



## Olde Towne East Automobiles and Early Suburbanization

### Historical Context and Overview

During the “Roaring Twenties,” most of America, including the city of Columbus, was growing rapidly. After a period of uncertainty following World War I, the 1920s was a period of unprecedented economic prosperity in the United States. Much of this economic growth was a result of the development of a consumer economy—one that depends on mass marketing of products to individuals.

The automobile became a major consumer product in the 1920s, as the number of registered cars in the U.S. rose by more than 15 million in the United States. Thousands of new businesses emerged to serve automobile travel, including dealerships, garages, gas stations, motels, and restaurants. The automobile also facilitated the growth of suburbs, as people could commute to work beyond the few miles of streetcar lines. In Columbus, many wealthier residents of Olde Towne East moved to the new suburbs. In turn, the Olde Towne East neighborhood became more diverse as many middle class African Americans purchased their first homes in the neighborhood.

### Standards Alignment

#### Ohio’s New Learning Standards: K-12 Social Studies

Grade 3, Content Statement 3: Local communities change over time.

Grade 3, Content Statement 7: Systems of transportation and communication move people, products and ideas from place to place.

Grade 3, Content Statement 19: Making decisions involves weighing costs and benefits.

HS American History 18: An improved standard of living for many, combined with technological innovations in communication, transportation and industry, resulted in social and cultural changes and tensions.

### Learning Objectives

- Discuss the effects that improvements in transportation technology had on the Olde Towne East neighborhood.
- Explain the relationship between automobiles and early suburbanization.
- Describe how the Olde Towne East area has changed over time.
- Analyze (in a financial literacy sense) E.T. Paul’s decision to “change with the times” in regards to his changing from blacksmith to tire specialist.
- Reflect on how the Olde Towne East area during this time demonstrated characteristics of a true community.

## Discussion Questions

1. What were the effects of advances in transportation technology on neighborhoods east of downtown?
2. How did the automobile contribute to early suburbanization?
3. How did the changes in Olde Towne East reflect the economic boom of the Roaring 20s?
4. How did the appearance of Olde Towne East change as a result of the movement in and out of the area?
5. What were some of the possible costs and benefits that someone like E.T. Paul may have considered when deciding if he should change his trade from blacksmithing to specializing in tires?
6. What characteristics of community were demonstrated by the people that resided in the Olde Towne East area?

## Extension Activity

Investigate the trade of blacksmithing. Research the pros and cons regarding staying in the blacksmith business versus changing to tire service. Students participate in a “board meeting” experience to argue pro- or anti- change. Students should consider cost, supplies, appearance, maintenance, future implications, and other financial concerns of a business board.

Have students analyze Ford Model T advertisements from the 1910s and 1920s. Ads can be found on the following site: <https://www.thehenryford.org/explore/blog/advertising-the-model-t/>. How did these ads reflect the consumer economy of the Roaring 20s? Students can dissect and analyze advertising using this worksheet: [www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson\\_images/lesson97/advert.pdf](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson97/advert.pdf). See the link in the additional resources below for more information on the impact of the automobile.

View the “Wheels of Progress” a ca. 1927 silent film on the rise of automobiles. <http://archive.org/details/Wheelsof1927>. Have students complete an analysis worksheet at [http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/motion\\_picture\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/motion_picture_analysis_worksheet.pdf)

## Additional Resources

Teaching Columbus website: <http://www.teachingcolumbus.omeka.net/items/show/182>

Becoming Modern: America in the 1920s – Automobile:  
<http://americainclass.org/sources/becomingmodern/machine/text3/text3.htm>

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