

## **Ford City Historic Walking Tour**

Ford City Arts & Heritage Festival September 27<sup>th</sup> 2015- 2.2 km one way

Ford City is the historical industrial heart of Windsor Ontario. Originally French Canadian farmland, the area evolved and became the birthplace of Ford Canada and modern Canadian unions. During its early years, the town was often divided by Catholic and Protestant viewpoints, as well as tension between French and English speaking Canadians. The area became Ford City in 1904, when Ford Motor Company decided to build in this area, making Ford the first of the “Big Three” automakers to break into the Canadian market. The creation of a new industry in the area caused growth in Ford City to skyrocket in the 1920’s. In 1935 Ford City amalgamated to become a part of the City of Windsor. The creation of Ford Canada gave Windsor a new identity as Canada’s Automotive Capital. In 1953, Ford Canada shut down the original plant and moved its headquarters to Oakville Ontario. Today, Ford City is the home of beautiful murals, boxing heroes, wood workers, friendly neighbourhood faces and the rich history of Ford and prohibition. Thank you for taking time to tour historic Ford City in the heart of Windsor Ontario.

This walking tour starts on Riverside Drive East and works its way South on Drouillard Road, and on to the Ford Test Track on Seminole Road. There is parking available on Drouillard Road or visitors can park at the Ford Test Track. Part of the tour is also on a city bus route. Map at end of page 5.



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**2879 Riverside Dr E:** Our Lady of Rosary Church was built in 1908 after a fire destroyed the original Notre Dame du Lac Church. This twin domed building with its beautiful front steps and stained glass windows served the Catholic community for 100 years. François Drouillard donated the land, and Hiram Walker donated a large sum of capital for the construction. During Prohibition, the Church was rumoured to be used as a landmark and light beacon by rum runners to navigate the Detroit River during night time crossings. Sadly the Church closed to the public in 2007, but has been repurposed as the Water’s Edge Event Centre.

Visible from the parking lot of the church is The Blockade Mural at 232 Drouillard. It honours the memory of the 1945 Ford Strike. On November 4th and 5th, protesting workers gathered over two thousand automobiles and gridlocked the surrounding area, creating the largest traffic jam the City of Windsor has ever witnessed. (Sergio Mazzotta & Glen Donaldson, 2000)

**Drouillard and Wyandotte:** The Drouillard Road Subway is a prime example of one of the many ‘make work’ projects that were prevalent during the Great Depression. Workers were paid four dollars a day to manually dig out the landscape to build the Subway and allow traffic to flow more smoothly. In 2007 the subway was refurbished by the City of Windsor. Continue South on Drouillard up the viaduct.

**926 Drouillard Road:** The Agreement Mural depicts the end of the 1945 Ford Strike. On September 12th over 11,000 workers walked off the job and did not return for 99 days. The aftermath of the strike led to the birth of the modern

Canadian Union and Union dues, and lead the way for modern collective bargaining. (Steven Johnson, with lettering by Glen Donaldson, 2000)

As you continue South on Drouillard look East down Trenton Road. You can see the gates and guardhouse for the original Casting Plant or Foundry as it was better known. It opened in November of 1934, and was one of Canada's largest recycling plants. For 73 years the 500,000 square foot plant melted scrap metal and produced over 50 million crankshafts and engine blocks. At the time of its close in 2007, the Foundry produced an average of 500,000 engine blocks per year. At 959 Drouillard Road: The Foundry Mural depicts the Windsor Casting Plant. (Steven Johnson, 2000)

Just down the street you will come across the Ford City Community Garden between 966 and 984 Drouillard. The garden was established in 2008 with the intention of turning empty lots back into green spaces. Covering three lots, the Garden grows a variety of fruits and vegetables while fostering gardening skills and community spirit. On 966 Drouillard you will see The Pioneer Spirit Mural which celebrates the original French Canadian Ford City settlers. Drouillard Road is named after Francois Drouillard who settled and farmed this area in the 1820s. (Sergio Mazzotta, Mike Mascarin & Steve, Lauzon 2000)

Just down the street at 993 Drouillard Road you can see the Champs Mural. This honours two of the all-time greatest Canadian Ford City boxers. During the late 1990s and early 2000s Margaret "Mean" Sidoroff won a Canadian women's amateur title, and three world professional championships. She went on to become the first coach of the Canadian National Women's Boxing Team. Also featured in the mural is Ford City native Alex Borshuk, better known as "Al Delany". He was the Canadian Heavyweight Boxing Champion from 1941 to 1945. His record stands at 65 wins, 31 losses and 7 draws, with 25 knockout wins. Borshuk met the legendary Joe Louis in 1934 and lost, but not before breaking one of the Detroiter's molars! (Donna Jean Mayne, 2001)

998 Drouillard Road: The Shift Change Mural is based on a 1950 photograph taken by Fred Lazurek of workers exiting the Whelpton gate, and pays tribute to all auto workers whose hard work and sweat helped to shape the City of Windsor. (Steven Johnson, 1999)

The Ford City Parkette: On the opposite side of the street at the corner of Drouillard and Whelpton is the Ford City Parkette. Here you will find the End of the Line Mural (Mark Williams and James Levergood, 2001). The 1949 Ford Tudor Deluxe Sedan joined more than three million vehicles built at Ford's assembly plant between 1904 and 1954. In front of the mural, the Generations Sculpture is a tribute to the families who worked in the automotive factories and helped to put Windsor on the map. The sculpture was completed by artist and Ford journeyman Mark Williams in 2001.

2757 Whelpton: Across from the Parkette you can see the Women on the Line mural (Donna Jean Mayne, 2001). In 1915, the magneto winding room was the only factory floor department that employed "girls". The women depicted here are winding and soldering spools of copper for magnetos- used in early ignition systems. Please continue South up Drouillard Road.

1072 Drouillard: Border City Boxing Club has established itself as a premiere training facility. It is a decades old, non-profit training facility that teaches youth the value of hard work and discipline. Here, you can train with Provincial, National and World Champions.

1078 Drouillard: Atelier Virginianne is a Gallery, workshop & studio space. Check for art shows, fundraisers or special events as you walk by.

1094 Drouillard: St. John the Divine Orthodox Church. In 1914 citizens came together with the goal of establishing

Windsor's first Orthodox Church. By 1924 the Church expanded and built a social hall and a library that contained a large collection of Russian works. Tragedy struck the Church in the 1946 when the buildings were severely damaged by a fire, but the resilient Orthodox community was able to rebuild the beautiful present day structure.

1102 Drouillard: Drouillard Place, a multi-service provider, has served Ford City for over thirty-five years. This non-profit organization has helped create many of the fine programs available in Ford City. The North side of the building features the New Millennium Mural, painted by day camp children under the direction of artist Sergio Mazzotta (2000). It depicts their vision of Ford City and themselves in the future.

1118 Drouillard: The Lazurek Series of Murals were created by various artists to honour long time Ford City Resident and highly acclaimed photographer Theodore Fred Lazurek. Each mural is a painting of one of his original Post WWII photographs. The building is home to Brown's Breaktime Lounge.

1168 Drouillard: Gino & Liz Marcus Community Complex offers a full recreation facility, city services and community programming. Originally the Holy Rosary Community Centre, the complex was renamed after the Marcus', who played a major role in the revival of the area in the 1980s and 1990s.

The building also features the Community Snapshot Series of Murals created by local artists as a tribute to local Ford City heroes.

- Marina Clemens has played a major role in the rejuvenation of Ford City as a key driving force behind Drouillard Place. She created a Family Resource Program, helping young families with community needs. (Steven Johnson 2001)
- Louis Gouin was well known for his kindness, and served as coordinator of the Ford City Business Improvement Area and a member of the Drouillard Road Development Committee. (Steven Johnson in 2001)
- Scott Gegesky was the manager of Ford's Windsor Operations. In the late 1990s he was heavily involved with the revival of Ford City and the beautiful murals that decorate Drouillard Road. (Mark Williams 2001)
- Theresa Latouf was one of Ford City's most prominent community activists during the second half of the 20th century. She heavily promoted education throughout Ford City and was instrumental in the creation of the Holy Rosary School and Community Centre. (James Levergood 2001)
- Deputy Chief Charlie Weston served with the Windsor Police Force for 35 years and was very proud to serve Ford City. He was just two months on the force when the 1945 Ford Strike occurred, and was often a peace maker when it came to issues on the streets. (Donna Jean Mayne 2001)
- Rev. Joseph N. Ross, M.S was one of the main community pillars of Ford City in the 1970's. Father 'Joe' served at the Our Lady of Rosary Church from 1969-1978. (Sergio Mazzotta and Mark Williams 2001)
- Monsignor Laurendeau became the third pastor of Notre Dame du Lac in 1917. He was able to help French-Canadians keep their culture, while at the same time opening his arms to the rest of community. His kind nature and ability to inspire helped the parish grow to a population of 3000. (Mary Beth Broughton 2000)
- House Calls honours Dr. George who served as Ford City's doctor for 52 years. He opened his practice in 1934, and for over 50 years, Dr. George would make house calls, helping the sick and elderly, and delivering many of Ford City's children. (Donna Jean Mayne, 1999)

- Mr. K.C. Hortop served as the Gordon McGregor School's first principal from 1924 to 1955. The painting features fingerprints of some of his former students in the brick wall backdrop. (Donna Jean Mayne, 1999)

- Gino and Elizabeth Marcus truly shaped Ford City. When it came to giving back to the community, they were known as the Ford City Power Couple. They sat on the Holy Rosary School and Community Centre committee, and were founding members of the East Windsor Citizen Committee, Drouillard Place and the Drouillard Road Athletic Association. When Mr. Marcus passed away in 1996 the Holy Rosary Community Centre was renamed the Gino & Liz Marcus Community Complex. (Steve Lauzon, 1999)

1207 Drouillard: The Prohibition Mural features a quote from "The Rum Runners", a book by local author Marty Gervais, and pays tribute to Ford City during the American Prohibition era. During the late 1920s and 1930s the old Ford City docks, on the bank of the Detroit River, was often the sight of bootleggers getting their shipments ready to smuggle into America. During the winter months, bootleggers would drive their cars across the frozen river into the United States. It is rumoured that the Our Lady of the Rosary's lighted steeples were used at night for smugglers to navigate back to Windsor. One successful night of trips across the river could net a bootlegger 200 dollars! (Steven Johnson, with the assistance of Mark Williams, Mike Mascarin, Steven Lauzon and Glen Donaldson 1999)

1214 Drouillard: The Military Production Mural celebrates both Ford Canada's and Ford City's contribution to the Second World War. By 1942, civilian production had been discontinued and all of Ford's resources were committed to the war effort. As a result, Ford Motor Company of Canada Limited became Britain's largest single source of military land transportation during World War II, supplying almost 400,000 vehicles. (Yong Sheng Xuan, Mark Williams and Donna Jean Mayne 1999) - While here, stop in at Banja Luka Serbian and Slovakian Cuisine for some lunch.

1220 Drouillard: The Model T Mural (Glenn Donaldson and Diana Goddard, 2000). First introduced in 1908, Canadian Model T's were built in Windsor. Not only did it change the transportation landscape of the city, the Model T was the automobile that revolutionized North American transportation. During Prohibition the Model T was often modified by bootleggers to carry beer and alcohol across the Detroit River. Drivers would keep their doors half open in case they hit a weak part in the ice. To this day there are many Model T's at the bottom of the Detroit River.

1231 Drouillard: The Founders Mural features Gordon McGregor and Henry Ford in front of the gates of the original Canadian Ford factory. Around the turn of the 20th Century, businessman Gordon McGregor began talks with famous industrialist Henry Ford to import his newly formed company's products into Canada. The end result was the creation of the Ford Motor Company of Canada in 1904. McGregor would build Ford Automobiles on the Canadian side of the Detroit River, in turn, lowering the duty charges that Ford would have to pay. This allowed Ford to become the first of the "Big Three" automakers to break into the Canadian market, and created a new industry for the area. (Mark Williams, Donna Jean Mayne and Steven Johnson 1999) - Stop in at Square Deal Market for some Rudy's Polish sausage.

In the 1300 Block of Drouillard is the Garry Dugal Park, featuring a children's playground, walking pathways, a soccer pitch, a BMX bike track, a water spray pad, basketball and tennis courts, public washrooms and a large gazebo. The 4.9 acre park has something for everybody. Dugal lived in Ford City and was a community activist and organizer. He was often found in the park leading community events for neighbourhood children.

At the corner of Drouillard and Deming, you can see the Ford Motor Company of Canada - Windsor Engine Plant. It is the last Ford operation in Ford City. Opened in 1923, the engine plant has produced many of Ford's V8 engines. The Ford Windsor V8 engine is named in honour of the City. In 1990 the plant closed, but was given a major overhaul and reopened in 1994. Currently the plant builds many of the company's V-8 and V-10 engines.

1410 Drouillard: The Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church was built to cater to the increasing local Russian

population after the immigration boom of the 1919 Russian Revolution. Built in 1948, the Church reflects Eastern Architecture.

At the corner of Drouillard and Seminole is Our Lady of the Lake Cemetery. Established in 1890 as a Roman Catholic place of rest, it is one of Windsor's older cemeteries. Designed in a large circular pattern, the cemetery is home to the Walter W. Miller Cenotaph, which honours local Canadian Veterans. Currently the cemetery is taken care of by The Descent of the Holy Ghost Romanian Orthodox Church. This beautiful Eastern European and Orthodox domed influenced church was originally built as St. Vladimir's Ukrainian Orthodox Church in 1937 for the growing Ukrainian population. Eventually the church became too small for its congregation, and in 1963, St. Vladimir's moved to new larger Orthodox Church on Tecumseh Road. This site is now home to The Descent of the Holy Ghost Romanian Orthodox Church.

On the corner of Alexis and Seminole is St. Cyril and Methodius Slovak RC Church. It was built in 1929 and is another reflection of Ford City's vast diversity. During the 1920s, Southern Ontario became a popular destination for Slovak immigrants. Many were attracted by the fertile farmlands and budding industries in Southern Ontario. Since its beginning, the parish has held true to both its Slovak and Catholic routes and mass is held in both Slovak and English. Next door, St. Cyril's Slovak Centre is a place for weddings, social gatherings and cultural events. The Centre is a cornerstone of the Windsor Slovak community.

3001 Seminole: The Drive Ford Test Track is a large parkland area used to exercise, play sports and enjoy the wide open outdoor space. Now known for its 59 acres, 18 soccer fields, running track, and an off leash dog park, the track was originally used to test new Ford Vehicles on the one mile track. This was the proving ground for the 351 Windsor, one of Ford's most successful and highly touted V-8 small block engines. This engine went on to power many of the early 1970s Mustangs, F series pickup trucks and was often the small block engine of choice for police cars.

Also in Ford City: Check to see if Korda Artistic Productions is performing at their nearby theatre located at 2520 Seminole Street.

