

# Milford Historical Society

## Milford Michigan

The following article appeared in the Spring 2002 edition of the Society for Industrial Archeology Newsletter. To contact SIA go to [phsianews@aol.com](mailto:phsianews@aol.com).

In Milford, MI, is a small, architecturally striking Art Deco powerhouse built by the Ford Motor Co. in 1939. Officially known as the Pettibone Creek Hydroelectric Station, it was built to supply power to Ford's Milford carburetor factory, one in a series of "village industries" envisioned and built by Henry Ford between 1920 and 1940. The village industries produced parts and supplies for the main production line at the River Rouge Plant in Detroit. Ford often selected sites, like Milford, where earlier millponds and their resulting waterpower still existed. It was an attempt to counter labor unrest in the auto industry and stop the flight of working families from rural southeast Michigan.

Architect Albert Kahn designed the Milford carburetor factory and the two associated hydroelectric stations. The larger of the two stations was demolished in 1997. Kahn was known as an innovative industrial designer and is best remembered for his work on Ford's River Rouge Plant and the General Motors Building.

Water is delivered to the Pettibone Station from the dam by a 3,400-ft., 48-in.-dia steel flume, providing a 50-ft. hydraulic head of water at the station. Once inside the building, the flume bifurcated to feed two Leffel turbines in the lower level. The turbines remain, but the generators have been removed. The powerhouse tower houses a large steel column that acted as a surge suppressor to absorb the inertia of the moving water when the turbine gates closed. The station was decommissioned around 1953 and acquired by the Village of Milford in 1970.

The Milford Historical Society is working with the Village of Milford to restore and interpret the building, as well as possibly return the turbines to working order. Initial funding has been secured from a combination of private and public sources. The restoration committee is looking for advice from those involved with similar projects. Info: Judith Reiter, Milford Historical Society, 124 East Commerce Rd.,

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