

ally reinforced by the vertical bars in the window and the fence close to the gallery building.

One purpose of the exhibition is to address local history, but what it says seems quite limited. Although clearly visible from Riverside Drive, a major thoroughfare, nothing about the window image makes one think: "Oh! Point Pelee!" Nor does it address the fact that, in some ways, the park's continued existence is surprising. By the 1960s so many visitors and residents crowded it that it nearly lost National Park status. No doubt not everyone welcomes the decision, made more than thirty years ago, to re-establish a natural habitat. James Patten, curator of the exhibition, has noted that the park was initially quite nervous about the project, and resentment by former residents may be the reason. Furthermore, the press information does not explain the artist's motivation. Does she find beauty in these remnants, or is their gradual demise unjustified? Should one mourn the loss of the park's community, or do these images prove that the past cannot be totally erased, suggesting, perhaps, that habitats can be altered, but not restored?

Then there is Detroit's inescapable presence. Because of the Gallery's proximity to the downtown core, its buildings are noticeable from a normal viewing distance and in window reflections when up close. The fact that French explorers named Detroit and the park (*détroit* means strait, *pointe pelée* means bald point) reminds us that an international border didn't always divide the region. Paradoxically, depopulation and abandoned buildings are also common to Detroit. The number of residents has dwindled to half of what it had in the 1950s, and certain forms of wildlife, once absent, have reappeared.

obvious. Closer examination disentangles cultivation from non-cultivation, and gradually reveals the sense of abandonment that these images convey.

This sense of abandonment also radiates from *Untitled (Point Pelee)* (2003), the 9 by 20 foot backlit image mounted in the window of an exterior wall. The photo shows a boarded up cottage (one of the last in the park) dwarfed by surrounding vegetation. A gate still stands before the structure, but the path leading to it is overgrown. The once-cultivated specimens survive, but the living that previously occurred here has stopped. The cottage is isolated, closed off, out of reach—an impression physi-

the park into the city, emphasizing the region's diversity, highlighting aspects of local history and continuing her practice of documenting how nature reclaims formerly inhabited areas.

The exhibition consists of two parts. Inside hangs the "Landscape and Memory" series (the title borrowed from a well-known book by Simon Schama), four large black and white images in which she has recorded the slightest remnants of a former way of life: a pruned vine on a stump; a tree from a former orchard mixing with newer growth. Hickox focuses on these remnants with her camera, but their presence is not immediately

WINDSOR, ONTARIO

By John R. Gayer

Contrasts and affinities characterize Essex County, Canada's southernmost region. In the county's southeast corner is Point Pelee National Park, a wedge-shaped peninsula that juts into Lake Erie and is known for bird watching and Monarch butterflies. In the opposite corner lies Windsor, a manufacturing city on the Detroit River often called 'Canada's Motor City.' The current exhibition by Toronto photographer **APRIL HICKOX** (*Art Gallery of Windsor, September 2003—September 2004*) brings



April Hickox, *Untitled (Point Pelee)*, 2003, backlit photograph, 9 by 20 feet (courtesy Art Gallery of Windsor).