

Historic buildings highlights during heritage walks

By Ron Giofu



Marsh Historical Collection archives co-ordinator Meg Reiner (far right) speaks to a group of people taking a heritage walk last Sunday afternoon. The walks were sponsored by River Bookshop and THRIVE Amherstburg. RTT Photo by Ron Giofu



Meg Reiner from the Marsh Historical Collection, speaks during a heritage walk last Sunday. She gave background on historical buildings in the Ramsay St., Richmond St., Dalhousie St. and Murray St. block. RTT Photo by Ron Giofu

A pair of heritage walks were held Sunday to promote some of the history of the downtown core of Amherstburg.

Meg Reiner, archives co-ordinator with the Marsh Historical Collection, brought two groups around a historic block of Amherstburg. Upwards of 18 people per group got background on buildings on Ramsay St., Murray St., Dalhousie St. and Richmond St. The hour-long tour highlighted designated buildings as well as buildings of historical interest.

Reiner's presentation detailed history of some of the more well-known historical buildings, including the Gordon House, Lord Amherst and Artisan Grill buildings, as well as buildings with lesser-known history. In the latter category was the building at 247 Ramsay St., where The Panetteria is going into. It was a former streetcar waiting station that originally was around the corner on Richmond St. but was moved to its current location in 1957.

The building just south of that, where Forever Nails is located, dates back to 1878, she added.

While it seems like a lot of work to relocate a building, Reiner said it was done often over 100 years ago.

Murray St. was known as the heart of the business district, she added, but many of the buildings from Ramsay St. to Dalhousie St. were built in 1875 or since. An 1875 fire destroyed many of the buildings that had been in that block, Reiner pointed out.

The heritage walks were co-presented by the River Bookshop and THRIVE Amherstburg. Richard Peddie, who leads both, thanked Reiner for her tours and said she was "a huge help" when he and wife Colleen were restoring the 135-year-old building at 67 Richmond St. where the bookshop sits now.

The building recently was approved by Amherstburg's heritage committee as a heritage property.

Peddie said the tour was done in the spirit of the late urbanist Jane Jacobs.

"She profoundly changed the way we should think about towns and cities today," said Peddie. "Her influence can still be felt in discussions on what makes great communities across the world."

"Heritage is definitely a real point of difference for Amherstburg versus any other town in the county," he continued. "Unfortunately, we are not treating it as important. We are really not protecting it enough. We are not investing in it enough."

Peddie endorsed the Town of Amherstburg's hiring of heritage planner Clint Robertson and called

on town council to support his ideas in the 2022 budget. Of the tour, he said Reiner toured people by a number of properties of historical interest but that shouldn't be confused with protection.

"They are still at risk," he said. "If we lose any of these great heritage properties, it weakens Amherstburg's point of difference."

Heritage action plans will cost money, Peddie continued, and noted some owners will oppose their buildings having an historical designation. He added THRIVE Amherstburg will be preparing a white paper on the topic and will address council in the fall on the issue of preserving heritage.

"Unfortunately, too often in Amherstburg, the reflex action of some residents to any new investments or any new ideas is 'no, we like the status quo. We don't like change. We don't like spending money.'"

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