



# Reflections



Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection  
Amherstburg, Ontario

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## Coping with the **COLD**

Ads from the Amherstburg Echo  
...Preparing for the winter weather

Ice Storm, Front Road S., 1960s

**When Winter Comes!**  
with howling blizzards, zero weather and drifting snow  
*Will Your House be Warm and Comfortable?*

THE  
**"SOUVENIR" SUPERHEATER**

is not a stove.  
It is the best furnace ever devised to heat the medium sized house.  
It will efficiently burn hard or soft coal, wood or coke, and will give you better heating results on far less fuel than any other small furnace on the market.  
It is handsomely finished in mahogany enamel, and may be placed in your living room if you so desire.  
It is portable if you wish to move and saves the expense of installing a basement furnace.

MADE IN CANADA  
HAMILTON STOVE & HEATER CO.  
HAMILTON, ONTARIO

See the Superheater at Your Dealer's  
He will be glad to demonstrate it for you.

C. Richardson & Son Harrow  
Wigle Hardware Co. Amherstburg

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**Beautiful Portland Cutters-8**  
Regular Price \$62.00  
For Sale At Only **\$45.00**  
This is a Rare Opportunity.

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**THE KEMP FURNITURE CO.**  
Phone 69 Amherstburg

**COAL. COAL.**  
**Falls Brothers**  
HAVE JUST RECEIVED  
A VESSEL OF FIRST-CLASS COAL.  
Furnace, Stove and Chestnut Sizes.  
Examine before buying elsewhere. Sheds below Wigle's Mill.

You cannot possibly have a better Cocoa than

**EPPS'S**

A delicious drink and a sustaining food. Fragrant, nutritious and economical. This excellent Cocoa maintains the system in robust health, and enables it to resist winter's extreme cold.

**COCOA**  
Sold by Grocers and Storekeepers in 1/2-lb. and 1-lb. tins.

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**Men's Ulster O'Coats**  
\$25, \$30, \$32, \$38 \$40.

Big warm fleecy Whitneys, friezes, naps and tweeds, splendidly tailored. The ideal winter overcoat for the man who is obliged to be out in all kinds of weather.

# Gift Shop

If you're looking for a gift for a local history buff, or would like to add to your own library, the Marsh Collection offers a variety of publications, prints and notecards.

These titles and many more:

## "McGregor News"

*The First 25 Years  
(1875-1900)*

Published by the  
Marsh Collection  
Society

This brand-new publication is a fun and interesting read of the good, bad, and the sometimes ugly, of old McGregor.

## "McGREGOR NEWS"

*The First Twenty-Five Years  
1875 - 1900*



A Publication of the Marsh Collection Society, Amherstburg, Ontario, Canada

## Eight Steamboats

*Sailing Through the Sixties*

By Patrick Livingston

\$35

**From The Vault:** A Photo-History of Windsor

*From the Archives of The Windsor Star*

Volume 1 \$39.95

Volume II \$42

2-Volume Set \$75

## The Pea Shooter Hit Squad

*And other Tales of Growing Up in Amherstburg*

By Edward A. (Pat) Warren

## CURRENT EXHIBITS



Featuring paintings, carvings, and drawings by local artists as well as scenes from around town.



Come in to see our display of  
*Greeting Cards From the Past*

Reprints of select designs will be  
available in the gift shop.

The Marsh Collection is  
open 10 am - 4 pm Tuesday through Friday

**CLOSED between Christmas and New Years**

Phone 519-736-9191

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website: [www.marshcollection.org](http://www.marshcollection.org)



# Snowflakes

As reported in the Amherstburg Echo  
January 18, 1918

Everybody in Amherstburg learned what it means to 'go over the top' Sunday when going to Church or making a survey of the town to view the effects of the storm.

Shovelling snow is about the most useless job in the world, but there's some satisfaction doing it when one feels that everyone else is indulging in the same kind of compulsory exercise.

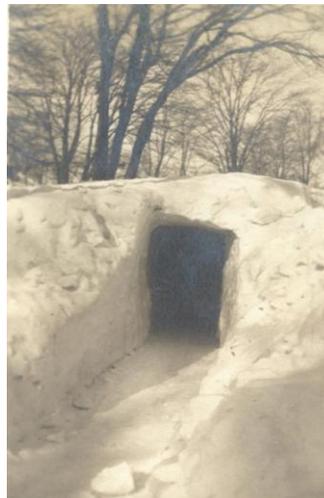
Many professional men qualified for shovel work at the Brunner Mond, Sunday, digging themselves out. If work gets slack next summer their experience in trench digging ought to suggest a way to keep the pot boiling and commend them to General Manager Ratherford for a job.

To the elders the billows of snow were a confounded nuisance; to the youngsters they were a miracle of fun, through which to dig trenches, communication trenches, dugouts, tunnels and other military byways.

Every outbreak of nature like this starts old cronies reminiscing. All day Sunday knots of old bends, gathered to discuss similar storms both here and in the old land, but one and all agreed that the blizzard of January 12, 1918 was in a class by itself.

One never realized what an important part bread and milk play in our daily diet until deprived of them. Most homes were utterly without milk and many without bread on Sunday. Grocers had a run on condensed milk and practically sold out. Luxuries in the Yukon became necessities in Amherstburg.

There was no real suffering for lack of fuel. While a number of homes were close to the danger point in this respect, charitably disposed persons shared up, and the Brunner Mond management passed the word along that it was prepared to tide over every needy case with soft coal from their works.



Snow Tunnel  
Dalhousie St. North

Little acts of kindness like this are deeply appreciated.

Old furs were resurrected from almost forgotten paper sacks, and brought out to serve their owners. Men forgot their pride in their efforts to keep warm, many of them appearing on the streets in their wife's, daughter's or sister's stocking caps. Anything to keep the ears and face from freezing.

Cases of freezing were common. Men going to work didn't realize how cold it was until their noses, cheeks, or ears were whitened with frost. Brunner Mond employees facing the storm to work, were the worst sufferers. Wesley Beacom, baker, endeavored to deliver bread on Sandwich street. Mr. Beacom was severely frozen about the limbs and face before he was taken in charge by passerby. It was necessary to remove him to the B.M. hospital for treatment.

Conductor Joseph Kenney and Motorman Thomas Hicks drove the 6.15 car through to Windsor Saturday morning, arriving only 5 minutes late, but the car leaving Windsor at 7a.m. in charge of O'Neil and Higgins, stalled at Martin's lane, and remained there for nearly fifty hours.

The lowest temperatures reported were as follows: Brunner Mond, 22 below; rear of Berube's store, 18 below; Auld P.O., 19 below. Saturday evening the thermometers leveled up to about 10 below.

Snap shot artists enjoyed themselves this week making records of the big storm's doings. The two outstanding snow banks were at the upper end of Dalhousie street, at the entrance to W.S. Fall's property, and on Dalhousie street south, between Murray and Gore. These banks were from ten to twelve feet high. In the later instance the residence of Dr. T.J. Park was almost completely snowed in.

# Upsetting the Hour Glass



**1926/27**

**December-** They are going Hell bent for the Liberty Theater, Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, to see "Hell Bent for Heaven".

**January-** At a representative meeting of the Amherstburg Merchants, which was held on Thursday morning, it was decided to close their stores every Thursday afternoon, with the exception of December.

**February-** The Malden town hall will soon be adorned with electric lights. This will be much appreciated by the public.

**1936/37**

**December-** Amherstburg children got a break Friday when they were able to tell Santa Claus personally what they wanted most for Christmas. The jolly old saint made a special visit to the Amherstburg branch of the Smith store.

**January-** Another step towards the modernization of the store fronts in Amherstburg is being made with the remodeling of the M&P Store. The old window is being torn out and will be replaced by two up-to-date windows. The entrance will

be in the center.

**February-** The freighter E.C. Pope of the Nicholson Steamship Co., opened the regular season of navigation on the Detroit River.

**1946/47**

**December-** The skating rink on the town park is being prepared by Lee St. John and if the cold weather holds should be ready for use before Christmas.

**January-** Mayor F.T. Pickering announced that final papers will be signed this afternoon to bring the industry S-K-D Tool Company to Amherstburg.

**February-** Headquarters of the Amherstburg municipal detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police will be moved from the town hall to the former waterworks building on Dalhousie Street.

**1956/57**

**December-** Jack Purdie was re-elected president of the Fort Malden Branch of the Canadian Legion.

**January-** On Wednesday, the students received their tuberculin test which was sponsored by the Essex County Sanatorium.

**February-** A hold-up, a bold robbery and a break-in were staged in the Amherstburg district over the weekend. The hold-up took place at the Moleses Grocery, 2<sup>nd</sup> Conc. And Texas Road; the bold robbery in Zin's Market, Sandwich Street, and the break-in at the Marine Museum at the Fort Malden National Historic Park.

**1966/67**

**December-** We wish you a Merry Christmas! May all the joy and gladness of Christmas come to you and yours this Holiday Season! – McQueen Marine

**January-** Temperatures in the Banana Belt for the week ranged from a low of 16 degrees (Fahrenheit) January 16<sup>th</sup>, to a high of 41 degrees (Fahrenheit) January 14<sup>th</sup>.

**February-** Help Wanted- 1967 Bob-Lo Season- Ride Operators; Waitresses; Cashiers; Grounds- Application forms available at Jones China Shop, Dalhousie St. Amherstburg.

# Bricks-N-Beams

## An Early History of the Rondot Villa 495 Dalhousie

Known by locals as “Argyle Castle”, the grand and dignified structure standing at 495 Dalhousie Street was constructed in 1894 to the finest standards of architectural design. The villa was built by A.E. (Gus) Rondot, a well-known businessman in town, who was involved in the mercantile trade. He built the house for wife Nellie Boyle and himself.

The house included a billiards room, smoking lounge, ballroom, servant’s quarters, and splendid reception hall featuring a double-return oak staircase and Lake Superior red sandstone fireplace. Each room was handsomely styled and furnished. A design element worth noting is that plumbing throughout the home was left exposed to permit access for repairs.



The Rondot’s time in their new elegant home was short-lived. Nellie Rondot died in 1900, leaving behind their only son, Guy. That year, Gus’ company Rondot & Co. merged with the Amherstburg Cash Store. He was manager of this establishment until he passed away three years later in 1903.

Executors of the Rondot estate sold the house to Alexander Pirie, of Detroit. It then passed to William H. Jones, an Amherstburg merchant, in 1914. He owned the property for six years before selling to Harry and Harriet Hodgman. Harry Hodgman was a U.S. engineer who worked on the Livingston Channel, and Harriet worked at the Amherstburg Public School. The home remained with the Hodgman family for some time, passing to their daughter Flora Hodgman in 1942.

Undoubtedly inspired by the age and grandeur of the structure, reports of secret tunnels, hidden passageways, and ghosts have come forth over the years.

The house has had multiple owners since Hodgman ownership in the 1940s and maintains a beguiling presence along the Amherstburg waterfront to this day.



**“-The exterior will consist of a coursed rockface limestone basement. The superstructure will be of random ranged hardhead cobbles carefully selected for diversity of colour and form, forming the field from ground floor level to cut stone frieze course directly under second floor window sills. From frieze course to eaves will be open timber construction; the panels between the timbers will be treated in combed stucco, ornamented in broad free scrolls, decorated with selected pebbles and shells-”.**

-The Amherstburg Echo  
September 28, 1894

# Ridin' the Rods

By Anony Mouse

Amherstburg's rail yard in the late 50s, as I remember it, consisted of the area south of Fort Street; the Co-Op granary, Menzies coal yard and the station depot (now the Gibson Gallery), with Canadian Cannery on the north side of Fort Street and farther up, past St. Arnaud Street, Calvert Distillers, being serviced by the New York Central system out of St. Thomas.

Arriving from Essex, the "plug", being dragged by an old "Consolidated 2-8-0" steam locomotive, first came to a stop alongside the cannery. After bleeding down the air brakes on all of the cars, a burst of throttle was given to start the train rolling, gathering speed toward the granary. On a hand signal from the conductor a crewman pulled a lever on the first car to "break" the train. The locomotive, separated from the string, thumped down the track ahead of the coasting cars. A switchman shunted the coasting "freights" to another siding. The locomotive then reversed up the track and switched over to the siding where the cars had slowed to a stop to begin the shunting process. Back and forth it steamed, to sort out and spot new shipments and cut out the empties for return. This took about one and a half hours.

The wail of the locomotive coming into town coincided with the Amherstburg Public School's "out" bell. Our gang hurried out of the school by the

Rankin Avenue exit, then ran across Sandwich Street and raced through the neighbourhood fields to a small knoll next to the granary. We'd watch the old steamer huffing and chuffing clouds of steam and thick black smoke as it rumbled up and down the rails.

As more time was spent at the yard we became braver and soon began "hitching" rides on the coasting cars. I can still remember the first time I grabbed a ride after working up the nerve. The locomotive and tender (coal car) was passing close by and we jumped onto the wooden running board at the rear of the tender. I couldn't believe how smooth and quiet the ride was compared to dad's old jalopy! We became addicted to this. The train crew, especially the engineer, were growing concerned. Threats and admonishment didn't work.

One day the old gray-haired engineer threw down a wad of chewing tobacco from the cab. It was horrible! He laughed as we retched our stomachs out (we thought you were supposed to eat the stuff) and watched us run home, sick.

Another day he said, "Alright, get up here! But behave." We couldn't believe it! The mystery of what was inside that big black cab was about to be unveiled.

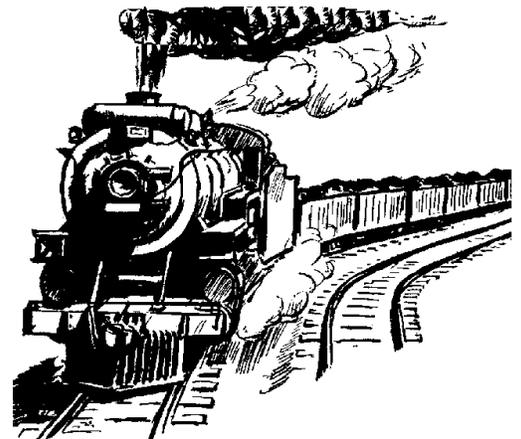
Here we were, up in the "office" of a real live steam locomotive—a hot, busy, noisy place where the engineer and fireman wore striped coveralls, blue and white striped hats and towels wrapped around their necks. The coveralls were tied with cloth rags about their ankles. This cramped hellish place was filled with pipes, shiny brass gauges, handles, levers, valve

wheels and oilcans. Grimy with coal dust and stifling heat, it reeked of sweat, mould, oil, grease, coal tar and old sardine sandwiches. I couldn't imagine how they drove this fire-breathing monster.

Right away the engineer put us to work shoveling coal. The furnace doors were opened by stepping on an iron foot pedal on the floor in front of the fire-box. My 75 pounds of weight weren't enough to open it without the fireman's help. From his seat a leg shot out and stomped on the pedal. The doors swung open to reveal a blinding white-hot slug of fuel and searing heat. My first pitch went all over the floor and I was told to pass the shovel to someone else.

Back and forth across Fort Street, five of us stood, riding on the gang plate (the steel plate joining the tender and locomotive) that lurched, shifted and swayed as the locomotive clanked and snorted through its task. We were kings of the Road, waving at the kids who looked up in awe from the sidewalk below.

Being up in the cab with the engineer, he could keep an eye on us to prevent the unthinkable...running over us.



*Continued on page 7.*

But his kind efforts to keep us from mortal danger were in vain. We didn't stop. The police were finally involved to inform us we were trespassing and we'd be jailed if caught there again. So, we moved our boarding operations to the bush north of the cannery. There, we lurked in the scrub, until the old plug rattling and hissing backwards, brass bell clanging, with its drag of cars, came by on its way to the next stop; Calvert Distillers. From the bushes we could spot the black tender rounding the cannery

curve. Its rear operating light appearing like a large yellow eye backing toward us. The engineer threw the throttle fully open on the iron beast. He knew we were waiting. The ground shook and the old engine thundered huge clouds of choking black smoke and steam into the air that literally blasted the leaves off the overhanging tree limbs. When the last cars were passing we'd dash out of hiding to the nearest boxcar and "grab" a ride to St. Arnaud Street.

These actions were incredibly foolish for a two-minute thrill ride. Missing the "grab-bar" resulted in derisive laughter, skinned knees and picking roadbed cinders from the palms of our hands for a week. But no one was ever seriously injured. We were lucky.

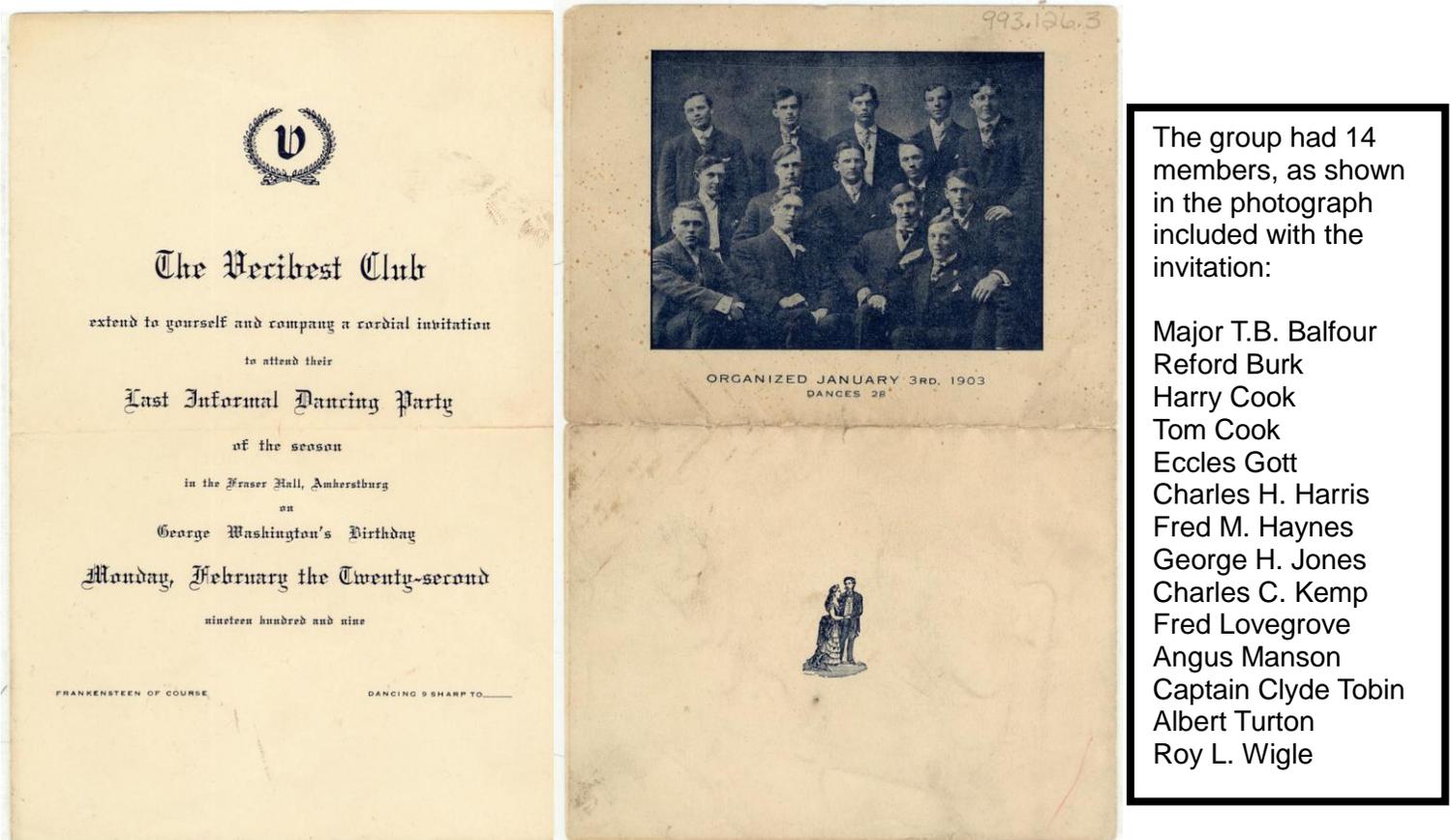
This period didn't last long though, as the "Diesel Era" in Amherstburg began around that time. These newer locomotives were considered boring. We soon abandoned the yards for other adventures.

## Then & Now - 80 Sandwich St. South



# Collection Highlights

*You're Invited* – An invitation to the Veribest Club Dancing Party, 1909



The group had 14 members, as shown in the photograph included with the invitation:

Major T.B. Balfour  
 Reford Burk  
 Harry Cook  
 Tom Cook  
 Eccles Gott  
 Charles H. Harris  
 Fred M. Haynes  
 George H. Jones  
 Charles C. Kemp  
 Fred Lovegrove  
 Angus Manson  
 Captain Clyde Tobin  
 Albert Turton  
 Roy L. Wigle

The Veribest Club was a social group in Amherstburg that was formed on January 3, 1903. The group was known for organizing and hosting informal dances at Fraser (Hadley) Hall on Murray Street. The hall was tastefully decorated for each event, with themes built upon the Union Jack flag. Catering was provided by the club, which always included the Veribest's signature punch bowl. Musical entertainment was often provided by Harold Frankenstein, a local favourite. The dances typically attracted 80-100 couples, with patrons travelling from out of town to attend.

The above invitation was for one such dance on February 22, 1909. This was the last dance of the season and therefore a memorable one. The decorations are described in an article from the Amherstburg Echo, February 26, 1909: "The electric lights were shaded with colored paper, while a liberal use of flags and bunting made the interior of the hall gay with colour". The article also mentions an electric sign with the letters "V.C." which flashed throughout the night. One hundred couples were in attendance, and the party continued until 7:00 the following morning.