

March 2017 A Frame
5351 Chestnut Street
New Orleans, LA 70115

**Officers of New Orleans A's Chapter
Model A Ford Club of America**

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Phone Committee: Red Dayberry; Carl Hunter, Angelo Ricca
Newsletter: Mickey King

COMING EVENTS

Monthly Meeting: Fourth Wednesday of the month at Randazzo's at 6:30 pm for dinner. Meeting at 7:15.

Future Outings:

Car Clinics: Angelo's garage on Oak Street the **third Sunday morning** of the month. We all need to learn how to repair and maintain our cars. I am ready to bring my car!

March 25: [Spring Fiesta Parade](#): Held in the French Quarter so get your Model A ready. Throw flowers and stuffed animals but no beads.

April 8: [Truck Farm Tavern](#) at 12:30 pm.

April 22: [All Car Club Picnic](#) at Wally Pontiff playground, 11:00 am.

May 6: [Landry's](#) on Lakeshore Drive at 11:00 am.

May 27: [St. Francis Car Show](#) 5:30 pm.

June 10: [Boutte's Bayou Restaurant](#). Meet in parking lot near Academy Sports at 11:00 am.

Check our web site for newsletters, coming events, want ads and photos: www.nolamodelas.com .

RiverShack Breakfast Meeting

The RiverShack proved to be an excellent venue for a Model A outing. Although a cloudy day, The temperature was pleasant and we had no rain. We arrived at 8:00 AM and Donnie, the owner, was already hard at work setting up a buffet on the patio. We parked in front of the building and drew many a curious glance from passersby on the River Road and levee.

In attendance were: Bob Sappington, Carl Hunter, Frank Culotta, Bill Pfaff, John Maiorana, John Troendle, Phil Strevinsky, Geoff Goodbee, Angelo Ricca, and your humble narrator comprising the male participants. The only females patient enough to endure a bunch of gritty old coots discussing ignition points settings or sticky float valves, etc. were Joycelin Culotta and Pearl Falanga.

It was a very pleasant affair with our host doing all the cooking himself. It was regular breakfast fare but everyone was praising his French Toast Soufflé, a recipe he had invented and tested out on the fellows driving old jalopies. We felt right at home in this archaic atmosphere. So informal was it that at some point the owner approached me and said "I have to run an errand, I'll be back in about 20 minutes." I replied, "Take your time, we'll watch the place for you till you get back." (He had left the door unlocked to allow us access to the bathrooms) which we did without looting the bar, kitchen, or cash register I'm pleased to report.

We sat around discussing cabbages and kings till somewhere between 10:30 and 11:00 we started to get wanderlust and one by one gravitated to our vehicles and after John Troendle's starter failed in it's duty, a group of his silver haired comrades, more suited to afternoon naps and bingo parlors, saw him merrily on his way again after pushing him a few yards down Shrewsbury Road until his engine, with a puff of smoke and a roar, belched into life much to the amusement of several onlookers.

A few of us retired to Angelo's new house nearby which is undergoing massive renovations to gape and gawk and generally admire his handiwork.

I can't imagine a more pleasant way to spend a nearly springtime Saturday morning than communing with friends in such a bucolic and relaxed scene.

Ken Falanga



Above: Early arrivals at RiverShack Breakfast.

Below: Way back when we first tried putting corn alcohol into gasoline!



History

Field and Factory. . . Ford's Village Industries

By 1919, Henry Ford had become famous for pioneering centralized, large-scale production plants which revolutionized the way hard goods were made in America. With the advent of massive factories, such as the colossal River Rouge facility in Dearborn, Ford proved he could make cars cheaper by having all parts he needed under one roof.

Ford, however, realized that the giant factories of industrialized America were attracting a largely unstable work force of workers primarily from farming towns. Many of these employees were unattached, single men who stayed in boarding houses and cheap hotels. In their off hours, many frequented saloons, burlesque shows and bordellos. Freed from the constraints of the family farm and village life, the modern factory worker was increasingly susceptible to the temptations of the "depraved" city. If left unchecked, such a situation would no doubt lead to an unreliable workforce and the demise of everything Ford believed America stood for.

It was a dream of the great innovator to create a network of what he called "Village Industries" to supply the needs of River Rouge and other factories. But they would do more than that. The Village Industries would act as vehicles of social as well as technological change. Ford believed that these shops would preserve America's rural values and folk culture; balance the country's agricultural past with its technological future; improve employee morale (as well as employee morals) by allowing workers to keep "one foot in industry and another foot in the land"; discourage labor unrest and put a check on union organizing; foment closer bonds between managers and workers; and, most significantly, improve quality and profits for the Ford Motor Company.

The way it worked was simple. Ford trained rural workers in the latest technological advances, allowing them release time to farm their fields and paying them "city" wages for factory work done in the outskirts. More than 30 of these Village Industries were established throughout Michigan, Ohio, Mississippi and New York, the first of which was the Ford Valve Plant in Northville, Michigan. Located on the banks of the Rouge River, an old gristmill stood on the site, and it was reconfigured into a factory to manufacture valves for Ford automobile engines in 1919. For the next 25 years these "farm/factories" produced light manufacturing goods for Ford such as copper welding rods, lamp assemblies, precision gauges, car horns, and headlight assemblies.

For the privileged few who were hired to work in the villages, the unusual labor arrangement was the best of both worlds. Not only did farmers get the opportunity to continue working their farms, but had the benefit of additional income in the off-season. According to many of the workers, there was a sense of family in these mini-plants that would have been hard to replicate in the typical urban factory environment of the day.

"I wouldn't go back to the city for twice my pay here," one man said, "and my wife wouldn't go back for three times as much. We've got a truck, garden and a cow. Then, too, the children are outdoors all day long and only have to go round the corner to school. "And say," he added, "who could want a more beautiful place to work?"

But the question that has baffled historians since Henry Ford came up with the idea of a village industry is. . . why? Why would the champion of massive, centralized assembly-line production methods, at the same time, put forth the notion of a decentralized workforce whose prior experience was that of milking cows and growing corn?

Like Ford himself, the answer is complicated. For labor experts, the Village Industries were a way for Ford, an ardent opponent of organized labor, to circumvent unions. Other historians take a different view. "Henry Ford was a man of enormous contradictions," said Howard Segal, a former University of Michigan professor and author of the book *Recasting the Machine Age: Henry Ford's Village Industries*. "He grew up on a farm and hated farming, but he wanted all of his employees to be part-time farmers. He lived in Dearborn outside the city but lured workers into the city. He was an industrialist but also an environmentalist. He built the giant Rouge plant but established the Village Industries."

Segal and others suggest that the establishment of the Village Industries was a way for Ford to preserve small-town America and perhaps to justify what he had done as an industrialist. "Maybe he felt uneasy or guilty about the conditions he created in his factories and cities," offered Segal.

According to noted journalist Drew Pearson, "Ford never resolved his mixed feelings about modernity: above all, the congestion, heterogeneity, rootlessness, impersonality, inequality and materialism of twentieth-century American cities. "The modern city has done its work and a change is coming," Ford told Pearson in a 1924 interview. "The city has taught us much, but the overhead expense of living in such places is becoming unbearable. The cities are getting top-heavy and are about doomed."

Or perhaps, as Ford himself alluded to, decentralization was simply a good business practice. "What we have learned in mass production makes decentralization possible," Ford said. "Congregating to a center has the advantage of coordinating many parts into a cooperative whole; disseminating them again possesses the advantage of bringing them to further refinement as separate units. Both movements must be looked upon as parts of one whole, a progressive whole."

At the height of Ford's Village Industries in the 1930s, Ford had aggressive plans to expand them further, taking operations out of the giant River Rouge plant and moving them to other outside locations. However, it never came to fruition largely due to the diversion of Henry Ford's interests to other matters and ultimately his death in 1947. The plants were gradually sold or closed, beginning when Henry Ford II took over.

The results and achievements of Village Industries are mixed. "Did they succeed? Yes and no," concluded Segal. His research indicates that the Village Industries never made money. "But, administratively, they were successful alternatives to large-scale manufacturing and production - and were pleasant places to work."

There were a total of 19 Village Industries in Michigan and, remarkably, all of them are still in existence, although not as manufacturing facilities. The Middle Rouge Stewardship Community of MotorCities National Heritage Area recently completed a brochure "*Thrills of the Mills*" which highlights the history of 10 of these Village Industries as well as other local sites of interest. For a copy of the brochure, feel free to email lambriez@motorcities.org. If you are interested in setting up a tour, please email ndarga@motorcities.org.