

The Village / Town of City Windsor, Ontario, Canada



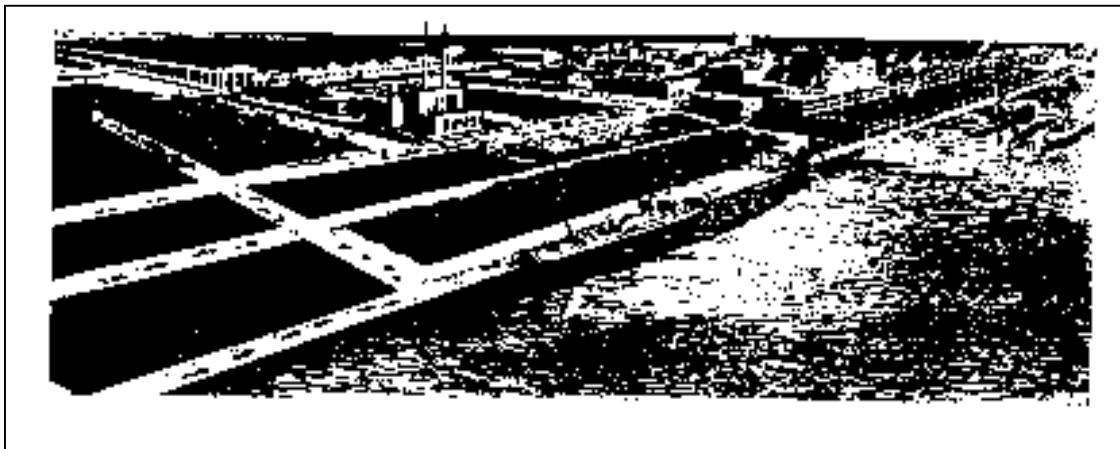

Windsor Architectural
Conservation
Advisory
Committee 1996-1997

Ford City

The area known as Ford City developed out of a French parish, Notre Dame du Lac, founded in 1884 on land donated by Francois Drouillard. The church, now named Our Lady of the Rosary (a.k.a. Holy Rosary), was built in 1908 to replace the original structure which had burned a year earlier.

William McGregor (1836-1903) began his business life as a horse dealer supplying the Union Army in the Civil War. He owned the street railway, real estate, a bank, a mill, a fence company and the Walkerville Wagon Works. He was warden of Essex County, a reeve of Windsor, a member of Parliament between 1874 and 1896, and Collector of Customs. His son, Gordon Morton McGregor, became the Wagon Works president and, thanks to Henry Ford's vision, became head of the fledgling Ford Motor Company of Canada in 1904.

As Ford Motor Company grew, the surrounding area became a boom town. The Wagon Works was augmented in 1910 with a new building as it was absorbed by Ford. By 1913, there were 1400 employees earning \$4. per hour. That year, the village was incorporated. In 1915, it achieved town status. Charles Montreuil, one of the farmers whose land was acquired by the company, became the first mayor of the Town of Ford City -one of the Border Cities (Windsor, Sandwich, Walkerville and Ford).



Unlike its orderly neighbour, Walkerville, Ford City grew haphazardly with little regard for planning. In 1928-29, with 16,000 residents, many of whom came from central European countries to join the Ford work force, Ford City was incorporated as East Windsor.

Ford City had grown too fast, and lacked the dictatorial leadership which had directed the Town of Walkerville. The town was wallowing in bank debts. Also unlike Walkerville, its prosperous neighbour, Ford City welcomed Windsor's amalgamation of the Border Cities in 1935.

Ford Motor Company flourished throughout World War II, producing heavy trucks for the European theatre. But the end of the war brought labour unrest and, in the fall of 1945, a major strike stilled the auto plant for what has become the legendary '99 Days'. The resulting agreement, called the *Rand Formula* after the arbitrator who designed it, was less than universally welcomed, but it set the tone for future development of trade unions and the role of management - a cool partnership, but one that has proven workable.

The removal of the Ford head office and assembly plant to Oakville, near Toronto, occurred in 1953-54. Ford City declined as the population dispersed, and little is left now of the town that Ford built.



William McGregor, 1836-1903, founded Walkerville Wagon Works. His son, Gordon Morton McGregor, 1873-1922 founded Ford Motor Co. of Canada Ltd., and was general manager from 1904 to 1922.

The former Belle Isle School (a.k.a. Ford City School), 1917 -1931, was converted to a private hospital in 1942. It was purchased by the Windsor Western Hospital Centre in 1972, and closed in 1994. James Pennington was the architect.

Ford City's Town Hall, a 1920s classic, stood on the south-east corner of the town's hub -Riverside Drive and Drouillard Road. Its architect is presently unknown. A parking lot has replaced it. Our Lady of the Rosary church stands immediately east of the site.

Ford Motor Company's landmark power plant was designed by the great industrial architect, Albert Kahn, in 1922. It is an outstanding example of Kahn's use of ornamental brick and tile detail. Unfortunately, his Ford office buildings (1910-18) and engine plant (1923) have been demolished or defaced. This massive building is an architectural prize worth conserving.



Ford Power Plant, 1922
3001 Riverside Dr. E.



Gordon McGregor School, 1924
1646 Alexis

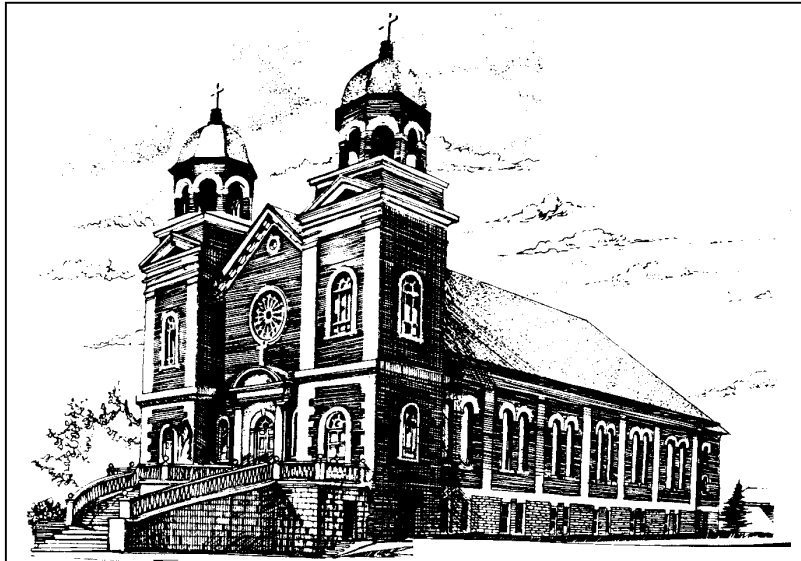


Ford Town Hall c. 1920 (Demolished)



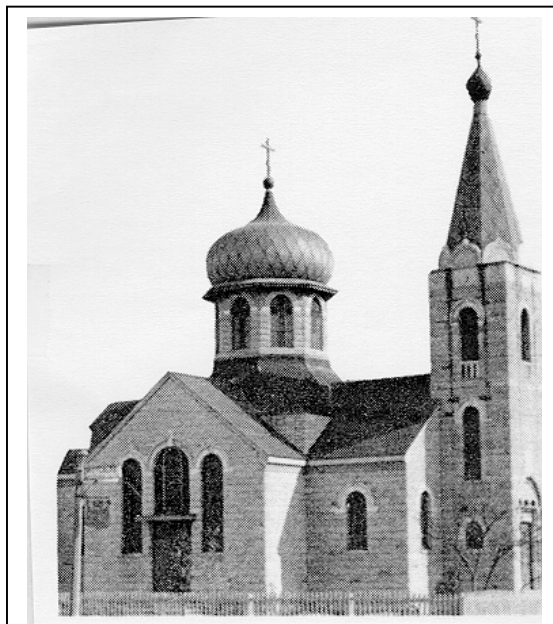
Ford City School, 1917
3177 Riverside Dr. E.
(Demolished)

FORD CITY CHURCHES (all surviving)



**Our Lady of Rosary, 1908
2879 Riverside Dr. E. / Drouillard Rd.**

Ford City's places of worship include the twin-towered Roman Catholic church named Our Lady of the Rosary , built in 1908 following a fire, caused by wind-borne sparks from the nearby railroad, which destroyed Notre Dame du Lac church.

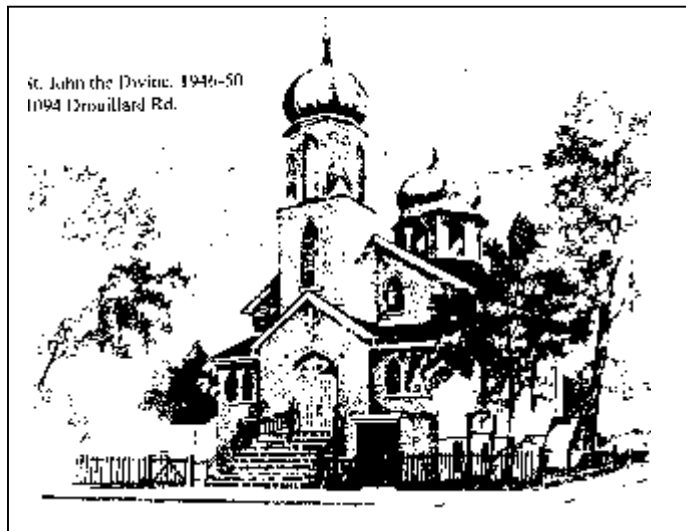


**Holy Trinity, 1947
1420 Drouillard Rd.**



**St. Dimitrije, 1945
2690 Seminole St.**

Four Byzantine-styled Orthodox churches were built by immigrants from eastern Europe. St. John the Divine (1946) and Holy Trinity (1947) (both Russian), Descent of the Holy Ghost (Romanian) and St. Dimitrije (Serbian) all exhibit picturesque forms referred to as "onion" or flame-shaped domes.



**St. John the Divine, 1946-50
1094 Drouillard Rd.**

FORD CITY EXECUTIVE HOUSES



Wallace Campbell
1882 – 1947



"Edgemere" c. 1916 – 1857 Richmond St.

Except for "Edgemere," Wallace Campbell's Walkerville house, few of the great houses survive which once lined Riverside Drive (Sandwich Street), built for the wealthy families of the Border Cities. The Walter McGregor house fell to parkland development; Henry Ling's tudoresque house was lost to fire; Robert Henkel's classical mansion was last seen adorned with a massive Polish flag -a veterans' home; and that of lumberman E. L. Thompson left the scene decades ago. Nothing remains but faded photos in a 1913 publication promoting the Border Cities' attractions



Walter McGregor House on corner of Coulter
Riverside Dr. & Sandwich St. Published



Ling house



Phelps house



Hurke house

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Border Cities Star

Municipal Archives

Windsor's Community Museum Don Wilson Post Card Collection Ford
Motor Co., Oakville, Archives Windsor Regional Hospital

Windsor-1913

Ninety-nine Days -the Ford Strike in Windsor, 1945; Colling, Herb, 1995

Strike! 99 Days on the Line; Walsh, Mark and Baruth, Mary, 1995

Garden Gateway to Canada; Morrison, Neil, 1954

The Township of Sandwich, Past and Present; Neil, Frederick, 1909

Windsor 1892-1992; Price, Trevor and Kulisek, Larry, 1992

