

These images revere the lonely cityscape of Pontiac, Michigan. They account for loss, sadness, and frustration, but stand clearly, colorfully on the side of optimism.

I came to Pontiac, drawn by an awareness of its manufacturing reputation and the symbolism of the brand. From the perspective of an outsider, Pontiac's problems were immediately apparent. I saw a city veiled by decades of neglect. Through the experience of living there, I was able to see beyond the faults, and began to uncover subtleties. People would sometimes ask why I was photographing Pontiac. My reply was that I was creating a survey of the city. The questioner would then recall how great Pontiac had been and lament the city's decline. I was surprised by the near verbatim expressions of disappointment, and I was mindful of their sentiments. Every relationship is embedded with an intricate, sometimes difficult, history. By looking closely, taking time to scrutinize, I was able to appreciate Pontiac as a whole.

To better understand the city's former character, I researched the municipal archives. The Pontiac Public Library's R.H. Frye Collection provided a source of material inspiration. The earliest images show cattle being driven to sale through downtown streets; the later recorded the demolition of buildings in preparation for a renewal that never came. As Pontiac's glory faded, the motivation to document it disappeared, and by the 1960's, the cataloging had stopped. I felt a connectedness to the photographers whose images I found, and the archive of their documentation served as a guide. My work continues the lineage set forth, related by method and connected by place, but with consideration for Pontiac's immediate circumstances.

Before I left Pontiac, the public library accessioned seventeen of my photographs into its permanent collection. The prints, chosen by the library, are a means of giving back to the archive, and my small contribution to the city's legacy.