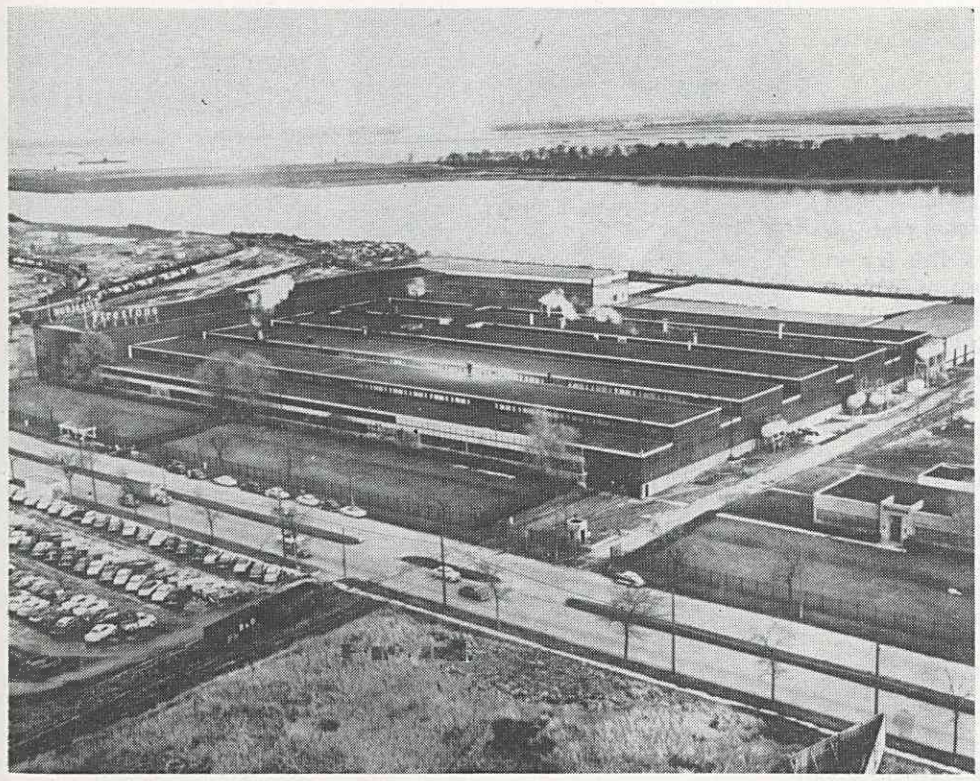

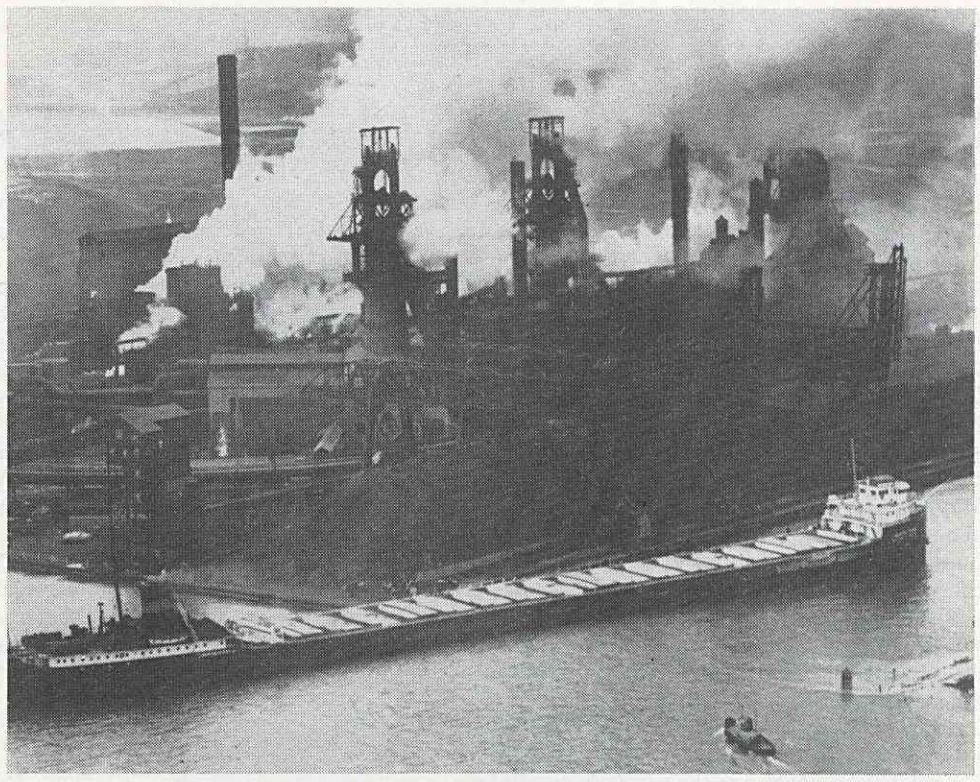

STEEL PRODUCTS PLANT — The Firestone plant in Wyandotte, Mich., produces rims for trucks, buses and tractors; and automotive and commercial stampings. Firestone Steel Products Company is the world's largest manufacturer of rims for trucks and farm tractors.

BUSY RIVER—The plant is situated on the Detroit River, "world's busiest stretch of water." National Steel Corporation ships bringing ore to the corporation's division, Great Lakes Steel at Ecorse, are among the vessels that give the Detroit River that title.

FEATURING PLANT CITIES . . .

Wyandotte Steel Products Plant Located On 'World's Busiest Stretch Of Water'

IF a study of the industrial growth of this country stirs the imagination, a visit to the Wyandotte, Mich., plant of the Firestone Steel Products Company will bring the story to life.

Built by the company in 1937, the plant is located in one of the biggest and busiest industrial centers in the world on what has been named "the busiest stretch of water in the world."

Yet, little more than 200 years ago this was the site of the old Indian village of Maquaqua, the inhabitants of which were known as the Wyandots. It was in this area that the Ottowa chief, Pontiac, called his council of tribal chiefs to plot the Indian uprising against the British at Detroit after the close of the French and Indian Wars.

Now more than 3,000,000 people live and work in the Detroit area. The Detroit River has become an important link in the vast Great Lakes waterway system and will become even more important when the St. Lawrence Seaway project is completed.

THE PLANT is at the edge of Wyandotte in the village of Riverview, newest and smallest of the six "Down River" communities which are part of the sprawling network of towns in the Detroit metropolitan area.

The Down River communities —Ecorse, Grosse, Ile, Riverview, River Rouge, Trenton and Wyandotte — have a population of about 100,000. Wyandotte has a 40,000 population and Riverview 5,000, having grown 300 per cent since 1950.

Wyandotte owes much of its development to an almost limitless subterranean chemical treasure. Salt deposits, hundreds of feet below the surface, have provided one of the basic raw materials from which science has derived fortunes in an endless variety of chemicals.

Prior to the discovery of salt treasures, Wyandotte achieved considerable renown for iron and steel production from 1854 to 1892. The first Bessemer process for producing steel commercially originated in Wyandotte in 1864, and the first steel rails made in America were manufactured in the city's early rolling mills. Ship building also flourished until the close of World War I.

The area's know-how in steel production and its proximity to the automobile capital of the world made the Down River area an ideal site for the construction of a steel products plant for Firestone.

The universal rim, to accommodate either straight-side or clincher tires, was introduced by Firestone in 1906. A year later the company developed the first commercial demountable rim. Both rims were manufactured for Firestone by another firm.

THERE WERE 207 automobile manufacturers at that time, and they called upon the tire makers to standardize rims. To accomplish this the larger tire companies pooled their patents and formed the United Rim Company. Harvey S. Firestone was not asked to join. And when two firms, under contract to him to make rims, were threatened with loss of United business and an infringement suit, they cancelled their contracts, and the company was without a source of supply.

Mr. Firestone knew that a tire could not give satisfactory service without a suitable rim. So, in 1909, he began to manufacture them himself. Events proved him right. The United Rim Company eventually went out of business and Firestone went on to become a dominant manufacturer in the field.

The Firestone Steel Products Company was formed in 1918 and a $1,000,000 plant was built in Akron to house all rim manufacturing facilities. In this plant, during the 1930's, other types of steel products were fabricated too, including stainless steel beer barrels.

The Steel Products Company is now the world's largest manufacturer of rims for trucks and farm tractors, with headquarters in Akron.

NEEDING to expand, the company bought 80 acres of filled swamp land along the Detroit River at Wyandotte for the construction of a new plant. The first rim came off the production lines on March 17, 1938. The plant produces rims for trucks, buses and tractors, and automotive and commercial stampings.

The Firestone Steel Products Company developed the 15 degree system rim. The company designed and developed tooling and equipment for the new tubeless truck rim and was the first to produce these rims in substantial quantities. The company has now manufactured more than a million 15 degree system tubeless truck rims.

The Wyandotte plant helped develop and produced the first special rims used on power adjusted tractor wheels.

THE FIRST Wyandotte employees were hired during the final months of 1937 while construction was still going on. Third in size among industries in Wyandotte and Riverview, the plant now employs between 750 and 800 people.

Turning out many millions of pounds of production per month, the plant makes hundreds of different types and sizes of rims—ranging in size from 3 inches to 20 inches in cross section and 14 inches to 44 inches in diameter. The wide agricultural rims up to 20 inches are made from single pieces of steel. Also produced are commercial stampings and stampings for the automotive industry. For the last three years Firestone has been the 100 per cent supplier of Ford engine mounting brackets. The plant has 15 lines.

During World War II the plant converted to war production and turned out machine gun belt links, 110-gallon jettison tanks

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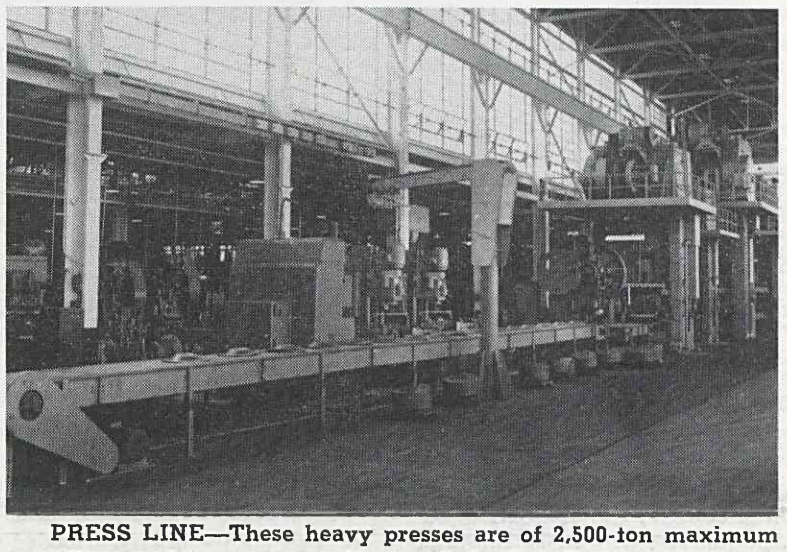
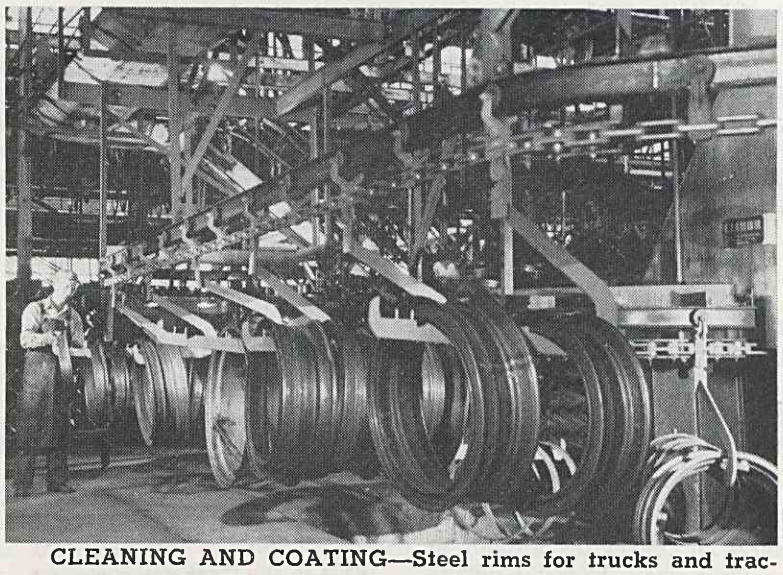


PRESS LINE—These heavy presses are of 2,500-ton maximum and 400-ton minimum loads. Plans call for installation of an automatic sheet feeder and transfer mechanism between presses.



CLEANING AND COATING—Steel rims for trucks and tractors are placed on this conveyor at the start of a process that cleans and coats them with a corrosion-resistant synthetic resin paint. The conveyor then takes the rims for a washing process in preparation for painting.

BEFORE SHIPPING—Drop-center rims for use with tubeless truck tires are checked in the warehouse before shipment to truck assembly plant. Some unpainted rims are oiled for protection, since they will be subjected to a further operation at the plant of the customer.