



# Reflections



Newsletter of the Marsh Historical Collection  
Amherstburg, Ontario

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## OLD NEWS ON TARIFFS & THE BORDER



By Jeanne McKay

The United States of America, as an independent Republic, began with the revolt against taxes placed on the New England Colonies by Britain. Historically, taxes have been a means of (Empires) Powers giving themselves an economic advantage.

The Treaty of Paris in 1783 ended the American Revolutionary War and established the boundaries between British North America and the United States of America. The War of 1812 saw Fort Malden pass back and forth between British and US control. Amherstburg was fully back in British North American control by 1815. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, several treaties were signed which helped to clarify the international boundary. These treaties were designed to protect the United States from Britain, since Britain was still the greater military power.

The Treaty of Washington was a treaty between the United States of America and the Dominion of Canada, two neighbors. "The Treaty of Washington settled issues related to boundaries, shipping access, and fishing rights between Canada and

the United States."<sup>1</sup> Historian Joseph Levitt noted: "Since the Treaty of Washington in 1871, when it first de facto recognized the new Dominion of Canada, the United States has never suggested or promoted an annexationist movement in Canada. No serious force has appeared on the American political scene that aimed to persuade or coerce Canadians into joining the United States. And, in fact, no serious initiative for any move in this direction has come from the Canadian side either."<sup>2</sup>

Despite Levitt's statement, it appears there were plans for invasion. War Plan Red<sup>3</sup> from 1930, revised in 1935, was an American plan to invade Canada. This was a defensive plan. Defense Scheme No. 1, 1921 was Canada's plan to invade the United States. Before World War II, the US was still afraid

of British invasion. Post World War II, Britain was no longer a threat, which meant Canada was not a threat. Canada's threat from the US has been more cultural and economic.

Amherstburg is not new to customs reporting. The location provided a strategic base for the British to protect Canadian waterways and to collect tariffs. John Askin Jr. was appointed Collector of Customs in 1801. The house now located at 68 Gore Street became known as the Customs House, after Edmund Anderson, Collector of Customs, moved his office and took up residence there in 1861. A new office was built on Duffy's dock in 1955 which was replaced by a Customs Reporting Office on Murray Street in 1966.

With the election of Donald Trump, Canada has a neighbor threatening high tariffs and annexation.

*Continued on page...3*

<sup>1</sup><https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/Treaties-of-Washington/277658#>  
Oct 22, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Neuhold, Hanspeter, and Harald Von Riekhoff, eds.; Unequal Partners: A Comparative Analysis of Relations between Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany and between Canada and the United States Westview Press. 1993

<sup>3</sup> "That Time the US almost went to War with Canada"  
<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/06/21/that-time-the-us-almost-went-to-war-with-canada-218881/>

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# HAPPENINGS AT THE MARSH

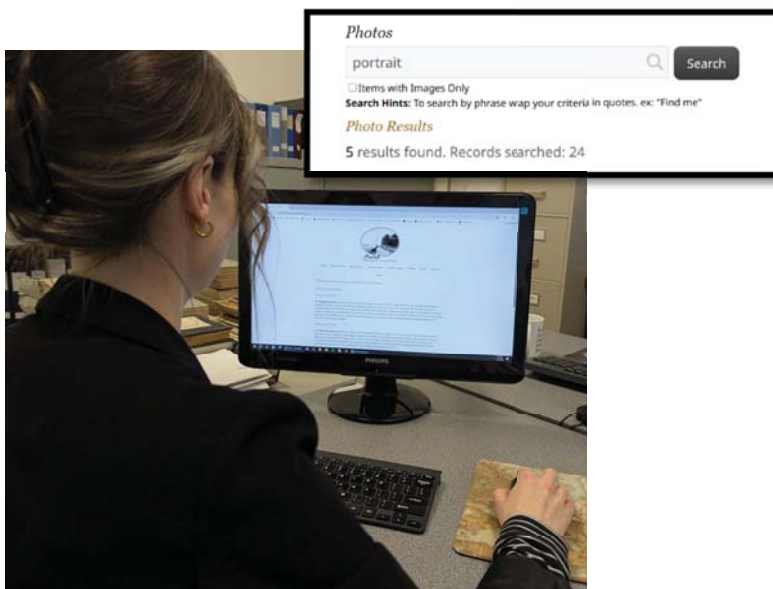
## WE'RE GOING ONLINE

We have exciting news! Thanks to a grant we received on behalf of the Joe & Hazel Lacey Memorial Fund held at the WindsorEssex Community Foundation, we were able to purchase PastPerfect Online: software that will allow us to create an online collections database.

This online database will provide the community with better access to the significant historical collections held in our repository. At the heart of our organization is *The Amherstburg Echo*, and the local history materials collected by the Marsh family while owning and operating the town's newspaper for over 80 years. Since the Marsh Collection Society was established in 1983, our holdings have grown significantly with the addition of books, archives, artifacts, and photographs relating to the heritage of Amherstburg and the lower Detroit River district. The collection includes pieces donated by local families, individuals, businesses, and organizations, and represents the community's history. It is important that we not only preserve these items, but also share them.

That is what makes the online database so important. The database will be fully searchable and accessed through our main website. Researchers will be able to lookup items by keyword, people, subject, date, and more.

We are working hard reviewing the records and preparing to upload the catalogues to the new site. Stay tuned for the website launch this spring! We look forward to sharing the Marsh Historical Collection with you.



The Joe & Hazel Lacey Memorial fund was established in 2009 by their children to celebrate their parents' years of community involvement.



### What's In the Collection?

The Marsh Collection Society mandate is "to collect, preserve and encourage research into the heritage of Amherstburg and the lower Detroit River district."

The facility contains a large collection of photos, books, genealogical records, maps and reference files on a variety of historical topics, plus microfilm of *The Amherstburg Echo* from 1874 to 2012. There is also a small gift shop which contains various publications about local history.

Funding comes from various foundations and private individuals. While **ADMISSION IS FREE**, donations are most welcome. A receipt for income tax purposes will be issued upon request for any monetary donation of \$10 or more.

**The Marsh Collection is open to researchers & visitors from 10am to 4pm Tuesday- Friday. (Mondays by appointment only)**

**Email: [research@marshcollection.org](mailto:research@marshcollection.org)**

**Website: [www.marshcollection.org](http://www.marshcollection.org)**

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**THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS**



# OLD NEWS ON TARIFFS & THE BORDER

By Jeanne McKay

...Continued from page 1



The race to establish a railway that extended coast to coast and negotiation of trade between provinces helped to develop a “Canadian” mindset that helped build industry and agriculture. Traditionally, history has been taught comparing the American melting pot and the Canadian mosaic. As the Americans pursued “Manifest Destiny,” Canada considered itself an Eden. In the Introduction to John Clarke’s book we read: *“The prevailing ideology in Ontario at the time was a conservative culture that rejected everything American and attempted to preserve the best of the British world in the new Eden.”*<sup>4</sup>

Interestingly, on July 29, 1887 the *Echo* published a survey of several people for their opinion of commercial union and annexation with the United States. For many, commercial union and annexation were synonymous. At the time of the survey, the US was placing tariffs on certain goods that impacted local businesses. Thomas B. White, proprietor of the Anderdon Quarry, had closed down his operation when the tariffs on natural stone were imposed. Detroit had been an open market and it was now closed to him. He particularly missed supplying the stone for the arches of the Belle Isle Bridge:

*“Many of the best stone buildings in Detroit were built from my quarry” said Mr. White, “when they could get the stone free of duty during the former days of reciprocity.”* Henry Cunningham, ex Reeve of Anderdon Township, made the following statement: *“commercial union (free trade) is just what we want and I believe that annexation will be our fate in less than 20 years.”* David Ireland of the Scotch Bakery: *“the only salvation for Canada is to hoist the stars and stripes.”* He thinks Canada is ready for a closer relation

with the United States, but the question is will the United States grant it. Simon Fraser - extensive wholesale lumber dealer in western Ontario. He is strong on Commercial Union.<sup>5</sup>

However, the Dominion of Canada stood and worked its way through tariffs. In 1911, Robert Borden, leader of the Conservatives was faced with the question of free trade and rejected it.

Discussions regarding tariffs and taxes have naturally been a part of Canadian governance. A quick glance through old copies of the *Windsor Star* shows discussions about tariffs on electricity<sup>6</sup> and concerns about tariffs on malt being sold to the US. Most trade was with the British Commonwealth however, post-World War II, there was concern about limiting trade within the Commonwealth and the need to allow individual Commonwealth States to find their own path.<sup>7</sup> This encouraged more trade between Canada and the United States. The Mulroney Conservatives introduced free trade in 1988. Since that time, Canada has regularly renegotiated free trade agreements but never as anxiously as it does now with the Trump government.

Although there are Canadians who see annexation to the US as a benefit, most Canadians see our cultural and political differences as too substantial to sacrifice. Human rights and protection of the population through welfare and healthcare are at our roots. Tariffs and borders are being threatened and questioned. What will the next treaty look like? If any country can strive for a peaceful outcome, Canada, although not perfect, has a strong history of working toward peace.

<sup>4</sup> John Clarke. *Land, Power, and Economics on the Frontier of Upper Canada*. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), Introductory Summary

<sup>5</sup> Impact of Tariffs on the Lime Kilns. Amherstburg, *Echo* -July 29, 1887

<sup>6</sup> The *Windsor Star*, March 31, 1925, pg 10

<sup>7</sup> The *Windsor Star*, October 12, 1946, pg 8

# UPSETTING THE HOUR GLASS

## 1935

**March-** The S.W. & A. car leaving Windsor at 12:00 noon jumped the track at the overhead bridge of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Sandwich Street. It crashed against the steel railing and then swerved around end for end, hitting a truck on the opposite side of the street. The icy condition of the rails was the cause of the accident. The passengers were taken off the car, driven to the car barns by taxi and transferred to another car for Amherstburg.

**April-** The farthest south detachment of R.C.M.P. is at Amherstburg, opened in 1932 when they took over the duties of the excise preventive service which was formerly carried on by the customs officers.

**May-** Bob-Lo Island, which has been doing a Rip Van Winkle act for the past two years awakened, stretched itself and burst forth in a blaze of electricity on Wednesday evening. Numbers of Amherstburg citizens witnessed the sight of the illumination of the rides and amusements with pleasure and anticipation.

## 1945

**March-** Great Lakes history was made last week when the United States Coast Guard ice-breaker Mackinaw smashed a channel through the Lake Erie ice packs to bring an urgently needed warship from Lorain, Ohio. It was the first time a warship has made a mid-winter crossing of the lakes.

**April-** An important business change took place on Monday when J.S. Kendall took over control of Shillington Brothers

Hardware Store from J.H. Shillington, one of the founders. The store in the future will be known as Shillington Hardware.

**May-** Walter Boxall, Chevrolet Sales and Service Garage, has been moved from Richmond St. to the former B.A. Service Station at the corner of North and Sandwich.

## 1955

**March-** The form work on the walls of the new pump house for Calvert Distillers Limited is rapidly nearing completion and cement will be poured this week. McQueen Marine has the contract for this section of the new building also the contract to run the intake pipe from the pump house to the channel. The pump house will supply water to be used for cooling purposes in the new distilling building. The building is on the river's edge west of the Calvert Gardens and will not be seen from the street.

**April-** John Gray of Grays Greenhouses is proudly showing a white orchid which he grew from seed. To get this beautiful bloom required 8 years of careful attention and supervision.

**May-** The propeller has been put on the new McQueen Marine Limited tug A'Burg this week and preparations are being made for trial runs. The A'Burg, former Henry Stokes, has been completely rebuilt. A powerful diesel engine took the place of the former steam engine.

## 1965

**March-** The department of transport has informed Eugene Whelan, M.P. Essex South, that there will be no restrictions on the

use of the retaining dyke at Bob-Lo by summer visitors and hunters. There will be no future negotiations over the renting of the dyke area.

**April-** The Amherstburg Public Utilities gang used their new trenching machine to dig a trench for an underground line that will operate the fire alarm siren from the communications rooms.

**May-** It didn't take long to move a house from Sandwich Street to Simcoe Street. The building was south of Jimmie's Flowers, Sandwich Street. This was the first move in clearing the property to allow construction of a supermarket.

## 1975

**March-** All businesses in Amherstburg have received notification that one dollar is due to the Town to cover business licence for 1975. Business licenses are required by most businesses in the town.

**April-** Good time is being made on the construction of a large addition to the Malden Township municipal building, Sixth Concession and Highway No. 18 at Malden Centre. This will include a new police office and large storage area.

**May-** Contractors have received plans for wharf extension in Amherstburg. This will be constructed between the Marine Services Base and the government wharf Dalhousie Street south. This will facilitate the movement of buoys and other equipment between the two docks.





# CALVERT DISTILLERY EXPLOSION & FIRE (PART II)

By Al Jackson

**Continued from the Winter 2024/2025 issue of Reflections.**

Miraculously no one was killed or seriously injured when the explosion and fire occurred on the hot and humid evening of August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1950. The distillery workforce had gone home for the evening and only a watchman and two security guards remained on site. They happened to be in safe places and received only minor injuries when the blast destroyed the “distillation still”.

An article in the *Windsor Star* newspaper described the plight of two nearby residents:

“Mr. and Mrs. Stan Gott who live in the first house south of Calvert Distilleries (Canada) Limited, in Amherstburg received a rude shock but only minor injuries when the explosions occurred at the distillery last night. Mr. Gott reported that he and his wife had finished dinner and begun their usual after dinner activities. Mrs. Gott was cleaning up the kitchen while Mr. Gott had retired to his chair on the front porch to read the paper. Suddenly, he said, he simultaneously heard a terrible crash and was blown from his chair across the porch. His wife, he found later, was blown across the kitchen and out the back door. All the windows in his home were blown out as well, he

stated, adding he was surprised the whole town had not been blown up. Both Mr. and Mrs. Gott were bruised when they were blasted about, but neither required hospital treatment.”

This article has special significance to me, your writer, as Stan and Betty Gott were my grandparents.

After the smoke cleared, most workers at the plant feared that “Rusty,” a four-year-old female cat, had perished in the fire. The cat had come to the distillery as a kitten and had been looked after for years by Joseph Taylor, a plant worker. However, three days after the fire, who should show up but none other than “Rusty.” She was missing some whiskers, a bit of her tail, and had some scorch marks on her fur but was eager and ready to resume her duties as chief mouse catcher.

The decision to rebuild the distillery unit didn’t come until 1953 which marked the beginning of unprecedented growth and modernization. In the spring of 1955, a new water intake and pump house was constructed by McQueen Marine to supply cooling water to a new distillation building that was under construction at the time. The rebuilt distillery began operation in 1955, and with a new automatic bottling line the next year the entire plant ran at full capacity for the first time since the end of World War II.

*Continued on page 6...*



Rusty & Joe Taylor.  
*The Windsor Star August 22, 1950.*



Calvert’s pump house. Foundation being built by McQueen Marine. MCS P2881.

## CALVERT DISTILLERY EXPLOSION & FIRE

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As an interesting sidelight, during the War the distillery was forced by the government in November of 1942 to produce industrial alcohol for the war effort. This 190-proof alcohol was shipped to Kobuta, Pennsylvania where it was mixed with styrene to produce synthetic rubber. This commercial grade alcohol was also used to produce high explosive powder for bombs, shells, mines and torpedoes. When the distillers had reached their quota of industrial alcohol, they were allowed to switch back to the production of beverage alcohol for the last two months of the year. Because of the war, a shortage of men occurred and women for the first time were given the opportunity to run the distillation unit with equal pay for the jobs that became available.

Between 1953 and 1982 the Amherstburg plant prospered with a new bottling building and offices being built along with six new warehouses. In 1981 the name was changed from Calvert of Canada Ltd. to Seagram Company Ltd. That same year the distillation section of the plant was shut down with the liquor for the bottling lines coming from a Seagram distillery in Gimli, Manitoba.

The 38-year-old distillation building was demolished in 1993 and by 2003 the ownership of the Amherstburg plant had changed to Diageo Canada Inc. The future of the Amherstburg facility is unclear but in a few years the plant will be celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Printed in *The Windsor Star* December 31, 1932:

"Indicate More Buying Canadian: Duty Total Down. Drop in Importations Shown by Customs.

Almost a half-million dollar decrease of customs collections for the port of Windsor is noted in totals compiled for 1932 as compared with 1931. Figures released from the port headquarters, on the third floor of the Guaranty Trust Building, indicate that collections for this year will approximate \$8,823,574.04, while for the 12-month period ending November, 1931, the total was \$9,308,713.22.

Indicated in these totals is a falling off of importations from the United States, leading to the assumption that Canadians are purchasing more goods manufactured in their own country or within the Empire."

**Stay tuned for this year's Jane's Walk Schedule!** Essex County Weekend is Friday, April 25 – Sunday, April 27. The Marsh will be hosting a walk called "The Impact of Industry: Amherstburg in the 20th Century."

In the 20th Century, the citizens of Amherstburg saw several industries arrive in town. While many of these enterprises no longer exist, they live on through the lasting impact they've left on the community.

## Americans Buy Canadian Garb

### Customs Collector at Detroit Admits That Practice Is Prevalent

Americans buy all the good clothes they can carry while sojourning in Canada, it was reported today by Walter S. Petty, acting customs collector at Detroit.

The Detroit customs officers have found that nearly all of the thousands of home-bound American tourists, returning home at their port, have purchased right up to the \$100 limit specified by Washington.

"We find they buy a terrible lot of clothes in Canada as well as other articles," Petty explained. "And, of course, our government permits that up to \$100 a person, providing, of course, that the traveler is a bona fide tourist and did not go over to Canada for the special purpose of purchasing something."

A close check is kept on the situation as it is believed that hundreds of Detroiters, including, of course, many former Canadians now resident here, cross over into Windsor for their clothes.

The purchase of clothes, of course, is seasonal. A man going through the customs barrier at the Detroit dock with a new overcoat during the current hot wave would have considerable explaining to do before he could evade payment of duty. His only excuse could be that he was "up north" when it turned suddenly cold. The customs men have to exercise their own discretion in such cases, Petty said.

Unestimated thousands of dollars are expended by Americans in the Border Cities each year for wearing apparel and, undoubtedly, much of it is worn back successfully by the purchasers.

*The Windsor Star* July 21, 1939





## BRICKS-N-BEAMS The Brunner Mond Lodge

By Meg Reiner

Now the location of the River's Edge apartments, the northeast corner of Sandwich Street and Brunner Avenue, was once occupied by a large historic residence. In 1846, Jean Baptiste Ouellette purchased property on the riverfront in the township of Anderdon, being Concession 1 Lot 5, totaling 102 acres. After constructing a new family home, Jean Baptiste and his wife Eleanor (Lemay) moved to the property from Sandwich with their 12 children. Jean Baptiste died in 1873 at age 59. Through his Will, the family homestead passed to his son Honore (Henry) Ouellette. Eleanor continued to reside at the family homestead until her death in 1884. Henry and his nephew Charles Evariste Ouellette shared ownership of the property.

Henry and Evariste Ouellette posted an announcement that they would hold an auction sale at the homestead on April 21, 1917. The Ouellettes were moving from their homestead after seventy years of occupancy. In January of that year, the house was sold to Brunner Mond Canada Ltd. By May, the residence was required for "the development scheme of the company." The former Ouellette residence was to be used as a boarding house for single company executives, and would come to be known as the "Brunner Mond Lodge."

The Lodge included a kitchen that in addition to serving hot lunches to office employees, would also provide meals for special events. When the bowling alley at the Brunner Mond Club on Richmond Street opened in 1920, those who attended the official opening, including the President of the Solvay Athletic Club in

Detroit, went to the Lodge to eat. They were served "a real old-time chicken dinner at the Lodge prepared by Mrs. Simmons and her skillful culinary staff with their usual perfection."

The Lodge acted as a social club, providing a gathering space and recreational facilities including a tennis court. In 1920, *The Amherstburg Echo* announced the "main office orchestra" played at the Lodge daily at noon hour. The men who resided at the Lodge formed a camaraderie. A group composed of many of the unmarried men who boarded at the Lodge was organized in 1921. It was called the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Prospective Bridegrooms (SPCPBG). At their first meeting, it was resolved that "no member of this organization shall at any time pay for engagement rings a sum exceeding \$16.17 each." We searched for evidence of former members overcoming the barriers to achieving economic status which had led to the establishment of the SPCPBG. Arthur Dingman, Secretary of the SPCPBG and resident of the Lodge, remained single until 1936. He was then married in Montreal (it was an extravagant affair) and the newlyweds honeymooned in Jamaica. The price of the ring was not reported.

In 1972, the Lodge was remodeled to become offices for Allied Chemical Canada Ltd. Departments located there included purchasing, engineering, traffic, and safety. In 1995, Binder Heating & Cooling set up shop in the space, becoming only the third owner in almost 150 years. Next, Fahrhall Home Comfort Gallery opened, turning the historic residence into a showroom for stoves and fireplaces. In 2004, the building was torn down.

## THEN & NOW Northeast Corner Sandwich & Brunner Ave.



View of the Brunner Mond Lodge, no date. MCS AS2019.025.028.



River's Edge Apartments, March 18, 2025.

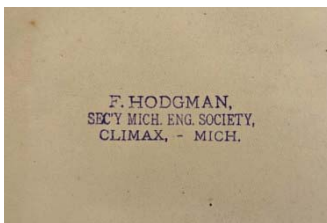
# COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS

By Meg Reiner

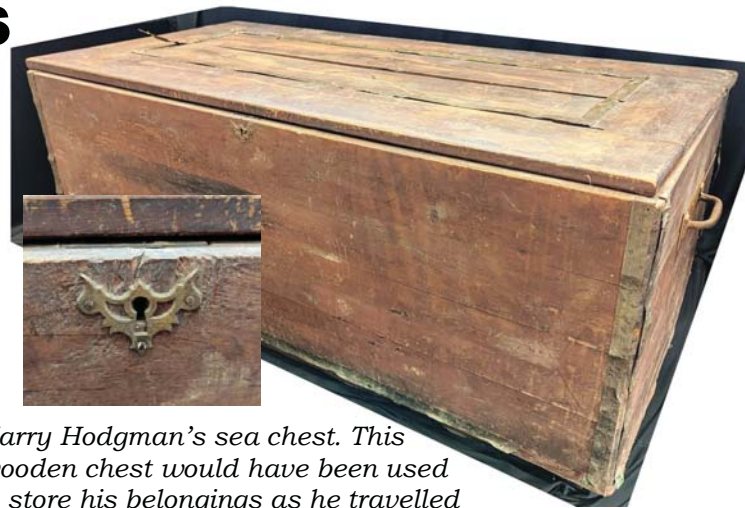
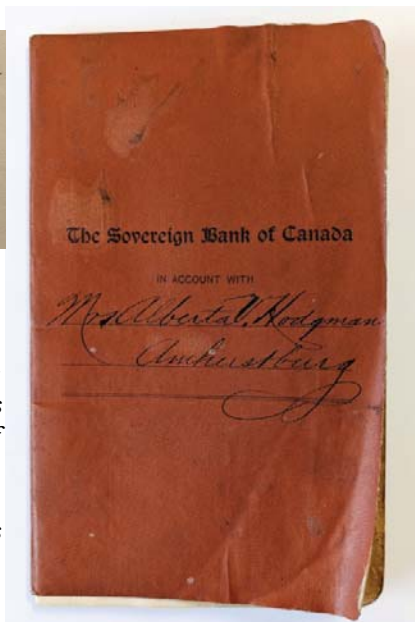
Brenda Williams Nobles, a former resident of what is known locally as “Argyle Castle,” got in touch with us recently regarding a possible donation. We were excited to learn that Brenda was offering a sea chest and other items that once belonged to the Hodgman family.

Harry Comings Hodgman came to Amherstburg in 1894 as an engineer with the U.S. Army Corps. His first appointment in the area was as inspector on the Bar Point channel project. After three years of living and working in Amherstburg, he married Alberta Stewart, of Essex, and the couple moved to the Captain Allen residence at 73 Rankin Avenue. Alberta joined the teaching staff at Amherstburg Public School. In 1900, their daughter Flora Hodgman was born. The family quickly connected with the community, making friends and becoming involved in local organizations. They moved a few times, living in different neighbourhoods within Amherstburg.

As assistant to C.Y. Dixon, Harry Hodgman worked on major local river improvement projects, including the Lime Kiln Crossing and Livingston Channel construction. In 1907, he was elected President of the Michigan Engineering Society. When all of the lower river work was completed by 1913, Harry was transferred to Kansas City, Missouri, where he would take on the role of assistant engineer in charge of work on the Missouri River. Alberta and young Flora continued to reside in Amherstburg for a while afterwards.



Above: Part of the collection is a series of engineering books that belonged to Harry or his father Francis, who was also an engineer. One of the books has a stamp from Francis. Right: Mrs. Alberta Hodgman’s bank book.



Harry Hodgman’s sea chest. This wooden chest would have been used to store his belongings as he travelled to work on various projects.

In 1919, it was announced that Harry Hodgman would return to Amherstburg as head of the new phase of government work on the channels. At that time, the family was living in Jefferson City, Missouri. Flora graduated from Hardin College in June of that year. She was in pursuit of a career in teaching, much like her mother. Harry purchased “Argyle Place,” the ornate riverfront mansion at 495 Dalhousie Street South, from W.H. Jones in 1920. This is where the Hodgman family would reside while in Amherstburg for the coming years. In 1922, Alberta passed away tragically. The following year, Flora attended Detroit Teachers’ College.

In 1926, *The Amherstburg Echo* reported that Mr. and Mrs. Hodgman were moving to Kansas City. This would have been Harry’s second wife, Emma Jermin.\* Harry remained with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers until retiring in 1943. According to his obituary, he “had supervision over the construction of many air fields throughout the Pacific southwest” during World War II. At the time of his death in 1949, Harry Hodgman was residing in Claremont, California, having recently moved there from Waukesha, Wisconsin.

In 1933, Flora married an attorney from Detroit named Wallace Temple. She taught in Detroit High Schools and was a resident of Grosse Pointe. According to her obituary, Flora received bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Michigan.

\*Harry and Emma were married until she died in 1935. He would remarry twice more: Harriet Gray (1876-1943) and Esther McGarigle (1875-1955).

Thank you to Brenda Williams Nobles for this donation to the Marsh Historical Collection.