

# ON THE ROAD...



# Canada

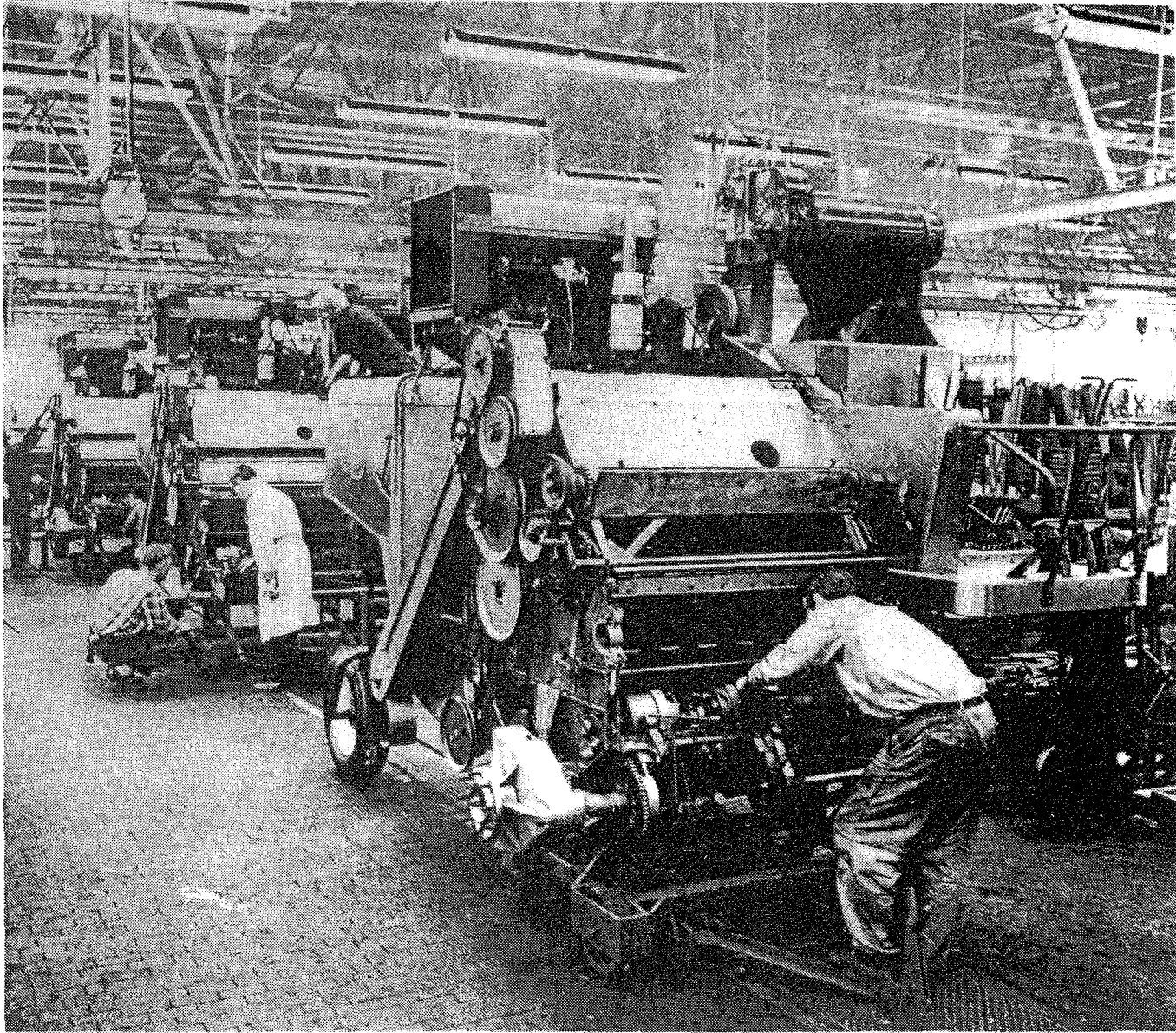


About a week before the Michigan Red Power Round Up in 1998 Kevin and I headed for Canada. While at the Benham, Kentucky get together, Jim Richards invited us to visit the Hamilton Plant, Milton Museum, and some IH tractor collections. Little did we know then that the Hamilton Plant was going to close. It was special to us to be able to tour the Hamilton Plant with all of it's great history. We are saddened it had to close, but that's the way things are anymore with companies swallowing up other companies. If we look back in history we will find that was the way International Harvester got started.

This was the first time Kevin and I went deep into Canada. I had no idea what to expect such as highways, motels, food, etc. Before we crossed in Detroit I didn't feel safe, but as soon as we crossed into Canada everything was clean and secure. Going through downtown Detroit at midnight didn't help anything. After driving in Canada for awhile I liked everything about Canada. All the Canadian people were really nice to us.

The next morning we met Jim Richards at the Milton Museum. It was a beautiful facility. I tried to talk Jim into having a Red Power Round Up there, maybe someday. It would be hard for vendors to cross the border. We might have to have a show sometime in Canada without vendors or they could cut down on their supply for one show. I know it would be tough but sometimes we have to give a little.

The International Harvester collection was in a two story round barn with tractors around the bottom and the lighter stuff on the top story. There was a reaper, mogul, cub from the Hamilton Plant, and several other tractors. The cub had a brass tag showing it was used in the Hamilton Plant. A sign upstairs on the wall caught my eye. It was instructions from the Hamilton Plant in 5 different languages. English, Polish, Hungarian, Armenian, and Italian. This just shows some of the different nationalities that made up North America. Most of the tough jobs like coal mines, steel mills, cement



## A VISIT TO INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER IN HAMILTON



- GENERAL OFFICE
- ENGINEERING
- HAMILTON WORKS
- TWINE MILLS

INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER COMPANY OF CANADA, LIMITED



plants, etc in the U.S. were like this also. In a movie the other night showed these kind of places set up booths at Ellis Island in New York when people got off the boats. I'm sure they made it look real good, but we know the rest of the story. This country wouldn't be like it is today if it wasn't for those hard working people, a big thanks from us. Too bad more of the younger generation doesn't understand their hard work. Also upstairs was a Chatham wagon, built in Chatham, Ontario. Chatham is now the home of International trucks. They also made sleighs, wonder if there are any of them left?

There were some small International Harvester items in other buildings such as a Dairymaid Cream Separator, signs, posters, etc. Jim and I were walking by a building on our way back to the office when I thought I spotted a cut-a-way combine. Sure enough, it was the threshing part of a 715 self propelled combine with clear sides so you could see the inside working. It was set up with an electric motor to operate it. Jim was going to check on why it was outside and try to take care of it. Maybe we can have it at a show sometime. These type displays were used at farm shows and this is the only IH made one that I know of. IH was pretty good about giving these type displays to museums and universities for people to look at and not giving them the torch. We made plans with Jim for the next day at the Hamilton Plant, and Kevin and I were off to Niagara Falls for the night. International Harvester had a advertising film about a lady wanting to go to Niagara Falls that intrigued me. What a beautiful site the falls are from the Canadian side. The boat ride and the behind the falls tour are a must if you go there.

The next morning we met Jim Richards, Howard Butler, and some other members from Canada at the Hamilton Plant for a tour. I have toured several Case IH plants but never treated as good as this one. I'm sure Jim being a Case IH dealer helped a little but this was just different. The old works office built in 1911 was near where we parked. The old assembly plants behind it were torn down in the 60's. This was where the 91 combine was built. The plant stands on Deering ground bought in the late 1800's about the time Mr Deering bought the ground in Deering, Missouri for Wisconsin Lumber Company.

First we had an old IH employee give us a brief history of the plant. Next we went to the Forge where they were making disk blades and cultivator shovels. We were met by Mr Louie R. D'Orazio, manager of this section. I was very impressed by Louie and all his enthusiasm. He was really proud of his department and it was well deserved. Louie was a big part in the development of the hard points on cultivator shovels. He proved that in one particular case that people could out work a robot and the change was made. In most Case IH plants pictures are not permitted, not in Louie's section. We got to see disk blades cut out, sharpened, and heat treated. It was pretty neat to see a cultivator shovel flat before it was put into the press. While we were leaving his building he told us to look up at the smoke stack. The IH was indented into the concrete and could still be seen even though it had been painted black. Case Corp better hang on to Louie because he is one fine employee.

The next part of tour was assembly for planters, grain drills, etc. They were remodeling the line so we didn't get to see in operation. Of the products built here, 78% goes to the

U.S. and 20% to Canada. Years ago it was 50% U.S. 50% Canada. The assembly building is the newest built, part in 1960-62 and the rest in 1966-67. The offices are on the west side of this building. The rotary hoe and moldboard plow were discontinued from this building in 1997. The products being built when we were there were field cultivators, disk harrows, grain drills, row crop cultivators, planters, air drills, and loaders. They were also setting up to build the new conventional planter.

After the tour Mr Vern Burns (General Plant Manager) took us out for lunch. He once worked at Steiger Tractor in Fargo. A very nice gentleman to talk to. I wonder now if he knew the plant was going to close in 6 months. He was not there when the plant closed. Sometimes companies send in people to get a plant ready for closure. He said he couldn't believe that when Case took over IH in 1985 that they wanted to stay with the non articulated designed 4 wheel drive tractors. He told them that they were a joke to the future of 4 wheel drive tractor design.

After lunch Jim took us around to the abandon part of the plant where we enjoyed the old history of the one time 169 acre plant. Later that afternoon we met Larry Smith, owner and operator of O'Neil's Farm Equipment in Binbrook. Many of you probably met Larry at the Michigan Red Power Round Up with the ambulance from the Hamilton Plant. Larry has several trucks and tractors including a beautiful 1918 Model K 1 1/2 ton International Truck. We spent the rest of the afternoon looking at his collection at the store and his home. He has a lot of interesting IH items that came from the Hamilton Plant including the engineering sign from the front of the engineering building. One thing that caught my eye was an IH cigar box from the 1920's. The picture of the doors with IH on the handles is probably in Larry's collection by now, he was working on it when we were there.

After spending the night in Toronto we headed north to Jim Richards business and IH-collection. Jim is a super nice guy and if you are ever up that way look him up. He is like most of us with tractors in sheds all over everywhere. He has the nicest collection of English made tractors that I have seen, B275, B414, B450, 434, and many more. I had fun sitting in the 4300 four wheel drive, only the 3<sup>rd</sup> one I had seen. I think I saw every model of the cub that was made and some with low hours. My wife enjoyed the IH Canada built refrigerator. A big thanks to Jim's son Bob for showing us around also, Bob is also involved and part owner of the collection. Before ending this article I will give you some history of the Hamilton Plant.

By the time Deering had finished his factory at Hamilton in October 1903 they had merged to make International Harvester of Canada Limited. The first products to be built were horsedrawn grain drills, mowers, binders, and hayrakes. In 1918 Oliver Chilled Plow Company to the west of Deering property was absorbed by IH. After this they owned around 169 acres of bay front with 2.5 million square feet under roof. The largest number of employees that I researched was around 4200. In the 169 acres was 7 acres of water.



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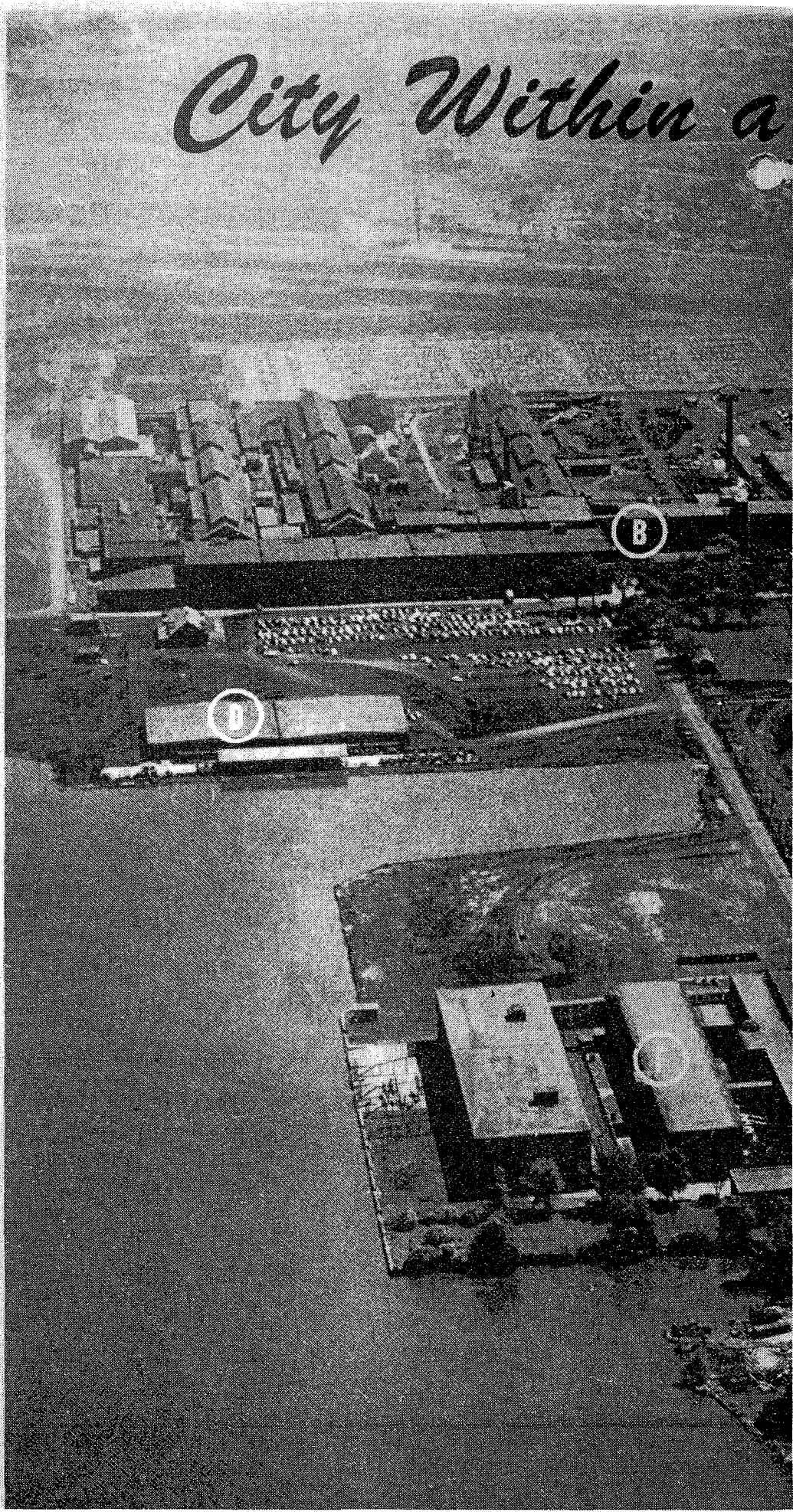


## COVER

Main entrance to International Harvester is attractive tree-shaded Sherman Avenue. Located on a 157-acre waterfront site, "Harvester City" is one of Canada's largest manufacturing centres. For over 50 years a City Within a City, Harvester's Hamilton operations today include the company's Canadian general offices, its farm equipment plant, its twine mills, its local sales office and its new product engineering building.

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# City Within a City





*City...*

## HARVESTER CITY

In this corner is where the last building was built in the 1960's

- (A) Hamilton General Offices
- (B) Hamilton Works
- (C) Grain Drill Plant
- (D) Dock Warehouse
- (E) Product Engineering Building
- (F) Hamilton Twine Mills
- (G) Hamilton District Office



The twine mills started after the west property was bought in the early 1920's and lasted till around 1970. All buildings of the Hamilton Plant were set on piles that were 80 feet deep. Like Chicago, most areas close to the lakes were swampy. Ships could dock next to the building closest to the water. The twine mills could produce about 3 million miles of agricultural twine a year. Part of 2 of the twine buildings were used for tractor assembly and a welding department. Most of the sisalana fibers came from Africa, Haiti, Brazil, and the Dutch East Indies. In October 1937 there was a fire that destroyed one of the buildings, but was built back as soon as it cooled.

The Hamilton Plant had 4.4 miles of railroad track. Around 1950 like most railroads they switched from steam to diesel. By the middle 1960's hauling away by rail had about ended. The main reason was humping by the railroads would tear products loose from the cars. Also the expense of tying down the products on rail cars. I want to do a future article on IH railroading since I like trains so much.

The Malleable Foundry poured its last iron June, 1969. During its 66 years of operation it produced a estimated half million tons of malleable iron castings. Some you have the maple leaf poured that day that said Last Malleable Iron Poured Hamilton Works 1903 – 1969. Coal to run the huge plant came in by ship, but by 1968 the plant had mostly changed to gas.

Over the years, the plant has produced a varied product line including air drills, S.P. Windrowers, manure spreaders, forage harvesters, plows, snow blowers, combines, balers, mowers, rakes, potato planters and diggers, off highway dump trucks, crawlers, log skidders, and of course twine. The last crawler came off the line in the spring of 1977. If you want to view a little IH Hamilton Plant history, I wouldn't wait long to go take a look. At this writing they are tearing down most of the Canton, Illinois Plow Plant. Hopefully they will use the old buildings for something else for many years. Next issue On The Road will go to Evansville, Indiana and talk to Mr Ed Gaul. He was the head of tractor engineering at Hinsdale when the last series of tractors went on the line.

Darrell