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End of wars, put back together again

Horrible war—Lost Generation—Europe destroyed

America with resources to help Europe rebuild

America's economy sputtered because America was too successful economically.

After the Great War, there was a mass market of American goods—agricultural and industrial. Brought a huge influx of production in the interwar period.

Mass consumption changed economy

Buying on time—credit

Mass saturation advertising

1920s—films promote consumption

First celebrities

Structure of economy: ability of a mass market able to consume mass-produced goods, works so long as you can sell the amount of goods produced

By the end of the 1920s that economy fails

What made the economy motor at such velocity? The automobile.

1921—President “motor car an indispensable component in our economic, political, and social life.” The automobile became the backbone of the American economy.

Was the lifeline of multiple industries: Oil, rubber, steel, paint, glass, upholstery, wood, machinery

Ford owns forests of upper peninsula in Michigan

By the middle of 1920s, largest budget item in state budgets was building and improving highways

By the mid '20s, 50% of auto owning public lives in rural America

What Henry Ford did was make the automobile affordable—he didn't invent it. Large enough for the family, but small enough for the individual to run and care for

Ford thought his automobile liberated farmers, but at the same time he drove many farmers to the factories

Ford was a paradox

History is bunk, but at the same time, developed a historic village

History was something to be controlled and shaped

Ford was a tinkerer

The great inventors were the innovators

There was a crisis in urban centers with horsepower

By 1906, he has produced several hundred cars

1908, Model T

Ford understood he had to produce a lot of vehicles to make money

1927—15 million sold, had 600 million dollar cash surplus; could buy new for a couple hundred dollars

Rubber trees in Dutch East Indies, Brazil, Philippines. Ford buys a huge chunk of land in Brazil, model industrial plantation, Fordlandia

Harvey Firestone a buddy of Ford's

Ford wasn't a nice guy, but he was a pioneer in paying his guys better wages

He annoyed his peers by upping wages to \$5 a day

Wanted his workers to have money to spend

Ford invested in electronics and consumer durable goods
GM (Sloan) became his rival—different colors
By the 1920s, the car was an integral part of life
Raw materials
On one level, was cleaner than the horse
The automobile revolutionized transportation and mobility
Escape and reform—achieve social order through efficiency
Impact of the car on the way human beings interact
American middle class culture was part of a transatlantic Victorian culture
Repressed culture—parlor culture, dressed piano “legs” because that was too provocative
When do dates get invented? About the same time as the car
Go to the home of the girl you wanted to date and drop your calling card
She’d reply by letter
Would court each other on the front porch
Public courtship controlled by parents
Automobile transforms this—gets kids away from parental control
Automobile and birth control: human behavior and American life
Car becomes part of your identity
Automobile shapes the culture

Decade of invention and engineering
Herbert Hoover—misunderstood
Hoover blamed for the Great Depression. Families in W.V. coalfields in 1932 are living in tents year around
By 1932, 1 million Americans have hit the road
Lived in hobo camps, sheds made of junked Model T’s
By 1932, the decade of prosperity came to a screeching halt
Hoover was the first engineer ever to serve as POTUS
Was a mining engineer—served as a supervisor for mines on 4 continents
By 30’s, he was wealthy
Father was a blacksmith
Mother and father were Quakers
Rags to riches—parents both died by the time he was 10
Moved west to live with family
Hoover applied to Stanford in 1891. He does badly on his qualifying exams. Goes through college—interested in geology.
WWI: Hoover was put in charge of evacuation of American tourists in Europe.
Successful—becomes chairman of the commission for relief in Belgium
Has to find housing and food for millions of Europeans
By 1919, he is an international/national hero. He is very popular.
1920, he becomes Harding’s Secretary of Commerce—against all government regulation
1928, he gets the Republican nomination
Gives an amazing speech—in sight of the day when “poverty will be banished”
Described as a utopian capitalist
One year later the stock market crashes—worst disaster since Civil War
What is happening in Asia? What is happening in Japan?

What is happening in the Weimer Republic?

Who is the new kid—Russia—that has been around since the Bolshevik revolution

Bonus marchers—WWI veterans

1932, marched on DC for money owed to them

Bonus was life insurance and pension funds

Was to reward veterans for their service (supposed to go into effect in the 40's)

Bonus was about \$1000 (half the annual income for a family in '32)

Hoover said it was un-American for the government to pay out this money before the term of the bonus was up

They march on DC

Congress responds to the pressure

Monopoly—game invented to help people understand the Depression

If you can't pay your bills, go to jail. Community chest has some privately funded \$\$ to help people.

In 1932, things are so bad, that most community chests are dry; families can't take care of relatives. There is no SS, there is no welfare. Churches are not doing well because people's tithes have gone down.

By June of 1932, 8,000 WWI veterans in Washington DC

Government moves them to a campsite near the Anacostia River

Marched on Congress—by June there were 15,000 vets

June 17, 1932—Senate voted on the Bonus Bill and it was defeated

There was "almost" a riot. Their leaders convinced them to return to their camp and sing "America." The marchers and families stayed in town—they refused to go home.

Hoover was convinced they were Communists and he deployed the army, Douglas MacArthur, Patton, and ***; Bonus marchers offered resistance. A small baby was asphyxiated by tear gas. They burned the camp. Economy worsened by the day, and now there was an increasingly political and social situation to be dealt with.

By 1933, the worse year of the Great Depression, in Detroit unemployment at nearly 60%. Franklin Roosevelt inherited this crazy situation

Testimony by Joseph Angelo