

**Historical Marker - L1790B - Michigan Alkali Company / Michigan Alkali Company  
(Marker ID#:L1790B)**



**Front - Title/Description**

**Michigan Alkali Company**

On October 17, 1890, Captain John Baptiste Ford (1811-1903) purchased this property along the Detroit River. He established the Michigan Alkali Company here in 1893. Ford had financial interests in several glass companies, and he chose the site for its proximity to resources needed to produce soda ash, a primary ingredient in the manufacture of glass. The deep strata of pure salt beneath the site was most important. Water from the Detroit River was used to extract the salt in solution form. This salt was used with limestone to produce a variety of sodium-based industrial and consumer products. The limestone was shipped from company-owned quarries near Alpena. In the early years Michigan Alkali's products included soda ash, baking soda, and lye.

**Significant Date:**  
Industry and Invention (1875-1915)

**Registry Year:** 1990    **Erected Date:** 1992

**Marker Location**

**Address:** 1609 Biddle Street

**City:** Wyandotte

**State:** MI    **ZipCode:**

**County:** Wayne

**Township:**

**Lat:** 42.21784600 / **Long:** -83.15037200

**Web URL:**

**Back - Title/Description**

**Michigan Alkali Company**

Since incorporating as the Michigan Alkali Company in 1893, these chemical works have played an integral role in the development of Wyandotte. The founder of the company, John Baptiste Ford (1811-1903), believed in corporate benevolence, and generous donations were made to the city. The corporation continued this practice after Ford's death. One contribution was the first Wyandotte General Hospital, erected in 1926. In 1943 Michigan Alkali consolidated with the J. B. Ford Company glassworks to become the Wyandotte Chemicals Corporation. In 1969 it became part of the BASF group of companies, headquartered in Germany. BASF continues to use this Georgian Revival administration building, designed by the Detroit firm of Chittenden and Kotting and completed in 1907.