

MILFORD'S AUTOMOTIVE HERITAGE SITES

Milford is truly a mill town. There have been more than 14 mills on the Huron River and on the two mill ponds on Pettibone Creek.

On the upper mill pond, created in 1845, were a grist mill, a woolen mill, a planing mill and a foundry. In later years the west side of the pond had a cultivator factory, factories that manufactured tin bath tubs, plumbers' woodwork, bookcases, store fixtures, the Detroit Auto Dash Company and finally, in 1938, a Henry Ford Village Industry that manufactured carburetors. This was the twelfth of Henry Ford I's Village Industries and was designed by the famous Albert Kahn.

On the lower mill pond were a saw mill and a distillery in 1836 and later a cultivator factory and plaster mill. In 1939 a power house for the Ford Carburetor Plant was built on the site of the older mills.

On the Huron River were a sawmill, two grist mills, a woolen mill and a foundry within the Village limits, and a sawmill and rake factory downstream in the township.

All of these mills except the Ford Carburetor Plant have disappeared but their sites have been marked with metal historical markers. A large marker in Center Street Park on North Main Street has a map which shows where each mill site marker is located.

The Ford plant is on the west side of the upper mill pond at 101 Oak Street and its Albert Kahn designed power house, now being restored, is on West Liberty Street at the foot of the lower mill pond.

The old blacksmith shop that stood on the northwest corner of North Main and Commerce later became a Mobil station. The building was torn down in 1938 when the Ford Carburetor Plant was built.

On the northeast corner of North Main and Commerce Street is the former Standard Oil Station, built in 1939 to replace an earlier station built about 1927.

At 435 North Main is a building, constructed in 1915, that was the Mil"Ford" garage, the first Ford Motor Company sales room in Milford.

Across the street, where Five Lakes Grill and Niche and Corner are now, an earlier building was a garage. It was torn down in 1930 when the present buildings were built.

In 1941 the building, where the Clothing Cove is now, replaced a very old building and became, first, a used car lot and then Van Camp's Chevrolet. It was later Breen's Grocery.

On the southwest corner of North Main and East Liberty is a small service station built in 1934 by the McPherson Oil Company. This mission-style building has been placed on the Michigan State Register of Historic Sites. It is now a window company.

Across the street, on the northeast corner of North Main and East Liberty is what was a service station built by the Red Indian Oil Company in 1932. It was later much remodeled.

The Art Deco style building at 125 South Main Street, just south of the Huron River, used to be the Agnew Electric Company that built and installed machinery used in the manufacture of automobile parts.

Across the street from the Agnew building is a double store at 204 S. Main. The north half was built before 1844 and the south half was added after 1870. In 1930 the two buildings were converted into show room and service for the Willys-Knight cars.

On the north side of Oakland Street in South Milford, east of South Main Street, is the building built in 1924 and used by the Schlieder Manufacturing Company that made valves for the Chevrolet Motor Company.

Three miles west of Milford Village, where General Motors Road meets Hickory Ridge Road, is the General Motors Proving Ground, opened in 1926 and the first automobile testing ground in the world.

In 1926 the Packard Motor Car Company purchased approximately 640 acres of land in the southeast part of Milford Township, east of South Hill Road and both north and south of Buno Road. The plan was to establish an automobile proving ground. They were unable to secure another piece of land necessary to their plans, so the project was abandoned and the land sold to a local farmer who still owns and farms it.