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Photograph by Alexander Vertikoff

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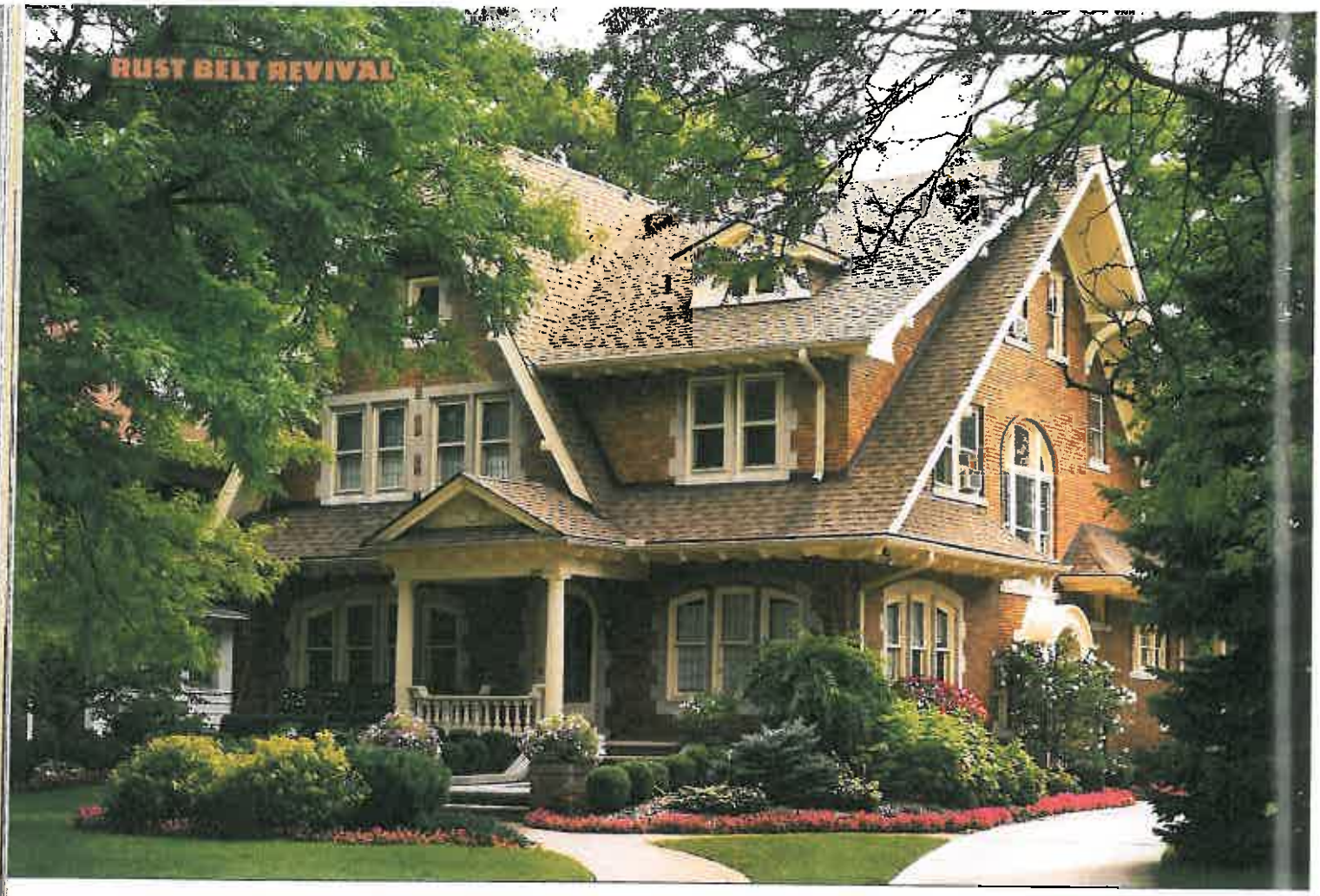


TOP, THE EXTRAVAGANT 1921 ANDRUS HOUSE, A MARRIAGE OF ARTS AND CRAFTS AND SWISS CHALET IN DETROIT'S BOSTON-EDISON HISTORIC DISTRICT. ABOVE LEFT, THE 1900 ENGLISH-STYLE FREDERICK H. ANDRUS HOUSE IN INDIAN VILLAGE. RIGHT, A 1902 CRAFTSMAN IN HIGHLAND PARK. OPPOSITE TOP RIGHT, DETAIL OF A FINE ARTS AND CRAFTS FOURSQUARE IN BOSTON-EDISON.

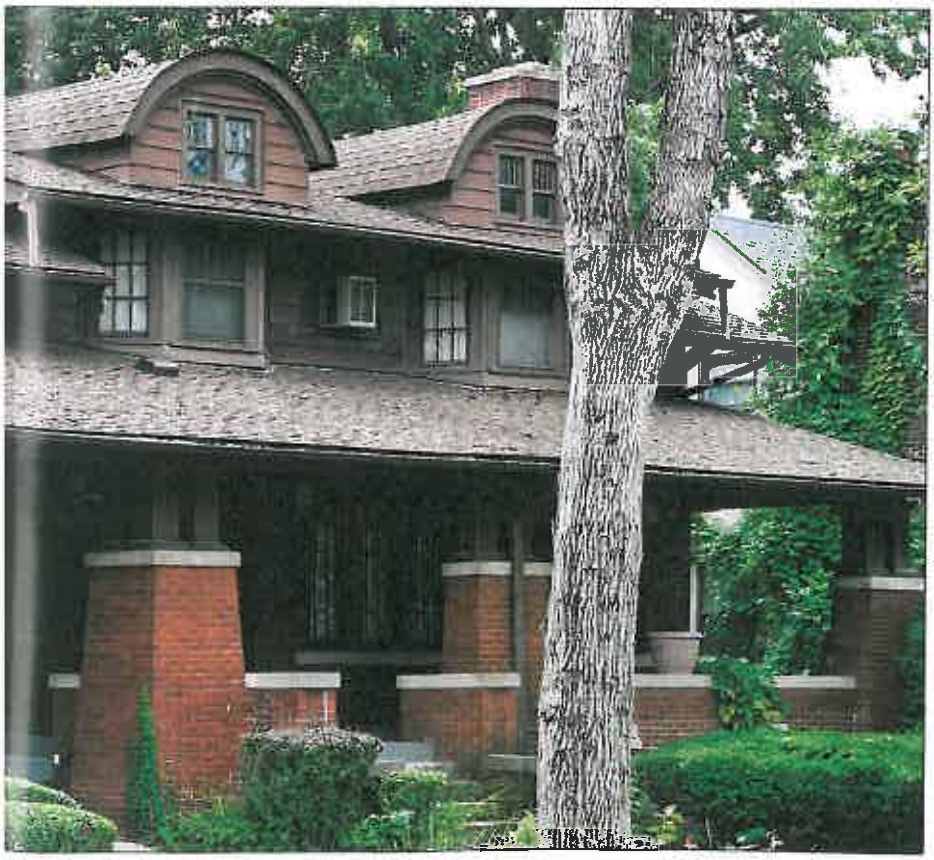
Detroit's inner-city Arts and Crafts–era residential historic districts may serve as crucibles of recovery for a struggling city.

RUST BELT RISING:
Learning from the Motor City

DOUGLAS J. FORSYTH

WHEN MOST PEOPLE THINK OF Detroit these days, the first things that come to mind are probably not beautiful residential streets, spectacular architecture, highly functional neighborhood associations that run complex and popular events throughout the year, and a high quality of life. Instead, most images of the city today are stark photographs of abandoned factories and collapsing houses. They can be found on the covers of national news magazines and in major exhibits in art museums across the country. Several talented art photographers have chosen to specialize in these dramatic images—"ruin porn," as Detroit writer Paul Clemens has called their work.

But there is another view of the city and its environs. In two of its historic Arts and Crafts–era inner-city neighborhoods, Boston-Edison and Indian Village, and another two (Highland Heights–Stevens' Subdivision and Medbury–Lawn) in Highland Park, an independent municipality surrounded by Detroit, residents have managed to stabilize their communities and maintain not just attractive but vibrant places to live.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEXANDER VERTIKOFF

These racially integrated enclaves are all the more intriguing because they have been stable now for a good 50 years. African-Americans began moving into them during the era of the civil rights movement, in the 1950s and '60s, toward the end of the Great Migration from the South that took place in two generational waves between 1910 and 1970. Some white residents left, but many others chose to remain and work to build stable communities with their new black neighbors. More significantly, new white families moved in, reinvigorating their integrated character. These neighborhoods are part of an archipelago of stably integrated neighborhoods that stretches across the Rust Belt cities of the American Midwest and Northeast. (*American Bungalow* has recently run several features about one such neighborhood, the Old West End, in Toledo, Ohio. Future issues will profile similar neighborhoods in the Cleveland area and in Buffalo.)

These neighborhoods developed in the age of the streetcar suburbs—Indian Village after 1894, Boston-Edison largely from 1905 to 1925, Highland Heights–Stevens' Subdivision from 1900 to 1930 and Medbury–Grove Lawn from 1910 to 1930. This was the heyday of the Arts and Crafts era, and Detroit was a major center of the movement. It is the home of Pewabic Pottery, founded in 1903, and splashes of tile from Pewabic

and other art potteries are conspicuous on the facades of Arts and Crafts dwellings everywhere. The Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts was founded in 1905; several leading industrialists, most notably Henry Ford and Detroit News publisher George G. Booth, were conspicuous patrons. Innovative Detroit-based architects worked in the Arts and Crafts style, including Albert Kahn, William Buck Stratton and Leonard Willeke, who designed many houses in these neighborhoods.

Craftsman bungalows predominate in the two Highland Park historic districts. Prairie Style and Arts and Crafts foursquares are common in the two Detroit districts. By any measure, most of the homes are large, even extravagantly so. Yet as in other Rust Belt cities, their market value is miniscule compared to the values of similar homes in less-stressed great American cities, making their ownership possible for middle-class preservation-minded city lovers.

"Central cities are highly desirable places to live all over the world, with the exception of the USA," says Jim Hamilton, a professor emeritus of economics at Wayne State University who has restored the Samuel Sterns House, in the Boston-Edison Historic District, seen in the photographs on these pages. "I could not buy a one-bedroom apartment in a nice part of Paris at the price for which I could sell my big house here."

Boston-Edison and Indian Village

Boston-Edison is one of the largest residential historic districts in the nation. It consists of over 900 houses, most of them built between 1905 and 1925. From the beginning, it has been one of Detroit's premier residential neighborhoods. Henry Ford (1863-1947) lived here; so did Sebastian S. Kresge, the founder of

Kresge Department Stores: James Couzens, vice president and treasurer of the Ford Motor Co. and later U.S. Senator and Detroit mayor; Walter O. Briggs, auto-body manufacturer and former owner of the Detroit Tigers baseball team; Clara Clemens, daughter of Mark Twain; heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis; Walter Reuther, the United Auto Workers leader; and Berry Gordy, founder of Motown Records. Boston-Edison has one of the oldest neighborhood associations in the country, founded in 1921.

The Indian Village historic district consists of 351 houses. It has always been one of the city's most prestigious neighborhoods; Henry Ford's son Edsel was one of its early residents. The Indian Village Neighborhood Association was founded in 1937, to resist the division of mansions into apartments.

Highland Park

Highland Park is an enclave; together with contiguous Hamtramck, it is completely surrounded by the city of Detroit. Few cities in America have suffered blows comparable to those that hit Highland Park when its major corporate tenants, including Ford and Chrysler, shut their manufacturing facilities in the 1970s and '80s and moved on. Its peak population, in 1930, was just under 53,000; by 2010 it had dwindled to less than 12,000. From 2001 to 2009 Highland Park was in a kind of receivership, run by an emergency financial manager appointed by the state of

THE 1913 THE SAMUEL STERNS HOUSE, ONE OF THREE HOUSES GROUPED AROUND BOSTON-EDISON'S VOIGT PARK, IS ONE OF THE FINEST PRAIRIE-STYLE HOUSES IN THE CITY. JIM HAMILTON, THE OWNER (WITH HIS WIFE, CLEO), IS A PAST-PRESIDENT OF THE HISTORIC BOSTON-EDISON ASSOCIATION. THE WINDOWS OF THE STUDY, BELOW, FEATURE A SIMPLE RECTANGLE THAT IS REPEATED ON THE BUILT-IN BOOKSHELVES AND THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE, RECALLING THE WORK OF FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT. THE SUNROOM, OPPOSITE TOP, IS FURNISHED WITH WICKER PIECES MUCH LIKE THOSE MR. STERNS MIGHT HAVE FAVORED. ABOVE, DETAILS OF THE FRONT PORCH.

Michigan. Per capita income was just over $12,000 in 2009, well below that even of Detroit.

Yet Highland Park is home to two of the finest bungalow neighborhoods in the country. Highland Heights–Stevens' Subdivision and Medbury's–Grove Lawn both enjoyed a modest revival after 1988, when they received historic-district status. In the 1990s and early 2000s, led by a dynamic community organizer named Katherine Clarkson, proud residents organized annual house tours, home prices recovered somewhat, and new homesteaders began moving in. Despite a fall-off in recent years, the bungalow neighborhoods remain integrated, and long-time homeowners have hung on, maintaining their properties.

Investing In Social Capital

There is obviously more to the success of these historic neighborhoods than good architecture and meticulous craftsmanship. A big part of what makes them tick is that their residents have a strong common interest in keeping them stable under circumstances that would discourage—and in fact have defeated—others, not just in Detroit but in shrinking cities across the Rust Belt. As people move out, fewer residences are needed. Abandoned houses collapse. Parts of the city revert to prairie. Even in these more fortunate neighborhoods, dramatically rising property values are not in the cards. These pockets of urban architecture, of great historical value, are being preserved amid seemingly unstoppable chaos and decay.

Under these circumstances, historic preservation and restoration are arduous enterprises. The people who engage in them are lucky if, for every two fallen stones they put back into place, just one falls down again. Keeping neighborhoods stable under these conditions requires unrelenting social mobilization. And this points to an apparent paradox of living in America's rust-belt historic districts. Despite the bleakness of their surroundings, they harbor groups of

EDWARD W. VOIGT (1844–1920) WAS A GERMAN IMMIGRANT WHO BECAME A LEADING LOCAL BREWER WITH INTERESTS IN DETROIT BUSINESSES AND REAL ESTATE. IN THE 1890s, LAND HE OWNED BECAME THE VOIGT PARK SUBDIVISION, WHICH CONSTITUTES THE CORE OF BOSTON-EDISON TODAY. HE DONATED THE PARK TO THE CITY AS THE CENTERPIECE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD. LEFT, A VIEW OF VOIGT PARK FROM THE 1913 WILLIAM S. EVANS HOUSE, OPPOSITE TOP.

THE EVANS HOUSE IS ANOTHER OF THE THREE PRAIRIE STYLE HOUSES BORDERING VOIGT PARK, HAS BEEN RESTORED BY THE CURRENT OWNERS, JIM RODGERS AND KEN YOURIST. OPPOSITE, THE SECOND-STORY SLEEPING PORCH. THE DINING ROOM IS BELOW; NOTE THE OPEN FLOOR PLAN, THE FINE BUILT-IN CABINETS IN THE DINING ROOM AND THE UNMISTAKABLY PRAIRIE STYLE FIREPLACE IN THE LIVING ROOM.

people among whom there is a surprising wealth of what Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam, in his 2000 book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, called "social capital."

As Putnam wrote, "social capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. Social capital is closely related to what some have called 'civic virtue.' The difference is that 'social capital' calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital." Putnam goes on to argue that social capital is an essential precondition for the healthy functioning of democratic institutions and that it also promotes economic development.

In America's Rust Belt, it's not hard to find examples of social dysfunction. Yet in many Rust Belt historic districts, social capital is not only stronger than in nearby blighted neighborhoods, it is stronger than it is in the suburbs and exurbs. The challenges of living in neighborhoods of historic architectural distinction foster a kind of sociability and interdependence that can be rare in affluent suburbs today.

Since security is an issue for residents of these neighborhoods, they need to know who their neigh-

THIS HOUSE WAS BUILT IN 1900-1 BY (GEORGE W.) NETTLETON AND (ALBERT) KAHN FOR THE COOK FARM CO., AS A SORT OF DEMONSTRATION HOUSE FOR WHAT THE INDIAN VILLAGE NEIGHBORHOOD WOULD LOOK LIKE WHEN DEVELOPED. THE CURRENT OWNERS ARE CRAIG AND REGINA KUPER, INDEFATIGABLE COMMUNITY AND DETROIT BOOSTERS.

bors are. Potlucks and porch parties are not just fun—they become an instrument of neighborhood self-defense. Anne Zobel, who has lived in Highland Heights–Stevens' Subdivision all her life, says that she and her neighbors are very close to one another. Her immediate neighbors are two large families. "We mow each others' lawns and shovel each others' snow," she says. "We generally look out for each other." If the level of protection provided by the city police is inadequate, neighbors will often band together, take up a subscription and fund a voluntary neighborhood security force, as has happened in both Boston-Edison and Indian Village.

When a house becomes vacant, the danger to the integrity of the surrounding properties is obvious. Architectural and metal scavengers are busy at work throughout the city. Nearby neighbors protect these houses by mowing the lawns and keeping shrubbery under control, and parking their cars in the driveways of the empty houses to make them appear occupied. In Boston-Edison, one

STREET SCENE ON BURNS ST., INDIAN VILLAGE.

DETAIL FROM THE FREDERICK H. ANDRUS HOUSE (SHOWN ON PAGE 46, TOP).

THE CHARLES C. HINCHMAN HOUSE, 1042 SEMINOLE ST., INDIAN VILLAGE BUILT IN 1900 BY NETTLETON AND KAHN FOR THE COOK FARM CO. NOTE THE ELABORATE CARVINGS ON THE PORCH GABLE.

Indian Village

THIS 1912 HALF-TIMBERED TUDOR (LEFT) IS AT 1052 BURNS ST. IT WAS BUILT IN 1912 FOR LUMBER MANUFACTURER FREDERICK M. SIBLEY, SR., AND DESIGNED BY ARCHITECT WILLIAM E. N. HUNTER, OTHERWISE BEST KNOWN AS A CHURCH ARCHITECT. BELOW, ECLECTIC ARCHITECTURE ON IROQUOIS ST. IN INDIAN VILLAGE. THE HOUSE IN THE CENTER, AT 2494 IROQUOIS, WAS DESIGNED BY WILLIAM BUCK STRATTON FOR DR. H. LEE SIMPSON IN 1929. STRATTON BUILT THE NEARBY PEWABIC POTTERY IN 1907 AND MARRIED ITS FOUNDER, MARY CHASE PERRY, IN 1918. THE STRATTONS WERE ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE DETROIT SOCIETY OF ARTS AND CRAFTS. BOTTOM, DETAIL OF LEONARD WILLEKE'S 1917 ROSCOE B. JACKSON HOUSE.

resident removed the antique lighting fixtures from an empty house next door and stored them in his basement until a new resident moved in.

Organizing annual public tours of historic homes is an exercise in social bonding in historic districts everywhere. In inner cities, it also serves the purpose of recruiting new residents, among them anxious suburbanites who are attracted to historic architecture and proximity to urban amenities, but need to get to know the terrain and the people before making the leap of moving into a gentrifying area of the inner city.

Jim and Cleo Hamilton faced that challenge several years ago. They were contemplating moving from a Detroit suburb into Boston-Edison but could not get a "reliable handle" on what it was like to live there. When an unexpected opportunity arose to spend a year working in Washington, D.C., they jumped at a chance to find out.

"We decided to spend that year living on Capitol Hill," Jim says. "Our thought was that if we could handle a gentrifying neighborhood like Capitol Hill, we probably could handle inner-city Detroit. We had a spectacular experience in Washington, and when we returned to Detroit we relocated to Boston-Edison and have never looked back."

Once new residents move in, they're often astonished to discover that they get to know dozens of neighbors in fairly short order. A

walk through one of these historic districts can often drag on for extra hours as one stops to greet neighbors on their porches and on the street. It's common to hear residents say they've moved in because of the architecture, but stayed because of the wonderful people.

Although Putnam argued that social capital is declining in most American communities, many rust-belt historic districts, including the two Detroit neighborhoods featured here, constitute significant exceptions to that trend. This strong sense of community is all the more striking because these neighborhoods have highly diverse populations. Not only do blacks and whites live side by side, but there are a disproportionate number of gay households, too. Indeed, it's hard to imagine how historic preservation could have thrived in rust-belt cities at all, if not for the presence of gays.

There is also a substantial population of what Richard Florida, in The Rise of the Creative Class, calls "Bohemians"—people who earn their livings in creative pursuits and who, he argues, drive the creativity and economic growth of cities. Add to this a disproportionate number of schoolteachers and college professors—including, in the case of Detroit, faculty at Wayne State University and the College of Creative Studies. Despite—and perhaps in part because of—its problems, Detroit today is bubbling with creativity. It hosts a growing artists' colony. Europeans, including Dutch and German artists, have begun settling in the city, attracted by the extremely low real estate prices and the freedom to experiment in a relatively unstructured environment.

OPPOSITE TOP, 40 FARRAND PARK IN HIGHLAND PARK'S HIGHLAND HEIGHTS-STEVEN'S SUBDIVISION. NOTE THE USE OF FIELDSTONE ON THE PORCH PILLARS AND THE CHIMNEY. THE FIRST RESIDENT, IN 1918, WAS W.C. WOLLASTON. OPPOSITE BOTTOM, FARRAND PARK STREET SCENE. THE CA. 1916 TWO-AND-A-HALF STORY HOME AT THE CENTER IS NO. 70. AGAIN, NOTE THE USE OF FIELDSTONE ON THE PORCH OF THE NEIGHBORING HOUSE, NO. 74, CA. 1918. BELOW, COMMUNITY GARDEN ON A VACANT LOT ON COLORADO ST., IN HIGHLAND HEIGHTS-STEVENS' SUBDIVISION.

Detroit's technology incubators, including the Wayne State affiliate, TechTown, are producing profitable new companies that draw on the region's manufacturing expertise. After a long hiatus, new businesses have begun opening in downtown and midtown, bringing more new residents and brightening prospects to the nearby historic neighborhoods in which their owners and employees are settling.

Historic Boston-Edison Association President Pamela Miller Malone says that despite the current economic recession, she is optimistic about the neighborhood and the future of Detroit. The U.S. Department of Transportation and a number of private foundations have allocated funding for a light-rail train that will travel north and south along Woodward Ave., connecting downtown Detroit to suburban Oakland County and passing right by Boston-Edison. The neighborhood is also a demonstration area for the Detroit Works Project, which is designed to enhance the delivery of municipal services, and has been designated a "Project 14" neighborhood to encourage Detroit police officers and other city officials to make their homes there.

Detroit's inner-city Arts and Crafts–era residential historic districts have acted as reservoirs of stability during the long period of demographic decline since the 1950s. If and when Detroit turns around, they may serve as crucibles of recovery.

Douglas J. Forsyth is Associate Professor of History at Bowling Green State University in Toledo, Ohio. *He thanks Thomas Brunk, Katherine Clarkson, Robert W. Cosgrove, John Gallagher, James L. and Cleo Hamilton, Craig and Regina Kuper, Pamela Miller Malone, Kurt Metzger and Data Driven Detroit, Tara Miller, Jerald A. Mitchell, Art Rizzo, James Murray Rodgers, Douglas Way, William M. Worden, Ken Yourist and Anne Zobel for assistance with this article. For more on our Rust Belt series, visit* **american bungalow.com/rustbelt.**