Detroit: A City of Immigrants and Innovation

By Billy Winkel
Turn of the Century

- Population: 285,704 (13th largest)
- 23 square miles
- 11.98% of Detroiters are non-English speakers
- Italians, Irish, Polish, Greek, Anglo-Saxons, Chaldeans, Arabs, and Chinese begin making Detroit home.
“It costs no more to plan for the welfare of the men and to make the plant brighter and more comfortable and good looking as well as efficient.”  - Albert Kahn
The Rise of the Auto Industry
The Power of the Assembly Line

• Henry Ford revolutionized the automobile development process when he installed moving assembly lines.

• Ford installed an assembly line in his factory in 1913. The time required to produce a Model T dropped from 12.5 hours per car to 5 hours and 50 minutes.

• Ford also promoted a $5 a day wage.
Detroit’s Ascent

- Population: 465,766
- 9th largest City
- 74 percent of Detroiters are foreign born or first generation Americans.
- 40.8 square miles
Detroit in First World War

• Engines
  • Packard

• Boats
  • Ford

• Munitions
Boomtown

• Population: 993,678
• 4th largest city
• 29 percent of residents are foreign born
• Since 1900, black community grows by 600%
• Crossroads of two industries
Crafting Detroit’s Landmarks

- The Book Building (1917)
- Detroit Public Library (1921)
- Book-Cadillac Hotel (1924)
- Book Tower (1926)
- Detroit Institute of Arts (1927)
- Fisher Building (1928)
- Penobscot Building (1928)
- Fox Theatre (1928)
- Guardian Building (1929)
The Great Depression
Hits Detroit

Population: 1,568,662

- Industry collapse
  - Loss in auto production
  - Loss in other businesses
  - Loss of the illegal liquor trade

- Tens of thousands were put out of work when companies suspended operations or closed.

- In less than one year, relief rolls grew to include almost half of Detroit’s population.

- People with jobs had their wages cut by thirty percent and were often paid by “scrip” - promissory notes that served as cash.
1940s Detroit

Population: 1,623,452

4th largest city
Arsenal of Democracy

- Planes
- Jeeps
- Tanks
- Munitions
- Recycling Program
Southerners head north & Rosie the Riveters

- Almost 30% of factory workers were drafted.
- Southerns, white and black, came to Detroit by the tens of thousands looking for factory work.
- Women across the city entered factories in droves
“Detroit can either blow up Hitler or it can blow up the U.S.” - Life Magazine

- Packard strike
- Mass segregation
- Sojourner Truth housing clash
- 1943 Race Riot
The Dawn of Suburban Sprawl

- Twenty new auto plants were built outside in the suburbs.
- New freeways made access to the suburbs easy.
- The construction of the freeways a majority of the black community, forcing them to move into other areas of the city. Which led many whites to move out.

White Flight

- 1950 - 1,849,568
  - White: 1,545,847
  - Black: 300,506
- 1960 - 1,670,144
  - White: 1,182,970
  - Black: 482,229
- White Flight - 23.4%
Deindustrialization grips Detroit

- “Detroit’s decline has been going on for a long while,” Time 1961

- Manufacturing workers in Detroit:
  - 1947: 281,500
  - 1967: 149,600
  - Loss: 47%

- Packard Motor Car Company and Hudson Motor Car Company shutter their doors after rolling recessions.
  - 90,000 job lost on the East Side in two years.

- Ancillary factories and businesses also shutter their shops.
Detroit: The Model City

Population: 1,670,144

5th largest
As Detroit hosted Martin Luther King Jr and vied for the 1968 Summer Olympics, Detroit remained segregated and systemically unequal.
The 1967 Uprising
A New Detroit
The Renaissance City

- Population 1,511,482
- Revitalization begins downtown
  - Renaissance Center
- Oil Embargo of 1973
  - Automakers hurting from foreign competition
The Great Divide

- Population: 1,203,339

- Foreign small cars and oil embargo take their toll

- Clashes between Detroit Mayor Coleman Young and Oakland County Executive L. Brookes Patterson deepen City/Suburbs divide.
Hopes Dashed

- Population: 1,027,974
- Big Three rebounded
- Red Wings and Pistons stir excitement
- New Construction

City Government falters
- Corruption
- Slow response
- Loss of over a hundred million in federal funds due to delays
The Great Recession Hits Detroit

- Population: 713,777
- General Motors and Chrysler file for Bankruptcy
- In 2013, the city of Detroit files for Chapter 9 Bankruptcy.
Looking Back to Move Forward