

Comments about Books about Detroit
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AIA Detroit: The American Institute of Architects Guide to Detroit Architecture. Eric J. Hill and John Gallagher. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003

This is the most comprehensive guide to architecture in the Detroit area.

The Algiers Motel Incident. John Hersey, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1968

On the final night of the 1967 riot, white police officers apparently shot three young black men to death in an inexpensive motel along Woodward, perhaps because they were cavorting with white women. This became a nationally discussed incident involving race, sex and police brutality. Hersey provides an excellent description of the issues as well as the strong but ultimately unsuccessful efforts to convict the police officers of murder..

Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights and Murder in the Jazz Age. Kevin Boyle. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005.

This is the most elegantly written book about racial issues in Detroit and merits the National Book Award it won in 2004. Ossian Sweet, a black physician, purchased a home on Detroit's east side and attempted to move in but his property was attacked by a violent crowd. To defending this home, his brother shot and killed a protester leading to the nation's most significant civil right trial of the 1920s; one in which Clarence Darrow successfully defended the right of blacks to protect their property.

Art in Detroit Public Places. (Revised edition) Dennis Alan Nawrocki and David Clemens. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999.

This is an inclusive guide to public art in the City of Detroit.

Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century. David Katzman. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1973.

Detroit leads the nations in racial riots that required dispatching the federal military to the streets. Katzman describes the small black population of Detroit in the 19th century, their struggle for civil rights and the urban violence of 1833 and 1863.

Before Motown A History of Jazz in Detroit: 1920-1960. Lars Bjorn and Jim Gallert, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001.

Detroit's musicians made remarkable contributions to the development of jazz, long before Motown music appeared. This is the history of Detroit's contributions to jazz.

Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW. August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, 1979.

The UAW's successful efforts to win gains from vehicle manufacturers helped establish the blue collar middle class. At all times, the UAW's leadership had to wrestle with racial issues. Hate strikes were common in World War II Black men were frequently employed in the auto plants but, until the Civil Rights Revolution of the 1960s, seldom got the most prestigious jobs.

The Buildings of Detroit: A History. W. Hawkins Ferry. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968.

This is the most comprehensive description of the area's architecture.

The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrialization and Immigrants in Detroit: 1880-1920. Olivier Zunz, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Detroit was a booming industrial metropolis in 1880 but the factories and shops were small employing only a few dozen workers; many of them skilled. With the coming of the vehicle industry, employers reorganized labor so that thousands of unskilled men worked in the same factory. Zunz excellently describes industrialization in Detroit, a process that eventually led to the modern blue collar middle class. He provides much information about the assimilation of European immigrants and described the unique status of the few blacks who lived in Detroit..

Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit. Suzanne Smith, Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1999

This is a comprehensive and informative description of the development of Barry Gordy's Motown industry and what it meant to Detroit's black residents at the time when racial issues were contested.

The Detroit Almanac: 300 Years of Life in the Motor City. Peter Gavrilovich and Bill McGraw (editors), Detroit: The Detroit Free Press, 2000.

This is a comprehensive encyclopedia of information about Detroit

Detroit Divided. Reynolds Farley, Sheldon Danziger and Harry J. Holzer. New York: Russell Sage, 2000

This volume provides extensive information about racial, social and economic trends in metropolitan Detroit including results of attitudinal studies.

Detroit in Its World Setting: A Three Hundred Year Chronology, 1701-2001. David Lee Poremba (editor), Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001.

This is a comprehensive year-by-year history of events occurring in Detroit with an excellent index.

The Detroit Race Riot: A Study in Violence. Robert Shogan and Tom Craig, Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1964.

This informative account provides an excellent description of the 1943 riot.

Devil's Night and Other True Tales of Detroit. Ze've Chafets. New York: Random House, 1990.

The author was raised in Pontiac, educated at the University of Michigan then moved to Israel for a numbers of years. He returned to Detroit and lived there during the troubled 1980s when Halloween was an occasion for arsonists to burn a remarkable number of homes. He offers perceptive comments about race relations, Mayor Coleman Young and Oakland County's L. Brooks Patterson.

Frank Murphy: The Detroit Years. Sidney Fine; Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1975.

Detroit resident Frank Murphy presided as judge in the Ossian Sweet trial in 1925, then served as mayor of the city, governor of Michigan, and then was appointed to the Supreme Court by President Franklin Roosevelt. This is an excellent summary of his accomplishments in Detroit.

Life for Use Is What We Make It: Building Black Community in Detroit: 1915-1945. Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 1992.

As the black population of Detroit grew and a middle class emerged thanks to auto plant jobs, a controversy arose between those who strongly favored ending Jim Crow policies and those blacks who favored establishing parallel institutions. This is an inclusive account of these issues as they played themselves out between the first and second world wars.

Made in Detroit: A South of 8 Mile Memoir. Paul Clemens. New York: Doubleday, 2005.

This is an exceptionally thoughtful account of growing up as a white person on the east side of Detroit during the 1980s and 1990s.

The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit. Thomas Sugrue. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966.

This is an excellent and prize winning description of racial and economic change in the city of Detroit in the years immediately following World War II. The precarious position of black workers in the auto industry is fully noted. No one has written a more informative account of the strident but unsuccessful efforts of many whites to keep their Detroit neighborhoods white.

Orvie: The Dictator of Dearborn: The Rise and Reign of Orville L. Hubbard. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989.

Long term Dearborn mayor Hubbard became a national symbol of suburban resistance to black in the era before the Open Housing Law was enacted in 1968.

Racial Situations: Class Predicaments of Whiteness in Detroit. John Hartigan. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

This ethnographic account of poor whites remaining in Detroit after the city became overwhelming black is informative, especially about aspects of race relations seldom considered: urban white poverty and whites as a minority.

Someone Else's House: America's Unfinished Struggle for Integration. Tamar Jacoby, New York: The Free Press, 1998.

Several chapters of this book describe racial issues in Detroit while Coleman Young served as mayor. She very capably describes the depth of the racial division and stresses forcefully that integration has become a forgotten strategy for ameliorating racial hostility.

Trial and Error: The Detroit School Segregation Case. Eleanor P. Wolf, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981.

To end racial segregation in Detroit's public schools, the NAACP brought suit in 1970, Eventually, the district and circuit federal courts ordered integration through a plan that would have pooled white suburban and black central city students for purposes of fulfilling the mandate of Brown. The Supreme Court, in 1973, overturned that remedy leaving standing the high levels of school segregation that persist. This is an account of that litigation.

Violence in the Model City: The Cavanaugh Administration, Race Relations, and the Detroit Riot of 1967. Sidney Fine. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1989

This historian provides the most comprehensive account of Detroit's political leaders in the 1960s and the riot of 1967.