



A New Book Tells The Enduring Story of Centuries-Long Friendship Between Windsor and Detroit

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PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY WALKERVILLE PUBLISHING

LIKE MANY GREAT IDEAS, the latest book by Walkerville Publishing began as something else. “In 2019, we held a photo exhibit called ‘A River Runs Between Us,’ featuring photographs of Windsor and Detroit,” says publisher, Elaine Weeks, who created the book, *A River Runs Between Us*, with her husband and partner in publishing, Chris Edwards. “The idea was to do a small event to promote our books. For instance, we had just released Windsor: Before & After.”

In the past two decades, Walkerville Publishing has released ten titles, all centering on various aspects of Windsor’s history. The books are noted for their plenitude of excellent vintage photographs and informative write-ups, preserving the region’s “incidental history,” so much of which has succumbed to progress.

“We held the exhibit at ArtSpeak Gallery, and displayed photographs from Windsor’s history on one wall,” Elaine recalls, “and historic photos of Detroit along the opposite wall. We put a long blue carpet down the middle of the floor, which symbolized the river separating the two cities.”

“A lot of people came to the event,” Chris Edwards remembers, “but there was one ►



Opposite top to bottom: Henry Ford and Ford Motor Company Highland Park factory, nicknamed the “Crystal Palace”. Photo Collage by Walkerville Publishing, public domain; sinking of the last tubular section of Detroit River tunnel. Photo by The Michigan Central Railway Tunnel Library of Congress.

This page clockwise from right: Belle Isle Bridge, 1908. Colorized by Walkerville Publishing, public domain; An historic ceremony was held on the international boundary line in the middle of the Ambassador Bridge on April 16, 1969. Photo by Walt McCall; Great Lakes Engineering Works workers 1913. Walter P. Reuther archives, Wayne State University; Detroit-Windsor Tunnel, 1950s. Walter P. Reuther archives, Wayne State University.



question everybody asked: ‘When is this book coming out?’ But there was no book based on the exhibit.”

Elaine and Chris’ publishing endeavours have promoted the history and achievements of Windsor, Ontario through *The Walkerville Times*, which published sixty-one editions between January of 1999 and 2008. Afterward, Elaine and Chris shifted gears and released nine books—plus this latest title.

There is a voracious appetite for local history in Windsor. Each Walkerville Publishing title proved more popular than the previous. Their book, *500 Ways You Know You’re From Windsor*, required three editions to keep pace with demand. That title was a Canadian bestseller.

“After the photo exhibit, it was obvious there was demand for a book about the histories of Windsor and Detroit,” Elaine explains.

Never ones to disappoint their readers, Elaine and Chris undertook to create that book.

“My idea was to keep things simple,” Elaine says with a laugh. “We could use a few images from the exhibit, use the stories we had posted on the walls, and encapsulate the exhibit.”

Chris wanted something more ambitious and soon learned: careful what you wish for.

“I wanted to tell the whole story,” Chris says. “The intertwined histories of Windsor and Detroit go back centuries.”

The new book has more than 1,200 photographs. For this project, Chris sought to bring the past alive and decided the best way to do that was to colorize the black-and-white images—all of them.

The book ultimately took seven years to create.

For all that hard work, it was the stories that spurred Elaine and Chris on.

“I was really interested in learning when the border between Windsor and Detroit first came into being,” says Elaine. “For so long, up to the late nineteenth century, people went back and forth without a second thought. One of the things that changed that was a murder that happened in the middle of the river.”

From the book: “On a summer evening in 1883, Luke Phipps shot and killed his estranged wife, Effie, aboard the Detroit-Windsor ferry Hope as it crossed the Detroit River. The location of the crime—specifically, on which side of the border it occurred—became a crucial le-

gal question, as Canada had capital punishment while Michigan did not. The case captivated people on both sides of the river for an entire year.”

One of the many stories that captured Chris’ attention was the saga of the Dodge brothers, John and Horace, who were born in Niles, Michigan. In 1892, the Dodge brothers came over to Windsor to work at Dominion Typography. With financial backing from Detroit entrepreneur Fred S. Evans, the brothers rented a Windsor printing company building on Medford Street in “Ferry Hill,” where they manufactured Evans & Dodge bicycles (E & D bikes). In 1897, the brothers received a patent on an adjustable ball bearing for bicycle hubs, then sold their start-up company to National Cycle & Automobile Company.

In the early 1900s, the brothers returned to Detroit and produced parts for the burgeoning automotive industry. In 1903, start-up automaker Henry Ford contracted the brothers as an exclusive parts supplier. By June 1903, Ford owed the brothers over \$7,000, but the three men managed to negotiate an agreement that changed their lives: in exchange for writing off overdue payments and extending Ford an additional \$3,000 in credit, the Dodge brothers received ten percent of Ford Motor Company stock.

Although the history of this region, on both sides of the river, is comprehensively and expansively told in this book, Chris is quick to say: “We’re not historians. People want the story and the visual. This book is a series of photo essays. Our background is in journalism. We like telling stories.”

That said, the story begins millions of years ago with mention of the ice ages that formed this region’s topography. Moving on to: “Indigenous peoples lived along the strait in 6,000 B.C. Peoples known as the ‘Mound Builders’ inhabited the area from about 1,000 B.C. to 700 A.D. In 1600, around 100,000 people occupied the region: Potawatomi, Ottawa, Ojibwa,” according to the book’s opening pages.

From there, *A River Runs Between Us* tells the intertwined stories of Windsor and Detroit right up to 2024. One of the many stories that Elaine and Chris agree gave them each a chuckle is when a hippopotamus named Cannonballs escaped the circus barge on which it was being transported through the area, and got into the Detroit River.

For more information, visit their website www.walkerville.com.

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As Featured in Windsor Life Magazine Holiday 2025 Edition