

Architecture: Washington Never Slept Here

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

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MINE is a generation caught between the automobile and the air age; we are the survivors of the last luxury trains and trans-Atlantic liners. We have experienced a revolution and, certainly, history. And so perhaps I attach more cosmic significance to a recent news item that the Ford River Rouge plant is headed for closing and demolition than those who never knew about its unparalleled impact on industry, labor, the construction art and 20th-century life style.

The Rouge. Meaningless

words to this generation. Magic and awesome words to the last one. A phenomenon unique in the history of modern manufacturing, the realization of Henry Ford's largest dreams of the moving assembly line and total industrial self-sufficiency. Started in 1917 in Dearborn, Mich., rich in technical innovation, it was designed by Albert Kahn Associates, a firm in which architecture, engineering and business made a very workable *ménage à trois*. It is as symbolic as any major monument of our time. It changed

America, and now it is pronounced obsolete, in a brief news story, without commentary.

The people who care may seem a little special. They are historians of the industrial age, such as Alan Nevins and Frank Ernest Hill, who have devoted substantial writings to the Rouge. There is the Society for Industrial Archeology, a relatively new group of scholars in this country, as scholars and subjects go, which marks the coming of age, culturally, of the Industrial Revolution.

The buildings and artifacts

of industry, often far handsomer than more self-conscious "art" products, are now being seriously documented and their preservation battled for by those who see the nation's heritage whole. Right now there are almost as many students prowling around old mills and factories with cameras as can be found recording more conventional works of architecture.

Thirty-one years ago, John Coolidge defined the New England mill town in his landmark study of Lowell, Mass., called "Mill and Man-

sion." It proved to be an epitaph and a warning. Today, Manchester, N. H., is going the same destructive way, spurred by "renewal." But Paterson, N.J., is waging an active campaign to protect one of the country's most historical mill complexes, in the Great Falls area. The future of Cohoes, N.Y., is uncertain.

The New England traveler will find nothing more harmonious than the typical cluster of vernacular brick dwellings around one or more steeped mill structures

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