



Faculty of Liberal Arts & Sciences

1994

## Ford City / Windsor [Exhibition Catalogue]

Donegan, Rosemary

---

### Suggested citation:

Donegan, Rosemary (1994) Ford City / Windsor [Exhibition Catalogue]. Art Gallery of Windsor. Available at <http://openresearch.ocadu.ca/id/eprint/1832/>

*Open Research is a publicly accessible, curated repository for the preservation and dissemination of scholarly and creative output of the OCAD University community. Material in Open Research is open access and made available via the consent of the author and/or rights holder on a non-exclusive basis.*

*The OCAD University Library is committed to accessibility as outlined in the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) and the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#) and is working to improve accessibility of the Open Research Repository collection. If you require an accessible version of a repository item contact us at [repository@ocadu.ca](mailto:repository@ocadu.ca).*

# Ford City/Windsor

A multi-media exhibition  
Art Gallery of Windsor  
July 30 - October 2, 1994  
Guest curated by Rosemary Donegan



Seneca Studios, Riverside, Red and White Chain Store, Plante Brothers, 1930  
black and white photograph, Municipal Archives — Windsor Public Library

Ford City is the name of the area that lies south of the Detroit River and east of Walkerville, immediately surrounding the Ford of Canada plant and many other auto plants. It developed in the early twentieth century as an industrial site where many new immigrants, particularly Eastern Europeans, settled. They joined the French Catholic rural community which had been established in the area since the 1750s. They came for the relatively good wages the auto industry offered, and built houses in the immediate vicinity of the plants. At the same time, they formed their own distinct social, religious, and ethnic communities that were united by

their common experiences of working in the auto industry.

Ford City developed in a piecemeal fashion, criss-crossed and sandwiched between railway tracks that led to the plants. The plants themselves were built on a north-south axis, like two thick industrial spines, parallel to Drouillard and Walker Roads. Drouillard was the main street and the centre of the working-class, residential neighbourhood that sprang up. The close relationship that existed in this area between the industrial and residential facets of the community makes Ford City a fascinating historical urban-industrial landscape.

# CHRONOLOGY

## **Native and early French Settlement: 1600s to the 1900s**

- The land was originally occupied by the Wyandotte tribe, later by the Ottawas and had been part of the Six Nations empire that extended across the large plain around the southern Great Lakes.
- 1750s • The first European settlers in the area were French. They had divided the land into river lots, approximately 188 yard wide (3 arpents) stretching back from the Detroit River for more than a mile (30 arpents). Many of the street names in the area were derived from the original river lot owners, Drouillard, St. Louis, Reaume, Parent. Throughout the 19th century the major activity was farming.
- 1796 • British Loyalists fleeing the US settled in the Essex county area.
- 1830-60 • The area was a destination for escaped US slaves, who came north on the underground railway and settled in Essex county, particularly in the Sandwich, Windsor and Amherstburg areas.
- 1854 • The Great Western Railway (later CNR) was completed; the railway tracks cut diagonally across the ribbon farms of the original land survey, to the east of what was to be Walkerville, running along the river to Windsor.
- 1858 • Hiram Walker, a US businessman, established a distillery east of Windsor.
- 1870s • The site on the river east of Drouillard Road (later the first Ford plant) was occupied by the Jenkins Shipyards, where many of the Drouillard family worked as carpenters. In the 1880s it became a grape sugar refinery.
- 1884 • A small village settlement developed along the Detroit River, east

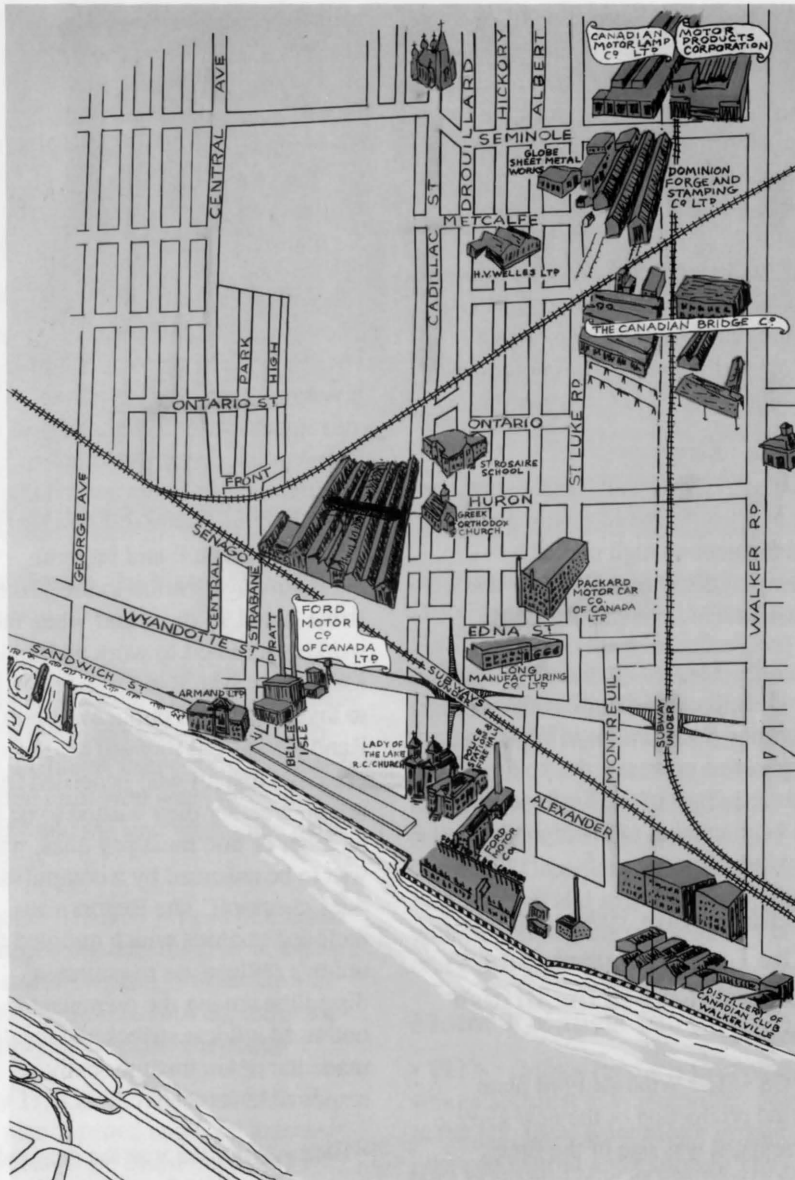
of Walkerville, where a Catholic church, Notre Dame du Lac/Our Lady of the Lake was built. A predominantly francophone parish, Reverend L.A. Beaudoin was the first long-term parish priest.

## **The Early Automobile Industry: 1900s-1930s**

- August 17, 1904 • the Ford Motor Company of Canada Limited, through the efforts of Gordon McGregor, was incorporated. The company started operations out of the Walkerville Wagon Works on Sandwich Street East (now Riverside Drive East) and produced its first cars in late September. The first President was John S. Gray, Henry Ford followed from 1906 to 1927, his son Edsel Ford took over briefly in 1927. In 1929, Wallace R. Campbell, who had started as a bookkeeper in 1905, became the first Canadian-born President.
- 1900s • Numerous small companies, many of which had started as wagon and carriage makers, starting producing automobiles in Walkerville and in the area to the east: Menard (1908-1920s); Studebaker (1908-1936); Maxwell Motor Co. (1916-1925); Chalmers Motor Car Co. (1916-1925); Godfredson Trucks (1923-1929). Auto parts companies like Canadian Motor Lamp Co. had 20 employees in 1913; by 1929 they had 400 employees and were making 4,000 lamps per day.
- 1910s • With the increasing demand for the Ford Model T, Ford of Canada grew quickly and its first major expansion was Plant #1 on Sandwich Street in 1910. In 1922, Plant #2 was built beside Drouillard Road in the midst of Ford City; Plant #4 was opened in 1937. The Power House designed by Albert Kahn was built in 1923. In 1914 Ford paid \$4.00 a day for an 8 hour day, and a 6 day week, an unusually high wage for unskilled

workers at the time. In 1918 the daily rate was raised to \$5.00 per day.

- 1910s • Many of the new residents attracted to Ford City were Polish, Russian and Ukrainian immigrants. In 1916-1917 the first Russian Greek Orthodox Church (now St. John the Divine) was built on Drouillard Road.
- 1912-1913 • As reeve of the township of Sandwich East, Charles Montreuil promoted the establishment of a village to provide services for the fast-growing, industrial-residential community. Montreuil named the village Ford City, rejecting the names Ford Park and Fordville. The borders of the new village were formed by the railway tracks on the west and south side.
- 1913 • The automobile assembly line, or as it was referred to in Ford literature "the Ford progressive assembly system," was introduced. The lines were first put in place in the Detroit Ford Highland Park plant in 1913. What Ford did was utilize the systems that had been developed in food production and slaughter houses, using systems of conveyer belts and overhead rails. These were combined with the ideas of Frederick W. Taylor, concerning the rationalization of factory work and scientific management. The significance of Ford's contribution was in utilizing the assembly method of mass production to produce an increasing number of automobiles at a low price.
- 1914 • The first automobile assembly lines were introduced in Windsor at the Ford Sandwich Street plant. Originally workmen had assembled an entire car on a trestle—from the chassis to the finished car—moving from trestle to trestle. This evolved into teams of workmen moving from one trestle to the next, till the final stage where work stations were re-arranged in a line and cars were pushed between them; later



Barbara Coulter Johnston  
 Ford City/East Windsor: 1930s

the cars were moved along a track with a chain. By the late 1920s, the process involved an entire series of sub-assemblies — axles, crankshafts, frames, motors, radiators, body, upholstery, etc.— which were then brought together in the final assembly line (which moved at a rate of 3 miles per hour).

- August 1915 • Ford City became an official town; Charles Montreuil was elected the first mayor with E.J. Drouillard as reeve. The war years were boom years in Ford City as Ford of Canada expanded and increased production. Over 102 homes were built in 1916, generally small one-story frame houses on narrow lots. A town hall was built on land donated by the Drouillard family at the corner of Drouillard and Sandwich. This was beside the new church of Notre Dame du Lac/Our Lady of the Lake which had been rebuilt in 1907, after the original church had burnt down.

- 1917 • The church of Notre Dame du Lac/Our Lady of the Lake was the scene of the Ford City Riot. A group of francophone parishioners were protesting the appointment of a new priest by Bishop Fallon, who was head of the diocese and based in London, Ontario. Locally, the so-called Riot or Battle of Ford City was about the right of the Bishop to appoint local parish priests; internally in the Roman Catholic church it was seen as a conflict between Irish (i.e. anglophones) and French Catholics. However, the larger issue at stake was control of the Catholic separate school system and French language education. The name of the church was subsequently changed to Our Lady of the Rosary.

- 1920s • Ford City prospered and new roads were built and paved, lots were serviced and schools were opened. In 1921, Ford City was predominantly of French descent and

# CHRONOLOGY

Roman Catholic, with a growing community of new Eastern European immigrants, a small Chinese community and the usual assortment of Irish, Scottish and English immigrants.

• June 17, 1925 • Chrysler Canada Ltd. was incorporated in the US and Canada; in Windsor it had taken over Maxwell-Chalmers Motors, which had formerly been the US owned Maxwell Motor Co. and the Chalmers Corporation Motors on St. Luke Road in Ford City.

• June 1, 1929 • Ford City officially changed its name to East Windsor. The new city had a population of 16,000 and celebrated the official event with speeches, bands and a parade of cars past city hall, at the corner of Drouillard and Sandwich. The impetus for the name change was that Chrysler Canada Ltd. built a new plant on the south side of Tecumseh and Drouillard Roads, directly north of Ford City.

• 1930 • General Motors of Canada took over the Fisher Body plant on Edna Street, and extended its Walker Road and Seminole Street plant.

• 1920s and 1930s • The public bathing beach and changing rooms at the foot of George Street, which was alternately known as the Ford City Beach, East Windsor Beach, and the George St. Beach, was a popular swimming spot on the Detroit River.

• 1930-31 • As Ford City was surrounded by railway tracks it was difficult for vehicular traffic to move in and out of the town, due to the heavy industrial usage. Long delays at the railway tracks prompted the building of the Drouillard/Wyandotte Street Subways. The two viaduct projects extended Wyandotte Street through East Windsor to the town of Riverside. The construction projects were completed by the unemployed on welfare, who did much of the manual work for meal tickets and coal vouchers.

• 1931 • Demographically, East Windsor was primarily made up of people of French, English, Scottish and Irish descent. However, with the large number of recent immigrants from Poland, Rumania, Russia, Germany, Serbia and Ukrainians, this was gradually shifting. It was their religious and ethnic halls that were the location of much of the local social life in the community. Specific halls would be associated with various immigrant politics while others were used as hiring halls.

• Early 1930s • Due to the Depression, the over-extension of building projects and the general high rate of unemployment, East Windsor was in considerable financial difficulty.

• 1935 • The amalgamation of East Windsor, Sandwich, and somewhat unwilling Walkerville, to Windsor proper, was primarily due to the financial crisis of the Depression and the large number of unemployed in the auto industry.

## **Windsor: late 1930s - 1950s "The Largest automobile manufacturer in the British Empire"**

• 1938 • The Windsor Ford plant started production of the new 1939 Mercury, it was one of the first streamlined cars to be produced at Ford Windsor.

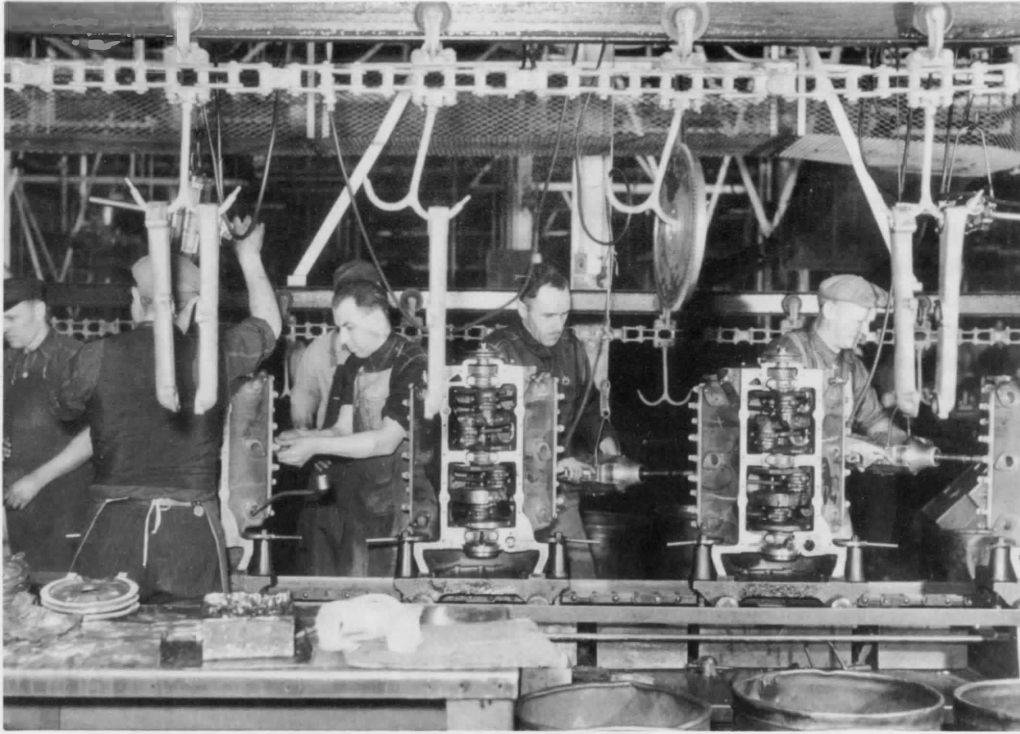
• 1939-1945 • Ford of Canada was the major military supplier to both the Canadian and British armed forces.

• 1941-42 • In November a formal vote was conducted by the Federal Department of Labour to select who would represent the Windsor Ford workers. Ford proposed an elected employees committee as opposed to the United Automobile Workers Local 200. The UAW won the vote and an agreement was negotiated and signed in January 1942.

November 1942 • A wildcat strike by UAW Local 200 over the potential employment of women workers at a lower wage rate (it was rumoured that the women were to be paid 60%-70% less than the men). This is probably the first industrial action over equal pay for women in Canada.

• September 12 to December 19, 1945 • The strike by UAW Local 200 against Ford of Canada was seminal in the history of the Canadian labour movement. After a threat of police intervention, the union set up an auto barricade for 48 hours around the Sandwich East plant that brought the area to a standstill and brought international attention to the strike. The strike lasted 99 days, and when the workers returned to work an inquiry by Mr. Justice Ivan Rand was established to investigate and publish a report. The Rand Report put forward the basic principle that all who benefited from a union, whether they wished to be a member or not, must pay dues, which was to be enforced by a compulsory dues check-off. The Report also included sections which outlined the union's obligations to maintain discipline among the membership, outlawed wildcat strikes and legally made the union institutionally responsible for the workers.

• 1946 • After the war the demand for new automobiles far out-paced production; veterans were given priority on the waiting lists. Ford of Canada introduced the Monarch, a medium priced car to be sold exclusively in Canada. The Monarch, as a marketing concept was developed in Dearborn by the Ford Design department. Mechanically, the Monarch was an adaptation of the Mercury 114 with a few unique details in the design of the grill. The slogan "Ride like a King in a Monarch" was elaborated on with a lion's head hood ornament and hubcaps. In 1949 a lower



Anonymous  
 Engine Line, Ford of Canada, 1938  
 black and white photograph  
 National Archives of Canada, Ottawa

priced version, the Meteor, was added to the line.

- June 18, 1946 • Chrysler UAW Local 444 went on strike for higher wages. After a bitter and long strike of 126 days, the union won a contract that included improved wage rates, union security and the first negotiated paid vacations.

- October 31, 1951 • Ford of Canada announced the construction of their new assembly plant in Oakville and that they would be moving the final assembly to the Oakville plant.

- May 11, 1954 • The new Oakville Ford plant opened and final assembly operations were transferred out of Windsor. This set off a series of layoffs and plant adjustments.

- 1954 • A 112 day strike between Ford of Canada and UAW Local 200 (October 10 to January 29, 1955). The long, drawn-out winter strike was eventually to produce a settlement that included hospitalization insurance for all employees and their dependents, a group insurance plan, and a number of monetary and vacation benefits.

- 1950s • With the completion of the Ford of Canada plant in Oakville and

the transfer of many workers to Oakville, plus the general movement of Ford workers to the new suburbs on the edge of Windsor, Drouillard Road and the surrounding community deteriorated. Even though many of the former Ford City residents still worked at Ford, they no longer lived in the area. The commercial stores closed down and Drouillard Road became home to bars and strip clubs, bringing with its disintegration an element of crime and general seediness.

### Motor Products Corp.

- 1920s • Motor Products Corporation was established in Walkerville; owned in the US, there were Motor Products plants in Detroit and Chicago. They started manufacturing steel parts and later moved into trim for automobile windows, dashboards, car mirrors, window handles, and specialized in chromium plating. Located at the corner of Seminole Street and Walker Road, at its peak the company employed over 700 people and had a floor space of 208,000 square feet.

- February 3, 1942 • A walkout of 300 Motor Product employees over the union representation led to a government supervised vote on the question of union recognition. On April

20, 1942 the Motor Products Corp. recognized UAW Local 195 as the sole bargaining agent; a collective agreement followed shortly after.

- 1959 • The plant faltered and a number of employees purchased shares in the plant in an attempt to save it; however, the plant closed nevertheless.

- 1960s • The former Motor Products building stood derelict for years; it was later sold at auction and now is the site of a GM Transmission plant.

• • •

For further information on the history of Ford City, East Windsor and the Windsor area, see:

Trevor Price and Larry Kulisek, *Windsor 1892-1992: A Centennial Celebration* (Windsor: Chamber of Commerce, 1992).

Herb Colling and Carl Morgan, *Pioneering the Auto Age* (Tecumseh: Travelife Publishing, 1993).

Michael Gladstone White, *Faces of Ford: The Windsor Years* (Windsor: Red Oak Press, 1994).

Soon to be published:  
 Mary Baruth-Walsh and Mark Walsh, *Strike! 99 Days on the Line*.

# IMAGES OF FORD CITY

The exhibition *Ford City/Windsor* examines the public history of this site from a number of perspectives and in several different mediums. At one level the images and stories on display simply reflect what Ford City was and still is. At another, they allow us to reconstruct that local history and re-examine it in light of personal memories and stories.

The exhibition consists of selections made from images produced by or for government, business and labour institutions, the popular press and some personal mementos. The images themselves are the work of filmmakers, photographers, painters, and other visual artists. By looking at these portrayals of the industrial landscape and community, we can more readily understand the historical urban experience and assess its meaning for us today.

For example, we can contrast the former stature of the corner of Riverside Drive East (formerly Sandwich Street) and Drouillard Road as the municipal centre of Ford City with the present meaningless void that has erased this corner. Several prominent buildings were once at this corner or in the immediate vicinity, including the former city hall, Our Lady of the Lake Roman Catholic Church (now Our Lady of the Rosary), the East Windsor Hospital, as well as Ford's Plant #1, the power plant, the Commissioner, and Ford of Canada's head office. The present vacant lots at this corner are symptomatic of the on-going disappearance of the city's landscape of production,<sup>1</sup> a process that is highlighted by Windsor's shift to a landscape of leisure and entertainment — images of consumption, symbolized by the casino and the shopping mall.



Anonymous  
Chassis Assembly, Ford of Canada, 1938  
black and white photograph  
Ford Motor Company of Canada, Ltd.

## The Industrial Landscape and the Auto Industry

In the 1920s and 1930s, artists and photographers throughout the industrial world, from the new Soviet Union to the United States, were fascinated by the landscape of industry. Heavy industry in particular was an icon of progress and also a source of national pride as it indicated a country's strength internationally. Heavy machines, especially the new automobile assembly lines in North America, were seen as indicators of progress, productivity, and increased prosperity.

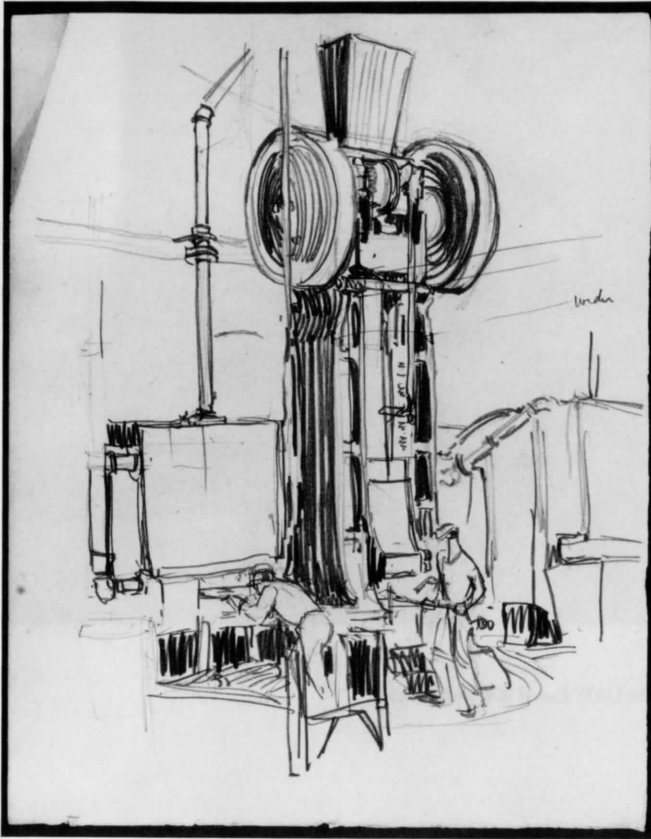
The architecture of industrial buildings, such as the Ford River Rouge complex built in 1927 across the river in Dearborn, Michigan, was seen as a "cathedral of industry;" it captured the drama and the wonder of — and the optimism about — industrial progress in the early part of the century.<sup>2</sup> The industrial architecture in Ford City was less commanding than the Rouge plant, but still dominated the local landscape.

This fascination with industry jostled in the public imagination with a strong critique of the dehumanizing machine and the endless toil of the assembly line. There were mocking and sometimes harsh commentaries on the machine in much of popular culture, from Charlie Chaplin's film *Modern Times* to Diego Rivera's fresco mural *Detroit Industry* in the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts. After the stock market crash of 1929 and during the ensuing Depression, the belief that industrial capitalism and machine technology would bring peace and prosperity to the world was badly shaken. Images of industry, particularly during World War II and immediately after, shifted focus from machine to worker.

The images in this exhibition are about the early fascination with the machine and the new technology of the assembly line, introduced by the auto industry, as they affected both the organization of industry and the division of labour. They are also about the effects of the new technology on workers, their communities, and the organizations they formed to defend and further their interests.

## Artists and the Assembly Line

Artists have seldom had access to industrial sites, and the auto industry has rarely allowed artists to enter their plants and record the manufacturing process unless there was a specific purpose. In the 1920s, Franklin Carmichael (1890-1945) gained access to the Windsor Ford plant while on assignment for the Sampson & Matthews agency in Toronto to produce a series of brochures and advertisements for Ford of Canada. His on-site sketches of the drill and stamping presses formed the basis for some of the final artwork used in the advertising campaign. Some of these advertisements



Franklin Carmichael (1890-1945)  
*Machinery and Two Workers, Ford of Canada*  
 ca. 1926-28  
 graphite on woven paper  
 National Archives of Canada, Ottawa

feature aspects of the automobile technology, rather than the consumer product, which underscores the widespread fascination with industrial processes at the time. Most often, automobile advertisements have focused on the potential customer's desire to acquire a car or truck or van, not on any assumption of shared pride in the manufacturing process.

Carmichael's quick studies focus on the massive scale of certain machines. The drawings are dramatic and immediate, capturing the awesome power of the huge presses.

Auto plant assembly lines are difficult to represent in a still medium because of their constant motion, the workers' repetitive actions, and the generally poor lighting. The omnipresent cacophony of the line that results from the intense contact between machine, metal, heat, electricity, and

human muscle — the mechanized repetition and controlled chaos of the line — can hardly be captured in a single, static image. Neither drawings nor photographs can adequately convey the sensations of the noise, the continuous movement, and the intensity of work.

This limitation can be seen in many of the industrial photographs produced for publicity purposes by Ford of Canada to document the work process and general factory operations, and in most of the series of photographs of the Motor Products Corp. This group of anonymous photographs, which were found at a Windsor lawn sale and have now been identified through a series of interviews, as of the Motor Products plant<sup>3</sup> in approximately 1938, were taken at the small auto trim plant at the corner of Seminole and Walker Road. The twenty-six images — probably one roll of film — are typical of industrial photographs of the early 1940s. Devoid of any actual work activity, the majority of the photographs show the general plant interior, the machinery, the drill presses, some short assembly systems, and the plant exterior.

However, within the series are three photographs of women workers and an older man taken outside the shops, which are refreshingly forthright photographs. In technical composition and meaning, they are fairly standard images, yet the photographs are striking in their rare glimpse — lasting a moment, a second — of these women, their personalities, their youth, their resilience, and the tensions among them.

It is in film, a technical and artistic medium that developed simultaneously with the assembly line, that some of the sensations of assembly line work have been captured. In 1938 Alfred Jacquemin was the cinematographer for the film *Song the Map Sings* commissioned by Ford of Canada. The film manages to convey some of the dynamism of what the company called "the Ford progressive assembly system." Tightly framed shots of machining, riveting, and soldering are juxtaposed with long views of the plant interior and follow the sequence of production for motors and car bodies, to their final assembly. Jacquemin's infatuation with the scale and form of the machinery has resulted in film footage that is a reverential tableau to industrial technology and the promotion of the new 1939 Mercury.

### News Photography and the 1945 Strike

The series of *Windsor Star* photographs of the 1945 Ford-United Auto Workers strike provide a forceful visual narrative of the public spectacle of a strike. The photographers, Bert Johnson, Jack Dalglish and Cecil Southward, were all recently returned RCAF photographers. They do not appear to have held any strong opinions about the strike, yet their photographs portray its inherent drama





Staff Photographer, Windsor Star  
September 13, 1945, 8:00 a.m. — 1,200 office employees, reluctant to cross the UAW Local 200 picket lines, observe strikers from the corner of Drouillard Road and Sandwich Street  
black and white photograph  
Windsor Star

and the potential tragedy working-class families faced as the strike started to define their lives. Among other subjects, the photographs evoke the passion of the standoff and the crowd control as 1,200 office workers encounter the first picket lines.

The strike, which took place during the fall and early winter of 1945, was central to the CIO and the industrial union movement's struggle for institutional recognition. The workers' fight for union security was battled out at the intersection of Drouillard Road and Sandwich St., the heart of Ford City and the site of the auto blockade.<sup>4</sup> The strike lasted ninety-nine days, but the major issue was not resolved until later, when Mr. Justice Ivan Rand, who led an inquiry into the strike, gave this UAW local — and the rest of the labour movement in Canada and the United States — the right to union security under the now famous Rand Formula.

The three *Windsor Star* photographers used the cumbersome Speed Graphic cameras, which limited them to about ten shots at any one time. This constraint meant that their shots were carefully selected, well composed, and show impressive framing and structure. Many of the photographs, particularly Southward's shots taken from a bird's-eye

perspective from the roof of the former Ford City town hall and the Wyandotte-Drouillard Road viaduct, use dramatic angles and architectural forms as frameworks. Their strong graphic compositions are energetic and deserved their front page placement in the newspaper. Johnson's aerial photographs of the auto blockade at the intersection of Drouillard and Sandwich and Southward's street-level shots were published widely and helped to attract international attention to the strike.

One of the interesting features of the *Windsor Star* photographs is the predominance of young men and the portrayal of their militancy and strength of commitment. Many of these young workers had only recently left the armed forces for civilian life. As veterans, they knew their rights — their need to make a decent living and their right to strike — and the photographs capture the emotion and discipline of the union membership, especially the almost military organization of the picket lines, the auto blockade, and the women's auxiliary that fed the strikers. Viewed years later, the photographs may appear random and diverse, but in fact they constitute a consistent and sustained examination of a strike that is justifiably famous for its



redefinition of union rights in North America. The photographs, especially those of the auto blockade, have rightly become symbols of Windsor's long labour history.

### **The Karsh Photographs**

In 1951, Yousuf Karsh (born 1908), the internationally known portrait photographer, was commissioned by Ford of Canada for a series of "industrial portraits" to be used in Ford's annual report and in the company's international displays "in recognition of the men whose skills have made Ford of Canada great."<sup>5</sup> Karsh toured the plant extensively and personally selected the men and jobs he would photograph. He saw his portraits as telling the story of the company, explaining that it is the men who "give the machines life and movement." When Karsh's photographs were exhibited at the Willistead Art Gallery in Windsor in November 1951, after Ford had announced its move to Oakville, David Mawr (aka Kenneth Saltmarche) wrote in the *Windsor Star* that Karsh "has come close to immortalizing the working man."<sup>6</sup>

The portraits are classic examples of Karsh's hallmark style: harsh, theatrical, almost oblique lighting and the

dramatic framing of the subject. There are twenty portraits in the series of three basic types of people: craggy, older workers, seen as warm and gregarious characters; young scientists and managers, austere and serious, who represent modern technology and capital; and the young workers, classically good looking, who gaze directly into the camera. The workers appear in motionless, almost empty sculptural spaces, devoid of noise, congestion or pollution.

Karsh's portraits are in many ways like movie stills in their formal composition and direct gaze. Although they were taken before the cult of the working-class counter heroes of the late 1950s, the photographs of the young workers evoke the sexual and smouldering intensity of a James Dean or Marlon Brando. As portraits of individuals, they show not the noisy reality of work, but a sanitized ideal of noble working men in somewhat contrived and tense poses.

### **Windsor, Automobile Centre of Canada**

One of the few paintings that depicts Ford City was done in 1952 by Frederick B. Taylor (1906-1986) and entitled *Windsor, automobile centre of Canada*. Taylor was



Staff Photographer, Windsor Star  
**Shift Change, Charles St. Gate, Ford of Canada, early 1940s**  
 black and white photograph  
 Windsor Star

commissioned as part of the “Cities of Canada” series by Seagram’s of Canada to paint an aspect of Windsor. Surprisingly, Taylor chose the unusual and even ironic perspective of the view from the office of Ford of Canada’s president. The preliminary sketch for this painting, which is exhibited here, and called *Looking South over Windsor, Ontario*, gives us the president’s view, looking south over the roof of the Ford plant on Sandwich Street. In the foreground is the plant roof and parking lots below, with the Church of Our Lady of the Lake and the former city hall in the mid-ground. To the left is the power plant, and in the distance the long low buildings of plants #2 and #4 stretch to the horizon.

The centre of the painting is occupied by almost empty space — the corner of Drouillard Road and Sandwich Street. Taylor’s oblique view comments on the 1945 strike and the auto blockade, but also ironically alludes to the real meaning

of Ford’s October 1951 announcement of the move of its assembly line to Oakville.

### Conclusion

One of the major reasons that industrial images had such a wide appeal in the earlier part of the twentieth century was because of the complex and contradictory relationship artists and the public had to mass industrialization in this period. This is no less true in a town like Ford City, despite the lack of a public civic vision of its leaders during its early days. While notions of industry and machinery were celebrated in art, representations of specific locales were few because of the reluctance of industrialists to allow artists into the factories. So, this exhibition can only show a fragmentary history. It covers only a small part of the overlapping layers of the local history of Ford City. It starts to examine how people have made images of a specific industrial residential

community that has shifted and changed meaning in the larger urban context. There are many more histories and fragments of history to be explored that lie in personal stories, religious and ethnic groups, and in local gossip. These we hope will be evoked and unlocked by this exhibition. *Ford City\Windsor* is just a start.

Rosemary Donegan  
July 15, 1994

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 38.

<sup>2</sup> See: Karen Lucic, *Charles Sheeler and the Cult of the Machine* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> The anonymous photographs were purchased at a lawn sale in Windsor by Frank Herold and were later donated to the "Active Archive" at the CAW Family Education Centre in Port Elgin, Ontario.

<sup>4</sup> The idea of an auto blockade was adapted from the Miller Road barricade in Flint, Michigan in 1942, where the UAW used a blockade of cars to collect union dues from the membership. The idea of using a blockade of automobiles, trucks and buses — to form a no-go area — within an auto strike, appears to be an entirely original strike tactic conceived and carried out by the Windsor UAW local.

<sup>5</sup> "Pictures by Karsh" *Ford Graphic* (16 February, 1951): 10.

<sup>6</sup> David Mawr, "Karsh's Ford Plant Pictures on Exhibit at Willistead," *Windsor Star*, 17 November, 1951.

Anonymous photographer  
**Motor Products employees, the machine shop, ca. 1938**  
black and white photograph  
Active Archive, CAW Family Education Centre, Port Elgin



#### Back left:

Lazar (Joe/Mike) Ungurean, Bertha Mazerolle, Katherine (Kay) Dingle, Emily Riberdy,  
[?] Helen Winton/[?] Joyce Moore, Emma (Emily) Larret, Rita Beachin, Katherine Kornago,  
[?] Lucy Couture/[?] Lillian Riggs/[?] Catherine Ronchka, Elsie Long, Isabelle Thomson, Bernice Brooker

#### Front left:

[?] Sylvia Horner Fitzgerald/[?] May Clark, Lily Biranski, Mary Petruniak