

*Chapter VII*

HERITAGE &  
RECREATION

## CHAPTER VII HERITAGE & RECREATION

### *Amherstburg Public Library*

*An agreeable feature of this interesting town is a public reading-room, where not only British, Canada and United States newspapers and other periodicals have been usually received, but journals printed in French and German, all of which are read and appreciated among the variety of residents. There is also a library attached to the reading-room.*<sup>1</sup>

Although Amherstburg had a library at least as early as 1821,<sup>2</sup> the library alluded to above was probably the best-documented of all of the town's early libraries, alternatively known today either as the Reading Room Subscription Library<sup>3</sup> or as the Wright & McKenney Circulating Library which operated out of Wright & McKenney's general store from February 20, 1841 to August 16, 1844.<sup>4</sup> Thanks to the preservation of the circulation records which are currently housed in the archives of Fort Malden National Historic Site, we know that this library contained at least 300 volumes including history, biography, travel, humour and fiction. Several magazines, including the *Edinburgh Review*, *Albion*, *Blackwood's Lady's Magazine* and *Gazette of the Fashionable World*, *Penny Magazine* and the *Tatler*, circulated as well.<sup>5</sup> Borrowing privileges cost one shilling three pence for three months. Despite the fee and relative lack of leisure time that the populace had to devote to recreational reading, a surprisingly high percentage of the area's inhabitants subscribed for at least one three-month period.<sup>6</sup>

Among the library's many patrons were professional men, tradesmen, local farmers and several women. Some of the most enthusiastic borrowers were the commissioned and non-commissioned officers of the 89th Regiment, newly stationed at Fort Malden.

For subscribers the general rule seems to have been that each could borrow one book for one week. However, no one seemed to take this very seriously for of the first thirteen books borrowed only four were returned on time. Possibly to alleviate this problem, a 'Fines' column was introduced into the register but no fines were ever recorded and this column was eventually renamed 'Remarks'.<sup>7</sup>

One of the most frequently borrowed books was Major John Richardson's *The Canadian Brothers; or, The Prophecy Fulfilled: A Tale of the Late American War*. Since very few copies of the original 1840 edition were sold, it was assumed that it had few readers; but in Amherstburg, where Richardson had come to live while still a small boy, this certainly was not the case. The book circulated no less than 32 times during the 42 months the library remained open.<sup>8</sup> Possibly its readers were mostly motivated by curiosity for it was a well-known fact that many of Richardson's characters were based on some of the local inhabitants.

During the mid-1800s the residents of the area had access to other libraries and reading rooms as well. The Western District Literary, Philosophical & Agricultural Association was established in 1842. Its purpose was twofold: to mutually instruct its members and to promote the more general

diffusion of educational, agricultural and general improvements throughout the district.<sup>9</sup>

Also in the 1840s the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society purchased a collection of books. These were circulated from their meeting room on the second floor of the Sons of Temperance Hall which was located on the west side of Ramsay Street. When interest in the society waned, the remaining members divided the books amongst themselves.<sup>10</sup>

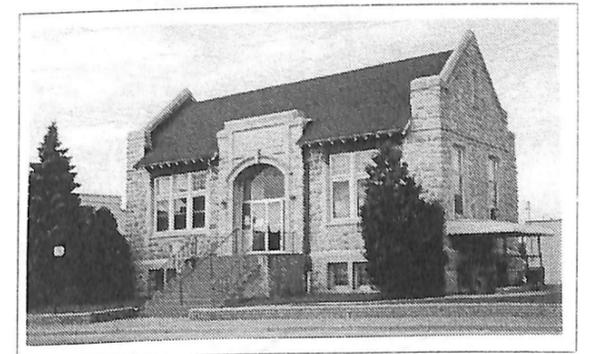
By the 1850s the Sons of Temperance Hall had become the meeting place for the Mechanics' Institute. Lectures were the main features of the institute's meetings. They also maintained a small library of books for circulation among their own members.<sup>11</sup>

Our present library can trace its beginnings to 1882 when Dr. James Boyle, an eccentric but much-loved retired physician, presented the town with a unique gift - his library of approximately 500 books valued at \$5000 as well as a \$5000 cash endowment and a \$500 building fund.<sup>12</sup> The elderly gentleman even purchased an oil painting of himself to be hung in the library rooms.<sup>13</sup> The new Amherstburg Library and Reading Room was installed in "the brick building between D.L. Wigle's and George Wilson's on Dalhousie Street."<sup>14</sup> Initially the library was on the first floor but when a newspaper office was established there around 1884 the library's books, magazines, newspapers and furnishings were moved upstairs.<sup>15</sup> By 1890 the library was once again "moved to the ground-floor in the brick building, next door south of Miss Meloche's millinery store, on Dalhousie Street," a change heralded by the *Amherstburg Echo* as a great improvement.<sup>16</sup>

In November, 1900 the Amherstburg Library and Reading Room Association transferred all of its effects, books and papers, furniture and fittings, accounts and liabilities over to the newly-formed Amherstburg Public Library Board. The board had intended that their new library would be subscription-free but due to the financial liabilities inherited from the old library association it was decided that the current annual fee of one dollar would have to be continued for at least one more year.<sup>17</sup>

Early in 1901 the library board, in order to provide more spacious accommodations, purchased the Smith building on the east side of Ramsay Street.<sup>18</sup> After the necessary renovations were completed the library was moved into its new home where it remained for the next twelve years.

Although funds had been available as early as 1899,<sup>19</sup> it was not until 1910 that Arthur W. Marsh, a member of the library board, first approached Andrew Carnegie for a gift of money to build a new and much larger town library. His persistence plus that of the rest of the board and of the town council resulted in a \$10,000 endowment from Carnegie to erect a beautiful new public library on the southwest corner of Richmond and Apsley (now Sandwich) Streets.<sup>20</sup> Built entirely of dressed stone, complete with faced lintels, quoins and keystones,<sup>21</sup> the building was a testimonial not only to the artistry of its architects, C. Howard Crane and J.C. Pennington, but also to the skill of its builder, the stonemason Joseph B. Wilson.<sup>22</sup> The Amherstburg Library's official opening on April 9, 1913 was proclaimed by the *Amherstburg Echo* as one of the most important events in the town for many years.<sup>23</sup>



**Amherstburg Public Library, 1997.**  
*Marsh Collection Society, P1530*

Today, 83 years later, this lovely old landmark still houses the Amherstburg Public Library. Currently in the process of becoming completely computerized and with a membership of over 5000 and an annual circulation in excess of 75,000, Amherstburg's library not only is thriving but also enjoys the reputation of being the busiest branch in the Essex County library system.

### Community Music Bands

For two centuries Amherstburg has had a tradition of music bands, beginning with the regimental bands stationed at Fort Malden. By 1875 the Amherstburg Cornet Band was regularly entertaining the citizens of the area<sup>24</sup> who responded with remarkable support. In 1876 the "Ladies of Amherstburg" planned a benefit picnic with proceeds going towards new uniforms for the Cornet Band.<sup>25</sup> Thirteen members of the band received new uniforms in 1886, made by tailor J.H. Webber in blue cloth with gold trim.<sup>26</sup> That year the band hosted a Calico Ball at the town hall.<sup>27</sup>

The Starlight Band was also popular in Amherstburg, playing alongside the Cornet Band at the 1884 municipal elections to serenade the successful candidates.<sup>28</sup> In 1885 the Starlight Band received eighty new pieces of music from Germany, each set for 20 instruments.<sup>29</sup> That same year, fourteen new blue-black doeskin uniforms were ordered from E. Berube.<sup>30</sup> Like the Cornet Band, the town rallied to support the Starlight Band in various ways, such as the churches giving a benefit concert for the band in 1886.<sup>31</sup> At some point between April, 1886 and early 1887 the band became "dormant" and was "resuscitated" in February, 1887 by manager/drum major J.J. McSpadden.<sup>32</sup>



**Brunner Mond Band, 1921.**

Front row (left to right): unidentified, unidentified, unidentified, Charlie Thomas, Joe Breault, Dick Bertrand, Herb Quick, unidentified.  
 Second row: Tom Spearing, Bill Church, Thomas Bevington, unidentified, unidentified, Hunter Bernard, George 'Bud' Bernard, Russell Thomas.  
 Back row: Walter Steubing, Bill Forhan, Walter Breault, Art Bennet, Tom Sadler (bandmaster), Frank Smith Sr., Don Yeoman, unidentified.

The Amherstburg Cornet Band seems to have disbanded by 1895, as that year "a movement [was] afoot to reorganize" it.<sup>33</sup> This effort was apparently in vain for it was not until 1906 that the "Amherstburg Brass Band" was re-formed.<sup>34</sup> However, by October of that year it was reported that the reorganized group was again disbanded and the chairman of the property committee was to call in the instruments and store them until such time as the band was reorganized again. Residents of Amherstburg were much put out by the short-lived band, as they had "subscribed liberally and council voted \$75 towards the purchase fund."<sup>35</sup>

In the 1920s the Brunner Mond Company organized a large well-equipped band of 15 brass, 7 winds and 2 drummers. Unfortunately little is known of this band nor of its membership, except for Frank Smith Sr. whose tuba was to be a mainstay of later bands and for whom a memorial trophy and bursary were later donated.

In 1937 the *Echo* reported that "the Amherstburg Bugle Band made its first public appearance in a parade to the Christ Church Fair."<sup>36</sup> The members of this band were quite talented, winning first place in three competitions at the Michigan State Fair in 1938.<sup>37</sup> In 1941 the *Amherstburg Echo* reported that "one of Amherstburg's greatest assets from a publicity standpoint, and one which is given the least credit is the Fort Malden Canadian Legion Bugle Band" which had just won a trophy at a band tattoo in Leamington.<sup>38</sup> The bandmaster was Mark Faucher. Later that month, "Little Sadie Risk, Drum-Majorette of the Fort Malden Bugle Band, led the Hi-12 Band in the Orangemen's Parade in Windsor July 12th."<sup>39</sup>

Alas, like its predecessors, the Bugle Band did not last long (perhaps because "it [had] little or no support from any of the community organizations in town"<sup>40</sup>) and in July of 1942 a meeting was called for citizens to discuss the formation of a band in Amherstburg.<sup>41</sup> A committee was formed to gather more information about this venture and in 1943 it was announced that "Amherstburg will have a Community Band sponsored by the Rotary Club for boys and girls from Amherstburg, Anderdon and Malden, 10 to 16 years old."<sup>42</sup> In February, 1944 the 24-member band joined the South Essex Associated Boys' Band led by bandmaster E.L. Robinson.<sup>43</sup>

In 1956 it was brought to the attention of the Amherstburg Recreation Committee that the



**Bandmaster E.L. Robinson leading the Kingsville-Essex Associated Band in the Emancipation Day parade, circa 1952, looking south from the intersection of Dalhousie and Richmond Streets. Jerry Harris is leading the parade.**

town was supporting "at a very high cost" a number of musicians to be part of the South Essex Associated Band financed by Amherstburg, Harrow, Essex and Kingsville.<sup>44</sup> The Amherstburg Community Band Committee, formed of Bob Rogers, Harvey Jones, John Fox, Stan Chisholm, Driff Bertrand and Gordon Curtis, decided that for the same amount of money paid to the South Essex Band, the town could support its own version. A week later Amherstburg withdrew from the South Essex Associated Band and returned all instruments and uniforms.

The committee's first task was to hire a bandmaster. Stan Chisholm had been a member of the Canadian Bandmasters' Association where he met and approached a past president, Peter Allan, a figure capable and respected in Canadian music but more familiar with adult than youth bands. After some thought, Mr. Allan accepted the position of bandmaster in March, 1956 and began rehearsals the following month.<sup>45</sup>

Few knew that Mr. Allan had received training prior to his emigration in 1925 as a solo cornet player with the best bands in Scotland, which proved valuable to Windsor's 21st Regimental Band and the Knights Templar Band, the first Windsor band to win top prize at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto. He received Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the Detroit Institute of Music followed by a Licentiate from the Canadian Bandmasters' Association. His subsequent positions included conductor of the Windsor Symphony Orchestra, lieutenant and bandmaster of two military bands during World War II and orchestral bandmaster for his employer, the Parke-Davis Company of Detroit. Demands were made for him to be not only an adjudicator at the Toronto and Waterloo Music Festivals but also a composer which led to his noted works entitled "The Reveller," "Fort Malden," and "Vernon," named for his most successful pupil Vernon Kennedy who later sang professionally with the Romeos Quartet on the popular CBC *Juliette* show seen after Saturday night hockey games.<sup>46</sup>

With a bandmaster in place, attention was devoted to the selection and purchase of music, instruments and charts. A princely sum of \$2500 was spent on uniforms for which fund raising parents and the Lions Club were thanked.<sup>47</sup> A junior band was formed for the youngest under the direction of former OPP officer Barry Chamberlain. The accommodation chosen was the upstairs concert hall at the old town hall complete with dusty backdrops and splintered wooden chairs. Discipline was not a particular problem because misbehaviour was met with a stern warning regarding the old moth-eaten jail in the town hall's basement.

The parents of band members joined the committee which became known as the 'Band Auxiliary' and soon many hands made light work. The first concert in uniform was held in November, 1958 at General Amherst High School. As in the contemporaneous movie *The Music Man*, Mr. Allan probably anticipated a crashing silence when he lowered his baton; however, the evening was a success. A need in 1959 for majorettes led to the hiring of Nancy Grondin as instructress. The flag and banner for marching were donated by Legion Branch 157 and in 1965 a proper colour party was formed by Jack Jones Jr. and Tom Ouellette. The town council approved a band tax bylaw to provide



Frank Smith Sr., circa 1967.

annual funding of about \$4000 which was a welcome addition to the members' annual sales of light bulbs.<sup>48</sup>

A stalwart group of adults was the backbone of the band, all circulating in the various responsibilities but usually comprised of John Fox, chairman; Joe Kennedy, vice-chairman; Gerald Thorburn, treasurer; Leo Probe, secretary; Jack and Marie Jones, publicity and music; Lloyd and Irene Bates, concessions and uniforms; Driff Bertrand and Bill Rumble, transportation; Leo and Edith Delmore, facilities and majorettes; Carmen and Charlotte Simone, junior band; Amos Thomas, light bulb sales; Jean Probe and Nellie Thorburn, uniforms; George Makepeace, instruments; Ethel Kennedy, Betty Gray, Charlene Beetham and Joseph Warren who had their patience tried many times by their younger charges. Parenthood, especially on overnight trips to the CNE, was never strained more with less sleep. Exceptional physical prowess was sometimes required such as the evening when Mrs. Jones delivered a knockout blow with a purse full of quarters to a male intruding into the girls' sleeping area.<sup>49</sup>

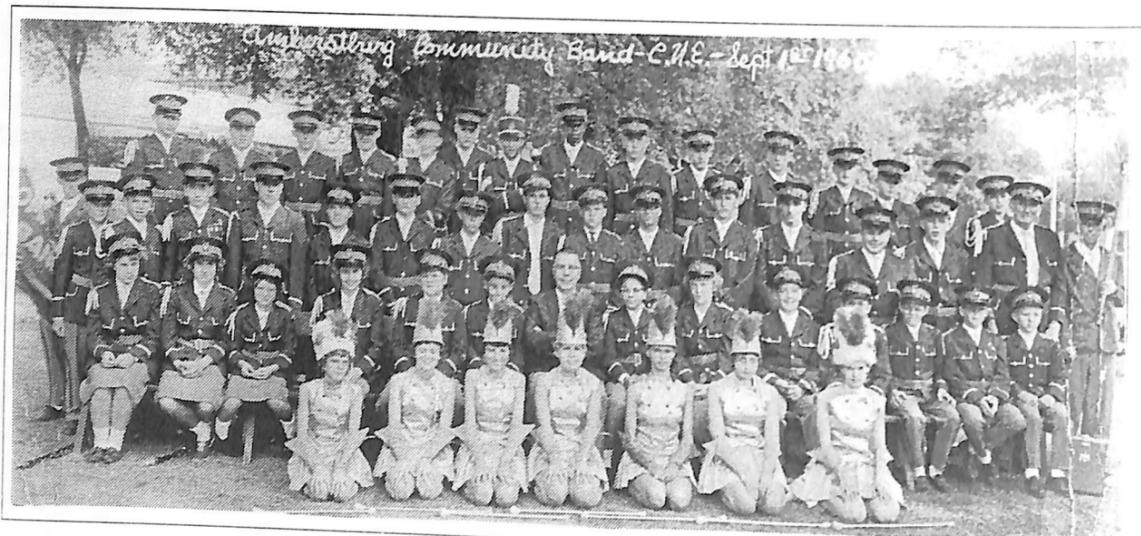
In the early 1960s the organization counted seventy young members aged 10 to 20, some of whom were becoming quite talented. Music lessons were made available for \$1 each. Top honours were being taken individually and at the band level at the music festivals in Windsor, Chatham, Waterloo and at the band level at the CNE. Award-winning soloists included clarinetists Robert Kennedy, Ray Probe, Terry Mosey and Dennis Thrasher; trumpeters Jack Jones Jr., Russel 'Rusty' Bouffard, Vaughan McIntosh and Kathryn Van Eenoo; and trombonists Douglas Thorburn, Michael Iler, Richard Van Eenoo, Michael Nedin and Gordon Thomas.

Concerts were given at the high school with guest pianists Sharyn Hall (also a bandmaster) and Alan Botsford and well-known vocalists Tom and Joan (Reaume) Hamilton, often with choir. A piece popular with the town's male population was the band's "In a Persian Market" as interpreted by the senior majorettes, which bore some resemblance to the Dance of the Seven Veils.

National prominence was acquired when an invitation was accepted to play at Expo '67 in Montreal and at the Calgary Stampede in 1973 where second place honours were won in two band competitions. By then Jack Jones Jr. was bandmaster overseeing close to 100 members.<sup>50</sup>

Tattoos were held around the county each summer and crowds of 7000 were not unknown at the town park. The chairman of the evening was often Henry Lavers and to keep attention, draws were held at various times for coveted prizes, often an alarm clock, a fishing pole or a bird cage complete with budgie. Among the participating bands were the Amherstburg Community Senior and Junior Bands, Essex & Kingsville Associated Band, Leamington Concert and Drum & Bugle Bands, Harrow Kinsmen Band, Cottam & Gosfield North Community Band, Wheatley Community Band, Windsor Sertoma Band, Windsor Yeomen of Sherwood Forresters Band, North Buxton Maple Leaf Band, Sarnia Lionettes Band and the Detroit Edison Lamplighters.

Tunes recalled were "Trombrero," "Space Cadets," "Storm Kings" which featured the majorettes under the direction of Bernadette Brooks and Barbara Bates; and "Copacabana" (the 1930s version) with hat-mounted penlights turned on as park lights dimmed. This bothered canines for some reason, leading one to cause slight turmoil on the field when, in its loneliness, it wandered through the band harmonizing with an occasional bark and howl. The most entertaining band hailed from North Buxton from which the drummers often sported sunglasses (for a night concert!) to hide 'the midnight sun' as they strutted the field. The precision marching for which the Amherstburg bands were known was the result of the dedication of drum major Tom Mosey who drilled the members



**Amherstburg Community Band at the CNE, September 1, 1960.**

**Front Row** (left to right): Leslie Brown, Elaine Ryan, Joanne Ryan, Barbara Bates, Bernadette Thompson, Frederika Beekhuis, Toddy Knight.

**Second Row:** unidentified, Kay Kennedy, Cheryl Hart, Sharyn Hall, Vaughn McIntosh, Dennis Thrasher, bandmaster Peter Allen, Marilee McCurdy, Helen McGregor, Mark Warren, Terry Hall, Chris Reid, unidentified, Ray Probe.

**Third Row:** Tom Ouellette, David Bailey, Robert Kennedy, unidentified, Jack Ouellette, nine unidentified, Frank Smith Sr., unidentified.

**Back Row:** Michael Nedin, Russell Bouffard, unidentified, Jack Jones, unidentified, Douglas Thorburn, drum major Tom Mosey, Ed Hurst, three unidentified, Greg Rogers, Terry Bertrand, unidentified, Terry Mosey.

ceaselessly at the public school, pounding the pavement outside when the sun shone and in the basement when it didn't. A large number were trained so well that they found their way into the best high school army cadet band in the area for which bandmaster Edward Hurst was the drum major.

Family involvement in the band was common with the more extensive being the Kennedys (parents Joe and Ethel and children Robert and Kay); the Warrens (father Joe and children Mark, Ann, Don and Paul); the McCurdys (Marilee, Barry and Douglas); the Joneses (parents Jack and Marie, Jack Jr. and wife Jo-Anne); the Probes (parents Leo Sr. and Jean and children Ray, Gay and Leo Jr.); the Leskiws (Jerry, Helen and Alice); and many others.

By 1980 musical tastes had changed and community bands encountered difficulties in defining their role. The Amherstburg Community Band faltered then sounded its last note but not before launching several professional music careers over the years, including Professor Sharyn Hall of McMaster University; Jack Jones Jr., head of the music department at Catholic Central High School in Windsor; Robert Kennedy, music department head at Montcalm High School in London; Vernon Kennedy of CBC fame; and Mark Rocheleau of the Canadian Forces Band.

## Movie Theatres

The first moving pictures were brought to Amherstburg by Rev. Michael J. Ryan, the pastor of St. John the Baptist Church, in August of 1917. He purchased a miniature moving picture machine which played to a packed house at the parish hall. Admission fees were donated to the church fund. Unfortunately, problems with "flying celluloid" and other aggravations soon closed this 'movie house'.<sup>51</sup>

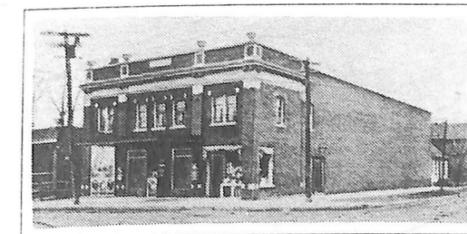
On October 30, 1918 J. George Brown opened the 'Burg Theatre. Moving pictures were shown at the Amherstburg town hall Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday evenings from 7:30 to 9:00 pm and 9:05 to 10:30 pm with an admission charge of 16 cents. Brown promised "a rare treat with varied films," the first of which included "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm" and "The Narrow Trail." The 'Burg Theatre was still advertising in the *Amherstburg Echo* in August, 1919.<sup>52</sup> Brown planned to build a theatre on the north side of Murray Street (between Dalhousie and Ramsay Streets) but for unknown reasons his plan did not come to fruition.<sup>53</sup>

## The Liberty Theatre

In January, 1919 N.A. Marra purchased the property on the northeast corner of Richmond and Sandwich Streets.<sup>54</sup> Bylaw #222b, passed on March 24th of that year, allowed him to "erect and locate a building to be used as a Theatre, Music Hall, Bowling Alley, Moving Picture Show, or other place of amusement." Marra soon began construction of a 600-seat moving picture theatre "of brick and cement block construction" which he called the "Liberty Theatre."<sup>55</sup> The Liberty opened on August 18, 1919 "with a crowd that taxed the capacity of the place though it is one of the largest picture houses in any town of a similar size in Canada."<sup>56</sup> Mr. Marra donated the proceeds of the first three nights to the ladies' societies of St. John the Baptist Church, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Christ Anglican Church and Wesley Methodist Church. The manager was George Brown.<sup>57</sup>

The popularity of the Liberty Theatre continued to grow. An advertisement in 1923 proclaimed, "Amherstburg's Playhouse - Latest World-Renowned Pictures!! - Recreation, Amusement, Enthusiasm, in Every Film - Educational Features Every Night - A Theatre like the Liberty can only hope to attract patronage by running the best features obtainable."<sup>58</sup> In August, 1926 N.A. Marra sold the Liberty Theatre to Tyas Bros. of Windsor who aimed to "continue the same high standard of motion picture entertainment that [had] been enjoyed by patrons of the past."<sup>59</sup>

Tyas Brothers sold the Liberty Theatre in May, 1930 to Jack Wright of Toronto<sup>60</sup> who immediately modernized the equipment. The theatre closed for four weeks, re-opening on July 9, 1930 as an "all talkies" theatre equipped with the "Ton-o-graph, the very latest reproducing machine on the market." The editors of the *Echo* found the new sound system to be "perfect in sweet tonal qualities and distribution" and predicted that the 'talkies', the first to appear in Essex County, would draw patronage from "an ever-widening radius."<sup>61</sup>



**Liberty Theatre, circa 1915.**

Less than a year later, N.A. Marra again was manager of the Liberty Theatre and installed a "Northern Electric Sound System" in April of 1931. "The reproduction [was] so good that even the lowest tones of the actors were audible in every part of the crowded theatre."<sup>62</sup>

In August, 1936 W.S. Woof took over the operation of the Liberty Theatre<sup>63</sup> and the following year remodelled it into "one of the most modern [theatres] in the province," installing new seats and acoustic equipment.<sup>64</sup> Woof operated the Liberty for twenty-five years until the last movie played in the theatre on December 30, 1961. Woof sold the Liberty Theatre to Earl Burstyn of Essex in March, 1964.<sup>65</sup>

In early 1965 work began on the renovation of the former Liberty Theatre into a commercial space. One large store was constructed at the front of the building with an additional store on the Richmond Street side.<sup>66</sup> The Haslehurst Big V Pharmacy occupied the front store in the spring of 1965.<sup>67</sup> Five years later seven apartments were constructed on the second floor of the building<sup>68</sup>

### The Garrison Cinema

The Garrison Cinema opened in the Fort Malden Mall on March 27, 1981, offering shows each evening at 7 and 9 o'clock plus weekend matinees. The cinema was owned by Jack Langlois with assistant manager Pat Lane.<sup>69</sup> Fred Brown later became the operator. Unfortunately, because the cinema was independently owned it was difficult to obtain first screenings of popular films and attendance was not high enough to support it. The Garrison Cinema closed on March 31, 1984.<sup>70</sup>

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### *Parks and Playgrounds*

An oasis of green amid a patchwork of blacks, greys and browns that paint an urban landscape, a park brings life to a community. Amherstburg's parks are testaments to those who realized there is more to a town than factories, houses, shops, schools and churches. People need a quiet place to relax and a safe place to play.

Parks do not emerge overnight. Creating the green space requires extensive planning, budgeting, determination and sometimes an influential friend in the right place to pull a few strings. As Amherstburg continues to grow, so will its parks as the community demands.

### King's Navy Yard Park

"...I believe the town should acquire this riverfront property...I am sure most of the people in Amherstburg would favour the acquisition..." This visionary statement, reported in the *Amherstburg Echo* of April 25, 1946, was made by Nick A. Marra as town council discussed the former Mullen Coal property and its unsightly coal piles. Thirty-four years later mayor Garnet Fox at the official opening of the first phase of King's Navy Yard Park on September 28, 1980 said, "Here it is for all of us to enjoy." Since then the park has become a showplace with three dozen flowerbeds

containing more than 20,000 annual and perennial flowers. Looking at the lush grass, kept a beautiful shade of green by an invisible army of underground sprinkler heads, it is difficult to imagine that the site was once occupied by not only huge piles of coal but a lively shipbuilding centre.

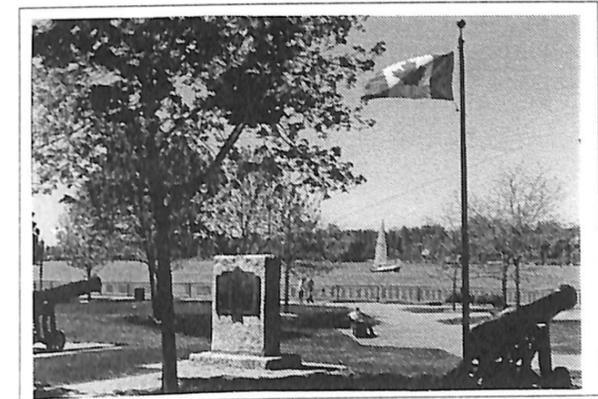
The jewel of Amherstburg, King's Navy Yard Park is a story of regeneration. As its name implies, the site was chosen by the British navy for its dockyard and shipbuilding centre after Detroit was ceded to the Americans two hundred years ago. The British used the yard for building and repairing ships until September, 1813 when they set fire to the site to prevent its use by the invading American forces. After the War of 1812, Fort Malden retained the property until the military left Amherstburg in 1859 at which time it was sold to private interests. A grist mill built there by C.W. Thomas was later operated by Denis Barron. In 1891 the town purchased part of the property and built the waterworks complex near the river at the end of Rankin Avenue. After Brunner Mond Canada Limited built a water purification plant in 1919 and began to supply the town with clean water, the former waterworks grounds became a mini-park. A swimming wharf and breakwall were constructed and Waterworks Park became a popular place for district children to swim in the Detroit River under the ever-watchful eye of lifeguard Ray 'Nitchy' Sawyer.

Commercial interests continued to occupy the river frontage south of Waterworks Park. For many years giant piles of coal were unloaded by freighters for the Mullen Coal Company. From 1947 until 1970 the operation was continued by McQueen Marine Limited interests as the Amherstburg Coal Dock Company and later the Amherst Fuel & Supply Ltd. The town gradually obtained this prime river property and by 1975 planning began in earnest for a large waterfront park.

The first step was to dredge the river in order to construct a seawall. In the summer of 1978 archaeologists from Parks Canada began the arduous task of cleaning and cataloguing the 30,000 artifacts unearthed during the dredging process. Phase I of the park's development was completed in 1980 (from the end of Rankin Avenue to Murray Street) and Phase II in 1989 (from Murray Street south to Duffy's Tavern) with funding from federal, provincial and municipal governments. Today, King's Navy Yard Park is a 'passive' park encompassing 10½ acres where people may stroll, sit and admire the flora and fauna or watch the ever-constant activity on the busiest international waterway in the world, the Detroit River.

### Seagram Park

Smaller than the Navy Yard Park but equally attractive, Seagram Park is located at the northern entrance to Amherstburg on Highway 18. Through the efforts of the Fort Malden Horticultural Society, the Calvert's rose garden of the early 1940s has progressed to a beautiful



King's Navy Yard Park, 1995.  
Town of Amherstburg

'passive' park which harbours two plants of significance: the rhododendron, which Robert 'Rhodo Bob' Sutherland and the Rhodo Committee promote as the official flower for the area, and the Calvert rose, a hybrid named locally for Calvert (now Seagram) Distillers.

### East and West - Amherstburg's First 'Town Parks'

When the patients of the Malden Lunatic Asylum were transferred to a new provincial asylum at London in 1870, the government no longer had use for the old Fort Malden grounds. The land was divided into residential building lots but before the properties were auctioned the Town of Amherstburg petitioned for a cessation of the former parade grounds as a town park plot. On November 23, 1875 fifty-three acres were sold by public auction and seven acres - bordered by Dalhousie, North and Sandwich Streets and Fort Malden Drive - were retained by the federal government and leased to the town for one dollar per year, the first lease being based on a 99-year occupancy.<sup>71</sup> In November, 1948 the federal government transferred the title of the land to the Town of Amherstburg with the stipulation that it could be used only for recreational purposes or it would revert to the government.<sup>72</sup>

The property had been used for recreational purposes even before the sale of the asylum lands. In the summer of 1875 the *Amherstburg Echo* reported that "young men of this town play baseball every evening on the Common just south of the asylum grounds."<sup>73</sup> Two years later the Amherstburg Cricket Club was using the town park.<sup>74</sup>

The 'EAST TOWN PARK' was first to be formally developed into a recreation area. Once the location of the Amherstburg, Malden and Anderdon Agricultural Society buildings and Fall Fair grounds (now the site of General Amherst High School), the property soon sported a baseball diamond and a race track around the perimeter. A softball diamond was created on the southeast corner of the park. In June, 1949 ceremonies were held to dedicate the new floodlights which had been installed by the newly-founded Amherstburg Recreation Commission.<sup>75</sup> Alex Traeff, president of the commission, threw the switch for the powerful lights. A highlight of the ceremonies was the presentation by federal member of parliament S. Murray Clark of the deed to the town park from the federal government.

The Town of Amherstburg and the Essex County Board of Education finalized an agreement in 1971 whereby General Amherst High School could, for an annual fee, use the east town park for physical education classes and team practices.<sup>76</sup> In 1995 the Amherstburg Minor Baseball Association constructed a batting cage at the western edge of the park.

In 1985 Amherstburg council passed Bylaw No. 1881 which officially named the east town park 'BILL WIGLE PARK' in memory of a popular Amherstburg native who was well-known in minor league baseball locally as well as in the United States. Wigle was a local merchant owning at different times Bill's Sport Shop, Imperial Bowling Lanes and Four Seasons Bowling Lanes. He served on town council and was especially active in the Recreation Commission. Bill Wigle died in 1984.

The 'WEST TOWN PARK' was not formally developed until the 1920s although lawn bowling had been a popular sport there for many years. In the early 1900s when that sport swept the country there was talk in Amherstburg about forming a league. The *Amherstburg Echo* of August

31, 1906 reported that "the game is not too strenuous for middle-aged men and is full of interest. In it the stiffest back must stoop to conquer, and there is sufficient activity to loosen the joints, wake up the liver at its job, and divert the brain from its struggle with business activities." Interest grew and soon the club greens were ready on the Dalhousie Street side of the park. One hundred bowlers could play simultaneously. T.W. Bellhouse donated his boathouse for the first clubhouse, which was replaced in 1925 when Fred Brown built a new 16 x 31 foot facility which had "modern conveniences in the way of a toilet, wash basin and lockers for members."<sup>77</sup>

For many years an outdoor skating rink provided activity in the winter. Hockey was then primarily a male-dominated sport but the Amherstburg area also produced some excellent female skaters. Around the turn of the century "ice carnivals" were popular with prizes for the best skaters, both male and female, as well as best costumes.

The first rink was situated on the east town park. However, when lawn bowling ceased in the late 1930s a rink was established on the west town park. At night overhead lights illuminated the rink and local boys played pick-up hockey. When finished with their game these same boys often shovelled the rink before the caretaker, for many years Lee St. John, flooded the ice.<sup>78</sup> It was his job to not only keep the rink in top condition but to keep the fire stoked in the little building (the former lawn bowlers' clubhouse) where people changed their footwear. "He was really dedicated and ran a tight ship," recalled Tom Kilgallin. "There was many a night when he would sleep there making sure kids didn't go on the ice till it was good and hard..." Every fall town workers put the boards around the edges and flooded the rink. By the end of the season St. John had built it up to a good five inches. In 1959 boards were built around the edge of the outdoor rink so the midget hockey team could practice there without losing pucks in the snowbank.<sup>79</sup>

In September, 1928 Malcolm McGregor, a nearby resident, funded the construction of a children's wading pool in the west town park so that when he passed the spot every day he could "hear the joyful shouting of the children" who enjoyed the pool each summer.<sup>80</sup> McGregor died in 1930, two years after his generous donation. This pool was rebuilt in 1982 and still thrills the many children who take part in swimming lessons or just fun in the sun.

Today the park offers not only a splash pool but also a large picnic shelter with barbecues, washrooms, concession stand and up-to-date playground equipment. All summer long the park resounds with children laughing and families holding reunions.

In 1985 the name of the west town park was changed to 'AUSTIN 'TODDY' JONES PARK' in memory of another citizen who was "one of the Town's leading proponents of Recreation and Civic Duty," having served on town council as Recreation and Parks Committee member and chairman, as well as council's representative on the arena board.<sup>81</sup> Austin Jones died in 1984.



Town park splash pool, 1997.  
*Marsh Collection Society, P1556*

### Hamilton Park

For a brief period in the early 1940s there was a small playground and ball diamond on the northwest corner of Richmond and Balaclava Streets. In August, 1941 this municipally-owned property was officially opened and named 'HAMILTON PARK' in tribute to the Hamilton brothers - Jack, Glen, Harvey and Tormey - who had been "leaders in all branches of sports in Amherstburg for almost fifty years."<sup>82</sup> A juvenile softball league for boys 16 years old and under was organized by the Amherstburg Youth Centre, comprised of four teams. Two games were played each week, one at the town park and one at Hamilton Park.<sup>83</sup> It was found, however, that the park was far too small so the east and west town parks were further developed to meet the requirements of the community. In August, 1945 the property was sold to Council 2110, Knights of Columbus who built a clubhouse/hall on the lot the following year.<sup>84</sup>

### H. Murray Smith Centennial Park

H. MURRAY SMITH CENTENNIAL PARK is Amherstburg's largest recreational park, combining many facilities into one large complex. In 1933 the Town of Amherstburg acquired the former Bell farm, bordered by Simcoe, Victoria and Alma Streets and the Second Concession (now Fryer Street). In 1956 the Amherstburg, Anderdon and Malden Arena Board chairman C. Devere Thrasher and Building Committee chairman W.J. Ouellette requested council to set aside twelve acres of the property for development as an arena and recreational facility. This proposal included "an arena 225 x 150 feet, swimming pool, change house, two tennis courts, baseball diamonds and parking for 273 cars."<sup>85</sup> It took fourteen years from the original 1956 proposal for the arena to become a reality.

In 1958 the Lions Club of Amherstburg began a fund-raising campaign for the construction of the town's first adult-size swimming pool (42 x 75 feet with a depth ranging from 3.3 feet to 5.5 feet). They raised over three quarters of the \$39,000 project, the town contributing the remainder. Sod was turned on June 25, 1959 and on August 28th of that year the LIONS POOL at the northeast corner of Simcoe and Victoria Streets officially opened.<sup>86</sup> It operates through July and August each summer, supervised with swimming instruction provided. An oddity about the Lions Pool is that the bathhouse is located at the deep end of the pool. Usually the shallow end is near the change rooms so people have the opportunity to go gradually into the water.<sup>87</sup> This peculiarity occurred because the original plan called for the pool to be located at the corner of Richmond and Victoria Streets. When the location changed to Simcoe and Victoria, the deep and shallow ends remained in the same place but the bathhouse was placed at the south end.

With the Lions Pool in full operation, the site's destiny as the athletic centre of Amherstburg was more certain, but it would take time and money to make the vision a reality. In 1960 the Amherstburg Recreation Commission again recommended that the town set aside part of the Bell farm for future development as a recreational facility. Five years passed and still no park developed. However, with Canada's Centennial looming in the near future, the proposal to develop thirty acres of the Bell farm into a recreational park as a Centennial project in 1967 was tabled.

One of the first projects taken on by the Kinsmen Club of Amherstburg after receiving its

charter in 1966 was to obtain property on Victoria Street where they installed playground equipment. In October, 1965 the *Amherstburg Echo* reported that the Kinsmen Club would construct four ball diamonds at a cost of \$14,000 in the planned Centennial Park. The Rotary Club of Amherstburg had already begun construction of tennis courts in the park.<sup>88</sup> Before long the former Bell farm took on the appearance of a vibrant park.

Amherstburg was still without an indoor ice rink until 1970. Prior to that time hockey and skating activities were limited to the outdoor rinks in the town parks, the Detroit River, Iler's Creek and Big Creek plus the backyard rinks flooded by a few hardy souls. Local sports were forced to drive to Windsor and other nearby towns for ice time and hockey. In July, 1969 Anderdon and Malden passed a bylaw to enter into an agreement with Amherstburg to operate and build the arena. A building permit for \$300,000 was processed in June, 1970 for a 227 x 117 foot building. Sod was turned on June 23rd and area residents celebrated with a parade.

After years of fund raising, persistence and dedication of community-minded citizens, service clubs and school children in the Tri-Community of Anderdon, Amherstburg and Malden, the AMA ARENA opened on December 12, 1970. Where ice activities were once cold-weather pastimes dependent on the whims of Old Man Winter, now the arena could hold activities all year round. Inside, the arena is alive with sports activities. To many local children and adults the building is their "home away from home." House and travel league teams and the Tri-Community Figure Skating Club take up most of the ice time. The arena holds activities year-round and ice remains in the building for ten months of the year. During the off-season, instructional hockey clinics give local children a chance to hone their skills.

In 1995, twenty-five years after it was constructed, the arena underwent an extensive renovation, including the replacement of the floor and boards. An addition to the southeast side of the building now houses four 35 x 12 foot dressing rooms. A new main entrance, vestibule, pro-shop and lobby accent the improvements which were funded by Amherstburg, Anderdon and Malden citizens and the arena board.

The dedication of the renovations in honour of Bruno Casanova took place November 15, 1996 at a hockey game between the Detroit Red Wing Oldtimers and local firefighters.<sup>89</sup> As the AMA Arena's first manager Bruno guided its activities for nineteen years. Much of the arena's success is due to his expertise and dedication. When illness compelled Bruno to retire in 1989, Ralph Barnwell was appointed as arena manager and facilities supervisor. Ralph performs in his position with the same degree of integrity and dedication as his predecessor.

From that day in June, 1969 when the ceremonial shovel turned sod for the arena, Centennial Park witnessed a flurry of activity. Coinciding with construction of the arena, the KINSMEN SCOUT HALL at the northwest corner of Simcoe and Victoria Streets was finished. This facility provides Scouts, Cubs and Beavers with a place to meet. A toboggan hill behind the arena, finished in the summer of 1970, comes alive with snowsuit-clad children in the wintertime. New playground equipment on the Victoria Street side of the park keeps them entertained in warmer weather.



AMA Arena, 1997.  
Marsh Collection Society, P1535

In 1977 when Amherstburg mayor H. Murray Smith was chosen by the Amherstburg, Anderdon & Malden Chamber of Commerce as 'Citizen of the Year', town council honoured him by passing Bylaw No. 1460 which officially changed the name of Centennial Park to 'H. MURRAY SMITH CENTENNIAL PARK'.<sup>90</sup>

#### Recollections of Bruno Casanova: A Brief Collection of Memories from Family and Friends

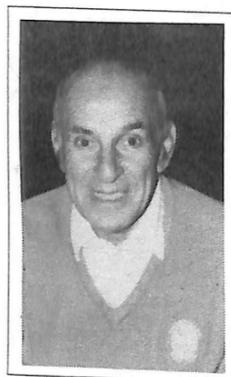
*"I've lived in a lot of places but nowhere can compare to Amherstburg." Family and friends heard these words many times from Bruno Casanova. In the brief years that he lived and worked in Amherstburg he was well-known and loved by the host of people with whom he was in contact. If you met him once he never forgot your name and you certainly never forgot Bruno.*

*Born in Windsor in 1927, Bruno Casanova was still a youngster when he began to organize and play football and baseball in the neighbourhood. He later played high school football at W.D. Lowe and was selected to the Windsor all-city team in 1942-43. In 1945 Bruno played for the Windsor AKO Fraternity junior football inaugural team.*

*His love of baseball and exceptional ability as an infielder eventually brought him to the St. Louis Cardinals farm system. In 1947-48 Bruno played in Hamilton and for the next two years with Duluth, Minnesota class 'C'. After a year in the Inter-County League with Kitchener-Waterloo and four years with St. Thomas he was appointed director of minor league baseball in Chatham in 1958. One of the players Bruno coached was Hall of Famer Fergie Jenkins.*

*During the winter months he worked at the Chatham Arena and took university courses in management and refrigeration. From 1964-70 he was manager of the Tilbury Arena until he was hired to oversee operations at the new AMA Arena in Amherstburg. In October, 1970 the Tilbury Times reported "nothing but praise for Mr. Casanova who brought the Tilbury Arena along to its present high level."<sup>91</sup>*

*Bruno became involved in the community almost before he arrived here. Apart from his duties as arena manager, he coached baseball and hockey and was involved in community service through Meals on Wheels and Goodfellows. He had a very unique style both in his personality and as a dapper dresser. Bruno had a contagious laugh and a great sense of humour which kept people in stitches from the time he came through the door.*



Bruno Casanova.

*He loved sports, kids and people in general and paid special attention to fatherless young men as his own dad passed away when Bruno was a youngster. He also loved golf and good stogies (cigars). Ralph Barnwell recalled that his grandfather played golf with Bruno when Ralph was a youngster and caddied for his granddad. The two became acquainted through other sports activities and it was Ralph who filled Bruno's position on an interim basis when the latter suffered his first heart attack in 1988. On September 20, 1993 Bruno Casanova collapsed and died after paring a hole at the Riverside Golf Club. In November, 1996 his memory was honoured when a plaque commemorating his nineteen years' service was dedicated in the renovated AMA Arena in Amherstburg.*

#### The S. Ralph McCurdy Track and Field Complex

Before track and field facilities were available in the community, Sheldon Ralph McCurdy founded the Amherstburg Olympic Track Club, a large circular track laid out in a field owned by Jim Latendresse along Simcoe Street.<sup>92</sup> In October, 1980 a 400-metre track was officially opened at H. Murray Smith Centennial Park. In memory of Ralph McCurdy who was well-noted for his efforts in spearheading local park development and recreational facilities, Amherstburg Town Council passed a bylaw on June 28, 1993 officially naming the 'S. RALPH McCURDY TRACK AND FIELD COMPLEX'.<sup>93</sup> Dedication ceremonies took place September 11, 1994.<sup>94</sup>

The complex occupies an area of land 124 by 198.5 metres. The 400-metre track has eight lanes and was originally built with a Uniroyal surface. Because it is used more for recreational purposes than competitions, the comfort of walkers and joggers was of primary importance and the recreation committee opted for a recycled rubber surface when the track was redone in 1994. The complex includes two long jump pits, two high jump areas, steeple chase, a football/soccer field and areas for pole vault, shotput, discus and javelin.

Besides the arena, track and four ball diamonds, H. Murray Smith Centennial Park also has five tennis courts and two basketball courts. The most recent additions to the sports amenities are two sand volleyball pits financed by the Amherstburg Optimist Club.

#### Amherstburg Culture and Recreation Centre

After a 'buy a brick' campaign raised funds for the project, construction began on the AMHERSTBURG CULTURE and RECREATION CENTRE in October, 1977. Officially opened on June 4, 1978, the facility is used for exercise classes, weddings, showers, meetings, election polling stations and other activities. The Golden Age Club was the first principal tenant of the centre and continues to use it today. The facility has had two managers since its opening - Bill Bailey who remained in the position until August 31, 1987 and current manager Mary Paquette who began on November 16th of that year.



Amherstburg Culture and Recreation Centre, 1997.  
Marsh Collection Society, P1536

#### Neighbourhood Parks

The Ontario Planning Act requires land subdivision developers to donate five percent of their land to the municipality for recreational purposes or to provide payment in lieu of the land. Two Amherstburg parks are being developed on land donated in this manner.

#### Jack Purdie Park

In 1987 the developers of the Park Place and South Essex subdivisions donated a total of seven acres of land to the community for use as a neighbourhood park.<sup>95</sup> The property is bordered by Richmond Street, Indiana Place and Vermont Drive. Development could not begin until construction on the surrounding residential lots had been completed. Bylaw No. 2274, passed in

1992, named the park 'JOHN (JACK) PURDIE PARK' in tribute to Purdie's "unselfish devotion to minor sports as a coach and manager" and "forty years of service, dedication and endless contributions" to Royal Canadian Legion Branch 157.<sup>96</sup> Purdie was a town councillor for eight years during which time he served on the Parks and Recreation Committee, four of those years as chairman.<sup>97</sup> Plans for Purdie Park include a soccer field, softball diamond, volleyball pits, picnic shelter, comfort station, games area and parking lots. Phase I of the project is to begin in the spring of 1997 with the installation of sidewalks, fencing, lawns and parking areas. Phase II is scheduled for the spring of 1998 and will include the construction of the sports areas.<sup>98</sup>

#### **Briar Ridge Park**

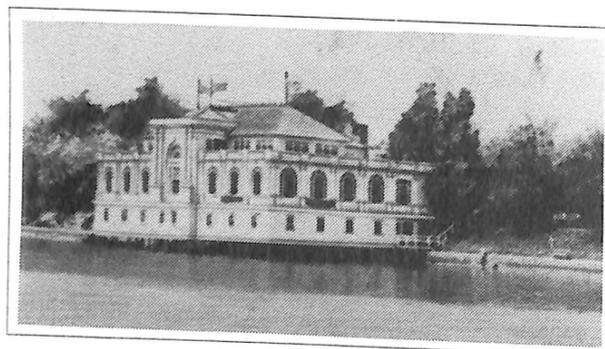
In the fall of 1996 Amherstburg Town Council approved a request from residents to develop the vacant land in the centre of the Crownridge subdivision into a neighbourhood park. BRIAR RIDGE PARK, bordered by Briar Ridge Avenue, Fern Ridge Court, Deer Ridge Court and Crownridge Boulevard, "will eventually contain swings, sandboxes and other playground equipment."<sup>99</sup>

#### **Bob-Lo Island Amusement Park**

##### **The Detroit, Belle Isle & Windsor Ferry Company: 1897 to 1949**

Bois Blanc Island, part of Malden Township, passed into private hands in the 1860s. For thirty years a variety of owners made plans to turn the island into a resort by erecting hotels and summer cottages. One such entrepreneur was William Menzies who purchased several acres of land at the north end of the island at the turn of the century and opened "a fine summer hotel."<sup>100</sup> This "beautifully located island resort" was popular for a number of years until 1913 when Menzies sold the property.<sup>101</sup>

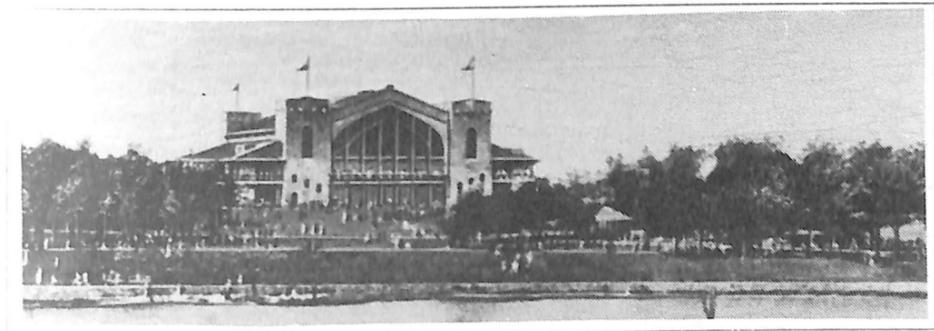
In 1897 the Detroit, Belle Isle & Windsor Ferry Company signed a 15-year lease with Bois Blanc owner Colonel John Atkinson for the northern half of the island, with an option to purchase the property at the end of the lease. The company planned to build a casino, observatory, pavilion, bath house, boathouse, baseball diamond, bicycle track, lawn tennis courts, wharf and bathing beach. Excursion agent Fred J. Mason at once began to organize picnics and outings for Sunday Schools and other groups.<sup>102</sup> By the time "Bois Blanc Island Park" officially opened on June 20, 1898 "excursions



Café Bob-Lo, circa 1915.

[had] been booked for nearly every date from [that date] until after the holidays."<sup>103</sup> Excursionists travelled to the island aboard the steamer *Promise* which made regular trips from Detroit and Amherstburg.<sup>104</sup> In June, 1898 the DBI&W Ferry Company acquired the steamer *Scotia* to run the Bois Blanc-Amherstburg route.<sup>105</sup>

In 1902 the DBI&W Ferry Company purchased the first of its two most famous steamers. The *Columbia* was 216 feet long and



Bob-Lo dance pavilion, circa 1915.

had a passenger capacity of 4000. She had three decks, one of which had a 40 x 140 foot dance floor. On her maiden voyage from Bois Blanc to Detroit the *Columbia* made the trip in one hour and 20 minutes.<sup>106</sup>

Her sister ship, the *Ste. Claire*, built at Toledo in 1910, made her first trip to Bois Blanc on July 11th of that year. Three feet wider and 14 feet shorter than the *Columbia*, the *Ste. Claire* carried 3400 passengers. "In the beauty of her interior finish and decorations the *Ste. Claire* [set] a new mark for vessels of her class."<sup>107</sup> Captain John Densteadt was appointed master.<sup>108</sup>

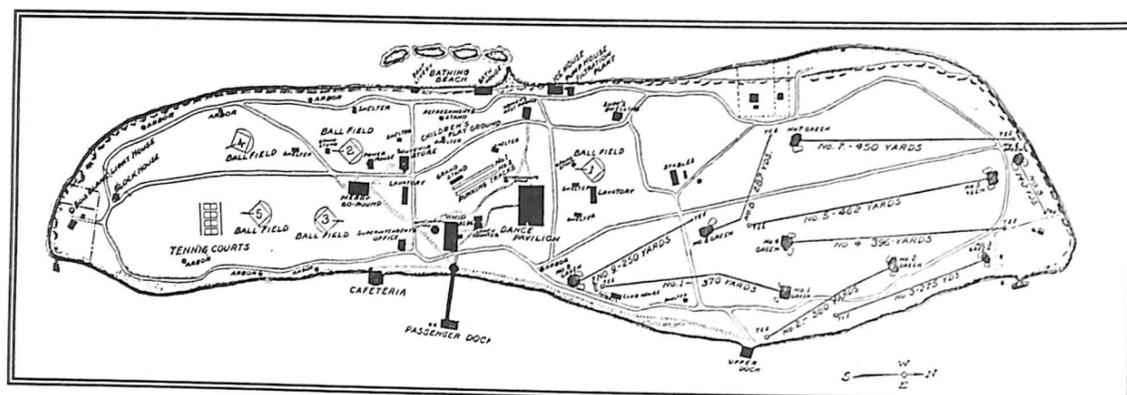
Throughout the first two decades of the park's existence many improvements were made and its popularity continued to increase. A dance pavilion constructed early on was expanded in 1901. The same year a two-storey café was constructed on piles in the river on the east side of the island facing the Amherstburg shore. Surrounded by verandahs, the 48 x 100 foot dining room was open on all sides and could seat 300 people. A "first-class chef" was hired to provide "excellence of cuisine [that would] meet with few equals among the resorts of the Great Lakes."<sup>109</sup>

The development of Bob-Lo Island as an 'amusement' park began with the 1905 construction of a two-storey building in the middle of the park to house a merry-go-round.<sup>110</sup> The carousel was built by Coney Island carousel maker M.C. Illions & Sons and included wooden chariots and animals, all hand-carved.<sup>111</sup> The steam organ for the merry-go-round arrived from Germany in 1906.<sup>112</sup> Other rides - the Whip, Dodge'ems and Aeroplane Ride - were later added.

In 1912-13 a new cut-stone dance pavilion was constructed with "the largest and finest dancing floor in this part of the country." The building, the size of a "city block," had a second-floor gallery for those who did not wish to dance.<sup>113</sup>

Bob-Lo's 1925 season was a busy one with many changes occurring in the park. The "log cabin" dining room, one of the original buildings, was remodelled into a cafeteria service along with the café building which had been moved back from the riverbank the previous year.<sup>114</sup> One of the most famous Bob-Lo attractions arrived in 1925: the Vernor's ginger ale factory which was set up in a "large new building" on the west side of the island. An ice cream fountain and Vernor's ginger ale stand were installed in the dance pavilion at the same time.<sup>115</sup> That year for the first time Customs officials were stationed on the island and ferry service between Amherstburg and Bob-Lo was withdrawn "due to U.S. immigration problems."<sup>116</sup> It was later reinstated.

In the fall of 1925 the baseball diamond at the north end of the island was converted into an 18-hole golf course which by July, 1926 was "proving to be a popular enterprise."<sup>117</sup> A new stone amusement building was built in 1928 to house "little auto coasters for which there [had] been a



Plan of Bob-Lo Island, 1934.

The Amherstburg Echo, November 23, 1934

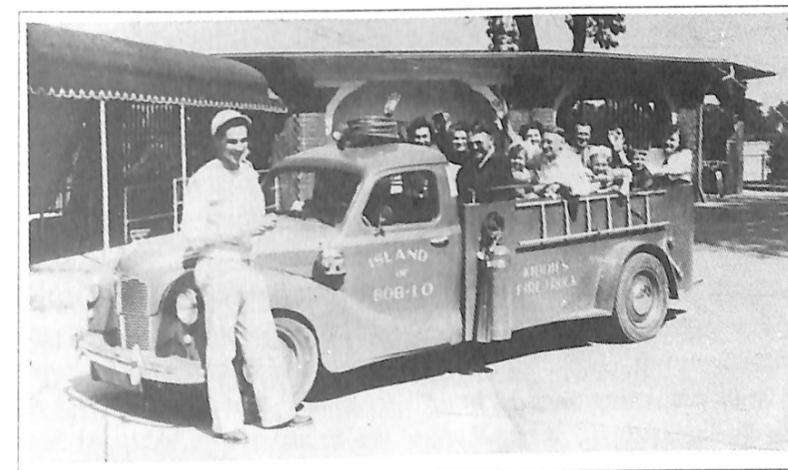
demand" from visitors.<sup>118</sup> The following year the DBI&W Ferry Company "embark[ed] on one of the most ambitious projects in their history" with the installation of the Bug Ride, "expected to be one of the most popular on Bob-Lo Island."<sup>119</sup> A children's Ferris Wheel was installed in 1930 along with a "miniature Brownie Coaster." Captain Fred J. Simpson, general manager of the ferry company, described these additions as "adding to [the] reputation [of the park's] amusement program."<sup>120</sup>

The Depression years were hard times for the amusement park. In 1933 the *Amherstburg Echo* reported that "due to economic conditions, excursions and moonlight rides to Bob-Lo will be discontinued for the first time in 35 years. The *Ste. Claire* and the *Columbia* will remain at their docks in Windsor and the island park will not open this year."<sup>121</sup> The park remained closed for the 1934 season but reopened in the summer of 1935. Operation of the golf course ceased in 1937.<sup>122</sup>

The Detroit, Belle Isle & Windsor Ferry Company changed its name to the Bob-Lo Excursion Company Ltd. in late 1939.<sup>123</sup> By this time the company owned most of the island, excepting the lighthouse at the south end, four acres at the north end and two private summer homes on the west side.<sup>124</sup> In 1940 ferry service between Bob-Lo and Amherstburg was again withdrawn because of World War II border regulations.<sup>125</sup> Although this service did not resume until the 1947 season, the Bob-Lo Excursion Company held a few "Canadian" days annually throughout the war years. Only on those days did excursion steamers run between Amherstburg and Bob-Lo.

#### The Browning Regime: 1949 to 1979

On June 20, 1948 over 500 guests dressed in period costume attended a special 50th anniversary excursion to Bob-Lo Island. The superintendent of the island, Charles E. Park, was one of the original ticket takers in 1898. In late 1948, however, the Bob-Lo Excursion Company announced that it would not open for the 1949 season and planned to liquidate all assets.<sup>126</sup> In the spring of 1949 the assets of the Bob-Lo Excursion Company were purchased by Browning Steamship Lines of Detroit<sup>127</sup> and the park opened as usual on Memorial Day. Under the Browning management, known as the Island of Bob-Lo Company, the amusement park continued to flourish. A scenic railway was built in 1957-58 and a new dock erected in 1962. The following year several new rides arrived from Germany and a large marina was constructed on the west side of the island.<sup>128</sup> In 1968 the Island of Bob-Lo Company purchased the former Judson S. Patton property, riverfront



Kiddies' Fire Truck ride, circa 1949, ride operator George Nicholson.

Malden, and built a new dock at that location the following year.<sup>129</sup>

#### The End of an Era: 1979 to 1993

In 1979 the Brownings sold Bob-Lo Island Amusement Park to a seven-member syndicate. Although the new owners expanded the park's attractions, including the installation of an 80-foot-high "Big Wheel" ride and the return of Big Bands to the Bob-Lo boats,<sup>130</sup> by late 1982 the park was in receivership.<sup>131</sup> It was purchased in 1983 by the Michigan branch of the American Automobile Association (AAA) who for several years continued to improve and expand the park, adding to their fleet of boats and restoring the 1906 carousel.<sup>132</sup>

In May, 1988 the Michigan AAA sold Bob-Lo Island to the International Broadcasting Company (IBC). The success of the park during the 1980s was short-lived and attendance began to decline. In an effort to save money, the IBC closed the park on Tuesdays during the 1990 season. In the fall of 1991 the decision was made to sell the two most beloved of the Bob-Lo boats, the steamers *Columbia* and *Ste. Claire* who made their last trip from Detroit to Bob-Lo on Labour Day, 1991.<sup>133</sup> The park declared bankruptcy that autumn.<sup>134</sup> It then was purchased by the Seattle-based Northern Capital Company under Michael Moodenbaugh<sup>135</sup> and lasted one final season. Unable to compete with larger, more modern parks like Cedar Point (Sandusky, Ohio), Bob-Lo Island Amusement Park again fell into receivership on December 22, 1993 and was auctioned off piece by piece the following spring.<sup>136</sup>

In August, 1994 Bob-Lo Island was purchased by John Oram<sup>137</sup> who has subdivided it into lots for residential housing. After nearly a century, the island's amusement park era has come to an end.

Janet (Botsford) McBride wrote the following recollection in 1994:<sup>138</sup>  
*I am another one who wept when the news of the demise of Bob-Lo became a certainty. Bob-Lo holds many happy memories for me.*

*When I was young our family sometimes in company with the Bonsors and Burks had picnics there. We carried our lunch in baskets and at the conclusion of the meal we carefully packed the remains for further snacks, folded our sweaters and jackets on top and set off for fun. I never*

Amherstburg Historic Sites Association

The Amherstburg Historic Sites Association (AHSA) formed in 1973 is the third such organization in Amherstburg. The Amherstburg Historical Society was organized with constitution and bylaws adopted on January 26, 1914.<sup>139</sup> The second such association, established on November 3, 1933, was called the Amherstburg Historic Sites and Museums Association, with A. W. McNally as president.<sup>140</sup> This group was instrumental in the initial formation of what is now Fort Malden National Historic Site.

The present Amherstburg Historic Sites Association came about as a direct result of the Amherstburg Rotary Club's action in rescuing the 'Park house' from demolition and moving it in 1972 to its present site on the King's Navy Yard. After restoration, club members felt that the old building would be a good home for a museum of local history so a meeting was held on May 10, 1973 to discuss the formation of a historical society to run the proposed museum and foster the preservation of historic sites in our area.<sup>141</sup> This meeting was attended by about 50 people. A steering committee was formed, composed of Hazen Price, David Botsford and Arthur Hall with Fred Wilson to provide legal advice.<sup>142</sup> Mr. Wilson outlined the steps to be taken for the formation of a non-profit organization.

At the next public meeting the steering committee presented the proposed objects and bylaws of the newly-formed association. These were enthusiastically accepted and the organization was then underway. Nine directors were elected to carry on the business of the association, three to be members of the Rotary Club and six to be members of the general public. The first members of the board of directors were Hazen Price, Walter Sidey, Don Jones, Mrs. Mary Hall, David P. Botsford, Gordon Knight, William Ransome, Harvey Webster and Rev. John Burkhart.

The objects of the organization included research, history, restoration and archaeology of the area and were written into the charter of the new non-profit corporation. After several meetings the first regular board meeting was held on July 12, 1973 and officers were duly elected.<sup>143</sup> The official Letters Patent incorporating the Amherstburg Historic Sites Association is dated July 13, 1973 and was recorded in September, 1973 as Corporation #273584.

It did not take long for the group to become heavily involved in restoration. Two Pensioners' cottages from the former A.B. Lukes property were donated by Peter DiPasquale who had recognized their historical value. The 'Matthew Pollard cottage' had to be separated from the front of the Lukes house and is now the tin and print shop behind the Park House Museum. The 'Charles O'Connor cottage' was moved to the north side of the Fort Malden property. Both cottages required considerable rehabilitation, including new roofs, siding, chimneys and foundations.

The second restoration project came about in 1977 when the AHSA decided to buy and restore one of the most run-down properties in Amherstburg, the old 'Gibb house' on the southeast corner of King and Gore Streets, an old log structure from the town's earliest days. Peter Stokes (of Niagara-on-the-Lake fame) was hired as architect and rendered all necessary drawings for a nominal fee. James Murray was hired as project manager and a crew of workers was assembled with the help of the Job Creation branch of Manpower and Immigration. The project specified five jobs and 175

remember anything being stolen. We always went first to the merry-go-round but there were teeters and swings to be enjoyed also. Later when the big dance hall was built it was pure bliss to listen to the music provided by Kingle's Orchestra.

Two or three times a summer my brother David and I were allowed a day on the island. We were given fifteen cents for a return ride on the Papoose and five nickels to spend. Carrying that little stub and the money was always bothersome. Usually I tied them in the corner of a handkerchief and just hung on to it.

We always caught the 11 o'clock boat because that boat carried some workers and docked at the lower dock giving us a longer boat ride. Landing on the island we ran for the merry-go-round which was situated away south. Here Mr. McCaffrey would start up the engine and ride away on his bicycle giving five or six youngsters an hour's free ride. We always chose an outside horse as that provided us the greatest thrill. Long before the hour was up we were ready to get off. No matter how enjoyable, one can get too much of a good thing!

We would change horses and even try sitting in the velvet seat. We never stayed very long there as the motion of just going round and round without the exhilarating up and down motion affected our stomachs. I remember once we contemplated jumping off but had second thoughts. When it neared 12 o'clock heralding the Columbia's arrival, Mr. McCaffrey came back and stopped the works. We were as glad to get off as we had been to get on. Nevertheless, it didn't stop us from doing the same thing again the next visit.

I don't suppose there were too many items one could buy but I always spent one nickel on Cracker Jack. There was usually a prize at the bottom but once in a while there was not, which brought disappointment to an eight-year-old. An ice cream cone took another nickel.

The little play house was a fixture from the very beginning and every year we borrowed a broom and swept it out. I wonder if we were the only ones who ever cleaned it.

Back in those days - 1910, 1911 and 1912 - the swimming beach was a great attraction. We spent a great deal of time watching those [boisterous] people on a noisy roller coaster and making a big splash as it hit the water. I remember the suits they were wearing had a lot of stripes and the swimmers had very little bare skin showing.

We never missed a visit to the blockhouse because we felt it belonged to us. The wood that was used in building the blockhouses in 1839 had come from the Wright and Botsford farms. The cut logs were piled on the shore and hauled to the island across the river on the ice when the winter came.

By 5 o'clock we were tired and began thinking of getting home. Sometimes I spent a nickel on chewing gum early in the day but I usually kept that pleasure to take home. Once I squandered a nickel on a package of Papoose gum which had a vile taste but I did not make that mistake a second time. The final nickel I always spent on a package of round pink wafer candies. If I could refrain from opening the package I had something to suck on that night and the next day thus prolonging the rapture of a day spent on Bob-Lo.

weeks' work with a grant of \$25,085.<sup>144</sup> After about one year and a total expenditure of some \$68,000 the restoration was complete. Unfortunately, no other restoration projects have been attempted because the Gibb house was sold at a loss and put quite a strain on the financial situation of the association.

In recent years the AHSA has been quite content with operating the Park House Museum and continuing to run various special events each year. There are at present two full-time employees: curator Valerie Buckie and tinsmith Alan Bald. Students are hired each summer as interpreters.

Over the period of 24 years, the AHSA has had numerous board members and five presidents: Hazen Price, John Amyot, John Burkhart, Mary Guthrie and Karl Braun. The Amherstburg Historic Sites Association is still alive and well in 1996.

### The Park House Museum

The Park House has a most romantic tradition. It is said to have been built at the mouth of the Rouge River in Detroit by a family of Loyalists. When Detroit was ceded to the Americans in 1796 the owners crossed the river to the new British post at Malden. On receiving a land grant in 1798 they dismantled their River Rouge home and towed it downriver by canoe to be reassembled on Lot 17, west side of First Street in the new town of Amherstburg.<sup>145</sup> A feat of loyalty indeed! This story first appears in print in 1881 in the Illustrated Historical Atlas of the Counties of Essex and Kent.<sup>146</sup> Unfortunately, to date there is no documentary evidence to support the claim.

Mystery also shrouds the first owners of Lot 17. In 1798 a draw was held for the lots on First Street (now Dalhousie Street). Lot 17 went to the mercantile firm of Leith, Shepherd & Duff<sup>147</sup> and by August 17, 1798 they had "A Good House Built" upon it.<sup>148</sup> However, Captain Hector McLean, commanding officer at Fort Malden, did not grant the location ticket for Lot 17 to Leith, Shepherd & Duff but to the schooner *Nancy*.<sup>149</sup> An affidavit signed by Angus Mackintosh states that the lot was given to William Mills "for and in the name of the Schooner Nancy."<sup>150</sup> At that time the *Nancy* was owned by William Mills, her captain, and the Montreal firm of Forsyth, Richardson & Company, founding partners in the New North West Company. It is unclear who actually occupied the lot and buildings and they slip into obscurity for a few years.

A flurry of activity concerning Lot 17 occurred in 1804. On July 6th Alexander Mackintosh registered the lot in his name,<sup>151</sup> a military plan of Amherstburg was drawn up showing for the first time a building on the lot in the position where we know the house stood,<sup>152</sup> and an evaluation of the "Storehouse, House and Wharff" on Lot 17, separate from the *Nancy*, was sought.<sup>153</sup>

The Mackintosh family pursued the acquisition of the property and in 1807 Angus, Alexander's father, bought William Mills' share for £800 New York currency.<sup>154</sup> It was another ten years before the purchase was completed. On July 15, 1817 Alexander acquired both his father's and the New North West Company's interests in the lot and premises.<sup>155</sup> After all this struggle, Alexander only retained the property until 1823 when it was sold to Jean Baptiste Macon. The Mackintosh family left Canada for Scotland in 1831 when Angus became chieftain of the Mackintosh clan.

The first glimpse of the house is found in Margaret Reynolds' painting, "A View of Amherstburg, 1813," seen from Elliott's Point.<sup>156</sup> It is interesting to note how many outbuildings had sprung up in a reasonably short time.

Jean Baptiste Macon was a well-established merchant in Amherstburg when he bought the property on August 23, 1823,<sup>157</sup> paying Alexander Mackintosh £500 for the prime spot. From 1819 to 1823 Macon had been in partnership with William and Charles Bercsy on the east side of Dalhousie Street<sup>158</sup> and was now prosperous enough to strike out on his own. He ran a busy forwarding business which employed many workers. Among his clerks were the Park brothers who would later buy the property. During his tenure Macon also served a term of four years as a member of the Legislative Assembly, representing Essex County along with William Elliott.

Thomas F. Park of Park & Company bought the house on September 23, 1839.<sup>159</sup> He placed his youngest brother, Theodore Jones Park, in charge of the new premises and together with brother John R. Park they ran a general merchandising and forwarding business out of Amherstburg and Colchester. This was the beginning of the long association of the Park family with the house. The Park brothers were astute businessmen and were involved in numerous business ventures together and with other partners. The shipping aspect of their business expanded quickly and by 1860 they had ships plying the Great Lakes, journeying to Montreal and even crossing the Atlantic Ocean to England.

Thomas Park died in 1864 and Theodore purchased the house two years later. The name 'Park House' was first applied to the large hotel built by Theodore Park in 1876-77 on the northwest corner of Dalhousie and Murray Streets (the present site of the Gordon House).<sup>160</sup> The hotel only retained this name for a brief time as it was sold by auction on September 2, 1884<sup>161</sup> shortly after Theodore's death and was renamed the Lake View Hotel by its new owners, the Fox family.

Dr. T. James Park, the oldest of Theodore's six children, set up a medical office in the family home in 1880<sup>162</sup> using the north end of the building for his office and waiting room. 'Dr. Jim' worked until his death on January 1, 1936. His youngest sister Lizzie outlived him and her death in January, 1941 brought an end to an era. The Park family had owned the house longer than any other proprietor, living and working there for 102 years.

The long ownership by the Parks was followed by a great deal of change. Shortly before her death, with no immediate relatives to whom the property might be willed, Lizzie Park conveyed the land to "Helen Donovan, spinster, of New York State."<sup>163</sup> After Miss Park's death Miss Donovan conveyed the land to Geraldine S. Sterns of Detroit on October 15, 1941;<sup>164</sup> she in turn sold the property to C.R. Lalonde in August, 1945. During this uncertain period the house had many tenants. After purchasing the property the Lalondes continued to rent out the north end of the house.

Mr. and Mrs. Lalonde carried out extensive renovations and opened an antique store in part of the house. In keeping with its past, they named it 'Park House Antiques'. Many people still have fond memories of buying a



Relocating the Park House, May 3, 1972.

treasured object there during the store's twenty-five year lifespan.

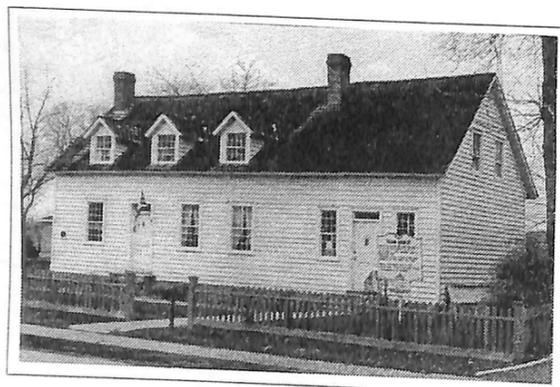
In November, 1970 the Lalondes sold the property to Zarko and Bessie Vucinic, owners of Duffy's Tavern situated on the adjacent lot to the south.<sup>165</sup> The Vucinics planned to develop the river frontage and by the spring of 1971 wished the house to be removed in order to extend the business.<sup>166</sup> Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan was approached but local opinion was against moving the house there.<sup>167</sup> In January, 1972 Mr. Vucinic advised the community that the house - thought to be the oldest within a 250-mile radius - would be disposed of after March 15th of that year. This announcement was the catalyst that set in motion a movement to save the house.

At this time the Amherstburg Rotary Club formed a committee with the intent to arrange an option to purchase the Park House, move it to another site and operate it as a community museum.<sup>168</sup> In late January, 1972, with the assistance of Amherstburg Town Council, it was decided to relocate the house to the northeast section of the former Waterworks Park opposite the west end of Rankin Avenue. The Rotary Club appointed a special committee to orchestrate the moving and restoration. Funding for the task came from many sources, the largest contributor being the Ontario Department of Tourism.<sup>169</sup>

On April 7, 1972 the delicate task of moving the Park House began with the digging out of the new basement. This, however, was not accomplished without incident. With the foundation cavity nearly complete an old water main was pierced by the shovel, flooding the hole and causing panic. Fortunately the damage was minimal and the preparations continued without any further major delays. Less than one month later, on May 3, 1972, the house rolled down Dalhousie Street toward its future home.<sup>170</sup>

The next year was spent "trying to restore the house as nearly as possible to the condition of its earlier years."<sup>171</sup> While the Rotary Club committee was the moving force, many members of the community also donated their time and expertise to the task. By May, 1973 they were ready to move on to the next phase, furnishing the house. It was felt that an organization should be set up to oversee this process and to manage the museum in the future.

In July, 1973 the Amherstburg Historic Sites Association was formed.<sup>172</sup> The first order of business was to form a Furnishing Committee to acquire the necessary artifacts to open the house as a museum. By the end of the year the kitchen was ready for public inspection. On December 9, 1973 the Park House Museum was officially opened by Mayor H. Murray Smith to crowds of enthusiastic visitors.<sup>173</sup>



Park House Museum, circa 1992.  
Park House Museum

Today the Park House is a year-round museum catering to the needs of visiting school children, seniors and the general public. As well as being an interesting and informative place to visit the Park House Museum also fills the function of Amherstburg's community museum, storing and displaying items of interest and importance to the area. In 1978 the Park House branched out into another historically related area, tinsmithing. The Park House Tinsmiths began producing tinware (made by volunteers) for sale to the public in 1978. Since that date the business has grown in size and

reputation. It now employs a full-time tinsmith and still has an active volunteer membership. Park House tinware can be seen at museums and historic sites all over Canada and the United States and is even shipped to the United Kingdom!

During the past two centuries the Park House has seen many changes in surroundings, structure, use and tenants and has survived with integrity. Hopefully the Park House Museum will survive the challenges of the next two hundred years as successfully.

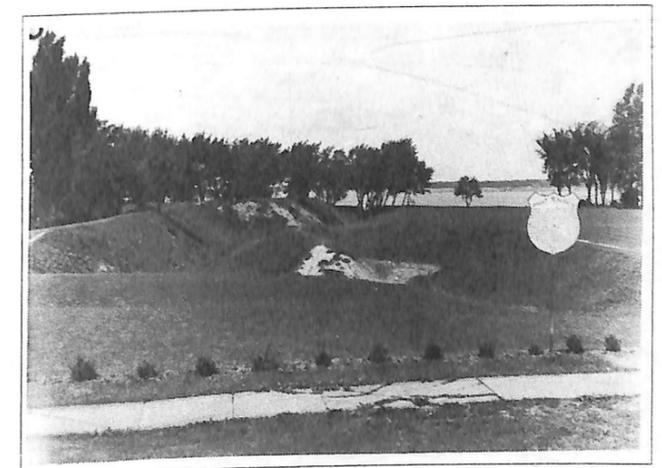
### Fort Malden National Historic Site

Constructed in 1796 as the new British garrison after Detroit was ceded to the Americans, Fort Malden kept watch over the lower Detroit River through the War of 1812 and the Rebellion of 1837-38, its military role ending in 1859 when the land was transferred to the provincial government. The property and buildings housed the Malden Lunatic Asylum from June, 1859 to 1870 when the property was subdivided and sold to private citizens. The land with the fort's buildings was purchased by Park & Borrowman and used for their planing mill until the property was sold to Franklin Hough.<sup>174</sup>

Even before the sale of the Park & Borrowman Planing Mill in 1918, concerned individuals in Amherstburg wanted to preserve Fort Malden as a national historic park. There was a deep awareness of the historical significance of the fort to the town. In 1904 the residents of the town and Essex County presented a petition to the Minister of Militia and Defense asking that the site be preserved as a park.<sup>175</sup> A second petition was sent in 1912 to Sam Hughes, then Minister of Defense. This petition received a favourable response and in 1913 a delegation from Amherstburg, including local notables Dr. Fred Park and Mr. W.S. Falls, met with Prime Minister Robert Borden. Momentum appeared to be building in favour of a park but World War I diverted the federal government's attention.

The pre-war efforts of Amherstburg's citizens started to bear fruit when in 1921 the federal government's Historic Sites and Monuments Board (HSMB) recommended that Fort Malden be recognized as a national historic site. The board suggested a cairn and plaque as a suitable means of commemorating the fort but it took ten years to develop a suitable text for the plaque.<sup>176</sup> Furthermore, the HSMB did not envision the acquisition of any particular property for the proposed plaque and cairn.

While the HSMB dithered over the plaque wording, others acted. A.W. McNally, founder of the Amherstburg Historic Sites and Museums Association and strong promoter of the town's heritage, urged the municipality to take over the tax-defaulted



Fort Malden National Historic Park, late 1930s.  
Marsh Collection Society, P375



**Visitor Orientation Centre, 1970s.** This building was the original Fort Malden National Historic Park museum, constructed in 1939.

*Department of Canadian Heritage: Fort Malden National Historic Site*

C.R. Hackett. The committee lobbied tirelessly to improve the park property and for the construction of a museum building to display artifacts collected by local history enthusiasts. In November, 1938 federal approval for this project came when funds earmarked for a museum in the Maritimes were surplus. Clarke and the management committee presided over a sod-turning ceremony in February, 1939 and the laying of the museum's cornerstone on March 13, 1939. Construction was completed by the end of the summer of 1939 and the new institution began to receive visitors. The efforts of the Fort Malden Management Committee were capped on December 28, 1940 when by Order-in-Council Fort Malden National Historic Park was officially established.<sup>177</sup>

The years since 1940 have seen tremendous development at Fort Malden National Historic Site. When the park opened officially on June 22, 1941 it consisted of a narrow strip of land with a museum building just north of the actual fort grounds. In 1946 the park acquired the Hough property which included the north curtain wall of the fort's earthworks, the remnants of the northwest bastion, the 1819 brick barrack and the 1860s asylum laundry. Since that time additional property acquisitions have extended the park to include the main site of 4.5 hectares encompassing most of the rebellion-era fort (1838), a brick Commissariat building (*circa* 1831) in the town's Navy Yard Park and a stone lighthouse (1836) on the southern tip of Bois Blanc Island. Today Fort Malden is known for its beautiful grounds adjacent to the Detroit River and its well-preserved structures.



**Interpretation Centre, 1990s.** Originally the kitchen and laundry for the Malden Lunatic Asylum, later the private home of F.A. Hough, the Interpretation Centre now houses exhibits on the fort's history.

*Department of Canadian Heritage: Fort Malden National Historic Site*

Webber property and deed it to the federal government for a park. This property, located just to the north of the remaining earthworks, was an ideal spot to locate the plaque and cairn. After McNally's death in 1934, Amherstburg mayor J.E. McGee continued negotiations with federal officials. In 1936 the Historic Sites and Monuments Board recommended that the federal government assume responsibility for the Webber property and locate the cairn there. The transfer occurred in 1937.

To further promote the park S. Murray Clark, M.P. for South Essex, suggested that a committee be formed to manage the future of Fort Malden. The original Fort Malden Management Committee consisted of chairman J.E. McGee, secretary John Marsh, Devere Thrasher and

Fort Malden National Historic Site's reputation and growth has been greatly fostered by the people who have worked there. David P. Botsford, the first superintendent (from 1941 to 1964), was an eminent local historian whose passion for the site and the community's history spanned three decades. He nurtured the museum's collection and oversaw the



**Fort Malden National Historic Site front gates, 1980s.**

*Department of Canadian Heritage: Fort Malden National Historic Site*

expansion of the historic park. As a result of his dedicated service and outstanding contribution to the community, Botsford was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada.<sup>178</sup> Harry Bosveld, superintendent from 1969 to 1991, placed great emphasis on the professionalism of his staff, the quality of exhibits at Fort Malden and the variety of public programming offered at the site. During his term Bosveld sharpened the focus on Fort Malden's military heritage. In 1992 the American Association for State and Local History awarded him a Certificate of Commendation for "leadership in the preservation of the military history of Fort Malden and the Detroit River Region." The association also noted Bosveld's promotion of close ties among regional American and Canadian military sites.<sup>179</sup> Despite the difficult economic conditions of the 1990s, the present staff of Fort Malden National Historic Site continues the traditions of excellence established by Botsford and Bosveld.

The 200-year history of Fort Malden is marked with periods of intense activity followed by periods of neglect and decline. This is apparent during the military, asylum and planing mill eras. Fortunately, since the founding of Fort Malden National Historic Site the fort's fortunes have improved. In its fifty-five years as a national historic site the fort has fostered the memory of past events and people who have shaped the development of the community and the region. While the British military post of Fort Malden originally guarded the frontier of Canada, today Fort Malden National Historic Site is a guardian of an important part of Amherstburg's and Canada's heritage.

### **Fort Malden Volunteer Association**

The Fort Malden Volunteer Association (FMVA) was formed by a group of local heritage supporters who were concerned that adequate funds be available to sponsor special programs and park projects at Fort Malden National Historic Site. Often referred to as a cooperating association, the FMVA established an official affiliation with the fort and embarked on an ambitious program.

The first official meeting of the FMVA was held August 1, 1988. Garnet Fox was nominated

as chair, Fred Wilson as secretary and William (Bill) Ferguson as treasurer. Others in attendance were Rick Huntley, Murray Kennedy, Norman Drouillard, David Webb and park superintendent Harry Bosveld. Plans were set for the first major project to be held August 26, 1989, the 50th anniversary celebration of the formation of Fort Malden National Historic Site.

On February 7, 1991 the association became a registered charitable organization. The objectives of the FMVA are: 1) to preserve and promote the unique heritage of Fort Malden by sponsoring programs and events that will increase public awareness of the site and the Amherstburg area; 2) to foster interest and pride in Canadian history; 3) to establish, operate, maintain and equip a historical re-enactment unit based at Fort Malden as a historical and tourist attraction; and 4) to undertake historical and archaeological research and publish the results.

In May, 1995 the FMVA opened the Garrison Gift Shop at Fort Malden, promoting local history through the sale of books and gift items. During Bicentennial year the FMVA provided the fort with a 6-pounder field gun and participated in several events to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the fort and town. A publication on the history of the fort is being written as well.

Membership in the FMVA is open to everyone and meetings are held monthly at the fort.

### Gibson Gallery / Fort Malden Guild of Arts and Crafts

In April, 1945 under the leadership of Miss Helen Marsh, a group of about fifty people gathered at the Fort Malden Museum to organize an arts and crafts guild in Amherstburg. David Botsford was elected the first president of the new organization, named the 'Fort Malden Guild of Arts and Crafts'. Its purpose was to encourage and train persons with hidden talent and to increase the community's knowledge of the arts and crafts. The first lessons to be offered were in painting, weaving and pottery.

By October, 1960 interest in the Guild was declining and a determined effort was made to obtain new members. The Guild was reorganized under the leadership of president Maurice O'Beay who stated that its new purpose was "partly educational and partly recreational." In January, 1961 an exhibition and sale of works by nine Essex County artists was held - the first show after the reorganization.

The Guild began sponsoring summer arts and crafts classes for children in 1961, a project which has since become an important part of the educational programme and which continues to the present time.

During its first decades of existence, the Guild had no permanent home and met in many different locations wherever space was available for its classes and shows. The need for a permanent home seriously hampered its planning and development. When the Michigan Central Railroad (MCR) station on Richmond Street was put up for sale the executive of the Guild thought it would make an excellent cultural centre. The station was purchased in 1968 through the generosity of member Florence Gibson. Through the hard work and generosity of Guild members and interested citizens, the interior of the station was restored and remodelled to make it functional as a working gallery for arts and crafts.

The endeavours of twenty-four years of the Guild became a reality on June 22, 1969 when the former MCR station became the new home of the Fort Malden Guild of Arts and Crafts. Named

the 'Gibson Gallery', the station became a cultural centre for the community. The first art exhibit to be shown in the gallery highlighted works by Essex County artists from the private collection of Dr. G.H. Shepherd. During the opening ceremonies, which were attended by 500 people, the key to the gallery was presented to President Rosemary Smith by Florence Gibson. Mayor Murray Smith cut the ribbon to the entrance.



**Gibson Gallery, 1996.**  
*Marsh Collection Society: P1042*

When room for storage was needed, a caboose was purchased from the Essex Terminal by Florence Gibson and Mayor Murray Smith in 1973.

Through the good graces of Allied Chemical Canada, Pennsylvania Central Railroad and Ranta Enterprises the caboose was moved off the railway tracks to a new set of tracks behind the gallery.

An added feature is the horse trough located near the gallery's entrance. This trough stood for many years in front of the town hall but with the demise of horse traffic it fell into disuse and was removed from the town hall when the street was paved. From forgotten years the trough was eventually given a permanent home at the Gibson Gallery by Max Shaw.

Over the years a wide range of classes have been held in the gallery, including weaving, painting, sculpture, stitchery, pottery and crafts. The Guild still offers classes in painting for both children and adults when there is an interest. Summer art classes for children are also offered and are quite popular. Stitchery classes are offered when there are enough interested applicants. Individual workshops take place from time to time.

Monthly exhibits are varied in subject and include both amateur and professional artists. The works of elementary, high school and University of Windsor students has also been displayed. Each May a juried art show takes place, a competition which is open to all high schools in Essex County. Cash prizes are awarded for first, second and third place entries.

### Art by the River

The first outdoor exhibition was held on the grounds of Fort Malden National Historic Park in 1967 as a Centennial event. Sponsored jointly by the Fort Malden Guild of Arts and Crafts and the Windsor Society of Artists, it was a two-day event - August 26th and 27th. The chairman was Rev. M.C. Davies. It proved to be a very popular event and thus was born the annual 'Art by the River'.

In 1968 it was planned as a one-day event on Sunday August 25th, again on the fort grounds. It was convened by Maurice O'Beay and Hazen Price and was co-sponsored as it had been the previous year. Attendance was reported to be about 1500 people.

This exhibition proved to be very popular and continues to be held every year on the last Sunday of August, now sponsored solely by the Fort Malden Guild of Arts and Crafts. It has grown from about fifty exhibitors to more than a hundred and the attendance averages 5000 people.

### Christmas Show and Sale

The first Christmas show and sale in the new Gibson Gallery was planned for the first three

weekends of December, 1971. A special feature was highlighted for each weekend in addition to the articles for sale. Many of the arts and crafts were created by students of the gallery who had taken lessons from local artists. Elsie Wootton was chairperson of the event. In 1973 the Christmas bazaar became a two-weekend event. Over the years the Christmas show and sale has continued to be a feature of the Guild. It has varied in dates and hours but it is still a special time when the Gibson Gallery is transformed into a beautiful Christmas treasure. For the past several years this event has been arranged by Anne Cant and Rosemary Smith and takes place the second weekend of November.

After fifty years the Guild is still in existence although since the mid-1980s participating interest from the community has declined. The present board of directors has been in place for the past ten years, with the exception of three or four new members. President Barbara Cozens has been the leader for most of that time. The financial books have been capably looked after by Irene Goulin. Florence Woof and Rosemary Smith have been faithful members, joining the Guild at its inception in 1945 and continuing to serve in many different capacities over the years, including the role of president. For many years Florence has been responsible for organizing the monthly exhibits. Rosemary, at present, arranges for the manning of the gallery. Her husband, Wallace, joined the Guild after his retirement and is in charge of the station's maintenance. Donna Goulin has been the secretary for nearly nineteen years, replacing Betty Marra in 1978.

Alice Bailey was one of the founding members of the Guild and has served in many capacities. For over twenty years she held the office of membership convenor and took on the task of registering the exhibitors for Art by the River. Recently she turned these responsibilities over to Lori Grondin, the granddaughter of Florence Gibson.

Over the years a number of people have been named honorary members because of the many contributions they have made to the Guild: William Stidworthy, Frank Gustin, Florence Krug Gibson, David Botsford, Maurice O'Beay, Hazen Price, Muriel Knight, Rosemary and Wally Smith and Florence Woof.

Since 1968 the Fort Malden Guild of Arts and Crafts has owned the former railway station at 140 Richmond Street but the railway has retained ownership of the land. Because of this drawback the Guild was never able to do landscaping to enhance the gallery. However, early in 1995 the Town of Amherstburg on behalf of the Gibson Gallery was able to secure the land. Cooperating with the Amherstburg Public Utilities Commission (APUC), who needed part of the land for entrance into the backyard of their building, an agreement was finalized in the fall of 1995 between the Fort Malden Guild of Arts and Crafts and the APUC. The entire property was purchased by the APUC but the station remains the property of the Fort Malden Guild and will continue as an art gallery. The APUC will contribute the grading and paving of the lot while the Guild will contribute the landscaping. It is the aim of both groups to complete a tourist attraction that will be the toast of the town.

In April, 1996 the Fort Malden Guild of Arts and Crafts was forced to rethink their plans for the Gibson Gallery due to a lack of volunteers. The operation of the gallery was taken over by the 'Art Connection', an artists' co-op whose nine members are George Alles, Barbara Camilleri, Julia Conlon, Barbara Cozens, Mary DeMarco, Dawn Lavoie, Francis Lucier, Johanna Johnson and Mary Weston. The Guild continues to own and maintain the building itself.<sup>180</sup>

The year 1996 marked the 200th year of Amherstburg's history, the 100th anniversary of the former railway station building and the 51st year of the Fort Malden Guild of Arts and Crafts. It is indeed a time to celebrate!

*The Gibson Gallery is made of bricks and mortar. In time it will perish as all material things do. The spirit which motivated it and which has made it what it is today will not perish. And that is what culture is all about.*

-Ken Saltmarche, quoted at the opening of the Gibson Gallery, 1969

### Marsh Collection Society

The Marsh Collection Society, 235A Dalhousie Street, is a local history research centre and archives based on the historical collection of John and Helen Marsh. Its policy statement is "to encourage research into the history and development of the lower Detroit River, the Town of Amherstburg and areas adjacent thereto; to collect and to preserve all articles of interest relating to such history and development; to provide a place to house, display, conserve, restore, conduct research into and otherwise; to accept gifts, grants, legacies, devises and bequests; and to hold, invest, expand or deal with the same furtherance of the objects of the Corporation."

The contributions of the Marsh family to Amherstburg began in 1896 when Arthur W. Marsh came to town as a partner in the *Amherstburg Echo*. He married Bessie Hicks and the couple had two children - Helen, born in 1901 and John, born the following year.

John A. Marsh joined his father at the paper in 1924 after the death of Arthur's partner John Auld. Helen, a teacher at Amherstburg Public School, joined her brother after Arthur was killed in a car accident in 1940. The brother and sister team worked together for forty years, selling the paper in 1981 to John and Linda James.

Throughout their lives John and Helen collected and catalogued an extensive collection of books, documents, photographs and other items relating to the history of Amherstburg and the lower Detroit River district. In 1980, realizing that it was a valuable asset to the community, they began to discuss what would eventually become of this collection. With the help of their attorney and longtime friend, the late Richard Thrasher, Q.C., John and Helen founded the Marsh Collection Society, registered with five directors in 1983 as a non-profit organization.

The Marsh family left not only a legacy in the way of research materials but also a foundation which would operate a research facility for many years. One of the few stipulations John insisted upon was that the facility not be opened until after his death. Helen Marsh passed away in March, 1986 and John in February, 1993.

On October 1, 1994 the Marsh Collection Society opened at 235A Dalhousie Street. Jennifer MacLeod was hired as archivist at that time. Today, two and a half years after the opening of the centre, the Marsh Collection Society has served hundreds of researchers, some from as far away as Europe. Popular research topics include genealogy, school projects, marine history and local historic buildings.

The Marsh Collection owns microfilmed copies of the *Amherstburg Echo* from 1874 to 1990 and has an extensive photograph collection. The Marsh papers, topic-related information files, contain a wealth of information about many aspects of local history, including people, buildings, businesses and events.

In June, 1995 the Marsh Collection Society published With the Tide: Recollections and Anecdotal Histories of the Town of Amherstburg and the Lower Detroit River District, a hardcover

book of stories told by the late John Marsh. From 1994 to 1997 the research centre served as headquarters for the Amherstburg Bicentennial Book Committee.

### North American Black Historical Museum

The North American Black Museum and Cultural Centre Inc. is the legacy of Melvin 'Mac' Simpson (1917-1982) and his dream of "illuminat[ing] the history of Black people in a dignified manner."<sup>181</sup> In the early 1960s Simpson began to develop a vision of a museum which would "uncover and preserve the record of the rich heritage Black people have, making it available for the positive development of the Black Community and for the general educational benefit of all [Canadians]."<sup>182</sup>



Sod turning for the North American Black Historical Museum, November 25, 1979.

Left to right: Mayor Garnet Fox, Dr. Daniel Hill (president of the Ontario Black History Society), Philip Alexander, Melvin Simpson, Henry White, Hon. Eugene Whelan.

In 1966 a group of dedicated people began to research contacts and sources which could assist with the project. The congregation of the Nazrey AME Church raised funds to build a hall adjacent to the church to house the museum which would contain artifacts loaned by members of the Black community. In 1971 five church members purchased the property immediately to the south of the church on which a log cabin stood. Municipal, provincial and federal governments contributed funds along with citizens and businesses in the community.

By 1972 discussions were being held regarding the establishment of a permanent museum in a new building to be constructed on the property.<sup>183</sup> On October 20, 1975 the North American Black Historical Museum (NABHM) was incorporated. Ground-breaking ceremonies for the new museum building were held November 25, 1979 and on September 20, 1981 its doors officially opened. Mac Simpson passed away a few months later, on January 7, 1982, having lived long enough to see the first phase of his dream become a reality.

Since that time the NABHM has been working on the second phase of the project, the restoration and furnishing of the log house to the period of the 1850s. The



North American Black Historical Museum, 1980s.

third and final phase will be the restoration of the Nazrey AME Church to the same decade.

### Project HMS Detroit Inc.

The foundations of Project HMS *Detroit* Inc. were laid on a sunny September day in 1813. The flagship of the British fleet, named after the recent capture of the American fort at Detroit, set sail to begin and end its fighting career in one short, vicious day. The determination and courage of those early builders and townfolk has been inherited by today's Project HMS *Detroit* who are fighting a much longer battle to keep the legend of the *Detroit* alive.

The legend was revived on June 17, 1982 when Amherstburg insurance broker Zane Handysides suggested to the Chamber of Commerce that a replica of the battleship HMS *Detroit* be built as a museum of Amherstburg's rich nautical and strategic heritage. It would become a popular tourist attraction, based on the popularity of other maritime museums and displays in North America and in Britain. The idea captivated another local businessman, Murray Kennedy, who remained the Project chairman and chief supporter until his retirement from the position in 1997. Begun as a committee of the Chamber of Commerce, the Project has become a registered charity in its own right and from a handful of Murray Kennedy's friends and co-workers who are still loyal to the dream the Project membership has spread internationally. The Project's patron is the Earl of Elgin whose Scottish ancestor once represented the Western District two hundred years ago.

### The Original HMS *Detroit*

Among Amherstburg's many contributions to the events of the War of 1812 was that it boasted the western outpost of shipbuilding and fleet muster. In June of 1813 the young commander Robert Barclay took command of the British fleet based in Amherstburg. The largest ship of the squadron was still under construction. Besieged by a lack of men, ships and supplies because of the war raging on land and water about them, the *Detroit*, as it was to be named, was cobbled together

with surplus supplies from other vessels and weaponry borrowed from the garrison at Fort Malden. Approximately 100 feet long, 28 feet in breadth and displacing 300 tons, the *Detroit* was the largest ship in battle and probably the largest on the Great Lakes at the time. Yet across Lake Erie, American Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry had been able to amass a much bigger fleet at Presqu'Île (now known as Erie, Pennsylvania). By September of 1813 the British outpost found itself in a stranglehold by American forces. Supply lines had been cut off along the waterways and in spite of the British capture of Fort Detroit, land forces were closing in on the tired and undersupplied British establishment.

Barclay had to make a stand. He took as many military, naval and Native personnel as he could muster and the small fleet set sail for Put-in-Bay (Ohio) to call out the American fleet on September 9, 1813. Outgunned and outmanned, the battle on the next day was a tragedy for the British, with the flagship *Detroit*, sails and rigging largely shot away, entangling with the rigging of the *Queen Charlotte*, the next ship of the line. Barclay was forced to surrender the *HMS Detroit* to Perry. Barclay was later court-martialed for his actions but was exonerated.

Much of what is known about the subsequent fate of the *Detroit* is speculation, except that its captors may have scuttled the ship with the *Queen Charlotte* some time after the battle. In 1841 it was raised and used for cargo. Legend has it that a Niagara Falls merchant bought the ship and sent it over the Falls as a tourist attraction. Nothing remains of the ship but the flags of the fleet, which are held as war trophies at Annapolis, Maryland.<sup>184</sup>

#### Achievements of Project HMS *Detroit*

The *HMS Detroit* Project has come into its own as a cultural and heritage promoter for Amherstburg. While raising funds for the full-size replica to be built, members of the Project and the community have achieved much already. Several feasibility studies have been conducted which have added to our knowledge of the history of the ship and have given direction to the Project. So far the Project has not been successful in obtaining any government grants despite the great economic benefits that would come from such a unique tourist attraction.

Starting with a meticulously researched and masterfully executed oil painting of the Battle of Lake Erie, local artist Peter Rindlisbacher has made a name for himself and the Project with sales of his prints and paintings. One of the many successful fund-raising efforts of the Project has been the sale of prints by Rindlisbacher, Morgan and poet David Ayland.



HMS *Detroit* ship's boat.

A stand of lumber (maple, oak and pine) from the Windsor Airport was donated to the Project in 1984. It has been kept in storage by the Town of Amherstburg and it is hoped that some of the wood can be used in the building of the ship.

Local industry has also played a crucial role. Ford of Canada made and donated reproduction cannon for the replica ship at its Windsor foundry in 1984. Carriers for the cannon were produced by local high school students with help from Windsor Factory

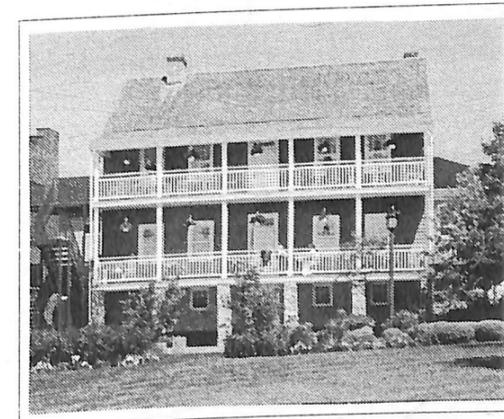
Supply Today some of these cannon are in storage while others are on loan to Discovery Harbour at Penetanguishene. Plans are being made to bring all of the cannon to Amherstburg and to display them together in one of the town's parks.

Endless charity bingos run by the indefatigable Murray Kennedy and his friends have been a chief fund raiser for the Project. The 'Ship's Store' in the borrowed Commissariat building in the King's Navy Yard Park acted as temporary headquarters and retail outlet. It was staffed by government-funded seasonal employees and many hardworking volunteers. A kiosk located in the Fort Malden Mall is a well-known Christmastime outlet for retail and print sales. An important fund-raising and awareness enterprise has been the merchandising of 'Project HMS *Detroit*' designs on mugs, T-shirts and other souvenirs. This method has been hugely successful as a way of increasing awareness of the Project's aims throughout the country and internationally. An 'HMS *Detroit*' sweatshirt was spotted on a passerby in a residential area of St. Andrew's in Scotland!

Perhaps the most vital event to revive the Project's goals was the building and launch of a 20-foot working replica of an 1813 ship's boat in 1993. With the arrival of the boat a new group of young volunteers became interested in the Project, now being able to learn new skills as well as provide a social context for this heritage organization. Moreover, the ship's boat had enabled Project HMS *Detroit* to participate in tall ship gatherings throughout Canada and the United States, notably in Penetanguishene in 1993 and Georgian Bay in 1994. This participation has brought new credibility to the Project and has helped to garner new information about the business of a tall ship as a heritage and educational opportunity.

The Project HMS *Detroit* ship's crew have made appearances at several historical re-enactments to sell souvenirs and to promote the Project. One rambunctious fund-raising effort in 1995 was a nautical 'bail and jail' drive in which a volunteer 'Press Gang' roamed the streets of Amherstburg in search of 'recruits' for the crew or bribes for the hapless victim's release. In a very short time the crew raised \$5000.

While the Project has taken some time to raise sufficient funds to meet its goals (through no lack of effort by members and supporters!) the aims and achievements of Project HMS *Detroit* have been refined and improved. The research of Peter Rindlisbacher and other naval historians, for example, has brought to light new, more accurate information about the measurements and fittings of the original *Detroit*. No contemporary plans of the ship exist today but over the years researchers have been able to trace significant clues about the *Detroit* through contemporary accounts and plans of sister ships such as the *Royal George*. The Project's aim has also undergone a major revision. While once the goal was to build a 'floating museum' - a flat-bottomed barge permanently moored to its dock at the Navy Yard Park - now the vessel will be a wood-clad, steel-hulled, fully functioning sailing vessel. As such, Project HMS *Detroit* is a member of the Canadian and American Sail Training Associations, adding another dimension to the self-financing and educational aspects



Gordon House (home of Project HMS *Detroit*) seen from King's Navy Yard Park, 1996.  
Marsh Collection Society, P1534

of the Project.

Several professional feasibility studies have proven that the project is viable,<sup>185</sup> although each application to government funding agencies has proven unsuccessful. These setbacks have not discouraged the Project members and certainly the Project has achieved much as a community and heritage organization.

### The Future

On August 1, 1996 Project HMS *Detroit* held an opening reception at its new headquarters at the newly renovated Gordon House at 260 Dalhousie Street opposite the proposed mooring site of the HMS *Detroit* and very close to the berth where the first HMS *Detroit* was built. Facilities include a tearoom, gift shop, gallery, meeting space and interpretive displays. With the Gordon House and the ship's boat, the Project has achieved many of its aims to promote Amherstburg's heritage and tourism potential in partnership with other local museums. Project HMS *Detroit* looks forward to building the full-sized replica in the near future.

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### *Historic Buildings*

While a significant number of buildings (particularly private residences) in Amherstburg date to the 1830s and '40s, only a few have been designated and plaqued by the Local Architectural Conservation and Advisory Committee (LACAC) as being architecturally and/or historically significant. Before there was a LACAC on the town council many old landmarks were razed, in some cases to make way for newer, more modern facilities. The Amherstburg Town Hall, the post office, Wesley United Church, Chateau LaRose, Lake View Hotel, Tea Garden Restaurant, St. Rose High School, St. Joseph's Convent, Marra's Bread office building, McGregor House and Pioneer Distillers' main office building are just a few recalled as having disappeared since the 1960s and '70s.

In 1996 as a Bicentennial project, the Park House Museum with the assistance of a Section 25 grant published "A Walking Tour of Amherstburg." This booklet contains a wealth of information about many of Amherstburg's existing historic buildings. Following are brief excerpts of sites and dates from that publication.

**Fort Malden National Historic Site**  
100 Laird Avenue  
- brick barrack ~ 1819  
- Interpretation Centre ~ 1861  
(Hough house)  
- Charles O'Connor cottage ~ circa 1851

**Park House Museum** ~ circa 1798  
214 Dalhousie Street  
- Matthew Pollard cottage ~ circa 1851

**Commissariat** ~ circa 1831  
224 Dalhousie Street

**Salmoni Hotel** ~ 1849  
252 Dalhousie Street

**Webber Hotel** ~ 1830s  
259 Dalhousie Street

**Gordon House** ~ circa 1798  
268 Dalhousie Street

**Bullock's Tavern** ~ 1830s  
269 Dalhousie Street

**Jones & Taylor General Store** ~ 1840s  
273 Dalhousie Street

**Royal Canadian Legion** ~ 1850s  
281 Dalhousie Street

**Bellevue** ~ 1816-19  
525 Dalhousie Street

**Christ (Anglican) Church** ~ 1819  
317 Ramsay Street

**Askin house** ~ early 1800s  
298 Ramsay Street

**Berthelot cottage** ~ early 1800s  
296 Ramsay Street

**Kolfage house** ~ circa 1850  
284 Ramsay Street

**Dunbar house** ~ circa 1850  
273 Ramsay Street

**General store** ~ circa 1835  
79 Murray Street

**Oddfellows Hall** ~ 1888  
79 Richmond Street

**Amherstburg Public Library** ~ 1913  
232 Sandwich Street South

**Private residence** ~ circa 1840  
277 Sandwich Street South

**Teeter building** ~ circa 1860  
272 Sandwich Street South

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church** ~ 1846  
129 Simcoe Street

**Elliott house** ~ circa 1835  
849 Front Road South

**Michigan Central Railroad Station** ~ 1896  
140 Richmond Street

**Mount Beulah Church of God in Christ**  
~ 1878 246 King Street

**Evangelical Baptist Church** ~ 1875  
266 King Street

**Gibb house** ~ 1860s  
193 Gore Street

**Nazrey A.M.E. Church** ~ 1848  
277 King Street

**Taylor cottage ~ circa 1840**  
281 King Street

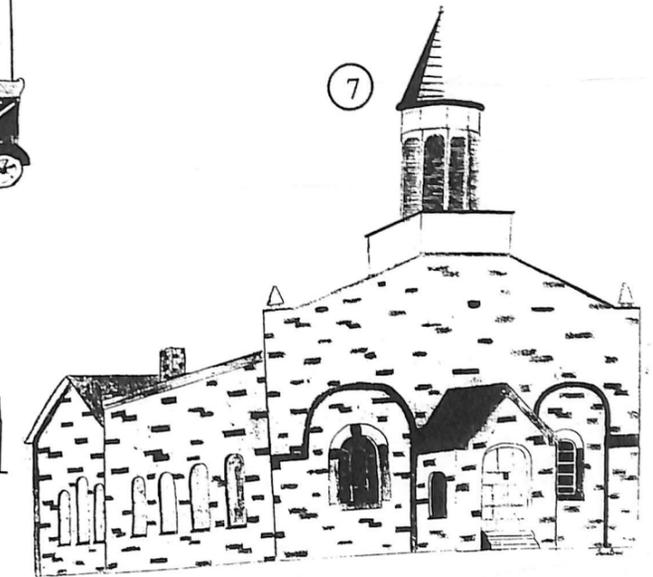
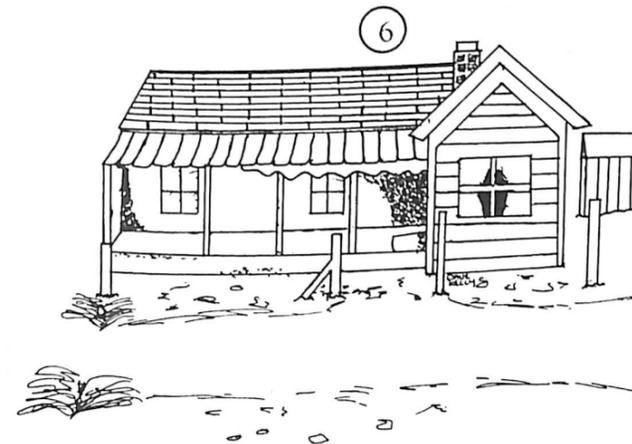
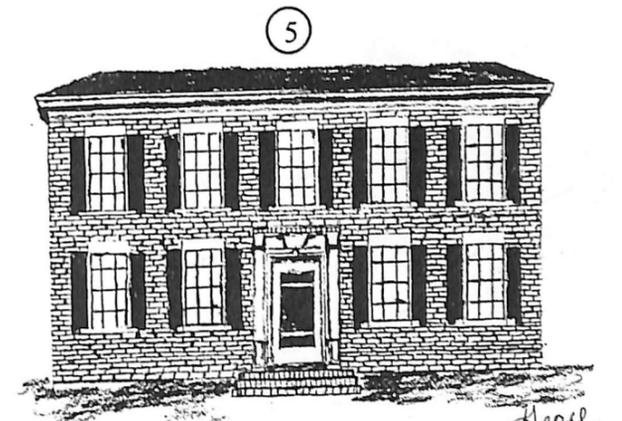
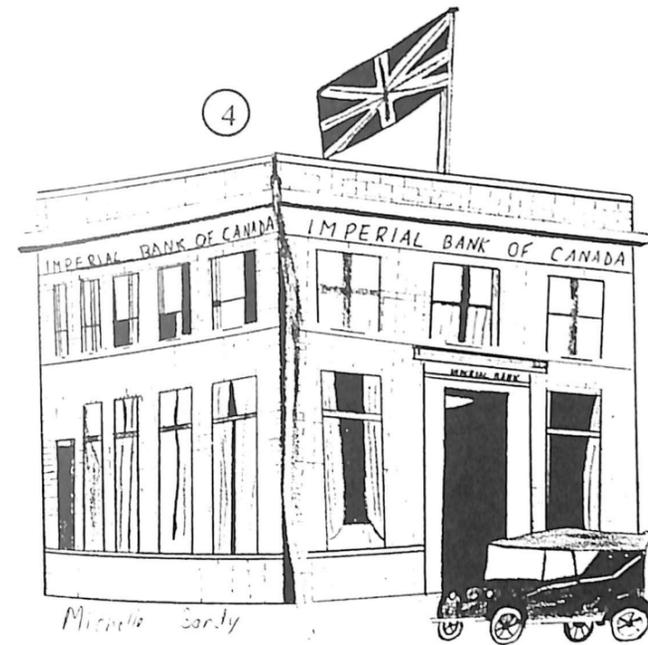
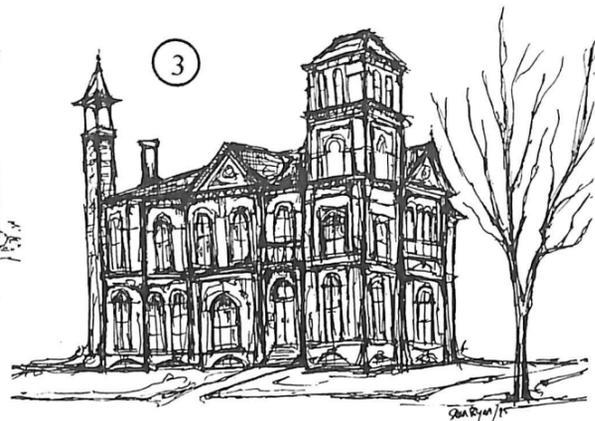
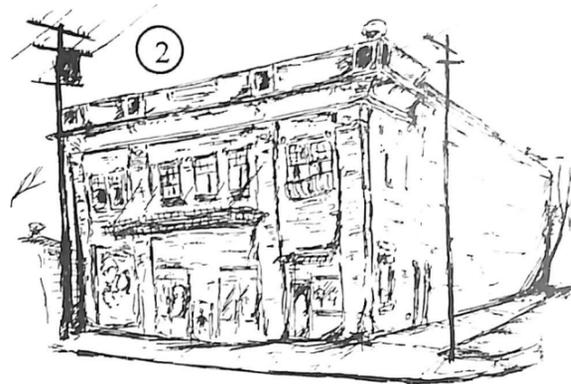
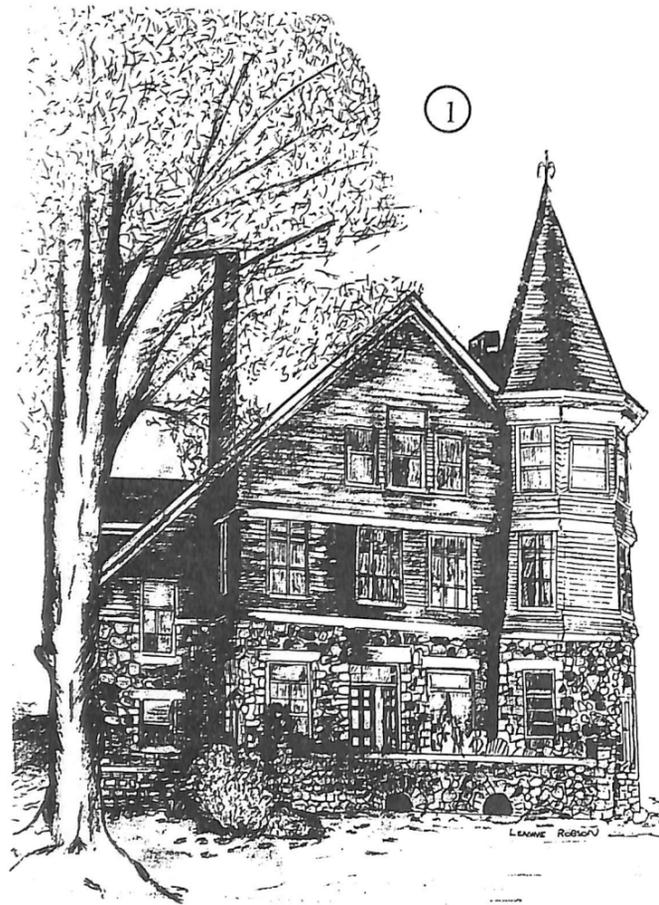
**Blacksmith shop ~ circa 1840**  
197 Gore Street

**Private residence ~ circa 1840**  
207 Gore Street

**First Baptist Church ~ 1849**  
232 George Street

**St. John the Baptist R.C. Church ~ 1844**  
255 Brock Street

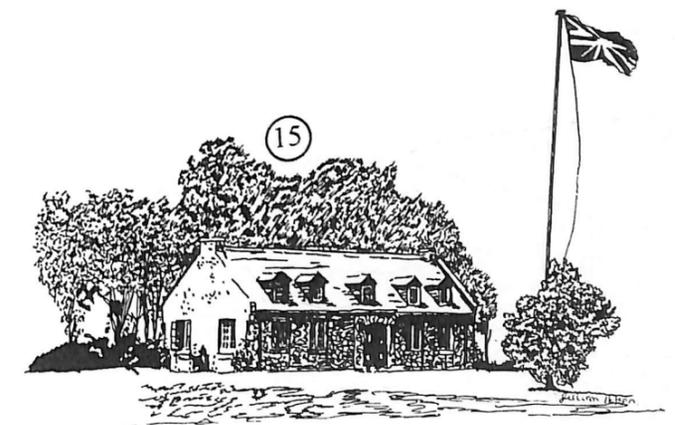
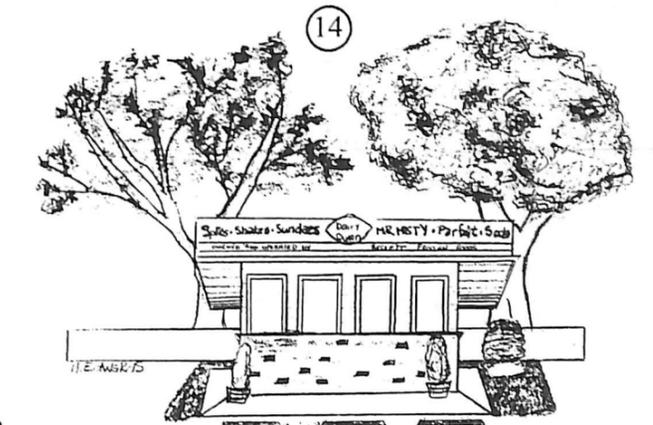
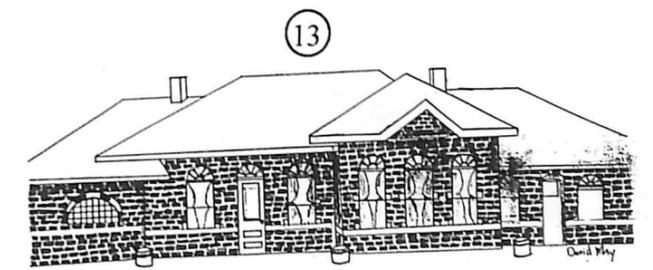
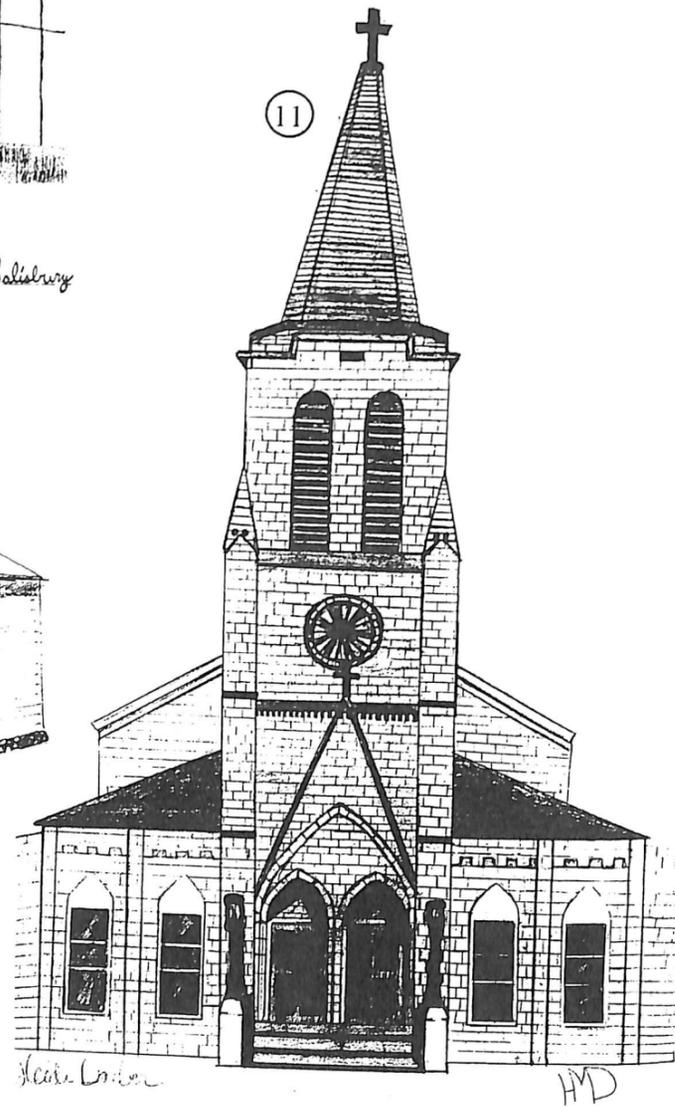
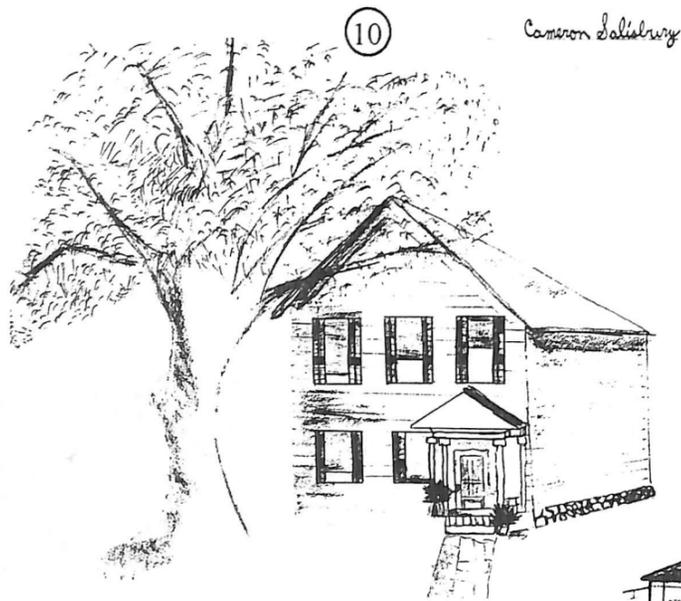
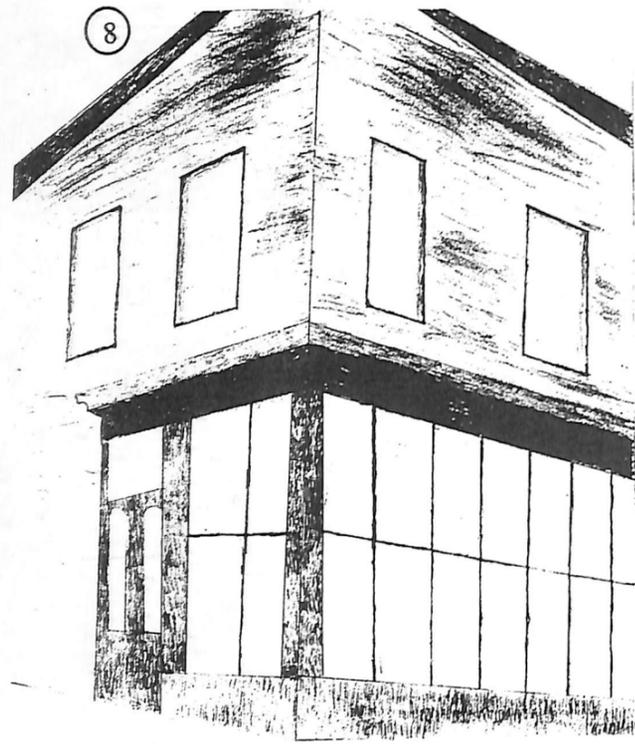
**Private residence ~ circa 1850**  
259 Richmond Street



1. **499 Dalhousie Street South**  
*Leanne Robson*
2. **Liberty Theatre**  
*Erol Oksuz*
3. **Amherstburg Town Hall (1883-1965) \***  
*Sean Ryan*
4. **Imperial Bank of Canada**  
*Michelle Bondy*

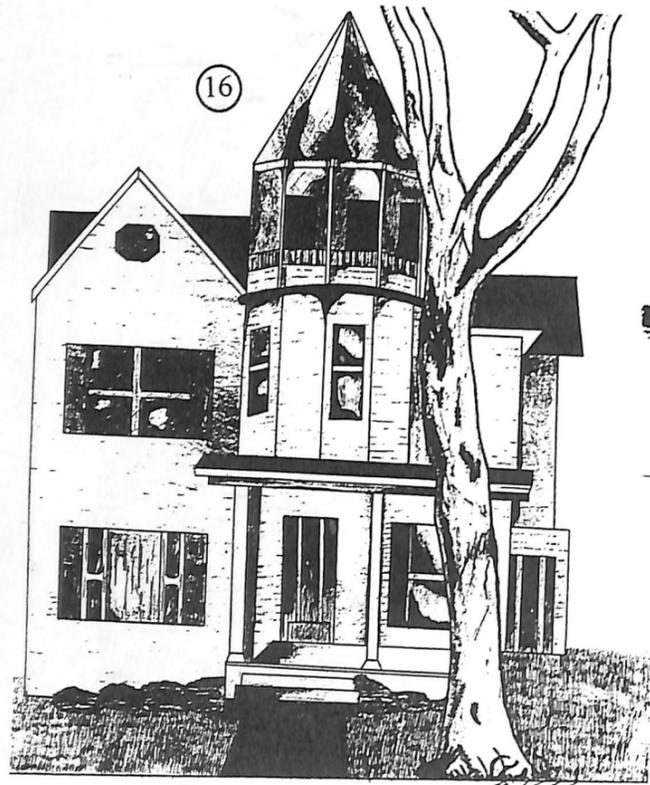
5. **273 Ramsay Street**  
*Grace Kern*
6. **Pensioner's cottage, Fort Street (Lot 11) \***  
*David Kelly*
7. **Christ (Anglican) Church**  
*Tara Brew*

*Buildings with \* no longer exist.*

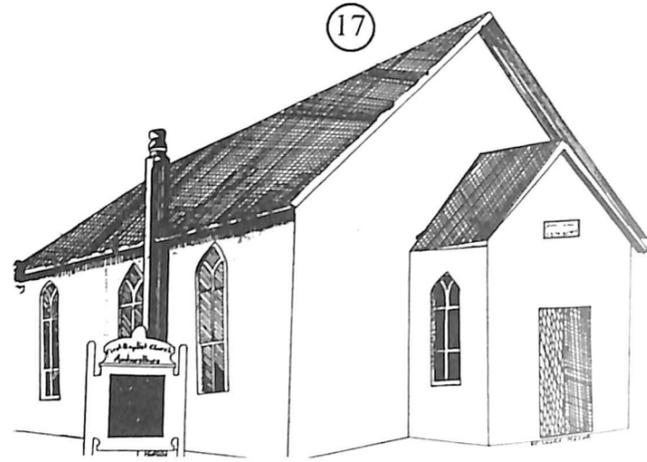


- 8. **67 Richmond Street**  
*Cameron Salisbury*
- 9. **299-301 Sandwich Street South**  
*David Dunn*
- 10. **unidentified house**  
*Erin Bennett*
- 11. **St. John the Baptist R.C. Church**  
*Heidi Daiber*
- 12. **199 Dalhousie Street**  
*Jen Litster*
- 13. **Michigan Central Railroad Station**  
*David May*

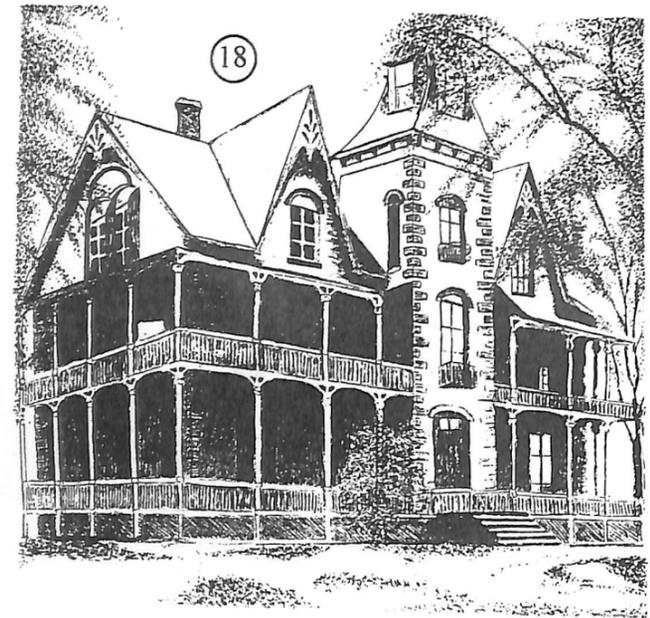
- 14. **Dairy Queen \***  
*Nicole Edwards*
- 15. **Fort Malden National Historic Site  
Visitor Orientation Centre**  
*Jillian Hotson*



16



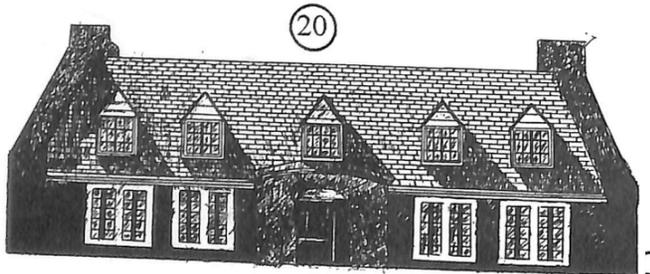
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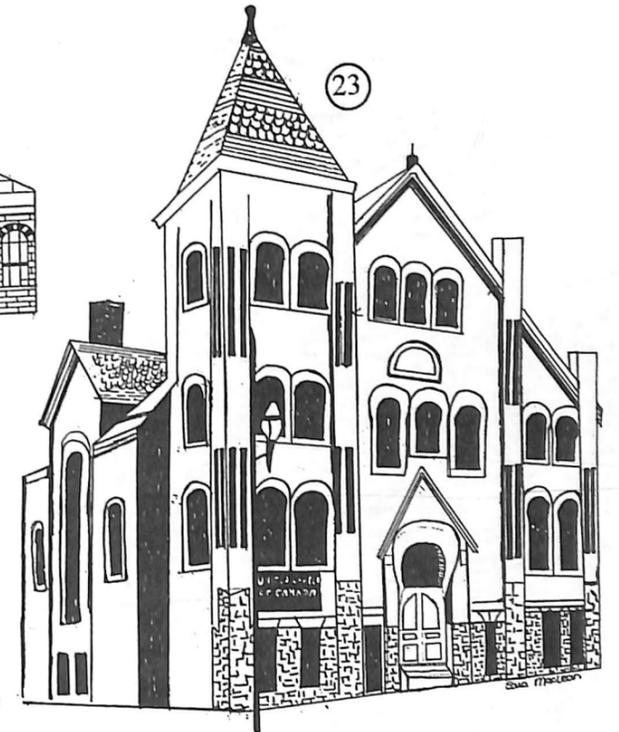
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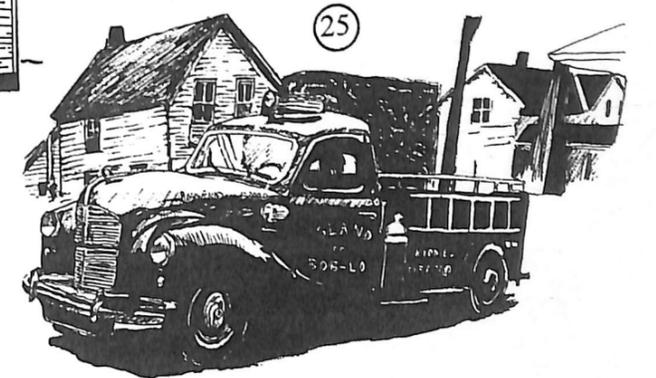
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24



25

16. 199 Dalhousie Street  
Nick Charron

17. First Baptist Church  
Shara Major

18. 'Chateau LaRose' \*  
Andria Del Rizzo

19. 1169 Front Road South  
Allen Mickle

20. Fort Malden National Historic Site  
Visitor Orientation Centre  
Jill Davies

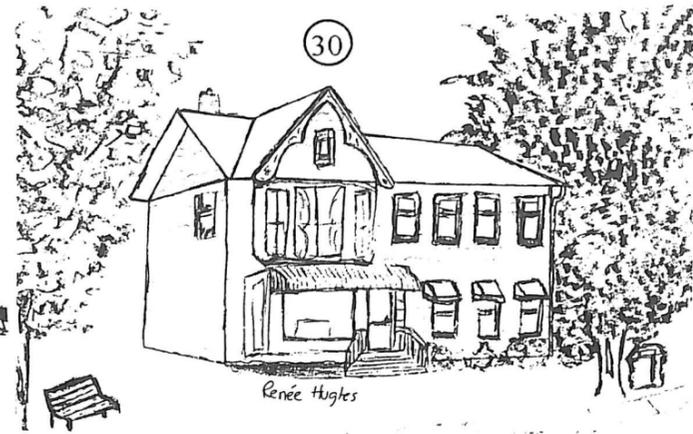
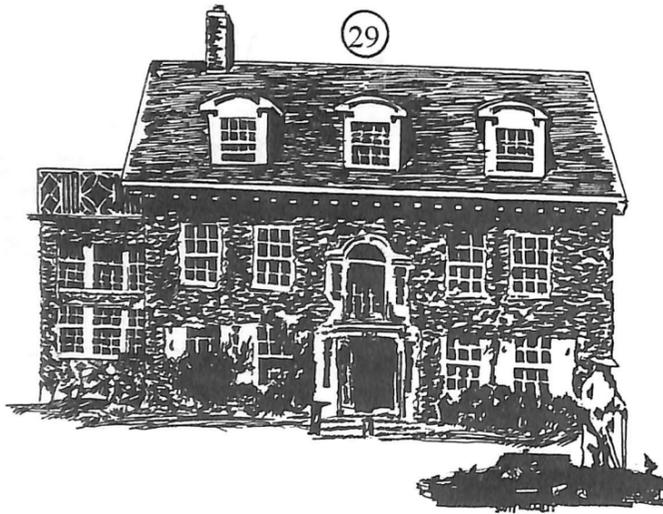
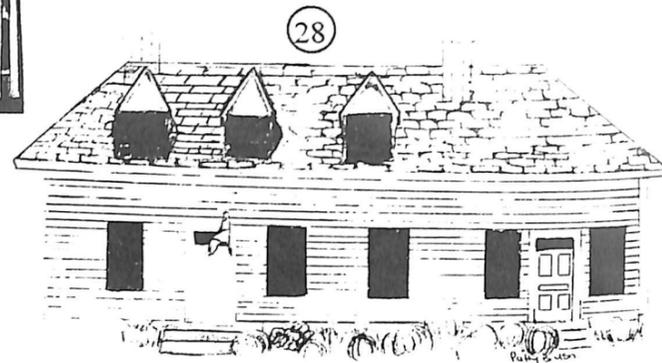
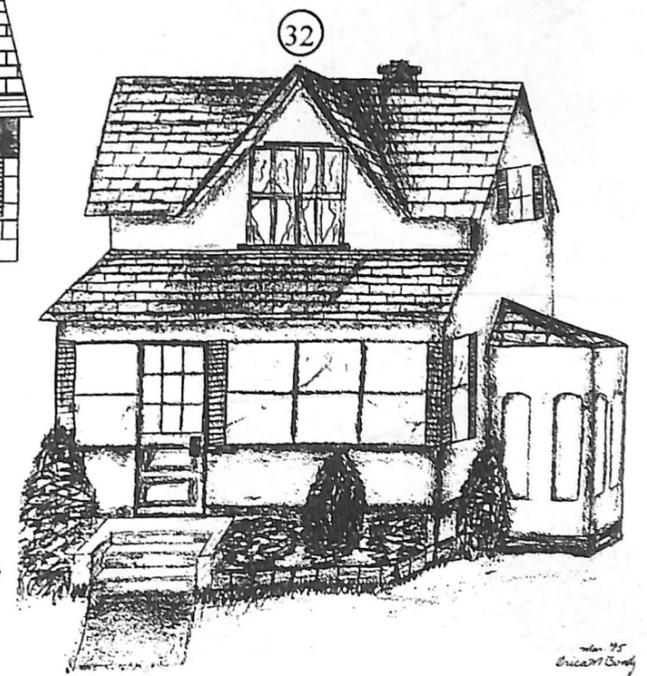
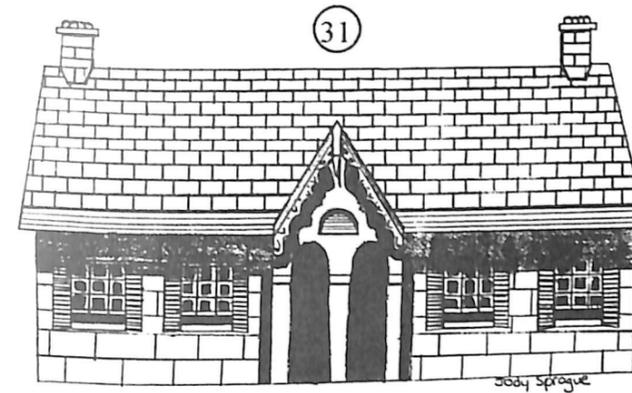
21. Amherstburg Echo  
Michelle Merritt

22. Michigan Central Railroad Station  
Adam Keen

23. Wesley United Church (Richmond Street) \*  
Sara MacLean

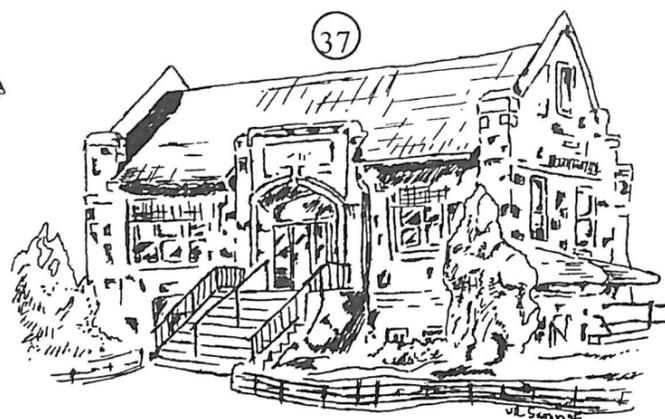
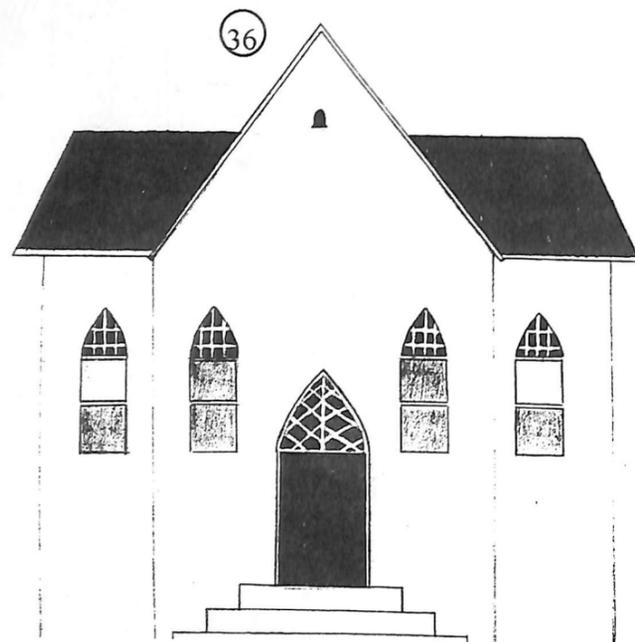
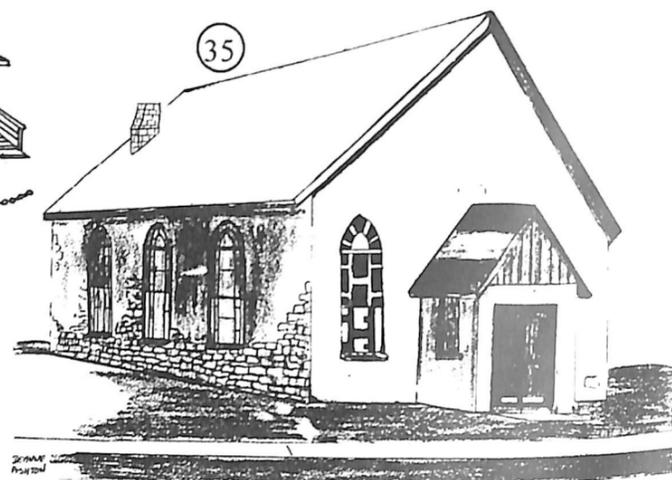
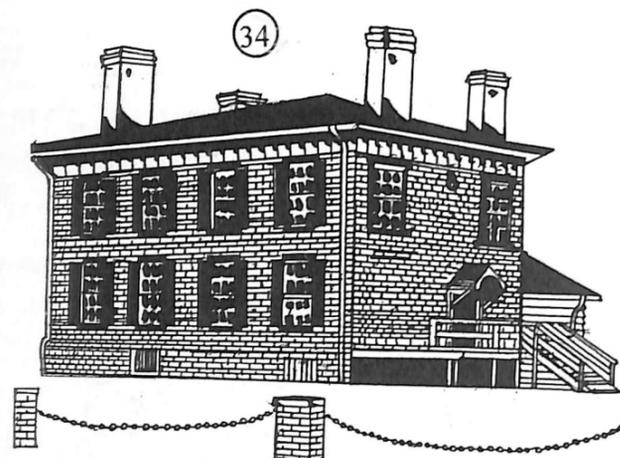
24. St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church  
Courtney Bisnett

25. Island of Bob-Lo kiddies' fire truck ride  
Steve Lauriault



- 26. **Fort Malden National Historic Site  
Charles O'Connor cottage**  
*Lisa Gardiner*
- 27. **Brunner Mond Club \***  
*Kim Coulter*
- 28. **Park House Museum**  
*Patty Brush*
- 29. **Fort Malden National Historic Site  
Interpretation Centre (Hough house)**  
*Scott Hallett*

- 30. **Tea Garden Restaurant \***  
*Renée Hughes*
- 31. **Richmond Street Public School \***  
*Jody Sprague*
- 32. **39 North Street**  
*Erica Bondy*
- 33. **Gordon House**  
*Aimee Bratt*



34. 849 Front Road South  
Bianca Storm

35. Nazrey A.M.E. Church  
Deanne Ashton

36. St. Theresa's Church (Malden)  
Angie Brush

37. Amherstburg Public Library  
Wil Saxon

Drawings rendered by Jane Grayson's  
1995-96 Art class at General Amherst  
High School.

## Endnotes to Chapter VII

1. Brown, James D. *Views of Canada and the Colonists*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1851), p. 320. Hereafter referred to as Brown.
2. Bigsby, John J. *The Shoe and Canoe; or, Pictures of Travel in the Canadas...*, Vol. I. London: Chapman and Hall, 1850.
3. Botsford, David P. Anecdotal history, Park House Museum, Amherstburg. Hereafter referred to as Botsford.
4. Magee, Joan. "The Wright & McKenney Circulating Library, Amherstburg: A Pioneer Library in Canada West." *Expression*, Vol. 3(3), Fall 1981.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid. Magee estimated that 8-10% of the population used the library for at least one three-month period. By comparison, in England in 1844 Francis Jeffrey estimates that a total of only 3% of the population read "for amusement or instruction."
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Brown.
10. Botsford, David P. Botsford's great-uncle Henry Botsford (1823-1894) was one of the members who received a portion of the library when it was dispersed.
11. Botsford.
12. *The Amherstburg Echo*, March 3, 1882.
13. *The Amherstburg Echo*, November 24, 1882.
14. *The Amherstburg Echo*, March 24, 1882. This building was on Part Lot 5, west side of Dalhousie Street (between Murray and Gore Streets). Daniel L. Wigle was located on Lot 5, George Wilson on Lot 4 in the 'Gordon house'.
15. Notes of David P. Botsford in Amherstburg Scrapbook No. 30 (Amherstburg Public Library).
16. *The Amherstburg Echo*, January 24, 1890.
17. *The Amherstburg Echo*, December 7, 1900. Among the debts owed were \$33 to Mrs. Caroline Park for 11 months' rent and \$22 to the librarian, Miss Josie Patton, for 11 months' work.
18. *The Amherstburg Echo*, January 18 and February 1, 1901. This is Lot 8, east side of Ramsay Street. Built in 1849, this historic building is located at 273 Ramsay Street.
19. Beckman, Margaret et al. *The Best Gift: A Record of the Carnegie Libraries in Ontario*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1984.
20. This property was the site of the former American House, owned by Jere Mailloux, which was destroyed by fire in 1910. In the spring of 1911 the Amherstburg Public Library Board held a special meeting to discuss the purchase of the "Mailloux property." (*The Amherstburg Echo*, May 5, 1911.)

21. Ibid.
22. Contract between Joseph B. Wilson and the Corporation of Amherstburg, October 2, 1911.
23. *The Amherstburg Echo*, April 11, 1913. The limestone used in the construction of the Carnegie Library was donated by the Solvay Process Company of Detroit and was quarried in Anderdon.
24. *The Amherstburg Echo*, November 1, 1995, 'Yesterday's News - 1875' mentions a concert given by the Cornet Band at the Sons of Temperance Hall.
25. *The Amherstburg Echo*, September 11, 1996, 'Yesterday's News - 1876.' Two hundred people attended the benefit, raising a sum of \$47.50 for the band.
26. *The Amherstburg Echo*, August 28, 1996, 'Yesterday's News - 1886.'
27. *The Amherstburg Echo*, November 6, 1996, 'Yesterday's News - 1886.'
28. *The Amherstburg Echo*, January 18, 1984, 'Yesterday's News - 1884.'
29. *The Amherstburg Echo*, September 20, 1995, 'Yesterday's News - 1885.'
30. *The Amherstburg Echo*, November 1, 1995, 'Yesterday's News - 1885.'
31. *The Amherstburg Echo*, April 17, 1996, 'Yesterday's News - 1886.'
32. *The Amherstburg Echo*, February 4, 1997, 'Yesterday's News - 1887.'
33. *The Amherstburg Echo*, June 14, 1995, 'Yesterday's News - 1895.'
34. *The Amherstburg Echo*, February 7, 1996, 'Yesterday's News - 1906.'
35. *The Amherstburg Echo*, October 9, 1996, 'Yesterday's News - 1906.'
36. *The Amherstburg Echo*, July 29, 1987, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1937.'
37. *The Amherstburg Echo*, August 31, 1988, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1938.'
38. *The Amherstburg Echo*, July 4, 1941.
39. *The Amherstburg Echo*, July 18, 1991, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1941.'
40. *The Amherstburg Echo*, July 4, 1941.
41. *The Amherstburg Echo*, July 16, 1942.
42. *The Amherstburg Echo*, September 28, 1983, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1943.'
43. *The Amherstburg Echo*, March 2, 1944.
44. *The Amherstburg Echo*, September 29, 1960.
45. *The Amherstburg Echo*, March 22, 1956.
46. *The Amherstburg Echo*, November 16, 1964. Also, the *Amherstburg Booster*, November 4 and 11, 1964; and April 28, 1965.
47. *The Amherstburg Echo*, May 6, 1987, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1957.'
48. *The Amherstburg Echo*, November 16, 1964. Also, the *Amherstburg Booster*, November 4 and 11, 1964; and April 28, 1965.
49. *The Amherstburg Echo*, September 29, 1960; January 17, 1963; and August 30, 1995. Also, the *Amherstburg Booster*, April 28, 1965.
50. *The Windsor Star*, June 14 and July 25, 1973; and July 23, 1975.
51. *The Amherstburg Echo*, May 2, 1990, 'Just Folks'.
52. The 'Burg Theatre's admission fee was 35 cents, compared to 22 cents at the Liberty Theatre. This may have been a factor in the demise of George Brown's plans.
53. *The Amherstburg Echo*, May 2, 1990, 'Just Folks'.
54. *The Amherstburg Echo*, January 24, 1919.
55. *The Amherstburg Echo*, February 7, 1919.
56. *The Amherstburg Echo*, August 22, 1919.
57. *The Amherstburg Echo*, February 7, 1919; and May 2, 1990, 'Just Folks'.
58. Advertisement in the *Amherstburg Echo*, November 23, 1923.
59. *The Amherstburg Echo*, August 20, 1926.
60. *The Amherstburg Echo*, May 2, 1990, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1930.'
61. *The Amherstburg Echo*, July 11, 1930.
62. *The Amherstburg Echo*, April 10, 1931.
63. *The Amherstburg Echo*, August 28, 1936.
64. *The Amherstburg Echo*, May 21, 1937.
65. *The Amherstburg Echo*, March 26, 1964.
66. *The Amherstburg Echo*, February 4, 1965.
67. *The Amherstburg Echo*, June 3, 1965.
68. *The Amherstburg Echo*, March 5, 1970.
69. *The Amherstburg Echo*, March 18 and April 1, 1981.

70. *The Amherstburg Echo*, March 21, 1984.
71. *The Amherstburg Echo*, July 15, 1932.
72. *The Amherstburg Echo*, June 2, 1949.
73. *The Amherstburg Echo*, June 7 1995, 'Yesterday's News - 1875.'
74. *The Amherstburg Echo*, April 15, 1997, 'Yesterday's News - 1877.'
75. *The Amherstburg Echo*, June 2, 1949.
76. *The Amherstburg Echo*, March 10, 1971. The bylaw setting out the annual fee is No. 1261. (*The Amherstburg Echo*, November 25, 1970.)
77. *The Amherstburg Echo*, May 29, 1985, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1925.' The lawn bowling clubhouse was moved to Sandwich Street in 1972 (*The Amherstburg Echo*, July 29, 1992, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1972') and later to the south side of Pike Road between the 3rd and 4th Concessions.
78. Conversation between Tara DeRyk and Tom Kilgallin. October 10, 1996.
79. Conversation between Tara DeRyk and Reg Spencer. October 9, 1996.
80. *The Amherstburg Echo*, September 14, 1928. Born in 1869 in Amherstburg. Malcolm McGregor moved to Windsor with his family at a young age, later living in Manitoba, then Michigan. In 1926 he returned to Amherstburg and purchased the Falls property at the north end of Dalhousie Street (the house was sold to Fort Malden NHS in 1958 and razed in 1982). McGregor died in August, 1930. (*The Amherstburg Echo*, August 28, 1996, 'Just Folks'.)
81. The Corporation of the Town of Amherstburg, Bylaw No. 1880.
82. *The Amherstburg Echo*, August 15 & 22, 1941.
83. *The Amherstburg Echo*, July 25, 1941.
84. *The Amherstburg Echo*, August 8 & 15, 1945.
85. *The Amherstburg Echo*, March 1, 1956.
86. *The Amherstburg Echo*, August 28, 1996, 'Just Folks'.
87. Conversation between Tara DeRyk and Ralph Barnwell, October 9, 1996.
88. *The Amherstburg Echo*, October 28, 1965.
89. *The Amherstburg Echo*, November 20, 1996.
90. *The Amherstburg Echo*, May 25, 1977.
91. *The Amherstburg Echo*, October 14, 1970.
92. Amherstburg 1796-1996: The New Town on the Garrison Grounds, Book I, Chapter IV, 'A New Homeland - A New Hearth'. Amherstburg: Amherstburg Bicentennial Book Committee, 1996.

93. *The Amherstburg Echo*, July 7, 1993. Ralph McCurdy passed away December 18, 1992.
94. *The Amherstburg Echo*, September 18, 1994.
95. *The Amherstburg Echo*, November 11, 1987.
96. The Corporation of the Town of Amherstburg, Bylaw No. 2274.
97. Ibid.
98. *The Amherstburg Echo*, April 1, 1997.
99. *The Amherstburg Echo*, September 25, 1996.
100. Marsh, John A. With the Tide: Recollections and Anecdotal Histories of the Town of Amherstburg and the Lower Detroit River District. (Amherstburg: Marsh Collection Society, 1995), p. 84. Hereafter referred to as Marsh.
101. Marsh, p. 85.
102. *The Amherstburg Echo*, December 17, 1897.
103. *The Amherstburg Echo*, June 17, 1898.
104. Ibid. A round-trip ticket cost 10¢.
105. Ibid.
106. *The Amherstburg Echo*, July 11, 1902.
107. *The Amherstburg Echo*, July 15, 1910.
108. Ibid. Other DBI&W Ferry Co. steamers in 1910 included the *Pleasure* (Capt. Daniel Jacques); the *Promise* (Capt. George Cruickshank); the *Sappho* (Capt. Archibald Bain); and the *Excelsior* (Capt. William Firby).
109. *The Amherstburg Echo*, March 1, 1901. The café building was moved back in 1924 to a "more accessible site." (*The Amherstburg Echo*, August 29, 1984, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1924'.)
110. *The Amherstburg Echo*, September 27, 1995, 'Yesterday's News - 1905.' The merry-go-round building was transformed into a roller skating rink in 1940. (*The Amherstburg Echo*, March 7, 1990, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1940'.)
111. *The Windsor Star*, January 4, 1990. The carousel was auctioned off piece by piece in 1990 and replaced by fibreglass figures.
112. *The Amherstburg Echo*, August 21, 1996, 'Yesterday's News - 1906.'
113. *The Amherstburg Echo*, January 10, 1913.
114. *The Amherstburg Echo*, March 12, 1995, 'Yesterday's News - 1925;' and August 29, 1984, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1924.'
115. *The Amherstburg Echo*, May 24, 1995, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1925.'

116. *The Amherstburg Echo*, June 7, 1995, 'Yesterday's News - 1925.'
117. *The Amherstburg Echo*, October 25, 1995, 'Yesterday's News - 1925;' and July 23, 1986, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1926.'
118. *The Amherstburg Echo*, March 30, 1928.
119. *The Amherstburg Echo*, November 29, 1929.
120. Ibid.
121. *The Amherstburg Echo*, March 30, 1983, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1933.'
122. *The Amherstburg Echo*, May 27, 1987, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1937.'
123. *The Amherstburg Echo*, December 20, 1989, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1939.' The name 'Bob-Lo' was in common usage as early as 1909 in which year 8-year-old Flora Hodgman refers to "the Boblo workers" in her June 12th diary entry. (Diary of Flora Hodgman, Marsh Collection Society.)
124. *The Amherstburg Echo*, August 8, 1941.
125. *The Amherstburg Echo*, July 4, 1990, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1940.'
126. *The Amherstburg Echo*, December 21, 1988, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1948.'
127. *The Amherstburg Echo*, May 5, 1949. The Browning management team included Troy H. Browning, president; Lorenzo 'Red' Browning, vice-president and general manager; and Frank Donovan, treasurer.
128. *The Amherstburg Echo*, August 3, 1983, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1963.'
129. *The Amherstburg Echo*, August 10, 1988, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1968;' and April 5, 1989, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1969.' The brick house on the property was thereafter known as the 'Bob-Lo house' and was used as the superintendent's residence. The house was built by Judson S. Patton in 1880. (*The Amherstburg Echo*, December 24, 1880.)
130. *The Amherstburg Echo*, April 8 and July 8, 1992, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1982.'
131. *The Amherstburg Echo*, December 23, 1992, 'Upsetting the Hour Glass - 1992.'
132. *The Windsor Star*, February 17, 1984; and May 11, 1987.
133. On January 17, 1996 the *Columbia* and the *Ste. Claire* were sold to "two heritage preservation foundations dedicated to restoring [them] to their original glory." The groups plan to restore the *Columbia* to her 1902 appearance and use her for cruises on the Detroit and St. Clair Rivers. The *Ste. Claire* will be preserved and sold to a similar group. (*The Amherstburg Echo*, January 24, 1996.)
134. *The Detroit Free Press*, October 24, 1991.
135. *The Windsor Star*, February 18, 1993.
136. *The Windsor Star*, May 21, 1994.

137. *The Windsor Star*, August 9, 1994.
138. Printed in the *Amherstburg Echo*, April 3, 1994.
139. *The Amherstburg Echo*, January 30, 1914.
140. *The Amherstburg Echo*, November 3 and 10, 1933.
141. *The Amherstburg Echo*, April 25 and May 9, 1973.
142. *The Amherstburg Echo*, May 11 and 16, 1973.
143. Minutes of the Amherstburg Rotary Club, July 13, 1973.
144. Gibb house records (Park House Museum).
145. In 1820 this was renumbered as Lot 3. It is the present site of Duffy's Motel.
146. Phelps, Edward & Cumming, Ross (eds.) Illustrated Historical Atlas of the Counties of Essex and Kent. Toronto: H. Belden & Co., 1881. Reprinted 1973.
147. "Holders of Lots in the Town of Amherstburg, 1799." National Archives of Canada (NAC).
148. Upper Canada Land Petitions (NAC).
149. Ibid.
150. Ibid. This affidavit was signed February 23, 1821.
151. Ibid.
152. "Sketch of the Military Post at Amherstburg, 1804" (NAC, C-52252).
153. Quaipe, Milo M. (ed.) The John Askin Papers, Vol. II. (Detroit: Detroit Library Commission, 1928), p. 444.
154. Upper Canada Land Petitions (NAC).
155. Ibid.
156. The original painting is the property of Fort Malden National Historic Site. Elliott's Point ran from the 'old' Elliott house almost to Bois Blanc Island. It was gradually removed at the turn of the century when it was discovered that its sand was ideal for making the cement needed in Detroit building projects.
157. Essex County Registry Office, Abstract Book E, Instrument No. 30.
158. Essex County Registry Office, Abstract Book D, Instrument No. 139.
159. Essex County Registry Office, Instrument No. 42 for Amherstburg.
160. It was announced in the *Amherstburg Echo* of June 29, 1877 that the Park House had recently opened.
161. *The Amherstburg Echo*, August 29, 1884.

162. *The Amherstburg Echo*, December 3, 1880.
163. Land Conveyance No. 11629, 1938.
164. Land Conveyance #3832 GK, 1941 October 15.
165. *The Amherstburg Echo*, November 11, 1970.
166. *The Amherstburg Echo*, April 14, 1971.
167. *The Amherstburg Echo*, June 11, 1971.
168. Amherstburg Rotary Club Papers, 1972.
169. Ibid.
170. *The Amherstburg Echo*, May 3, 1972.
171. *The Detroit News*, September 29, 1972.
172. Amherstburg Rotary Club Papers, 1973.
173. *The Amherstburg Echo*, December 12, 1973.
174. For a detailed history of Fort Malden from 1796 to the 1940s, see Amherstburg 1796-1996: The New Town on the Garrison Grounds, Book I, pp. 20-36.
175. Fort Malden NHS Development Info File.
176. Ibid.
177. Ibid.
178. Fort Malden NHS file, 'Botsford Family Genealogical File'.
179. Schatkoski, Lisa. "AASLH Honours in Eastern Canada". Impact: The Voice of the Canadian Heritage Network, Vol. 5(1), January 1993.
180. *The Amherstburg Echo*, April 17 or 24, 1996.
181. Amherstburg 1796-1996: The New Town on the Garrison Grounds, Book I. (Amherstburg: Amherstburg Bicentennial Book Committee, 1996), p.246.
182. North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre brochure.
183. *The Amherstburg Echo*, March 15, 1972.
184. For a more extensive treatment of this history, see Malcomson, Robert and Malcomson, Thomas. HMS Detroit: Battle for Lake Erie. St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishing, 1990.
185. Lord Cultural Resources Planning and Management Inc. with Frank Wolman Associates Inc., 1988; Monteith Zelinka Limited, 1994.

### **Chapter VII - Heritage & Recreation**

- p. 266 - In the Amherstburg Community Band photo, the first person in the second row is Jo-Anne Curtis. In the third row, 5th from the right is Jim McTaggart.
- p. 267 - The caption for the photo of the Liberty Theatre should read "circa 1920."
- p. 302-303 - Building #19, incorrectly labelled as 1169 Front Road South, is the Dr. Fred Park house at 102 Gore Street.