



# Reflections

Please  
take  
one!

Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection  
Amherstburg, Ontario

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## The "Princess" Roller Skating Rink

by Vicki Petras

Capitalizing on the growing popularity of roller skating in the mid-1880's, Amherstburg entrepreneur/photographer Douglas H. Terry and coal merchant Capt. Ira B. Mansfield teamed up to establish and construct a roller rink known as the "Princess Roller Skating Rink". Contracted to Alex Ellis for erection, the 36' x 130' structure was located at the NE corner of the block bounded by Richmond, Bathurst, Murray and Ramsay Streets (site of the present day TD Canada Trust building).

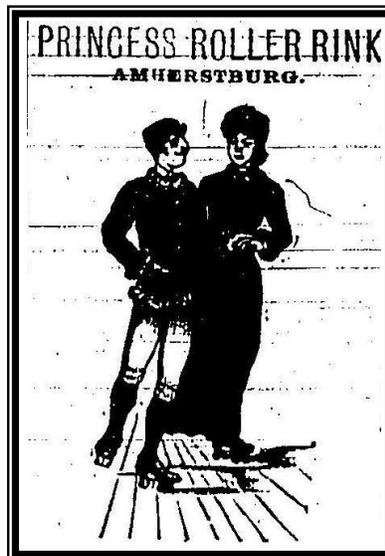
The rink's specialized flooring consisted of soft maple laid with a mitre at each corner so that the skating surface would be straight in every direction. Separate dressing rooms were provided for ladies and gentlemen, as well as a bandstand to accommodate the provisions of live musical accompaniment. Along each side of the skating surface was seating for spectators. Lighting and coal heaters were perks added to enhance this recreational experience. The proprietors ordered 100 pairs of "Wilkie" roller skates for the patrons' use. For those wishing to possess their own skates, they could be purchased at D.L. Wigle's store for \$3.50 a pair.

The Grand Opening took place on Monday, December 8, 1884 and drew about 400 guests from the town and surrounding county. The following evening, approximately 175 people were in attendance. Generally, the rink was open for business on weekday afternoons and evenings with admission priced at 15 cents per person, or discounted to 10 cents when purchasing a package of 10 visits for \$1.00.

Special events were often held to sustain interest and increase attendance, and prizes provided by

the proprietors and local merchants were added enticements for patrons to participate in the contests. Among the varied events were:

- lap count races for boys and men
- basket races for women and girls, with the object being to transport oranges from one end of the rink to the other as quickly as possible
- live pig capture contest for boys
- masquerade carnivals
- solo and partnered skill and style competitions
- guest performances by out-of-town expert and stunt skaters
- scattered penny collecting contests for children



In early February 1885, townsman Charles H. Kemp negotiated the purchase of Capt. Ira Mansfield's share in the partnership. Ownership of the rink was then known as "Kemp & Terry", with Kemp acting as manager and Terry as treasurer. They proceeded to have the rink refurbished during the summer of 1885. For the most part, roller skating was a wintertime indoor form of recreation. Typical newspaper coverage of events and activities at the rink suggested that its active operation customarily spanned the months of late October until May.

During the latter part of May 1886, the Salvation Army (SA) established a mission in the town of Amherstburg and secured temporary use, by way of rental, of the Princess Roller Rink as its base of operation.

The first service in that venue was held on the evening of June 18, 1886. By the fall of that year, the Salvation Army's local leadership was holding fundraising events towards finding a suitable place to relocate the mission on a permanent basis.

*continued on page 2*

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**What is the Marsh Collection Society?**

Our mandate is to *collect, preserve and encourage research into the heritage of Amherstburg and the lower Detroit River district.*

Established in 1994 at 235A (2nd floor) Dalhousie Street, this registered non-profit organization was founded in 1983 by the late Helen and John Marsh, whose family operated the Amherstburg Echo for over 80 years. It was, however, their intent that a facility to house their historical collection should be established only after their deaths, which occurred in 1986 and 1993 respectively.

**What's in the Collection?**

The resource centre contains photos, books, documents, postcards, artifacts and many more items relating to the area. An extensive library boasts several shelves of books on a wide range of subjects - church records, Canadian, Ontario and Local history, Black and First Nations history; Marine and Military, Prohibition, Railway, WW1, 2 and 1812 - and more. Microfilm holdings include census records for Essex County, the Amherstburg Echo (1874 - 2012) and Assessment rolls. A collection of land instruments (Amherstburg and Malden) is also a very valuable resource.



**The Princess Roller Rink, cont'd.**

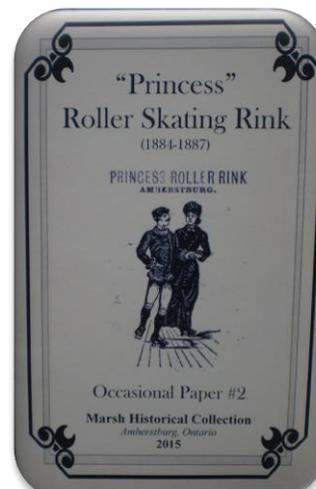
A total lack of newspaper coverage of roller skating events during the winter months of 1886/1887 is suggestive that use of the rink for that purpose was suspended. The announcement of the SA mission's opening of its new "barracks" location on Bathurst Street in early April 1887 seems to indicate that an extended rental of the facility was required, rendering it unavailable to the roller skating public.

In October, 1887 "Amherstburg Echo" articles announced that limited roller skating hours were once again available. These fall occasions were reasonably well attended. The expectation of the proprietors Kemp & Terry was to ramp up operations so that the rink would be open six days a week starting on New Year's Day 1888.

All promise of an upcoming entertaining winter and spring of skating came to a sudden and fiery end on the afternoon of November 8, 1887 when the Princess Roller Rink burned to the ground – one of a number of buildings that were victims of the block-sized blaze originating in the first floor of the adjacent grocery store of George Florey.

Soon after the fire, Kemp & Terry approached the town council to promote the idea of renting part of the new town hall for a couple of days each week for a rink. This idea was rapidly dismissed by council members as being impractical in a number of ways.

In the aftermath of this roadblock to re-establishing the rink, there is no coverage of any further attempts on the part of these proprietors to pursue resurrection of the rink. C.H. Kemp busied himself with the operation of his livery stable before selling this business to W. Gibb in March of 1889.

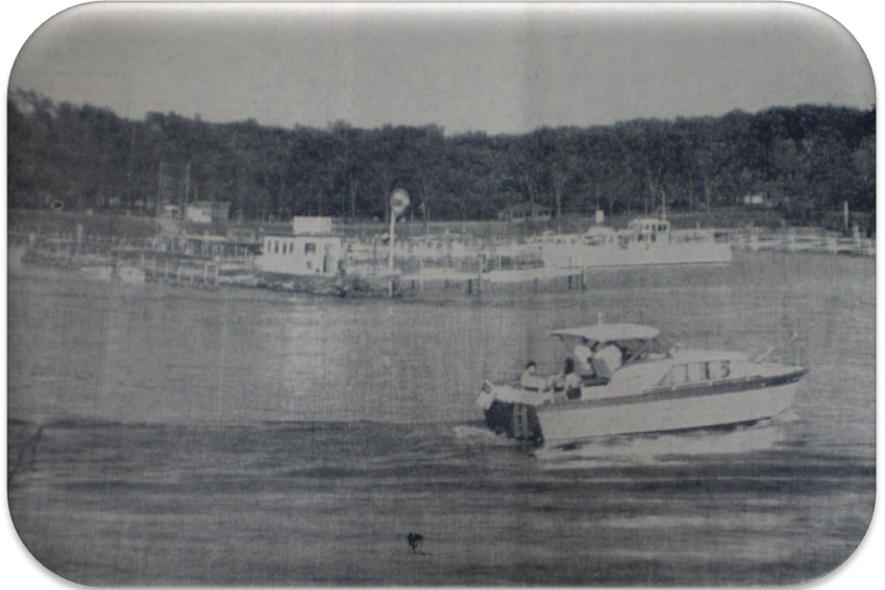


**Read more about the happenings at the Princess Roller Rink as reported in the Amherstburg Echo. Pick up your copy today for only \$3.00.**

# Summer of '65

*"Port O' Call Marina on Bob-lo is now open for the season."*

*Amherstburg Echo, May 29, 1965*



*"The Lions Club Swimming Pool opened on Monday. Swimming classes started on that day."*

*Amherstburg Echo, July 8, 1965*

*The small ferry C.E. Park has carried thousands of people from Amherstburg to Bob-lo so far this season. She sails from the foot of Murray Street."*

*Amherstburg Echo, August 26, 1965*



# Shipping the Detroit

*Marine related articles from The Amherstburg Echo*

## June 11, 1915

- With the lighter **EDWARD MCWILLIAMS**, the tug **FRANCIS B. HACKETT** left Amherstburg for Cleveland last week. The vessels will carry coal from that port to Welland canal during the summer. The trip is the first made by the **MCWILLIAMS** since she was brought to Amherstburg last summer.
- Construction of the new Canadian light station marking the intersection of Livingstone and Amherstburg channels above the head of Bois Blanc Island, lower Detroit River, is going forward rapidly. It is expected the structure will be finished before July 1<sup>st</sup>, ready for installation of the light and fog signal.

## July 30, 1915

- The steamer **HARVEY H. BROWN** passed down Saturday with her first cargo of the season. Mrs. (Capt.) D. Girardin made the first trip with her husband, who is master.
- Mrs. (Capt.) A. C. Callam and daughters, Misses Dorothy and Mary, left Monday for a trip up the lakes on the steamer **FITZGERALD**, of which the former's husband is master.
- John Fraser sold the engine from the steamer **ENERGY** to Capt. J. S. McQueen, and same is being placed in the hull of the steamer **CITY OF DRESDEN**.

## **-STEAMER EASTLAND HORROR -**

- Over twelve hundred people were drowned on Saturday morning in the Chicago River, when the steamer **EASTLAND** turned over at the dock. The vessel was leased by the Illinois Transportation Company, and was crowded with 2,500 excursionists of the Western Electric Company. Some 1,645 people are reported as being safe. Officials of the Transportation Company were arrested, as was W. C. Steele, Secretary-Treasurer of the St. Joseph-Chicago Steamship Company. The most discussed theories of the cause of the wreck are four: That the boat was overloaded; that she was not properly ballasted; that a tug that made fast to warp the **EASTLAND** from the dock started pulling too soon; that congestion of passengers rushing to the port side attracted by some passing sensation tipped the steamer over. The **EASTLAND** was equipped with water ballast. The **EASTLAND** is well known along the chain of great lakes as being the only boat with a steam calliope aboard. She has always been dubbed "The crank of the lakes" and old mariners in every port predicted that she would be a coffin for someone. William Deneau, formerly of Malden, an experienced diver, is prominently connected with the work of recovering bodies of the victims.

## August 13, 1915

- The steamer **MIDLAND QUEEN**, known to every child along the river, and recognized as an old friend by marine men, has been torpedoed by a German submarine. She left Sarnia six weeks ago with a Sarnia crew for salt water, and was taking a cargo of steel from Halifax to London when caught by the Germans.

***If you like ships, stop in to take a look at our scrapbooks and McQueen Marine display!***



# Yesterday's News

## 1915

**June** – The post office department has decided to issue a two-cent post card for domestic use, covering both the postage and the war tax.

**July** – Thirty tons hard coal is being loaded on the dock, foot of Richmond Street, for the supply steamer Simcoe, by Falls Bros., for the different lighthouses.

**August** – Clingstone peaches are selling on the local market at \$2 a bushel.

## 1925

**June** – There was tremendous automobile traffic through Amherstburg on Sunday. The water front was lined for miles with picnickers. F.H. McCaffrey, town engineer, and W.P. Coyle, County Clerk who live opposite each other on Sandwich Street, satisfied their curiosity by counting the vehicles which passed their places between 4 and 5 o'clock, and found they totaled 226 automobiles, 3 street cars and 1 horse drawn carriage.

**July** – Owing to the very satisfactory results at the entrance examinations at the Amherstburg centre, the High School attendance will be increasing to a much greater degree after holidays than for several years and it is expected that it will be necessary to engage an additional instructor making it a six-teacher school.

**August** – Thirty-four rinks participated in the annual tournament of the Amherstburg Lawn Bowling Club on Monday.

## 1935

**June** – Si Bertrand, one of the best young golfers in these parts, demonstrated his ability at the Spring Hill Golf Club on Sunday when he shot the course in three under par.

**July** – The Annual Meeting of the Harrow Farmers Co-operative Association Limited was held in the Harrow town hall on Friday evening last. The Co-operative enjoyed for the year, the largest business in its history. During the year businesses were acquired at McGregor, Stone Point and Amherstburg. In Amherstburg, in addition to the old Amherst Co-operative plant, the old well-established firm known as Falls & Sons was acquired.

**August** – Mayor J. Ernest McGee and Chief of Police Joseph Taylor, of Amherstburg, have been threatened with a writ for damages following the orders of the council that all slot machines in operation in Amherstburg be seized by the local police and removed to the town hall. These machines were collected, taken to the town hall and are held there awaiting removal from the municipality by their owners.

## 1945

**June** – A goodly number of Amherstburg and district soldiers from overseas are expected to arrive home over the weekend and a Civic Reception has been planned by the Fort Malden Branch of the Canadian Legion, the Rotary Club and other civic organizations.

**July** – While excavating for the foundations for the new office being built for McQueen Marine Ltd. on the former Wigle Flouring Mill property, Dalhousie St. South, workmen came across two tannery hooks and other evidence of the tannery that used to be located in this area. The tannery was operated by John G. Kolfage, first mayor of Amherstburg.

**August** – An attempt will be made to inaugurate a housing program in Amherstburg. This was decided at a meeting of the Amherstburg Post-War Planning Commission held at the home of Captain J. Earl McQueen Tuesday evening.

## 1955

**June** – A building boom is in progress in Amherstburg with building permits to the total of \$1,105,500 being issued in the first 5 months of the current year.

**July** – Hazen Price took over the office as president of the Amherstburg Rotary Club on Thursday evening. He succeeds John Turnbull.

**August** – A successful drive for funds to build a new church building is being carried on among the local Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Irving Jones is chairman of the campaign committee.

### 1965

**June** – Ledson Darragh, collector of customs for the port of Amherstburg, reports there were 301 small crafts that reported into Amherstburg customs during the week Sunday night. This brought in 1237 tourists.

**July** – In the opinion of William J. Hilliker, Windsor architect, the former post office building, corner Dalhousie & Richmond Streets, is not suitable to be remodeled into town offices.

**August** – The Amherstburg plant of Canadian Cannery Ltd. started receiving tomatoes Wednesday. The first tomatoes went to the Simcoe and Kingsville plants.

### 1975

**June** – Honourable Eugene Whelan, federal minister of agriculture, was honoured by his home town people at a large gathering held at the Verdi Club Friday evening.

**July** – A delegation of some 30 residents of Bar Pointe were present at the meeting of the Malden council Monday evening to discuss the construction of a boat ramp through the sand dyke constructed by the township.

**August** – The Amherstburg Community Band stole the show at the annual festival of bands staged at the east town park Wednesday evening.

### 1985

**June** – Jellystone Park, Yogi Bear & Friends theme, has created a warm and friendly atmosphere at the campground facility on Pike Road.

**July** – Alan Richard's Casual Wear opened July 4<sup>th</sup> as the mall's newest tenant.

**August** – The AAM Volunteer Ambulance Service is proud to introduce its newest piece of equipment, the 1985 Sentinell II Ambulance. Purchased to replace the aging 1974 Cadillac, this unit represents the latest in emergency care technology.

### 1995

**June** – A plaque will be unveiled in his honour on Simon Girty's original Loyalist Crown grant land along the Detroit River, Front Road South, on Saturday.

**July** – Members of Malden Council presented Orval McGuire with the senior citizen of the year award and also a plaque recognizing his induction into the Essex County Agriculture Hall of Fame..

**August** – The Bicentennial Book Committee is working to release a book called "The New Town on the Garrison Grounds" at the end of May 1996. It will recount the

past 200 years of Amherstburg's history.

### 2005

**June** – The Rotary Club of Windsor has bestowed upon Mary Hall the 2005 Eli Goldin Lifetime Achievement award for her humanitarian work.

**July** – The Ontario Ministry of Environment is conducting an investigation into water levels which have resulted in the deaths of hundreds of fish in Big Creek.

**August** – With roughly one month to go until the next round of Family Health Team announcements, there is a sense of optimism that the application put forth by Amherstburg Community Services will be accepted.

*Amherstburg Echo  
June 19, 1914*

# Bricks-n-Beams

## Some Still Call it The Amherst - part 2

by Eleanor Warren

In the March 'Reflections' we ended the Amherst Hotel story in 1948 when Charles and Bertha Fleming sold the place to John Vrede, Joseph and Wilfred Brockman. While we were unable to determine whether the new owners ever operated the business, our research shows that they sold it a year later to Andrew Masney and Steve Buchok. Then in 1952 Buchok transferred his interest to Masney's sons, Paul and Steve Masney. Almost immediately the Amherst became the place to go to enjoy great food and a variety of music. By 1958 they had introduced Lake Erie Pickerel, Fish & Chips and a special Steak Dinner for \$1.10. Patrons were entertained by the Zimmerman Trio

Several structural changes made through the Masney years included updating guest rooms and facilities, a second floor banquet room and an addition to the south of the original building, which provided for enlargement of the bar room and a modern kitchen. By 1961 the popularity of the place had grown to the point where it was again necessary to enlarge and renovate the 80-year-old hotel. The structure was extended the full width of the property to the west along Richmond Street. This allowed for a lounge to accommodate 150 patrons, a new dining room and dance floor, a perfect venue for bowling banquets and wedding receptions. A new front exterior and entrances were also added at that time. On June 5th, 1962 a Grand Opening of the newly remodeled Amherst Hotel brought out a crowd of fun-seekers who danced to Benny's Trio. Other musical groups that drew crowds in later years were Earl Roach and the Canadian Vagabonds, strictly country music; then Slim Maguire, who was just "back from a cross-Canada tour." Another popular group was Gordon Wood & The Country Cougars who played four nights a week in the late 1960s. The year 1970 ended with rockin' and dancin' with Chuck Galipeau and The Hi Tempo Band.



From left: Andrew, Paul and Steve Masney, and unidentified gentleman  
Undated Marsh Collection photo



The Marsh Historical Collection archives contain a massive amount of information about the history of the Amherst Hotel. It's impossible to tell the rest of the story here so please watch for our September issue of 'Reflections' for more."

# Summer Exhibit

Stop in to see our latest exhibit, "Peeking Thru the Porthole", which looks back at the pleasure steamers that plied the Great Lakes a century ago. On display until September 30<sup>th</sup>.



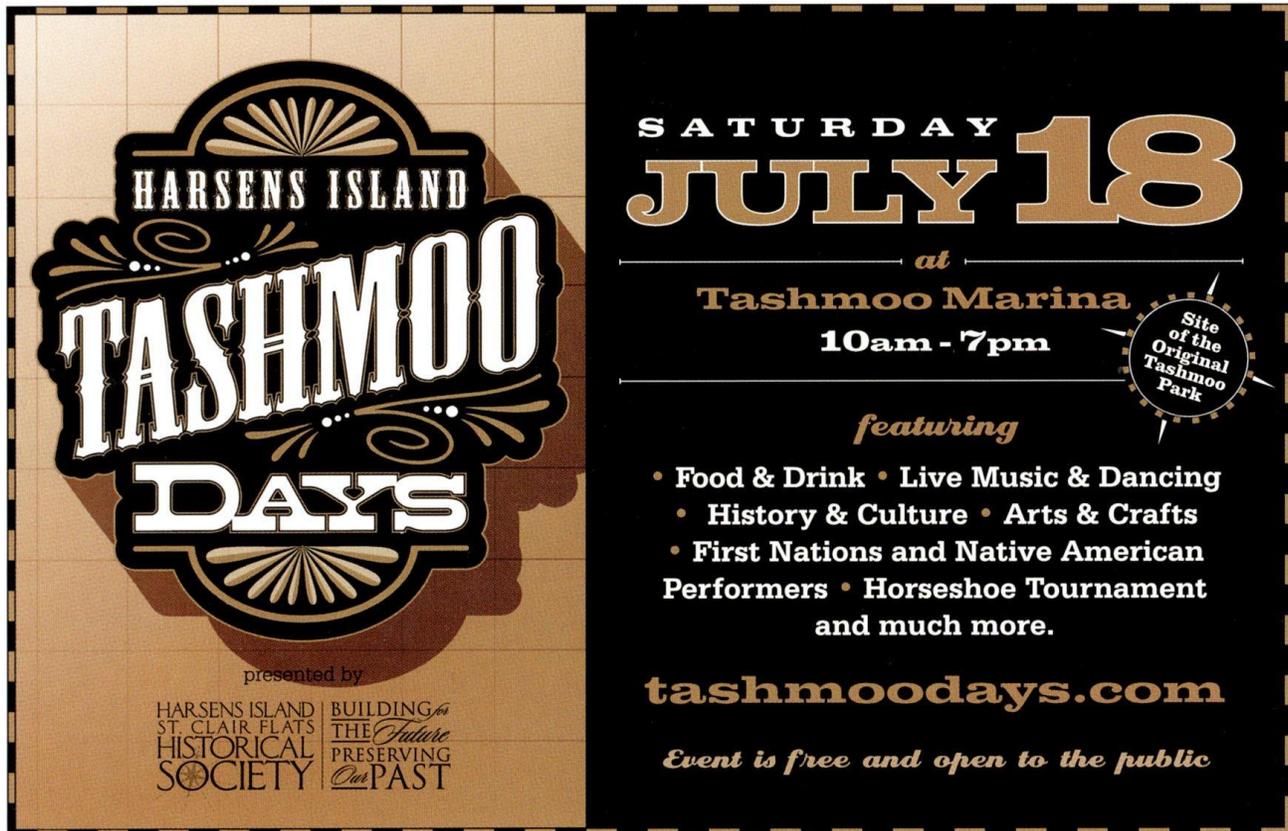
## Remembering the Pappoose



"The ferry Pappoose is in charge of the same crew as last year, and is run on the same schedule. S.J. Pettypiece has charge of the dock on the Amherstburg side. W.R. Pizer is again ticket agent here, with James Martin pursuer, while H.J. Mickle, of Cherry Grove, looks after the Company's interests on the Bois Blanc side of the run."

***Amherstburg Echo***  
***June 4, 1915***

Photo courtesy of Fort Malden National Park



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## Odds *N* Ends

*Taken from the Amherstburg Echo*

### **June 21, 1889**

- A new mixed drink is called a “business brace,” but its practical tendency is more that of a business suspender.
- J.H. Morgan from Anderdon has some splendid strawberries this year, 5.75 inches each around is the size several have attained.

### **July 5, 1889**

- At Racine, Wisconsin, admission to saloons on Sundays is gained by imitating the hoot of an owl.

### **August 13, 1915**

- Capt. Charles Hackett, Bois Blanc, has a cat which is mothering a brood of chickens, the biddy hen having died. Pussy guards her flock with jealous care, and has a healthy scratch for anyone found molesting them.

# Then & Now

## Navy Yard Park north of Richmond Street



Mullen Coal dock c. 1930s



Navy Yard Park 2015