

# DETROIT 1925

## A BOOMTOWN WITH PROBLEMS

### **Detroit was a city of opportunity in the 1920s.**

The young automotive industry was growing fast and offering good-paying jobs, which, in turn, supported economic growth throughout the city. Some of Detroit's most iconic buildings were built as the population soared.

### **By 1924, Detroit was the fourth largest city in the United States.**

During the "Great Migration," millions of people moved away from the South to escape racist Jim Crow policies and to find work in Northern states, like Michigan. One of these people was Dr. Ossian Sweet, who moved to Detroit to begin a career in medicine and start a family.



Postcard image of Detroit's waterfront in the 1920s.

Photo: NEED

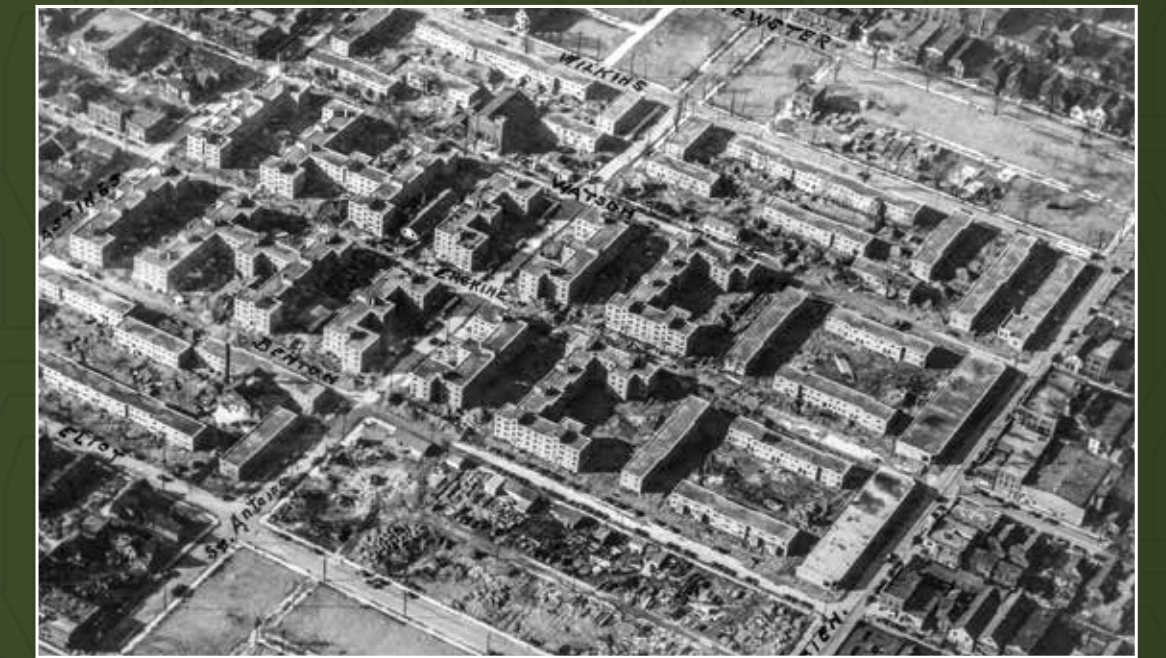


Campus Martius in the 1920s.

Photo: Detroit Historical Society

### **Jobs were plentiful, but racism was pervasive.**

White supremacy was on the rise throughout the U.S., taking many forms in Detroit, as elsewhere. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) terrorized Black residents and white allies and the police did nothing to stop them. The KKK openly endorsed political candidates and engaged in corruption to make sure they won elections. The media stirred fears that people of color were stealing jobs and committing crimes against white people. White residents formed "neighborhood improvement associations" to prevent integration. Housing covenants kept Black Detroiters concentrated in the already crowded Black Bottom neighborhood.



The Black Bottom neighborhood, 1939. The neighborhood was destroyed in the name of urban renewal in the early 1960s.

Photo: Detroit Public Library

### **Some wealthier Black families purchased land and homes on the city's outer edges.**

White residents reacted with boldly violent tactics. By 1925, Black residents outside Black Bottom were often confronted by angry mobs, bent on driving them from their homes. Too often, the mobs were successful.

