

12/12/02

DETROIT

(For the boys in the 1942 K. U. basketball squad.)

Detroit is the fourth city in the U.S. Pop. approx 2 million. In the last year and a half over 360,000 has been added to its population. War workers. Think of that in terms of a town the size of Lawrence. I don't know where they have put them. The city is approximately 30 miles long and ten miles wide. It stretches along the Detroit river, which is not a river as you ordinarily think of one, but the connecting link between Lk. St. Claire and Lake Erie. More traffic passes thru that river than thru Suez and Panama combined in peace times. Mostly ore boats. Detroit, before the advent of the auto was just a nice residential town. It is still just a small town, a collection of suburbs. It is not metropolitan at all like Chicago or N.Y. or Phila. We have no subways, residents do not commute by train to the suburbs and the papers print local news on the front page. Detroit is just an overgrown village with many square miles of small houses and that is one reason I like to live here.

You think of Detroit as the auto city. That is true. It is the heart and soul of the automobile industry. So much so that the chief purchasing agent of Nash (located in Kenosha, Wis.) has his office in Detroit. Yet most cars are made outside the city limits. The Ford is made in Dearborn, Chevrolet in Flint, Pontiac in Pontiac. Buick in Flint, Olds in Lansing. In Detroit proper is Plymouth, Chrysler, Packard and Hudson and Cadillac. Dodge also (Hamtramck). These other towns are close to Detroit. People in Detroit buy Ford, G.M. or Chrysler cars almost exclusively as all of us are dependant on the industry for our living. You see few Studebaker or Nash cars in Detroit. Yet in spite of all these names Detroit is a one man town. It is a Ford town. When Ford changed over from Model "T" to model "A" he did not know how to make model changes as the others did and he closed his plant for a year. (About 1927). A depression hit Detroit till he started again. In order to keep his plans secret he had most of the dies made in the East, Many came from Germany. People here can tell you Ford stories by the hour. The Michigan Manufacturers Record refers to him as the Master of Dearborn. Few realize out side Detroit that he is smarter as a business and financial man than as a mechanic. He has put Wall St. in its place and everybody else for that matter.

The most interesting place to see in Detroit is Greenfield Village, Ford's hobby. It is closed for the duration, so I understand. Next I would place the Ford Rouge plant. We do have some big buildings down town and night clubs and some exclusive residential districts. They are the same in every city. You have heard a lot about the Ford bomber plant at Willow Run. Its production has been a disappointment to both Detroit and Washington. They have been making parts for some time but completed bombers are just beginning to come off the line. When finally rolling as planned they hope to produce one four motored bomber an hour with one third the man hours per plane as now goes into the same plane being made elsewhere. But it has been a vast project and the number of dies, jigs and fixtures req'd has been enormous. These have mostly all been made in Detroit which has a die, jig and tool industry as an accessory to the motor industry, the foremost in the country.

I think of Detroit as the greatest industrial center in the world. Perhaps the value of products made in and about Chicago and some other centers may be greater if you count their sweat shops but there is this about