



Reflections



Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection
Amherstburg, Ontario

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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
from Eleanor, Jennifer and Liza

Having Fun with Heritage: Historic Places Made for Play Amherstburg's Town Parks

Heritage Day, established in 1973 by the Heritage Canada Foundation, is celebrated on the third Monday of February to encourage the preservation and promotion of Canada's nationally significant historic, architectural, natural and scenic heritage.

In honour of this year's Heritage Day theme, "Having Fun with Heritage: Historic Places Made for Play," we present the history of our west and east town parks. Originally the parade grounds for Fort Malden, these 6.9 acres have long been used for recreational purposes.

1875 - The Commons just south of the former Fort/Asylum grounds were being used for baseball games.

1875 - The *Echo* urged Town Council to have land kept aside for a park when the Asylum grounds were sold off. This was done, with the Town leasing the land for \$2/year.

1877 - Cricket was being played on the town park.

1880 - Maple trees were planted around the perimeter of the west town park.

1909 - The newly-formed Amherstburg Lawn Bowling Club announced plans to establish a bowling green on the west town park.

1911 - T.W. Bellhouse donated his boathouse, which was moved to the town park for a lawn bowling clubhouse.

1925 - A 16x30-foot lawn bowling clubhouse was constructed in the west

town park. This was later used as a change room for the outdoor skating rink.

1925 - The playground was lighted for the first time.

1928 - A wading pool was constructed, the gift of Malcolm McGregor who lived in a large house on the
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Hockey team
at the east town park,
circa 1929.
Marsh Collection P148

Lawn bowling green,
west town park,
circa 1912.
Marsh Collection P5034.2



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

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Growing Up in the 'Burg

Memories of Lakewood Beach

Fred Clayton Jr. was born in Detroit in 1925. The following year his parents purchased Lot 97 in Lakewood Beach subdivision and built a cottage there. The following excerpts are from a family history book compiled by Fred's granddaughter Brook.

A couple of years after the stock market crashed, the Claytons could no longer afford to live in Michigan, so they moved to Canada. They lived in a small cottage on Lake Erie in an area called Lakewood Beach. The cottage wasn't weather-proof and winters were hard, so they had to put tar paper around the bottom of the house to prevent the wind from getting through. To get by, Freddie's family helped the farmers with the harvest and in return they got corn and potatoes. Plus, Freddie and his dad hunted rabbits and his mother always had a garden and canned everything, so they never went hungry. The food, along with his dad's small amount of savings, held them over.

The children found so much to do there. When the temperature started to dip low enough, the fire department would flood a field and the kids would build a bank around it and they would have a place to ice skate all winter long. When the lake freezes over, it's usually rough ice, but then it warms and the top layer of water melts and finally refreezes very smooth....

The marsh behind the cottage froze over and they would skate to friends' houses. Trails formed in the multitude of tall cat tails and they would skate through, unable to see over them. They sometimes would sit on a kitchen chair, hold two sticks and an old pillow case and they would sail across the ice. If there were a hole in the ice, though, it would tear a leg off the chair, but that was the fun of it....

Every summer the boys would get together and cut down trees for a

tripod. They would build a tripod with three trees tied together and put it in the lake and build a swimming platform on top. They'd leave it there every summer and the ice would push it out each winter....

Steamers would go by in the lake and dump ash, but some coal was accidentally dumped at the same time, which would eventually end up on the shore. Freddie would gather the coal for the stove because it made a real blue, hot flame. They kept it in a box so they would have plenty of coal.

Ferry boats carrying passengers and cars from Cleveland, Niagara Falls and Buffalo would often pass. Occasionally deck chairs washed upon shore....

Freddie went to grade school for a few years in Canada, then they moved back to Detroit...They continued to spend summers at Lakewood Beach, where they would roast hot dogs and marshmallows, fish, swim, sleep on the porch and have bonfires on the beach. It's a special place, full of memories.

Christmas Memories

by Carole (Merlo) Hooper

I remember Christmas of 1943. There had been a wonderful snow that 24th and I was so excited. Mum had a hard time getting me to bed and I had finally settled when I heard sleigh bells outside. My bedroom was in the front and when I looked out, there was a sleigh and horses and down on the front porch was Santa Claus. I started screaming that Santa Claus was at the front door and ran downstairs as fast as I could. When I opened the door, Santa said, "Oh ho ho, Merry Christmas, Mary Elizabeth!" I was so upset. Mary Elizabeth was Mary Elizabeth McCurdy, the daughter of Dan and Helen (Jones) McCurdy, whose parents lived next door. Dan was in Europe during the war and Helen and her

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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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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children had come to live with her parents, but I don't remember if it was for the duration of the war. Anyhow, when I told Santa that I was Carole, he said that the elves had made a mistake but that he had something in his sack for me. It was a glass train engine and it had a stopper to keep in the bright candy. I still have it today and get it out

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Yesterday's News

from the archives of the *Amherstburg Echo*

1883 December - St. Clement's Church, McGregor, has purchased four acres for a cemetery.

1884 January - Skating carnivals are being held on the marsh behind John Kolfage's residence [now #443 Dalhousie Street, south of Caldwell Towers].

1884 February - An iron arch with a large street lamp has been placed over the gate at the entrance to Christ Church.



Christ Church, circa 1890.
Marsh Collection P2420

1893 December - The Bois Blanc Lighthouse will be lighted for the last time this season on December 12th, the earliest it has been discontinued in the last several years.

1894 January - Block stone from the Anderdon Quarry is being used for piers for a bridge over Kettle Creek, Port Stanley.

1894 February - A Young People's Society has been organized at Wesley Methodist Church.

1903 December - The new organ at St. John the Baptist Church, "a very large and most handsome instrument," will be blessed on December 20th.

1904 January - The electric lights went out suddenly on New Year's evening when boys throwing chestnuts attached to strings over the wires caused a short circuit.

1904 February - Wesley Methodist Church is now debt-free and is holding a mortgage-burning celebration February 2nd.

1913 December - The High School Board have set up a room in the basement of the Richmond Street School for a "manual training class".

1914 January - Sam Lee of Winnipeg has leased a store in the Hough Block and will

open a Chinese restaurant.

1914 February - The Chief of Police has resigned, citing reasons such as not getting a uniform and the First Hussars using his office during a ball.

1923 December - The Canadian Glass Co. has discovered glass sand on the former William Goodchild farm, Pike Road.

1924 January - Ladies' bowling team is being organized by the Brunner Mond Club and will have exclusive use of the alleys one night a week.

1924 February - Anderdon Council is asking Bell Telephone to extend their lines north of McGregor along the townline.

1933 December - The old waterworks tower [on the riverfront at the end of Rankin Avenue] is being torn down and a breakwall will be built with the material.

1934 January - The Amherstburg Rotary Club has received its charter.

1934 February - Under the leadership of A.W. McNally, the Amherstburg Historical Sites & Museum Assn. is working to establish a museum in the public library.

1943 December - The first practice of the newly-organized Amherstburg Community Band is being held this month.

1944 January - The Canadian Legion is asking for donations of popular magazines less than four months old, to send to troops overseas.

1944 February - The Amherstburg Public Library Board is discussing how to deal with people who continually return library books past the due date.

1953 December - The Federal Government will expropriate the Flynn property, Dalhousie Street, for a Government dock.

1954 January - The first houses in the Federal-Provincial Housing Project are expected to be ready by April. This is the area bounded by Victoria, Alma, Fort and Second Concession [Fryer Street].

1954 February - The Dept. of Public Works has recommended that a new post office and customs house be built in Amherstburg.

1963 December - Bob-Lo Island is being considered for a Grand Prix racetrack.

1964 January - Collavino Bros. of Windsor have been awarded the contract to build an addition to General Amherst High School, including a double gymnasium and a vocational wing.

1964 February - The Town has purchased the Cote property immediately north of the town hall, the house to be used for the caretaker and the driver of the fire truck.

1973 December - The Park House Museum has officially opened.

1974 January - Town Council has turned down a proposal to place a traffic light at the intersection of Simcoe and Victoria Streets and instead has hired a crossing guard.

1974 February - The House of Shalom is considering moving to the former St. Anthony School. Its current location, the old St. Joseph's Academy building, is structurally unsound.

1983 December - Michigan AAA has announced that they will spend over \$2 million in improvements to Bob-Lo Island next year.

1984 January - Amherstburg has received a \$300,000 grant from the Federal Government for the upgrading and expansion of the sewage treatment plant.

1984 February - Town council will voice its objection to the proposal that mail will no longer be sorted at the Amherstburg post office.

Shipping the Detroit

The steamer *Greyhound*

by Al Jackson

Over a century ago, there was a hot summer day that made marine history on the lower Detroit River. There was no loss of life or major calamity on Sunday, August 5, 1906, but it made for an interesting time in our little town of Amherstburg.

On that day the sidewheel steamer *Greyhound* treated its passengers to a most thrilling incident and the unique experience of being marooned on a foreign shore. The adventure began when the hot and humid weather drove hordes of people from the heat of the city of Toledo to the pleasant parklands of Sugar Island in the lower Detroit River, just west of Bois Blanc Island. The excursionists, having spent an enjoyable day on the island, were returning to Toledo on the relatively new 276-foot steamer *Greyhound* of the White Star Line. The *Greyhound* had just left the dock at Sugar Island when a furious thunderstorm overtook the vessel. The wind and heavy rain prevented the captain from seeing the aids to navigation and the steamer, after touching the east channel bank, sheered over and ran hard aground on the west channel bank near Hickory Island. The abrupt stop and sudden jar when she grounded caused considerable alarm among the passengers and the officers and crew were kept busy giving reassurance that they had only run aground and would be underway again shortly.

However, that did not happen. Life preservers were strewn about the decks; brave passengers used them as pillows while the more timid wore them. Some sang songs, others carried on long conversations; many slept or prayed. Four tugs from Detroit were sent down and tried to pull the *Greyhound* off her strand but with no success. The large commuter ferry *Garland* was brought down from Detroit later that evening but could not get close enough to the



Photo courtesy
Fort Malden NHSC

stranded steamer for an effectual transfer of passengers. This did not help the fear and once again the passengers became anxious. The crew constantly assured the crowd that there was no danger and they would be taken off safely. All refreshments and food on the boat was given out free of charge but it was deemed advisable to lock up the bar. The lunch counter was soon devoid of anything edible and the passengers spent a long night before they were finally taken off the next morning by the little Bois Blanc ferry *Papoose*. After many short runs, the *Papoose* landed all passengers back at Sugar Island and from there they were taken by the *Garland* to Amherstburg.

Upon arrival, our small town was literally taken by storm. The following description of the assault is from the *Amherstburg Echo* of August 10, 1906:

Fourteen hundred weary, bedazzled, sleepy and hungry people crowded the streets looking for supper and breakfast all in one, as many had fasted for over twelve hours. Every grocery store, hotel, restaurant, boarding house and many private residences were besieged by

*people asking for food, and for an hour Amherstburg merchants got the biggest hustle-on they had ever known to display. For people who had spent an anxious, sleepless and supperless night, they were a most orderly crowd. They seemed to take a bad situation philosophically and make the most of it. After getting a corner on all the bread, cakes, sandwiches, bananas, bologna &c. in town, they sat down on stairways, in doorways, on the sidewalks and in the pavilion warehouse on the dock, in fact anywhere, to rest and wait for the steamer *Pleasure*, which did not arrive until 11 o'clock to return them to Toledo. It is estimated that they left nearly \$600 with town merchants during their brief visit.*

In the meantime, the *Greyhound* defied all efforts to be released even though her human cargo had been removed. It was not until her boilers were pumped out that the four tugs and the steamer *Garland* succeeded in pulling her to deeper water, which allowed her to return to Toledo later that afternoon.

Bricks 'n' Beams

Duffy's Tavern

by Eleanor Warren

Just as we were completing research on the original land, buildings, etc. for the property we know as Duffy's Tavern, news broke that the doors of the historic roadhouse will be closed at the end of this year. This evoked many memories of good times at Duffy's through the years when it was owned by the Vucinic family...especially the Friday night chicken & fish dinners and the dancing on the weekends, almost always to a packed house, summer or winter. When our family owned Seaway Marine & Sports across the street, almost every day our son Randy was sent to Duffy's to get his dad a scrumptious cold pork sandwich with mustard. Funny the things you remember.

Much has been written about Duffy's Tavern in the local press since the Vucinic family took over in the late 1950s. However, this account deals mainly with the original residence, built by Daniel Wigle in 1885. Part of that house is still at the centre of the establishment.

In 1821 Robert Innes received a patent for the land, where he built a log

house. Innes died in 1844 and his properties were divided among his children. The part on which Duffy's now stands went to Innes' daughter Margaret and her husband, Edward C. Jones.

On the 31st of December, 1884, Daniel L. Wigle obtained the property for \$800 from the Edward Jones Estate. Two months later, in February 1885, tenders were opened for his "new brick residence" and the *Amherstburg Echo* reported that Wigle had "workmen tearing down the old log house, a landmark which stood on the property for many years...where he intends building in the spring."

There was a significant building boom in Amherstburg in 1885. C.M.S. Thomas was having his store on the southwest corner of Richmond and Ramsay erected (now the *River Town Times* office). By July of that year the walls of both buildings were complete. A slate roof was being installed on Wigle's house. In November the *Echo* announced that the interior of Wigle's new residence

was being decorated. One month later Daniel Leonard Wigle (1845-1942) moved his family into their beautiful new home overlooking the Detroit River.

On September 19th, 1890, the *Echo* announced that "Simon Fraser closed the purchase of D.L. Wigle's handsome brick residence and grounds, corner of Gore and Dalhousie, at \$6000." Fraser called it "Abernathy" after his birthplace in Scotland. When he died in 1905 the property and residence were willed to his son John Fraser (1857-1928) and then to John's son Kenneth.

Some time later the Fraser property reverted to the Town of Amherstburg. In 1941 it was sold to A.K. Duff for \$1550. Duff remodelled the house and it became the new home for his Deerhead Club. In 1948 Duff was issued a "Dining Lounge Licence" under a "Tavern" establishment and the business, which could seat 52 people, was renamed "Duffy's Tavern".

In 1959 the business was sold to Zarko Vucinic and two partners. Since that time multiple additions and

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Simon Fraser's residence, 1892.
Photo in Toronto Daily Mail, January 9, 1892.



Duffy's Tavern, December 2013.
Marsh Collection photo

Growing Up in the 'Burg

Christmas Memories

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every holiday. It still has the ragged ribbon that my Mum used to tie it on the tree and the candy is still inside. That was the most wonderful Christmas I ever had. Later Mum told me that Tom Kilgallin [Senior] had been the Santa that year.

The Ice Rink

by Carole (Merlo) Hooper

The home we had [on Dalhousie Street North] was so perfectly placed for keeping up with the ice skating rink that was put up every winter [in the town park]. Lee St. John was the man who spent hours every cold night with a fire hose getting the ice ready for use the next day. The lights that were strung overhead went on every night in time for 7 pm skating and we were called by townspeople every night to see if the lights were on. At that time there was a big bay window at the front of my house and if I leaned up against it I could see the lights. I remember a couple of

years where there was a evening of skating contests - with the snow piled up around the rink. One year I beat all of the boys in my age group and won a quarter. I must have been hard to live with after that.

There was a shoe shop down the street, on a corner either one or two blocks from the Jones Soda and China Shop. That's where everyone took their skates to be sharpened. The boys took over the rink about 10 pm on Friday and Saturday nights for hockey games and they were serious, so we got off the ice and went in the old hut that was across the street from Dr. Hutchinson's and where Lee would stay warm while we skated. It had a pot-bellied stove and someone's idea of lockers to keep things in while we skated, and built-in benches all around the walls and plywood on the floors for us to walk on when we came in from the rink to get warm.

Today's indoor rink can't possibly measure up to being outside with all of the light bulbs overhead and the people in the cars around the edge watching us. It was really a gathering place for the young people and such an opportunity for girls to

get to be with someone they had a crush on, because the boys were always asking us to skate with them and that meant that for a few minutes you got to hold hands in front of everyone on the ice. Then the boys would change partners and someone else would skate up and pair with you. There were no fights that I can remember and no bad language. We were all so safe, whether we left with someone or on our own.

Amherstburg was the best place to grow up. All of the parents kept an eye on us and our parents knew before we got home if something was not right. I hope that in some ways it is still the same place today.

**NEW
BOOK**

**The Pea Shooter
Hit Squad**
and Other Tales of
Growing Up in Amherstburg
circa 1930 to 1945

by Pat Warren

\$20

available at the Marsh Collection

Bricks 'n' Beams Duffy's Tavern

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renovations have completely altered the appearance of Duffy's Tavern, but from the outside one can still see the top of the house.

For interested researchers there is more information covering the period from 1959 to date in the files of the Marsh Historical Collection.



Alex Duff, circa 1948.
Marsh Collection P698

Local History Books

These titles and many more are available in our gift shop

\$10 Million Ditch:

Building the Livingstone Channel 1908-1912

A timeline of the Livingstone Channel project,
as reported in the *Amherstburg Echo*

\$10

Summer Dreams: The Story of Bob-Lo Island

Well-researched history of Bob-Lo by Pat Livingstone

\$30

Letters Home 1914-19

Letters written by local soldiers during World War I

\$15

Know Your Ships 2013

\$18.95

Then & Now

Northeast Corner Dalhousie and Park Streets



Fred Bertrand's Livery Stable, circa 1907, in the former Middleditch Foundry.
Courtesy Fort Malden NHSC

The Beer Store, December 2013.
Marsh Collection photo

