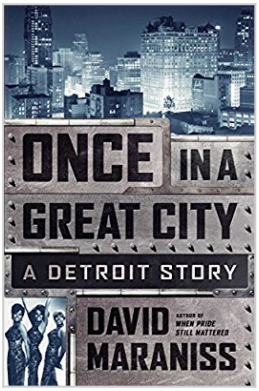

Once in a Great City: A Detroit Story

By David Maraniss

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*** Winner - Robert F. Kennedy Book Award (2016) ***

“Elegiac and richly detailed...[Maraniss] succeeds with authoritative, adrenaline-laced flair...evocative.” —Michiko Kakutani for *The New York Times*

As David Maraniss captures it with power and affection, Detroit summed up America’s path to music and prosperity that was already past history.

It’s 1963 and Detroit is on top of the world. The city’s leaders are among the most visionary in America: Grandson of the first Ford; Henry Ford II; influential labor leader Walter Reuther; Motown’s founder Berry Gordy; the Reverend C.L. Franklin and his daughter, the amazing Aretha; Governor George Romney, Mormon and Civil Rights advocate; super car salesman Lee Iacocca; Mayor Jerome Cavanagh, a Kennedy acolyte; Police Commissioner George Edwards; Martin Luther King. It was the American auto makers’ best year; the revolution in music and politics was underway. Reuther’s UAW had helped lift the middle class.

The time was full of promise. The auto industry was selling more cars than ever before and inventing the Mustang. Motown was capturing the world with its amazing artists. The progressive labor movement was rooted in Detroit with the UAW. Martin Luther King delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech there two months before he made it famous in the Washington march.

Once in a Great City shows that the shadows of collapse were evident even then. Before the devastating riot. Before the decades of civic corruption and neglect, and white flight. Before people trotted out the grab bag of rust belt infirmities—from harsh weather to high labor costs—and competition from abroad to explain Detroit’s collapse, one could see the signs of a city’s ruin. Detroit at its peak was threatened by its own design. It was being abandoned by the new world. Yet so much of what Detroit gave America lasts.

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Editorial Review

Review
*** A Best Book of 2015 (*The Economist*) ***

*** Winner - Robert F. Kennedy Book Award ***

“Elegiac and richly detailed . . . Maraniss . . . conjures those boom years of his former hometown with novelistic ardor. Using overlapping portraits of Detroiters (from politicians to musicians to auto execs), he creates a mosaiclike picture of the city that has the sort of intimacy and tactile emotion that Larry McMurtry brought to his depictions of the Old West, and the gritty sweep of David Simon’s HBO series “The Wire.” . . . People’s experiences intersect or collide or resonate with one another, and Mr. Maraniss uses them as windows on the larger cultural and political changes convulsing the nation in the ‘60s . . . [Maraniss] succeeds with authoritative, adrenaline-laced flair. . . . Maraniss cuts among story lines about the auto industry, the civil rights movement and City Hall, and among subplots involving Ford’s development of its top-secret new car (the singular Mustang), the police commissioner’s efforts to get the goods on the mobster Tony Giacalone and Berry Gordy’s construction of a hit factory with Motown. The result is a buoyant Frederick Lewis Allen-like social history that’s animated by an infectious soundtrack and lots of tactile details, and injected with a keen understanding of larger historical forces at work – both in Detroit and America at large. . . . Maraniss’s evocative book provides a wistful look back at an era when those cracks were only just beginning to show, and the city still seemed a place of “uncommon possibility” and was creating “wondrous and lasting things.” (Michiko Kakutani for The New York Times)

“Captivating . . . Maraniss hears the joyous sound of a city suddenly, improbably filled with hope. . . . Maraniss asks himself what in the city has lasted, a question that often haunts former Detroiters. The songs, he decides. Not the reforms, not the dream of racial justice, not the promise of a Great Society, but the wonderfully exuberant songs that came pouring out of Berry Gordy’s studio. That’s the tragedy at the core of this gracious, generous book. All that remains of the hopeful moment Maraniss so effectively describes is a soundtrack. And that isn’t nearly enough.” (*The Washington Post*)

“*Once in a Great City* is incandescent. Through evocative writing and prodigious research, David Maraniss offers us an unforgettable portrait of 1963 Detroit, muscular and musical, during the early days of Motown and the Mustang. Bursting with larger than life figures from Henry Ford II, Walter Reuther, and Mayor Jerome Cavanagh, to Berry Gordy, Martin Luther King, and Reverend C.L. Franklin, Aretha's father, this book is at once the chronicle of a city during its last fine time and also a classic American story of promise and loss.” (Gay Talese)

“The great virtue of Maraniss’s bighearted book is that it casts a wide net, collecting and seeking to synthesize these seemingly disparate strands. . . . Even where material is familiar, the connections Maraniss makes among these figures feel fresh. He’s even better on the lesser known. . . . Motown is clearly where Maraniss’s heart is, and it is where his materials—music, race, civil rights—come together most naturally. . . . You finish *Once in a Great City* feeling mildly shattered, which is exactly as it should be.” (*New York Times Book Review*)

“Maraniss has written a book about the fall of Detroit, and done it, ingeniously, by writing about Detroit at its height, Humpty Dumpty’s most poignant moment being just before he toppled over. . . . An encyclopedic account of Detroit in the early sixties, a kind of hymn to what really was a great city. . . . The display of

municipal energies is so impressive that every page haunts us with the questions What went wrong? How could so much go so wrong so rapidly? How did a city of so many fruitful tensions and monuments and intermediary institutions turn into the ruins we see now, with scarcely a third of its 1950 population remaining and so many of the sites that Maraniss mentions ruined or destroyed?" (*The New Yorker*)

"David Maraniss turns back the clock to paint the picture of an American metropolis in its prime, however, one where the seeds of the city's future fall were already starting to take root. . . . Maraniss's recounting of the story of his birthplace has the distinct feeling of the first big drop of a roller coaster. A car chugging upward towards heady heights, but en route takes an inevitable plunge back into cold reality. . . . Maraniss is able to give these characters life by injecting them with foibles along with the force of personality that made them prominent figures in the building of the city. . . . The simple breadth of the book is impressive, with Maraniss merging and wrangling disparate storylines about culture, politics, race, and the Ford Mustang into a single patchwork image of the Motor City." (*Christian Science Monitor*)

"David Maraniss is a journalist's journalist. . . . the book explores the optimism that existed in those days and the signs of major problems to come. It's a fascinating political, racial, economic and cultural tapestry." (*Detroit Free Press*)

"A compelling portrait of one of America's most iconic cities. . . . Maraniss highlights the class and race frictions that demarcated and defined the city and gives readers a glimpse of the colorful life of mobsters and moguls, entertainers and entrepreneurs. Among the famous Detroiters he highlights are Henry Ford II, Lee Iacocca, Berry Gordy Jr., George Romney, and the Reverend C. L. Franklin. Maraniss captures Detroit just as it is both thriving and dying, at the peak of its vibrancy and on the verge of its downfall." (*Booklist (starred review)*)

"A sprawling portrait of Detroit at a pivotal moment." (*Publishers Weekly*)

"In celebration of what Detroit represented, this book is equally a study of what was lost and is written with an attractive wistfulness that pulls the reader in. The narrative's tone of reminiscence makes it entertainingly informative. . . A colorful, detailed history of the rise and ultimate decline of Detroit." (*Library Journal*)

"Fast-paced,sprawling, copiously detailed look at 18 months—from 1962 to 1964—in the city's past . . . Maraniss' brawny narrative evokes a city still 'vibrantly alive' and striving for a renaissance. An illuminating history of a golden era in a city desperately seeking to reclaim the glory." (*Kirkus Reviews*)

"[A] glimmering portrait of Detroit . . . that will leave the reader thoroughly haunted. . . . *Once in a Great City* has it all: significant scenes, tremendously charismatic figures, even a starry soundtrack. . . . Reading about the city in its hey day is like falling backward in time and running into someone whose youthful blush you'd completely forgotten. Detroit is that someone. She is bright and laughing, flickering before you like a specter from the past. I doubt I'll forget her anytime soon." (*Bookpage*)

"Maraniss . . . undoubtedly will attract notice and focus even more attention on Detroit. . . . a unique and absorbing take. . . . As often as authors have told the story of Gordy and the rise of Motown, Maraniss still captures the vitality and enterprise on West Grand Boulevard in a fresh way. . . . [Maraniss] is equally adept at capturing the white-run city's complex racial dynamics at a time when black leaders were becoming more militant and clashing with each other over the proper level of assertiveness. Maraniss . . . is a skillful storyteller, and his interpretation of events in Detroit a half century ago is well founded. . . . Maraniss will only add to his reputation with *Once in a Great City*. It's a good read if your interest is only to visit Detroit's remarkable recent past. It's even a better read if you are interested in the city's extraordinary devolution. In

either case, it’s a story that is haunting, thought-provoking and, in the end, sad." (*DeadlineDETROIT.com*)

“A sobering portrait of a city that felt itself to be at the peak of its power and influence in a "time of uncommon possibility and freedom when Detroit created wondrous and lasting things," even as the forces that would topple it had set about their work. The principal strength of Maraniss's book lies in his skill at marshaling copious research to serve his sophisticated account of a complex, vibrant city balanced on its tipping point. . . . Sadly, one can't avoid the conclusion that never again will it be the city David Maraniss portrays with empathy and candor in this impressive book.” (*Shelf Awareness*)

“Maraniss . . . aptly traces these two narratives — cars and race — in chronicling a pivotal period of his hometown’s history. Spanning autumn 1962 to spring 1964, the book bustles with vivid characters, from Berry Gordy and C.L. Franklin (Aretha’s father), to Walter Reuther and George Romney (Mitt’s father). “It all looked so promising,” Maraniss writes, paraphrasing Detroit Mayor Jerome Cavanagh’s conversation with President Johnson after his 1964 visit, but even in those halcyon days, “some part of Detroit was dying,” a casualty of white flight, the demise of labor unions, and a changing world. This is a beautifully written tribute to that lost, great city.” (*The Boston Globe*)

“Combining hindsight and insight with deep-dive research, Maraniss provides a clear-eyed flashback to a once-powerful manufacturing metropolis intoxicated by cheap gasoline, swaggering hubris and blue-sky confidence. . . . Maraniss examines modern history in the dogged manner of David Halberstam and Robert Caro. Between the lines, he leaves an unwritten thought for both today’s optimists and pessimists. If things could go change so much in just 50 years, what might the next half-century bring?” (*The Detroit News*)

“One of America’s finest non-fiction writers, a son of Detroit, offers a lively and meticulously researched account of how the city, once the engine room of America, began sputtering.” (*The Economist*)

“Maraniss’ well-written and researched book well remembers the city of Detroit in the early 1960s as a place where factories hummed, Motown rocked and the present gave little warning that Detroit would become a ‘city of decay.’” (*Seattle Times*)

About the Author
Born in Detroit, David Maraniss is an associate editor at *The Washington Post*. Maraniss is a Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist and bestselling author of *Once in a Great City: A Detroit Story*; *First in His Class: A Biography of Bill Clinton*; *Rome 1960: The Olympics that Stirred the World; Barack Obama: The Story*; *Clemente: The Passion and Grace of Baseball’s Last Hero*; *They Marched into Sunlight: War and Peace, Vietnam and America, October 1967*; and *When Pride Still Mattered: A Life of Vince Lombardi*, which was hailed by *Sports Illustrated* as “maybe the best sports biography ever published.” He lives in Washington, DC, and Madison, Wisconsin.

Once in a Great City

Chapter 1

GONE

THE NINTH OF NOVEMBER 1962 was unseasonably pleasant in the Detroit area. It was an accommodating day for holiday activity at the Ford Rotunda, where a company of workmen were installing exhibits for the Christmas Fantasy scheduled to open just after Thanksgiving. Not far from a main lobby display of glistening next-model Ford Thunderbirds and Galaxies and Fairlanes and one-of-a-kind custom dream cars, craftsmen were constructing a life-size Nativity scene and a Santa's North Pole workshop surrounded by looping tracks of miniature trains and bountiful bundles of toys. This quintessentially American harmonic convergence of religiosity and consumerism was expected to attract more than three-quarters of a million visitors before the season was out, and for a generation of children it would provide a lifetime memory—walking past the live reindeer Donner and Blitzen, up the long incline toward a merry band of hardworking elves, and finally reaching Santa Claus and his commodious lap.

The Ford Rotunda was circular in an automotive manufacturing kind of way. It was shaped like an enormous set of grooved transmission gears, one fitting neatly inside the next, rising first 80 then 90 then 100 then 110 feet, to the equivalent of ten stories. Virtually windowless, with its steel frame and exterior sheath of Indiana limestone, this unusual structure was the creation of Albert Kahn, the prolific architect of Detroit's industrial age. Kahn had designed it for the Century of Progress exposition in Chicago, where Ford's 1934 exhibit hall chronicled the history of transportation from the horse-drawn carriage to the latest Ford V-8. When that Depression-era fair shuttered, workers dismantled the Rotunda and moved it from the south side shore of Lake Michigan to Dearborn, on the southwest rim of Detroit, where it was reconstructed to serve as a showroom and visitors center across from what was then Ford Motor Company's world headquarters. Later two wings were added, one to hold Ford's archives and the other for a theater.

In the fullness of the postwar fifties, with the rise of suburbs and two-car garages and urban freeways and the long-distance federal interstate system, millions of Americans paid homage to Detroit's grand motor palace. For a time, the top five tourist attractions in the United States were Niagara Falls, the Great Smokey Mountains National Park, the Smithsonian Institution, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Ford Rotunda. The Rotunda drew more visitors than Yellowstone, Mount Vernon, the Statue of Liberty, or the Washington Monument. Or so the Ford publicists claimed. Chances are you have not heard of it.

To appreciate what the Rotunda and its environs signified then to Detroiters, a guide would be useful, and for this occasion Robert C. Ankony fills the role. Ankony (who went on to become an army paratrooper and narcotics squad officer, eventually earning a PhD in sociology from Wayne State University) was fourteen in November 1962, a chronic juvenile delinquent who specialized in torching garages. Desperate to avoid drudgery and boredom, he knew the Rotunda the way a disaffected boy might know it. Along with the Penobscot Building, the tallest skyscraper downtown, the Rotunda was among his favorite places to hang out when he played hooky, something he did as often as possible, including on that late fall Friday morning.

"The Highway" is what Ankony and his friends called the area where they lived in the southwest corner of Detroit. The highway was West Vernor, a thoroughfare that ran east through the neighborhood toward Michigan Central Station, the grand old beaux arts train depot, and west into adjacent Dearborn toward Ford's massive River Rouge Complex, another Albert Kahn creation and the epicenter of Ford's manufacturing might. In Detroit Industry, the legendary twenty-seven-panel murals at the Detroit Institute of Arts painted by Diego Rivera and commissioned by Edsel Ford, the founder's son, among the few distinguishable portraits within the scenes of muscular Ford machines and workers is that of Kahn, wearing wire-rim glasses and work overalls. Ankony experienced Detroit industry with all of his senses: the smoke and dust and smells drifted downwind in the direction of his family's house two miles away on Woodmere at the edge of Patton Park. His mother, Ruth, who could see the smokestacks from her rear window, hosed the factory soot off her front porch every day. What others considered a noxious odor the Ankonys and their neighbors would describe as the smell of home.

On the morning of November 9, young Bob reported to Wilson Junior High, found another boy who was his frequent collaborator in truancy, and hatched plans for the day. After homeroom, they pushed through the double doors with the horizontal brass panic bars, ran across the school grounds and over a two-foot metal fence, scooted down the back alley, and were free, making their way to West Vernor and out toward Ford country.

It was a survival course on the streets, enlivened by the thrill of avoiding the cops. Slater's bakery for day-old doughnuts, claw-shaped with date fillings, three cents apiece. Scrounging curbs and garbage cans for empty soda bottles and turning them in for two cents each. If they had enough pennies, maybe go for a dog at the Coney Island on Vernor. Rounding the curve where Vernor turned to Dix, past the Dearborn Mosque and the Arab storefronts of east Dearborn. (Ankony's parents were Lebanese and French; he grew up being called a camel jockey and "little A-rab.") Fooling around at the massive slag piles near Eagle Pass. Dipping down into the tunnel leading toward the Rouge, leaning over a walkway railing and urinating on cars passing below, then up past the factory bars, Salamie's and Johnny's, and filching lunches in white cardboard boxes from the ledge of a sandwich shop catering to autoworkers on shift change. Skirting the historic overpass at Miller Road near Rouge's Gate 4, where on an afternoon in late May 1937 Walter Reuther and his fellow union organizers were beaten by Ford security goons, a violent encounter that Ankony's father, who grew up only blocks away, told his family he had witnessed. Gazing in awe at the Rouge plant's fearsomely majestic industrial landscape from the bridge at Rotunda Road, then on to the Rotunda itself, where workmen were everywhere, not only inside installing the Christmas displays but also outside repairing the roof.

To Ankony, the Rotunda was a wonderland. No worries about truant officers; every day brought school groups, so few would take notice of two stray boys. With other visitors, including on that day a school group from South Bend, they took in the new car displays and a movie about Henry Ford, then blended in with the crowd for a factory tour that left by bus from the side of the Rotunda over to the Rouge plant, then the largest industrial complex in the United States. Ankony had toured the Rouge often, yet the flow of molten metal, the intricacies of the engine plant, the mechanized perfection of the assembly, all the different-colored car parts coming down the line and matching up, the wonder of raw material going in and a finished product coming out, the reality of scenes depicted in Rivera's murals, thrilled him anew every time. The Rouge itself energized him even as Rivera's famed murals frightened him. The art, more than the place itself, reminded him of the gray, mechanized life of a factory worker "in those dark dungeons" that seemed expected of a working-class Detroit boy and that he so much yearned to avoid.

When the Rouge tour ended in early afternoon, Ankony and his pal had had enough of Ford for the day and left for a shoplifting spree at the nearby Montgomery Ward store at the corner of Schaefer Road and Michigan Avenue, across the street from Dearborn's city hall. They were in the basement sporting goods department, checking out ammo and firearms, when they heard a siren outside, then another, a cacophony of wailing fire trucks and screeching police cars. The boys scrambled up and out and saw smoke billowing in the distance. Fire!—and they didn't start it. Fire in the direction of the Rotunda. They raced toward it.

Roof repairmen since midmorning had been taking advantage of the fifty-degree weather to waterproof the Rotunda's geodesic dome panels. Using propane heaters, they had been warming a transparent sealant so that it would spray more easily. At around 1 p.m., a heater ignited sealant vapors, sparking a small fire, and though workmen tried to douse the flames with extinguishers they could not keep pace and the fire spread. The South Bend school group had just left the building. Another tour for thirty-five visitors was soon to begin. There was a skeleton staff of eighteen office workers inside; many Rotunda employees were at lunch. A parking lot guard noticed the flames and radioed inside. Alarm bells were sounded, the building was evacuated, the roof repairmen crab-walked to a hatch and scrambled down an inside stairwell, and the Dearborn and Ford fire departments were summoned, their sirens piercing the autumn air, alerting, among

others, two truant boys in the Monkey Ward’s basement.

By the time firefighters reached the Rotunda, the entire roof, made of highly combustible plastic and fiberglass, was ablaze. Two aerial trucks circled around to the rear driveway. From the other side, firefighters and volunteers stretched hoses from Schaefer Road and moved forward cautiously. It was too hot, and the water pressure too limited, to douse the fire with sprays up and over the 110 feet to the roof. The structure’s steel frame began to buckle. At 1:56, fire captains ordered their men away from the building, just in time. Robert Dawson, who worked in the Lincoln-Mercury building across the street, looked over and saw a “ball of fire” on the roof but at first no flames below. “Suddenly the roof crashed through. Everything inside turned to flame. Smoke began sifting through the limestone walls. Then, starting at the north corner, the walls crumbled. It was as though you had stacked dominoes and pushed them over.” The fire had reached the Christmas displays, fresh and potent kindling, and raged out of control, bright flames now shooting fifty feet into the sky. The entire building collapsed in a shuddering roar, a whirlwind of hurtling limestone and concrete and dust.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Johanna Bassett:

Book is to be different for each grade. Book for children until finally adult are different content. As we know that book is very important for all of us. The book Once in a Great City: A Detroit Story ended up being making you to know about other understanding and of course you can take more information. It doesn't matter what advantages for you. The e-book Once in a Great City: A Detroit Story is not only giving you considerably more new information but also to become your friend when you experience bored. You can spend your own spend time to read your reserve. Try to make relationship together with the book Once in a Great City: A Detroit Story. You never feel lose out for everything when you read some books.

Wilma Richards:

The e-book with title Once in a Great City: A Detroit Story has lot of information that you can find out it. You can get a lot of help after read this book. This kind of book exist new expertise the information that exist in this guide represented the condition of the world currently. That is important to yo7u to be aware of how the improvement of the world. This particular book will bring you within new era of the globalization. You can read the e-book in your smart phone, so you can read it anywhere you want.

Marco Manuel:

People live in this new day time of lifestyle always try to and must have the free time or they will get lot of stress from both lifestyle and work. So , whenever we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not really a huge robot. Then we ask again, what kind of activity are you experiencing when the spare time coming to you actually of course your answer will unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading publications. It can be your alternative with spending your spare time, the book you have read is actually Once in a Great City: A Detroit Story.

Cedric Barnett:

Playing with family in a park, coming to see the ocean world or hanging out with pals is thing that usually you might have done when you have spare time, then why you don't try issue that really opposite from that. 1 activity that make you not sense tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you already been ride on and with addition details. Even you love Once in a Great City: A Detroit Story, it is possible to enjoy both. It is excellent combination right, you still want to miss it? What kind of hangout type is it? Oh occur its mind hangout folks. What? Still don't buy it, oh come on its named reading friends.

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