

## **The Roaring Twenties: From Riches to Rags**

### **EXHIBIT PANEL TEXT**

#### **MEDICAL ADVANCES IN 1920S**

Throughout the 1920s, new technologies and new science led to the discovery of vitamins and to increasing knowledge of hormones and body chemistry. New drugs and new vaccines flowed from developments made in previous decades.

Insulin was discovered by Canadian physician Frederick Banting in 1921, creating the first effective treatment for diabetes. Diphtheria, caused by bacteria, became better controlled in 1923 by a newly introduced immunization. And within a year, a vaccine against TB was created. Vitamins were discovered, beginning with Vitamin E and its anti-sterility properties, followed by Vitamin D and its presence in cod liver as well as its ability to prevent rickets, a skeletal disorder. Vitamins A, B, C, K and various subtypes were also isolated during the decade.

In 1928, British bacteriologist Alexander Fleming made a chance discovery from an already discarded Petri dish contaminated by mold, which turned out to contain a powerful antibiotic, penicillin. However, it was more than a decade before penicillin was turned into the miracle drug of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In addition, two mainstays of modern medical care were developed during this period: the Band-Aid<sup>®</sup> and cotton swabs (Q-tips<sup>®</sup>).

#### **PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON**

Like Roosevelt before him, Woodrow Wilson saw himself as the personal representative of the people. He campaigned on a program called the New Freedom, which stressed individualism and states' rights, and was elected in 1912. Wilson sponsored three major pieces of legislation: a lower tariff with a graduated federal income tax, the Federal Reserve Act, and antitrust legislation which established a Federal Trade Commission to prohibit unfair business practices. Another burst of legislation followed in 1916. One prohibited child labor; another limited railroad workers to an eight-hour day. By virtue of this legislation and the slogan "he kept us out of war," Wilson narrowly won re-election.

After the election, Wilson concluded that America could not remain neutral in the World War. On April 2, 1917, he asked Congress for a declaration of war on Germany, and the massive American effort slowly tipped the balance in favor of the Allies. After the Germans signed the Armistice in November 1918, Wilson went to Paris to try to build an enduring peace. He later presented to the Senate the Versailles Treaty, containing the Covenant of the League of Nations, and asked, "Dare we reject it and break the heart of the world?" But the election of 1918 had shifted the balance in Congress to the Republicans. By seven votes the Versailles Treaty failed in the Senate. The President, against the warnings of his doctors, had made a national tour to mobilize public sentiment for the treaty. Exhausted, he suffered a stroke and nearly died. Nursed by his second wife, Edith Bolling Galt, he lived until 1924.

Source: <http://www.WhiteHouse.gov>

## **WARREN G. HARDING**

Harding was born near Marion, Ohio, in 1865. His undeviating Republicanism and vibrant speaking voice, plus his willingness to let the machine bosses set policies, led him far in Ohio politics. He served in the state Senate and as Lieutenant Governor, and unsuccessfully ran for Governor. He delivered the nominating address for President Taft at the 1912 Republican Convention. In 1914 he was elected to the Senate, which he found "a very pleasant place." He was the Republican candidate for the 1920 presidential race, and won the election by an unprecedented landslide of 60% of the popular vote.

Republicans in Congress easily got the President's signature on their bills. They eliminated wartime controls and slashed taxes, established a Federal budget system, restored the high protective tariff, and imposed tight limitations upon immigration. By 1923 the postwar depression seemed to be giving way to a new surge of prosperity, and newspapers hailed Harding as a wise statesman carrying out his campaign promise--"Less government in business and more business in government."

Behind the facade, not all of Harding's Administration was so impressive. Word began to reach the President that some of his friends were using their official positions for their own enrichment. Alarmed, he complained, "My...friends...they're the ones that keep me walking the floors nights!" He did not live to find out how the public would react to the scandals of his administration. In August of 1923, he died in San Francisco of a heart attack.

Source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/warrenharding>

## **CALVIN COOLIDGE**

Born in Plymouth, Vermont, on July 4, 1872, Coolidge was the son of a village storekeeper. As President, Coolidge demonstrated his determination to preserve the old moral and economic precepts amid the material prosperity which many Americans were enjoying. He refused to use Federal economic power to check the growing boom or to ameliorate the depressed condition of agriculture and certain industries. His first message to Congress in December 1923 called for isolation in foreign policy, tax cuts and limited aid to farmers. In his 1926 Inaugural he asserted that the country had achieved "a state of contentment seldom before seen," and pledged himself to maintain the status quo. In subsequent years he twice vetoed farm relief bills, and killed a plan to produce cheap Federal electric power on the Tennessee River.

The political genius of President Coolidge, Walter Lippmann pointed out in 1926, was his talent for effectively doing nothing: "This active inactivity suits the mood and certain of the needs of the country admirably. It suits all the business interests which want to be let alone... And it suits all those who have become convinced that government in this country has become dangerously complicated and top-heavy..."

Coolidge was both the most negative and remote of Presidents, and the most accessible. But no President was kinder in permitting himself to be photographed in Indian war bonnets or cowboy dress, and in greeting a variety of delegations to the White House.

By the time the disaster of the Great Depression hit the country, Coolidge was in retirement. Before his death in January 1933, he confided to an old friend, ". . . I feel I no longer fit in with these times."

Source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/calvincoolidge>

### **HERBERT HOOVER**

Born in an Iowa village in 1874, Hoover grew up in Oregon. He enrolled at Stanford University when it opened in 1891, graduating as a mining engineer. After capably serving as secretary of commerce under Presidents Harding and Coolidge, Hoover became the Republican Presidential nominee in 1928. He said then, "We in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land." His election seemed to ensure prosperity. Yet within months the stock market crashed, and the nation spiraled downward into depression.

After the crash Hoover announced that while he would keep the Federal budget balanced, he would cut taxes and expand public works spending. At the same time he reiterated his view that while people must not suffer from hunger and cold, caring for them must be primarily a local and voluntary responsibility.

His opponents in Congress, who he felt were sabotaging his program for their own political gain, unfairly painted him as a callous and cruel President. Hoover became the scapegoat for the Depression and was badly defeated in 1932. In the 1930's he became a powerful critic of the New Deal, warning against tendencies toward statism.

Source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/herberthoover>

### **CHARLES LINDBERGH (1902–1974)**

Charles Lindbergh was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1902 and grew up near Little Falls, Minnesota. Prior to her marriage, his mother was a chemistry teacher at Cass Technical High School in Detroit. The young Charles had a great interest in aviation, and after two years of studying engineering in college he dropped out, learned to fly, and was a "barnstormer" performing aerial daredevil stunts from town to town.

In 1925 he graduated from the U.S. Air Service Flying School and joined the Air Service Reserve Corps. In 1926 he started flying the Chicago/St. Louis airmail flight. Lindbergh was known for making sure the mail was delivered, even if he had just parachuted out of the plane and landed two miles from where the plane crashed.

On May 10-11, 1927, Lindbergh was the first to fly nonstop from New York to Paris, and won a \$25,000 prize for doing so from New York hotel owner Raymond Orteig. The feat projected him to international stardom and he became a spokesperson for promotion of aeronautics. Lindbergh had a profound effect on aviation research in the United States which was accomplished through his celebrity and its draw of monied people like Harry Guggenheim who funded research.

Sources: <http://www.charleslindbergh.com/history/index.asp>

Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *War Without and Within: Diaries And Letters Of Anne Morrow Lindbergh, 1939–1944*. Orlando, Florida: Mariner Books, 1980.

### **HARRY HOUDINI (1874-1926)**

Few performers have ever captured the public imagination like Harry Houdini. His escapes from seemingly impossible predicaments thrilled audiences, who found in him a metaphor for their own lives, an affirmation of the human capacity to overcome adversity--escapism in both senses of the word! He was truly a uniquely powerful window on his times.

Called "The King of Handcuffs," Houdini developed the basic routines which would make him a legend. His milk can escape reminded audiences that "Failure Means a Drowning Death." He staged a series of "manacled bridge jumps" and added the elaborate Chinese Water Torture Cell escape. These had all the elements of a Houdini performance: brilliant technical conception, great physical strength, and highly dramatic presentation.

He took the show on the road in 1926, but during a stay in Montreal in October, he was assaulted by a young man in his dressing room. The stomach blows, which he had invited as a test of his legendary strength, aggravated a case of appendicitis, and he soon became seriously ill. In a final display of stamina and willpower, Houdini performed the next day and again in Detroit. His appendix was removed on October 25th, but the delay had allowed an infection to set in, and he died in Detroit on Halloween.

Source: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/houdini/peopleevents/pande04.html>

### **ALBERT EINSTEIN (1879 - 1955)**

Albert Einstein grew up in a secular middle-class Jewish family in Germany but finished his schooling in Switzerland to avoid obligatory military service. In 1905, at the age of 26, while working at the Swiss patent office, Einstein published his first five groundbreaking papers including his special theory of relativity and the  $E=MC^2$  equation. He started working for the University of Berlin in 1913, and traveled the world during the early 1920s on lecture tours. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1922 but not for his most famous, yet controversial, work on relativity, but rather his distinguished career in physics and his 1905 theory of light and electrons.

Nazi power continued to rise in Germany, and by 1931 the government had passed a law barring Jews from holding any official position, including teaching at universities. Einstein also found out his name was on a hit list, so he immigrated to the United States in 1933 and took a position at Princeton. He later became an important figure in warning the United States of the possibility of Germany's building of an atomic weapon and urging nuclear research during WWII.

Sources: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/einstein/timeline/>;

<http://www.biography.com/people/albert-einstein-9285408?page>

<http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/einstein>

## **MARGARET SANGER (1879-1966)**

Margaret Sanger coined the term “birth control” and was a prominent activist for women’s rights during the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She was one of 11 children in a working-class, Irish-American, Roman Catholic family, and believed that her mother’s numerous pregnancies took a toll on her health, leading to her early death.

As a nurse, Margaret saw many women who had undergone botched back-alley abortions or tried to self-terminate their pregnancies. This led her to become a pioneer in sex education, a risqué topic at the time. She started a feminist publication in 1914 called *The Woman Rebel* that promoted woman’s right to birth control. The Comstock Act prohibited the circulation of “obscene and immoral materials” which included contraception and abortion, thus making her publication illegal.

In 1921, Sanger started the American Birth Control League (which evolved into the modern Planned Parenthood Federation of America), and opened the first legal birth control clinic in the U.S. in 1923. Margaret had always dreamed of a “magic pill” that would allow women to control their fertility. In the 1950s, she worked with a number of sponsors and medical experts in developing ‘Envoid’ the first oral contraceptive.

Sources: <http://www.biography.com/people/margaret-sanger-9471186>  
[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/pill/peopleevents/p\\_sanger.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/pill/peopleevents/p_sanger.html)

## **CONSUMERISM AND CREDIT: BUYING ON BORROWED TIME**

“Even when you were broke, you didn’t worry about money, because it was in such profusion around you.” – F. Scott Fitzgerald

The 1920s was a period of rapid economic progress and change. The growth of mass production, technological advances, and efficiency of labor meant that industrial production soared. As more and more of America's homes received electricity, new appliances followed. The consumption level and standard of living for the average American family climbed rapidly throughout the 1920s, helped by the extension of consumer credit and a new emphasis on advertising.

Until the 1920s, Americans paid cash for all their purchases. A home mortgage was acceptable, but any other form of debt was regarded as unwise or even shameful. The automobile changed that perception. As the prices dropped, more people could afford a car, but not as a one-time cash purchase. General Motors was the first auto company to introduce consumer credit, and before long the question was no longer, “Do we have the money?” but “Can we get a loan?” During the 1920s, people bought cars, radios, sofas, pianos, sewing machines, washing machines, electric iceboxes, and even land and stock shares on credit.

At the turn of the century, most advertisements consisted of large amounts of print. During the 1920s, advertising agencies hired psychologists to help design ad campaigns. They built name-brand identification, created catchy slogans, manipulated endorsements by doctors or

celebrities, and appealed to consumers' hunger for prestige and status. By 1929, American companies spent \$3 billion annually on advertising, five times more than in 1914.

In the 1920s, families spent a lower proportion of their income on necessities (food, clothing, and utilities) and a larger portion on appliances, recreation, and new consumer products. Widespread prosperity led to a new notion of "thrift." Previously associated with self-restraint, moderation, and frugality, thrift now came to mean "wise spending." Government and business supported this trend and a number of consumer organizations worked to inform the public about the virtues of thrifty spending.

Despite what appeared to be universal wealth, farmers in the 1920s experienced an agricultural depression. In urban areas, consumerism had its critics, but criticism could not slow American demand, even as purchasing on credit and financial speculation in the real estate and stock market drove the country toward the crash of 1929.

Sources: *A Cultural History of the United States Through The Decades: The 1920s*

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/coolhtml/ccpres04.html>

*The Decade that Roared: America During Prohibition*

[http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3396](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3396)

## **FORD AND THE RISE OF THE AUTOMOBILE**

"Ownership of an automobile has now reached the point of being an accepted essential of normal living." – *Middletown*, 1929

In the early 1920s, over 50% of all cars sold in the United States were Model Ts, and Henry Ford was an American hero. The Model T liberated millions of people who had never traveled more than 12 miles from their homes, or the distance a horse could go in a day.

Ford introduced the moving assembly line in 1913, and in 1914 instituted a \$5 a day pay rate. Ford reasoned that since he could build inexpensive cars, more of them could be sold if employees could afford to buy them. Ford's River Rouge Plant opened in 1921. It was designed by Albert Khan and fulfilled Ford's dream of controlling every aspect of car making. He bought iron ore deposits, coal mines, and even rubber plantations. He shipped materials to the Rouge on Ford-owned railroads and ships. He made his own steel and glass. It was the largest factory in the world, a self-sufficient industrial city with 75,000 employees, 5,000 of whom did nothing but keep the place clean.

Ford soon produced 8,000 Model Ts per day. The price dropped to under \$300. Ford proved that expanded production allows manufacturers to reduce costs, increases the number of products sold; and that higher wages allow workers to buy more products.

Sources: *A Cultural History of the United States Through The Decades: The 1920s*

<http://www.learner.org/biographyofamerica/prog20/transcript/page03.html>

<http://corporate.ford.com/our-company/heritage/company-milestones-news-detail/677-5-dollar-a-day>

## **GENERAL MOTORS: A CAR FOR EVERY PURSE AND PURPOSE**

General Motors and other automakers also increased wages and began using moving assembly lines. Henry Ford had changed the industry forever, but he had also helped make America a nation of consumers, where style began to matter more than utility. Upwardly mobile people didn't want the same old Model T in basic black.

No one understood this better than Alfred Sloan, the head of General Motors. Starting in 1923, Sloan introduced a line of cars designed for different income levels. GM built Chevrolets to compete directly with the Model T, but more affluent buyers could move up to a Pontiac, an Oldsmobile, a Buick, or even a Cadillac.

GM's cars came in a variety of colors with plenty of accessories. The 1927 Cadillac LaSalle, with curves rather than sharp corners and a long, low stance, made people see cars as more than just a mode of transportation. Created by Harley Earl, the LaSalle marked the beginning of true automotive design.

Sloan also introduced installment buying and by 1926, three-quarters of cars were bought on credit. He pioneered used car trade-ins and the practice of new car models coming out every year. If Henry Ford demonstrated the usefulness of mass production, Sloan revealed the importance of merchandising in a modern consumer society.

Sources: [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3396](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3396)  
<http://www.learner.org/biographyofamerica/prog20/transcript/page03.html>  
<http://www.gm.com/company/historyAndHeritage/acceleration.html>

### **MIGRATING NORTH TO SEARCH FOR A BETTER LIFE**

The Great Migration, or the relocation of more than 6 million African Americans from the rural South to the cities of the North, Midwest and West from 1916 to 1970, had a huge impact on urban life in the United States. Driven from their homes by unsatisfactory economic opportunities and harsh segregationist laws, many blacks headed north, where they took advantage of the need for industrial workers that first arose during the First World War. In an effort to reduce worker attrition, Henry Ford announced the "5 dollar work day" in 1914. Newspapers from around the world reported this as an act of goodwill and people flocked to Detroit.

As northern cities saw their black populations expand exponentially, migrants were forced to deal with poor working conditions and competition for living space, as well as widespread racism and prejudice. During the Great Migration, African Americans began to build a new place for themselves in public life, actively confronting economic, political and social challenges and creating a new black urban culture that would exert enormous influence in the decades to come. The Great Migration particularly impacted Detroit, as it coincided with the rise of the auto industry and the need for a new work force.

Sources: <http://www.history.com/topics/great-migration>  
<http://corporate.ford.com/news-center/press-releases-detail/677-5-dollar-a-day>

### **THE KKK IN MICHIGAN**

The 1920s marked the second wave of the Ku Klux Klan, fuelled partially by the Great Migration. The first wave occurred mainly in the South during the 1860s. During the 1920s, the organization was nationwide, and although somewhat different, vigilante violence was still present. It was a time when people were inclined to join a social organization like the Elks, the Moose or the Oddfellows, and the Klan was just as likely to sponsor community picnics as it was its hateful ideology. The ideology was much broader and many people felt similar anti-immigration, anti-Catholic sentiments, which drew in people from all levels of society.

The group held significant political power, and a Klan-backed candidate almost won the Detroit mayoral race in 1924. It is estimated that in 1925, KKK membership in Detroit was around 35,000. Nationwide, Klan membership rapidly declined in 1925 after a prominent leader over Indiana and 22 other states (including Michigan) was convicted of rape and murder and Klan activities were exposed. It is estimated that at its peak in the mid-1920s, national membership was around six million, which quickly declined to 30,000 in a few years.

Sources: <http://domemagazine.com/bookit/bookit0311>

<http://www.hourdetroit.com/Hour-Detroit/March-2009/The-Dark-Days-of-the-Black-Legion/>

[http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2012/02/retrospectives\\_the\\_klu\\_klux\\_kl.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2012/02/retrospectives_the_klu_klux_kl.html)

[http://michiganhumanities.org/programs/gmr\\_new/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/14-15.pdf](http://michiganhumanities.org/programs/gmr_new/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/14-15.pdf)

### **CULTURE CLASH: FUNDAMENTALISM, MODERNISM AND THE SCOPES “MONKEY” TRIAL**

By the 1920s, the United States had transformed itself from a regional agricultural economy into one of the most powerful industrial and urban economies of the world. The Victorian value system that prioritized restraint gave way to the more relaxed morals of the twentieth century. In an increasingly consumer-based society, leisure and pleasure were now prized over hard work and self-denial.

In the confusion of their world, many Americans turned back to “old-time religion.” Fundamentalism was a comfort to many, and evangelists like Billy Sunday and Aimee Semple McPherson drew huge crowds to their tent meetings.

The Scopes Trial is an example of this cultural clash. John T. Scopes was a high school biology teacher who had taught evolution in a high school class, which was prohibited by Tennessee law. The trial had actually been engineered by “Dayton boosters” to attract tourism and economic opportunity to their town. The “Monkey Trial” took on a life of its own when politician William Jennings Bryan agreed to serve as prosecutor and lawyer Clarence Darrow came to Scopes' defense. The trial soon became an international spectacle.

Although portrayed in works such as *Inherit the Wind* as a clash between ignorant fundamentalists and enlightened moderns, the reality of the trial was far more complex. Americans continue to struggle with the questions it raised about academic freedom and the seemingly irreconcilable conflicts between science and religion.

Sources: <http://ehistory.osu.edu/osu/mmh/clash/Scopes/scopes-page4.htm>; *The Decade that Roared: America During Prohibition*

## **THE RED SCARE**

World War I was over, but the hysteria lingered. In November 1917, Lenin led a successful revolution of the Bolshevik workers. The ideas of Karl Marx had been known since 1848, but nowhere in the world had a successful communist revolution occurred. The United States sent troops to Russia hoping the White Russians could oust the communist Reds, but the Bolsheviks secured control of the entire nation.

Back in the United States, Great War veterans were returning home. Workers were now demanding wage increases to keep pace with spiraling inflation. A small group of radicals formed the Communist Labor Party in 1919. Progressive and conservative Americans believed that labor activism was a menace to American society. President Wilson's Attorney General, A. Mitchell Palmer, was determined that no Bolshevik Revolution would happen in the United States.

From 1919 to 1920, Palmer conducted a series of raids on individuals he believed were dangerous to American security. He deported 249 Russian immigrants without just cause. With Palmer's sponsorship, the Federal Bureau of Investigation was created under the leadership of J. Edgar Hoover. In January of 1920, federal agents broke into the homes of suspected anarchists without search warrants, jailed labor leaders, and held about 5,000 citizens without respecting their right to legal counsel.

The New York State Legislature expelled five Socialist representatives from their ranks. Twenty-eight states banned the public display of red flags. It seemed as though the witch hunt would never end. Responsible Americans began to speak out against Palmer's raids and demand that American civil liberties be respected. By the summer of 1920, the worst of the furor had subsided, although distrust of Socialism continued throughout the decade.

Source: <http://www.ushistory.org/us/47a.asp>

## **THE SACCO AND VANZETTI CASE**

On April 15, 1921, two employees of a shoe warehouse in South Braintree, Massachusetts, were murdered during a robbery. The police investigating the crime arrested two Italian immigrants: Ferdinando Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti.

Sacco and Vanzetti maintained their innocence, but they already had a strike against them: they were anarchists and socialists. Just a little over two weeks after their arrest, they were found guilty. Many people, particularly fellow socialists, protested the verdict, saying the two men were convicted more on political and ethnic prejudice than on any real evidence. Indeed, four years later, another man said he had committed the crime with a local gang.

Despite appeals, Sacco and Vanzetti were never granted a retrial. When they were sentenced to death on April 9, 1927, protests erupted around the country. But to no avail — the men were executed on Aug. 23, 1927. They claimed they were innocent until the moment of their deaths. Scholars still debate the guilt and innocence of Sacco and Vanzetti, but there is little question that the trial was biased against them.

Source: <http://www.ushistory.org/us/47a.asp>

### **BLACK TUESDAY – THE STOCK MARKET CRASH OF 1929**

The stock market crash ushered in the Great Depression. Throughout the 1920s stocks had quadrupled in value. Investors confidently began to put borrowed money into the market. But in 1929, stocks headed quickly downward. In 1932 and 1933, they hit bottom, down about 80% from their highs in the late 1920s. This had sharp effects on the economy. Demand for goods declined because people felt poor. New investment could not be financed through the sale of stock, because no one would buy it.

The banking system was in chaos as banks tried to collect on loans made to stock market investors whose holdings were now worthless. Many banks had themselves invested depositors' money in the stock market. When word spread, depositors rushed to withdraw their savings. Unable to raise fresh funds from the Federal Reserve System, banks began failing by the hundreds in 1932 and 1933.

By March 1933, the banking system of the United States had largely ceased to function. Roosevelt closed all the banks in the United States for three days. Some banks were then cautiously re-opened with strict limits on withdrawals. Eventually, confidence returned to the system and banks were able to perform their function again. To prevent similar disasters, the federal government set up the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.

Source: <http://www.pbs.org/fmc/timeline/estockmktcrash.htm>

### **HOOVERVILLES**

During the Great Depression, which began in 1929 and lasted approximately a decade, shantytowns appeared across the U.S. as unemployed people were evicted from their homes. As the Depression worsened in the 1930s, causing severe hardships for millions of Americans, many looked to the federal government for assistance. When the government failed to provide relief, President Herbert Hoover was blamed for the intolerable economic and social conditions, and the shantytowns that cropped up across the nation, primarily on the outskirts of major cities, became known as Hoovervilles. The highly unpopular Hoover, a Republican, was defeated in the 1932 presidential election by Democrat Franklin Roosevelt, whose New Deal recovery programs eventually helped lift the U.S. out of the Depression. In the early 1940s, most remaining Hoovervilles were torn down.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

As America's housing and economic crisis worsened through 2009, homelessness was on the rise. Encampments and shantytowns often referred to as tent cities, with similarities to Hoovervilles, began appearing in parts of California, Arizona, Tennessee, Florida, Washington and other states.

Source: <http://www.history.com/topics/hoovervilles>

### **The Speakeasy – in Room 109**

## **PROHIBITION: THE END OF DEMON RUM**

The Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution declared the production, transport and sale of alcohol illegal. It went into effect on January 16, 1919. The Volstead Act, a separate law which passed over President Wilson's veto, detailed enforcement methods and the specifics on what types of alcohol was prohibited.

The legislation included many loopholes. Businesses and individuals came up with many technically legal ways to obtain alcohol. Individuals brewed "non-intoxicating" cider and fruit juices for home use. Businesses manufactured and sold alcohol for industrial, medicinal and religious purposes. These "legal" exceptions were often used for illegal uses of alcohol.

National Prohibition was the result of decades of work by the Temperance movement, which believed Prohibition would protect families, especially women and children, from the effects of alcohol abuse. In fact, by 1914, 23 states and many municipalities had banned liquor. Michigan approved a statewide prohibition of the sale of beer, liquor and wine, beginning May 1, 1918.

Per capita consumption of alcohol actually dropped between 1910 and 1934. However, crime surrounding the illegal liquor trade skyrocketed, and in 1933 the states ratified the 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment, repealing the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment and ending Prohibition.

Sources: *A Cultural History of the United States Through The Decades: The 1920s*

*The Decade that Roared: America During Prohibition*

<http://www.learner.org/biographyofamerica/prog20/feature/page03.html>

## **MICHIGAN'S "RUM" REBELLION**

By the time Prohibition passed in 1920, a strong Italian community, along with its heritage of home winemaking, was thriving in Iron River, in Northern Michigan. The Scalcucci brothers made wine in the basement of their grocery store, and lived on the third floor. They thought they'd be protected by a loophole in the Volstead Act that allowed brewing alcohol for home use.

Officers raided the Scalcucci grocery store on February 14, 1920, seizing the wine, but State Attorney Martin McDonough demanded that the officers return the wine to the Scalcuccis, since the officers did not present an authorized warrant. Chicago-based federal Prohibition officer A.V. Dalrymple then declared Iron River to be in rebellion against Prohibition, and headed to Michigan with his agents, where a standoff between Dalrymple and McDonough ensued.

National news picked up the story, and though wine was the target of the raids, headlines proclaimed, "Whisky Rebellion; U.S. Defied in Michigan" and "Rum Rebellion Turns to Panic Before U.S. Ire." Finally, the national Prohibition commissioner ordered Dalrymple to compromise, and McDonough was hailed a hero.

Source: <http://www.mynorth.com/My-North/January-2011/Wine-Rebellion-in-Northern-Michigan-039s-Upper-Peninsula/>

## **THE RISE OF ORGANIZED CRIME**

Prohibition saw a rising tide of professional criminals. Smugglers, home distillers, doctors selling prescriptions for alcohol, and businesses selling alcohol and home distilling kits all sought to make a dime in the illegal liquor market. At first, the illegal liquor trade was a neighborly business, involving people who were otherwise law-abiding citizens. In time, violent gangs took over, especially in urban areas. In Chicago an estimated 1,300 gangs sprang up. Rival gangs led by the powerful Al “Scarface” Capone and the hot-headed George “Bugs” Moran turned the city streets into a virtual war zone.

With bootlegging profits, gangs outfitted themselves with “Tommy” guns and operated without consequences by paying off politicians and police. Congress had appropriated only \$5 million to enforce the Volstead Act, while thirty states allocated nothing. An investigation arm of the Department of Justice (which would later become the FBI) had been founded in 1908, but the Prohibition Bureau was part of the Treasury Department under the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, which is why Prohibition agents were sometimes called “Revenuers.”

Dealing with bootlegging and speakeasies was challenging enough, but during the “Roaring Twenties” bank robbery, kidnapping, auto theft, gambling, and drug trafficking all became increasingly common crimes. Law enforcement was outgunned and ill-prepared to take on this surging national crime wave.

Source: *The Decade that Roared: America During Prohibition*; <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/history/a-centennial-history>

## **SPEAKEASIES AND GAMBLING**

In 1923, Detroit Police recorded about 3,000 speakeasies. By 1925, the number had increased to 15,000 and by 1928, according to the *Detroit News*, the number ranged from 16,000 to 25,000 blind pigs.

While many blind pigs just sold illegal booze, others expanded their operations. Gamblers took advantage of police non-intervention and several casinos were opened in and around Detroit. The Blossom Heath Inn, built in 1911, but expanded as a roadhouse after 1920, was one of these. Nationally known big bands drew people from Detroit and Canada. Blossom Heath became notorious for illegal drinking and gambling during Prohibition, along with many other clubs both in the city and suburbs. However, many speakeasies applied for legal liquor licenses after Prohibition’s repeal in 1932.

## **“THEY’RE ROTTEN, PURPLE LIKE THE COLOR OF BAD MEAT, THEY’RE A PURPLE GANG” – DETROIT SHOPKEEPER**

Detroit got a head start on the production and distribution of illegal liquor when alcohol was banned in Michigan in 1918. The Detroit River was a smugglers’ dream - less than a mile across in some places, and 28 miles long with thousands of hiding places. Seventy-five percent of the liquor in the U.S. during Prohibition came through Michigan from Canada.

The Purple Gang, Detroit's most famous organized crime group, got its start providing protection for the Sugar House, a "legitimate business" that provided corn sugar for home brewers. The Purples quickly turned to hijacking liquor loads from smugglers. Anyone landing liquor along the Detroit waterfront had to be prepared to fight to the death, since it was common for the Purples to steal a load of liquor and shoot whoever was with it.

The Bernstein brothers, Abe, Joe, Raymond, and Izzy were the recognized leaders of the loose confederation known as the Purple Gang. By the late twenties, they reigned over the Detroit underworld. They controlled the city's vice, gambling, and racketeering schemes as well as the liquor and drug trade. The gang even became the suppliers of Canadian whiskey to Al Capone's gang in Chicago after they told him to keep out of the city. In 1931, a gang dispute that ended in a triple murder led to the conviction of three Purples for murder, and ended the violent run of the Purple Gang.

Sources: <http://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/purple-gang>  
<http://blogs.detroitnews.com/history/1999/07/15/detroits-infamous-purple-gang/>

## **Detroit and Michigan – NEAR AND IN ROOM 137**

### **STORES IN DETROIT**

In 1928, the J. L. Hudson Department Store, the world's tallest department store took up an entire downtown Detroit block. Trips to Hudson's were daylong excursions for back-to-school or holiday shopping. Shoppers found goods as well as services such as shoe shines, tea rooms and beauty and barber shops. When making a purchase, customers could charge items by showing a numbered metal tag—a forerunner of the credit card.

Sebastian S. Kresge started the first S. S. Kresge Store in 1899 in Detroit. At Kresge's and other "dime stores" people could buy varied household and personal items. By the 1920s, there was no longer a ten-cent limit, but the name "dime store" or "five-and-dime" stuck.

Kern's expanded throughout the 1920s, eventually encompassing 200,000 square feet. Kern's spacious main floor had a rich art deco look. The marble floors were accentuated with a 30-foot high ornamental ceiling, decorative cast-iron railings, and rich mahogany counters. New additions to the store included an auditorium, a roof garden, an employee gymnasium, a dining room, an elevator bank featuring 21 cars, and in 1933 the famous Kern's clock was added.

Crowley, Milner and Co. boasted a number of Detroit "firsts." The store was the first retailer to initiate time-payment sales on all general merchandise and the first to use gasoline-powered delivery vehicles. Crowley pioneered a charge-a-plate system (an early version of credit cards) and featured their famous wooden escalators by 1928.

Sources: <http://www.hal.state.mi.us/mhc/museum/explore/museums/hismus/1900-75/twenties/windows.html>; <http://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/>

## **IDLEWILD, MICHIGAN'S "BLACK EDEN"**

65 miles south of Traverse City is the town of Idlewild, was once considered the “Black Eden” of Michigan. During the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many black Americans had new economic opportunities. This opened the door for more recreation, but due to segregation blacks were not welcome at many popular tourist spots. In 1912, four white families purchased the land which became Idlewild, because they felt that they could sell lots to “land hungry blacks.” By 1927, 16,895 lots had been sold to over 6,000 African Americans and it had become a resort community for many prominent people of color. The list of owners and visitors throughout the years included W.E.B. DuBois, founder of the NAACP, the boxer Joe Louis and jazz greats like Duke Ellington, Louie Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie.

The most prominent name during the 1920s was Dr. Daniel Hale Williams. Dr. Williams was from Chicago. He was the first to successfully operate on a human heart, which made him very respected in the medical community and a hero to the black community.

Idlewild started to decline in the ‘60s and’ 70s after the civil rights movement when black Americans were able to travel to the same resorts as white Americans.

Source: <http://www.northernexpress.com/michigan/article-787-the-rise-fall-of-idlewild.html>

### **BLACK BOTTOM AND PARADISE VALLEY**

During the 1920’s, the black population in Detroit swelled as people came from the South to work in the automobile industry. The east side neighborhood of Black Bottom was one of the few areas blacks were allowed to reside. Paradise Valley, just north of Black Bottom, held more than 300 black-owned businesses, ranging from drugstores, beauty salons and restaurants to nightclubs, bowling alleys with bars, theaters and mini-golf courses. Black-owned nightclubs such as the Paradise Theatre and the Flame Show Bar booked popular black artists and attracted mixed-race audiences to shows.

### **DETROIT RADIO**

With the first broadcast of WWJ (then known as 8MK) on August 20, 1920, Detroit became one of the first places in the nation to have a commercial radio station. About 300 people with homemade receivers in a 100-mile range heard its first broadcast. WWJ was founded by the Scripps family, and was originally licensed to the *Detroit News*.

In the early 1920s, WWJ broadcasted speeches by Alex J. Groesbeck, governor of Michigan, James Couzens, mayor of Detroit, and famous performers, such as comedian Will Rogers, also made their radio debut on WWJ. The station also aired live music; the first broadcast of a Detroit Symphony Orchestra concert was in February, 1922.

WWJ’s programming included hints to housewives, music, weather reports, market quotations, baseball scores, and church services. Ty Tyson announced WWJ's first play-by-play account of a Detroit Tigers baseball game in 1927.

The *Detroit Free Press* founded its own radio station, WJR, on May 4, 1922. It was first known under the call sign WCX. In 1928, WJR moved to the Fisher Building, and began to broadcast

with the slogan, "WJR Detroit, from the Golden Tower of the Fisher Building," which is still used today.

Sources: <http://www.hal.state.mi.us/mhc/museum/explore/museums/hismus/special/ontheair/index.html>; <http://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/>

## **RECREATION**

In the 1920s, Detroit became a prosperous city. Thanks to the booming vehicle industry, a large middle class population emerged and many residents looked for new activities. These included seeing movies, sometimes in splendid new buildings like the Fox Theatre, or in former opera houses and vaudeville theaters. People could also take streetcars to go shopping downtown, to Navin Field where the Tigers played, or to see concerts or go dancing.

Many Michiganders also participated in outdoor recreation. The City of Detroit had long operated a Commission of Parks and Boulevards for the management of Belle Isle, but in 1920, that Commission became the Department of Recreation. The MacArthur Bridge to Belle Isle today was constructed in 1923, making the park more accessible for vehicles, and the Ambassador Bridge was completed in 1929, replacing a limited ferry service to Canada. The Detroit-Windsor Tunnel opened just a year later, in 1930.

Sources: <http://detroit1701.org/Grande%20Ballroom.html>  
<http://www.hal.state.mi.us/mhc/museum/explore/museums/hismus/1900-75/twenties/neighbors.html>

## **Detroit Tigers**

The Detroit Tigers, founded in 1894, were going strong during the 1920s. They played home games at Navin Field, constructed in 1912. Star player Ty Cobb headed winning seasons throughout the teens, but by 1920, the Tigers had plunged to seventh place. After Cobb's retirement as a player, he became manager in 1921. The highlight of Cobb's tenure was 1924, the same season that Hall-of-Famer Charlie Gehringer first wore the Tiger uniform, when the club remained in the race until the season's final week.

Source: <http://detroit.tigers.mlb.com/det/history/timeline.jsp>

## **Detroit Stars**

The Stars were Detroit's Negro Leagues baseball team. The original team played at Mack Park from 1919 to 1931. The Detroit Stars prospered in the 1920s, despite not winning a championship, and were able to attract a racially mixed crowd purely due to the talent of the players. Notable Detroit Stars included Turkey Stearnes, who later became a Hall of Famer.

Source: <http://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit>

## **Hockey**

In 1926, the Victoria (British Columbia) Cougars came to Detroit and began to play as the Detroit Cougars, in Windsor, Ontario. Despite the fact that the Victoria Cougars had won the Stanley Cup in 1925 and were finalists in 1926, the Detroit Cougars had the NHL's worst record for the 1926-27 season. The team was also more than \$80,000 in debt. The following season the team moved into the brand new Olympia Stadium, and Jack Adams became the team's

coach and general manager. The team made the playoffs for the first time in franchise history in 1929.

Source: <http://redwings.nhl.com/club/page.htm?id=43765>

### **Boating**

Christopher Smith, founder of Chris-Craft, built his first boat in 1874, in Algonac, and began producing boats full time in 1881. What was perhaps the company's first advertisement appeared in the April 1922 issue of *Motor Boat* magazine. This ad lists four different models, including the Baby Gar, a racing boat that achieved speeds from 50 to 60 miles per hour and sold for \$7,500. The boat was first built for racer Gar Wood, who broke several boating speed records on the Detroit River.

Source: <http://www.marinersmuseum.org/library/early-chris-craft-runabouts>

### **SELFRIDGE AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE**

In 1917, during WWI, the U.S. government leased the air strip that is now the Selfridge Air National Guard Base from Henry B. Joy and has operated the space ever since (97 years). The name was changed to Selfridge Field in honor of First Lieutenant Thomas Etholen Selfridge who was killed in a demonstration flight with Orville Wright, making him the first Army airman to perish in an aircraft accident.

The time between WWI and WWII was the Golden Age of Flight, and Selfridge hosted a number of air races and flying meets. In 1924, Charles Lindbergh came to Selfridge to fly slots, which only lasted a short time before he went back to the air mail. He returned after his famous flight, and let his friend and base commander take the renowned *Spirit of St. Louis* for a short flight.

Selfridge is home to the 127<sup>th</sup> Wing of the Michigan Air National Guard, and hosts tenant units from every branch of the U.S. Armed Forces. It employs nearly 3,000 full-time civilian and military personnel in addition to approximately 3,000 reserve components of the U.S. Armed Forces. Prominent aircraft assigned to the base include the A-10 Thunderbolt II, KC-135 Stratotanker, CH-47 Chinook helicopter, and HH-65 Dolphin helicopter.

Sources: <http://www.127wg.af.mil/>; <http://www.selfridgeairshow.org/about.aspx>  
<http://www.militarybases.us/air-force/selfridge-air-national-guard-base/>

### **BATH SCHOOL MASSACRE**

The most deadly act of school violence in U.S. history took place in the small farming town of Bath, Michigan, just outside of Lansing on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1927. Andrew Kehoe, a farmer and school caretaker, had lost his farm to foreclosure and was angry about property taxes that were used to fund the school. He planned America's first school massacre as an act of retaliation. Kehoe planted 600 pounds of dynamite in the basement of the school, but only 100 pounds ignited, allowing many to escape. Thirty-eight children and one adult were killed in the event. Kehoe then burned down his farm and drove his car to the school where he proceeded to blow up the car, killing himself and five others. Forty-five people died that day and 58 were maimed or wounded. As time passed, it was typical to see people around town with abnormalities that

were assumed to have happened at the massacre. Some locals refused to even speak the perpetrator's name, considering it an obscenity.

Sources: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=103186662>  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lev-raphael/americas-deadliest-school\\_b\\_860924.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lev-raphael/americas-deadliest-school_b_860924.html)

## **WOMEN IN THE 1920S**

The Roaring Twenties were a time of new opportunities and prosperity for young women. In 1920, the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, giving woman the right to vote. That same year, the League of Women Voters was established as a nonpartisan group urging women's active citizenship rather than the support of a particular political party of specific candidates. In 1921, the effects of women's suffrage could be seen in the passage of the Sheppard-Towner Act, the first federally funded social welfare program, providing prenatal care and education, including the creation of women's and children's health clinics. Nellie Tayloe Ross was elected as governor of Wyoming in 1925 to complete the term of her husband who had died in office, becoming the first female governor in the U.S.

While married women still did not hold jobs in great numbers, there was a huge increase in employment among single women. With the rise of corporate offices and department stores, large numbers of white collar jobs became available to working class woman. By 1928, women were earning 39 percent of the college degrees in the U.S., up from 19 percent at the turn of the century.

However, work for women was still seen as a precursor to marriage, with very clear limits to advancement opportunities. Henry Ford expressed the view of times, noting "I pay our women well so they can dress attractively and get married."

In 1923, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was first introduced to Congress and the term "feminism" was coined. While the ERA finally passed both houses of Congress in 1972, it was not ratified by a sufficient number of state legislatures to be adopted.

## **1920S FASHION**

Although the flapper is most closely associated with 1920s fashions, a number of other clothing styles were equally as popular during the decade. Skirt lengths fluctuated, women donned flashy evening attire, comfortable sportswear, and conservative work suits. Dresses either hung straight or flared at the hip. But despite the variety, women's 1920s fashions all broke free of the physical and social constraints of the previous century.

The boyish, or garçonne look, was popular, and straight, curveless dresses were worn with bust flattening brassieres. The waist completely disappeared, and belts were worn around the hips. Skirts rose to the knees during the first two years of the 1920s, fell to the ankles again in 1923, rose up to the knees again in 1925, and were again long by the end of the decade. The straight skirt was the dominant shape of the 1920s, but flaring skirts were also in fashion. Waists, however, were still quite low, and the form was still quite narrow and drooping.

Casual sporting attire was introduced in the 1920s. In addition to bathing suits, tennis uniforms, and golfing outfits, simple, comfortable skirts, sailor blouses, and large-brim hats were worn by women.

Source:[http://www.uvm.edu/landscape/dating/clothing\\_and\\_hair/1920s\\_clothing\\_women.php](http://www.uvm.edu/landscape/dating/clothing_and_hair/1920s_clothing_women.php)

## **ART AND ARCHITECTURE**

In visual art and architecture, the 1920s saw the beginning of the Surrealist, Expressionist, and Art Deco movements. Also called Style Moderne, Art Deco was characterized by linear decorative designs that were reminiscent of modern technology. Modern concepts such as machine and automobile patterns and stylized gear and wheel shapes were used to celebrate the rise of commerce, technology, and speed. The name derived from the 1925 Paris Exposition of Decorative Arts.

Early modernism saw a rise in the construction of skyscrapers, and hundreds of architects competed for the work. In New York City, the Art Deco design was exemplified by the Chrysler and Empire State Building, as well as Rockefeller Center. Besides being influential in the arts, architecture and industrial and graphic arts, Art Deco was also a popular style in fashion, furniture, jewelry, and textiles. Designers included Kem Weber, Eliel Saarinen, and perhaps the most famous, René Lalique.

Along with Art Deco, other artistic styles included the Modernist movement (George Luks, Charles W. Hawthorne), Abstract Expressionism (Willem de Kooning), Surrealism, and Dadaism (Georgia O'Keeffe, Morgan Russell, Man Ray), Realism (Thomas Hart Benton, Edward Hopper, Grant Wood, Leon Kroll) and Landscape (Aldro Thompson Hibbard, N.C. Wyeth).

Sources:<http://kclibrary.lonestar.edu/decade20.html>;<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/36505/Art-Deco>

## **MASS ENTERTAINMENT**

Until the 1920s, there was no national entertainment industry. Large cities had concert halls, opera houses and theatres, small towns made do with touring theatrical or vaudeville companies and circuses. Many popular forms of mass entertainment emerged during the 1920s but none had more impact than the radio.

The first commercial radio station began broadcasting in 1919 and during the 1920s, the nation's airwaves became filled. Radio networks like CBS and NBC became a major industry, changing the way the country received news, music, sports, entertainment, and national advertising. Companies became sponsors of regular programs: The Eveready Hour, The Collier Hour, The Chase and Sanborn Hour.

Radio drew the nation together, with more than 10 million households owning a radio by 1929. When Charles Lindbergh became the first person to fly nonstop across the Atlantic, the radio brought news into American homes, transforming him into a national celebrity overnight. Radio could also blunt regional differences and shape the country's opinions, spreading racial and

cultural caricatures and derogatory stereotypes, or imposing similar tastes and lifestyles across wide distances.

The phonograph was not far behind the radio in importance. The 1920s saw the record player enter American life in full force. Musical tastes spread quickly as people brought recordings into their homes. Popular singers like Billy Murray, Blues singers “Ma” Rainey and Bessie Smith, Jazz musicians like Louis Armstrong, and even Detroit’s own Jean Goldkette Orchestra could be heard in living rooms across the country.

Like radio shows, motion pictures blended technology with entertainment. In the 1920s, Hollywood released thousands of movies and movie attendance soared, from 50 million a week in 1920 to 90 million weekly in 1929. According to one estimate, Americans spent 83 cents of every entertainment dollar going to the movies, and three-fourths of the population went to a movie theater every week.

Spectator sports also attracted vast audiences in the 1920s. Team sports flourished, but Americans focused on individual superstars, people whose talents or personalities made them appear larger than life. Baseball was America’s pastime, and gave us stars such as Ty Cobb and George Herman (“Babe”) Ruth.

Sources:<http://www.encyclopedia.com>[http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtid=2&psid=3397](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtid=2&psid=3397); *The Decade that Roared: America During Prohibition*

## **LITERATURE OF THE 1920S**

Following WWI, talented young authors wrote about their feelings of disillusionment and alienation. A sense of rebellion developed and the Victorian idea of decency was considered hypocritical. Writers began to write frankly about sexuality. Three important groups which evolved during this period were The Algonquin Round Table, the Harlem Renaissance and the Lost Generation.

The Algonquin Round Table, also called The Round Table, was an informal group of American literary men and women who met daily for lunch on weekdays at a large round table in the Algonquin Hotel in New York City during the ‘20s and ‘30s. Many of the best-known writers, journalists, and artists in the city were in this group. Among them were Dorothy Parker, Alexander Woollcott, (author of the quote, “All the things I really like are immoral, illegal or fattening.”), Heywood Broun, Robert Sherwood, George S. Kaufman, Franklin P. Adams, Marc Connelly, Harold Ross, Harpo Marx and Russell Crouse and Robert Benchley, who was a frequent contributor to the *Detroit Athletic News*, a monthly publication for Detroit Athletic Club members.

The Harlem Renaissance is considered the first important movement of African-American artists and writers in the U.S. Centered in Harlem and other urban areas during the ‘20s, black writers published more than ever before. Influential and lasting black authors, artists and musicians received their first serious appraisal, including Zora Neale Hurston, W. E. B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer and Alain Locke.

The Lost Generation represented self-exiled expatriates who lived and wrote in Paris between the wars. These writers, looking for freedom of thought and action, changed the face of modern writing. Realistic and rebellious, they wrote what they wanted and fought censorship for profanity and sexuality. This group included Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, John Dos Passos, Henry Miller and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Other important writers during this decade include e. e. cummings, William Faulkner, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Eugene O'Neill while Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett ushered in a Golden Age of Mysteries.

Source: <http://kclibrary.lonestar.edu/decade20.html>

### **FILM IN THE 1920S**

The 1920s saw a vast expansion of Hollywood film making and worldwide film going. Throughout the decade, film production increasingly focused on the feature film rather than the "short" or "two-reeler." This change began with the long D.W. Griffith epics of the mid-1910s. In Hollywood, numerous small studios were taken over and made a part of larger studios, creating the studio system that would run American film making until the 1960s. The 1920s was also the decade of the "Picture Palaces," large urban theaters that could seat 1-2,000 guests at a time, with full orchestral accompaniment and decorative design.

Key genres such as the swashbuckler, horror, and modern romantic comedy flourished during the decade. Stars like Douglas Fairbanks, Ramon Novarro, Pola Negri, Alla Nazimova, Greta Garbo, Mary Pickford, Lillian Gish, Francis X. Bushman, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, Lon Chaney, Rudolph Valentino, John Gilbert, Clara Bow, Gloria Swanson, Joan Crawford, George O'Brien, and John Barrymore created some of their most memorable roles and films during the period.

The transition to sound-on-film technology occurred mid-decade as talkies developed in 1926-1927. With sound, the concept of the musical appeared immediately, as in *The Jazz Singer* of 1927, because silent films had been accompanied by music for years when projected in theaters. Sound also greatly changed the Hollywood approach to storytelling, with more dependence on dialogue and less creative use of the visual element.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1920s\\_in\\_film](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1920s_in_film)

### **JAZZ IN THE 1920S: THE DEVIL'S MUSIC**

The American musical art form jazz emerged in New Orleans around the advent of the 20th century. Jazz blends elements from varied traditions, including African and African American, religious, brass band, and blues styles. The improvisational music that results has a syncopated rhythm, and originally both the performers and audiences were African American. The more popular it became, the more it was criticized by everyone and everything from carmaker Henry Ford to publications like *Ladies Home Journal* and *The New York Times*.

Jazz's popularity grew, and as it attracted a wider audience, so did campaigns to censor this "devil's music." Early detractors like Thomas Edison, inventor of the phonograph, ridiculed jazz, saying it sounded better played backwards. By the end of the 1920s, at least 60 communities across the nation had enacted laws prohibiting jazz in public dance halls.

Prohibition brought jazz into gangster-run nightclubs, venues that served alcohol and hired black musicians. These speakeasies allowed whites and blacks to mingle socially for the first time; they also drew young audiences from all social classes, attracted to both the music and the increasingly suggestive jazz dances.

But the reformers did not halt the growing popularity of jazz among both black and white audiences. Recordings and radio broadcasts allowed the music to reach beyond nightclubs, and the arrival of virtuosos such as New Orleans-born cornet and trumpet player Louis Armstrong and composer Duke Ellington propelled the art form to a higher level.

"When my grandmother found out that I was playing jazz music in one of the sporting houses in the District, she told me I had disgraced the family and forbade me to live in the house...she told me that the devil music would surely bring about my downfall, but I just couldn't put it behind me." -Jelly Roll Morton, jazz composer

Source: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/beyond/jazz.html>

## **THEATRE IN THE 1920S**

In the 1920s, vaudeville and music hall variety shows were popular, but the twenties also saw the rise of American drama, and the birth of the American musical, and the first shows starring, written and produced by African Americans, starting with Eubie Blake's *Shuffle Along*, which premiered in 1921.

Eugene O'Neill, one of the first great American dramatists, had his first full-length play, *Beyond the Horizon*, produced 1920. The play earned him his first of three Pulitzer Prizes during the decade.

Florenz Ziegfeld's Ziegfeld Follies remained popular, starring Fanny Brice throughout the twenties. Ziegfeld also produced light musicals, which tended to ignore plot in favor of emphasizing star actors and actresses, big dance routines, and popular songs. Typical of the 1920s were lighthearted productions such as *Sally*; *No, No, Nanette*; *Harlem* and *Funny Face*. The shows were forgettable, but they produced enduring standards from George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, Vincent Youmans, and Rodgers and Hart, among others.

However, Ziegfeld also produced *Show Boat*, a collaboration of Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein, based on Kern's new theories of what a musical could be. In *Show Boat*, the songs actually move the story along and define characters and relationships. *Show Boat* also dealt with its themes seriously, unlike the musicals of the day.

Source: <http://www.talkinbroadway.com/bway101/4th3.html>; <http://www.musicals101.com/>

