



# River Rouge: Ford's Industrial Colossus

*Joseph P. Cabadas*

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In 1914, Henry Ford ordered the construction of a small plant at the confluence of the River Rouge and Detroit River in what was then the rural community of Dearborn, just outside of Detroit. Eventually, that small pilot plant grew into the gigantic 1,100-acre River Rouge Complex, the most famous auto factory of the twentieth century, renowned as the home of Ford's "vertical integration." In 1999, Ford's great-grandson and Ford Chairman Bill Ford III announced that the company would reinvent the complex as the auto factory of the new century, scheduled for completion in 2004. Like "the Rouge" itself, this illustrated 90-year chronological history of the complex will provide a sprawling view of the evolution of automaking and industrial technologies, as well as the exciting new concepts the company is incorporating into the current redesign. Central to vertical integration was self-sufficiency: raw materials went in one end and finished cars came out the other. In fact, iron ore and coal became completed engine blocks in less than 24 hours! Filled with evocative inside-the-factory shots, this illustrated 90-year history provides sprawling views of manufacturing processes, factory evolution, and the exciting new concepts Ford has incorporated into the redesign. Author Joe Cabadas also explores "vertical integration" as conceived at the Rouge-raw materials essentially entered one door and new automobiles exited the other. In fact, iron ore and coal were transformed into engine blocks in less than 24 hours. In addition to manufacturing processes that also included glassmaking and woodworking, the engaging chronological history explores the Rouge's roles as a crucible of industry unionization (at its peak in 1929, the 1,100-acre factory employed 128,000 workers) and wartime production, and its profound influence on Japanese automakers. Thanks to the Rouge's immensity and diverse operations, archival and current images provide a visual cornucopia for just about any reader.- The River Rouge automotive factory is part of Henry Ford's grand legacy that remains today. It is one of the world's largest automotive manufacturing facilities.- Timed to coincide with the completed Rouge renovation and the complex's ninetieth anniversary

About the Author: Joe Cabadas is an automotive journalist whose work regularly appears in several industry trade publications. He is the co-author of MBI Publishing Company's bestselling *The American Auto Factory* (ISBN 0-7603-1059-9) and lives in Dearborn, Michigan.

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