to transfer the timepiece back to the Town. It was recently moved to the Marsh Collection, directly across the street from its original location.

### What's inside...

Growing Up in the 'Burg.....	pg. 2
Yesterday's News.....	pg. 3
Shipping the Detroit - 100th anniversary of the Livingstone Channel - Part One .....	pg. 4
Bricks 'n' Beams - 92 Rankin Avenue.....	pg. 5
Then & Now - 80 Sandwich Street South.....	pg. 6

# Growing Up in the 'Burg

## Camping on Livingstone Dike

by anonymous

Two of my proudest possessions were my boat and motor. With these, the Detroit River was mine and my avenue of exploration seemed unending. The river held so many spots that required my attention, from Crystal Bay, Spider Mountain, Big Bay, Hidden Lake, Horseshoe Bay, White Sands, the duck blinds on Bob-Lo and the Livingstone Dike to the exotic (at least to me) ports on the U.S. side of the river.

It's hard to pick a favourite, but the duck blinds were near the top. Some of these units had tables, bunks and stoves and were right up there with the stereotypical cabin in the woods we saw in the movies at the Liberty Theatre. Many's the time we stayed there overnight, fried up our freshly-caught fish for supper and just sat back and enjoyed the serenity of the evening. It didn't matter to us that we hadn't asked permission to use these facilities. In fact, I don't think the question even entered our minds. I can say with certainty, though, that we left these places the same or better than we found them. When camping on a blind on Livingstone Dike, we would particularly enjoy the passing freighters on their way to the various ports on Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. It got so we knew them by the sound of their massive engines. It seemed we were close enough during the night that you felt you had to get out of your bunk to let them get by.

On one of our camping excursions, it got very cold during the night. I was snuggled under some warm blankets and was warm as toast. My buddy, however, was not as fortunate and around 3 a.m. he proceeded to wake me to tell me he was cold, couldn't get the fire started and wanted to go home. Now, the last thing I wanted to do was get in a cold boat and head for Amherstburg at that time of day. I asked him to try again to light the fire to warm up the place. I watched as he proceeded

to throw a piece of coal into the stove and then toss a match in on top of it, all the time saying, "See, I told you the fire won't start." I advised him of the need for paper and kindling before any thoughts of coal. I took over fire duties and before long we had the place as warm as could be. He was amazed and decided that maybe going home was not his best idea. I hasten to add that this was his first time camping and he was to be forgiven for his lack of knowledge. Morning arrived, we tidied up and left for the 'Burg, stopping to fish here and there.

I never did find out who owned any of those duck blinds, but if you're still around, here's a great big Thank You for helping to create another chapter in the ongoing saga, "Growing Up in the 'Burg".

## Prayers Answered

by River Rat

If you recall, in our first adventure [see Fall 2011 issue], we had to jerry-rig our outboard motor, but now we had a more reliable (?) one. Again, we had all our gear stowed in the boat and we struck out for far and beyond. Cruising around the southern tip of Bob-Lo Island (remember, there was no White Sands then), we headed up the west side of the island, past the two or three small, rocky islands and through the "Hole in the Wall" and over toward Sugar Island and Grosse Île. It was fun motoring through the numerous channels and waterways that intersect the big island. After refueling we decided to head over to the mainland at Gibraltar, Michigan, visiting Humbug Marina, doing more exploring and making a stop at the old South Gibraltar Market for snacks. It then was decided that since we had been gone for four or

## 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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five hours, it was time to head for home. Now you have to realize, our outboard didn't have a lot of horsepower, so the journey took us a long time. From Gibraltar it was a straight run past Celeron Island and the south end of the Livingstone Channel and then across  
*continued on page 5*

# Yesterday's News

from the archives of the *Amherstburg Echo*

**1881 December** - The slate roof is being put on Thomas Ouellette's new house, riverfront Anderdon [now #671 Front Road North].

**1882 January** - Michael Twomey beat John G. Kolfage in the mayoral race by 16 votes.

**1882 February** - Frank Meloche raffled a silver watch to raise funds to buy an artificial leg.

**1892 January** - Council intends to purchase and operate the Electric Lighting plant.

**1902 February** - Former Anderdon residents Jack and Ed Biddle, on death row in Pittsburg, escaped from prison with the help of the warden's wife. They were chased down and shot by police.

**1912 January** - The Women's Institute is endeavouring to raise funds to erect a statue of Chief Tecumseh.

**1912 February** - Plans are afoot for a complete renovation of the interior of Christ Church.

**1921 December** - H.M. Stancliff has completed his hothouse and is installing a heating plant.

**1922 January** - Amherstburg's population is 2738.

**1922 February** - Work is progressing on the new high school.

**1931 December** - The lighted Christmas tree at the library corner gives the town a holiday appearance, as do the coloured lights on Richmond and Dalhousie Streets.

**1932 January** - "The History of the Wigle Family" has been published.

**1932 February** - General Amherst teachers have volunteered to have their salaries reduced by 6%, feeling that the cost of running the high school should be decreased.

**1941 December** - Four new submarine

chasers of the Royal Canadian Navy are docked at Amherstburg under command of Lieutenant-Commander J. Earl McQueen. (See photo below.)

**1942 January** - Sugar has been rationed to ¾ lb. per week per person.

**1942 February** - Council has given the Amherstburg Youth Committee permission to continue to use the Waterworks building for a youth centre.

**1951 December** - Collection of mail from drop boxes in Amherstburg will begin this month.

**1952 January** - A new chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star has been organized in Amherstburg.

**1952 February** - Dr. Bruce Hutchinson has returned to Amherstburg to go into practice with his father, Dr. E.D. Hutchinson.

**1961 December** - Wes Ball has joined the permanent staff of Jimmie's Flowers.

- Kemp Furniture, Murray Street, is going out of business.

- A pistol club has been formed in Amherstburg.

- Anderdon Twp. will have four outdoor skating rinks this winter, which will be flooded by the Anderdon Fire Dept.

**1962 January** - An ambulance and rescue service on a 24 hours/day, 7 days/week basis will begin in the Amherstburg district on March 1st.



Submarine chasers at the Government dock, Amherstburg, December 4, 1941.  
Marsh Collection P805

**1962 February** - The new N.A. Faucher Door & Sash Co. plant on St. Arnaud Street has gone into operation.

**1971 December** - Construction of a daycare centre in Amherstburg has been approved by the Province.

- The former Dr. Warren home on Sandwich Street has been razed to make way for construction of a medical centre. (See "Then & Now", page 6.)

- Murray Kennedy Motors has moved into their new building on Simcoe Street.

**1972 January** - The Rotary Club has appointed a special committee to try to save the historic Park House.

- The remaining seven Sisters of St. Joseph's Academy moved out of the old stone convent, which is beyond repair.

**1972 February** - The Amherstburg Lions Club is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

- The children's wading pool in the west town park is being rebuilt.

- Weekly garbage collection will begin April 1st on a trial basis, replacing the former twice-weekly service.

**1981 December** - The Block Parent program is being introduced to the Tri-Community.

- Christmas lights donated by the Chamber of Commerce have been set up in the King's Navy Yard Park.

**1982 January** - The community is saddened by the death of Melvin 'Mac' Simpson, founder of the North American Black Historical Museum.



# Shipping the Detroit

## 100th Anniversary of the Livingstone Channel - Part One

from *Amherstburg Echo*, January 5, 1912

**EXIT LOCHERVILLE** - Unique Village on Stoney Island is already Being Wrecked owing to the Completion of "The Livingstone Channel" in the Lower Detroit River.-(*Detroit Free Press*)-Another week and the chatter of pneumatic drills that has lulled the residents of Stoney Island to sleep at night and greeted them on waking in the morning, furnishing a continuous chorus throughout the entire twenty-four hours, will be no more.

The creaking of the cableways, the dull boom as a "skip" dumped tons of rock on the mountain-like piles on either side of the cut that forms the principal features of the Livingstone Channel, will no longer astonish visitors to this most novel of engineering feats in the annals of the Great Lakes.

No longer will timorous residents of Grosse Île have their nerves upset by explosions of dynamite that send great masses of rock hurtling into the air, making windows rattle for a long distance in every direction.

Seven days more of labor, at the most, and that portion of the new Livingstone Channel that has been done "in the dry" will be completed.

Another month and the last of the equipment that has performed such valiant service will have been taken down and prepared for shipment to some other point, and Locherville, the thriving little village that for something more than three years has existed on Stoney Island, will have become little more than a memory, its erstwhile inhabitants scattering to take up new duties elsewhere.

Three years ago, almost to a month, the first shovelful of rock was taken from the channel in the lower Detroit River which bears the name of the man to whose untiring efforts can largely be attributed the success of the agitation in behalf of a watercourse at that most dangerous point on the entire chain of Great Lakes that would prove adequate for the tremendous marine traffic traversing this stretch every day during the season of navigation.

**The Beginning.**-It was in April, 1908, that work was commenced on the giant cofferdam which, having its base on the deserted little stretch of forest and marsh



**Dry cut of Livingstone Channel.**

*Marsh Collection P3971.8*



**Dry cut near Stoney Island.**

*Courtesy Fort Malden NHS of Canada*

aply named Stoney Island, extended out into the river, enclosing an area approximately one-half mile wide and just one mile long. This of itself was an undertaking which held the attention of the engineering world. Seasoned men declared that such a feat was visionary and must fail. Those who had been content to operate "in the wet" with drillboats and dredges scoffed at the idea of pumping the river dry, as they expressed it - that is, some of them did, although there were others who admitted the possibility of it being done.

November, 1908, saw everything in readiness for the Herculean task of tasking out approximately 1,000,000 cubic yards of rock, an amount which totalled fifty percent more before it was all over, owing to the wisdom displayed by the Government in increasing the width of the channel from 300 to 450 feet.

Almost without cessation, the work has gone forward and only those who have watched the progress step by step can have any sort of understanding of what it has meant. One cubic yard of limestone weighs approximately 4500 pounds, or something more than two tons. The 1,500,000 cubic yards of rock that have been taken from the course would therefore mean a little matter of 6,750,000,000 pounds, or enough to

keep every railroad entering Detroit busy in its freight department for some time.

Of course, this rock was moved only a short distance. Skips travelling on heavy cableways suspended from seventy-five-foot towers and actuated by compressed air engines carried it away from the channel and automatically dumped it in great piles on either side. But every bit had to be quarried and when it is remembered that on an average throughout the entire period more than 1600 cubic yards of rock, a matter of 7,200,000 pounds, was drilled, blasted, handled by steam shovels and skips every day, you will understand that no time was lost by anyone connected with the job.

If there was, they didn't stay. Grant, Smith & Company and Locher don't do business that way. They are the most considerate of employers - but they insist on results and they always get them.

Remarkable as this showing in its entirety, the progress made with the last half of the contract causes all else to sink into insignificance.

With the 300-foot channel originally provided for out of the way, at the earnest solicitation of William Livingstone, president of the Lake Carriers' Association, the members of that body and various other interests, the Government decided to increase the width to 450 feet to make the channel sufficient for all time.

*To be continued in Spring 2012 issue*

# Bricks 'n' Beams

## 92 Rankin Avenue

A collection of slides in the Archives of the Marsh Collection contains two views of the house at 92 Rankin Avenue. A quick look through our property files revealed that the residence was built for John Riley in 1881, the *Amherstburg Echo* of June 17th reporting that "John Riley has purchased Lot 19 on Rankin Avenue, next to F.J. Maloney's, for \$150 and has begun to build a dwelling thereon, 18 x 24 feet, 14 feet posts. Peter C. Cadaret is the contractor."

Riley sold the house in 1884 to Godfrey Rebior, who sold it six years later to Alfred McCrea for \$600. A cement block foundation was built under the house in 1913. The property eventually was handed down to McCrea's daughter Merna and her husband Charles Bennett Sr., who resided there until the 1960s.



92 Rankin Avenue,  
circa 1900.  
Marsh Collection PA 67



92 Rankin Avenue, 1970s.  
Marsh Collection PA 67



92 Rankin Avenue, December 7, 2011.  
Marsh Collection photo

## Growing Up in the 'Burg

*continued from page 2*

towards the Amherstburg shore and home, which was in the safe confines of Callam's Bay. As we neared the beach we could see a group of people (whom we recognized as our neighbours) milling around and there on the dock, with tears in their eyes and prayer beads in hand, were our mothers, praying for our safe return. Well, I guess their prayers worked 'cause we arrived home safe and sound, but with a stern warning that we were "never to do that again!" But, you know, a couple of kids with a boat and motor and "all that river" to explore...what did they expect??!!

# Then & Now

## 80 Sandwich Street South



*Marsh Collection P1374*

**The former Dr. E.M. Warren residence (shown above, *circa* 1940) was razed in 1971 and a medical centre constructed on the site. The building now houses Hogarth Hermiston Severs; Remax Preferred Realty Ltd.; and Mortgage Intelligence (Ian Brownlie). Photo below taken December 7, 2011.**



*Marsh Collection photo*